

Thirteenth Grade

**Screenplay by
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**Story by
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FADE IN ON:

A STICK OF BUTTER -- glowing eerily under industrial lights.
Over this tantalizing image, VOICES:

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
It's not possible, man.

ANOTHER MALE VOICE (O.S.)
For two hundred bucks, anything is
possible.

YET ANOTHER (V.O.)
In Bangkok, maybe.

We are

INT. LOL! DOT COM OFFICES - BREAK ROOM - DAY

One of those hip Williamsburg refurbs replete with exposed brick, lofted ceilings and an open floor plan.

The three voices belong to KEVIN HANLEY, 30, halfway handsome and nattily dressed, BEARDED INTERN, and CODE JOCKEY, both early-20s males clad in skinny jeans and Chuck Taylors.

The trio stares intently at the stick of butter, which rests on a coffee table next to a STACK OF TWENTIES. Code Jockey records the proceedings on his iPhone.

KEVIN
Nothing gives me more pleasure than
draining your trust funds.

BEARDED INTERN
Ooh, old man's got swagger!

Kevin hoists the stick of butter, 'toasts' the boys and takes a MASSIVE BITE. As they ad lib shock and awe, Kevin chews, attempts to swallow... but the butter refuses to go down.

CODE JOCKEY
Oh, he's donezo.

BEARDED INTERN
Tell me you're getting this.

CODE JOCKEY
1080p, son!

Kevin massages his throat, eyes watering. ANDY, a hipster in her mid-20s, enters and shoots them a look like, "WTF?"

BEARDED INTERN
We bet Kev two bills he couldn't
eat an entire stick of butter in
five minutes.

Kevin finally manages to swallow the first bite, but it's a hollow victory. As he bolts from the kitchen--

ANDY
You guys are retarded.

BEARDED INTERN
(scooping up the twenties)
You mean rich!

Beard and Code Jockey share a victory high-five.

IN THE HALLWAY

Andy finds Kevin HEAVING into a sleek steel trash can--

ANDY
You alright in there?
(Kevin offers a weak
thumbs-up)
Meeting's about to start. Don't
forget to wipe your mouth.

CUT TO:

AN ERSATZ CONFERENCE ROOM

Where FIVE EDITORIAL STAFFERS recline in aerodynamic chairs, clutching coffee mugs. Kevin staggers in, a tiny spot of regurgitated butter on his Armani blazer.

Editor-in-Chief TOM BAYLES swivels to address him--

TOM
Our knight in shining Armani
arrives. Entré, entré!

Kevin takes a seat and exhales, happy to be off his feet.

TOM (CONT'D)
We were just discussing Friday's
update. We're going live with the
new avatars and we expect a lot of
traffic, so we need to have
everyone's content ready to roll.
Aura, where are we with Cassidy?

AURA is rail-thin, with pink hair and ear spacers--

AURA
Her P.R. team is bitching about
some of the retouches, but I'm on
it. We'll be good to go by E.O.D.

Kevin glances over at ANDY, who gestures to indicate the spot of butter on his jacket. He looks down-- *nasty*.

TOM
 (to Kevin)
 Is the Q & A ready?

KEVIN
 Oh, uh, yeah. Pretty deep stuff,
 too. I think you'll be impressed by
 her nuanced take on the global
 financial crisis.

AURA
 (not amused)
 You need to add a plug for her new
 line of clutches. Her team wants to
 run a banner ad above the piece.

KEVIN
 Sure. I'll stick something in.

Andy makes the finger-in-fist hand sign for sex while
 mouthing, "Stick something in?" Kevin tries not to laugh.

TOM
 Alright, great. One other thing. We
 need to push your editorial on teen
 labor in the Third World. No room.

KEVIN
 Isn't a website sort of-- infinite?

TOM
 Sorry, Kev. We'll circle back to it
 next week.

Kevin sighs, defeated. Andy offers a sympathetic smile.

INT. LOL! DOT COM - KEVIN'S DESK - NIGHT

A BEAVIS BOBBLEHEAD head-bangs mindlessly as Kevin browses a
 Word of the Day website on his computer.

TODAY'S WORD -- **quisling**, noun: *a collaborator; a traitor*

Andy plops down on Kevin's desk and he closes the browser
 window, revealing the LOL WEBSITE beneath it.

Its visual style can best be described as "Neon Fairy
 Massacre"-- 80s punk pink and "edgy" gothic text.

Beneath the LOL! LOGO, an airbrushed face emerges from the
 center of a technicolor dandelion.

"Cassidy: Tween Punk's It Girl Blossoms!"

KEVIN
 You realize she's 26, right?

ANDY
God bless you, Photoshop.

Kevin mimes putting a gun in his mouth and pulling the trigger. Andy laughs.

ANDY (CONT'D)
C'mon. Let's get drunk.

KEVIN
It's pretty late. Think I'm just gonna head home.

ANDY
It wasn't a request.

She reaches over and turns off his monitor.

INT. THE COMMODORE - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

A hip Brooklyn nightspot with low lighting and divey decor. Kevin and Andy drink FROZEN MOJITOS, tipsy.

ANDY
These are amazing!

KEVIN
I know. If Cuba had 7-11s, this is what their Slurpees would taste like. With a twist of communism.

ANDY
What does communism taste like?

KEVIN
Red. And a little salty-- like the sweat of the proletariat.

Kevin's coat pocket BUZZES. He retrieves his cell phone.

ANDY
Need to take that, Mister Popular?

KEVIN
Nah, it's fine. Sorry.

Kevin seems conflicted, but Andy doesn't press him.

ANDY
So, I have a serious question to ask you.
(heavy beat)
What's with the butter eating?

KEVIN
Self-loathing makes a man do funny things.

ANDY

Yeah, your life is so tragic. It's like Dachau, with frozen mojitos.

KEVIN

Fair enough. But when I got into journalism I had these lofty ideals, you know? I thought I'd be engaged in some grand public discourse, waging war over the hearts and minds of the American people. And now? I make a living shilling celebrity perfume, so teenage girls can smell like their favorite reality show star.

ANDY

So why don't you do something else?

KEVIN

You've seen rents in this city. I thought maybe I could sneak some real reporting onto the site, but Tom's not gonna let that happen.

ANDY

He'll run your piece. You just have to be patient.

Kevin doesn't know whether to pity or envy Andy's youthful optimism. He slugs the remainder of his mojito.

KEVIN

He offered me a managing editor position, but if I accept, it's like, that's it-- *that's* my life. Kreyshawn and Katy Perry. Forever.

ANDY

That sounds pretty hot, actually.

Kevin chuckles. Andy checks her watch, abandons all pretense--

ANDY (CONT'D)

God it's late. And uptown is like, a millllllion miles away.

Oh. Kevin stares at her for a long beat, torn...

INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lamplight dimly illuminates Andy and Kevin, making out with drunken abandon. They've stripped down to their underwear-- boxer briefs and PINK LINGERIE. Andy climbs astride him--

ANDY

Do you like me?

KEVIN
Yeah. You're great.

ANDY
'Cause I don't normally do this.
I'm not a slut.

KEVIN
No, of course you're not.

ANDY
(unhooking her bra)
I just feel like I can trust you.

Beautiful Breasts *one*, Stupid Man *zero*.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

A BEDSHEET COCOON. Kevin's eyelids raise to half-mast, flinch painfully at the sunlight pouring through the drapes.

In the light of day, Kevin's place is suspiciously... *feminine*. A print of Gustav Klimt's "THE KISS" hangs on one wall, and everything is tastefully color-coordinated, down to the bedside MOISTURIZER PUMP and SCENTED CANDLE.

The sound of KEYS UNLOCKING THE DOOR rouses Kevin from his stupor. He scans the room frantically-- *Andy's gone*. Remembering something, he rolls out of bed and bolts for

THE BATHROOM

Where the feminine touch is even more obvious. A magazine caddy holds issues of VOGUE. Cosmetics crowd the shelves.

Kevin spots a USED CONDOM bobbing in the bowl. He FLUSHES it, scurries back to

THE BEDROOM

and hops into bed just as NATALIE, his professionally-attired girlfriend, enters.

NATALIE
Hey lazybones. You up? It's almost noon.

KEVIN
Mmmhmmmm. What are you doing home?

NATALIE
Guess you didn't get my messages. I only left like, ten of them.

Kevin sits up and faces her, trying not to look guilty.

KEVIN

We finished a huge site update last night. I was working.

Natalie sits down on the bed. Smooths the duvet nervously.

NATALIE

I have some news. Deloitte's promoting me to Regional Operations Coordinator.

KEVIN

Wow, that's-- what does that mean?

NATALIE

I'd help run the Ohio, Illinois and Michigan offices, but home base would be Detroit. At least for the first year. They want me to start next month.

Detroit? Next month? Kevin's head spins...

KEVIN

Wow. Detroit. That's... How would that work? I mean, with my job...

NATALIE

Well, I thought maybe you'd quit the job you're always comparing to a slow day in Hell and find something at a weekly out there. Deloitte's offered to cover our moving costs.

Big boy time. Not Kevin's specialty. He clams up.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

What is that? Silence? That's your answer?

KEVIN

It's a lot to process, Nat. I mean I'm barely awake and you spring this on me--

NATALIE

I'm not *springing* anything, I'm excited. I've been working my ass off for the past six years and they're finally taking notice. I thought you'd be happy for me.

KEVIN

I am happy for you, I just... I don't know what to say.

NATALIE

(getting emotional)

You have no idea? Really? How about, "That's amazing, I'd love to move to Detroit with you." Or maybe, "Let's get married." Or Hell, even, "I can't stand Detroit, why don't you get a job here in Manhattan so we can spend more time together?" You know. *Something*. Something that tells me this whole thing hasn't been a complete waste of time.

KEVIN

Nat, come on. That's not-- it's-- look, it's complicated.

Natalie stares him down, fed up.

NATALIE

No, it's simple. You're a coward.

Verdict rendered, she stomps into the bathroom and SLAMS the door. Kevin groans and peels himself out of bed. Approaches the bathroom door--

KEVIN

Babe? Nat? Please. Talk to me.

The door swings open and Natalie SHOVES Kevin back onto the bed. In her hand, a PINK THONG-- the proverbial smoking gun.

NATALIE

What the *fuck* is this?!

Off Kevin's face, frozen in an expression of OH SHIT, we

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - MORNING

Kevin, rumpled and unshaven, wakes on a bench. A DUFFEL BAG of personal possessions rests beneath his head.

IN A PUBLIC RESTROOM

Kevin brushes his teeth and applies fresh Speed Stick, trying to make himself look presentable. It's not working.

INT. LOL! DOT COM OFFICES - LATER

ELEVATOR DOORS open to reveal Kevin, disheveled, duffel bag in hand. He strides through the lobby, making a beeline for

TOM'S OFFICE

where Andy stands at Tom's desk, discussing something. Tom looks up, flinches at Kevin's tragic appearance--

TOM
Did I miss the apocalypse?

KEVIN
Can we talk... privately?

TOM
Sure. Andy, would you excuse us?

She glides out of the room, pointedly ignoring Kevin.

KEVIN
It's about the Managing Editor position. I accept.

TOM
Well. That's a little awkward, because I offered the position to Andy this morning and she said yes. On the spot.

KEVIN
Are you serious? She's only been here six months.

TOM
I realize that. But after you didn't respond, I assumed you weren't interested.

KEVIN
Well I was-- *am*-- very interested. I just had to think about it.

TOM
For three weeks? You're a great writer, Kevin, but I don't think you're committed to what we do here. And that's a problem.

Kevin takes in Tom's smug smirk, his framed abstract art, his \$500 designer glasses... and SNAPS. In a fit of rage, he PUNCHES one of the framed prints. It doesn't shatter.

TOM (CONT'D)
Plexi.

KEVIN
Oh... Very nice.

TOM
I think you'd better leave.

INT. LOL! MAGAZINE - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin heads for the elevator, carrying a cardboard box full of his possessions. As he passes Andy in the hall, he shoots her a look that could melt an icecap--

KEVIN
Quisling.

ANDY
What?

KEVIN
(pressing the call button)
Look it up. You seduce me, then
ignore my calls and steal my job.

Andy stares, aghast, as co-workers exchange "yikes" faces. The elevator arrives. Kevin gets in and turns to face her.

ANDY
Wow. Does your *girlfriend* know how
big an asshole you are?
(as the doors close)
Tell her she can keep the thong!

As the doors close, the elevator chimes in--

AUTOMATED VOICE
Going. Down.

No shit.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Kevin stands at a bus stop, carrying his duffel bag and a cardboard box of possessions. THE BUS arrives, A MERCEDES AD plastered across its side-- "Love what you drive."

INT. MERCEDES OF MANHATTAN - AFTERNOON

Kevin sits in a back room with a SLICK DEALER who licks his lips as he talks, signing documents.

SLICK DEALER
So what do you do over at Deloitte?

KEVIN
Regional Operations Coordinator.

SLICK DEALER
Usually get a company car for
something like that--

KEVIN
They reimburse me. That everything?

SLICK DEALER
Time is money, right?

EXT. MERCEDES DEALERSHIP - CONTINUOUS

A RED SLK350 purrs by the exit. The dealer grimaces as Kevin SQUEALS off the lot, burning rubber...

INT/EXT. MERCEDES - EVENING

The coupe zooms along the highway, past frost-covered plains. Kevin blasts the stereo, cradling a cell phone to his ear--

WOMAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
Hello, you've reached 394-1444. I'm
not available to take your call--

Kevin hangs up. A HIGHWAY SIGN says we're somewhere in OHIO.

LATER

Kevin eats WHITE CASTLE with one hand on the steering wheel, face blank. On the dash, BEAVIS head-bangs away.

A HIGHWAY SIGN tells us CHICAGO is just 200 miles away.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAWN

Kevin smokes a cigarette as he pumps gas. A MINI-VAN MOM shoots him murderous look. He smiles and waves, oblivious.

EXT. ROAD - EARLY MORNING

Kevin passes A ROADSIDE MARKER -- *The Village of Mount Prospect Welcomes You!* The preponderance of BLAND CHAIN STORES suggests that Mount Prospect is like most suburban enclaves-- very white, very middle class, very unremarkable.

INT. MERCEDES - MORNING

Kevin parks and drains the dregs of his gas station coffee. He looks out the driver's side window, pensive.

EXT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

A two-story suburban house nestled among identical neighbors, all red brick and white wooden slats.

Kevin rings the doorbell and waits. Again. No answer. Finally, he roots around in a rhododenron and removes a LARGE GRAY ROCK. It's plastic. He slides a spare key out of it.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS cover every available surface.

As Kevin enters, a burglar alarm BEEPS in protest.

AT THE ALARM -- Kevin presses a sequence of numbers. It continues to BEEP. He tries again. No dice. Once more, frantically. The alarm erupts in a HIGH-DECIBEL WAIL.

EXT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - LATER

Kevin stands on the lawn with a pair of SUBURBAN COPS. The taller one, RUSS, knows Kevin from way back when. He eyes Kevin's Mercedes, his stylish threads--

RUSS
Heard you were a major player on
The Street. Fuckin' supermodels on
yachts an' shit.

KEVIN
Not exactly.

RUSS
Betcha got gold diggers clinging to
your balls like crabs.

On that note, a shiny sedan pulls into the driveway and MAUREEN, Kevin's well-maintained Midwestern mom, climbs out. Russ switches into Cop Mode.

MAUREEN
Kevin? What are you doing here?

RUSS
Ma'am, we responded to a call from
your security provider informing us
your alarm system had been
activated. Found your son here.

MAUREEN
They charge us for this, you know.

KEVIN
You changed the code.

MAUREEN
Of course I did.

KEVIN
(to Russ)
She watches a lot of CSI.

Maureen hugs Kevin, holding him at a slight distance to avoid smudging her makeup.

MAUREEN
You smell like cigarettes.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - LATER

More FLOWER BOUQUETS occupy the dining room table. Kevin sits with Maureen, eating an omelette from a carry-out container.

He looks into the kitchen, at the stainless steel appliances--

KEVIN
You remodeled. Looks good.

MAUREEN
You haven't been home in a while.

KEVIN
Well, it's nice to be here. You look good, too. Very, uh-- what is that outfit?

MAUREEN
Kardashian Kollection. So are you gonna tell me what's going on or do I have to pry it out of you?

KEVIN
Why does something have to be going on for me to visit?

Maureen shoots him a look and snorts-- "Get real."

MAUREEN
You and Natalie having problems?

KEVIN
You could say that... We broke up.

MAUREEN
Who broke up with who?

KEVIN
It's... complicated.

Maureen believes that line even less than Natalie did.

MAUREEN
I told you to put a ring on it. I don't care how 'modern' a woman is, she won't wait forever.

KEVIN
I appreciate your sympathy. Can we talk about something else?

MAUREEN
Sure. How's work?

KEVIN

It's... I took a leave of absence.
I've got some money saved and
thought now might be a good time to
get away... Re-evaluate things.

Kevin takes another bite of omelette, avoiding her gaze as we

CUT TO:

- A PAPER TOWEL ROLL unfurling rapidly, until only a CARDBOARD TUBE remains.
- A BOX OF DRYER SHEETS, "Morning Dew" scent.
- A HAND stuffing a sheet into the tube, creating a SPOOF.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kevin reclines on his WATERBED, smoking. He takes a drag and exhales through the Spoof. Gentle waves rock the mattress.

We PAN AROUND HIS ROOM, a shrine to mid-90s adolescence.

GRUNGE ICONS adorn the walls: Kurt Cobain strumming an acoustic guitar, fragile and haunted. Eddie Vedder wailing, tangled mane obscuring his anguished features.

A desk holds a stereo, CDs, and stacks of magazines. In the corner, a FENDER STRATOCASTER collects dust.

LATER

Kevin hasn't moved, but the sun's rays have dimmed. Maureen opens the door and sniffs the air-- "Morning Dew."

MAUREEN

I'm going out. You're on your own
for dinner.

KEVIN

What? Where?

MAUREEN

On a date, Nosey Parker. Go hit the
mall or something. Here.

She offers a TWENTY and Kevin begrudgingly accepts. He reaches for a sweatshirt--

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Don't you have something heavier?
You'll freeze to death.

EXT. WESTFIELD OLD ORCHARD MALL - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

Like Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade, Old Orchard features rows of shops flanking an outdoor plaza. Pretty poor planning, when you consider how fucking frigid Illinois gets.

INT. CHEESECAKE FACTORY - EVENING

Kevin, clad in an ill-fitting PARKA, joins the horde of noisy patrons clogging this chain eatery. He weaves through soccer moms and strollers toward the HOSTESS STAND, where a fresh-faced blonde named KRISTA holds down the fort.

KRISTA

Welcome to The Cheesecake Factory.
How many in your party tonight?

KEVIN

I'm here for a pick-up order?
Should be under Hanley.

Krista consults a list, then hands Kevin one of those VIBRATING BUZZERS that signals when your food is ready.

KRISTA

Great! When that buzzes, just head
over there and pick up your order.

Kevin nods and trudges over to a hideously-upholstered couch to wait. He eyeballs Krista as she greets an OLD COUPLE.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Handjob? Is that you?

Kevin turns to find T.R., a lanky, affable dude with glasses.

KEVIN

T.R.?

T.R.

Handjob! The fuck you doing here?

They slap skin as a few patrons glare disdainfully--

KEVIN

Just picking up some food.

T.R.

No, I mean *here*, in Mount P.

KEVIN

Oh, yeah. Just, you know-- little
vacation, check in on the moms.

T.R.

Well shit, man, we gotta hang out.

Before Kevin can respond, the BUZZER begins VIBRATING furiously in his pants-pocket.

KEVIN
Yeah, I better, uh-- I'll call you.

T.R.
Got a new number. Facebook me.

Kevin removes the buzzer and LIMPS awkwardly toward the counter, adjusting his jeans. A WOMAN and SMALL BOY join T.R.

WOMAN
Who was that?

T.R.
We were best friends in high school. Haven't seen him in years.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kevin polishes off his meal while cruising FACEBOOK on an ancient Dell laptop. He looks up T.R.'s profile, sends a Friend Request, cruises on... Lots of PHOTOS of the Woman and Kid we saw at Cheesecake... Wait, that's odd. Most of T.R.'s "Friends" appear to be TEENAGERS.

Kevin clicks on one of the profiles. A HOT GIRL striking a wannabe model pose. Kevin gazes a little too intently when DING! A CHAT NOTIFICATION pops up. It's T.R.

T.R. (ON SCREEN)
Ball and chain's asleep. Beerce?

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACON TAP - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A neighborhood Sports Bar, established 1955.

INT. BEACON TAP - NIGHT

MOUNTED TVs, DARTS and a few ARCADE GAMES. Neon is strictly domestic. T.R. and Kevin share a pitcher in a corner booth.

KEVIN
Can't believe you still come here.

T.R.
Mount P isn't exactly a cultural hotbed. I play the hand I'm dealt.

KEVIN
They still have Alice in Chains on the jukebox?

T.R.
Of course. *Here they come to snuff
the Rooster, awww yeaaaah...*

Kevin cracks up. Just like old times.

KEVIN
You still play?

T.R.
Not since Tyler came along. You?

KEVIN
Does *Guitar Hero* count? Wait, you
have a kid?

T.R.
My girlfriend's. He's six.

Okay, so not exactly like old times.

KEVIN
Wow. That's very... adult.

T.R.
More like batshit crazy. But hey,
we all gotta grow up some time.

If this hits home with Kevin, he doesn't show it.

KEVIN
Speaking of grown up, what's with
all the jailbait on your Facebook?

T.R.
Those are my *students*, dude.

KEVIN
Whoa-- you're a teacher? Where?

T.R.
Prospect, baby.

KEVIN
Get the fuck out!

T.R.
Yup. The old stomping grounds. And
that hostess you were eye-ramming
at Cheesecake? She's in my honors
chem. So hands off, unless you feel
like spit-shining sack up in Cook
County.
(Kevin winces, "Yeesh")
Just sayin'. You got a real purty
mouth.

Kevin chuckles. They polish off their beers.

T.R. (CONT'D)
 Level with me, Hand. You're not on
 vacation. In Illinois. In January.
 (Kevin shrugs, mysterious)
 Alright, time for Plan B.

EXT. BEACON TAP - VOLLEYBALL COURT - NIGHT

There's a SAND VOLLEYBALL COURT behind the bar. Kevin and
 T.R. recline in the sand with their SHOES OFF, passing a
 JOINT back and forth.

KEVIN
 What'd I miss at the reunion?

T.R.
 Kira Bell and Jen Swedland got fat,
 everybody got drunk. Jake Stassen
 puked on the dance floor-- and
 still fucked Lexi Clark at the
 after party. There were all kinds
 of rumors about you-- dating a
 model, made a killing on the Google
 I.P.O., got calf implants.

KEVIN
Lies. Look at these chicken legs.

T.R.
 (passing the joint)
 Truth serum.

KEVIN
 Truth? I lost my job. I'm broke. I
 live at home with my mom-- who's
 apparently an internet-dating,
 Kardashian-loving MILF now.

T.R.
 Nice. Can I get some digits?
 (Kevin smacks him)
 What about that chick on your
 Facebook-- Natasha?

KEVIN
 Natalie. Shit... She wanted-- I
 don't know-- career, house in the
 burbs, two-point-five offspring.
 Everything was on her terms, her
 schedule. I felt like a passenger.

T.R.
 You need a gig? We're always
 looking for subs.

KEVIN
 Ha! The thought of setting foot in
 that place makes my nuts shrivel.

T.R.
 Fair enough.
 (stoned beat)
 Mmmmm. How good does that sand feel
 between your toes?

It *does* feel good. Kevin gazes up at the STARS and they BLINK OUT one by one, until only BLACK remains.

OVER BLACK -- the low, quiet HUM of a refrigerator. Its door OPENS, casting light on the contents inside.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Kevin, drunk-stoned from his night out, grabs a jug of juice from the fridge and chugs out of the bottle. Turns to find--

SOME GUY walking into the kitchen. Kevin drops the bottle, splashing juice all over the floor. They both SCREAM.

KEVIN
 Jesus! Who the fuck are you?

The guy flicks on the light switch, revealing himself to be a 50-something male in BOXERS and nothing else.

SOME GUY
 Sorry! Sorry. Didn't know anyone
 was down here. I'm Rick.

Rick offers his hand, but Kevin doesn't reciprocate.

KEVIN
 Why are you in my house?!

RICK, APPARENTLY
 I just came down for some water.
 (realizing that's vague)
 Mo and I-- your mother. We've been
 seeing each other.

KEVIN
 You call her "Mo"?

Kevin feels slightly ill. Rick walks over to the sink, pours himself a glass of water, drinks.

RICK, APPARENTLY
 Ahhhh. Worked up a serious thirst.

Gross. Kevin winces as Rick gives him a toothy smile.

SUPER OVER BLACK - TWO WEEKS LATER

Chris Cornell wails a 90s anthem. "*Fell onnn, black days...*"

Kevin lies in bed fully clothed, with a pair of GIANT HEADPHONES on. OREO CRUMBS ring his mouth. MUSIC continues as

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATE MORNING

Kevin shuffles in, finds a list of HOUSE RULES on the fridge:

- Shovel driveway
- Wash dishes
- Garbage and Recycling on Tuesday
- NO calls after nine
- NO loud music
- NO smoking!!!

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin enters clutching a two-liter of Coke. Stops at the

MANTLE -- Where the Kevin of Yesteryear reigns in perpetuity. Toddler Kevin smiling in a sandbox. Eight-year-old Kevin in a Little League uniform. High School Kevin in cap and gown.

Next to him, a PORTRAIT of the entire Hanley clan, including Kevin's father JACK. He's a serious man in a serious suit. ANOTHER PHOTO of Jack is framed along with an embossed notice from his MEMORIAL SERVICE: 1952--2004.

Kevin grunts and takes a swig of Coke.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Kevin shovels snow, each leaden scoop a reminder of his wretchedness. He looks over at a pack of SCREAMING KIDS on bikes and CATCHES A SNOWBALL IN THE KISSER. Over this:

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Mister Hanley, this is Mercedes
Financial Services calling. We're
calling regarding an overdue
payment on your outstanding auto
loan. Please call us back.

- Kevin wanders into the living room to find Maureen and three friends watching REAL HOUSEWIVES and sipping trendy cocktails. One of the women passes Kevin on her way to the kitchen and SLAPS HIS ASS flirtatiously. Over this:

NATALIE/VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
--bills piling up here and I don't
know where to send them. Have you
filed a change of address? Don't
call my cell, I changed the number.

- Kevin finishes listening to her voicemail while peeing. As he zips up, he fumbles the phone, DROPPING it into the bowl.

- Kevin, paunchy and unshaven, grabs a dusty edition of SCRABBLE out of his closet and carries it to his bed. He removes the tile bag and holders and sets them aside, then the game board itself, revealing...

A stack of PORNO MAGS from the mid-90s: *Club, Swank, Cheri*. Kevin picks one and opens it to a spread of a BLONDE IN A CHEERLEADER OUTFIT.

As Kevin gets down to business, he HEARS SOUNDS emanating from Maureen's bedroom down the hall-- SEXUAL sounds. *The horror*. Kevin TURNS UP THE STEREO to ear-splitting levels.

As LOUD KNOCKS rock his bedroom door, we

CUT TO:

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin huddles by the dryer, clutching a cordless phone.

T.R./PHONE
Well if it isn't Brian Wilson.
How's the sandbox?

KEVIN
Not so fresh.

T.R./PHONE
Why are you whispering?

KEVIN
I'm grounded. Maureen threatened to
kick me out unless I pay rent.

T.R./PHONE
Bummer. You need a place to stay?

KEVIN
...Not exactly.

CUT TO:

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

An upscale suburban high school sporting manicured grounds and sturdy brick buildings. Safe, nurturing, stable.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - PARKING LOT - MORNING

An OVERWEIGHT KID kneels behind a SHINY SUV, affixing a GAY PRIDE RAINBOW STICKER to its bumper. He grins at

KEVIN, who stands one car over, conspicuously dressed in a SUIT AND TIE. He clutches a sack lunch and stares at his alma mater with a mix of nostalgia and apprehension.

STUDENTS prowl the landscape like alien life forms, slap-fighting, making out, text messaging. COLOR SHIFTS to a DESATURATED LOOK à la the Moon Landing.

ANGLE ON KEVIN, ensconced in a SPACE SUIT and HELMET. His BREATHING becomes heavy and synthetic. PUSH IN until only his EYES are visible in the helmet's visor.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - ADMIN OFFICE - MORNING

Kevin, still wearing the SPACE HELMET, sits on a bench facing the secretary's desk. SOUND GRADUALLY RETURNS.

KEVIN
I'm sorry?

MS. MAPLE, the octogenarian office secretary, tries again--

MS. MAPLE
I said Maureen updates me on all
your accomplishments back East.
We're all just... so proud. You
even made my "Wall of Fame."

She indicates a BULLETIN BOARD to her right, covered with student photos. Among them, a mid-90s PORTRAIT OF KEVIN posed awkwardly in the office of the HIGH SCHOOL PAPER. His hair is long and unkempt, and he wears a SONIC YOUTH shirt beneath a flannel button-down.

Ms. Maple looks to Kevin-- NOW SANS HELMET-- for approval.

KEVIN
Wow, that's... quite an honor.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PRINCIPAL GRANT, an imposing administrator with graying temples and a no-nonsense attitude, smiles across his desk at Kevin. It's obvious these two share some history.

GRANT
Mister Hanley. It's a bit of a
shock, you sitting across from me
again after all these years.

KEVIN
And you promoted to Principal.
Imagine how I feel.

GRANT

I see you found a barber back East--
too bad he couldn't trim the
smartass out of you.

(Kevin smiles)

So. T.R. tells me you're interested
in subbing for us. I'm usually
happy to hire alums, but after this
incident with Stuart Miller--

KEVIN

Stuey teaches here?

GRANT

Taught. He stole a student's
Escalade and drove it into a
drainage ditch. But we're short-
staffed, so you're in luck. Think
you can handle Study Hall?

KEVIN

Sure, sounds good.

GRANT

Punch in at seven, out at three,
fifth period is yours for lunch.
We'll file for emergency
certification so you can work
without a Teacher's Certificate.
Bit of a loophole in the district
guidelines, but don't go
advertising it. You have any
concerns, you come to me.
(extending his hand)
I'm giving you a chance here,
Hanley. Don't blow it.

Kevin shakes, wincing at his grip.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - KEVIN'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Kevin sits at a battered wooden desk, working on a JUMBLE
PUZZLE as students enter, talking and texting. He smiles to
himself as he completes the final mystery phrase.

DISSOLVE TO:

Another class. More texting, flirting. Kevin spins the GLOBE
on his desk absentmindedly. Eyes the CLOCK. Its hands STOP
dead in their tracks. He looks away, rubs his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

Fourth period. Kevin guzzles coffee at his desk as Krista,
the Cheesecake Hostess, enters the room.

KRISTA

Oh my God, hey. It's Krista. From Cheesecake?

KEVIN

Oh, hey, yeah. Thought you looked familiar.

KRISTA

You're like, our best customer. What are you doing here?

KEVIN

I'm subbing. Sort of.

KRISTA

Cool. Well. Welcome to Prospect.

KEVIN

Actually, I was a student here.

KRISTA

No way. When?

Kevin stumbles, suddenly-- painfully-- aware of his age.

KEVIN

Ancient times. Before iPhones roamed the Earth.

KRISTA

God, I could never come back. This place blows.

As if on cue, the Overweight Kid from the parking lot strolls in, sweating like Rodney Dangerfield on four hits of Ecstasy.

FINN

I've been waiting to hear that word come out of your mouth for three years. Three years!

KRISTA

Suck it, Finn.

FINN

Oh, it gets better.
(to the heavens)
Dear Lord, what have I done to deserve your grace?

KEVIN

Alright, funny man, settle down. What's your name?

FINN

Finn.

KEVIN
(checking his roll sheet)
Vernon Finn?

FINN
Just Finn.

KRISTA
(heading to her desk)
Later, Vern.

FINN
(wistfully)
You had me at "Suck it."

The BELL RINGS and Finn grabs a seat. Kevin stands before the class, still uncomfortable with this introductory bit.

KEVIN
Hello. Ahem. Uh, welcome to fourth period study hall. I'm gonna take roll, so if you could just--

FINN
Who the hell are you?

KEVIN
Right, guess I should've-- my name is Kevin Hanley. You can call me Kevin, or Mister Hanley if you're feeling formal. Whichever.

JOCK
What happened to Mister Danforth?

KEVIN
He passed away. Freak snowmobile accident.

Shocked faces. A hush falls over the crowd, broken by--

KRISTA
Oh my God.

KEVIN
I'm *kidding*. He had hip surgery, he'll be back next Fall. Until then, you're stuck with me.
(taking roll)
Krista Barnett, you're here-- Dave Callahan?

This SKINNY DWEEB rarely speaks. Just nods.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Vernon, check-- Jason Graham?

A DISGRUNTLED KID in a thrift store shirt and skinny necktie pulls his head out of a paperback and salutes. Everything about him suggests he's too good for this place.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Kenneally. Mike Kenneally?

A good-natured JOCK-- quarterback size-- gestures from the front row, smiling like he just told a great joke.

MIKE
What up.

KEVIN
Any relation to Tommy Kenneally?

MIKE
He's my big brother.

KEVIN
No way. He was the best quarterback I've ever seen. What's he up to?

MIKE
He mixes paint. At Home Depot.

KEVIN
(awkward beat)
Cool. Alright... Last but not least, Andrea Walter.

A GIRL WEARING HEADPHONES in the back looks up, revealing a pierced eyebrow and choppy black dye-job. She'd be Goth if she cared enough to commit to a style. She doesn't.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
So this is the part where you pull out paper and pretend to work, and I pretend to supervise you. Cool?

The students grumble and dig in their bags...

LATER

Kevin makes his rounds and spots Jason reading "Naked Lunch."

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Great book. Read any other Beats?

JASON
(doesn't look up)
Yup.

KEVIN
"Dharma Bums" changed my life when I was your age. Kerouac in general-- his thirst for adventure, the way he threw himself into travel and new experiences.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Growing up in the 'burbs, he just
seemed so-- fearless. I wanted to
live like that.

JASON
Yeah, he was pretty brave, drinking
himself to death in his mom's
basement.

Smart kid. Kevin considers...

KEVIN
His words were brave. And *he* owned
the house.

As Kevin moseys off, Jason eyes his suit...

JASON
Run and tell 'em, G.Q.

LATER STILL

Finn approaches Kevin's desk.

FINN
Mr. H. You mind letting me out
early? Gotta drop a deuce.

KEVIN
Wait for the bell, Finn.

FINN
Yeah. Thing is, there's a guy
looking for me and I could use a
head start.

KEVIN
Ah. And what makes you so popular?

FINN
I... may have said something about
his mom rimming me.

KEVIN
Well, maybe you can use your way
with words to talk him out of
pummeling you.

They're interrupted by THE BELL.

FINN
Fuck. Nice knowing you.

Kevin gathers his things and ushers Finn to the door--

KEVIN
You're gonna be fine.

But as they cross the threshold, Finn is YANKED OUT OF FRAME and thrown against a locker by a guy in a Letterman's jacket: DREW DEROUIN, six feet of piss, Adderall and testosterone.

DEROUIN

You fuck with my truck, Special Ed?
Think you're fucking funny?

THE HALLWAY

immediately devolves into chaos. Kids chant "Fight!" as Drew and Finn grapple. Jason JUMPS ON DREW'S BACK, choking him. It takes Kevin a few seconds to realize he's an authority figure and must stop the mayhem. He shoves past a chanting student--

KEVIN

Break it up! Yo! Let go of him!

--and pulls Jason off just in time for Drew to spin around and CLOCK HIM WITH A BACKPACK FULL OF BOOKS. Kevin staggers backward and crumples to the ground.

HE SEES -- Finn slumped against a locker across the hallway, smiling. Finn hoists a thumbs-up before Kevin BLACKS OUT.

FADE IN ON:

A FEMALE FACE -- blurry beyond recognition. Her words echo and recede...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hey. Hey, are you alive?

The woman's face COMES INTO FOCUS. She's pretty enough, but her eyes set her apart-- they glitter with untold secrets.

KEVIN

I think. What happened? Who're you?

WOMAN

Slow down. Let's just get you up.

Students CLAP as she helps Kevin stand. Delirious, he raises his fist like a victorious heavyweight.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Alright, Balboa. Show's over.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - FACULTY LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Kevin sits on a ratty couch, holding a frozen, plastic-wrapped HOT POCKET to his eye. His savior leans against a fridge nearby, noshing on a piece of STRING CHEESE.

WOMAN

You always go around picking fights
with high school kids?

KEVIN

That guy's in high school? Thought he was the football coach.

WOMAN

Snazzy threads. You a lawyer?

KEVIN

Thanks. No. I'm subbing... Just 'til I get back on my feet.

WOMAN

Hey, the education of America's youth is a noble pursuit. Course, I didn't get my ass handed to me on my first day.

KEVIN

I didn't-- Who are you again?

WOMAN

I'm Karen. Miss McAdams to you.

Before Kevin can reciprocate, Grant barrels in--

GRANT

Hanley! What in Christ's name happened out there?

Kevin removes the Hot Pocket, revealing his swollen eye.

KEVIN

I'm fine, thanks for asking.

GRANT

(unmoved)

I've got four students in my office fabricating stories as we speak. I need the facts.

KEVIN

Let's see. Fourth period let out and I was walking with one of my students-- Vernon Finn--

CUT TO:

FINN'S FACE as he addresses the camera--

FINN

--when Drew just attacked me out of the fuckin' blue. Our sub saw the whole thing, you can ask him.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Finn fidgets in a chair opposite Grant's desk.

GRANT

Watch the language. Now, I know you're aware of Prospect's "three strikes" policy. And equally aware that you have two and a half strikes on your record already.

FINN

But I'm the victim here!

GRANT

So you say. But you won't walk this Spring unless you get your grades up and stay out of trouble.

FINN

It's kind of hard to focus on tests when you're worried about getting your ass kicked every day.

Grant raises an eyebrow, skeptical.

CUT TO:

DREW DEROUIN, slouched in the same chair, defiant--

DREW

Attacked him? That's bull-- I was walking down the hall and Vernon tried to trip me. So I shoved him-- warning shot. Next thing I know he's throwing punches and I got that other psycho on my back.

Grant's expression hardens. He doesn't like Drew.

GRANT

I've heard from witnesses who say otherwise. They tell me you instigated the fight.

CUT TO:

MIKE KENNEALLY, nervously massaging the bill of his ball cap--

MIKE

I couldn't tell who threw the first punch, it all happened so fast. But Drew and Finn have had beef since sophomore year, and lately Finn's been... pushing him.

GRANT

You're saying Finn provoked him?

CUT TO:

JASON GRAHAM, sitting with his head down, drawing on something with a black permanent marker. Silent.

GRANT (CONT'D)
 I know he's a friend of yours, and
 I know you take issue with
 authority. But you're a straight A
 student and you've got too much at
 stake to let an incident like this
 tarnish your record. So if there's
 anything you want to tell me...

Jason stops scribbling and sets something on Grant's desk:

A CIGARETTE PACK MAN -- with arms and legs and a goofy drawn-on grin, fashioned out of an empty pack of CAMELS.

JASON (O.S.)
 No comment. *Sir.*

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - FACULTY PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Kevin stands next to his car, smoking. With his cigarette and BRUISED EYE, he's a study in rebel cool. Grant approaches--

KEVIN
 (tossing the smoke)
 Principal G. How'd it go?

GRANT
 Like an amateur production of
 Rashomon. I suspended Drew for
 three days. Gave Finn detention.

KEVIN
 Kids these days. It's all the
 violent video games.

GRANT
 Like you were any different. I've
 been in this business twenty-three
 years-- the only things that change
 are the clothes and the music.

A student drives by, blasting LIL' WAYNE from his Camry.
 Grant shakes his head, dismayed by the foul language.

KEVIN
 So, will you be needing my services
 tomorrow?

GRANT
 You've earned your stripes. Keep
 coming back 'til I tell you not to.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON

Kevin enters quietly and tries to slink upstairs before his mom spots the shiner he's sporting.

MAUREEN (O.S.)
Kevin? How was your first day?

KEVIN
Exhausting! Gonna go take a nap!

Maureen enters from the kitchen in a Juicy jogging outfit.

MAUREEN
What happened to your face?

KEVIN
Nothing. There was a-- *incident* in
the hallway at school. Got caught
in the crossfire.

She reaches out and touches his tender cheek.

MAUREEN
You should put some ice on it.

He nods and heads up the stairs. But before he can ascend--

MAUREEN (CONT'D)
Shoes!

Kevin sighs and stops to remove the offending footwear.

CUT TO:

A HOT WATER KNOB TURNS. WATER CASCADES.

INT. KEVIN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The CEILING FAN CHUGS loudly as Kevin reclines in the bath, a washcloth over his face. Music wafts in from the bedroom-- a mournful Radiohead ballad. Kevin lifts the washcloth, takes a hit from a JOINT resting on the tub's rim. *Ahhhhhhh*.

LATER

Kevin stands before the mirror, righteously stoned.

Surrounded by the DEEP BLUE WALLS of his bathroom, he almost appears to be floating underwater. He stares at his reflection, tries some tentative breast stroke motions...

ANIMATED BUBBLES FLOAT BY, filling the screen as we

FADE OUT.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! KEVIN'S HAND slams down on an alarm clock, silencing its infernal cry.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - ADMIN OFFICE - MORNING

Dressed in khakis and a polo, Kevin checks his staff mailbox for pressing Prospect bulletins. On his way out, he passes Mrs. Maple's WALL OF FAME-- his picture is missing. *Stolen?*

INT. KEVIN'S CLASSROOM - LATER THAT DAY

The fourth period Regulars are assembled. Finn approaches--

FINN
Killer K! Nice assist yesterday.

KEVIN
Just doing my job, Finn.

FINN
So what are you up to after school?
You wanna walk me home?

KEVIN
Siddown.

The BELL RINGS. Kevin removes a NEW YORK TIMES from his bag and begins reading. A quiet moment passes. *Too quiet.* He slowly lowers the paper, revealing his ruined visage. The students bore holes into him with their beady teenage eyes.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Don't you guys have some "sexting"
to do?
(no one moves)
Really? Well, if you're curious
about my face, maybe we should ask
Vernon what happened yesterday.

FINN
Hey, you saw it. The 'Roid Ranger
jumped me out of nowhere.

KRISTA
Out of nowhere? You've been
spreading rumors all year.

FINN
You mean about your boyfriend being
a cock juggler?

KEVIN
Finn. Check yourself.

KRISTA
Thank you.

FINN
She should know, as his girlfriend.
He prefers the taste of nuts.

KEVIN

Seriously. One more and you're-- I don't know what. Something bad.

FINN

Why are you taking their side?

Whatever nervousness Kevin felt the first day has been overridden by wounded pride. Righteousness, even.

KEVIN

I'm not taking anyone's side. I'm saying what happened yesterday shouldn't have happened, period. You guys are too old for this junior high clique crap.

JASON

Says the expert. You've been here what, a day and a half?

KEVIN

Yeah. And in that time I've seen the same shit I saw ten years ago.

FINN

Tight freshman ass?

Kenneally chuckles despite himself. Krista smacks him.

KEVIN

Jocks and misfits throwing down. Calling each other "fag." It's a cliché. You're living in a John Hughes movie.

Skinny Dave Callahan speaks up for the first and only time--

DAVE CALLAHAN

John Whose?

KEVIN

Hughes. John-- it's not important.

Andrea rolls her eyes at Callahan's cultural ignorance.

JASON

So the misfits should just get their asses kicked. How Ghandi of you.

KEVIN

Nobody should get their ass kicked, is my point. Look, what do I know, right? I'm a substitute study hall teacher. But if you really wanted to rebel, you'd hang out together. You'd eat at the same lunch table.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Go to the same parties. Finn would be on the football team. He's huge!

FINN

Hey! I got a condition.

KRISTA

What, Dairy Queen Syndrome?

Kenneally slaps Krista some skin-- "Oh, snap!"

KEVIN

I'm just saying, all this drama-- these walls you put up-- it's just hormones and insecurity converging in a perfect storm of, like, irrational behavior. And it doesn't have to be this way-- you *choose* what rules to play by.

Kevin is like a mad prophet sermonizing before the rabble. Jason stands on the seat of his chair and SALUTES--

JASON

O' Captain, my Captain!

Andrea smiles. So does Kevin. *Touché*.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Kevin weaves through the bustling corridor toward Grant, who waits by the doors, checking bags and chastising students.

GRANT

(re: Kevin's eye)
That's a good look for you.
(indicating his bag)
Any contraband in there?

KEVIN

No, sir.

GRANT

Let's have a look.

He takes Kevin's bag and roots through it.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - ALLEY - A FEW SECONDS LATER

Kevin walks briskly, cursing Grant under his breath. He passes an alley and spots Andrea lighting a cigarette--

KEVIN

Hey.

Andrea startles and tosses the smoke, totally un-sly.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 If I was a real teacher you'd be so
 busted right now. Follow me.

He stalks off toward the football field. After a moment's hesitation, Andrea grabs her bookbag and follows.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - SMOKING SPOT - AFTERNOON

A tree-lined alcove speckled with Winter frost. Kevin reaches down and removes a pack of smokes from his SOCK.

KEVIN
 This is more like it.

He offers his pack. Andrea takes a smoke, lets him light it.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 That alley's a trap. Grant's got
 patrols and everything.

ANDREA
 I usually drive off campus, but I'm
 grounded. No car for a month.

KEVIN
 A month! Who'd you kill?

ANDREA
 I lifted some Manic Panic from the
 mall. Got caught.
 (they smoke for a bit)
 Nice speech today.

KEVIN
 I know. I'm the asshole.

ANDREA
 You might as well tell a pack of
 hyenas not to eat meat... but
 you're not an asshole.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

A swirling eddy of pheromones, bare bellies, baggy jeans and shiny technology. SEXED-UP R & B MUSIC BLASTS.

Kevin bobs and weaves, acutely aware of the exposed flesh surrounding him. Not in a pervy way-- more shock at how carelessly the kids flaunt their sexuality.

- A toned teenaged MIDRIFF
- An ASS in painted-on jeans

KEVIN
 'Scuse me. Sorry. 'Scuse me.

- Shapely swimmer's LEGS
- Pert BREASTS barely contained by a halter top

Kevin finally finds T.R. and grabs a seat--

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Jesus. Did girls dress like this
back in the day? I've seen
strippers with more subtlety.

T.R.
A generation raised on Spankwire
and *Jersey Shore*. I worry.
(noticing Kevin's eye)
Nice face, Handjob.

KEVIN
Maybe don't call me that at work.

T.R.
Remember you gave me a black eye?

KEVIN
Gavin's Halloween party. You stole
Allie Sheehan from me.

T.R.
Stole? You talked to her *once*, at a
bus stop.

Kevin chuckles-- fair enough.

KEVIN
You ever get in her pants?

T.R.
Nah. I guess getting my ass kicked
wasn't a huge turn on. Especially
by a dude dressed as Courtney Love.

KEVIN
Zombie Courtney Love.

Kevin watches Grant patrol the Senior Section. He grabs a can
of soda from a student and SNIFFS IT, checking for booze.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Fucking Grant. You know he's been
screwing with me since I got here?

T.R.
Of course he has. You forget about
the pot brownies? He missed our
graduation because of you.

Kevin smiles. Oh yeah, *that*.

KEVIN

He threw a thesaurus at Jill Sweeney because she used the word "difficult" twice in the same sentence. Gave her a bloody nose. Somebody had to do something.

T.R.

True. But you were always his favorite. And you betrayed him.

(beat)

Black eyes, pot brownies. You were kind of a badass back in the day.

Kevin considers that for moment-- *he used to fight for what he wanted*. Before he can dwell, Karen sits down next to T.R.

KAREN

Who's a badass?

(off Kevin's eye)

Sweet shiner.

KEVIN

Most people don't even notice it.

Kevin inspects his sack lunch-- GATORADE, SOGGY SANDWICH, DORITOS, BRUISED BANANA. A meal fit for a twelve-year-old. He looks at T.R. and Karen, who are devouring TACO BELL.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Whoa, where'd you get The Bell?

KAREN

"Yum" got the catering contract this year. I'm switching to elastic waistbands.

Kevin looks around. Indeed, most of the students dine on YUM! branded "food"-- Pizza Hut, Taco Bell. PEPSI LOGOS and SLOGANS adorn the cafeteria walls.

KEVIN

Creepy.

T.R.

No, creepy was when Coke made me teach an "Authentic Effervescence" unit in my chem classes.

(Kevin snickers)

I'm not kidding.

They resume eating.

KAREN

So, Mr. Hanley. You free Friday night?

KEVIN

Why? You asking me out?

KAREN

You wish. I need someone to help me out at the basketball game and T.R.'s got a hot date.

T.R.

Tyler and I are watching *Cars 2* for the sixteenth time.

KEVIN

Sure, count me in.

CUT TO:

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - KEVIN'S ROOM

SUPER: Friday night. A series of shots as Kevin prepares for his "date" with Karen.

- In the SHOWER, Kev lathers up and rinses. He reaches for a can of SHAVE GEL and squirts a dollop on his hand, then reaches below our line of sight... reacting to the tingly sensation of Aloe-kissed testicles.

- In front of a MIRROR, Kevin applies molding paste to his hair. Noticing something amiss, he leans in closer, frowning at the appearance of an unsightly NECK ZIT.

- In front of his CLOSET, Kevin tries on a wide array of SHIRTS, from polos to button-downs to vintage tees-- settling on a V-NECK SWEATER. He turns and walks toward his bed, revealing his BARE ASS.

- With a spring in his step, Kevin passes through the living room, where Maureen and Rick are watching a FOREIGN FILM. Kevin gives her a peck on the cheek, surprising her.

- Kevin climbs into his Benz and ZOOMS OUT OF FRAME...

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

A modest suburban split-level. Finn BANGS on the door.

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Your typical den of discontent: WORN PAPERBACKS on cinder-block shelves, CONCERT POSTERS on dark walls. A family of Jason's CIGARETTE PACK PEOPLE, like the one he made in Grant's office, pose together on a shelf.

Jason sits at his desk, typing on an iMac. He's CHATTING with someone named "*TeenDream*" on IM.

TEENDREAM (ON SCREEN)
Gonna be a sick show. Do you have
tickets yet? I'm soooo broke.

Finn bursts in--

FINN
Jaybird! Sup sup?

Jason types "BRB" in the chat window and quickly HIDES it.

JASON
Who let you in?

FINN
Your mom. In more ways than one.

Finn moves to Jason's bed, plops down on it--

FINN (CONT'D)
You downloading midget porn again?

JASON
Close. I'm posting a personal on
Craigslist. For our sub.

FINN
That's sweet. He does seem lonely.

On JASON'S COMPUTER -- A CRAIGSLIST AD seeking a "Casual
Encounter," with Kevin's WALL OF FAME PIC front and center.

JASON
So. Fur-vert or zoophile?

FINN
What's the difference?

JASON
Fur-verts fuck people in animal
costumes. A zoophile fucks actual
animals.

(Finn winces)
Yeah, I'm leaning zoo. Horses,
specifically.

FINN
I'm gonna puke on your pillow.

JASON
Hey, it's all fun and games until
someone's colon gets perforated.

FINN
You coming to the game or what?

JASON

In the four years you've known me,
have I attended a sporting event of
any kind?

FINN

You said you'd help me with
Operation Drewchebag.
(off Jason's shrug)
You're such an ass captain.

JASON

Fine. Pick me up after.

Finn gets up and backs out the door, offering Jason two fists
worth of middle finger. Once he's gone, Jason brings the
INSTANT MESSAGE WINDOW back up.

LION IN A COMA (ON SCREEN)

Sorry bout that. Had a 200 lb
interruption to deal with.

TEENDREAM (ON SCREEN)

That's what I call my mom. ;)
So. You wanna hang out?

A long beat as Jason ponders. As he begins typing, we

CUT TO:

INT. KRISTA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

An upper middle class home, tidy and antiseptic. Krista and
two girlfriends-- MICHAELA (loud, too much make-up) and JENNY
(meek, too much make-up)-- mix drinks and play Truth Or Dare.

MICHAELA

Truth.

KRISTA

Okay... Who's the last guy you
jilled off to?

MICHAELA

Hmmmm... That new teacher your b.f.
knocked out.

JENNY

Mister Hanley? Eww. He's like
thirty years old!

MICHAELA

Whatevs. He's cruel and unusual.

KRISTA

Subs should be like, fat and bald.
By law.

MICHAELA

I bet he commutes *downtown* too.
Unlike some people we know.

JENNY

I told you, Matt has a sensitive gag reflex. He can't even use a regular size toothbrush.

KRISTA

(handing Jenny a drink)
Yeah yeah, gag on this.

JENNY

Where's yours?

KRISTA

You know I don't drink before games.

MICHAELA

Little Miss Scholarship over here.
You already got in, live a little.
(she gulps her drink)
Speaking of getting in, you should totally seduce ol' fossil dick.

KRISTA

He's my *teacher*.

MICHAELA

Older man. *Experienced*. Bet he rides long and hard. Unlike Drew and his one minute rodeos.

Jenny reacts mid-sip, spewing Cosmo OUT OF HER NOSE.
Michaela cackles like a hyena as

WHOOOOSH! Kevin's Benz ZOOMS ACROSS THE SHOT, bring us to

EXT. KAREN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kev's Benz is parked in front of a mid-60s rambler with a small yard. A PINK FLAMINGO balances on one leg in the snow.

AT THE DOOR -- Kevin pats his hair, tests his breath in his palm and knocks. A girl with a complex hipster coif answers--MADDY. She CLICKS HER TONGUE RING when she speaks.

MADDY

You must be the mystery man.

KEVIN

Hey, hi. I'm Kevin. Karen ready?

MADDY

Still putting on her game face.
(click click)
(MORE)

MADDY (CONT'D)
So, you a teacher? Little office
romance brewing?

Kevin smiles tightly. Maddy looks past him, at the Benz.

MADDY (CONT'D)
Sweet ride. So you're not a
teacher.
(before he can respond)
Karen! Date Boy's here!

INT. MERCEDES - MINUTES LATER

Karen checks out the car's flashy interior, running her hands over the wood-grain, pushing buttons on the GPS. A COMPUTER VOICE begins spouting directions-- Kevin swats her hand away.

KEVIN
You teach English, right?

KAREN
Comp, Brit Lit, Creative Writing.
I'm all about the alphabet.

KEVIN
English teachers were always my
favorites.
(wait, that sounds creepy)
I mean, their classes. I love
books. You know-- reading, writing--
(Karen laughs)
New subject. Um... Your roommate
seems interesting. How'd you two
hook up?

KAREN
Craig's List. My ex moved out and I
needed to find someone ay-sap.
(moving on quickly)
T.R. told me you were
Valedictorian.

KEVIN
Salutatorian, actually. That's
Latin for "second best."
(beat)
Why would he tell you that?

KAREN
Oh, we talk about you all the time.
He's got a bit of a man crush.

Karen digs in her GIANT PURSE and removes a bottle of PEPSI. She chugs half of it, then hands the bottle to Kevin.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Hold that.

She digs again, whips out a FLASK.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Gimme.

He passes the Pepsi bottle back. Karen empties the flask into it, caps it and gives it a gentle swirl.

KEVIN
Impressive technique.

KAREN
I was Salutatorian of my bartending class.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Kevin parks the car as a crew of BLACK TEENS watches. Kevin gets out and opens Karen's door for her.

CURTIS
(re: the Benz)
That shit is clean, son.

KEVIN
Uh, thanks.

CURTIS
Whattup, Mizz Mick?

KAREN
Hey, C.J. Hey, Tami.

As Kevin and Karen march toward the gym--

KEVIN
When did Prospect get so-- diverse?

KAREN
We bus kids in from the city. For the athletics program.

KEVIN
No shit. Do we still suck?

CUT TO:

A PROSPECT KNIGHTS PLAYER DUNKING with Shaq-like ferocity.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

As the opposing team checks in, another Knight steals the rock and drains a three. FANS go apeshit. Kevin and Karen shout over the din, passing the SPIKED PEPSI.

KAREN

We won state last year! Don't you read the alumni newsletter?

Kevin, watching the action unfold on the court, gets distracted by the LINE OF CHEERLEADERS gyrating wildly.

KAREN (CONT'D)

See anything you like?

KEVIN

I only have eyes for athletic competition, Miss McAdams.

KAREN

Come on, every guy has cheerleader fantasies. 'Fess up.

KEVIN

Not this guy. Cross my heart.

On the court, a Knights player THROWS UP A BRICK--

KAREN

You're a terrible liar.

Kevin glances sideways at Karen. Maybe it's the booze talking, but she looks extremely attractive in this light.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Here, we gotta finish this before half-time.

(passing the bottle)
We're working concessions.

KEVIN

You never said anything about that.

KAREN

Must've slipped my mind.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - CAFETERIA - SAME TIME

BLACKNESS. The door JIGGLES ominously, swings open to reveal Finn. He creeps through the darkened cafeteria into

THE KITCHEN

and roots around, locating an industrial-sized box of PLASTIC FORKS. He grabs it, then heads for the FRIDGE. Opens it to find two cases of REDI-WHIP TOPPING. *Score!*

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - LATER

Karen and Kevin sling hot dogs and soda in the frenzied atmosphere of half-time. A prim PTA MOM pays for her order--

KEVIN
 Here's your weiner, ma'am.
 (as she walks away)
 Looks like you could use one.

KAREN
 Quiet, you!

Karen swats Kevin playfully with a LICORICE ROPE. Krista stands at the front of the line in her cheerleader outfit, observing their flirtation with no small amount of envy. Derouin is at her side, staring daggers at Kevin.

KEVIN
 Krista! Nice work out there.

KRISTA
 (ice cold)
 Diet Pepsi.

KAREN
 Great squad this year, huh?

KRISTA
 We *always* have a great squad.

Kevin grabs a DIET PEPSI from the cooler-- a peace offering.

KEVIN
 Welcome back, Drew.

DEROUIN
 (snatching the soda)
 Let's get the fuck out of here.

As Karen and Kevin share a bemused look in the wake of that hormonal bomb, Finn approaches, huffing and puffing--

FINN
 Dodging that dee-bag's gonna kill me. Thank God you're here. Hook me up with a dog?

KEVIN
 That depends. You got two bucks?

FINN
 Come on, man, I'm starving.

KEVIN
 Sorry, Finn, no free lunch.

As Kevin turns to serve another student, Finn grabs as many bags of DORITOS as he can and bolts.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT - SAME TIME

Jason sips a smoothie at a table in the corner of the food court, eyes trained on a FOUNTAIN about twenty yards away. A GAGGLE of TWEEN GIRLS stops. He waits-- is one of these her? They move on, giggling and texting. *Whew.*

A GIRL IN A HOODIE walks up and sits on the ledge of the fountain. Looks around. Waiting for someone. She pulls down her hood to reveal... ANDREA. *Oh shit.* Jason pulls his own hood up, turns and hauls ass out of there.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A hush has fallen over Prospect. Karen and Kevin walk to the car, giddy from the Knights' victory and the doctored Pepsi.

INT. MERCEDES - MOMENTS LATER

An awkward silence, which they both try to fill at once--

KEVIN
Well that was fun--

KAREN
Thanks for coming--

They crack up, dispelling the tension.

KEVIN
So. Where to?

KAREN
I'd invite you back to my place but Maddy's having some friends over.

KEVIN
No, yeah, that's cool. I'd invite you to mine, but I, uh...

KAREN
It's cool, you don't have to make up some excuse.

KEVIN
No, it's just-- I live with my mom. Temporarily.

KAREN
I know.

KEVIN
T.R.'s a dead man.
(thinks for a beat)
You ever been to Camp Chuck? It's in the woods, not far from here.

KAREN
The woods? You're not a serial
killer, are you?

KEVIN
(starting the car)
Define "serial."

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Kevin's car is parked on a residential street bordering a grassy field. He and Karen scoot under a piece of unmoored fencing and disappear into a copse of trees.

EXT. CAMP CHUCK - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Kevin and Karen hike through the forest, exhaling steam.

KAREN
I'm freezing my knocks off, Hanley.
We getting close?

And on that note, they arrive at CAMP CHUCK-- a rough-hewn campsite with log benches and a fire pit. Empty BEER BOTTLES litter the ground like bones, and a JOLLY ROGER FLAG hangs from the branch of a tree.

KEVIN
(a la Jurassic Park)
Welcome... to Camp Chuck.

KAREN
Charming. And a little bit rapey.

They plop down on the logs. Karen whips out a bottle of RED WINE and extracts the cork with a pocket knife.

KEVIN
Where on Earth did you come from?

KAREN
Orange County, originally.

KEVIN
Really? How'd you end up here?

Karen takes a swig, offers the bottle to Kevin--

KAREN
Beats the O.C. Buncha Republicans
and TV actors fighting over lawn
space.

KEVIN
Your family still out there?

KAREN
Yeah. My folks, the Republicans.
And my sister, the TV actor.

KEVIN
Ooh. Anything I've seen?

KAREN
Ever watch *CSI*?

KEVIN
(passing the bottle)
Miami, *New York*, or classic?

KAREN
Great, a fanboy. She plays Serena
Samson on *Miami*.

KEVIN
Sassy redhead with a shadowy past!

KAREN
Tame your boner, it's a dye job.
(BIG gulp)
Tits are fake too.

KEVIN
(shifting gears)
So of all the places you could run
away to, why The P.H.?

KAREN
Don't call it that. And who says I
ran away?

Kevin just smiles wryly. *Takes one to know one.*

EXT. PARK - SAME TIME

A SHINY SUV parks behind Kevin's Mercedes. There's a RAINBOW STICKER affixed to its bumper, partially scratched off.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Derouin sits behind the wheel clutching an empty can of OLD STYLE, which he occasionally spits chewing tobacco into. Krista stares out the passenger window, ignoring him.

DEROUIN
You haven't said a word since the
game. What'd I do?

KRISTA
Nothing... I'm just tired.

Drew places a hand on Krista's thigh. She crosses her legs.

DEROUIN
Don't dog me, Kay-bee. Come on.

Drew leans in close and makes puppy noises, pawing at her shoulder. It's actually kind of endearing. She laughs--

KRISTA
Okay! Stop! Okay!

DEROUIN
That's better. Who's my kitty cat?
But he's lost her again. A pensive beat.

KRISTA
You ever get tired of this?

DEROUIN
What? Me and you? Hell no.

KRISTA
Not us. *This*. Drinking in the woods. In nowhere, Illinois.

DEROUIN
If you'd get a fake ID we could go to The Beacon.

Krista sighs. He *so* doesn't get it.

DEROUIN (CONT'D)
What? We've been hanging out here since we were kids.

KRISTA
Yeah, and now we're adults. Adults don't go on dates in the woods.

Drew is hurt, but covers it up with a dose of anger--

DEROUIN
I forgot-- you're a big city girl now. It must suck to hang out with all us ig'nant country folk.

KRISTA
Come on. That's not what I meant.

A FORD TRUCK pulls up and HONKS, interrupting their spat. Kenneally and some chicas sit in the bed, ready to party.

JOCK DRIVER
Yo D, we got beer, we got bitches. Let's get fucked up!

The girls let out a collective "WHOOOOOOO!"

EXT. RITZY RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME TIME

A beat-up TOYOTA TERCEL cruises through the neighborhood.

INT. TOYOTA TERCEL - CONTINUOUS

Finn drives while Jason rides shotgun, filling him in on the night's dramatic events.

JASON
--I mean of all the people in this
bullshit town.

FINN
The bitch with the dragon tattoo.
She's kinda hot, though.

JASON
You're gonna die of syphilis.

FINN
We're all gonna die. Might as well
go out crazy as a loon, bleeding
from my pee-hole.

Jason smirks, which is about as close as he gets to laughing.

FINN (CONT'D)
Just sack up and talk to her. How
often do you connect with somebody
around here?

JASON
I *do* hate everyone... But what's
the point? She's a junior. I'll be
out of here in five months.

FINN
The point is to get some dirty
dirty. If I had your brain and
weighed a hundred pounds less, I'd
catch more tail than a shrimpboat.

JASON
Hold up. This is it.

Finn stops the car in a cul-de-sac. Through the windshield we see a FANCY COLONIAL with an expansive, manicured lawn.

JASON (CONT'D)
We gonna do this or what?

FINN
Just a sec. I brought treats.

Finn reaches behind the passenger seat and grabs the REDI-WHIP dispensers he pilfered earlier. Hands one to Jason--

JASON
Un apéritif. How thoughtful.

Jason takes out a BUTTERFLY KNIFE, flicks it open, and SLICES the seal off the dispenser. Flicks the knife closed.

FINN
 This is awesome. I feel like a stalker.

They press the nozzles and INHALE NITROUS from the tanks... Finn GIGGLES. Then, in a low, nitrous-altered voice--

FINN (CONT'D)
Stalker: Texas Ranger.

Jason leans back, grinning. In the same slow-mo accent--

JASON
Tu-stalk Shakur.

EXT. CAMP CHUCK - SAME TIME

Kevin digs through the pile of BOTTLES. Hands one to Karen--

KAREN
Bud-weis-er. Never heard of it.

KEVIN
 Check the Born On Date-- ninety-eight. That bottle may have been one of the many that corrupted my youth-- and here it is, a fossil record. Proof that I was here.

KAREN
 I didn't know you were such a romantic.

KEVIN
 Oh yeah. How do you think I wooed all those cheerleaders?

KAREN
 Ha! I knew it. *Details.*

KEVIN
 She was a junior, I was a sophomore. We made out after homecoming, in the parking lot.

KAREN
 Wait, I saw this on Cinemax.

KEVIN
 Yeah. Only it turned out she was just drunk and trying to piss off her boyfriend.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

But I was an idiot in love-- even made her a mix-tape proclaiming my undying devotion. The rest of the year, whenever I passed a cheerleader in the hall she'd sing "Desperado" at me.

KAREN

The *Eagles*? You poor thing.

Kevin laughs. Funny now, but at the time it was anything but.

EXT. THE WOODS - SAME TIME

Derouin and Mike lead the group toward camp. The guys in back play grab-ass with their dates, who CACKLE drunkenly.

DEROUIN

Shit, I left my dip in the car.

MIKE

Fuck it. We're almost there.

DEROUIN

Fuck you, I'm going back.

Derouin turns and heads back the way they came, passing--

KRISTA

Where are you going?

Drew stomps off into the dark, ignoring her. Mike notices Krista shivering and offers her his coat--

MIKE

Here, put this on.

She does, appreciating the effort-- and the warmth.

EXT. CAMP CHUCK - SAME TIME

Karen takes a sip of wine and passes the bottle to Kevin.

KAREN

Now that I've lowered your inhibitions, tell me your life story.

KEVIN

(Hannibal Lecter voice)
Quid pro quo, Clarice.

KAREN

Was that Hannibal Lecter? Awful.
(Kevin chuckles)
Really, don't ever do that again.

KEVIN
Stop stalling and spill.

KAREN
Oh, didn't I tell you? I have
intimacy issues.

One of those jokes that's more true than funny.

KEVIN
Fine. After Prospect-- and my
stunning success with its lady
cheerleaders-- I went to
Northwestern. Studied journalism.

KAREN
Really? I'm faculty advisor for *The
Prospect*.

KEVIN
No way! I was Editor-in-Chief, '98
and '99.

KAREN
Way! So then what? You graduated--

KEVIN
Moved to New York, freelanced.
Spent a few years in the blood-
soaked trenches of web journalism.

KAREN
Like TMZ?

KEVIN
Try *Sassy* with a Twitter feed. I
hated it, but I kept clocking in,
waiting for something better to
fall in my lap. Never happened.

KAREN
So you ran away.
(she takes the bottle)
Why'd they call you Vocab in high
school?

KEVIN
Because *apocryphal* means "dubious
in authenticity," *peripatetic* means
"traveling from place to place" and
a *harridan* is a "scolding, vicious
woman." I used to use words like
that in everyday conversation,
freaked people out. 'Course, T.R.
just called me Handjob. Said I was
a mental masturbator.

Karen laughs. Kevin takes the bottle back--

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Anyway, he was right. A handjob is what you settle for when nothing better comes your way. And I am an ace settler.

KAREN
Maybe you're still searching.

KEVIN
I'm thirty years old and I have a curfew.

KAREN
Then we don't have much time.

Karen leans in quickly and KISSES Kevin on the lips, just as VOICES ring out in the woods. The jock squad is closing in.

KAREN (CONT'D)
What was that?

KEVIN
I think someone's coming.

Karen hears THE VOICES getting closer and scrambles to her feet, elbowing Kevin in the nose. He YELPS in pain, then gropes about for the bottle of wine.

KAREN
(grabbing his arm)
Leave it, we gotta go!

EXT. CAMP CHUCK - NIGHT

Karen and Kevin run through the forest at high speed, whooping and hollering as branches crackle underfoot.

INT. SUV - SAME TIME

Derouin reaches in his glove compartment and removes a can of DIP. He puts a chaw in, pockets the can and is about to leave when the sound of LAUGHTER draws his attention to

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

As Kevin and Karen burst out of the woods. They collapse on the grass, out of breath.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Drew switches off his dome light and leans over to get a better look. *Very interesting.*

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Kevin and Karen catch their breath, gazing at the night sky.

KEVIN
I fink you boke my doze.

KAREN
I am *so* sorry.

KEVIN
Eh, sense of smell is overrated.

KAREN
So. Does your mom's house have a back door?

CUT TO:

A WINDOW -- as Kevin climbs through it and knocks over a lamp. He rights the lamp, turns it on and helps Karen into

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Karen circles the room, taking in the mid-90s decor. The nostalgic vibe is amplified ten-fold by the lamp's amber glow. She spies Kevin's PROSPECT YEARBOOK in his bookcase and pulls it from the shelf.

KAREN
You didn't tell me the window was a time portal.

Kevin sidles over to the stereo, presses play. Pearl Jam's "Black"-- the grunge equivalent of a slow jam-- begins.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Oh my god. I'm having flashbacks to seventh grade. You're not gonna tell all your friends about this...

KEVIN
Only if you break my heart.

That hangs there for a pregnant moment before--

KAREN
You cheeseball.

Karen pushes Kevin onto the bed playfully, laughs when he lands with a waterbed-y GURGLE.

KAREN (CONT'D)
No way. I always wanted one of these.

KEVIN
Come on in. The water's fine.

She climbs onto it gingerly, trying to find her sea legs.
Finally, she settles in and they KISS, slowly...

KAREN
We're not having sex. You do
realize that.

KEVIN
I'd totally settle for a handjob.

Karen smacks him on the shoulder. He grins, and they resume
kissing as we FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. RITZY RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN

The FANCY COLONIAL we saw from Finn's car the night before.
Morning light reveals THOUSANDS OF PLASTIC FORKS stuck in the
lawn in neat rows, like a memorial cemetery for G.I. Joes.

The front door opens and DEROUIN'S DAD wanders onto the
porch. He picks up a newspaper and scans the front page
before noticing the forks. Frowns at the absurd scene.

DEROUIN'S DAD
Drew! Get out here!

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A SUNBEAM illuminates Kevin's sleeping face. He opens his
eyes and rolls over-- finds A NOTE on the pillow--

"For a good time, call 708-2181 -- XO, Karen"

Grinning, Kevin hops out of bed and flips on his stereo. As
Pearl Jam launches into "Alive," he windmills a few manic air
guitar licks and bounces around the room.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM

Kevin strolls in, finds Rick and Maureen eating breakfast. He
helps himself to a CROISSANT--

KEVIN
Morning, Mo. Rick. How's it going?

MAUREEN
Hey, Mister Chipper. You have a
good time at the game last night?

KEVIN
You know what? I did.
(re: croissant)
This is amazing.

He kisses "Mo" on the cheek and heads for the door.

INT. MERCEDES - LATER

Kevin drives through town, sipping an ICED COFFEE and drumming on his steering wheel as "Alive" continues to play.

EXT. RECKLESS RECORDS - DAY

A classic hole-in-the-wall indie record store. Kev finds a parking spot right out front. *Things are looking up.*

INT. RECKLES RECORDS - CONTINUOUS

A sweater-clad COLLEGE KID buys a copy of My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* as Kevin peruses the MAGAZINE RACK.

BITTER HIPSTER CLERK
Tell me this isn't your first copy
of *Loveless*. Please.

COLLEGE KID
(desperate for approval)
Nooo, no way, man. I had a copy
before-- on vinyl-- but I just
played it to death, you know?

Kevin smiles at their cool-measuring contest.

KEVIN
You got the new Pearl Jam?

BITTER HIPSTER CLERK
Sure thing, pops. Check "Oldies."

BHC exchanges a finger-tip high-five with ANOTHER CLERK.

ANDREA (O.S.)
Pearl Jam's over here.

Kevin turns, surprised to recognize his smoking buddy from school. She leads the way to another section of the store.

KEVIN
I can't believe you work here. I
practically grew up in this place.

ANDREA

Just weekends. I'm applying to a bunch of schools in Chicago, figure if I get in this'll beat some crappy work study job.

They pass a LISTENING STATION where a HOMELESS WOMAN wearing headphones wails along to Kanye West, wayyy off-key.

Andrea stops at a "NEW RELEASES" END-CAP and points.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Eddie and friends.

KEVIN

Thanks. Feel like a smoke break?

Before Andrea can respond, Homeless Woman's volume increases--

BITTER HIPSTER CLERK

Hey, High School! Take care of Miss West, would you?

Andrea rolls her eyes, "Sorry." Kevin looks down at the end-cap, sees a section set aside for "Employee Picks."

Among them, ANDREA'S SELECTIONS: Beach House, Girls, Washed Out-- hip indie music. Kevin picks one up, intrigued.

EXT. KAREN'S HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Kevin rings the bell, holding one of Maureen's BOUQUETS in his free hand. Karen answers in JEAN SHORTS and a t-shirt.

KEVIN

Hey, you. Nice jorts.

KAREN

Thanks. Nice buds.

She takes the flowers and blushes slightly, shy for once.

KEVIN

I was gonna grab some Pita Inn. Interested?

INT. PITA INN RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Karen and Kevin share a table at this humble but delicious Middle Eastern eatery.

KAREN

So I was thinking--

KEVIN

Rut roh--

KAREN

Shut up. I was thinking, since I'm running *The Prospect* but have no legitimate credentials, maybe you could come by some time and help out. The kids would love it.

KEVIN

Oh, really?

KAREN

Yeah. You can tell 'em what it's like out there-- in "the field."

KEVIN

And crush their tender spirits?

KAREN

You could sugar coat it a little bit. They're just-- really green. I think you would inspire them.

(beat, a sly smile)

And maybe do a little copy editing.

KEVIN

A-ha! Pawning off your homework...

Karen bats her eyes, knowing she's already won.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Okay, no need to rub it in.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - KEVIN'S CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

A new week. Kevin doodles at his desk during his last class.

CLOSE ON the doodle: KAREN'S NAME in elaborate, flowing script, adorned with flowery flourishes.

The bell RINGS and the kids begin packing up.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Students gab at their lockers, making plans for later. Kevin strolls along, feeling good. He turns and enters

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - BOYS' BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

and heads for an unmanned URINAL. He assumes the position and finds a print-out hanging at eye level.

THE CRAIGSLIST AD Jason made, featuring Kevin's Wall of Fame photo next to shots of ELEGANT RACE HORSES. And text:

"SWM seeks sable-coated Arabian for heavy horseplay..."

Kevin tears down the page, then notices print-outs taped above the other urinals. And the mirrors above the sinks.

Mortified, he zips up and makes a beeline for the door. A STUDENT at the sink spots him and WHINNIES LIKE A HORSE.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - JOURNALISM LAB - AFTERNOON

Kevin enters the messy, buzzing headquarters of the high school newspaper, *The Prospect*. Students bang away at computers, working on articles and layouts.

Karen leans over a student's shoulder, helping him with something. Turns to spot Kevin standing in the entryway--

KAREN
(teacher formal)
Mr. Hanley, thanks for coming.

KEVIN
Miss McAdams. This a good time?

Karen waves him in and walks to the front of the class.

KAREN
Listen up, y'all. We've got a special guest today.

Kids turn from their screens, revealing JASON and FINN among them. Jason gives Kevin a sarcastic wave.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Some of you may have seen Mr. Hanley around, as he's been substituting here the past couple of weeks. But what you probably don't know is that he's also a journalist, who spent quite a few years plying his trade in New York. I've invited him here today to share his knowledge and answer any questions you may have. And if you're really lucky, he may even read some of your work.

She shoots Kevin a smile and gestures: 'The floor is yours.'
Kevin sets his bag on a desk, looks out at the crowd.

KEVIN
Thank you, Miss McAdams, and thank you all for having me. I guess I should begin by telling you I used to work here at *The Prospect*. I started out covering student council meetings as a freshman, and worked my way up to Editor in Chief. Speaking of, which one of you is Gail Hutchens?

A GEEKY GIRL with pigtails raises her hand.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Ah, I feel for you. All the hard work, none of the bylines.

(Gail smiles)

I'll level with you-- when I joined the paper I was just looking to pad my resume for college. I wasn't athletic, I sucked at chess and I was terrified of public speaking, so it seemed like a safe bet. Figured I'd write some record reviews and sail off into the Ivy League sunset. Maybe some of you are in the same boat.

(a thoughtful pause)

But then I discovered something. That I really loved telling stories and sharing ideas with my fellow students. I loved shaping the raw material of life into a narrative-- putting a window around the truth as I saw it and inviting people to look through it. Why do we write anything? To communicate what's in our heads, right?

A few kids nod in agreement.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I remember being a teenager. I had an opinion on everything, but no meaningful way to express it. Sure, you guys have Facebook, but a million voices shouting over each other-- that's just noise. This place gives you and your fellow students a unified voice. An audience. And that's a very powerful combination.

KAREN

Thank you, Mr. Hanley. Any questions for our guest?

Jason raises his hand. Karen nods.

JASON

Who've you written for?

KEVIN

A few places. I freelanced for a while, then took a staff position at a web magazine. Steady pay, but I liked freelancing better.

Gail Hutchens raises her hand as we

CUT TO:

THE SUN - melting into the horizon like a pat of butter.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - JOURNALISM LAB - EVENING

Karen shuts the blinds, blocking the view. It's late and the lab is empty. She turns to face Kevin--

KAREN
That was incredibly hot.

Kevin cocks an eyebrow-- "What's that?"

KAREN (CONT'D)
When you got all passionate about
showing people your "truth window."

She moves closer. Kevin smiles, tries to play it off--

KEVIN
I'm a pretty good bull-shitter.

KAREN
Don't do that. You're really good
at talking to these kids. They
listen to you. I can't even get
Finn to stop writing porn reviews.

She wraps her arms around him, whispers in his ear--

KAREN (CONT'D)
Show me what else you're good at.

KEVIN
What, right here? I don't kn--

She shuts him up with a kiss. *Yes, here.* Kevin hoists her onto a desk. She wraps her legs around his waist and we

FADE OUT.

FADE IN ON:

A JUMBLE PUZZLE -- The final riddle reads "What the couple got when they weren't compatible." It's unsolved. We are

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - KEVIN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Kevin looks up from the puzzle to find Finn staring at him--

KEVIN
Why aren't you working?

FINN
I'm finished.

KENNEALLY
(coughing)
Bullshit.

KEVIN
Pretend to work. You're creeping me out.

FINN
Quick question. Are you banging Miss McAdams?

KEVIN
I'm sorry?

FINN
No need to apologize. I'd knock the dust off that in a hot second.

KRISTA
God, what is wrong with you?

KEVIN
(over them)
First of all, Finn, my personal life is none of your business. And second of all, that's no way to talk about a teacher. Or any woman, for that matter.

KRISTA
Yeah, maybe if you weren't such a misogynist pig, women would actually talk to you.

FINN
That's a big word for a cheerleader. Drew must have it tattooed across his balls.

KRISTA
Fuck you, Finn.

Chaos threatens to overtake the room. Even Andrea takes note, removing one of her ever-present earbuds.

KEVIN
Whoa! Hey! You're making me feel like a teacher up here, and I don't like it. If you want to have a battle of the sexes, do it like adults. Show a little respect for one another.
(Jason's hand shoots up)
Mister Graham.

JASON
Finn's wrong. Women aren't dumb...
they're evil.

KRISTA
Says Psycho Number Two. Andrea,
help me out here.

ANDREA
Actually, I kind of agree with him.

Finn leans in for a fist-bump but Andrea leaves him hanging--

JASON
And-- I can prove it.

KRISTA
Have you even talked to a woman
before? Like, *not* online.

KENNEALLY
Hold up, I wanna hear this.

The entire class is intrigued. Jason gestures to the board--

JASON
May I?

KEVIN
Alright. But keep it civilized.

Jason struts to the board, picks up a dry erase marker and
begins talking as he jots an EQUATION down:

TIME = MONEY

JASON
Okay. I think we can all agree that
time equals money, right? Clock in,
clock out, cash your check. Keep
America rolling.

He adds: **GIRLS = (TIME)(MONEY)**

JASON (CONT'D)
And a girl requires both. Time
spent *with* her, money spent *on* her.
Dinner and a movie, diamond
earrings on your anniversary. Thus,
Time multiplied by *Money*.

Kenneally's digging it. Andrea too. Krista just glares.

JASON (CONT'D)
But if Time and Money are *equal*--
(taps the first equation)
--then we can simplify the entire
equation like so--

A revision: **GIRLS = (MONEY)(MONEY)**

JASON (CONT'D)
Which is really just Money squared--

He rectifies this: **GIRLS = (MONEY)²**

KRISTA
So what's your point? You can't afford a girlfriend?

JASON
Stay with me.
(he continues writing)
Now, we also know that Money is the root of all Evil. The dark lining of capitalism's silver cloud--

He's added a figure off to the side: **MONEY = $\sqrt{\text{EVIL}}$**

FINN
Okay, I'm lost.

JASON
What do we have left? If Girls equal *Money squared*, and Money equals the *square root of Evil*--

He jots: **GIRLS = ($\sqrt{\text{EVIL}})(\sqrt{\text{EVIL}})$**

JASON (CONT'D)
--then Girls are the root of Evil squared, and thus we can conclude--

He circles the solution: **GIRLS = EVIL**

Jason turns to the class. Andrea offers up a SLOW CLAP. Finn just scratches his head.

KEVIN
Miss Barnett, a rebuttal?

KRISTA
(to Jason)
Yeah. You're gonna be a virgin 'til the day you die.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Full of kids texting and making plans. Jason grabs a few things from his locker as Kenneally approaches.

KENNEALLY
Jay Gee! That shit in study hall was tight.

JASON

Tight?

KENNEALLY

Yeah, man. I could never come up with something like that.

Jason is flattered, but he can't help himself--

JASON

If you didn't spend your free time chasing men and groping balls, you'd have more time to think.

KENNEALLY

(a good sport)

Huh. I always wondered what people did without football.

Jason offers a sarcastic salute as he departs. Kenneally watches him go, a bemused smile on his face.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - JOURNALISM LAB - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Karen stands at the white board going over a list of story ideas, while Kevin observes from a desk nearby. Jason enters and makes his way to a seat in the back, next to Finn.

KAREN

Nice piece on the cheerleading tryouts, Yoon. Jason, how's your review of "Raisin in the Sun" shaping up?

JASON

It's a scathing indictment of Prospect's racial profiling practices. I mention the play too.

KAREN

Just get it in this afternoon, OK? If you wait 'til the last minute, we won't have time to edit it.

JASON

(under his breath)

Exactly.

Kevin turns to address the class--

KEVIN

There's some great stuff here, guys. I'm really impressed by your work over the past couple weeks. But I think we can do even better, tackle some bigger stories. Beyond the usual sporting events and student council meetings... Ideas?

The class is silent for a long beat. Then--

FINN

A story on the herpes epidemic--
"Wrap It Before You Tap It."

KEVIN

Does your mind ever crawl out of
the gutter?

FINN

Kids are dying, Mister H. How can
you be so cold?

KEVIN

Alright, if you can pitch it, you
can write it. Just keep in mind, it
doesn't have to be some epic
concept. A great reporter can take
the simplest subject and invest it
with complexity and significance,
just by observing it.

Kevin grabs a stack of PRINT-OUTS from the desk he's sitting
on and begins handing them out as he speaks--

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I'm giving you a little homework
this week. I want you to read this
piece by David Foster Wallace--
it's about the Illinois State fair.
I'm sure most of you have been.

(murmurs of assent)

I want you to notice how he takes
this familiar thing and makes it
new by choosing which details to
focus on. This is what great
writers do-- they bring a singular
perspective to their work, and show
us the world through their eyes.

KAREN

Every one of you is going to write
a feature to run before year's end.
It doesn't have to be about school.
It can be political or personal,
local or exotic, funny or tragic--
whatever excites you.

Some groans.

KEVIN

I know, I know. Sounds tough. But
we're gonna give you plenty of
practice. For those of you who are
interested, we've scheduled a field
trip to Chicago next month to train
those observation skills.

KAREN

If you want to go, you need to turn
in a feature pitch in the next
three weeks. So get to work.

Students begin moving to computer stations to work on their
stories. Kevin hands Jason the Wallace print-out--

JASON

I found some of your work on the
web. Inspiring stuff.

KEVIN

Oh. Thanks.

JASON

Especially your piece on Sassy
Spring Lip Gloss Flavors. It was so
honest and complex.

As Sponge's "Molly (Sixteen Candles)" kicks in, we

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Winter's pall gives way to the warmth of Spring. Snow and ice evaporate. BLUE VIOLETS emerge from hiding.
- Study Hall. Kevin and Kenneally square off in a heated game of NERF BASKETBALL. Mike hits a shot, Krista cheers.
- Kevin and Karen eat falafel as they copy edit articles in the Journalism Lab. Kevin crosses out a line and hands the paper to Karen, who wipes her mouth with it. He laughs.
- Jason sits at home, typing on his iMac. *TEENDREAM* appears on his CHAT program. He sends her a message: "Hey," and waits... No response. Tries again: "I'm sorry..." Nothing.
- Kevin, Karen and T.R. hang out in the Prospect parking lot. A couple of kids walk by and bump fists with Kevin. Karen watches, a little disconcerted by his popularity.
- Study Hall. A NIRVANA concert video plays. Kevin writes on the board: Why Your Music Sucks. Andrea argues with him.
- Kenneally and his boys parked at DAIRY QUEEN, hanging out in the beds of their trucks. Derouin tells a story and the guys crack up. Kenneally looks distant, doesn't smile.

END MONTAGE.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - JOURNALISM LAB - AFTERNOON

The clock reads 4:15. Kevin and Karen correct papers.

KAREN
These pitches are surprisingly good.

KEVIN
I know. We're kind of brilliant.

KAREN
(punching him)
You mean the *kids* are brilliant.

KEVIN
Of course, right.

Kevin takes in the room, Karen, this new world he's stumbled into. He's surprisingly... happy. He smiles like a goofball.

KAREN
You're being weird.

KEVIN
Yeah, no, I was just thinking.
About getting an apartment. You
know, somewhere in town.

KAREN
Aww, are you getting attached this
place? That's adorable.

She grins and kisses Kevin softly on the lips just as Grant walks by the classroom's open door. He stops, pivots--

GRANT
Miss McAdams, a word in my office
when you have a moment.

KAREN
Sure thing.

KEVIN
Hey, Jefe.

Grant just glares at Kevin and leaves. Karen gets up--

KAREN
I'll call you later. We need to
talk about the field trip.

KEVIN
Cool, just make it before nine.
Maureen's cracking the whip.

KAREN
You should definitely get that
apartment.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Pockets of students hang out, shooting the shit. Jason and Finn walk toward Finn's Tercel. A couple of nearby KIDS snicker as they approach.

ON THE WINDSHIELD -- "COCKMOBILE" in giant spray-painted letters. One of the PLASTIC FORKS from Derouin's lawn rests beneath a wiper-- a calling card. Finn picks it up.

FINN
You need to find a ride home.

JASON
What? What are you talking--

FINN
I'm serious. Find a ride.

He gets in the driver's side and starts the car. Jason BANGS on the passenger window--

JASON
Finn! What the fuck?

But Finn throws the Tercel in reverse and chugs out of the parking lot, leaving Jason standing there. He looks around, sees Kinneally standing by his truck.

MIKE
I can give you a ride... If you don't mind being seen with me.

INT. MIKE'S TRUCK - LATER

They cruise through the wide avenues of suburban Illinois.

JASON
Shouldn't you be at practice?

MIKE
We finished early. Anyway, coach is kind of pissed at me.

JASON
Why? You get a cheerleader in "trouble"?

MIKE
Ha. No. I told him I'm not playing football next season.

JASON
Seriously? Why not?

MIKE

I'm not gonna play college ball like my brother. I guess I just-- want my last year to be mine. Not coach's. Not the team's.

(beat, joking)

Maybe I'll start reading books and get all angsty. Carry the torch.

Jason smirks, surprised to find himself liking this kid.

LATER -- The truck stops in front of his Jason's house.

JASON

(joking)

I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell anyone about this. I've got a rep to maintain.

MIKE

(offering his fist)

No doubt.

They bump fists-- unexpected allies.

EXT. DREW DEROUIN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Finn pulls up a hundred feet from the house and scopes the scene. Drew's SUV is parked in the driveway. *Fuck it.*

Finn puts his car in gear and RIDES OVER THE CURB onto the lawn, PEELING OUT in a NASTY DONUT. The house lights POP ON as he continues spinning in circles, destroying the yard.

Drew runs out of the house, hollering, and Finn performs one last loop before tearing off the lawn, SMASHING INTO Drew's SUV as he goes. The back tire POPS and deflates.

CUT TO:

KAREN'S CELL PHONE -- VIBRATING on a coffee table. We are

INT. KAREN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Karen and Maddy watch *The Office* on TV-- Jim and Pam are making nachos. Maddy pauses TiVo-- BOOP BIP!

MADDY

You gonna get that?

KAREN

(eyeing the phone)

I don't think so.

MADDY
 Well can I airplane it? It's super
 annoying.
 (she grabs the phone)
 Four missed calls from Mister H.
 What's up, Dramatown?

Karen snatches the phone back and gets up from the couch.
 Maddy just snickers and returns to her TiVO.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Kevin stares out his own window, phone in hand. He flops down
 on his bed, grabs a stack of papers and a red pen...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A BEEPING ALARM drags Kevin back to consciousness. As he
 opens his eyes and rolls over, we gaze OUT THE WINDOW to the

STREET BELOW

Where a REPO MAN in a pit-stained dress shirt is stealthily
 gaining access to Kevin's Benz. The car alarm BLARES.

Kevin moves to the window, sees the "burglar" and runs

DOWNSTAIRS

through the foyer, to the front door and

OUTSIDE

where he books toward the car, clad only in TIGHT BRIEFS--

KEVIN
 Hey! What the fuck are you doing?
 Stop! Hey!

REPO MAN
 Shoulda made your payments!

Repo Man guns the engine, TOSSES something out the window--
 Kevin's BEAVIS BOBBLEHEAD lands on the pavement, broken.

The Benz disappears down the block. Kevin picks up the
 Bobblehead, stands up to reveal he's sporting MORNING WOOD.

AN ELDERLY NEIGHBOR watches from a window, her face a
 withered rictus of disapproval.

KEVIN
 I just woke up!

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin wades through a sea of cardboard boxes and finds a BMX leaning in a cobwebbed corner. He's outgrown the frame and its tires are deflated, but it appears operational.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - PARKING LOT - MORNING

Kevin cruises up on his bike, sweaty from the long ride. Karen sits in her car, watching him with a melancholy smile. She rolls down her window, cocks and eyebrow re: the bike.

KEVIN
Traded in the Benz.

KAREN
You must drive a hard bargain.

KEVIN
Oh yeah. So WTF? I thought we were gonna talk field trip last night.

KAREN
Yeah, about that-- I wanted to tell you in person. I think maybe I should go solo on this one.

That takes Kevin by surprise, to say the least.

KAREN (CONT'D)
You've been-- an amazing help, really-- but the paper is my responsibility.

KEVIN
(sniffing his pits)
It's the bike sweat, isn't it?
(raising a palm)
I do solemnly swear to shower.

KAREN
I'm serious, Kevin.

KEVIN
I can tell. Which is scary, because I don't know what I did.

KAREN
You didn't do anything. I just think we need to cool it a bit-- at school. People are talking.

KEVIN
People? Like who? Grant?

KAREN
It's not just Grant--

KEVIN

That *fuckstick*. He's had a hard on for me since day one.

KAREN

Grant brought it to my attention, but it's not some-- vendetta. Have you seen this?

She hands Kevin her iPhone, which displays A PHOTOSHOPPED IMAGE of Kevin and Karen engaged in acrobatic sex.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Kids have been texting it around. We have a Facebook fan page.

KEVIN

Obviously 'shopped. Look at this guy's back hair.

KAREN

It's not funny, Kevin.

KEVIN

You're right, it's cyber-bullying. And it's no laughing matter.

KAREN

Can you be serious for a second? I can't have this kind of thing-- I'm supposed to be a role model.

KEVIN

Says the woman who brings booze to basketball games and smacks my ass in the hallway.

Ouch. Karen tries not to lose her cool.

KAREN

You're right. I've been acting like an idiot. I got caught up in whatever this is and let it cloud my judgment. That ends now.

KEVIN

I can't believe you're breaking up with me over *this*. A stupid prank.

As the argument escalates, students stop to eavesdrop--

KAREN

I didn't say anything about breaking up. I said we need to behave like professionals. I'm trying to build a future here.

KEVIN

And I'm not?

KAREN

I don't know. Are you? Because taking smoke breaks with your students, trying to be their best friend-- that's not how you do it!

(collecting herself)

Look, I've only known you for two months, and I don't know where you're going to be in another two but I'm going to be *here*.

It's a valid point, but something in Kevin has snapped. He's gone total teenager, all self-centered emotion--

KEVIN

Yeah, well, I wouldn't want to complicate your life, Karen.

He stares at her for a heated moment, then flips up his kickstand and pedals furiously away. As he races across the lot, he nearly collides with a student's car as it rounds a corner. BRAKES SCREECH. Kevin veers sharply and flies over his handlebars, landing on his back with a THUD.

He stares up at the azure sky, cursing the God that has abandoned him. A parade of FLUFFY WHITE CLOUDS float by.

KEVIN (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

Why does this keep happening to me?

DISSOLVE TO:

WHITE CEILING TILES, row upon row of them. We are

INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON KEVIN'S FACE, brow furrowed as he talks--

KEVIN

I find this perfect woman-- smart, sexy, soulful. You know? She just gets it. And I fuck it up. I can't seem to figure out the *rules*.

A long moment of silence as we PULL BACK from Kevin's face to reveal he's lying supine on a tattered couch.

A GUIDANCE COUNSELOR sits at his desk, supremely uncomfortable with this conversation. He clears his throat.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I dreamt about her last night. I'd grown this massive beard-- like, ZZ Top big. In the dream. Karen wanted me to shave it off but I refused. I yelled at her, threatened to move to a llama sanctuary in Argentina. You think it was a premonition?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR
I mostly handle college
applications. Course schedules.
That sort of thing.

KEVIN
I think the beard represented
freedom.

INT. KEVIN'S CLASSROOM - LATER THAT DAY

A BUDDHA MACHINE -- a tiny plastic boombox that plays
soothing electronic drones, hums on Kevin's desk. He stares
into space, trying to Zen out. It's not working.

He looks at his attendance sheet, silently notes who's there--

KEVIN
Anyone seen Finn?

There's an awkward silence in the room. Krista looks over at
Jason, not sure if she should speak. Finally--

JASON
He got expelled.

That snaps Kevin out of his funk. Andrea, too. She speaks up--

ANDREA
Are you serious?

JASON
Dead fucking.

KEVIN
Wait, what? What happened?

JASON
What do you think?

KRISTA
Here we go. Vernon the victim. He
nearly ran Drew over!

JASON
Jesus. Would you just--

Jason is about to lash out, but holds back. What's the point?
His friend is gone.

JASON (CONT'D)
You know what? You're not worth it.

A tense silence. Jason is defeated. Andrea looks genuinely
sorry for him. Kevin takes a deep breath, overwhelmed.

KEVIN
I have to admit, I'm starting to
agree with you.

Krista stares daggers at Kevin-- *what did you just say?* He
leans back in his chair, stares out the window.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
What's the point? What are we doing
here? I thought maybe something I
said had gotten through to you
guys, that you were putting aside
the petty bullshit, if only for an
hour a day. What an idiot.

A brutal beat. A few of the kids look down, ashamed.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I guess it's every teenager's
destiny to be selfish, shallow and
mean-spirited. But I don't want any
part of it. I'm serious.

Kevin stands up. Walks to the door and hurls it open--

KEVIN (CONT'D)
From now on, this period is
completely optional. I'll mark you
present whether you show up or not.
You want to text snarky comments to
your friends or smoke a cigarette
or Photoshop pictures of your
teachers fucking instead, be my
guest. As of this second, it's your
choice. Because that's how life
really is-- there are no teachers
to tell you how to behave, there's
just you. Be here and be good to
each other, or get the fuck out.

Krista, still pissed, gathers her things and walks out the
door, barely looking at him. Everyone else stays, defiant.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM - MORNING

Karen and T.R. lead the newspaper students up the steps of
this beloved urban institution.

INT. CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Karen sets the kids loose--

KAREN
Meet back here in three hours.
That's noon on the dot! No running!

T.R. hangs back, walks with Karen toward the first exhibit.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Thanks for filling in. I know it was last minute.

T.R.
Fuck that. How are you?

KAREN
Confused. I feel like I'm making the same mistake over and over again and I just-- I really wanted it to work out this time.

T.R.
Kevin isn't Joe. You can't carry that with you.

KAREN
Part of me just wants to end the whole thing. But I can't tell if walking away is the *right* thing or the *easy* thing.

T.R.
Does it feel right?

KAREN
It feels shitty.

T.R.
That doesn't sound easy.

KAREN
It's not.

T.R.
Sounds like you're doing the wrong and hard thing.

KAREN
Wow, you're good at this.

T.R.
"Doing the wrong thing and hard thing"? I can't believe you didn't jump on that.

Karen smiles, imitates Kumar from BOTTLE ROCKET--

KAREN
I lose my touch, man.

LATER

Students wander past a variety of sights: An ABRAHAM LINCOLN installation, a full-size SUBWAY CAR, World's Fair SOUVENIRS.

Jason and a classmate check out a MASSIVE DIORAMA of the Great Chicago Fire. A tiny city engulfed in flames.

Jason sets one of his CIGARETTE PACK PEOPLE down inside the diorama. Its expression is serene, at peace with its fate.

JASON
(as the cigarette man)
Anybody got a light?

INT. ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO - LATER

Richter's dream-like WOMAN DESCENDING STAIRCASE. Degas' twirling BALLERINAS. Hopper's eerie, urban NIGHTHAWKS. Then--

A COLORFUL SPLASH OF DOTS. Tiny pastel points on canvas.

We SLOWLY back away, revealing Georges Seurat's dizzying pointilist masterpiece *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*.

REVEAL Karen staring at the painting. From a distance, everything is orderly, safe. *Get too close, and it dissolves into chaos.* Off her melancholy meditation, we

MATCH CUT TO:

SERENA SAMSON, a dead ringer for Karen but with CRIMSON HAIR and a conspicuous BOOB JOB. We are

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Kevin and Maureen share a couch, watching *CSI: Miami*. Serena Samson dresses down a suspect--

SERENA SAMSON (ON TV)
We found your semen at the crime scene, Louis-- DNA's a match. Which means you have two choices: tell me what you were doing at the Chuck E. Cheese, or have fun playing Whac-a-Mole with your cell mate Omar. I hear he's got a big black mallet and likes plugging holes.

MAUREEN
You tell him, sister.

Kevin stares at the TV, his jaw clenched.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

A teenage disaster area-- clothes piled on the ground, comics and CDs spread across every surface. Kevin sits on his bed, banging out a Smashing Pumpkins song on his rusty Strat.

KEVIN
*Disarm you with a smile, and leave
 you like you left me here, to
 wither in denial, the bitterness of
 one who's left alooonnnnnne--*

The phone RINGS, interrupting his ridiculous performance--

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 (picking up)
 Yeah... Hey... No, I'm good. Yeah,
 really. Alright, see you there.

Kevin hangs up and returns to his song--

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Ooh, ooh, the years burn!

CUT TO:

A DIGITAL STAG -- running through a bucolic meadow. It's ruthlessly GUNNED DOWN by an unseen assassin. We are

INT. BEACON TAP - NIGHT

Kevin and T.R. play *Big Buck Hunter*, a deer-slaying video game with a RIFLE-SHAPED CONTROLLER. The arcade cabinet is littered with empty cans of Old Style.

KEVIN
 (taking aim)
 I just thought things were going so
 well and then *bam--*
 (he fires)
 --like *that*, she flips on me.

T.R.
 Cut the girl some slack, Hand.
 She's had a rough couple of years
 in the romance department, and the
 district has zero tolerance for
 this kind of thing.

KEVIN
 Thanks for the sympathy, dick.

T.R.
 Sympathy? I vouched for you. Got
 you a gig. Helped you out of the
 hole you dug back East, even though
 you stopped returning my calls six
 years ago. And I'm not asking for a
 medal or a cookie, but please-- get
 off your mile-high horse.

Kevin turns to T.R. and really looks at him. He's right.

KEVIN

You're right. I'm sorry. I'm sorry
I didn't keep in touch, I'm sorry
I've been such an asshole--

T.R.

You have. And I forgive you. Just
do me a favor-- stop starting every
sentence with "I." 'Cause the thing
is, it's not always about you.

T.R. slaps some bills on the arcade cabinet, puts a hand on
Kevin's shoulder--

T.R. (CONT'D)

I gotta get up early for tee-ball.
You cool getting home?

KEVIN

Yeah.

T.R.

Just talk to her, alright? When
you're *sober*.

(Kevin nods, contrite)

She really likes you, Hand. God
knows why.

T.R. departs, leaving Kevin to ponder the mess he's made of
things. He looks around the bar and spots JASON in a dark
corner booth, scribbling in his journal. He signals the
bartender-- "two beers"-- and approaches.

JASON

You gonna report me?

KEVIN

How'd you get in here anyway?

Jason flips his wallet open, revealing a FAKE ID.

JASON

What do you mean? I'm twenty-four.

KEVIN

Wow. I didn't get one of those 'til
college.

JASON

Generation Google, gramps. The
world is my oyster.

KEVIN

So I've noticed.
(sitting down)
Bum a smoke?

Jason passes Kevin a Camel and a lighter. He lights up.

JASON
I heard about you and Miss McAdams.
My condolences.

KEVIN
Yeah? I never picked you for our
biggest fan. Thought horse fucking
was more your speed.

Jason reacts-- didn't know Kevin knew he was behind the ads.

JASON
...Sorry about that.

KEVIN
No worries. You get any takers?

JASON
You don't wanna know. Anyway,
"pretty girls make graves," right?

KEVIN
(smiling)
I thought you hated Kerouac.

A CUTE WAITRESS in short skirt and Pat Benatar hair appears
and drops off two CANS of Old Style.

CUTE WAITRESS
You guys need anything else?

KEVIN
Think we're good to go.
(watching her depart)
What about her?

JASON
Six feet under for sure.

KEVIN
You know, Kerouac was divorced
twice. Didn't know fuck-all about
women.

Kevin notices Jason's journal--

KEVIN (CONT'D)
What're you working on?

JASON
Have to give a speech at
graduation. The English Department
is giving me some award.

KEVIN
Ah. And what wisdom do you plan to
impart to your peers?

JASON
I'm telling them to fuck off.

KEVIN
Short speech.

JASON
That's just the thesis sentence.

Kevin sips his Old Style. He can't help smiling.

JASON (CONT'D)
What's with the stupid grin?

KEVIN
Nothing, just... I won that same
award. Back in the day.

JASON
You're shitting me.

KEVIN
I was a sharp kid.

JASON
Yeah? What the hell happened?

KEVIN
Ha ha. Take your shots, but when I
was your age, I was just like you.
Thought I had the whole game
clocked. I read cool books and
listened to cool music and had cool
opinions I'd mostly inherited from
cool dead people.

(looking for the words)
And yeah, I knew a lot of shit.
Shit that looked good on a
transcript, that impressed other
people-- but I didn't know jack
about the really important stuff.
What *I* wanted. What *I* believed in.
Who I wanted to be.

(gathering steam now)
But eventually, life stops handing
out grades and people stop caring
about what you say. All that's left
is what you've done, the kind of
person you are.

(snuffing his smoke)
You're a smart kid. Smart enough to
know what you're against. But that
doesn't make you a rebel. Rebels
create change-- they light the way.
"Fuck off" isn't a rallying cry,
it's a death rattle.

Jason considers Kevin's speech for a long moment...

JASON

Have you been drinking, Mr. Hanley?

Kevin shakes his head and laughs-- *fair enough*. They CLINK CANS, a toast to misanthropes everywhere.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

Kevin enters the house, stumbling a little as he removes his shoes and bicycle helmet. He turns to find Maureen in the dining room, working on a new flower arrangement.

KEVIN

Hey, ma. What are you doing up?

MAUREEN

Just working. I couldn't sleep. I was worried about you.

KEVIN

Well, *that's* unusual.

MAUREEN

Ha ha, funny man. I know you think I don't want you here, but that's not true. It just... took me a long time to get used to this house being empty. And I don't think I can go through that again.

Kevin never thought of that before. He sits down at the table and watches Maureen work. Unlike her other bouquets, this arrangement is simple, elegant.

KEVIN

I like this one. It's different.

MAUREEN

It's *Ikebana*. An ancient Japanese method.

KEVIN

Where'd you pick that up?

MAUREEN

I'm taking a class at The Pottery Barn. Figure it's never too late to learn a few new tricks.

Kevin smiles, proud of her resilience.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Christine-- the assistant manager-- she says the Buddhists offered flowers to the spirits of the dead. They believe the best arrangements have only three elements.

She adjusts a stem until it's just so...

MAUREEN (CONT'D)
See? It's all about balance.

INT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - KEVIN'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Kevin wakes on his waterbed, fully clothed. He wanders to the stereo and finds Andrea's EMPLOYEE PICKS, rips one open and puts it on. The music is groovy, sexy, modern. Something like "Feel It All Around" by Washed Out. Kevin nods along.

LATER

Kevin's cleans. As he organizes his desk, he notices his YEARBOOK sitting out. *Strange.*

He flips through it, stopping at a few select pages along the way. Kevin with the PROSPECT NEWS TEAM, including a young T.R. At SPRING TOLO with a cute girl, tux and tails.

He flips again, lands on his senior picture. KEVIN '99 smiles wide, full of promise and optimism.

He looks at the myriad MESSAGES scrawled across the yearbook's pages-- the warm wishes and memories and in-jokes of people he once knew. People he forgot, ignored, outgrew.

And there among them, a new message, scrawled in Karen's loopy script. MUSIC FADES as Kevin reads.

KAREN (V.O.)
Hey Vocab, it's me, Karen. The girl with intimacy issues. Remember Camp Chuck, drinking cheap red wine and running from the jocks? Okay, it was last night, but by the time you read this you'll probably be a million miles from Mount P, and I'll be a distant memory.

Kevin smiles to himself. *Not likely.*

KAREN (V.O.)
You probably thought you had me pegged when you said I ran away. Maybe so, but I've developed this theory-- no matter how fast and far we run, we all end up exactly where we need to be. So now that you know the where and the when, you've just gotta figure out the why. Stop reading and get to it, old man.

Kevin sets the yearbook down, moved. As MUSIC RETURNS, he begins grabbing CDs from his shelf. *The Pixies. The Breeders. Jane's Addiction. Built to Spill.*

He sets his haul down in front of the stereo, digs a BLANK CASSETTE out of a dusty shoebox and pops it into the deck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - AFTERNOON

Kevin, now clad in shorts and a t-shirt, rides rapidly past the maple trees. He pedals harder, en route to

EXT. OLD ORCHARD SHOPPING MALL - DAY

The Cheesecake Factory's facade glimmers in the midday sun.

INT. CHEESECAKE FACTORY - DAY

Kevin removes his bike helmet as he approaches the hostess stand. Krista's expression hardens when she sees him.

KRISTA
Can I help you?

KEVIN
I hope so. I'm here to apologize to
someone. She's about your height,
long blonde hair. Killer smile.

KRISTA
(not amused)
Table for one, then.

As she grabs a menu, Kevin reaches out and stops her--

KEVIN
Krista. I'm really sorry about the
other day. I was going through some
personal stuff and I took it out on
you guys and it was totally uncool.

Krista caves-- she's not used to sincere apologies from boys.

KRISTA
It's okay.

KEVIN
It's not. But if you let me buy you
lunch I'll feel *slightly* less
guilty about it.

INT. CHEESECAKE FACTORY - SECLUDED TABLE - LATER

Kevin and Krista are mid-conversation, surrounded by heaping plates of mall cuisine.

KRISTA

Everyone expects me to, like, marry Drew, crank out babies and live happily ever after in Mount P. But that's not me. I mean, I can't wait to get out of here and like, see the world. Meet new people. Just-- experience *life*. It's like no one in this town is even aware that there's a world out there. God, I'm totally rambling.

Kevin smiles as she takes a nervous drink from her soda.

KEVIN

I felt the exact same way my Senior year. And you know what? You're right. You can't let other people define what your life is going to be. You have to go figure it out for yourself.

KRISTA

I can't believe that five months from now I'll be like, living in Manhattan. And I know my idea of New York is a total *Sex and the City* fantasy, and I'll have loans for the rest of my life, but still.

KEVIN

You're gonna love New York, Krista. The people, the culture, the *energy*. It makes this place look like, I dunno-- an ingrown hair on America's fat Midwestern ass.

Krista laughs-- *gross*.

KRISTA

I hope so. I haven't told anybody this but-- I'm fucking terrified.

KEVIN

Trust me. One day you're gonna look back at this place and these people and you're gonna laugh about it all. And when you come home to visit, everybody will be doing the exact same things they did in high school. Just a few years older and a few pounds heavier.

KRISTA

God, I can totally see Drew working construction and growing a gut.

(she laughs)

I'm glad you came by.

And on that note, we back slowly away from their table and

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

The old building stands proudly in the morning sun. Birds chirp. Boys shout. Freshman girls giggle.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - FACULTY LOUNGE - MORNING

Kevin enters with his sack lunch to find Karen preparing her morning coffee. He waits for her to turn around.

KAREN
(surprised)
Oh. Hey. How's it going?

KEVIN
Honestly? I'm not sure. But I
wanted to apologize for acting like
such a douche the other day.

KAREN
I'm just glad the kids are having a
positive influence on your
vocabulary.

KEVIN
Yeah... How was the field trip?

KAREN
Good. I think they managed to learn
something, despite their best
efforts.

A complicated silence. She hasn't exactly accepted his apology. Or invited him back to the newspaper.

KAREN (CONT'D)
So I've thought a lot about our
situation and-- I think I may have
rushed into things. Got in over my
head, you know?

KEVIN
(not exactly)
Sure. Okay.

KAREN
You're obviously dealing with some
pretty major life changes, and I'm
still a mess from my last trip
around the track. Which isn't your
fault, but still..

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

It would be a mistake to think I
can fix your life, Kevin. Or that
you can fix mine.

Not what he was hoping to hear.

KEVIN

You're right. But I should warn
you, I kind of have a thing for
mistakes.

KAREN

(cracking a smile)
I've noticed that.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - CLASSROOM - DAY

The Regulars are assembled, giddy with Spring fever. The vibe
seems to have chilled out since Kevin's tirade. Kenneally
approaches Kevin's desk, grinning--

KENNEALLY

You get my Facebook invite?

KEVIN

What?

KENNEALLY

Spring Break party. My house,
Saturday night.

Kevin has no idea what he's talking about.

KENNEALLY (CONT'D)

Dude, it was practically your idea.
I'm gonna bring the whole school
together-- jocks, mathletes, band
geeks, stoners, goth-punk
whateverthefucks. Gonna be epic.

KEVIN

You guys all going to this thing?

Jason tilts his hand back and forth, "mayyyybe."

KENNEALLY

Fuck *that*. You're definitely
coming. Andrea and Callahan too.

KRISTA

Yeah, guys. It's gonna be ridonk-a-
donk.

ANDREA

If you promise not to say that ever
again, I'll consider it.

KENNEALLY

(to Kevin)

It's a theme party, so dress for the beach.

KEVIN

As awesome as this sounds, the school frowns upon teachers getting smashed with their students.

Jason COUGHS loudly, which Kevin pretends not to hear.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

But I appreciate the thought.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - SMOKING SPOT - AFTERNOON

Kevin approaches Andrea at the smoking spot-- she nods hello.

KEVIN

Grounded again?

ANDREA

Nah, I gave up shoplifting.

(grabbing a lock of hair)

Hence the roots.

(smiling)

I just got used to this place.

KEVIN

Wow.

ANDREA

What?

KEVIN

Just-- you should smile more often.

Andrea shrugs, embarrassed. Kevin digs in his bag--

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I, uh, made you something.

He pulls out a MIX TAPE and hands it to her. The case sports retro cut-and-paste artwork and the title *Old Man Music*.

ANDREA

What's this?

KEVIN

It's called a cassette.

ANDREA

I know *what* it is. I mean *what* for?

KEVIN

Back at Reckless, when you helped me out-- I bought some of your Employee Picks. And then I had a really shitty day, one of those days where you just can't stand being "you," you know? And I put one on and it just-- it made me feel *different*. Like there was still a chance I could be someone else. Someone better.

(goofy DJ voice)
Reeeeeemix.

Andrea laughs, but knows he's trying to say something real-- the kind of thing high school kids never say to one another.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I wanted to return the favor.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Karen watches Kevin and Andrea emerge from the alcove, concerned. She considers approaching... but before she can make a move, Kevin hops on his bike and pedals off.

KAREN'S VOICEMAIL (PRE-LAP)

You've almost reached Karen. Leave a message and I'll call you back.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: SATURDAY NIGHT

Kevin lies on his bed, cordless in hand. After the beep--

KEVIN

It's Kevin. I tried you at your house and Maddy told me you were in California. I just wanted to make sure everything's okay. I know how much you love the O.C. So. Yeah. Call me back. Or not. Bye bye.
(hanging up)
Bye bye?

CUT TO:

A SUPPLE LEATHER COUCH -- where Karen's open purse rests, phone BUZZING and BLINKING inside. We are

INT. MCADAMS' HOUSE - ORANGE COUNTY - SAME TIME

An Anthropologie catalog come to life. The McAdams family is gathered around a long, dark wood dining table.

Parents DEBORAH and KEITH resemble Fox News pundits. Sister SUSAN (from the *CSI* episode) looks like she just stepped off a film set, though her silicone upgrades are tastefully camouflaged by a cashmere sweater.

KEITH

Which one is the gaffer again?

SUSAN

He's in charge of the lights. Most important person on set if you're an actress-- piss off the gaffer and he'll make you look like roadkill. But Troy really wants to write. I gave his pilot to our producers and they loved it.

DEBORAH

That's wonderful. What's it about?

SUSAN

It's a love story set aboard the international space station. I play a Russian botanist.

Karen lets out a snicker, covers it up with a cough.

DEBORAH

What about you, Karen? Have you been seeing anybody?

Karen takes a long drink of wine before answering.

KAREN

Not really. I've been focused on work. I think this is the best group of students I've ever had.

Deborah doesn't have anything to say about that. She obviously considers Karen's "career" beneath her.

SUSAN

You thought any more about moving back here? The show's shooting year 'round now and my condo in Hermosa is collecting dust. I'd love to have someone I trust there to keep an eye on things.

KEITH

It would be great to have you closer to home, Kare.

KAREN

That's a very... generous offer. But I like where I live. I like teaching. And I think I'm a little old to be your house-sitter.

DEBORAH
You're a little old to be living
with a roommate too.

KEITH
Deb.

DEBORAH
Well, I don't understand why she
insists on living a thousand miles
away when she only moved there to
support whatshisname's-- what was
it, painting?

KAREN
You know his name and you know he
was a musician.

DEBORAH
I know he had sex with his teenage
fans, is what I know.

KAREN
Jesus Christ. And you wonder why I
live a thousand miles away.

SUSAN
(trying to defuse)
It'll be fun, Kare. We can drive up
to L.A. on weekends, paint the
town. I know this oral surgeon, he
just got divorced--

Karen pushes herself back from the table, exasperated--

KAREN
I need a cigarette.

She stalks toward the patio, grabbing her purse on the way.

DEBORAH
I don't think your oral surgeon
would approve of *that*.

EXT. MCADAM'S HOUSE - ORANGE COUNTY

Karen steps onto the patio and digs in her purse for a pack
of smokes. She finds her phone, sees a notification: "Missed
Call - KEVIN HANLEY." She looks at it for a long beat... and
puts the phone back.

She lights a cigarette and inhales, taking in the
neighborhood's neatly-trimmed lawns and gaudy McMansions.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Kevin paces, smoking, phone pressed to his noggin--

T.R.'S VOICEMAIL

(T.R.'s voice, monotone)

To leave a voice message, please
wait for the tone. When you are
finished with your message, hang up
or press one for more options.

KEVIN

It's Spring Break and I'm stuck at
home with Rick and Maureen and
reruns of Glee. Save me! Please.

CUT TO:

A DIGITAL PHOTO OF KRISTA AND DEROUIN AT A COSTUME PARTY --

Krista wears a "sexy vampire" costume with plenty of pale
skin visible. Derouin, dressed as a Twilight character,
flashes his FANGS and GROPES KRISTA'S BREAST. We are

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Finn, in a HAWAIIAN SHIRT, ogles the picture on Jason's iMac.

FINN

I can't believe they posted it.

REVEAL the WEBSITE Finn's looking at-- "Hot Chicks With
Douchebags." A digital compendium of assholes and the ladies
who love them. Derouin's pic is captioned "Count Douche-ula."

Jason, dressed in his usual outfit, sits on the bed, drinking
from a bottle of JAMESON'S.

JASON

Any comments yet?

FINN

Oh yeah. Dicktard's gonna make the
"Hall of Scrote" in record time.

JASON

A cause for celebration, my portly
associate.

Jason passes Finn the bottle, walks to his dresser and grabs
his wallet. Sees his BUTTERFLY KNIFE there... and pockets it.

FINN

So, is your undercover lover gonna
make an appearance?

JASON

Doubt it. Why?

FINN

I'm gonna be grounded for life when
my mom finds out I took the car.

(MORE)

FINN (CONT'D)
This might be my last chance to run
a train with you.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Kevin stares at his laptop, idly surfing Facebook. Baby Pictures. Vacation photos. More baby pictures.

Finally, he clicks on EVENTS. Sees the INVITE to Kenneally's party. He stares at it for a long beat. *Nah, stupid idea.*

DING! His Facebook IM notification pops up-- it's KRISTA.

KRISTA
OMG misterr H?

Kevin stares at the message for what seems like an eternity.

KEVIN
Hey. How's it going?

KRISTA
Sux... brokeup with dtew... drank
too much vodka... feel like im
gonna diiiiie...

KEVIN
Where are you? Are you safe?

KRISTA
im at mikes... can u come?

Is she serious? *Shit. Shitshitshitshitshit.*

EXT. KENNEALLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A Midwestern wife's wet dream. GANGSTA RAP bumps loud enough to wake the neighbors.

INT. KENNEALLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We FLOAT THROUGH THE PARTY, passing students of all types. The SPRING BREAK theme is in full effect and most of the guys sport swim trunks and flip flops. A few girls wear bikinis, but most opt for shorts and bare midriffs. In

THE LIVING ROOM

A JOE FRANCIS WANNABE with an iPhone is attempting to film his own version of *Girls Gone Wild*.

JOE FRANCIS WANNABE
Come on, ladies, we got beads! You,
with the tig ol' bitties-- show me
what you're workin' with!

Wannabe's friend, a CHUBBY ASIAN, holds two handfuls of MARDI GRAS BEADS. The girls ignore them both. We move into

THE KITCHEN

Where Kenneally, Derouin and a couple of pals fill RED CUPS from a keg. A DRAMA GEEK pumps a pour and draws foam. Derouin smacks the kid's chest with an open palm--

DEROUIN
You're fuckin up the rotation, bro.
(to Kenneally)
Show Queer Eye how it's done.

Kenneally takes the tap as Drama Geek tries to escape without inciting further violence. Jason and Finn observe the proceedings from the opposite corner of the massive kitchen.

JASON
"When Neanderthals Attack." We
should start a tumblr.

FINN
Fuck that date rapist.
(loudly, so Derouin hears)
Big man, picking on someone the
size of my sister.

Derouin turns toward Finn and grins--

DEROUIN
If she's your sister, I'm guessing
she's big enough to fight back.
(raising his solo cup)
But I'll still bang her 'til she
bleeds.

Finn starts forward but two of Drew's pals block his path.

FINN
Tell your goons to back off and
we'll settle this shit for good.

DEROUIN
Already settled, chunk. I'm going
to U of I and you're getting a GED.
Hope you like flipping burgers as
much as you like eating 'em.

Derouin and his boys head outside, smirking all the way.

JASON
What happened to "fuck him"?

FINN
Nobody talks about my sister.

JASON
You don't have a sister.

FINN
Yeah, but *he* doesn't know that.

Jason can't help but laugh. Meanwhile, in

THE UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

Krista and Michaela sit on the tile floor in bikinis, backs against a jacuzzi tub. Krista clutches a bottle of PEACH SCHNAPPS like it's a life preserver.

Michaela is looking at the Hot Chicks With Douchebags picture on Krista's phone.

KRISTA
I had to de-tag it like thirty times already. It's everywhere!

MICHAELA
At least you look hot. And I can't see your beav, so that's a win.

KRISTA
God, I hate him. I bet he's down there right now, grinning that stupid fucking grin and flirting with my friends--

MICHAELA
Hey-- listen to me. You're better than him, okay? You're better than all these assholes.

Krista looks into Michaela's eyes, wanting to believe her.

KRISTA
I don't know, Mick, I don't think I am. I just-- I think I fucked up.

MICHAELA
Here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna finish this bottle. Then we're gonna go downstairs and dance our asses off. And we're gonna enjoy our last two months together in this bullshit town.
(offering her fist)
One big room.

KRISTA
(bumping it)
Full of bad bitches.

They crack up, united in teenage awesomeness. Meanwhile...

DOWNSTAIRS

The front door opens and Andrea enters, TRANSFORMED. Her eyebrow ring is gone, black lipstick has been replaced with red, her hair is freshly cut and dyed. A 50s-style polka-dot bathing suit completes the look. She makes her way into

THE KITCHEN

and joins the line for the keg. As she scans the crowd for a friendly face, Finn appears holding twin bottles of BUD.

FINN
Hey, Hotty Boop. What's up?

She's so happy to see a friendly face, she gives him a HUG.

FINN (CONT'D)
What did you do with Andrea?

ANDREA
Shut up. I didn't think I was ever
gonna see you again.
(taking a Bud)
Where'd you get these?

FINN
Jock stash. Pretty lady like you
shouldn't have to wait in line.

They amble over to Jason's post.

JASON
Yo Annette, where's Frankie?
(Finn shoots him a look)
Kidding. You look good. I mean, I
liked the whole "apathy in black"
thing you had going on before...

Andrea smiles as they CLINK bottles--

ANDREA
Nice tie, dipshit.

INT. MAUREEN'S CAR - SAME TIME

Kevin sits in his mom's idling sedan, staring across the street at Kenneally's house. He kills the engine.

INT. KENNEALLY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin enters in board shorts and a t-shirt. VARIOUS REVELERS greet him with high-fives and pounds. A wasted Dave Callahan presses a bottle of FOUR LOKO into his hand--

DAVE CALLAHAN
Mister H! I love you, man!

KEVIN
Hey Dave. You seen Krista?

DAVE CALLAHAN
What?

KEVIN
Krista! Have you seen her?!

DAVE CALLAHAN
Drink first, ask questions later.

Kevin hands the Loko back but a HOT BIKINI GIRL walks up and presses a RED SOLO CUP into his hand seconds later.

A group of kids begin chanting, "Chug, Chug, Chug!" Kevin smiles and shakes his head no, trying to convince himself that he's just there to check on his student.

The chant BUILDS. BIKINI GIRL licks her lips. The music is loud, the energy intoxicating. "Chug! Chug! Chug!"

Kevin stares at the cup like a death row inmate eyeing a noose... and CHUGS. He tosses the empty cup into the crowd.

Dave and the Bikini Girl lead him into another area where kids are playing ROCK BAND on a massive PLASMA TV. Among them, an INDIAN KID with a bikini top tied around his head--

INDIAN KID
Holy shitballs! Mister H!

KEVIN
Devang! Nice hat! You seen Krista?

DEVANG
Nah. But dude, our guitarist just puked on his date. Get on this!

He hands Kevin a GUITAR CONTROLLER as Pearl Jam's "Alive" pounds from the speakers. Kevin can't resist-- he bangs out the signature riff while Devang does his best Eddie Vedder impression. It's surprisingly good. Kids MOSH and yell along during the chorus, until the epic GUITAR SOLO arrives.

Primed for his big moment, Kevin SHOWBOATS-- dancing, playing behind his head, spinning the guitar around to play left-handed-- Marty McFly at the high school prom.

THE KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Kevin, sweaty from his star-making performance, enters and grabs another beer, drinking deep. He makes his way over to--

FINN
What the hell are you doing here?

KEVIN
Me? I thought they shipped you off
to Samoa!

Kevin hugs Finn, who winces--

FINN
You're all sweaty. It's like
hugging myself.

KEVIN
It's good to see you, Finn.
(turning to Jason)
Mister Graham. Greetings.

Jason raises his cup. Kevin notices Andrea's makeover.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Wow. You look fantastic.

ANDREA
You sure? I feel like a fifties
beach slut.

FINN
Wait, what's wrong with that?

Andrea punches Finn's arm. Turns to Kevin--

ANDREA
Hey, thanks for the mix tape.

KEVIN
You listened to it?

ANDREA
I had to dig my dad's old boombox
out of the attic. There was a
family of spiders living in it.

KEVIN
So what'd you think?

ANDREA
I didn't know Weezer used to be
good.

KEVIN
I know, right?

Andrea smiles wide. She really is beautiful when she tries.

ANDREA
Like you said-- it did the trick.

Suddenly, Krista barges in out of nowhere, half past tipsy
and perilously close to popping out of her bikini top.

KRISTA
Hey, *gang*... Mister *Hanley*, I can't believe you *came*.

FINN
That's what she said.

ANDREA
Seriously? We're still doing that?

Finn shrugs-- *come on, it was a gimme*.

KEVIN
Are you alright? I've been looking all over for you.

KRISTA
I'm uh-may-zing. But that's so sweet. You're sweet.

She puts her arm on Kevin's shoulder, a little too familiar. He tries to detach himself--

KEVIN
You sounded really upset in your IMs. I was worried.

KRISTA
What IMs?

FINN
(to Jason)
I smell nip-slip. Stay alert.

Krista turns to Andrea--

KRISTA
You look awesome. Who knew?
(ouch)
Finn! Omigod! What're you doing here?

FINN
You know. Living the dream.

KRISTA
Kick ASS. Well I just broke up with Drew and I'm gonna have some *fun*. You should too. You guys--
(to Andrea and Finn)
--should go hook up somewhere.

FINN
Ooooookay.
(to Jason and Andrea)
Time for a smoke break.

As they go, Finn turns to Kevin and mouths, "HIT THAT SHIT."

KRISTA
I can't believe you're here.

KEVIN
(regretting it)
Me neither.

EXT. KENNEALLY HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Like Southern California without the swimming pool. Kids drink booze and hang out on lawn chairs. The JOCK SQUAD holds court near a massive GAS BBQ.

Jason and Finn huddle in a corner, watching Andrea bum cigarettes from a pair of GOTH CHICKS.

FINN
Dude. She's been hiding a sweet set of udders under those hoodies.

JASON
Shut the fuck up.

FINN
Oh shit. You *like* her *like* her.

Before Jason can reply, Andrea returns with a pack of smokes.

ANDREA
I come bearing gifts.

JASON
You scored a whole pack?

ANDREA
And it only cost me two Adderall.
Thanks, Doctor Dorsey!

They light up and observe the party. Some of the popular kids are drinking TROPICAL DRINKS-- margaritas, mai tais, piña coladas. Finn breaks out in a massive grin--

FINN
I just had a brilliant idea.

JASON
Not possible.

FINN
Hold down the fort.

Finn heads for the house, covertly dropping his CIGARETTE in a BITCHY GIRL's cup en route. Jason and Andrea chuckle.

ANDREA
That guy's a maniac... So. Didn't think I'd see you here.

JASON
You're one to talk.

ANDREA
Fair enough. Having fun?

JASON
Actually, it's not as painful as I
expected. I sort enjoy observing
Top Forty in their natural habitat.

Andrea eyes the jocks and "normals" all around them--

ANDREA
Top Forty. *Clever.*

JASON
That's me.

ANDREA
So what do you call a guy who makes
plans to meet a girl and doesn't
show up? Is he an asshole, or a
pussy?
(beat)
Any girl will tell you it's an
important distinction.

Jason looks at her, taken aback. Takes a pull from his beer.

JASON
I'd guess 'pussy.'

ANDREA
Hmmm. Good thing I'm a cat person.

CUT TO:

FINN'S SWEATY FACE -- crinkled in concentration. He's

INT. KENNEALLY HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Jerking off frantically. He FINISHES with a grunt and sets a
CUP of PIÑA COLADA down on the rim of the sink. He stirs the
foul mixture with a spoon, whistling innocently. Meanwhile

IN THE KITCHEN

Krista bends Kevin's ear--

KRISTA
He can be so sweet, but when he's
with his boys he turns into this,
like, show-off asshole. Trying so
hard to be cool.

KEVIN
Like that Avril Lavigne song.

KRISTA
You listen to Avril Lavigne?

KEVIN
God no. I used to work at this
website-- it's complicated.

KRISTA
Yeah, "Complicated!" I was obsessed
with that song in seventh grade. I
played it like fifty times a day!

Now Kevin feels ancient. And he doesn't like the way Krista
is looking at him.

KRISTA (CONT'D)
You always know what to say to make
me feel better.

KEVIN
Let's go get some air.

EXT. KENNEALLY HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Jason puts the finishing touches on one of his CIGARETTE PACK
MEN with a Sharpie and presents it to Andrea--

ANDREA
Who's this?

JASON
A Cancer Patch Kid. He sprouts from
the empty packs of underage
smokers. Be gentle with him.

ANDREA
(touched)
Thanks. I will.

Kevin and Krista appear, defusing the moment. Jason chances a
peek at Krista's bikini'd rack, then shoots Kevin a look.

JASON
How's the rebellion, Skywalker?

KEVIN
I think the dark side's winning.

Finn approaches clutching TWO PIÑA COLADAS and pulls Andrea
aside. They discuss something and she takes the drinks as
they walk toward Derouin and his crew.

KEVIN
What was that about?

KRISTA
Where's he going?

Jason says nada but his body stiffens, anticipating trouble.

AT THE GRILL -- Andrea gets Drew's attention. Finn waits in the wings, a few feet back.

ANDREA
(flirty)
Ohmygod, are you Drew Derouin?
Like, the football player?

It's a terrible imitation of a popular girl, but Derouin's too drunk to care.

DREW
Yeah. You go to Prospect? I haven't seen you or your friends around.

ANDREA
My friends?
(realizing he means her
boobs)
Oh. Yeah, I'm new.

DREW
We should get to know each other.

Finn watches as Andrea passes Drew the SPIKED colada. She continues flirting as he tips the cup back and takes a GULP.

Finn walks up to Drew, a shit-eating grin on his face.

DREW (CONT'D)
The fuck do you want, Ed?

FINN
I was just wondering... How does my cum taste?

INT. KENNEALLY HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A THUNDEROUS CRASH! A GUY in a SOMBRERO runs in from outside--

SOMBRERO GUY
Fight, yo, fight!

And with that, a wave of revelers pours out the door, into

EXT. KENNEALLY HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Where Derouin has Finn in a headlock and is punching his face furiously. The GRILL lies on its side nearby, BELCHING SMOKE. Jason rushes to help but one of Derouin's BOYS stiff-arms him and he lands hard on his ass.

KENNEALLY stands back a few yards, his face grim. Staring as his buddies cheer Derouin on.

KRISTA screams for Derouin to stop, frantic. Kevin grips her arm tightly, looks over at

JASON as he gets up off the ground. He reaches into his pocket and removes the BUTTERFLY KNIFE. Flicks it open.

KEVIN

Fuck me.

Kevin grabs Andrea, shaking her out of her stupor--

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on Krista.

A LARGE CIRCLE FORMS AROUND THE GLADIATORS. Chanting.

SOMEONE yells out--

SOMEONE

Death to Count Douche-ula!

JOE FRANCIS WANNABE jockeys for a good camera angle as

JASON approaches the circle, knife in hand, bobbing.

FINN takes another shot to the face, lip pouring blood.

JASON'S EYES scan the action, looking for an opening. He takes a deep breath, about to take the plunge when--

KEVIN GRABS HIM IN A BEAR HUG from behind, restraining him.

JASON

Get the fuck off me, man! Let go!

KEVIN

He's not worth it.

Kevin holds on tight, dragging Jason from the circle as

KENNEALLY charges into the fray, rips Derouin off of Finn and hurls him to the ground.

An electric moment. The entire crowd is frozen, silent. All we hear is Kenneally and Derouin's RAGGED BREATHING.

DEROUIN gets to his feet, red-faced with embarrassment--

DEROUIN

The fuck, Mike? That fat bastard
jizzed in my drink!

Onlookers crack up-- *instant catch phrase!* But Kenneally stands silent, holding his ground... Derouin CHARGES HIM. Kenneally spins him around like toreador, and as Derouin charges again, *Kenneally lays him flat with a right hook.*

KRISTA breaks away from Andrea, instinctively rushing to Drew's aid. But seeing him there-- on the ground, defeated-- she realizes that's exactly where he belongs.

She runs toward the house, distraught. Kevin releases Jason and chases after her

THROUGH THE KITCHEN

Where a WASTED GUY with a prominent beer gut stops Kevin--

TOMMY KENNEALLY
Vocab! It's Tommy K, bro! Get the
fuck over here!

Kevin stops just long enough to recognize Mike's brother, former all-state quarterback... Present pity case.

KEVIN
Sorry. You got the wrong guy.

Kevin runs off as Tommy returns to the keg.

TOMMY K
Fuckin' A, dude looks just like
this guy I went to school with.

EXT. KENNEALLY'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

Krista reaches her Camry and tries to open the door, but she's drunk and upset and can't get the key in. Kevin approaches and takes the keys from her, gently.

KEVIN
Krista. Hey. You can't drive home
like this. Come on.

He walks her to the passenger side and helps her in, then climbs into the driver's seat.

INT. KRISTA'S CAMRY - CONTINUOUS

Krista tries to pull herself together. It's not going well.

KRISTA
I'm sorry. God I feel ridiculous.

She looks ridiculous too, in her bikini and smeared mascara. Kevin rummages in the backseat and finds a sweatshirt--

KEVIN
It's okay. Here, put this on...
Try to breathe. In. Out. Better?

KRISTA
A little. Can you turn the heat on?

Kevin turns the key. A COLDPLAY CD resumes playing-- a ballad about lost love and reconciliation.

KRISTA (CONT'D)
 Can we just sit here for a second?
 I can't go home drunk. My mom will
 kill me.

Kevin cuts the headlights and they sit, listening to the song. It's getting to him, sappy as it may be.

Krista stifles a sob. Kevin reaches out and rubs her shoulder. She grabs his hand, holds it tight.

Krista smiles and wipes tears from her eyes. She looks at Kevin... He looks back... She leans in... And like a spaceship caught in a tractor beam, Kevin is unable to move as her lips draw closer and she KISSES HIM.

Every sober cell in Kevin's brain tells him to pull away, but he's tipsy, nostalgic, high on adrenaline-- and despite his best intentions, it feels good. They kiss deeper, harder. Both desperate to feel something.

THROUGH THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW -- POLICE CARS approach. The cruisers stop in front of the house and PUMP THEIR SIRENS, lights splashing RED and BLUE across the neighborhood.

KEVIN
 (pulling away from her)
 Oh, shit.

KIDS begin pouring out of the house, making a run for it. As POLICE OFFICERS exit their vehicles, Kevin pulls Krista close and ducks down in his seat, trying to become invisible.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 Shhh. Stay down.

The cops pass by Krista's car and head into the house.

KRISTA
 Omigod, omigod.

Kevin puts the car in drive and slowly pulls away from the curb, headlights off. Halfway down the block, SOMEONE steps in front of the car. Kevin SLAMS on the brakes--

KEVIN
 Jesus!

It's Russ, the cop who responded to Maureen's alarm earlier.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 Russ! Scared the shit out of me.

Russ approaches the driver's side window. All business.

RUSS
Some reason you're driving without
headlights at this hour?

Kevin doesn't have an immediate answer. Russ looks over at
Krista-- smeared makeup, bikini bottom. It's... weird.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Krista Barnett? That you?

She tries to put on a happy face--

KRISTA
How's it going, officer Backs?

RUSS
Not good. We got a house full of
drunk teenagers to round up, and
now I find you and Mr. Hanley here
in a-- I don't know what to call
it, but it doesn't look good.

KEVIN
Russ, it's not like that. We
weren't-- you *know* me.

RUSS
Thought I did. Turns out I was
mostly wrong. I don't wanna be
wrong twice.

Just then, Jason approaches, waving--

JASON
Mr. Hanley! Mr. Hanley, thank God.

RUSS
Can I help you, son?

JASON
I went to a party down the street
and everyone was drinking and I was
worried something bad was going to
happen, so I called Mr. Hanley and
asked him to come pick me up. Me
and my date.
(to Krista)
Hey, babe. You okay?

It's an Oscar-worthy performance. Krista runs with it--

KRISTA
Yeah, but I was trying to call you
and you weren't picking up and I
got really freaked out.

JASON
I know, I couldn't hear my phone at
the party. I'm so sorry.

RUSS
Wait, so you called Mr. Hanley?

JASON
Yeah, he's my teacher. I told my parents I was going to the movies and I thought if I could just get home before--

Russ's WALKIE emits a garbled squawk--

VOICE ON WALKIE
Backs, what's your twenty?

Russ considers Kevin, considers the kids...

RUSS
Turn your lights on and get these kids home. And if you get a call like this in the future, don't play hero. Just contact the police.

KEVIN
Thank you, Russ. Officer.

Russ stares at Kevin, skeptical, as he turns on the Camry's headlights and pulls away. *Close call.*

KEVIN (CONT'D)
(to Jason)
Holy fuckbuckets. Where'd you learn to lie like that?

JASON
Theater camp. I owed you one.

KEVIN
Shit. Where's Finn?

JASON
He and Andrea cut out when the cops rolled up. We got separated.

As they gain distance from Kenneally's house, the tension finally abates, and Krista starts laughing.

KRISTA
I can *not* go home right now.

JASON
Me neither.

KEVIN
Me three. My mom's car is back at Mike's house.

JASON
Your mom's car?

Now they all laugh. The whole situation is just... too much. Jason's phone buzzes with an incoming TEXT.

JASON (CONT'D)
Finn and Andrea are all clear. On their way to D.Q.

KRISTA
Big surprise.
(beat)
I'm *kidding*. Let's go!

JASON
Kev, you in? Blizzards on me.

KEVIN
I can't imagine a better last meal.

And as they speed off into the night, we

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN ON:

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - ADMIN OFFICE - MORNING

Kevin sits on a bench in the FANCY SUIT he wore on his first day, surrounded by students in hoodies and jeans-- he looks out of place, not to mention way too old for this shit.

Grant's office door opens and Mike Kenneally walks out. He gives Kevin a sad smile as he leaves. Grant turns to Kevin--

GRANT
Mister Hanley. Walk with me.

Grant heads out of the office. Baffled, Kevin follows...

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - SMOKING SPOT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Grant and Kevin stand together at Kevin's "secret" spot.

KEVIN
You know about this place?

GRANT
Course. I had to keep something for myself.

Grant offers Kevin a NEWPORT--

KEVIN
Menthols?

GRANT

Now is not the time to test my
patience.

Kevin takes one and shuts up. Grant lights them both.

GRANT (CONT'D)

You remember eleventh grade
English?

KEVIN

Of course. You were a great
teacher... Most of the time.

GRANT

I did a lot of things I regret.
Made mistakes. The truth is, I
wasn't a great teacher. I was
selfish-- more concerned about what
my students thought of me than what
they needed.

(a beat as this sinks in)

I don't care about that anymore.
That's not what this job is about.
So if you think I've been hard on
you, you should know that it was
never about you and I or our
history. It was about protecting
these kids. That's my job.

Kevin looks at Grant, surprised at his sympathetic tone.

GRANT (CONT'D)

I don't presume to know what
happened at Mike's party, I just
know you were there. A lot of
people know-- and once the rumors
start flying, I can't contain them.
You're just lucky people have come
forward to defend you, otherwise
I'd kick your ass myself.

Grant tosses his butt on the ground, stomps it out.

GRANT (CONT'D)

You remember your first day, out in
the parking lot? I said keep coming
back 'til I tell you not to.

(they lock eyes)

I'm telling you not to.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - HALLWAY - MORNING

Kevin does the walk of shame, carrying the GLOBE from his
classroom as a keepsake. As he passes an open doorway, he
hears riotous LAUGHTER. He stops and glances inside

A COMPUTER LAB

Where students are gathered around various PCs.

A COMPUTER SCREEN displays a YOUTUBE CLIP -- Joe Francis Wannabe's footage from the party.

An AUTOTUNED Derouin sings the phrase "That fat bastard jizzed in my drink!" over footage of Kenneally knocking him out in SLOW MOTION. Kids crack up, loving it.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - PARKING LOT - LATER

Kevin struggles to affix the globe to his bike with a bungee cord. He hears footsteps, turns to find Karen approaching.

KEVIN

Karen. Hey--

KAREN

Please tell me it isn't true.

(he can't...)

I don't even know what to say.

KEVIN

I'm sure you've been hearing a very sordid version.

KAREN

What other version is there?

KEVIN

I didn't roofie any cheerleaders or blow Ritalin with the A/V club or-- whatever else is going around. I just-- shouldn't have been there. I was trying to help and I made a mistake.

KAREN

A *mistake*? Jesus, Kevin, you're thirty years old. Partying with students? What the hell were you thinking?

KEVIN

What do you want me to say?

KAREN

I don't want you to *say* anything. I want you to stop talking and grow the fuck up.

Check and mate. Kevin stands alone, holding his globe as Karen walks away, out of his life. The Clientele's "Since K Got Over Me" begins, carrying us away to

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Kevin tosses his old flannels into garbage bags. Begins tearing down his rock 'n roll posters. Exorcising his past.

INT. KINKO'S - DAY

Kevin faxes his resumé out with the help of a SULLEN CLERK.

EXT. CAR LOT - DAY

Kevin checks out used cars-- a FORD ESCORT catches his eye.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A LANDLORD leads Kevin through a modest one-bedroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE BEAVIS BOBBLEHEAD, its broken neck preventing any actual bobble-ing. We are

EXT. HANLEY RESIDENCE - DAY

Yard sale. Beavis awaits his fate among equally passé pals: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Garbage Pail Kids*, *Alf*.

NEIGHBORS roam the front lawn, scouring Kevin's ragged possessions for eBay gold. A YOUNG KID approaches--

YOUNG KID
Got any hip hop?

KEVIN
Should be some Pharcyde in there.
Public Enemy.

YOUNG KID
Who?

Before Kevin can school the kid, a familiar voice rings out--

KRISTA
How much for the Madonna?

Kevin is caught off-guard by her appearance, but recovers.

KEVIN
For you? Fifty cents.

Krista digs in her purse for the change, hands it to him along with a copy of THE PROSPECT newspaper.

Kevin looks at the front page, which features an article by Gail Hutchens, entitled "Lucky Us: The Plight of Teen Workers in the Third World." Kevin smiles slightly, surprised.

KRISTA

Back page.

He flips the newspaper over, reads something we don't see--

KEVIN

Yeah, I don't think that's such a good idea.

KRISTA

Just consider it, okay? It would mean a lot to us if you were there.

He looks at Krista for a long, bittersweet moment.

KEVIN

You know, Krista, I-- I'm really sorry about what happened. Truly.

KRISTA

It wasn't your fault. I was so pissed at Drew. Not to mention drunk.

KEVIN

It doesn't matter. I was your teacher, and I betrayed your trust.

KRISTA

Hey. Lighten up. One day you're gonna look back at this place and these people and you're gonna laugh about it all.

Kevin smiles at hearing his own advice thrown back at him.

KEVIN

You think?

KRISTA

Yeah. Now give me a hug.

He protests, but Krista cuts him off with a friendly embrace--

KRISTA (CONT'D)

Shut up.

She flashes a final smile and departs. Kevin watches her go, a little heartbroken with the knowledge that she's moving on, that he's already becoming a memory.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - DAY

A BANNER hangs over the entrance: "Congratulations Class of 2012!" Kevin stares at it, screwing up his courage.

Finn leans against a wall nearby, "dressed up" in a tight-fitting sweater and slacks.

FINN
Killer K!

KEVIN
Finn. What are you doing here?

FINN
I've got a week before summer school begins. Thought I'd catch Jay's speech, but now that I'm here I feel like an asshole. Aren't you, like, banned from school grounds?

KEVIN
Aren't you?

FINN
Good point.

KEVIN
We could go in together-- two assholes in a pod.

FINN
Fine. But if the cops show up, it's every man for himself.

INT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS

The gym is decked out with chairs, streamers and a stage for the big day. PARENTS pack the rows, beaming proudly.

Finn and Kevin stand in the back. T.R. spots Kevin from the faculty section, offers a surprised smile and a salute.

ON STAGE -- Principal Grant stands before a podium.

GRANT
Congratulations again to Grace Oh, our 2012 recipient of the Mathematics Merit award.
(a smattering of applause)
Thank you. And our next award, for *Outstanding Achievement in Letters*, is given to one student annually for exceptional accomplishments in the English and Literature Department. This year, that student is Jason Graham.

As the audience applauds, Jason walks across the stage and accepts his award. Grant guides him to the lectern.

JASON

(adjusting the mic)

Thank you. Well... I guess I'm up here because I have a way with words. And words, as we all know, are powerful things. I can think of a few right now that would get me hauled out of this auditorium faster than you can say "hate speech." And a few weeks ago, I might have tested that theory.

(chuckles from the crowd)

I've always been fascinated by the power of words to conquer-- to dismantle and destroy. I suppose we all are, in our youth. But recently, I've realized something-- words can build and unite, as well as divide. Words can create-- and if decay is the natural state of the world, maybe creation is the only true act of rebellion. But we rebels must choose our words carefully, for they not only express the contents of our hearts, they fill the hearts of those who receive them-- with love, hate, acceptance, rejection. These feelings will determine the world we make and the future we inhabit. Will we be selfish like so many generations before us, or will we build something new, together? It's up to every one of us. So choose wisely, and remember--

(locking eyes with Kevin)

--the tide will push you in many directions, but when the wind and the waves become overwhelming, we are each other's lifeboats. Reach out, hold on, and as you gaze toward the horizon spread before you say these words: "I saw that my life was a vast glowing empty page and I could do anything I wanted." Thank you.

Kevin smiles at Jason, moved by this unexpected gift.

EXT. PROSPECT HIGH - GYMNASIUM - LATER

WE FLOAT PAST parents, students and faculty as they mingle.
REST ON Finn and Jason as they exchange a manly hug--

FINN

You look good in that dress, boy-o.

JASON

Thanks, man. Thanks for coming.

Andrea stands next to Jason, looking more than a little like his girlfriend. She gives Finn a hug too-- he grabs her ass.

AS Krista joins them--

KRISTA

Hey guys. Awesome speech, Jay.

JASON

Thanks. I had a good consultant.

FLOAT FURTHER, past T.R. and a group of ecstatic SENIORS--

AND COME TO REST on Kevin, leaning against his Escort, observing it all from a distance.

KAREN (O.S.)

Howdy, stranger.

Kevin turns. Karen stands by the passenger door in a tailored pantsuit, eyes twinkling.

KEVIN

Hey.

They take each other in over the top of the vehicle.

KAREN

Glad you could make it.

KEVIN

Yeah, well... You look great.

KAREN

Thanks. You too. This your ride?

KEVIN

Indeed. Upgraded to four wheels.

KAREN

I remember when you drove a Mercedes... I like this better.

KEVIN

Wanna go for a ride?

KAREN

(sizing him up)
How about a sit?

INT. FORD ESCORT - CONTINUOUS

Kevin opens the passenger door from the inside. Karen slides in, her seat SQUEAKING loudly in protest.

KEVIN
That's real vinyl.

KAREN
Comfy.
(pregnant pause)
I'm sorry I left town without
telling you. That I avoided your
calls.

KEVIN
You don't have to apologize. I
acted like an idiot.

KAREN
True. But it wasn't just that. I
was scared. Of messing up what I
had, of-- repeating past mistakes.

KEVIN
(wry)
I have no idea what you mean. But
thank you.
(beat)
So, how was the O.C.?

KAREN
Oh God. Awful. But I did call my
mother a *harridan* in front of her
country club cronies. You would've
been proud.

She smiles at him. Kevin smiles back, grateful.

KEVIN
I was pretty sure you'd never talk
to me again.

KAREN
Jason told me why you went to the
party. And about the fight. I guess
you're not *pure* evil.

They stare out the window at the empty football field.
There's a sense of finality in the air, of things ending.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Graduation is so depressing.
Everybody moving on except me.

KEVIN
Please. Look who you're talking to.

KAREN
So you're not gonna run away?

KEVIN
What, and leave all this?

KAREN
I'm glad.

KEVIN
Why's that?

KAREN
Because now we can be friends. I think.

KEVIN
Great, 'cause they're screening *Barry Lyndon* tonight at Village North and I really wanna go.

KAREN
That sounds more like a date. A really long, boring date.

KEVIN
Friends go to the movies. And *Barry Lyndon* is a masterpiece, you philistine.

KAREN
(smiling)
Let's just take it slow.

KEVIN
Cool. You'll call me?

KAREN
Yeah, I'll call you.
(as Kevin starts to speak)
Before nine, I know.

KEVIN
Actually, I got a new place. And a cell phone. Call me day or night.

KAREN
Look at you, all grown up. What's the number?

Kevin removes a pen from the glove compartment and takes Karen's hand. Jots his new number on her wrist--

KEVIN
You should write that somewhere more permanent when you get home.

KAREN
I'll think about it. It's good to see you, Kevin. Take care.

She gets out of the car. Kevin waves as she walks away--

KEVIN
(like a mantra)
Take care.

On his frail look of hope and possibility, we

FADE TO WHITE.

OVER WHITE:

Spoon's "Vittorio E." begins. Rusty acoustic guitars building slowly...

A HAND WIPES STEAM FROM A MIRROR, replacing the vast whiteness with Kevin's reflection.

"I took a river and it wouldn't let go. I want you to stay and I want you to go. I took a river and the river was long, it goes on."

A STRIPED TIE. Windsor knot. Crisp collar. Professional.

POLISHED LOAFERS. Shining like a distant star.

"I want to get there but it's just out of sight. I took a river and felt so slight, so hold on."

MUSIC BUILDS... We HOVER ABOVE Kevin's apartment as he walks outside and greets the day. Determined strides to his car.

"So hold on. Hold on. It goes on."

SOAR OVER his Escort as he passes through the suburbs. Rolling hills and housing developments. He pulls into a courtyard buttressed by BRICK BUILDINGS.

FOLLOW Kevin's shoes as they walk down a LONG CORRIDOR and turn into A ROOM.

"It goes on. Oooh it goes on. It goes on."

DRUMS KICK IN as the song builds to a deafening crescendo.

CLIMB UP Kevin's pant leg and follow his hand as it presses a marker to a dry erase board. PULL BACK SLOWLY to a...

WIDE SHOT of Kevin writing the day's lesson plan. He turns around to address

TWENTY EAGER FACES. All boys. Private school uniforms.

And in the middle of the song, in the middle of Kevin's life--

CUT TO BLACK.