

THE SCAPEGOAT GENERATION

Written by

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BLANK SCREEN:

Against black, TITLE CARD:

"Adolescent personality evokes in adults conflict, anxiety,
and intense hostility (usually disguised as concern)."
Edgar Z. Friedenbert

The title card SHATTERS to reveal...

EXT. DIXON HIGH SCHOOL - EARLY MORNING

Your standard suburban high school. Nothing interesting looks
like it happens there; no one interesting looks like they
would graduate from there.

MANUEL, the groundskeeper, raises the flag.

CAROLYN TOWNSEND (mid 30's) gets out of the car. Always the
first teacher to arrive and the last to leave - we recognize
the type - but what's unexpected is how attractive she is to
have no life outside of school.

She smiles, waves to Manuel, then bounds up the front steps.

INT. CAROLYN TOWNSEND'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Carolyn sits at her desk. Posters of Sigmund Freud and other
psychologists line one set of walls; on another set are Sex
Ed posters. This is not your mother's classroom, but then
again, your mother never looked anything like Ms. Townsend.

A head pops in her open door, followed by a rotund body. It's
MS. BANKER (50's), the weary-worn teacher next door.

MS. BANKER
Morning, neighbor.

CAROLYN
Good morning!

MS. BANKER
Another day, another dollar--

CAROLYN
Another 150 papers to grade--

MS. BANKER
Another ill-attended Back to School
Night tonight.

She motions to the Sex Ed posters.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)

You better take those down.
 (turns to leave, and then)
 We should get drinks after class.

CAROLYN

Ms. Banker! We can't show up with
 alcohol on our breath!

MS. BANKER

That's why God made vodka!

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Our main crew before school. Set to some disaffected cover of
 a song from one of John Hughes' teen movies.

CHRIS TINKER, the oddball, dressed in a black RENT T-shirt,
 walks past his father who's passed out drunk on the couch.

JESSIE, fresh-faced and attractive, applies lipstick in her
 bedroom mirror lined with photos of her and #36.

WES, #36, mouths "amen" and lifts his bowed head. He stands,
 pats the backs of his MORMON FRIENDS before grabbing his
 backpack and exiting the CHURCH OF CHRIST OF LDS.

CARLOS, a Latino wearing a football jersey too, pulls his
 beater car up front of a nondescript home. His obese cousin
 HECTOR struggles to get out of the passenger seat, while his
 white girlfriend CRYSTAL runs out the front door and straight
 to the driver's side window to give Carlos a hungry kiss.

GAYLE, a shade too dark and morose to be pretty, sits shotgun
 in a minivan, her LITTLE SISTER in the backseat. GAYLE'S
 MOTHER struggles to open the door with a purse and briefcase
 in one hand and a CENTURY 21 real estate sign in the other.

BRIAN, younger looking than the rest, plays a video game in
 his bedroom. His male avatar pounds on a woman brutally. His
 handsome father RAY enters, motioning its time to go.

On a cul-de-sac, two BOYS exit the front doors of their
 houses, separated by one house in between. They both have ear
 buds in; they both get onto crappy bikes and meet in the
 middle of the street. If they had normal names, they've been
 forgotten - everyone calls them FRICK and FRACK. They're
 trying to look like scary death metal dudes, but their faces
 are too damn sweet to scare anyone.

They bicycle down the street, and are almost hit by Gayle's
 mother's minivan, which veers toward them as she tries to
 open her flip phone. Gayle pulls the wheel just in time: her
 mom slaps her hand angrily.

They ride past a cemetery, and then the HOLY GRACE CATHOLIC CHURCH where the PRIEST is putting the letters in the sign: so far it reads "REACH FOR THE HEA...."

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT

Everyone arrives at once.

Tinker pulls up in the Graffiti Mobile, a beat-up Volkswagon Bug that's been tagged one too many times.

Jessie gets out of a car with her TWO GIRLFRIENDS. She sees Wes walking with his Mormon friends. They each leave their friends, meet, peck lips, and walk to class holding hands.

Brian exits his father Ray's car after a fist-bump goodbye.

Gayle's mother almost bumps into Ray's bumper as she abruptly stops the minivan. Gayle's already got her hand on the door knob - can't get out fast enough.

Frick and Frack skid to a halt on their bikes, dropping them in a pile by the bike rack without bothering to lock them up.

MUSIC ENDS as the BELL RINGS. Students scramble to class.

I/E CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Carolyn stands in the doorway, greeting students.

CARLOS

What's up, Mizz T?

CAROLYN

Your GPA, if you want to play.

HECTOR

Owww! She told you, Cuz.

(turning to Carolyn)

I got the brains, he got the beauty.

CAROLYN

(patting his back)

You've got both, Hector.

Frick and Frack push past them into the room, where Wes, Jessie, Gayle, Brian, and Tinker are seated, along with a full room of other students.

Carolyn smiles as the FINAL BELL RINGS. She closes the door behind them. As she walks to the front of the classroom...

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Morning, Class.

It's a comfortable room, warm and easy in the routine. Everyone, except the always silent Frick and Frack, repeat

CLASS

Morning, Ms. T.

CAROLYN

So yesterday we wrapped up the oral, anal, and latency ages. Next up in our developmental journey -

TINKER

The phallic age! The age of the almighty phallus.

He points to his crotch.

WES

You're sick, Tinker.

TINKER

Hey Wes, are Mormon boys allowed to go through the phallic age, or does the church make you stay latent?

Jessie smiles shyly at Wes, who blushes.

CAROLYN

Tinker.

GAYLE

Why does Freud call it the phallic stage when only guys have phalluses? What's in it for us?

TINKER

The phallus is in "it" for you.

Carlos, sitting next to Crystal, looks over at her, then down at his crotch, then winks. She mouths the word "Later."

CAROLYN

I do hope your parents are coming to Back to School Night, Tinker, so I can share your contributions to our class discussions with them.

TINKER

My dad's a drunk, my mom's an enabler - they've got better things to do tonight than care about me.

(MORE)

TINKER (CONT'D)

You may attribute all my comments
to young Brian here.

All eyes on the awkward Brian, who turns red.

WES

Yea, then your dad can tell the
other school board members what
happens in class. Maybe Tinker'll
be kicked out.

CAROLYN

In a town like this, if anyone's
kicked out, it'll be me.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

THE BELL RINGS - Carolyn's last class of the day files out,
chatting enthusiastically. Brian, looking rather sheepish,
swims upstream to enter the room.

CAROLYN

Hey - forget something this
morning?

BRIAN

No. I just wanted to say that... I
don't tell my dad everything... I
mean, I talk about class sometimes,
but my dad, he's chill.

She squeezes his shoulders, letting him off the guilt hook.

CAROLYN

I have no doubt that any father
with such a cool son must be very
cool himself.

Brian looks down, controlling his pleasure, then turns around
quickly, bouncing off Ms. Banker at the door.

MS. BANKER

Look up, kid. Not everyone is as
padded as I am.

She shuts the door after him, and he very aggressively flips
her off behind her back. Neither women see this.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)

Sucking up to the school board
member's psychotic kid... well
done, Carolyn.

CAROLYN

I think he's sweet.

MS. BANKER

Sweet on you because you're so damn pretty.

(pinching her cheek)

It's 3:21. Buy me a drink and I'll tell you about the time he set his 4th grade teacher's dress on fire.

CAROLYN

You shouldn't judge people by their past.

She moves to the chalkboard and begins erasing it.

MS. BANKER

"What's past is prologue."

Carolyn snaps around - really? Ms. Banker's touched a nerve.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry - you're right. Forgive me - I can't resist a good Shakespeare quotation. I'm an ass. If I wasn't so fat, I'd put my foot in my mouth.

Carolyn returns to erasing the board.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)

Change of subject?

CAROLYN

Please.

MS. BANKER

The department chairs just voted through an anti-teenage drunk driving program -

Carolyn drops the eraser. She snaps around again.

CAROLYN

"Every 21 Minutes"? Here?

MS. BANKER

Woah, okay, I'll buy you a drink and you can tell me why you're obviously so opposed to it.

EXT. HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Carolyn and Ms. Banker walk down the hallway.

CAROLYN

It's a complete spectacle.

MS. BANKER

"Sound and fury, signifying nothing?" Shakespeare again. Sorry.

EXT. ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A terrible car accident near the football field. HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS gathered around.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

They fake a car accident outside the school, complete with ketchup soaked bodies and police and an ambulance.

PARAMEDICS pull a BODY out of the car.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Four kids. One "dies."

POLICE handcuff the DRIVER. Some students cry, others laugh.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

They take the kid to the morgue, his parents come identify his body.

TWO PARENTS stand outside the morgue door. The MEDICAL EXAMINER calls them inside where the body bag is.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

The driver spends a night in jail.

A POLICEMAN locks the driver in a cell.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

And the next day they have some big emotional assembly where they bring everybody back to share how scared straight they are.

BACK TO THE END OF THE HALLWAY

Where Carolyn hands Ms. Banker a diet soda.

MS. BANKER
Thanks, I think. Cheers.

MATT HAINES, P.E. teacher, former boyfriend of Carolyn's bursts through the door. He's Owen Wilson with an edge.

Golf club in hand, he mocks whacking the vending machine open, then puts money in.

MATT HAINES
Excuse me, Ms. Banker.

He ignores Carolyn.

MS. BANKER
Still holding a grudge that she won
Teacher of the Year?

MATT HAINES
A grudge the size of your ass, Ms.
Banker.

He winks, grabs his water, and leaves.

MS. BANKER
You really broke that boy's heart.

YELLING erupts outside the hallway. Carolyn runs out into

THE QUAD

A fight. A small circle of STUDENTS gather around, but they give way when they see Carolyn charging forward.

The LOSING BOY lays on the ground, nose bleeding, face bloody. BRADLEY, the winning boy, jumps up and runs off.

CAROLYN
Bradley! Get back here. Now!

He stops, turns around, returns.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
(pointing to a bench)
Sit down!

He sits. Carolyn squats beside to the bloody boy.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Are you okay, sweetie?

He nods woozily. Blood flows from a cut above his eye. She places her finger on the wound to stop the flow, and pulls him to her chest.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
It's okay, it's okay.

When Ms. Banker finally arrives...

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Get Dolan! Bradley, go with her.

Bradley obeys. Carolyn turns her attention back to the wounded boy, cooing, comforting, maternal.

INT. LARGE BATHROOM - DAY

Carolyn washes the blood off her hands, but some remains on her blouse. PRINCIPAL DOLAN stands by, watching.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN
(sniffing the air)
Smells like pot in here.

GAYLE, feet up on the toilet inside a locked stall, watches a joint float in the water.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN (CONT'D)
You should've put on medical gloves
before you did that.

Carolyn's head snaps to him - is he serious?

PRINCIPAL DOLAN (CONT'D)
That kid's not worth it. AIDS,
hepatitis... you never know.

Carolyn shakes her head in disbelief. And then...

CAROLYN
Listen, Dolan, now that I have you
alone...

They both laugh a little at their surroundings. Dolan looks like he wishes they were elsewhere, and she was serious.

Gayle raises her eyebrows behind the door.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
"Every 21 Minutes"? Really?
(to his nod)
And the grim reapers the next day,
every 21 minutes, all day?

He nods again. She dries her hands.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

They did this in the community I lived in before I came here. I was one of the counselors brought in deal with traumatized students.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Already taken care of it. We'll have a trauma team on campus.

(sniffs again)

It really smells like pot.

He walks to the stalls, pushes one door open.

CAROLYN

Isn't it our job to shelter them from trauma, not to provoke it?

He pushes another door, peers inside. Nothing.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Ah, another cause of yours, so soon after the last one.

He pushes Gayle's door. It's locked. He rattles it. He looks under the stall, sees nothing. He rattles the door again.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN (CONT'D)

Why do they do this?

He turns back to Carolyn. He points to her neck.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN (CONT'D)

You have a little blood still...

She returns to the mirror to wipe it off.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN (CONT'D)

Carolyn, we're not trying to provoke trauma -- it's just a little drama to wake 'em up to the consequences of their actions.

CAROLYN

But it was traumatizing. There were kids who had lost people in their lives in car accidents that had to re-live it all day long -

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Students like that should probably just stay home.

CAROLYN

What about all the kids who have alcoholic parents who don't have a choice about getting in the car with them when they drive drunk? You want them to stay home too? Dolan...

She turns to him, impassioned. A bloody towel drops to the floor. Thinking to be chivalrous, he picks it up.

He drops it immediately when he realizes what he's done. He washes his hands vigorously in the sink next to hers.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Carolyn, you're welcome to speak your mind at the faculty meeting - *as always* - but you should know it won't change my mind, and the school board's unanimous.

He hands her a T-shirt to change into.

CAROLYN

Out, out.

He exits. She goes into the stall next to Gayle, and takes off her shirt. She's startled by Gayle's voice.

GAYLE (O.S.)

Ms. T?

Gayle flushes the joint down the toilet.

GAYLE (CONT'D)

I'm pretty sure I can talk my mom into giving me up for adoption...

They both step out of their respective stalls.

GAYLE (CONT'D)

I know you don't have any kids but-

CAROLYN

If I had kids, you're the kind of kid I'd want to have.

Gayle smiles. Carolyn puts her arm around her as they walk out of the bathroom.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Minus the pot smoking.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Carolyn walks by Hector who sits on a bench outside the gym.

HECTOR

Nice shirt, Ms. T. Way to show your school pride.

CAROLYN

You need a ride home, Hector?

HECTOR

Nope. Just waiting for my Pops.

He motions to the groundskeeper picking up garbage.

CAROLYN

Hi Manuel.

He nods his head. Carolyn walks past...

...Crystal and Carlos, locked in a sexy embrace against the outside of the locker room. Crystal whispers in his ear.

CARLOS

Only two? No fair, Chica. It was three last time.

Wes and Jessie walk up to the locker room.

WES

Three what, Speedy Gonzalez?

CARLOS

Blow jobs. For every time I score.

Wes drops Jessie's hand abruptly.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Can Mormon dudes get blow jobs before you get married?

Crystal kicks Carlos.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

No, I'm just saying, because it's cool for Catholics as long as you don't "do the evil."

Crystal pushes him playfully.

CRYSTAL

You're incorrigible.

CARLOS

Ewe, Girl learned a new SAT word.

Carlos and Wes kiss their girlfriends goodbye and disappear into the locker room. Crystal and Jessie walk by Hector.

CRYSTAL

Carlos and I do the evil, even though he's Catholic.

(beat)

He says if God didn't want people to have pre-marital sex, he wouldn't have invented confession.

JESSIE

Wes can't even masturbate.

CRYSTAL

Wow. Sucks for him.

Jessie's look suggests the whole thing sucks for her too.

Hector's eyes never leave Jessie.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Gayle looks down at her watch with exasperation, then back to her book FAHRENHEIT 451. Tinker walks by, dangling his keys.

GAYLE

Tinker, give me a ride home.

TINKER

Can't. I have a meeting.

GAYLE

Freaks Anonymous? F. A.?

TINKER

F. U.

(beat)

You know, one day you're gonna realize you're in love with me.

He points to the line on his RENT shirt: "No Day But Today."

EXT. THE BUCKHORN - DAY

The Buckhorn is a small town bar crawling with people day and night. Tinker parks in front, stops to peer in. He sees his dad sitting at the bar, sloshy already. No surprise.

TINKER

Hey Dad.

TINKER'S DAD, from inside the bar...

TINKER'S DAD

Hey gaywad! Come in - have a drink.

TINKER

I'll be back in an hour to take you home.

TINKER'S DAD

This is my home. My home away from home. My "Buck-home." Fuck home.

Tinker's gone, heading toward the Catholic Church across the street. The sign now reads "REACH FOR THE HEATHENS."

INT. HOLY GRACE CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Tinker chants the Serenity Prayer with the other ADDICTS.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Gayle's mom pulls up - finally. Gayle is in no hurry to gather her things and get in.

GAYLE'S MOTHER

Don't be surly - you'll never make a man happy if you're surly.

INT. GAYLE'S MOTHER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

GAYLE'S MOTHER

The buyers kept wanting to go through the numbers one more time - I need to meet with them tonight to close it. You'll baby-sit.

GAYLE

It's Back to School Night tonight.

GAYLE'S MOTHER

Oh, like you care. Your grades are fine - it's your attitude that needs adjusting.

GAYLE

Whatever.

GAYLE'S MOTHER
No, not whatever.

Gayle rolls her eyes. Here she goes again.

GAYLE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
You're the reason I'm working so
hard in the first place, to put you
through school.

GAYLE
Mom, I go to public school.

GAYLE'S MOTHER
And, to save up for college.

GAYLE
I'll be dead before college.

INT. CAROLYN TOWNSEND'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Only half a dozen parents sit in the room.

WES' MOTHER and WES' FATHER, a straight-laced Mormon couple,
sit attentively in the front row.

Interspersed in the room, Crystal's mother, JESSIE'S MOTHER
and JESSIE'S STEPFATHER, and one other MOTHER.

CAROLYN
Grades are posted in the back if
you'd like to take a look -

Brian's dad Ray enters the room, late, and so boyishly
handsome that Carolyn loses her train of thought.

RAY
Excuse me.

He does a cute little half bow, making Carolyn smile.

CAROLYN
Grades are in the back, along with
some examples of student papers on
the counter and copies of the
syllabus if you haven't see it yet.
Make yourself at home.

Ray slouches in his seat, kicks up his feet onto the desk in
front of him, and reclines backwards. Carolyn smiles again.

The parents mill around. Wes' parents scrutinize the Sex Ed
posters, clearly not pleased.

Ray heads toward Carolyn, but the mother intercepts him.

Wes' parents approach Jessie's. They shake their mutual heads over the poster.

WES' MOTHER

Did Jessie tell you? Wes got early admittance to BYU.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

She didn't say, but I know she's hoping he'll wait for Stanford.

WES' FATHER

He won't. Stanford was back up. He'll go to BYU.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

That'll be hard on Jessie, but...

WES' MOTHER

It's for the best.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

It's for the best.

VARIOUS SHOTS

Carolyn conferences with parents.

Ray mingles, seemingly knowing everyone in this small town.

They're both waiting for their chance to be alone. Finally...

RAY

So you're just as attractive as my son said you are.

CAROLYN

Don't you have better things to talk about with your son? Like his grades, or something?

RAY

Straight A's year in, year out. If you give him a B, maybe we'd have something else to talk about.

CAROLYN

I'll see if I can arrange that. What's your son's name?

RAY

Brian.

Carolyn consults her grade book.

CAROLYN

Oh no, can't help you on that one.
98.9 percent.

RAY

See. So we'll just have to keep
talking about how pretty you are.

Him - the kind of man who makes a woman glad to be a woman.

CAROLYN

Wait, Brian's dad. You're -

Her - a woman who almost forgot she's a teacher.

RAY

Ray Solomon. You just put 2 and 2
together. You're pretty and smart!

CAROLYN

Do you flirt like this with all
your district's teachers?

RAY

Do you flirt like this with all
your students' fathers?

CAROLYN

Only the straight A students'.

RAY

Then my son's made me a lucky man.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brian plays the same video game. Ray peeks his head inside
the room, sees Brian's avatar walloping on the woman.

RAY

Hey, pick on someone your own size.

BRIAN

She's big, Dad.

RAY

Then you should kick her ass!

He turns to leave, and then...

RAY (CONT'D)

I'm taking Ms. Townsend out for
breakfast tomorrow. Is that cool?

Brian doesn't miss a beat, but Ray sees his head nod.

RAY (CONT'D)

Cool.

He leaves the room.

Brian looks back at him for a minute. On his face, a half-smile. When he turns around, the woman has thrown his avatar to the ground. His face flushes anger.

BRIAN

Fuck you, bitch.

He furiously tries to escape her hold.

INT. WES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wes lays in bed, staring at the acceptance letter from BYU.

INT. CRYSTAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carlos lays naked, kissing Crystal, clearly postprandial.

CARLOS

I love your mom's new boyfriend.

CRYSTAL

Ewe, gross. His butt's saggy.

CARLOS

The more she loves him, the less she hates me. It's good.

(beat)

How's my butt?

CRYSTAL

Impeccable.

She slaps it, hard.

CARLOS

Stop! You're gonna wake 'em up.

CRYSTAL

They'll be going at it all night. It's disgusting. Last time he left, she had a hickey. Do you know how gross it is trying to eat breakfast when your mom has a hickey? I almost hurled.

CARLOS

Talk dirty to me with some more of your SAT words.

CRYSTAL

"I wanna make love to you incessantly, until we light up in iridescent, incandescent flame."

CARLOS

You wrote that one?

She nods. They kiss intimately, infinitely in love.

INT. JESSIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jessie sits at the breakfast table with her parents. The kitchen is decorated with a kitschy little kitten motif.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

They might be facts, but the facts are inappropriate.

JESSIE

Why don't you give her some of your kitten posters then?

JESSIE'S STEPFATHER

Don't be smart with your mother.

JESSIE

She teaches abstinence too. Did you overlook that poster?

JESSIE'S MOTHER

It's the only thing she should be teaching. Leave birth control to -

JESSIE

The heathens?

JESSIE'S MOTHER

You know our church's stance on premarital sex.

JESSIE

I know your church's stance on divorce too, but that didn't stop the two of you.

JESSIE'S STEPFATHER

Don't disrespect your mother.

JESSIE

Don't disrespect my teacher, then.
At least she treats us like adults -

JESSIE'S MOTHER

You're not an adult.

JESSIE

I'm not a child.

JESSIE'S STEPFATHER

Girls, enough. Jessie, you didn't
tell us Wes got accepted into BYU.

Jessie's mouth drops open. It's news to her too.

INT. CRYSTAL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Crystal enters and sees her mom's boyfriend EARL pressing her
mom against the sink, rubbing his hands up and down her body.

CRYSTAL

Get a room.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

I own every room in this house, and
if you don't like what I do in
those rooms, then you who should
get a room - in another house.

She thinks she's funny. She and Earl laugh.

CRYSTAL

Fine. I'll move in with Carlos.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Over my dead white body.

EARL

Over your fine white body!

He slaps her on the ass.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Cereal?

CRYSTAL

I'm not hungry. You guys make me
sick to my stomach.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Don't try to get out of school - I
know you have a biology test.

She sets a bowl of cereal in front of Crystal. As she leans down, Crystal spots a hickey on her neck.

CRYSTAL
God, Mom! Again?

And then she begins to gag. She jumps up, runs down

THE HALLWAY

A DOOR SLAMS. RETCHING sounds.

Her mother follows her down the hallway. Outside the door...

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER
You don't have one of those eating disorders, do you? Earl, which one is it when you throw up.

EARL (O.S)
Bulimia.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER
Earl's daughter had one and lost all the enamel on her teeth.

EARL (O.S.)
(yelling)
It's not pretty.

INT. BREAKFAST JOINT - DAY

MARIA, a former student/current waitress and Hector's sister, takes their order.

RAY
Two breakfast clubs.

CAROLYN
Thanks Maria.

MARIA
You're welcome, Ms. T. Tell Hector hey.

She leaves. Ray leans in.

RAY
So Brian says he's never heard you talk about a boyfriend.

CAROLYN

I don't meet a lot of men my age in my line of work.

RAY

And what age is that?

CAROLYN

The age of discretion about age.

RAY

Fair enough. Matt Haines is single.

CAROLYN

Matt Haines is single for a reason.

RAY

Oh good. Gossip. Do tell.

CAROLYN

A lady never kisses and tells.

RAY

You kissed Matt Haines?!!

CAROLYN

Years ago. When I first moved here. I was trying to forget someone... He was light and fun, at first.

RAY

And then?

CAROLYN

He was serious, I wasn't. He wanted kids, I already had a hundred twenty of them needing a mother. I learned a big lesson about why you don't date someone you work with.

RAY

Well in that case... you're fired!

EXT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Jessie, heated, pokes Wes' chest with her forefinger.

JESSIE

When were you going to tell me?

Wes hangs his head. He has no defense.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
 You don't have to go - it's your
 life.

WES
 It's not just my life, it's...

Ms. Banker, looking very hung-over, approaches.

JESSIE
 She's not here yet.

Ms. Banker doesn't believe Jessie, and tries the door.

Carolyn, still buzzing from the flirtation, breezes past Ms. Banker, whose eyes drop to her sexy legs in high heels.

CAROLYN
 Close your mouth, Ms. Banker. It's
 unbecoming.

The BELL RINGS.

Matt Haines walks by, giving Carolyn's legs the once over.

MS. BANKER
 Close your mouth, Mr. Haines. It's
 unbecoming.

Tinker approaches, dressed in a preacher's black gown.

MATT HAINES
 What's with the dress, Ladycakes?

TINKER
 I am reaching to the heathens!

Frick and Frack push their way past Matt. He stops them with his hands on their shoulders.

MATT HAINES
 Frick, Frack, meet Freak.

Carolyn disregards him. Brian walks into the room without making eye contact, followed by the students and Carolyn.

Matt can't take his eyes off Carolyn.

MS. BANKER
 It's a thin line between love and
 hate, isn't it Mr. Haines?

MATT HAINES
 Oh, she's far across that line.

MS. BANKER

Umm-hmm.

Not buying it for a second. She closes her classroom door.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

TINKER

Hey, check it out - I got ordained
on the Internet.

(waving a piece of paper)
Minister of Universal Life Church.

HECTOR

Damn, you white boys are weird.

TINKER

From now on, you shall call me
Reverend Tinker.

CRYSTAL

Why can't you use the Internet like
a regular guy and look up porn?

TINKER

You will go to hell for that. And,
for having premarital sex with him.

Gayle bursts into the room.

GAYLE

What the hell is wrong with adults?

CAROLYN

What happened?

GAYLE

I went to see Ms. DeBie because I
feel like blowing my fucking brains
out again, but she's too busy
preparing financial aid packets to
talk. She's just stapling - she
can't talk and staple?

WES

You can talk to a peer counselor.

GAYLE

Peer counselors are the school's
way of making us do their jobs. If
I wanted to talk to my peers, I
could talk to you morons.

TINKER

Perhaps you'd like to confess your sins to the preacher man? Or take a shower with me in some holy water.

He drips some bottled water over Gayle's head.

SCREECH. SCREECH. SCREECH. SCREECH. The loudest fire alarm you've ever heard. Tinker tosses the water bottle, startled.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Holy shit!

CAROLYN

Calmly, folks. Let's head to the bleachers. Gayle, walk with me.

Tinker runs to the door, delighted at his own antics.

TINKER

We're all gonna burn in hell!

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Carolyn and Gayle sit on the bleachers, Carolyn's hand on Gayle's knee, listening as Gayle vents.

Jessie talks to her friends on the field.

JESSIE'S GIRLFRIEND 1

Just break up with him and get it over with. Then you can spend your senior year hanging out with us!

JESSIE'S GIRLFRIEND 2

And finally get laid!

Jessie glares at Wes who's standing with his Mormon friends. When Wes looks at her, she looks away.

Hector watches Wes and Jessie's exchange.

JESSIE'S GIRLFRIEND 2 (CONT'D)

He probably won't get into Stanford anyway - I think the Mormon Church sucked all his brain cells out.

THE BELL RINGS, signalling time to go back in. Everyone vocalizes their disappointment.

Crystal looks pale.

CARLOS
You okay, baby?

CRYSTAL
I don't feel so good.

CARLOS
Again?

Carlos takes Crystal's hand. To Hector...

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Cuz, tell Ms. T we're not ditching.

He pulls her away from campus.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Crystal sits at the top of a slide, head down in silence. She perks up when she hears loud Tex-Mex music.

Carlos walks toward her, bag in hand.

CARLOS
It's digital, so you don't have to guess the color or nothing. Just words. Pregnant, or not pregnant.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND - LATER

They sit side by side. Carlos slowly rotates them around with his feet. He holds the used pregnancy test in his hands.

CRYSTAL
You're gonna make me sick again.

CARLOS
Sorry.
(checking his watch)
It's lunch. Wanna go talk to her?

INT. CAROLYN CLASSROOM - DAY

Carolyn locks her door when Carlos and Crystal approach.

CRYSTAL
Did Hector tell you we didn't cut?

CARLOS
Can we talk to you for a minute?

CAROLYN
Absolutely.

She reopens the door, and motions for them to sit on the couch. She pulls up a chair. A beat of silence.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Pregnant?

They nod, relieved they didn't have to say it.

Just then, Ms. Banker bursts through the door.

MS. BANKER
Meeting time. Oh, sorry. I'll save you a seat.

CAROLYN
I'll be there in a bit.

Ms. Banker leaves quickly. When the door is fully closed...

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Do you want to keep the baby?

CARLOS
She has to.

CRYSTAL
I don't have to. You can't tell me what I have to do.

CARLOS
But it's my baby too, and abortion's a sin in my religion.

CRYSTAL
It wouldn't be your sin, it'd be mine, and I'm not religious.
(to Carolyn)
My mom's gonna be so pissed. She hates Carlos because -

CARLOS
Because I'm a Mexican, man.

CRYSTAL
No.
(not convincingly)
She just doesn't want me to get married real young like her and ruin my chances for a good career.

CARLOS

You can come live with my family.
They'd take you in, no problem, and
you could write your poetry -

CRYSTAL

While you work at Burger Barn?

CARLOS

My parents already treat you like
their own daughter. 'Sides, my ma,
if she found out you aborted her
grandkid, she'd kill us both, man.

CRYSTAL

Great. Your mom will kill us if I
don't keep it, and my mom will kill
me if I do.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Carolyn walks in late to the faculty meeting. She sits next
to Ms. Banker.

MS. BANKER

(whispering)

We just finished the video.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Remember the grim reapers can't
talk to anyone because they're
dead, so don't call on them.

MATT HAINES

I nominate Frick and Frack to die -
they don't talk to anyone anyway.

Dolan scowls, but only because he's supposed to.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

So tomorrow we'll introduce this to
the students at a rally, but for
now, questions, comments, concerns?

Matt Haines flashes Carolyn a look, and then digs in.

MATT HAINES

I think it's a great idea. I think
anyone who doesn't think it's a
great idea doesn't care about kids.

CAROLYN

I could not disagree with you more.

An older history teacher, MR. BUCHANAN, rolls his eyes.

MR. BUCHANAN
Surprise, surprise.

Teachers around him laugh.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN
Carolyn?

MATT HAINES
We all know how she feels - she's been talking it down to everybody since she heard.

An earnest young teacher, MR. HALL, jumps in.

MR. HALL
Carolyn, if we could save just one student's life, isn't it worth it?

CAROLYN
It doesn't work. The kids who drank kept drinking - yea, they designated a driver for a couple of weeks, but pretty soon that person was back to partying too.

MR. BUCHANAN
We're educators, Carolyn. That's our job. We educate kids about academic and social issues.

MATT HAINES
You'd think the Sex Ed teacher would know that.

CAROLYN
I don't have to simulate sex at school to make my point. I don't take kids to the abortion clinic and put them on the table to "wake 'em up to the consequences of their actions."

The teachers laugh. MRS. LEE, an older teacher, adds...

MRS. LEE
Well maybe you should! Maybe that'd knock some sense into them!

MR. HALL
Before they get knocked up.

More laughter. It cuts the tension some.

CAROLYN

I'm a little surprised at your position, Matt, given your rather vocal opposition to the Breathalyzer at Prom.

MATT HAINES

I don't support them driving drunk to Prom - I support them renting a limo and getting loaded inside.

Everyone laughs. Another young teacher, MR. LOPEZ, jests.

MR. LOPEZ

You were drunk last year at Prom.

MATT HAINES

But I didn't drive drunk - I let my girlfriend drive.

MS. BANKER

You're such a good role model. Look, I don't know if I totally agree with Carolyn, but it seems to me that if we're so worried about saving just one student's life, we should focus on suicide prevention instead. We've never lost a student here to drunk driving -

MR. HALL

There's always a first.

MS. BANKER

- but we've lost three to suicide in the last three years alone.

MRS. LEE

Three? Besides Christina, who else?

Matt Haines pantomimes slitting his wrists.

MS. BANKER

Christina, Frank Harris...

Matt pantomimes hanging himself.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)

And Michael Wise.

Matt pantomimes shooting himself in the head. He pulls the trigger and jerks his head back. Carolyn reacts viscerally. She stands up, ready to leave.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Sit down, sit down. We get your point, Carolyn. Despite Matt's gallows humor, no one would think of staging mock suicides.

MATT HAINES

Ms. Banker does it. Don't you stage *Romeo and Juliet*, Nan? That play glorifies suicide.

MS. BANKER

(standing up, heated now)
That play's a tragedy and anyone who teaches it otherwise is a -

EXT. DIXON HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Carolyn and Ms. Banker walk to their cars after the meeting.

MS. BANKER

Would it be totally hypocritical of me to tell you I'm really craving a margarita right now?

Carolyn laughs. She sees a note on her car, and reads it. She folds it back up, grinning.

EXT. GREENLAND PARK - DAY

Ray walks over to Carolyn's car as she pulls up.

CAROLYN

Be there or be square? How old are you?

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Carlos and Crystal stand in the tower of the park's castle, looking over the edge. A SNOTTY LITTLE BOY tries to climb up.

CARLOS

Hey, this is an adults only castle.

SNOTTY LITTLE BOY

You're not an adult!

CRYSTAL

Wait - look. Is that Ms. T?

CARLOS

HEY MS. T! MS. T!

BACK ACROSS THE PARK

Carolyn sees them waving wildly. Her wave - rather timid.

INTERCUT Ray and Carolyn's walk around the perimeter of the park with Carlos and Crystal's conversation in the tower.

RAY

So, I was wondering if you'd be my date for Lambtown next weekend. Unless there's someone else you usually go with.

CAROLYN

Actually, I've never been.

RAY

What? You've been living in this town for, how many years?

CAROLYN

Five.

RAY

...For five years and you've never gone to Lambtown?

CAROLYN

(laughing)

I'm sorry. I never understood the appeal.

RAY

The appeal is LAMB! Lamb kabobs, lamb on a stick, lambchops, hamburgers... are you a vegetarian?

CAROLYN

No, I eat meat.

RAY

Good. Then let's go out on a date together and eat meat.

CAROLYN

You used the word "date" twice.

RAY
Just making my intentions clear.

THE TOWER

Carlos, squinting, sees Ray flirtatiously lean into Carolyn.

CARLOS
You think Ms. T has a boyfriend?

CRYSTAL
It's about time.

CARLOS
Guess that's something you never
wanna think about - your teachers
or your parents having sex.
(beat)
Ms. T's fine though.

Crystal kicks Carlos. He takes her in his arms.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
You are mas fina, girl. Mas guapa,
bonita, preciosa, deliciosa. Our
baby, he's gonna be bilingual, like
me. A bilingual poet, cuz he's your
son too.

CRYSTAL
That'll thrill my mom.

CARLOS
Hey, if it's a boy, we could name
him Jesus so your mom would think
you got pregnant without me.

Crystal smiles absentmindedly.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Yea, then around my family we'll
pronounce it Jesús so he'll be a
proud little Mexican.

He's really trying, but she's a million miles away.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Or if it's a girl, how 'bout Angel
for your mom, and Angél for mine?

ACROSS THE PARK

RAY

So where'd you live before you came
to Lambtown, USA?

CAROLYN

Beantown, USA, actually. Bah-ston.

RAY

You teach there too?

CAROLYN

I was a therapist.

RAY

Really. Why'd you give up a paying
job for this?

CAROLYN

Believe it or not, I like the
clientele better. Adults can be...
so judgmental. I really love being
around the kids.

RAY

Tell me about it. My son is not
allowed to grow older. Seriously, I
banned him from being an adult. So
why'd you leave Bah-ston?

Carolyn carefully measures her response.

CAROLYN

Despite what they said on "Cheers,"
sometimes you want to go where
nobody knows your name.

RAY

Ah. Leave some broken hearts there?
(to her silence)
Yours included?

CAROLYN

Change of subject?
(when Ray nods)
You approve of this "Every 21
Minutes" debacle?

RAY

I did. And I have a feeling you're
about to try to change my mind.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. RESTAURANT

Carolyn and Ray talk over a romantic dinner.

INT. FRACK'S HOUSE

Frack eats a frozen dinner alone in front of MTV.

INT. FRICK'S HOUSE

Frick sits at a formal dining room table with his GRANDPARENTS. Frigid silence.

INT. TINKER'S CAR

Tinker waits while his dad stumbles out of the bar.

INT. GAYLE'S HOUSE

Gayle's mom runs into the living room, fast food bag in one hand and briefcase in the other. She tosses the bag to Gayle and her little sister, then runs back out.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

Carlos flips burgers, wiping sweat off his brow.

INT. CRYSTAL'S BEDROOM

Crystal knocks old dolls and toys off a shelf into a box on the floor. She props up the book *Where the Sidewalk Ends*.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wes and Jessie do homework. He touches her - she pulls away.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE

Brian lays on the couch alone reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

EXT. DIXON HIGH SCHOOL - SOCCER FIELD

Hector's father, Manuel, kicks a soccer ball with his FIVE YEAR OLD SON and Hector as the sun sets and

THE NIGHT ENDS.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Carolyn arrives early again, with a smile only the possibility of new love can put on your face.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

The class settles in after the weekend.

CARLOS

So Ms. T, we heard you got into it with Haines at the faculty meeting.

HECTOR

So you guys arch rivals, or what?

GIRL IN CLASS

What's an arch rival?

HECTOR

It's like how in *Romeo and Juliet* the Montagues and Copulates are. Like enemies.

GAYLE

It's Capulets, you moron.

TINKER

Oh no, they copulate alright!

Carolyn frowns, cutting off that conversation.

CAROLYN

We're not arch rivals.

WES

You beat him out for Teacher of the Year last year.

GAYLE

Who gives a shit about Teacher of the Year in some crappy school like this? No offense, Ms. T.

CAROLYN

None taken. Except the part about the school. It's not a crappy school if you're all in it.

Lots of "ahhs." It's corny, but she's sincere.

JESSIE

So what were you fighting about?

CAROLYN

We were *disagreeing* about "Every 21 Minutes," which he supports and I don't.

WES

Why wouldn't you support it? It sounds like a great idea.

CARLOS

Yea, I want to be a grim sleeper.

GAYLE

Reaper. God, I'm surrounded by complete morons.

Carolyn pauses, considering her answer.

CARLOS

You always tell it to us straight, Ms. T. Don't go changing on us now.

Carolyn walks over to her bookshelves, pulls off a book called *The Scapegoat Generation*.

CAROLYN

I found this book about 8 years ago, right around the time I was considering a career change. That was it - I knew I wanted to teach.

The students hang on every word.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

The main point of the book is that every social problem that kids have, they learned from adults.

TINKER

You needed a book to tell you that?

HECTOR

Shut up man - let her teach.

Jessie smiles at him.

CAROLYN

(opening the book)

Example. When abortions in adults rise, abortions in teens rise. When abortions in adults go down, abortions in teens go down.

CARLOS

So the shit we do, it's not our fault, it's theirs?

WES

Were you listening, dude? That's not what she said.

CAROLYN

I'm saying it goes both ways. You shouldn't drive drunk - but neither should adults. The book just suggests that when adults clean up their acts, yours get cleaner too.

CARLOS

Can we read this book, Ms. T?

All eyes snap at him. Carlos, read?

CAROLYN

You want to read the book?

All heads nod, and a few "Yesses" are heard.

JESSIE

Yea. How soon can we get it?

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Ms. Banker enters the room, swinging her lunch bag.

MS. BANKER

Ready to head to the feed trough?

She snorts like a pig, but Carolyn is buried in her computer.

CAROLYN

I can't right now. I'm ordering twenty books, two day air. My students want to read!

Ms. Banker sits down.

MS. BANKER
Be still my heart.

CAROLYN
I know! I mentioned a book in class
and they want to read it.

MS. BANKER
What book was it? *The Kama Sutra*?
The Marijuana Cookbook?

Carolyn, nonplussed, pulls out her credit card.

CAROLYN
The Scapegoat Generation. It's
basically about how teenagers
reflect the social problems of the
adults around them.

MS. BANKER
Are you serious?

At Ms. Banker's tone, Carolyn stops typing and looks up.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)
You think that's going to go over
in this town, blaming parents for
their kids' problems? You'll be
hung and quartered for heresy by
the end of next week.

CAROLYN
I said adults, not parents.

MS. BANKER
"What's in a name? That which we
call a rose, by any other name"--
would still have thorns. Be
careful, darling. I wouldn't want
to see you get pricked.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Carolyn passes out copies of the book. Gayle opens hers.

GAYLE
Looks like math in here. What are
all these graphs?

CAROLYN
They're mostly showing you how
youth statistics parallel adult
statistics.

(MORE)

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

(she draws parallel lines
on the board)

When adult smoking decreases, youth
smoking decreases. When adult
smoking increases, youth smoking
increases.

JESSIE

Do as I do, not as I say.

CAROLYN

Exactly!

HECTOR

What's a scapegoat, Ms. T?

CAROLYN

It's a term from the Bible.

CARLOS

Oh, you know we can't talk about
Christianity in class.

He points to Wes.

CRYSTAL

Close your ears, Mormon boy.

Wes flashes her a look, then leans toward Carolyn.

CAROLYN

In the Old Testament, Yom Kippur is
the Jewish day of atonement, the
day where the community confessed
all their sins.

CARLOS

Okay, get to the goat part.

GAYLE

There's no goat, you moron.
Scapegoat's just a word.

CAROLYN

No, actually, there is a goat. The
escape goat.

A slew of "what?"s and "huh?"s fill the room.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

God told a man named Aaron to lay
his hands on the head of a live
goat and confess all the sins of
the people of Israel on it.

(MORE)

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Then they sent that goat out of the community, carrying all their sins with it.

GAYLE

That's not fair.

CAROLYN

Maybe not fair, but understandable. Guilt's a heavy thing to carry on your own back.

WES

And you guys make fun of my people for wearing funny underwear. Your religion's whacked too.

CAROLYN

That goat got off easy compared to what happened to the other goat. In some ways, it was lucky to escape.

BRIAN

What happened to the other goat?

CAROLYN

They slaughtered it and sprinkled its blood around.

JESSIE

Why?

CAROLYN

Same reason - to atone for the sins of the people.

GAYLE

So adults feel guilty for the shit they do, then lay that guilt on us?

CRYSTAL

So we're the goats, si?

CAROLYN

Si, senorita.

HECTOR

Which goat are we, Ms. T? Are we the one that gets slaughtered, or the one that escapes?

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS

Different days, different shots of the students reading raptly.

EXT. LAMBTOWN USA - NIGHT

Carolyn and Ray walk through the carnival area.

CAROLYN

They're reading, Ray. I don't even have to tell them to open their books - they just come in, sit down, and read.

RAY

Well you have my vote for Teacher of the Year.

CAROLYN

And the other thing is -

He spots the Ferris Wheel. He puts his finger to her lips.

RAY

Enough adult talk - can we just play?

And play they do. Typical teenagers at a local fair. Being a small town, they run into everyone.

They ride a roller coaster with Hector and his friends.

They play skeeball, Ray against Carlos, as Crystal and Carolyn look on.

They pass Jessie and her friends, there checking out guys.

They see Matt Haines, there with his girlfriend. They all nod, cordially enough.

Ray pulls her behind some bleachers to kiss. Frick and Frack are there, smoking. They jump on their bikes and ride away.

LATER

Ray and Carolyn walk through the lamb exhibit, eating lambdogs. Carolyn sees a mother sheep suckling her lamb. Motioning to the lambdog, she says to the sheep...

CAROLYN

Sorry.
 (to Ray)
 This is so wrong.

She throws her lambdog into the garbage. Ray laughs, then takes a big bite of his.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Does Brian ever see his mom?

RAY

Never. She left when he was four and she never looked back.

The lamb tries to stand up, its knees wobbly. They watch, making "oohs and ahhs," until the lamb falls back down again. Ray leads her away, tossing his stick in the garbage.

RAY (CONT'D)

For a while I was afraid she'd do some Kramer Versus Kramer thing and come back for him, but she didn't.

CAROLYN

Is that a good thing?

RAY

For me, it's the best thing. I couldn't live without that kid. For him... he's pretty wounded.

They see a student from Psychology class (ARMANDO) hand feeding a baby lamb in a pen.

ARMANDO

Hey Ms. T.

CAROLYN

Is your lamb okay, Armando?

ARMANDO

He's good - he's just having some trouble with the oral stage.

CAROLYN

You're a good daddy.
 (to Ray, quietly)
 You're a good daddy too.

They keep walking.

RAY

It's not easy. Dating's not easy.
He ran off a woman I was engaged
to. I couldn't blame her. It's not
her kid - it's not her problem.

Carolyn stops walking.

RAY (CONT'D)

No. Don't go there. He's different
with you.

CAROLYN

Ray, we don't really know each
other, and this is a good reason to
go slow.

RAY

We know each other. I know you care
about kids, you know I care about -

CAROLYN

Lamb.

RAY

Come here.

He pulls her into a private corner of the exhibit hall.

RAY (CONT'D)

We can go slow, but we just can't
stop, okay? Not before we have a
chance to see what this could be.

He leans his body against her. She doesn't resist.

RAY (CONT'D)

I like you. I don't like a lot of
women, but you
(he kisses her)
I like.

When she doesn't say anything in return, he fishes.

RAY (CONT'D)

And me....? Huh? Me?

CAROLYN

You... I like too.

He takes her in his arms, kisses her.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

You taste like lamb.

RAY

Is that a good thing?

CAROLYN

Not really. But I know where
there's a toothbrush and
toothpaste.

I/E. CRYSTAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carlos and Crystal at the door saying good night. She has a
stuffed lamb animal in hand.

CARLOS

I want to tell her with you.

CRYSTAL

Carlos, no. I need to do it alone.
Trust me, you don't wanna be there.

CARLOS

Promise me you'll tell her tonight?

CRYSTAL

If she's up.

She kisses him good night, and enters the house. And then -

CARLOS

Hey. If Earl comes over tonight,
call me!

Crystal waves him away, closes the door. Her mom scares her
by being right there when she turns around.

Her indecipherable smile is also scary.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

We need to talk.

CRYSTAL

What? You look weird.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Not weird. I look... pregnant.

To Crystal's quizzical look...

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm pregnant, baby.

INT. CRYSTAL'S KITCHEN

Crystal's mother microwaves two mugs of hot chocolate.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Why aren't you happy? You always wanted to be a big sister.

CRYSTAL

Mom, I'm seventeen. I wanted to be a big sister when I was like, five.

(beat)

Are you gonna marry him?

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

I need you to be happy for me. For us. For all of us.

CRYSTAL

I said are you going to marry him?

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

He hasn't asked and I'm not ready to say yes, and it's not what's important right now. What's important is that we have a baby to get ready for. And I want you to help me pick out names!

CRYSTAL

Woah, just slow down. Can you -

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Do you remember all those baby names you had picked out for me?

CRYSTAL

Mom, I'm happy you're so happy, I guess. Can you just give me some time to get used to it?

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Of course, honey. Earl should be here in a few minutes - when you see him, be happy. He's thrilled.

CRYSTAL

He's like, 50 or something already.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

And he'll be a great father this time around. He's happy he's getting a second chance to do it right. We both are.

Crystal takes that as an insult, and gets up to leave.

CRYSTAL'S MOM
Can you believe it? Your mom's
pregnant!

INT. CRYSTAL'S BEDROOM

Crystal, on the bed, in her polka dot pj's. She's far away.

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jessie's mother sets Jessie's laundry on her bed. She sees *The Scapegoat Generation*, and picks it up.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Carolyn turns on the classroom light. Ray follows her inside.

RAY
I so did not see this coming.

Carolyn opens a supply closet in the back of the room, pulls out a toothbrush and toothpaste, hands it to him.

CAROLYN
Free samples courtesy of the health
department. Go brush.

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jessie and Wes on the phone. Jessie flips through the scrapbook of their relationship, which began in 1st grade.

WES (O.S.)
But we always go to Lambtown
together. For like, eight years.

JESSIE
I think we have to get used to
doing stuff apart.

WES (O.S.)
Why?

JESSIE
Wes, you know why.

She straightens a picture of them at a Pumpkin Patch in 3rd grade, arms around each other, wide toothless grins.

WES (O.S.)
I know. But why now?

JESSIE
Why stay together now if we can't
be together later?

WES (O.S.)
Even if I went to Stanford, then
what? Jessie, I can't marry you.

JESSIE
Not unless I convert. I know.

Jessie's voice is cold, but the look in her eye as she takes
in the memorabilia from their relationship belies her tone.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
I'm not converting.

WES (O.S.)
I know.

JESSIE
I don't even like my family's God.

Jessie wistfully touches a feather taped to a card in the
scrapbook. In Wes' scrawl, "We can fly!"

JESSIE (CONT'D)
We should just break up now.
(long silent beat)
Wes?

WES (O.S.)
I'm sorry. Really really sorry.

She looks at a picture of her parents with Wes on prom night.

JESSIE
It's not your fault, it's our
parents' fault. They should never
of let us go out.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Ray returns, takes Carolyn in his arms.

RAY
Minty fresh.

They kiss hungrily. Ray breaks it off, motions to the door.

RAY (CONT'D)

Lock it.

Carolyn - surprised - goes toward the door. He follows her, and when she shuts it, he presses her against it. They kiss.

There's no going slow with that kind of passion. She runs her hands down his back, to his pockets, pulls out his wallet.

CAROLYN

Tell me you have a condom in here.

RAY

We don't need a condom. Worst case scenario, we make us a new student. Good for both our businesses.

INT. JESSIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jessie enters, sees her mom in a chair reading.

JESSIE

Mom, have you seen my psych book?

Her mom swirls around. She wags Jessie's book, seething.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

What on earth are you reading?

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Carolyn digs around the supply closet. She pulls out a box full of Sex Ed paraphernalia. Pushing aside the synthetic penis, she pulls out a condom.

RAY

Remind me to write a letter of gratitude to the health department.

He takes it, but is more interested in the rest of the box.

RAY (CONT'D)

What else do you have in here?

She pulls him away by kissing him. He lifts her up onto the back counter. He kisses her while unbuckling his pants.

CAROLYN

Oh my god, not here.

RAY

Where? Your house?

CAROLYN
Small town. Too soon.

RAY
Brian's at -

Carolyn pushes him away.

CAROLYN
Not your house. God no.

RAY
Where? A motel?

CAROLYN
Anyone across the county line.

He pulls her off the counter. She follows, then stops, confidence draining.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Ray. . . It's been a, a long time
. . . since I've. . .

RAY
Me too, Carolyn. Me too.

He kisses her gently, then pulls her, running, laughing

DOWN THE HALL

OUT THE BUILDING and into

RAY'S CAR

Ray and Carolyn inside. Ray sweetly holds Carolyn's hand.

He drives - fast. Past...

EXT. STREET

Frick and Frack... hoods over their heads. Pedalling - fast.

Rounding the corner to their street.

The large tree in the house between theirs looks ominous in the street light.

The boys peel off in front of the tree to their respective homes. Their bikes drop on the ground, doors open and shut...

and the night ends.

INT. CRYSTAL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Crystal enters in her pj's, looking wiped out. Her mom, oblivious, hums as she flits around the kitchen.

CRYSTAL'S MOTHER

Guess where I'm taking you today?
Baby clothes shopping! I know it's
early, but I'm just sooo excited!

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - BABY SECTION - DAY

Crystal's mother holds up a cute pink sleeper. Crystal smiles a little, and nods her head. Her mother tosses the sleeper into her brimming basket.

INT. CRYSTAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Crystal lays in Carlos' arms, crying softly.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

Carolyn walks by, sees Carlos and Crystal huddled together, deep in conversation. She stops, then walks on.

INT. CARLOS' CAR - DAY

Carlos and Crystal drive on the freeway in silence.

EXT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD - DAY

Carlos and Crystal enter the building holding hands.

INT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD - DAY

Crystal lies on a cold white table, washcloth on her forehead. A KIND NURSE holds her hand.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A class discussion. Carlos and Crystal's desks - empty.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Crystal and Carlos sit cross-legged under a tree at the park, knees touching. Carlos rests his head on Crystal's shoulders. Her arms hold him tightly. It's his turn to cry.

EXT. CRYSTAL'S HOUSE - DAY

Carlos and Crystal sit in the car. Crystal's mother throws a large box out of the house. It's for - A BABY CRIB.

INT. CRYSTAL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Earl and Carlos put together the crib. Crystal and her mother sit on the couch, very different expressions on their face.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Carolyn notices Carlos and Crystal's seats are empty.

CAROLYN

(to Hector, quietly)

No Carlos and Crystal again? Are they... okay?

He nods his head, but doesn't make eye contact. Carolyn takes a deep breath, soldiers on. To the class...

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Okay, since the book is over a decade old, we'll need to research current statistics and see if the premise still holds true. So partner up and tell me what topics you want to work on.

TINKER

Since my dad's a big alkie, I'll do drinking. Gayle?

He looks at her hopefully. She blushes a bit, then nods.

GAYLE

My mom's a once a month drunk. She buys a pack of menthol cigarettes and some wine and gets loaded while listening to a mixed tape my dad gave her like forever ago.

TINKER

My dad, if he couldn't drive drunk, he'd never be able to drive at all. He's got this motto - "if you're still upright, you're alright." He brags all the time about getting me drunk when I was little.

CAROLYN

You sure you should do this topic?

TINKER

I don't drink anymore. AA. Clean and sober 3 years. Which pisses my dad off.

JESSIE

I'll do smoking. I'll work with... Hector.

Hector raises his head in surprise. So does Wes.

CAROLYN

Yep, good. Who wants to do teen pregnancy?

FEMALE STUDENT

I will.

A BOY WITH PIERCINGS jumps in.

BOY WITH PIERCINGS

I'll do it with her.

Everyone laughs, teases him for the double entendre.

BRIAN

What about guns?

CAROLYN

(too quickly)
No, we're not going to do guns.

BRIAN

Why not?

CAROLYN

Because we're not going to.

Realizing this is no answer...

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

You're not going to find anything on guns.

BRIAN

There's a lot of stuff in here on violence.

CAROLYN

Violence is fine. Just don't focus only on gun violence.

GAYLE

Touch-y.

TINKER

You freaked out by guns, Ms. T? Cuz my dad's got like a hundred of them, so if you want me to take you out hunting or something, maybe you can confront your fears.

HECTOR

Somebody learned something in psychology.

JESSIE

Watch out Tinker - there could be some accidental shooting while you're out there.

GAYLE

Yea, she'll pull a Cheney and be like "Oops, Tinker, I thought you were a quail" or something.

KID WITH PIERCINGS

What's a cheney?

GAYLE

He used to be the president, moron.

CAROLYN

Enough.

TINKER

Brian, work with us. Your dad's too perfect - you need a reality check.

CAROLYN

Okay. Frick, Frack?

Silence. All eyes turn to them. Their heads are down.

GAYLE

(gently)

You guys wanna do suicide?

They shrug, then nod their heads.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

THE BELL RINGS and Carolyn's last class of the day files out. As they leave, Gayle runs in.

CAROLYN
Forget something?

GAYLE
No, I just wanted to say - I think
this stuff we're learning is cool.

CAROLYN
I'm glad - because I wanted to ask
you - the suicide thing today? When
we talked last time, I thought you
were feeling better.

GAYLE
Whatever. No, I said it because of
Frank.
(to Carolyn's confusion)
Oh, that's right, you weren't here
when Frank killed himself.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - SIMULTANEOUS

Frick and Frack ride their bicycles home from school, side by side, their ubiquitous earbuds in their ears.

GAYLE (V.O.)
They were best friends with Frank.

They round a corner into their cul-de-sac. The tree is less daunting in the daylight, but still, it looms large.

GAYLE (V.O.)
He was two years older than them,
lived in the house between 'em.

Frick veers right, Frack veers left toward their homes.

GAYLE (V.O.)
They were always together, since
the day Frick came to live with his
grandparents after his mom died.

Frick's grandfather washes a vintage car. Frick coasts into the driveway, nods at his grandfather, and drops his bike.

GAYLE (V.O.)

Frick and Frack were the ones who
found him hanging in the tree.

Frick runs up the porch steps - his grandmother puts down her romance novel for a kiss - he obliges, drops his backpack next to her, and heads over to Frack's house.

GAYLE (V.O.)

No one knows why he did it for sure
cuz there was no note, but we think
he was molested by this creepy
church guy and couldn't deal.

Frick conspicuously avoids looking at the tree.

INT. FRACK'S KITCHEN - SIMULTANEOUS

Frack opens the fridge, takes a pull on a carton of juice.

GAYLE (V.O.)

Frick and Frack were never the same
after that.

He closes the fridge. School pictures of Frack on the door, lined up in chronological order. He looks like the boy next door, all smiles, until junior high, when he gets very dark.

INT. FRACK'S GARAGE

Frack steps into the darkened garage filled with band equipment. Frick puts his guitar around his neck.

GAYLE (V.O.)

They've barely talked at all since
then. I think it shocked the words
right out of them.

Frack throws his earbuds on top of Frick's in an ashtray by the drumset. He takes his seat at the drums. They look at each other, mouth the words ONE, TWO, THREE...

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC

DARK, ANGRY MUSIC bursts out from Frack's garage, filling the street. The lyrics are incomprehensible, but not the pain.

Frick's grandparents exchange a sad look.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Frick and Frack's music drowned out by the MARCHING BAND.

Carlos and Wes are on the field playing. Crystal, in her cheerleading uniform, sits on the bleachers watching the rest of the cheerleaders.

Jessie sits with her two girlfriends. They see Hector walk by with his friends, heading to the snack bar.

GIRLFRIEND 1

What about him?

GIRLFRIEND 2

He'd be hot if he weren't so fat.

JESSIE

That's mean, you guys. He's in my psych class. He's really nice.

She leaves her friends, and goes over to her mother and stepfather who sit with their FRIENDS on the bleachers.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Can I have money for the snack bar?

JESSIE'S MOTHER

(to her friends)

This one, only talks to me when she wants something.

Jessie flips some attitude, takes the money, flounces off.

JESSIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

You see what I have to put up with?

FEMALE FRIEND

She's a good kid.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

She's a smart aleck is what she is.

She watches Jessie bound down the bleachers. Jessie almost runs into Ray and Carolyn. They stand and talk. Ray reaches out his hand to shake Jessie's.

JESSIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's that one's fault. I don't like what she teaches them. You should see the book Jessie's reading. Have you seen it, Sue?

SUE, a mother, shakes her head no.

JESSIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Well, you should ask Thomas to see it. It blames parents for everything wrong with kids.

Ray and Carolyn sit on the bleachers. Tinker, Gayle, and Brian approach them. Gayle waves something in her hand with animation.

JESSIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Look at Gayle. She's probably stoned. Like that's her poor mother's fault.

Down the bleachers, Gayle reveals what's in her hands.

GAYLE

It's a Breathalyzer. I "borrowed" it from Dolan's office.

TINKER

We're gonna do a little research tonight, see how many adults are intoxicated. What about you, Mr. Solomon? You been drinking?

Ray laughs, shakes his head no.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Prove it.

Ray blows. Tinker, Gayle, and Brian look at the number.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Bor-ing. Oh hey, can Brian spend the night at my house tonight? We got a huge assignment due Monday
(motioning to Carolyn)
in this one's class.

RAY

Fine by me.

The three take off. Carolyn calls them back.

CAROLYN

You guys? Be careful, okay?

They roll their eyes and leave.

RAY

You know what this means? I can spend the night at your house.

CAROLYN

Not yet, Ray.

RAY

Then you stay at mine. I'll put a blanket over you when I pull out of the garage in the morning.

Carolyn laughs.

Jessie sees Crystal sitting alone, and joins her.

JESSIE

You okay?

CRYSTAL

Yea, why?

JESSIE

(motioning to the cheerleaders)

You're sitting this one out.

CRYSTAL

Yea. I just don't feel good.

JESSIE

You wanna get something to drink?

Crystal nods her head. They get up and walk toward the snack bar, passing by Tinker, who's trying to get a rowdy group of football fathers to blow into the Breathalyzer. When they are alone, Jessie looks at Crystal, who's obviously upset.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

You wanna talk about anything?

Crystal searches for safety in Jessie's eyes. She finds it.

CRYSTAL

I had an abortion.

The CROWD GOES WILD. On the

FOOTBALL FIELD

Carlos has just scored a touchdown. He looks in the stands for Crystal, but can't find her. He sees Carolyn instead, on her feet cheering with Ray. The score: HOME 27, VISITOR 6.

In their excitement - and attraction to each other - Ray and Carolyn hug. He whispers in her ear...

RAY
Do you think anyone would miss us
if we left?

CAROLYN
No one.

All eyes on them as they attempt to slink away.

INT. RAY'S HALLWAY

Ray and Carolyn kiss frantically as they walk into the

LIVING ROOM

Carolyn loses her balance. They fall on Ray's couch, never
losing their clutch on each other.

LATER

RAY
That was good.

CAROLYN
Very good. Both times.

RAY
Do you want a glass of wine?

He attempts to get up, but falls back on the couch, wiped.

RAY (CONT'D)
I can't get up right now.

They embrace, laughing. She takes the throw blanket off the
back of the couch and covers them with it.

Ray hears THE DOOR, and jumps off the couch. He turns to see
BRIAN. Stopped in his tracks. Mouth agape.

BRIAN
Dad!

Ray reaches for the blanket to cover himself, but Carolyn
holds tight. Brian sees her. His head snaps back and forth
between the two. Ray's hands quickly cover his genitals.

INT. BRIAN'S ROOM

Brian rifles through stuff on his desk.

BRIAN
(yelling)
I just came back for the grading
rubric. I didn't know -

RAY (O.S.)
It's okay. We...

LIVING ROOM

Ray pulls on his pants, while Carolyn sits on the couch,
mortified. She motions to her bra on the floor.

CAROLYN
Gimme that, gimme that.

He tosses her the bra, and she stuffs it under the blanket.
Seeing her panties...

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Those too.

He tosses. She hides them, and herself, under the blanket.
Brian walks by, hand shading his eyes.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE

Brian walks to Tinker's car shaking his head and repeating...

BRIAN
I did not see that. I did not see
that. I did not see that.

INT. TINKER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

TINKER
What? We weren't doing anything.
Not that I didn't try.

He puts his hand on Gayle's leg. She slaps it away. He guns
the car into gear and drives off.

GAYLE
You look like you saw a ghost.

BRIAN
I saw Ms. T... undressed, sorta.

TINKER
Way to go Mr. Solomon! You jealous?

BRIAN
Of her?

TINKER
No, of your dad, for beating you to her.

BRIAN
Don't be sick.

GAYLE
It's okay, everyone has a crush on her. I do.

TINKER
I thought you had a crush on me.

GAYLE
You wish, you moron.

Tinker pulls the car over in front of...

EXT. GAYLE'S HOUSE

He gets out of the car as Gayle does.

GAYLE
What are you doing?

TINKER
Accompanying a lady to her door.

GAYLE
Chivalry. How Shakespearean.

But she's pleased.

At the door, she kisses Tinker quickly on the lips, surprising them both. She goes inside. Tinker runs to the car, waving his hands wildly and screaming silently for joy.

INT. GAYLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A sappy song fills the dark house. Gayle clicks off the cassette player.

GAYLE'S LITTLE SISTER'S BEDROOM

Night light on. She sees her mom smoking a cigarette in the rocking chair by the bed, wine bottle on the nightstand.

GAYLE'S MOTHER

(slurry)

This wasn't what my life was supposed to look like.

Gayle covers her mom with a blanket from her sister's bed. She takes the bottle of wine, turns off the light.

GAYLE'S BEDROOM

Gayle in a chair by her bed, washing hits from a joint down with swigs from the wine bottle.

INT. TINKER'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

A red-neck party in full swing. Five MEN sit around a poker table. Beside it, a 30 gallon recycling container with a basketball hoop over it. It's 3/4 way full with beer cans.

JEFF shoots his empty through the hoop. RICO drops his cards.

RICO

I'm out. I'm heading home.

TINKER'S DAD

Blow again.

Tinker appears with the Breathalyzer. Rico blows.

TINKER

Point one two.

TINKER'S DAD

Friends don't let friends drive sober. Toss him a beer, kid. One for the road.

Brian throws him a beer from another garbage container.

JEFF

You better take another one for the garage, because your wife's gonna kill you when you get home.

TINKER

I can do your last rites - I'm an ordained minister now.

TINKER'S DAD

You're a freak, kid. If I thought there was any other man out there who woulda banged your mom, I wouldn't believe you were mine.

Brian laughs. Tinker's dad punches his arm. It hurts, but Brian likes being one of the guys.

TINKER'S DAD (CONT'D)

Go get more beers, kid.

Brian and Tinker walk to a

MAKESHIFT ROOM

off the side of the basement, where there's a fridge and a gun cabinet. Tinker motions to the cabinet.

TINKER

Check this out.

He opens it.

BRIAN

He doesn't keep it locked?

TINKER

He used to, but he can't remember where he put the key.

Tinker takes out one of the couple dozen guns inside.

TINKER (CONT'D)

This is the one he used to shoot our cat after he ran over it.

Brian's mesmerized. He slowly reaches for it. Seeing his own reflection in the glass of the cabinet, he points the gun toward it, putting his finger on the trigger.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Dude, don't. It's loaded.

Brian snaps out of his trance, shaken.

BRIAN

Why?

TINKER

I don't know. In case he has to put something else out of its misery.

EXT. HUDSON'S SLOUGH - NIGHT

The place in the country where everyone underage (and their admirers) goes to party post-game.

Jessie hangs out with her friends, clearly uncomfortable. She holds a full beer in her hands, but she's not drinking.

Hector approaches her. He has to yell to be heard.

HECTOR

Hey, I never seen you here before.

Jessie doesn't respond.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Where's Wes? I'm used to seeing the two of you. Wes and Jessie. Wessie.

JESSIE

We broke up.

HECTOR

What?

(leaning in)

You wanna talk?

With Hector? Jessie considers, then nods her head.

EXT. HUDSON'S SLOUGH - LEVY

It's quieter, though the party rages on in the background.

HECTOR

If I were your boyfriend, I'd follow you to any college anywhere. If I could afford to go to college.

Jessie smiles. She's beautiful when she smiles.

JESSIE

You wanna go to college?

HECTOR

Hell ya. I don't want to be stuck in this town, working 16 hours a day like all the men I know, never seeing my kids. If my dad didn't work at our school, I'd never even see him. I wanna get out of this place, go some place better.

JESSIE
I think we all do.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ray sleeps with his arm around Carolyn. Utter peace. Not for long.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Ms. Banker walks down the empty hallway plastered with signs.

LOCKERS TO BE REMOVED DURING WINTER BREAK.

MS. BANKER
Oh shit.

She grabs a sign and opens Carolyn's door, waving it.

CAROLYN
I know. I feel bad for them.

MS. BANKER
Bad for them? What about us? Do you know how agitated they're going to be today? We won't get anything done. Happy fucking Monday.
(beat)
Did you have a happy fucking weekend? Emphasis on fucking?

CAROLYN
Ms. Banker!

MS. BANKER
Finally I'm not the only one getting laid. Is it serious?

CAROLYN
I could see it heading that way.

MS. BANKER
(very seriously, gently)
Are you ready?

CAROLYN
Yea. I think I am. Finally.

MS. BANKER
Does he know?

CAROLYN
 Brian? Of course. They've got a
 great relationship.

MS. BANKER
 No, I mean Ray. Have you told him
 about... Boston?

Manuel opens the door, reaches for the trash can.

CAROLYN
 Buenos días, Manuel! Cómo estás?

MANUEL
 Bien, bien. Y tú?

CAROLYN
 Bien.
 (and to Ms. Banker)
 Bien.

I/E. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Heated, Carlos and Crystal burst into the classroom where the
 conversation is already in session.

GAYLE
 But why?

CAROLYN
 Apparently last night they brought
 Orloff in and he sniffed out drugs
 in a few lockers.

Tinker barks, then howls, then begs Gayle.

CARLOS
 So a few kids screw up and we all
 gotta pay? That's scapegoatin, man.

CAROLYN
 Not exactly.

CARLOS
 Sure it is. Adults have all these
 places where they can lock their
 shit up, and then they take away
 the one private place we have.

BOY WITH PIERCINGS
 When my parents found pot in my
 room, they took my friggin door off
 completely.

CARLOS

Where'd you masturbate, dude?

BOY WITH PIERCINGS

The bathroom. They still keep locks on that so they can hide their stash when their friends come over.

WES

In the bathroom?

BOY WITH PIERCINGS

Yea, they got their own private lockers in there. They're called "medicine cabinets."

WES

There's a difference between medicine and drugs.

BOY WITH PIERCINGS

What's the difference between Ritalin and speed?

GAYLE

A prescription.

WES

Ritalin's for kids.

CAROLYN

No, adults with ADD take it too.

GAYLE

And adults who wanna get high. The principal at my last school got caught swapping kids' Ritalin out for Advil and taking them himself.

BOY WITH PIERCINGS

Adults got prescriptions for uppers, downers, sidewayers... And then they gotta dope us up to make us easier to cope with.

CAROLYN

In the 70's, the most popular pill was a tranquilizer called Valium. You know the band, the Rolling Stones? They nicknamed it "Mother's Little Helper" because it helped the desperate housewives of those days cope with their boredom.

JESSIE

They still got that? I wanna get my mom some for Mother's Day.

CAROLYN

And even stronger drugs in the same class like Xanax and Ativan.

BOY WITH PIERCINGS

See, they got all that good, legal shit to calm their nerves and when we wanna smoke a little pot to relax, it's a crime.

GAYLE

Morons.

Hector, reading the whole time, suddenly looks up.

HECTOR

Hey Ms. T, this part doesn't make sense. It says the worse the crime is that we commit, the more likely we'll get tried like an adult.

GAYLE

Yea, like if you're 13 and you murder someone, they treat you like an adult and can throw you in prison for life.

HECTOR

But that doesn't make sense. Why is it when we are acting bad, we're acting like adults?

JESSIE

Yea, like adults should get tried like children when they act bad. Good thinking, Hector.

She flashes him a smile. He blushes, pleased.

CARLOS

Once, my little sister went to my dad crying cuz she said I hit her, and my dad came into my room and smacked my face and said "You never hit anyone smaller than you."

Gayle bangs her hands on her desk, making everyone jump.

GAYLE
GOD - this stuff is making me
crazy! We have to do something or
I'm gonna lose it.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Gayle checks her watch, again. Tinker walks by.

GAYLE
Give me a ride home, Tinker.

TINKER
No can do. Gotta go to work.

GAYLE
Then take me to your work.

TINKER
Serious?

GAYLE
I don't care. Just get me the fuck
out of here.

INT. TINKER'S CAR - DAY

Tinker zooms by Gayle's mom, standing outside a house for
sale with a CLIENT. Gayle leans out the window, screaming.

GAYLE
Mother! I'm being kidnapped! Save
meeeeee.....

Tinker swerves with surprise. Gayle pulls her head back into
the car, laughing hysterically.

EXT. GENERIC SUBURBS STREET - DAY

Tinker works his job - sign twirler at a subdivision. Gayle
sits next to him on the deserted sidewalk, taking hits off a
joint when the coast is clear, staring at his crazy moves.

GAYLE
What the hell kind of job is that?

TINKER
It's not a job - it's art.

GAYLE
It's humiliating.

TINKER
It's EXHILARATING!

He throws the sign up into the air, spins around twice, and misses the sign, which whacks him on the head. They both laugh. Then she takes another hit.

TINKER (CONT'D)
If you got clean, we could hook up.

GAYLE
You wouldn't want to be around me
if I'm clean.

He stoops to pick up the sign, still looking at her.

GAYLE (CONT'D)
You think I'm fucked up now? You
should see me without weed.

She sings from Pink Floyd...

GAYLE (CONT'D)
"I have become comfortably numb."

Another beat. Tinker shakes his head. He can't fall in. He begins to move wildly, sign a-twirling.

INT. WES' HOUSE - DAY

Wes comes home from football practice. He enters the

BATHROOM

and starts the shower. His eyes light on the medicine cabinet. He ponders it.

He turns off the shower, and walks down the

HALLWAY

And into his parents'

BEDROOM

And into their

BATHROOM.

He stares at their medicine cabinet. It has a lock on it.

He tentatively tries it, finds it unlocked. He peers inside.

The usual medicine cabinet things. He spots 3 prescription bottles. He turns them sideways so he can see the labels. Not recognizing the names, he removes the bottles.

INT. ATHLETIC SHOE STORE - DAY

Brian holds up a pair of tennis shoes for his dad to see.

RAY
Like those?

Brian nods. A FEMALE STORE CLERK comes up to him.

FEMALE STORE CLERK
Can I get you those in your size?

Brian puts them down, and sourly shakes his head no. She gets the point, and leaves.

RAY
I thought you liked them?

Brian picks them back up, and shrugs. Ray sees a MALE CLERK, calls him over.

BRIAN
Can I try these on in a five?

INT. WES' ROOM - DAY

Wes sits in front of his computer with the three bottles lined up on his desk. He moves one bottle to the side.

WES
Generic for Viagra. Da-ad!

He types in the name of the next one.

WES (CONT'D)
P-r-e-m-a-r-i-n.

He watches the search come up, clicks on one, reads quickly.

WES (CONT'D)
Female hormone replacement. Oh-kay.

He moves that bottle to the side, and types in the last one.

WES (CONT'D)
What else you got, Mom?
(trying to pronounce it)
Al-p-ra-zo-lam.

Cut to the screen, where the first search item reads

XANAX - GENERIC NAME: ALPRAZOLAM

Wes pops up and dashes back to the bathroom. He opens the cabinet again: nothing else. He rifles through drawers: nothing else. He opens the cabinet under the sink. Nothing.

And then he sees a small pink box in the back of the cabinet. He opens it, and inside he sees

A DOZEN PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES

He looks at their titles. All Xanax or its generic. And many of them prescribed by different doctors.

INT. MALL - DAY

Ray and Brian walk through the mall, Brian with a shoe bag.

RAY

So, are you okay with me dating Ms. Townsend?

BRIAN

No one calls her that, dad. And yea, I'm okay.

Ray roughs him up playfully.

RAY

You sure? You sure she's okay?

BRIAN

Okay, okay! She's okay!

Ray lets go. Brian gets serious.

RAY

Whaaattt?

BRIAN

The stuff we're studying in her class, it's hard. It's like you can't trust adults, like they have this dark side they're hiding, or secrets they keep or something.

Brian looks at his dad, question in his eyes.

RAY
 Are you asking me if I'm hiding
 anything from you?

BRIAN
 (shrugs)
 You always said we could tell each
 other everything.

INT. WES' KITCHEN - DAY

Wes sits at the table, PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES lined up in front
 of him.

His mother enters the house with a bag of groceries in hand.

WES' MOTHER
 Hi honey - how was practice? Sorry
 I wasn't home when you got home.

Her voice is smooth and sweet, 1 milligram away from fake.

When he doesn't answer, she glances over.

WES' MOTHER (CONT'D)
 What are those?

She picks up a bottle, reads it. She flushes anger.

WES' MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Why do you have these?

WES
 Why do YOU have these?

WES' MOTHER
 You answer to me, young man, not
 the other way around.

WES
 We were talking about drugs in Ms.
 T's class and--

WES' MOTHER
 It's medicine, not drugs. For my
 anxiety.

WES
 What are you so anxious about? It
 is that stressful being my mom?

WES' MOTHER

Of course not. I have a chemical imbalance - the pills balance me.

WES

How? By calming your nerves? That's what everyone says pot does too.

WES' MOTHER

It may well be, but pot's illegal.

WES

But who decides what's legal and what's not?

WES' MOTHER

The people who make the laws decide what's legal.

WES

Medical marijuana's legal. If your doctor prescribed that, would you take it?

WES' MOTHER

Of course not. You know how our church feels about marijuana.

WES

How does the church feel about these?

WES' MOTHER

The church doesn't come between a woman and her doctor.

WES

It's not one doctor, Mom. It's...

He picks up the different bottles. She loses her patience.

WES' MOTHER

Is "Ms. T" telling you it's okay to challenge adults like this? Because I don't like your new attitude one bit, and I will pull you out of that class in a heartbeat if you ever talk to me like this again.

Wes sweeps his arm across the table, flinging the pill bottles everywhere. He storms out of the room.

The FRONT DOOR slams.

His mother stands in shocked silence. Then she reaches for the phone and dials.

WES' MOTHER (CONT'D)

Sue, it's Linda.

(beat)

He told me they broke up. I think it's a very adult decision on their part. Uh huh. Uh huh. I agree. Listen, do you know what's going on in Ms. Townsend's class right now?

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Brian laces up his new shoes. Ray takes his racket out of the case. He pauses, looking at Brian.

BRIAN

Whaaattt?

RAY

Okay, man to man? There's only one thing I haven't been honest with you about.

Brian slows down with the lacing.

RAY (CONT'D)

Mary - I didn't break up with her. She broke up with me.

BRIAN

(shocked)

Why?

RAY

You weren't the easiest kid to get along with.

Brian looks down, angry.

BRIAN

You lied to me?

RAY

I didn't lie to you, I... just didn't tell you the whole truth.

BRIAN

(incredibly hurt)

Why?

RAY
(booms, like Jack
Nicholson)
Because you can't handle the truth!

Ray sits next to Brian.

BRIAN
Seriously.

RAY
Seriously? Because sometimes
parents don't tell kids the truth
to protect them.

BRIAN
So why are you telling me now?

RAY
Because I don't want you running
off the woman I'm currently dating.

He roughs him up a little again, to make it lighter.

LATER

BRIAN'S FACE -- concentrated, hard, furious, as he belts back
his betrayal with every hit of the ball.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Hard and furious too, Wes drips sweat as he runs around the
track. He passes...

MATT HAINES, concentrated too, eyebrows furled, as he whacks
the golf ball into the practice net.

INT. WES' KITCHEN - DAY

Wes' mother hangs up the phone and dials again.

WES' MOTHER
Hi, it's Linda. I was calling to
see if you've seen the book Isabel
is reading for Ms. Townsend's
class. Call me back.

She hangs up, and dials another number.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - DAY

Brian bolts out of the car and heads up to the front door.

INSIDE THE CAR, Ray says to himself

RAY
Geez. Sore loser.

His cell phone rings. He answers.

RAY (CONT'D)
Hey Dolan. What's up?

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

On Dolan's computer screen

AMAZON.COM - *The Scapegoat Generation*

PRINCIPAL DOLAN
Ray, we have a situation brewing.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brian storms toward his dresser. He takes out a picture of a woman - Mary - with her arm around his younger self. He tears it up, throws it down, and grinds it into the ground.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Carolyn, arms full, drops her keys as she tries to lock the door. From out of nowhere, Ray's there, still in tennis clothes. Down on one knee, he picks them up, hands them back.

MS. BANKER'S ROOM

Ms. Banker opens her door to leave, sees what looks like a proposal, and closes the door quickly. Back to

OUTSIDE CAROLYN'S DOOR

RAY
Come have dinner with us tonight.
I'm making my famous lamb stew.

CAROLYN
Have you heard of chicken?

RAY
 (standing)
 And bring an overnight bag.

CAROLYN
 Ray, I can't -

RAY
 Listen, I can't have my son
 thinking this is some one night
 stand. How am I going to model good
 relationships for him?

He sneaks a kiss, then walks away.

RAY (CONT'D)
 See you at seven.

CAROLYN
 (after him)
 Don't think I didn't notice how
 you've gone from calling it
 "dating" to a relationship.

RAY
 Don't think I didn't do it on
 purpose!

Ray's face - a huge grin, as he nearly skips down the hall.

Carolyn's face - a sweet smile, as she turns the key.

Ms. Banker opens her door. In a loud whisper, to Carolyn...

MS. BANKER
 Did you say yes?

CAROLYN
 Yes.

She squeals, shrieks - if she could jump for joy, she would.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
 It's just lamb stew.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brian's face -- blank, as he lays on his bed.

THE DOORBELL

He gets up, takes a pill from a prescription bottle and chucks in into his mouth, swallowing it dry.

I/E. RAY'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Ray answers the door, and leans out to kiss Carolyn.

RAY

Before you come in, there's something I have to warn you about.

She looks at him, serious.

RAY (CONT'D)

You are not allowed to say the "H" word.

She looks at him, confused.

RAY (CONT'D)

Homework. He's already finished it, and it would be really uncool for you to bring it up.

She smiles, then makes a zipping motion with her lips.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

It's awkward at first, but as the night wears on, the three of them relax. They make dinner together, they sit at the table, eating and laughing, they talk, they look. . .

like a family.

Dishes cleared, eating ice cream while they play Scrabble, Brian places down the letters WED.

CAROLYN

Wed? As in abbreviation for Wednesday? Nope, against the rules.

BRIAN

No, wed as in married. Past tense.

RAY

Sounds funny. What's the present tense? "Today I will wed."

CAROLYN

That's the future. "We are wed."
No, still past. "I now pronounce
you wed." Doesn't sound right.
Where's Ms. Banker when you need
her?

BRIAN

Ugh. I hate her.

CAROLYN

How can you hate Ms. Banker?

Brian shrugs his shoulders.

BRIAN

How come you've never been wed?

Awkward.

CAROLYN

I think that's called the past
imperfect tense.

She's skating, nervously rearranging her tiles.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

I'm not wed now, present tense. I
may wed later, future tense.

She laughs, quickly turns to her tiles, adding an OG to
Brian's D.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Dog. It's the best I can do. I told
you I'm no good at this game.

BRIAN

Wait, you've been married?

CAROLYN

Oh no. You can't change the word
now. Ray...

She gestures to his tiles, wanting him to take his turn.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brian sleeps on a recliner chair. Ray and Carolyn sit on the
couch. The movie they're watching has just ended.

CAROLYN

I should go. School night.

RAY
I'll get your coat.

He leaves. Carolyn walks up to Brian. He's beautiful in his sleep, with all the teenage angst drained from his face. Her hand moves unconsciously, tenderly, toward his face. . .

He snaps awake, startling them both.

CAROLYN
I'm sorry to wake you. I'm leaving.

BRIAN
K. Night, Ms. T.

CAROLYN
In this house, it's Carolyn.

BRIAN
Okay. Night... Carolyn.

She turns, sees Ray with her coat, softly smiling.

I/E. FRONT DOOR

Ray opens the door for her, and steps outside.

RAY
I'll walk you to your car.

CAROLYN
No, go in. It's cold and
(looking around)
There may be students spying!

They laugh. He kisses her cheek quickly. She turns to leave.

RAY
Carolyn. Hey. Is there anything you
want to tell me... about...tonight?

CAROLYN
There is absolutely nothing I want
to tell you about tonight.

She buttons her lips again, then unbuttons them.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Except, I had a really great time.
Present perfect.

She punctuates the last two words with a kiss.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Carolyn greets students at the door. When Brian passes through, they exchange an awkward hello.

THE BELL RINGS.

CAROLYN

So tomorrow's "Every 21 Minutes,"
and I'll be sick for two days.

The students laugh.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Mr. Jones will be your substitute.

CARLOS

Mr. Smelly Bones? I'll be sick for
two days too.

CAROLYN

No, you should be here.

GAYLE

I have an idea. I think we should
put on a play for the community.

To questioning sounds and looks...

GAYLE (CONT'D)

Yea, where we present all this
stuff we're learning.

The class is interested.

GAYLE (CONT'D)

Remember studying Greek tragedy in
English, and how the chorus is
always there saying what no one
else can say? Let's stage that.

WES

Like "A Chorus Line"?

JESSIE

No, you moron.

(everyone laughs)

It's brilliant, Gayle. I can help
you make costumes. Can we rehearse
while you're gone, Ms. T?

Carolyn nods.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Is everyone in? Ditch the assembly
and we'll rehearse then too.

Wes mumbles under his breath.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

What?

WES

I'm in the assembly. No one's
supposed to know, but I'm one of
the kids in the car.

(he angers)

Not everyone thinks like all of
you, that this is a bad thing.

Before anyone can jump on Wes, Carolyn interjects.

CAROLYN

Wes is right. Stay home, be in the
chorus, go to the assembly - what
matters is that you stand up for
what you believe.

EXT. DIXON HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A school day like every other school day and like no other
school day. Manuel raises the flag. Carolyn's car is absent.

EXT. FRICK AND FRACK'S CUL-DE-SAC

Frick and Frack exit at the same time from their respective
front doors. They get on their bikes, meet in the center of
the street, and ride to school. The tree looms over them.

INT. CRYSTAL'S KITCHEN

Crystal's mom and Earl sit at the kitchen table. Crystal
enters, on the run, grabs an apple.

CRYSTAL'S MOM

Guess what, Citty - I'm giving up
beer 'til after the baby's born -
Earl too. My hero.

Earl nods, takes a deep drag on his cigarette.

Crystal runs out of the house and into

CARLOS'S CAR where she screams. Carlos screams too in shock.

INT. TINKER'S KITCHEN

Tinker enters the kitchen. His dad mixes a Bloody Mary.

TINKER'S DAD
Breakfast of Champions. You should
have one. Full of nutrients.

TINKER
Dad, I'm in AA.

TINKER'S DAD
Pussy.

INT. HECTOR'S KITCHEN

Hector scarves down a breakfast burrito at the table with his OVERWEIGHT SISTERS and OBESE MOTHER. The only normal sized kid is the 5 year old brother in his soccer shirt.

HECTOR'S OBESE MOTHER
Don't eat so much too fast, Hector.
You're gonna get fat.

HECTOR
I'm already fat, Ma.

She slaps the backside of his head. He yelps. The burrito flies. His little brother laughs.

HECTOR'S OBESE MOTHER
Don't talk back to your madre.

INT. JESSIE'S KITCHEN

Jessie, wearing a T-shirt with a graph on it and the words "WE DO AS YOU DO NOT AS YOU SAY," walks past her mom.

JESSIE'S MOTHER
Wes called.
(seeing her shirt)
What in the world are you wearing?

Jessie walks out the door and slams it without saying a word.

INT. RAY'S CAR

Ray drives Brian to school.

RAY
You been taking your medicine?

BRIAN
Is it medicine, or a drug?

RAY
Are you taking it with my
permission?
(Brian nods)
Then it's medicine.
(beat)
Still feel like it's working? You
feel better. . . emotionally?

BRIAN
Yea Dad.

RAY
(like a commercial)
Side effects may include headaches,
stomach upset, dry mouth,
constipation . . . any of those?

BRIAN
No Dad.

RAY
(more tentatively)
Mood swings? Thoughts of suicide?

BRIAN
Dad.

RAY
Erections lasting longer than four
hours?

When Brian rolls his eyes...

RAY (CONT'D)
Don't worry, that's just a side
effect of being a teenage boy.

INT. GAYLE'S MOTHER'S CAR

Gayle waits in the car. Her mother, flustered, gets in.

GAYLE'S MOTHER
Do you have everything?

GAYLE
Yes.

GAYLE'S MOTHER

I mean it, Gayle. I'm late and I'm not turning around. Do you have your homework? Lunch money? Phone?

GAYLE

Mother, I have everything.

Her mother sighs. She drives. Halfway down the street...

GAYLE'S MOTHER

Shit. I forgot something.

She turns the car around, almost hitting Jessie in her car.

EXT. DIXON HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The scene of the fake crash, looking amazingly real.

Police cars and ambulances.

In the center of the cordoned-off street, a wrecked car sits with FOUR BLOODIED TEENAGERS inside, including Wes.

Students and parents gather at the edge of the police tape.

Some are visibly upset as the accident victims are pulled out of the car, one by one, and placed on stretchers and moved into the waiting ambulances.

Some stifle cries as the dead student is removed and zipped into a body bag. Others cry outright.

When the ambulance drives off, the students shuffle back into the classroom to the sound of the siren.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A spindly substitute teacher, MR. JONES, writes his name on the board. No one pays him any attention.

A bell gongs a death march. A student dressed like the Grim Reaper enters the room and sits in Wes' seat. Tinker sprinkles a little "holy water" over his head.

TINKER

To help with your transition.

Jessie pulls T-shirts out of her backpack that match hers.

GAYLE

Dress rehearsal is tomorrow.

JESSIE

Does everyone have their lines ready? Let's do a run through.

Mr. Jones glares as Jessie and Gayle take charge.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

Class ends. Students pour out of the classrooms and into the hallway. Grim Reapers walk amongst them. Some students are somber as they pass them, while others mock and taunt them.

EXT. STREET - DAY

From behind, a single male rides a bike. Frick, without Frack? No, it's

RAY. He pedals swiftly, huge grin on his face.

EXT. CAROLYN'S BACKYARD - DAY

Carolyn sits in her backyard grading papers. She startles - someone's jumped the fence, and is coming toward her. It's

RAY. He grins winsomely.

RAY

Caught you playing hookey!

CAROLYN

I'm taking a mental health day.

Ray leans down and kisses her neck sensually.

RAY

What do you say we take a physical health day instead?

CAROLYN

Ray, I can't have your car in front of my house when everyone knows I'm not at school!

RAY

I rode my bike. Sit up, sit up.

Carolyn sits up, and Ray climbs behind her on the lounge chair. She lays back in his arms, and lets the papers she's grading fall from her hand to the grass. She sighs.

CAROLYN
I'm worried about the kids.

RAY
What kids?

CAROLYN
All the kids.

RAY
That's a lot of kids to be worried
about.

CAROLYN
Did you go this morning?

RAY
Yep. Along with half the town. Matt
Haines was tossing around a bloody
shoe from the accident scene.

He kisses the top of her head.

RAY (CONT'D)
I intercepted it for you, and gave
him an appropriately scolding look.

CAROLYN
Thank you, I think.

She sighs again, deeply.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
I have a bad feeling about this.

RAY
It will be over in two days, and
everything will go back to normal.

The worried look on her face conveys disbelief.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE - DAY

The students, minus Wes, stand in a line wearing their T-shirts. Gayle stands in front of them, directing.

Frack sits at his drumset. Frick with his guitar. Gayle points to them - they play under the chorus.

JESSIE
"Smoking parents are three times
more likely to have smoking kids."

TINKER

"Who's driving drunk? While teenagers hog the media, adults are committing 90% of the intoxicated motorway damage."

INTERCUT WITH

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - SIMULTANEOUS

Somber students sit in the bleachers. On the basketball court - the parents of the injured and dead kids, the police and ambulance drivers, and a slew of kids who died every 21 minutes, including Wes.

It's just as theatrical as what's happening in the theatre.

The FATHER OF THE DEAD BOY is tearfully reading a note.

FATHER OF THE DEAD BOY

When I saw you in the morgue, all I could think of was I wish I had spent more time with you. I hope it's not too late.

He breaks down. The BOY WHO DIED embraces him.

Tears flow in the bleachers. Eyes roll too.

INT. THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

HECTOR

"The mathematical correlations between rates of teenage and adult sexual, homicidal, suicidal, criminal, and other behaviors display near one-to-one correspondence."

FEMALE STUDENT

"For five decades, adult and teen unwed birth rates are identical. Teen and adult abortion rates are also identical."

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

The MOTHER OF THE DEAD BOY speaks.

MOTHER OF THE DEAD BOY

It's against the natural order, for a child to die before a parent.

She points to the students in the bleachers.

MOTHER OF THE DEAD BOY (CONT'D)
 Don't drink and drive, because
 you'll break your parents' hearts.

INT. THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

Jessie's mother quietly enters the back of the theatre.

CARLOS
 "11% of U.S. children are victims
 each year of a severe violent act,
 including being kicked, bit,
 punched, beat up, burned or scalded
 - by their parents."

CRYSTAL
 "Adults, not youth, are the chief
 murderers of youth."

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

A girl ACCIDENT VICTIM speaks directly to the boy who died.

ACCIDENT VICTIM
 All I kept thinking when they put
 you in the body bag was, I hope it
 has holes in it.

Everybody laughs.

ACCIDENT VICTIM (CONT'D)
 Seriously, though, if you really
 died all because of some stupid
 party, it'd be. . . stupid.

INT. THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

BRIAN
 "Adults in their 20's and 30's, not
 teens, are worst for drunken
 fatality."

BOY WITH PIERCINGS
 "Middle agers are eight times more
 likely than teenagers to die of
 drug abuse."

Jessie's mother seethes in the back of the theatre.

Jessie cuts the theatre lights. The stage goes black.

A CELL PHONE RINGS.

CRYSTAL

It's mine.

She takes it out of her purse, looks at the screen.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Mom? What's wrong?

INT. CRYSTAL'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Crystal sits bedside and holds her mom's hand. Earl stares out the window into the darkness, smoking.

CRYSTAL'S MOM

It was silly to even think of having a baby at my age.

Crystal re-adjusts the washcloth on her mom's forehead.

CRYSTAL'S MOM (CONT'D)

I'll just have to wait for you to give me grand babies. White grand babies. After college, and after you're married.

Earl takes a deep drag on his cigarette, and slowly exhales.

Crystal's cell phone rings. She answers it, stepping outside of her mom's door.

CRYSTAL

I can't leave my mom. A miscarriage, I guess. I can't, Carlos. I can barely hear you.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Carlos hangs up his phone. He's at a Mexican quinceanera. Tex Mex music blasts. While everyone parties in the parking lot, Hector's mother, father, little brother, two fat sisters, and the birthday girl all pose for a picture.

MANUEL

Ole! Let the party begin!

He beelines for the tequila table.

Lots of dancing. Beer and tequila. Tables of food. Laughter. Into the night. Hector's dad drinks a lot, completely loosens up, looking nothing like the school groundskeeper anymore.

LATER

Hector's asleep in a chair, his little brother asleep in his lap. Most of the party goers have left. His dad approaches.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Let's go. Vamanos.

He stumbles drunkenly toward the minivan. Hector stands, his brother flung over his shoulder.

HECTOR

Pops, give me the keys. Pops.

His dad ignores him, nears the minivan.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Pops, seriously, you're drunk. Let me drive.

His dad gets into the driver's seat. His three sisters and mother are already loaded up.

MANUEL

Get in the car, Hector. NOW!

This wakes his little brother. Hector puts him down.

HECTOR

Pops, come on, for real.

Hector leans into the minivan, tries to take the keys. They struggle. Neither see Hector's little brother walk behind the car to get into his side.

His dad turns on the engine, and jerks the car into gear. Into reverse. Into

Hector's little brother.

The screen goes black.

AN AMBULANCE'S CRIES morphs into a RINGING PHONE.

INT. CAROLYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone stops ringing. In the dark, a woman mumbles hello.

MS. BANKER (O.S.)
 Carolyn, it's Nan. I need you to
 wake up.

Carolyn turns the light on.

CAROLYN
 I'm awake.

MS. BANKER (O.S.)
 Something terrible happened.

CAROLYN
 To who?

MS. BANKER (O.S.)
 To whom. To Hector's family. To his
 little brother.

Carolyn bolts up in bed.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Hector's seat is empty. All eyes are on Carolyn as she stands
 in front of the classroom. They wait for her to speak.

INT. TEACHER'S ROOM - DAY

A still somber Carolyn goes to her mail tray.

Matt Haines sits at a nearby table. In a snarky voice...

MATT HAINES
 I hope you're happy now.

Carolyn looks at him, incredulous.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)
 You made your point. And now a
 little boy is fighting for his
 life, Manuel's in jail, and they
 sent Hector back to Mexico to live
 with his grandparents because his
 dad threatened to kill him.

Carolyn snaps. She gets in his face.

CAROLYN
 You think this makes me happy? A
 family's destroyed and you think
 I'm happy because I made a point?

Her venom pushes him back. Mr. Boblette steps in.

MR. BOBLETTE

Hey Carolyn, back off. That's not what he meant.

MATT HAINES

It is what I meant. Mannie's probably driven drunk a thousand times and would have been fine if you had kept your self-righteous mouth shut.

Carolyn almost lunges at him, but Boblette holds her back.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)

(emboldened now)

You have the blood of that little boy on your hands. All for the sake of some point you had to preach.

From the door of the teacher's room, a voice booms.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

MATT! Get in my office, now.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Principal Dolan closes the door, heated.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

What the hell was that about?

A KNOCK on Dolan's door. His SECRETARY enters.

SECRETARY

Girl fight in the quad.

Dolan raises his finger to Matt.

PRINCIPAL DOLAN

Don't go anywhere.

Dolan closes the door. Matt sees a half-opened filing cabinet with a key dangling from it. PERSONNEL.

He flips through the files - Carolyn's. He opens it. A copy of her driver's license inside - Massachusetts. CAROLYN TOWNSEND CLARK. Clark? He takes the copy out of the file.

INT. CAROLYN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

On the kitchen table, the front page of the DIXON TRIBUNE folded in half, the face of the injured five-year-old boy staring at her. Carolyn cries deep, wracking sobs.

INT. MATT HAINES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

The photocopy of Carolyn's license sits next to Matt's computer. On Google, he types in "Carolyn Townsend Clark" and "Massachusetts."

INT. CAROLYN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carolyn sits on the couch, staring into space. Utter silence. A woman alone with her conscience.

The PHONE RINGS. She jumps.

CAROLYN

Hello?

MS. BANKER (O.S.)

Did you see the paper?

CAROLYN

Yes. He's beautiful. Any news?

MS. BANKER (O.S.)

Still on life support. Look below his picture, bottom of the page.

She goes to the

KITCHEN to get the paper. She unfolds it. The title reads

"High School Teacher Faces Possible School Board Sanction."

INT. MATT HAINES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Matt stands by the printer as the newspaper article slowly scrolls out. He stares at a holiday picture of a family - a younger Carolyn, her husband, and a young son.

INT. CAROLYN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carolyn is on the phone.

CAROLYN
When were you going to tell me?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM

Ray sits on the couch with the paper. Brian is in a chair, looking really concerned.

RAY
I just picked up a message from Ron telling me they'd called for a special session Thursday.

CAROLYN
(wagging the paper)
They're blaming me for this?

RAY
Not the accident, but for inciting students. There were parents who weren't happy with your scape-goating unit before this happened - this put them over the edge.

CAROLYN
What parents? How do you know?

Ray looks at Brian. He covers the phone with his hand.

RAY
It'll be okay.

Back to the phone, quieter...

RAY (CONT'D)
There's been talk, Carolyn. It's a small town. I'm on the board - I hear things.

CAROLYN
Why haven't I heard anything? And why didn't you tell me?

RAY
I was trying to protect you.

CAROLYN
It's not your job to protect me.

RAY
It sort of is.

CAROLYN

Not like that, Ray, and you know it.

RAY

I didn't see this coming, I swear. No one could have seen this coming.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The students are riled up.

JESSIE

It's scapegoating.

GAYLE

They want to run you off, like the escape goat, so they don't have to look at their shit.

CARLOS

It was my uncle's fault, not yours or Hector's.

CRYSTAL

It's not fair.

JESSIE

Can we come to the meeting, Ms. T?

GAYLE

Yea, to stand up for you?

CAROLYN

They're open meetings - you can come, but please don't worry about me - I can fight my own battles.

GAYLE

It's our battle too. We have a right to learn this stuff.

Tinker turns to Brian.

TINKER

Your dad gonna have her back?

Brian nods.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ray and Brian sit on the porch swing.

BRIAN
Can they fire her?

RAY
They won't go that far. They just
want to knock her down a notch.

Seeing Brian's concerned face...

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm serious about Carolyn - you
know that. She's not going
anywhere, trust me.

Brian doesn't reply.

RAY (CONT'D)
Trust me?

BRIAN
I guess.

RAY
Here she comes.

Carolyn's car rounds the corner, parks. She gets out.

RAY (CONT'D)
Come on. I'll drive.

INT. RAY'S CAR

Carolyn looks back at Brian, sees his worry. She reaches back
and touches his hand tenderly. He squeezes hers back.

INT. BOARDROOM - NIGHT

The School Board meeting overflows with parents, students,
teachers. Matt Haines stands against the back wall, folded
piece of paper in his hand.

Ray sits with the BOARD MEMBERS, looking uncomfortable. On
their table, several copies of *The Scapegoat Generation*.

DR. JOHNSON, the superintendent, runs the meeting. An older
COMMUNITY MEMBER is speaking.

COMMUNITY MEMBER
It's not so much the content of the
book I have a problem with -

WES' MOTHER
Have you read it?

COMMUNITY MEMBER
Well, no - but if these kids are
anything like me in school, they
probably haven't read it either.

Chuckles from the audience.

CARLOS
(under his breath)
Rude.

CRYSTAL
Patronizing.

Carlos looks at her, amazed.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)
SAT.

He kisses her.

COMMUNITY MEMBER
The problem I have is with the
process, that she didn't follow due
process for adopting a classroom
text. We laid out that process for
a good reason, so the community
could have some say in what our
kids are reading.

GAYLE
That's censorship. We have rights.

TINKER
Freedom of speech, baby! Article
One of the Constitution. I learned
that in his class.

He points to Mr. Buchanan, history teacher, who waves.

WES' MOTHER
Listen to them talk back. I've
never had any problems with my son
until she made him read this book-
now he's starting to *question me*.

GAYLE
And that's a bad thing because?

WES' MOTHER
Because it's not his job.

JESSIE

What's his "job"?

WES' MOTHER

My job is to educate my son about what's right and wrong.

CARLOS

(pointing to Carolyn)

Then what's her job?

WES' MOTHER

Her job is to teach the facts.

TINKER

But that's what she did! That's what the book's -

JESSIE'S MOTHER

If anyone's scapegoated these days, it's the parents. Everything's blamed on us - "my mom this" and "my dad that."

(pointing to Jessie)

She comes home with *Romeo and Juliet* and tells me it's their parents fault they kill themselves.

MS. BANKER

That's not what I taught.

JESSIE'S MOTHER

That's what she heard - same thing.

CRYSTAL

You just don't like her cuz she tells us the truth.

WES' MOTHER

(jumping up)

The truth? There's only one truth and it's God's truth.

JESSIE

Which God's truth? Your God's truth?

(pointing to Carlos)

His God's truth?

WES' MOTHER

There's only one God!

DR. JOHNSON
Ladies, please. This is not the
place to argue theology -

TINKER
Separation of church and state!

He winks at the history teacher, Mr. Buchanan.

JESSIE'S MOTHER
Jessie, you're out of line.

JESSIE
I'm out of line? Why isn't she out
of line? She started it.

JESSIE'S MOTHER
Real mature.

WES' MOTHER
(mocking)
"She started it."

JESSIE'S MOTHER
(pointing to Carolyn)
She started it.

CAROLYN
With all due respect, the Board
started it with the decision to
bring "Every 21 Minutes" to campus.

WES' MOTHER
You're going to stand there and
blame the Board and not take any
responsibility for this?

CAROLYN
I'll take responsibility for
bringing in a book that hadn't gone
through the review cycle. It was a
teachable moment - I seized it.

Matt scoffs.

JESSIE'S MOTHER
What about the book's message? Are
you going to acknowledge it was
inappropriate?

CAROLYN
I don't think it is. The book's
just a collection of facts - you
might not like what those facts
point to but -

JESSIE'S MOTHER

Facts that point to how children
are the victims of adults.

CAROLYN

No, facts that point to how when
adults do bad things, kids follow
suit.

WES' FATHER

You're saying their drunk driving
is our fault?

TINKER

Who do you think buys us alcohol?

JESSIE

She's didn't say that - she's said
your drunk driving is your fault,
and our drunk driving is our fault -

CAROLYN

And it just happens to be the truth
(looking at Wes' mother)
- the statistical truth - that when
your drunk driving goes down,
theirs goes down.

TINKER

Yea, have that assembly, Haines!
Mr. "Come drunk to the Prom."

Audible gasps from the audience. Haines loses face - and
looks to find it again. It's in his hand. He wags the paper.

MATT HAINES

You think she's so innocent?
Telling you the "truth" about
adults?

He glares at Carolyn. The adrenaline focuses him.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)

Walk your talk, Carolyn. Tell them
the truth about you.

She - deer - in his headlights.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)

"When adults do bad things, kids do
bad things." You want to tell them
what bad thing happened to your
kid?

The whole room - spellbound.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)
It's another teachable moment.

He opens the article.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)
"Mother Charged With Felony Neglect
In Accidental Shooting Death of
Son."

CAROLYN'S FACE - crumbling.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)
Remember, Carolyn? Or maybe this
quote will help -- "My husband and
I thought we were protecting him,
having a gun in the house."

RAY'S FACE - shock.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)
Maybe if you had been a better
teacher, you would've taught your
son that guns aren't toys. Oh wait -
that's a mother's job. Guess you
weren't so good at that either.

BRIAN'S FACE - stone cold anger.

MATT HAINES (CONT'D)
"When adults do bad things, kids do
bad things." You sure learned that
lesson, Carolyn.

CAROLYN'S FACE - crushed.

And then, she bursts out of the room and into

THE PARKING LOT

Brian pushes past her, inadvertently (?) knocking her down.

Ray jumps out of his seat, runs past Matt.

MATT HAINES
Guess he didn't know either.

Ms. Banker rushes up to Matt, grabs his collar, shaking him,
almost lifting him off the ground.

MS. BANKER
You fucking asshole.

MATT HAINES
She should've told us. We should've
known. She can't just forget.

MS. BANKER
She told me, you bastard. I knew.
She wasn't keeping it a secret so
she could forget it, she was
keeping it a secret because that's
the only way she could live with
it. You had no right to take that
away from her. No right!

She pushes him against the wall, punctuating her words.

EXT. STREETS

Brian runs, fists clenched, eyes squeezing back hot tears.

INT. RAY'S CAR

Ray's white knuckles grip the steering wheel. Carolyn stares
out the door. Betrayal and grief. Silence.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE

Brian bursts through the front door and rushes into his

BEDROOM.

He slams the door, then bangs his fists against it over and
over again, repeating NO NO NO NO NO.

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM

Ray motions to the couch.

RAY
Sit.

Carolyn sits. She's crying. Ray hands her a box of Kleenex.

RAY (CONT'D)
How could you not tell me?

BRIAN'S BEDROOM

Brian rocks back and forth on his bed, hands covering his ears, still repeating NO.

LIVING ROOM

Ray sits in a chair across from the couch.

CAROLYN

Have you ever felt guilt so bad that you wanted to die, but you can't kill yourself because you know you don't deserve to die, because you know that living will actually be harder? I have to live, Ray. I have to live with it.

Ray moves to the couch, touches her leg.

RAY

But you didn't mean--

Carolyn cuts him with the mantra that haunts her.

CAROLYN

It doesn't matter what you mean to do, it matters what you've done.

BRIAN'S BEDROOM

Brian opens his door. Overhears the conversation. Freezes.

LIVING ROOM

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

I needed to be some place where I wasn't always. . . that. Where I wasn't always. . . her.

RAY

Her?

CAROLYN

The mother responsible for her son's death.

BRIAN'S BEDROOM

Brian closes the door.

LIVING ROOM

Carolyn speaks without looking at Ray.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

There isn't a word for what I feel -
believe me, I've searched for one.
It's beyond grief, it's beyond
remorse, it's beyond regret. I
can't talk about it.

But she *is* talking, and fast.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

You wanna surround yourself with
kids, with hundreds of kids, in the
hopes that by loving them, you can
still have... a connection to him.

And now she looks at him, speaking every word deliberately.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

But I can't have those kids see me
as someone who let that happen to
my son. I can't have them see me.

Ray tries to speak, but Carolyn rushes on.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Ray. I never meant to
hurt you -
(to Brian's door)
To hurt him. I liked the way you
saw me. I liked the me you saw.

Brian opens his door again. Listens.

RAY

Carolyn, that hasn't changed.

CAROLYN

(scoffs)
It has changed. It has to change.
Everything has to change.
(long pause)
Can I tell Brian goodbye?

RAY

Why don't you come back tomorrow?
I think I'll keep him home from
school and--

CAROLYN

Ray, I mean goodbye goodbye. I
can't go to school. I can't stay in
this town.

Brian's door SLAMS, accompanied by the loudest, angriest, painful, primal

BRIAN (O.S.)
NNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

LIVING ROOM

On Carolyn's face, horror revisited.

It doesn't matter what you mean to do, it matters what you've done.

INT. CAROLYN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On the couch with Ms. Banker, Carolyn is so numb she can't even feel her own falling tears.

MS. BANKER
Carolyn, just take some time off.

Carolyn shakes her head no.

CAROLYN
Time doesn't change anything.

MS. BANKER
Are you kidding? I used to weigh a hundred pounds. Sorry. Don't go.

CAROLYN
I'm already gone.

MS. BANKER
Well you have to go in tomorrow. Those kids will never forgive you if you don't even say goodbye.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM

Brian tears pages out of THE SCAPEGOAT GENERATION. He throws the book across the room.

It hits his bottle of antidepressants.

IN THE KITCHEN

Ray pours a stiff Scotch.

BRIAN'S BEDROOM

Brian empties the bottle into his fist - half a dozen pills. He swallows them down with a juice box.

IN THE KITCHEN

Ray slugs down his drink, sets down the glass. He walks down

THE HALLWAY

To Brian's door. He knocks softly.

BRIAN'S ROOM

Brian breaks open a pill capsule, stares at the colored specks inside.

BRIAN

Not now.

RAY (O.S.)

Brian.

BRIAN

NOT NOW DAD.

RAY (O.S.)

Okay. Not now. But tomorrow...

THE HALLWAY

Ray's face, aching.

BRIAN'S ROOM

Brian empties the capsule halves into his mouth like a pixie stick, swallows.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE

Ray sits on the porch swing. Cell phone on his lap. Watching the light in Brian's bedroom.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM

The light of the computer screen flickers on Brian's face. He finds the article.

BOSTON JURY ACQUITS MOTHER OF FELONY NEGLIGENCE IN SON'S ACCIDENTAL SHOOTING.

The picture of Carolyn, husband, and young son.

Brian makes the picture larger. Larger. LARGER.

Carolyn's son's face fills the screen.

Brian could easily be staring at his younger self.

EXT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

BAM BAM BAM. Ray pounds on Brian's locked door.

RAY

You don't have to school, but you need to come out and eat something.

INSIDE BRIAN'S ROOM

Brian, fully clothed still, on his bed. His eyes, glassy.

RAY (O.S.)

You ready to talk?

Brian doesn't blink.

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Okay, later then. I'll go to work for a couple of hours, but I'll come home at lunch and we'll talk.

Brian goes to the window, sees Ray leave. He's been thinking about this all night. He grabs his backpack.

EXT. STREETS

A lock-jawed Brian rides his bike up to Tinker's house. He drops it on the ground, walks around the back, and enters through the unlocked kitchen door. He storms through the

KITCHEN

and down into the

BASEMENT

Where he goes to the gun closet. He removes the gun Tinker's dad used to shoot the cat. He shoves it in his backpack.

EXT. STREETS

Brian rides his bike aggressively and single-mindedly. He angrily brushes away a tear from his face.

EXT. DIXON HIGH SCHOOL

Brian pulls up to the school. He drops his bike by the racks. No one in sight, everyone in class. He walks through the

MAIN ENTRANCE

And down the hallway, head down.

INT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

A somber class.

GAYLE

Mr. Haines is a dick. He should quit, not you.

I/E. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

Brian pauses outside Carolyn's door. He wipes his face, grits his teeth, reaches into the backpack, and takes out the gun.

He pushes open the door. enters. Waves the gun.

WES

Woah, Cowboy.

STUDENT WITH PIERCINGS

(throwing his hands up
jokingly)

I didn't do it, I swear!

BRIAN

Shut up! It's not a fuckin joke!

TINKER

Is that my dad's gun? He'll kill you if he finds out you took it.

BRIAN

Everybody shut up. SHUT UP!

Carolyn moves toward him.

CAROLYN

Brian.

He points the gun at her.

BRIAN
You SHUT UP you fuckin BITCH.

From behind him, Wes makes a run for the door.

MS. BANKER'S CLASSROOM

A FEMALE STUDENT reads from TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD.

FEMALE STUDENT
"When a child asks you something,
answer him, for goodness' sake.
But don't" -

A LOUD POPPING SOUND.

MS. BANKER
Another wise cracker with a
firecracker. Keep reading, keep
reading...

She lumbers to the door and into the hallway.

CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

Wes lies on the ground, scared to death. Tinker looks at the
bullet hole in the coat closet.

TINKER
Jesus, Brian.

CAROLYN
Brian, give me the gun. I'm
serious. You're angry with me, not
them. Please.

Ms. Banker opens the door, peers her head in.

Brian turns around, sees her, and fires aimlessly in her
direction. She slams shut the door.

HALLWAY

MS. BANKER
Shit!

She turns. Faster yet, she runs back to her classroom.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)
 Someone's got a gun. Nobody leave
 the room.

She runs toward the principal's office.

CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

Carolyn lunges toward Brian to get the gun. He snaps the
 barrel toward her.

CAROLYN
 Brian, no. Please, please don't do
 this. Give me the gun.

PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Ms. Banker finishes. Dolan picks up the phone.

CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

BRIAN
 (gun on Carolyn)
 Why'd you let him have the gun?
 Why?

GAYLE
 Brian, it was an accident. She
 didn't mean for him to find it.

BRIAN
 (growing hysterical)
 There are no accidents. You weren't
 paying attention. You have to pay
 attention to kids.

JESSIE
 It's not her fault, Brian.

BRIAN
 It's her fault. It's ALL her fault.
 She was supposed to be his MOM.

The word is venom in his mouth. Carolyn moves toward him.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 Back off. Back the fuck off!

CAROLYN
 Brian, this is between us. Please,
 let them go.
 (MORE)

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

(when he wavers)

You let them go and we'll talk,
okay? Let them go, and we'll talk.

He lowers the gun a little, shaky.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Okay? Can they go?

He nods his head yes.

Some walk out with false calm, while others bolt out the door. Frick and Frack hit the pavement, running into the

PARKING LOT

Where the first police car descends upon the school. They get on their bikes and ride away, fast.

The police car flips a U-turn and follows after them.

CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM

Brian's gun still aimed at Carolyn.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Brian, please, please don't do
anything you'll regret. You have
your whole future -

BRIAN

You don't care about my future. You
don't care you don't care...

He loosens his grip on the gun to wipe his eyes.

CAROLYN

Brian, I do care, I care very much.

He shakes his head no.

BRIAN

If you cared you wouldn't leave.
We're all dead to you now, like
him. Like me.

He reverses the gun, and points it toward his head.

CAROLYN

BRIAN NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Primal.

She lunges toward him.

A GUN SHOT.

Principal Dolan and Matt Haines burst into the room.

MATT HAINES

CAROLYN!

OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

Another police car pulls up.

CAROLYN'S ROOM

Matt holds Brian face down into a pool of blood streaming from Carolyn's leg.

BRIAN

I didn't mean to do it, I didn't
mean to do it.

Principal Dolan strips off his tie, and uses it as a tourniquet around Carolyn's leg.

THE POLICE burst into the room.

OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

Ray pulls up, bursts out of the truck without closing the door. He sees

Carolyn on a stretcher being loaded into an ambulance.

Matt Haines, blood on his hands, talking to police.

A shirtless Principal Dolan, bloody too, trying to keep students away from the scene.

Hundreds of students look on, some crying. It's "Every 21 Minutes," but real. All too real.

EXT. CAROLYN'S CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Ms. Banker walks by Carolyn's classroom, the door covered with yellow police tape.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY

The library serves as a make-shift classroom.

Carolyn's students fill the room. Subdued. Expectant.

Mr. Jones stands in front of them, holding a big box. He clears his throat. He avoids eye contact. Finally...

MR. JONES

Please return your textbooks here.

Some students pull out THE SCAPEGOAT GENERATION.

Tinker looks at Gayle, who's mouth has dropped open.

GAYLE

That's it? We're just going to act like nothing happened? We're not even gonna talk about it?

Mr. Jones looks down.

GAYLE (CONT'D)

This is bullshit. I'm gonna get Dolan.

She storms out of the library. The students look around, and then Tinker, Crystal, Carlos, Frick, Frack, Jessie, and a reluctant Wes follow after her.

They walk into the

PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

His door is shut. To the SECRETARY...

GAYLE (CONT'D)

We need to talk to Dolan.

SECRETARY

He's in a meeting, and can't be bothered.

GAYLE

No shit.

She leads the way out of the office and down to the

COUNSELING CENTER

She peers inside of the counselors' doors, but no one is inside. Without looking up, the COUNSELING SECRETARY speaks.

COUNSELING SECRETARY

They're in a meeting with Mr. Dolan.

GAYLE

We need to talk to someone now.

COUNSELING SECRETARY

A peer counselor will be available
3rd period.

GAYLE

Fuck! FUCK!

She slams her hand on the counter, then storms out of the office. Her classmates follow her down the

HALLWAY

and past some guys installing a metal detector at the front entrance. Too little. Too late.

EXT. CHURCH

They walk past the church, whose sign now reads "REACH FOR THE HEAVENS," and The Buckhorn, just opening for business.

LOUD HONKING from a car across the street..

GAYLE'S MOTHER

Gayle? GAYLE! What you doing out of school, young lady?

She drives through the intersection slowly, glaring, as Gayle and her classmates cross the street.

GAYLE

Fuck you! FUCK YOU!

Gayle flips her mother off. Frick and Frack flip her off too, adding their own "FUCK YOU's." Everyone except for Wes joins in the chorus, yelling "FUCK YOU" to anyone who will listen.

EXT. MORMON CHURCH

Wes stops for a moment, cocks his head trying to make sense of it all. Jessie walks up to him. She takes his hand.

EXT. CEMETERY

They walk by the cemetery. Frick and Frack's eyes go to Frank's marker. Behind it, a statue of Jesus with his arms held out, but his back turned to Frank.

Suddenly, Frack rushes to the statue, waving his backpack wildly and beating the Jesus statue with it. Frick joins him.

WES

Hey, guys, come on. It's not
Jesus's fault.

CRYSTAL

What do you know about Jesus,
Mormon boy?

She drops her backpack, and sits on the grass near the grave.
The others join her.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A NURSE is helping Carolyn into Ms. Banker's car, being
careful of her casted leg. Ms. Banker puts some crutches in
the backseat, then gets in the driver's seat. She starts the
car.

CAROLYN

Is he at Juvenile Hall?

MS. BANKER

No, they have him at the jail -
Dolan thinks they're going to try
him as an adult.

She pulls out of the parking lot. Carolyn stares out of the
car, remembering.

MS. BANKER (CONT'D)

We should know tonight. The
arraignment's in 20 minutes.

CAROLYN

Then I need to be there.

MS. BANKER

No. You need to go home, rest.

CAROLYN

Nan, I need to be there.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Ray sits in the front of the courtroom very much alone.

Carolyn enters on crutches, Nan steadying her. Ray turns
around and sees her. He motions for her to sit next to him.
She does. Ms. Banker sits behind them.

Brian, handcuffed, is led in by a bailiff. He sees Ray and
Carolyn. Carolyn slightly nods her head, slightly smiles.

A small gesture of reassurance. Brian slightly nods back. Ray takes Carolyn's hand.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The students lay on the ground around an armless Jesus, their heads together in a small circle, their bodies fanning out like spokes of a wheel.

FRICK

FRACK

CRYSTAL

CARLOS

JESSIE

WES

TINKER

GAYLE

They grow smaller and smaller until they look like ants on the ground.

GAYLE

There's got to be a better place
than this.

TINKER

Heaven?

GAYLE

No, college, you moron.

Still smaller, smaller, until they are gone entirely and it's just the big blue marble in space. And then, quietly...

JESSIE

We're never going to be like them.
Are we?

SHATTER TO BLACK.