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PILOT

DRAMA HIGH

“Pilot”

Written by  
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*Inspired by a true story.*

2nd REVISED NETWORK DRAFT  
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## TEASER

EXT. STANTON PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

### BEAUTY SHOTS OVER MUSIC

LOU MAZZUCHELLI (early 40s), tightly combed back hair, oversized glasses, drives through the struggling but still picturesque town-- Diners, Churches, Clapboard Houses, American flags -- Americana.

We hear a piece of the local news over the car radio.  
"...another round of teacher layoffs are expected at Roosevelt High School signaling more bad news for the troubled district..." We see this weigh on Lou as he glances out at THE SHUT DOWN STEEL MILL he is passing, a symbol of tough days the town is experiencing.

--CLIMBING OUT OF A BEDROOM WINDOW -- MAASHOUS EVERS (16) long, unruly hair, blue doughy eyes, sneaks out as a TEENAGE GIRL giggles and throws him his flannel shirt and his bookbag.

--IN THE TOWN LUNCHEONETTE two breakfast specials are swooped up by LILETTE SUAREZ (16), half Puerto Rican, half Irish, long sexy legs and vulnerability under the surface. She looks at her mom, VANESSA (35) a hot mess, jockeying her way through the tight space and her boss ANTON (50s) old school and sort of gross, squeezes Vanessa's ass as she passes. Lilette is disgusted. Comes to Vanessa--

LILETTE

Mom, you're going to let him do that? Seriously? That is sexual assault.

VANESSA

If that's sexual assault I need a new name for a lot of other stuff. Relax, honey, I'm a big girl, I can handle it.

She walks off and we hold on Lilette, annoyed.

--NURSING CARE FACILITY. ROBBIE THORNE (16) African American, a stud, and the closest thing this town has to a star, walks into a room where EVA (40s) African American, in late stages of a muscular disease. He brings a book and some flowers he picked on the way.

ROBBIE

How you doing Momma?

He leans over, kisses her cheek.

--INSIDE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. SIMON SAUNDERS (16) 5'2" thin, handsome, the theater's leading man -- clearly gay, though he would deny it, prays next to his devout MOM and DAD and younger SISTER, who has CP and is wheelchair bound.

--IN A DRIVEWAY a man, COACH DOUG STRICKLAND (early 40s) gathers his suitcase and a cardboard box from his car and walks into his HOUSE. GWEN STRICKLAND (16) Roosevelt High's Theater queen bee, make-up on, tears up as her father enters, she throws her arms around him.

GWEN

Daddy, I'm so glad you're back home.

He holds her tight and we see DENISE STRICKLAND (early 40s) Gwen's Mom, appear in the doorway-- gorgeous and put together on the outside, a wreck under the surface. He looks at her, contrite, but she's still not fully ready to forgive.

EXT. ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

ROBBIE THORNE runs up and down the steps of the bleachers, with his football teammates, leading the pack. He stops as he watches LILETTE walking up to school with her unlikely friend, theater-geek Simon. She feels Robbie looking at her as she passes.

SIMON

I'm telling you should try out for Grease. You have a killer voice.

LILETTE

No offense? But I am not hanging with the theater nerds.

SIMON

My entire life is theater, so how could that possibly be offensive to me? QB1 is totally staring at you. Go talk to him.

LILETTE

I don't date football.

As Lilette and Simon pass, we pick up Gwen and her best friend and lieutenant JOLENE. Gwen looks at Lilette with disdain.

JOLENE

She's wearing those slutty shorts again.

GWEN

Like mother like daughter.

INT. LOU'S ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Lou holds up a copy of "The Grapes of Wrath" to a group of lifeless students. Dead to the world.

LOU

Who is the protagonist of this novel? Anyone. Anyone? Okay, here's a hint -- we have been talking about him for the past three days! No one. Anyone?

Lou walks over to a student slumped over, asleep. Taps him on the shoulder. He lifts his head -- it's Robbie Thorne.

LOU (CONT'D)

Mr. Thorne, join us, please.

Lou writes on the board.

LOU (CONT'D)

Tom Joad. The book is about Tom Joad making Tom Joad the protagonist.

The Bell rings and the class gets up and moves to the door before Lou even dismisses them. Lou calls out after them--

LOU (CONT'D)

In the assigned pages tonight pay special attention to Tom Joad's scene with his Mom -- it is one of the greatest moments of American literature.

Lou hears a few of the students banter as they leave--

STUDENT

Does he realize his glasses don't fit. The guy should get a life.

A few students laugh and we hold on Lou, just a day in the life of Lou Mazzuchelli.

INT. PRINCIPAL WARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Lou sits across from EVAN WARD (50s) African American, he just seems tired from years of all the bullshit.

LOU

...Long story short, with Ms. Cordoza gone I know you need a new head of the theater program and I want to throw my hat in the ring.

WARD

(he didn't expect that)  
You want to run theater?

LOU

I know I'm not your typical "charismatic theater guy." I realize the kids don't flock around me like Mr. Levitsky doing Pearl Jam songs in the chorus. But I love theater. I always have. And I can't help but notice that theater has been suffering. Spirit is down. Attendance has been dwindling. I just think the theater is ready for a reboot. Maybe I need a little reboot myself.

WARD

Lou...

LOU

I know I don't have experience and Ms. Wolfe's been here for over a decade--

WARD

It's yours.

LOU

I'm sorry?

WARD

Theater. It's yours. Have at it.

LOU

What about Ms. Wolfe?

WARD

Ms. Wolfe was a pain in the ass when she was my student here in Tenth Grade History and she's still a pain in the ass.

(MORE)

WARD (CONT'D)

You can have her stay on as assistant but that's as far as it goes. I like this. Even keeled Lou Mazzu. I like it.

Lou is sort of excited but immediately has a little buyer's remorse. Is this really that easy?

LOU

So that's it? I don't have to be approved?

WARD

I just approved you. Just keep it simple. Don't rock the boat. Musicals. People love musicals. Good clean fun. And put some butts in the seats soon or the entire program's getting shut down.

PUSHING IN on Lou -- elated and a little terrified.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Start on students doing *We Go Together* from *Grease*—

GREASE CAST

WE GO TOGETHER

LIKE RAMA LAMA LAMA KA DINGA DA DINGA DONG  
REMEMBERED FOREVER

No costumes, stumbling through choreography. Gwen is a tour-de-over-acting force as Sandy; Simon is her 5'2" 90 pound Danny Zuko. They clearly lead as the ensemble tries to keep up behind them. This is straight ahead, no holds barred middle America high school theater, complete with mugging and winking. The director pacing in front of them is—

TRACEY WOLFE

(mid 30s) skin tight clothes, mouth like a sewer, just leaving her third marriage, she loves theater but hates theater bullshit.

GREASE CAST (CONT'D)

AS SHOO-BOP SHA WADDA WADDA YIPPITY BOOM DE BOOM  
CHANG CHANG CHANGITTY CHANG SHA-BOP  
THAT'S THE WAY IT SHOULD BE  
WAH-OOOH, YEAH!

Lou enters from the back, unnoticed and watches. Nervous but excited about taking over. Tracey chimes in, stopping the rehearsal—

TRACEY

Okay, that's enough of that.  
People. How many times do I have to  
tell you to pick up your yippity  
boom de booms? For the love of God,  
come in on the downbeat. Gwen,  
honey, that little cute ass shake  
thing you're doing? Lose it. Simon -  
- perfect. You're my favorite.

Tracey turns and sees Lou. She is annoyed at the intrusion.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Yes... May I help you?

LOU

Oh. Yes, I thought you'd be  
expecting me.

TRACEY

Why would I be expecting you?

LOU

I'm... didn't anyone... Huh...

TRACEY

What. Spit it out. Speak words.

LOU

I'm taking over the theater  
department.

Silence.

TRACEY

Excuse me?

Gwen hears this and embraces her first instinct -- to emote.

GWEN

I'm sorry, what is happening right  
now? Ms. Wolfe? Ms. Wolfe!

TRACEY

Idiots. Fucking idiots.

Beside herself, Tracey storms out. Lou starts after her but  
locks eyes momentarily with Maashous who watches from the  
projection room, the proverbial fly on the wall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lou runs, catching up to Tracey.

LOU  
I'm sorry the way this is all  
happening but I'd like you to  
consider staying on as my assistant  
director--

TRACEY  
Where did this come from? This  
information.

LOU  
From Principal Ward.

Lou follows Tracey into--

INT. DRAMA CLASSROOM - DAY

Cinder Block walls. Couches. Theater posters. Tracey  
immediately starts sorting through her shit, packing her  
personals.

LOU  
I have ideas. Change things up.  
Make this program feel special.

TRACEY  
It is something special.

LOU  
Even more special then. I was  
thinking what if we do *Spring*  
*Awakening* as our first production?  
Provocative, emotional--

TRACEY  
--What have you directed?

LOU  
Honestly, not that much--

TRACEY  
You must have some great credits to  
steal the job from me. Please. Tell  
me.

LOU  
Fiddler On the Roof, Lake  
Susquehannock Summer Camp, Junior  
Division, 1994.

TRACEY

Well, I could see how your work at Lake Shoot-My-Hammock trumps my 11 years of giving my blood, sweat and tears to this program. What's Ward paying you?

LOU

I don't think--

TRACEY

I'll find out. I find out everything.

LOU

Two thousand for the year.

TRACEY

I was getting four. Now that explains a ton, doesn't it? They just spent Forty G's to put new turf on the football field, but they threw their theater program out the window to save a lousy two grand. That should give you some insight into how much they think of this program.

Tracey hands Lou her heavily marked up edition of Grease.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

I would strongly recommend you do Grease. Uno. Gwen and Simon are practically off book. Dos. There's a movie so you'll get a good turnout at auditions. If you don't get a good turnout it'll land you in a heap of trouble, especially with boys-- boys are scarce at Roosevelt theater. My kingdom for a heterosexual boy. Tres. We have the costumes and props in storage from our last production which will save your ass since these mother fuckers keep ravaging our budget. That's all the free advice you're getting. I guess this is your classroom now. Break a leg, Mr. Mazzu.

Tracey exits slamming the door. OFF LOU, welcome to theater.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

START ON KAITLIN MAZZUCHELLI (15) who lip syncs and does a goofy/charming white-girl rap dance to "Alexander Hamilton" from *Hamilton*, which is playing on her iPhone.

GAIL MAZZUCHELLI (39) is making dinner, and helping SADIE (10) do her homework.

Lou comes in, holding a copy of *Spring Awakening*, kissing Kaitlin on the head as he passes.

LOU  
Hey beautiful.

SADIE  
Dad, I'm not sure if I need to do the last sheet but Mom said if I'm not sure I have to do it.

LOU  
That's because your mother is brilliant and wise.

Lou, excited to talk to Gail, gives her a real kiss.

GAIL  
Well, hello.

LOU  
Okay, so I have an announcement, everyone. I'm taking over the theater department at the school.

GAIL  
What?

KAITLIN  
Oh my God, that's insane. That's awesome. You could do *Hamilton*, or *Spring--*

LOU  
--*Awakening*. Exactly what I was thinking.

GORDY (16) enters, a very different vibe from the rest of the family, passes through--

LOU (CONT'D)  
Hey bud--

KAITLIN

Dad's taking over the theater  
department at school.

GORDY

That's embarrassing.

GAIL

Gordy, where are you going? I am  
making dinner--

GORDY

Save some for me. Thanks.

LOU

Gordy!

But he's out the door. Tension over this. Lou turns to Gail  
who doesn't look thrilled.

LOU (CONT'D)

So! What do yo think?

GAIL

(with a big smile)

Can we talk for a sec?

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

They stand outside.

LOU

I talked to Ward -- honestly, I  
didn't think it would go anywhere,  
but he just said yes. He said yes.

GAIL

Uh huh.

LOU

You're not happy.

GAIL

I know it's your dream to do this,  
and I get how badly you could use  
something like this.

LOU

But...

GAIL

Let's just talk through this.  
Figure this out.

(MORE)

GAIL (CONT'D)

Because it's a lot of hours. It's afternoon rehearsals and evening rehearsals. And probably weekends as you get closer to production. And you know I teach piano in the afternoons and evenings. And we need that money, Lou.

LOU

I've thought about it. The final bell rings. I pick up Sadie. I get her settled back here. Get dinner prepped. By that time Kaitlin gets home. Kaitlin keeps an eye on Sadie and pops the dinner in the oven.

GAIL

And what about Gordy?

LOU

Gordy, will do what he always does. Drive home after football practice.

GAIL

You know what I'm talking about Lou. Everything I'm reading about fighting alcohol abuse comes down to a strong home environment and a consistent parental presence.

LOU

He's been doing better--

GAIL

For a week. What happens when he isn't doing better?

LOU

Gail. You know that my first priority is this family. It always has been and it always will be. But I need this, Gail. I need something.

This speaks to her. She gets it. She's still having trouble with the whole thing, but--

GAIL

Okay.

LOU

Okay?

GAIL

Okay. Yes. Do it. Take the job.

LOU

Good, because I already took it.

And we hear the song drift in from the kitchen, an excited Lou does his white-man rap moves as he sings along--

LOU (CONT'D)

"Alexander Hamilton. My name is  
Alexander Hamilton..."

Gail, smiles, charmed, but we hold on her feeling a little worried about what Lou's new endeavor will do to the family.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lou walks in early in the morning. Stands in the empty theater, having his little hero moment. He speaks to a completely empty theater.

LOU

Thank you everyone. Why Spring  
Awakening? Why a show about  
sexually repressed teenagers coming  
of age in 19th Century Germany?  
Because it is provocative, smart,  
challenging...

\*

He hears something scurrying up above. A rodent? What is that. He follows the sound up into--

THE PROJECTION ROOM

He is startled, seeing someone -- it's Maashous.

LOU (CONT'D)

Who are you?

MAASHOUS

Maashous. Evers. Lights.

Lou feels obliged to explain about talking to himself.

LOU

I was just... I'm taking over the  
theater and honestly I guess I'm a  
little nervous.

MAASHOUS

It's cool. 19th Century Germany.  
It's got smash hit written all over  
it.

LOU

It's not like it sounds. It's  
wonderful. And relevant to our  
school. Our town. I just think this  
program needs something to wake us  
up.

MAASHOUS

Why are you trying to convince me?  
I'm just lights.

Lou sees evidence of a blanket and Maashous' day pack. Was he  
sleeping there?

LOU

What's the blanket for?

MAASHOUS

Well, Mr. Mazzu, I like this  
theater a whole lot, but sometimes  
it makes me need a little nap.

Lou smiles at Maashous. He just likes this kid.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tracey walks down the hallway and sees the sign-up sheets --  
NOW CASTING FOR ROOSEVELT HIGH'S FALL PRODUCTION OF SPRING  
AWAKENING.

TRACEY

Son of a bitch.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

First day of auditions. A sad and sparse crowd, around ten  
students including Gwen and Simon, wait their turn. All girls  
other than Simon. Lou talks quietly to MR. BAER (40S)  
pianist, vocal coach, a man with an eternally dubious  
expression, who seems to have been put on this earth to dash  
the dreams of theater hopefuls with words like, "Your voice  
has just actually hurt me." And, "Try shop, theater is not  
for you."

LOU

Is this a normal turnout?

MR. BAER

This is an extremely disconcerting  
turnout, Mr. Mazzu. We are D.O.A.

Lilette tentatively walks in, last minute. Simon looks at  
her, nods, encouraging. Gwen gives her a cool look.

Lou looks at his people, tries to break the ice.

LOU

So happy to see everyone. Welcome.  
I'm very excited to get started.

He looks at them, there's not a lot of support yet.

GWEN

May I just ask what is wrong with  
Grease? It has seven Tony  
nominations, a blockbuster movie  
and a 2016 television revival. Is  
there a reason why that isn't good  
enough for us?

LOU

That is a fair question. I guess I  
just like this show more.

\*

Gwen glares at him.

LOU (CONT'D)

Okay, first up... Harmony Garcia?

HARMONY GARCIA (16) nervous, braces, steps up to the stage.  
As she does, Tracey enters, and sits next to Lou and has a  
whisper conversation.

LOU (CONT'D)

Wonderful. You're staying on.

TRACEY

Not for you. For the kids. I  
couldn't leave them up shit's creek  
with an amateur. Spring Awakening?  
Which part did you like best -- the  
abortion, the teen suicide or the  
rape?

(to a nervous Harmony)

Take a deep breath, honey. Breathe.

Harmony nods to Mr. Baer, who begins playing the first  
rhythmic chords of Adele's *Rolling In The Deep* and Harmony  
begins, struggling to hit notes. Lou exchanges a look with  
Tracey. This could be rough.

HARMONY GARCIA  
THERE'S A FIRE STARTING IN MY HEART

SMASH TO -- ANABELLE, overweight, who belts out *Come Together* by the Beatles. She has a good voice but she keeps randomly shifting octaves. Not good.

ANABELLE  
HERE COME OLD FLAT TOP  
HE COME GROOVIN UP SLOWLY...

SMASH TO -- SASHA, emo girl, who channels Patti Smith talk-singing her song like Patti Smith reciting a poem.

SASHA  
THE BOY WAS IN THE HALLWAY  
DRINKING A GLASS OF TEA  
FROM THE OTHER END OF THE HALLWAY  
A RHYTHM WAS GENERATING

SMASH TO -- Simon, wearing a fake beard, steps up to the mic.

SIMON  
I will be performing "I Only Have  
to Know" in the role of the lord  
Jesus Christ.

He begins, his voice is money, but seeing this diminutive boy playing God in a fake beard is just very high school theater.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
WHY I SHOULD DIE  
WOULD I BE MORE NOTICED

SMASH TO -- JOLENE, doing an over-the-top conspicuously Caucasian *America* from West Side Story with an unfortunate Puerto Rican accent...

JOLENE  
I LIKE TO BE IN AMERICA.  
OKAY BY ME IN AMERICA

SMASH TO -- Gwen, who looks like she is taking the stage that she personally owns.

GWEN  
Hello. Gwen Edith Strickland. I  
will be performing "Mama Who  
Bore...

OVERLAPPING WITH...

With a visibly nervous Lilette--

LILETTE

...Mama Who Bore me From Spring...

GWEN

--From Spring Awakening.

WE SEE BOTH GWEN and LILETTE begin the song. Gwen starts boldly and confidently -- and Lilette starts simply. Her voice is so pure and stunning and arresting. Lou is taken by her. We CROSS CUT between -- the girls and it plays out like a feud--

GWEN AND LILETTE (CROSS CUTTING)

MAMMA, THE WEeping  
MAMMA, THE ANGELS  
NO SLEEP IN HEAVEN  
OR BETHLEHEM.

MORE RAPID CUTS as our auditioners reach their climaxes. A sea of imperfect humanity.

ANABELLE

(popping through octaves)  
COME TOGETHER RIGHT NOW. OVER ME...

SASHA

(going right up to Lou at the table  
like she were in American Idol  
round one auditions)  
HORSES HORSES. COMING ROUND FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. HORSES.  
HORSES.

Gwen and Lilette (NOW DOING THE DOUBLE-TIME REPRISE VERSION)

GWEN AND LILETTE (CROSS CUT)

MAMMA WHO BORE ME. MAMMA WHO RAISED ME. NO SLEEP IN HEAVEN.  
OR BETHLEHEM.

SIMON

I HAVE TO KNOW I HAVE TO KNOW MY LORD.  
HAVE TO KNOW MY LORD. AAHHHHHHHHHHH!

Simon sings the climactic high note which he just holds just as... Everyone braces themselves as Harmony reaches for her climax of *Rolling In The Deep*.

HARMONY

I COULD HAVE HAD IT ALLLLLLLLLLLL....

OFF Lou, that was sobering, we SMASH TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - PEP RALLY - DAY

The pomp and circumstance of a pep rally. The gym is jam packed -- students, parents and faculty. The marching band plays. Cheerleaders kick. Tribal. Ward and Coach Doug Strickland (Gwen's Dad) stand on the makeshift podium and greet the players as one by one they are introduced. Lou is with Kaitlin and Gail. Kaitlin sees Maashous hanging by himself and she makes an excuse.

KAITLIN

I'm getting popcorn. I'll be right back.

SADIE

Can I come?

KAITLIN

No.

ANGLE ON LILETTE AND VANESSA

Vanessa is showing way too much skin, but damn she pulls it off. On the stage we notice Coach Strickland subtly checking her out. And when Lilette and Vanessa pass Gwen and Denise, Denise and Gwen look at them with icy stares.

IN THE BACK OF THE STANDS

Kaitlin has "just by coincidence" ended up near Maashous.

KAITLIN (CONT'D)

Barbaric.

MAASHOUS

What is?

KAITLIN

Pep rallies. Football. High school. Life.

He smiles, and walks off. Kaitlin wants to kick herself for being such an idiot.

ANGLE ON Lilette holding some popcorn as Gwen finds her.

LILETTE

Hi.

GWEN

Would you drop the innocent girl routine.

LILETTE

What--

GWEN

My dad had to go live in a motel  
because your slutty mother threw  
herself at him.

LILETTE

I'm sorry.

GWEN

How can she show her face here at  
my dad's pep rally. That is  
disgusting. No wonder your greatest  
claim to fame is giving a blowie to  
Jordan Riggs behind the pizza  
place.

Gwen walks off, leaving Lilette stunned.

ANGLE ON LOU, GAIL AND SADIE

Rise as Gordy is announced.

WARD

Next up - Freshman corner back,  
Gordy Mazzuchelli!

Gordy comes out to mild applause -- Lou, Gail, and Sadie  
cheer insanely. Someone yells out, "How's the bench, Mazzu?"  
Scattered laughter. Gordy looks back at his parents, looking  
pained to be there. Lou feels for this kid.

WARD (CONT'D)

And now, the man with a plan, the  
man who is going to take down  
Vestal, QB1 -- Robbie Thorne.

As Robbie takes the stage, the entire gym erupts in cheers. A  
hip hop beat plays through the PA -- and everyone is up  
moving to the beat. Someone hands Robbie a mic. He takes it  
and what happens next is unprecedented. Robbie begins to free  
style. Telling his story pitting Roosevelt, the righteous  
underdogs, versus Vestal, the privileged devils. As he tells  
the story, we see Robbie, this stoic kid, come to life in a  
way we never could before see.

His Dad DETRELL (30s) slacks, sports jacket, watches as he  
stands next to YVONNE (late 20s) a trophy wife vibe. In his  
rap, Robbie outs his Dad as dating one of those hot devils  
from Vestal. Cracking everyone up.

Lou isn't laughing. He watches very seriously. He has just found his star.

INT. DRAMA CLASSROOM - DAY

Lou and Mr. Baer watch Tracey tack Polaroids of the auditioners onto a bulletin board. She shuffles different people in different roles, but puts Gwen and Simon side by side on top as the male and female leads, below it other actresses (Lilette remains off the board) while the rest of the male cast after Simon remains empty. Satisfied, she looks to Mr. Baer and Lou for approval.

MR. BAER

Brilliant.

(to Lou)

We call Tracey the casting whisperer. She's got the magic touch.

TRACEY

Clearly, we have some work to do, but we can get the girls cast and start working with them while we scour the hallways looking for dudes.

Lou studies the board and then walks up to it. Tracey watches incredulous, as he starts switching pictures around. He commits the ultimate sacrilege of taking Gwen's picture down. He reaches for Lilette's picture (who hasn't even made Tracey's cut in a supporting role) and puts her up on top.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Lilette Suarez? You're not serious.

LOU

Gwen is always lead. Let's shake things up.

TRACEY

Gwen is always the lead because she is the best we have. And she and Simon have been in three shows together -- they have a shorthand.

\*

LOU

That's the other thing. Simon. I think Simon's a Hanschen.

Tracey doesn't even know how to respond to this.

TRACEY

You want to make Simon Saunders a fifth lead. The Simon Saunders? He may be the best tenor Roosevelt has ever had.

LOU

I like Simon. But his female leads are always a foot taller than him and look about five years older. Our Melchior and Wendla need to have real sexual tension.

TRACEY

Well, let's see, who else will you cast? You have so many to choose from.

LOU

I actually had a thought.

Lou goes to the corner and picks up a copy of the school newspaper. He turns to the sports page and rips out the back page -- A big picture of Robbie Thorne in his practice jersey. He tacks it next to the picture of Lilette. Tracey looks at him. Lilette and Robbie side by side--

TRACEY

Robbie. Robbie Thorne?

LOU

You saw him at the pep rally. He's got something special.

TRACEY

Yes. He does have something special. He can throw a football half a mile. Are you trying to poach Robbie Thorne during football season to be in a musical? You will get us all killed. Rule number one, Mr. Mazzu-- do not cast football. Football is off limits.

\*

LOU

You're probably right.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Start on an English test marked with red pen and a big red 47%. Lou sits across from Robbie, his dad Detrell, Principal Ward and Coach Strickland.

COACH STRICKLAND

I just want to say Detrell and I are absolutely outraged by the poor work Robbie has been doing in your class.

DETRELL

Outraged. We apologize.

Detrell looks at Robbie, who says his scripted apology:

ROBBIE

I lost sight of my priorities. I'm very sorry. I won't let it happen again.

LOU

Unfortunately, we all know the Pennsylvania education board states that failing an academic test results in a mandatory one week suspension from athletics. So no need to have a meeting.

WARD

Let's not pretend that we don't all know we've got the Homecoming game against Vestal this Friday night. Most important game of the season. The town waits every year for that game. We need Robbie on the field if we have any shot in hell of winning that game.

LOU

I'm assuming you are not asking me to change a student's grade.

Ward looks at Lou -- damn he could make this a little easier. Strickland has had enough.

WARD

I'm just asking you to let him re-take the test after we get through the game.

Lou looks at both of them, considering.

LOU

I want him to audition for the show.

\*

They look at him like he's crazy.

ROBBIE

What show?

\*

LOU

*Spring Awakening*. Our fall production.

(to Robbie)

I don't know if you heard. I've taken over theater.

ROBBIE

I don't act.

COACH STRICKLAND

Are you kidding? He does not have time to act in some play.

LOU

Actually, musicals are typically referred to as shows, not plays--

\*

\*

COACH STRICKLAND

I don't give a shit.

\*

\*

LOU

Doug, it's just an audition. I need to drum up some enthusiasm. If people see that Robbie Thorne auditioned for the show, it'll give it some heat.

\*

\*

\*

Robbie exchanges looks all around. Coach Strickland finally reluctantly nods.

ROBBIE

'Right.

Lou smiles, rips up Robbie's test and tosses it in the trash.

LOU

Go Tigers.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF THEATER - DAY

Gwen stares at the newly posted cast list on the bulletin board. The starring role of Wendla -- Lilette Suarez. Gwen looks at this-- her life flashing in front of her eyes. As sadness evolves into cold, burning rage....

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

REHEARSAL. Lilette (Wendla) Gwen (Thea) Jolene (Martha) and Annabelle (Anna) sit around the table reading the lines. Lilette is tentative, so shy you can't hear her speak. Gwen commanding.

LOU

Lilette, just a little more volume.

VOICE PRACTICE -- MR. BAER works with Lilette who struggles with getting the song down. Lou sings a phrase for Lilette trying to help her find it.

CHOREOGRAPHY - Tracey counts out as the four girls begin doing their blocking. Lilette flounders and accidentally trips Gwen-- they both hit the floor. Gwen lays on the floor an extra few seconds for dramatic affect.

LILETTE

I'm so sorry.

JOLENE

Are you okay?

Gwen smiles, and gets up. The eternal pro.

GWEN

No problem. I'm good.  
(whispering to Lilette)  
Dumb bitch.

LOU

Okay. Let's try it again. Lilette.  
Nice and relaxed...

Tracie looks at Lou -- this is not good.

INT. ENGLISH OFFICE - DAY

English teachers sit at metal desks grading papers, some playing computer solitaire. Lou looks up as Simon enters. There is a natural tension here-- Simon feels invaded by Lou and Lou knows it.

SIMON

May I show you something?

INT. MUSIC ROOM - CHORUS - DAY

Cool teacher MR. LEVITSKY (late 20s) skull cap, scarf, leads the chorus in a rehearsal of a beautiful harmonized version of "JUST BREATHE" by Pearl Jam. Simon and Lou stand watching from outside.

SIMON

Damn, Mr. Levitsky is insanely cool.

(salt in wound for Lou)

Anyway, second row, third from the right.

Lou's eyes go to the second row, third from the right, where MARGARET HALLOWELL (16), while she is technically a girl, there is no denying she presents pretty masculine -- her beautiful voice booms above the others.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Her name is Margaret Hallowell, she has the best voice in the school and in 3 months she will be Michael Hallowell.

(off Lou's curious look)

That's right. She's in transition.

I know we need guys for the show.

You're welcome.

\*

Simon starts to walk away. Then turns back--

SIMON (CONT'D)

You cast me as the fifth lead even though I played the starring role in our last three productions and I am literally the only guy who auditioned. A guy can take that personally.

LOU

Hanschen is a wonderful role.

SIMON

Let's cut the shit. Melchior is the role and I know you asked Robbie Thorne to audition for it.

There's a beat. Then Simon gets to the somewhat uncomfortable truth--

SIMON (CONT'D)

Hanschen is gay. He kisses another boy. I'm not gay.

LOU  
I understand--

SIMON  
I have taken a girl to every school dance since Freshman year. Attractive, lovely girls. I come from a devout catholic home. My sister has cerebral palsy. My parents have dealt with too much. The last thing I am going to do is have them hear rumors about their son at church functions.

LOU  
(gently)  
It sounds like you're carrying a burden in your family. I'm sorry.

SIMON  
It is not a burden. I love my family and I will not embarrass them. I'll play any other role.

Lou considers for a beat, he should let it go. But he can see something is going on here with Simon and he has an instinct to dig deeper.

LOU  
You know Simon, I've been a teacher here 17 years. Seen students come and go. I tried to teach them the best I could, but the truth is I've always felt really inconsequential to their lives. Terrible thing right? I'm a teacher and I feel like I'm really not doing anything. And now -- doing this show, it's scary, but I feel like this is my chance to be who I am. Maybe it's scary for you too. But I believe Hanschen is your role and that you're going to be amazing.

\*

Simon is swayed by this, by being spoken to so honestly and personally by a teacher. You can see it, but the notion of what Lou is asking him to do is still too big for him--

SIMON  
Robbie Thorne is never going to do it. I would kill as Melchior. I would kill.

Simon walks away. OFF Lou.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - EVENING

There is a foldout table set up on the stage and several people await a production meeting including, Tracey, Mr. Baer, MR. GARDNER (50s) the wood shop teacher and de facto set construction department, and Denise Strickland (Gwen's mom), costume mom. Lou enters. Takes a seat at the head of the table.

TRACEY

You know Phil Gardner from shop --  
he's our fantastic construction  
foreman. And this is Denise  
Strickland, costume mom  
extraordinaire. Gwen's mom. And I  
think you know everyone else.

LOU

Hello everyone.

TRACEY

I got everything prepared for  
Grease in case you decide to pull  
the trigger on that direction. We  
have costumes and props and pieces  
of the set that can be reclaimed.

All eyes are on Lou who feels a little ambushed. Then--

LOU

Thank you. But we will be doing  
Spring Awakening.

There is a silence. Clearly this isn't a popular decision.  
Denise starts to gather her things--

DENISE

My daughter has worked for this  
since she was five years old.  
Acting, dance, voice, you name it.  
Lilette Suarez has a lovely voice.  
I'd give my left breast for her  
soprano. But she is untrained,  
unproven and her family is a  
disaster. Roosevelt Theater is not  
just about talent, Mr. Mazzu. It's  
about family. Okay, well. Good luck  
everyone. Have fun trying to find  
slenderizing knee socks for Lilette  
Suarez.

She walks out. Lou exchanges a look with the omnipresent  
Maashous who is on a ladder hanging lights. Everyone looks at  
Lou.

LOU  
Shall we talk sets then?

A chuckle of relief. Suddenly, there is a loud thud. Lou looks over and sees Maashous has collapsed on the floor, unconscious!

LOU (CONT'D)  
Oh my God. Maashous!

INT. E.R. - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Lou and Tracey are waiting to get word on Maashous. They sit brooding. Finally Lou breaks the silence.

LOU  
Please don't do that again. That whole "Should we decide to go back to Grease thing." It's annoying and undermining and frankly demonstrates a weakness in your character.

TRACEY  
A weakness in my character. Isn't that a little personal?

LOU  
Yes it is. I have a vision for this show. If you don't share in that vision--

\*

TRACEY  
Oh, I don't share in that vision. Not even close.

LOU  
Then maybe you should leave.

TRACEY  
I'm not going anywhere. You're going to crash and burn, Mr. Mazzu. You won't make it through the year. And when you go, I will be here to make sure the entire program doesn't crash and burn with you. This isn't Broadway. Half our shows aren't even good. But that doesn't mean you can come in and play with this program like some kind of toy. I grew up in this town. I went to Roosevelt.

\*

(MORE)

TRACEY (CONT'D)

I used to be a real pain in the ass  
until I discovered theater.

LOU

This is you not being a pain in the  
ass?

TRACEY

That theater saved my life. I am  
not going to stand by and watch you  
take it down.

A young ER DOC walks up. Lou and Tracey rush to him.

LOU

How is he?

TRACEY

How's he doing?

ER DOC

It's just low blood sugar. He's  
okay. But the kid is kind of a  
mess. Ear infection, a bad rash on  
his feet. He needs to take better  
care of himself.

OFF Lou processing this deepening mystery.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lilette walks in on a mission, and sees Vanessa drinking and  
flirting with some middle aged guy with a pot belly at the  
bar.

VANESSA

(to the guy)

Give me a sec.

Lilette comes up to...

LILETTE

Did you have a... a thing with Mr.  
Strickland?

VANESSA

Who the hell said that?

LILETTE

Just tell me.

Vanessa sees her daughter start to tear up. It breaks her  
heart. She takes her aside.

VANESSA

That is a lie. That is what happens  
in this town. People make up lies  
just to keep from dying of boredom.  
It's why we're gonna get out of  
here one day.

LILETTE

Mom, you can't lie to me. Okay.

VANESSA

I am not lying. I swear.

Lilette breathes, relieved.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Come here baby. Come here.

Vanessa takes Lilette in her arms. She looks to the guy she  
was flirting with.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Get the hell out of here. I'm gonna  
have dinner with my daughter.

OFF this...

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

Lou comes in late. Gail is playing a song on the piano.

LOU

You only play that song when you're  
pissed.

She turns and sees him. She can't smile.

LOU (CONT'D)

I am so sorry. I know you had to  
cancel lessons and I missed Sadie's  
pick up. There was a kid who had to  
be rushed to the E.R.

GAIL

Lou. Gordy... I found this in his  
room...

She holds up a pint bottle of whiskey with about a quarter of  
it gone. Then Lou sees the pain in Gail's face. He feels the  
pain too. Lou walks to Gail, holds her.

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

Lou knocks on Gordy's door.

LOU  
Gordy. Gordy.

GORDY  
Please leave me alone.

Lou tries the door, it's locked.

LOU  
Open the door. Now.

The door opens a crack and Lou walks in.

Lou goes to Gordy's desk, picks up his car keys and his wallet.

GORDY  
What are you doing?

LOU  
Until further notice -- no car, no money.

GORDY  
Are you kidding?

LOU  
I'm very serious.

GORDY  
For how long?

LOU  
Until you join the support group and show that you give a damn about your life you have no car privileges, no money. Go to school and come home and that's it.

GORDY  
I'm not an alcoholic. I'm not going to that lame group with a bunch of losers from Bennett Avenue.

LOU  
You heard what you have to do. We are trying to help you but you have to meet us halfway.

OFF this...

INT. PRINCIPAL WARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Ward sits across from Gwen and Denise. Gwen is reading from Spring Awakening, emphasizing the violence and inappropriateness of the text.

GWEN

Wendla: I've never been beaten --  
my entire life. I've never felt.  
Melchior: What? Wendla: Anything.  
"He strikes her lightly on the  
backside." Wendla: I don't feel it!  
Melchior: Maybe not, with your  
dress on. "She hikes her skirt. He  
strikes her again." Melchior: How's  
that? Wendla: Nothing. Melchior:  
And that? Wendla: Nothing.  
Melchior: You bitch. I'll beat the  
hell out of you. "Melchior flings  
the switch aside and throws Wendla  
to the ground so violently that she  
begins sobbing."  
(closing the book)  
There's more. But you get the idea.

DENISE

This is not Roosevelt High theater.  
This is disgusting.  
(dropping the script in  
front of him)  
I've flagged all the objectionable  
sections in case you're strapped  
for time. If you don't do something  
about this I'm happy to take this  
up with the district, the local  
press, and tweet the shit out of  
this. Let's go Honey.

Gwen and Denise walk out. OFF Ward, lifting the script and  
starting to read. \*

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Tracey, Lou, Mr. Baer and Lilette sit around waiting. Lou  
looks up at the clock. 3:10. Finally, Robbie walks in, in his  
practice Jersey. Lilette and Robbie exchange a look.

LOU

Good to see you, Robbie. You'll be  
reading with Lilette.

Robbie sees Lilette -- he didn't know about that. He tries to  
play it cool.

ROBBIE  
Hey, Middle Ages with Hendricks,  
right?

LILETTE  
That's right.

LOU  
So, did you get a chance to read  
the script? \*

ROBBIE  
I skimmed it.

Lou smiles at this reaction.

LOU  
And?

ROBBIE  
What was wrong with Grease? People  
come, they laugh, they clap, they  
get entertained. Why you want to do  
this dumbass shit for? This thing  
is going to piss people off. \*

Lilette smiles. We see a building spark between these two.

LOU  
Because I read it and I got  
excited. And I got a little  
nervous. And I thought screw it --  
let's have a go at it. Shall we  
read?

ROBBIE  
I guess.

Robbie and Lilette walk up on stage and they start to read.  
At first, Robbie is doing it by the numbers.

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
Melchior, I'm sorry about... what  
happened. Truly, I am. I understand  
why you'd be angry at me. I don't  
know *what* I was thinking--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)  
Don't.

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
But how can I not--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)  
Please. Please. Don't. We were  
confused. We were both just--

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
But it was my fault that--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)  
Don't -- please -- no. It was me.  
All me. Something in me started,  
when I hit you.

Robbie is forcing it. Acting. Lou chimes in.

LOU  
Robbie, don't act. Just be  
yourself. Just be natural. Okay?  
It's good. You're doing great.

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
But it was my fault that--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)  
(more grounded.)  
Don't -- please no. It was me. All  
me. Something in me started, when I  
hit you.

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
Something in me, too.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)  
But I hurt you--

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
Yes, but still--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)  
No more. My God! No more. Just -  
*please.*

Lilette comes up to Robbie, very close, it's so fucking sexy.  
Lou steals a look to Tracey -- holy shit.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR) (CONT'D)  
Forgive me...

LILETTE (WENDLA)  
It was me. All me.

And there's no denying it. They are a leading man and leading  
lady. Not even Robbie could deny that something just  
happened.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. FIELD HOUSE - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Lou, looking like a fish out of water, approaches Robbie, who is lifting weights. Lou hands him a printed out calendar.

LOU

I made a schedule. It works around most of your practices. Football would still be your first priority. You'd only miss one game for our Friday performance in December. It's the Waterboro game-- and let's be honest, they're gonna shellack us anyway.

ROBBIE

I was just there to audition. That was the deal.

LOU

Yeah, but then you exceeded all expectations.  
(then the hard sell)  
When you sang at the pep rally.  
When you read yesterday. I saw you.  
I saw you come alive. I really think you can do something amazing. I think we can do something amazing together. Think about it.

Lou walks off. OFF Robbie...

INT. LILETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lilette is sitting home doing homework when she sees a text message come up on her Mother's computer. She goes to look at it. She reads the text exchange: DOUG: WE NEED TO TALK.

VANESSA: I TOLD YOU NO. DOUG: MEET ME AT THE MILL. I HAVE TO SEE YOU. VANESSA: UGH. FINE. GIVE ME TWENTY.

Lilette looks at this, her mood darkening.

EXT./INT. STEEL MILL/SIMON'S CAR - NIGHT

Simon and Lilette sit in his car. Lilette sees her Mom's car pull to a stop. Vanessa gets out. She's in her waitress uniform. In a moment we see another car pull up. Gwen's Dad, Coach Strickland gets out of the car.

He walks up to her, they have an impassioned argument which leads to the two of them kissing. So fucked up. Lilette watches, tears fill her eyes. Simon reaches out and takes her hand.

LILETTE

Drive...

SIMON

Lilette.

LILETTE

Drive!

Simon drives away and as the car passes Vanessa looks up and sees Lilette through they window. They lock eyes.

EXT. FOSTER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lou stands at a doorway in a sketchy neighborhood. The door opens a bit and a WOMAN (40s) opens the door.

WOMAN

Can I help you?

LOU

Yeah, I'm Lou Mazzuchelli. I teach at Roosevelt High school. I wanted to talk to you about Maashous. I know this is his foster home.

WOMAN

Is he in trouble?

LOU

No. It's just I tried you a few times and haven't gotten a call back. I just want to make sure everything's okay here.

WOMAN

Everything is fine. I'm a little busy.

LOU

Of course, I just--

WOMAN

Good night.

Lou peers into the house-- a few kids sitting staring at the TV, it looks more like a way station than a home. The door closes on him.

EXT. NURSING HOME GROUNDS - NIGHT

Robbie wheels his Mom along.

ROBBIE

So this dude, Melchior, he loves this Wendla chick. Like a lot. But they're not allowed to see each other-- even talk. But eventually they get with each other. But then she gets pregnant and he loses her. And it's like this tragedy in one way. But in this other way, all these characters they come to life.

They reach a little stream. He sits down next to her-- she takes his hand.

EVA

That sounds wonderful.

ROBBIE

Dad said I could be in a play down the road if I wanted. But I should focus on football. Shouldn't spread myself thin.

\*

EVA

And what do you say?

ROBBIE

I say I can't stop thinking about this Melchior dude.

EVA

I think you have to put that into the equation. Life is short baby.

OFF Robbie, thinking about this.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Lou faces the troop.

LOU

Okay, we have two new cast members to welcome. Welcome back Jeremy who did a wonderful job in his freshman year in the Guys and Dolls chorus. Jeremy will be playing Ernst.

Everyone gives a round of applause.

LOU (CONT'D)

And also...

Lou looks at Margaret.

LOU (CONT'D)

What will we call you?

Margaret takes a long beat, then--

MARGARET

Michael.

LOU

Beautiful. Michael will be joining  
us in the role of Georg.

Everyone applauds. Margaret (now Michael) smiles, feeling acceptance.

And then Lilette looks up and we look to the back of the auditorium--

ROBBIE enters. Looks at Lou, nods. Lou smiles and we WE  
PRELAP LATIN WORDS, chanted RHYTHMICALLY.

THEATER - LATER

ROBBIE backed by Simon, Michael, and Jeremy sing an early rehearsal -- just standing around the piano...

THE BOYS

(chanting)

LAVINIAQUE VENITLITORA, MULTUM ILLE ET TERRIS IACTUATUS ET  
ALTO VI SUPEREM SAEVAE MEMOREM IUNONIS OB...

As the boys grow louder, the piano kicks in and Robbie sings.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)

ALL THAT'S KNOWN  
IN HISTORY, IN SCIENCE  
OVERTHROWN  
AT SCHOOL, AT HOME

Robbie continues -- there is a definite hip-hop influence to his take on this material -- making it fresh, exciting.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR) (CONT'D)

BUT I KNOW THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO FIND  
JUST IN LOOKING THROUGH MYSELF, AND NOT AT THEM...

This brings us to A MONTAGE of the troop's early rehearsals taking shape.

--Lilette stands at the piano working with Tracey singing *Mama Who Bore Me*. More powerful than ever. We HEAR LOU talk to his actors.

LOU (V.O.)  
Why are we doing this? Are we doing  
this to entertain? Yes. Are we here  
because it gets you out of your  
phys ed elective? Absolutely.

--Michael (Margaret) on stage playing a male role.

LOU (V.O.)  
But we're also doing this because  
we are artists.

--Simon does his emotional love scene with Jeremy. "Oh,  
you're Gonna be Wounded." We feel the catharsis of this  
moment for Simon.

LOU (V.O.)  
It is our job and duty to reflect  
the world we live in.

--Maashous looking at Lou from the projection room. He gives  
Lou a nod of approval. Somehow this means everything to Lou.

We REVEAL Lou has been passionately addressing the cast. This  
is a man who has woken up. The cast is sweaty and spent after  
a long, tough rehearsal..

LOU  
The joy, the pain, the longing...  
We pick up each other's lines. We  
have each other's back.  
We are a troop. A sacred troop.  
Okay. Everyone. Good job today.  
Tomorrow, 3:30 sharp.

Everyone breaks up and now there are hugs as everyone breaks  
apart. He comes up to Tracey who finds it hard to admit how  
awesome it is going.

LOU (CONT'D)  
What do you think?

TRACEY  
Not bad.

Understatement of the century.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Lou is teaching the class again, but he is a different man now. He reads from "Grapes of Wrath", energized, immersed. He is giving Henry Fonda a run for his money. The students are glued. Maybe he's crazy, but they can't help but watch.

LOU

"Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an' - I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build - why, I'll be there."

The bell rings. This time no one moves a muscle.

LOU (CONT'D)

Now you can say what you want about me. But do not fuck with John Steinbeck. You guys? Don't you get what's happening? We've got a 44 percent dropout rate at Roosevelt. Statistically 14 of you will not graduate from this school. Don't sleepwalk through this. Wake up. Wake. Up.

Long beat, then Robbie begins to slowly applaud. Everyone else joins in. OFF Lou...

INT. FIELD HOUSE - COACH STRICKLAND'S OFFICE - DAY

Coach Strickland is with his assistant coaches going over x's and o's and Lou walks in.

LOU

You wanted to see me?

Strickland excuses his coaches and nods for Lou to come in.

COACH STRICKLAND

I don't like this, Lou.

LOU

Like what?

COACH STRICKLAND

Being the big, bad football coach.  
What do you consider yourself? An  
English teacher or a theater  
director?

LOU

Both I suppose.

COACH STRICKLAND

No. You're an English teacher.  
That's your job. That's how you get  
paid. No matter what happens to  
your play -- you could flop, you  
could suck, you could fail -- but  
you'll still get paid because  
you're an English teacher. I get  
paid to win games, Lou. That's how  
I support my wife and my daughter.  
It's pretty simple. We lose. I'm  
out. Robbie Thorne is my one chance  
to win games.

\*

Lou thinks for a second, and then says quietly.

LOU

Robbie is dedicated to his team but  
wants to do the show too. That's  
his choice, Doug.

\*

\*

\*

COACH STRICKLAND

I cannot have him split focus. He  
is our linchpin. You tricked me.  
You said it was just an audition.  
You think I don't get what you did?

\*

\*

\*

LOU

It is not our job to think about  
Ws. And unfortunately not really  
our job to think about our own job  
security. Our job is to do the best  
for those kids. And right now being  
in this show is important to that  
young man. I believe that in my  
soul and I won't back down.

\*

\*

\*

COACH STRICKLAND

I like you, Lou. I always have. But  
stay away from Robbie Thorne. Let's  
not let this get ugly.

\*

OFF this adrenaline pouring through Lou.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Lou leaves with the cast for the night.

LOU

Night everyone. Beautiful work.  
Michael you killed that speech.  
Excellent.

Everyone walks out, the door closes. In a moment, Lou walks back into the empty theater. He calls out.

LOU (CONT'D)

Maashous? You still here?

Lou finds Maashous in the projection room.

LOU (CONT'D)

Maashous, I want to help you. But  
you need to tell me what is going  
on, or I need to call child  
protective services.

MAASHOUS

Please don't do that. You put me  
back in the system I'll end up  
getting sent to some other  
district, some other school, some  
other house. I like it here. I have  
friends. I'm doing decent in my  
classes. I can manage until I'm 18.

Lou looks at Maashous, considering.

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

Gordy and Kaitlin are watching TV, Gail is working with Sadie on homework when Lou enters. With Maashous. Gail's confused. Kaitlin tries to breathe seeing Maashous in her kitchen.

LOU

Maashous is going to be staying  
with us for a few days.

Lou looks at Gail who looks back at him, like what the fuck is going on. But he nods, and she gets whatever this is, is important.

GAIL

Let me get you something to eat.

MAASHOUS

Thank you, ma'am.

LOU

Gordy can you bring the sleeping bag into your room? And Kaitlin, can you bring some pillows from the linen closet.

KAITLIN

Uh huh. Hi Maashous.

MAASHOUS

Hey.

OFF this, we, CUT TO:

INT. LOU AND GAIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lou is getting ready for bed. Gail stares at him.

GAIL

Okay, so what's the deal with doughy eyes in there?

LOU

He's in foster care and he hasn't been home for weeks. He's been sleeping in the projection room.

GAIL

Wow. So now we're foster parents?

LOU

Gail...

GAIL

Lou, I had to cancel three lessons this week. We need that money.

LOU

I know.

GAIL

Look, I'm glad that you're living your dream but I'm worried. I'm worried about our son. We need you too. I need you.

LOU

Gail... Gail...

He sees how vulnerable she is. And beautiful. He goes to hold her and it leads to a kiss. It's one of those kisses that comes out of an emotional place but is charged. He kisses her again -- more sexual. She responds. He pushes her up against the dresser. Aggressive. Uncharacteristic.

GAIL

Ooh, did doughy eyes teach you that move?

He laughs. She moves to lock the door. He knows what that means. They start making out.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Did you see how your daughter looked at him? That boy is dangerous, Lou. What part does he play?

LOU

Oh, he's not an actor. He does the lights.

GAIL

Well, that's a waste.

She moves in to kiss him. HOLD on Lou, an idea forming...

INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Simon's parents, ROBERT and CELIA are sitting in the living room when Simon comes in, holding a copy of the script. \*

SIMON

This is my role in the musical this year. It's not Danny Zuko -- so the good news is you won't have to pray for me playing a lothario sex symbol. The other news is that I'm playing a character who has a love scene -- with a boy. And I want your blessing. So here it is, the script. The role is Hanschen. The last thing I want to do is disappoint you. But I've thought about it. I prayed about it. And I decided that this is something I should bring to the world. I love you both. \*

Simon gently places a copy of the script in front of his parents and walks out. \*

INT. LILETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

\*

Lilette walks in. Vanessa waits with takeout burgers, her dysfunctional way of apologizing.

VANESSA

I drove to Five Guys. Your favorite.

LILETTE

Not hungry.

Lilette starts to walk to her room.

VANESSA

Joanne's out with the stomach flu. I told Anton you would work afternoons this week.

LILETTE

You know I have afternoon rehearsals.

VANESSA

Well, you can miss a couple of rehearsals.

LILETTE

Actually, I can't.

She moves into her ROOM. Vanessa follows her into her inside--

VANESSA

Listen, whatever you thought you saw the other night--

LILETTE

I don't want to talk about it.

VANESSA

--it is not worth blowing a good job that I stuck my neck out to get for you. Try working at the Quikmart, maybe you'll stop taking it for granted.

LILETTE

I am in this play. I like it. It's important to me. I'm not going to throw that away for a dumb waitressing gig.

VANESSA

Oh, so, now you're going to be a movie star? Is that it?

LILETTE

Why do you do this, Mom? Bring me down. Make me feel less than? I want more for myself. I want to go to college. I want to get out of this town and have a bigger life. And that's a huge mountain for me. I can't do it on my own. I need you to stop making every possible bad decision and help me. Be my mother.

That came out harsh. Vanessa is hurt.

VANESSA

I'll tell Anton you can't take the shift. Hope you don't lose your job-  
- we need the money.

She walks out, half slamming the door. OFF Lilette, feeling both frustrated and now a little guilty for talking to her mom like that.

EXT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - DAY

Gail opens the front door and stops, seeing something.

GAIL

Lou?

Lou walks out and we see the house has been TP'd. Lou's car is vandalized. The word "TRAITOR" spray painted across it.

GAIL (CONT'D)

What the hell?

LOU

I'll clean it up.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lou comes in, energized. Approaches Tracey.

LOU

I figured it out. He's been in front of our noses the entire time. Maashous. Maashous is our Moritz.

TRACEY

That's... that's not a good idea.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - LATER

Maashous stands on the stage looking so uncomfortable yet still somehow chill. The cast is sitting in the first couple of rows to support him. Maashous begins to sing. At first he's basically more or less just talking the lyrics.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)  
GOD, I DREAMED THERE WAS AN ANGEL  
WHO COULD HEAR ME THROUGH THE WALL

Tracey leans into Lou, whispers:

TRACEY  
Train wreck time.

Mr. Baer stops it for a second. Hits a lower cue note on the piano.

MR. BAER  
Try bringing it down an octave.  
That's where you should live.

Maashous finds the right range -- and then continues.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)  
AS I CRIED OUT LIKE IN LATIN,  
"THIS IS SO NOT LIFE AT ALL"  
HELP ME OUT, OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE  
THEN I HEARD HER SILVER CALL  
SHE SAID "JUST GIVE IT TIME, KID  
I COME TO ONE AND ALL"

Maashous is now getting more comfortable and something crazy is happening. He's good. There is simplicity to what he's doing, he doesn't push, but this guy just sort of owns the stage. The whole cast reacts. This is like this magical experience. Tracey looks at Lou, holy shit. This is working.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ) (CONT'D)  
OH WE'LL WORK THAT SILVER MAGIC  
THEN WE'LL AIM IT AT THE WALL"  
SHE SAID "LOVE MAY MAKE YOU BLIND, KID  
BUT I WOULDN'T MIND AT ALL"  
IT'S THE BITCH OF LIVING BITCH

The cast jump in spontaneously with the background vocals--

CAST  
BITCH, JUST THE BITCH.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)  
WITH NOTHING BUT YOUR HAND

CAST

BITCH, JUST THE BITCH, YEAH.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)

JUST THE BITCH OF LIVING  
AS SOMEONE YOU CAN'T STAND

Maashous finishes his audition. The entire cast rises. Lou looks at Tracey. Tracey looks at Lou.

TRACEY

Like I said, the kid's money.

Lou looks to Mr. Baer who just gives him a terrified smile.

LOU

Maashous, you just made our day.  
Congratulations. You are Moritz.

On Maashous, and we can see even this emotionally shut down dude is feeling like something amazing just happened. As the cast rush the stage to welcome him, Lou just stands there taking this moment in. Reveling it. He looks up and he sees Principal Ward waiting to talk to him.

INT. PRINCIPAL WARD'S OFFICE - DAY

\*

Ward takes a petition with a bunch of signatures and hands it to Tracey and Lou who sit across from him.

WARD

Denise Strickland's got the entire  
PTA on this. I got Coach Strickland  
and the boosters up my ass.

Ward throws the script in front of him.

\*

WARD (CONT'D)

I read this thing -- suicide, teen  
pregnancy, abortion, teenage sex,  
obscenities. And what is this about  
Margaret Hallowell playing a boy?

\*

LOU

Her name is Michael now.

WARD

Not as far as her parents are  
concerned. This is a shitstorm  
waiting to happen.

LOU

Evan, it's going to be okay. The  
show will be amazing.

\*

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)  
Yes, it deals with some mature  
material, but once people see it.

\*

WARD  
People are not going to see it.  
They will never see it. Not at  
Roosevelt.

Lou looks at Ward, realizes he has made the decision.

WARD (CONT'D)  
Lou, what part of don't rock the  
boat didn't you understand? I'm  
sorry. My hands are tied. Tracey,  
the program is yours. The musical  
is Grease. Robbie plays football.

\*

LOU  
You're making a mistake.

WARD  
Please, Lou. I have three goddamn  
teachers to fire this week. Don't  
make yourself one of them.

OFF Lou no ammunition left. Ward turns to Tracey--

WARD (CONT'D)  
Are we good?

Tracey feels terrible, doesn't know what else to say.

TRACEY  
Yeah. We're good.

OFF Lou, fired and betrayed.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - DAY

Lou sits thoughtfully -- Gail comes up to him and comforts him.

GAIL  
It's not fair.

LOU  
I went for it though, huh?

GAIL  
You went for it.

INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY

Simon comes out of his room and his parents are there waiting for him. The script stands before them.

ROBERT  
We read this.

SIMON  
And?

CELIA  
Your school should not be doing this material. It is absolutely inappropriate.

ROBERT  
We'd like you to step away from this.

There's a beat -- Simon conjures his nerve, hears himself saying--

SIMON  
I can't do that. I'm part of a troop. I can't let them down.

ROBERT  
Son...

SIMON  
I'm sorry. I really am.

Simon walks away knowing that he is now going to be at war with this family.

INT. LOU'S CAR - DAY

Lou drives to work/school. Kaitlin sits next to him. Sadie is in the back seat.

KAITLIN  
It's so unfair. They can't take the theater away from you. Fascists.

SADIE  
What's a fascist?

LOU  
The PTA and the Boosters, Sweetie.

KAITLIN  
I believe in you, Dad.

Lou puts his hand on hers. Moved.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lou addresses the cast.

LOU  
I'm sorry but effective immediately  
I will no longer be your director.

Everyone is aghast.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Tracey is here and as you all know she is wonderful. Just wonderful. You are in such good hands. I... I had this vision that theater at Roosevelt high school could be different. Bold. Exciting. Challenging. And I believe it can be. I believe in all of you. But I needed to do it in baby steps. I needed to play nice. One step at time. And as you know -- I didn't take it one step at a time. That was my mistake. Live and learn. But you have all brought me so much the last few weeks. I don't think I'll ever be the same. I really don't. So -- the show will be Grease. Ms. Wolfe will be your esteemed director. And I will be in the front row at opening night cheering you all on. I love you all.  
(then a joke...)  
(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)

Well, Gwen, you I like. I love everyone else.

That gets a pained laugh. As *I Believe* from "Spring Awakening" BEGINS -- Some of the students start to tear up. Lilette takes it really hard. And Simon. Robbie looks stoic. Maashous won't cry, but you can tell how much this hurts him. Finally, Tracey looks at Lou... "I believe..."

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Lou teaches his classroom. Back to square one. He exchanges a look with Robbie, bittersweet. The song continues, "I believe, there is love in heaven..."

INT. LOU'S CAR - NIGHT

Lou drives home at night... The song continues, "All will be forgiven..."

INT. EMPTY THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

While we continue to hear *I Believe* from "Spring Awakening", what we see is that *Grease* is back. Tracey is directing, Maashous is back up in the booth and Gwen and Simon are center stage and Gwen is bossy. Tracey and Simon share a look. They both realize something in the moment. They both just know. "I believe, oh, I believe."

INT. PRINCIPAL WARD'S CAR - NIGHT

Principal Ward rides home and he gets a call on the cell phone.

WARD

What? Where!? ... I'm on my way.

Ward pulls into a U-turn. The song continues...

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOME - NIGHT

Lou walks into the house. Gail runs up to him urgently. She hugs him. Says something to him, and they both turn and head back out to the car. "All will be forgiven..."

EXT. ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL YARD - NIGHT

Start on flames. PULL BACK and we see a bonfire. Around it is the entire Roosevelt cast. They are singing and we realize this is the source of the music.

ENTIRE CAST

I BELIEVE I BELIEVE I BELIEVE. HARMONY AND WISDOM.

Lou walks onto the scene with Gail. He sees what is happening and is immediately moved.

We now see that one by one members are feeding the fire. As we get closer we realize they are pulling Grease costumes off the rack and burning them.

The Cast all beam, looking at Mr. Mazzu as they sing. He has never been more moved.

Gail takes in these kids banding together for her husband. She is moved. For the first time she truly gets the impact that Lou has had. She shares a look with her husband. This means everything to him.

Lou looks at Tracey, deeply moved. She smiles and sort of shrugs.

Principal Ward arrives. Takes a look at what is happening.

Coach Strickland has also been called, he arrives from the other parking lot.

Tracey addresses Ward.

TRACEY

Roosevelt theater has made a decision.

LILETTE

We want Mr. Mazzu to stay.

SIMON

We want Spring Awakening.

\*

ROBBIE

(to Strickland)

And if I can't be in the show, I don't play football.

\*

TRACEY

And we're all ready to quit. By the way, these are the costumes from Grease in case you haven't figured that out.

Tracey tosses one last Pink Ladies jacket in the fire as they join hands in solidarity and continue to sing.

Coach Strickland stares at Lou, and then storms off, livid. They haven't seen the last of him.

Ward stalks away as well.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

We see, but don't hear a rehearsal. Lou is on stage. Talking passionately to his actors. In his element. Alive. The song continues: "I believe. Oh, I believe..." We PULL BACK...

END OF PILOT