

THE BIT PLAYERS

Written by

Matt Acuña

matt.j.acuna@gmail.com

INT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - DAY

CHYRON: HARPER'S CREEK MALL

CHYRON: BARNHAM, IL

CHYRON: JANUARY 1991

We OPEN ON a man in his 40's walking through an active mall, listening to a WALKMAN. The camera follows him in a mockumentary style, as he walks and dances to the beat of "Blue Monday 88" by New Order playing through his headphones. This is WALTER CLARKE (42, British, bushy blonde mustache, a bit of a British accent).

Walt walks into a game store called GAME PARADE, clipboard in hand.

INT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - GAME PARADE - CONTINUOUS

Walt walks up to the young man working the register, ERIC (early 20s). Eric counts the money in the cash register, not looking up.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | WALT | 1 |
| | Eric, my main man, my buddy, my guy. Tell me, what's the good cheese? | |
| 2 | ERIC | 2 |
| | Walt. | |
| | Walt taps nonchalantly on the counter. | |
| 3 | WALT | 3 |
| | So... You got those sales numbers for me? | |
| 4 | ERIC | 4 |
| | Same as last week, man, not great. Only sold one more copy, and then they returned it the next day. The coupon for free Dairy Queen was missing. | |
| 5 | WALT | 5 |
| | Uh huh. Hmm. Mmhm. Not loving that. How are you pitching it? | |

Frustrated, Eric looks up from his work.

6 ERIC 6
I'm not pitching it, we put your
game on the shelves, and that's it.
People just don't want the same
tennis game for the 5th time.

7 WALT 7
Hey, "Walter Clarke's Tennis 5" is
not the same game. We
revolutionized the genre in this
entry.

Eric turns on a nearby CRT TV and loads up Tennis 5. It's incredibly primitive and basic, just a ball going back and forth with two little characters rallying it.

8 ERIC 8
What's different, Walt.

9 WALT 9

A lot! You can change the type of tennis court now. What about grass? You ever play tennis on grass? It's a challenge.

Eric turns off the TV.

10 ERIC 10
Listen man, Tennis 3 sold a lot for
us.

11 WALT 11
(correcting) Walter Clarke's Tennis
3.

12 ERIC 12
Sure. But 4 and especially 5
haven't been cutting it. People
don't want safe anymore, they want
something new.

Eric points to a display of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

13 ERIC (CONT'D) 13
This is what other companies are
cooking up. And you wouldn't
believe the stuff coming out of
Japan. Make stuff like this. Not...
tennis again.

Eric starts to turn away before addressing Walt once more.

14 ERIC (CONT'D) 14
Also, my boss said to stop coming
around here and asking sales
numbers, it's like, illegal or
something.

Eric turns his back as Walt sadly shuffles away. He notices a KID looking at a game. Walt inches up slowly to the kid.

15 WALT 15
Video games, huh? I always find it
hard to pick the right one.

The kid looks up at him, confused. Walt hands him his business card.

16 WALT (CONT'D) 16
Walter Clarke. Founder and CEO of
Crystal Horizons Entertainment. I
see you're looking at, what is
this, Double Dragon?

17 KID 17
Yeah, it's cool.

18 WALT 18
Sure, it's cool, but does it have
heart? Soul? Does it revolutionize
the genre?

Walt reaches over and picks up a copy of Walter Clarke's Tennis 5 and places it in the kids hand.

19 WALT (CONT'D) 19
This game right here is one of my
favorites, you should try it out!
Can even choose if you're right or
left handed! Pretty radical eh?

20 KID 20
Walter Clarke's Tennis...? Isn't
that your name?

Walt's desperation reaches through.

21 WALT 21
You like Dairy Queen? I got a ton
of Dairy Queen coupons, could hook
you up with some if you buy this.

22 ERIC 22

Walt!

WALT (CONT'D)

But working out of a mall really humbled me, I think you can really see that in 'Tennis 5'. Back to my roots. Grass roots. Much like the grass courts in the game.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walt walks through the cramped office space of Crystal Horizons Entertainment, with the four cubicles that make up its space huddled up next to each other. There's barely any room to walk!

At the cubicle closest to the main entrance, covered in schedules and post-it notes, NIA WASHINGTON (Intern, early 20s) promptly gets up from her chair and fast walks behind Walt, reading from a note pad.

27 NIA 27
Walt, while you were out we had five more instances of teenagers walking into the office thinking it's still a Cinnabon. Do you want me to print out another sign?

28 WALT 28
Saints above, we've already put out three signs. I've given them all the leftover icing I found in the back room, what more do they want?

Nia eagerly writes a reminder on her note pad.

29 NIA 29
I'll put in an order for some more icing to hold them over! Should I take it from the icing account?

30 WALT 30
No, no more icing! Also, didn't your internship end last week? Er, uh... (trying to recall her name)

31 NIA 31
Nia Washington. And no, it actually started last week? You keep hiring new interns so you don't have to hire an assistant.

32 WALT 32
Right, right. Learned that trick from Bernie Madoff's business guide, he's really smart.

Nia looks towards the camera, unimpressed.

NIA TALKING HEAD - CONTINUOUS

33

NIA

33

I'm actually really excited to be here. Walt was thrilled to hear during the interview that I grew up playing 'Tennis 2' with my friends. I left out all the parts about us making fun of how easy it was to break the game. Not very well coded. But... it's the thought that counts, right? And with me here, maybe there won't be as many bugs in the code? ...If they ever let me actually do anything.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walt stops in front of a glass case, where a large PYTHON sits inside. He reaches his hand in and gently caresses it.

34

WALT

34

You'd never get sick of our games, would you Lead Programmer?

The python flicks its tongue out at Walt. HECTOR TORRES (Lead programmer, 40's) walks up to Walt.

35

HECTOR

35

You give any thought to renaming the snake, boss? Not cause I'm like jealous or anything, it just might get confusing if you keep calling it Lead Programmer... cause like, I'm the Lead Programmer.

36

WALT

36

Hector, there can be two Lead Programmers. We both know who the important one is.

37

HECTOR

37

...It's me, right? Right?

Walt looks up at the camera.

HECTOR TALKING HEAD - CONTINUOUS

38

HECTOR (CONT'D)

38

When Walt first started Crystal Dynamics, people kept telling 'you gotta get Python, you gotta use Python'. Yeah, well he didn't realize that was a coding language and bought a real Python. Named it 'Lead Programmer' as a sick joke. It's not funny. I'm the Lead Programmer. I'm pretty sure that snake has never coded in his life.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

39

IAN (O.S.)

39

Any word on the 'Tennis 5' sales, Walt?

Walt looks up to see IAN KEARNY (Lead artist, late 20s) poking his head out from his cubicle.

The last employee of Crystal Horizons, PAIGE CHOI (Sound designer, 30's) look up from her work.

40

WALT

40

Oh, the sales? Who cares about sales, what do sales matter?

41

IAN

41

A lot, I would say.

42

WALT

42

Well... you know it's illegal to be asking people sales information, right? So think on that, Ian.

Walt runs into his office and quickly closes the door. After a BEAT, quiet <SOBBING> can be heard through the door.

43

HECTOR

43

I think we have our answer.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - WALT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walt sits at his desk, quietly sobbing. Nia <KNOCKS> on the door and opens up.

44

WALT

44

I wasn't crying.

45

NIA

45

I didn't think that you were.

8.

46 WALT 46
Well good, because you would be
sorely mistaken. What is it?

47 NIA 47

I was reading the trades, and well,
I know it's not my job... but the
industry seems to be going towards
mascot characters. Running and
jumping games. What if we invested
in one of those for ourselves?

48 WALT 48
Listen, Nikki-

49 NIA 49

50 WALT 50
Nikka, it's very sweet that you
want to help. But chasing trends is
not what we do here at Crystal
Horizons. We chase dreams. My
dreams! And sometimes the rest of
the teams dreams, if they align
with my dreams!

51 NIA 51
Oookay, well, you've got a visitor.

52 WALT 52
No meetings before or after lunch.
You know how my stomach gets.

53 NIA 53
It's the, um, investor?

Walt's face goes white.

54 WALT 54
Send her in.

CUT TO Walt combing his hair, and then his mustache, in a small hand-held mirror.

The door opens, and Walt's heart jumps out of his chest. A small elderly woman, WALTER'S MUM, walks in. Walt awkwardly stands up and goes to hug her.

55 WALT (CONT'D) 55
 <AHM> Hello, mum?

Brushing him aside, she sits down.

56 WALT'S MUM 56
Sit down, Walter.

57 WALT 57
Yes ma'am.

Walt sits down at his desk.

58 WALT'S MUM 58
I thought I made myself clear. NO.
MORE. TENNIS.

59 WALT 59
You did, mum, crystal clear!

60 WALT'S MUM 60
So why the hell did I just see your
stupid porno stache on a box for
'Tennis 5' or whatever god forsaken
number we're on down at the Kmart?

61 WALT 61
Well, we thought we'd give it one
more shot, you know what they say -
fifth times the charm.

62 WALT'S MUM 62
Walter. You're my son, and I love
you. And for some reason, I believe
in you. That's why I funded your
game company all those years ago.
But since then you've been making
the same shit year after year, and
nobody wants it anymore. I can't
keep funding your failure. I'm
pulling the plug.

63 WALT 63
Wait! One more game. Please. I've
got a great idea.

64 WALT'S MUM 64
It better not be 'Walter Clarke's
Golf'.

Walt mulls things over for a second.

65 WALT 65
A mascot. A running and jumping
mascot game. A proper platformer.

66 WALT'S MUM 66

A mascot that runs and jumps? Isn't that the same as that one Italian fellow?

67 WALT 67
Mario, yes.

68 WALT'S MUM 68
...Is he successful?

69 Very. WALT 69

Silence. Walt waits with anticipation.

70 WALT'S MUM 70
One more chance. But if this isn't
a success, Walter, it's over. Are
we clear?

71 WALT 71
Crystal.

72 WALT'S MUM 72

I'll wire you the money. See you at dinner this Saturday. Bring some of that Cinnabon icing, your brother was craving it.

Walt's mom leaves the room. Walt sits for a beat before buzzing his intercom.

73 WALT 73
Nikki? Can you go ahead and place
that icing order for me?

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - FOOD COURT - DAY

In the crowded, loud food court of Harper's Creek Mall, Nia, Paige, and Hector sit at a table, waiting.

Ian approaches and sets down a tray of fried chicken from THE BEAK BARN.

74 IAN 74
Got some Beak Barn to share.
Anybody want the cowboy hat?

Paige raises her hand, as Ian passes over the paper COWBOY HAT (a la Burger King crown) to her. She puts it on, never changing her stone-faced expression. Pulling out her SOUND BOARD, Paige plays the <SUPER MARIO BROS. POWER-UP SFX>.

75 NIA 75
(to Ian) I've been here a week, and
I don't think I've heard Paige say
a single word.

76 IAN 76
(mouthful of chicken) She likes to
let her bleeps and bloops talk for
her.

PAIGE TALKING HEAD - FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Not looking up at the camera, Paige plays a whole mess of random video game SFX, ending in the <DONKEY KONG ARCADE START-UP SFX>.

EXT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Hector pulls the skin off of the fried chicken, eating it and leaving the meat behind.

77 IAN 77
Are you seriously gonna pick the
skin off all the chicken?

78 HECTOR 78
The skin is the best part. The meat
below just wastes my valuable time
chewing when I could instead be
coding the next legendary game.
(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Maybe if you ate more skin, you'd
be able to make better art, Ian.

Ian throws his hands up as if he's bowing out of this fight.

79

IAN

79

Cold, Hector. Also you got some
skin on your tie.

Walt shuffles over to the table with some poster boards. He
clumsily puts them together on a stand, prepping for a
presentation.

80

WALT

80

Alright, I'm sure you're all
wondering why I've called you to
the conference room.

81

IAN

81

(mouthful) Food court.

82

WALT

82

Look, it's a room. We're having a
conference. Therefore, conference
room! Now then, important question.
Here it comes. What does every
successful video game company have?

83

HECTOR

83

Money?

84

IAN

84

Game variety?

85

WALT

85

Well, yes, but-

86

IAN

86

An actual studio space that's not
in a mall?

87

WALT

87

Stop, I-

Paige adds to the chaos by playing the **<PAC-MAN GHOST
WHIRRING SFX>** on her sound board.

88

NIA

88

Hopes? Dreams? Ambitions?

89

WALT

89

Mascots! I'm talking about mascots,
alright?

Walt unveils his first poster board, showcasing the most classic mascot of all - MICKEY MOUSE.

90 WALT (CONT'D) 90
Do you all know who this is?

91 HECTOR 91
The most powerful rat on earth.

92 WALT 92
Correct. Michael Mouse, or Mickey
as his friends call him, shows the
power of a mascot. Without this
mouse, Disney has nothing.
Absolutely nothing. Well, except
all that cash and a theme park.

Walt flips a page on his poster board, showing three video game mascot characters; MARIO, LINK from the Legend of Zelda, and DONKEY KONG.

93 WALT (CONT'D) 93
The age of video game mascots is
now.

Walt points at Mario.

94 WALT (CONT'D) 94
Kids want to play a game with
someone they feel comforted by.

He then points to Link.

95 WALT (CONT'D) 95
Teens want to play a game with
someone they can relate to.

Lastly, Walt points to Donkey Kong.

96 WALT (CONT'D) 96
And adults wanna play a game with
someone that they can be intimate
with.

Ian gets a concerned look on his face.

97 WALT (CONT'D) 97
There's no way around this folks.
We need a mascot for Crystal
Horizons that we can feature in our
games. This is our path forward in
this industry!

98 HECTOR 98
So... does this mean that Tennis 6
is cancelled?

99 WALT 99
(correcting) *Walter Clarke's* Tennis
6. And yeah, it's in the can.

100 HECTOR 100
(under his breath) I've been coding
that for seven months...

Hector stares off into space as Walt continues delegating.

101 WALT 101
I want everyone, and I mean
everyone to start thinking up
mascot character designs by end of
day. Think *cool dude!* Think *in your*
face! Think *90's!*

The employees all look at each other, unsure.

102 WALT (CONT'D) 102
And... break!

Ian, Paige, and Hector all shrug at each other and start
heading back to the office. As Walt packs up his poster
boards, Nia approaches.

103 NIA 103
Heeeeey, Walt!

Walt glances back briefly.

104 WALT 104
Natalie.

105 NIA 105
It's Nia, just three lovely little
letters. So, loved the mascot talk,
I whole-heartedly agree! So much so
that I brought it up earlier...
remember that?

106 WALT 106
That was a whole hour ago, I can't
remember every little thing. But
yes, I do remember. And I thought
it was such a good idea that I
decided to use it!

107

NIA

107

That's not what you said before...
it doesn't matter! It does *not*
matter. Because I'm just so excited
to help out and design a mascot!

Nia pulls out a small sketchpad and eagerly flips through
pages.

108

NIA (CONT'D)

108

I've had this one idea since I was
a little kid, and-

Walt turns around, giving his full attention.

109

WALT

109

Actually, I have a very important
job for you! I need you to make
sure everyone is staying focused on
their mascots, and set up a pitch
meeting later this afternoon.

110

NIA

110

But... you said *everyone* needed to
think of mascot ideas.

111

WALT

111

And I meant it! Everyone except for
you!

Nia frowns.

112

WALT (CONT'D)

112

Listen, I know it doesn't feel like
it, but whatever it is you do is
essential.

113

NIA

113

But I'm basically the assistant you
didn't want to hire. That doesn't
really sound essential to me.

114

WALT

114

Trust me, things would fall apart
without you. Now, keep an extra eye
on Ian, will you? Hard to keep that
one motivated.

Nia looks towards Ian, who's stuffing his mouth with the rest
of The Beak Barn chicken.

115 NIA 115
But Ian is the lead artist.
Wouldn't he be best at making a
mascot character?

116 WALT 116
He's... (looks left and right
before leaning in, whispering)
Depressed. Not sure why, but
nothing a little close monitoring
wouldn't help with!

As Walt sends Nia off on her way, Hector approaches.

117 HECTOR 117
Walt, we need to talk.

118 WALT 118
What's this about, Hector?

119 HECTOR 119
I think you know what this is
about.

Hector looks left and right before leaning in to Walt.

120 HECTOR (CONT'D) 120
(whispering) Harry Hedgehog.

Walt's face goes white as his entire demeanor changes.

121 WALT 121
Let's talk in my office.

HECTOR TALKING HEAD - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

122 HECTOR 122
I've been fired by some of the
biggest companies in the industry.
So you might say I'm a pretty big
deal. Walt wanted a big name
programmer, and here I was, freshly
unemployed and ready for a studio
that could handle my raw
programming power. I made a deal
with him to make his tennis games,
IF... he makes my dream game down
the line.

Hector pulls up a poorly drawn brown HEDGEHOG wearing
sunglasses, riding a skateboard, and holding a. He looks very
similar to Sonic the Hedgehog...

123 HECTOR (CONT'D) 123
This is Harry Hedgehog. My greatest
achievement. His design is perfect,
wouldn't change a thing. This
little guy is gonna change the game
one kick-flip at a time.

WALT TALKING HEAD - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

124 WALT 124
I fucking hate that hedgehog.

INT. WALT'S OFFICE - LATER

Hector sits down in front of Walt's desk, looking at him
expectantly.

125 WALT 125
Listen. Hector.

126 HECTOR 126
Walt, you promised. You said Harry
Hedgehog would be a thing. Now's
the time.

127 WALT 127
I know, but I just gave that whole
presentation, and it wouldn't be
fair to the others to just hand it
to you!

128 HECTOR 128
It would be fair to me! You
promised. You pick Harry, or... or
I tell the IRS that the python
isn't a dependent.

129 WALT 129
Hector, come on! Leave Lead
Programmer out of this!

130 HECTOR 130
I'M the Lead Programmer! Me!!
Listen, Ian's a flake and Paige
can't speak, let alone pitch. I'm
the only one submitting anything
worthwhile here.

131 WALT 131
Look, we're having a pitch. If he
wins, then... I'll think about it.
But if he most likely doesn't win,
tough luck, we'll try next decade!

140 NIA 140
Maybe we could make this a learning
moment instead? I'd love to know
your process.

141 IAN 141
Of course. Here's the process
They stop in front of the Game Parade.

142 NIA 142
What are we doing at the Game
Parade?

143 IAN 143
Just checking out the competition.
Recon.

144 NIA 144
So... stealing?

145 IAN 145
Inspiration.

IAN TALKING HEAD - FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

146 IAN 146
When I graduated, I applied to
every studio that I could find.
Crystal Horizons wasn't exactly my
first choice. Or my second. Or my
tenth. But... here I am.

INT. GAME PARADE - CONTINUOUS

As Nia and Ian enter, they're met with a big poster saying
"THE FASTEST THING ALIVE - SONIC, COMING SOON". There's no
picture of what this could be.

IAN
There's not even a picture of this
thing and I'm already sure it'll be
better than what we come up with.

NIA
Hey, we're here to get motivated,
not depressed!

IAN
A little late for that.

Nia and Ian look through the aisles of video games for sale, perusing the different box arts.

147 NIA 147
Remember, the keywords are 'cool
dude'.

Ian picks up a copy of 'Yo! Noid!'. (This is a real game based on the Domino's mascot from the 90s.)

148 IAN 148
Hey, here's a mascot.

149 NIA 149
Isn't that the Noid? Like, from
Domino's? That *thing* isn't a cool
dude, Ian.

150 IAN 150
Alright, well then enlighten me,
what do you consider cool?

Nia looks around the store, stopping on a copy of 'Dr. Mario'.

151 NIA 151
Dr. Mario, very cool.

152 IAN 152
Ooh yeah, a doctorate, that really
appeals to the skateboarders
smoking behind the high school.

153 NIA 153
There's nothing cooler than
financial stability, Ian.

154 IAN 154
I dunno... Walt's existence
deconfirms that.

155 NIA 155
Hey! ...Walt's not financially
stable.

The two of them share a <LAUGH>.

156 IAN 156
Listen. Truth be told, I've got
artists block.

Nia looks horrified, almost as if Ian just told her that he has cancer.

157 NIA 157
Oh my God... I'm so sorry.

158 IAN 158
Yeah, it's been rough.

159 NIA 159
How long have you had that?

160 IAN 160
Let's see... been working here for
about five years. So... five years?

161 NIA 161
Oh wow...

162 IAN 162
Sure, I did art for the tennis
games, but it was never really the
kind of art I wanted to do. Ever
since then, my brain's just been
kind of plugged up. Haven't drawn
anything for myself in years.

Nia looks disappointed.

163 IAN (CONT'D) 163
But... if you had a mascot idea, I
could give you some pointers.

164 NIA 164
Well, I did have an idea... but
Walt didn't want me to submit
anything.

165 IAN 165
Well, Walt doesn't know what he
wants, he's constantly changing his
mind every-

Walt runs up, frantically interrupts their conversation.

166 WALT 166
Heyyyy lads, doing some recon, eh?
I like the way you think.

167 NIA 167
Walt? What are you doing here?

168 WALT 168
Just thought I'd come monitor how
Ian's monitoring is going.

169 IAN 169
She's spying on me just fine,
Walt.

170 WALT 170
Good, great, fantastic. I'm not
allowed in here anymore, so I gotta
be quick. Nora, I was just thinking
that maybe it would be a good
intern assignment to brainstorm.
Think about what goes into a good
mascot. Maybe present it later
today with the rest of the team.

171 NIA 171
Really? I would-

Walt keeps an eye out for Eric, the store employee. He's a
mess, with the Hector situation weighing on him as well.

172 WALT 172
Good, great, fantastic! I've got to
run, but remember - make it
RADICAL. For the love of god,
please make it radical.

Walt zips off. Nia looks at Ian, with a stunned smile.

173 IAN 173
See? Now show me what you've got.

Nia smiles as she pulls out her sketchbook.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Hector is searching through a filing cabinet next to his desk
with purpose, tossing paper after paper aside.

174 HECTOR 174
No... No... Ah-ha!

Hector pulls out a contract and smiles grimly, looking
directly at the camera.

175 HECTOR (CONT'D) 175
(menacingly) Things are about to
get *Harry*... (then) That's his
catchphrase, I've already patented
it.

Walt enters the office, walking by Paige's desk. She is
sitting there, tinkering with her soundboard.

176 WALT 176
Ah, the *Paige-Master*! How's the mascot process going?

Paige plays a **<FART SFX>** on her sound board.

177 WALT (CONT'D) 177
...I have some pepto in my office if you need it.

Paige gives Walt a disgruntled look.

178 WALT (CONT'D) 178
Look, I know music is more your thing, but please just think of a character. Anything is better than-

179 HECTOR (O.S.) 179
Oh, Walt!

Hector fast-walks over to Walt with *purpose*!

180 WALT 180
Hector...

181 HECTOR 181
Just thought you might find this interesting. I found my contract.

Hector hands the contract to Walt, who whips out his fancy READING GLASSES.

182 HECTOR (CONT'D) 182
Right there, article 5. The 'Harry Hedgehog' clause. Unless we legally cannot do Harry Hedgehog, you're required by law to make this game.

183 WALT 183
Why did I agree to this...

184 HECTOR 184
It was your idea, actually. You were really desperate.

185 WALT 185
Dammit, that does sound like me.

Hector heads back to his desk.

186 HECTOR 186
So yeah, I'll be ready to pitch our *new mascot* later on.
(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Unless you wanna let the snake out
of the bag on your taxes.

Walt slumps next to Paige.

187

WALT

187

Maybe we should go back to tennis
games.

Paige plays a <TENNIS BALL KNOCKING SFX> on her soundboard.

INT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - FOOD COURT - LATER

Nia opens her sketchbook to a page showing a DAPPER LITTLE
SLOTH wearing a bowler hat. Next to him is a ADORABLE TURTLE
with a bow tie.

188

NIA

188

(nervous) So, um... these guys
are... Wow, why am I so nervous??
(shakes the nervousness away) This
is a sloth and a turtle character I
made! The sloth's name is Bread
cause they like to loaf around, and
the turtle is Butter, cause they're
smoooooth.

Nia does an awkward little 'smoooooth' hand gesture. Ian
mulls things over.

189

NIA (CONT'D)

189

It's too much, isn't it?

190

IAN

190

No, no, keep going!

191

NIA

191

Well, um, the gameplay would kind
of switch between more slow-paced
puzzle solving with Bread, and a
faster platformer with Butter,
cause she spins on her shell.

Ian nods his head, taking it all in.

192

IAN

192

This is a ton of fun. I mean that,
genuinely.

Nia blushes, she doesn't know what to say. Ian starts making
his own sketches on a blank page.

193

IAN (CONT'D)

193

I would say we should push their expressions a bit, maybe give Bread some droopier eyes to really accentuate his lazier demeanor, and to make him softer. But lean into the 'cool guy' attitude for Butter, like Walt wants. When we pitch it, we'll really want to push that aspect.

194

NIA

194

You're... gonna help me pitch?

Ian stops drawing and looks up.

195

IAN

195

Yeah, if that's cool with you?

196

NIA

196

Y-Yes!! It's um, it's very much cool with me.

197

IAN

197

Cool. I'll go get us some extra motivation over at the Beak Barn.

198

NIA

198

And extra napkins! Don't want any grease stains on our pitch!

Ian smiles as he gets up from his chair. Nia looks down at her mascot characters and gives a relieved smile.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - WALT'S OFFICE - EVENING

Walt lays on the floor, tossing a tennis ball up and down, up and down.

199

WALT

199

I'm just starting to question the whole 'mascot' thing. Like, who really needs them? Do kids buy cereal cause of a mascot? Do people *actually* like Mickey Mouse? No! He's not even funny! Once something becomes a mascot, it loses all identity and just becomes a corporate spokesperson! Do we *really* want that? Do we really want to contribute to the capitalist slop plaguing the world?

REVEAL Walt is talking to the phone, which is on speaker.

200 WALT'S MUM (V.O.) 200
Just make the god damn mascot game,
Walter.

201 WALT 201
Yes, mum.

There's a <KNOCK KNOCK> on the door. Nia enters, holding back
her excitement.

202 NIA 202
Walt? It's time for the mascot
pitches.

203 WALT 203
Oh joy.

204 NIA 204
I think you're really going to like
what you see.

205 WALT 205
That's what I'm afraid of.

Walt tries to stand up, but can't get himself off the floor.
After a pathetic attempt, he holds out his hands for Nia to
try and lift him up.

206 WALT (CONT'D) 206
Okay, okay, let's go.

INT. FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

The Crystal Horizons employees have gathered in the food
court, ready for the pitch meeting. Walt joins them, looking
apprehensive and uncomfortable.

Walt makes eye contact with Hector, who holds up his contract
knowingly.

207 WALT 207
Alright... Mascot pitches... Woo-
hoo... Let's get this over with.

208 IAN 208
Geez Walt, try not to be too
enthusiastic. Wasn't this your
idea?

209 NIA 209
Technically it was mine, but
whatever.

A TEENAGER walks up to them.

210 TEEN 210
 You dudes, can I have that chair?

211 WALT 211
 We need it for our presenter to
 stand on when they're presenting
 their pitch.

The teen stands there, blank-faced and confused.

212 WALT (CONT'D) 212
 ...No, you can't have it.

213 TEEN 213
 Bummer.

The teen walks away.

214 WALT 214
 Paige? You wanna go first?

Paige walks up with her soundboard. She plays a **<SAD TROMBONE SFX>**.

215 WALT (CONT'D) 215
 Nothing? You've got nothing?? Come
 on, Paige!

She walks back into the crowd as Hector hands her a \$5 bill.

216 WALT (CONT'D) 216
 Hector, you can't bribe your co-
 workers. And seriously Paige? \$5?
 You could have gotten way more than
 that.

217 HECTOR 217
 She knows what she's about.

Paige shrugs, playing a **<CHA-CHING SFX>** on her soundboard.

218 HECTOR (CONT'D) 218
 Well, guess I'm next.

Hector walks in front of everyone with several poster boards featuring Harry Hedgehog.

219 HECTOR (CONT'D) 219
 War. It separates us, divides us,
 and conquers us.
 (MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

When a young family is ripped apart by a war, a child finds comfort in their pet hedgehog. But then one day BAM! An explosion of radiation. The kid dies. Like, no room for interpretation, that kid is *dead* dead.

220 IAN 220
Jesus, Hector...

221 HECTOR 221
It's educational, Ian, kids need to know about the horrors of war. In the aftermath of the radiation, our hedgehog hero mutates and picks up a skateboard. He's gonna mow down the ones who took his best friend from him. Out for blood on his vengeance quest, this is... Harry Hedgehog.

Silence.

222 WALT 222
(under his breath, worried) Fuck me.

223 HECTOR 223
Great, so by process of elimination, looks like Harry the Hedgehog is our new mascot! I'll start drafting up a design document.

224 IAN 224
Hold on. Nancy hasn't pitched yet.

Nia gets a little shy.

225 HECTOR 225
Really? I mean... Walt, come on.

226 NIA 226
I have an idea!

227 HECTOR 227
Yeah, but I have a contract.

Everyone looks to Walt.

228 WALT 228

I... maybe kind of already promised
Hector that we'd pick his mascot
for the game.

229 What? IAN 229

Nia deflates.

WALT
Look, I'm really sorry, I-

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 231 | NIA | 231 |
| | It's fine, Walt. Aaaaalllll good. | |
| | I'm uh, just gonna... go back to my | |
| | desk... | |

Nia walks away, as Paige and Ian follow. Hector walks up to Walt.

232 HECTOR 232
Hey, I gotta take a wicked victory
dump, but after that let's talk
shop in your office, yeah?

Walt grimaces. BEAT. The teenager from before comes back up to Walt.

233 TEEN 233
Yo dude, can I have that-

234 WALT 234
Just take the chair.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - WALT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walt sits at his desk, ashamed as he rolls a tennis ball back and forth. There's a <KNOCK KNOCK> at his door.

235 WALT 235
 <SIGH> Come in.

Nia enters, surprising Walt.

236 Oh! N- WALT (CONT'D) 236

237 NIA 237

Nia. I know you don't really remember my name. Uh, hey listen. This has been something, but I'm gonna leave.

238 WALT 238
Oh. Right, see you tomorrow.

239 NIA 239
No, like I'm quitting. I don't
think I really fit in here. Thanks
for everything though.

Nia leaves.

240 WALT 240
Wait! Nia!

As Walt gets up, Hector enters the room.

241 HECTOR 241
Hey boss, you got any sanitizer?
Bathroom is out of soap, and I
really need it, if you know what I
mean.

Walt runs past him.

242 WALT 242
Not now!

INT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - NIGHT

Nia fast walks through the mall, humiliated and dejected.
Walt runs to catch up with her.

243 WALT 243
Nia!!

Nia stops to face Walt.

244 NIA 244
What, Walt?

245 WALT 245
I really did want you to pitch. I
needed someone to win out over
Hector!

246 NIA 246
So that's the only reason then? Not
cause you thought my ideas had
value, but cause you didn't like
Hector's stupid hedgehog?

247 WALT 247
No! ...Well, yes.

Nia huffs in frustration.

248 NIA 248
I was really excited to work here,
you know? All my friends from
school told me not to take this,
the company is a joke, they just
make the same shitty tennis game,
over and over!

249 WALT 249
Well, I wouldn't call it the same
game.

250 NIA 250
But I thought I'd learn a lot here.
I thought a small team would give
me the chance to actually do
something. But I guess not.

251 WALT 251
Nia, please. I want to hear your
pitch.

Nia mulls for a beat before pulling out her sketchbook.

252 NIA 252
Knock yourself out. Tell me what's
wrong with it, why I shouldn't
bother trying, why I should just go
back to taking notes.

Walt looks over the sketchbook.

253 WALT 253
This is good. It's got... well,
it's got vision and heart.
Something I haven't had in years.

254 NIA 254
You're just saying that because you
feel bad.

255 WALT 255
No! Well, sort of. But I also mean
it. It's fresh. And honestly... we
need fresh at this company. We need
something like this.

Nia cracks a small smile.

256 NIA 256
Thank you, Walt. But you've got
that contract with Hector.

257 WALT 257
Right... He's got me by the legal
balls there. If only I could get
rid of that damn hedgehog, and-

Walt notices something behind Nia. (The viewer does not see
what he's looking at.)

258 NIA 258
What?

259 WALT 259
I know exactly what to do.

INT. CRYSTAL HORIZONS OFFICE - NIGHT

Ian is finishing up a draft of Harry the Hedgehog concept
art. He hands it to Hector.

260 HECTOR 260
Thanks Ian. Sick, Harry looks
great!

261 IAN 261
Did Walt say why he wanted him
blue?

262 HECTOR 262
Nope, but honestly, he looks
amazing.

Hector holds up a new design for Harry, who is now BLUE.

263 HECTOR (CONT'D) 263
This design is literally perfect.
Like, I can't imagine him any other
way. I can't believe this is
happening!

Walt exits his office, wearing his coat as he goes to leave
for the day. Hector walks up to him.

264 HECTOR (CONT'D) 264
Good call on the blue, boss. Glad
you came to your senses on the
whole Harry thing.

265 WALT 265
Well, you know, one doesn't really
fancy a visit from the IRS.

266

HECTOR

266

Oh right, the threat. I was just fuckin' with you, you know that right? You're so easy to mess with, boss.

Walt looks at the camera, unamused. Nia approaches the others, wearing her coat.

INT. HARPER'S CREEK MALL - LATER

As the workday comes to an end, the employees put on their coats. Walt gives some food to Lead Programmer while scratching the snake on the chin, as Hector watches on with disdain. The employees exit the Crystal Horizons office and walk through the mall together, chatting, as they head to the upstairs exit.

267

WALT (V.O.)

267

Game development is a rather interesting path in the entertainment industry. We're not like TV and Film, where you've got your star power front and center. And we're nothing like the one-man army of Literature. To the public, we are the games themselves. It can feel a bit de-humanizing at times, eh? That's why you have to surround yourself with the right team to weather the journey with you. Find a team who can surprise you, laugh with you, challenge you. Because sometimes your idea isn't the best. Someone else's is.

The team passes by Game Parade, as they've just put up a new cardboard standee advertising a new game.

268

IAN

268

Oh shit...

Hector notices and stares in disbelief.

269

WALT (V.O.)

269

If you let your pride get the best of you, well, that's game, set, and match. (beat) That's a tennis term for ya.

REVEAL the standee is for Sonic the Hedgehog, a brand new game coming Summer 1991.

The camera pans to Hector, holding his poster of Harry Hedgehog. A smile forms on Walt's face as he looks towards Nia. This is what he saw earlier.

The character designs are nearly identical.

270

HECTOR
SON OF A BITCH!!

270

Paige plays the <PAC-MAN DYING SFX> on her sound board.

THE END