

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Episode 1.12

"Gestalt Shift"

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TEASER

129. Many voices WHISPERING at once. Gavel BANGS.

ALDER NIAMH

I take it we've reached the point where
it learns of us.

NARRATOR

The point where Mackenna Thorne learns.

ALDER NIAMH

That is not its name.

NARRATOR

No? I'm simply using the name we gave
her. Didn't you take the other's away?
Mackenna Thorne is a perfectly good
name. Someone ought to use it.

ALDER NIAMH

We do not need to hear of its training.
That is an unnecessary waste of our
time.

NARRATOR

Oh? So you are already aware of what
she learned from the witch?

(beat)

Were you even aware that she went to
the witch?

(beat)

Perhaps, Alder Niamh, you need to
reconsider what it is we're doing here.
I am not here to testify for you.
Perhaps, Alder Niamh, I am not here for
you at all.

ALDER NIAMH

(long beat)

How soon until the revel?

NARRATOR

A short while. Mackenna and her friends
went on a few more adventures before it
all came crashing down. Literally.

(beat)

That epic battle looms, still, and those who are lost in it have yet no idea of their fate. But it won't be long. For now, Mackenna needs to look beyond the veil. To see us. Heed what she learns and what she does not. Ignorance is a powerful weapon.

END TEASER

130. In a MOVING TRUCK. Truck PULLS OFF the road onto the shoulder. Truck PARKS.

NISSA

What are you doing, Thomas?

THOMAS

I need a second to think.

ALFIE

Are you sure this is the appropriate place to think?

THOMAS

She...whoever that was, we left her behind miles ago. How fast do you think she can run?

NISSA

Just be ready to drive if we see...well, if we see anything weird.

ALFIE

Weird like a fake Mackenna?

NISSA

That qualifies, yes.

THOMAS

What happened to her? I mean, to my sister. To the real Mackenna.

NISSA

I'm not sure, Thomas. She vanished right in front of us. There could be any number of possibil--

ALFIE

Four.

NISSA

What?

ALFIE

There are four possibilities.

THOMAS

Alfie, I don't know that we have enough evidence to narrow it down so quickly.

ALFIE

No, I hear you, but I've already considered everything. Only four ways they could just vanish from our sight.

NISSA

Quit being dramatic and spit it out.

ALFIE

One: Teleportation. They teleported and are now somewhere else.

THOMAS

Teleportation?

NISSA

Seriously?

THOMAS

You're leading with teleportation?

ALFIE

Mack and Shaylee were drawing something on the ground. It looked like a circle. Then they stepped inside it and vanished. It could have been a teleportation circle.

NISSA

This isn't one of your RPGs, Alfie. Teleportation circles are not a thing.

ALFIE

Two: Invisibility.

NISSA
(groan)

ALFIE
They turned invisible. They're still
back there right now, out of sight,
hiding from fake Mack. Fake Mack. Fake
Mack? Fack?

NISSA
For fuck's sake.

THOMAS
I'm afraid to ask about number three.

ALFIE
Three: Disintegration. They were
completely vaporized.

THOMAS
You think Mackenna could be dead?

ALFIE
It does seem unlikely, given that what
they were doing looked intentional. It
would be a weird ritual suicide.

NISSA
Aaand I think we're done with your
theories, Alfie. That is the stupidest
idea I've ever--

ALFIE
Four: Shrinking.

NISSA
Nope. I was wrong.

ALFIE
They shrank in the circle until we
couldn't see them anymore.

THOMAS
Why would they do that? I mean, also
how, but why?

ALFIE

I'm just coming up with the possibilities.

NISSA

And of course you end on the single dumbest thing that could be called a possibility.

THOMAS

I don't feel like these theories are particularly helpful.

ALFIE

There's also a fifth option, I guess, but I disregarded it. It's the one where all of this was a hoax and nothing we saw was real.

THOMAS

That blonde woman--

ALFIE

Fack.

NISSA

Stop talking.

THOMAS

She came after me. Sam shot one of the dogs four times. Not a hoax.

ALFIE

I said I disregarded it.

THOMAS

Do you really think they could still be back there? Invisible or whatever? They might need our help.

NISSA

I don't think it's safe to go back there, Thomas.

THOMAS

I should call Sam.

NISSA

And tell her what? "Mackenna's innocent but blonde Mackenna, who is definitely not the same person, is guilty?"

THOMAS

She'll understand.

NISSA

Just because you two were snogging doesn't mean she'll believe this insanity.

THOMAS

Snogging?

ALFIE

Ha! And you thought I would be the one to spill the beans!

NISSA

Focus, you two! Mack is gone. Somehow. Somewhere. She needs our help.

THOMAS

But how can we help her if we don't know what happened to her? We have no idea where they are.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

131. STEPPING SIDEWAYS arrival.

MACKENNA

Where the fuck are we?

(beat)

Did we just...how did we get here?

SHAYLEE

Stepping sideways.

MACKENNA

Huh?

SHAYLEE

I'm not a physicist. You'll learn to accept a lot of pure crazy soon enough.

MACKENNA

Where are we? Why are you talking like that?

SHAYLEE

My gaff. I'm Irish.

MACKENNA

What's a gaff?

SHAYLEE

Home. It's Irish.

MACKENNA

Like you.

SHAYLEE

Like me.

MACKENNA

I'm so confused.

SHAYLEE

Get over it fast, Mackenna. We have things to do.

MACKENNA

But like...your home? This looks like a warehouse.

SHAYLEE

Look at you, getting all judgy right after I saved your life.

MACKENNA

No, I didn't...I just meant that...but like, we're in a warehouse, right? So I just--

SHAYLEE

I'm messing with you. I live in a warehouse. I like having space.

MACKENNA

I still don't understand. Are you the real Shaylee?

SHAYLEE

Well, that's a question, isn't it?

MACKENNA

I just mean...back there, that woman looked just like me. What if you just look like Shaylee?

SHAYLEE

It's me, Mackenna.

MACKENNA

But this whole Irish thing.

SHAYLEE

It's me, bathroom girl.

MACKENNA

(beat)

I think I'm gonna throw up.

SHAYLEE

Ack, just because I live in a warehouse doesn't mean I want you vomiting on the floor.

MACKENNA

So why are you different now?

SHAYLEE

I'm not different. This is me.

MACKENNA

So when we first met...

SHAYLEE

I needed you to trust me.

MACKENNA

So you lied to me.

SHAYLEE

Everything I told you, everything that happened, was true. Real. I just left out a few key details.

MACKENNA

And used a fake voice.

SHAYLEE

I needed you to trust me.

MACKENNA

My life is not your LARPing group.

SHAYLEE

I'm sorry for that bit of deception. I needed to blend in.

MACKENNA

Why? Why did you do all of this?

SHAYLEE

All I did, Mackenna Thorne, was keep an eye on you to keep you safe. None of this is my doing.

MACKENNA

So who did it?

SHAYLEE

I remember being in your position. I know it's confusing. I will answer every question I can.

MACKENNA

Who was that woman? Why did she look just like me?

SHAYLEE

That was your fetch. She looks like you because she is you. Rather, you are her.

MACKENNA

I'm her?

SHAYLEE

You are her changeling. A construct. You are her replacement.

MACKENNA

What? Changeling? Construct?

SHAYLEE

Yes. A construct. Like the barghest-- those black dogs? They are also constructs.

MACKENNA

They had leaves in them.

SHAYLEE

No, they are leaves. Made of nature. Leaves, stones, twigs.

MACKENNA

And...I'm like them?

SHAYLEE

Sort of. Made of leaves, yes. But you're not a dog.

MACKENNA

I don't...this is completely ridiculous.

SHAYLEE

Do you know what a changeling is, Mackenna?

MACKENNA

Like in the movie? A kid switched at birth or something?

SHAYLEE

A changeling is a magical creature that replaces a stolen human baby without the parents' knowledge. They're created by the Hidden People. The changeling is a copy of the human child, only made from nature. Twigs, leaves, that sort.

MACKENNA

The Hidden People?

SHAYLEE

Yes. The human child is taken by the Hidden People. It is given no name. It is only known as fetch. That one that tried to kill you, it was your fetch.

MACKENNA

And she...

(beat, realizing)

She's the one who killed my parents,
isn't she?

SHAYLEE

She is. After decades of training and
torture, the fetch is released into the
world to reclaim. If it can kill the
changeling who took its identity, it
believes it can have its name back.
Sometimes, the fetch kills its entire
family, a kind of vengeance for never
realizing the changeling was a fake.
For leaving it to grow up in a hellish
world of sadism and pain.

MACKENNA

Who are the Hidden People?

SHAYLEE

You know them as faeries.

MACKENNA

Faeries? Seriously?

SHAYLEE

We don't like using that word.

MACKENNA

Why? You worried it makes you sound
completely insane? Cuz it makes you
sound completely insane.

SHAYLEE

No. Because it's cute. It's Tinkerbell
and pixie dust. The Hidden People are
not ten inches tall with butterfly
wings. They're beings of immense power
who view humanity at best as
playthings, at worst as ants.

MACKENNA

I don't understand why she wants to
kill me, though.

SHAYLEE

Because she hates you. She has hated you her entire life. Been raised to hate you. She hates you because you took her life. She wants to be Mackenna Thorne.

MACKENNA

I'm Mackenna Thorne.

SHAYLEE

Are you? Who is more this person? The one born and named Mackenna Thorne, or the one who answers to that name?

MACKENNA

I am.

SHAYLEE

Even now, I can hear your hesitation. You've never felt at home with your name, your identity. Can you deny her claim? Her anger?

MACKENNA

If what you're saying is true, she killed her own parents.

SHAYLEE

Yes. Parents she has no memory of.

MACKENNA

So where do you fit into all of this? Are you here to help me fight her?

SHAYLEE

I'll help you prepare, but you have to kill her.

MACKENNA

Why me? What if I don't want to kill anyone?

SHAYLEE

That's how it works. Rules.

MACKENNA

Could you explain the rules to me?
Like, in English? I don't speak crazy.

SHAYLEE

This is the way of the Hidden People.
They have many rules. If someone else
kills your fetch for you, the Hidden
People will never stop hunting you. The
only way to get them to leave you alone
is to kill the one whose life you
stole.

MACKENNA

You're right. That doesn't sound like
Tinkerbell.

SHAYLEE

Now you're getting it.

MACKENNA

I feel like all of these answers are
just raising more questions.

SHAYLEE

It will take a while for you to learn
everything. And longer for you to
really believe it all.

MACKENNA

I need to call Thomas and warn him.

SHAYLEE

You will do no such thing.

MACKENNA

Where is my phone?

SHAYLEE

Listen carefully: your old life is
over. You want to go back to that? To
being on the run? Is that an appealing
life? You always wanted a reset button.
Here it is. Big, flashing reset button.
You can use it and start over, or you
can go back and die.

MACKENNA

You were nicer without your accent.

132.

SHAYLEE

We can help you, if you trust us.

MACKENNA

We?

DANE

Hey, Shaylee.

MACKENNA

(scream)

DANE

Oh, shit! You brought her with you.

(beat)

The fetch attacked?

SHAYLEE

She did.

DANE

Are you all right?

SHAYLEE

Barely. She was good. Really, really good. Like best I've ever fought good.

MACKENNA

Who are you? Who is this?

DANE

I'm Dane.

SHAYLEE

He's my assistant.

DANE

I'm her partner.

SHAYLEE

No, he's not. "Partner" has all sorts of other connotations.

DANE

Like a business partner. Assistant sounds so subordinate.

SHAYLEE

Shut up, Dane.

DANE

Yes, ma'am.

MACKENNA

How many other people are here?

SHAYLEE

Just us. Dane and I help changelings to prepare. So they can face their fetches.

MACKENNA

You're going to train me to fight?

SHAYLEE

That's the idea.

MACKENNA

I can't even keep my jumping jacks coordinated.

DANE

Shaylee's a good teacher. Give it some time and you'll be shocked you ever doubted her.

MACKENNA

I'm pretty sure I'm still dreaming, sooo...

SHAYLEE

No, you're not. You told me about how real life felt like a dream. That's because it was. Just a puppet show designed to amuse them. This moment, learning the truth...this is you awake for the first time.

DANE

I can fill her in on some of the history if you're tired, Shay.

SHAYLEE

I'm knackered, but I'll stay. I don't want you to feel abandoned, Mackenna.

MACKENNA

I don't really know how I feel right now.

DANE

I can fill you in on more of the deets. Maybe it will help you process.

MACKENNA

Yeah, I mean...I guess so.

DANE

Cool. Pull up a box. Time for a history lesson.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

133. Outdoors at the Thorne house. Cops everywhere.

SAM

Start calling her relatives. See if anyone has heard from her. And we'll need a helicopter to help search the woods as soon as it's light.

RON

(calling out)

Sam!

Ron HURRIES over.

SAM

Ron. What's going on?

RON

I've still got nothing on Mackenna. But when I checked with Geoff, he said that Thomas left your house a while ago.

SAM

What? Why?

RON

I don't know. Geoff said that Thomas asked if we were keeping him there forcibly, and when he found out we weren't, he took his truck and left.

SAM

Why would he do that? I wanted to keep him away from any danger.

RON

I think there's a pretty good reason he might have left. Why he didn't want cops looking over his shoulder.

SAM

Thomas is not involved in this.

RON

How can you be sure?

SAM

I watched her attack him, Ron. He identified his sister. Why would he turn right around and help her?

RON

I don't know. Families do weird things.

SAM

Thomas wouldn't do that.

RON

When you love someone, you make all kinds of excuses for them. Even when the evidence points in the other direction.

SAM

But he wouldn't...

(beat)

You're talking about me.

RON

Maybe we need a BOLO out for Thomas and his truck.

SAM

He probably needed to clear his head. His sister tried to kill him.

RON

Maybe I need to put a BOLO out.

SAM

Fine. Put one out. If we find him, we can keep him safe.

RON

Yeah. Sure.

(beat)

The chief is on his way down. He's going to want a progress report. I'll let you mention Thomas. But he needs to know.

SAM

I can handle it, Ron. I know how to do my job.

RON

That's...you're a good detective, Sam. The chief really likes you. Because you don't mess around and you get the job done.

SAM

I know where I stand with him.

RON

I'm just saying. I know you'll get the job done. But don't mess around.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

134.

NARRATOR

It's time for Mackenna to learn a little more about the threat she faces. Where they come from, how they operate. Of course, this is all history. And you know what they say about history: it was written by the dead, given to the old, and told to the young. The most absurd game of telephone. Do you just trust the first person to offer you an explanation of the world? Parents lie about elves making gifts. Teachers lie about which skills are necessary to life. Churches lie about mystical punishment for arbitrary sins. Imagine the world where we believe everything we are told. Is it trust or stupidity? Or are they the same thing?

MACKENNA

Hang on, I still need to process this. So I'm a changeling.

DANE

Yep.

MACKENNA

And Shaylee's a changeling.

SHAYLEE

I am.

MACKENNA

Are you a changeling, too?

DANE

Nope. I'm a halfling. No hobbit jokes, please.

MACKENNA

Halfling? Is that like half-human, half made of leaves?

DANE

No. Halflings are humans mixed with the blood of the Hidden People. No leaves.

MACKENNA

So your mom or dad was one of them?

DANE

God, no. I'm like one-sixteenth Hidden. If I were half, I'd be dead.

MACKENNA

What do you mean?

DANE

Little bit of history for you, in case you're not up to speed on British and Norse folklore. Adam and Eve had a bunch of kids. One day, the kids were dirty from playing, so Eve hid them from God to avoid embarrassment. God punished Eve by hiding her children forever. Thus, the Hidden People.

MACKENNA

My parents' Bible left that part out.

DANE

Most do. The Hidden People don't even believe that origin story. They have their own god, Wodan. Nasty guy who rode the Wild Hunt and wiped out civilizations. Who knows which one is real? Anyway, fast forward thousands of years. The Hidden People prey on mankind the whole time, hiding in plain sight. But the mixing gets too close, and they start having children with humans. These halflings aren't nearly as evil as the Hidden. The human blood mellows them, gives them a conscience. So the halflings band together and form a counter government to the pure Hidden. Kind of like two political parties.

MACKENNA

I'm not even registered to vote, so...

DANE

The two courts struggle to balance power. Eventually, the Unseelie Court, that's the pure Hidden, brings down the Seelie Court, the halflings. The Magister--he's like the god-king of the Hidden People--makes a law forbidding any more halflings. They kill them at birth to prevent the Seelie Court from rising again.

MACKENNA

So they don't care about you? Your blood is too diluted?

DANE

I don't have the kind of power a true halfling does. That poor kid wouldn't make it to its first birthday.

MACKENNA

So you were born, not created. But I was...created? And so was Shaylee? I don't get it.

SHAYLEE

Thirty years ago, one of the Hidden People slipped into the nursery of a baby girl named Shaylee. He stole Shaylee and left behind a construct that was an exact copy of her, right down to her DNA. The real Shaylee was stripped of her name and raised by the Hidden People. She grew up tortured and without any moral guidance. Meanwhile, I was raised as if I were her, by parents who thought I was theirs, even though, deep down, I think they always knew.

MACKENNA

That you weren't theirs.

SHAYLEE

Yes.

MACKENNA

This explains so much.

SHAYLEE

I'm sure it does. The same thing happened to you and to your fetch.

MACKENNA

Why do they do it? They're just super evil?

SHAYLEE

It's a matter of perspective. From our perspective, a human one, they seem evil.

DANE

Yeah, they're pretty fuckin' evil.

SHAYLEE

But they're not us. They have an entire culture that predates humanity by millennia. We can't expect them to match up to our arbitrary standards of morality.

MACKENNA

Kidnapping and torturing babies does not seem arbitrary to me.

SHAYLEE

Of course not. Not to me, either. But think about it from a different perspective. They aren't evil because they're not even on our scale. They're something wholly different. Ascribing your ideas of good and evil onto them is one of the ways they can beat you.

MACKENNA

How so?

DANE

Shaylee thinks that when we call them evil, we assume a lot of other baggage along with it.

SHAYLEE

It's true. Humans can't possibly comprehend the motivations of such alien creatures.

MACKENNA

But we're not even human, right?

SHAYLEE

Our brains are human, even if what formed us isn't.

DANE

I might as well be human. I was raised human. I don't have any powers of the Hidden People.

MACKENNA

So they're not evil. Just misunderstood.

SHAYLEE

Don't mistake my clarification with sympathy. They are monsters in every sense. Regardless of whether they are evil or just incomprehensible, they're dangerous and ruthless. We don't understand why they do what they do, but we know they gain amusement from it. If I could, I'd wipe the lot of them out.

MACKENNA

But we can't? Couldn't we--I dunno-- call the FBI or something? The Marines?

SHAYLEE

The Hidden People cannot be harmed by their weapons nor matched in power. But their greatest weapon is deception. It is the root of their culture and their magic. Who would you tell that would believe you? The government? The police? Your own friends? Are they even on your side now.

MACKENNA

Alfie is.

SHAYLEE

And would he be when you tell him that you aren't human and that the Hidden People are real?

MACKENNA

Honestly, I think he'd love it.

DANE

Shaylee's right. If you tell anyone, you put yourself in danger of getting committed and them in danger from knowing too much. The human world operates based on how the Hidden People want it to. So many people are cogs in their machine without even realizing it. They won't let you endanger that system.

MACKENNA

And they'll honestly leave me alone if I murder someone they raised in slavery?

SHAYLEE

Don't get sentimental for her. She would slaughter you with no hesitation.

MACKENNA

It still doesn't seem right.

SHAYLEE

You always have a choice, Mackenna. Throughout your life. But in this instance, where the Hidden People and your fetch are concerned, every choice is to play their game or die. It's still a choice.

DANE

A really, really shitty choice.

MACKENNA

I don't like your definition.

SHAYLEE

Oh, don't you? I know you're not one for stepping up or following the rules. But do you really think you've dictated the terms of your life? Free will is a lie. Every decision you make is based on a collection of experiences and knowledge that you've accumulated. If I run you through the same simulation over and over, you'll make the same choices every time. So did you get to make those choices? Insomuch as you picked what to do, yes. But your choice was predetermined by your life leading up to it. So were you ever really free?

MACKENNA

I make my own decisions. With my mind, not just my instincts.

SHAYLEE

That would explain skipping your parents' funeral.

DANE

Shay...

MACKENNA

(hissing)

Fuck you.

SHAYLEE

Maybe you're right. But if we asked Thomas, what would he say? Do you think he was completely surprised that you let him down one more time?

MACKENNA

(angry yell)

Shaylee BLOCKS Mackenna's punch, KICKS her in the stomach, and FLIPS her onto the ground.

MACKENNA (CONT'D)

Owww.

SHAYLEE

Your form is terrible. You telegraphed your punch, and you left yourself open to the throw.

DANE

And now you're on the ground and sore.

MACKENNA

(groan)

SHAYLEE

The good news is that you'll be fine in a few minutes. We heal quickly.

MACKENNA

And this was some kind of lesson about staying collected and not charging in, right?

DANE

That's what she wants you to think, but I'm convinced she just likes kicking ass. Anyone's.

SHAYLEE

The Hidden People will use every weakness against you. Anger is an easy one to exploit.

MACKENNA

I get it; I get it. I'm sorry I punched you.

SHAYLEE

If by "punched" you mean "tried to punch," then yes, I accept your apology. I'm sorry I flipped you completely around in the air and slammed you into the ground.

MACKENNA

Well, when you say it like that, you can go suck it, Jujitsu Girl.

DANE

I like her.

SHAYLEE

So do I.

MACKENNA

I'm right here. Still on the ground.

SHAYLEE

I mostly like her.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

135.

ALDER NIAMH

So the changeling was working with a halfling? How did we not know this?

NARRATOR

There is much about her that you do not know.

ALDER NIAMH

Where is the halfling now? He needs to be found and dealt with.

NARRATOR

You'll find out soon enough.

ALDER NIAMH

You know our ways. His existence is an affront to this entire court.

NARRATOR

Ironic that he would be...hidden from you, isn't it?

ALDER NIAMH

The Seelie Court will not rise again. We face heretics, traitors, and thieves even now, but half-breeds are a threat beyond.

NARRATOR

He is a shade of a halfling. No power to speak of. You bind yourself to traditions that prevent you from thinking clearly.

ALDER NIAMH
Isn't tradition the only reason you're
allowed to speak right now?

Hushed MURMURS through the courtroom.

NARRATOR
(dark)
You would do well to cease your
interruptions, Alder Niamh.

ALDER NIAMH
Your games endanger the entirety of the
Unseelie Court. Even now, while we sit
through your tale, they plot against
us. The accused may be locked up
awaiting trial, but she should not be
underestimated.

NARRATOR
And neither should I.

ALDER NIAMH
Your threats bore us all.

NARRATOR
Look around you, Alder. Do the others
look bored? Tired? Irritated?
(beat)
Or afraid?

ALDER NIAMH
Tell us what we want to know.

NARRATOR
That was the last time you demand I
hurry through this story. You speak of
boredom? You bore me, Alder Niamh. You
want what I know? Well I know far more
than the story of Mackenna Thorne. I
also know the saga of Niamh, from
Drudge to Alder. Would you rather I
told that one to the court?
(beat)
No?
(long beat)
I'm going to need an answer.

ALDER NIAMH
(defeated)

No.

NARRATOR
Very well. Then I shall continue the
tale of Mackenna Thorne. Or, more
accurately, the one who once held that
name.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

136. Dark club MUSIC faintly, from another room. Fetch
WALKS up to the Magister.

MAGISTER
She is still alive.

FETCH
Yes, Magister.

MAGISTER
That wasn't a question. Do you think we
do not know?

FETCH
No, Magister.

MAGISTER
The trainer reached her first, then.
(beat)
You were always a fast learner, weren't
you?

FETCH
Yes, Magister.

MAGISTER
Perhaps you would have reached her
sooner had you not lost your temper and
killed a random human.

LILIANA
Oh, please, dear. Did you want it to
end so quickly?

MAGISTER

My amusement is independent of this
fetch's failings. Do not conflate them.

LILIANA

Of course not.

MAGISTER

What is your next move, fetch?

FETCH

I will track the trainer to her lair
and kill them both.

LILIANA

You've given up on your brother? Her
friends?

FETCH

Mackenna Thorne is all that matters,
lady. I will reclaim.

MAGISTER

You failed to kill them in your last
encounter. What makes you think the
next will end differently?

FETCH

Mackenna Thorne is weak. Soft. A waste.
No degree of training or changeling
trickery can prepare her for me. The
last time, they ran. The next time, I
will prevent them from running.

MAGISTER

And in the meantime?

FETCH

I have discovered a new way to study
her. She dropped it during the
struggle.

(beat)

It unlocks and opens to my face.

THE END