

BAD PENNY

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INT. MCMANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Fist to stomach. Elbow to cheek. This is a vicious, no holds barred, bone cracking fight. A crowd drunkenly cheers the brawlers on. Another blow - one of the fighters has long, perfectly manicured red nails. The other wipes blood off of her lipsticked mouth.

We pull out to see TWO TEENAGE GIRLS beating the absolute shit out of each other in the living room of a McMansion. It's a prep school party gone off the rails - well-dressed, well-coiffed TEENS holding solo cups cheer and scream as one of the girls goes sprawling into an end table and breaks an expensive lamp. In the corner, the teenage HOST of the party has a meltdown.

PENNY LOGAN, 16, peels off from the crowd and makes her way unnoticed up the staircase. She's a human Rorschach test: people who talk to Penny often come away knowing more about themselves than they know about her.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Penny pushes open doors as she walks down the hallway until she reaches the one she's looking for:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Contemporary rich kid's bedroom -- top-of-the-line desktop computer on a desk littered with chem homework and textbooks. Baseball trophies on the shelf above.

She leans over to look at the computer. There's a sticky note with a short list of passwords stuck to the edge. Penny pockets it.

She does a quick scan of the room and spots a DSLR hanging off the bedpost. She takes that, too.

On her way to the door she grabs his wallet off the desk and rifles through it. Skips right past the cash and takes his student ID: BRETT HOFFMAN, GREER ACADEMY PREP SCHOOL. His photo is recognizable as the host of the party. One last look over her shoulder, and Penny closes the door behind herself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

"Lollipop" by the Chordettes plays.

The party has devolved into the high school equivalent of a prison brawl. Penny descends into the madness. She is the eye of the hurricane, untouched by the chaos around her as she cuts through the center of the room to pour herself a drink.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A public high school somewhere outside of Sacramento.

Students have to jam the front doors just right to get them open - there's the occasional NERD who can't quite get it right.

Penny barely breaks stride on her way in and heads straight down the hall. She doesn't have the Regina George effect - no slo-mo, no heads turn, she's not flaunting any power - but no one gets in her way, either.

The hall feels cramped. The few TEACHERS trying to good-naturedly hurry the more rambunctious groups to first period are clearly underpaid and overwhelmed.

This year's SOCCER TEAM in last year's uniforms jokes against the lockers. A soccer player pulls one of many handmade posters off the wall - each poster promoting a fundraiser for a different student group, each one already starting to peel off.

Each classroom has a delivery box outside - as Penny walks past, teachers and students open the boxes to find tissues, pencils, notebooks, and other necessary school supplies. The boxes are clearly unexpected - the teachers are confused, but excited to have much-needed supplies.

As Penny passes the soccer guys, one head does turn - the new kid on the soccer team.

Penny turns a corner and disappears.

INT. GIRLS' BATHROOM - SAME DAY

The counter is littered with girl detritus - makeup, jewelry, accessories, even clothing - but everything still has tags attached. Five or six GIRLS process their ill-gotten goods in an efficient, well-practiced assembly line.

One girl shows another girl how to remove gator tags from the clothing with a rubber band. Another girl keeps a running inventory of their stock. The next girl cross-checks prices from the inventory on eBay. They pass and throw the items back and forth - lipstick, baubles, streams of fabric flying through the air in a choreographed chaos.

Everything ends up in a series of neatly labeled tote bags – Makeup, Clothing, Jewelry, Etc.

The girls work under the watchful eye of AVERY CASTILLO, junior, Latina, the muscle – a party girl with teeth. She holds a lacrosse stick, which she uses to scare a LOST FRESHMAN out.

It doesn't hurt that she has a very black eye – we recognize her from the McMansion brawl in the teaser.

AVERY
(to the freshman)
Out of service.

Avery cracks the lacrosse stick against a stall, blocking the girl's path. The girl runs out, swerving out of Penny's way as she enters. Penny eyes Avery's eye.

PENNY
(to Avery)
Good weekend?

Avery scrolls through a spreadsheet on her phone and hands it to Penny.

AVERY
They don't suck. The new girls are holding their own. We're pushing two grand this weekend alone.

She smacks one of the lackeys on the butt with her lacrosse stick.

AVERY (CONT'D)
This bitch went after Bella Boutique, though.

THIS BITCH
They don't have any security cameras, it's the easiest –

AVERY
Not the point.

PENNY
We don't steal from small businesses.

AVERY
We're criminals, not monsters. Stick it to the man, not old Mrs. Bella.

The girl goes back to her work, chastised. Penny glances at the inventory and hands the phone back to Avery.

PENNY

Let's not give anyone a reason to
up security.

AVERY

You got it, boss.

PENNY

And don't call me that.

Penny pulls the sticky note out of her pocket and hands it to Avery.

AVERY

So can I ask you something? Promise
you won't be mad? You gonna tell us
what this is about?

PENNY

Hoffman.

Avery writes *Hoffman* on the sticky note underneath the list of passwords and sticks it onto a short stack of sticky notes already on the bathroom mirror.

AVERY

Swear to god, Pen, you're weird as
fuck sometimes.

PENNY

We're having a meeting before the
party tonight.

Penny hands her the DSLR camera.

AVERY

Is there a sex tape on this? Please
tell me there's a sex tape on this.
Is it someone hot? Is it someone we
know?

PENNY

Yeah, your hot brother. See if you
can get fifteen hundred for it.

Avery stares at Penny.

PENNY (CONT'D)

For the camera.

AVERY

Are you a crazy person now? Is this your new thing, being a crazy person? Where did you get this? Isn't someone gonna know it's gone?

Avery pops open the SD slot - no camera card.

AVERY (CONT'D)

What, did you keep the sex tape for yourself?

Penny hands Avery the student ID.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Oh good, evidence.

PENNY

They think I'm Simone De Beauvoir from Long Beach.

AVERY

Simone De Beauvoir. For real.

Avery looks at the ID, then back at Penny.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Is this from this weekend? Is that where the camera's from? Is that why you don't have a black eye to match mine? I like it better when we match, Penny.

Penny shrugs, points at the camera.

PENNY

Fifteen hundred.

She takes the tote bags and leaves Avery in the bathroom, shaking her head.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - ART CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

At least, it used to be an art classroom. Everything's a little broken and definitely hasn't been used since the art program was cut last year.

Penny walks in and dumps the bags on a table, nodding to MALLORY WILKINSON, junior, black, bespectacled - the girls' emotional core and the "how" to Penny's "what" - who's already sorting more bags.

MALLORY

Liv's good, but maybe keep her away from Sephora. She pulled twelve Naked palettes in a weekend - brilliant work, but not exactly subtle.

PENNY

Subtlety is not her strong suit.

MALLORY

Still. Gonna be a good year.

Mallory starts poking around in some of them, checking out the merchandise.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

Gonna be a *phenomenal* year. Been dying for a new chartreuse.

Mallory pulls out a green eyeshadow and pops it open.

PENNY

How's SAT prep?

MALLORY

Totally transcendent.

PENNY

Your prep or your tutor?

MALLORY

The tutor, obviously.

Mallory pockets the eyeshadow. She stands on a table and pushes a ceiling tile out to stash the bags in the ceiling.

PENNY

The girls will be in at lunch to log and shoot everything for sale.

MALLORY

What are these?

Mallory holds up the post-it notes. Penny takes a seat.

PENNY

They're post-it notes.

MALLORY

I know what they are, Penny. I'm asking how they fit into your creepy master plan.

PENNY

Rude.

MALLORY

Do they have anything to do with the boxes of school supplies that mysteriously showed up in first period this morning?

PENNY

Personal project. I'm just upping my study group game.

MALLORY

You're planning something.

PENNY

Do you even wear green eyeshadow?

MALLORY

Chartreuse.

PENNY

Looked more emerald to me.

MALLORY

Emerald is terrible with my skin.
(re: the post-its)
This feels like a parlous venture,
Pen.

PENNY

...Perilous?

MALLORY

Parlous. P-A-R-L-O-U-S. Full of danger or uncertainty.

PENNY

So, perilous.

MALLORY

Sure. But fancy. You want another fancy word? Obfuscate. To render obscure, unclear, or unintelligible, like what you're doing right now.

PENNY

Okay, Harvard.

MALLORY

Whatever. I have two concerns: Lena and Kyle.

PENNY

I'm driving home with Lena today.

MALLORY

And Kyle? His boys doxxed the last amateur hacker who tried to horn in on his gang and their whole family had to move to Alaska.

PENNY

Beautiful state.

MALLORY

Penny I don't want to live in Alaska.

PENNY

You're not going to Alaska. You're going to Harvard.

MALLORY

Just tell me you're not fucking with Kyle.

PENNY

I'm not trying to start a gang war.

On her way out the door:

PENNY (CONT'D)

Meeting tonight. Don't forget.

Mallory watches her go. There's some envy, but also love, and maybe a small desire to punch Penny in the face.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

VICE PRINCIPAL TAMARA MARTIN, 27, African-American, sits at her desk with a large cup of black coffee. It's a small office - still has boxes from moving in. Tamara's new to Angelou High, but under no circumstances is she fucking around.

She has a short stack of folders on her desk: student records. As she flips through we see students who need help, boys with expulsion records and low grades. Then we see Penny. She lingers on that one for a moment.

Tamara flips through a couple more - we see Avery in there, and a couple other girls with a long list of infractions - before she lands on JAE SOUNG, junior, Korean.

Jae's from the same middle school as Penny and has similarly perfect grades, but her file is full of warnings, pink slips, and annotations. They're all for sit-ins, protests, or other activist activity.

Tamara examines Penny's and Jae's next to each other.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - SAME DAY

The last of the students are filing out for the day. Avery heads for the water fountain – where she's violently pulled into an alcove and shoved up against the wall, someone's elbow in her throat.

LENA MONTGOMERY, senior, Latina, wields the elbow. Lena's the girls' Mistress of Ceremonies; she goes about her life like she's at a Junior League luncheon, even when she's jumping her classmates between periods.

AVERY

What the fuck?

LENA

Pulled this out of your bag, hon.

Lena shoves a bag of pills in Avery's face.

AVERY

It's a study aid.

LENA

That what you're gonna tell the cops when you get pulled out of school for possession?

AVERY

(read: fuck off)

God, sorry.

Avery tries to walk away, but Lena presses harder against her windpipe. She's not fucking around.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to get caught.

LENA

If I saw it sticking out of your bag, a teacher could've seen it.

AVERY

But they didn't.

LENA

Super not the point, babes. You get caught, I get caught, all the girls get caught. College apps are due in a couple months, and I'm never going Ivy League if I get kicked out of another school. Do whatever the hell you want, just do it off campus. Fuck this up for me and I'll gut you. Got it?

AVERY

Got it.

Lena lets Avery go and pockets the pills.

LENA

Sweet. See you at the meeting.

Lena pats her cheek and sashays off.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - SAME DAY

Lunchtime. The cafeteria is overrun and understaffed - the students mostly keep in line for food, but this is their only unstructured hour of the day. Small scuffles, shouts, and tossed milk cartons break out along the crowded line.

Avery, Lena, and Mallory grab drinks and head to their conspicuously empty table.

At the table behind them, JILL, sophomore, sobs over her mystery meat.

MALLORY

Is she okay?

LENA

Her manager at Ulta - slash creepy-old-boyfriend - cheated on her with some college girl.

AVERY

Serves her right for fucking her manager.

LENA

She's underage. He's an adult. He's in a position of power. If I were her, I'd run him over with my parents' car. Actually...

Lena turns around to the crying Jill.

LENA (CONT'D)

(to Jill)

Is there anything we can do to help?

AVERY

(to Lena)

You cannot run him over with your car.

LENA

But we can rob him blind.

MALLORY

To be fair, we've been avoiding that Ultra for months.

ANGLE ON: Penny sliding her tray down the buffet. Another tray smacks down behind hers, and she looks back.

The girl from the second student file, Jae Sung, acts surprised to find Penny looking at her.

JAE

Do you want something?

PENNY

Lunch.

Penny nods at the offerings. They look bleak.

JAE

Where's your clique?

PENNY

We're not a clique.

JAE

You're a gang.

PENNY

We're not really into labels.

It's a joke. Penny made a joke. Jae just blinks at her.

JAE

You used to be fun, y'know?

PENNY

Pot, kettle?

JAE

Because I'm a feminist killjoy who can't take a joke?

PENNY

Because you're a vegan.

JAE

The meat industry is -

PENNY

- murdering innocent animals with inhuman slaughterhouses and over-polluting our already tenuous atmosphere contributing to the collapse of our ecosystem and the unstoppable rise of global warming.

They slide their trays down and start collecting their suspicious meals. Penny takes the mystery meat.

JAE

Do you even have time for lunch? I hear your clique spends this time posting your ill-gotten goods on eBay for unwitting consumers.

PENNY

I thought you'd be into that. We're an anti-corporatist operation, subverting the capitalist market with guerrilla tactics. Purchase power to the people. Totally in line with the manifesto.

Penny has a soft smile starting on her lips. Jae looks at her, caught off guard.

JAE

You traded the manifesto in for a five finger discount.

PENNY

We were twelve. Pretty sure I was drinking a juice box when we wrote it.

JAE

What are you now, a wine cooler girl?

PENNY

Juice box for grown ups, but the idea's the same.

Jae looks at Penny, evaluating her.

JAE

Don't let Vice Principal Martin catch you.

PENNY

She have something against wine coolers?

JAE

Someone on student council works in the offices. Martin pulled our files.

PENNY

Just ours?

JAE

A batch. The usual suspects. Plus you.

PENNY

I don't remember chaining myself to any trees recently. How'd I get on a list with you?

JAE

Steal any copies of the Anarchist's Cookbook?

PENNY

No need. Why bomb the store when you can bomb their bottom line?

JAE

You can't co-opt a political movement to justify your petty theft.

PENNY

I don't get out of bed for less than grand larceny.

JAE

High standards for someone who trades in nail polish and drugstore mascara.

The sound of student chatter rises as a fight starts to brew at a table behind them.

JAE (CONT'D)

Tell me, when you're locked up for grand theft lipstick, are you going to call the shots from jail or hope your sister can run the empire on her own?

PENNY

(quiet)

At least I'm building something instead of burning it down.

JAE

What's the point when it's already on fire?

The argument reaches a boiling point behind them. At the center of the crowd is NICOLE VANDERWAAL, sophomore, the wildcard, ready to deck ANOTHER GIRL who accidentally spilled a drink down her back.

Nicole spins and spikes her milk carton on the floor. The carton explodes.

The crowd of students start shoving each other, escalating the conflict. One of them bumps Nicole, who wheels around to take a swing at whoever's closest.

Before she makes contact, Penny and Jae swoop in together and strong arm her out of the scuffle as the first girl tries to go after Nicole. The girl misses, hits someone else, and a true fight breaks out.

Jae and Penny drag a struggling, swearing Nicole to the floor beneath a table. They work in perfect unison – this might not be their first time deescalating a fight.

NICOLE

Fucking bitch did it on purpose –

PENNY

Nicole, breathe. Breathe. It's not worth it. You've already got strikes against you – breathe.

Jae strokes Nicole's hair as Penny talks her down. Nicole struggles to control herself – there's something more going on here than simple anger, and Penny and Jae are practiced at handling it.

PENNY (CONT'D)

In and out, come on.

JAE
 (to Penny)
 It's getting worse, isn't it?

PENNY
 She's fine.

NICOLE
 I'm fine. I'm fine - get off.

Nicole shakes them off and storms out of the cafeteria, past the fight.

JAE
 She needs help.

PENNY
 She has help.

JAE
 She needs *real* help. A doctor.

PENNY
 It's none of your business.

JAE
 Sure. You made it your business.
 Act like it.

Penny's face doesn't change but Jae lands this blow.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - ART CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Penny, Mallory, Avery, and Lena are mid-meeting at the front of the classroom. Other gang members, including OLIVIA LOGAN, Penny's freshman sister, lounge at the desks around the room. Mallory takes meticulous notes on a legal pad with a pink feathered pen.

MALLORY
 - She's going to be a problem.

LENA
 Who are we talking about?

MALLORY
 The new Vice Principal. She's in from New Village Prep to crack down on us hardened public-school delinquents.

AVERY
 I can take her.

OLIVIA

Thanks, I hate that. And you know who's gonna be most affected is the school's minority population. Namely -

MALLORY

She's black, honey.

OLIVIA

Internalized racism -

MALLORY

She's black, honey.

Olivia takes a metaphorical seat as Penny refocuses the room:

PENNY

I want to know what got us on her radar.

MALLORY

There's nothing incriminating in our files.

LENA

And it's going to stay that way. Right, Avery?

AVERY

If anyone's shooting her mouth off, it's Nicole. Love her, but she's a fucking liability.

PENNY

Nicole's not going to be a problem.

LENA

You'd better make sure of it. How are we doing on tonight's fundraiser?

MALLORY

We have around 300 RSVPs for the Bake Sale, so we can expect around a 150 to show.

As she takes notes, she switches pens to keep them color-coded.

LENA

Fabulous. I did the rounds at lunch today - should have attendance from the school's best and brightest.

AVERY

(to Lena)

My brother will drop off the booze at your place when he gets off of work. I'll text you what he's supposed to bring – if he tries to skim off the top, you have my permission to kick his ass.

Avery puts her feet up on the desk and starts spinning her lacrosse stick in one hand – her job here is done.

LENA

Is it the cute brother or the weird brother?

AVERY

I dunno, it's my brother.

LENA

Yeah babe, but you know which brother is the hot brother. You live with them. They're probably shirtless all the time.

MALLORY

Sweaty. Perspiring. Sudoriferous.

OLIVIA

So do those all mean the same thing?

MALLORY

I just feel really strongly.

Avery drops the lacrosse stick, grossed out.

AVERY

Ew? It's... my brother? Do you know we're related? Have you heard of the Habsburgs?

LENA

Right, but one of your brothers is cute and one of them is weird.

MALLORY

Is it the one who speaks fluent Klingon or is it the one who offered to bench press Lena?

AVERY

It's... it's Travis. Klingon.

MALLORY

The hot one. His butt is too nice to kick.

LENA

I'm sure I'll find something to do with it.

AVERY

Goddammit.

MALLORY

So that's attendance and libations.

Mallory checks those off her list -

OLIVIA

(And Peggy)

I've got the cups!

AVERY

You're on a path to greatness, Olivia. Nail this one and you'll graduate to cocktail napkins.

OLIVIA

True responsibility. I honestly can't wait.

MALLORY

This is a meritocracy, Liv. We all earn our place here. You can't just ride Penny's coattails to the top.

OLIVIA

I don't want a ride to the top. I want a ride home.

LENA

Sorry babe, Penny and I have some after school errands to run.

OLIVIA

What am I gonna do? Walk? I'm all for eco-friendly modes of transportation but city planning -

LENA

Or hitchhike.

PENNY

Don't hitchhike.

OLIVIA
Great. I'm gonna hitchhike.

Olivia gets up, but Penny grabs her by her backpack and yanks her back into her seat.

PENNY
Avery will give you a ride.

AVERY
Thanks, Pen.

OLIVIA
I'm gonna hitchhike.

AVERY
Thanks, Liv.

OLIVIA
So what is it? Am I risking my life with stranger danger or with Emperor Furiosa here?

LENA
Avery will take you home.

AVERY
But can Emperor Furiosa be my gang name?

PENNY
We're not a gang.

MALLORY
We're a meritocracy.

OLIVIA
We're not a gang? What am I doing here? I thought I was here for a GANG meeting, I thought we were gonna talk about GANG related activities--

PENNY
Will you stop.

OLIVIA
Nope, but I'll leave. If we're not talking about GANG business, I'm gonna go do my chem homework.

Olivia grabs her bag and heads out the door.

LENA

I'm super excited for her to be part of the gang.

MALLORY

Meritocracy!

LENA

Speaking of - we're making an impromptu run tonight, Mal?

MALLORY

Anyone who isn't on party prep will get a text with relevant details from Penny.

PENNY

It's an in and out job. Hit the targets and back to the party by ten. The beerfest in the city will go till about two AM. It'll give us a buffer until about three before we have to worry about attracting any kind of attention. Parents will be out, cops will be busy. Smooth sailing.

LENA

It's going to be a great year for the women's lacrosse team.

MALLORY

Maybe we can even spring for new uniforms.

LENA

Do you think we can get in the yearbook?

AVERY

Then we might actually have to play.

LENA

Absolutely not. My nose is perfect and I'm not risking it. The only contact sport I participate in is Tinder.

Meeting adjourned. The girls file out of the classroom, chattering.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

Tamara packs up some of the gang's files and heads out for the evening.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We follow Tamara through the school, weaving through the hallways. She's still getting the lay of the land.

She lingers over the wall of sports team photos: football, soccer, baseball, softball. She doesn't know enough to realize the lacrosse team doesn't exist.

EXT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Tamara heads to her car, walking past the dumpsters behind the school, where Jae has found Olivia smoking a joint. Jae watches disapprovingly.

JAE

That'll kill you, ya know.

OLIVIA

It's just weed. It's basically a health food.

JAE

Is that what your sister's been telling you?

OLIVIA

My sister tells me a lot of things. Doesn't mean I'm listening.

JAE

What did she tell you about me?

OLIVIA

That you're a crunchy, oversensitive, slacktivist vegan bitch.

JAE

Cute.

OLIVIA

No, that's what *I* said about you.

They lock eyes - Jae looks away first, holding her hand out for the joint. Olivia passes it to her.

JAE

So how are your Neopets doing?

OLIVIA

Can we not talk about how awkward I was when I was eleven?

JAE

As long as we don't talk about my bangs circa eighth grade.

OLIVIA

What about your emo phase? Is that off limits?

JAE

Wow, two years really made a difference for your comeback game.

OLIVIA

"So's your face" only gets you so far with Penny.

JAE

I can only imagine.

Jae takes another hit and passes the joint back.

OLIVIA

You coming to the lacrosse bake sale tonight?

JAE

Only if there are brownies.

OLIVIA

I hear it's gonna be a "big year" for the lacrosse team, whatever the actual honest fuck that means.

JAE

When is someone going to realize we don't have a lacrosse team?

OLIVIA

Go team, go. Penny wants to get us in the yearbook this year.

JAE

Penny's pushing her luck.

OLIVIA

That's what she does best.

JAE
Always has. Lucky Penny.

OLIVIA
Bitch.

Jae takes a pull from the joint.

INT. BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - SAME DAY

The soccer team pours into the dilapidated locker room after practice - muddy, sweaty, and rowdy.

Among them is AIDEN SANTOS, senior transfer - the kind of boy you don't bring home to mom, because she'll like him better than she likes you.

As Aiden heads for his locker, the team captain, CAMERON, a wholesome bro, pulls him aside.

CAMERON
Santos, coach said you'd never
played on a team before. That true?

Aiden nods.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
It shows.

A beat - Aiden looks disappointed.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Just fuckin' with you, man. You're
first string for the game next
week. That flip throw is sick.

He tosses Aiden a team jersey and smacks him on the shoulder. They head for their respective lockers.

The team jokes around as they change out of their practice clothes and filter in and out from the showers.

Another teammate - ENZO, senior defense, who secretly watches soap operas with his mom - pops open the locker next to Aiden's. It slips off the hinges a bit, but he catches it - he's done this a thousand times.

ENZO
(to Cameron)
Maybe Aiden can teach you, bro.
Your throws are weak as shit.

AIDEN

I don't take on lost causes.

Aiden goes to put the shirt in his locker and finds a hole in the fabric. He holds it up and looks at Cameron through the hole.

CAMERON

Don't worry, we're getting new ones.

FELIX, junior striker, emerges from the shower mist. Felix could talk you out of your pants, but he'd fold them nicely afterwards.

FELIX

Yeah, Cameron's dad is hooking us up.

CAMERON

He runs an apparels company.

AIDEN

(re: Cameron)

Is that why he's team captain?

FELIX

We needed the uniforms too bad to say no to him.

AIDEN

Doesn't the school just like, provide them?

CAMERON

We've been begging the school board for years, but they don't give us nada. That one dude -

FELIX

Langenbrunner, right?

CAMERON

He even used to be on the team. We thought he'd be out there for us, but.

ENZO

Traitor.

Cameron slams his locker closed good-naturedly and flips a towel at Felix. The conversation ends as Felix retaliates and Enzo dives into the fray. Aiden stands off to the side, uncomfortable.

INT. CAR - SAME DAY

Lena drives Penny home in her shiny new convertible - her vanity plate reads BITEME. Penny listens attentively while scrolling through spreadsheets on her phone.

LENA

So I told him that I'm not free for dinner, because I'm going out with Freddy on Thursday, and he's just going to have to wait. And he got all mad, like he's entitled to my time or something, like I don't have college applications and homework and like five other guys I'm juggling and this party tonight. I've got a lot on my plate, you know? He's acting like the main course and he's just the side dish. Not even a good side dish. He's like, the steamed broccoli of my love life. But he's got really good hair so how can I say no to that?

PENNY

Good hair?

LENA

Like nineties movie football player hair.

PENNY

Good hair always means trouble.

LENA

But it's so nice to hold onto. Wait, shit - I forgot to ask - what was the take this month?

PENNY

More than last month, less than I expected.

LENA

I'm not worried. You're so good with plans. Always looking for the next big thing.

PENNY

I want to make sure you can focus on what's important.

LENA
Like college.

PENNY
And good hair.

LENA
Exactly. Priorities. I appreciate
you, Penny. Always looking out for
me.

PENNY
That's what this is all about,
isn't it?

LENA
For sure.

Lena pauses dramatically.

LENA (CONT'D)
You know what I don't appreciate?
Secrets.

Lena makes a sharp turn into a sketchy looking parking lot
and locks the doors. Penny pulls at the door, unsettled, but
plays it cool. These girls trust each other, but it's not
unconditional.

PENNY
What's up, Lena?

LENA
What's with the post-its, Penny?

PENNY
I didn't want you to worry about
something you don't need to worry
about.

LENA
See, now, *that* makes me worry.

PENNY
I saw an opportunity.

Lena reaches over Penny's lap to get to the glove compartment
and pulls out the stack of post-its.

LENA
You saw a dozen opportunities.

PENNY

That's how businesses grow, isn't it?

LENA

We're not a business, babe.

PENNY

We sell a product, we turn a profit, we have a boss.

LENA

We're not a company. We're family. We're goddamn Olive Garden.

PENNY

Olive Garden is both.

Penny takes the stack of post-its.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I hit the party circuit on the nice part of town this summer. Turns out people still write their passwords on post-it notes.

LENA

Passwords are Kyle's area. We've got like an armistice with those guys, or whatever, we let them have their basements and computers and we get to live in the real world.

PENNY

Cyber crime is Kyle's area. Passwords are fair game.

Lena's interested, but wary.

LENA

Are we talking, like, felony shit here? Some of us are legal adults. We're not touching this.

PENNY

You don't have to. Your life is paid for.

LENA

Your life will be paid for, too, once you're in prison.

PENNY

I'm not trying to go to prison, I'm trying to go to college. We haven't gotten new textbooks since 1986. How am I supposed to get out of this shitty little town if our school maps still have the Soviet Union on them? What college is going to take somebody with no extracurriculars because our school can't fund them?

LENA

Sign up for a community college class or like join a club sport team. Sign up with Mallory's sexy sexy tutor.

PENNY

With what fucking money, Lena?

LENA

You get a cut from the bake sales. You get a cut from the hauls. It's not nothing, babe.

PENNY

After helping my mom pay the mortgage, and getting our forty year old car fixed, and paying for bus fare, and making sure Olivia has shoes that aren't falling apart, it *is* nothing.

LENA

When I graduate, you're in charge. And if you want to lead all of the other girls off of a cliff, I can't stop you. But it's not just your future you're playing with.

PENNY

With any luck, it's all of our futures.

LENA

You're planning to fix our futures with boxes of school supplies? Look into your crystal fucking ball, Penny. You're talking a big game for someone who's buying pencils and rulers.

PENNY
I didn't buy them.

LENA
Semantics. I'll find out the whole
story eventually.

PENNY
You'll find out when I tell you.

Beat.

LENA
I'm just trying to help you, honey.
There are some lines you can't
uncross.

PENNY
No risk, no reward.

Lena starts the car again.

LENA
Maybe that's what I should have
told Freddy when he got an attitude
about the other guys I invited to
the party.

She pulls out of the parking lot.

LENA (CONT'D)
(pointed)
We'll just have to get through
tonight and see where we stand.

EXT. ULTA - NIGHT

Avery pops out of a 90s sedan -

AVERY
Bye dad love you thanks for the
ride!

She slams the door and turns to face her opponent: ULTA
BEAUTY.

INT. LENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lena's house is filled with smoke and blaring music, the
floor sticky with bad beer and who knows what else. Lena's
not worried. There will be a maid to clean it up tomorrow.

Lena approaches Penny as she fires off some texts -

PENNY
Avery's in position.

LENA
Is Jill still holding it together?

PENNY
On schedule for a 9:30 meltdown.

LENA
Beep me when she gets here. I'm lining up rebounds the moment she dumps that daddy-complexed douche canoe. Thanks babe!

INT. ULTA - NIGHT

Avery browses the aisles, playing it cool. She glances over at Jill, behind the counter, who looks like she's about to burst into tears. They make eye contact and Jill's face hardens. She gives Avery a nod.

The door chimes - enter Nicole, also playing it cool. Avery and Nicole lock eyes for a moment before walking down separate aisles, pretending they don't know each other. Avery's blood begins to boil. This is not the plan.

As they pass each other, Avery whispers over the display -

AVERY
You're not supposed to be here.

They don't look at each other. Nicole clumsily shoves a few nail polishes into her purse.

NICOLE
I got an address and I went to it.

AVERY
Can't even fucking read.

NICOLE
Fuck you.

Avery moves on to a NARS display, positioning herself by the more expensive makeup, marking her territory. Nicole drops a bottle of nail polish and Avery's knuckles whiten around a tube of mascara.

Jill looks up as her pizza-faced manager, STEVEN, emerges from the back room. Shit's about to go down.

INT. LENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jae comes into the party alone, hands in the pockets of her denim jacket, and immediately zeroes in on Olivia chatting with a FRIEND - but catches sight of Penny and looks away quickly. As she passes Olivia -

JAE

Meet me in the hallway.

OLIVIA

Gimme three minutes, Penny's Secret Service is on a timer.

JAE

Can't let her catch you with Public Enemy No. 1.

Jae heads for the hallway as Olivia tries to hide a smile, turning away from Penny.

Penny leans against a far wall, away from the action, surveying her kingdom. Lena's at the center of the party, but Penny's managing it - the girls look to Penny for directions.

INT. ULTA - NIGHT

Jill stomps out from behind the register and confronts Steven:

JILL

I know about Becky, *Steven*.

STEVEN

What?

JILL

You thought we'd never meet because she works the day shift. But she works the day shift with Kate who sometimes works the night shift with Isabel who's in bible study with my sister's best friend Amanda who is the biggest gossip in the entire state of California, *Steven*.

It's on. Avery and Nicole catch eyes and subtly but quickly start grabbing the priciest merchandise they can get their sticky fingers on.

STEVEN

She's just a friend -

JILL

Have you ever heard of friends,
Steven? Do you give your friends
blow jobs in Beth Sedlak's cousin's
Ford Focus, Steven?

Avery and Nicole are totally in sync now - blocking each other from the security cameras and working the store in tandem to cover the most ground. But Nicole's getting greedy - having too much fun - she's going to fast, fumbling things as she tries to put them in her bag -

STEVEN

It was just one time, it didn't
even mean anything -

JILL

Can you even count, Steven? Becky
can count. Becky got an A in
Calculus. I trust Becky.

STEVEN

You talked to Becky?

JILL

I thought she was just a friend.
Why can't I talk to your friends,
Steven?

Avery looks up as something clatters - a makeup palette, falling out of Nicole's pocket - but Jill and Steven are too far in to notice.

STEVEN

Okay, as your manager I need to
remind you that we're in a
professional environment -

Jill picks up the nearest shampoo bottle and hurls it at Steven, who ducks. It hits the display behind him, sending an explosion of eyeshadows raining down on him.

JILL

A professional fucking environment,
Steven? Like the stock room where
you grabbed my ass six months ago?

Nicole reaches for a flatiron and Avery glances quickly at the security camera, pointed straight at Nicole. She coughs, furious - Nicole catches herself and jerks out of the camera's line of sight.

JILL (CONT'D)

Let's be fucking professionals, Steven. You're twenty-two years old. I'm sixteen. If you want to be professional, we can go through the professional Human Resources Department which will go to the professional fucking police who will put you on the professional fucking sex offender registry for the rest of your professional fucking life. Literally, Steven.

She shoves a tall display of perfume bottles, which shatter. Steven panics, trying to scoop them up at her feet. Avery takes the moment to put down her shopping cart and bail, pockets loaded with merch.

JILL (CONT'D)

Get it? Professional *fucking* life?

Nicole follows Avery out, reveling in Jill's and her own triumph.

EXT. ULTA - CONTINUOUS

Nicole crosses the parking lot - only to be cut off by Avery, laying in wait.

AVERY

What the fuck was that?

NICOLE

Amazing. Did you hear Jill in there?

AVERY

I mean your fucking 2006 Tony Romo act.

NICOLE

I don't speak sports, Ave.

AVERY

You don't speak anything to me ever again, do you understand that? Your fumbles in there almost cost us that whole haul. That was supposed to be a gimme.

NICOLE

It was -

AVERY
Is that a brush set sticking out of
your pocket?

NICOLE
(fuck you)
I'm just happy to see you.

AVERY
Fucking rookie.

Avery stalks off into the night, leaving Nicole alone in the parking lot - with a brush set sticking out of her pocket.

Pre-lap:

TAMARA (V.O.)
I know you're used to having the
run of this school and I respect
that. But in order for all of us to
grow, we're going to have to work
together.

INT. VICE PRINCIPAL TAMARA MARTIN'S HOME - SAME NIGHT

Vice Principal Martin in her small bedroom, practicing her speech for school the next day. Her space is sparse - possibly because she's recently moved, possibly not.

Tamara looks down at her notes, then back in the mirror and experiments -

TAMARA
Together! Work together. Work
together.

INT. LENA'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

The party rages on. Lena continues to hold court. She measures out lines on the coffee table and summons the boys she wants to do them with.

Avery shows up at the front door, assuming her rightful place as bouncer. Mallory taps out and joins Lena's circle.

Nicole is close on Avery's heels - pushing past her and heading straight for the coke Lena's doling out. She does a line, uninvited, and leans into the game.

They're surrounded by various PARTYGOERS, mid-game of an alcoholic Two Truths and a Lie. It's Lena's turn:

LENA

Number One - I've skinny dipped in the school pool during school hours.

NICOLE

Your school had a pool? Our school doesn't have a pool.

LENA

Perks of private school, until you get kicked out. It also had individual offices for teachers. So, number two - I had sex in one of them during a school dance.

NICOLE

Number three?

LENA

I ran over a teacher with my car.

Lena finishes a line of coke.

NICOLE

Has to be number two. It definitely wasn't during a school dance.

Everyone laughs.

Mallory lets a group of guys into the party, including soccer boys Cameron, Enzo, and Felix, heckling some of them as they enter.

Tagging along at the tail end of the group is Aiden. Penny tracks him as he follows the group towards the kitchen. He's new. And also perfect. But mostly, he's new.

Pre-lap:

TAMARA (V.O.)

It's normal to be suspicious of someone new. Who is this person showing up on my turf, walking around like they've always been here? What do they want? What are they gonna change?

INT. TAMARA MARTIN'S HOME - SAME NIGHT

Gaining confidence as she speaks:

TAMARA

Change is scary. And I'm gonna change a lot. And it's gonna be hard, and it's gonna be uncomfortable, but I am here to help.

INT. LENA'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

Aiden sits at the periphery of the game, one eye on the party, tracking the flow of people.

As people enter, they clock Penny before going to say hi to Lena.

When someone gets rowdy, Avery looks to Penny for thumbs up or down. Mallory hands Penny a cup en route to the bathroom, refreshing her drink as though it's second nature.

When a big group filters in, Lena makes eye contact with Penny to confirm they're already cleared on the list. Lena's the wizard; Penny's the man behind the curtain.

Jill enters, flush with victory, and Nicole starts up a cheer. Lena taps a BOY in her circle, sending him to Jill:

BOY

Can I get you a drink?

They head towards the kitchen as Lena taps another boy, sending him in pursuit.

Aiden peels off from the group and makes his way towards Penny, never quite looking her in the eye. He slows down as he walks past her, studying the bookshelf she's leaning against.

Penny doesn't acknowledged him.

AIDEN

So your family's big on criminology?

PENNY

Nope.

AIDEN

Behave: The Biology of Humans at our Best and Worst says otherwise.

PENNY

Not my house.

AIDEN

But it is your party.

PENNY

It's the lacrosse team's party.

She looks at him, then back away.

AIDEN

Oh, come on. The way the door chick checks with you whenever someone new shows up? You could be playing beer pong or dancing and you're over here watching this party like you're watching a security feed. Like you know exactly how many people have walked through that door and how many beers they've had since arriving.

PENNY

Can neither confirm nor deny.

AIDEN

You know everyone here, huh?

PENNY

Not everyone.

AIDEN

No?

Her gaze fixes on him.

PENNY

I don't know you.

AIDEN

I'm new.
(extends his hand)
Aiden.

Penny ignores his hand.

PENNY

Who do you know here, New Aiden?

AIDEN

Soccer team.

PENNY

You follow it?

AIDEN

I'm on it.

She eyes him, measures him, and looks away again. Aiden gestures with the criminology book, *Behave*, and pivots.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

You up for an experiment? We've got, what, two hundred test subjects living their best and worst lives -

He gets no reaction from Penny.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, this pick-up line isn't working. You want a drink?

PENNY

Got one.

AIDEN

You want a smoke?

PENNY

Nope.

AIDEN

You want to dance?

PENNY

Still no.

AIDEN

So you hate fun?

PENNY

Yup.

AIDEN

Cool. Me too.

His group, the soccer team, heads outside to play beer pong as a fresh wave of admirers surround Lena, who has started a dance party.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

But who am I to deny my brothers in their hour of need? *Behave*, party girl.

He hands her the book, and weaves through the dancers to follow his friends. Lena eyes him on his way out:

LENA
Ooooooh. Good hair.

EXT. LENA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Spacious, suburban backyard, full of drunk, stoned teenagers. The soccer team rallies around a beer pong table, trying to impress girls with trick shots.

Aiden joins the soccer guys around the beer pong table.

ENZO
You need to stop hitting on her.

FELIX
She's totally into it.

CAMERON
She's literally here with her boyfriend.

FELIX
Just because there's a goalie doesn't mean you can't score.

Enzo offers a grudging high-five and they bro out. Aiden emerges into the fray.

AIDEN
So are we playing beer pong or what?

CAMERON
Now we are! Over here, Aiden.

Lena emerges from the party like a 50's movie star and makes a beeline for the beer pong table.

LENA
God, I would kill for a joint.

Soccer boys appear with joints.

LENA (CONT'D)
Is it going to light itself?

Soccer boys appear, like the gentlemen in Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend, with lights.

Lena takes a hit and passes it to her left - to Aiden.

AIDEN
You seem like the girl to know
around here.

LENA
You're a fast learner.

Beat. Aiden's beer pong teammate makes a shot.

LENA (CONT'D)
Who exactly are you?

AIDEN
Aiden.

LENA
Lena.

They shake, and share the brief moment of acknowledgment that occurs between two attractive people.

AIDEN
Honestly, I'm surprised you didn't
know me.

Aiden takes the next shot. The game continues as they talk.

LENA
Ego?

AIDEN
Nah - the bouncer in the living
room seemed to have a pretty strict
guest list. This is your party,
right?

LENA
It's the lacrosse team's party.

The soccer team laughs.

AIDEN
Lacrosse. Badass. Are you guys any
good?

LENA
We've never lost.

AIDEN
I didn't even know we had a
lacrosse team.

LENA
Well, you're new.

AIDEN

Can't wait to come to a game.

Everyone laughs again. Penny comes out of the house, on a lap of the party, keeping an eye on everyone. She loops past the beer pong table -

AIDEN (CONT'D)

You! Party girl.

There's a moment of confusion before everyone - including Penny - realizes who he's talking to. His teammates stare at him. Lena stares at him. Penny stares at him.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Be straight with me. Am I a part of a social experiment?

PENNY

Wouldn't be a blind study if I told you.

AIDEN

Funny. What's up with the lacrosse team?

PENNY

What lacrosse team?

Aiden's teammate smacks him on the shoulder again and hands him the ball. He hands Penny the joint that Lena passed him.

AIDEN

Hold that thought.

He makes the shot. His teammate picks up the next ball and, with a glance at Aiden, holds it out - in deference - to Penny.

CAMERON

Celeb shot?

Penny, joint in one hand, takes the ball. Now Lena's staring at Penny. Penny locks eyes with Aiden and makes the shot.

They hold eyes for a moment as Penny takes a hit. She holds the rest of the joint out, almost towards Aiden - he reaches for it - and she drops it, straight into his drink.

Lena lets out a shriek of laughter as Penny heads back indoors and Aiden watches her go, curious.

LENA
 (to Aiden)
 You're fucked.

Aiden doesn't even realize his teammate is celebrating their win.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - NEXT DAY

The end of a school assembly, as Tamara finishes her introductory speech. The students are tired, restless, probably hung over.

TAMARA
 I need you to trust me when I say I have your best interests at heart, and I'll do what I can to earn that trust. But when I look at the statistics of where you're ending up in graduation, I know you can all do better if we work together—and I'm going to drive you to get there, as hard as I need to. It's going to be a great year.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Students file out of the auditorium after the assembly. Nicole stands dead center in the doorway, totally in the way, totally unaware. She's lost in thought while people push around her. The low hum of student chatter and fluorescent lights buzzes in the background.

Tamara comes up behind her and puts a hand on her arm. Nicole bristles.

TAMARA
 Nicole, can we chat for a minute before your next class?

NICOLE
 Nahh.

Nicole starts to walk away, but Tamara steps around her to block her way.

TAMARA
 (smiling)
 That wasn't actually a question.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

The chatter's gone, but the fluorescent buzz continues. It's starting to irk Nicole. She sits in the center of the office, defensive, angry, bouncing her leg.

TAMARA

...so, I'm trying to meet with a bunch of different students and get the lay of the land. I know you've had some trouble lately, so I just wanted to chat and get your take on what's going on in your life.

NICOLE

There's no trouble. I'm fine.

Tamara opens her sizeable file.

TAMARA

You're on your last strike for getting in fights. You got caught smoking weed last week. I need a Dewey Decimal System to find anything in your file -

NICOLE

If you want to make changes, talk to the class president. Somebody who gives a shit.

TAMARA

The class president doesn't need the school to change. The school is working for the class president just the way it is. I want to talk to you because this school obviously isn't giving you what you need. That's the change I want to make.

NICOLE

Hooray.

TAMARA

You get caught again, you get kicked out. But if you talk to me, tell me what's going on, maybe we can work through it. I don't think you're a bad kid.

NICOLE

Thanks. Really touched. Can I go?

TAMARA

But I am worried you fell in with a bad crowd.

NICOLE

What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

TAMARA

It's no secret that this school has a gang problem.

NICOLE

News to me.

TAMARA

My door is open, is all I'm saying. I know it can feel like you're ratting somebody out, but I need you to believe that I'm here for you, and I can't fix anything if I don't know what's going on with the students at this school.

Nicole doesn't respond.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

I know you hang out with Kyle Johnson and Matt Rhodes. They're into some tough shit, if the rumors are true.

NICOLE

Well, you can't believe everything you hear.

TAMARA

I'm worried about the danger Kyle and his friends pose to the other students. I think they could accidentally hurt a lot of people. That's why the school brought me in, you know. They're worried about these boys. But you and I both know that boys don't have a monopoly on tough shit.

Nicole looks up for the first time.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

I can help you work through this, but I'm going to need your cooperation.

NICOLE

If you think I'm going to sell out my friends, you don't understand this school as well as you think you do.

TAMARA

You have potential, Nicole. My door is open if you remember anything. But if something happens before I hear from you, there's nothing I can do.

Tamara's phone rings, and she takes a moment before reaching for it. Nicole gets up to leave.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

Open door. Really.

Nicole rolls her eyes at Tamara as Tamara picks up the phone, watching her.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

Mr. Murphy, I was just going to call you about the school board's contribution to this year's -

Nicole lets the door swing shut loudly behind her.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - BATHROOM - SAME DAY

Nicole enters the bathroom and goes to a sink. She looks at herself in the mirror, pulling herself together. The buzzing of the fluorescent lights rises. She splashes her face with water, and when she looks up Penny and Avery have appeared behind her in the mirror.

AVERY

What'd you tell her?

NICOLE

I didn't tell her anything.

PENNY

But you talked.

NICOLE

I don't know. She wanted to help me or some shit. She knows something about Kyle's gang, I guess.

AVERY

That's it? Nothing else? Why did she pull you in?

NICOLE

She probably saw me talking to him.

Nicole laughs, trying to brighten the tone.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

She probably thinks one of you is into Kyle. She acted like you were going to go all *Heathers* on me.

AVERY

What?

PENNY

And you said...

NICOLE

Nothing.

AVERY

Are you sure?

NICOLE

Yeah, I told her I wasn't going to rat my friends out.

Things are instantly tense again. The fluorescent buzzing spikes.

AVERY

Fucking what?

NICOLE

I didn't say anything.

AVERY

You fucking told her that there was somebody to rat out you stupid fucking -

Avery steps toward Nicole, but Penny yanks her back into line.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Pen, she's a fucking problem -

NICOLE

I didn't say anything. It's not like I went in there looking to gossip with the Vice Principal -

AVERY

How do we know you didn't? You're all over the goddamn place.

Avery steps around Penny and shoves Nicole hard. Nicole reacts instantly, violently, but Penny intervenes again, one hand on each girl, holding them back.

NICOLE

Whatever. This conversation is over.

Nicole blows out of the bathroom.

AVERY

Um, does she get to decide that?

PENNY

I've got this. Go to class.

Penny follows Nicole out of the bathroom.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Penny catches up to Nicole, following her down the empty hallway as Nicole rages toward the cafeteria. The buzz of lights steadily increases.

NICOLE

That fucking bitch. Goes on and on about *we're a team* and *we're in this together* and she's been at my throat for weeks -

PENNY

Nicole, wait -

NICOLE

All *Nicole's a problem* and *Nicole's gonna narc* and she's not exactly a goddamn Mother Theresa. She's worried about me fucking up and trying to save my own skin because that's exactly what she would do.

PENNY

We're all on edge.

NICOLE

I can't believe you think I'd fucking say anything.

PENNY

You did say something.

NICOLE

Fuck you. I'm not about to sell you all out. You're my family.

PENNY

None of us think you'd do it on purpose.

NICOLE

You don't fucking trust me.

PENNY

We love you.

NICOLE

But you don't trust me.

PENNY

We all know you're at the end of your rope.

NICOLE

What does that have to do with anything?

PENNY

We've all been desperate, Nicole.

NICOLE

The fuck is wrong with you?

Nicole tries to walk away again but Penny keeps on her heels.

PENNY

It's easy to talk about what it means to be a family but when it comes down to it there's no telling what any of us would do in that room. She gives you a Get Out Of Jail Free card? Stay here, stay out of juvie, pretend everything is *fine* and *normal* -

NICOLE

It *is* fine I'm fine -

PENNY

- and like you're not a total mess, a goddamn disaster, a bomb ready to go off at every moment -

NICOLE
I'm *fine* I'm *FINE* -

PENNY
Avery's right, Nicole. You're a fucking liability. Vice Principal Martin offered you help and you sure as hell need it. I can't even blame you for betraying us. It was just inevitable.

The buzzing of fluorescent lights reaches its peak as Nicole hauls off and slugs Penny: first in the gut, then in the face. Penny takes these hits without any resistance as the bell rings and students, teachers, and Vice Principal Tamara flood the hall, just in time to witness Nicole beating up her friend.

TEACHERS descend on her instantly, dragging her off of Penny and through the crowd of students. Blood streams from Penny's lip, and she looks like she's about to cry as another teacher comes to help her off the floor.

The teacher guides her towards the office through the mess of students, who part to let her pass. Calm again, Penny wipes a drop of blood off her lip.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE sits behind his desk in the Principal's office as Vice Principal Tamara stands by the door.

TAMARA
I was just talking to her-

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE
What did you say?

TAMARA
I was trying to help.

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE
I know your methods of helping. It's why we hired you. But this isn't some inner city juvenile facility. These kids need a gentler hand - support, not an inquisition.

TAMARA

A gentler hand is how you ended up with a solid dozen students in jail for narcotics possession and a nurse's office full of kids with broken pinkies.

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE

This isn't The Godfather. This is a high school.

TAMARA

This is a training ground.

Principal Mackenzie rolls his eyes at her.

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE

Whatever it is, we have the school board breathing down our necks. I've heard from Langenbrunner and Johnson just this week about tightening budgets for this fiscal year. We lose more kids, more funding gets cut, and we're already barely scraping by.

TAMARA

I understand.

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE

Do you?

She just looks at him. He relents.

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Nothing we can do for Vanderwaal at this point.

TAMARA

Nicole had potential. Now I have to start from scratch. Find another weak link.

PRINCIPAL MACKENZIE

You'll sign her expulsion papers, though?

TAMARA

Already done.

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE - LATER

Penny sits on the nurse's bench, holding a makeshift ice pack to her face with one hand and working on her phone with the other. She has a split lip but is otherwise fine.

Aiden opens the door, holding his own badly bruised hand. It looks like he slammed it in a door.

AIDEN
Nurse Pirklbauer?

PENNY
Not me.

AIDEN
Where's the ice?

PENNY
Three guesses.

Aiden looks at the freezer, sheepish, and grabs himself an ice pack. Penny keeps her attention on her phone, watching Aiden out of the corner of her eye.

AIDEN
How'd the other guy do?

PENNY
She's fine.

AIDEN
My old school had socratic seminars to resolve disagreements. Here chicks are punching each other out in the halls. Shit's crazy.

He's trying to get a rise, and he succeeds, relatively - Penny looks up from her phone.

PENNY
So go back.

AIDEN
Can't.

PENNY
(interest)
Kicked out?

AIDEN
For what? Bringing non-organic produce for lunch?
(MORE)

AIDEN (CONT'D)

My mom married a new guy. New dad,
new house, new town, new school.

PENNY

New Aiden.

AIDEN

Same shit.

PENNY

How'd you hurt your hand?

AIDEN

Slammed it in a door.

PENNY

On purpose?

AIDEN

You run into somebody's fist on
purpose?

PENNY

Gotta get my kicks somewhere.

AIDEN

And street fights are where you
landed?

PENNY

Well, it was a hallway.

AIDEN

I guess it's less embarrassing than
my fight with a door.

PENNY

You're not wrong.

They regard each other. Penny puts down her ice pack and
starts to rifle through the nurse's cabinets.

AIDEN

What are you doing?

PENNY

Looking for drugs.

AIDEN

Drugs?

PENNY

Drugs.

Now she's getting a rise out of him.

AIDEN

What kind of – what if she comes back?

PENNY

You scared?

AIDEN

No, I – I'm not the one looking for drugs. What kind of drugs would the nurse even have?

PENNY

This is a public school, New Boy. What kind of drugs doesn't she have?

AIDEN

You're not serious.

PENNY

Do I look like I have a sense of humor?

AIDEN

Look, you can't just start going through the cabinets.

PENNY

I already have.

AIDEN

If you get caught –

PENNY

I don't get caught.

AIDEN

You can't just take shit from people. And drugs are –

PENNY

Dangerous?

She tosses him a pill bottle. He catches it with his good hand – immediately looks at the bottle like it's about to explode.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Found em.

AIDEN
... Advil.

PENNY
Drugs.

Aiden starts to laugh.

AIDEN
Are you always such an asshole?

PENNY
Yeah. You always panic under pressure?

AIDEN
Sorry.

PENNY
It's okay.

Stone-faced, Penny extends a hand for a shake. He looks to his injured hand, then at her, then sets the ice pack down and gently, but firmly, shakes her hand with his injured one.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Nice to meet you.

NURSE PIRKLBAUER returns to the room, breaking the spell. While she's distracted with Aiden, Penny slips a couple bottles of Advil into her pocket and leaves.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Passing period. Jae shoves books into her locker between classes as students hustle down the busy hallway. Olivia approaches, unnoticed, and casually leans against her locker.

OLIVIA
Do you still have your notes for Kent's chem class?

JAE
From two years ago?

OLIVIA
Giving them to me would be, like, activism. Your good deed for the week.

JAE
Anything for a good cause. I'll have to dig through some boxes.

OLIVIA
I'll help you look if you help me
study. Friday?

JAE
Yeah, that's going to happen. Me,
you, and Penny eating popcorn,
trading gossip, studying
chemistry...

Olivia steps toward Jae.

OLIVIA
Penny failed chemistry. She's not
invited.

JAE
I'll bring popcorn.

OLIVIA
I'll bring gossip.

JAE
Don't forget your labcoat.

Olivia's hand inches toward Jae's throughout their
conversation.

OLIVIA
Safety goggles.

JAE
Beakers.

OLIVIA
Bunsen burner.

JAE
Graduated cylinders.

Olivia intertwines her fingers with Jae's. They hold hands.

OLIVIA
(distracted)
Meniscus. Can you bring that?

JAE
Won't know until you try.

OLIVIA
Sounds fake, but ok.

They have a moment – their eyes catch and hold until Olivia sees Penny turn the corner, over Jae's shoulder. She drops Jae's hand and flashes her one last smile.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
See you Friday, gal pal.

Olivia flees, passing Nicole at her own locker as she goes.

ANGLE ON: Nicole clearing out her locker as a SECURITY GUARD waits, browsing Facebook on their phone.

SECURITY GUARD
You done yet?

NICOLE
Almost.

Nicole dumps her things into her bag, and a heavy sealed envelope falls to the ground. She picks it up, runs her fingers over the heavy parchment, and opens the envelope to find a LETTER embossed with a fancy crest. It reads:

We are pleased to inform you that you've been accepted to New Village Girl's Preparatory School. Enclosed please find...

On the back, she finds a post-it:

Dr. Cindy Taganova, PsyD - Sept 30, 11:15am

Nicole looks over her shoulder and sees Penny walking past. They lock eyes for a moment – oh, it's you, again – and Penny walks away.

INT. FANCY BEDROOM - NIGHT

The same fancy bedroom from the teaser -

Brett Hoffman, same face we saw on the ID Penny stole in the teaser, sits at his desk. He's scrolling through eBay listings, smoking a joint, and procrastinating on his homework.

He stops suddenly, scrolls back up, and stares at the computer screen. Glances over his shoulder at the empty night stand.

A high-end second-hand DSLR – the one Penny stole – is listed from an anonymous seller. He zooms in on the image – there's a tiny scrape on the body of the camera.

And Brett looks MAD.

BRETT

Fucking -

He gets up and starts combing over his shelves, through his drawers, looking for anything else that's missing.

EXT. NICOLE VANDERWAAL'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

Nicole's house is smallish, but well-kept. Not rich, not poor. The doorbell rings and Nicole's mom, LAURIE VANDERWAAL, opens it to see Mallory on the doorstep.

Laurie looks like she was born exhausted. Mallory smiles.

MALLORY

Hi Mrs. Vanderwaal! Oh my god, when did you cut your hair?

Mallory gives good parent.

LAURIE

Mallory, honey. Just last week. Is Nikki expecting you?

MALLORY

Nah, I just came to drop off something she left behind at school.

LAURIE

Come in. I'll get her.
(yelling)
Nikki, friend's here!

MALLORY

I can't stay long.

LAURIE

She'll be down in a sec. How's school? She won't tell me a thing, and now -

Something smashes inside. Laurie winces.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, I've had the longest day and it's just me tonight and that damn dog -

MALLORY

Go, go. I'll wait. It's fine.

LAURIE

Thanks, hon. Give my love to your
mom.

Laurie disappears into the house and Nicole, in pajamas,
appears at the end of the hall. She approaches the door
cautiously. Mallory's cheerful smile vanishes.

NICOLE

Did Penny send you?

MALLORY

Who else?

NICOLE

I'm sorry - I totally lost control,
I don't even know what happened -

MALLORY

We don't want apologies.

NICOLE

I know she left the letter in my
locker. I called New Village, I
start on Monday, but -

MALLORY

No buts.

Nicole stares at her for a long moment. Mallory reaches into
her pocket and Nicole flinches, but Mallory only pulls out a
small pink package.

NICOLE

What is it?

MALLORY

From all of us. For your new
school. Take care of yourself,
Nicole. Make sure you go to that
appointment. The time and
everything should've been in that
envelope.

NICOLE

For the shrink?

MALLORY

That's the one. You've got a good
brain, lady. Just gotta make sure
it's working for you, and not the
other way around.

NICOLE

Thanks, Mal.

MALLORY

Don't get all weepy on me. I have a reputation to uphold.

Mallory smiles again, and walks off into the dark suburb. Nicole shuts the door and opens the package to find a pink Razr flip-phone, and a note:

We'll be in touch.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL - ART CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

The room bustles with girls - Avery, Mallory, Olivia, and underclassmen - sorting through mounds of trinkets they've shoplifted. They arrange them on old art sculpture pedestals and snap hipstery pictures of each item.

Penny enters, looping around the room to toss the bottle of Advil to a girl who's lying on the floor with a Starbucks cup of coffee pressed against her stomach like a makeshift hot water bottle. The girl catches the bottle and shakes it in thanks. Without pausing, Penny passes the rest of the girls to settle in the corner.

At the main table, Avery quickly edits each photo and uploads them to a variety of resale sites like eBay, where Mallory labels, prices, and publishes the listings to the site.

Penny works alone, skimming through to proofread the listings and cross-check them with a log of their stock.

Lena walks in, passes the other girls, and drops the stack of post-its in front of Penny.

LENA

Brett Hoffman, he went to Greer Prep with me. My friend dated Alex Murphy's sister. Hoffman, Murphy, Johnson. It's the school board. And the city council. What the fuck?

Penny spreads the post-its out one by one on the desk.

PENNY

Want me to read your fortune?

LENA

I want pie charts. I want a Powerpoint presentation.

(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

I want spreadsheets. I want a fucking chalkboard football play schematic – I want a plan, Pen.

PENNY

Are you sure?

LENA

Like I said, babe. You're my sister. You need money. Let's make some money.

PENNY

This isn't just about me. This is about the school.

LENA

You know me. I'm all about some Old Testament retribution. Let's go.

Beat. Penny leans in.

PENNY

School board's been skimming. Everyone knows that, but nobody does anything. Nobody pays attention. So they keep getting elected. Rigged, maybe, who knows – the point is, they're cleaning out the coffers before we see a cent and sending their kids to private schools, so it doesn't touch them. So, I got their passwords.

LENA

Their kids' passwords.

PENNY

Some, yeah. But their kids use the same Wi-Fi, same door codes, same VPN servers.

Penny collects the post-it notes.

PENNY (CONT'D)

When I couldn't get their passwords, I got their kids' – but I have a lot of their stuff, too. Email access. Bank accounts. Total VIP top-floor access.

(MORE)

PENNY (CONT'D)

They don't get a lot from the school funds individually – it's not like we have that much funding to begin with – but then there are school fundraisers, the real ones. The galas. That big-ass party last month where they got that one startup CEO to donate to the school? All in their pockets.

LENA

Tell me you're not jerking off to some Robin Hood fantasy.

Penny lays down one of the post-its -

PENNY

Avery's dad works for this one – Langenbrunner – pays her dad fifteen dollars an hour and the Langenbrunner's house was fucking plastered with pictures of them at their summer homes on every fancy island in the Atlantic.

She lays down another -

PENNY (CONT'D)

This one – Hoffman – you went to school with him – his dad runs a company that makes literal bombs, Lena. And they're taking all of this fucking money and just sitting on it. Dragons on their fucking hordes. They turned their back on the students. On me, on my sister, on you – they're in it for themselves. It's not fucking selfish to be in it for us if this is what we're up against.

LENA

You seriously want to rob them.

Penny pulls her laptop towards herself and pulls up a file of photos.

PENNY

I'm not gonna rob them. They're going to give it to us.

Lena stares at the photos.

LENA
Holy shit, that's -

PENNY
That's Hoffman.

LENA
That's blackmail.

PENNY
The charity fund that paid for the school supplies is about to get an anonymous donation.

LENA
Okay, sure. Where do the passwords come in?

PENNY
If this is what Hoffman is up to, I don't want to know what the rest of the board is doing. But we have the keys to their lives now.

Lena considers the post-its, the pictures, and Penny. It doesn't look good.

LENA
You're scary. And I love you.

All around them, the girls continue preparing their hauls for sale.

INT. ANGELOU HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

As the hallways start to clear out, our girls leave the art room. Lena heads the group as they cut through the crowd. She's flanked by Mallory, Avery, and Olivia, her dedicated foot soldiers.

Penny doesn't get into formation. She lingers in the doorway, watching them go. Aiden walks past and they lock eyes, but she looks away, surveying her kingdom - her friends, the other students, the teachers, Vice Principal Tamara, Principal Mackenzie.

She stands on the threshold - ready to cross, one way or the other.

EXT. PENNY LOGAN'S HOUSE - LATER

It's not a large house, but sweet. The garden is overgrown, the grass needs a cut, and there's no car in the driveway.

Penny unlocks the door and pulls a post-it note off:

Dinner in the fridge, be home late - Mom

INT. PENNY LOGAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Olivia follows her into the house and kicks the door closed behind her. She steps over a mess of shoes in the hallway to follow Penny into the kitchen.

INT. PENNY LOGAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

This kitchen gets cleaned once a month. Dishes in the sink, bills on the counter, pens and personal detritus strewn across every surface - a house with three women who are never home.

Olivia dumps her bag next to Penny's on the kitchen table and pulls out her homework while Penny digs through the fridge. Dinner is a frozen pizza, which Penny pops in the oven before starting on the pile of dishes in the sink.

The jingle of keys in the door precedes AMY LOGAN, Olivia and Penny's harried mother, wearing nurse's scrubs. She bursts into the kitchen and grabs her wallet off the counter before seeing her daughters.

She goes to Olivia first, kisses her on the cheek -

AMY

Hey baby, how was school?

OLIVIA

Fine.

Olivia accepts the kiss and grins after her mother, who's already blowing Penny - still at the sink - a kiss on her way back out the door.

AMY

Forgot my wallet. Thanks for doing those, baby. Save me a slice. Love you so much. Bed by ten, remember?

And she's gone, leaving Olivia and Penny watching the door close behind their mother.

PENNY
Love you too, mom.

For the first time, Penny looks all of seventeen years old.

"Mama Said" by The Shirelles blares.

CUT TO BLACK.