

CARRY ON

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I/E. EDNA'S CAR - AFTERNOON

JUDE DUNN (JD), 17, sits shotgun while HIS MOTHER, EDNA, 42, drives. JD wears jeans and a black T-shirt that reads "THE NITRO PUMPKINS" with a picture of an exploding jack-o'-lantern. Edna wears a red dress.

EDNA

So, how was your day? Anything interesting happen?

JD tilts his head to the side.

JD

There was a fight in the cafeteria.

EDNA

On the first day?

JD

I know, right?

EDNA

How'd it happen?

CUT TO:

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

JD and RICKY MALLO stand in front of each other. The cafeteria is packed. Everybody watches them, holding their lunches. A few people drop their lunches.

JD

Say it again. Say it again, I dare you. I double dare you, motherfucker! Say it one more God damn time!

Ricky shrugs and looks JD square in the eyes.

RICKY

Ass-burger.

BACK TO:

I/E. EDNA'S CAR - PRESENT

JD still sits in his mother's car. The light turns red, and Mrs. Dunn stops in traffic.

EDNA

Cut to the end, Jules. How'd it end?

JD

Well...

CUT TO:

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

JD punches Ricky to the ground.

JD

Do I look like a bitch? Is that all I am to you? Answer the question! Do I look like a bitch to you?

A smug grin crosses Ricky's bloody face.

RICKY

Huh, yeah.

JD

I am nobody's bitch!

The lunch monitors hold JD back from stomping on Ricky.

BACK TO:

I/E. EDNA'S CAR - PRESENT

The light is now green, and cars honk behind the Dunns. Mrs. Dunn looks at her son horrified. Her jaw is agape.

JD

Green, Mom.

EDNA

The hell am I going to do with you?

A car honks its horn again, and Mrs. Dunn takes off.

JD

So, remember how I wasn't going to land myself in detention this year?

EDNA

Yes, I remember.

JD

It's a suspension, now. The good news is they didn't call the police this time.

CUT TO:

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - DR. TOLINI'S OFFICE - EARLIER

JD sits across from the principal, DR. TOLINI, 49. Dr. Tolini is a tall, muscular, African-American man with a deep voice. His office is cozy; not large, but not cramped, either.

DR. TOLINI

Mr. Dunn. We need to stop meeting like this. I'll let you off with just two detentions... this time. If you assault another student, we will be forced to charge you with such.

JD

Detention? Don't you think you're a little uptight?

Dr. Tolini raises an eyebrow.

JD

You know what you could use right now?

DR. TOLINI

Please enlighten me, Mr. Dunn.

JD

You need to go out, find a nice girl, have a nice screw... Maybe even...

DR. TOLINI

Mr. Dunn! That is inappropriate!

JD

(singing)

What do you get when you fall in love?

(spoken)

Eh... I'd say about five, no! Six months of penicillin shots. It's like an adventure!

DR. TOLINI

That's enough, JD.

JD

Hey, I hear Nurse Linda has a wandering eye for you...

DR. TOLINI

You're trying my patience...

JD

Naw, I'm trying to dig myself out of a hole.

DR. TOLINI

Allow me to put you back in it. Two days suspension. If you're lucky, I may just forget about the detentions.

JD

Hey, maybe we'll both get lucky...

JD clicks and winks. Dr. Tolini still scowls.

DR. TOLINI

Do I look amused to you, Mr. Dunn?

JD

No, but you should...

Dr. Tolini glares.

JD

Is joke, you laugh, "ha, ha!" Is funny, no?

DR. TOLINI

No. Go home, JD.

JD

See, we're at a first name basis again. You're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

DR. TOLINI

Just... Go. Please. I need headache medicine.

JD

Oh, like Mom? She usually drinks a fifth.

CUT TO:

I/E. EDNA'S CAR - PRESENT

Edna sits at a stop sign, looking in awe at her son. Angry drivers shake their fists and honk behind her.

DRIVER

Move it, Lady! You've been sitting there for ten minutes!

EDNA

You're unbelievable. I thought you were past this, Jude. I'm trying so hard to show you appropriate behavior, and you go and do this.

JD

I'm trying, too. And I'm failing. And I'm sorry.

Mrs. Dunn and Jude look at each other for a beat.

JD

I should've gone for refuge in audacity.

EDNA

I know you took your meds today. I watched you. What's going through your head, right now?

JD opens his mouth and closes it, again.

EDNA

Well?

JD

A bunch of fired neurons, racing all over the place.

EDNA

Jude, I'm not in the mood!

JD

I got nothing.

EDNA

That's for sure.

The Dunns pull into their driveway. A street sign reads "SENTRY RD."

EXT. THE DUNNS' FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

JD and his mother exit the car, a red Toyota. Their next door neighbor, JACK GLADWYNNE, looks up from pruning his prized bushes. They are shaped like lions and tigers. Jack is currently working on a bear.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Hey, Edna! Hey, Jude!

EDNA  
Hi, Jack.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Don't say that on a plane.

Jack laughs. Edna doesn't.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Rough day?

EDNA  
You could say that.

JD  
Not as rough as it was for Ricky.

EDNA  
Jude, that's enough.

JD  
To be fair, Ricky started it.

EDNA  
I don't care who started it. You're not going to end it. Am I clear?

JD  
Actually, I think you're a bit red in the face, right now.

EDNA  
I give up.

A beat.

EDNA  
What's the theme for this year?

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Homages to George Takei. You know, "lions and tigers and bears. Ohh myyyyyy..."

JD GROANS while Edna looks confused.

JACK GLADWYNNE

Don't worry about it. Just a bad pun.

JD

Bad doesn't even describe it!

EDNA

Get inside, NOW.

JD

I think the "red shirts" are rolling in their graves.

EDNA

Now.

JD

Why don't you like fun?

Edna glares at JD, as he trudges inside the house.

EDNA

I don't know what to do with him.

JACK GLADWYNNE

He really seemed to take the news pretty hard. Father skippin' out on his high school graduation. I'd be upset, too.

EDNA

We already explained to him that he didn't have a choice. Bill's job requires him to go on tour that month.

JACK GLADWYNNE

True, but do you really think he's going to let go of it anytime soon? Look at it from his perspective.

Edna stands still and tilts her head for a moment.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Bill and Edna stand before JD, who sits on the couch.



JD

So, let me get this straight: You can go to Bernadette's graduation, but you can't attend mine.

BILL

Jude, I know you're upset by this, but...

JD

This is hardly fucking fair! She's always been your favorite!

EDNA

That's not true.

JD

I mean, I'm sorry I'm not a perfect little angel like her, but God! What do I have to do to get your attention around here?

EDNA

Ho! You have our attention, all right. Believe me, nobody can miss you.

JD

What's that supposed to mean?

EDNA

Like the time you tried to push your father off a second floor balcony.

JD

Hey! He landed in the pool.

BILL

Or the time you decided to play "sword fight" with Bernadette.

JD

How was I supposed to know that security had us on tape?

EDNA

Two words: New. Zealand.

JD shudders.

BILL

Now, I'm going on tour whether you like it or not.

There's nothing you can say or do that will change that. Go upstairs, calm down, and go to bed. You have school tomorrow.

JD

Make me.

Edna raises an eyebrow at JD.

JD

I'll be good.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DUNNS' FRONT YARD

Jack Gladwynne raises an eyebrow at Edna.

EDNA

Okay, so it could have gone better... But hey! That doesn't excuse his behavior today.

JACK GLADWYNNE

I never said it did.

INT. THE DUNNS' HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Edna walks through the front door. She walks through the house to...

THE BASEMENT

BILL DUNN, 45, sits at a computer station with many monitors. He has turned their basement into a recording studio. JD sits with him, both of them wearing large headphones.

EDNA

Guys?

Bill and JD remove their headphones.

BILL

Oh! Hi, Sweetie. We were just listening to one of my latest recordings for the tour.

EDNA

Jude, can you go upstairs for a second. I need to talk to your father.

JD

Uh-oh.

JD gets out of his seat and walks to the stairs. He passes by a keyboard and taps Chopin's "Funeral March," eventually making his way up the steps.

EDNA

Very funny, Jude.

Bill spins around in his chair to face Edna. He is wearing a gray T-shirt under a blue unbuttoned shirt and jeans.

BILL

Um... Should I ask what that was about?

EDNA

Jude got into a fight in the cafeteria today.

BILL

Did he win?

EDNA

Yes, and the prize was a suspension.

BILL

Wow, day damn one. Impressive.

EDNA

Bill!

BILL

So, now what? I mean, what do we do about it?

EDNA

Well, I was thinking you two should try some father-son bonding. Maybe you could teach him about the guitar. Perhaps if he's not as mad at you, he won't act out so much.

BILL

Worth a shot.

A beat.

BILL  
I'll take him to Dim Witty's.

INT. THE DUNNS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

JD stands with the fridge open.

JD  
Ah. Cool air and Kool-Aid. A  
winning combination.

Bill and Edna walk up the steps into the kitchen.

BILL  
C'mon, Sport. We're going to get  
you a guitar.

JD  
Should I be scared? Is this a trap?

BILL  
Naw, Jude. Put your Kool-Aid in a  
bottle, and let's go.

JD  
I'm getting committed, aren't I?  
What color wallet do you want, Mom?

BILL  
You're not getting committed. I  
just wanna spend some quality time  
with my son before I go out on  
tour. Is that a crime?

JD  
Sure you don't want a wallet, Mom?

BILL  
Why don't we talk about it in the  
car?

Bill ushers JD out of the kitchen.

JD  
(singing)  
They're coming to take me away! Ha,  
ha!

I/E. BILL'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Bill drives with JD sitting shotgun. JD fidgets and taps on  
the arm rest.

BILL  
Something you wanna talk about?

JD  
Why aren't you guys yelling?

BILL  
Jude, no amount of yelling is going to get you to stop being angry. So, why don't we focus that energy into something constructive?

JD  
Like what?

INT. DIM WITTY'S MUSIC STORE - MOMENTS LATER

JD stands in awe as Bill pays for something just out of view.

JD  
You're nuts! N- V- T- S, NUTS!  
Mom'll kill you!

BILL  
This was Mom's idea.

The clerk hands a Gibson Les Paul to Bill. The guitar is green and shiny. A dangling price tag reveals its expensive cost: \$1,995.99. JD stumbles back and nearly faints.

EXT. DIM WITTY'S MUSIC STORE - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

JD and Bill walk through the packed parking lot. Bill carries a guitar case in his hand.

BILL  
We are going to make you a great guitarist.

JD  
But I've only ever played keys.

BILL  
True, which is why I'm going to teach you the guitar. As long as you have all that energy to spend, right?

JD  
Do I even know you?

They reach Bill's black Hyundai.

BILL

Son, rest assured, there will be consequences for your actions in the cafeteria today. Clearly, us yelling at you isn't working. So, your mom and I figured...

JD

Figured what? That you can buy my emotions with a guitar?

BILL

No. Listen, Jude. Your anger is well deserved, but you need to keep it under control. Put that energy to better use. Make something of it. That's all we're saying.

JD

Dad... I, I just can't believe you're choosing Brock over me. I have issues with that.

BILL

Let's look at it this way. You want me to be there for you. I want to keep a roof over your head and food on your plate. Life isn't always fair. In order to meet my goal, you need to postpone your goal a little bit.

JD gets in the shotgun seat and sulks, looking away from Bill.

JD

Whatev.

He slams the door with a loud WHAM.

Bill SIGHS.

INT. THE BASEMENT - LATER

Bill and JD sit on stools. Bill holds his guitar, while JD holds the guitar Bill just bought him.

BILL

Now, play an E-Minor Chord just like I taught you.

JD strums, and it sounds nothing like an E-Minor Chord.

JD

This is useless! This is just going to piss me off even more.

BILL

Take a deep breath, and calm down. Imagine how much more awesome it's going to feel when you nail it.

JD

Dad, we've been down here for two hours. Let's face it; I'm never going to be awesome.

BILL

You expect to be awesome in just two hours?

Bill stares at JD. JD stares back for a moment, looks at his guitar, and sighs.

BILL

Well?

JD

No, Dad.

BILL

Why don't we take a break?

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MR. D.'S CLASS - MORNING

MR. D., 56, leans against his desk, drinking from a mug of coffee. JD and Ricky sit before him.

MR. D.

These games have gone far enough, you two. If you want to graduate this year, I'd recommend you cut the crap and learn to be civil with each other.

JD and Ricky glare at each other.

MR. D.

You're almost grown adults. I'm not saying you have to like each other, but you don't have to make each other's lives harder than they need to be. Are we clear?

JD AND RICKY  
 (in unison)  
 Yes.

MR. D.  
 Good. I'm glad we could have this  
 talk.

More students pile into the classroom. One of them, AMY  
 GLADWYNNE, 16, catches JD's eye.

MR. D.  
 Guys, meet our new friend joining  
 us, Amy Gladwynne.

AMY  
 Hi. I just moved here from  
 Nashville. My mom's sick, so I'm  
 staying with my uncle and aunt 'til  
 she's better.

MR. D.  
 I hope you all will show Amy the  
 same kind of support you show each  
 other.

JD hears words flying around the room, but he doesn't listen  
 to them. All he is focused on is Amy.

AMY  
 Blah blah-blah blee-blah.

MR. D.  
 Blah, blah-by blah.

RICKY  
 Blah. Blah. Blah? JD!

Ricky nudges him. JD almost clings to the ceiling.

RICKY  
 You're up, dude.

JD  
 What're we doing again?

RICKY  
 We're introducing ourselves. If you  
 want, you can go back on screen  
 saver mode. I can introduce you to  
 the class. All I'd have to say is  
 that you're an autistic ass.



JD  
I'd rather be an ass than a douche-  
canoe like you, Dick.

JD and Ricky glare at each other with lightning shooting from their eyes.

MR. D.  
Knock it off, you two.

JD and Ricky look away from each other, sulking.

EXT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

JD walks alone. Amy walks up behind him.

AMY  
Hey!

JD startles and trips over his own two feet.

AMY  
Oh, my goodness! Are you okay?

JD  
Peachy.

JD pulls himself up and dusts himself off.

AMY  
What's up with Ricky? He was such a  
jack-ass to you, earlier.

JD  
He's always a jack-ass. Why do you  
think his name's Dick?

Amy laughs.

AMY  
You have an interesting way with  
words.

JD  
What's interesting about it?

JD stares at Amy, while she laughs.

JD  
What?

AMY  
Mind if I walk with you?

JD

Okay.

JD and Amy walk as they talk.

AMY

So where do you live?

JD

Right around the corner.

AMY

You don't really talk much, do you?

JD

What do you mean?

AMY

In class, you hardly said a word.

JD

So?

AMY

You're hardly talking now.

JD

And?

AMY

That's not very sociable of a gentleman.

JD

Huh?

AMY

I just meant that you're a man is all.

JD

I am?

JD and Amy round the corner onto...

THE DUNNS' FRONT YARD

AMY

I can't tell if you're funny or just a smart-ass.

JD

I'm an Aspie. If that helps.

AMY

Dear Lord. I traded Nashville for this.

Amy walks ahead with a huff.

JD

Was it something I said?

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC CLASS - AFTERNOON

JD sits at a table with his group, NICK MACCLOUD, 18, and JOHN HAMMEL, 18. Nick wears jeans and a flannel shirt with the sleeves rolled up. John sits opposite from JD and Nick, frowning. The teacher, MR. SPEIGEL, 45, addresses the class.

MR. SPEIGEL

I'm sure you all heard the rumors. FME Records and VH1 are, in fact, seeking talented graduating seniors for a new reality series. I am told there will be a talent competition in March to select three acts for the show.

Nick raises his hand.

MR. SPEIGEL

Yes, Mr. MacCloud.

NICK

Where is this going to be held?

MR. SPEIGEL

Good question. Since they are selecting these acts from HHS, we will be hosting the Mr. Fahrenheit competition in the auditorium. Auditions for the show will be held sometime in early January.

JD scowls. Nick nudges him.

NICK

Hey, JD. You should totally do it. You could use Autism Awareness as your platform.

JD

Yeah, and I can defend Fairy Land from the Jabberwocky right after I'm done working the shaft.

MR. SPEIGEL  
I'm sorry. What was that, Mr. Dunn?

JD  
I said...

MR. SPEIGEL  
I heard what you said, young man.  
That's not appropriate. Apologize  
for that remark.

JD  
I'm sorry I can work the shaft.

A few audible SNICKERS escape from some of the other students. Mr. Speigel walks up to JD.

MR. SPEIGEL  
Very cute.

JD  
You're looking dapper today, as  
well.

The SNICKERS become LAUGHS.

MR. SPEIGEL  
Do I look like an idiot? Am I  
really that stupid?

Mr. Speigel whips around to face the rest of the class.

MR. SPEIGEL  
First person to answer that reports  
to Dr. Tolini's office.

CUT TO:

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - DR. TOLINI'S OFFICE - LATER

JD sits across from Dr. Tolini again.

JD  
He did ask.

DR. TOLINI  
JD, I know you know better than  
that. You were doing so well last  
year. Why now? Why so close to  
graduation?

JD  
That's nine months away.

DR. TOLINI

JD...

JD

It is. Just sayin'.

Dr. Tolini reads a paper from his desk.

DR. TOLINI

(in disbelief)

I'm sorry I can work the shaft. Mm.

I'm sorry I can work the shaft. Mm!

JD chortles. Dr. Tolini looks up at him.

DR. TOLINI

Such vulgarities are unbecoming of a young man like yourself. I'll go light on you this time. Apologize to the class for your behavior, and don't do it again. Two days detention.

JD

Damn.

DR. TOLINI

Excuse me?

JD

This isn't going well.

DR. TOLINI

I'll say.

EXT. SENTRY RD. - AFTERNOON

JD and Amy walk up to JD's house.

JD

Thanks for waiting up for me after detention.

AMY

Sure. I just can't believe you did that.

JD

I didn't even realize I was doing it. It just... sorta happened.

Jack Gladwynne exits his front door with a hedge trimmer.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Oh, hey! What'cha guys think?

JD  
Needs more Shatner.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Shatner, eh? Hmm...

He strokes his chin for a moment.

AMY  
When's the judging?

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Next week. Can't wait.

JD  
Awesome.

JD turns to go inside his house with a thumbs up.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Hey, I got a great idea. Why don't  
you introduce Amy to your dad?

JD  
Because he's my dad?

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Jude's dad is the lead guitarist  
for Wild Billy and the Maniacs.

AMY  
Really? Wow! I'm a huge fan of  
theirs.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Oh, I'm sure Bill won't mind  
meeting a fan. Never has before.

Amy looks at Jude with a smile that could blind the sun.

JD  
What?

AMY  
Could you introduce me to your dad?

JD  
Why?

AMY  
Because I've never met a celebrity  
before.

JD blinks at her. Amy still smiles. He blinks again.

AMY  
Please...

JD  
Fine. You win. He's in the  
basement.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Don't be rude.

JD  
Jesus! C'mon.

JD grabs Amy by the hand and pulls her inside his house.

INT. THE DUNNS' HOUSE - BASEMENT

Bill sits at his computer station with headphones on. JD and Amy walk down the steps. JD taps Bill's shoulder, and Bill turns around.

BILL  
Oh. Hey there, Jude.

Bill notices Amy standing behind Jude.

BILL  
Wow. You finally brought home a  
girl. I'm so proud. My son's  
becoming a man!

Bill pretends to wipe a tear from his eye. Amy giggles while JD glares at his father.

JD  
Actually, Dad... This is Jack's  
niece, Amy.

AMY  
Hi. It's so nice to meet you.

BILL  
Likewise.

Bill shakes Amy's hand. Amy almost can't contain her excitement.

BILL

So, you're Jack's niece I've been hearing so much about. What brings you guys down here today?

AMY

I am such a huge fan of yours. I didn't know I was moving next door to a celebrity.

BILL

I don't know if I'd call myself a celebrity, but I appreciate all the fans. You know, Jude, here, is shaping up to be a great musician, himself.

AMY

Really?

JD

Dad...

BILL

Nonsense, Jude. You're a very talented keyboarder. Right now, we're working on guitar...

JD

Which I'm still shit at.

BILL

Why don't you play some keyboard for Amy?

AMY

Yeah! That's a great idea. Are you gonna play in the talent show?

BILL

Talent show?

JD

Shut up, Amy.

JD nudges her.

BILL

Tell me about this talent show.

JD rolls his eyes.



AMY

FME and VH1 are teaming up for a new hit reality show. The top three acts at the talent show make it in.

BILL

Whaddaya know? That's my label. I'm sure Jude would be happy to participate.

JD

Don't I get a say in this?

BILL

Don't tell me you don't want to do it, now.

AMY

Why don't we hear a sample of what he's capable of before he makes that decision.

JD

Absolutely not!

BILL

Why not?

JD

Because I don't want to participate in the talent show.

AMY

But why?

JD

I just don't. Okay?

AMY

Nope.

JD

What?

AMY

That's not an option.

JD

Oh?

AMY

Yep.

JD

That's outrageous! No, I'm not doing it.

AMY

I guess I'll just have to go to that upcoming RUSH concert with Ricky.

JD

I'll do it.

AMY

I thought so.

JD stomps up the stairs and slams the door behind him.

BILL

Nice work. Playing the "Ricky Card," I see.

AMY

I was just playing the RUSH card.

BILL

Do you even have tickets?

Amy motions to shush him.

BILL

Don't worry about it. I'll get'em.

JD returns to the basement with his 49-key synthesizer.

BILL

Need some help with that, Jude?

JD

I got it.

JD starts to put the synthesizer on a table on top of Bill's paperwork.

BILL

Why don't we move some of this?

Bill moves his papers out of the way, and JD sets the synthesizer on the table. JD plugs a myriad of cables into the synthesizer.

JD

Now, I haven't played in a couple months, but with some practice, you won't even know the difference.

JD turns on the synthesizer, a black Yamaha, and fiddles with the instrument settings for a moment.

JD  
Here, we go!

JD starts playing the synthesizer. Amy and Bill bob their heads to the music. After a few bars, Bill cuts him off.

BILL  
All right, that was good for someone who hasn't played in three months, but it's still a little sloppy.

JD  
Bite me.

AMY  
You talk to your father like that?

JD  
I talk to everyone like that.

AMY  
True.

JD glares at Amy.

BILL  
Oh, he's just mad that I'm going on tour during his graduation. Don't take it too seriously. I don't.

JD  
Thanks, Dad.

AMY  
You know, I used to play piano back in Nashville.

BILL  
Really, now?

JD  
You think you can do any better?

A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Amy finishes playing on the synthesizer.

BILL

That was much better technique.  
Maybe you two could play together  
in the talent show.

JD

If she plays keyboard, what does  
that leave for me to play?

Bill and Amy both look at JD's guitar in the corner of the  
basement studio and look back at JD.

JD

What?

Bill and Amy grin.

JD

What?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DUNNS' FRONT YARD - EVENING

A neighbor walks his dog past the Dunns' residence. He hears  
screaming from the basement. His dog drags him away.

JD (O.S.)

I'm not doing it!

BILL (O.S.)

Jude, calm down! The neighbors can  
hear you.

BACK TO:

INT. THE DUNNS' BASEMENT

Amy sits in a swivel desk chair, watching JD and Bill scream  
at each other. She swivels toward JD.

JD

You can't make me do this! I'm not  
even any good at guitar!

Amy swivels toward Bill.

BILL

Can we talk about this without  
screaming?

Back to JD.

JD

You wanna talk? How about we talk about you ditching me for a bunch of bandwagon fans? How about we talk about that?

Back to Bill.

BILL

Fine. We can talk about that. Just stop screaming. The neighbors can hear all of our business.

Amy swivels back to JD. JD addresses her.

JD

Can you please stop doing that; it's driving me up a wall!

BILL

I can't talk to you at this point. You're too far gone.

JD clenches his fist.

JD

Of course, you can't talk to me. You're too busy kissing Brock's...

Amy intervenes before JD can punch Bill.

AMY

Hey, why don't we take a break? C'mon, let's go get something to drink.

JD reluctantly follows Amy upstairs. Amy gives Bill a quick wink. Bill SIGHS and goes back to his computer station.

INT. THE DUNNS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Amy and JD sit in the kitchen, drinking Kool-Aid.

AMY

Relax. I don't think anybody wants anybody to get upset.

JD puts his Kool-Aid down.

JD

The talent show's in six months. There's no way I'm going to be good enough for it.

AMY

Not with that attitude.

JD

Why do you even care, anyway? We just met.

AMY

Because I'm a nice person, and I see a young man in front of me who's hurting inside so much, he can't see when other people try to help him.

JD

I don't need any help.

AMY

I guess that means you don't need me.

JD

That's not what I said. You're twisting my words.

AMY

Let me ask you your own question. Why do you care if I'm around or not?

JD

I don't have too many friends. If I do this, I'll make an ass of myself.

AMY

You have six months to change that outcome. For you to not make an ass of yourself.

JD

How?

AMY

By having your dad and I help you do the best you can.

JD

He doesn't care.

Amy stares him down, putting her hand over his.

AMY

He does. It's just in a different way than how you want him to care. If not for him, will you do it for me?

JD looks into Amy's puppy dog eyes.

JD

This is hardly fair.

AMY

I'm not hearing a "no."

JD

Let me calm down first.

AMY

Take a deep breath. Relax.

JD takes slow, deep breaths and closes his eyes.

AMY

Good. We can start tomorrow if you want.

JD

Fine.

Bill walks up the stairs.

BILL

Everything all right, up here?

JD

Yeah.

AMY

I'll be by tomorrow. I'm holding you to that.

JD

Whatev.

Edna walks through the back door.

EDNA

Hi, guys.

Edna notices Amy.

EDNA

Oh, you must be Jack's niece I've heard so much about.

Amy blushes.

AMY

Yeah.

EDNA

Would you like to stay for dinner?

AMY

Oh, I don't think I...

EDNA

Nonsense. You're more than welcome here.

JD

If not for her, then will you do it for me?

AMY

That's not even remotely fair.

JD

Turnabout's fair play.

AMY

Okay, I guess I can stay a little longer.

EDNA

Great! Jude, can you and your father set the table?

JD

Whatev.

JD turns to leave the kitchen.

EDNA

Oh, and Jude?

JD

Yeah?

EDNA

You're grounded this weekend. Dr. Tolini called me at work today.

JD

Damn.

EDNA

No more debts to society.



JD

Hooray! I'm a rich man! I don't  
have any more debts to society to  
pay! Wahoo! I'm a free man! I'm  
livin' large, tonight!

Bill and Edna look at each other. Edna's face expresses  
concern, while Bill stares with a flat expression.

BILL

Whatev.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC CLASS - AFTERNOON

JD and his group sit at their table while Mr. Speigel talks.  
John pays close attention, sitting on the edge of his seat,  
while JD stares into space and Nick rests his head on his  
desk.

MR. SPEIGEL (O.S.)

Blah, blah, bleep, bloop, be-doop.

John leans in closer. Mr. Speigel walks up to JD, who doesn't  
flinch.

MR. SPEIGEL

Blah!

JD startles and falls over backward in his chair. The class  
LAUGHS.

JD

Ow.

MR. SPEIGEL

Try to pay more attention, Mr.  
Dunn.

Mr. Speigel turns his attention to Nick.

MR. SPEIGEL

That goes for you as well, Mr.  
MacCloud.

Nick raises his hand and gives a thumbs-up.

MR. SPEIGEL

Now, then. Is there anyone else who  
wishes to sign up for the talent  
competition auditions next month?

JD raises his hand. John falls forward out of his chair,  
LAUGHING.

JOHN  
Now, that's funny.

MR. SPEIGEL  
Mr. Hammel, I'll thank you not to  
disrupt my class.

JD GROWLS at John.

JD  
Why is that funny?

MR. SPEIGEL  
Screw it. I'm done.

JOHN  
You'd be playing keys, right?

JD  
No, I'd be using guitar.

JOHN  
Dude! We'll crush you on that  
stage. Forget it. You'll never end  
up on that show.

JD  
Well, there are three spots on the  
show, so we can both end up on the  
show. Friendly competition, right?

JOHN  
Yeah, right, JD. You'll never get a  
callback. You really think they'd  
want someone who's only played for  
what? A month? Get real.

Nick picks his head up.

NICK  
Guys...

JD  
I've been playing for three months,  
ass-hole!

NICK  
Seriously, guys. Calm down.

JOHN  
Is that all? I've been playing for  
three years. What makes you so  
special, anyway?

NICK  
(singing)  
Imagine, there's no heaven...

JD  
Like, there's any actual music  
theory in your mindless shredding!

NICK  
(singing)  
It's easy if you try...

MR. SPEIGEL  
I know I can, right now.

Nick high-fives Mr. Speigel.

JOHN  
Why don't you learn to play without  
tabs the right way?

JD  
You're one to talk! Why don't you  
stop hiding behind your good buddy,  
Ricky?

JOHN  
I don't have to take this from an  
Aspie!

JD throws his hands in the air.

JD  
Oh! So, that's what this is about!  
Now, all the cards are on the  
table! Jude Dunn can't have talent  
because he's fucking autistic!

JOHN  
Retarded is more like it!

MR. SPEIGEL  
Enough! Knock it off, the both of  
you!

JD stands up.

JD  
I need a time out.

MR. SPEIGEL  
That's a wise decision, JD.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MR. D.'S CLASS - MOMENTS LATER

JD sits at a desk, drinking a bottle of water. Mr. D. sits at an adjacent desk.

MR. D.  
I'm proud of the way you handled that, JD.

JD  
He just pisses me off, so much.

MR. D.  
Just do the best you can. People are going to come and go all throughout your life with all their opinions. There's only one opinion you'll carry around with you your whole life.

JD puts the water down and looks up at MR. D.

JD  
Mine?

MR. D.  
A wise man knows when to fight his own battles. A wiser man knows when not to fight.

JD  
But...

MR. D.  
Be who you are, and say how you feel. Because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind. Do you know who said that?

JD  
Dr. Seuss. But...

MR. D.  
Does he matter?

JD  
No.

MR. D.  
Then don't mind.

JD  
How will that make him stop?

MR. D.

It won't.

JD raises an eyebrow.

MR. D.

You can't change others; you can only change yourself. Set a good example. Be the change you want to see in the world.

Nick enters the room.

NICK

Hey. Dude, JD. You missed all the drama.

JD

There was more drama after I left?

NICK

Yeah, man. John's dropping the class, which means he'll be one class short for graduation.

JD

Which means he can't be in the competition, now.

MR. D.

Will Mr. Spiegel let him do that?

NICK

He encouraged it. I told him not to drop it, but he flipped me off and quit the band.

JD

Really?

NICK

Yeah, and now we need a guitarist.

MR. D.

Sounds like a lucky break, JD.

JD

What about Asher and Brendan?

NICK

I'll talk it over with them.

JD  
I need to talk it over with Amy,  
first.

NICK  
Take as long as you need.

EXT. SENTRY RD. - LATER

JD and Amy walk up to JD's house, talking. Jack Gladwynne rakes leaves on his front lawn. The Shatner bush has a giant see-through hole in its stomach.

AMY  
Yeah, sure. Do it. Serves him right  
for quitting.

JD  
Thanks.

Jack Gladwynne looks up at Amy and JD. JD waves.

JD  
Sorry about Spiffy getting into  
your bushes.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Yeah, I didn't like that judge,  
anyway. That's what he got for  
getting too close to the cat in the  
Shat.

Jack Gladwynne bumps his eyebrows up and down and makes a jazz hands motion.

JD  
You're losing your touch, there.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Welp, I guess that didn't lighten  
the mood.

AMY  
What's wrong?

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Amy, we got a phone call from  
Nashville General Hospital this  
morning. We didn't want to upset  
you at school.

Jack Gladwynne's eyes start to tear up with a SNIFFLE.

JACK GLADWYNNE

Your mother went peacefully in her sleep. Around 9:15, the nurse went to wake her up, and it was too late.

He starts to lose his composure.

JACK GLADWYNNE

We thought we should wait to tell you in person.

Amy drops to her knees. JD comforts her, as she bawls on his shoulder. JD rubs her back.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MR. D.'S CLASS - MORNING

JD and Amy sit with Mr. D., as the rest of the class file in. Mr. D.'s hand rests on her shoulder.

Ricky enters the room.

RICKY

Hey, JD. I heard you had an interesting music class, yesterday.

JD

Not now, Ricky.

Ricky moves in closer.

RICKY

Yo mama!

Amy storms out of the room.

JD

I mean it, Ricky. Knock it off!

Mr. D. pulls Ricky to the side and tells him something.

A beat.

Ricky looks over at JD and puts his head down. JD glares back for a moment and walks out after Amy.

RICKY

JD, I...

JD (O.S.)

Save it. Your friends are all assholes, and so are you.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM - LATER

JD works with Nick at an empty table. Sheets of paper with musical staves printed on them are scattered across the table. JD frowns.

NICK

There's nothing anyone could have done.

JD

Here I am, worrying about a stupid reality show. We can't take fame and fortune with us when we go, so what's the point of living?

NICK

Nobody knows, and maybe that's the point.

JD

What?

NICK

Maybe the point's that we're supposed to spend our lives finding our purpose to answer that for ourselves.

JD

But what's my purpose?

NICK

You have to figure that out on your own.

JD SIGHS.

NICK

Hey, man. Hakuna Matata.

JD

Hmm?

NICK

(singing)

It means no worries for the rest of your days.

JD

(singing)

It's a problem-free philosophy.



NICK AND JD  
(singing in unison)  
Hakuna Matata!

JD and Nick laugh.

JD  
Hey! Why don't we dedicate our  
performance in memory of Amy's mom?

NICK  
I like the way you think, sir. I'm  
sure Amy will really appreciate  
that.

INT. THE DUNNS' BASEMENT - EVENING

JD jams on his guitar, while Bill looks on with awe. JD  
sounds much better, now.

ANGLE: JD'S FINGERS

JD's fingers flutter all over the fretboard with perfect  
technique.

BILL  
You've been practicing for twelve  
hours today, Jude. Why don't you  
give yourself a break?

JD  
Can't hear you over the sound of my  
suck.

BILL  
You're fine. Why the sudden  
obsession?

JD stops playing.

JD  
I need to do this right, Dad.

BILL  
And you will. What you need to do  
is...

JD  
What I need to do is keep  
practicing.

Bill walks over to JD and puts his arm around his shoulder.

BILL

Your fingers are bleeding and  
you've been practicing since you  
woke up at seven. Get some rest.

JD

Just as soon as I nail this solo.

JD YAWNS.

BILL

You're exhausted. You need to break  
out of this brain-lock and go to  
bed. You're not going to be able to  
help anybody if you can't function,  
yourself.

JD puts the guitar in its stand and starts to walk up the  
stairs, as Edna enters the basement.

EDNA

Good night, Sweetie.

JD

Good night, Mom.

JD gives her a hug and walks up the stairs, closing the door  
behind him.

INT. JD'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

JD lies awake in his bed with the light turned out. He looks  
at his hands in the dark.

A tuxedo cat, SPIFFY, jumps on his bed and rubs up against  
him. JD strokes the cat.

JD

What's your purpose in life?

SPIFFY

MEOW.

JD

Real helpful, cat.

Spiffy lies down next to JD and PURRS.

A beat.

Bill walks up to JD's open door and KNOCKS on the doorjam.

BILL  
Hey, Sport.

JD  
Huh?

BILL  
Your mom and I were just talking,  
and we like that you're channelling  
all this energy into something  
productive...

JD  
But...

BILL  
We're a bit concerned about the  
amount of time you've been  
practicing each day.

JD  
I haven't practiced that much, have  
I?

BILL  
You've practiced for 80 hours out  
of the past ten days.

JD rolls over in his bed to avoid looking at Bill.

BILL  
Careful there, Sport. You're about  
to fall out of...

JD falls out of his bed with a THUD.

JD  
WHUP!

BILL  
Bed.

JD  
Ow.

Bill CHUCKLES, as JD's middle finger rises from behind the  
bed, aimed at Bill. Spiffy jumps down to JD.

JD  
OOF! Frigging cat.

SPIFFY  
MEOW.

BILL  
Get some sleep.

JD lies on the floor until...

MORNING

Sunshine slides through the slats of JD's blinds. Spiffy sleeps on JD's face on the floor.

The cat perks up and runs out of the room in a hurry.

JD  
Frigging cat.

SPIFFY (O.S.)  
MEOW.

JD sits up, rubbing and cracking his neck. He picks himself up and heads for...

THE KITCHEN

Bill and Edna sit at the kitchen table, eating.

Bill reads a newspaper, as Edna sips her coffee.

BILL  
Mornin'.

JD  
Yes. It is morning.

EDNA  
Something wrong?

JD  
I slept on the floor with a cat on my face last night?

BILL  
You have any schoolwork for Monday?

JD  
No.

BILL  
Good. Eat some breakfast.

JD  
I don't even like bacon.

Bill pauses with a strip of bacon hanging out of his mouth.  
CRUNCH.

BILL  
Whose son are you? Don't like  
bacon...

EDNA  
What's on your schedule for today?

JD  
Band practice at 2:30.

EDNA  
Don't you think you're working a  
little too hard?

JD  
I'll be fine. We're dedicating our  
performance to Amy's mom.

EDNA  
Oh, that's nice.

BILL  
Are you going to be able to handle  
it if you don't get picked?

JD  
Oh, we're getting picked. The Nitro  
Pumpkins will be on that show.

BILL  
If you say so.

INT. NICK'S GARAGE - EVENING

The NITRO PUMPKINS practice in the garage, with the door  
open. The garage is empty, save for the band and their  
equipment.

There's a beautiful sunset tonight, not that anybody notices.

ANGLE: ASHER PLAYS BASS GUITAR.

ANGLE: BRENDAN FLAILS WILDLY ON THE DRUMS.

Nick stops playing his keyboard and motions for everybody to  
stop.

Brendan continues flailing.

NICK  
Okay, Brendan. The drums work.

Nick grabs the drumsticks from Brendan.

NICK  
Can we be a tad more serious?

A beat.

ASHER  
It's 8:42. Maybe we should call it  
a night.

JD  
Already? I was just getting  
started.

NICK  
I like the enthusiasm, but we're  
all exhausted, dude.

JD  
You are.

BRENDAN  
What's with all the seriousness,  
anyway?

NICK  
Yeah, man. What's up?

JD  
I just wanna do this right. We are  
dedicating it and all.

Nick smirks.

NICK  
You like her, don't you?

JD  
What? Who?

NICK  
You know who I mean.

Nick's smirk becomes an impish grin.

NICK  
You like Amy. That's why you're  
pushing yourself so hard.

JD  
Not here; not now, Nick.

NICK  
Hey, it's noble. Just remember to  
take care of yourself, too.

BRENDAN  
This isn't another thing like with  
Lauren Snyder, is it?

JD  
You tryin' to say something, big  
guy?

ASHER  
Whoa! Chill out. He's not trying to  
say anything.

JD  
But he just said...

ASHER  
Be the bigger man. Don't let anyone  
get to you. Just let it go. Are you  
the bigger man?

JD  
I'd like to think so.

ASHER  
Then don't worry about it.

NICK  
C'mon, Jude. Let's take a walk.

EXT. NICK'S NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

The sun has finished setting. JD and Nick walk with their  
winter coats on.

NICK  
I didn't mean to start something,  
back there.

JD  
That's okay. To tell you the truth,  
I'm exhausted, too.

NICK  
Just remember what we talked about  
in the music room.

JD

What?

NICK

(singing)

Hakuna Matata.

NICK AND JD

(chanting in unison)

Hakuna! Matata! Hakuna! Matata!

Nick and JD nudge each other and laugh.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

The Nitro Pumpkins perform a sound check on stage, fiddling with different knobs and plugging in cables.

BROCK TRENT, 42, sits a few rows back in the audience. His hair has a gray racing stripe on one side. A few other people sit with him, holding clipboards.

A myriad of roadies and cameramen adjust sound settings and lighting.

Amy watches from a distance, backstage. Ricky approaches her.

RICKY

I'm sorry I said that thing. I didn't know.

AMY

Why do you hate Jude, so much?

RICKY

It's not that I hate Jude so much as he makes it so easy. Like a walking bull's eye.

AMY

But why? Why even go out of your way to bug him?

RICKY

I... I just... I dunno.

Amy stares him down.

RICKY

It's just that when we were kids, everybody did it. I guess it just kinda... stuck.



AMY

Just because someone else does something, doesn't mean you should.

RICKY

I'll take that into consideration.

Ricky starts to walk away, but stops a moment.

RICKY

Tell him I said, "good luck."

AMY

I'll let him know.

Ricky walks off down...

THE HALLWAY

Mr. D. exits the main office and bumps into Ricky.

MR. D.

Hey, there.

RICKY

Mr. D.?

MR. D.

Something wrong?

RICKY

I feel like I don't even know myself, anymore.

MR. D.

Wanna talk about it?

RICKY

I've been a horrible person.

MR. D.

There are no horrible people. Their actions may be horrible, but there's no such thing as a horrible person.

RICKY

No, I think my actions speak louder than words.

MR. D.  
 I'm not gonna lie, Ricky. Your  
 actions toward JD have been  
 deplorable and despicable.

Ricky looks at his feet.

MR. D.  
 But. We are more than just our  
 actions. We make choices. We always  
 have the option to make new  
 choices. We can always change our  
 actions in the future.

RICKY  
 So, what do I do, now?

MR. D.  
 That, Mr. Mallo, is up to you. I  
 have to get to a meeting. Let me  
 know if you need to talk about  
 anything else.

Mr. D. turns to walk down the hallway.

MR. D.  
 (singing)  
 ...As we wind on down the road, our  
 shadows taller than our souls.  
 There walks a lady we all know, who  
 shines white light and wants to  
 show how everything still turns to  
 gold. And if you listen very hard,  
 the tune will come to you at last.

His words echo throughout the hallway.

RICKY  
 (singing to himself)  
 When we all are one and one is  
 all...  
 (spoken)  
 To be a rock and not to roll.

Ricky turns his head to look back at the auditorium.

Amy still stands at the backstage door, watching.

RICKY  
 (singing)  
 ...And she's buying a stairway to  
 heaven.

AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

MONTAGE:

The Nitro Pumpkins perform their audition song, a cover of "Carry On Wayward Son."

Jude's fingers fly up and down the frets, playing each note with passion.

Brendan keeps the beat on the drums along with Asher on bass.

Nick sings and plays keyboard at the same time.

The judges scribble in their clipboards.

Brock bobs his head to the beat and taps his foot.

Amy claps along.

Ricky sits outside on a step with his face buried in his hands.

The Nitro Pumpkins finish their performance.

Brock stands up and claps.

BROCK

I wouldn't expect anything less from Wild Billy's son. That was studio quality, right there. What's your platform?

NICK

Autism Awareness. JD, here, is an Aspie.

BROCK

I know. I work with his father.

JD

Don't I know it.

BROCK

Do you even know who I am?

JD

You're Brock Trent. You're the guy who told my dad he can't attend my graduation in June.

BROCK

I did? That would be a crime.  
Anyone who plays like that deserves  
to have his father attend his  
graduation.

JD

So...

BROCK

I'll see what I can work out. See  
you guys in March.

NICK

Wait, you mean...

JUDGE #1

You're in.

JUDGE #2

Congratulations! You'll be  
receiving further instructions at  
the next meeting in February.

The Nitro Pumpkins CHEER.

JD double high-fives Nick. Asher pumps his fist in the air.

ASHER

Woo-hoo!

Brendan crashes on the drums.

BRENDAN

Animal!

Brock smiles.

EXT. SENTRY RD. - LATER

JD walks Amy home.

AMY

That was amazing. I'm so proud of  
you.

JD

Wait until Dad finds out. He won't  
believe it! I mean, I hardly  
believe it.

They reach JD's house. Jack Gladwynne shovels snow off his  
sidewalk. He looks up and waves at JD and Amy.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Hey, guys! How'd it go?

JD  
We're in!

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Fantastic! I can't wait to see the  
competition. How many bands got in?

AMY  
Five.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Out of how many?

JD  
Fourteen.

JACK GLADWYNNE  
Outstanding!

Bill storms out the front door, a portable phone in his hand  
and a scowl on his face.

BILL  
Jude! What did you do? My tour got  
pushed back a month.

AMY  
JD didn't do anything. Brock was  
there, and...

BILL  
Oh, no! Tell me you didn't...

JD  
I didn't.

BILL  
Don't lie to me, Jude.

JD  
But I really didn't. He saw me play  
and said it was a crime to make you  
miss my graduation.

BILL  
How'd it come up?

JD  
He asked if I knew who he was?

BILL  
What did you say?

JD  
I told him about the situation,  
and...

BILL  
Jude...

JD  
Now we both get what we want.

BILL  
That's not the point, son.

Bill SIGHS.

BILL  
I was counting on that revenue to  
get you your graduation gift. Now I  
have to figure everything out all  
over again.

A beat.

BILL  
Did you at least get in the talent  
competition?

JD  
Along with four other bands.

BILL  
Congrats!

Bill gives Jude a big hug.

JD  
Dad...

BILL  
I am so proud of you.

JD  
Dad, I have to pee.

Jack Gladwynne laughs. Amy face-palms. Bill lets go.

BILL  
You really know how to kill the  
moment, don't you? I'll let you  
tell your mother the good news.

JD disappears inside, leaving the front door open.

BILL  
Amy, do us all a favor?

AMY  
Yeah?

BILL  
Make sure he doesn't overwork  
himself?

AMY  
On it.

BILL  
Thanks.

Spiffy jumps out the front door and plays in the snow piles. He inadvertently destroys a snowman and knocks over Bill's ice sculpture at the curb.

BILL  
Frigging cat.

SPIFFY  
MEOW.

Jack and Amy burst out laughing. Bill GRUNTS and chases the cat.

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

JD sits on the couch, watching *VH1's Behind the Music*.

LOUD RUMBLING can be heard from outside the house.

BILL (O.S.)  
Ow!

A pair of hands stretch from behind the door, throwing Spiffy inside the house.

SPIFFY  
RWOWR!

The door slams shut, and the cat runs up the stairs.

JD  
Good cat.

INT. BROCK TRENT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Brock's office is akin to the mythical "corner office," with a large window, two couches, a large, flat-screen TV, and his Mahogany desk.

Brock sits behind his desk on the phone.

BROCK

I think it's a great idea... Yes, I saw him play... Phenomenal... I want to get him a contract... Win or lose, he still deserves something for his effort... Four months ago, he didn't even know how to play one... I'll get right on that. Thank you... Bye, bye.

Brock hangs up the phone. He pulls out a folder and writes on it.

ANGLE: THE FOLDER: NITRO PUMPKINS

Brock puts the folder in his desk drawer and pokes his head out his glass office door.

BROCK

Hey, Cammi! I need you to cancel my 12 o'clock. I have to work on a new deal coming up.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

Amy and the members of the Nitro Pumpkins chat at the lunch table.

JD's the only member of the group still eating a meatball sub.

JD

Oh my God, this is good.

AMY

I don't think I've ever seen you savor your food before.

JD gulps down the remainder of a meatball.

JD

Huh?

NICK

Yeah, you usually finish first.



JOHN (O.S.)  
That's what she said.

JD puts his sub down and turns around to face John. John stands behind him with his arms crossed.

JD  
Hello, John. To what do I owe this honor?

JOHN  
I'll never understand how an Ass-burger like you got into the talent show. My money's on the Buzz Fuzz.

AMY  
Ew. You're rooting for Randy Buzz?

JOHN  
He's better than the retard, over here.

John motions to JD. JD stares him in the eye with a vacant expression.

JOHN  
Cat got yer tongue?

JD  
Don't get me wrong; I'm absolutely livid. We're so far beyond livid that the U.S. Military wouldn't be enough to save you if I lost my temper right now.

JOHN  
Is that a threat?

JD  
No, just a fact. Nothing I say or do is going to change your behavior.

John CHORTLES.

JOHN  
Dork.

NICK  
You're the only dork, here, John.

JOHN  
What're you even doing with a loser like Dunn, anyway?

JD

Weren't you the one who quit his band and dropped a class during a temper tantrum?

JOHN

Shows how much you know! The only reason you got in was because of your loser dad.

JD stands up and gets in John's face.

JD

My father is more of a man than you'll ever be.

JOHN

Is that so?

AMY

Knock it off, John.

JOHN

Then why isn't he signed to a bigger label? I'll tell you why. It's because everyone knows his music sucks.

ANGLE: RICKY WATCHES FROM A COUPLE TABLES OVER.

AMY

Go do something else, creep!

JOHN

What'cha gonna do about it? Hit me like a girl?

NICK

John...

JD

No, I'm going to walk away.

JOHN

Coward.

JD turns and walks away.

JOHN

What? You're just going to run? Fight like a man, wuss!

JD stops.

Mr. D. Walks into the cafeteria, pausing to watch JD's reaction.

JD

A wise man knows when to fight his own battles. A wiser man knows when not to fight.

JD walks away.

Mr. D. smiles and walks out.

JOHN

Pussy!

JD

Meow.

JD exits the cafeteria. The lunch bell rings.

HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

John walks along the crowded hallway. Ricky comes up behind him.

RICKY

Hey, bud. Can I talk to you a sec?

Ricky pushes John into...

THE MEN'S ROOM

The men's room is empty except for John and Ricky.

JOHN

Dude! What the hell?

Ricky punches John in the face with a CRACK.

John falls to the ground.

RICKY

What the hell was that in the cafeteria? Are you really that much of a jack-hole?

JOHN

I'm the jack-hole? Take a look at the retard. He wouldn't even fight me.

Ricky grabs John by the collar.

RICKY  
He's smarter than you are.

Ricky punches him three more times. John falls backward against a urinal.

JOHN  
Since when are you all buddy-buddy with him?

RICKY  
Since I stopped being an ass-hole like you!

A beat.

RICKY  
Tell on me if you want. I don't care. Everyone will know why I did it.

Ricky leaves the men's room.

Mr. D. walks out from a bathroom stall with a FLUSH.

MR. D.  
That could've gone better.

JOHN  
Did you see what he did?

MR. D.  
No, but I saw what you did to JD.

JOHN  
He had it coming.

MR. D.  
So did you.

JOHN  
Hey!

MR. D.  
I see before me a waste of energy, attacking those he feels threatened by.

JOHN  
Threatened?

MR. D.  
He's found his niche. I suggest you think long and hard about finding yours.

A beat.

MR. D.  
Shouldn't you get to class, or something?

JOHN  
I have study hall.

MR. D.  
You also have three days detention with me. Do you need a nurse?

JOHN  
I'm fine.

A drop of blood streams down from John's nose.

MR. D.  
Let's get you to the nurse.

EXT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Ricky passes by the parking lot just as Mr. D. unlocks his car.

MR. D.  
Mr. Mallo. That was a nice gesture you made in the men's room, today. Although, I don't necessarily approve of your methods.

RICKY  
You saw?

MR. D.  
No, but I heard everything.

RICKY  
I can explain...

MR. D.  
I'm sure you can. Detention with me tomorrow.

RICKY  
That's all?

MR. D.  
You have one thing in your favor.

RICKY  
What's that?

MR. D.  
You did the right thing, standing  
up for JD. Next time, tone down the  
violence.

Ricky smiles.

RICKY  
Okay.

A beat.

RICKY  
Do you have time to talk about  
something?

MR. D.  
Like what?

RICKY  
I thought about what you said that  
time. About the choices that we  
make.

MR. D.  
And?

RICKY  
What if I make things worse?

MR. D.  
That's a risk we all have to take.  
Otherwise, what's the point of  
living if we're not going to do  
what it takes to live?

RICKY  
How do I know I'm making the right  
choices?

MR. D.  
You'll know it when the time's  
right.

RICKY  
When's that?

MR. D.  
That, Mr. Mallo, I don't have an  
answer for. The world works in  
mysterious ways.

Ricky and Mr. D. stare at each other for a beat.

RICKY  
Thanks.

MR. D.  
No problem. That's what I'm here  
for.

Mr. D. gets into his car, and turns on the engine. The radio  
blasts "Friends in Low Places" by Garth Brooks.

Ricky watches Mr. D. peel away in a red Mazda.

A beat.

Ricky SIGHS and walks away.

RICKY  
(singing)  
I've got friends in low places...

EXT. SENTRY RD. - MOMENTS LATER

JD and Amy walk up to JD's house. Ricky stands in the  
driveway with his arms crossed.

JD  
Ricky? What are you doing here?

RICKY  
I saw what happened at lunch.

AMY  
Then you know what a big jerk he  
was.

RICKY  
I just wanted to apologize for  
John's behavior.

JD  
Okay...

RICKY  
No, really. I also wanted to  
apologize for the way I've treated  
you all these years.

I've made some poor decisions in the past, and I know I can't correct all of them, but I have to at least try.

JD

How do I know I can trust you? That's not something that can be repaired so easily.

RICKY

Then trust this. I want to make it up to you.

Amy looks back and forth at Ricky and JD.

AMY

Where's all this coming from?

RICKY

I... I've been doing some thinking lately.

JD

You want to rebuild my trust? Get to know me.

JD extends his hand.

A beat.

Ricky takes it, and they both shake on it.

JD

You wanna come in?

RICKY

Naw, I gotta get home. My little sister's got her first grade play tonight.

JD

Oh, cool!

RICKY

Yeah. Good luck with the talent competition.

JD

Thank you.

Ricky walks off into the distance.

Bill walks out the front door.



BILL  
Was that Ricky Mallo?

JD  
Yup.

BILL  
You got mail. It's on the table in  
the kitchen.

JD  
Thanks.

JD enters the house.

AMY  
Something wrong?

BILL  
The last time Ricky came over, they  
got into a huge fight. Something  
about popularity. I don't  
necessarily remember what started  
it.

AMY  
I wonder if they even remember.

ANGLE: RICKY ROUNDS THE CORNER IN THE DISTANCE.

BILL  
I'm not entirely sure they do.  
You're always welcome to come in;  
you know that.

AMY  
I have some homework to do.

BILL  
You better get to it, then.

Bill turns around and goes inside.

Amy pauses a beat, then leaves.

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM

Bill finds JD sitting on the couch, reading a letter.

JD  
Hey, Dad! It says I got into UCLA!

BILL  
That's wonderful.

JD  
You don't sound too excited.

BILL  
Everything go okay at school today?

JD  
For the most part.

BILL  
You know you can always come to me  
if you wanna talk.

JD  
Thanks.

BILL  
I gotta get back to work in the  
studio.

Bill walks out of the room.

JD reaches to open another letter.

JD  
Hmm... This one's from UArts.

INT. THE DUNNS' BASEMENT - EVENING

Bill sits at his recording station on his portable phone.

BILL  
Listen, I know sales are slowing  
down... Yes, I understand that...  
Look, I know we need a new album  
release this summer, and I'm  
trying... Brock, listen to me...  
Yes, I know it's been two years  
since... Just give me until that  
tour... I promise we can turn this  
around. Just give me a chance to do  
it!

JD walks down the basement steps.

JD (O.S.)  
Dad?

BILL  
Can I call you back? My son just  
walked in... Yeah, I'll consider  
it. Thanks... Buh-bye.

Bill hangs up the phone.

BILL  
What's up, Sports Fan?

JD sits down next to Bill.

JD  
Something did happen in the  
cafeteria today.

BILL  
You didn't get into any...

JD  
No. No, I'm not in any trouble, but  
somebody said that you're a loser  
because you're not on a bigger  
record label.

BILL  
...And it bothered you.

JD  
I know your last album didn't make  
it too far up the Top 100 lists,  
but your next one should be better,  
right?

Bill puts his arm around JD's shoulder.

BILL  
Jude... Don't worry about me. You  
just focus on what you're doing.  
Brock thinks you've got potential,  
so let's not let him down.

JD  
You need a miracle, don't you?

BILL  
No! No. We're fine, Jude. Just  
concentrate on your band.

JD  
Wow, that biblical, huh?

BILL

Jude! Listen to me. You're focused right now. Put that energy into your life. I promise things will turn out for the better, 'kay?

JD

I thought about what you said earlier. About needing the money for my gift. Are we in trouble?

BILL

No, Jude. That's something for your mom and I to worry about. You just get through 12th grade. All right?

JD looks up at Bill.

JD

Okay.

JD gets up and walks up the stairs.

A beat.

Bill picks the phone up off his desk and throws it across the room.

BILL

Fuck!

He bangs his fists on the desk.

BILL

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

Edna runs down the stairs.

EDNA

Bill? Are you okay, Honey?

Bill rests his head on the desk, as Edna rubs his shoulders.

JD watches from the steps, unnoticed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE DUNNS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

JD stands with the fridge door wide open. He pulls out a pitcher of a red liquid.

JD  
(singing)  
Kool-Aid, yeah!

EDNA (O.S.)  
I'm home! Jude, can you help me  
carry some stuff in?

JD  
Dammit. Yeah, Mom!

JD puts down his pitcher of Kool-Aid and walks out of the kitchen. He returns moments later.

JD  
No! No! I'm not doing it! No!

Edna follows him into the kitchen.

EDNA  
She's your sister, and she's  
staying with us this semester.

JD  
Then I'm moving out!

BERNADETTE, 21, with shoulder-length brown hair and JD's height walks into the kitchen.

BERNADETTE  
So nice to see you, too.

JD  
Get out!

BERNADETTE  
I did. Now I'm back.

JD  
Then I'm getting out.

Edna blocks JD from reaching the doorway into the dining room.

EDNA  
Both of you be nice. You're family.

JD  
Only by blood.

BERNADETTE  
Now, why would my favorite baby  
brother say that?

JD  
Because you're a...

EDNA  
Jude! Stop it!

JD  
Now hang on! She disappears for four years, doesn't come home for birthdays and holidays, and she's supposed to be family?

BERNADETTE  
Hey, we kept you, didn't we?

JD  
Bitch!

BERNADETTE  
Real original...

JD grabs the pitcher of Kool-Aid and splashes it at Bernadette.

Bernadette dodges, and the Kool-Aid hits Bill in the face, as he opens the door to the basement studio.

JD  
Oh, shit.

BILL  
The funny part is, I was coming up for something to drink.

EDNA  
Are you all right, Bill?

BILL  
Peachy.

JD  
Actually, it was fruit punch.

BILL  
Go help your sister bring her things in. If you don't, you can kiss the talent show good-bye.

JD  
On it.

JD disappears from the kitchen.

BERNADETTE

You did tell him I was coming,  
didn't you?

EDNA

Not exactly. No.

BERNADETTE

That explains it.

BILL

Go tell your brother where you want  
everything.

BERNADETTE

My room still exists, right?

EDNA

Just do what your father says,  
okay, Bernie?

Bernadette disappears from the kitchen.

BILL

Can you hand me a paper towel?

INT. THE DUNN'S HOUSE - BERNADETTE'S ROOM

The walls are painted purple with red carpeting. Her bed is a disaster area; her bed is unmade and the sheets lie wherever they fell. Old magazines are strewn across the floor. Just how she left it.

Bernadette walks into the room and points at the bed. JD follows behind her with three suitcases.

BERNADETTE

You can just put those on the bed.

JD drops the suitcases on the floor where he stands and walks out.

BERNADETTE

Danke.

JD (O.S.)

Bitte.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

JD sits at the table with Amy and his bandmates. JD eats feverishly, as if taking his anger out on the food. The others sit and stare in amazement.

AMY

Wait a minute! You have a sister?  
You never mentioned her before.

NICK

Oh, yeah! The two of them have been going at it for years now. I didn't think she was ever coming back, JD.

Ricky walks up to the table with two plates of cake.

RICKY

Here's that cake you wanted.

Ricky hands JD a plate of cake and sits down.

JD takes the fork and stabs the cake repeatedly.

JD

Die, bitch! Die! Die! Die!

Ricky shoots a concerned glance to Amy.

AMY

His sister's back.

RICKY

Wow. I didn't think she was ever coming back. Especially since the graduation incident.

AMY

Excuse me, but...

A beat.

AMY

Did you say graduation incident?

NICK

Yeah, Bernadette didn't invite Jude to her graduation party. JD, here, got sent out with his cousin to the zoo.

JD looks up at Nick and glares.



JD

Bitch tried to push me in with the monkeys.

AMY

I'm sorry, but maybe I'd be a bit more sympathetic if I had known you had a sister.

JD

You're not missing much.

RICKY

You really aren't.

JD

She never called, wrote, visited, or anything in the past four years. Now, all of a sudden, she's commuting from home.

AMY

I feel like I'm missing part of the story. What was she like when she was home?

JD

Again. You're not missing much.

AMY

Jude! She's your sister. I feel like you should have some special place for her in your life.

JD

Yeah. Under my foot.

AMY

Jude!

JD

She's a bitch!

AMY

She's your sister!

JD

Only by blood.

AMY

Am I the only one who didn't know about this?

JD  
Nobody told me she was coming back,  
either.

AMY  
Cute, Jude.

JD  
What?

AMY  
Nothing. Never mind.

Amy stands up and walks away.

JD  
Was it something I said?

RICKY  
You're a special kind of special,  
aren't you?

JD  
What?

NICK  
Nothing. Just eat your food and  
calm down.

JD shrugs and stabs the cake again before eating it.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Amy storms through the hallway toward Mr. D.'s classroom.  
Ricky runs up behind her.

RICKY  
Amy! Hold up!

Amy stops and turns around.

AMY  
You know, you haven't been my  
favorite person, either.

RICKY  
I know. Just hear me out. JD... He  
doesn't really pick up on things  
like you and I do.

AMY  
Really, now? I wouldn't have  
guessed.

RICKY

Yes, well...

Amy grabs Ricky and cries into his shoulder.

AMY

I lost a family member recently,  
and JD doesn't even care about his  
own family.

Ricky rubs her back.

RICKY

They had a tense relationship.

AMY

My mother died, Ricky. I'm all  
alone except for my aunt and uncle.  
I need someone who can pick up on  
what a living hell my life is,  
right now.

Ricky and Amy share a kiss.

RICKY

I... I'm sorry. That won't happen  
again...

AMY

No, no. It's okay.

Amy wipes tears from her face.

AMY

I kinda liked it.

RICKY

I thought you and...

AMY

Oh, no. We're just friends.

JD walks up to Amy and Ricky.

JD

What did I say that has you all  
bent out of shape?

RICKY

JD...

JD

No, hold on a minute! She's just my sister! It's not like she really matters in my life.

RICKY

Um...

Amy whips around with a left hook.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SENTRY RD. - LATER

Jack Gladwynne shovels snow from his sidewalk. Amy walks up alone.

JACK GLADWYNNE

What? No Jude, today?

AMY

He had an early dismissal.

JACK GLADWYNNE

What happened?

AMY

I punched him in the face in Mr. D.'s class. With any luck, I gave him a concussion.

JACK GLADWYNNE

Amy! Come now, you two are such good friends.

AMY

Were such good friends.

JACK GLADWYNNE

What happened?

AMY

I found out he had a sister, and he doesn't even care about the fact that I just lost Mom.

JACK GLADWYNNE

Yes, but...

AMY

He's just a callous jack-ass.

JACK GLADWYNNE

It has nothing to do with that. I can assure you. Bernie and Jude never got along. Then again, what siblings do?

AMY

That's still no reason to act like a jerk-off about it.

JACK GLADWYNNE

She's been a negative force in his life for a long time. I'm sure things will quiet down soon.

AMY

They better quiet down soon. I just might have to kill him if they don't.

JACK GLADWYNNE

Amy... The thing you have to remember is that Jude's not most cases. Why don't you go apologize to him.

A beat.

AMY

Fine.

Jack goes back to shoveling while Amy walks up to...

THE DUNNS' HOUSE - FRONT DOOR

Amy knocks on the door. Bernadette answers.

BERNADETTE

You must be the girl who clocked my brother.

AMY

You must be the sister he doesn't even care about.

BERNADETTE

He's a jerk, but only I get to hit him like that.

AMY

Why are you so mean to him?

BERNADETTE  
Hey, you punched him.

AMY  
I wanted to apologize to him for  
that.

BERNADETTE  
And I wanted to not have to pick up  
my brother from school today. That  
didn't happen.

AMY  
Can I apologize to him?

BERNADETTE  
Nope.

JD (O.S.)  
Hey, Bernie! Who is it?

BERNADETTE  
(calling back)  
Nobody, go back to sleep.

Bernadette turns back to Amy.

BERNADETTE  
You need to leave.

Amy walks away, and Bernadette slams the door shut.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MR. D.'S CLASS - MORNING

JD and Amy sit opposite each other, as Mr. D. sits between  
them.

MR. D.  
You two have been good friends all  
year. Now, you seem to hate each  
other. I want to know why.

AMY  
I got mad because my mother died a  
while back, and here he is not  
caring about any of his family.

MR. D.  
So you punched him.

AMY  
Yes. I tried to apologize, but...

JD

When? When did you try to apologize? No visits, no phone calls, nothing!

AMY

Your sister answered the door!

JD

Where was I?

AMY

Apparently asleep.

JD's expression becomes vacant for a moment.

DIAL-UP NOISES can be heard, while JD computes Amy's story.

A MACINTOSH START-UP SOUND rings in his head, as his eyes widen.

JD

I'm gonna kill the bitch!

MR. D.

Jude! Unnecessary language. Stay calm. Amy, is there anything you'd like to say, right now.

AMY

I'm sorry, Jude. I let my anger control me, and I punched you. I set a bad example for you, and I hope you can forgive me.

MR. D.

Jude?

JD

What do you mean you're setting a bad example for me? I'm 18, not three!

MR. D.

You know that isn't what she meant. Do you accept her apology?

JD

Does she understand why I hate my sister now?

MR. D.

That's not a condition of acceptance.

AMY

No, wait. I'll answer that. I understand you hate your sister. A lot of siblings hate each other. At the end of the day, you two are still family. Instead of making life worse for each other, try making it better.

JD

Tell her that.

Mr. D. begins scribbling notes on a clipboard.

AMY

I'm going to tell both of you that. You need to meet her halfway, too.

A beat.

AMY

Don't let her ruin your friendship. Okay?

Amy puts her hand out. Jude shakes it.

JD

Fine.

MR. D.

Good. You guys can go to your first block classes, now. I'll see you after school, Ms. Gladwynne. You still have a detention to serve.

AMY

Right.

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

JD walks through the front door to find the room empty and the TV on. He flips the channel to an episode of Dragonball GT and sits down on the couch.

Bernadette walks in with a glass of Kool-Aid.

BERNADETTE

Hey! I was watching that!

JD

Is that my Kool-Aid?



BERNADETTE

It belongs to the family.

JD

Funny thing happened in school today. Amy said you slammed the door in her face when she came over to apologize.

BERNADETTE

Yeah, so? You don't need a witch like her.

JD

I don't need a witch like you telling me which witch I need.

JD tilts his head for a moment.

JD

Yeah, I think that made sense...

BERNADETTE

She hit you.

JD

That's a love tap compared to the zoo incident.

BERNADETTE

We talked about this, Jude. We couldn't risk a blowout at my party.

JD

I'm your brother. Didn't that thought cross your mind?

BERNADETTE

Yes. Of course, it did.

JD

The monkey Frenched me! You never even apologized for it!

BERNADETTE

Hey, I didn't push you over the fence!

Edna opens the front door.

JD

You're the one who requested I be there.

Nobody discussed anything with me  
back then, and nobody discusses  
anything with me now.

Bernadette motions their mother to leave the house.

JD  
What? What're you doing now?

JD whips around and sees only Edna.

JD  
What's going on, this time?

EDNA  
Nothing.

A dog BARKS off-screen.

JD  
Tell me you didn't...

EDNA  
Okay, we didn't.

BERNADETTE  
To be fair, this was all my idea.

JD  
I have a cat!

BERNADETTE  
His name's Scooby, and he's super  
sweet with cats and small children.

SCOOBY (O.S.)  
WOOF!

BERNADETTE  
What could go wrong?

Spiffy walks by the front door. His fur spikes up. He hisses  
and runs back up the steps.

BILL (O.S.)  
Whoa!

SCOOBY, 8 weeks, a Great Dane puppy twice the size of Spiffy,  
runs up the steps after the cat with his leash trailing  
behind him.

SCOOBY  
WOOF! WOOF! WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!

JD  
Does that answer your question?

BERNADETTE  
We were going to surprise you.

JD  
You're just full of surprises,  
aren't you?

BERNADETTE  
I'm trying to make it up to you.

JD  
By sacrificing my cat to the gods  
of Scooby Doo?

BERNADETTE  
Hey! You can name him Scooby Dunn!

JD  
Nice!

A beat.

JD  
Don't change the subject. Nice try.

BERNADETTE  
You want I should go rescue your  
cat?

JD  
Please.

Bernadette runs upstairs.

BERNADETTE (O.S.)  
Hey! Bad dog! No! Ow!

JD LAUGHS and calls upstairs.

JD  
Good dog! I think I'll name him  
Bitey!

BERNADETTE (O.S.)  
I'm doing this for you, ya know!

JD sits down and watches Dragonball GT on TV.

Bill walks in, covered in mud.

EDNA  
I'll get you a towel.

BILL  
Make it a Screwdriver.

BERNADETTE (O.S.)  
Ow!

Everybody stops and looks at the staircase.

BERNADETTE (O.S.)  
Everything's okay!

JD goes back to the TV, while his parents continue their conversation.

BILL  
Everything all right in here?

Spiffy runs down the stairs and across the living room.  
Scooby Dunn follows close behind.

SCOOBY  
WOOF! WOOF! WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!

EDNA  
Does that answer your question?

BILL  
I think I'll have a double.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC CLASS - AFTERNOON

JD and Nick talk while composing a song. Mr. Spiegel stands over other groups' shoulders, monitoring their progress.

JD  
He finally stopped barking at two  
in the morning.

NICK  
Damn. It sounds like she's at least  
trying to make amends.

JD  
We'll see how long that lasts.

NICK  
Ready for the show tomorrow night?

JD  
You know it!

NICK

There's no second chance at this.  
Are you okay with that?

JD

We'll be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. BROCK TRENT'S OFFICE - EVENING

Brock sits on the phone with his feet on his desk.

BROCK

Yes, and I want the same conditions  
as we have for his father... Good.  
I'll have him look over the  
contract after tomorrow night's  
performance... All he has to do is  
show up and perform. You won't be  
disappointed... Okay, I'll talk to  
you tomorrow night at the show.

Brock puts his phone down, and writes himself a memo.

ANGLE: THE MEMO: JUDE DUNN CONTRACT DEAL.

Brock slides the memo in a file folder marked NITRO PUMPKINS  
and takes the folder with him out of the office.

He turns out the lights and closes the door behind him.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The bell RINGS, and students crowd the hallway on their way  
home for the day.

JD walks up to his locker, looking around. Brendan walks up.

JD

Hey, have you seen Amy?

BRENDAN

I've been looking for Nick.

JD

That's odd.

JD and Brendan walk around the corner to Nick's locker.

ANGLE: RICKY KISSES AMY AT NICK'S LOCKER.

JD turns around and storms off in a huff. Brendan stays behind a moment, looking back and forth at JD and Ricky.

BRENDAN

Oh, jeez.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

JD passes by the auditorium, angry as can be. Asher runs out of the auditorium and grabs JD.

ASHER

Dude! There you are! Have you seen Nick? Ricky's supposed to be here, too.

JD

I haven't seen Nick, but tell Ricky he can suck off when he's done sucking Amy's face.

Asher's face crinkles.

ASHER

What?

JD

Forget it. I'm done.

ASHER

What's wrong?

Ricky and Amy walk up to the auditorium. They instantly notice JD's mood.

RICKY

What happened? JD, why are you so upset?

JD

You know why.

AMY

No. We don't. Jude, tell us.

Amy reaches out to put her hand on JD's shoulder, but he swats it away.

AMY

Jude!

JD  
I saw you two kissing earlier.

AMY  
I don't understand.

RICKY  
What are you talking about?

JD  
I'm talking about when you were at  
Nick's locker after school.

RICKY  
Oh, that? It was just a joke.

JD  
Don't lie to me!

AMY  
We really should tell him, Ricky.

JD  
Tell me what?

AMY  
Ricky is my boyfriend now.

Nick walks up to the auditorium.

NICK  
Hey, what's going on?

JD  
Bite me! I'm out!

NICK  
What? Hakuna matata, remember?

JD  
Fuck you all! How many of you knew  
about this?

AMY  
Nobody. We kinda kept it a  
secret... from... well, everybody,  
really.

JD  
Get bent! I'm done!

NICK

JD, don't do this. If we don't go on, we forfeit the show. You were so excited.

ASHER

If you leave now, John will...

NICK

Stay out of this, Asher!

A beat.

JD

No, hold on! John Hammel will what?

NICK

Don't answer that.

ASHER

If you leave, John will lord it over our heads that we kicked him out of the band.

Nick cringes.

JD

You lied to me? You told me that he quit the band!

NICK

No, I... I kicked him out and he bet me our spot in the show that we'd come begging for him back. Please, JD. Don't let him win.

JD

You bet what?

NICK

I thought you'd want to stick him on this. I'm... I'm sorry.

JD

Stick this!

JD flicks off Nick and storms out the side door to the school.

NICK

JD! Shit!

AMY

Want me to go talk to him?



NICK

No, he's mad at all of us.

ASHER

What do we do? Show's gotta go on.

NICK

Keep going as if nothing happened  
and hope he calms down in time.

ASHER

We have three hours before the  
show; that's not enough time.

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM - EVENING

JD sulks on the living room couch. Tears roll down his face,  
but he's dead silent. Bernadette walks into the room.

BERNADETTE

Hey, it's almost time for your  
show. Aren't you going to get  
ready.

JD sulks.

BERNADETTE

I don't know what happened, but is  
this how you want to be remembered?  
As a temperamental Aspie whose  
emotions control him?

JD sulks.

BERNADETTE

Can you look at me?

JD sulks and looks Bernadette in the eye.

BERNADETTE

This is your big chance to show  
everyone what an Aspie can do. This  
is your Cell.

JD

What?

BERNADETTE

I know I'm gonna regret this, but  
do you remember Gohan from  
Dragonball Z.

JD  
Yeah, but...

BERNADETTE  
The greatest thing he ever did was  
beat Cell, right?

JD  
Yeah...

BERNADETTE  
Don't you see? You're Gohan, and  
the show is your Cell. You have to  
win the talent show.

A beat.

JD  
I didn't think you watched DBZ.

BERNADETTE  
Are you kidding? You made me watch  
it with you all throughout your  
childhood.

Somebody KNOCKS on the front door.

BERNADETTE  
Care to answer it?

JD opens the front door. Ricky stands outside before him.

RICKY  
JD, you're coming with me, and I  
don't want any trouble.

Ricky puts his fists up, ready to block a punch.

JD  
Let me get my guitar.

Ricky drops his hands in confusion.

RICKY  
Wait, what? It worked that easily?

JD  
Gotta beat Cell.

RICKY  
God, I don't understand you.

JD  
Good. Neither do I.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - LATER

The Nitro Pumpkins stand backstage, waiting. Nick walks up to his bandmates.

NICK  
Still no sign of Ricky and JD.

ASHER  
But we go on in less than three minutes!

BRENDAN  
We're out of time.

NICK  
We'll just have to go on without a guitarist.

ASHER  
That's suicide!

NICK  
It's the only thing we can do.

EXT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

A blue Honda Accord pulls into a spot. Ricky and JD jump out of the car and run toward the school, guitar in hand.

RICKY  
Hurry up!

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Speigel walks up to the Nitro Pumpkins.

MR. SPEIGEL  
You guys are on. You ready? Where's JD?

NICK  
We're going on without him.

MR. SPEIGEL  
Okay, just do your best.

NICK  
We will.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

JD and Ricky run toward the auditorium.

JD  
I'm telling you, it's this way! I  
would know!

RICKY  
Fine. Just don't stop running.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

The Nitro Pumpkins minus JD cross the stage. The crowd  
CHEERS.

Someone in the crowd shouts at the stage.

STUDENT #1  
Hey! Where's JD?

STUDENT #2  
Yeah! We want JD!

The crowd starts chanting.

CROWD  
JD! JD! JD! JD!

Asher pulls Nick aside.

ASHER  
This is bad. They want JD. We're  
gonna lose them.

NICK  
I'm aware of that. Just act  
natural.

ANGLE: SOMEBODY PLUGS IN AN AMP BACKSTAGE.

Nick closes his eyes, and braces himself to start to play.

NICK  
Here goes...

Before the band can play, the guitar riff from Dire Straits'  
"Money for Nothing" ECHOES across the auditorium. The crowd  
stops chanting and CHEERS again.

Nick looks up to see JD playing the riff.

NICK

JD.

JD

That's your cue, Pumbaa. Hakuna  
matata.

Nick smiles and motions for the band to start over.

JD

What's my name?

CROWD

JD!

JD

I can't hear you!

CROWD

(louder)

JD!

JD

Louder!

CROWD

(still louder)

JD!

JD

Say it loud! Say it proud!

JD starts the riff over, and the band picks up on cue this time.

MONTAGE:

The Nitro Pumpkins play their best set they've ever played.

The crowd lights up and screams at the Nitro Pumpkins.

JD jumps into the audience and rocks out, encouraging the crowd to rock out with him.

John Hammel stands, sulking. Another student in the audience nudges him. John turns around and walks out.

JD steps back up on stage for the big finish.

JD

I know we said our platform was Autism Awareness, but we just wanted to dedicate that song we just played to a very special friend of ours. She lost her mother to cancer this past year, and we wanted her to know that we care. Thank you!

Amy holds back tears in the audience.

The crowd CHEERS and starts a new chant.

CROWD

ENCORE! ENCORE! ENCORE! ENCORE!

JD turns to Nick.

JD

Sorry about earlier.

NICK

Not a problem. Just don't do that again. We need you; you're a vital part of this band.

ANGLE: THE JUDGES SCRIBBLE ON A PAPER AND PASS IT OVER TO BROCK.

Brock takes the stage, waving the paper in his hand.

BROCK

You guys want an encore?

CROWD

YEAH!

BROCK

Well, how about this for an encore? I'm holding in my hand a contract with FME Records signed by my colleagues and myself. How many of you guys think the Nitro Pumpkins deserve this contract.

The crowd SCREAMS louder than before.

BROCK

How about it guys? The crowd seems to think you deserve it. What do you think?

The band huddles a moment then breaks.

JD

How do we know we're not getting screwed?

BROCK

JD, my boy, we're prepared to give you the exact same deal your father has. He's already given us the okay. If you want, you can talk to him after the show.

JD

I think we'll do that.

BROCK

Let the negotiations begin!

The crowd SCREAMS again.

BROCK

Settle down, people! We need a few minutes to score the bands. We'll be right back after a ten minute intermission to reveal the winners.

The audience migrates to...

THE HALLWAY

Bernadette, Bill, and Edna stand outside the auditorium. Mr. D. walks up.

MR. D.

I'm proud of JD. You all should be, too.

BILL

Brock contacted me about giving Jude a contract. Who's idea was it?

MR. D.

It wasn't me. That much, I can tell you.

BERNADETTE

If it wasn't you, and it wasn't my dad, then who was it?

MR. D.

I can't tell you that.

Behind them, Jack Gladwynne talks with Brock.

BROCK

They loved him out there! The contract was a great idea.

JACK GLADWYNNE

Yeah, well. I think this works out better, no matter how it ends.

Mr. D. walks past Brock and Jack Gladwynne.

MR. D.

They're onto us.

Mr. D. smiles.

JACK GLADWYNNE

I'll handle that.

Bill greets Brock.

BILL

Hey, Brock. I see you met my neighbor, Jack.

JACK GLADWYNNE

We were just talking about how great Jude did out there.

BILL

I suppose I owe you a giant thank you.

JACK GLADWYNNE

You don't need to thank me for anything. He earned it out there.

BILL

He sure did!

BROCK

I'm telling you, Billy, your son is going to go far. You've raised a modern day Mozart.

Bill laughs.

BILL

I'll tell him you said that.

Bill starts to walk away.



BILL

Oh, and your secret's safe with me,  
guys.

Jack Gladwynne chuckles.

JACK GLADWYNNE

All right, then. Hey, isn't it  
about time to announce the winners?

BILL

Eh, I'll go back in a few minutes.

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - LATER

Bill sits down with his family, chuckling.

EDNA

Well?

BILL

Well, what?

BERNADETTE

Who was it? You know something  
don't you?

Amy returns just in time for the conversation.

BILL

I don't know anything.

Bill winks at Amy. Amy smiles.

EDNA

That's for sure. Give your uncle my  
thanks, Amy.

Bill and Amy startle.

BILL

You knew?

EDNA

You didn't think he had the idea on  
his own, did you?

Edna winks back at Bill.

BILL

You're just evil, aren't you?

EDNA

I was going to tell you when we got home.

BILL

Definitely evil.

BERNADETTE

You raised a son whose dream when he was six was to build a death ray and destroy the sun. I think you both qualify as "evil."

BILL

Watch your mouth. We prefer the term "heroically impaired" in this house, young lady.

BERNADETTE

No wonder Jude's a dork.

EDNA

Bernie!

BERNADETTE

What? He's our dork.

EDNA

And we wouldn't want him any other way.

Bill and Amy look at...

THE STAGE

Brock returns with the microphone.

BROCK

Okay, ladies and gentlemen! It's the moment we're all here for! The three bands moving on to VH1's "New Classics" reality show are...

ANGLE: THE NITRO PUMPKINS LOOK ON AT THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS.

ANGLE: JOHN HAMMEL ROLLS HIS EYES.

ANGLE: RICKY AND AMY LOOK AT EACH OTHER, THEN AT BROCK.

BROCK  
Climbing Disasters!

The crowd CHEERS.

ANGLE: BILL WINCES.

BROCK  
The Buzz Fuzz!

ANGLE: JOHN HAMMEL SMIRKS.

ANGLE: JD WETS HIS LIPS.

BROCK  
And... the biggest winner of all...

ANGLE: JD LEANS FORWARD.

BROCK  
The Nitro Pumpkins!

The crowd SCREAMS louder than any previous screaming combined.

ANGLE: JD FALLS OUT OF HIS SEAT.

BROCK  
Congratulations, New Classics! Stay  
tuned to VH1 this fall for the two  
hour premiere!

The rest of Brock's speech is overpowered by the SOUNDS OF APPLAUSE, CHEERING, AND THUNDER.

EXT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

People migrate back to their cars, as John Hammel makes a scene.

Security personnel escort John Hammel out of the building.

JOHN  
You can't do this! This isn't  
right! He's an Aspie! Why are you  
all enabling him!

Brock pokes his head out the door.

BROCK  
Just get that brat out of here!

JOHN  
Who are you calling a brat, old man?

The Dunns approach their car. The Nitro Pumpkins sign their contract behind them.

BILL  
It turned out even better than we could have hoped.

BERNADETTE  
Do you have any idea what this is going to do to his ego?

JD comes running up to the car.

JD  
Stuff it, Bern! I'm a rock star, now! Bow to the Prince of All Rock Stars!

BERNADETTE  
You can stop with the DBZ metaphors now. It only worked the first time.

JD  
You missed out on four years of this stuff. Just trying to catch you up.

BERNADETTE  
Dear lord!

Bernadette slams her door shut.

Amy walks by.

JD  
Hey, mind if I walk home, tonight?

EDNA  
I don't know...

BILL  
Ah, let him go, Edna. He's earned it, and it's not that far.

EDNA  
Oh, okay. We'll leave the door  
unlocked for you.

JD  
Thanks.

EXT. SENTRY RD. - MOMENTS LATER

JD runs up behind Amy.

JD  
Hey, got a minute?

AMY  
You're not still mad, are you?

JD  
About that... I guess I  
overreacted. The truth is...

A beat.

JD  
The truth is I love you.

Amy stops walking.

AMY  
Jude.

JD  
The fact of the matter is you  
deserve someone who can make you  
happy, and I'm not going to be  
around to be able to do that.

AMY  
So, what are you saying?

JD  
I love you, Amy, but I have to let  
go. I just wanted you to know how I  
feel. You have a whole year left to  
figure yourself out. I'm going to  
UCLA in the fall. FME's paying for  
it. Point is...

A beat.

JD

Point is I want you to be happy. If that means dating Ricky, then... Then so be it.

AMY

Jude. I don't know what to say.

JD

You don't have to say anything.

AMY

Thank you. You'll find somebody, I'm sure.

JD

Thank you.

The two share a hug and continue walking home.

JD

So, did you see John get kicked out by Brock at the end?

AMY

No way! You're so making that up.

JD

I'm so not making it up. He took a swing at Brock backstage.

JD and Amy trail off along with the sound of their voices.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL - MR. D.'S CLASS - AFTERNOON

Mr. D. picks up his briefcase, as students leave the room.

JD and Ricky walk in. Mr. D. doesn't even pick his head up.

MR. D.

You graduated two days ago, boys. There's nothing left for me to teach you.

JD

Don't you have any last words for us?

RICKY

Yeah, like a final word of wisdom from our favorite teacher?

Mr. D. puts down his briefcase and sits down at his desk.

JD and Ricky sit down before him.

MR. D.

You have come farther than either  
of you will ever comprehend.

JD

Can we skip past this part. I've  
been hearing it all month.

MR. D.

Very well. I'll give you guys  
something more tangible to ponder.

JD

World's a scary place. Tangible  
would help.

MR. D.

And men like you will surely make  
it a less scary place to be.

RICKY

Even me?

MR. D.

Yes, Mr. Mallo. There's even hope  
for you. My advice to you is  
simple. Love much. Try hard. Dream  
big. Never give in to the side of  
you that tells you otherwise. Say  
to yourselves, if you have to: I am  
me. I am the only me there will  
ever be. I am the best me I can be.  
Things may not always go my way,  
and I am okay with that. I'm doing  
my best, and that's what really  
matters.

JD

What if our best isn't enough?

MR. D.

If it's truly your best, it will be  
enough, Mr. Dunn. Be the change you  
want to see in the world. Do that  
much, and you won't have any  
regrets.

JD and Ricky turn around to leave. JD stops at the door.

JD

Thank you.

Mr. D. waves, and JD exits the classroom.

MR. D.

You're welcome.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Edna, Bernadette, Ricky, and the Gladwynnes sit on the couch watching the TV.

Amy sits next to Ricky, his arm around her on the couch.

Edna picks up the remote.

EDNA

Ooh! Everyone be quiet; the show's back on.

ANGLE: THE TV SCREEN.

INSERT: VH1 PRESENTS: NEW CLASSICS

JD sits in a chair, talking into the camera during an interview.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Some people look at you and how far you've come with a guitar in just one year, and they say, "I want to be like him." What advice do you have for them?

JD

Try your damndest. If you don't ever try, you're never going to succeed.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Has this newfound fame spoiled you in any way? Sex, drugs, rock and roll?



JD

Just the rock and roll. Which I love more than sex and consume like a drug, so I guess that's three for three.

The group watching on the couch LAUGH.

EDNA

I can't believe he said that on national TV.

BERNADETTE

Shush!

ANGLE: TV SCREEN.

JD

Seriously, though, I'm trying to limit that kind of junk. I'm trying to set a positive example for other Aspies out there.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Yes, you're doing a very good job! Tell me, is there anything in particular you'd like to say to anyone?

JD

Just that...

JD pauses.

JD

Just that no matter how much life knocks you down, you have to keep getting back up. You can meet 99 people in your life who will knock you down, but it's the hope that number 100 will help you up that has to keep motivating you. If you don't take any chances, you'll never know what could have been. And if 100 does help you, it makes everything worthwhile. You'll never know if you don't try.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

That's very sage of you.

JD

Someone, somewhere once said that you have to earn your soul. I feel that's true in every possible way.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You've definitely earned yours. This has been Jude Dunn from the Nitro Pumpkins, and you're watching New Classics on VH1. We'll be right back with some live concert footage of Wild Billy and the Maniacs in Atlanta after this.

Back to the couch.

AMY

You know, he's very wise for someone his age.

JACK GLADWYNNE

I think you helped him become that wise.

AMY

No.

EDNA

No, really. You did wonders for him.

AMY

You think?

RICKY

We know so.

Ricky holds Amy's hand. Amy responds with a peck on the cheek.

BERNADETTE

I wonder what he's doing now?

EXT. UCLA - GRASSY HILL - EVENING

JD sits under a tree, strumming on an electric-acoustic guitar.

The sunset blankets him in a warm glow.

ANOTHER STUDENT, 18, walks up with a set of bongos. JD stops playing.

JD  
I'm sorry, did I disturb you?

ASHLEY  
No, not at all! My name's Ashley.

JD  
Jude, but you can call me JD if you want.

ASHLEY  
Mind if I jam with you, JD?

JD  
I'd be insulted if you didn't!

ASHLEY  
That's a nice sunset.

JD  
It's beautiful.

ASHLEY  
So, where are you from? I'm from Arizona.

JD  
I'm from Pennsylvania.

ASHLEY  
Wait! Are you the guy from the Nitro Pumpkins?

JD  
Yeah! That's my band. We're all here on campus. FME pays for our education.

ASHLEY  
I'm so jealous! My bandmates ditched me for community college. Even my boyfriend ditched me.

JD  
So sorry to hear that.

ASHLEY  
Yeah, well, I just broke up with him, anyway.

JD  
That's too sad.

ASHLEY

Nah, he cheated on me. He tried to hide it at first, but I caught him. I'm not upset at all. I'm actually feeling kinda... liberated.

JD starts strumming his guitar again. Ashley plays her bongos.

JD

That's good. I bet that feels so much better.

ASHLEY

Oh, it does.

JD

Wanna hit up the Welcome Week concert tomorrow night?

ASHLEY

I'd love to.

The two jam out as the sun sinks lower in the Western sky.

INT. THE DUNNS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The group still watches the TV, their heads all tilted to the side as if in a daydream.

BERNADETTE

I'm sure he'll be fine. How much trouble can he get into in California? Right?

The rest of the group look at her like they've seen a ghost.

BERNADETTE

Right... I'll get the phone.

EDNA

Thank you, Sweetie.

FADE TO:

EXT. UCLA - GRASSY HILL - NIGHT

The sun has long set, and a gibbous moon is bright in the night sky.

JD and Ashley still jam out under the tree.

ASHLEY

I'm hungry. Is the song over yet?

JD

It's not over until one of us  
stops.

Ashley stops playing her bongos and stands up.

ASHLEY

It's over.

FADE TO BLACK.