THE SPECIAL DEFECTS DEPT.

by

Scott Billingham

801 360 3633
billingham245@gmail.com
FADE IN:

SOME INNER SPACE

Sleek, agile, close quarters - two SPACE FIGHTERS twist and turn in a cosmic ballet - vying for ultimate domination.

The battle rages on with no clear victor, until we pull back to reveal that this is not the cold vacuum of space, but the crowded gymnasium of EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

SUPER: "FALL, 1979"

The ships engaged in this mock battle are manipulated by two low-caste high schoolers. BEN WALDORF (16), a good looking kid who doesn’t try; wardrobe by Goodwill, hair by accident.

Equally unpopular is WALTER CHONG, also sixteen - a Korean immigrant with coke-bottle glasses who just happens to be Ben’s best friend.

Ben and Chong continue on with their interstellar battle, and haven’t noticed the four musty JUDGES cradling clipboards before them.

A throat clears - Ben and Chong snap back to reality. They place their models down on the long table and hastily reorganize the display. Chong turns to Ben and takes a deep settling breath.

CHONG
Look at me Benjamin. Everythin’ been leading to this moment, we got this okay. How do I look?

Ben glances at a hand-painted banner hanging over the double doors, it reads: "CLAYTON FALL FESTIVAL." He turns to Chong.

BEN
Like you could take on the world. What about me?

Chong brushes the chip crumbs from Ben’s flared collar.

CHONG
Never better.

The friends turn and face the judges. Supremely confident, Chong smiles as the judges whisper amongst themselves. Without another word, they move on to the next table.
Chong deflates. Ben puts a hand on his friend’s shoulder.

**CHONG**

That just great! Thought we had it this year Ben, really thought we had it.

The trim figure of PRINCIPAL VICKERS (40s) approaches through the crowd. He has the look of an everyman with his friendly face and well-tailored suit.

**PRINCIPAL VICKERS**

You know your problem, Waldorf? It’s the same every year as I recall. They just don’t believe this is the work of a sixteen year old kid.

Principal Vickers picks up one of the spaceships and admires the granular detail. Chong heaves his backpack onto his shoulders, looks to his wristwatch.

**CHONG**

Listen, I gotta go Benjamin, see you later, k?

Ben watches Chong slump from the gym. The principal hands the model back.

**BEN**

There’s always next year, sir.

Principal Vickers curls a smile - it’s obvious he has a soft spot for the underdog.

Ben shoots a glance over the principal’s shoulder; four CUPCAKE GIRLS gloat back at him from a nearby table with their first-place ribbons.

**EXT. BEN’S HOUSE - YARD - DAY**

Ben drops his bike into the shrubs, a small bag of groceries nestles under one arm. He chances a quick glimpse at the rundown facade of his house.

A loud BARK shakes Ben from his moment. He pivots to see a friendly golden retriever, (WINSTON), in the next yard. His tail wags like a metronome.

**BEN**

Winston! What you doin’ boy? You get out out again?
Winston let’s out another energized BARK.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - FRONTYARD - DAY

Ben hops the low hedge and kneels down to pet the friendly pooch. Winston hurries off in the direction of the...

BACKYARD

Ben looks around for the dog. His eyes settle on his elderly neighbor, MRS. HOLBROOK, poised on all fours at the bottom of her garden. Ben trods over. Mrs. Holbrook stabs at the dirt with a small hand trowel as Winston looks on.

BEN
Mrs. Holbrook?

The old lady wipes her brow, keeps on digging.

BEN
It’s me Mrs. Holbrook, Ben.

MRS. HOLBROOK
No time to talk, young man, the planes will be here soon. We must finish the shelter.

Ben frowns. The old lady smiles up at him.

BEN
The war’s over, Mrs. Holbrook.

Ben takes her gently by the arm.

BEN
Let’s get you back inside before you catch cold. Whaddya say?

Winston WOOFS in agreement. Confused and vulnerable, the old lady rises to her feet. Ben leads her back to the house.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Holbrook dozes in an armchair. Ben puts a blanket on her lap and watches her snooze.
INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ben places his carton of milk and eggs into the old lady’s spartan refrigerator. He turns to Winston.

BEN
Now you take good care of her and I’ll buy you a hamburger later...you like that?

Winston paws the air.

BEN
Good boy, and make sure she takes her medicine.

Winston pants. Ben strokes his head.

INT. BEN’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben clicks on a small black and white TV - a Flash Gordon rerun bursts into life. He crosses the room and opens the refrigerator; it’s even more sparse than the old lady’s.

Ben settles for a soda. He slides into a bench and watches the action unfold on the tube. A loud BELCH echoes down the hall. Ben turns to see his boozy POPS (40s), swaying towards him.

POPS
Hey kid.

Pops slumps into the opposite bench. He runs a hand over his five o’clock shadow. Whiskers BRISTLE.

POPS
Anythin’ to eat?

Ben shakes his head. Pops scans the table and sees Ben’s backpack, he makes a grab for the model.

POPS
This what they teachin’ you kids these days?

Ben puts down his drink and attempts to retrieve the model. Pops holds it out of reach.

BEN
Dad, be careful, please.
A brief stand-off. Ben makes another sweep for the model. Pops butterfingers and the spaceship falls hard to the linoleum. Ben scrambles to the floor.

Crestfallen, Ben looks up at Pops as he gathers the broken pieces. Pops, no longer paying attention, helps himself to Ben’s coke.

INT. BEN’S HOUSE – BEN’S ROOM – LATER

Dozens of models hang from the ceiling of the small room. Posters of science fiction B-movies and other fantasy artwork adorn the walls.

Ben, locked in concentration, glues the broken parts of his spaceship back together. Suddenly, the bedroom door swings open, Chong stands in the doorway.

CHONG
Father passed out again, let myself in.

Chong enters, he notices the swaying models.

CHONG
Wow! Made even more since last time.

Chong makes his way among the models, eying them with delight. Chong’s eyes narrow, he wags a playful finger.

CHONG
You sure you make these? Don’t look like work of sixteen year old kid to me.

BEN
Very funny, Chong.

Chong doubles up in hysterics.

CHONG
Today was a five-star poop parade, Benjamin. We need to figure out what we do wrong.

Chong looks over at Ben, still admiring his repair job.

CHONG
You listening, Benjamin?

Loud barking fills the air. Chong goes to the window.
CHONG
Old ladies dog, goin’ mental!

Ben stands and joins Chong. Winston can be seen scratching frantically at his back door below.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ben cups his hands to the window.

BEN
Mrs. Holbrook? You home?

No answer. Chong peers through the keyhole. He reels.

CHONG
Smell like cabbage in there! Maybe she at bingo?

BEN
I’m worried about her, Chong. She hasn’t been herself lately.

Ben hurries around to the front of the house with Chong and Winston.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Ben squints through the window. He sees the lifeless legs of Mrs. Holbrook poking from behind the couch. He shoots a desperate look to Chong.

BEN
Quick, go to the neighbors, call 911. Hurry!

Chong darts off. Ben reassures Winston.

BEN
It’s okay boy, help is on the way.

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EVENING

Chong and Ben exit the busy hospital. Chong’s father, CHONG SRN. greets them with a big smile. Winston sits at his feet, he sees Ben and rushes over.

BEN
Easy boy! It’s great to see you, too! Thanks for picking us up Mr (MORE)
BEN (cont’d)
Chong, and for taking care of
Winston.

CHONG SNR.
Old lady lucky to be alive. Dog did
good.

CHONG
What gonna happen to dog now?

Chong looks to his father.

CHONG
We take him! He cute, right Dad?

Chong Snr. ponders.

CHONG SNR.
Sorry boy, would never work...Mrs.
Chong too allergic. We take him to
shelter.

Winston whimpers.

BEN
Hey, no way! I guess he’s comin’
with me. We’ll have to be sneaky
though, Pops doesn’t care too much
for animals.

Winston barks his approval. The guys smile down at the dog.

EXT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - BIKE PAVILION - DAY

Lunch hour. Ben and Chong meet with the rest of their
friends.

Stoner dude, LAZER (17), sits in a lotus position on the
floor. Nearby, is SLENDER EDWARD, also 17, an oddly tall
former private-school student fallen on hard times. Add 'em
all up, you might get three quarters of an extrovert.

Edward is busy setting out his cutlery as Lazer watches on.

LAZER
All I’m sayin’ dudes, is that
chicks would be a whole lot hotter
if they didn’t poop, that’s all.

Edward decants a juice box into a wine glass.
SLENDER EDWARD
Lazer, you’re a very peculiar individual, I ever tell you that?

Lazer glances over his ubiquitous shades.

LAZER
Comin’ from a guy who brings his own silverware to school.

Slender Edward fishes around in his blazer pocket and pulls out a small laminated card. On it are written the words: "over-familiarity breeds contempt." It’s how he handles confrontation.

BEN
Guys, guys, we’re getting way off track here.

Edward puts his card away, adjusts his silk cravat. Ben motions to Chong.

BEN
Our good friend here has called this meeting to discuss our plans for the future.

Ben pulls out a sketchpad from his backpack. He tosses it onto the bench. Lazer snatches it up.

BEN
Something I’ve been working on...new designs for the club.

Lazer turns the pages, admiring each new sketch before him. Futuristic spacecraft of all kinds fill the pages.

LAZER
These are seismic, dude.

Lazer tosses the pad to Edward and gives Ben a high five. Out of the corner of his eye he sees BRUTUS (18), Clayton High’s star quarterback and team captain swaggering over with his JOCKS; beefy bros JOHNNY and TONY CARBONE (18).

LAZER
Don’t want to slam your day dudes, but Brutus and the Jocks are headin’ this way. Two o’clock!

The guys duck out of sight. Ben looks to Winston and presses a finger to his lips. Lazer chances a quick peek over the wall. The Jocks are now feet away, they stop to FLEX.
Johnny pulls out a comb and slicks back his hair. Tony tosses away his smoke, it arcs over into the pavilion and lands by Ben’s feet. Brutus and the Jocks swagger on out of sight.

LAZER
Phew! All clear.

SIGHS of relief all around. Just as the tension melts, an alka-seltzer voice rends the air, stiffening their backs.

HAGULA (O.S.)
What’s going on here?!

The guys spin on their heels to see MISS HAGSTROM, (50s) standing before them. Nicknamed HAGULA by the kids, she is Clayton High’s wraith-like assistant principal on the perpetual prowl for fresh souls.

Hagula points to Winston with a bony finger. The poor dog cowers behind Ben.

HAGULA
You all know the school’s policy on animals!

Hagula notices the cigarette butt, tossed over moments ago smoldering at Ben’s feet.

HAGULA
You’ll hang for this, Waldorf!

BEN
But miss --

HAGULA
Save it for the principal!

CHONG
It true miss, you gotta believe us!

HAGULA
To the principal’s office at once. Follow me!

Ben looks to the supportive faces of his friends, silently rooting for him.

LAZER
Go get it over with, dude. We’ll be right here.
INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - DAY

Ben stands tall in front of the principal. Hagula keeps guard nearby. Vickers wraps up a telephone call.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
That will be all, Miss Hagstrom.

Hagula, incensed at being excluded from proceedings, shoots Ben a scowl. She storms from the office.

BEN
Sir, I swear I had nothing to do --

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Relax Ben.

BEN
Hagula, I mean Miss Hagstrom --

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I know, it’s okay. Take a seat.

Ben flops into a chair.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I’m glad you came in today, Ben. I needed to speak with you.

Ben, intrigued, sits forward.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
This hobby of yours. This modeling you do. It’s very impressive.

Vickers stands, paces.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I might have some good news for you. One of the mobile classrooms over by the batting cages has become available. I was wondering if you and that little club of yours would like the use of it?

Flabbergasted, Ben breaks into a radiant smile.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
There’s a little extra grant money floating around too. Could come in handy for some extra materials.
BEN
Sir, I don’t know what to say...

Principal Vickers opens his drawer. He pulls out a key.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Just keep it clean, Waldorf. That’s all I ask.

Energized by the good news, Ben stands.

BEN
You bet, sir! You bet! Thank you!

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
That will be all.

Ben backs out of the office, gesturing with gratitude.

Principal Vickers chuckles to himself with his good deed.

EXT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Chong and Edward eye a beat up old camper van sitting before them. A wing mirror hangs off, the bodywork is held together by duct tape and prayers.

The words: "STAN’S DEMON FEETUS" are airbrushed on the side in large colorful letters. The proud moniker of Lazer’s garage band. Lazer flashes a megawatt smile.

LAZER
Well, whaddya think?

SLENDER EDWARD
Lazer, you do know that fetus only has one "E" right?

Lazer looks to his van, his smile drops.

LAZER
Man! You know how many lawns I had to mow to get that, dude?

Ben approaches. Lazer adjusts the wonky mirror.

LAZER
Ben, did you know fetus only has one E?
INT. LAZER’S VAN - TRAVELING

Chong leans in, struggling to talk over the 8-track.

CHONG
Got your note Ben. Am confused. You make it sound like something good happen to us today. Must be some mistake, eh?

BEN
You didn’t misunderstand, Chong...something great did indeed happen.

CHONG
Hear that, Eddie?

SLENDER EDWARD
I am not in the mood for your practical jokes.

CHONG
It true, tell him Benjamin.

BEN
Our friend speaks the truth, Edward. As of now, we have procured ourselves a new clubhouse, effective immediately.

Edward’s interest is piqued.

BEN
No more ducking Brutus and the Jocks. No more papers blowin’ in the wind. Just a nice warm place to indulge the creative process. Things are lookin’ up you guys.

SLENDER EDWARD
I don’t know how you pulled that off Ben, but I am suitably impressed.

Lazer grinds the gears, lays on the HORN.

LAZER
Next stop, Waldorf residence.

Ben grabs his backpack, looks to his pals.
BEN  
Don’t forget, after school tomorrow. We got work to do.

EXT. BEN’S HOUSE – BACKYARD – DAY

Winston drops a ball at Ben’s feet. Engrossed with his sketchpad, Ben tosses it away. Winston bounds off in excitement. A BARK rings out, Winston can’t find the ball in the long grass.

Ben puts his sketchpad aside and joins Winston in the quest for the lost ball. He looks to the unkempt yard.

BEN  
You tryin’ to tell me something boy?

SLIGHTLY LATER

Ben yanks the cord to the old lawnmower, it doesn’t want to start. Winston trots over to a gap in the fence.

BEN  
Some help you are.

Winston, enthralled by something through the fence, wags his tail frantically. Ben joins the curious dog and they jostle for position. Ben’s eyes focus in on a young woman.

Meet BEATRICE "BOOKSIE" SHOOTER (15), a teen nerd’s fantasy made flesh. Emo before her time, she rakes the leaves in her black overalls and knee-high striped socks. She is part Cyndie Lauper, part Molly Ringwald and all DYNAMITE.

Booksie bends – Ben is getting a REAL eyeful. Ben looks to Winston briefly, then back to the fence. Booksie is nowhere to be seen.

BEN  
Where’d you go?

BOOKSIE (O.S.)  
Hey purviss, up here...

Searching for the voice, Ben cranes upwards, a pile of dead leaves is dumped unceremoniously over his head.

Ben clears the leaves from his face. The girl hovers over him. She raises the rim of her black trilby, exposing her edgy good looks.
BEN
I was just --

BOOKSIE
-- about to register with the city? Since when was rakin’ leaves a spectator sport?

BEN
It’s not like that. I --

BOOKSIE
Relax kid, I’m just messin with ya.

Booksie blows into her bangs, kicks at a leaf pile.

BOOKSIE
Personally, I find the fall leaves to be at their most beautiful when somebody else is pickin’ them up. Hey...cute fur-baby.

BEN
I’m takin’ care of him, until Mrs. Holbrook comes home.

BOOKSIE
About that, kid...

Ben frets. Winston whimpers.

BOOKSIE
Relax, Gram’s doin’ fine. She’s gone to the old folks home at Wilbur. Can’t be by herself no more.

Ben sighs with relief.

BEN
You’re her granddaughter? How come I’ve never seen you ’round before?

BOOKSIE
We live outta state. Dad’s dragged us up here to get the house ready for market. Not much of a vacation I know, kinda hopin’ for Prague.

Booksie offers her hand.
BOOKSIE
The name’s Booksie. Never Bea and
definitely never Beatrice, only my
folks call me that.

BEN
Booksie? You live in a library or
something?

BOOKSIE
Might as well. Digesting the
written word is what I do.

Booksie holds up the rake.

BOOKSIE
Other hobbies include gardening,
and by gardening, I mean reading.
So what’s your story?

BEN
Oh yeah, I’m Ben...Ben Waldorf. I
live here.

Booksie scans the overgrown yard.

BOOKSIE
You don’t say.

Ben gets to his feet and brushes himself off. Winston jumps
up on the fence, presents his head to be patted.

BEN
Been doin’ my best to keep him a
secret from dad, he sleeps in my
friends van mostly. He’s
technically yours now I guess.

BOOKSIE
The road is no place for a pooch.
You’re comin’ with me, handsome.
Grams will be thrilled to see him.

Winston pants at the pretty girl.

BEN
Remember boy, I’ll be right here.
You can visit whenever you want.

Ben raises the fence panel, Winston squeezes through.
Booksie pulls out a book from her back pocket.
BOOKSIE
Now if you’ll excuse me, it’s mating season for this girl and her new paperback.

Ben nods.

BOOKSIE
Hey, you go to Clay right? Any way I could bum a ride to school tomorrow?

Ben attempts to talk, Booksie doesn’t wait for a response.

BOOKSIE
Great! I’ll be out front at eight. Oh and Ben, it’s a dirty plug.

Confused, Ben eyes Booksie.

BOOKSIE
On your mower.

Ben gets it with a smile. Booksie shoots him a wink, leaves.

INT. LAZER’S VAN - TRAVELING - MORNING

The boys eye Booksie. There’s a real human girl in the van sitting feet away! They nod politely back at her but can’t hide their awkwardness.

The van pulls into the busy school parking lot. The doors open and everyone piles out. Booksie scans the small town high school.

BOOKSIE
The academic factory in all its glory.

BEN
If it’s any consolation, we do have a great library.

Booksie brightens.

BOOKSIE
I’ll be sure to check it out.

Booksie bats her eyelashes at the boys.
BOOKSIE
I take it I’m good for a ride home?

Chong elbows Ben.

BEN
Err, we kinda got this thing we do after school...

CHONG
Model club, keep us very busy.

BOOKSIE
Hey, I can wait. Beats dad pickin’ me up in his sock and sandal requiem.

Booksie puppydogs the boys. They cave.

BOOKSIE
Alrighty! See you guys later.

Booksie adjusts the straps on her backpack and leaves. The boys come back to life. They throng around Ben.

CHONG
She super hot Ben!

LAZER
She is very easy on the eye, dude.

SLENDER EDWARD
They’re both correct in their appraisals. She does have a certain girl next-door appeal.

Chong turns to Edward.

CHONG
Well, seeing she is actually girl next door, Eddie.

Edward fishes around in his pocket and pulls out his over-familiarity card. Ben watches Booksie melt into the crowd; even from a distance she stands out amongst the other kids. He turns to his pals and feigns nonchalance.

BEN
Really? I hadn’t noticed.

CHONG
Oh, Ben hadn’t noticed. Right!

Chong pokes Ben’s ribs. The friends pull and prod at him.
INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Booksie has made some new friends. Loudmouth BRANDI and snotty TRISH (both 16). Brandi sniffs her lunch and pushes it away. Booksie scans the busy cafeteria.

Ben, Chong, Edward and Lazer sit at a corner table, passing around magazines. Suddenly, Booksie’s attention is diverted as Brutus strides in with his Jocks.

Hourglass cheerleader and homecoming queen, CRYSTAL DUKES (17) drapes herself around Brutus – so close they could share a bloodstream.

Booksie admires Brutus’ tight denims, he’s a stud for sure. Brutus looks over and catches Booksie’s eye for a beat, before looking away.

BOOKSIE
He’s beautiful, can I keep him?

Brandi leans in, her gum bubble POPS.

BRANDI
One thing you gotta know about Clay, sister, if you’re gonna survive the popularchy --

TRISH
-- those two are King and Queen ’round here.

Time seems to slow as Brutus, Crystal and the Jocks file on through. They stop at Ben’s table and signal for them to vacate. Chong protests, the Jocks haul him off his stool.

Booksie watches on as Ben tries to mediate a solution. Ben and his friends are given POWER-WEDGIES and sent on their way. They leave humiliated as Brutus and his entourage get comfortable at their new table.

BRANDI
The guy wearing his underwear as a hat is Ben Waldorf, those are his shadow people. I’d stay as far away from those perma-virgins as possible if I were you. Instant cred-shed, lady.

Booksie looks to Trish and Brandi, then back to Brutus, Crystal feeds him a fry.
INT. MOBILE CLASSROOM - DAY

The guys are busy making the dusty classroom their own. Chong sweeps up, Ben and Edward hang sci-fi posters on the walls. Lazer, feet up, pounds a burrito whilst tuning a small transistor radio.

    LAZER
    You know, for bein’ in the middle of a pot epidemic, this town sure has some crappy music.

Edward struggles with the poster.

    BEN
    Left corner, down a little. That’s it.

Edward adjusts the poster. Ben admires their work.

    BEN
    I was thinking. We could each have our own stations. One for sculpting, one for painting. We could even have one for electronics. Whaddya think?

    CHONG
    Right on! All we need now is cool name for new HQ. Wasn’t this old chemistry room? What about - the lab?

The guys mull it over, it meets with everyone’s approval.

    BEN
    The lab it is.

The door swings open. Booksie peeks in.

    BOOKSIE
    There you are.

Booksie pulls off her mittens and heads over to Lazer. She takes his burrito and sinks a deep bite before handing it back. Lazer shoots her a look.

    BOOKSIE
    We gonna be long?

    BEN
    Almost done.
SOME TIME LATER

Head resting on arm, Booksie closes her paperback and YAWNS. Chong, Edward and Ben still organize their equipment.

BOOKSIE
So, when you boys aren’t touring with the circus, what else is there to do around here? Anywhere to get a good bite to eat? Be my treat...

Never one to turn down a free meal, Lazer grabs his jacket.

LAZER
We know just the place!

EXT. THE BURGER PIT - EVENING

Game night. The after-school hangout is a neon-hive of activity. Scores of teens wearing the team colors of the CLAYTON CLAYMORES mill around eating and socializing.

INT. LAZER’S VAN

A world weary WAITRESS with killer legs leans in and takes the orders on her roller skates.

WAITRESS
Five doubles and four large gulps.
That’ll be ten dollars.

LAZER
-- and a large cheeseburger...and hold the cheese.

The waitress fires Lazer a look.

WAITRESS
Right...sure hon, whatever you say.

Booksie hands over the cash. The waitress skates off.

CHONG
Hold cheese, every damn time!
What’s the point in ordering cheeseburger Lazer, if you’re just gonna hold the cheese?

LAZER
You know, one day I’ll make you all my world famous BBQ burger. Two
(MORE)
LAZER (cont’d)
patties, grilled 'shrooms, onions
and the secret ingredient I’m
takin’ with me to my grave.

SLENDER EDWARD
It wouldn’t happen to be BBQ sauce,
would it?

Lazer throws up his arms.

LAZER
Man! Who told you?

LATER
Lazer lets out a long BELCH. He fires up his 8-track.

LAZER
Awwright! Let me take you on a
journey through space and time!

BEN
We’re gonna talk about the founding
principles of rock music now,
aren’t we?

LAZER
Dude, one thing about Sword of
Damocles, that you’re not quite
getin’, is that they are, and
always will be, a band’s band.

SLENDER EDWARD
Here we go.

Booksie, amused by these oddballs in her midst, takes a slug
of cola.

BOOKSIE
So, enlighten me Lazer, what the
heck is a band’s band?

LAZER
Quite simple really -- music that
bands themselves would listen to.
They’re totally a band’s band.

A rockin’ guitar riff fills the van. Lazer cranks it up. The
guys grimace at the audacious decibels. Without warning, and
completely out of character, Edward reaches over and ejects
the tape. He tosses it from the passenger window.
LAZER
That was less than cool, man.

Unperturbed, Lazer reaches into the glove compartment and pulls out a SAME COPY of the 8-track tape. He fires it up and it picks up exactly where the other left off. Edward looks to the stunned faces staring back at him.

SLENDER EDWARD
I’m sorry you had to see that side of me.

LAZER
You should definitely go and get that, man, it’s like only my fourth copy. It’s called social responsibility, dude.

Edward sighs, reaches for the door.

EXT. THE BURGER PIT - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Slender Edward stands over the ejected tape, which has landed in front of a ‘71 Chevy full of drunken RIVAL FANS parked in the next stall. High beams kick on. Windows wind down. Edward is blinded.

INT. LAZER’S VAN

Ben and the guys notice Edward’s plight and press their faces to the glass. Booksie looks to Ben, without a word, she hops from the van.

EXT. THE BURGER PIT - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Booksie approaches, kneels for the tape. WOLF WHISTLES ring out, doors swing open and the drunks spill out.

RIVAL FAN #1
Hey Elvira, bend over a little more when you do that, would ya?

Edward, still shell-shocked, looks on. The drunks gather round. One of them shoves Edward out of the way, they focus in on Booksie, ogling her gothic attire.

RIVAL FAN #3
You know Halloween isn’t ‘til next month right? Unless of course, you wanna bite my neck now?
Booksie attempts to push free, but the drunks surround her. The crowds at the drive-thru have started to notice. They point and stare.

INT. LAZER’S VAN - CONTINUOUS

Chong looks to Ben. Indecision fills the air. Ben looks back to the action outside. Suddenly, the crowd parts like the red sea, making way for Brutus and Crystal.

EXT. THE BURGER PIT - CONTINUOUS

Brutus sees the disturbance. He hands his jacket to Crystal.

CRYSTAL
Just leave it, Brutus.

Brutus, not listening, approaches Booksie. The rival fans square up to the beefy quarterback.

RIVAL FAN #2
Hey meatball, what’s on your mind?

Without warning, Brutus shoves the guy backwards onto the hood of his car. Eyes flash in shock at the primal power on display.

The other two fans rush Brutus. He grabs their heads in his meathooks and cracks them together with a sickening THUD. They drop to the cement. Brutus dusts off his hands.

BRUTUS
How many times I gotta tell ya?
This is our place.

Brutus turns to the guy still sprawled on the hood. He throws up his hands in resignation.

BRUTUS
Now get outta here...

Peeling himself off the car, the guy helps his buddies back to their vehicle. They fire up the ignition and screech from the burger pit. The home supporters, watching on, CHEER and APPLAUD.

Basking in the moment, Crystal struts over like a peacock and takes Brutus’ arm. Booksie and Brutus lock gazes briefly before turning away.
EXT. BEN’S STREET - LATER

Ben and Booksie are deposited at curbside. Lazer’s van pulls away in a cloud of smoke and horns.

    BEN
    You sure you’re okay?

    BOOKSIE
    I don’t want to talk about it.

    BEN
    About that guy --

    BOOKSIE
    I said I don’t wanna talk about it.

Booksie chills.

    BOOKSIE
    Look, it’s still early, why don’t you come in and meet the fam? I’m sure Winston would love to see you.

Ben glances at Booksie’s homey place, then to his own house; shirtless Pops rages to himself in the window. Booksie pretends not to notice.

    BEN
    Maybe some other time...

Ben, embarrassed by his father’s antics, manages half a smile and leaves. Booksie watches him tramp the short distance back to his house.

Still waiting at curbside, Booksie watches Ben enter his living room. Pops flails wildly at him.

Seconds later, Ben emerges. Booksie steps into the shadows to conceal herself. She watches Ben scale the drainpipe onto the flat roof of his garage.

INT. THE LAB - DAY

Booksie lets out a long yawn. She puts her book down and glances at the clock. She eyes Edward and Chong, who huddle around Lazer’s latest masterpiece.

Gone is the dusty old classroom of before. The lab has been transformed into an antiseptic, fully functioning workspace, housing all manner of handcrafted models and dioramas.
It’s a flock of Lava-wolves, closing in fast on their prey.

I know what it is, Lazer, you don’t have to tell me. You’ve definitely improved.

No flock you idiot! Pack! Pack of wolves! But Eddie right, getting much better.

Booksie inspects her fingernails. The door opens and Principal Vickers enters. He looks around the lab, admiring the progress the club has made in such a short time.

I’m looking for Waldorf, is he around?

Not in school today, sir.

Is he sick?

No clue, just not in school.

Surprised, Principal Vickers glances over to Booksie.

Miss Shooster, I had no idea you were part of this little club.

They’re my ride, sir.

The principal digs into his pocket, pulls out an envelope.

Would one of you give this to Ben, next time you see him?

A puzzled Chong takes the envelope from the principal.

Funds Mr. Chong, for this little enterprise of yours. Not much, I know, but every little helps I’m sure.
Truly grateful, Chong bows graciously.

   PRINCIPAL VICKERS
   The news isn’t all good, I’m afraid.

Booksie eyes Vickers.

   PRINCIPAL VICKERS
   You might as well hear this too
   Miss Shooster. I know you’ll only
   be here for a short while, but it
   concerns you as well.

Booksie heads over.

   PRINCIPAL VICKERS
   The district, in their infinite
   wisdom, have decided to transfer me
   over to King’s. The school has been
   failing for some time now and
   there’s going to be a reshuffling
   of personnel.

Chong looks to Edward. Faces tighten.

   PRINCIPAL VICKERS
   This shouldn’t effect this endeavor
   of yours, and I’m sure any new
   principal worth his salt will be
   more than happy to continue
   supporting the arts.

Principal Vickers takes another look around the lab.

   PRINCIPAL VICKERS
   Be sure to pass the news onto
   Waldorf. As you were.


   BOOKSIE
   You guys look like you’ve had your
   wisdom teeth removed.

   SLENDER EDWARD
   We have what you may dub an
   informal lease. Any administrative
   changes may jeopardize that
   arrangement.

Booksie pries the envelope from Chong’s hand.
BOOKSIE
I’ll make sure Ben gets it.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - ASSEMBLY HALL - MORNING

Hagula scans the sea of faces.

HAGULA
And this year’s winner of the Lincoln Farish memorial scholarship is Macy Stanton. Macy, come up here.

Milquetoast MACY (16), crosses the stage. Elements of the crowd SNICKER as she trips over her feet. Macy approaches Hagula and takes her certificate. She shuffles back off stage to a small ripple of applause.

HAGULA
Principal Vickers, I believe you have one more announcement to make?

Principal Vickers takes to the podium.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Thank you. As some of you may know, tomorrow is going to be my last day here at Clayton High.

There are audible mumbles from the gathered student body.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Due to events beyond my control, I am being assigned elsewhere. I want it known that I’m going to miss every one of you, my tenure here has been the most rewarding of my career.

Vickers scans the front row, who seem genuinely upset.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
With that in mind, please allow me to introduce you all to your new principal.

Vickers gestures off to the side of the stage.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Please join me in extending a warm Clayton welcome to your new commander in chief, Principal Boggs.
Roly-poly BOGGS (50s), waddles over in his clip on tie and off the rack suit. Clearly out of breath from the short walk, he runs a hand through his greasy comb-over.

BOGGS
Good morning...

The microphone whistles out a bar of static.

BOGGS
I sure appreciate the kind words. I know how fondly you all think of my predecessor, and although we differ greatly in style, I think you will find me firm and fair in my approach.

Whispers can be heard. Boggs scans the crowd.

BOGGS
That will be enough.

The hall grows silent.

BOGGS
Over the next few weeks, you may encounter me on my travels, asking questions, and getting to know you all. Coming from a proud military tradition, I may not agree with the limp-wristed policies of my counterpart here, but I’ll do my best to take under advisement any sensible suggestions you all may have.

Boggs tromps off stage with Hagula in tow. The students stand and file from the hall.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY

Booksie peruses the shelves, stopping occasionally to add another book to the growing pile under her arm. She notices a familiar face sitting at a corner table - the unlikely sight of Brutus studying by himself.

Booksie approaches. With collar pulled up high in an attempt to hide his face, Brutus hasn’t noticed her. He silently mouths words from a magazine.
BOOKSIE
Ya got a great setup here. Although personally, I think your Feng-shui section is in the wrong place.

The joke is wasted on the big guy. Booksie sits and puts her books to one side. She takes the magazine from Brutus who clearly isn’t used to this level of impudence.

BOOKSIE
TV guide, huh?

Booksie tosses the TV guide aside, it falls open.

BOOKSIE
Listen, I never got to say thank you. For the other night I mean.

Brutus stands, takes his team jacket from the back of the chair. He turns to leave.

BOOKSIE
Let me guess, struggling with the grades? Coach puttin’ unreasonable pressure on you to do better? I could help you with that if you like. I know you guys live for your quarterback honors.

BRUTUS
Listen, I don’t know who you are and I don’t care. You never saw me here, got it?

Booksie zips her mouth closed with a finger. Brutus leaves. The open TV guide catches Booksie’s eye. She hones in on an advert in the personal section, it reads:

"WANTED: PROP MAKERS FOR SCI-FI MOVIE PROJECT. ONLY SERIOUS PARTIES NEED APPLY. CALL THE OFFICE OF HELTON CANE ON: 899-567-9086." Booksie’s eyes narrow, the gears turn in her mind. She scribbles Ben’s name on the ad and circles it.

EXT. BEN’S HOUSE - GARAGE - EVENING

Booksie pulls herself up onto the garage roof. Ben is lying on his back watching the stars come out.

BOOKSIE
This is where I resume the ongoing campaign to get you to come over.

Ben doesn’t answer. Booksie implores.
BOOKSIE
Come on Benjy, Mom’s been dyin’ to thank you for takin’ care of grams. She’s been buggin’ me to bring you over forever.

An awkward silence grows, Booksie changes tactics.

BOOKSIE
We got Atari --

Ben slowly pivots.

BEN
Yeah?

BOOKSIE
All the latest games --

Ben looks to Booksie.

BEN
Well, maybe for a little bit, what could it hurt?

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben pounds his dinner like he hasn’t eaten in a month. Booksie’s MOM, DAD and little sister POPPY (10) watch on. Booksie’s mom offers up some second helpings – Ben BEAMS.

LATER

Booksie’s mom collects the dishes. Booksie’s dad casually leans over the table and pries Ben’s jaw open.

BOOKSIE’S DAD
You know, that’s a great set of teeth you got there, Ben.

BEN
Ankyou thir...

BOOKSIE’S DAD
You could do a lot worse than dentistry as a career, Ben. It’s treated my family well. Something to think about.

Booksie’s dad releases Ben’s jaw. He rubs it in relief.
LATER STILL

Ben finally has his hands on the coveted Atari, he pulls and prods at the joystick. Booksie, curled up nearby, reads her book.

BEN
May I present to you the decade’s high score, nobody’s beating that. And on that bombshell, I better go.

BOOKSIE
But it’s not even nine.

BEN
I got stuff to do, and it’s a --

BOOKSIE
-- school night. Don’t remind me.

Ben stands.

BEN
Thanks for tonight, Booksie. I really needed it.

BOOKSIE
Remember Ben, the offer still stands. You can crash here whenever you want.

Ben nods, he knows she means it. Ben makes his way to the front door. Booksie and Winston follow.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - NIGHT

Booksie watches Ben plod the short distance back to his house. Pops is raging to himself in the window again. Hurting for Ben, Booksie closes the door.

INT. BEN’S HOUSE - BEN’S ROOM - NIGHT

Ben finishes up his latest model. He hangs it on the ceiling with the others, they sway in the cool night air. Hypnotized by the swaying starships, Ben is transfixed.
BEN’S DAYDREAM

Dressed in flight-suit and helmet, Commander Benjamin Waldorf of the legendary VOLMAR SQUADRON huddles in the cramped cockpit of his speeding fighter. He glances at his console - the enemy fighter centers in his sights.

Commander Waldorf struggles with the controls, trying to keep the enemy locked in the cross-hairs. His patience pays off, the target pulls into range.

Waldorf squeezes the triggers - twin photon lasers streak towards the enemy fighter. KABOOM! It doesn’t stand a chance.

INT. BEN’S HOUSE - BEN’S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A loud BANG shakes Ben from his daydream. He hurries to the window. Ben sees Pops in the garden below, pointing a small pistol into the air. He races from his room.

EXT. BEN’S HOUSE - FRONTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Ben eyes Pops through the heavy drizzle, spinning in circles and cursing at the heavens. Several NEIGHBORS keep an indiscreet watch from across the street.

A police car screeches up; two POLICE OFFICERS get out. One of the officers mumbles something into his radio, the other puts a hand on his sidearm.

BEN
Wait! It’s just Grampa’s old starter pistol!

The officer waves wildly at Ben.

OFFICER #1
Get back, kid!

Pops swaps stares with Ben, a tense moment passes. Pops drops the starter pistol, falls to his knees and sobs hysterically in the mud.

The cops rush over and gather Pops up. They escort him back to the patrol car. Ben, soaked to the skin, watches on as another vehicle pulls in, a female SOCIAL WORKER gets out.

SOCIAL WORKER
Ben? Benjamin Waldorf?

Ben, confused, eyes the woman.
SOCIAL WORKER
My name is Cassie, Cassie Myers, I’m from the department of social services.

BEN
Where are you taking my dad?

SOCIAL WORKER
Your father is being detained for his own safety, Ben. I know this is a lot to take in, but I’ll do my best to answer any questions you may have.

Emerging through the rain, a breathless Booksie appears, she eyes the unfolding drama. Ben scans her stocking feet.

SOCIAL WORKER
Under state law, Ben, we can’t leave you unsupervised out here.

Ben looks to Pops, stewing in the police car.

SOCIAL WORKER
Until we figure out our next move, I’ve arranged for you to go to St. John’s, it’s a hostel about ten miles from here.

BOOKSIE
He can stay with us, can’t you Ben? My parents will sign whatever you need.

SOCIAL WORKER
I’m afraid it’s not as simple as that, miss. The guardianship process must go through the courts. It takes time.

The social worker nods to the officers. They step forward.

OFFICER #2
Come now, young man...

Ben wipes the rain from his face, steps back.

SOCIAL WORKER
Ben, we have to do what’s right. We’ll have all this sorted out before you know it.
BEN
I ain’t goin’ to no hostel...

Ben catches Booksie’s eye for a beat then takes off. An officer bolts after him. The social worker pinches the bridge of her nose.

SOCIAL WORKER
I really didn’t want it to come to this.

The officer returns, clutching his sides.

OFFICER #1
He’s gone, ducked into a neighbor’s yard and hopped the fence. That kid can move.

The social worker turns to Booksie. She scans her feet.

SOCIAL WORKER
Remember, no one’s got to be a hero. When he does surface, you have a moral obligation to inform us of his whereabouts.

Not listening, Booksie fires a long gaze down the street.

EXT. BEN’S STREET - NEXT EVENING
Booksie gathers up her backpack, hops from Lazer’s van.

LAZER
If you hear anythin’, you gotta let us know k?

BOOKSIE
Try not to worry. I’m sure he’ll turn up soon.

LAZER
I just want everythin’ back the way it was, things were all so different before they went and changed.

BOOKSIE
That’s real deep, dude.

Booksie catches the typo on the side of the van.
Erm Lazer, you do realize that --

Yeah, I know. Fetus only has one E, bummer. Hey, catch you later k.

Lazer slaps the van door, the van pulls away in a screech of tires. Booksie eyes Ben’s house; a newly erected "FOR SALE" sign sits in the front yard.

Heading over to investigate, Booksie scans the sign briefly, then walks to the window. The house has been completely emptied of furniture.

Booksie turns to leave – a faint SNEEZE carries on the breeze. Dismissing it with a shake of her head, Booksie plods on. Another sneeze rings out, Booksie pivots.

Peering under the partially open garage door, Booksie scans the gloom. Nestling amongst the clutter is Ben, illuminated by the faint glow of a flashlight.

INT. GARAGE

Booksie squeezes under the door.

So this is where cockroaches go to die...

Ben drags his sleeve across his nose, doesn’t respond. Booksie maneuvers her way between the clutter and drops down onto a crate next to him. She snatches the flashlight and trains it on him KGB style.

Where ya bin, Waldorf? Where ya bin, huh?

Ben squints. He leans over and takes back the flashlight.

The other humanoids are missing you Ben. They hardly work in the lab anymore, I think Lazer might be crashing there.

Ben doesn’t talk. Booksie notices a small shrine next to him. Several photographs and other collectibles fill the space.
The name is Ben, right? Hobbies include model-making and giving up on people?

Booksie lays down some bait.

I’ve beaten all your high scores.

Ben’s voice cracks into life.

Super Breakout?

Especially Super Breakout.

Ben mulls the bad news. Intrigued by the shrine, Booksie reaches over and picks up a limp BALLOON lying amongst the other items.

We makin’ balloon animals now?

Ben gestures for the balloon, Booksie hands it back.

You know, for a guy who grew up without an effective male role model, you turned out okay Waldorf.

It wasn’t always this way...

Ben arranges the balloon back in front of an old photograph of Pops in his younger days. He gazes off into space.

It was my twelfth birthday. My folks did their best to convince me to stay home, but I had a quiz that day and me being me, I decided to go in anyway. Mom told me she’d make up for it by picking me up after school and taking me to my favorite place, Dean’s Arcade. She even fixed my favorite breakfast. I can still taste those homemade pancakes.

Ben looks to Booksie.
BEN
She never made it. She was killed by a drunk driver on her way over there. I waited forever outside those school gates, until a police officer finally picked me up and took me to the hospital. Dad was already waiting for me, a construction set resting on the seat next to him, still wrapped in shiny paper with a balloon tied to it. The officer said they were in Mom’s car when the paramedics arrived.

Booksie looks to the balloon on the table.

BEN
I never played with the construction set much after that, but the balloon became more important to me than anything I owned. Just knowing it was filled with Mom’s breath connected me to it in a way I can’t explain.

Booksie leans in.

BEN
Over time, the balloon went down, it’s what balloons do. But having it go down over time like that was complete therapy for me, like I wasn’t losing her all at once, you know?

A crystalline jewel of pure emotion runs down Booksie’s cheek. She lets it fall. Booksie pulls Ben in close.

BEN
I screwed up Booksie. I’ve let everyone down. They’ll take away the lab for sure now, I just know it.

BOOKSIE
It’ll all be there waiting for you, Ben. You just gotta show em’ you’re comin’ back.

Booksie breaks off the hug. They share a smile.
BOOKSIE
Come on, let’s get you cleaned up.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Chong is swapping baseball cards with his UNCLE CHENG (30s), Clayton High’s easy-going janitor. Chong notices Ben and Booksie approach. A huge smile erupts on his face.

CHONG
Been so worried about you Benjamin! Wait till I tell Lazer and Eddie, they gonna be stoked!

Ben engages in a mock fight with Chong.

BEN
It’s great to see you guys.

CHONG
You know I don’t do well with change, Ben...been hell for me.

BOOKSIE
Where are the others?

CHONG
Lazer out with new girlfriend, no idea about Eddie. He took things real hard.

BEN
Poor guy. I know it hasn’t been easy on him, adjusting to life in the public school system.

BOOKSIE
Then what are we waitin’ for? Let’s go get the gang back together!

Chong high fives Booksie, the friends turn to leave. A sour voice rings out, rooting them to the spot.

BOGGS (O.S.)
One moment!

Ben pivots, the portly frame of Boggs approaches.

BOGGS
My office, now.

Boggs turns on Uncle Cheng.
BOGGS
And you...if you want to remain
gainfully employed here, I suggest
you get back to work.

Cheng snaps to it. Ben looks to his friends.

BEN
You go, I’ll catch you up.

Booksie shoots Ben a sympathetic smile, motions to Chong.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - DAY

Boggs fingers his pipe.

BOGGS
We’ll skip the introductions, shall
we? I suspect my reputation has
preceded me.

Ben takes a look around. The office has undergone quite the
makeover since Vickers’ tenure. Ships in bottles and
intricate topiary displays adorn the shelves and cabinets.

BOGGS
You’re not the only one with a
hobby around here.

Boggs taps his pipe. It is then we see it - the iridescent
MARCH FINCH - a perfectly preserved bird of incredible
natural beauty nesting on a clutch of eggs.

Boggs has transformed the unusual bird into an ornate
ashtray, and it takes pride of place on his desk.

BOGGS
The glorious March Finch...only
twelve mating pairs left in the
world. It took my father and I
three summers to track her down.
She’s the pride of my collection.

Boggs’ eyes brim with memory. He looks up.

BOGGS
Let me get straight to the point,
Waldorf. I don’t like people like
you. Thinking they can play by
their own rules. A school runs on
order boy, if we all took
unauthorized absences, what would
become of us?
BEN
I had some personal problems sir, my dad --

BOGGS
Your excuses cut no ice with me, Waldorf. I’m perfectly aware of what’s going on with that never-do-well father of yours.

Ben’s shoulders drop.

BOGGS
You must understand, I can’t let you set a bad example for the others. Detention for a month, and there’s also the matter of this little club of yours.

Ben’s face tightens.

BOGGS
Until you can learn to be trusted around here, I’ll be assigning Miss Hagstrom to supervise your little meetings from now on.

BEN
But sir...

BOGGS
She’ll report back to me directly. Extra curricular activities are a privilege not a right, boy. You carry on flaunting my rules and you’ll leave me with no alternative but to shut you down permanently. Dismissed.

INT. THE LAB – DAY

Ben and his friends remove the posters from the walls, the atmosphere is cold and sterile. Hagula watches on.

BEN
Do we have to take them all down?

HAGULA
They’re a fire hazard. I want them removed immediately.

Lazer turns to Ben.
LAZER
This is worse than regular class.

The door swings open, Booksie appears.

BOOKSIE
How do you guys handle the cold ’round here? I got a mini-glacier forming in my belly button.

Booksie notices Hagula. Her smile drops.

HAGULA
Take a seat Miss Shooster, and keep the noise down.

EXT. CLAYTON MUNICIPAL PARK - MORNING

Booksie inspects the boys like a drill instructor. They squint up at the sun and look totally out of place outside.

BOOKSIE
Today, happy girl is happy, and I’m imposing it on all of you. Any idea why I’ve brought you here this morning?

Before anyone can speak, Booksie gestures upward.

BOOKSIE
These are called ultra-violet rays, and we need them to maintain healthy skin and bones.

Lazer mumbles something inaudible.

BOOKSIE
Do you have anything to say mister? Straighten up, or do I have to get the jumper cables?

Lazer straightens. Booksie produces a frisbee.

BOOKSIE
We’re makin’ today our bitch. Morale has taken quite a hit lately so it’s time to cast aside life’s woes and have some good ol’ fashioned R&R. Is everyone with me?

The boys murmur their compliance.
LATER

The guys toss the frisbee to each other with mixed results. Booksie, watching on from a blanket, lays out a hearty picnic. Ben and Lazer break from the group and join her.

LAZER
We gotta do something about this Boggs dude, karma is takin’ way too long.

BEN
What do you have in mind?

LAZER
Ever heard of a whizz-disc?

Ben and Booksie swap quizzical looks.

LAZER
Oh, it’s classic man! You take a leak on a dinner plate, then freeze it overnight. Next day you slide it under the door of your nemesis. It melts and stinks up the place! Whaddya think?!

Booksie tosses a chip to Winston.

BOOKSIE
We won’t be indulging in any urine based vengeance, Lazer. Besides, we don’t have that kind of bail money.

Booksie beckons to Chong and Eddie.

BOOKSIE
Lazer is right though. Boggs has to go, but we gotta do it clean, and send him back to the devil’s farm from whence he came.

BEN/LAZER
Agreed.

Slender Edward looks to his hands.

SLENDER EDWARD
Remarkable, stress levels have decreased to tolerable levels.
CHONG
For sure! Was fun day.

BOOKSIE
We’re not done yet, my little alfalfa sprouts. There’s one more thing to do before we call it a day.

The guys crease their brows. Booksie looks over to four TEENAGE GIRLS struggling to fly a kite nearby.

CHONG
Nuh-uh! Oh no! Ask too much, came outside, had fun. Talking to girls, bridge too far!

SLENDER EDWARD
Miss Shooster, there’s things you need to understand, we’re far more interesting as individuals when you don’t get to know us.

BOOKSIE
This might hit you right between the eyeballs, but talking to girls ain’t some arcane science. Follow my three step program and it’ll be a breeze. Where’s your sporting blood?

Edward glances over to the girls.

SLENDER EDWARD
The solution to their problem seems simple enough.

CHONG
Right! Basic aerodynamics. We tell them to face into wind and problem solved. Then we go home.

BOOKSIE
Boys, the kite is immaterial, it’s the cahonies that are key here. Just go up there and introduce yourselves.

Winston BARKS. The boys swallow hard.

BOOKSIE
Now Jackets off! Untuck those shirts...and Eddie, lose that neckerchief.
SLENDER EDWARD
It’s a cravat, thank you Miss Shooster...Harvey and Mayfield.

BOOKSIE
For the purpose of this exercise, it’s gotta go. Now make momma proud. I want you all back here before the street lights come on.

Booksie picks up the frisbee and tosses it away, it sails on the breeze and lands over by the girls’ feet.

BOOKSIE
Now go get those sexy dolls!

Booksie watches the guys lumber over. She smiles to herself and gets comfortable for the show.

LATER
The kite soars. Booksie watches the boys teach the girls some new tricks. After several farewell handshakes, the boys head back over. Booksie sits up to greet them.

BOOKSIE
Well?

A brief pause. The guys erupt into ENDZONE DANCES. Chong waves a small scrap of paper above his head.

BOOKSIE
Get the heck off this Earth!

CHONG
It true! She gave me her number!

Chong BEAMS wildly. The guys slap him on the back as he stares proudly at the phone number in his hand.

EXT. THE LAB - DAY
Lazer, Chong, Edward and Winston sit on the wooden steps to the lab. A MAINTENANCE GUY removes a toolbox from his truck as Hagula and Boggs watch on. Ben and Booksie approach.

BOOKSIE
What’s goin’ on?

Boggs looks to Lazer.
BOGGS
Are you going to tell them boy, or am I?

BOOKSIE
What are you up to, Boggs?

HAGULA
That’s Principal Boggs to you.

The maintenance guy changes the lock to the lab.

BOGGS
Sheltering an animal on school grounds is in direct violation of policy. When Miss Hagstrom was forced to eject the beast, your friend here took it upon himself to lock her out as well.

Booksie stifles a chuckle.

BOGGS
Thus comes to an end your little after-school folly. We tried to work with you Waldorf, we really did. You never gave us a chance. Let this be a lesson to all of you.

Boggs smirks at Ben, puts out his hand.

BOGGS
You have something of mine?

Crestfallen, Ben digs into his pocket and fishes out the key to the lab. He hands it over to Boggs, who butterfingers it on purpose. The key drops to the ground.

BOGGS
Well? Pick it up...

Ben kneels, picks up the key. He places it into Boggs’ hand.

BOGGS
I hope you can find renewal in all this, Waldorf. I really do.

Smug and vile, Boggs waddles away. Hagula follows.

LAZER
I’m sorry dudes. Principal chowder went from zero to overload in three seconds. I just don’t like leavin’

(MORE)
LAZER (cont’d)
the pooch out in the cold that’s all.

Winston licks Lazer’s face.

BOOKSIE
He was just lookin’ for an excuse to shut us down, Lazer. It was just a matter of time.

BEN
Why does nothing ever work out for us? Just once, if they could only see the merit in what we’re doing here.

SLENDER EDWARD
Maybe we should try and reason with him? This is getting out of hand.

BOOKSIE
We don’t negotiate with terrorists.

The guys eye Booksie. She shoots them a smile.

BOOKSIE
Dry your eyes, boys. So we lost this round. If old Boggs thinks he can just waltz in here and cut us off at the knees, he’s gotta know he can’t expect calm.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY

Booksie gathers up a stack of homemade flyers from the library’s clunky mimeograph. Ben takes one.

BEN
Gotta admit Booksie, these turned out great. I still don’t see how entering some competition will get Boggs off our backs though.

BOOKSIE
Not just any competition, Ben. The state fair.

Ben searches Booksie’s face for more info.
BOOKSIE
Think about it. If we drum up enough publicity around our intention to win state fair next year, Boggs will have no chance of shuttin’ us down.

Ben clicks his fingers.

BEN
I’ll get on it right away.

Booksie grins. Brutus skulks in, teasing his collar in a futile attempt to hide his identity.

BOOKSIE
I won’t be long.

Ben questions Booksie’s motives with a narrowing of the eyes. He leaves the library carrying the stack of flyers. Booksie approaches Brutus.

BRUTUS
What you doin’ here?

BOOKSIE
You know, people write books, I read ‘em. It’s working out pretty good.

An awkward second passes.

BOOKSIE
Well, you keep up the good work.

Booksie adjusts her backpack. Brutus turns.

BRUTUS
Did you mean what you said? About helping me I mean?

Booksie is taken aback.

BOOKSIE
Sure.

Booksie pulls a pen from her hair, hands it to Brutus.

BOOKSIE
Here, give me your address.

Brutus shuffles. Booksie urges with a smile.
BOOKSIE
Give me your coordinates, you big ox.

Booksie connects the dots, takes back her pen.

BOOKSIE
You can’t write, can you?

Brutus shakes his head, looks to his boots.

BOOKSIE
Well, we’re gonna change all that.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben pokes his head inside the backdoor.

BEN
Booksie, you home?

No reply. Ben heads for the...

LIVING ROOM
The house appears empty.

BEN
Anyone?

Suddenly, Booksie, Poppy and her parents burst from behind the furniture blowing kazoos.

BOOKSIE/POPPY/PARENTS
Surprise!

Ben is caught off guard. Booksie slaps a party hat on him.

BEN
What we celebrating?

POPPY
Tell him Dad!

BOOKSIE’S DAD
We got some good news today Ben, we thought you might appreciate it.

BOOKSIE’S MOM
Last month, at the urging of young Beatrice here, we filed for a (MORE)
BOOKSIE’S MOM (cont’d)
temporary guardianship order. Well, we got the paperwork back today, it’s all final.

BOOKSIE
That’s right Benjy. No more looking over your shoulder, no more sleeping in Lazer’s van. You can relax for a while.

Ben’s eyes mist up. Poppy hugs his legs.

BOOKSIE’S MOM
I’ve already made up the spare room...with a little help from miss Poppy here.

POPPY
Can I show him mom, can I?

Ben beams down at the excited young girl.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Booksie’s parents dance to "VOLARE" in the living room. Ben watches them through the arch. Poppy dances nearby with Winston. Booksie appears with dessert.

BOOKSIE
I thought we’d finish strong with some ice cream. Now’s not the time to be calorifically responsible.

Ben takes a spoon, digs in.

BEN
I posted all the flyers.

BOOKSIE
Great work. It’s just a matter of time ’til Boggs sees them. In the meantime, we gotta get busy in the lab.

BEN
Level with me Booksie, why are you doing this? By the time state fair rolls around, you’ll already be gone.
BOOKSIE
It’s the principal of the thing
Benjy. Standing up for what’s right
in the face of tyranny.

BEN
I guess you’re right. (Beat) Thanks
for my party, I had a great time.

Booksie’s eyes flash with mischief.

BOOKSIE
The folks are goin’ out of town
next week. How ‘bout we celebrate
with a real party?

BEN
What could possibly go wrong?

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY
Boggs and Hagula patrol the busy corridor, kids duck out of
their way as they hurry to class.

BOGGS
Slow down, no running in the halls!

Boggs sucks the lunch from his teeth.

BOGGS
No sense of discipline you see,
Miss Hagstrom. A good stint in the
army is what they need, do them the
world of good.

Something catches Boggs’ eye up ahead. Booksie is surrounded
by several MEMBERS of the school newspaper. Boggs and Hagula
approach. Booksie hands Boggs a flyer, his face grows dark.

BOOKSIE
You wanna play blackjack Boggs? We
got the winning hand right here.

Boggs silently fumes, veins in his forehead throb. Booksie
puts out her hand.

BOOKSIE
Key please...

Boggs fishes the key from his pocket and hands it to
Booksie. The school newspaper SNAPS a photo. Boggs storms
off. Hagula follows him like a pet harpy.
HAGULA
What is it?

BOGGS
A problem Miss Hagstrom, that’s what!

Boggs hands the flyer to Hagula.

HAGULA
With the board behind them, they’ll never agree to pulling their club now.

BOGGS
I’m perfectly aware of that.

Boggs snatches the flyer back, he crumples it up.

BOGGS
So that’s how they want to play it.

INT. THE LAB - DAY

The lab is back in full swing, the atmosphere is carefree once more. Everyone is busy at their workstations transforming Ben’s new designs into reality.

LAZER
No more Hagula! And tellin’ the board Winston is our emotional support animal, mythical dude!

Booksie smiles down at Winston, gnawing a bone at her feet.

BOOKSIE
I’ve been thinking guys, we could really use a name for this little venture of ours.

Chong looks over, strokes his chin.

CHONG
What about...Clayton Craft Club?

Booksie mulls, dismisses.

BOOKSIE
Not punchy enough.
Booksie shakes her head, still no good.

BEN
How about...the Special Defects Department?

The others ponder. They slowly nod their approval.

LAZER
Oh that’s good, man...that’s real good. For a bunch of guys that never fit in anywhere, it’s perfect!

Booksie digs around in her backpack. She pulls out her Polaroid camera.

BOOKSIE
The Special Defects Department it is! Okay my august men, my wonderful rebels, gather ‘round.

The guys leave their stations and huddle together. Winston maneuvers himself proudly to the front. Booksie sets the timer and hurries back over.

A bright FLASH illuminates the lab. Booksie pulls the photo from the camera and watches it develop in her hand. The Special Defects Department admire their first group photo.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

One hundred hormonal GHOULS and GHOSTS rock out to Stan’s Demon Feetus, who make their public debut at Booksie’s Halloween bash.

Booksie, wearing a 1960’s PAN AM flight attendant’s uniform, scans the heaving room. She turns to Ben and the guys, dressed as THE BEATLES and looking totally out of place in the corner.

BOOKSIE
Watch the party fouls tonight boys. I’m putting a gagging order on dorking and any dorking related behavior. Chong, I noticed kite girl is here, why don’t you ask her to dance?
Chong beams, puffs out his chest. He looks over to the girl he met in the park earlier. She smiles shyly back at him.

SLENDER EDWARD
That might be unwise, Miss Shooster. Chong’s particular style of dance has best been described as grand mal on a rope bridge.

Chong reaches over and digs into Edward’s pocket. He pulls out the over-familiarity card and holds it aloft. Edward snatches it back. Booksie CHUCKLES.

From the corner of his eye, Ben sees Brutus and Crystal enter, carrying six packs and dressed as Frankenstein and his bride.

BEN
That’s great. Who invited those guys?

BOOKSIE
Relax, Ben...it’ll be fine. Take a deep breath and try to enjoy yourself for once. Looks like we’re runnin’ low on snacks, be right back.

BEN
Please don’t be long, Booksie. We can’t die alone.

Booksie leaves.

SLENDER EDWARD
You think we have it bad, spare a thought for Cheng, he’s working late tonight.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Uncle Cheng, with portable vacuum on his back, sweeps the deserted hallway. He approaches Boggs’ office with a look of dread.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - NOOK - LATER

Booksie is alone, she twists and jerks to the music whilst refilling a bowl with pretzels. Brutus, still wearing his Frankenstein mask, appears in the doorway, he watches her groove.
Booksie notices Frankenstein. Beyond embarrassed, she gathers herself. Brutus yanks off his mask. He pulls a book from his jacket and hands it to Booksie.

BOOKSIE
Well? What did you think?

BRUTUS
It was great. You were right, the main guy was totally me.

BOOKSIE
Told ya. Speakin’ of great, your short story was seriously on-brand.

BRUTUS
You’re just sayin’ that.

BOOKSIE
For reals dude. Was it true, about you wanting to be a marine biologist?

Brutus nods, they share a moment. Crystal enters.

CRYSTAL
Let’s split Brutus, this is lame. A bunch of us are goin’ to Lou’s.

Crystal Dukes picks up on the vibes. She looks to Booksie.

CRYSTAL
What’s goin’ on here?

Before Brutus can respond, Crystal storms off.

BRUTUS
Crystal wait up. It’s not what it looks like.

Brutus looks to Booksie for a beat.

BRUTUS
She gets kinda jealous. I better go.

Booksie shoots an understanding smile.
EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - YARD - CONTINUOUS

Johnny and Tony Carbone extort some candy from a couple of young KIDS trick or treating. Crystal barrels past, followed by Brutus, hot on her heels.

BRUTUS
Hey Crystal, hold up!

CRYSTAL
Don’t play me for a fool, Brutus. I saw the way you were lookin’ at her.

Brutus tosses his Frankenstein mask into the shrubs and hurries on after Crystal. Tony looks to the mask and shares a knowing look with Johnny.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stan’s Demon Feetus debut one of their slow numbers, it’s going down well with the teens. Couples in tight clinches slowdance, Chong and Kite girl are among them.

Kite girl breaks from the clinch and pulls Chong across the room. Chong beams over to Ben and Edward as the girl leads him upstairs by the hand.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Uncle Cheng puts on his headphones and fires up his portable radio. He runs a quick rag over the desk, stopping to eye a photograph of Boggs in his military uniform.

Turning to leave, Cheng’s vacuum cleaner clips Boggs’ prized March Finch. A nervous second passes, the finch teeters on the edge of the desk briefly, before tumbling to the floor.

Uncle Cheng, still oblivious, pushes his cart from the office, leaving Boggs’ beloved finch in pieces on the floor.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Booksie approaches Ben and Edward.

BOOKSIE
Havin’ fun boys?

Slender Edward shoots a puzzled look.
SLENDER EDWARD
I don’t believe so Miss Shooster, but I will keep you apprised if the situation changes.

Tony and Johnny Carbone enter, squeezing a few butts as they draw near. Tony stares at Ben and Edward.

TONY
Well, if it isn’t the hole patrol.

Booksie jabs Tony with a sharp finger.

BOOKSIE
Casual cruelty ain’t cute, son.

Tony scoffs. He motions to Johnny and they head back into the throng. Booksie holds up the book Brutus returned earlier.

BOOKSIE
One more thing to take care of...and when I return, I expect a dance Benjy.

Booksie exits through the crowd. From across the room, Tony and Johnny watch her leave.

JOHNNY
You ever make it with a girl like that, Tony?

Tony pulls out the Frankenstein mask from his jacket and looks to Booksie’s Polaroid camera, resting on a nearby side-table.

TONY
Give me five minutes to get cozy...and remember, I want pictures, Johnny.

Tony and Johnny knock their beers together.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BOOKSIE’S ROOM - NIGHT

Booksie, lit only by the hall light, kneels at her bookcase. The door opens, Frankenstein peers in. Surprised, Booksie looks up.

BOOKSIE
That was quick, you guys get everythin’ smoothed out?
Frankenstein shakes his head. He enters and closes the door. Booksie shoots him a sympathetic smile.

BOOKSIE
Don’t worry, I’m sure you guys will work it out.

Frankenstein, cast in shadow, kneels beside Booksie. He rests his head on her shoulder. Booksie attempts to stand.

BOOKSIE
Whaddya say we get back, huh?

Frankenstein restrains her. Booksie attempts to stand once more, her face reveals the effort of will. Frankenstein pulls her back in.

LANDING
Johnny Carbone tiptoes up the last of the stairs, passing a young couple making out. He scans the upper level - his eyes settle on a door ahead.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BOOKSIE’S ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Booksie and Tony continue their struggle. Tony breathes hard, pressing his masked face into Booksie’s neck. He grabs Booksie’s leg, his hand creeps up her thigh.

Booksie reaches down and grabs Tony’s hand, she crushes his fingers - Tony WINCES bad. Booksie yanks at the mask, Tony Carbone’s sweaty face leers back at her.

TONY
You broke my finger!

Booksie squeezes harder. Tony grimaces.

BOOKSIE
You’re two seconds away from getting a free, no hassle vasectomy, pal.

LANDING
Johnny readies himself outside the door. He looks to the camera, turns the handle and bursts in.
SPARE BEDROOM

Chong, confused at the unauthorized entry, cups his junk. Kite girl pulls the blankets under her chin. Johnny, realizing he got the wrong room, decides to preserve the moment anyway. CLICK! Chong flips out.

CHONG
This private room! What you think you’re doing?!

Johnny laughs at the spectacle, backs out slowly.

LANDING

Chong, incensed, follows Johnny out.

CHONG
Give me photograph!

All eyes on Chong still covering his modesty. His outburst is attracting party-goers from the lower levels. Ben appears through the throng, followed by Edward.

BEN
Chong? what’s going on?!

The red mist rises.

CHONG
Sexual pervert...taking pictures!

JOHNNY
Shut your mouth, calculus.

Johnny shoves Chong. Ben and Edward rush to his aid, shocking themselves. They surround Johnny with a steely resolve.

At that moment, Booksie’s bedroom door opens. Tony rushes out, wearing the Frankenstein mask and nursing his hand. He bolts for the stairs.

Johnny crams the photo into his jacket pocket and tosses the camera at Ben.

JOHNNY
We won’t forget about this, you’re dead, all of yous!

Johnny legs it after Tony, HOWLING like a moron. Booksie appears in the doorway seconds later, buttoning her blouse.
BOOKSIE
Party’s over kids.

EXT. BEN’S HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER

Booksie pulls herself onto the moonlit roof.

BEN
What is it with you and that guy Booksie? Is it the towering intellect, the scalpel wit? Oh wait, he just looks good in a pair of Levis.

BOOKSIE
Watch the sharp edges, Benjy.

BEN
Chong is getting assaulted and all you’re concerned with is getting busy with king rat.

BOOKSIE
For your information, that wasn’t Brutus. Mankind needn’t worry, I’m still a hundred and six percent single.

Ben scans Booksie’s face.

BOOKSIE
I forgive you Ben, I know you’ve got a lot goin’ on at the moment. Just know I’m here for you, k?

BEN
Were you here for me the night they took Pops away? I know it was you, Booksie...who called the cops.

Ben glares.

BEN
You do know that when Pops gets out of wherever it is they sent him, he’s gonna have nowhere to go right? He’s just gonna slip back into his old ways and I’m goin’ to lose what little family I have left.
BOOKSIE
It couldn’t go on like that Ben, not anymore...

Ben, burdened by events, turns his back on Booksie. With sad eyes, she lowers herself from the roof.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL – CAFETERIA – DAY
The guys tease Chong. He watches on in horror as several YOUNG GIRLS sitting at a nearby table pass around the Polaroid of him from the party.

SLENDER EDWARD
I hear the juniors are paying a buck each to take it home for the weekend.

CHONG
Not funny, Eddie.

LAZER
Try to look on the bright side, dude. It’ll be so worn out soon you won’t be able to tell who it is.

Edward high fives Lazer. Chong SIGHS.

CHONG
Where Benjamin at? At least he show some maturity.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE – LANDING – DAY
Ben collects the sea of plastic cups from last night’s party and stuffs them into a garbage bag.

BOOKSIE (O.S.)
I would like toast, with peanut butter and bananas.

Ben enters Booksie’s room.

BOOKSIE’S ROOM
Booksie YAWNS with a stretch.

BOOKSIE
Three slices – just be grateful I’m makin’ you part of my mornin’

(MORE)
BOOKSIE (cont’d)
routine. Still wanna draw a chalk outline around me?

Ben manages a smile.

BOOKSIE
Did everyone make it home okay?

BEN
Eddie was the last to leave. Somebody drew a female reproductive system on his forehead. I didn’t have the heart to tell him.

Booksie sits up.

BEN
I take it we’re not going to school today?

BOOKSIE
Nah, I’m not feelin’ it...besides, my hair hurts.

Reaching under her pillow, Booksie pulls out two bus tickets. She hands them to Ben. Puzzled, he scans them briefly. The tumblers click into place.

BEN
Now wait just a minute!

BOOKSIE
He’ll be nervous too, Ben.

BEN
No way! I’m not ready, Booksie.

BOOKSIE
Look, when we first met, I wasn’t entirely honest with you. I said the reason we didn’t get to see Grams a whole lot was because we lived outta state. Although that was partly true, the real reason was after Grampa died, Dad and Grams lost touch, over stupid stuff mainly.

Ben flops down on Booksie’s bed.
BOOKSIE
What I’m trying to get at is, we must never leave it ’til it’s too late, Ben.

Booksie looks to the tickets in Ben’s hand.

BOOKSIE
Maybe two damaged people can make each other whole again?

INT. INNER CITY REHAB – POP’S ROOM – DAY

The sun streams in through the blinds. Pops removes two cans of soda from the mini-fridge, hands them to Ben and Booksie. Pops transformation is nothing short of remarkable - clean shaven with a haircut, he’s even gained a few pounds.

POPS
It’s great to see you, Ben.

Pops glances at Booksie.

POPS
You never mentioned anythin’ about a girlfriend.

BEN
We’re just friends, Pop.

POPS
Right. So what’s been goin’ on? Tell your old Pops everythin’.

BEN
School’s been keepin’ us real busy. We got ourselves a new principal.

BOOKSIE
He’s a little ball of hate, all wrapped up in a big barf bow.

Pops chuckles. Ben looks to Booksie.

BEN
Now Booksie, we gotta give him a chance...I’m sure old Boggs will find his groove soon enough.

POPS
I hear ya. Had a few of those in my time. Wait, did you just say Boggs? What does this guy look like?
BEN
Kinda short, walks with a waddle.

Pops slaps his knee.

POPS
That is Boggs! Old Emery Boggs. No way!

BOOKSIE
You know him?

POPS
Know him? After high school, a bunch of us enlisted in the service. He begged us to take him along, so finally we gave in. Was always screwin’ things up and holdin’ back the squad. Seems like that guy hit menopause before he even hit puberty.

Ben and Booksie listen close.

POPS
We got real tired of being punished for all his mistakes, so a bunch of the guys taped him to his locker. He struggled so damn hard the locker fell forward and smashed up his face real bad. I went to see him in the hospital a few times, but he was always asleep when I got there.

BOOKSIE
That might explain the bitter bone.

BEN
So he was never in the army?

POPS
Hell no! Didn’t even make it through basic. His flat feet got him in the end.

Pops beams.

POPS
Sure is nice to see you, Ben.
INT. THE LAB - DAY

Booksie crosses off another item from the blackboard.

BOOKSIE
We’re almost done boys, just two more astro-jets and a captain’s shuttle. All your hard work is payin’ off.

Suddenly, the door opens with an ominous CREAK. Boggs looms in the doorway. Winston growls low. Boggs stalks the lab, scowling at the work being done.

Boggs stops at Ben’s workstation. Subdued, solemn, the friends eye him in silence. Boggs digs into his pocket and pulls out the remnants of his broken March Finch. He cradles the pieces briefly, then drops them onto the desk.

BOGGS
It’s personal this time, Waldorf. I just want you to know that.

Boggs leaves. The air hangs heavy with his vapors. The guys look to Ben.

BEN
I didn’t break his damn ashtray...

CHONG
He not listening anymore, Ben.

BOOKSIE
He was never listening.

Slender Edward straightens his cravat.

SLENDER EDWARD
Well, we’re about to go head to head with the most ruthless principal the district has ever thrown at us. Any bets?

Booksie looks up.

BOOKSIE
Ben...my money’s on Ben.
INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnny Carbone takes a drink from the water fountain and straightens himself out. He approaches the principal’s door and looks through the frosted glass.

With all the sex appeal of a ruptured colostomy bag, two figures embrace inside.

    HAGULA (O.S.)
    Oh, Emery!

Johnny enters. Hagula and Boggs quickly separate.

    BOGGS
    Did no one ever teach you to knock, boy?!

    JOHNNY
    You wanted to see me, sir?

    BOGGS
    Yes, sit down.

Johnny drops into a chair.

    BOGGS
    I’ve just got off the telephone with Coach Renfield. He’s concerned about morale in the locker room, grades are slipping, what’s going on down there?

    JOHNNY
    It’s just a little bad blood sir, nothin’ to worry about.

    BOGGS
    I won’t tolerate petty in-fighting in my school Carbone, it’s an important season for the Claymores, we’re shooting for state championships this year. You guys do it on your dime, not mine.

    JOHNNY
    Look, I’ll level with you, sir. My brother has been buttin’ heads with the cap lately. I’ve been gettin’ caught in the middle. I’ll have a word with him about it.
BOGGS
Make sure you do. That will be all.

Johnny leaves. Boggs turns to Hagula.

BOGGS
With all these hormones running around, it’s a wonder this place functions at all. Stupid jocks.

Boggs looks to the empty space on his desk where his beloved March Finch used to sit.

BOGGS
Why can’t it be Waldorf sweating it off in here? He hasn’t put a foot wrong in weeks.

Boggs turns to Hagula.

BOGGS
What do we know about this little falling out of theirs?

HAGULA
Only that Brutelli has been trying to better himself lately. Got some grand ideas he can escape the mill when he fails to graduate.

Boggs scoffs.

HAGULA
This brother of Carbone’s sounds like a real hothead, crossing him like that.

Boggs fingers his pipe. His eyes widen.

BOGGS
That’s it...

Hagula looks to Boggs.

BOGGS
The solution to our problem, Miss Hagstrom! Don’t you see? In the words of Philip of Macedon – a great ancestor of mine – we must divide and conquer! What are you waiting for? Get Carbone’s brother in here at once.
INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - LATER

Tony Carbone slouches before Boggs and Hagula. Hagula hands him a cup of coffee – he doesn’t know what is happening.

TONY
Hey, if this is about the girl’s locker room --

Boggs rises from his chair, paces.

BOGGS
You know what I like about you, Carbone? You have the spark of Zeus. I know a real go-getter when I see one.

Tony, still confused, takes a gulp of coffee.

BOGGS
What I’m trying to get at Carbone, is I’m perfectly cognizant the pressures top flight competition can have on an athlete, being an avid sportsman myself.

HAGULA
It can’t be easy, knowing your captain is spending more time among the books than focusing on his duty to the team. Word travels fast around here.

Tony’s eyes fire.

TONY
See, this is what I’m talkin’ about! I’ve been tryin’ to tell em’.


BOGGS
Not now, man!

Uncle Cheng backs out of the office, Boggs resumes.

BOGGS
We wanted to reassure you Carbone, that you’re not the only one with concerns. I’ve spoken with the coach and he agrees that Brutelli (MORE)
BOGGS (cont’d)
could indeed benefit from a long rest.

Tony leans in.

BOGGS
That leaves us with the difficult task of choosing his successor.

Boggs lets his words hang in the air.

BOGGS
You wouldn’t know anyone who’d be interested now? Team captain is a lofty position, not everyone is cut out for the role, despite the many perks it can bring.

Tony clamors, points to himself.

TONY
What ’bout me?

Boggs smirks to Hagula. A silence grows.

BOGGS
I don’t think we need look any further, Miss Hagstrom. Young Carbone here would make an excellent choice.

Hagula nods in agreement.

HAGULA
I’ll make the call at once.

Tony BEAMS.

BOGGS
Oh and boy, before you go, there is another small matter. Perhaps you might do something for me?

INT. THE LAB - EVENING

The friends are hard at work. A KNOCK thumps on the door.

BOOKSIE
State your business!

The pizza DELIVERY GUY responds.
DELIVERY GUY (O.S.)
Got your order. Six pepperonis and a large crazy bread.

Booksie opens the door. She takes the food and crams some bills into the guy’s hand. The delivery guy looks in awe over Booksie’s shoulder.

And impressed he should be. The mobile classroom is fast becoming the town’s unofficial sci-fi and fantasy museum, brimming with all manner of starships and creatures.

INT. THE LAB - LATER

Empty pizza boxes litter the desks. Ben hands Booksie his model spaceship, she places it in a box and tapes it up.

BOOKSIE
That’s officially the last one. We have everythin’ we need guys!

BEN
It’s a pity Lazer can’t be here to see this. Where is he anyway?

BOOKSIE
Planning a birthday surprise for that girlfriend of his. Even borrowed my camera to capture the moment. So cute.

CHONG
It midnight, can we go home now?

BOOKSIE
You’ve earned your freedom here today. Go, be among your people.

The gang stand and stretch, Winston barks.

SLENDER EDWARD
Don’t worry Winston, we won’t forget the lights.

EXT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Thunderheads gather on the horizon. Distant flashes of lightning illuminate the night sky.
Lazer leads his blindfolded girlfriend, JUANITA (17), over to his van. It’s been given a new sober paint-job, and even has a white picket fence running along the roof. Lazer removes the blindfold, Juanita breaks into a big smile.

Lazer slides open the door; gone are the orange carpets and gaudy decor. A neutral interior glints back at them. Juanita beams some more. Lazer helps her inside.

INT. LAZER’S VAN – CONTINUOUS

Juanita takes a look around. Lazer has set the table for a romantic dinner, a candle completes the mood. She pulls him in close, gives him a quick smooch.

Juanita can’t wait for dinner, she blows out the candle and pushes Lazer back onto the bunk bed, things are getting passionate.

EXT. LAZER’S VAN – CONTINUOUS

Two shadowy figures creep up to Lazer’s van. Tony Carbone unscrews Lazer’s gas cap, Crystal Dukes, wearing Tony’s team jacket, hands him an empty liquor bottle. They share a wry smile as they siphon the gas.

INT. LAZER’S VAN – CONTINUOUS

Oblivious to what’s going on outside, the two lovers romp. Lazer rolls over onto Booksie’s camera -- it SNAPS a quick shot which we can’t quite make out yet.

EXT. THE LAB – LATER

Crystal pops in a stick of gum, her eyes flash with malice.

CRYSTAL

That’s it, baby! We’ll show ‘em, we’ll show ‘em all.

Tony looks to Crystal for a beat, then splashes the gasoline around the base of the mobile classroom. Tony digs into his pocket and pulls out a box of matches. He hands them to Crystal.

Crystal takes a match and strikes it. She watches the match flicker in her fingertips briefly, then tosses it away. WHOOSH! The lab bursts into flames.
In an instant the lab is consumed in a huge fireball. Windows smash from the heat, the rising flames ROAR. Tony and Crystal look on mesmerized. Crystal kisses Tony.

Crystal breaks off the kiss and laughs with primal lust. The two figures slink away as the lab lights up the night.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ben and Booksie sit at the table. Booksie’s mom prepares breakfast. Poppy reaches for the coffee-pot, without looking up from his newspaper, dad swats her hand away. The phone RINGS, Booksie’s mom answers.

BOOKSIE’S MOM
Hello? Yes, I’ll accept the charges.

Booksie’s mom hands the phone to Booksie.

BOOKSIE’S MOM
Somebody called Lazer.

Booksie presses the receiver to her ear.

BOOKSIE
Slow down Lazer, you’re doin’ ninety in the left lane. Try complete sentences.

Booksie drops the phone, it dangles on its cord.

BOOKSIE
We gotta go, right away.

EXT. THE LAB - MORNING

Booksie, Ben, Edward and Lazer eye the smoldering ruins of the lab. It is completely destroyed. Edward’s legs buckle. Ben drops to his knees, Winston WHIMPERS.

LAZER
All that work, man, gone! Weeks of round the clock slog...up in smoke!

SLENDER EDWARD
How could this have happened? Lazer, you unplugged your soldering iron right?
LAZER
Don’t blame me, dude...what about your heat gun? You’re always leaving that thing on.

SLENDER EDWARD
I resent your claims, Lazer. My safety record is second to none.

BOOKSIE
Will you guys just quit it?!

Booksie looks over to Boggs’ office window in the distance.

BOOKSIE
We all know what happened, it doesn’t take Sherlock the Holmes to figure it out.

SLENDER EDWARD
Are you insinuating nefarious forces were at work here?

BEN
Look, let’s just take a step back. What matters most is nobody got hurt. It’s been a rough morning and we all need a breath. Then we figure out where we go from here.

LAZER
Where we go from here? We’ve reached the end of the paved road, man. We’re done, dude, done!

Ben scans the catatonic faces of his pals.

BEN
First thing we do is tell Chong, he should know as soon as possible.

INT. THE BURGER PIT - MORNING

Ben, Booksie, Edward and Lazer sit in a booth. The diner is empty, the jukebox is silent. Lazer scans the menu.

LAZER
Fries or onions rings? It all comes down to these two basic questions.
BOOKSIE
Lazer, how can you think of your stomach at a time like this?

LAZER
Booksie, I can’t figure you out, you’re takin’ this worse than any of us.

Chong enters, he ambles over.

LAZER
Uh oh. Here he comes.

Chong, in good spirits, slides into the booth.

CHONG
What up you guys?

Chong grabs a menu. Ben eyes his best friend.

BEN
Something happened Chong, last night at the lab. Something bad.

CHONG
We gonna order or what?

LAZER
Chong, you gotta listen up, man.

SLENDER EDWARD
Lazer, let Ben handle this.

Chong casts the menu aside with an impish grin.

CHONG
Is that all you got to say? For moment there, thought you were gonna tell me lab burnt down takin’ everythin’ with it.

The guys swap stares.

BEN
You know? But we’ve lost everything Chong, it’s gone.

CHONG
It sucks about lab guys, really does, but all not lost!
SLENDER EDWARD
I think his engrams have reversed.

CHONG
Listen! Uncle Cheng doing rounds last night. Bogg breath was scheming with Hagula...overheard whole evil plan to sabotage our work. Later, Uncle waited for school to get out and snuck back into office. He swap out all Boggs’ stuff with ours!

The information hits home.

BEN
Wait, so let me get this straight. You’re saying that what went up in smoke last night was all Boggs’ stuff?

Chong nods wildly. Hope grows in Ben’s eyes.

BEN
Then where’s our stuff?

CHONG
I show you! I show you!

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - JANITOR’S CLOSET - MORNING

Chong opens the door with Uncle Cheng’s keys. The group rush into the cluttered utility room. In the corner sits a large cardboard box, Ben tears into it.

CHONG
Uncle grabbed what he could, didn’t have much time.

BEN
We’re missing a ton of things, but it looks like most of the ships are still intact.

Ben looks up at Booksie.

BEN
We can rescue something from this after all. It’s great news Booksie, the state fair is still on.

Booksie, forlorn, doesn’t respond.
BEN
Booksie?

BOOKSIE
Listen guys, there isn’t any state fair. There never was.

Booksie leaves, confusion fills the air, the boys follow her out.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ben catches up to Booksie.

BEN
Okay, start talkin’ Booksie.

Booksie reaches into the hatband of her trilby and pulls out Helton Cane’s ad. She hands it to Ben. He reads it then passes it around.

SLENDER EDWARD
H-H-H-Helton, Helton Cane?!

BOOKSIE
I’m not sure whether he spells it with four H’s or five...but yes, that’s him, you know him?

SLENDER EDWARD
Know him? He’s the B-movie king of Alamogordo. Who could forget Martian Gargoyles from the Void. No one’s heard from him in years.

BOOKSIE
Well, it looks like he’s back -- and hungry for more.

CHONG
Why you lie to us, Booksie?

BOOKSIE
It wasn’t really a lie, Chong. Replace state fair with visionary director seeking to break new ground on a project that’s never been tried before, and it wasn’t too far out of whack. Besides, you guys have so much built-in fear of success, you never would have gone for it.
LAZER
Whoa, let me play catch up here. All this time we’ve been workin’ on stuff for a new space flick? That’s far out, man!

BEN
We can still do it, it’s not too late!

BOOKSIE
What’s left in that box won’t be enough, Ben. Helton gave out very specific instructions.

CHONG
Then we make more! Tell us what you need and we start now, right guys?

BOOKSIE
They need to be on Helton’s desk first thing tomorrow. I was gonna ship everything off today then tell you. Was gonna be a surprise.

The reality sinks in. Booksie scans the vacant faces.

BOOKSIE
Not only is the lab gone, we’d never have enough time to get everything ready. We just gotta accept we flew too close to the sun on this one. I’m sorry for gettin’ you guys involved.

Slender Edward hands the ad back to Booksie. She scrunches it up and tosses it to the trashcan. It misses and rolls under Boggs’ office door. The guys leave.

EXT. THE LAB – MORNING

Boggs kicks at the charred remains of the lab.

BOGGS
That damned idiot, Carbone! I said smash a few windows, make a few things disappear, not burn the place to the ground!

Hagula runs her hand through Boggs’ comb-over.
HAGULA
Calm yourself, Emery. What’s done is done. That band of hoodlums have been shut down once and for all, that’s all that matters.

Boggs takes cold comfort in the words. He notices something in the ashes. A melted ship in a bottle smolders back at him, he recognizes it as one of his own. Boggs clenches his fists and throws back his head.

BOGGS
Waldooooorf!

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Locked in concentration, Ben wiggles the joystick, the videogame BLEEPS back at him. Booksie and Poppy watch on.

BOOKSIE
Just face it Benjy, you’re never gonna beat me.

BEN
Just fifty points more, your reign of terror is over.

Booksie’s parents enter. Winston gets up to greet them. He nudges Ben and he fumbles the joystick – the game is over. Poppy GIGGLES, Booksie sticks out her tongue.

BOOKSIE
Sorry, sometimes I forget my face is on the outside.

BEN
Dangit Winston!

BOOKSIE’S DAD
Poppy honey, let’s go. Movie starts in half an hour.

Poppy hurries off the couch.

BOOKSIE’S DAD
Ben, I ever tell you you have great teeth?

BEN
Only every time I bump into you, sir.

Booksie’s dad holds out a book on dental anatomy.
BOOKSIE’S DAD
I want you to take a look at this, son, and think about what I said. There’s a whole lot worse out there for a bright young man like yourself.

Booksie takes the book from her dad. Her family leave.

BEN
Sure nice of your old man, thinking of my future like that.

BOOKSIE
You do have cute teefs, Benjy. I ever tell you that?

Ben scowls back in mock indignation. He flashes his pearly-whites and gestures for the book.

BOOKSIE
Nothing wrong with those babies. No false teeth for you anytime soon.

Ben fingers the pages. Suddenly, the smile drops from his face. The book falls to the floor.

BOOKSIE
Ben?

BEN
False teeth...

Booksie gives Ben one of those looks.

BEN
False teeth - dentures - don’t you get it, Booksie? You’re a genius!

BOOKSIE
I am?

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BOX ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Booksie helps Ben scan the shelves of a small bookcase. She pulls out a selection of her dad’s old college books.

Ben leafs through the pages. He casts the book aside. Booksie hands him another. He files through it.
BEN
Here! The big ticket item...just what we need.

Booksie kneels. Ben pokes at the page.

BEN
Alginate powder. When mixed with water it forms a thick paste which can be used to make molds. Dentists use it all the time to make false teeth.

BOOKSIE
But we’re not making false teeth.

BEN
No silly, don’t you see? Using these same principles, we take the models we already have, combine them with some of my stuff from home and we can produce as many as we like.

BOOKSIE
So let me get this straight, Benjamin. We gotta acquire ourselves a butt-load of dental supplies at eight o’clock in the evening. Work through the night getting everything ready with no lab this time...then drive to Helton Cane’s ranch which is over three hours away?

A smile blossoms on Ben’s face. Booksie is seduced.

BOOKSIE
That’s the most ridiculous idea I’ve ever heard. Give me five minutes to get ready!

Booksie slaps Ben on the back.

BOOKSIE
Put on your positive pants and let’s go rally the squad. I’ll look up dental supply stores in the area.

BEN
There is the small matter of how we’re gonna pay for all this stuff.
BOOKSIE
I’ve done the mathematicals Benjy
and we’re gonna be fine. You just
leave that to me.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - SLIGHTLY LATER

Ben reaches for his jacket. Booksie hangs up the phone.

BOOKSIE
Lazer and Chong are inbound,
touchdown in sixty seconds.

Booksie rummages through her dad’s overcoat.

BOOKSIE
I know he keeps a spare in here
somewhere.

Earlier than planned, Booksie’s family return. Booksie, hand
still in her father’s coat, smiles awkwardly.

BOOKSIE
You guys are back early.

BOOKSIE’S DAD
Mom wasn’t feeling well, we think
it was the prawn cocktail.

BOOKSIE’S MOM
It wasn’t the prawn cocktail.

BOOKSIE’S DAD
(to Ben)
It was the prawn cocktail.

Poppy hurries over to the TV and turns on the video game.
Booksie removes her hand from her dad’s coat.

BOOKSIE’S DAD
Find what you’re looking for?

BOOKSIE
Erm, that pic of Grams, the new
one... Ben wanted to see it.

Booksie’s dad smiles and pulls out his wallet. He opens it,
revealing a photograph of his elderly mother hugging a much
OLDER MAN. He shows it to Ben.
Wow, she looks great. Who’s the guy?

Her new boyfriend.

Dwight - a sprightly ninety five.

Booksie gestures for the wallet, she eyes the photo.

Booksie

Grams likes to be the only one in the relationship with her own hips.

Booksie sneaks a credit card from her dad’s wallet and pushes it up her sleeve. She hands it back.

You guys going somewhere?

We thought some night air sounded good. Didn’t we Ben?

Ben is caught off-guard. Booksie elbows him.

Oh yeah, refreshing night air.

Well, don’t you kids stay up too late.

Booksie and Ben shuffle from the room, Winston follows.

Lazer pulls up outside Slender Edward’s house and lays on the horn. Booksie admires the van’s new interior.

Love what you’ve done with the place, Lazer.

Edward pulls open the door and clambers inside. He has on a mud face-mask and dressing gown over silk pajamas.

Please feel free to deploy one of your generic put-downs.
BEN
No time for that now Eddie, duty calls. We have ourselves a new mission brief, how to get the upper hand on Boggs. You with us?

SLENDER EDWARD
You know I believe in you guys, I always have.

The gang smile.

SLENDER EDWARD
But I also believed in the tooth-fairy once, so don’t get too enthused.

EXT. DOWNTOWN RETAIL ZONE - DENTAL SUPPLY WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lazer’s van swings into the empty parking lot. Winston jumps out, followed by the others.

CHONG
Don’t know about this. We’re breaking at least a dozen by-laws right now, not to mention Eddie’s curfew.

BEN
Dig deep people, the end will justify the means.

The guys tiptoe over to the main entrance. A large padlock secures the door.

SLENDER EDWARD
Please, allow me.

Edward removes his cravat pin. After some tinkering with the lock, it clicks open. Astounded, the guys look on.

SLENDER EDWARD
One of the few benefits of having Mr. Lazer here as an associate.

BOOKSIE
Eddie, if I could reach up there, I’d kiss you right now! You’re still goin’ on my naughty list ‘til further notice.
Edward pushes open the door, revealing the cavernous warehouse interior. The aisles stretch on forever and are laden with all manner of orthodontic supplies. He motions to the gang.

INT. DENTAL SUPPLY WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Booksie fires up the switches, banks of overhead lights flicker into life.

    BOOKSIE
    Delta squad - you’re with me.
    Chong, Lazer, Eddie, synchronize watches. Meet us back here in twenty minutes - oh, and good luck.

Edward, Lazer and Chong nod in unison. The teams split up.

INT./EXT. GOLF CART - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

A golf cart zips around the bend. Intrepid REGINALD DEVEREAUX (70), semi-retired security guard and all-round paragon of efficiency listens to his funnies on the radio.

Reg chuckles along with the canned laughter. Something up ahead catches his eye, his molten glare fixes on Lazer’s van.

INT. DENTAL SUPPLY WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The door opens with a slow CREAK. Shiny regulation boots step forward. With nightstick at the ready, Reg is ready for action.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Booksie sits at the desk. She runs her dad’s credit card, looks over to Ben.

    BOOKSIE
    There, paid in full. Now let’s go find the others.
INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Edward and Chong heave the supplies onto a cart. Lazer fumbles a box of utensils, the loud CLATTER echoes around the warehouse walls.

CHONG
You makin’ enough noise right now?

SLENDER EDWARD
Perhaps you could incorporate some harmonica or cymbals on your knees?

Lazer shoots Edward a look over his shades.

CHONG
Enough you guys. Let’s go.

Chong and Lazer ready the cart. Lazer looks around.

LAZER
Wait a minute, where’s the pooch?

The guys rubberneck, no sign of Winston. Edward shrugs.

CHONG
Well go find him, Eddie!

Edward lets out a long SIGH, skulks off.

DEEP IN THE WAREHOUSE

Winston stands on his back legs, straining for something high up on a shelf. Edward appears.

SLENDER EDWARD
There you are.

Winston doesn’t acknowledge.

SLENDER EDWARD
Winston, your cooperation would be greatly appreciated, we have to go.

The distracted dog still doesn’t respond. Edward slinks over. High up on the shelf is a large pair of model teeth, the kind dentists display in their office.

SLENDER EDWARD
You want these?

Winston wags his tail. Edward hands him the teeth, he clamps them in his jaws like a bone. Edward leaves with Winston.
WAREHOUSE

Winston and Edward rejoin Chong and Lazer.

CHONG
What took you?

Before Edward can reply, a loud clomping of boots fills the air. The guys FREEZE. Edward fires a concerned look to Chong. Chong fires a concerned look to Lazer. The footsteps are getting closer.

Reg stops and surveys the area with a steely countenance. He approaches the end of the aisle and peeks around the corner.

All clear. Reg chances a glance in the opposite direction, still nothing. Reg relaxes. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the cart WHIZZES by, with Chong, Edward, Lazer and Winston holding on tight.

LAZER
Later dude!

Reg reels backwards. He looks to the cart, and locks eyes with Edward in his face-mask and Winston grinning back with a mouthful of over-sized teeth. He shakes his head in a quick blur.

The cart races off, Reg pants after it. Up ahead, Booksie and Ben notice the approaching chaos. They exchange incredulous looks.

Lazer propels the cart onward, skater style, it hurtles towards Ben and Booksie.

LAZER
Somebody order a taxi?!

Ben and Booksie steel themselves. The cart races by and they jump on. It barrels down the aisle and bursts through the exit. WHEEZING Reg breaks off his pursuit.

EXT. DENTAL SUPPLY WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The guys hurry their supplies into Lazer’s van.

BEN
That’s everything, start her up.

Lazer fires up the ignition. The guys swap relieved smiles. Out of nowhere, a golf cart zips out in front, blocking them in. Reginald Devereaux always gets his man.
INT. LAZER’S VAN

Lazer bangs the steering wheel in frustration and throws himself back into his seat. The guys watch Reg approach.

    REG
    Everybody out!

EXT. LAZER’S VAN

The guys line up. Reg inspects them up and down.

    REG
    Today’s life lesson kids...Reginald Devereraux always get’s his man.

Reg points to slender Edward.

    REG
    You there, spindles...open her up.

Edward slumps to the rear of the van, followed by Reg. He opens up the vehicle. Ben and the rest gather around.

    REG
    Well, well. What do we have here?

Reg steps forward. He prods at the alginate sacks.

    CHONG
    We pay for everything!

Reg holsters his nightstick.

    REG
    Sure you did. I ain’t buyin’ it buckos...not even on double coupon day.

Reg leans in and tears open the sack of alginate. The white powder gleams back at him.

    REG
    Well, I’ll be damned. They’ll make me sarge for this.

    BEN
    That’s not what it looks like --

    REG
    Stealin’ to fund your habits no doubt? It all makes sense now.
Booksie steps forward.

**BOOKSIE**
What can we say Reggie boy? You caught us fair and square. What you got right there is prime Peruvian marching powder -- Colombian flake, fresh off the boat.

**REG**
I knew it!

The guys shoot desperate looks to Booksie.

**BOOKSIE**
Only one way to be sure though.

**REG**
Don’t tell me how it works! I watch the crime stories!

Reg licks a finger and dips it into the alginate. He runs it over his gums. Unsure, he samples another mouthful.

Reg licks his lips -- something is wrong -- the powder, combined with his saliva is causing the alginate to set. Reg attempts to pry his mouth open, his hand gets stuck.

The friends can’t look away. Reg, now bug-eyed, uses his other hand to pry his fingers from his mouth, it gets stuck in the setting alginate too! Booksie pats his head.

**BOOKSIE**
Awww, they’re cute when they’re still small.

Reg yanks his hand. Alginate goop drips from his nose.

**BOOKSIE**
Let’s get out of here. It’s been a blast Reggie, but we gotta bail.

Booksie motions to the boys. Lazer and Chong push the golf cart out of the way. Everyone piles in and they screech off, leaving Reg struggling in the rear-view.

**INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Ben and the gang make the finishing touches transforming Booksie’s garage into a rudimentary workshop.
BEN
It’s no lab, but it’ll have to do.

Booksie turns to her friends.

BOOKSIE
What we’re about to do here has never been attempted before in the history of ever. If there’s anybody who isn’t up to the task, they should speak up now.

The friends remain silent. Ben smiles proudly. He digs into the bag of alginate and takes a powdery handful.

BEN
This is it, the stuff that’s gonna make it all possible.

Ben drops the powder into a bowl of water, gives it a quick stir. Booksie takes the bowl from Ben and studies the thick pink paste.

BOOKSIE
Looks like clown diarrhea. Okay modern dentistry, let’s do this, we ride at dawn.

LAZER
Just one more thing!

Lazer reaches out and clicks on a nearby cassette recorder. Sweet velvet rock from his beloved SWORD OF DAMOCLES bounces off the walls.

MONTAGE
- Ben shows Booksie how it all works. He plunges her hand into the alginate paste and reveals the end product—a perfect replica of her hand.

- Booksie’s face is completely smothered in alginate, she has straws up her nose to help her breathe. Ben hands her a life-cast of her own face. She is amazed.

- Chong pulls spaceship after spaceship from the molds. He hands them over to Lazer for painting.

- Edward, with matchsticks holding his eyes open, installs electronics. Engines and cockpits glow with colored lights.

- Winston is busy running errands, taking bags of chips and soda over to the guys.
- Ben nods off briefly, Booksie shakes him awake and crams a doughnut into his mouth.

- The counters are now brimming with a plethora of incredible creations; space stations, fighters, creatures.

- Booksie labels the growing collection and packs them away in boxes. She squints at the morning sun peeping through the small garage window.

BACK TO SCENE - MORNING

The guys stretch. They admire the fruits of their labors.

BOOKSIE
Holy sore girl parts...I’m beat.

Booksie looks to the guys.

BOOKSIE
Who’s ready for a kick-ass road trip? Destination amazing!

INT. LAZER’S VAN - MORNING

Lazer turns the key, the van sputters into life.

LAZER
Gotta make a quick stop, promised my girl I’d bring her along.

BOOKSIE
We’re cuttin’ it real fine here, Lazer.

Lazer nods, adjusts his mirror. The van screeches off.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - MORNING

Boggs opens his office door. He spies Helton Cane’s ad on the floor which Booksie tossed away earlier. He kneels and picks it up. Hagula’s bony legs appear before him.

HAGULA
I just got off the phone with the district office, they got the fire-chief’s report. They know the fire was started deliberately, Emery. They want answers.
Boggs eyes Hagula’s wrinkled stockings for a beat then stands. He unravels the ad and cocks an eyebrow.

**BOGGS**

Then we’ll just have to give them some. The minute Waldorf and his goons turn up, send them to me. I have an appointment with the superintendent in ten minutes and I intend to give him a show.

**EXT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MORNING**

Lazer ties his shoe, looks to his friends in the van.

**LAZER**

Give me five minutes.

Lazer darts off towards the school entrance.

**INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING**

Peering through the classroom window, Lazer beckons wildly. Juanita appears, she pecks him on the cheek.

**LAZER**

Got everythin’?

Juanita nods. They turn to leave.

**HAGULA (O.S.)**

One moment!

Lazer and Juanita spin on their heels. The gaunt face of Hagula leers back at them.

**HAGULA**

And where do you think you’re going?

Lazer cups Juanita’s pregnant paunch.

**LAZER**

She’s not feelin’ well, I’m takin’ her to the docs.

**HAGULA**

In that case, you will need a release. Come with me.

Lazer takes Juanita by the arm.
LAZER
We don’t have time for this.

Juanita resists.

JUANITA
Won’t take long. We sign, we go...please Lazer.

Lazer caves. They follow Hagula to the principal’s office.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - MORNING

Lazer and Juanita enter. Hagula locks the door - the trap is sprung. Lazer stares over at Boggs and the superintendent.

BOGGS
Take a seat...mister? I don’t think I’ve had the pleasure.

LAZER
It’s Lazer, just Lazer.

Boggs glances to the superintendent, gestures.

BOGGS
Superintendent, I give you one of the co-conspirators in our recent misfortunes. If instinct serves me well, I suspect the others will be along shortly.

SUPERINTENDENT
I must commend you on your diligence, Emery. The district is keen to draw a line under this whole episode.

INT. LAZER’S VAN - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Booksie grabs Chong’s wrist, checks his watch. Edward gnaws on his fingernails.

BOOKSIE
We can’t just sit here, let’s go see what’s keepin’ him.

Winston barks with excitement. Ben pats his head.
BEN
You wait here boy, we won’t be long. You gotta guard the van, k?

Winston pants. The guys pile out.

INT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - HALL - MORNING

Ben, Booksie, Edward and Chong creep down the corridor. Up ahead, Uncle Cheng empties a trash can. They bee-line for him.

CHONG
Uncle, seen Lazer ‘round here?

Uncle Cheng points to the principal’s office.

UNCLE CHENG
Stuck in there with Boggs. From sound of things, not goin’ too well.

The gang frown. Ben motions.

EXT. PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben presses his ear to the door. Raised voices can be heard.

INT. PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The superintendent implores Lazer.

SUPERINTENDENT
Mr. Lazer, I ask you again. Assist us with our inquiries and I’ll ensure this whole unfortunate business unfolds more smoothly for you.

Boggs leans in.

BOGGS
Eye witnesses confirm your vehicle was spotted on school grounds on the night of the fire. What do you have to say for yourself?

LAZER
Listen to what you’re sayin’ man. Why would we burn down our own clubhouse?
BOGGS
Elementary really. You wanted to drum up more sympathy for yourselves whilst alienating me in the process.

Lazer SIGHS.

BOGGS
We’ve given you ample opportunity to confess your sins. You leave me with no choice but to suspend you for the rest of the school year.

Lazer frets, he looks to Juanita.

LAZER
Dude, no! I got responsibilities now! I need that diploma man!

BOGGS
Then tell me what I want to hear...

EXT. PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben strains at the door. His friends look on.

CHONG
Well?! What goin’ on in there?

BEN
They’re tryin’ to pin everything on me but Lazer ain’t talkin’. Boggs is makin’ damn sure he ain’t gonna graduate though.

Ben looks to a payphone on the wall.

BEN
It’s time to execute order three eleven and call in the cavalry. Who’s got a quarter?

INT. PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

All eyes on Lazer.

SUPERINTENDENT
I’m giving you one last chance.

Lazer glances at Hagula, her eyes seer into him.
Suddenly, the office door bursts open. Boggs and Hagula pivot. Uncle Cheng kneels at the lock with his keys. Ben and the gang stand firm in the doorway.

**HAGULA**
Answer him.

Suddenly, the office door bursts open. Boggs and Hagula pivot. Uncle Cheng kneels at the lock with his keys. Ben and the gang stand firm in the doorway.

**BEN**
Back off Boggs, leave him alone.

Juanita and Lazer stand. They hurry over to their friends. Chong eyes her pregnant belly.

**CHONG**
Lazer out to be a dad! Look guys!

The friends hug Juanita. A moment of warmth among the hostilities.

**BOGGS**
I must commend you on the loyalty of your friends, Waldorf. Even in the face of such adversity, they never leave your side.

**BOOKSIE**
We don’t need this Ben, let’s get out of here.

Boggs is oddly calm.

**BOGGS**
I wonder if your little band of delinquents will feel so smug when I sign the paperwork ordering all of their expulsions? Truancy? Recalcitrance? Destruction of private property?

Ben steps forward. He eyes his tormentor.

**BEN**
I know what happened Boggs – between you and my dad, he told me everything. There’s no need to punish them, take it out on me if you have to.

Boggs smirks. Hagula hands him the paperwork.

**CHONG**
Wait, can’t do that! Eddie up for scholarship, Lazer need that diploma!
BOGGS
You should have thought of that before you crossed Emery Boggs. Punks like you are why I’ll never retire.

Boggs sneers.

BOGGS
I wouldn’t worry about your future Waldorf, because you don’t have one. Just like that useless father of yours.

Chong cocks back his fist and rushes at Boggs, it takes all of Ben’s strength to hold him back.

BEN
Chong no! That’s exactly what he wants.

Chong composes himself. Boggs looks to the superintendent, who is genuinely shocked at the unfolding events.

BOGGS
You see Superintendent? The hurdles I find myself up against?

Boggs readies his pen— the friends grit their teeth. Suddenly, a familiar voice parts the air.

VOICE (O.S.)
We won’t be expelling anybody here today...

Heads swing, the welcome sight of Principal Vickers stands in the doorway. Ben’s face lights up.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
This has gone far enough.

Vickers strides in.

BEN
It’s great to see you, sir!

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I got here as soon as I could, Ben.

Boggs puts down his pen, he leers at Vickers.
BOGGS
Must I remind you that I run things around here now?

SUPERINTENDENT
We’re dealing with a very sensitive situation here, Mr. Vickers. I suggest you come back at a more convenient time.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I’m perfectly aware of that, sir. I have some information which may shed new light on your investigation.

Principal Vickers gestures to the door.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Miss Dukes, please come in.

The dejected frame of Crystal Dukes appears in the doorway. Boggs’ face drains of color. Hagula’s smirk dies.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I’m afraid Miss Dukes here couldn’t keep her little secrets to herself. She boasted of her recent exploits to several of the cheerleaders over at King’s. Apparently, she claims Boggs put them up to the whole thing.

Crystal scoffs, plays with her hair.

CRYSTAL
Dunno what you’re talkin’ about. I was outta town that night.

Boggs chimes in.

BOGGS
The idle gossip of an air-headed strumpet? You really must do better Vickers.

SUPERINTENDENT
I’m afraid Emery is right, Mr. Vickers. We’re gonna need more than that.
Juanita looks over to Crystal, something is sparking a recollection in her. She digs around in her purse and pulls out the Polaroid taken earlier when she and Lazer were frolicking in the van.

Juanita waves the picture, points to Crystal.

JUANITA
It her! It her!

Lazer takes the picture from Juanita. It clearly shows Crystal and Tony siphoning gas from Lazer’s van with a liquor bottle on the night of the fire.

LAZER
Snuggles, where’d ya get this?

JUANITA
In camera!

Vickers gestures for the photo, Lazer hands it over.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Out of town, huh? I think this picture paints a different story. Next time you siphon gas madam, I suggest you do it from a vehicle that isn’t getting lived in at the time.

Boggs’ eyes burn into Crystal Dukes.

BOGGS
You fool!

Uncle Cheng pipes up.

UNCLE CHENG
Count me in as witness too! I heard all your schemes!

CHONG
You screwed Boggs...screwed!

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
I’m sure the police will be very interested to see if that rather unique looking gas can matches the one found at the scene. They’ll want to speak with you too, Hagstrom. Dereliction of duty, gross misconduct. Quite the rap sheet.
Hagula’s cheeks pucker. Boggs flops back into his chair. The superintendent stands.

SUPERINTENDENT
Emery Boggs, in light of the new evidence presented here today, I see no alternative but to suspend you forthwith. In the meantime, I am installing Mr. Vickers as interim principal at East Clayton High.

Vickers turns to Ben with his characteristic warm smile.

PRINCIPAL VICKERS
Mr. Waldorf, I believe you have somewhere to be? I’ll take it from here.

Ben BEAMS, Booksie punches the air.

BOOKSIE
Great to have you back, sir!

EXT. EAST CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

Ben, Booksie and the gang file from the school.

BOOKSIE
That was awesome!

CHONG
Double awesome! Don’t think we’ll be hearing from Boggs in a while.

Chong looks at his watch.

CHONG
Uh oh! Better hurry, we runnin’ out of time!

The guys hustle to the van. Lazer is the first to notice – all of his tires have been let down.

LAZER
That’s just great man! Just great!

CHONG
Damn Carbone! How they like it if I run over their football?
SLENDER EDWARD
You don’t have a license, Chong.

CHONG
Don’t have car either!

Booksie glances across the parking lot. Brutus kicks at the flat tires of his motorcycle. He pads over.

BRUTUS
You too eh? I’ve had about as much as I can take from those guys.

A COP CAR pulls into the grounds. Booksie scans it.

BOOKSIE
I have a feeling Carbone won’t be bothering us for much longer.

Brutus looks to the doleful faces around him, then to Booksie, she points to the boxes in Lazer’s van.

BOOKSIE
We had to be somewhere, like yesterday. We’re all takin’ it pretty hard.

Half a beat passes. A spark flashes in Brutus’ eyes.

BRUTUS
Grab your stuff and come with me, I got an idea.

Ben stirs, Chong restrains him.

CHONG
Ben, what you doing? It Brutus man.

BEN
Take a look around Chong, we don’t have many options left.

Chong silently agrees. The friends move away.

EXT. SOUTH EAST PARKING LOT – CONTINUOUS

Brutus leads the guys over to the Claymore’s TEAM BUS. He feels around under the wheel arch and pulls out a key.

BRUTUS
Get in.
INT. TEAM BUS - MORNING

The friends find their seats and get comfortable. The cop car seen arriving earlier now leaves the school. Boggs, Hagula and Tony Carbone sweat it off in the backseat. Wild CHEERS break out.

Pockets of students in the parking lot, arriving late to class, also notice Boggs’ plight and burst into jubilant celebrations.

CHONG
Don’t forget to write Bogg breath!

SLENDER EDWARD
It is highly unlikely he would forget such a basic skill, Chong.

Chong looks to Edward, deadpanning back at him.

CHONG
I freakin’ love you Eddie, I ever tell you that?!

INT./EXT. TEAM BUS - TRAVELING - DAY

The team bus buzzes down the highway. Booksie leans from the window, the wind whips at her hair.

INT. CLAYTON POLICE STATION - EVENING

Boggs’ fingerprints are taken, his mugshot is snapped. The DESK SERGEANT glowers back at him, motions to a payphone.

DESK SERGEANT
One call, and make it snappy.

A wry smile grows across Boggs’ face, he pulls out the ad from his pocket and scans Helton Cane’s number.

EXT. THE HILLS - HELTON CANE’S RANCH - EVENING

Ben takes a breath, looks to the sprawling ranch before him, it’s the only abode for miles. He rings the bell.

No answer. Brutus steps forward and thumps on the door with a closed fist. Stirring can be heard within, the heavy oak door opens.
A well put together woman in her thirties peers back at them. Helton Cane’s personal assistant, MISS HENDRICKS, eyes the motley crew before her.

MISS HENDRICKS
(British accent)
May I help you?

Ben clears his throat.

BEN
We’re here to see Helton, I mean Mr. Cane.

MISS HENDRICKS
And do you have an appointment?

BEN
It’s about the ad, for the movie, we have some things for him.

Ben gestures to his friends, they hold out the boxes and smile back awkwardly. Miss Hendricks frowns.

MISS HENDRICKS
I’m afraid the deadline for submissions has passed. Now if you’ll excuse me...

Miss Hendricks closes the door. Winston barks.

BEN
Please mam, we’ve come a long way. We just ask you take a quick look.

A hot second passes, the door opens. Miss Hendricks looks into Ben’s honest face.

MISS HENDRICKS
Give me your sample and wait here.

Lazer hands over a box, the door closes. Ben and Chong glance at each other nervously.

LAZER
Ten bucks she’s callin’ the cops.

A brief moment passes. The door reopens.

MISS HENDRICKS
This is most irregular. Follow me, the dog will have to stay here.
Before Miss Hendricks can object, Winston and the gang bundle past her. She sighs.

INT. HELTON CANE’S RANCH – HALLWAY – EVENING

Ben paces. He eyes the framed movie posters on the wall.

BEN
My hands are sweating.

BOOKSIE
Will you chill please? We made it through and delivered the bomb, everything’s gonna be fine.

Booksie helps Juanita into a chair.

BOOKSIE
I’m so excited for you Juanita, you must be very excited.

Juanita nods shyly. Lazer checks his pockets.

LAZER
I nearly forgot!

Lazer pulls out some tootsie rolls and hands them out.

LAZER
Couldn’t afford cigars.

Miss Hendricks appears.

MISS HENDRICKS
Mr. Cane will see you now.

INT. HELTON CANE’S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

The gang stand before HELTON CANE, a thickset, bearded man in his mid 50’s. He eats supper at his desk. Ben ogles the plush wood paneled room as the growing silence looms.

Helton finishes his meal and puts the plate down for Winston, who trots over and laps at the gravy. Helton scans the box before him. Still he doesn’t talk.

Pulling out several model spacecraft, Helton inspects them one by one. His face gives nothing away. The group wait for a sign – anything. Ben can’t bear it any longer.
BEN
There’s a switch on that
freighter...under the fuel tank.

Helton fires up the electronics, the model comes to life in
his hand. He adjusts the folding wings, shakes his head.

HELTON CANE
Amazing...

The friends let out an audible GASP of relief. Booksie
beams. Even Brutus’ heart skipped a beat.

HELTON CANE
I won’t lie to you. These are head
and shoulders above anything I’ve
seen so far.

Cane swivels in his seat and points to a large poster on the
wall behind him. The colorful letters spell out: "SPACE
WARP!" Ben admires the artwork.

HELTON CANE
What I’m working on here has never
been attempted before, at least not
on the scale I intend.

Helton faces forward. He looks to the faces beaming back at
him, clinging on to his every word.

HELTON CANE
Based on what I’ve seen here today,
I would be very interested in
pursuing a creative partnership. I
not only need miniatures you
understand, but a wide variety of
practical props as well.

The group listen closely.

HELTON CANE
I’m also trialling a new system, I
call it green screen, it will allow
for far more elaborate scene
composition. You guys think you can
wrap your heads around that?

Ben looks to Edward, who nods back enthusiastically.

BEN
Absolutely, sir!

Miss Hendricks enters. She walks over to Cane and whispers
low into his ear. Helton’s face clouds up. He turns to Ben.
HELTON CANE
How old are you, kid?

Puzzled, Ben looks to Booksie, then back at Cane.

BEN
Sixteen sir...why?

Helton sighs. He looks at the models on his desk and starts packing them up. Slender Edward looks to Lazer, who looks to Chong.

BEN
Sir?

HELTON CANE
We just received a rather troubling phone call, from someone concerned we were exploiting children over here.

CHONG
Boggs!

HELTON CANE
Do you realize how many child labor laws I’d be breaking by employing you guys? Quite a few I’d imagine.

The gravity of the situation sinks in. Ben is distraught.

HELTON CANE
I really thought you were freshmen. I’m sorry, but my hands are tied.

Cane looks at the box of models.

HELTON CANE
Damn shame. When you guys get a little older, give me a call, okay?

Ben can’t believe what he’s hearing. Helton Cane hands the box of models over, the gang slump slowly from the room.

INT. HELTON CANE’S RANCH – HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Chong beats his head against the door-frame.

BRUTUS
Man, that was rough.
Booksie, on the verge of tears, looks over to her guys. Ben is catatonic, Chong is self-inducing a brain injury and Edward rocks himself back and forth on the floor.


BRUTUS
What’s that all about?

Booksie strains to listen.

BOOKSIE
Something about -- being too old --
I can’t quite make it out.

Booksie and Brutus head over. Juanita slugs Lazer again.

BOOKSIE
Guys, guys...take it easy. Juanita,
I know this is a lot to take in,
but you can’t go upsetting yourself
like this.

Juanita pokes Lazer hard.

JUANITA
Tell her, Eugene, you tell her now!

Ben, Chong and Edward look over.

CHONG
Eugene? You called Eugene?!

BOOKSIE
Yeah "Eugene", you better speak up.

LAZER
Okay, okay! Look, I bin kinda held
back these last few years...I never
claim to be the main brain round
here, ya know?

Ben, Chong and Edward stand, they slump over.

BEN
What are you sayin’ Lazer? You’re
not really seventeen?
LAZER
Look, can we just go now?

CHONG
You not getting it, Lazer!

LAZER
I totally get it, man! You guys just won’t let it go. It’s bad enough we lost our big chance, now you gotta embarrass me too?

Booksie puts her arm around Lazer.

BOOKSIE
You’re eighteen dude...

Ben leans in.

BEN
Old enough to sign a legal contract...

Lazer’s lightbulb comes on. The group mob him.

INT. HELTON CANE’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Helton’s office door swings open. The gang stand in the doorway like western outlaws. Helton Cane glances up from his work.

HELTON CANE
Forget something?

With no words, the gang push Lazer back into the office. He digs around for his driving license and puts it on Cane’s desk. Helton puts on his spectacles and studies the I.D.

HELTON CANE
Well, this changes everything. Ready to make some history?

Double high-fives and fist bumps all around.

EXT. HELTON CANE’S RANCH - DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Ben holds up a check, the gang gather round.

BEN
I’ve never seen so many zeros.
Chong gestures for the check, Ben hands it over. Chong stares at it in rapture.

    BOOKSIE
    We’re still splittin’ everything
    straight down the middle, right?
    Seventy/thirty?

    CHONG
    Yeah right, ha ha! You good
    Booksie!

    BEN
    Now the real work begins. We gotta
    rent some space...get situated.

Brutus pats Ben on the back. He turns to face the big guy.

    BEN
    Thanks for everything man, I mean
    it.

They exchange a cool handshake. Booksie and Ben pause as the others drift on ahead. Booksie smiles, adjusts Ben’s collar.

    BOOKSIE
    You know, it just occurred to me.
    I’ve never known a Benjamin before.
    Plenty of Steves, a John here and
    there, but never a Benjamin.

Ben smiles.

    BEN
    You’ve been a cast iron friend,
    Booksie.

    BOOKSIE
    Stick around long enough and I’ll
    make you believe you can do
    anythin’.

Ben rolls his eyes at the cheese. He could dip his nachos in that one.

    BOOKSIE
    I’m gonna miss you Ben. Damn these
    emotional highs.

Ben and Booksie share a moment. The guys gather round. Booksie consumes them in the mother of all hugs.
EXT. LOS ANGELES - GRAND AVENUE - EVENING

SUPER: "THE GLORIOUS EVENING - TWO YEARS LATER"

Close up on a pair of scuffed shoes treading the sidewalk. They attempt a quick polish on the back of tuxedo pants. Another pair of shoes appears, then three, then four.

Joining them, a pair of black converse high tops and a set of dog paws. Booksie raises the rim of her black trilby.

BOOKSIE
  Bin awhile.

Ice cool, Ben nods.

BOOKSIE
  You grew out your hair...

Booksie pinches Ben’s cheek.

BOOKSIE
  And attempted a beard.

Ben looks to Booksie’s flowing curls.

BEN
  So did you...not the beard I mean.

Ben flusters. The guys drop their pretense and crash into each other’s arms. Winston mobs Ben with mad licks. Ben looks Booksie up and down in her little black dress.

BOOKSIE
  What’s wrong?

BEN
  Nothing. Just not used to seeing you in a dress, that’s all.

Booksie scans the boys in their tuxes, all pastel ruffles and bow ties.

BOOKSIE
  Don’t get used to it, Benjy.

Winston BARKS, drawing attention to his own bow tie and white collar.

BEN
  You look great too, Winston.

Winston pants, Chong beams.
Slender Edward pulls out his over-familiarity card. Booksie smiles, she’s missed these guys. Firing a glance across the street, Booksie eyes a movie theater; a long line stretches around the block.

BOOKSIE
I can’t believe it’s still in theaters.

LAZER
It’s breakin’ records all over the country.

BOOKSIE
Which country?

CHONG
Pick one! Toy-line and comic books comin’ soon!

Booksie glances into a store window; several TVs beam various clips of Helton Cane doing publicity interviews on popular talk shows. An action packed trailer for SPACE WARP! shows on another.

BOOKSIE
Can you believe this? What a story!
I smell a New York Times bestselling beach read.

Booksie turns to the guys.

BOOKSIE
What you gonna do now?

BEN
The offers keep flooding in. We’re still weighing up all our options. You know, we’re gonna need a manager...

Booksie looks to Ben, he’s dead serious.

BOOKSIE
That reminds me...whatever happened to Boggs?
CHONG
Last we heard, been sent away -- indefinitely.

LAZER
Wherever it is they dump toxic waste.

BOOKSIE
He’s a man of great convictions alright. Mostly felonies and class A misdemeanors. Bet he’s rockin’ that orange jumpsuit.

The guys chuckle.

BEN
Turns out he was suspended from teaching in three other states. Shouldn’t have been anywhere near a classroom.

CHONG
Even more good news! Ben rented dad new condo, he got part-time job, doin’ great now!

Booksie delights at the news. She shoots a long glance down the street, an imposing building looms up ahead - it’s obvious something on a very grand scale is taking place.

Crowds gather outside, limos pull up and people dressed to the nines spill out.

BOOKSIE
You guys ready? Let’s do this.

EXT. GRAND AVENUE - ALHAMBRA THEATER - EVENING

Ben and the gang jostle towards the theater entrance through the shimmering gowns and tuxedos. Flash bulbs POP from the gathered press. People notice Winston in his bow tie and point and smile.

BOOKSIE
Look at this place! That dame is wearing half of South Africa’s mineral deposits around her neck.

Still rubbernecking, the friends bump into a burly DOORMAN blocking their path. They crane upwards at the sour face staring down at them. Ben steadies himself on a velvet rope and fumbles through his tuxedo pockets.
BEN
Chong, tell me you have the tickets?

Chong pats himself down, shakes his head.

CHONG
Thought Lazer had them.

LAZER
Don’t look at me, dude!

The doorman grows impatient.

DOORMAN
Okay kids, you’ve had your fun. Prom’s down the street - and take the mutt with you.

BEN
But...

DOORMAN
You heard me junior, beat it!

The doorman puts a meaty hand on Ben’s shoulder and pushes him away. Winston barks.

CHONG
Hey! Don’t touch him!

Ben and the gang backpedal into the crowd. Jewelry CLANKS, people REACT. They retreat back to the curb.

SOME TIME LATER

In full on mope-mode, the friends sit and sulk. The crowds have gone, the avenue is empty. Ben stands and dusts himself off.

BEN
We haven’t come all this way to give up now. We’re just gonna have to find another way in.

CHONG
You crazy, Ben.

Booksie perks up. She adjusts her dress.
BOOKSIE
Show me a red-blooded man that
knows what he wants! You heard him!

EXT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Shadows dance on the wall. Ben leads his friends to the rear
of the theater. He stops at a fire exit and runs his hands
over the door. Without warning, he shoulders it hard.

Ben rams it again, and again, looks painful. The sturdy door
holds firm. Chong takes off his jacket, hands it to Edward.

CHONG
Never thought I say this, where
Brutus when you need him?

Chong joins Ben, they barge at the door together as the rest
watch on. Lazer looks to Booksie, he too joins in. All three
shoulder the door. Winston pants on eagerly.

The door is bowing under the pressure. Booksie looks to
Edward. In an unspoken acknowledgment they answer the call
and join Ben and the guys.

BEN
Right, on three. One...two...three!

The door bursts open. The swell of MUSIC and APPLAUSE rushes
out into the night air. The gang look to the scene before
them with slack jaws.

The majestic hall is a sea of red velvet and humanity.
Crystal chandeliers sparkle overhead. The mezzanine balcony
keeps a dizzying watch over a deep stage below.

Hundreds of celebrities and moguls applaud as a grand
orchestra blasts its sweeping fanfare. Ben looks to his
friends, they nod to each other and step inside.

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Resembling latecomers at a matinee, the gang excuse
themselves as they tiptoe through the rows. Winston makes
his way between legs.

BEN
Sorry...coming though.
CHONG
Benjamin, what we do?!

BEN
I don’t know! find a seat...

Chong smiles awkwardly at the faces staring back at him.

SLENDER EDWARD
There aren’t any seats Ben. This isn’t the school cafeteria. Any more bright ideas?

Members of the audience are getting visibly frustrated at the disruption. GRUMBLEs fill the air. Booksie points. From their elevated position at the back of the hall, they see distant figures on stage.

BOOKSIE
Look! It’s Helton!

The guys squint over. SECURITY GUARDS are gathering in the aisles. Looking more like secret service agents, they mumble into their sleeves.

SLENDER EDWARD
We got trouble.

LAZER
Yeah dude, and they look pretty pissed.

BEN
Split up, head for the stage. We have to make it to Helton, it’s our only chance.

The gang look to the approaching guards shuffling up the row towards them, they hurry away in the opposite direction.

The guards pursue the friends around the packed theater, house lights go up, illuminating the fleeting figures. Sections of the audience are now standing, straining to get a better view of the action.

A guard closes in fast on Ben, makes a mad lunge, Winston trips him. Ben hurries on, Helton Cane can be seen onstage talking with the HOST, laden down with gold statuettes.

Ben zones in on another guard heading towards him from the other direction. He waves frantically at Helton as security closes in.
The rest of the Special Defects Department are rounded up. Security grabs them by their collars, even Winston. They lead them from the hall.

Helton Cane notices the chaos and double-takes down to Ben. The guards haul him away. BOOS and HECKLES fill the air. Helton grabs the microphone.

HELTON CANE
Now wait just a minute, those kids are with me...

The guards continue to drag the friends from the hall, the boos are getting louder. More audience members get to their feet. Television cameras swing over to cover the action.

Helton Cane hands his awards to the host and adjusts the microphone.

HELTON CANE
I said those kids are with me!

The security guards stop, one by one the friends are released. Ben straightens his collar to ripples of applause.

HELTON CANE
Yes even the dog...get up here Winston.

Bursts of energized applause ring out as Winston is released. He pads down the aisle in his little bow tie and joins the others. They gather at the base of the stage. Helton smiles down.

HELTON CANE
Well, what are you waiting for?

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - MAIN STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The gang clamber up on stage, the glitz and the glamor surrounds them. The host addresses Ben.

HOST
Quite the entrance, young man.

The host turns to Helton Cane.

HOST
You know these guys?
HELTON CANE
Know them? These are my kids.

The friends surround Helton and rubberneck as they try to take it all in. A giant screen behind them erupts with clips of Space Warp! Lazer leans into the mic.

LAZER
You’re like the nicest people ever.

The huge audience swells. Helton removes the mic from its stand and moves amongst Ben and his friends.

HELTON CANE
You know, back when this little movie of mine was just a seed in a small corner of my mind, I was faced with the difficult task of how to make it all a reality. Not really knowing what to do, I placed an ad in the paper hoping for the best. I must have interviewed over three hundred people.

Helton catches Ben’s eye, puts a paternal arm around him.

HELTON CANE
Little did I know then, that a group of high school kids and their pet dog would steal my heart and help propel Space Warp into the phenomena it is today. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you...Ben, Booksie, Walter, Edward, Lazer and Winston. The Special Defects Department!

Instant applause. Cameras FLASH from all four corners of the cavernous hall. Helton Cane hands Ben the award.

HELTON CANE
I believe this is yours, young man. Winner for best special effects in a major motion picture...

Ben takes the award. The orchestra bursts into life, the audience gets to their feet.
INT. POP’S PLACE - CONTINUOUS

Pops, glued to the tube, sits on the edge of his seat. He drags a sleeve across his tear strewn face.

POPS
I love you kid.

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - MAIN STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Streamers drift down. The world slows to a crawl. Ben and Booksie ogle the magic, sandwiched in tight by the blurred figures celebrating around them. They turn to each other.

BEN
I might have a massive crush on you.

BOOKSIE
I never would have guessed.

Booksie takes Ben’s hand and they share a long gaze. Suddenly, the world around them restores to normal – music and noise flood back in. Edward turns to Booksie.

SLENDER EDWARD
Miss Shooster, you asked me once if I was ever experiencing a good time. I do believe I’m having one now.

Ben and Booksie throw back their heads. With Helton looking on proudly, the friends grab the golden statuette in Ben’s hand and thrust it towards the sky in a triumphant act of unity.

FADE OUT:

THE END