

NARPs
Episode #1
"Open Season"
by Rebecca Waterson
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COLD OPEN

1. INT. TEXAS A&M POOL - DAY

The Texas A&M Natatorium, the host of the West Coast Invitational swim meet, is ugly maroon, overwhelmed by the deafening sounds of shouts, cheers, and whistles. An oppressive environment and the air is permeated with chlorine and nerves. CALISSA BROOKS, representing the California-based SUN RAY SWIM TEAM, stands behind the starting blocks. There are two heats of women's 100-yard butterfly before her, and in these final moments before the race, Calissa looks around at the chaos of a swim meet.

To her left, in lane four, is her teammate KENZIE COLLINS who is staring intently at the scoreboard, locked in, focused, deadly. Calissa looks to the stands to find her MOM, Suzanne Brooks, but teammate ALICE SMITH interrupts her search by pointing out the dozens of COLLEGE COACHES clumped in the stands. But no time to think about these people who have the power to make or break dreams. The whistle blows to call Calissa, Alice, and Kenzie to the blocks. COACH RUSTY lets out his signature bellowing, "Let's go, Rays!" and the STARTER sounds the BUZZER: the race is off! On the live stream, the ANNOUNCER narrates the action with Calissa racing against her teammates, the other members of the heat, and ultimately the clock.

Everyone is neck and neck, coming to a nail-biting finish. BOOM, Calissa hits the wall first, earning a roar from the crowd. She pulls her goggles off, breathless and smiling, eyes glazing over the scoreboard and looking back to the stands, to her Mom. And then moving on to the college coaches pointing at the board and nodding.

Off Calissa's excited reaction, we begin her voice-over, "Dear NARPs, welcome to open season."

ACT ONE

1. EXT. SUNFLOWER RIDGE POOL - AFTERNOON

"Chun Li" by Nicki Minaj plays as Calissa emerges from the Sunflower Ridge Pool locker room door. She swings her goggles around her finger, flipping her brown hair over a sun-kissed shoulder. Her swimsuit is purposefully tight and sunscreen is minimal, just like the other girls around her. Everything about these women screams hot in a stereotypical way, and the girls know it and own it, completely aware of their effect on their male teammates.

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Kenzie, chattering excitedly about a party on Friday, and Alice, holding a wrench and batting mascara-d eyelashes at the boys, join Calissa with the team. When Coach Rusty steps on deck, though, the flirty fun immediately ceases, and everyone stands at attention. Between sips of Diet Pepsi and in a thick southern drawl, he tells the team to get ready for practice.

In a wave of white, the girls tuck their hair into egg-like swim caps and transform into fierce and tough. Out for blood. Rusty explains the set, and practice begins. Through voice-over, Calissa explains how this practice is special because it's the last day before official recruiting, something she's spent the past year preparing for.

FADE TO:

2. EXT. OAKVINE HIGH SCHOOL - FLASHBACK - DAY

We are back in Calissa's sophomore year when college became a reality since she needed test scores for recruiting. Calissa turns to MS. MILLSY, the well-meaning but not entirely understanding college advisor and math teacher. It's "College Day" where the seniors and 'try-hard' juniors get a chance to meet with college admissions officers and sign up for the SAT. According to NARPs, Calissa is severely out of her element, but college coaches start looking at swimming profiles online—including events, times, and test scores—as early as the summer after sophomore year. Calissa attempts to explain this to Ms. Millsy, who scoffs, "You don't need to think about college for another year, maybe even two!" But finally folds and allows Calissa to sign up for the SAT.

In the testing room, everyone else is either a Junior or Senior, and they laugh at Calissa for being a nerd. Despite the tension, Calissa does well, putting her in a range for the most highly selective colleges, and adds her test score numbers to her swim resumé. We see her post this to her College Swimming profile and attach a few letters of interest to coaches.

CUT TO:

3. INT. BLUE-BARU CAR - EVENING

"O Zittre Nicht, Mein Lieber Sohn" from the opera *The Magic Flute* plays softly as California farmland skids past slowly with the late afternoon traffic. Calissa, hair wet and dripping onto her clothes, looks out the window before hunching over her phone. It seems like everyone and their mother are on the road; this car ride will take for-ev-ah.

Mom opens her mouth as if to speak, closes it, looks out onto the expanse of traffic ahead of her, and pauses for an uncomfortable beat. Then come the questions: how is practice? Have you studied? You ready for recruiting?

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Calissa brightens at a notification, and her Mom senses her change in demeanor. Mom asks who is texting Calissa, who can't believe her Mom is trying to infringe on her privacy. But does Calissa have anything going on Friday night? "Calissa, I'm not your calendar. I've told you to start writing your schedule down in your planner—" Calissa cuts her off, asking in a suspicious manner if she can attend a team dinner.

Mom contemplates, staring out at the traffic as if she can see the entire road of Calissa's future career. She may say she's not Calissa's calendar, but she very nearly is. Classic mom-ager. She reminds Calissa of her commitments to school and swimming, which Calissa brushes off. As traffic lets up, Mom revs the car to 75—over the speed limit, but not enough to be a target for speed traps. A perfect reflection of Mom, living the life but avoiding consequences. She allows the dinner, with the caveat that Calissa must be home at 9 to be ready for practice the next morning and have her work done before leaving. We turn back to Calissa, who is fast asleep.

4. INT. CALISSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Calissa is sitting in bed, binders and homework sprawled across the sheets. She is cuddled with a stuffed animal and staring intently into her phone. We see two different conversations. One with Kenzie, talking about how the team dinner was such a good cover for a massive party. The second is with ERIC HART: classmate, heart-throb, and serial womanizer. He keeps saying how much he admires Calissa for being a swimmer, how cute her tan lines must be... She switches screens to view her college swimming profile, uncomfortable with the compliments.

At her computer, she stalks the current rankings for high school juniors, staring admiringly at her name at number 13. Mom walks by, "You put your phone away out here, right?" Calissa nods, but her phone is hidden in the covers of her bed.

Back to texting Eric in the dark: weekend plans and tomorrow's test, all while the floorboards creak outside her door. Every so often she looks at the clock projection on her ceiling, watching the hours tick by. When midnight hits, Calissa is under the covers as college recruiting emails start to pour in.

Shocked, she ignores Eric as she begins to read the messages. Annoyed by the lack of attention, Eric calls her, a silly song that cracks the silence like an egg.

Mom throws open the door, a flash-bang of light as she shouts, "No electronics in your room. Hand it over. NOW!" Calissa is frozen like a deer in headlights.

CUT TO:

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ACT TWO

1. INT. SUNFLOWER RIDGE POOL - EARLY MORNING

Five in the morning, and the sun is still asleep. Our Sun Ray swimmers, though, are up and working hard under the stadium lights. They've just finished their pre-set to the main workout, and everyone is bright red and breathing hard. Calissa floats to Kenzie's side of the lane as Coach Rusty gets ready to explain the set and, between gulps of air, angrily complains about the unfairness of her phone being taken away.

Her anger melts into excitement as she reminiscently lists all the schools that contacted her in the few minutes before her phone was confiscated, prompting Kenzie to inquire if any of them are where she plans to consider seriously. Calissa realizes that she was so enamored by the number of emails that she hasn't really considered what she's actually hoping for, "I dunno exactly what I want."

Alice, overhearing the college conversation, proudly announces that she received an email from the Princeton assistant coach about his desire to watch this upcoming Saturday morning practice. The reaction is immediate and chaotic; the lanes fly into a frenzy as word spreads through the pool that Princeton is coming to watch practice!

After noticing the kerfuffle, Coach Rusty tries to focus everyone back in on the present practice, but everyone's mind is now on Saturday. Alice basks in the attention as everyone asks her how she got Princeton's attention so quickly, while Calissa daydreams of herself as a Tiger.

2. EXT. SUNFLOWER RIDGE POOL - MORNING

At the end of practice, Calissa and Alice make their way to the locker room as Coach Rusty pulls Kenzie aside. In a bit of exposition, Rusty says that as a sophomore, now is a great time for Kenzie to really start stepping up her game and setting high goals in the pool, and start putting herself in the eyes of college coaches. "Use the Princeton coach coming as a kick start to your college career, and let's start thinking about Olympic Trial cuts."

He believes Kenzie has a lot of potential in the pool, and to start exploring it, she should start maintaining certain paces in practice to guarantee her success in competition. Kenzie, a bit star-struck, excitedly runs to get changed.

CUT TO:

3. INT. BLUE-BARU - MORNING

"Nur Stille, Stille Stille" from *The Magic Flute* plays in the car. Mom is in there by herself, waiting.

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With a huff, she looks at the clock on the dashboard; what is taking her daughter so long in the locker room? The rhythmic buzz of a phone alert cuts through the opera music, and Mom pulls Calissa's phone out from her purse. She goes to unlock it but sees Calissa coming and puts it back.

Beaming and exhilarated with the news that Princeton is coming to watch practice, Calissa hops into the car. She starts buttering up Mom with compliments and how well swim went this morning, and wow, wouldn't it just be so cool if she could have her phone back? The vibe immediately shifts as Mom refuses, "You can look at college emails on your computer." An argument ensues, and Calissa becomes more desperate as she hears her phone buzzing in Mom's purse.

As the quarrel turns sour, Mom pulls into the driveway at home, refusing to spoil Calissa by driving her the extra two minutes to school. Tensions are running high as Calissa realizes she will actually need to run to school to get there on time, "Man, I hate land sports!"

Mom calls out good luck on the math test from the porch, then digs through her purse to find Calissa's phone. She gazes at it for a beat, then unlocks it and scrolls through messages guiltily.

CUT TO:

4. EXT. OAKVINE HIGH COURTYARD - DAY

Eric Hart lies on top of the circular picnic tables in the main quad. Phone in hand, he is smiling and kicking his feet in the air as he types out a lengthy love letter to Calissa. We see that he is likely the culprit of all the notifications Calissa heard in the car; the whole morning, he's been blowing up her phone, asking why won't you answer, did he say something wrong, are you avoiding me? Eric reads back through the letter and starts to spice it up with emojis when Calissa stumbles into the quad.

Shutting off his phone, Eric swings off the table and attaches himself to her side. Calissa apologizes for the lack of response; her phone has been taken away (Eric pales), and she starts frantically pulling notes out of her locker. Was her mom trying to set her up for failure? Didn't she know that the test was first period? Calissa is spiraling into stress as EMILY, studious academic frenemy, sidles up to the duo, and boasts about staying up *all night* studying. How *hard* she worked to understand the material, and oh this test will just be so *difficult*. Nothing to help Calissa's nerves, but she puts on a face of false confidence.

Eric looks at his watch and smoothly grabs Calissa's shoulders to shepherd her toward the classroom, "Let's go. We have a test to take!"

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5. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

In the classroom, Ms. Millsy hands out the tests as the students finish settling into their seats. While Calissa immediately starts working on the first problems, Emily uses her feet to conveniently spread papers filled with practice problems and notes on the floor. Besides frantically copying down answers, Emily's eyes are rarely on her own test, either peering at Calissa's paper or looking down at her notes.

Meanwhile, Eric is passing the test time, doodling pictures of him and Calissa holding hands, not even attempting to try the questions. He gazes longingly at Calissa, which Ms. Millsy mistakes for him attempting to cheat as she reminds the class, "Eyes on your own paper!"

Calissa looks up at the timer at the front of the room, counting down how much time until pencils down, then flips through the remaining test pages. She has so much left to do and not much time...

Of Calissa's worried face, we fade to black.

ACT THREE

1. EXT. OAKVINE HIGH GARDEN - DAY

The school garden, a quiet green space where a handful of students usually gather for lunch, is unusually hot today. The heat drives most students into air-conditioned classrooms to eat, but Calissa and Kenzie are sweating their way through lunch. Their conversation circles around how weird it is to sweat, like, they know it happens in the pool but thank goodness the water hides it, you know!

A beat of silence, and then Calissa mentions her worry about not finishing the test in time. Princeton wouldn't want someone who can't finish their tests; what should she do? Already stressed and frustrated, the situation isn't helped when Emily enters the garden and immediately starts flaunting how easy the test was, and how she got so nervous about it for no reason. Failing that test could have affected her future as a doctor or lawyer!

Calissa and Kenzie just stare at Emily in uncomfortable silence. Realizing she isn't entirely welcome, Emily mentions something about it being too hot out here anyway, and she needs to discuss her chances at being valedictorian next year with Ms. Millsy. With a flip of her hair, she exits the way she came. Kenzie is like, "What's her deal," to which Calissa mentions offhandedly that of course Emily thought it was easy! Emily was cheating! Eyes lighting up with piping hot tea, Kenzie rushes off to prepare for the next class, leaving Calissa to her free period.

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2. EXT. ATHLETIC FIELDS - DAY

Calissa is lying on the grass, soaking up a few sun rays and moments of rest before returning to the grind. A shadow covers her face; what's going on? She opens her eyes to see Eric standing over her, his head haloed in the sun. "Oh, hey." At this, Eric shoves a partially eaten ciabatta loaf in her direction, getting crumbs in her eyes. Calissa declines, so Eric extends a hand out to pull her off the ground instead. The tug is powerful, launching Calissa into Eric, which she quickly steps away from, but he doesn't let go of her hand.

Calissa's eyes stay pointedly at her limp hand in his grasp, but Eric doesn't notice, leading her toward the athletic field next to the garden. Letting go, he shows her a few volleyballs on the grass, and despite her exclamation that she needs to do work, he begins playfully tossing them toward her. Calissa cannot do land sports, so she is a bit embarrassed as Eric bumps and easily sets the ball. While he showboats, he starts talking about the first time the two met, all the way back in 8th grade, on this same field. Calissa laughs a little bit, not remembering the interaction at all, focused more on not making a fool of herself. He teases her, and she replies, "I don't even know how to put my arms!" Eric decides to show her by going behind her and maneuvering her arms (ooh la la).

Calissa breaks the embrace and steps away. The constant texting she could see past because it felt like an escape from the stress of home and swimming, and Eric wasn't flirty on the phone. But this was different; this behavior couldn't fly because what would Eric's current girlfriend think if she saw this?!? Eric replies, "She doesn't need to know," prompting Calissa to grab her bag and escape, now extremely uncomfortable.

3. INT. SUNFLOWER RIDGE POOL - AFTERNOON

Back at the pool for the second time that day, and Coach Rusty is calling out times as swimmers finish to the wall during the main set. Calissa is obviously far behind, struggling to make intervals and touching a body length behind her teammates. Rusty pulls Calissa aside, "If you aren't going to try, just get out."

Calissa, desperate not to get kicked out of practice, tearfully tries to explain the stress of the test, Eric, and the Princeton coach at practice tomorrow. Rusty listens, he's got a tough exterior but a bit softer on the inside. He reminds her, "Swimming is your meal ticket to college," but tells her to go home to prepare for a good practice tomorrow. A firm believer in cutting your losses and preparing for the next big thing instead of grinding yourself into dust. Scared of what will be meeting her in the car, Calissa takes a moment in the locker room to compose herself, then trudges head down to the parking lot.

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4. INT. BLUE-BARU - AFTERNOON

In the car, "Der Holle Rache Kocht in meinem Herzen" from *The Magic Flute* plays as Mom tries but fails to understand why Calissa got out early. She doesn't get why 1) Calissa couldn't finish the test, 2) why she is entertaining Eric, and 3) why she thought she could lie about the type of party she was going to, revealing that she read Calissa's text messages. Tempers begin to rise as Calissa realizes her privacy has been breached, leading to wild accusations of her Mom being the reason why the test didn't go well. If she had driven her to school, she would have had more time to review her notes before the test!

As the argument unfolds, Mom states, "You are not going to that party. You're going to do your homework and go to bed." Calissa throws back the barb, "I hate you. I can't wait to be in college when you aren't just... hovering! Over my whole life!" Mom gets the last word, though. At this rate, would Calissa even attend college, given this show of poor grades and bad swim practice?

Shocked by Mom's callousness, Calissa stalks off to her room but watches her mom plug in her phone in her bedroom before slamming the door in typical teenage angst.

5. INT. MOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

The only light in the room emanates from the red projection of a clock on the ceiling, leaving everything else in deep shadow. A movement in the depths: it's Calissa sneaking into her Mom's room. Every sound feels deafening as Calissa hits a creaky board or her clothes rub against each other. She gets to the bedside table where her phone is plugged in, grateful that her Mom is asleep on her side facing away from the "crime" she's about to commit.

Calissa pauses for a beat, contemplating whether she should go through with this, then grabs her phone from the charger and unlocks it. The glow of her phone brightens the space, and Mom snores a little louder, but otherwise, it looks like Calissa will pull this heist off. Thinking quickly, she pulls her phone case off the phone, and threads the charging cable through the bottom, a hollow shell but one her mom wouldn't question (hopefully) in the morning.

Back to her phone, Calissa scrolls through her notifications, seeing a few from Kenzie reminding her to get her butt to the function! Without a pause, Calissa texts Kenzie, "On my way!!" and sneaks out.

ACT FOUR

1. INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

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Calissa sticks out like a sore thumb at this party. It's obvious she's a bit of a square: sitting uncomfortably at the edge of the couch, attempting to jump into conversations, or skirting around the edges of groups of people she doesn't know. Kenzie had said this was just a swim team party, but there are so many faces Calissa doesn't recognize...

While Calissa is second-guessing her entire life, Kenzie is partying it up, not worrying about practice in a few hours. She offers a drink to Calissa, encouraging her to loosen up a bit. But everyone is already out of it. Calissa is stressed about the day's events, nervous about the unknown environment, and the party simply isn't fun. She leaves early, realizing that what she thought would make her happy actually didn't.

2. EXT. SUNFLOWER RIDGE POOL - MORNING

It appears that Calissa's late-night adventure went unnoticed by Mom as Calissa and Kenzie shamle into the pool deck like zombies. They are quiet, Calissa because she is still contemplating her realization from last night, and Kenzie because she hasn't slept the entire night and is now dead tired. She has a bit of mascara and glitter smudged around her eyes, just enough to give away where she may have been last night. The two are so wrapped up in themselves that they miss the man in bright orange (like a traffic cone) watching the swimmers enter the deck—the PRINCETON COACH.

In the water, Kenzie is struggling to hit the pace Rusty set previously. As Rusty eyes his stopwatch, then throws a furtive glance at Princeton, he jokes to Calissa (who is still quiet), "Don't be like this one; keep your focus on the pool." Then, Rusty does something unexpected; he folds up the practice and announces the final set is a relay race. Going off the page? He must want his swimmers to get a chance to show off a bit. Alice, Kenzie, and Calissa are on a team together with another swimmer, and Alice immediately takes charge. She needs to impress Princeton, so everyone better do well or else. Kenzie, embarrassed by Rusty's jokes, gets her game face on. She'll do what it takes for the team, but more importantly, to impress Rusty and return to his good graces.

3. INT. SUNFLOWER RIDGE POOL - MORNING

Relays are special in swimming, one of the only times in the club sport that you are competing with and for your team and not by yourself. The pool deck is electric as the Sun Rays get ready to race, with teams hyping each other up and swimmers jumping and shaking out behind the blocks. It's enough to get Calissa out of her funk by stewing about Mom, Eric, and colleges; she gets ready for her relay leg.

It's a 4x100 freestyle relay, and we mostly stay on deck cheering as our team of ladies crushes their race one by one.

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Kenzie almost ties her best time in the relay leg, earning her a nod of approval from Rusty. Calissa does well too. As anchor leg, she barely out-touches the men's relay next to them. Kenzie tells the boy in the water from the pool deck, "Get chick-ed!"

The team passes around fist bumps and "good job," and Rusty commends Calissa's come-back from yesterday. He calls it a wrap on practice, and Calissa exits the pool with teammates laughing and smiling... this has brought her true joy. Still occupied by Rusty's earlier quip, Kenzie turns to Calissa: "See, you can have it all." They walk into the locker room to change.

On the bench outside the locker room is Calissa's phone, still in her possession from last night. An email from "Arizona State University" appears, and we cut to a quick montage of MICHAEL PHELPS putting on an ASU cap, smiling at the camera, and giving us a cheeky wink.

4. EXT. POOL DECK - DAY

After they change, Rusty brings Alice and Calissa over to the Princeton coach and introduces them all. He is polite, saying hello and commenting on Calissa's great underwater work during the relay. "But, at Princeton, we expect that to be just one arrow in your quiver. Our women are going NCAA A cuts." He goes on to talk about expectations of hitting both practices and the classroom with the highest level of participation. Steamrolling on, he launches into some long talk about how Princeton girls are so great, and Alice and Calissa aren't quite that caliber, although they do have the potential to be (some kind of backhanded compliment). Calissa's day-dream tiger purrs and then fades.

5. INT. IHOP - DAY

IHOP, the hallowed post-practice gathering place on Saturday. Calissa, deflated, sits with Kenzie in a booth near the window to the parking lot, poking at breakfast. When Kenzie asks how talking to Princeton was, Calissa sighs and mumbles how she wouldn't want to attend a school like that anyway. On paper, Princeton seemed like the right direction for school choice, but her interaction with the coach leaves a sour taste in her mouth. "I guess I need to go back to the drawing board..." Calissa brings out her phone with the intention to scroll through the schools that have contacted her, but sees the message from "ASU."

She begins to read the email aloud to Kenzie, but stops, her hand flying to her mouth in surprise.

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Flipping her phone around to Kenzie, who finishes reading the email, we hear this is not from ASU, but a love letter from Eric with the final sentence, "I broke up with my girlfriend for you, don't let me down. Let me take you on a date today."

Out the window in the parking lot, Eric pulls in with his windows down and "In Your Eyes" by Peter Gabriel (or similar) blasting. He idles in front of Kenzie and Calissa's window, and we see him sigh, deeply in love.

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