

09/02/2024

EPISODE 1

Camp Be Better

written by

Hayden J. Weal
and
Chye-Ling Huang

NIAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But my fellow offenders don't
 exactly look like regular
 offenders. And we're listening to
 this dude who looks like he should
 be on a boat telling us he's our
 papa.

STERLING
 Me -- Papa. And Papa Sterling will
 take care of you.

Niah looks around -- WTF? No one else seems bothered; angle
 on who we'll soon know as WENDY, looking bored, cracking her
 knuckles.

STERLING (CONT'D)
 (laughs)
 But really, you should all be in
jail. But instead, you're here. My
 personal brainchild. Camp Be
 Better.

Sterling waits, expecting applause. There's a smattering.

STERLING (CONT'D)
 I know, it's tough. You've made a
 whoopsie and you must be 'punished
 in the eyes of the law' ... but
 also... you're promising young
 people.

ANGLE ON: a pompous young man (soon we'll meet him as DECLAN)
 nodding to someone, in full agreement.

5 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH

5

Niah sits in a 'Confession Room'. She addresses the camera
 (this is where all V.O. comes from).

NIAH
 Basically, we're here in this camp
 for one hundred days then we go
 back to our normal lives, no
 questions asked, no criminal
 record. Um, score for me but ...
 what?

6 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

6

STERLING
 But there are some rules. Octavius?

WHIP PAN ONTO: OCTAVIUS (30s, bottom-feedy, trussed up).

Niah, Jonas, Declan, Wendy and Roe (hereafter referred to as 'the H campers') are unpacking their bags.

NIAH (V.O.)

And we're Hobson Cabin. Our cabin leader is--

REGINA

WHOOOOO!!!!

REGINA (30s) jumps outta nowhere, giving them a fright.

REGINA (CONT'D)

Camp Be Better, leshgo!! You guys ready to be better? hahaha. I'm Regina -- welcome to Hobson cabin. You might notice that our four cabins are named after four *respected European settlers*, who also, like yourselves, pioneered forward with no regard for right or wrong but because of who they are and where they came from, were forgiven. And we all know that worked out beautifully for everybody.

(her eye twitches)

Forgiven and forgotten. All in the past...

(takes a breath)

But bringing it back to the here and now, I reckon all you need is just one person to believe that you can Be Better. And that person's me. Okay! Round of names and how you want to 'be better'.

Stony silence. The H Campers aren't keen.

MICHAELA (O.S.)

Catch!

Michaela appears at the door, throws a bottle of champagne, all smiles. Declan catches it.

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

A welcome gift from daddy. Enjoy! Come on gal, let's leave the kids to it.

Regina is dragged off by Michaela.

JONAS

...Daddy?

Declan goes out onto the deck with the bottle of champagne.
Jonas grabs it from him.

**they're all rich fucks who deserve special treatment, and
they're not going to be friends.

JONAS

I got this, pretty boy.

DECLAN

Suit yourself, ugly boy.

WENDY

Great, the flirting begins.

ROE

Sorry um -- what were everyone's
names?

Wendy's got flute glasses. Niah comes out last, marvelling at
the fact that everyone's running with this.

NIAH

Does anyone else think it's weird
that we're given champagne for
having like, done a crime?

DECLAN

It's not champagne cos its not from
the Champagne province in France,
but it's a nice touch.

NIAH

That's not what I mean.

ROE

It was pretty traumatic what we
went through with the sentencing
and being in court and all that.
Going through the system.

NIAH

This doesn't feel like the system,
though.

WENDY

Didn't you hear Sterling?

JONAS

-- 'Papa' Sterling.

WENDY

We're 'promising young people'.
It's different for us.

DECLAN

What, you think we should go to
juvie like normal people just
because we made a mistake?

NIAH

Well, shouldn't we?

Jonas, Declan, Wendy and Roe look at Niah as if she's insane.

JONAS

Oh great, we're sharing a cabin
with a special needs kid.

Wendy punches Jonas in the arm and takes the bottle from him.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Oh, let me guess, you can't say
'special needs' any more?

ROE

"Individuals with disabilities".

JONAS

Noted. Thanks, retard.

Niah watches these privileged brats, shocked. Declan notices
her expression.

DECLAN

(to Niah)

You know you don't have to pretend
to be a good person here, right?

JONAS

(re: Wendy and the bottle)

You're not gonna get anywhere
handling it like a delicate little
fanny. You gotta treat it like a
cock and really go for broke--

Wendy aims the bottle at Jonas and pops the cork. The cork
SHOOTS out and hits Jonas in the throat. He *GWARKS*.

14

THERAPY CAM -- VARIOUS

14

QUICK CUTS: the H campers sit. Get comfortable.

JONAS

Hello, I'm Jonas Highmore, of *the*
Highmore Group -- wait, so I can
say "I have a small penis" and it
won't tell anyone?

(beat)

That's not true by the way.

(playing to the lens)

Or is it?

Dr Kimberly floats in, making adjustments to the camera.

DR KIMBERLY

The camera is fitted with voice recognition and a custom large language model, AI. Cutting edge of mental healthcare, apparently.

NIAH

And I just talk into it?

DECLAN

(turning)

Hang on, this is my good side. Na just kidding -- all my sides are good.

AI VOICE (V.O.)

You look great, Declan Peters.

ROE

I suppose I feel...

(beat; serious)

I know I'm not considered the coolest or hottest or ... you know. People don't seem to like me. Could you, I don't know, tell me I'm not a loser?

AI VOICE (V.O.)

Rohinton Templeton...

(painfully long beat)

My programming prohibits me from telling mistruths.

WENDY

This is stupid.

AI VOICE (V.O.)

Try your best, Wendy Easton.

DR KIMBERLY

Look, it's easy. Good morning, Therapy Cam.

AI VOICE (V.O.)

You sound depressed, Dr Kimberly. How are those dreams you've been having?

DR KIMBERLY

See? You can talk about your 'feelings' and 'problems' with 100% confidentiality or judgement unlike you know, people.

AI VOICE (V.O.)

Niah Zhou. Why are you here?

NIAH
 (same as opening line)
 So why am I here? Good question.

15 INT. H CABIN - NIGHT 15

Niah is in bed. Looks over at: Declan doing his gua sha; Wendy putting her mouthguard in.

NIAH (V.O.)
 I'm clearly not like these people.
 I think there's been a big mistake.

Niah lies back in bed, stares wide-eyed at the ceiling.

FIRST AD BREAK

ACT 2

16 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, ESTABLISHER - DAWN 16

Sun, bush, water, beauty.

17 INT. H CABIN - DAWN 17

BANG! The door flies open -- Regina stands in running gear.

REGINA
 WHOOOOOO!! Let's go!!

All the other campers are already in running gear, looking at Niah like "hurry up". Niah wipes drool from her mouth.

OVERLAY TITLE: RUNNING

18 INT. CHOIR ROOM - DAY 18

OVERLAY TITLE: MUSIC THERAPY

Thomas leads the H Campers (plus 3-4 OTHER CAMPERS if possible) in a Camp Song as he plays guitar with fervour. Niah mumbles in the back.

19 INT. MICHAELA'S OFFICE - DAY 19

Sterling jams special reports into a MONOGRAMMED BRIEFCASE. In between packing, he lines up cocaine on a framed photograph of himself doing the finger guns.

He snorts the line -- does finger guns to his photograph.

20 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FIELD - DAY 20

OVERLAY TITLE: ANGER MANAGEMENT

The H Campers hold a giant circular "parachute game" and are led by Dr Kimberly. (plus 3-4 OTHER CAMPERS if possible)

DR KIMBERLY

Let it go. Yes, I know it's stupid,
just do it.

NIAH (V.O.)

So, the first week has been
interesting.

Jonas is showing off and trying to get a laugh out a stony
Wendy. Declan leans in to Roe and Niah:

DECLAN

Yeah, the Highmores own islands.
But I heard Jonas sold poisoned
drugs to a kid he didn't like. The
kid OD'd and died. Embarrassing.

21 EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

21

OVERLAY TITLE: SELF-REFLECTION

Michaela and the H Campers have cucumbers on their eyes,
tanning on blankets. Michaela specifically has special
EXPENSIVE SHEETS. (plus 3-4 OTHER CAMPERS if possible)

MICHAELA

Let your mind go blank, my babies.

Roe whispers to Niah and Jonas; pointing to Declan who oils
himself pompously.

ROE

Declan's dad is on billionaire wife
number three after the first two
died suspiciously. I heard he
exposed himself to a bunch of
octagenarians -- gave them heart
attacks.

NIAH (V.O.)

One thing they all seem to have in
common: they're all loaded.

MICHAELA

These sheets? One hundred per cent
Mulberry silk.

22 EXT. RUNNING TRACK - DAY

22

ANGLE ON: EXERCISE

The H Campers run across the camp's running track.

NIAH (V.O.)

And these kinds of people like to
run ... for fun?

Wendy, Declan and Niah are ahead. Wendy gestures back at Roe.

WENDY

Rohinton Templeton. His parents are US diplomats -- very connected. He set an entire neighbourhood of mansions on fire.

NIAH

Shit. At least no one die --

WENDY

Children died.

Roe bends over and clutches a stitch.

23

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

23

The H Campers watch Wendy jump from post to post, grunting.

JONAS

Wendy Easton -- her mum is the CEO of Rugby Aotearoa, she's an all star type. She broke every limb on her teammates' body - turned her into a chicken nugget. So her family pressed charges. Poor girl will never be able to rub her own nub again.

NIAH (V.O.)

And everybody gossips.

24

INT. SHOWER BLOCK - DAY

24

The H campers chat moisturise at the mirrors, post-run.

ROE

That one girl from Wakefield Cabin - Zhazha? - her family lost big on crypto. They're worth less than 30 million now.

DECLAN

(sincerely)

Rough. How do you reckon they'll manage?

WENDY

(to Niah)

How do you run in that baggy shirt?

DECLAN

(feeling fabric)

Is it an Infante-Mossman?

NIAH

(making it sound flash)

It's um ... T Ware-whare.

ROE

Niah, what family are you from?

JONAS

Yeah, you dark horse! I haven't heard anything about you.

Niah flounders.

DECLAN

You're in good company, Niah. Don't be a hold out.

JONAS

What are you, a mole? She's a mole, call the cops! Wooop wooop!

Desperate to escape, Niah grabs a bottle of liquid soap and squeezes a load into her eyes.

NIAH

Ow, my eyes! I gotta go.

25 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH 25

Niah, eyes red and swollen, addresses the camera.

NIAH

My efforts to blend in aren't working. I need to step it up.

26 EXT. CLOTHESLINE - DAY 26

Glittery, expensive clothes hang on the line.

Niah pokes her head around a tree -- eyes them up.

27 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH 27

Niah is kitted out head-to-toe in flashy clothes and accessories. It's too much.

NIAH

I doubt the Seddon girls will even know they're missing anything.

(beat)

Is it too much?

28 INT. MESS HALL - DAY 28

ALL CBB CAMPERS are in the mess hall having breakfast.

Niah struts in wearing her new get-up. Elicits SLO MO impressed stares from the other H Campers.

SLO MO Seraphina -- "are those my clothes?" expression.

Niah nods. Big beat.

DECLAN
Wow. That's excellent.

Phew. As Declan engages Niah in chatter, Jonas watches, jealous. Roe looks slightly suspicious.

ROE
Wasn't the game of darts invented-
-?

JARRING CUT TO:

33 INT. H CABIN - AFTERNOON

33

Jonas jumps around the room, cranking music on his Bluetooth speaker.

Wendy does a hand gesture of riding a horse, looking at Niah like, "Right?" and Niah grins back, confused.

DECLAN
Niah, what do they listen to in
Switzerland? Connect up.

Jonas sighs as Declan throws the speaker to Niah who connects it to her phone.

JONAS
(re: his phone)
Oh, you guys gotta check out this
meme. It's crack-up.

Everyone leans in to look: The meme loads painfully slow.

JONAS (CONT'D)
The connection here is ratshit.
Just give it a sec.

Niah's music plays --

DECLAN
Nice.

JONAS
Super nice! Makes me wanna get
litty titty start-a-committee!

Declan nods, digging it. Wendy lifts something heavy (gag to come). Roe watches her -- she catches him and he looks away, caught.

Suddenly the music stops, replaced by a crackly ringing.

Niah swipes her phone -- accidentally answers it.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (through speaker; crackly
 with bad connection)
 This is South City Corrections
 calling for Niah Zhou, do you
 accept--

Niah jumps on the speaker, killing the call. A long beat of
 silence as everyone looks at her.

WENDY
 Why is the jail calling you?

NIAH
 That was ... my boyfriend.

DECLAN
 Boyfriend?

NIAH
 Yeah. It's a running joke we have
 since I got sent here. Probably
 just wants a tit pic.

JONAS
 Don't show face. No face no case.
 Only nips - maybe some side flap.

34 THERAPY CAM -- DECLAN 34

DECLAN
 Niah has a boyfriend. That's fine.

35 INT. H CABIN - CONTINUOUS 35

Everyone is staring at Niah with suspicion.

NIAH
 (to Jonas)
 Actually I feel like getting litty
 titty as well, I'll join the
 committee!

JONAS
 Woo! Drinks, nose drinks? Molly?

The others don't look as excited, but Niah and Jonas woop at
 each other and start dancing, getting the place pumped up.

36 THERAPY CAM -- WENDY 36

WENDY
 Team sports have never been my
 forte. Largely because I never get
 invited. Is getting lit a sport?

42 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FIELD - CONTINUOUS

42

WENDY

Mulberry sheets... The Sterlings
have it all.

DECLAN

They're cut-throat. Apparently
Sterling is a sociopath.

JONAS

I'm not surprised. Gotta be
ruthless if you wanna be top dog.

DECLAN

He betrayed his only friend back in
the day to buy all this land. Heard
it from some of my dad's friends,
the McCallums.

Niah freezes: what did he say?

43 FLASHBACK -- MCCALLUM HOUSE

43

Niah squatting, doing her business on the counter.

ANGLE ON: The screaming woman. Bliss McCallum.

44 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FIELD - CONTINUOUS

44

NIAH

How do you know the McCallums?

ROE

Uh ... I feel a bit green around
the gills.

MICHAELA (O.S.)

HEY! ARE THOSE MY SHEETS?

Before anyone can explain, Roe groans... then releases an
inhuman waterfall of vomit over Michaela's sheets.

45 INT. MICHAELA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

45

The H Campers are lined up against the wall like targets of a
firing squad.

Michaela paces, Regina trying to calm her down.

REGINA

Michaela, I'm sure it was an
accident; you can Be Better than
this, right team?

The H Campers nod in unison, still kinda high.

REGINA (CONT'D)
 And we'll get you some new sheets.
 Okay? Would you like that?

MICHAELA
 (sulkily)
 Yes.

REGINA
 Good.

A beat between Regina and Michaela. The door opens and Sterling walks in.

STERLING
 All right, what's the hoo-ha?

JONAS
 Um, can I get Roe some water?

Roe still looks queasy.

46 THERAPY CAM -- JONAS

46

JONAS
 I shouldn't have given him so much,
 it was obviously his first time.
 (uncharacteristically
 remorseful)
 Dammit Jonas, you big dumb dumb.

47 INT. MICHAELA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

47

Michaela finishes telling Sterling what's up. Sterling sits down in a LARGE THRONE (the CBB THRONE) and addresses the H Campers.

STERLING
 Listen up, kiddies. Drugs are bad.

Sterling wipes some white dust from his own nostril.

STERLING (CONT'D)
 Templeton, what would your parents
 say if they saw you in this state?
 Highmore? Peters? Easton?
 (beat)
 And you. Niah Zhou. You ought to be
 extra careful.

Sterling pulls open a filing cabinet -- pulls out a file.

STERLING (CONT'D)
 (reads file)
 "An unremarkable individual from a
 disreputable, impecunious family.
 Father absent. Mother..." Well.

The H campers are looking at Niah. Her face burns.

STERLING (CONT'D)

"Granted a place in Camp Be Better
as a personal favour to Bliss
McCallum."

NIAH

What? The McCallums? Why --

STERLING

You are a charity case. And just
like the Sterling Child Cancer
Foundation, my charity is mostly
for show. Understand?

Sterling tosses the file back into the filing cabinet and
slams it shut. Niah's eyes burn - what else is in there??

48 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH

48

NIAH

So I'm not here because I'm a
promising young person. I'm here
because the people I hate most in
the world pulled some strings.

49 INT. MICHAELA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

49

The H campers look at Niah -- shooketh.

SECOND AD BREAK

ACT 3

50 INT. MICHAELA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

50

All the campers are looking at Niah, shooketh.

JONAS

What does impecunious mean?

ROE

Having little or no money.

JONAS

You're poor? Ewwwwwwwwww.

STERLING

Michaela, let me finish showing you
the ropes, then I'll take my leave.

Sterling and Michaela exit. The air is thick with tension.

NIAH

So ... funny story.

DECLAN
 (leaving)
 I think you've told enough stories,
 Dart girl.

JONAS
 Talk to the hand.

ROE
 'Cause the face ain't listening.

Declan, Jonas and Roe leave. Wendy is downcast, then leaves.

REGINA
 Okay, back to bed. Don't let the
 bedbugs bite.
 (beat; aside to Niah)
 I'm serious. There's been an
 outbreak of bedbugs.

51 INT. H CABIN - MORNING 51

Niah wakes first. Lies in bed feeling terrible.
 Then, has an itch. Looks under the blanket -- oh shit.

52 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH 52

Niah is *covered* in red, swollen bites.

NIAH
 Sweet. This is good. Gooooood stuff.

53 INT. SHOWER BLOCK - MORNING 53

Wendy (in a towel) puts lotion on her many welts. Niah (also
 in a towel) approaches.

NIAH
 Hey.
 (beat)
 Could I borrow some of that?
 (beat)
 Really? Silence?
 (beat)
 Wendy, I lied okay? I'm not from a
 fancy family or whatever ... but
 you know what? I don't want to be.
 You guys are like, super bitchy and
 up your own arses. I'm glad I'm not
 like you.

WENDY
 I thought you were a horse girl.

Wendy walks away, hurt.

NIAH

WHAT?

ROE (O.S.)

Fire! Help, there's a fire!

54

EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, OUTSIDE CABINS - MORNING

54

Niah, still wearing only a towel, runs to see Michaela using a fire extinguisher on a smoking drum.

The H Campers stand in their towels. Their suitcases lay scattered on the ground -- empty.

Declan picks the charred remains of a garment from the drum.

DECLAN

Please tell me this isn't my Ralph
Lux boat-casual tee...

MICHAELA

So ... don't panic, but--

JONAS

OHMIGOD! My Karl Urban scarf!

Jonas pulls a burnt, tattered piece of wool from the drum and drapes it over his neck, near tears.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Does it look okay?

MICHAELA

We only meant to fumigate them, but
Dr Kim got too close with a joint.

DR KIMBERLY

(nearby, waves)
Sorry team!

WENDY / JONAS / DECLAN / ROE

This is abuse! Maltreatment! ETC.

NIAH

Calm down, it's only some clothes.

JONAS

Stay out of this, you ... loaf.

NIAH

Loaf? Oh, ouch Jonas--

It turns into a yelling match, the four privileged campers ganging on up Niah.

Declan notices -- (POV angle on) the whole camp is watching.

DECLAN
 Enough! She's not worth it.
 (to Michaela)
 What are you gonna do about this?
 That was everything we had.

Regina stands with a large box.

REGINA
 Lost and Found. Some nice bits in
 here, actually!

55 THERAPY CAM -- DECLAN 55

Declan wears a hodgepodge ensemble of clothes.

DECLAN
 Look at me! Look at what I have
 been reduced to. It's like putting
 the Mona Lisa on a beer coaster.
 (beat)
 I don't know how this is Niah's
 fault ... but it is.

56 EXT. RUNNING TRACK - DAY 56

As Declan stretches after a run, he sees TWO CAMPERS giggling
 at him. His mana is at zero. He fumes.

57 THERAPY CAM -- VARIOUS 57

ROE
 So everyone hates Niah now. Crazy.
 Can I say something horrible? I'm
 kinda glad it's not me.

JONAS
 I knew something was off.
 Mysterious like a big fat toe at
 the table.

WENDY
 Like my Mum's always said: Never
 rely on anyone. You're born alone
 and you die alone so you might as
 well live alone.

NIAH
 What did they say about me?

AI VOICE (V.O.)
 I cannot divulge information about
 other campers.

There's a knock. Niah looks away from camera.

REGINA (O.S.)
 Niah? There's a letter for you.

58 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, GRASSY AREA - DAY

58

Niah opens a letter and reads.

YONG (V.O.)

Niah. You won't want to hear this, but knowing who you are I needed to explain. As you know, what happened with the McCullums and the company wasn't my fault. I thought we were more than colleagues. Your reaction was ... fair, and funny, but not smart, Niah. They say they didn't want to press charges on you, but they had to or else it would look suspicious. But what you didn't know is -- I agreed to take the fall.

ANGLE ON: the discarded envelope shows a South City Corrections logo.

SLO MO as Niah walks numbly back into camp, letter hanging from her side.

YONG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Five years, tops. In exchange, the McCallums will pay for your future. University, travel, anything you want. For life.

59 INT. MESS HALL - DAY

59

It's the next day. SLO MO: Niah sits alone.

SLOW MO NIAH'S POV: CAMPERS (ALL CAMPERS if possible) chat, laugh, clown.

YONG (V.O.)

Please, *stay at camp*. Keep your head down.

60 EXT. CHOIR ROOM - DAY

60

SLO MO: Niah stands in among the H Campers as they sing. Thomas plays guitar like a lunatic.

YONG (V.O.)

The others kids are brats, sure, but their families are more powerful than you know.

61 INT. H CABIN - MORNING

61

SLO MO: Niah is awake. Looks around at her privileged cabinmates waking up.

YONG (V.O.)

We don't know the full story about anyone. Everyone has their own problems, even if it doesn't seem like it.

SLO MO NIAH'S POV as Roe takes his sleep-mouthguard out and saliva spills down his shirt.

62 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH 62

NIAH

Mum's right. Everyone has a weak point. And these people, they exploit other people's weaknesses. So why shouldn't I exploit theirs?

63 INT. MICHAELA'S OFFICE - DAY 63

Sterling bids Michaela farewell, briefcase in hand.

STERLING

Passing the baton to you, my diamond. You're in charge now. Don't let me down.

64 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FIELD - DAY 64

Niah watches a badminton game: Wendy and Declan vs. Jonas and Roe. (can change to volleyball -- art dept dependent).

65 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH, CONTINUOUS 65

NIAH

I'll stay at camp. But I'm not gonna keep my head down. I'm going to find a way to get justice.

66 EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FIELD - CONTINUOUS 66

Niah approaches.

NIAH

Can I join?

The H campers don't look thrilled. She snatches a badminton racket.

67 THERAPY CAM -- NIAH, CONTINUOUS 67

NIAH

I'm in the snake pit. But maybe that's the best place to be. Hiss hiss, motherfucker.

68

EXT. CAMP BE BETTER, FIELD - CONTINUOUS

68

The shuttlecock comes Niah's way. She jumps and SLAMS it hard, back over the net -- and scores a point! The H Campers are grated.

Wendy picks it up and hits it in frustration -- overcooks it. It POCKS Thomas who spills hot coffee all over himself.

Niah grins -- game on.

END OF EPISODE 1