

# **HAPPIEST PLACE**

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## CHARACTERS

|              |                                                                                         |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DJ, 28, F    | Dane's girlfriend. Works at a crafts store. White.                                      |
| DANE, 28, M  | DJ's boyfriend. Works in IT. White.                                                     |
| MEL, 24, F   | DJ's work friend. Filipino.                                                             |
| MANNY, 26, M | Dane's work friend. Latino.                                                             |
| CLINT, 32, M | A friend Dane meets online. White or Latino. (Can double with the actor playing Manny.) |

VOICES FROM VARIOUS PHONES, ADS, AND YOUTUBE VIDEOS (ALL UNSEEN)

## SETTING

The suburbs of an American city  
2020-2021

## NOTES

A dash (-) at the end of a line of dialogue means a character is being interrupted. Sometimes characters interrupt themselves.

A slash ( / ) indicates when the next line of dialogue begins.

A line break within dialogue indicates a short pause. A double line break indicates a longer pause.

[Brackets] indicate dialogue that is implied but not spoken.

Dialogue that ends with an ellipsis (...) indicates an unfinished thought. An ellipsis followed by a period (...) indicates a more conscious choice to move onto a new thought.

## ACT 1

## PROLOGUE

*A small, ground-level suburban apartment. Tidy enough. Pretty bare. Some sports memorabilia and Disney souvenirs decorate a living room with an attached kitchen. A few makeup items lie about.*

*It's early evening on a weekday. DJ enters through the front door, tired after a full day on her feet. She's white, mind-mannered, composed. She removes a light jacket and hangs it on a dining chair, revealing a bright apron uniform from a craft store. She throws that on top of the jacket. She exhales, plops down on the couch, and begins looking at her phone. After about five minutes, she crosses the stage into her bedroom, closing the door behind her. It has a queen bed, faceless furniture, and a little nook with a desk in the far downstage corner, where she sits and spends another five minutes watching vlogs about Disney theme parks on a desktop computer, clicking around with a mouse and taking occasional notes on a legal pad. We hear them faintly.*

*The bedroom is dim; only the screen's glow illuminates her.*

## ACT 1

## SCENE 1

*(DJ turns up the volume on her computer, and we hear a few specific lines more clearly.)*

DISNEY VLOGGER 1 *(Enthusiastic)*

Today is our first day mom-less at the parks. Let's see how it goes!

*(Click.)*

DISNEY VLOGGER 2 *(Youthful)*

What's up YouTube, we're back at Chef Mickey's to check out-

*(Click.)*

DISNEY VLOGGER 3 *(Eager)*

EPCOT's Festival of the Arts just started. Here's our list of must-dos, and more importantly, must-eats!

*(Click.)*

DISNEY VLOGGER 4 *(Matter-of-fact)*

New blackout dates for annual passholders. New entry procedures at Toy Story Mania. And rumors of a new fireworks show at the Magic Kingdom. What does it all mean for your next Disney World trip?

*(Click. Click click. Silence otherwise.)*

*(Eventually, DJ positions a mic and begins to record her own video. We hear a perky, somewhat affected voice that doesn't match the tired body it's coming out of.)*

## DJ

Hey there folks, it's the Magic Mommy, back with tips and tricks for your next visit to Walt Disney World.

Today, we're talking specialty restaurants: the top-of-the-line, cream-of-the-crop dining experiences on property. These are the perfect choice if you want a little (or big) splurge during your next Disney vacation.

*(Done. She marks her notepad and clicks around to set up the next recording.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

Next up on our list is California Grill. Now, this one is on some prime real estate at the top of Disney's Contemporary Resort, and it is a classic choice for a special occasion - or just an elevated date night.

Like the state it's named for, California Grill has an eclectic menu-

*(No good. Some clicks.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

Now, the menu here is like the Golden State itself: it's big, it's diverse - and it's expensive. You'll find options from gourmet sushi to flatbread pizza to more traditional steaks and pastas, so your adventurous and your picky eaters should all be able to find something they like.

*(Good. Some clicks to set up the next segment.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

As our most loyal viewers may know, we've done a full video on Cali Grill and our favorite choices there, even down to which tables to ask for, so click right here to check that out if you're thinking of going.

*(Click click click.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

Now onto Morimoto Asia. We love their ribs, their calamari if you're feeling a little adventurous, or if you really want to go all out, their A5 Japanese wagyu beef.

You guys, on our last Disney trip, Hubby and I did our night away from the kids here. He treated me to some of this stuff and...wow. I never knew meat could melt in your mouth like that!

Here's the catch, though! At twenty-three dollars an ounce, it'll cost you a pretty penny. In fact, the whole Morimoto Asia menu is a little pricey (we are talking specialty restaurants after all!) so be prepared for that. But if you do enjoy noodles and sushi and the like, I think you will definitely find it worth it.

*(Some clicks and notebook flips.)*

*(As she continues, DANE enters the apartment and turns the living room light on. He's pale white with a bald head, a little stoic and a little clumsy, wearing a patterned button-down that he's ripped out from under his chinos' belt. DJ doesn't hear him as he puts down a black synthetic hip bag and large paper grocery bag, and then fumbles around the kitchen grabbing a snack and drink.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

Hey there folks, it's the Magic Mommy, back with tips and tricks for your next visit to Walt Disney World.

Today, put on your Spanish cap, because-

*(Click click.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

Hey there folks, it's the Magic Mommy, back with tips and tricks for your next visit to Walt Disney World.

Today, we're doing Spanish flair, Disney style, so get ready-

*(Click click. She takes a moment to look at her notebook and think.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

Hey there folks, it's the Magic Mommy, back with tips and tricks for your next visit to Walt Disney World.

Today, we're doing a paella roundup across all of the Disney resorts. You might be surprised at how many places offer this rice-and-seafood delicacy from Spain...but that might just be because of how darn good it is!

As usual, Disney gives you lots of options, from quick-service to signature dining-

*(Suddenly, Dane knocks over a glass. It loudly shatters.)*

DANE

Shit!

*(DJ clicks to stop recording and runs into the other room.)*

DJ

Are you OK?

*(Her non-vlogging voice is more grounded.)*

DANE

I'm fine! I'm fine. Sorry. It wasn't on purpose.

DJ

I figured! I didn't even hear you come in.

*(Dane has started using a dustpan he's found.)*

DANE

You were vlogging?

DJ

Yeah...just some scraps I need for the next few.

DANE

Nice. Any new data?

DJ

Ehh. I hit eight K on one from last week, but Journey to the Magic just topped twenty K. And Trixie Dust is still gaining on me.

DANE

Fuck Trixie Dust. Why do people watch that shit?

Eight K is great! You couldn't have dreamed of that a month ago.

*(He puts the dustpan away.)*

DJ

Welcome home, by the way.

*(They kiss.)*

DJ *(Continued)*

Your day OK?

DANE

You know, Trixie Dust will not get any closer to your views. One of her freaky kids is definitely gonna murder her before that can happen.

DJ

You're obsessed.

DANE

I'm trapped. If you had looked into their eyes during that video, you would be too.

DJ

Journey to the Magic, I don't know. I feel like a couple having a vlog is popular.

DANE *(Gesturing to his face)*

Guess you shoulda picked someone a little more suited for the camera.

DJ

Shut up.

*(She kisses him.)*

DJ (*Continued*)

You look great. (*Rubbing his head*) Especially with some of these new buds coming in....

DANE

Oh. My. God! She...she did not, folks! (*Miming an earpiece*) Oh, what's that? We're getting word that she, in fact, did! Well, shit!

(*Smiles. Maybe a kiss.*)

DJ

What do you want to do for dinner?

DANE

Oh!

(*He gets the grocery bag.*)

DANE (*Continued*)

I got a chicken from the Amish place. Not that you / deserve it.

DJ

They're not Amish.

DANE

They look Amish.

DJ

Well, thank you. I'll make a salad.

(*She puts the chicken in the oven and turns it on.*)

DJ (*Continued*)

So are you gonna tell me how your day was?

DANE

Same old shit. You?

DJ

Yeah....I was at the desk for a minute and had the cutest old lady, though.

She walks up and goes, (*in a Southern accent*) "Excuse me, but I need some crafts supplies for my *gay* grandson."

Then she's just walking around the store for 20 minutes, telling everyone who'll listen about how he just came out and she's so proud of him and he's (*in the accent*) "so artsy."

DANE

Amazing.

DJ

Yeah. But then we had this like wave of *returns*. Mel was on the next register and I swear she almost punched in the screen.

DANE

Oh God, why?

DJ

They keep putting in all these new restrictions.

Or, I guess it's just now they're enforcing them. Like, it won't let you process a return if someone comes in literally one day past the window. Stuff like that. There's a way around it in the system, but Shirley got written up for using it too much.

DANE

More happy customers for you guys to deal with.

DJ

Seriously. Like, it would kill you to give this mom her seven dollars back? For yarn you could totally resell?

DANE

I was actually kind of thinking about this today.

DJ

Mmm?

DANE

Well, this guy Rog has been in all week. He's from the San Jose office.

*(He waits half a beat for recognition, but she's doing something in the kitchen.)*

DANE *(Continued)*

Anyway, I guess Manny kind of knows him. So we all had lunch today, and he's telling us about this time he spent in Southeast Asia.

DJ

He's like, a white guy?

DANE

Yeah, yeah. A little older than us. Or maybe he's...yeah, I think so.

Anyway, he was in this place Don Det, in Laos. It's all these tiny little islands, like a thousand islands. And in my head I was like, OK, I know like, Thailand, and like...Vietnam. But you don't really hear about Laos. You know?

(She shrugs.)

DANE (Continued)

Well anyway, Rog spent a year there, in a grass hut he rented for five bucks a night. And it was just, like, a different world. Everyone was just, completely relaxed. They didn't have any possessions, really, but they were so much happier. He was on this tiny little island with one dirt road, one little grocery store, and then just palm trees and beaches everywhere.

DJ

Wow.

DANE

Apparently while he was there, this one girl who grew up on the island came back. She'd gotten some scholarship somehow - I don't know, I guess they have internet. Anyway, she did like two semesters at Penn State and then six months touring the US, like all expenses paid.

So she rolls back to this little-ass village on this little-ass island and is like, (*unenthusiastic*) "That was cool." Next day she's back in some ratty t-shirt running her dad's juice stand, saying she never needs to leave again.

DJ

That is wild....What a cool thing to get for free.

DANE

Yeah.... But I mean...do you see what I'm saying?

DJ

...about our return policy?

DANE

I mean...like, okay. After Rog leaves, I go back to my desk. I open up my computer, and my calendar pops up. And I've got all of these fucking meetings, and calls, and emails. And I'm just like: Why?! This is meaningless! Like, what could matter less?!

I'm subjecting myself to so much bullshit day after day, putting on clothes I don't like to wear, running around, pushing buttons on computers people are too dumb to use, going to these totally useless meetings that have nothing to do with me. Like, why? So my company can sell more (*in a voice*) backend insurance solutions? Like, we don't get that much time on Earth! You know?

DJ

Yeah.

DANE

What's the endgame? We go away for a weekend here and there? A week at Christmas? Wow.

It's not like we could even afford a decent house any time soon. Not that that would even-

*(By now she's walked over and started to lightly rub his back.)*

DJ

Yeah. Things suck sometimes.

DANE

I'm kind of talking about all the time....

At least at work...I mean-

DJ

Dane.

There's some good stuff.

*(Slowing down, kissing him between sentences)* You and me. Manny and Mel. Tim, Louisa. Going to the Tap, Rinconcito's....

I just mean maybe not everything is awful....Or. You can try and find joy in certain places.

DANE

Yeah. That's just...fucking hard sometimes.

*(A beat.)*

DJ

Close your eyes.

*(He does. She turns the TV on, then taps her phone a bit until a sea breeze track plays. They kiss in between the next few lines, which she delivers slowly.)*

DJ *(Continued, having fun)*

Imagine you're in a grass hut. In Laos. You can relax in a hammock. You can drink a tropical juice. *(Touching his leg)* You can have sex on the beach, if you play your cards right.

*(He smiles and lightly opens his eyes. They continue kissing until the smoke detector loudly interrupts.)*

DANE  
DAMMIT!

DJ  
DAMMIT.

*(She tends to the oven as he finds a stepstool to push the button on the smoke detector. They're practiced at this.)*

DJ  
Chicken looks ok.

DANE  
Good. I don't want to have to go back to Amish country. Though the women do look good in those bonnets.

DJ  
Oh my God, shut up.

DANE  
Would you wear a bonnet if I got you one? Ooh, or one of those big, long dresses, the black and white checkered ones?

DJ  
Yes. And you know what? You would hate it.

DANE  
I don't know. Every time I go into that place I get a little turned on.

DJ  
Sometimes I can't tell if you're serious or joking. And I don't think I want to.

*(He playfully grabs at her as she works on the chicken.)*

DANE  
All I'm saying is if you got one of those big smock dresses I might not be able to *(grabbing with each word)* control! my manly! Instincts!

DJ  
You creep.

*(They kiss a bit, and hold one another.)*

DANE  
I love you, DJ.

DJ  
I love you, Dane. You creep.

## ACT 1

## SCENE 2

*(A weekday evening. DANE is home alone. He sits on the couch looking at his phone for a good while. Eventually, he turns on the TV. Vlogs are still up from whenever DJ was last watching.)*

## DISNEY VLOGGER 3

And that's why we never wear sandals to the Magic Kingdom anymore.

## DISNEY VLOGGER 5

So, what do you think?

*(Dane rolls his eyes and searches for the other remote.)*

## DISNEY VLOGGER 5

Do you wear sandals to the parks? Let us know your preferred footwear in the comments!

## DISNEY VLOGGER 3

And don't forget to like this video and subscribe to our channel, so you can follow along whenever we...

## DISNEY VLOGGER 3

*(Continued)*

Journey! To! The magic!

## DISNEY VLOGGER 5

Journey! To! The magic!

*(Alarmingly peppy public-domain muzak starts to play as the video wraps. Dane has found the second remote, finally. After a few clicks, we hear a male narrator talking rapidly.)*

## SPORTS VLOGGER 1

Hey there, YouTube. This Sunday, the 49ers fell to the Chiefs in the big game. Let's take a look at the highlights to see how it all went down.

*(Dane doesn't look too interested.)*

SPORTS VLOGGER 1 *(Continued)*

Now, let's start with the Chief's offense-

*(Dane clicks to another video. This guy isn't as quick, and sounds more analytical.)*

## SPORTS VLOGGER 2

Minute by minute, Kansas City simply outplayed San Francisco in this year's Super Bowl. As usual, I'll be taking you through each play to analyze what went right for the winning team.

*(A knockoff ESPN-type jingle starts to play. Dane clicks to another video, but an ad plays first.)*

## REAL AMERICAN 1

I know exactly who I'm supporting in the primary.

*(Dane, half-engaged, rolls his eyes like he's seen a ton of these lately.)*

## REAL AMERICAN 2

Amy Klobuchar.

## REAL AMERICAN 3

She knows how to get things done.

## AMY KLOBUCHAR

I'm Amy Klobuchar, and I approve this message.

*(We're on to the video. Two men, GREGGY and STEW, start talking with a fast-paced, loud style.)*

## GREGGY

Super Bowl 54.

## STEW

L...V...X...whatever the fuck.

*(Dane chuckles, puts the remote down, and moves to the kitchen to look for a snack.)*

## GREGGY

Chiefs over 49ers, 31 to 20.

## STEW

But folks, this was not just a simple football game. This was a victory for America! Okay?

## GREGGY

Greggy and Stew here, as always, for your straight-up, uncensored commentary on the world of sports.

*(A short, catchy intro jingle plays.)*

GREGGY (*Continued*)

This week, we've got the big one, baby! Kansas City over San Francisco.

STEW

Kansas City! The heartland!

GREGGY

Now, Stewie here is on to something. Because Kansas City - that's a team for real Americans, normal people! And that's a team that has been absolutely besieged / by-

STEW

*Besieged!* Listen to this fuckin' guy.

GREGGY

Hey, some of us didn't dive into the shallow end for fun, Stewie.

*(These vloggers crack each other up throughout.)*

GREGGY (*Continued*)

Anyway, all year, the Chiefs have been under attack.

STEW (*In a whiny voice*)

Change your name! Stop doing the tomahawk chop! It's hurting my feeeeeelings!

*(Dane's head is in the fridge - it's unclear how much attention he's paying.)*

GREGGY

And the people leading these calls? Where do they live?

STEW

Well, Brooklyn, Austin, and most of all, (*with contempt*) San Francisco, home of the 49ers.

GREGGY

And the team of Colin Kaepernick, let's not forget.

*(A canned "Boooooo" sound effect plays. Dane comes up with a string cheese.)*

GREGGY (*Continued*)

So what a message it sent when Kansas City trounced the San Francisco / pansies-

STEW

*Trounced?!* Am I vlogging with Miriam fucking Webster today?!

*(DJ enters the apartment. Dane goes to grab the remote.)*

GREGGY

Alright Stewie, keep your pants on. Anyway, the San Francisco treats-

*(He switches off the TV. He walks over and kisses her. She removes her coat and bag.)*

DANE

Hey.

DJ

Hi....How was your night?

DANE

Good, good. How was Mel?

DJ

Great. Sorry I'm back so late! We were just...it was fun. After the Tap she took me to this insane tiki bar. Sort of like, off Grove.

*(She's a little tipsy.)*

DANE

Nice....So, are she and Manny / gonna-

DJ

Oh my god! They DID!

Well, they didn't sleep together, but at some party on Friday they made out!! I am PUMPED.

DANE

Amazing. Wow....I wonder if they'll get married.

DJ

Dane...they've literally kissed one time. I mean, maybe they will, but....

DANE

I know, I...I don't know why / I-

DJ

Also, do not tell anyone at work that you know, especially not Manny. I was sworn to secrecy.

DANE

I got you.

DJ

Did you eat?

DANE

Not really. I was just gonna / heat-

*(She's gone to her bag and pulled out some leftovers.)*

DJ

I have some mac and cheese from the Tap, if you want. And there's like, chicken on top.

DANE

Yes...yes, please.

*(He takes it from her, unwraps the container from a plastic bag, and microwaves it.)*

DANE *(Continued)*

You take such good care of me.

DJ

I love you!

*(She kisses him.)*

DANE

I love you.

*(She smiles. The microwave beeps. Dane starts to eat.)*

DANE *(Continued, mouth full, fork pointing at the dish)*

This is good.

DJ

Yeah, it was really good tonight. Mel got these cauliflower tacos, and I was like, that sounds awful - like, in my head - but they were so good.

*(By now she's taken a seat on the couch and turned on the TV. Dane, deep in the mac and cheese, hasn't noticed.)*

STEW

I mean, a transgender bathroom at a football game?! I don't need some broad staring at my junk while I'm at the urinal-

*(Dane looks up and scrambles for the remote.)*

DJ

What is this?

GREGGY

Nobody needs to see your shriveled-up little thing!

DANE  
Uh, I don't know.

STEW  
My powerful manly organ, thank you  
very much!

*(DJ stops the video.)*

DANE *(Continued)*  
Some thing that autoplaved I guess. I had sports videos on earlier.

*(Now she has the TV playing some chill, instrumental  
music. Still, a charged pause.)*

DANE *(Continued)*  
I don't even know who those guys are.

*(She's made her way to the freezer.)*

DJ  
Do we have any good dessert?

DANE  
I think there are still those Thin Mints.

DJ  
YES.

*(He finishes the last bite of mac and cheese and starts to  
clean it up as she searches the freezer. She comes up to him  
with two cookies and feeds him one sensually. She starts  
kissing him and pulls him close.)*

DJ *(Continued)*  
You know how I get when I have rum in me.

*(He pulls her in. They kiss. They pull back. A half beat  
where Dane hesitates.)*

DJ *(Continued)*  
What?

DANE  
Nothing.

*(They continue kissing. Eventually, they move to the couch,  
her on top of him.)*

(END OF EXCERPT)