

Popular: Senior Year
"California Dreamin'"
by
The Wild Pikachu

POPULAR: SENIOR YEAR

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. MCQUEEN DEN - EVENING

SUPER: September 10th, 2001

Harrison and Brooke are sitting side-by-side on the edge of her bed, not looking at each other and very carefully not touching each other.

BROOKE

Harrison—

HARRISON

Tomorrow. I'll tell her tomorrow.

BROOKE

What? What are you going to tell her?

HARRISON

(grimacing)

I'm still kinda working on that part. I think—maybe I'll just go with the "needing space" thing. Girls understand that, right?

BROOKE

(distantly)

Oh—yeah. Right.

Harrison starts to lay his hand on hers, but she shies away.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Don't...please. you promised—we promised—not until you break things off with Sam.

HARRISON

I know, but—I miss you, Brooke.

BROOKE

(bleakly)

Please, don't make this harder. It's already—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brooke turns away.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Where is she?

HARRISON
Upstairs.

BROOKE
You shouldn't be here.

HARRISON
(exasperated)
Brooke, we aren't doing anything.

Brooke runs her hand through her hair.

BROOKE
(forlornly)
I know.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM

Humming, Sam is on her way out the door when the phone rings. Turning on a dime, she heads back across the room and picks it up.

SAM
(into the phone)
Hello?

PETE (V.O.)
(over the phone)
Sammy?

SAM
Uncle Pete?

PETE (V.O.)
Hi, Sammy.

SAM
Where are you? Hang on, I'll get Mom.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. A JETLINER CABIN

Pete McPherson is sitting on the aisle, airphone in hand.

PETE

Naw, I've only got a couple of minutes. We're just about to start heading down to JFK.

SAM

You're in New York? I thought you were still in Egypt!

PETE

Wrapped up there a week ago. I was supposed to be back here last Thursday, but I got held up in Cyprus, and my flight from Rome got cancelled, and...well, better late than never, I guess. So, you up for a visit from your long-lost favorite uncle?

SAM

You're coming here?!

PETE

You got it, kiddo. I need to check in at the office tomorrow morning, and then I'm officially on vacation—and on the first flight out to L.A.

(beat)

Oh, I got you something.

SAM

What is it?!!

PETE

You'll see.

SAM

Come on—give me a hint at least!

PETE

(thinking)

It's...educational.

SAM

(rolls her eyes)

Yeah, right.

A passing flight attendant taps Pete on the shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Oops, I gotta go now.

SAM

I can't wait to see you—I love
you.

PETE

Love you too, kiddo. See you in a
couple of days.

Hanging up the phone, Sam jogs lightly out of the room.

WHITE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. KENNEDY HIGH - DAY

SUPER: September 21, 2001

The campus might be a bit more subdued, but for the most part the kids are getting on with their lives.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Carmen is standing by her locker when Mary Cherry comes rushing up.

MARY CHERRY

Carmen! Carmen! I've got it!!

CARMEN

(shaking her head)

What have you got?

MARY CHERRY

Why, the answer to our problems,
of course!

CARMEN

If this is about the Glamazons—

MARY CHERRY

Of course it's about the
Glamazons! What else would it be
about?

CARMEN

I don't know, Mary Cherry. I
mean, maybe Brooke is right. It
just doesn't seem to important
anymore.

MARY CHERRY

Are you kidding? It's very
important! Look, I can't do
anything about all that stuff
that's going on everywhere else,
but this here is my turf.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY (CONT'D)

As red-blooded American high-school senior girls, it is our patriotic duty to see to it that the natural social order is restored. Like my mama says, carpe the diem, and honey, I intend to do some carping!

CARMEN

Okay, even assuming that bringing back the Glamazons is... patriotic...I still don't see how we can do it. The Career Day thing was a fiasco, and with everyone in a funk these days...

MARY CHERRY

Didn't I say I had the answer to that? Come on!

Mary Cherry grabs Carmen by the arm and drags her off.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Cherry comes bursting through the door, still dragging Carmen behind her. After looking around to see if anyone else is there, she motions for silence. Mary Cherry then meticulously stoops down and peers under the door of each stall, while Carmen waits and stewes. Finally Carmen lets out an exasperated snort and throws her hands into the air.

CARMEN

All right, Mary Cherry, what's this all about?!

Mary Cherry hurries back across the room.

MARY CHERRY

(hushed)

This information is absolutely top secret. Nobody else can learn of this—especially those Bring It people!

CARMEN

(thoroughly frustrated)

Learn of what?!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY

I have it on very good authority that the hottest musical act in these United States of America is coming right here, to this very school.

CARMEN

Britney Spears?

MARY CHERRY

Bigger.

CARMEN

N'Sync?

MARY CHERRY

Bigger!

CARMEN

(eyes narrowing)

Wait a minute—you don't mean...

Mary Cherry nods excited, and whips out a CD showing five twenty-something guys, all chewing gum and blowing pink bubbles.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

(awestruck)

The Bubblegum Boys!

MARY CHERRY

According to my source, they're coming here to shoot the video to their retro-techno-pop remake of the Mamas and the Papas classic "California Dreamin'!"

CARMEN

That seems strange, somehow.

MARY CHERRY

I know! It seems that they had this school in New York all picked out, but now they don't want to fly there! So instead, they're going local—namely, right here!

CARMEN

So...how does this help, exactly?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY CHERRY

(gaping)

Don't you see? Boy bands—music videos—cheerleaders! That's our express one-way ticket right back to the top of the social heap!

CARMEN

Huh?

MARY CHERRY

The Bubblegum Boys' manager is coming next week to scope out the place. All we have to do is convince him that the Glamazons should be the ones dancing in the video, and—

(snaps her fingers)

—we become the most popular girls in the whole school!

CARMEN

And, how do we do that?

MARY CHERRY

Well...I'll think of something.

Carmen collapses back onto the tuffet with a groan.

CUT TO:

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - LATER

The students are settling in. Lily comes up to Brooke, who is sitting by herself.

LILY

(gently)

Sam's not here?

Brooke looks up, and shakes her head mutely.

LILY (CONT'D)

Seen Harrison?

Brooke just shrugs despondently and looks away. Lily decides to let the subject die, and moves off.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM

The room is dim, curtains shut tight against the sunlight. Sam is huddled against the headboard of her bed, knees up against her chest, wrapped in a blanket.

A quiet knock on the door breaks the silence.

JANE (O.S.)
(from the hallway)
Sam?

After a couple of moments, the door opens, and Jane pokes her head in.

JANE (CONT'D)
Honey? Do you want me to fix you
some lunch? Some...soup, or
something?

From Sam comes a barely perceptible shake of the head. Jane ventures a couple of steps inside.

JANE (CONT'D)
I...I know you don't want to talk
about it...

SAM
They're giving up... They aren't
going to find anyone...just...

JANE
I know how much you loved him. I
loved him too, you know—he was
the best brother-in-law anyone
could ask for.
(beat)
Sam...he wouldn't want you to hide
away like this. He'd want you to
get out and...and...well...

SAM
Sure.
(long beat)
Just as soon as he tells me to.

JANE
(stymied)
I'll bring you up some soup later.

Jane retreats, closing the door behind her; Sam scrunches herself into an even tighter space.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A few moments later the door opens again.

HARRISON

Sam?

Sam doesn't even look up as Harrison steps gingerly over to the bed and sits on its edge. Hesitantly he reaches out and strokes her hair.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Sam, I...

At a loss, he turns away for a moment and regroups.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

...I'm sorry. I don't know...

Finally Sam looks up at him.

SAM

Why...? People...they aren't supposed to just...die...like that... Like when you got leukemia, and you got better... It's not supposed to... First Daddy, and...

Her voice breaking, she reaches out and clutches at him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Why? Why? WHY?!!

Harrison gathers her into his arms and holds her tightly as she sobs against his chest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jane is aimlessly cleaning when Harrison comes down the stairs.

JANE

(anxiously)

Did she eat?

HARRISON

Yeah. Finally. A little. She's asleep now. I think.

They sit down across from each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE

I just don't know what to do. I don't want to make her go back to school again.

HARRISON

Yeah...even when she was there, she wasn't... You know what I mean.

JANE

(nodding)

But I can't let her hide up in her room forever, either.

(smiles)

I'm really glad you're here for her, Harrison.

HARRISON

Oh...yeah. I mean, I'm glad I can help. If I'm helping, I mean.

JANE

I really don't know what she'd do if you weren't here. She depends on you so much—especially now.

The front door opens, and Brooke walks in, still leaning slightly on her cane. She stops short when she sees Harrison sitting there.

BROOKE

You're here.

HARRISON

(rising)

Uh, yeah—

JANE

Harrison came by when he heard Sam had stayed home. He's been with her all afternoon.

Brooke looks bleakly at Harrison and, without another word, turns and heads for her room. Jane shoots a quizzical look at him, and he manages a casual shrug in response.

HARRISON

I'll talk to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As Harrison goes after Brooke, Jane sighs, and returns to her cleaning.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Harrison reaches the door to the den just as it closes; after a moment's hesitation he opens it and walks through.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN DEN - CONTINUOUS

Brooke is sitting on her bed when Harrison walks in and closes the door behind him.

BROOKE

Don't! Just—go away!

HARRISON

Brooke, what am I supposed to do?!
I can't abandon Sam now—she needs
me!

BROOKE

She needs you?! What about me?!
I need you! I don't have anyone,
I can't talk to anyone—

Harrison kneels in front of Brooke and takes hold of her shoulders.

HARRISON

I still love you, Brooke. But...
we promised we wouldn't hurt Sam.
I can't end things with her, not
right now—not with everything
she's going through.

BROOKE

I don't care!!
(sniffling)
I'm sorry. I do care—I don't
want to hurt her. But—I miss
you. And I feel like...I'm all
alone...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON

You'll never be alone. I just
have to help Sam get through this,
and then we'll be together. I
promise.

BROOKE

I just don't know how much longer
I can keep doing this.

HARRISON

I know. Just a little while
longer. Please?

Brooke turns away, but finally nods. Harrison hugs her
tightly.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH - DAY

Morning at school.

CUT TO:

INT. THE STAIRS

Josh and Lily are coming down the stairs, hand-in-hand.

SUGAR (O.S.)
Yo! Josh! Lily!

The pair stops and turns around, to see Sugar Daddy coming down after them.

JOSH
Hey, Shug.

SUGAR
Guys, I really need some advice.

JOSH
What's going on?

SUGAR
Man, it's Carmen. I mean, we had this thing going.

JOSH
Yeah, I know. I think it's cool.

SUGAR
Yeah, well, that's where it is.
Cool. More like cold. Ice cold.

JOSH
What, she blew you off?

SUGAR
Naw, man, it's not like that.
She...well, she said she needed
"space".
(to Lily)
What is that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
(considering)
It's what girls say when they need
space.

JOSH
Lil...

LILY
I'm serious. Maybe she just needs
to think it over. You know, it's
not like Carmen's had a lot of
luck where boys are concerned.

SUGAR
Hey, she wanted me to back off, I
backed off. I just wanna know if
there's some light at the end of
this tunnel or not.

LILY
Look, I'll...talk to her. Maybe I
can find out, I don't know, what
she's thinking. But I'm not
promising anything.

SUGAR
Thanks, Lily. I owe you. I mean,
big time.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Mary Cherry and Carmen are walking down the corridor.

CARMEN
...I'm telling you, it's
impossible!

MARY CHERRY
But we have to know his schedule
if we're going to successfully
intercept him and insinuate
ourselves into his plans! Like my
Mama says, intelligence is crucial
to any hostile takeover, and
that's what we need!
Intelligence!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARMEN
(rolling her eyes)
So much for this plan.

MARY CHERRY
What?

CARMEN
Never mind. Look, I thought you
were the one with all the
contacts.

MARY CHERRY
Oh, that's just in the highly
lucrative field of celebrity
gossip! I don't know anything
when it comes to this school.

CARMEN
(rolling her eyes again)
Uh-huh.

MARY CHERRY
What?

CARMEN
Nothing. Mary Cherry, I can't
find out this manager person's
schedule any better than you can.
You want someone with an inside
track to Principal Krupps' office,
like...like Sam, except I don't
think she's in any shape to help,
or—

MARY CHERRY
(snapping her fingers)
That's it!

FLIP CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

CLOSE-UP: HARRISON

HARRISON
You want me to do what?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY

It's real simple, Joe. We just want you to find out when a certain somebody is coming to the school, and exactly where he'll be when he gets here. You know, his—his—

CARMEN

Itinerary.

MARY CHERRY

Right!

HARRISON

And this "certain somebody" would be...?

MARY CHERRY

A certain somebody who can guarantee the Glamazons triumphant return to its former shining radiance.

HARRISON

(to Carmen)

You're going along with this?

CARMEN

(defensively)

I—I just want to get rid of Bring It.

HARRISON

Hey, I can get behind doing away with anything that has Nicole's fingerprints on it. But this seems...very strange.

MARY CHERRY

Look, we need this information, and we need it without anyone else finding out about it. Now, can you help us or not?

But before Harrison can reply, a swelling tone resounds through the hallway speakers, and they—and all the students around them—look up.

KRUPPS (V.O.)

(over the loudspeaker)

Attention, everyone, I have an announcement to make.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

KRUPPS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It is my pleasure to announce that the singing group, Bubblegum Boys, has chosen our very own Kennedy High as the site to film their next music video.

There is a general chorus of shrieks from the girls in the hall.

CARMEN

(muttering)

Well, there goes the big secret.

KRUPPS (V.O.)

In addition to candid shots of the students and teachers going about their business, several students will be selected to have featured roles in the video. There will be two principle dancers—female—who will be chosen from the student body at large. Also, one student will be picked to portray the lead singer's girlfriend. For this part, I am informed that the band is looking for an authentic California girl; therefore, only students born and raised in California will be considered. Sign-up sheets for auditions are now posted outside the auditorium.

The loudspeaker clicks off, and Carmen and Mary Cherry look at each other sourly.

MARY CHERRY

Well, dang, if that don't beat all!

CARMEN

(thinking)

Wait a minute...did he say...?

MARY CHERRY

Dancers!

The two girls share a wide-eyed look—and then go running pell-mell down the hall, pushing and shoving each other out of the way. Harrison watches them go, shakes his head in befuddlement, and goes on his own way.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM

Sam is wandering around the room, doing nothing more than picking things up, looking them over and setting them back down in a disturbingly detached way.

The phone rings.

Sam spins around, horrified at the sound. For four rings she just stands there, frozen. Then the answering machine clicks on.

MIKE (V.O.)
 (on the machine)
 Hi, you've reached the home of
 Mike and Brooke McQueen, and Jane
 and Sam McPherson. We're all
 otherwise occupied at the moment,
 so please leave a message after
 the beep.

The machine beeps.

FLEISCHER (V.O.)
 (over the machine's speaker)
 This is Art Fleischer, calling for
 Sam. I know it's been a bit
 longer than I said it would be,
 but if you could call me back at—

Spurred into action, Sam reaches for the phone and picks it up.

SAM
 (into the phone)
 Mr. Fleischer? It's Sam.

FLEISCHER (V.O.)
 Sam? Ah—I do that, too.

SAM
 I'm...sorry?

FLEISCHER (V.O.)
 Screen my calls.

SAM
 I—

FLEISCHER (V.O.)
 Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

I—thought you forgot about me.

FLEISCHER (V.O.)

Well, obviously a lot's happened, but no, I didn't forget about you. Actually, we've been in a kind of "all hands on deck" mode for the past couple weeks. We could use all the help we can get—including yours, if you're willing.

SAM

I...I guess so.

FLEISCHER (V.O.)

Good! How about now? Say, my office, in an hour?

SAM

Uh...all right, Mr. Fleischer.

FLEISCHER (V.O.)

I'll see you then. Oh—and, Sam?

SAM

Yes?

FLEISCHER (V.O.)

It's Art.

SAM

Right.

After she hangs up the phone, Sam shakes herself—literally—and heads for the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - NOON

Lily and Josh make an appearance at the entrance to the lunchroom.

JOSH

I just think you're making too big a deal about this, that's all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY

Josh! It's a very big deal! It's totally discriminatory that they're only considering California girls for this part! I mean, so they want some bubble-headed, over-peroxidized, Valley surfer girl. What difference does it make whether she's from L.A. or El Paso?

JOSH

(puzzled)

El Paso's not in California?

Lily just looks askance at him.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Lily, you don't...want this part, do you?

LILY

No! But I should still have the opportunity to try out, even if I don't want to!

JOSH

But...weren't you born and raised here?

LILY

(exasperated)

Other people should have the opportunity to try out, even if they don't want to!

Miss Glass, who seems to have caught the end of this exchange, steps up behind them.

GLASS

If I might make a delicate suggestion, Miss Esposito—get a life!

Lily turns, outraged.

LILY

Excuse me?! And it's Mrs. Ford!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GLASS

Whatever. The only thing I can think of that could be worse than this mindless, pop culture, music video crap is some mindless, P.C.-obsessed idiot getting worked up enough to make a fuss about it. Do everyone a favor—go save a whale.

Miss Glass walks off, leaving Lily staring after her open-mouthed.

JOSH

Toldja you were making too big a deal out of it.

Lily snaps her mouth shut and smacks Josh on the arm.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Oww!

SWEEP CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE CAFETERIA

Carmen and Mary Cherry are sitting at one of the tables, across from Brooke and George, who seems less than interested in the pair's exploits.

MARY CHERRY

It was perfect! We were gonna convince the Bubblegum Boys to let the Glamazons dance in their video, and then Bring It woulda bought it.

(pouts)

Then Principal Krupps had to go and spoil everything by letting everyone in on it.

BROOKE

I can't believe you guys are still on this.

CARMEN

Hey, restoring the Glamazons is our patriotic duty.

Brooke and George look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
(aside to George)
Are you gonna ask?

GEORGE
No way. You?

BROOKE
Not a chance.

Brooke turns back to the girls.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Can't you guys just try out for
the dancing parts?

CARMEN
We are.

MARY CHERRY
Yeah, but now we have to compete
fair and square against those
Bring It people. And if there's
anything I hate, it's playing
fair.

BROOKE
Now you sound like Nicole.

MARY CHERRY
(wounded)
That is truly a low blow, Brooke.

BROOKE
Sorry.

GEORGE
Hey, maybe you should try out for
the girlfriend part, too.

CARMEN
You think so? I would give
anything to play B.J.'s girl.

She looks down at herself critically, the dreamy expression
fading from her face.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
I'm not sure I'm exactly what
they're looking for.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

I guess you wouldn't qualify, Mary Cherry. Seeing as how you have to be from California and all.

MARY CHERRY

What?! I would so!

CARMEN

(laughing)

Only if you suddenly developed laryngitis.

MARY CHERRY

(snapping her fingers)

Laryngitis!

Mary Cherry leaps from her seat and scurries off. Carmen looks across at Brooke and George, dismayed.

CARMEN

I didn't just give her that idea, did I?

GEORGE

(chuckling)

Afraid so.

CARMEN

Well, how was I supposed to know?

BROOKE

Around Mary Cherry?

CARMEN

All right, you've got a point.

GEORGE

That's one of the first things I learned when I came here—around Mary Cherry, anything's possible.

CARMEN

(to Brooke)

You know, maybe you oughta try out. You'd look spectacular on B.J. Tucker's arm.

GEORGE

Yeah, Brooke, you've got that classic California look going.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BROOKE
(grimacing)
Yeah...B.J.'s gimpy girlfriend. I
don't think so.

CARMEN
Maybe you don't have to move
around. Maybe you just have to
sit there and look totally in
love.

BROOKE
I don't think I know how to do
that.

GEORGE
Unfortunately, I do.

What might have been the start of an awkward silence is
summarily broken by Mary Cherry, who stomps back into the
scene and plops herself down in a huff.

BROOKE
(innocently)
Problem?

MARY CHERRY
That laryngitis idea won't work—
it's a speaking part! Plus,
they're gonna check people's birth
certificates.

CARMEN
Well, of course they are.

MARY CHERRY
I guess I'll just have to fake me
some birth records.

GEORGE
You gonna fake an accent while
you're at it?

MARY CHERRY
Mister, I will do whatever it
takes to make sure that a Glamazon
gets that role.

CARMEN
I was just saying that Brooke
should try out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARY CHERRY

(awed)

Why, Carmen! That's even better
than laryngitis!

BROOKE

Oh, please, not you too.

MARY CHERRY

But, Brooke! You look the part so
well!

GEORGE

I already told her that.

BROOKE

But I can't move the part.

MARY CHERRY

Details!

Brooke's eyes narrow dangerously.

BROOKE

My leg having been broken in eight
places is not a detail.

Mary Cherry glances at Carmen, and decides to change tactics.

MARY CHERRY

(fake-offhandedly)

Yeah, and even if you did try out,
that Sam person would probably
mosey along and steal it right out
from under you, like she did with
that contest a while back.

GEORGE

Sam wouldn't do that. She's got a
lot going on right now.

BROOKE

Besides, Sam isn't like that.

GEORGE

Besides, Sam isn't even eligible.

MARY CHERRY

Huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GEORGE

Well...you have to be born and raised in California, right? That leaves Sam out.

MARY CHERRY

What's that supposed to mean?

George and Brooke exchange another look.

BROOKE

Sam was born in New York. Her parents moved here when she was six.

MARY CHERRY

(chewing that over)

Huh...I never knew that.

GEORGE

Well—I better go.

George gets up, but Brooke puts out a hand to stop him.

BROOKE

George, wait? Walk me to my next class?

GEORGE

Uh, sure.

Brooke gets up in her still-awkward way.

MARY CHERRY

About the part—

BROOKE

(severely)

We will not talk about that later.

She and George head off.

MARY CHERRY

(aside to Carmen)

She'll come around.

Carmen just shakes her head resignedly.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke and George are moving at about three-quarters speed down the hall.

GEORGE
So, what's going on? Or was I
just a convenient escape from Mary
Cherry?

BROOKE
(hesitantly)
You haven't checked on Sam.

GEORGE
Sure I have. I ask you how she's
doing.

BROOKE
You know what I mean.

GEORGE
(sighs)
She's got Harrison to be there for
her.

BROOKE
Yeah, but you could be there for
her, too.

GEORGE
Look, I appreciate what you did
for me and Sam—getting the air
cleared and all that. I just—I
can't be that kind of friends with
Sam. Not now. Not yet.

BROOKE
She needs you, George. She needs
you to be whatever kind of friend
you can.

GEORGE
But, Harrison—

BROOKE
She needs more than just Harrison.
What if—?

George stops and looks at her quizzically.

GEORGE
What if what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

What if...Sam and Harrison didn't work out?

GEORGE

If you're asking, could we magically go back to the way we were before, then the answer is no.

BROOKE

But—

GEORGE

Brooke, Sam never really loved me. She liked me, but she only chose me over Harrison because she was afraid that a romance between them might go sour and ruin their friendship.

(shrugs)

You can't build love out of something like that.

BROOKE

But if she had a chance—

GEORGE

(suspiciously)

Do you know something about Sam and Harrison that you're not telling me?

Brooke suddenly realizes what she's been saying, and hastily backtracks.

BROOKE

(emphatically)

No! Absolutely not! Me? I—no.

GEORGE

Do you even tell Sam that I ask about her?

BROOKE

Sam and I—don't talk much. We don't fight, or anything, we just...don't talk much.

George stops in front of a classroom doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE
(nodding)
We're here.

BROOKE
What?

GEORGE
Your next class?

BROOKE
(regrouping)
Oh...right.

For a long moment, nothing happens.

GEORGE
Well...okay.

He turns and starts to walk away.

BROOKE
Just—

George turns back and waits expectantly.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
(wistfully)
Nothing.

She turns and disappears into the classroom.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. THE L.A. CHRONICLE LOBBY

Sam walks through the sliding glass doors, and pauses for a moment to take in the spacious lobby, before steeling herself and marching up to the security desk.

SECURITY GUARD
Can I help you, Ma'am?

SAM
Uh—yes. I'm Sam McPherson. I'm here to see, uh, Art Fleischer...?

SECURITY GUARD
(looking down)
Do you have an ap—

FLEISCHER (O.S.)
Sam!

Sam and the security guard both turn to see Fleischer approaching from somewhere deeper within the building. He comes around the security desk and claps Sam on the shoulder.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
Good to see you again.
(to the security guard)
Jack, this is Sam—she's going to be the new wombat.
(to Sam)
There's been a slight change in plans—we have to send you up to Personnel first thing. Turns out they're incredibly anal about these things. I hope you don't have a phobia about filling out forms.

The security guard pushes a clipboard across the desk.

SECURITY GUARD
If you'll just sign in, Ma'am.

Sam scrawls her signature.

FLEISCHER
Oh—this is Jack. He's usually here afternoons.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

And after you start working here,
you can forget about being called
"ma'am". You'll be "hey you"
before you know it.

SAM

Mr. Fleischer—

FLEISCHER

Art, please, Art. Every time
someone your age says "Mr.
Fleischer", another one of my
hairs turns gray.

SAM

Could we just...talk for a minute?

FLEISCHER

Ah...sure.

After a quick look around, he guides her to a bench along the
wall of the lobby, where they sit.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

So...?

Sam takes a deep breath.

SAM

I...I just don't know if I'm going
to do any good here.

FLEISCHER

Your writing says otherwise.

SAM

No, I mean...

She runs her hands through her hair, attempting—none too
successfully—to gather herself.

SAM (CONT'D)

I haven't—I haven't hardly been
to school since... And even when
I went, I...I tried, but I just...
can't...

Fleischer reaches over and clasps her hands.

FLEISCHER

Who did you lose?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

It's...my uncle...Pete...

FLEISCHER

Sam, I am so sorry.

Sam peers at him intently, as if trying to make some kind of connection.

SAM

He called me...the night before...
he was just landing in New York,
and he called... he'd been in
Egypt for three years, and...he
wasn't even supposed to...he was
just supposed to...just stop at
his office...

She gives up trying to talk and hangs her head; Fleischer reaches up and gently brushes the hair away from her face.

FLEISCHER

Look, Sam... We don't have anyone
here who's lost family— thank
God—but there are some who lost
friends, acquaintances... We know
how to deal with this. We all
help each other get through it.
And there are people here, people
you can talk to.

SAM

You mean, like—?

FLEISCHER

Counselors, okay? No
psychobabble, just people who are
good at listening. Look, all I'm
saying is—God, I'm the wrong
person to be trying to do this—I
know that you probably feel
completely, totally alone. Right?
But you aren't, really. Your
family is there for you, your
friends are there...all these
people that would turn somersaults
for you.

Sam shrugs, almost imperceptively.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

I know...you want to just curl up
and make the world go away.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

But you can't do that, Sam. You just...have to keep putting one foot in front of the other. Because even if it seems like you aren't getting anywhere, you are. Man, does that sound trite...but it's true.

Fleischer waits for some kind of reaction from Sam. Not getting one, he sighs and tries again.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

Sam...you're a really good writer. You could be a really, really good reporter. It would be a shame if you gave up on that.

As Sam appears to waver just a bit, Fleischer puts a game arm around her shoulder.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

Whaddya say, huh? Come up to Personnel with me, spend a couple of hours filling out forms, and then... Well, after a couple of hours with those forms, anything'll look good.

He pulls back and sports Sam a hopeful look. Several moments of silence pass between them. Finally, she lets out a short sigh and shrugs unenthusiastically.

SAM

Okay.

FLEISCHER

(slapping his knee)
There you go! Come on, we'll get you all set up.

He gets up and half-pulls Sam to her feet.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

(earnestly)
We'll get you through this, Sam. I promise.

Fleischer guides her back toward the elevators.

SAM

Uh...Mr. Flei—

Fleischer clears his throat loudly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SAM (CONT'D)

—Art? Could I ask...just one other thing?

FLEISCHER

What?

SAM

Um...“wombat”?

FLEISCHER

Oh, that’s a very long story. You might even find it funny...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL KRUPPS’ OFFICE - LATER

The office is empty and darkened, until the door cracks open and a head—Mary Cherry’s—pops through, looking around cautiously. A moment later the door swings open and Mary Cherry and Carmen sneak in.

CARMEN

(hushed)

Mary Cherry, this is a really bad idea.

MARY CHERRY

Shhh! It’s for a good cause, remember?

The pair make their way over to Krupps’ desk, where Mary Cherry starts to rifle through stacks of papers.

CARMEN

Careful! He’ll know someone’s been in here.

MARY CHERRY

(dismissively)

Guys never notice stuff like that. Besides, I’m an old pro at this.

CARMEN

(sighing to herself)

Why am I not surprised?

Mary Cherry finds the folder she’s looking for, and starts flipping through it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY
(flipping pages)
Nobody...nobody...nobody...
(pulls out a sheet)
Ewww.

Carmen looks over her shoulder.

CARMEN
Jessica Landon?

MARY CHERRY
Too good.

She crumples up the sheet and sticks it in her bag. Then she goes through the rest of the file, making vague noises of approval or disapproval, and getting rid of more applicants. Meanwhile, Carmen is looking on, aghast, but unsure of what to do.

CARMEN
(tugging at Mary Cherry's sleeve)
Mary Cherry! What's going to happen when all those girls find out their applications are missing?!

MARY CHERRY
By the time they figure that out, they'll be out, and we'll be in. Now, where's that other...?

She hunts around, and soon comes up with another folder. She opens it and thumbs through it quickly.

MARY CHERRY (CONT'D)
Well, this part is gonna be easy.

She lays the folder flat on the desk, reaches into her bag and pulls out a paper with Brooke's photo attached. She lays it neatly on top of the stack, closes the folder and puts it back where it came from.

MARY CHERRY (CONT'D)
Now, let's get the heck out of here.

CARMEN
That's the smartest thing I've heard you say today.

They head for the door, and after making sure the coast is clear, quickly leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

But no sooner do they get into the hallway than Brooke comes around the corner—for once walking (not too steadily) without her cane. Her appearance triggers a frantic shuffle by Carmen and Mary Cherry, as they project a thoroughly unconvincing air of innocence. Brooke advances on them suspiciously.

BROOKE

All right, what are you two up to?

CARMEN/MARY CHERRY

Us?

BROOKE

Yes, YOU. Are you still trying to rig that video competition?

MARY CHERRY

Now, Brooke, how could we do that? Principal Krupps has already announced it to the whole school.

BROOKE

I don't know...but you'd think of something. You should hear yourself—you sound exactly like Nicole.

MARY CHERRY

(grumbling)

I wish you'd stop comparing me to her.

BROOKE

I wish you'd stop acting like her.

MARY CHERRY

But—this is different! Nicole used her deviousness and scheming for evil! I'm using my powers for the side of good and righteousness!

Brooke holds up her hands.

BROOKE

You know what—I don't even want to know. Just leave me out of it.

Mary Cherry and Carmen exchange a glance.

MARY CHERRY

(backing away)

Uh...sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CARMEN

Yeah, you're way, way out of it.

The two girls are so busy trying to make a clean getaway that they don't notice a boy, carrying a stack of books, coming up behind them. They both back right into him, bowling him over and sending books flying everywhere.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Oops!

Carmen stops and starts to help the boy up, but Mary Cherry grabs her arm and drags her off down the hallway.

MARY CHERRY

(over her shoulder)

Sorry!

Brooke stares open-mouthed at the departing girls.

BROOKE

Guys? Guys!!

Shaking her head in disgust, Brooke makes her way over to the where the boy is sitting on the floor, and extends her hand. He takes it and starts to pull himself up—but Brooke's leg gives way, and she ends up in a heap on top of him.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Oh! I'm sorry!

The boy, who aside from the large stack of books is sporting a bad haircut, thick-rimmed glasses and a thoroughly geeky outfit, disentangles himself.

BILLY

Maybe we oughta help each other up.

After they are both back on their feet, he looks around and starts to gather up the books. Brooke obligingly holds them while he rebuilds the stack. When all the books are collected, he takes them from her; she smiles and proceeds to lift off the top half of the stack for herself.

BROOKE

So, were are you headed?

BILLY

Oh—I've, uh, got a locker...

Awkwardly he digs a piece of paper out of his pocket and sneaks a glance at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BILLY (CONT'D)
...217?

BROOKE
(tilting her head)
That's this way. Come on.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As the books are unceremoniously dumped into an open locker. The boy closes and locks it, and turns to Brooke.

BILLY
(awkwardly)
Uh, well, thanks for doing that...
um—?

BROOKE
(holding out her hand)
Brooke.

BILLY
Billy.

They shake hands.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Well, uh, I guess I'll, um...I'll
see you around.

Without further ado, he takes off down the hallway, leaving Brooke to look after him, slightly bemused.

CUT TO:

INT. THE L.A. CHRONICLE NEWSROOM

The newsroom is typically hectic as Fleischer makes his way through it. As a feature columnist, he rates a private office and an assistant, who is busily tapping away at her computer when he approaches.

FLEISCHER
Vicki?

She stops and looks up expectantly.

VICKI
Where's your new protogée?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER

In the clutches of the anal-
retentives in Personnel. I'll
have to go rescue her after a
while.

(beat)

Listen, I need something.

Vicki picks up a pad and pen.

VICKI

Shoot.

FLEISCHER

I need you to dig up whatever you
can on someone who was at the
World Trade Center.

VICKI

(scribbling)

Who?

FLEISCHER

Peter McPherson.

VICKI

Peter Mc—

(looking up)

McPherson? As in...?

FLEISCHER

(nodding)

Her uncle.

VICKI

(lips pursing)

How's she handling it?

FLEISCHER

Not good. I really want to help
her. I'm hoping...I don't know,
just, see if you can find out
something useful.

VICKI

(writing)

Okay. You got it.

Fleischer disappears into this office, and Vicki turns back to
her computer.

CUT TO:

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - LATER

Miss Glass has Billy at her side.

GLASS

Ten-HUT!

The kids stop their chatter and sit at attention, more or less.

GLASS (CONT'D)

(gesturing)

This is Billy Cole, and he's in this class until further notice.

CARMEN

(raising her hand)

And you want us to make him feel welcome?

GLASS

(dryly)

Yes, Miss Ferrera, I want the whole class to take the rest of the week off to plan a raucous party for our new student.

CARMEN

Okay, you're being sarcastic now, right?

GLASS

You know, I'd like to say that I'm touched at how well we've gotten to know each other—but it really just makes me want to vomit.

(beat)

Now, as I was saying, Mr. Cole needs a seat.

Brooke raises her hand.

BROOKE

Miss Glass? He can sit here.

GLASS

(looking over)

Miss McPherson still on her sabbatical?

(to Billy, pointing)

Go.

Billy obediently sits next to Brooke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY
(whispering)
Is she always like that?

BROOKE
Uh, yeah.
(beat)
So, are you any good at chemistry?

BILLY
Oh, I did pretty good in—um, at
my last school.

BROOKE
Good, 'cause I got lost about the
second day.

BILLY
Well...I can try to help.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

A short montage of Miss Glass lecturing on some topic actually related to chemistry, complete with diagrams on the blackboard; Brooke looking fairly confused; and Billy pointing things out in her book and generally being helpful—while Harrison shoots a couple of glances at them from across the room.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

As chemistry class is letting out, Brooke and Billy emerge through the doorway.

BROOKE
Thanks a lot. I told you I was
lost.

BILLY
Ah...I didn't do that much. I
mean, you got most of it okay.

BROOKE
Believe me, you are a lot better
at helping than Sam is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

Sam?

BROOKE

Oh—she's my sister—um, step-sister...anyway, she normally sits next to me. But she's not a whole lot better at chemistry than I am.

BILLY

Oh...well, it's okay, I can find somewhere else to sit tomorrow.

BROOKE

You're welcome to stay until she comes back.

(beat)

You know...I might need help with this assignment. I still don't think I know what exactly she was talking about.

BILLY

Ah—if you want, I can, um, yeah, I can help.

BROOKE

Great!

She waits expectantly for a couple of seconds.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I, uh...need your number?

BILLY

Oh! Right...of course, that's...right.

He fumbles for a piece of paper, and after Brooke helpfully hands him her pen, he scribbles down his number and hands it to her.

BROOKE

I promise, I'll only call if it's a chemistry emergency.

BILLY

Oh, no, that's...I mean, you can...um...okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

After petering out, he abruptly turns on his heel and walks away, again leaving Brooke chuckling to herself.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EST. MCQUEEN HOUSE - DUSK

A short establishing shot.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN

Jane is moping at the kitchen table when the patio door opens and Sam walks in. Jane leaps up and rushes over to her.

JANE

Sam! Where have you been?! I've been worried sick!

SAM

Oh, I'm sorry... Mr. Fleischer— Art—called. He wanted to set everything up for me to start working. So...I went down there.

JANE

Well, honey, I wish you'd left a note.

SAM

I'm sorry, I didn't...think I was going to be this long. I was...I was going to tell him that I couldn't do it.

JANE

Oh, Sam...you didn't.

SAM

(sighs)

No...I didn't. We...talked. I don't know—I said I'd give it a try. I guess I won't be able to babysit Mac anymore—I'll be busy after school.

JANE

After school?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM
(grimacing)
He said he couldn't hire me if I
dropped out.

Jane hugs Sam.

JANE
I am very, very proud of you.

The door opens, and Mike and Brooke come in.

MIKE
Jane—

JANE
(turning and interrupting)
Mike, Sam went down to the paper
today, to start her new job.

Mike, who was already grinning, hurriedly makes his way over to Sam.

MIKE
Really! That's great, Sam. Tell
us all about it—are we going to
be reading your articles in the
Chronicle now?

SAM
(blushing)
Not for a long time. I guess
interns mostly do research and
stuff.

He claps and encouraging hand on her shoulder.

MIKE
Still, I bet you're pretty
excited, huh? I mean, here you
are, not even out of high school
yet, and your career's already
taking off.

JANE
Honey, we're all so thrilled for
you.

Sam looks past both of them.

SAM
Brooke?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Brooke, who has been watching this exchange without much expression at all, blinks and visibly refocuses on Sam.

BROOKE

It's...

JANE

(uncertainly)

Brooke?

BROOKE

...just...great
(swallowing hard)
It is. Great.

Without another word, she turns and walks—at a reasonable pace—out of the room.

MIKE

Brooke!

Mike starts to go after her, but Sam grabs at his arm, and pulls him back.

SAM

Wait—let me. Please.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam enters the hallway and seems a bit surprised to find it empty. She walks up to the door to the den and raises her hand to knock; but at the last moment pulls it back. Instead, she opens the door and walks through.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN DEN - CONTINUOUS

Brooke, who is sitting at her desk, looks up as Sam comes in.

BROOKE

God! Do I have to put a lock on
that door?!

Sam just shakes her head, throws up her hands and turns to leave—but instead she closes the door and whirls back around.

SAM

Brooke—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brooke slams her hand down on the desk in frustration.

BROOKE
What?! What do you want from me?!

Sam lets out an incredulous snort.

SAM
What—what do I—? What do you
want from me?! I thought we
were—

BROOKE
You thought we were what?

SAM
I thought we were sisters!

BROOKE
We were!!

Suddenly spent, Brooke buries her face in her hands.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
We are...I...

With no small amount of trepidation, Sam approaches Brooke, and squats down to meet her eye-to-eye.

SAM
Do you want me to beg, Brooke? Is
that it?

BROOKE
(suddenly confused)
What—? Sam—

SAM
Please, please, please don't do
this. Not now.

Brooke just shakes her head mutely. Sam squeezes her eyes shut, carefully picking her way through her words.

SAM (CONT'D)
Please don't turn your back and
walk away from me. I can't—
handle—losing someone else that I
care about.

BROOKE
(curiously)
I'm someone you care about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Oh, God, Brooke, how can you ask that? After all we've been through.

BROOKE

I don't—what do you need me for? You've got a career, you've got a boyfriend—

Sam pulls back suddenly.

SAM

Is this about Harrison??

BROOKE

Sam—

SAM

It is, isn't it?

BROOKE

I...don't want to talk about it.

But Sam is busy reaching her own conclusions.

SAM

Are you—are you jealous of me and Harrison?

Brooke refuses to answer or even look at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

Oh...I cannot believe—I am such a yutz!

BROOKE

Huh?

SAM

Here I am, I have—Harrison, who is like the ideal boyfriend...and, and this thing with the paper, which is pretty much a dream job for me...

BROOKE

(annoyed)

Is there a point in all this somewhere?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SAM

See? There I go again. I just...
flaunt these things. I'm
completely insensitive to anyone
else's feelings.

Sam kneels down next to Brooke's chair.

SAM (CONT'D)

I know how you feel...stuck...
like you're going to be stuck in
high-school mode forever.

BROOKE

You do?

SAM

(chuckling ruefully)

We may not talk anymore, but I do
hear things. Even if I haven't
been paying enough attention to
them.

(beat)

And...I know...I realize...how
hard—even though you were all
supportive—how hard it was to let
go of Harrison.

BROOKE

Sam...

SAM

No, I...took your feelings for
Harrison too lightly. I'm sorry,
Brooke. I'm very, very sorry.
After all you went through because
of Nicole...I never meant to hurt
you more.

Brooke turns away, shaking her head.

SAM (CONT'D)

What?

BROOKE

(murmuring)

You never meant to hurt me...

SAM

Is that funny?

The ironic smile disappears from Brooke's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BROOKE

No. Sam, I don't want you to feel guilty about having a job, or... Harrison. And I don't want you to think you have to tiptoe around me. I'll deal. It's not your problem.

(beat)

I'm sure Dad and Jane want to do something to celebrate your new job.

Sam straightens up and goes to the door.

SAM

(turning back)

Aren't you coming with?

BROOKE

Naw...I've got homework.

SAM

Homework...

(rubbing her eyes)

I am so screwed...I'm never gonna catch up.

BROOKE

You only missed, like, a week and a half. It's not a big deal.

Sam opens the door.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

(suddenly)

George asks about you.

SAM

(turning back)

He does?

BROOKE

Yeah, he hasn't felt right about, you know, coming over, but...yeah.

SAM

Huh...

With a half-smile playing at her lips, Sam walks out of the room. Brooke holds her gaze on the closed door for a couple of moments; then she reaches across the desk for her cell phone. Shuffling through the pile on the desk, she pulls out the paper Billy gave her, and dials.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BROOKE
 (into the phone)
 Hey. It's Brooke—from school?
 Can we meet somewhere? Not
 here...

VERTICAL SLIDE CUT TO:

INT. THE DINER - LATER

Brooke and Billy are having a combination dinner and study session.

BROOKE
 (scribbling on paper)
 Here...like this?

Billy reaches out and turns the paper around so he can read it.

BILLY
 (shaking his head)
 You've got it backwards.

He adds a few marks of his own.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 See?

Brooke picks up the paper and studies it closely.

BROOKE
 Don't the signs switch after
 osmosis?

BILLY
 (considering)
 I think that's algebra.

Brooke shakes her head, reaching across the table to steal a couple of Billy's french fries.

BROOKE
 I wish they would just teach one
 science at a time.

BILLY
 Well, math isn't a science,
 strictly speaking—

Brooke glares at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY (CONT'D)
Uh, I get your point.

BROOKE
You know, you sound different,
somehow.

BILLY
Different?

BROOKE
I don't know...sometimes you
sound...well, just, different.
Less...geeky. No offense.

He self-consciously adjusts his glasses.

BILLY
Oh...I, uh, didn't mean to.

BROOKE
No, it's okay.
(grinning)
I like it.

BILLY
Oh, well, then, um...

BROOKE
(laughing)
Never mind.

Billy watches her sneak another french fry.

BILLY
Um, should I get more?

BROOKE
(shaking her head)
Oh, no...

She holds the french fry up to her face and considers it
before popping it into her mouth.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
You know, last year you wouldn't
have caught me dead doing this.

BILLY
What...eating?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE

(laughs)

Yeah. I mean, I'd go places to hang out, be seen...but I would've been counting the calories in the water. I was really messed up back then.

BILLY

You don't seem like the kind of girl to mess up.

BROOKE

Little Miss Perfect... That was the problem.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the diner, the door opens and Mike, Jane, Sam and Harrison walk in.

JANE

Are you sure you don't want to go someplace fancier?

SAM

This is fine, Mom. It's about as fancy as I'm ready for.

While they look for a booth, Harrison spots Brooke and Billy.

HARRISON

(to Sam)

Hang on a sec.

Leaving the others, he goes purposefully striding over to the booth where Brooke and Billy are laughing over something or other.

BROOKE

(looking up)

Harrison...what are you doing here?

HARRISON

That's funny—I was about to ask you the same thing.

BROOKE

I'm having dinner, and doing my chemistry homework.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARRISON
(miffed)
Really...I thought maybe you were
branching out into charity work.

BILLY
Ah, maybe I should—

Billy starts to get up, but Brooke puts out a hand to stop him.

BROOKE
(quickly chilling)
No, it's all right.
(pointedly)
Harrison's not staying.

HARRISON
So are you going to tell me what's
going on?

BROOKE
As if I have to explain myself to
you. And what, you're one of the
cool kids now, you can turn up
your nose at everyone else?

HARRISON
(pointing)
Hey, I was never that. Emory
isn't that.

Brooke gives him a look that would freeze molten lava.

BROOKE
(grating)
Harrison, go away.

HARRISON
Brooke—

BROOKE
Now.

HARRISON
(snorts)
Fine.

Harrison walks off in a huff.

BILLY
Uh, I'm sorry, I didn't...that's
your...boyfriend?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BROOKE
(looking after Harrison)
Harrison?? No. No way.
(with finality)
No.

Meanwhile, Harrison rejoins the others at the booth they've found.

SAM
What was that all about?

MIKE
And who's that sitting with
Brooke?

SAM
(craning her neck)
Don't know.

HARRISON
Oh, it's some new kid. He sat
next to Brooke in class today.

SAM
Is there a problem?

HARRISON
Oh, he's just...glomming all over
her.

SAM
(pecking him on the cheek)
It's sweet of you to worry.

Harrison looked more pissed than worried, but he holds his peace around Sam.

CUT TO:

INT. ART FLEISCHER'S OFFICE - LATER

Fleischer is relaxing behind his luxurious oak desk, absorbed in a sheaf of papers, when Vicki knocks on the open door, and steps inside. She sets a bunch of slips on the desk.

VICKI
Your messages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER
(tapping his computer)
You could just upload those, you
know.

VICKI
Uh-huh. If the Governor calls and
that thing eats the message, it's
not the one getting fired.

FLEISCHER
(shrugs)
True.

VICKI
(holding out a paper)
Here's that information you
wanted.

Fleischer immediately sits up and takes the paper from her.

FLEISCHER
Thanks, Vicki. This is it?

VICKI
Everything I could find.

FLEISCHER
Okay. Thanks.
(looks at his watch)
It's late. You might as well take
off.

VICKI
See you tomorrow, then.

After Vicki leaves, Fleischer scans the printed paper quickly. He reaches into his desk and pulls out an old, weathered datebook. Flipping through it, he finds the page he wants, picks up the phone and dials.

FLEISCHER
(into the phone)
Is Detective Seizemore there?
Tell him it's Art Fleischer from
the L.A. Chronicle.

For a few moments, while he is on hold, he reads the paper in his hand more closely. Then his attention turns back to the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
 (into the phone)
 Hey, Larry, it's Art... Yeah...
 It's not exactly a picnic out
 here, either... Look, I need a
 favor...

DISSOLVE TO:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH

Another sunny establishing shot.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Carmen and Mary Cherry are once again walking down the hallway.

MARY CHERRY
 I don't get it! It's been two
 days already! When are they gonna
 get around to those auditions?!

CARMEN
 (shrugs)
 Maybe they decided to call it off.

MARY CHERRY
 (aghast)
 No! They can't do that! I'll—
 I'll—I'll sue!

As they pass by the girls' restroom, the door opens, and two hands reach out to drag Carmen sideways through the doorway. Mary Cherry, of course, keeps on walking down the hallway, oblivious.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Carmen spins around to find Lily standing there.

CARMEN
 Lily! What the hell are you
 doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
I've been trying to talk to you
all day!

CARMEN
Well, I'm sorry, I've had more
important things on my mind.

LILY
Okay, Carm, first of all, I don't
care what Mary Cherry's
brainwashed you into thinking,
this Glamazons thing is not even
remotely important! And second...
what's going on with you and Sugar
Daddy?

CARMEN
(flustered)
Going on? N-nothing. Why? Did
you hear something?

LILY
I thought you two had a good time
when you were together.

CARMEN
Well...we did. It just...wasn't
gonna work out. We're just too
different. I mean, he's a jock,
and I'm...I'm just me.

LILY
Carmen, don't you dare put
yourself down like that! And, who
cares how different you are? Look
at me and Josh!

Lily sits Carmen down on the tuffet.

LILY (CONT'D)
Believe me, he really wants to go
out with you.

CARMEN
(doubtful)
You think?

LILY
Carm, why do you think I'm talking
to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARMEN
You mean, he...? But...he hasn't
said anything to me. I mean, I
haven't even seen him in ages.

LILY
Well, you told him you needed
"space".

CARMEN
(confused)
Wait...so, guys actually do what
you tell them?

LILY
(shrugs)
Sometimes.

Suddenly the door opens, and Mary Cherry bursts in.

MARY CHERRY
(to Carmen)
Here's where you disappeared to!
Didn't you hear? Come on!

CARMEN
Hear what?

MARY CHERRY
There's gonna be a special
assembly! This is it! They're
gonna announce the auditions!

Mary Cherry is so excited that she's actually bouncing.

MARY CHERRY (CONT'D)
Come on! We're about to be
famous!

She proceeds to hustle Carmen out of the room.

LILY
(calling)
Carm! Sugar?!

CARMEN
(as the door closes)
I know!

Lily just looks heavenward and sits back down on the tuffet.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - LATER

The entire student body is gathering in the bleachers.

ANGLE: MARY CHERRY AND CARMEN

Mary Cherry is barely able to contain herself.

MARY CHERRY

This is it, I just know it! All
my hard work is gonna pay off!

CARMEN

(dubious)

I dunno...why would they do all
this just to announce that they're
holding auditions?

MARY CHERRY

Search me! But I can feel fame
and fortune heading my way!

ANGLE: BILLY

Billy, wearing a very loud jacket, is sitting by himself near
the floor and off to one side. He looks up as Brooke sits
down next to him.

BROOKE

Okay, look, I just want to
apologize again for Harrison. I
don't know what got into him...
I've never seen him be that rude
before. And I completely
understand if you just don't want
to bother with me anymore.

BILLY

(chuckling)

Brooke, it's okay, really.
Besides—

(gesturing around)

—it's not exactly like I've got
an entourage.

Brooke looks around herself, at the buffer of empty space the
other kids have put around him.

BROOKE

I'm sorry, this school really
isn't...

(reconsidering)

What am I saying?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE (CONT'D)

This school is exactly like that.
I'm really sorry.

BILLY

Stop apologizing, already. You're
not responsible for the whole
school.

BROOKE

There you go again—sounding not-
geeky.

BILLY

Well, you did say you liked it.

BROOKE

(grinning)
Yeah, I did.

Principal Krupps walks up to a microphone set up in the middle of the gym floor and taps on it, sending a squeal of feedback through the building.

KRUPPS

Attention, students... As you
know, a few days ago I announced
that the Bubblegum Boys would be
shooting their new video here at
Kennedy High. First, about the
part of the lead singer's
girlfriend: I understand that
those auditions will not be held—
although I hasten to add that this
has nothing to do with the
complaint that was made to the
State Department of Education
about an allegedly discriminatory
process.

In the bleaches, Josh glances over at Lily, who shrugs gamely.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)

However, the part will be chosen
in an alternate manner. And to
explain a little further just how
that's going to happen, I'd like
to introduce the manager for the
Bubblegum Boys, Mr. Franklin
Reese.

A thirty-ish man in a very expensive suit, who has
nevertheless been leaning casually against the wall, rights
himself and steps over to the microphone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REESE

Thank you, Principal Krupps. Now, when we first began this project, we had a straightforward audition process in mind. But, some of the band members—specifically, B.J. and Terrence—thought that we should go in another direction. What we decided to do—with Principal Krupps' permission—was to spend a couple of days observing all of you in your element...just being yourselves. Now, we can still hold the auditions if we have to...but from what I hear, that won't be necessary.

(looking up)

Will it?

A wave of surprise ripples through the gym when Billy stands up.

BILLY

No, it won't.

As everyone sits in stunned silence—not least of all Brooke—"Billy" clambers down off the bleachers. As he steps onto the gym floor, he pulls at his head, and the bad hair—a wig—falls to the floor, followed by the thick-rimmed glasses and the geeky jacket; leaving him completely transformed.

MARY CHERRY

(hushed)

B.J. Tucker!

BILLY

Billy Jack.

He shrugs apologetically at Brooke.

BILLY (CONT'D)

My parents were bad movie freaks.

Billy—B.J.—starts to pace leisurely in front of the collected student body.

BILLY (CONT'D)

See, the guys...we wanted to find a real, natural California girl... someone warm, and caring—the genuine article.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BILLY (CONT'D)

But there isn't anything more un-
natural than a bunch of girls
lining up outside an office, going
in one by one and showing
themselves off to a producer.

(shakes his head)

I've been through it—it ain't
fun. So, Mr. Krupps here was kind
enough to let me slip into school
anonymously...just to see what you
all were really like.

MARY CHERRY

(smacking her forehead)

All this time...

REESE

So—I take it you found the girl
you were looking for?

A slow grin spreads across Billy's face.

BILLY

Yeah, I did...

He turns and looks up at Brooke.

BILLY (CONT'D)

...if she'll do it.

For a moment Brooke seems genuinely surprised; then she furls
her brow, thinking.

BROOKE

On one condition.

Eyes alight, she crooks her finger, beckoning him. He
scrambles up to her and bends down; she whispers in his ear
for a moment. Finally he straightens up, shrugging.

BILLY

I don't see why we can't do that.

SWEEP CUT TO:

INT. GYM - LATER

The gym looks much the same as before, with the exception of
five young men in bubblegum-pink shirts lined up on the floor.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Music!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A technopop arrangement of "California Dreamin'" begins to blare through a loudspeaker.

DIRECTOR (O.S.) **(CONT'D)**
 And...ACTION!

On cue, the five Bubblegum Boys begin to perform a complex set of dance steps, while lip-synching to the song. And flanking them, waving their pom-poms and dancing, are Mary Cherry and Carmen, having the time of their lives.

FADE TO:

EST. MCQUEEN HOUSE - NIGHT

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR

The doorbell rings, and after a moment the door swings open. Jane, standing in the doorway, looks out questioningly. Fleischer is on the front stoop holding a box, which he sets down in order to offer his hand.

FLEISCHER
 You must be Sam's mother. I'm Art
 Fleischer...from the Chronicle?

JANE
 Oh!
 (shakes his hand profusely)
 Please, come in. We've heard so
 much about you.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Fleischer picks up the box and follows Jane into the living room, she looks up the stairs.

JANE
 (calling)
 SAM! Mr. Fleischer's here!

Mike emerges from the kitchen, and Jane waves him over.

JANE **(CONT'D)**
 Honey, this is Art Fleischer,
 Sam's boss.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE (CONT'D)
 (to Fleischer)
 This is Mike McQueen.

Fleischer sets down his box on the coffee table, shaking Mike's hand.

FLEISCHER
 Please, call me Art. I can barely
 keep Sam from saying "Mr.
 Fleischer" as it is.

Sam comes flying down the stairs.

SAM
 Mr. Fleischer—

FLEISCHER
 (to Jane and Mike)
 See?

He lowers a playful glower at Sam.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
 Sam...?

She pulls up short, holding up her hands.

SAM
 Sorry—Art.
 (regrouping)
 Uh...was there something else you
 needed me to do?

FLEISCHER
 No, no—this isn't...it isn't
 business. Can we...?

He gestures to the sofa set, and they sit obligingly. Fleischer takes a seat across from them, folding his hands in front of him.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
 Well, I...guess I should just dive
 right in.

He turns to Jane.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
 When Sam first came to the paper
 last week, she told me about...
 well, about her uncle, and nine-
 eleven.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

I wanted to do something to help—and since I'm a natural busybody—I did a little digging. I have some friends on the NYPD, you see.

JANE

Did they...find anything?

FLEISCHER

(sighs)

They confirmed—as far as they could—that he was on the ninety-fifth floor of Tower Number One. They did locate his hotel room. His personal effects are going to his sister in...Wisconsin, is it?

Jane nods silently. Fleischer taps the box he brought.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

They also found this in his room.

He turns to Sam.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

It looks like it's for you.

As though it might rear up and bite her, Sam hesitantly reaches out and pulls the box to her. She lifts the flaps, and carefully pulls out a brand-new laptop computer.

JANE

Oh, honey...

(to Fleischer)

Thank you for...for doing this.

Sam sets the laptop down on the coffee table and opens it up, then starts as it suddenly comes to life on its own. On the screen, a window forms—a window containing Pete McPherson's face.

PETE

(on the computer screen)

Hi, Sammy. Okay, I just picked up this baby in London, but if you're watching this, it means that, despite all my threats and intimidation, something came up at the office and I wasn't able to make it out to the Left Coast like I planned.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETE (CONT'D)

If that's the case, then I've sent this on ahead, and I promise that I'll call as soon as I can, and definitely before I go anywhere where I'm completely out of touch again. And I hope this little present starts to make up for the birthdays, and the Christmases, and the other times I missed over the past few years. You've always been my favorite niece—hell, my favorite family member, period—and nothing's ever going to change that.

(beat)

I love you, Sammy. I'll see you when I can.

The screen goes blank. Sam reaches out and brushes the screen with her fingertips, crying; and as her sobs become stronger, Jane—crying herself—gathers her in her arms and rocks her back and forth gently.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END