

Popular: Senior Year
"The UnPopularity Game"
by
The Wild Pikachu

POPULAR: SENIOR YEAR

THE UNPOPULARITY GAME

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. PRINCIPAL KRUPPS' OFFICE - DAY

Krupps is sitting behind his desk, reading from a folder.

KRUPPS
Hmmm... Well, this is
interesting.

Sitting across from the principal is a smartly-dressed man,
who leans forward over the desk.

CONSULTANT #1
I can assure you, Mr. Krupps, that
what you hold in your hands is the
ideal solution to your particular
problem.

KRUPPS
Now hold on—I said it was
interesting; I didn't say I was
sold.

CONSULTANT #1
But you will be. How do we know?
Because we're experts. And how
can you tell we're experts? By
the wide array of paraphernalia
available at completely reasonable
prices.

In the corner of the office, a second, identically-dressed man
adopts a game-show-hostess pose next to a display rack filled
with pamphlets and books.

KRUPPS
Yes, I've heard the pitch...but
I'm still not sold.

CONSULTANT #1
I might remind you of the stunning
success of the last project we
coordinated for you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRUPPS

Yes, yes, the whole music video thing did boost school morale... temporarily.

CONSULTANT #1

Well, as we told you before, engaging an entire student body is an ongoing process.

KRUPPS

(skeptically)
Right...

CONSULTANT #2

(holding up a book)
It's all right here in "Putting the Rah in Your School's Rah-Rah".

Krupps holds up his hand.

KRUPPS

I don't need the book, thank you.

CONSULTANT #1

Of course, you would have longer-lasting results if you purchased one of our complete packages, starting at only eighty-thousand—

KRUPPS

We'll try this first. Frankly, I don't like the idea of hiring outside consultants to boost school morale in the first place, but—it's the district's money.

(looking up)

You can put this in motion right away?

CONSULTANT #2

(smiling)
Immediately.

And from behind the display rack he pulls a large, colorful tagboard sign reading, "Mr./Ms. (your school here) - School Spirit Contest!"

WHITE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

ANGLE: MARY CHERRY

head on, looking curiously at something. Soon she is joined by Carmen on one side, and Lily on the other. After a moment, the scene shifts to show one of the contest posters, with the Kennedy name (crudely) filled in.

CARMEN

"School Spirit Contest"?

LILY

(reading)

"All students should enter this exciting contest. Be the guy or girl who exemplifies the principles of your school, as determined by a vote of your fellow students."

MARY CHERRY

Sounds like fun! Of course, I'm a shoo-in.

LILY

What?! You are not!

FLIP CUT TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - LATER

Brooke and Sam are sitting in adjoining desks, but not interacting. Harrison walks by; Sam grabs him, spins him around and plants a kiss on him. Brooke carefully looks away.

SAM

Hey, you.

HARRISON

(flustered)

Hey. Wha—what was that for?

SAM

(shrugs)

Nothing. Is there something wrong with me kissing you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON

Uh, n-no. Of course not.

The awkward moment is interrupted by the rowdy arrival of Mary Cherry, Carmen, and Lily, who are in the midst of a spirited discussion. Harrison takes advantage of the distraction to slip away.

MARY CHERRY

I am still waitin' for an explanation for that slanderous remark, Lil Lily!

LILY

(rolling her eyes)
Which one?

MARY CHERRY

How could you insinuate that I, Mary Cherry, do not exemplify the values of our fair school?!

LILY

Uh, because greed, avarice, and the shallowness of a wetland that's been drained for development aren't the values of this school?

MARY CHERRY

Why, of course they are! They're the values of all red-blooded American high schools!

LILY

No, they aren't!

She turns to Brooke and Sam.

LILY (CONT'D)

Sam?

SAM

(holding up her hands)
Whatever you're talking about, I don't want to get involved.

LILY

(imploring)
Sam—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE
(breaking in)
Wait—is this about that stupid
contest?

CARMEN
Yes.

Mary Cherry holds up a flyer that is a miniature copy of the poster.

MARY CHERRY
You could enter, Brooke. Second
place isn't bad.

BROOKE
An extreme no, thank you. It's
just one more pointless popularity
contest. I've been through enough
of those to last me my whole life.

SAM
For once, I totally agree with
Brooke. The whole thing is
completely bogus.

MARY CHERRY
(miffed)
Well, that's a fine attitude to
have!

LILY
Mary Cherry, I'm sure there are
lots of shallow people at this
school who would love to compete
against you.

MARY CHERRY
I'm sorry, but when it comes to
popularity, no one competes
against me.

BROOKE
(looking off)
Maybe you guys should sit down?

The girls quickly find seats as the teacher, a distinguished, slightly exotic-looking man in his late forties, enters the room. Standing at the chalkboard, he writes "Mr. Eric Osbourne", and then turns to face the class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OSBOURNE

Good morning. For those of you who are unaware, my predecessor in this position, Miss Thornapple, won five million dollars in a poker tournament in Las Vegas this past weekend, and thus decided to immediately retire from teaching.

He looks down his long nose at all of them.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Now, I am informed, by reasonably reliable sources, that you are high-school seniors. I shall therefore begin my instruction by making the charitable assumption that you—at least, most of you—possess the ability to think.

He turns back to the chalkboard and draws a large "0" on it.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

However, you shall have to prove that ability to my satisfaction. Everyone in this class begins, now, at zero. You will accumulate points for work done, here and elsewhere; the total number of points you have at the end of the school year will determine your final grade. You may also, from time to time, receive bonus points. When you have accumulated enough of these, you will receive a partial step-up in your grade.

Osbourne takes a stack of papers from his desk and hands them to the students in front, who begin passing them back.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

You may discard any notes or other materials you have previously collected from this class—as of now, they are irrelevant. I have studied Miss Thornapple's lesson plans; the knowledge required of you under her auspices seemed limited to such things as the capital of Texas—

MARY CHERRY

(waving)

Ooh! I know! Austin!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Osbourne subdues her with a look.

OSBOURNE

That's geography, Miss Cherry, not social studies. And certainly not what we are going to study in the coming months.

LILY

(raising her hand cautiously)
Uh, Mr. Osbourne? You know our names? Already?

OSBOURNE

Indeed I do, Mrs. Ford. I spent yesterday studying your records.

(considers)

Also, I was cornered this morning by a certain Miss Roberta Glass, who seemed determined to speak at length about all of you. She apparently wanted me to take her opinions as my own—but then I decided to consider the source.

Sam and Brooke exchange a glance, raised eyebrows and a barely-audible snort—which does not go unnoticed.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Miss McQueen? Miss McPherson?
You find something amusing?

The girls instantly sit up, straight-faced.

BROOKE

Uh, no, sir—

SAM

No—we, we just think—

BROOKE

We think Miss Glass, she's...she's a little—

SAM

—a little biased.

BROOKE

Right. Just a little.

Osbourne appears to consider this for a moment; then he goes back behind the desk and makes some marks in a ledger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

OSBOURNE

I agree with you. You each receive ten bonus points.

MARY CHERRY

Hold on—they get bonus points for—

OSBOURNE

Opinions, Miss Cherry, as you will discover, are what this class is all about.

BROOKE

(suspiciously)

Wait...are you rewarding us because we said something, or because you agree with what we said?

Osbourne peers over the desk at her.

OSBOURNE

You will have to reason that out for yourself over time, Miss McQueen.

(making another mark)

However, you do get an additional five bonus points, for realizing that the question exists.

Brooke settles back, looking somewhat satisfied with herself.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Now then, shall we begin? Is there a subject—some issue relevant to the human condition—worthy of discussion? Something social to study, as one of my students—whom I flunked—liked to say?

The kids look around at each other, at a loss. Roaming around the room, Osbourne snatches the contest flyer off of Mary Cherry's desk.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

This will do.

Sam rolls her eyes briefly—and Osbourne turns on her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

You have an opinion, Miss
McPherson? What do you think of
this contest?

SAM

Honestly?

OSBOURNE

(severely)

Dishonesty is useless to me, Miss
McPherson. You're allowed to ask
that once. Don't ask it again.

Chastised, Sam drops her gaze.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

(prompting)

You had an opinion, Miss
McPherson.

SAM

(shaking her head)

It's meaningless. It doesn't have
anything to do with school spirit.
It's just another popularity
contest.

OSBOURNE

I see.

He crosses to his desk and leans against it casually, arms
folded.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

A valid interpretation. And is a
popularity contest a good thing?

SAM

Huh?

BROOKE

(cutting in)

Everyone knows who's popular
around here and who isn't.

Osbourne shifts his attention to Brooke.

OSBOURNE

Expand the question, then, Miss
McQueen: is popularity a good
thing? Or a bad thing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Brooke shrugs helplessly. Osbourne rights himself and heads for the bookcase.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Let's back up several steps.

He pulls out a book and opens it.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

The definition of popularity is, and I quote, "the quality of being admired or desired by many people". Miss McPherson—attack or defend that statement.

SAM

(quizzically)

You want me to attack the definition of popularity?

OSBOURNE

Or defend it. Your choice.

Sam thinks for a moment.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Well, Miss McPherson? Attack or defend?

Sam puts her palms out flat on her desk.

SAM

All right—attack. It's not about being wanted, or even admired. Sure, people want to be around you, but—

BROOKE

—but it's not about you. I mean, people aren't popular for who they are. They're popular for how they look, or what clothes they wear, or how they act...

The flow of conversation falters for a moment.

OSBOURNE

And what does that mean?

(beat)

Anyone? Mr. John?

All heads turn to Harrison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

HARRISON

(thinking on the run)

It means...you're just doing what everyone else has already decided is popular.

CARMEN

What?

HARRISON

No, think about it. Everybody thinks popular people are leaders, but they aren't. They're just following the popular "thing". If you try to do something different—

LILY

—you instantly become unpopular.

MARY CHERRY

That's crazy! Who doesn't want to be popular?

BROOKE

(soberly)

I don't. When I was the most popular girl in school...I was the unhappiest I've ever been in my life. Every moment, I was consumed with maintaining my social standing, doing exactly the right thing...it was horrible. My whole life was about playing the popularity game.

MARY CHERRY

But...but...it's worse to be UNpopular!

LILY

Is it? Okay, you don't have legions of hangers-on, but... you're free. You can do what you want, be who you want, without any pressure—

MARY CHERRY

Well, darn, I just don't get it! Bein' popular's, like, you're right at the top of the social heap. I know it's better to be on the top than on the bottom!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

BROOKE

Mary Cherry...

When Mary Cherry—and everyone else—turn to face Brooke, her eyes are deadly serious, and her voice cuts through the room like a knife.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

You've never been on top of the social heap here. You have no idea what it's like. Being popular almost killed me. Twice.

She turns to Osbourne.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

It's not a good thing.

Osbourne tilts his head in acknowledgement.

OSBOURNE

All right, we've established the effect—or at least one effect—of popularity upon its objects.

(holding up a finger)

Now, let's examine popularity from the viewpoint of the others—the "hangers-on", as you call them. What function does popularity serve for them?

SAM

(cynically)

Mindless imitation?

CARMEN

Well...popular people are role models.

LILY

But what good's a role model if it's a bad role model?

SAM

Carmen's right. If nobody knows who you are, you can't be a role model.

HARRISON

Hang on, I'm not sure I buy this idea. I mean, not everybody who's famous is just, you know, evil. I don't think they're always connected.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

SAM

They don't have to be. That's one of the things about popularity: you can't control what people think about you, or if they want to be like you. You might think you have this power over people—

BROOKE

—but you really don't have any power at all.

CARMEN

So what about someone who signs a ten-million-dollar contract for shoes?

LILY

That's different—that's commercialism.

CARMEN

But they're still telling people which shoes to wear. Isn't that power?

MARY CHERRY

That's right!

LILY

No, no...

As the discussion grows more animated, the scene pulls away and focuses on the wall clock...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - LATER

The clock, which had read 10:20, ticks over to 11 o'clock. Several of the kids are talking at once when the school bell cuts them all off.

Osbourne claps his hands together.

OSBOURNE

Well, I think we've made a constructive beginning. Everyone here gets full credit for today. Tomorrow's assignment: a class project, demonstrating what we've discussed today. The entire class will be graded as a unit;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
co-operation is encouraged.
Dismissed.

As the kids file out, Osbourne takes a seat behind his desk.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
(beckoning)
Miss McQueen, Miss McPherson.

Brooke and Sam stop at the desk, waiting. Osbourne looks up at them, regarding them for a moment.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
I'm not impressed with you yet—I
don't impress easily—but I could
be. You argue well, when you
agree and when you don't.
(beat)
I have a feeling this class may be
more interesting than I had
originally thought.
(looking down)
That's all.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Sam and Brooke are walking down the hallway side by side.

SAM
Well, he's...interesting, anyway.

BROOKE
Definitely better than Miss
Thornapple, though.

SAM
I don't know...I was kinda looking
forward to state capitals.

Suddenly Mary Cherry prances across their path, waving a paper: an application form for the school spirit contest. Sam and Brooke just shake their heads at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Lily is talking animatedly to Josh while he is rummaging through his locker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
...so we ended up just talking,
and it was really cool. All these
ideas just flowing around the
room, not like the rest of our
classes.

JOSH
(distant)
Uh-huh, yeah.

LILY
Josh, are you listening to me?

JOSH
(shortly)
Sure.

LILY
(sighs)
Josh, are you still upset?

He turns to glare at her.

JOSH
Naw, Lily, why would I be upset?

LILY
Josh—

JOSH
First you show up at practice and
embarrass me in front of the guys,
and now you're here, all amped
over this social studies guy and
his flowing ideas, while I'm stuck
in jock classes, which is where I
belong anyway.

LILY
Josh, that's not—

He slams his locker shut, making her jump.

JOSH
Go be with your smart friends,
Lily.

Josh turns and stomps off; Lily hugs herself tightly as she
watches him go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EST. FERRARA HOUSE - EVENING

CUT TO:

INT. CARMEN'S BEDROOM

Carmen is sitting at her computer when the phone rings. She reaches over and grabs it.

CARMEN
(into the phone)
H'lo?

SUGAR (V.O.)
Yo, Carmen.

CARMEN
Oh, hey.

SUGAR (V.O.)
So, I scored these tickets to Ska-Fest on Saturday.

CARMEN
What?! How? That's been sold out for, like, weeks!

SUGAR (V.O.)
My cousin's in tight with one of the guys that does the lights. Anyway—

CARMEN
(grinning)
Sure!
(beat)
Uh, I mean...if you WERE gonna ask me...

SUGAR (V.O.)
Yeah, that was the plan.

CARMEN
Great.

SUGAR (V.O.)
So...see you tomorrow?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARMEN

Yeah, okay.

SUGAR (V.O.)

Okay.

Carmen hangs up the phone, still grinning, and gives herself a bit of a celebratory fist-pump.

DISSOLVE TO:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH - MORNING

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM

Lily is pacing around the room, working a rubber band spasmodically between her fingers, while Sam, perched on the tuffet, eyes her carefully.

SAM

Maybe you oughta—

But before Sam can finish her thought, the rubber band snaps out of Lily's hand. With a cry, Sam ducks as it goes zinging over her head and ricochets off the wall behind her.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hey!

LILY

(sighs)

Sorry.

(beat)

Okay, so what do I do now?

Sam shakes her head discouragingly.

SAM

I don't know, Lily.

LILY

Last night he said I'm trying to change who he is. That's not true—I don't want him to change.

Sam raises her eyebrows at Lily skeptically.

LILY (CONT'D)

Well...I mean, I'm not trying to change him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam gives her another look.

LILY (CONT'D)
What??

SAM
Come on, Lily. When Josh was the
quarterback of the football team,
you didn't want anything to do
with him.

LILY
(momentarily indignant)
That's not true! I—I just didn't
think about him like that.

Sam peers at Lily speculatively.

SAM
Are you sure this is just about
football?

LILY
(hesitant)
Well—what else would it be about?

Sam stands up and folds her arms.

SAM
Did Josh do something?

LILY
No! Really...he hasn't done
anything.

SAM
Have you told him?

LILY
I—
(looking away)
—I don't know what you're talking
about.

SAM
(gently insistant)
Yes, you do. Have you told him?

Lily backs away a few steps.

LILY
I...I can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM
(sighs)
Lily...

LILY
You know I can't.

SAM
(shaking her head)
You have to tell him, Lily. He
doesn't know.

LILY
And he's not going to, either.
Please, Sam, just...don't get in
the middle of this.

The moment is interrupted by Carmen, who waltzes into the
Novak while whistling up a storm.

LILY (CONT'D)
(turning)
You're in a good mood, Carm.

Carmen puts her hands to her heart.

CARMEN
I...am content.
(beat)
Sugar Daddy and I are going to Ska-
Fest on Saturday.

LILY
So, no more problems?

CARMEN
You know what, I decided that this
whole talking things out is way
over-hyped. I'm having a good
time, he's having a good time...
we're having a good time.
(giggling)
It's like English class.

SAM
Good for you, Carm.

Lily takes Carmen by the arm and steers her towards the door.

LILY
Yeah, Carm, come on and tell me
all about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Sam shoots a dirty look at Lily's back for escaping their conversation; but the other two are already leaving, and she hurries to catch up.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lily and Carmen are walking down the hall, chatting animatedly, with Sam tagging along behind.

Sam spots Brooke; she shifts direction, taps her on the arm and draws her off to a quiet spot in the corridor.

SAM

Have you had any ideas for this
"class project" for social
studies?

BROOKE

(shaking her head)

I haven't really thought about it.
The whole subject kind of makes me
queasy.

SAM

Listen, I might have something...

Sam and Brooke start to talk in earnest, and—

CUT TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - LATER

The kids are chatting amongst themselves until the bell rings, which is the exact moment that Osbourne appears in the doorway. Crossing to the front of the teacher's desk, he sets down his things, and turns to face them.

OSBOURNE

Good morning. Yesterday we
discussed the concept of
popularity. I believe I mentioned
a class project as today's
assignment.

(folding his arms)

I await your inspiration.

From the assembled students comes a soft murmur and some exchanged glances, but nothing more. Osbourne cocks an eyebrow at them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
 Anyone? I distinctly recall encouraging cooperation. If you wish to cooperate for a zero that is, of course, your choice.

Brooke half-raises her hand.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
 Yes, Miss McQueen?

BROOKE
 We, uh...

She motions to indicate herself and Sam.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
 ...we kinda have an idea. Sam?

Sam collects her thoughts for a moment.

SAM
 Okay, yesterday Brooke said something about playing the popularity game. Well...I was thinking, if it's like a game—why don't we change some of the rules and see what happens?

Osbourne purses his lips.

OSBOURNE
 Interesting. Continue.

SAM
 In fact, why not reverse the whole thing? Make it anti-popular. Like, we can call it...The Unpopularity Game.

OSBOURNE
 My interest does not diminish. And the goal of this game would be?

For the first time, Sam falters.

SAM
 Uh...to be...unpopular?

MARY CHERRY
 Well, hell, anyone can be unpopular, just by being an obnoxious bitch!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LILY
(stage-whispering to Carmen)
I guess she'd know.

Mary Cherry narrows her eyes at Lily.

HARRISON
She's right, though.

MARY CHERRY
(pleased)
Why, thank you, Joe!

HARRISON
You have to have some ground
rules. Otherwise you're just
going to end up with who can do
the best imitation of Nicole.

There seems to be general agreement on that point.

CARMEN
Wait a minute, though. Doesn't
Nicole kinda disprove the theory?

BROOKE
(shaking her head)
What are you talking about?

CARMEN
Well—Nicole was an obnoxious
bitch, but she was still popular.

SAM
(waves her finger)
No, no, she was only popular
because Brooke was popular. All
she ever did was ride Brooke's
coattails.

CARMEN
What difference does it make?
People still thought she was
popular. Isn't that what counts?

Osbourne takes a step forward, to insert himself into the
discussion.

OSBOURNE
Let's take that curious little
question—the perceptions of
popularity—save it for future
examination, and return to the
subject at hand.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

(turning to Sam)

Miss McPherson, you wanted to uncover unpopularity. I think it behooves you to define it.

SAM

Define unpopularity?

OSBOURNE

A simple enough task, Miss McPherson...

(tilting his head)

...don't you think?

SAM

(thinking furiously)

Unpopularity... Isn't it...just not being popular?

OSBOURNE

(challenging)

Is it?

SAM

(uncertainly)

Well...isn't it?

Osbourne shifts his attention to the whole class.

OSBOURNE

Can someone name a person who, in your opinion, defines unpopularity?

Sam and Brooke look at each other.

SAM/BROOKE

April Tuna.

CARMEN

No...I mean, she may be schizo, but she was student body president.

SAM

Yeah, by default! Look, nobody wants to be anything like April. As far as unpopularity goes, that works for me.

LILY

(shakes her head)

We're missing something here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BROOKE

I don't know what.

LILY

Well—okay, it's easy to dump on April, 'cause she's so...out there.

SAM

(leading)

Yeah?

LILY

I'm saying there's lots of people worse off than her, at least popularity-wise. What about Emory? Or Freddy Gong? For that matter, what about these...these hordes of people we don't even know?

HARRISON

I don't think you're talking about unpopular. I think you're talking about unnoticed.

CARMEN

I get it. You can't be unpopular if nobody knows who you are.

LILY

So, see, that's what I'm saying. There's really three groups—the popular kids, the unpopular kids, and then there's this huge, nameless void in the middle.

She turns to Osbourne.

LILY (CONT'D)

Right?

From his customary perch on the corner of his desk, Osbourne nods in acknowledgement.

OSBOURNE

Bravo, Mrs. Ford. A competent observation. It would appear that both popularity and its opposite have the same foundation. And, of course, it's possible to be neither.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

He straightens, walks around to the chalkboard, and writes "POPULAR" and "UNPOPULAR" in large letters, side by side.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Perhaps we should spend some time refining our terms. Then, I believe, we shall discover whether or not Miss McQueen's and Miss McPherson's idea is implementable.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - LATER

Osbourne is sitting at one of the tables, looking over papers; Ms. Ross and Coach Krupps are eating at another table; and Miss Glass is helping herself to a cup of coffee.

Principal Krupps walks in, and makes his way over to Osbourne, who stands in response.

KRUPPS

Mr. Osbourne. I'm sorry I haven't had a chance to drop in on your class—lend a little moral support.

OSBOURNE

(waves dismissively)
It's Eric, please. And it's completely unnecessary. I've had no problems at all.

From next to the coffee machine, Miss Glass snorts.

GLASS

That bunch of delinquents, you just need to sit on 'em hard.

Osbourne eyes her for a moment before addressing himself to Principal Krupps.

OSBOURNE

Actually, I've found them to be studious, hard-working and intellectually curious.

GLASS

(guffawing)
Those kids? Intellectually anything?

Osbourne gathers his papers and puts them in his valise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE

(to Glass)

Indeed. I can't speak to your experience, of course—perhaps their potential merely required someone with the ability to awaken it.

As Miss Glass' mouth drops open, Osbourne nods a farewell to Principal Krupps and walks out; while nearby, Ms. Ross can barely keep from cracking up. Glass glares after him.

GLASS

(muttering)

Oh, you are going down, Mister Osbourne.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CAFETERIA - NOON

Lily sets her tray down at one of the tables, where Sam, Brooke and Carmen are already eating.

CARMEN
Man—that class is exhausting.

SAM
I think it's stimulating.

CARMEN
(wrinkling her nose)
That's just because he likes you.

BROOKE
I agree. It's...challenging.

CARMEN
Well, he likes you, too.

LILY
Come on, Carm, I don't really think he "likes" anybody.

CARMEN
He called you "competent".

LILY
(grins)
He did, didn't he?

Harrison walks up to the table carrying a stack of paper slips.

HARRISON
Hey, check it out, guys. Fresh from the print shop.

He sets the stack down in the middle of the table; Carmen picks off the top sheet.

LILY
(reading over Carmen's shoulder)
"Kennedy High Popularity Survey".

CARMEN
It's just a couple of boxes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON
Yeah, the girl doing graphic
design said KISS was best.

CARMEN
(quizzically)
Kiss?

Carmen presses her lips to the paper experimentally, before
Sam reaches out and takes it.

SAM
"Keep It Simple, Stupid".

She examines the paper critically.

SAM (CONT'D)
It IS pretty simple. We just ask
people to write down who they
think the most popular and
unpopular people in the school
are?

HARRISON
The twist is, whoever gets the
most unpopular votes, wins.

LILY
I still think it should be
multiple choice.

BROOKE
I still think everybody's going to
put April Tuna down as the
unpopular one, and...

Sam wags an eyebrow.

SAM
"And"? You think the school'll
pick you as the popular one?

Brooke gives her a sour look.

SAM (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Face it, Brooke, you've still got
it.

If anything, Brooke's expression turns even more bitter.

CARMEN
Cheer up—maybe Mary Cherry will
win.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Oh, God, can you imagine how
insufferable she'd be then?

As the girls—minus Brooke—laugh over that, Carmen spots Josh and Sugar Daddy entering the lunchroom.

CARMEN

(waving)

Hey, Jo—

But before she can even get his name out, he has turned on his heel and left.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

That's funny—I just saw Josh.

(to Lily)

Hey, don't you usually eat lunch
together?

LILY

(defensively)

We're not joined at the hip, you
know.

Sam looks like she might say something, but Lily warns her off with a sharp glance. Meanwhile, Brooke looks across at Lily speculatively, and a moment later gets up abruptly.

BROOKE

(muttering)

Excuse me.

Carmen eyes Brooke as she walks away.

CARMEN

Was it something we said?

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sugar Daddy is trailing Josh down the hall.

SUGAR

Yo, man, what's with the U-turn?

Josh stops and allows Sugar Daddy to catch up.

JOSH

I can't go in there—Lily's in
there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sugar Daddy puts his hands to his temples.

SUGAR

I musta woke up in Bizarro World
this mornin', 'cuz I coulda swore
you and Lily were like that.

(crossing his fingers)

You know, with a ring and all to
prove it?

JOSH

Yeah, well, there's a shortage of
wedded bliss. Look, all we've
been doing lately is fighting—I
just want a little peace and
quiet.

SUGAR

Okay, bro, but I gotta keep my
strength up, so—

JOSH

Yeah...see you later.

Sugar reverses course and heads back towards the cafeteria.
Josh continue to meander down the hall, until from behind
comes—

BROOKE

Josh!

He turns and sees Brooke coming.

JOSH

(grins)

Hey, Brooke.

He leans easily against the lockers; while she stands frowning
in front of him, arms akimbo.

BROOKE

Okay, what's going on?

JOSH

What?

BROOKE

You and Lily—what's going on?

His expression sours.

JOSH

It's nothing, Brooke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He turns to walk away, but she maneuvers to block his path.

BROOKE

Oh, no, no, we've known each other too long for you to just blow me off.

JOSH

(tiredly)

I'm already fighting with Lily. I don't want to fight with you, too.

BROOKE

Well, then, tell me what's going on, and we won't be.

Josh gives up.

JOSH

It's the same thing it always is. She's...Lily, and I'm just dumb Josh.

BROOKE

(sighs)

Josh, you have got to get over this!

JOSH

Hey, it's not me, it's what she thinks!

BROOKE

Oh, that's not true.

JOSH

Yes it is! You know, I thought we were happy. Now all of a sudden she wants me to be...I don't know what she wants me to be, but it's not who I am.

BROOKE

I think you're being silly.

JOSH

And she thinks I'm just a dumb jock. I dunno...maybe I am, after all.

BROOKE

Stop it, Josh. Didn't you have a great summer job?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Not some dumb jock-type job, like the counter at some fast-food joint. Huh?

JOSH

Yeah...

BROOKE

And, you remember when you first made the team, and the coach said that you memorized the playbook faster than anyone else? You had to be pretty smart to do that, right?

JOSH

That's not gonna help me. She's all freaked out now just because I've been practicing with the guys lately. Did you know she hates football??

BROOKE

(shrugging)

Big deal. I hate football.

JOSH

(accusingly)

What?! You do not!

BROOKE

(chuckles)

Yes, I do.

JOSH

No way! We went to every game for two years—

BROOKE

Josh, I was cheering. I couldn't've cared less what you guys were doing.

JOSH

(dumbfounded)

Really??

BROOKE

So see, it didn't stop us from having a relationship; it shouldn't stop you and Lily, either.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JOSH

I dunno...

BROOKE

She's just worried that you're going to turn into some neandrathal. I told her it was nothing.

JOSH

You talked to Lily?

BROOKE

(rolls her eyes)

Yes, Josh, it's not like we exist in separate social universes anymore. I told her it wasn't like you were going back to being a full-time jock.

(eyes him)

You aren't, are you?

JOSH

What? No! It feels good to be out there with the guys again, but...my dad always wanted that more than me, anyway.

BROOKE

See? All you have to do is sit down with Lily and tell her that. And stop with the idea that she's so much smarter than you! Okay, maybe she is a little, but—

He swats her playfully on the arm as she dissolves in laughter.

EFFECT CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Sam, Brooke, Harrison, Lily and Carmen are huddled at the intersection of two corridors. Each of them is holding a stack of survey slips.

SAM

Okay, everybody know what section of the school they're taking? Let's get out there and get those votes!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The group splits up.

FLIP CUT TO:

MONTAGE

of the gang stopping other students, passing out and explaining the surveys.

CUT TO:

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - LATER

Miss Glass is walking the center aisle of her empty classroom, sweeping random papers into the trash, when she spots one of the survey slips lying on a table. Setting down the wastebasket, she picks it up and looks it over—and then a very evil grin spreads across her face.

FLIP CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL KRUPPS' OFFICE - LATER

Krupps is examining the survey slip, as Miss Glass looks on with ill-concealed glee.

KRUPPS
(reading)
"Kennedy High Popularity Survey".

GLASS
(pointing helpfully)
"Return to Mr. Osbourne".

KRUPPS
Yes, I see... Well—thank you for bringing this to my attention, Miss Glass.

GLASS
(straight-faced)
Just doing my duty as a member of the faculty.

KRUPPS
I think—

At that moment he spots Osbourne walking past the open doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRUPPS (CONT'D)

—Eric!

Osbourne stops in his tracks, backs up a step and peers in.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)

Come in, please.

OSBOURNE

(stepping inside)

Yes, Mr. Krupps. How can I help you today?

Krupps holds up the slip.

KRUPPS

Miss Glass was just showing me this.

OSBOURNE

Ah, yes. It's a class project. The upcoming school spirit contest spawned a fascinating discussion of the nuances of popularity—a subject with which the students are intimately familiar on a personal level, of course.

KRUPPS

(musing to himself)

And this little survey will have all the kids thinking about it, just in time for the contest...

OSBOURNE

Excuse me?

KRUPPS

(looking up)

Synergy, Eric. Your class helping to advance the morale of the whole school.

Krupps extends his hand.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)

(shaking Osbourne's hand)

Keep up the good work, Eric.

OSBOURNE

Thank you, Mr. Krupps.

He turns to Miss Glass, who is standing there stupified.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

And thank you, Miss Glass, for
your part with this.

With that, Osbourne turns and walks out. After a couple of
seconds, Miss Glass shakes off her shock and rushes out after
him.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As Osbourne strolls down the corridor, Miss Glass comes
running after him.

GLASS

Osbourne!

He turns and stares her down.

GLASS (CONT'D)

I don't know how you finagled your
way out of that, Osbourne, but I
swear I'll get you!

OSBOURNE

Indeed?

GLASS

Standing there with your diction
and your hoity-toity attitude...
You're a disruptive influence
here!

OSBOURNE

(icily)

Yes, I can see how someone like
you would be threatened by the
radical concept of actually
teaching something.

GLASS

(shaking her finger furiously)
You just wait! Your days here are
numbered, Osbourne!

She turns on her heel and stalks off. Osbourne watches her go
impassively.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE
(softly)
We shall see, Miss Glass. We
shall see.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH - MORNING

Another sunny morning.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Lily and Carmen are walking down the hall when they come face-to-face with a huge, glitzy, professionally prepared poster hyping Mary Cherry in the school spirit contest.

CARMEN

(gaping)

Whoa... I think maybe Mary
Cherry's going a little overboard
over this.

LILY

Carm, does Mary Cherry ever not go
overboard?

They are still laughing when Sam shows up.

CARMEN

(gesturing at the poster)

Hey, Sam—see this?

Sam just shakes her head in resignation.

SAM

Mary Cherry trying to buy
popularity. Didn't we talk about
that yesterday?

LILY

(shakes her head)

That was Wednesday. Yesterday was
popular culture.

SAM

Ohh, right...

LILY

(thinking)

You know, these posters only went
up yesterday...I hope we didn't
give Mary Cherry the idea for
them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam rolls her eyes. Carmen heads off for class, but Sam catches Lily's arm.

SAM

How are you and Josh doing?

LILY

Better, I think. Maybe everybody's right, maybe I am obsessing over nothing. I mean, a couple of practices doesn't mean anything, right? Anyway, we're going to spend all day tomorrow at the beach.

Sam hugs Lily.

SAM

I'm glad.

LILY

Me too—I hate fighting.

Arm in arm, they walk off, laughing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - LATER

As usual, Osbourne makes his appearance at the exact moment that the bell rings.

OSBOURNE

Good morning. We shall begin by announcing the results of the class project we began on Tuesday. Through this morning, two hundred and eighty-nine surveys had been returned.

SAM

(crestfallen)

That's all?

OSBOURNE

(raising an eyebrow)

It is considerably more than I expected, and significantly more than usually results with this sort of thing. You were, apparently, quite dilligent in your efforts. I said that the class would be graded as a unit;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
the entire class hereby receives
an "A" grade for this project.

There is a muted swell of approval.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
Now, as for the results of the
survey. I have tabulated all of
the responses, and discovered
that—coincidentally—both the
person who received the most
"popular" votes, and the person
who received the most "unpopular"
votes, are in this class.

Everyone looks around at each other, while Osbourne circles
around behind his desk and fishes out a piece of paper.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
The person who received the
highest number of "popular"
votes—by a considerable margin—
was Miss McQueen.

There is a light smattering of applause, led by Sam, while
Brooke looks skyward with an aggrieved expression and shakes
her head.

MARY CHERRY
Well, Brooke, once again I bow to
your greater popularity. I musta
come in second. But since you're
not running in the school spirit
contest, I'm still a shoo-in to
win that!

OSBOURNE
Ahem...and as for the person who
received the most "unpopular"
votes—the winner of The
Unpopularity Game—
Congratulations, Miss Cherry.

Mary Cherry spins around and goggles at Osbourne.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
You are, apparently, the most
unpopular person at this school.

Dead silence fills the room, and before anyone can recover, a
tone fills the air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KRUPPS (V.O.)
 (over the loudspeaker)
 Can I have your attention, please.
 This is Principal Calvin Krupps,
 with a special announcement. Due
 to, ah...difficulties the
 organizers are experiencing, the
 school spirit contest, scheduled
 for next week, is now cancelled.
 Thank you.

As the loudspeaker clicks off, all eyes turn to Mary Cherry, who is sitting there, eyes wide, mouth hanging open. For one, two, three beats she sits frozen; then she lets out one single, prolonged, ear-splitting, glass-shattering scream...

CUT TO:

EST. MCQUEEN HOUSE - EVENING

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN DINING ROOM

The McQueens and the McPhersons are sitting around the dinner table.

JANE
 Was she all right?

SAM
 She's not catatonic or anything.
 It was fun to watch.
 (rubbing her ear)
 I may never hear right again,
 though.

JANE
 That poor girl...

SAM
 Mary Cherry? Please. She'll get
 over it.
 (beat)
 And of course, there was the
 affirmation of Brooke as the most
 popular one—as always.

Brooke, who has been moodily picking at her dinner, throws her napkin down and jumps up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

Excuse me.

Sam watches her run off, and hangs her head.

SAM

Aw, damn... I shouldn't make jokes about it. She really hates it.

Sam gets up.

SAM (CONT'D)

I have to go apologize.

As Sam starts after Brooke, the phone rings. Jane, who is closest to it, gets up and picks it up.

JANE

(into the phone)

Hello?... Oh, yes, just a moment.

(calling)

Sam! It's Art Fleischer.

Sam stops, torn, but then reverses her course and walks over to the phone, taking it from her mother.

SAM

(into the phone)

Hello?...

FADE TO:

EST. L.A. SKYLINE - SUNRISE

A fast-motion shot of the sun rising behind the city's skyscrapers.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

ANGLE: THE ANSWERING MACHINE

blinking insistently. Brooke, wearing flannel pajamas, reaches out and touches the button.

GIRL #1 (V.O.)

(on the machine)

Hey, B.! It's Kelly Ann—Kelly Ann Sanderson? Listen, we should shop sometime.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL #1 (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Gotta have outfit to put everyone
else to shame, right? Call me!

The machine beeps.

GIRL #2 (V.O.)
(on the machine)
Hi, Brooke, this is Lisa. Anyway,
I heard about you gunning for the
top spot again, and, you know,
count me in. See ya Monday.

Another beep.

GIRL #3 (V.O.)
(on the machine)
Brooke! Jennifer here! Hey, I
knew you couldn't stay below the
radar forever. We need to get
together and plot strategy—

With a frustrated snarl, Brooke cuts off the recording by picking up the machine—ripping the cord out of the wall—and hurling the whole thing in the general direction of the doorway. It hits the doorway and bounces off, narrowly missing Harrison, who has his hand poised to knock.

HARRISON
Whoa!

Brooke doesn't even notice him. In one furious movement, she sweeps everything off her desk and onto the floor, then grabs the table lamp and flings it across the room. The sound of the lamp shattering against the wall spurs Harrison into action; he takes a few long steps across the room, and catches her just as she seems ready to topple her bookcase.

BROOKE
(hysterically)
LET ME GO!!!

HARRISON
Brooke! BROOKE!! STOP IT!

He pins her arms to her sides, holding her—with no small effort—as she tries to squirm out of his grasp. As gently as he can, he pulls her back to the bed and sits her down. All the fight seems to go out of her, and she collapses into his chest.

BROOKE
(sobbing)
I don't want it, I don't... It's
all starting all over again...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Please...just make it go
away...make them all go away...

HARRISON

(stroking her hair)
Shhhh...it's okay, Brooke... I'm
here...I won't let anything happen
to you...

She looks up, as if just recognizing him.

BROOKE

Harrison?

HARRISON

I'm here.

She lifts up her head and kisses him; and for a moment he
responds, before pulling away ever so slightly.

BROOKE

What?

HARRISON

(gently, shaking his head)
Brooke... Here? Now?

BROOKE

(whispering)
Dad and Jane have Mac, Sam's at
work...

HARRISON

Y-you've been pushing me away for
weeks—

Fresh tears well up in Brooke's eyes.

BROOKE

Please...

HARRISON

I—

But she cuts him off by kissing him again; and eventually,
despite whatever reservation he might have had, he falls back
onto the bed with her.

CUT TO:

INT. CARMEN'S BEDROOM

The room seems empty when Sugar Daddy cautiously appears in the doorway.

SUGAR

Yo, Carm? Your mom said to come on up!

CARMEN (O.S.)

Yeah! Just don't come in the bathroom!

Sugar Daddy advances into the room.

SUGAR

No problemo. I'll just wait out here.

CARMEN (O.S.)

I won't be long, promise!

He makes the same kind of "look, don't touch" rounds that he did the last time he was in the room.

SUGAR

You know, you always look pretty damn good to me, Carm.

CARMEN (O.S.)

(lightly)

Hey, I don't know about other girls, but flattery works on me.

But by this time Sugar Daddy has worked his way over to her computer again, and this time she isn't there to stop him. He peruses the papers covering her computer desk with no more than the barest curiosity—until something catches his eye, and he bends down to look more closely. He picks up a stack of papers and flips through them quickly.

As Carmen emerges, all made up, Sugar Daddy turns and holds up the papers.

SUGAR

You wanna explain this?

Carmen's mouth drops open.

CARMEN

Wha—?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUGAR

This is why you didn't want to
give me your new screen name?
Because you're stepping out with
another guy online?!

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S APARTMENT

Josh is sitting on the sofa in the living room, packing beach
stuff into a bag.

JOSH

(calling)

Honey?! Have you seen the suntan
lotion?!

LILY (O.S.)

Did you look in the bathroom?

JOSH

Yeah!

Lily emerges from the other room, carrying towels.

LILY

I don't know, then. Maybe we ran
out.

JOSH

How do you run out of suntan
lotion? You've been to the beach,
like, twice this year.

Lily shrugs.

LILY

We'll just pick up more on the
way.

She sits down and snuggles up next to him.

LILY (CONT'D)

This is really gonna be nice.

JOSH

(grinning)

Yeah.

The phone rings, and Josh leans over to pick it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Hello?

He listens for a moment, then jumps up suddenly.

JOSH (CONT'D)
(into)
What?!! When?!!... Man,
that's...what??? I can't...what
about Stankowski??... But...
but...
(sighing)
All right... Yes, sir, I'll be
there.

As Josh hangs up the phone, Lily gets up, concerned.

LILY
What is it?

JOSH
George broke his ankle in
scrimmage!

LILY
What?! Is he all right?

JOSH
Yeah, but...he's gonna be out the
rest of the season.

LILY
(shaking her head)
So?

Josh braces himself.

JOSH
Coach Krupps wants me to sub,
starting next week against
Roosevelt.

LILY
Josh! No!!

JOSH
Lily, try to understand.
Everyone's counting on me.

Lily throws up her hands and starts to pace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LILY

No! This is how it starts—first the practices, now playing again! You can't do it!!

JOSH

I already told him I would. Coach is expecting me at practice in half an hour.

LILY

What?!! What about our day at the beach?!

JOSH

I'm sorry, Lily, but we're just going to have to do it some other time.

LILY

Josh!!

JOSH

(sighs)

I don't want to fight with you...I have to go get my stuff.

But Lily gets between him and the doorway.

LILY

(waving her finger)

Josh, stop! I forbid you from doing this!

JOSH

(impatiently)

Lily, don't be dumb, okay? You can't just forbid me from playing football. Now, I have to go.

LILY

I don't care! I'm not gonna let you do this!

JOSH

Dammit, Lily—!

In frustration, Josh slams his palm against the wall next to Lily's head—and the reaction is like flipping a switch: she shrieks, covers her head and runs screaming from the room.

Josh is shocked right out of his anger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSH (CONT'D)
Lily? Lily!

Cautiously, Josh goes through the doorway after her.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM

The front door opens, and Sam walks in, juggling her laptop, several folders and her cell phone.

SAM
(into the phone)
...well, I wish they'd install new software when I'm at school...
No, no, I'm totally down with the telecommuting thing.

She looks around.

SAM (CONT'D)
Nobody's here anyway. Just let me run up to my room and set everything up. Call you right back.

Sam flips the phone shut and tucks it away, and bounds up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rounding the top of the stairs, Sam is not exactly looking where she's going—which is why she practically collides with Harrison, wet and wearing only a towel around his waist, as he makes his way down the hall.

SAM
Harrison!! God!

HARRISON
Ah, S-Sam—I thought—y-you're supposed to be at work—

SAM
The computers at the paper crashed. So I'm working from home today.

She looks at him again, and does a double-take.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM (CONT'D)

Harrison...you're wearing a towel.
Something wrong with the shower at
your place?

Harrison looks down at himself dumbly.

HARRISON

Sam, I can—uh—

Then a twinkle enters her eye, and a slow grin spreads across
her face.

SAM

Were you gonna surprise me?
Maybe, show up in my bed? I'm
sorry, I didn't mean to ruin it.

She runs her hand lightly over his chest.

SAM (CONT'D)

But I will say, it is a nice thing
to come home to—

But then her flirting is abruptly cut off by—

BROOKE (O.S.)

Harrison? Did you find my soap?

Harrison squeezes his eyes shut, defeated.

BROOKE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Come on, Harrison, I thought you
were going to wash my back—

Unaware, clad only in her own towel, Brooke steps out of the
bathroom—and stops dead.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Sam.

Sam just stands there, frozen, eyes wide, looking from
Harrison to Brooke and back.

SUPER: TO BE CONTINUED

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END