

Black Mascara

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE - LIBRARY - DAY

SUPER: Monday...

A huge open space. Rows upon rows of bookshelves.

FOUR STUDENTS make their way toward the --

STUDY AREA

-- and sit down together at a table.

PERSEPHONE (19), an emo, pale skin, black hair and makeup, sits alone.

Persephone carves a heart-shape into the table with a pen. The students stare at her and gossip, but Persephone takes no notice.

ENTRANCE

MAGS (45), a demure woman, sits behind the front desk. She sorts through stacks of paperwork.

PAIGE (17), a beautiful geek, enters the library, carrying a stack of books.

MAGS

Hey Paige, how are you today?

Paige dumps the books on the desk.

PAIGE

I'm okay, I guess...

Mags examines the books.

MAGS

You've read all of these?

PAIGE

I didn't have time.

MAGS

That's a shame...

Mags holds up a copy of Romeo and Juliet.

MAGS

I could never get enough of this one.

Paige looks over toward the study area. She can see the students, but Persephone is out of sight.

MAGS

Just like you can't get enough of that girl...

PAIGE

Huh?

Mags removes her glasses and sighs.

MAGS

I know why you come here Paige, I've had my eye on you for weeks now. It's always the same shelf and it's always the same book.

PAIGE

(laughing)

I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're talking about.

MAGS

Why don't you just ask her? She doesn't bite.

PAIGE

(beat)

I don't know how to...

MAGS

I'm sure you'll figure it out. You're a bright girl.

Paige smiles tentatively at Mags.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE - LIBRARY - STUDY AREA - DAY

SUPER: Tuesday...

Quiet. Peaceful. Persephone sits at the same table, reading a book.

BEHIND A BOOKSHELF

Paige reads Romeo and Juliet. Her eyes light up as she flicks through the pages.

Her attention shifts to further down the aisle, to a protruding book on the shelf. Paige bites her bottom lip, excited.

She removes the book from the shelf.

Paige kneels and peers through the gap --

PAIGE'S P.O.V

Persephone, hard at work, studying. She flicks her hair back to reveal a choker around her neck.

Paige's heart-rate increases, along with her breathing.

Persephone looks up.

BACK TO SCENE

Paige ducks to the floor. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. Her lips tremble with excitement, the thrill of being caught.

She takes another peek --

PAIGE'S P.O.V

Persephone packs up her books and leaves.

PAUL (O.S)
Hey, Paige!

BACK TO SCENE

Paige jumps out of her skin.

PAUL (18) stands next to her. He stuffs a piece of cake in his mouth.

PAIGE
Jesus Christ, Paul.

PAUL
Spying on Per again huh?

PAIGE
No, I was-

PAUL

Come on Paige, I told you already man, just ask her, shit's getting boring.

Paige rises to her feet, brushing the dust off her knees.

PAIGE

I was going to, but then you showed up with your... stupid piece of cake.

PAUL

She's crazy anyway. I heard her parents shipped her off to some nuthouse, and then she-

PAIGE

You don't even know her, Paul.

PAUL

Come on Paige, half the college knows about that bitch. You seen the cuts on her arms?

Paige storms past Paul, a face like thunder.

PAIGE

Just leave it, okay?

PAUL

Hey! Where you going?

PAIGE

Away from you.

Paige disappears around the corner

PAUL

Whatever.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE - HALLS - DAY

SUPER: Wednesday...

STUDENTS walk and talk on their way to class. Paige opens her locker and grabs a diary.

She opens up the diary and scans through the dates.

INSERT - DIARY

Every date is blank apart from Friday. Scrawled beneath Friday: *The day I ask...*

INT. COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY

Filled with STUDENTS.

MR. SELBY (65) stands at the front, next to a large whiteboard.

MR. SELBY
Right, ladies and gentleman.

Incessant chatter drowns him out. Mr. Selby coughs, loud enough so that everybody can hear.

MR. SELBY
Ladies and gentleman!

Paige enters.

MR. SELBY
Ah, Paige, just in time for the presentation, take a seat please.

Persephone sits on the left, all by herself. Paul sits on the far right. He gestures at an empty seat.

Paul points at Persephone while pretending to hang himself with an invisible noose.

Paige shoots him down with a dirty look. She takes a seat next to him.

PAIGE
What did I tell you?

PAUL
Calm down, I'm only joking.

Paige glances at Persephone.

PAIGE
What if she saw you?

PAUL
She'd have to look our way for that to happen...

PAIGE

You can be a real asshole, you know that?

Paul taps Paige on the nose with his pencil.

MR. SELBY

Persephone! We'll start with you...

Silence. All eyes on Persephone. She freezes, like a deer in a headlight.

MR. SELBY

I take it you have something prepared?

PERSEPHONE

Yes.

Mr. Selby coughs.

MR. SELBY

Well, what are you waiting for? A full moon?

Everybody laughs, apart from Paige.

Persephone makes her way to the front. She stands next to Mr. Selby.

MR. SELBY

Whenever you're ready...

Mr. Selby takes a front row seat. Persephone pulls a piece of crumpled paper from her pocket.

A sea of faces smirk at Persephone. Her face turns bright red as she reads from the piece of paper:

PERSEPHONE

Shakespeare was-

MR. SELBY

A little louder please, so the people at the back can hear.

Persephone takes a deep breath. A student HOWLS like a wolf.

LAUGHTER.

STUDENT
Razor! Razor!

More LAUGHTER.

MR. SELBY
Enough!

Persephone looks at Paige, who is unimpressed with the disruptive behavior.

Persephone's mascara runs as tears stream down her cheeks. She storms out of the classroom.

MR. SELBY
Per! Come back!

Paul nudges Paige.

PAUL
Come on, that was funny right?

She ignores him. Her eyes well up as she watches the door close.

INT. COLLEGE - HALLS - DAY

Persephone sprints past Mags, crying her eyes out.

MAGS
Per?

Mags expresses concern.

INT. COLLEGE - TOILETS - DAY

KERRY and ANN (both 17) apply their make-up at the mirror. Both of them fixate on their reflections.

KERRY
Did he text you back?

ANN
I dunno, I haven't even-

Persephone bursts through the door, distraught. She locks herself in one of the cubicles.

Kerry and Ann turn to each other, open-mouthed.

TOILET CUBICLE

Persephone presses her back against the wall, a pained expression on her mascara stained face.

Kerry and Ann whisper:

KERRY (O.S)
Oh my god! Is that who I think it
is?

ANN (O.S)
The crazy lesbian?

They giggle.

Persephone slides to the floor. She curls up in a fetal position, sobbing.

KERRY (O.S)
She's a lesbian?

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE - LIBRARY - STUDY AREA - AFTERNOON

SUPER: Thursday...

Persephone sits at her usual table. She stuffs a handwritten letter into an envelope.

Mags walks over to the table with two steaming mugs of coffee. She places one next to Persephone and takes a seat.

PERSEPHONE
Thanks.

Persephone wraps her hands around the mug. Mags spots the cuts on Persephone's wrists.

MAGS
Wanna talk about that?

Persephone rolls her sleeves down.

MAGS
It's okay to be different you know.
I was exactly the same.

PERSEPHONE

I don't want to be different, I
just want to be normal.

MAGS

Normal? Like those idiots who
bullied you out of the classroom?
Yeah, I know, Mr. Selby told me. Oh
Per, why didn't you say anything?

Persephone shrugs.

MAGS

Believe it or not, there's people
out there who care about you, very
much. In fact, I know somebody who
would really like to-

PERSEPHONE

Please. I just want to be left
alone.

MAGS

(sigh)
Okay... if that's what you want.

Mags stands.

MAGS

You know where to find me...

Mags walks off. Persephone licks the envelope and seals it.
She props it up against the mug of coffee, nothing written
on the front.

INT. COLLEGE - LIBRARY - ENTRANCE - (LATER)

Mags sits behind the front desk. She examines a leaflet
under a lampshade.

INSERT - LEAFLET

*BULLYING - Support for parents and guardians around
bullying.*

BACK TO SCENE.

Persephone approaches the desk. Mags switches the lampshade
off and tucks the leaflet away.

MAGS

Everything okay?

Persephone nods. She hands Mags an envelope.

MAGS
What's this?

PERSEPHONE
Can you look after it for me?

MAGS
Sure, anything important?

PERSEPHONE
It's just some money, for a college trip.

MAGS
Oh right. Well I can lock it in the box for you..

Mags scrambles beneath the desk.

MAGS
Would that be alright? It might not be the safest place but- ... Per?

Mags looks up. Persephone is nowhere to be found.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE - STAFF ROOM - MORNING

SUPER: Friday...

TEACHERS drink coffee, read newspapers, and slouch on the settee. Mags sits by herself in the corner, racking her brains over a crossword puzzle.

Mr. Selby prepares a pot of coffee in the kitchen area.

MR. SELBY
Coffee, Mags?

MAGS
No thanks, Mark.

Mr. Selby pours himself a cup. He takes a seat next to Mags.

MR. SELBY
How are you feeling today, Mags?

MAGS
I'm okay...

MR. SELBY

Very well.

Mags shifts her focus back to the crossword puzzle.

Mr. Selby eyes up the clue.

MR. SELBY

Death!

MAGS

Huh?

MR. SELBY

Five across. Death.

MAGS

Oh, right.

Mags fills in the blanks.

MR. SELBY

Oh, that reminds me, I'll need to use the library later.

MAGS

What for?

MR. SELBY

Didn't you get the memo?

MAGS

What memo?

MR. SELBY

You know, the memo...

MAGS

No I don't know, Mark, that's why I'm asking.

MR. SELBY

It wasn't my idea by the way, Dave insisted that I make it an open forum, so that people can give their support to the parents.

Mags gives Mr. Selby her full attention.

MAGS

Mark...

MR. SELBY

I'm sorry Mags, but Persephone was found dead at her home this morning.

Mags delves into a complete state of shock.

MR. SELBY

That's all the information we have at the moment. I'm sorry, I know it must be hard for you because of the book club and everything but-

She leaps out of her chair and darts toward the exit.

MR. SELBY

Mags?

INT. COLLEGE - STAIRWELL - MORNING

A panic-stricken Mags, on the verge of an asthma attack, climbs flight, after flight, after flight.

Mags collapses midway up the stairs. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out an inhaler, takes a couple of puffs and soldiers on.

INT. COLLEGE - LIBRARY - ENTRANCE - MORNING

Mags bursts into the room. She searches beneath the front desk and produces a medium-sized lockbox.

She unlocks the box with a miniature key and removes an envelope. She reads the letter within:

PERSEPHONE (V.O)

Dear Mags, if you're reading this it's safe to assume that we'll never see each other again. I always did enjoy my time with you, and perhaps I didn't show that, but I can assure you it's what I felt in my heart. But I also felt pain in my heart, a love which I wanted so bad but couldn't have. I waited all week for her to ask me, but she never did. I can't live without her, and for that I'm sorry. Bye Mags.

Paige enters, a great big smile on her face.

PAIGE

Hey Mags, have you seen Persephone
anywhere? I've got something I want
to ask her.

Mags and Paige exchange looks. Paige's smile fades.

PAIGE

What's happened?

FADE OUT: