

Second Place

Book and Lyrics by Kate Chadwick
Music by Edison Hong

Cast of Characters

Cast Size: 15 (9 women, 6 men)

Bridgie Samson is our protagonist. She's a thirty-year-old executive-chef who is obsessed with success (her grandmother, who is now dead, trained her to win one of the highest honors a chef can win; Bridgie's trying desperately to win that honor for her grandmother). Bridgie's incredibly talented, a virtuoso, but her life is defined by cooking; not much else is going on. She keeps her grandmother's winning medal on her person at all times. Biggest fear: being "regular". **Her vocal range is mezzo-soprano/belter.**

Hank Jones is Bridgie's love interest. He was a basketball player who almost made the NBA (now working as a cop). He knows his dreams were shit, he's come to terms with the wealth of attention he got as a high-school and college student, and he's dealing with it by being incredibly routinized in his life. He has a close-knit group of friends, and he's charming in a goofy sort of way. Biggest fear: lack of structure. **His vocal range is bari-tenor.**

Linda Samson is Bridgie's mom. She is in her sixties, and she's a retired nurse. She's loving, she's supportive, but because of the close relationship between her mother and Bridgie, she's always felt like she doesn't know how to connect with Bridgie. She's never been obsessive. She's has been married to Divinia Tigercloud for thirty-five years. Biggest fear: losing Divinia or Bridgie. **Her vocal range is soprano.**

Divinia Tigercloud is a fifty-some-year-old, no-nonsense psychic who is one of the only people who sees through Bridgie's crap and talks about it; because of that, she's one of the only people who connects with Bridgie when Bridgie's obsessive. Divinia's not airy-fairy, despite everything in her new-age world; she dresses like Stevie Nicks, but inside, she's Elaine Stritch (martini in hand, tarot-deck in her pocket at all times). Biggest fear: No fear. She meditates away fear. **Her vocal range is alto/belt.**

Ralph Wolfe is a forty-year-old, non-title-holding bodybuilder who now works as a flight attendant. He's one of Hank's closest friends, and he started (with Hank and Chloe) the support group, *Second Place Psychology: Where Losers Go To Win*. Ralph could lift a bed or a small car, he eats more food than anyone should, and most days, you can find him baking cookies on layovers in random cities. Biggest fear: being alone. **His vocal range is bass.**

Chloe Tucker is twenty-five. She's an ex-ballerina who now works as a yoga instructor. She is Hank's good friend, a member of *Second Place Psychology*, and despite some run-ins with feeling very competitive, she maintains a quiet, if disciplined, grace. Biggest fear: physical injury. **Her vocal range is mezzo-soprano.**

Juliet Turner is a twenty-five-year-old chef who works with and competes with Bridgie. Unlike Bridgie, her career is going really, really well. She's Bridgie's main rival, and she can get pretty

cheerleader-bitchy with Bridgie. Sweet as sugar, but with daggers in every sweet word. She's pretty, too. Biggest fear: ugliness. **Her vocal range is pop-mezzo-soprano/thin belt.**

Charles Maurier is basically French Tim Gunn. He's the judge of the competition Bridgie is trying to win, and he should embody everything that someone would want on the outside, and everything that is bitchy and insufferable. He doesn't sing, but he can take part in ensemble singing in the scene's he's not in. Biggest fear: being gauche.

Ensemble Members represent Bridgie's fear. They look like regular New Yorkers, but some of them remind Bridgie how invisible she is, how powerless she is, how she'll never make it, and how she's going to end up average and normal like they are. They should be unremarkable, and that's what makes them the scariest. **We need all vocal ranges**, and ideally, there should be four men, four women (Charles being one of the four men).

Scenes and Songs:

Scene:	Song:	Characters:
Scene 1: Opening, A Hotel Ballroom	"Second Place"	Ensemble
Transition: Monologue, Limbo		Chloe
Scene 2: Hank Meets Bridgie, Outside Riverdale Rest Cemetery	"There's Nothing Good About This"	<i>Bridgie, Hank</i>
Scene 3: First Support Group Scene, A Greasy Spoon Diner	"There's Nothing Good..." Reprise	<i>Hank, Chloe, Ralph, Waiter</i>
Transition: Monologue		Ralph
Scene 4: Bridgie's Curse, Bridgie's Apartment	"That Damn Blue Ribbon"	<i>Linda, Divinia, Bridgie</i>
Scene 5: Extended Sequence, Streets of Manhattan	"What Do You Wanna Be When You Grow Up?"	<i>Ensemble</i>
Scene 6: Second Support Group Scene, A Greasy Spoon Diner	"Second Place Anthem"/"Time Stands Still"	<i>Bridgie, Hank, Chloe, Ralph</i>
Scene 7: Extended Sequence of Bridgie as Sauté Chef	"I Fade Away"	<i>Bridgie</i>
Scene 8: Bridgie and Juliet, Streets of Manhattan	"The Good Old Days"	<i>Bridgie, Juliet, Gus, Cliff, Simon.</i>
Scene 9: Divinia's Reading, Divinia's Office	"Be"	<i>Divinia, Bridgie</i>

Transition: Monologue		Hank
Scene 10: Beer Class, A Brewery in Brooklyn	“Regular People”/”Holy God”	<i>Ensemble</i>
Scene 11: Bridgie and Hank Part Ways, Streets of Manhattan	“Slipping Through My Fingers”	<i>Bridgie, Hank</i>
Scene 12: Nerves, A Hotel Hallway	“I’m Your Friend”	<i>Linda, Divinia, Bridgie, Raúl</i>
Scene 13: Second Competition, A Hotel Ballroom	“Second Place” Reprise/”I Have To Walk Away”	<i>Ensemble</i>
Scene 14: The Walk Home, Streets of Manhattan	“Demons”	<i>Bridgie, Linda, Divinia</i>
Scene 15: Finale, Bridgie’s Apartment	“It’s Perfect”	<i>Bridgie</i>

Time and Place:

The action of the play should feel like it grows out of the streets of New York City as Bridgie walks, fights, marches, and trudges to her discovery of what is true for her. It is present day.

Scene 1

As the audience enters, they see three chef stations set up in the middle of a hotel ballroom or conference room. Bridgie Samson is at the center station, Chef Frank to her right, Chef Juliet to her left. Off to one side, three stuffy, well-dressed judges sit at a table, watching the chefs like hawks. They have glasses of water and glasses of wine in front of them; their hands are folded on the table, and their noses are high in the air. All around these six, there are assistants, producers, event planners, medics, waiters, etc. roaming about the tables of supplies and paperwork, for this is the finals of the International Culinary Masters Competition (held once a year in July for the last one hundred years). Bridgie glances up at the judges' table, smiles, and dives back into her cooking. She exudes confidence.

Ten minutes!	Raúl
No!	Juliet
No!	Frank

Song 1: *Second Place* (Entire Cast)

Bridgie

Yes!
 THE CEL'RY'S THICK, SO I NEED TO DICE THIN.
 IT HAS TO COOK WELL; I NEED TO DICE THIN.
 EACH PIECE IS EVEN; I'M DICING IT THIN!
 COMPARE THESE PIECES! THEY'RE PERFECTLY THIN!
 CEL'RY CEL'RY CEL'RY CEL'RY CEL'RY!

Yes!

Frank

OVEN! HEAT UP! THREE TWENTY FIVE!
 DAMN IT! HEAT UP! THREE TWENTY FIVE!
 OVEN OVEN OVEN OVEN OVEN!

Juliet

THIS OIL IS RANCID!
 I CAN TASTE IT! NO!
 I USED THIS!
 OIL! OIL!

A man with a clipboard, Raúl, steps forward, listening to his headset.

Raúl
Bridget Samson?
Bridgie
Yes?
Raúl
The producers want you for the press when this ends.
Bridgie
Sure.
Frank
Why her? I want to be interviewed.
Raúl
Chefs! You have eight minutes before the entrée course will be presented to our panel. Chef Charles?

The middle judge subtly raises his hand and waves his fingers like a bitch. He's french Tim Gunn.

Raúl
Chef Charles is the director of the International Culinary Masters Competition and was named Master Chef in nineteen-eighty-seven in Milan. Chef?
Charles
Bonjour, Chefs. We shall see if one of you has what it takes to be the *one-hundredth* International Culinary Master. *(He leans over to the other stuffy chefs.)* I suppose one of them *has* to win, huh?

The other two judges laugh with Charles. The competitors notice, but try not to.

Charles
Chef Frank Giordano?
Frank
Yes, Chef?
Charles
What dish is going to win you this title today?
Frank
Uh... I'm making roasted duck with drunken prunes. I've used a port-wine reduction, and...
Charles
So old fashioned! For this competition, Chef? Do you think we are fuddy-duddies? *(He laughs, glancing at the judges' table.)* Chef Juliet Turner?
Juliet
Yes, Chef?

Charles
 What is your winning dish?
 Juliet
 I'm making fettuccini extract engulfed in a sphere of rosemary oil and cedar essence...
 Charles
 Oh! Molecular nonsense, huh?
 Juliet
 Well, Chef, it's gluten-fr...
 Charles
 Bridget Samson! I remember you. Why is your name familiar to me?
 Bridgie
 I recently came in second for the James Beard Award, Chef.
 Juliet
 I came in second, Bridge.
 Bridgie
 Uh... No, you didn't.
 Charles
 Oh la la! Girls! No fighting, please!
 Raúl
 Five minutes.
 Charles
 That's not why I remember your name, Chef.
 Bridgie
 Uh, until this week, I was head at La Coquille here in New York City; Chef Juliet was my sous-chef. I quit and that made the stupid blogs and the culinary news. *(quietly, to Juliet)* I came in second for James Beard.
 Juliet *(quickly, to Bridgie)*
 Neither of us won. Can we just say that, Chef Quitter?
 Charles
 You quit! That's why I know you! Why did you quit?
 Bridgie
 To compete in this competition. When I win this, I won't need that job anymore.
 Charles
 Oh! *When you win, huh? Très bien! Très bien! (He laughs, surprised at Bridgie.) (To the other judges.)* Mes amis, shall we take a walk and look at the dishes?

Charles and the two other judges surround Frank at his station; lights dim on all but Bridgie. Bridgie glances over, but focuses on her own prep; she's in the zone.

Bridgie
 THIS IS THE KITCHEN THAT I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED ABOUT.
 THIS IS THE DAY I'VE TRAINED FOR ALL MY LIFE!

MASTER CHEF! IT'S RIGHT HERE!
THIS IS WHERE I WILL MAKE MY MARK ON HISTORY!
MUSEUMS WILL DISPLAY MY KNIFE!
(holding up her knife)
BRIDGIE'S KNIFE!

I'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE THE BEST.
THESE JUDGES WILL BE SO IMPRESSED!
I WILL WIN FIRST PLACE.
THEY'LL HANG MY NAME UP ON THEIR WALL!
THIS IS MY TIME, AND I CAN'T FALL!

Ensemble

'CAUSE SECOND PLACE?

Bridgie *(dismissing them)*

NO.

Ensemble

SECOND PLACE?

Bridgie *(more aggressively)*

NO!

Ensemble

SECOND PLACE IS NO PLACE AT ALL.

Bridgie/Ensemble

Right! SECOND PLACE IS NO PLACE AT ALL.

Lights back up to normal, as the judges move away from Frank. Raúl steps forward.

Raúl

Time's up!

Juliet

CHEF, I'M FINISHED!

Frank

CHEF, I'M DONE.

Bridgie

CHEF, YOU'LL SEE THAT I HAVE WON.
MY THREE-BEAN SOUP WILL TAKE YOU TO THE SOUTHERN COAST OF SPAIN.

Juliet

CHEF, JUST TASTE IT!

Frank

CHEF, TRY MINE!

Bridgie

CHEF, I PAIRED IT WITH THIS WINE.
JUST TASTE IT...

TASTE IT. Juliet

TASTE MINE, TOO. Frank

Juliet/Bridgie/Frank (*to themselves, but looking at one another*)
MY FLAVORS ARE INSANE!

The three judges go down the line at an infuriatingly slow tempo to taste each plate. Bridgie flicks sweat off her brow, Frank breathes, and Juliet shakes one of her hands out. The judges get to the end of the line and face the competitors.

Charles
Well, first thing's first: you are all incredibly talented! But, unfortunately... (*The three chefs put their heads together for a blink of time.*) Chef Frank. You Lose. Get out.

The room is shocked. Frank tries really hard to not weep openly. Raúl takes him by the shoulders and leads him out of the room as the judges go back to their table. Producers and crew run around, clearing the stations and setting up dessert fixings.

Charles
This is unprecedented, but we have two *female* chefs left! Kittens! Make us the fastest dessert you've ever made. Be magnificent. Be perfect. Be a Master Chef. Allons-y!

Juliet and Bridgie run around like chickens, grabbing ingredients from the tables behind them.

Behind you! Juliet

Behind! Bridgie

Behind you! Juliet

Bridgie (*realizing*)
I'll make my Samson Parfait. It... can't lose! Yes!
I'VE WORKED MY WHOLE LIFE LONG TO COOK THIS DISH.
EACH TASTE, EACH CUT, EACH BURN WAS FOR THIS DAY.
MASTER CHEF! IT'S SO CLOSE!
I KNOW MY STUFF, AND SOON, THE WORLD WILL KNOW MY NAME!
MY LIFE STARTS HERE WITH ONE PARFAIT!
THIS PARFAIT!

Juliet/Bridgie

THEY HAVE TO CHOOSE ME, 'CAUSE I'M UNIQUE.

Bridgie

OH, PERFECT! CHERRIES AT THEIR PEAK!

Bridgie/Juliet

I WILL WIN FIRST PLACE!

Juliet

I FEEL MY MOMENTUM START TO STALL.

Bridgie

I'M LOVING THIS! GOD, I'LL FEEL TALL!

Bridgie/Juliet/Ensemble

'CAUSE SECOND PLACE?

Ensemble

NO!

Bridgie/Juliet/Ensemble

SECOND PLACE?

Ensemble

NO!

Bridgie/Juliet

SECOND PLACE IS NO PLACE AT ALL.

Ensemble

Right!

Bridgie/Juliet/Ensemble

SECOND PLACE IS NO PLACE AT ALL.

Bridgie (*as she prepares her parfait*)

I FEEL HER HERE, AND I FEEL GOOD!

MY GRANDMA'S HERE, RIGHT HERE WITH ME; SHE SAYS, "I KNEW YOU COULD!"

SHE'S GUIDING EVERY MOVE I MAKE.

SHE'S CATCHING EACH MISTAKE.

I CANNOT LOSE AT THIS, NO, I CANNOT LOSE.

Juliet

CHEF, I'M FINISHED!

Chef Charles stands up and goes to the cooking stations.

Bridgie

THIS IS IT.

Juliet (*to Charles*)

CHEF, I MADE BANANA SPLIT.

Bridgie

MY MASCARPONE PARFAIT WITH PERFECT CHERRIES STOPS THE SHOW!

JUST TASTE IT...

Juliet

TASTE IT.

Bridgie

TASTE MINE, CHEF.

Juliet/Bridgie (joyfully, to themselves, but looking at one another)

THIS TITLE'S MINE! I KNOW!

Chef Charles tastes them both, again, in his own good time; the chefs are vibrating with anxiety.

Charles

Well, I'm astounded... this cheeky girl who quit her job is so impressive... the One-Hundredth International Culinary Master is... Chef Juliet Turner! A woman!

Bridgie

Thank you so much, Chef... Wait... what?

The panel stands and claps, the staff claps, and Raúl grabs Juliet before she falls to the ground.

Charles

Oop! Delicate thing! She's fainted! Come, bring her outside, huh? Into fresh air.

Everyone surrounds Juliet and takes her out of the room. Bridgie is left with some of the crew, who begins clean up.

Bridgie

But... I'm supposed to be... the next woman. My grandma... *My grandma was the last woman to win... this. (To a member of the crew.) Do they still want me for the press? (No response.)*

But...

I'M SUPPOSED TO WIN THIS, THIS IS ME.

WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT DID THEY NOT SEE?

WHAT ABOUT FIRST PLACE?

I'M SUPPOSED TO BE THE NAME THEY CALL...

Ensemble

YOU DIDN'T WIN; DON'T YOU FEEL SMALL?

Bridgie

No!

Ensemble

YOU'RE SECOND PLACE.

Bridgie

NO!

Ensemble

SECOND PLACE!

Bridgie

I...

Ensemble

SECOND PLACE IS NO PLACE AT ALL.

Bridgie (*turning on them, suddenly defensive*)

Shut up!

Ensemble

SECOND PLACE IS NO PLACE AT ALL.

Bridgie runs out a different door, and we move into...

Transition 1

A twenty-five-year-old, spindly woman named Chloe comes out in limbo, dressed in monochromatic, classy clothes. She's an ex-ballerina, and her bun is perfect. She has a canvas bag on one arm; the veins in her hands are quite pronounced.

Chloe (*without self-pity*)

How did I react to coming in second? Well... we don't really call it that in ballet... but uh... I had a meeting with the artistic director, and he said they would never promote me to principal ballerina. And I mean, I pushed him to say it; he would have let me dance small roles forever. He liked me. But I wanted to be Cinderella, Kitri, Aurora! I wanted to do the fouettés in *Swan Lake*! And he said... never. (*beat*) And I know, girls would kill to be in one of the best companies in the world. I know that; I was lucky to be where I was. But what do you do with your head when you push for twenty years for that one thing... like... I was doing ballet before I learned to read... and you suddenly don't fit where you thought you fit. What do you tell yourself? What do you do with your body that has this skill? (*Beat*) Anyway, it messed me up for a while. But I'm better now. I have a little yoga studio downtown that I teach at, and I'm okay. Here! Business cards! I'll give you one!

She pulls out her wallet as we transition into...

Scene 2

It is midnight, the same summer night of the competition. Bridgie walks up to an ornate gate outside of the Riverdale Rest Cemetery; she tries to open the gate, but it's locked. Inside a little Alpine security hut off to one side, Officer Hank Jones, 35, athletic, snoozes with his hat over his eyes. Bridgie shakes the gate. Hank wakes up, and peeks out of his hut.

Hank

Closed.

Bridgie

Sorry?

Hank

We're closed.

Bridgie

Oh. Excuse me, Officer. Could you open it for me?

Hank

Can't, Ma'am. Closed. Move along.

Bridgie

Oh. Yeah. Okay. But... Uh... *(holding out her hand to shake)* My name's Bridget, Officer...?

Hank

Hank. Officer Jones, I mean. Hank Jones.

They shake hands.

Bridgie

Officer Hank Jones, I was wondering if you could make an exception just this once. I *need* to get in there.

Hank

You *need* to get into a cemetery at midnight. Are you a grave-robber?

Bridgie

I'm a chef!

Hank

What? Disgusting! This is a *cemetery!* Get out of here! Shoo!

Bridgie *(panicky)*

No! Listen! Uh... I... I'm the one-hundredth International Culinary Master, but I'm not. I didn't win, and I was so sure... I just have to see my grandma, because I can see the way she's looking at me, and I need to explain what went wrong. Officer! Please?

Bridgie starts freaking out.

Hank

Uh... Ma'am?

Bridgie

She's in there, row thirty-three, plot eighty. Please? She could tell me what to do!

Hank *(pulling out his flashlight)*

Your grandmother's dead?

Bridgie shakes the bars of the gate. Hank is unsure of what to do.

Hank

Now! Listen! There have been... vandals poking around in there these last few weeks. That's why they posted me here, so... go home! You don't want to get caught in any sort of a "situation", do you?

Bridgie

It was our dream. The International Culinary Master Chef title. I was supposed to become the next one. My grandma was one, nineteen-sixty-six, Brazil; she was the first woman to win the title. So, we worked so hard... since I was little, like every day, cooking. See? I carry the medal she won. It's on a blue ribbon... you know, like blue ribbon?

She pulls an aged, tiny medal on a blue ribbon out of her pocket. She shows it to Hank. He goes to grab it, but she won't let him touch it.

Bridgie

And everything was going great! I made her parfait, and... it's so delicious. Chef Juliet's banana split looked so basic... I just... I don't know what happened! I thought I had it, you know? And... I can't enter the competition again. You're only eligible once. And I lost. I lost it. And that's not what was supposed to... happen!

Hank

Um... Uh... The gate opens at eight thirty tomorrow morning; you could come back then.

Bridgie looks in through the bars, longing to be inside. She starts crying. Hank, confused, holds out his handkerchief, but too far away and limply, so Bridgie doesn't see it.

Bridgie

Who really decides that it's closed now anyway?

Hank

It's... the law. And there's a guy posted on the other side. Officer Steve. What if he thinks you're a vandal and shoots you? That would be worse, right? Being shot?

Bridgie

Unhhnhhn!

Bridgie grabs onto the bars to pry herself through them. Hank watches her, confused and immobile, a little amused. She can't make it through, and finally, she gives up. She sits on the ground and rubs her shoulder where the bars pushed. He walks up to her, hands her the hankie.

Hank

Does your grandma talk back?

Bridgie

I'm not crazy, I just need to tell her.

Pause. Hank pulls out a bag of chips from his pocket, and offers her some. She takes some, but she can't eat them... In fact, she can't contain herself anymore. She pulls out the medal and talks to it.

Song 2: *There's Nothing Good About This* (Bridgie, Hank)

Bridgie (*ramping up to the dark place*)

Grandma! I don't know what I did! I thought everything was going okay. The entree course was delicious. It was just me and her... and I started in on the parfait, and nothing went wrong! Nothing! Did I accidentally add salt instead of sugar? I don't think I did! I tasted it... I think... Oh, God. What if I didn't taste it? What if I'm the worst chef in the history of the world and no one should ever eat my food ever because all I do is use salt for sugar and poison people with shit flavors and disgusting food!? I should fall down into an abyss of despair where there's no food and no chance of me cooking for people *ever again! Ever! I am! The worst! Chef!*

Bridgie cries even more. Hank frantically tries to figure out what to do.

Hank

Oh. Uh... Okay. That's dark. That's getting dark. Uh... Look at me! Look at me!

Hank tries to entertain her; Bridgie doesn't react at first.

Hank

THERE'S NOTHING GOOD ABOUT THIS!
LIFE'S AN ABYSS! YOU'RE RIGHT!
THERE'S RARELY GOOD IN ANYTHING!
SO HEY! GIVE UP THE FIGHT!
IF YOU THINK SHIT THINGS HAPPEN,
THEY DO! IT'S REALLY TRUE!
SO, GO HOME, MA'AM, AND DRINK SOME!
'CAUSE HEY, YOU CAN'T UNDO...

THE VOMIT THAT IS EVERY DAY,
THE SHITSTORM THAT IS FATE!
THE CHOICES THAT YOU'VE MADE ARE CRAP,
AND NO ONE CAN BE GREAT!
YOU THINK I LIKE MY STUPID JOB?
I GUARD A GRAVEYARD! WHY!?
BUT I'M THE ONE THAT GOT ME HERE,
SO I CAN'T FUCKING CRY!

Uncomfortable pause as Bridgie stares at Hank. He smiles like a doof, doing some strange pose to make her smile. She's smiling; it's good.

Hank (*back at it*)

I USED TO BE LIKE YOU, MA'AM.

I HAD A PLAN. I DREAMED.
 I THOUGHT IF I WAS GOOD ENOUGH,
 I'D WIN! THAT'S HOW IT SEEMED.
 BUT THIS SHIT WORLD IS SHITTY.
 AND NOTHING WORKS LIKE THAT.
 SO NOW, I GUARD THE DEAD FOLKS.
 MY LIFE HAS GONE KER-SPLAT!

THE VOMIT THAT IS EVERY DAY,
 THE DICKWAD THAT IS FATE.
 THE CHOICES THAT I MADE WERE CRAP,
 I KNOW THAT I'M NOT GREAT.
 WITH LOWER EXPECTATIONS, MA'AM,
 THE WORLD CAN'T CRUSH MY SACK.
 IF YOU COULD LEARN THAT LESSON, TOO,
 YOU'D CUT YOURSELF SOME SLACK.
 YES!
 YOU'D CUT YOURSELF SOME SLACK!
 CHEF!

Remarkably, Bridgie has been comforted. She pockets the medal.

	Bridgie
You're strange.	
	Hank
I'm just trying to help.	
	Bridgie
You did. Thank you, Officer...	
	Hank
Jones.	
	Bridgie
Officer Jones. Panic's gone. <i>(She breathes.)</i> You sure I can't sneak in? Five minutes?	
	Hank
Officer Steve over on two-hundred-and-fiftieth has an itchy trigger finger.	
	Bridgie
Okay. I can wait 'til tomorrow anyway; it seems you've shocked me back into myself.	
	Hank
Well, you're welcome.	

They laugh, and as they do, Hank gives her his hand to help her stand up. She does, and when she's up, they have a chemistry moment where they almost kiss. She pulls away.

Sorry. Bridgie

Sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... Hank

Me, neither. Sorry. Bridgie

Sorry. Hank

I'm sorry. I have to focus on cooking. Bridgie

Awkward pause. Hank nervously grabs his chips and eats them.

Chip? Hank

No. No, thank you. Although, have you ever melted stilton on those? It really improves the nuttiness in them. Bridgie

Oh, really? No. I just eat them. Hank

Beat.

Eight tomorrow morning, then? Bridgie

Eight thirty. Hank

Thank you, Officer Jones. I appreciate the help. Bridgie

Bridgie starts walking away.

Uh... Miss...? Hank

Bridgie.

Bridgie... Uh... Miss Bridgie, I have this group that I go to... It's for people... Uh... Hank

A group? Bridgie

Uh... Nothing. Sorry. I like your grandmother's medal. It's a nice story. Hank

Bridgie

Thanks. And thanks again for the help.

Bridgie walks off. Hank looks at his chips, then he strangles the bag until chip detritus is all over the ground.

Hank

Bunghole! Ask her for her number... her *last name!* Anything!!!! Do *something* other than be an idiot!

He walks across the stage, and as he does, dawn breaks, and we are in a greasy-spoon diner for breakfast.

Scene 3

Hank sits down at a table with Chloe and Ralph Wolfe, a forty-some-year-old ex-bodybuilder, now flight attendant. They all eat eggs and drink coffee. Chloe picks at her food; Ralph wolfs it down.

Ralph

But you're on step four of the Program.

Hank

Yeah, but we made the Second Place Program up!

Chloe

It's not random, though. We thought it out.

Hank

I need coffee. *(looking for a waiter)* Excuse me?

A waiter comes by and fills their cups.

Waiter

You guys okay?

Chloe

Yes, thank you.

Ralph

More coffee cake?

Waiter

Sure.

The waiter leaves. Hank stabs his eggs.

Ralph

You shouldn't be thinking about this. You're on step four: "establish a routine, and stick to it." You can't just skip to step six.

Hank
Yeah, but this is happening now! You guys! This girl is... something!
Ralph
But step four! Dating is step five!
Hank
Ralph, it's not dating! I'm trying to help her! I think our group could help!
Ralph
Step four!
Chloe
Hey! Deep breaths! Pranayama.

All three of them take deep breaths. Ralph eats.

Chloe
Step six of the Second Place Psychology Program is what, Ralph?
Ralph
Step six: "carry our message to others that struggle with coming in second."
Hank
That's what I want to do!
Ralph (*overpowering him*)
But you're on, "establish a routine, and stick to it." Then, step five: "Cultivate a social life outside your skill."
Chloe
Well, maybe he can combine four, five, and six. His routine is going okay, this girl could be his social life, and... he could help her, too. Plus, we made the steps up.
Ralph
Yeah, but we're gonna have to pick up the pieces when he falls apart. The steps work.
Chloe
But...

Song 3: *There's Nothing Good About This Reprise* (Hank, Ralph, Chloe)

Hank
Ralph!
THERE'S SOMETHING GOOD ABOUT THIS.
Ralph
Maybe!
Hank
AND NOTHING'S GOOD. I KNOW.
Chloe
Breathe!