

HAND COVERS MOUTH

[UPBEAT ELECTRO POP MUSIC STARTS PLAYING]

AEMYN: Hubris! Round four, group five. This piece is titled Hand Covers Mouth, content warning for intense arguing.

[TRUTH SERUM BY AEMYN CONNOLLY STARTS PLAYING]

AEMYN (SINGING):

Tell me the truth about love

Without writing me a paper

The details got me down

But baby you're my major

[SONGS FADES OUT TO GUITAR RIFFS AS CALLOWAY AND SAMANTHA START TALKING]

CALLOWAY: It sucks, doesn't it.

SAMANTHA: I mean, I wouldn't say it's your perfect nude, but it goes with your undertones.

CALLOWAY: A pink-y lipstick goes with my green undertones?

SAMANTHA: Bitch, my track is zoology, not IDP.

CALLOWAY: "Indecisive Personality Disorder"?

SAMANTHA: See, this is why you're my soulmate. (BEAT) You look fine. Maybe blot it a little.

CALLOWAY: Yeah.

[PURSE ZIPPER OPENING]

CALLOWAY: Thoughts and prayers?

SAMANTHA: Miles better. I'd make out with you.

CALLOWAY: You won't even look at anyone who's not at least a foot taller than you, but thanks.

SAMANTHA: (DEFENSIVE) It's not a complex!

CALLOWAY: Sam. I never said it was. Chill.

SAMANTHA: Five foot two is, like, the normal average height for women our age-

CALLOWAY: Again, I did not say you have a complex.

SAMANTHA: And don't act like that shit about coffee stunting your growth is true!

CALLOWAY: I literally said nothing about coffee, or your own height. Hey, look at me. You good?

SAMANTHA: I feel like I'm gonna throw up.

CALLOWAY: Well don't get it on me. Madewell isn't cheap.

SAMANTHA: (SARCASTIC) Oh my God, I'll really try.

CALLOWAY: Why are you so freaked out? It's just a science fair.

SAMANTHA: Yeah, with a judge from NASA, and a judge from MIT, and a judge from the CDC, and I think someone said Bindi Irwin is here-

SAMANTHA: -And I've just had a lot on my plate lately, okay?

CALLOWAY: Do you wanna... like... (MILD GAG) talk about it?

SAMANTHA: Jesus, no.

CALLOWAY: Thank God.

SAMANTHA: Look, just- distract me. Tell me about your project.

CALLOWAY: Seriously?

SAMANTHA: Yeah, you've been acting like it's a DeuxMoi blind item with how cagey you've been.

CALLOWAY: Well I mean to be like a billion percent honest... I'm not sure it works.

SAMANTHA: Oh, shit. What is it?

CALLOWAY: It's a truth serum. I saw a documentary on this experiment they did back in the 90s at Guantanamo Bay-

SAMANTHA: Fantastic start.

CALLOWAY: And I was like, "What if I could make a nicer one?"

SAMANTHA: "Nicer"?

CALLOWAY: Yeah, like if you were wrongly accused in court and wanted to testify for yourself, you could take it and be like, "I didn't do it!" and because it was all verified by the FDA, they would have to believe you. Also, BuzzFeed would probably get a kick out of it.

SAMANTHA: But you don't think it works. How sure are you?

CALLOWAY: Like... ninety percent. I put some in my brother's cereal last week, and he said our mom's a lesbian. That's insane; she doesn't even like going to Home Depot.

SAMANTHA: Uh huh.

CALLOWAY: I'm totally fucked. It was even supposed to taste like a mojito, but instead it tastes like stale gum. Here, try it.

(SAMANTHA OPENS THE FLASK AND DRINKS IT)

SAMANTHA: Ugh. Yeah, that's vile.

CALLOWAY: See? And, like- here. Do you secretly hate me?

SAMANTHA: (IMMEDIATELY) Yes.

A BEAT, then the two burst out into -laughter-.

[music fading back in]

CALLOWAY: God, I am so screwed. My dad is gonna kill me.

SAMANTHA: Hey, I spent two weeks studying Tasmanian Devils, and I slept through most of the expeditions. Jet lag is *rough*. So at least we're both screwed.

CALLOWAY: Yeah... Oh shit, here they come.

[judges footsteps]

JUDGE 1: Hello, ladies. Next it appears we have... Calloway Gardner. What do you have for us today?

CALLOWAY: My project is a chemical serum for the targeted lowering of inhibitions, specifically expressed through the language processing centers. The amygdala is heavily sedated in a way that disables the fight-or-flight response to questions, and encourages an instant and unrestrained response. With more fine-tuning, I believe that response could more consistently reflect the subject's genuine thoughts and intentions. It's perfectly safe to ingest, with a pleasant mint aftertaste, and gluten-free, dairy-free, Kosher, and Keto-friendly.

JUDGE 2: Interesting. And what was your success rate?

CALLOWAY: Acceptable.

JUDGE 2: Hm. And Miss...

[PAPER FLIPPING]

JUDGE 2: Samantha Zhang. Tell us about your project.

SAMANTHA: Right! Right. Yeah. So, um. I. Studied Tasmanian Devils for two weeks.

[SCRIBBLING ON NOTEPAD]

JUDGE 1: Yes?

SAMANTHA: I did do that. That is a thing I did.

JUDGE 2: Interesting... what were your findings?

SAMANTHA: My findings?

JUDGE 2: Yes.

SAMANTHA: My findings, right. Right. Well, I found the Tasmanian Devils!

(A LONG, NERVOUS LAUGH)

JUDGE 2: Huh

JUDGE 1: Hm.

SAMANTHA: Anyway. I saw them run. They fight each other with their mouths. It's really really loud and terrifying. The first time I heard one, I thought I was gonna shit myself. (BEAT) When they kill something, they sleep inside its body. Like Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Revenant*. Soooo crazy, right?

JUDGE 1: May I ask how much time you spent with the animals in their natural habitat?

SAMANTHA: None.

A shocked BEAT.

JUDGE 1: None?

SAMANTHA: I overslept a lot. Most of the research here is from what everybody else talked about when they got back from the hikes.

JUDGE 2: I see.

JUDGE 1: I think we've heard quite enough. Thank you, ladies.

The JUDGES walk away.

CALLOWAY: Jesus fucking Christ, Sam. (BEAT) Well, I mean, hey. There's always next year.

SAMANTHA: I'm gonna go sit in the pool and scream.

CALLOWAY: Is your mascara waterproof?

[JULIEN walks up to them from their own booth.]

JULIEN: Hey, guys. Do either of you have a pen I could borrow?

CALLOWAY: Surprised you didn't send a Roomba over to ask for you.

JULIEN: Don't be fucking weird, Calloway. (BEAT) And Rupert is above that.

CALLOWAY: I'm only saying yes because I feel sorry for you.

[CALLOWAY GETS A PEN OUT OF THEIR PURSE TO HAND TO THEM.]

JULIEN: (FLAT) My hero. (BEAT) What's up with Samantha?

CALLOWAY: Everybody has their off days.

SAMANTHA: I hope I die in my sleep tonight.

CALLOWAY: No you don't, the new season of *Love Island* starts tomorrow.

JULIEN: Hey, at least you got their attention. The judges barely spent any time at my booth. Assholes.

CALLOWAY: Yeah... is your brother here, Julien?

JULIEN: Emmet's running errands for our mom or something; guess there's a first time for everything.

CALLOWAY: Cool, cool. Has he said anything about-?

JULIEN: Look, dude, he hasn't even mentioned your name for the last month, and if I were you, I'd be grateful. The guy's an asshole. Grade-A douchecanoe.

SAMANTHA: He probably just moved on with someone else!

JULIEN: Sure, yeah, probably. Sounds in character. (to CALLOWAY) Anyways, Calloway I'll bring this back when I'm done.

[THE PA SYSTEM CRACKLES TO LIFE]

SAMANTHA: Oh my God.

JUDGE 1: (CLEARS THROAT) Good afternoon, Charleston Preparatory Academy. The judges are pleased to announce we have chosen the winners of today's science fair. In third place: Allison Wu. In second place, Oksana Lewandowski. And in first place: Samantha Zhang. Thank you to all our competitors and sponsors, and congratulations to our winners. Please make your way to the main stage to receive your prize.

A BEAT as CALLOWAY turns to look at SAMANTHA.

[SUSPENSEFUL BASS STARTS BUILDING IN THE BACKGROUND]

CALLOWAY: Oh, you have got to be fucking kidding me.

SAMANTHA: Calloway-

CALLOWAY: Uh-uh, that was the shittiest presentation I've ever seen. How the *fuck* did you get first place?

SAMANTHA: I- I didn't-

CALLOWAY: You goddamn bitch. If you were going to rig this whole thing, you could have at *least* put me in second place!

SAMANTHA: Well-

CALLOWAY: I am your best fucking friend; I have done more for you than anybody else in this school, and you have the *gall* to screw me over like that? *Who* do you think you are?!

SAMANTHA: So you admit it? You admit the only way you would have placed is if I helped you win?

[BASS STOPS]

CALLOWAY: No, I'm saying that if you're gonna cheat me out of first place, the least you can do is give me second!

SAMANTHA: Oh that's rich, coming from the girl who only wins every year because her dad is a major donor!

CALLOWAY: I do not-

SAMANTHA: You didn't even think your stupid truth serum would work! You knew just as much as I did that *my* project is miles better! That *I'm* better than you in literally every capacity! Our teachers like me more, the judges like me more, and Emmet likes me more!

[BEAT.]

CALLOWAY: Oh, this is amazing. This is simply the best fucking day of my life. Do you wanna know why? (BEAT) Because I love learning, Sam. And I'm learning so, so much today. I'm learning that my truth serum works. That my mom is a lesbian. And that my best friend has been hooking up with my ex the entire goddamn time!

SAMANTHA: And if I have, so there!

CALLOWAY: No, no, no: you give me details. When did this start?

SAMANTHA: N- New Year's.

CALLOWAY: How did you meet?

SAMANTHA: I was walking my dog and he was out working on his car.

CALLOWAY: What demon of dumbfuckery possessed you to think you could get away with hooking up with him, and I wouldn't find out?

SAMANTHA: I just thought you wouldn't!

CALLOWAY: But now you know! Now we both know, that you're an arrogant, stupid little bitch who will never be smarter than me!

SAMANTHA: You invented a working truth serum and didn't even realize until I had to spell it out for you! Try that sentence again!

CALLOWAY: No, I *am* smarter than you, and prettier than you, and everybody likes me more! Literally everybody!

SAMANTHA: Bullshit-

CALLOWAY: -And that pisses you off to such an extraordinary degree that you just can't help but parade around in your little

East-coast -esort-chic vintage tees you'll only wear once, then sell for \$200 on Depop, acting like you can focus-group popularity when we both know this school is Nerdville, USA, and the only way you crack this level of deeply disliked by everyone while still being a goddamn genius, is by being the single worst person on the planet, which you are.

SAMANTHA: Say that again without the little brown Bebe shoes.

CALLOWAY: [STOMPS FOOT] They're sustainable vintage.

SAMANTHA: Yeah, that must be a really easy lifestyle when your Dad's the CEO of Shein.

CALLOWAY: Do you think maybe, just maybe, you could shut up forever and die?

SAMANTHA: What, so you can reanimate my corpse and finally make someone who wants you around?

CALLOWAY: No, so I can win a Pulitzer for finally discovering someone faker than you!

SAMANTHA: Of course the only award you'd ever win would be with my help!

JULIEN: Hey, Calloway, I brought your pen back- oh, hell no.

[JULIEN QUICKLY WALKS AWAY.]

CALLOWAY: He doesn't even like you! Emmet only likes blondes!

SAMANTHA: I am blonde!

CALLOWAY: Oh please, you could see those roots from the International Space Station.

SAMANTHA: At least I figured out Santa wasn't real before I was sixteen!

CALLOWAY: Aw, pissed that your daddy doesn't love you as much?

SAMANTHA: We're Buddhists, dumbass!

CALLOWAY: It's Santa! Don't look a gift horse in the mouth! Free shit is free shit!

SAMANTHA: Is that what every guy in our grade calls you? I don't even know why you're so broken up about Emmet when you have more exes than brain cells!

CALLOWAY: Ohhhhh...

CALLOWAY: You dumb fucking bitch- I'm gonna fuck you-!

EMMET: Uh, am I interrupting something?

SAMANTHA: Emmet?

CALLOWAY: Hi. We were- hi.

EMMET: (NERVOUS LAUGH) Hey... Uh, I'm actually glad I caught both of you guys.

CALLOWAY: You are?

SAMANTHA: (UNDER HER BREATH) Can't say I didn't see this coming.

EMMET: Yeah.

[PAPER RUSTLES]

EMMET: (REHEARSED) So, my mom made me start therapy a while back, and I've been doing a lot of, uh, personal self-reflection. Especially regarding my blasé and unproductive attitudes towards women. I have discovered this came from a

place of deep-seated internalized homophobia, and projected misogyny stemming from compulsory heterosexuality. (NORMALLY) Basically, I'm gay, and Samantha, I'm breaking up with you. Except we weren't really dating in the first place, so... yeah. (BACK TO THERAPY SPEAK) I understand that I have hurt the two of you very deeply, and hope that if you cannot forgive me, at least understand where my behavior came from, and that it is not reflective of your own value as strong, independent, powerful women. (NORMALLY) Wow, that did feel really good. Huh. (BEAT) Yeah, that was it, so... catch you guys later.

[He walks away. A BEAT.]

SAMANTHA: Well now who's gonna take me to Prom?

[CALLOWAY STOMPS ON SAMANTHA'S FOOT. HARD.]

SAMANTHA: Ow!

[TRUTH SERUM BY AEMYN CONNOLLY STARTS PLAYING]

AEMYN (SINGING):

Tell me the truth about us

Without this hesitation

I could be your science fair submission

Put me on your table

Oh, no, don't you dare

Move away next year

Cause you know I like it here

But I would go anywhere

Whatever that you need to do

Can't you see I don't want anything but you

You fucking nerd

How dare you be so damn loveable

You got me bad

And there's no serum for this wonderful feeling

And if I had the hubris

maybe I would tell you

True blue friends who'd probably hate you

Just cause we're obvious don't mean that you should say it

But if I had to tell the truth

Can't you see I don't want anything but you

You fucking nerd

How dare you be so damn loveable

You got me bad

And there's no serum for this wonderful feeling

And can't you see I don't want anything but you

[GENTLER ACOUSTIC MUSIC FADES IN]

AEMYN: This episode was written by Newt Schottelkotte and edited by Gaby Hall. It was directed by Lindsay Zana, with dialogue editing by Lindsay Zana. Sound design was by Aemyn Connolly, and music was made by Aemyn Connolly. The transcript was made by Clary Cheung. Samantha was played by Clary Cheung, Calloway was

played by Sophie Borjón, the judges were played by Lindsay Zana, Julien was played by Gaby Hall, Emmet was played by Aemyn Connolly.

[acoustic guitar fades out]