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Alexis Kenyon
Mascot boot camp script
Hi.imalexiskenyon@gmail.com
Prologue.

Alexis Kenyon: Allison is 15 and she's psyched because this weekend... she's going to mascot boot camp. She and her mom drove ten hours from Chatham, Virginia to get to camp in Newark Delaware. Allison has been her High School mascot, Striker, for 2 years. She's got on yellow tights, ginormous feet, a huge furry hawk head... and she's not telling any of her friends where she is...

Allison: It's like a secret club.

Alexis Kenyon: Why is it like a secret club?

Allison: Because, at least at my school, nobody is supposed to know who the mascot is. So, it's kind of cool to be superman a little bit.

Alexis Kenyon: So what are you going to tell the friends that don't know where you are this weekend?

Allison: I will tell them I was college shopping and looking at the University of Delaware.

Alexis Kenyon: And you won't feel bad lying about it?

Allison: No. Well, because it's not *completely* lying, I am planning on taking a look at the college.

Alexis Kenyon: Jarrod is also attending this weekend's camp. This is what Jarrod said to his friends.

Jarrod: I told some people that I was up here for a religion conference because some of the religion professors invited me to go, but I pick and choose who I tell what story to because if I tell one story to one person and one story to another person and they meet up and talk about it, they will notice that there is something wrong.

Alexis Kenyon: Last year, Jarrod was working in the dorms as an RA and some of the kids in the dorms started to catch on. Jarrod's college mascot is Fritz the cat.

Jarrod: A couple of my freshman boys actually confronted me one time. They were like, "Jarrod, you are Fritz," and I'd be like, "No, no I'm not." And, so I was like, "I've got to end this right now." They said it to me again: "Jarrod, just admit it. You are Fritz." And I looked at them, dead in the face -- and I had this pissed off face -- and I was yelling, this is me yelling, I said, "Look, I tried out for it. I didn't get it. But it frustrates me everyday I didn't get it, cause I know I'd be great at it. I know I deserve it. So, please, for the love of God, never ask me if I am Fritz and, never ask me to tell you if I am Fritz cause, I swear to God, I will yell at you again." And they didn't ask me, at all

Alexis Kenyon: and he wants it to stay that way... and so for this story Jarrod and Allison will be Jarrod and Allison, no last names... but Mascots and mascot wannabes from high school colleges and professional teams drive and fly in from all over the place... just to learn how to be a better mascot.

And the people who want to BE mascots, well, they're kind of like drama kids...some are shy others are spazzy. BUT what's really surprising is how that all changes when they put in the mascot suits...

In this story, we get to go behind the scenes of the mascot world... And, yes, there is a whole world of mascotting. After years, of watching those, mimed halftime skits! In this story we HEAR from the mascots... Let me just say, there is so much more going on than what we can see from the sidelines...

Act 1: F-U in fun.

Ambi of Camp

Alexis Kenyon: Day one of mascot boot camp... about 15 campers wander into a basement gym at the University of Delaware. The campers size each other up... the University of Delaware mascot team has come to camp with matching track suits.

Campers: Their hair even matches! What the heck?

Campers: Yeah we went crazy...

As the campers unpack their costumes, the stage at the back of the room starts to look like an island of misfit cartoon creatures. A hawk head perches on a rack next to the a fuzzy lion costume. A human sized mouse slouches next to a pair of cougar paws.

Alexis Kenyon: Dave Raymond walks in just before camp begins. His T-shirt reads, "Get serious about fun." On the back: "We put the F-U back in fun."

Alexis Kenyon: Dave Raymond is the original Phillie Phanatic and he runs this show.

Dave Raymond: I want you to hang your costumes at the back of the room and hustle back here and we'll get started.

Alexis Kenyon: Dave's 54, and the father of 4... and, out of costume, he looks like a suburban dad: solid build, maybe 5'11. He's wearing a visor.

But the Phanatic is legendary in the mascot world because before him one other mascot... the interactive sports mascots that we know today, didn't really exist... the mascot was kind of stiff symbol that stood on the sidelines. THAT WAS IT. Today, thanks, mostly to the Phanatic, mascots are everywhere... and if someone needs a mascot, they call Dave. He's created mascots for the 76ers, the Orlando Magic, the Pittsburgh Pirates. All the big teams.

[Video sound comes up...]

Alexis Kenyon: To start off camp Dave puts on a video.... It's a Phillie Phanatic highlight reel.

Alexis Kenyon: Dave started performing at the Phillie Phanatic back in 1978. If you have never seen of the Phanatic he is green shaggy creature with a narrow snout, a very round belly and clunky paws. In the first scene, of the video the Phanatic is jumping out of a plane. He's running at other mascots... body slamming them... He's sneaking up to bald men and rubbing their heads. He's cruising around the Phillies stadium launching hotdogs at into the stands.

Dave Raymond: And I told you I was a professional idiot but I am not stupid. That was not me skydiving.

Alexis Kenyon: Dave says as a professional mascot... you must HARNASS the power of fun.

Dave Raymond: Here we talk about the difference between a kid in a suit and a living breathing brand extension... There's a huge gap between a kid in a suit. A kid in a suit is what most people think of mascots...

Alexis Kenyon: The living breathing brand extension thing... definitely not as interesting as the to kids in the suits... but its really important to Dave. He's got it down to a science. He goes to the white board and writes the letters FUN. There are three lessons to mascoting.

Dave Raymond: So, here are the three lessons. F-U-N. F is for fun.

Alexis Kenyon: If you didn't catch that, The f in fun stands for fun...the mascot's number one job.

Dave Raymond: The next lesson I learned, U is for ubiquitous. What is ubiquitous?

Alexis Kenyon: Dave means this literally... As the Phanatic, Dave's performed EVERYWHERE... a Catholic church during the sermon. He once performed for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; he even performed at a guy's funeral. Ubiquitous

Dave Raymond: You cant' huge the buildings...The Mascot is the embodiment of the university.

Alexis Kenyon: The final principle of mascoting... perhaps the most important one to remember. The "n" in fun, stands for no... which is what mascots have to say to FUNKILLERS. YES FUNKILELRS. PEOPLE WHO KILL FUN... And this sounds a little silly but Dave says that funkillers are everywhere and funkillers are the mascot's nemesis. Dave says that mascots have to work with fun-killers -- but...

Dave Raymond: Right, we cannot let them kill the fun... we will work with funkillers to make the fun better. But we will not let them kill the fun. You are not goofballs. You are not nuts, you are not maniacs, and you are very serious professionals but professionals in the art of having fun.

[Fade up track of next clip]

Alexis Kenyon: It's the mascot's job to bring the fur and foam to life... Dave tells everyone to suit up.

AMBI OF CAMP AND KIDS TALKING QUIETLY TO EACHOTHER

DR: OK, we are going to work on certain walks, signature moves, and then we're are going to practice, in front of the camera... [It will be like your audition...]

Alexis Kenyon: Allison unhooks her striker the hawk costume from the rack.

Camper 1: I don't think he said put the head on. Did he say put the head on?

Camper 2: No

Alexis Kenyon: Up until now Allison has been visibly nervous. When she introduces herself her face turns red, her voice shakes and she's tugging on the cuffs of her pink jacket.

All of the mascots start getting into costume and Allison puts on the body and the feet of her suit and then looks up.

[Songs changing beneath tracks and acts... Bare Necessities for a second...], [ambi of song... SOME NIGHT for one second... then whistling song begins and stay on this song...]

Alexis Kenyon No one is dressed yet. She waits with the mascot head tucked under her arm.

[BARELY AUDIBLE. OKAY WHEN YOU'RE READY PUT ON YOUR HEAD... YELLED BY DAVE OVER WHISTLING SONG]

Alexis Kenyon: Then, all of a sudden, Jarrod is dressed and in middle of the room dancing. As Fritz the cat, he is jumping from one foot to the other and bending over and smacking the ground and then springing back up again. Allison puts on the Striker head and she transforms.... she prances to the middle of the room. She is pin-wheeling her arms like she is flying. She dances under the suit like she is completely free.

In minutes all the campers are dressed. They are sliding across the smooth wood floor and belly bumping and hip thrusting and silently goofing around.

[FADE THE WHISTLING SONG...]

Act 2: *that kid*

Alexis Kenyon: There are two types of personalities at mascot boot camp. Jarrod, or Fritz the Cat, is one.

Jarrood: Well, In middle school and half of high school, before everyone matured, I was that kid -- at least before everyone matured -- I was *that* kid: that really annoying, really outgoing, really loud individual. And I didn't have any friends, really. I didn't. Everyone hated me. No one would talk to anything or me like that. It's a really Sad story but it is who I am and it's why I became Fritz.

Alexis Kenyon: Allison is the other type.

Allison: When I am not in the suit, I am a kind of quiet and shy person, and when I am in the suit, I am just the complete opposite. I am a total extrovert.

Alexis Kenyon: And why do you feel like you normally you can't express what you can when you're wearing the suit?

Allison: I don't know, I am worried about... I know a lot of people, if they knew who I really was, I don't know. It would be different. I'm not really sure what that is. It's just how's it's been. (: 25)

Alexis Kenyon: I asked Dave about the two types of personalities at camp. He tells me he sees

them all the time

AK: What do you think the similarities are between them?

DR: Between the shy and the annoying? I just think they are both insecure... and that's their way of expressing their insecurity. Or covering up their insecurity.

Alexis Kenyon: Allison first put on the mascot suit last year... She remembers trying to get dressed for the first time. She tried to put on the head before she put on the feet, but that didn't work because she couldn't see.

Allison: So I had to take the head off and then I put the feet on. And then I put the head back on. And then, I went to walk out of the doorway, I opened the door, and I whacked by beak cause I didn't realize it was sticking out so far.

Alexis Kenyon: Finally, Allison made it outside and then she was ambushed by a bunch of people.

Allison: They were like, 'Oh Striker, Striker,' cause that's the hawks' name, and they got all excited. I felt like I was some famous person. I guess, kind of, it is, cause Striker is famous, sort of, in his own little world. And that was nice. (15)

Alexis Kenyon: About half way through the first quarter of the game Allison took her first break. She went back up the stairs, remembered to duck through the doorway.

Allison: And I took the head off and I had, I don't know, it was one of those light bulb moments... It felt so good to just be free and do whatever I wanted and just get away with it. That doesn't happen when I'm not in the suit.

AK: Whether it's a big disconnect or a more subtle insecurity, Dave thinks everyone drawn to mascotting probably a little bit like an outsider. **Dave is the overly talkative type...** Growing up, Dave's mom was deaf... he thinks that's one of the reason he was so good at mascotting. Before she died, Dave asked her about it.

Dave Raymond: She goes as a little boy you were always trying to get in front of me and miming in front of me trying to communicate. So, I think really made sense to her. So, even that, it's a piece of communication that, just wipes away your need to use language.

Alexis Kenyon: Mascot boot camp happens to be the weekend before Halloween. After the first day of camp, I'm walking home, kind of confused about why these kids are so moved by a costume. Then a guy dressed as Iron man passes me. He's walking a dog with batwings. Billy Idol crosses the street and then Kermit the frog. Playboy Bunnies are EVERYWHERE. The world is filled with people in costume. Because it's Halloween. But then I start to think that even after the holiday, people will go back to dressing like sorority girls or businessmen. They'll use costumes, just more subtle ones. Everyday we put on personas to feel a certain way... to get a certain reaction.

That's kind of why Jarrod and Allison do this stuff.

Jarrod: So, the game is about to start, and so I'm like, "Okay, I'll put the head on." So I

put the head on and I'll walk up the stairs. (:08)I hear them screaming and I'm like, "How many people are out here?" And I walk out and turn the corner and I am like, "Oh my gosh." I see the whole stand filled [[[with Saint Leo students and,]]] I'm like, "Oh my God."

Alexis Kenyon: Jarrod says that last year his college basketball team had made it to playoffs and he decided that Fritz HAD to be there.... even though it was an away game...

Jarrold: [fade under narration: And a bunch of them bum-rush me because I am Fritz and we are at the finals, and Fritz is here.]

Jarrold: And, for me, that was my moment. That was the moment when I truly connected with the crowd. I could do whatever and everyone was going nuts. (: 40)

Alexis Kenyon: Jarrod says he's always known he wanted to be a mascot.... ever since he was a little kid.

Jarrold: I think it's because I don't connect with people very well. I wanted to do something where I made an impact but I laid low... That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be iconic

Alexis Kenyon: I ask around, and it's not just Jarrod, the vast majority of campers say they have dreamt of becoming mascot since they were kids. And for them, while mascotng seems to be about, just being the mascot... Dave is much more conflicted... it goes back to his dad... a hall of fame football coach.

Dave Raymond: Well, I saw my father motivate players in the locker room, motivate football players to tears before they got ready to play a football game, He was a master motivator and a great speaker and I would sit there in awe.

Alexis Kenyon: Tubby Raymond, Dave's father coached for 56 at the University of Delaware. In high school, Dave thought the drama kids were fruitcakes. He wanted to be a football coach, like his dad...

Dave Raymond: I would sit in there as a young kid and I was crying.

Alexis Kenyon: But, when Dave told his dad he was majoring in PE to become a football coach, just like him -- Dave's dad told him to major in business. He said Dave wasn't tough enough to be a coach, that he wanted people to like him too much to be any good.

Dave Raymond: He was being a little bit of a fun-killer as a coach. That's a classic thing, you know, Howard Stern's father didn't want him to go into radio.

But Dave still wanted to follow in his dad's footsteps-- and become a football coach...up until his junior year in college.

Dave Raymond: I don't know. I'm not exceptionally bright, book wise. I'm not stupid but I'm not wildly bright. I'm just not the brightest person.

Alexis Kenyon: In college Dave got to play football for his dad. He came in wanting to play wide receiver.... But his dad kept him as punter.

Dave Raymond: And it was hard, it is hard playing for your father. I thought it would be this really big thrill but you know playing for your father is not easy. Other people think you are there because your dad is there. Your dad doesn't want anyone thinking he's giving you special favors and so he doesn't talk to you that much.

Alexis Kenyon: so, or the four years of college, Tubby basically ignored Dave. To prove a point.

Finally Tubby decided he needed to **do something** more to distract Dave. He called up the Philadelphia Phillies and asked them to *please* give Dave an internship in their **business** office. Dave took the internship and.... he liked it. The next year the Phillies decided to come out with. A new Phillies branding tool.... a green dancing creature called the Phillie Phanatic...

Dave Raymond: And, was just unsuspecting low man on the totem pole that they knew I would say yes because they knew I wanted a job. So that's what happened, and they say, hey if this is a horrible idea you are the one that took one for the team. And they were the only ones the only ones that said, hey this could be something big.

Alexis Kenyon: But Dave thinks maybe his parents were just saying that.... Years after the Phanatic became a national sports phenomenon and inspired teams and businesses all over the country to get mascots, Sports Illustrated printed a quote from Tubby Raymond, as their favorite quote of the week...

Dave Raymond: And my dad said, "I used to be known as Tubby Raymond, head coach of the University of Delaware... but now, because of my youngest son, I will forever be known as Tubby Raymond, father of a green transvestite." Ha-ha. It was a great line.

Alexis Kenyon: Dave says his dad's not the type of guy to just come out and say anything like, you know, Son, I'm proud of you... Dave still wonders how things would have gone if his dad had taken him more seriously - with football and also, just in general... He think he could have been a pretty good wide receiver back in college.

In 1993, which was A few years after Dave's mom died, Dave retired from performing as the Phanatic.... that's when he switched to the whole power of fun mascot-business guy mode. He trained the current Phanatic. It was time to do something different. But he wanted the mascot to live on.

Dave has a tense relationship with Ted Giannoulas, the guy who's the San Diego Chicken. The chicken is one of the other original sports mascots. He came out a few years before the Phanatic... and Ted's been performing as the Chicken for almost 40 years and still does it today. He says, when he dies, the Chicken dies. And this really bugs Dave...

Dave Raymond: Ted and I are not the best of friends, but he always says, "Why do you say bad things about me?" And I say, "I don't say bad things about you. I say the truth. I think you are selfish. You," and I understand why, "You really believe you are the Chicken and when you decide to not be, the Chicken is dying. That is selfish. And the

Chicken is a great character. But, Ted is emotionally, mentally and physically into being the Chicken and he believes that he is the Chicken and there is no difference between the Chicken and him, and I think that's sad. And I think the main difference between him and I am that I always will have a part of the Phanatic that is part of me. But I want it to go on. I don't want to quit and say the Phanatic is dead. That doesn't make any sense to me.

Person at Special Olympics: [Car slam... STRIKER THE HAWK FROM RUTNA HIGH SCHOOL]

Alexis Kenyon: Day 2 of boot camp
[CHEERING AND PEOPLE SAYING I LOVE YOU....]

All the mascots get into costume to perform at a Special Olympics Awards Ceremony across campus.

Cheering

The campers dance around and give warm hugs and are a huge hit.

One girl is crying because she is so excited to hang out with the mascots...

[Cheering, I love, you fade to door OPENING. OPEN CAR DOOR BEEPING and RAYMOND IS TALKING OVER THE RADIO....]

Dave Raymond: "You have to get in here or get out of here!"

Alexis Kenyon: On the way back from the stadium. Dave is completely bummed out by the funkifiers.

Dave Raymond: Instead no! You can't do this! It drives me crazy,

Alexis Kenyon: But they loved you. The kids loved you.

Dave Raymond: Oh, they loved the mascots, it's just people... these funkifiers get involved and they suck the fun out of it for me. Yeah, it was a success but, it's just my pet peeve is all...

Fade and ambi of back at camp for 1 second

AK Back at camp... Jarrod, on the other hand, is psyched. He thinks the event went well. Jarrod says if people don't like him, he *blames* himself but he doesn't really feel like he's let *himself* down... because he's NOT Fritz... Fritz is a mascot. And, after all, a lot of people just don't like mascots. Jarrod describes being in the suit as an out of body experience...

Jarrod: It's like you are losing yourself, you are losing all of yourself to become someone else. There is something within me that is specifically dedicated to Fritz. As soon as I put on the head, that light just flares on. That part of my body or brain or soul completely takes control.

AK: Jarrod says even if you are the type of person, who needs to be at the center of attention,

there's something about being in the suit that makes feel like you don't need it as much.

Jarrold: As much as I really want the whole crowd to roar, for me, a girl smiling is enough for me. Or have a kid with Down syndrome balling her eyes out and say that she's so happy to see me and take my picture. That's enough. That's all I need.

Alexis Kenyon: It seems like Dave obsesses over the funkillers because part of Dave, just wants something more... like part of him wants EVERYONE to love him. Or, at least, like him as much as they like the Phanatic...And maybe part of Dave wonders if he—him Dave, not the Phanatic--is worth it...

Dave Raymond: I still think I was just kind of masquerading around... I thought, "Hey I've got them fooled, you know?"

Alexis Kenyon: But Jarrod and Allison say that's kind of the beauty of it. They ARE masquerading around and they do fool everyone.

Allison: It's weird and hard to explain. It's like another identity. It's like you can hide.

Alexis Kenyon: Allison says sometimes she even fools herself.

Allison: When I see another mascot I don't think about the person underneath and when I see videos people have taken of Striker, I see Striker as his own being and not, "Hey, that's me under a suit." It's like Striker is his own person. (30)

Jarrold: I can't dance for the life of me.

Jarrold:

But as soon as I put on the suit, I can dance like nobody's business. And my walk, it's not me. As soon as I am in the Fritz suit, I'm a confident. I am courageous. It's like; I'm the top dog kind of thing. Like the Alpha Lion. Like get on my level. I am just walking around, chest pumping. I've got this swagger going on

Alexis Kenyon: Jarrod says since he started mascoting, he doesn't feel like he's *that* kid anymore.... at college, he has a lot of friends. He's part of a fraternity and the Student Government Union. And Allison says she's more confident too

Jarrold: When I get done I think I did a great job and I am the only one who knows it... 90 percent of the school has no idea who I am. So it's really cool that I have this little thing, I have this little trinket. I have this little box in my head and one of things that is in it, is Fritz and it's just like sitting there, and no one can touch it. They can't take that from me (30)

Alison I am more open about everything.

I'm not quite so nervous all the time.

The more I have actually, the more I think about it, the more I am realizing, it's a little bit more difficult t to let someone down than I think it is.

AK: With Dave, it seems different... like being a mascot is almost a let down. To him, more than to anyone else, even his Dad.

Alexis Kenyon: Yet at Dave's boot camp, what Jarrod and Allison seem to be taking away is sort of the opposite of what Dave teaches... this idea that the fun killer is out in the world... that there's this menacing presence out there waiting to take us down.

They seem to understand that the real person holding us back, the person who judges us the most or doesn't take us seriously... the real fun killer...

Well, it's kind of like Jarrod and how Fritz the cat lives in that little box in his head? In the end, like the costumes we put on whether it's doctor's coat or a football helmet or a mascot suit, we get to choose what we take away from a given situation... They don't seem that worried about fun killers, because they're having fun.