

Popular: Senior Year
"New Girl on the Block"
by
The Wild Pikachu

POPULAR: SENIOR YEAR

NEW GIRL ON THE BLOCK

TEASER

FADE IN:

EST. MCQUEEN HOUSE - DAWN

Pre-dawn, actually: the eastern sky just beginning to light up.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN DINING ROOM

Jane comes down the kitchen stairs, yawning. Surprised to find the lights already on, she looks around.

Sam walks in, dressed and obviously ready to leave.

JANE

Sam...where are you going?

SAM

(shortly)
Paper.

JANE

(yawns again)
This time of the morning? Are they even open?

SAM

It's a newspaper, Mom. There's always people there.

JANE

Well, let me at least fix you br—

SAM

Had it.

Jane makes a move to give Sam a hug, but she veers off sharply, heading for the patio doors.

JANE

(exasperated)
Come on, Sam. How long are you going to hold a grudge?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At the doors, Sam stops and glares back at her mother.

SAM
(coldly)
I'll let you know.

She walks out, leaving Jane shaking her head.

CUT TO:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH - MORNING

The quad, a sunny day.

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNEDY HIGH PARKING LOT

A young woman is walking through the lot, attracting a few stares from passers-by. The reason that people are staring is that this girl happens to look exactly like Nicole Julian—with a single, glaring exception: a rich, luxurious mass of auburn hair, braided down her back. She is making decent time while carrying several folders under her arm—all of which almost comes to a crashing end when she nearly—nearly—runs right into Harrison. He reaches out to steady her before she can fall.

Then he goes white as he looks up into her face.

NATALIE
Wow...thanks. I'm sorry, it was
my fault. I wasn't looking.

HARRISON
(extremely flustered)
Ah...ah...no...I mean, um...

She partly extends a free hand.

NATALIE
(grinning)
Hi. Natalie. Natalie James.

Still dazed, Harrison shakes her hand.

HARRISON
Ah...Harrison...John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Ohhh...pleased to meet you,
Harrison. It's always nice to see
another one of us.

HARRISON

Ahh...I'm sorry..."us"?

NATALIE

A person whose last name is really
a first name. You know?

Harrison obviously has no clue what's going on.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

The plot is to confuse everyone
else so much that we can take over
the world.

(straight-faced)

Did you miss the memo?

He just stands there, gulping air for a moment. Then she
breaks up.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I'm sorry—again. I've been
accused of having a warped sense
of humor. I guess I shouldn't
unload it on my first day, though.

HARRISON

Your...uh...first day...?

NATALIE

(nods)

In fact, if you could tell me
where Principal...

(checking a note)

...Krupps' office is, I'd be very
grateful.

Harrison takes a moment to try to get his wits together.

HARRISON

It's, uh...right down that way.

(pointing)

Go left at the cafeteria doors,
and then right when you get to the
restrooms.

NATALIE

Great! Thanks, Harrison John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Without further ado, she walks off in the direction Harrison's still pointing towards. He looks after her, gaping at her back and shaking his head in great confusion.

HARRISON

HUH???

WHITE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Natalie is walking down the corridor, seemingly oblivious to the stares of the people around her. Then an arm reaches out and shoves her into the lockers. She quails, wide-eyed, at Brooke, Mary Cherry and Carmen, who form a menacing semi-circle surrounding her.

NATALIE

Wha—?

BROOKE

What the hell are you doing here?!!

CARMEN

Yeah, you've got some nerve showing your face!

MARY CHERRY

Yeah, did you really think nobody would notice you?!

NATALIE

(shaking)

What...why—?

She tries to take a step forward, but Brooke shoves her back against the lockers again.

BROOKE

Oh, no, you're not getting away. You're getting exactly what you deserve.

Natalie reaches for her bag and tries to open it.

NATALIE

Here—just take whatever you want—

Carmen slaps the bag away, and as she does, it and all of Natalie's folders fall to the floor. The momentary distraction is enough for her to push past Carmen and run, shrieking, down the hall. The three girls look after her.

CARMEN

Man... What, is she Freddy Krueger or something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY

She's like a cockroach—ya gotta squish 'em, and then make sure they're dead!

BROOKE

I still can't believe Nic would show up here.

Carmen, meanwhile, picks up Natalie's bag and folders.

CARMEN

How do you suppose she got out of jail, anyway?

BROOKE

(shrugs)
Her mother must have pulled some strings.

Carmen pulls a wallet out of the bag and flips through it.

CARMEN

Natalie James...Natalie James...

MARY CHERRY

"Natalie James"? Ha! That's rich! And not in a oil-strikin' way, either. If she thought some fake I.D.s and a bad dye job was gonna fly, then the hoosegow made her dumber.

Carmen abandons the bag and starts flipping through one of the folders.

BROOKE

(leaning in)
What's that?

CARMEN

Looks like...transcripts. From St. Cloud, Minnesota.

MARY CHERRY

I didn't know Nicole's mama could do that.

A sharp breath comes from Carmen, who is still reading.

CARMEN

Uh-oh...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE

What?

Carmen hands her the folder, pointing.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

(reading)

James, Natalie...Mother, James,
Rebecca...

(gasps)

...mother's maiden name—Grout??

MARY CHERRY

Grout? Isn't that—?

CARMEN

She's related to Nicole's birth
mother.

MARY CHERRY

Well, that would explain the...

CARMEN

(looking over cautiously)

Brooke?

Brooke throws up her hands fatalistically.

BROOKE

Oh, yeah—we're dead.

(tittering)

We just mugged a girl on her first
day at Kennedy. We're gonna get
suspended...it's going on our
permanent records, we'll never get
into a decent college...

(bleakly)

Maybe they'll put me in the same
cell block as Nic.

CARMEN

Okay, Brooke, chill. We'll just
find her, and Mary Cherry'll
convince her it was all a big
mistake.

MARY CHERRY

Hold on! Why me?!

CARMEN

Well...you're better at groveling
than we are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY CHERRY

Well, yeah, there is that...

CARMEN

Okay, then, that's the plan—we
find this Natalie person, and we
fix things.

BROOKE

All right, so...where do you think
she went?

Carmen shrugs helplessly; and they all go tearing off down the
corridor.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM

Lily comes into the Novak and heads for the mirror. She
spends a couple of moments teasing her hair—and then the
reflection of movement behind her catches her eye. She spins
around, and doesn't see anything. But then she hears the
faintest of whimpers coming from the area of the tuffet.
Puzzled, she walks softly over to the tuffet and peers over
it—to see Natalie curled up in the tightest possible ball
behind it. Lily is instantly around the tuffet and on the
floor next to the terrified girl.

LILY

(soothingly)

Hey...hey...what's wrong?

She reaches out cautiously, but Natalie shies away.

LILY (CONT'D)

It's all right...nobody's going to
hurt you...

Suddenly Natalie breaks out into great, wracking sobs, while
Lily puts her arms around her comfortingly. Ever so gently,
Lily lifts Natalie up and sits her down on the tuffet.

LILY (CONT'D)

What happened? Did someone hurt
you?

NATALIE

(sobbing)

There were...these girls...they...
they...and I...they were...
screaming...and...they took...
everything...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
Are you...new here?

NATALIE
(nodding)
It's...it's...my first...day...

LILY
(growing outraged)
Schoolyard bullying—it's becoming
a scourge across America! Well,
this kind of injustice can't be
allowed to go unanswered. You
have the inalienable right to a
free, wholesome and safe
educational environment! Come
on—we'll march right down to
Principal Krupps' office, and make
sure this never happens again!

NATALIE
But...but...what if...what if
they...?

LILY
(stridently)
No! You can't allow them to win!
You're the victim here—you have a
right to be heard!

NATALIE
I...I don't know...

LILY
Look, I promise, I'll be with you
every step of the way. I swear.

Finally, Natalie nods tearfully and allows Lily to help her
up. At just that moment, the door swings open, and Brooke,
Mary Cherry and Carmen walk in.

CARMEN
...I still think we should split
up—

The trio and Natalie make eye contact at the same instant, and
their reactions are instantaneous: Natalie squeaks, and hides
behind Lily; while the other girls all throw their hands up
defensively.

MARY CHERRY
Whoa! Hey, easy now. Steady...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE
(hissing)
Mary Cherry, she's not a horse!

Lily eyes them suspiciously.

LILY
Guys? What's going on??

The girls stand there, fidgeting nervously.

CARMEN
We, uh...um, we...kind of...um...
accidentallly...

LILY
WHAT—DID—YOU—DO?!!

CARMEN
We...thought she was Nicole.

LILY
WHAT???

Carmen and Mary Cherry look to Brooke for confirmation.

BROOKE
Yeah, we, uh, thought Nic was
back, uh...somehow.

LILY
(incredulous)
Are you all insane?!

CARMEN
(defensively)
Well, she does look like Nicole...
except for the hair.

Lily turns back to Natalie, holds her at arm-length, and studies her carefully.

LILY
(doubtfully)
You think?

BROOKE
(gesturing, annoyed)
Oh, come on! She's a dead ringer
for Nic!

After a moment, Lily shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LILY
 I dunno, maybe a little...
 (turning back)
 Still, Nicole is in prison, right?
 Which kinda shoulda maybe been a
 clue that this wasn't her?!

CARMEN
 (pleading)
 Believe me, we are SO sorry.

She holds out Natalie's bag and folders.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
 Here... We didn't take anything,
 we swear...

Disgusted, Lily snatches the items away, turns and hands them over to Natalie.

LILY
 (taking a deep breath)
 Look, Natalie, I know these girls.
 I'm still not quite sure what
 possessed them to go off and do
 this, but I really don't think
 they meant to—

Sensing that Lily has switched sides, Natalie takes a step back, fear coming back into her eyes.

NATALIE
 You—you mean...?

LILY
 (hastily)
 No! No, this is totally your
 decision. If you still want to go
 to Principal Krupps, I will still
 go with you, and I will still be
 with you every step of the way.

CARMEN
 Lily—

Lily whirls around, jabbing a finger at Carmen.

LILY
 You—HUSH!

Carmen subsides meekly; Lily turns back to Natalie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LILY (CONT'D)
 (earnestly)
 I'm not pressuring you. I'm
 just—asking you to think it over.
 Okay?

Natalie looks past Lily to the other girls, who are all trying to look as contrite and harmless as possible.

NATALIE
 Well...

BROOKE
 (hopeful)
 You won't tell on us?

Natalie thinks about it for several tense moments. Finally she nods, just slightly.

NATALIE
 I guess...

The trio of girls breathe a simultaneous sigh of relief.

MARY CHERRY
 I swear to the Lord Almighty, we
 thought you were the evil Nicole
 Julian!

NATALIE
 (puzzled)
 Who's Nicole Julian?

CARMEN
 She used to go to this school,
 before she tried to kill Brooke
 here and wound up in prison.

BROOKE
 Yeah, and even though her name was
 Julian, she was adopted. Her real
 mother—her birth mother—was a
 woman named Shaggy Louise Grout.

NATALIE
 Shaggy Lou—Aunt Louise??

CARMEN
 (gesturing to Lily)
 There, see, she's Nicole's, um,
 cousin!

Lily looks closely at Natalie again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

LILY

I guess there is a bit of a resemblance.

MARY CHERRY

Well! I'm sure glad that's straightened out!

Along with Carmen, Mary Cherry turns to leave.

BROOKE

Guys—hang on.

They stop and turn back.

CARMEN

What?

BROOKE

I'm thinking, this is gonna keep happening. I mean, Nic made a lot of enemies around here.

CARMEN

(shrugging)

So, what are we supposed to do about it?

BROOKE

Look, I think the four of us should take turns, and make sure somebody's with...um?

NATALIE

Natalie.

BROOKE

...with Natalie every minute, at least today. So nobody else makes the same mistake we did.

LILY

That is a great idea, Brooke.

Brooke steps up to Natalie, still a bit cautious.

BROOKE

So—if we could start over?
(holding out her hand)
Hi. I'm Brooke McQueen.

NATALIE

(smiling)

Natalie James.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

The two girls shake hands.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Natalie and Lily are walking along the hall.

LILY

I think you'll really like social studies. Our teacher is very cool, and class is like—well, you have to be there.

(beat)

Hey, do you mind if we take a little detour?

NATALIE

(shrugs)

I just think of it as getting the tour.

LILY

Great—come on.

Lily veers off up the stairs, with Natalie in tow.

CUT TO:

INT. ZAPRUDER REPORTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Lily raps on the open door.

LILY

(calling)

Sam?

(to Natalie)

Sam was the editor of the school paper...now she's busy working at a real newspaper.

(beat)

SAM?!

SAM (O.S.)

Coming!

Sam appears from a connecting room, carrying a cardboard box.

SAM (CONT'D)

I swear, I'm gone two months, and I can't find anything anymore—

She stops dead at the sight of Natalie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY

Oh, um, Sam, this is Natalie James. She, uh, Nicole's...
(searching)
...birth—cousin? Natalie, Sam McPherson.

Sam blindly sets the box down on a desk.

SAM

Wow...I mean...wow.
(shakes her head)
Sorry, uh, but...wow.

NATALIE

It's all right. I've had worse reactions today.

LILY

(explaining)
She got attacked earlier.

SAM

My God, are you okay?

NATALIE

Well, I had my wits scared out of me, but other than that, I'm all right.

LILY

We're all escorting Natalie around today, letting everyone know that she's not Nicole reincarnated or anything.

SAM

Yeah, I can see that would be a good idea.

NATALIE

(to Sam)
Are you sure we look that much alike? Lily can't see it.

LILY

Well, I see it a little, but not like everyone else, I guess.

SAM

(nodding)
Ohhh, yes. You definitely could be Nicole's twin.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM (CONT'D)

(beat)
Hang on a sec.

Sam goes to a filing cabinet and rumages through one of the drawers for a second. She pulls out a book, flips it open and hands it to Natalie.

SAM (CONT'D)

(pointing)
See?

INSERT: THE BOOK

open to a color photograph of the Glamazons from two years past: Brooke, Nicole, Mary Cherry and Carmen.

Natalie stares at the photo, her mouth hanging open. Finally she hands it back to Sam.

NATALIE

Ewww.

LILY

What?

NATALIE

(gesturing)
That's what I would look like
blonde? Yuck.

The girls crack up over that.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Brooke, Natalie and Lily are coming down the hallway, with Brooke whispering in Natalie's ear. As they stop outside an open classroom door, Natalie pulls back and looks at Brooke, an astonished look on her face.

NATALIE

Really??

Brooke nods, wagging her eyebrows. Natalie turns the other way.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Lily?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
 (considering)
 Welllll...normally I would say
 no...

BROOKE
 Lily...

LILY
 (with a little grin)
 But, just this once...

Brooke claps with delight.

BROOKE
 This is gonna be killer. Come on.

Brooke peeks through the doorway, then motions the girls to go through—

CUT TO:

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Miss Glass is looking through a file cabinet, her back to the door. Brooke and Lily head for their seats—with Brooke staying as far away as possible from Sam. At seeing Natalie, Josh gapes, and starts to say something; Lily gets there just in time to clamp her hand over his mouth and make a shushing motion. Meanwhile, Natalie stands quietly at the teacher's desk, hands clasped in front of her, waiting. After a moment, Miss Glass pulls out a file and straightens up.

GLASS
 (turning)
 All right, now—

At that instant, she comes face-to-face with Natalie, and goes completely white. Her voice sticks in her throat; she makes a couple of gulping, urking noises, before staggering backwards, clutching her chest. She misses her stool and winds up landing on the floor on her rear, to an uproar of laughter from the class.

Natalie just stands there innocently, leaning a bit to peek around the edge of the desk.

NATALIE
 (innocently)
 Miss Glass? Is something wrong?

Miss Glass manages to wave a shaky finger at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLASS
Y-y-you—you—

NATALIE
I'm sorry...is there a problem?

Miss Glass struggles to her feet.

GLASS
What—what—what are you doing
here?!

NATALIE
Transferring. From Minnesota.
This is my first day.

She lays a couple of forms on the desk.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
That's my record from my old
school, and that's from Principal
Krupps.

Miss Glass, after managing to get her breathing under control, takes a look at the papers. Then she glares out at the still-snickering students, realizing that they were in on the joke.

GLASS
All right, you bunch of juvenile
delinquents... You may have had a
little fun—but don't think I
won't remember this when finals
roll around!
(to Natalie)
You—find a seat!

Natalie obediently goes and takes the empty seat next to Sam.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - LATER

As usual, Mr. Osbourne is conducting class in his own distinct style.

OSBOURNE
I trust you've all read
yesterday's handouts containing
some of Goethe's thoughts on youth
and society.
(to Natalie)
Not to worry, Miss James.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Allowances shall be made in your case.

Natalie favors him with a wan smile.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Not to digress, but has anyone seen Miss Fererra? Unless my eyesight has begun to fail—which I doubt—I saw her this morning. Yet she is not present now.

The kids all look at each other, and the result is a collective shrug.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Well, I suppose a certain amount of...shall we say, goofing off?... must be expected. After all, in the words of another noted philosopher—

He switches to German for the quote:

OSBOURNE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

—“youth is a disagreeable time.”

From the side of the room, Natalie snorts—an oddly Nicole-like sound. Osbourne raises an eyebrow at her.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Yes, Miss James?

Natalie shrugs at him.

NATALIE (SUBTITLE)

(in casual German)

Goethe was an artist. Nietzsche was an idiot.

Osbourne focuses on her, and continues the conversation in German.

OSBOURNE (SUBTITLE)

Indeed?

NATALIE (SUBTITLE)

“All Too Human” was especially obtuse.

OSBOURNE (SUBTITLE)

You’ve read the original, I assume.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Natalie just raises an eyebrow.

OSBOURNE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
Your German sounds flawless,
incidentally—no accent at all.

NATALIE (SUBTITLE)
Thank you. Five years, junior
high and high school. I had very
good teachers.

OSBOURNE (SUBTITLE)
I commend you on your educators,
then. We shall have to discuss
Nietzsche sometime, though.

Natalie tilts her head in acknowledgement.

NATALIE (SUBTITLE)
Whenever you'd like, Mr. Osbourne.

The other kids, watching but not understanding this exchange,
trade significant looks. Osbourne refocuses on the class,
switching back to English.

OSBOURNE
Well—this school grows curiouiser
and curiouiser.
(to Brooke)
Miss McQueen, you may have
competition.

Natalie shrugs at Brooke apologetically.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Brooke and Natalie are walking down the corridor, when a
couple of kids passing by give them a stare.

BROOKE
(sharply)
Hey, she's not Nicole, okay?

The kids back off, and Brooke and Natalie continue on.

NATALIE
So, this Nicole...you knew her,
right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

She used to be my best friend. Of course, she did sleep with my boyfriend—ex-boyfriend—while we were split up for about a week. And then on prom night she hit me with her car.

NATALIE

(doing a double-take)
You mean, hit, like...tapped?

BROOKE

No, more like, at about fifty miles an hour. I spent most of the summer in the hospital.

Natalie gives her a very strange look.

NATALIE

And—this was your best friend?

BROOKE

I know, I know... But then, I used to not be very nice myself.

Natalie looks her up and down, and nods knowingly.

NATALIE

Ah...Julie Stanton.

BROOKE

Who?

NATALIE

She's a girl, at my old school. Head cheerleader, homecoming queen, center of the ultra-popular clique—prize bitch.

BROOKE

(laughing)
That was me, all right.

NATALIE

And Nicole—she was, like, the number-two person in your circle?

BROOKE

Uh, yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATALIE
(nodding)
Okay. I know exactly who you're talking about, now.

BROOKE
I guess things are the same all over.

NATALIE
In high school, I think so, yeah.

They walk along for a couple of moments in silence.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
You know, this is really weird for me.

BROOKE
Ha. You're not the only one.

NATALIE
I mean, Aunt Louise was always kinda the black sheep of the family—but I don't ever remember anyone mentioning her having a baby.

BROOKE
Maybe nobody knew. From what I heard, Nicole's mother just abandoned her.

NATALIE
That's so sad...

They stop at an open classroom door.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Well, here's my English class.

Brooke puts her hand in the chest of a boy about to go in, stopping him.

BROOKE
(pointing at Natalie)
Hey. Natalie—not Nicole. Completely different person. Got it? Good. Spread it around.

After she lets the boy go, Natalie shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NATALIE

I was going to say something about being babysat, but I'm actually kinda grateful.

BROOKE

Hey, it's the least we could do, after...

NATALIE

It's okay. If someone tried to kill me, and then I saw her face on someone else...I might go a little nuts, too.

Brooke grins for a moment.

BROOKE

Okay, Lily's going to meet you here after class, and then we'll have lunch.

NATALIE

(cautiously)
And lunch would be...?

BROOKE

(sighs)
Some things really are the same all over.

NATALIE

Oh, well.

Natalie goes into the classroom, and Brooke turns and jogs back down the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Further along the corridor, Lily is standing at the pay phone, making a call. After a moment, she hangs up, puts in a quarter, and dials again. A few seconds later, she hangs up again, a frustrated expression on her face.

Brooke jogs up behind her, and Lily catches her by the arm.

LILY

Brooke, did Carmen tell you where she was going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

Nope. I guess she musta skipped
after chem.

LILY

It's really odd...her line is
busy, but I tried downstairs and
the machine picked up.

BROOKE

(thinking)

Well...maybe she was online this
morning, and forgot to log off

(tugging at her)

Come on—we're gonna be late!

Brooke takes off down the hall, and as the bell rings, Lily
hustles after her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CARMEN'S BEDROOM

Carmen, as it turns out, is sitting at her computer, typing
away furiously, completely absorbed.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CAFETERIA - NOON

Brooke, Natalie, Lily and Josh are sitting together at one of the tables.

JOSH

Man, I still can't get over it.
It's like seeing a ghost.

(to Lily)

Why didn't you warn me?

LILY

Well, honey, I was a little busy
keeping Natalie from getting her
ass handed to her.

NATALIE

I really can't thank you enough,
Lily.

(to the others)

You know, Lily was the first
person to see me and not try to
kill me.

(considers)

Well, the second, actually.

LILY

Really? Who—?

At that moment Natalie spots Harrison carrying his lunch
across the room, and half-rises out of her seat, waving.

NATALIE

Harrison!

Harrison comes over.

HARRISON

Natalie, right?

NATALIE

(grinning)

You remembered.

HARRISON

Uh, trust me, you're kinda hard to
forget.

BROOKE

Wait, when did you meet Harrison?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Oh, before school. He told me where Principal Krupps' office was.

BROOKE

(to Harrison)
You think you could've said something?

HARRISON

Well—the first time I saw you, you were already with Natalie.

Harrison slides in next to Brooke, who wraps an arm around his neck and snuggles.

NATALIE

(eyeing them)
So, you two...?

HARRISON

Ah, yeah.

BROOKE

But it's a long story.

HARRISON

(expectantly)
Brooke?

Brooke sighs and takes her arm away, pouting.

BROOKE

I thought we'd been through this.

HARRISON

That doesn't mean you have to climb all over me every time Sam's in the room.

BROOKE

I like climbing all over you, whether Sam's around or not.

Josh and Lily whistle appreciatively; Brooke blushes and discreetly pulls back a bit.

NATALIE

What about Sam?

BROOKE

Like I said, it's a long story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATALIE

(rolling her eyes)
I'm sure I'll learn everything soon enough. Like, about Miss Glass.

BROOKE

(laughing)
Oh, that look on her face was worth whatever we get.
(to Lily)
Come on, admit it—you enjoyed it too.

HARRISON

Yeah, a little payback for all the times she's humiliated us?

A grin tugs at the corners of Lily's mouth.

LILY

Well...it was curiously satisfying.

Everyone erupts in laughter. On the other side of the lunchroom, Sam gets up, dumps the rest of her lunch and walks off. Lily spots her leaving, and gets up herself.

LILY (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.
(severely)
Nobody touch my organic Brussel sprout yogurt.

As she rushes off, the others look at each other.

JOSH

I wasn't even thinking about it.

HARRISON

So, Natalie, that was sure a surprise you pulled on Mr. Osbourne in social studies.

JOSH

What surprise?

BROOKE

(to Josh)
She speaks German.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NATALIE

I can get by in Swedish, too—the
Grout side of my family is
Swedish—but German's easier.

HARRISON

(awed)

I don't think I've ever met anyone
who was trilingual before.

JOSH

Yeah, around here most people take
Spanish.

NATALIE

Oh, as far as Spanish goes, I know
"quiero Taco Bell", and that's it.
And I don't even know what that
means.

(beat)

I guess I'll fit right in, huh?

There is more general laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam is at her locker when Lily catches up to her.

LILY

Hey, Sam!

SAM

(turning)

Oh—hey, Lily.

LILY

So...I saw you having lunch...

Sam rolls her eyes.

SAM

(sighs)

I can't, Lily. I just—can't,
okay?

Lily closes her mouth and gazes at Sam speculatively. Sam
laughs humorlessly.

SAM (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY

What?

SAM

You're thinking, when I was dating George, Harrison didn't run away and hide.

LILY

(nonplussed)

I—

SAM

I don't know how he did it. Maybe I oughta ask him. Oh, wait, I'm not talking to him.

Sam lets her forehead bang against the locker, and Lily reaches out sympathetically.

LILY

I wish there was something I could do.

SAM

There is—loan me your car.

LILY

Huh?

SAM

Oh, I just need to run down to the paper.

LILY

(checking her watch)

But lunch is already half over.

SAM

I have study hall—I can be a little late. Please? I promise I won't speed.

Lily fishes out her keys and dangles them.

LILY

(teasing)

Are you sure you remember how?

SAM

(snatching the keys)

Just because I don't have my own car doesn't mean I'm going to forget how to drive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She hugs Lily lightly, and then runs off.

CUT TO:

EST. THE L.A. CHRONICLE - LATER

An imposing pan of the building's exterior.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE FILE ROOM

In a room filled, top to bottom, with old-fashioned file cabinets, Sam is bent over, searching through the drawers. After a moment she surfaces with a couple of file folders. She flips through them briefly; then, satisfied, she makes her way towards the door. She is almost to the doorway when she hears familiar voices in the corridor outside, and freezes.

JANE (O.S.)

...I just don't feel good about this.

MIKE (O.S.)

I'm not happy about it. But we have to do something...

Sam ducks behind a file cabinet as Mike and Jane pass by the doorway. Then, with a mix of confusion and suspicion on her face, she peeks around the corner of the doorway, and follows them.

CUT TO:

INT. ART FLEISCHER'S OFFICE - LATER

Mike and Jane are seated before Fleischer's desk; Fleischer is pacing along the small space behind it. He goes to the window and idly peeks out through the blinds, before shaking his head.

FLEISCHER

I can't do it.

MIKE

Look—

FLEISCHER

(cutting him off)

First of all, you don't want me to do it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

Sam has a promising career in front of her—you don't want to go nipping that in the bud.

CUT TO:

INT. THE NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam is pressed against the wall next to the door, listening, storm clouds darkening her face. She moves around the edge of the room, staying out of the line of sight of the inner office, and corrals another intern.

SAM

Gina, would you make sure Art gets these?

GINA

Sure thing.

SAM

Thanks.

Sam starts to turn away; then, struck by a thought, she faces the intern again.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hey, did you get your check?

GINA

A couple days ago.

SAM

Okay.

GINA

(thinking)

You know, you're new...they might've screwed up the address.

SAM

(dully)

Yeah. Thanks.

She takes off at a run.

CUT TO:

INT. ART FLEISCHER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MIKE

I realize this is a radical request. We're just a little desperate here.

JANE

We're a lot desperate. Do you know what it's like, every time I come home, every time I wake up in the morning, wondering if she's run off again?

FLEISCHER

Has she talked about running away? Have there been any warning signs?

JANE

You have to understand, Sam doesn't talk about things—she just goes and does them. There are never any warning signs.

FLEISCHER

Hey, I really do understand your concerns. But I still can't just fire her, even if I wanted to.

JANE

Can't you at least limit the time she spends here? She's almost never home anymore, except to sleep.

FLEISCHER

I can't order her to work less; my editor would have my ass.

MIKE

Doesn't she need parental permission to work?

FLEISCHER

(shaking his head)

Not at her age. In fact, I'll tell you what our legal department would probably tell me: that she could, conceivably, find a lawyer and sue us for wrongful termination.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE

I can't believe we're talking
about this.

MIKE

It's not that we want to force her
out of this job. We just...want
to control the situation.

FLEISCHER

(sitting)

Well, I'm sorry to tell you that
might not be possible. And that
it's a good thing you don't want
to force her out of her job,
because I don't think you can do
that, either.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Harrison is getting a book out of his locker when Brooke comes
up from behind and wraps him up in her arms.

HARRISON

(reproachfully)

Brooke—

BROOKE

What??

(looking around)

I don't see Sam. Do you see Sam?

No Sam. What's the problem?

He takes her by the arm and leads her into a nearby empty
classroom.

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harrison closes the door and turns to find Brooke glaring at
him, hands on hips.

HARRISON

Brooke, I'm sorry.

BROOKE

God, Harrison! What is it?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON

Don't you...don't you feel the
least bit guilty? About us? About
Sam?

Brooke turns away, burying her face in her hands for a moment
before facing him again.

BROOKE

Okay—I wish...you and Sam hadn't
been involved. I wish she
hadn't...discovered us together. I
wish she weren't mad at us. But,
Harrison...

She goes over to him and cups his face in her hands.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I think we might have something
really special going. And, if the
price for that is a little
disharmony at home, I will gladly
pay it.

(beat)

Besides...Sam can't stay mad
forever. Right?

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - LATER

Lily's car screeches to a stop at the curb, and Sam leaps out,
running up to the house.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam bursts into the study and heads for Mike's desk. Without
any concern for stealth, she yanks open the drawers and goes
through them quickly. Finding one drawer locked, she grabs a
letter opener and, although she doesn't seem to know exactly
what she's doing, she manages to jimmy the drawer open. In
just a moment she pulls out an envelope.

INSERT: THE ENVELOPE

Business-sized, with Sam's name in the plastic window and the
newspaper's logo imprinted in the corner. Sam slits the
envelope open and pulls out her paycheck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then she reaches further back in the drawer, and comes up with the wad of cash Jane took from her. Holding both up, she shakes her head bitterly, almost crying.

SAM

To hell with you. Both of you.

She bolts from the room.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH - AFTERNOON

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM

Brooke, Lily and Natalie are gathered in the Novak.

LILY
(to Natalie)
So, what did you think of your
first day here?

NATALIE
It's definitely not what I
expected when I got up this
morning.

Suddenly, Mary Cherry comes bursting through the door.

LILY
Mary Cherry! Where did you
disappear to?

MARY CHERRY
Why, just gettin' Natalie here a
"welcome to Kennedy" present.

NATALIE
Aw, you didn't have to do that.
You've all been so nice—well,
after that little thing this
morning.

LILY
(aside to Brooke)
Isn't there a saying that goes,
"beware of Cherrys bearing gifts"?

MARY CHERRY
(holding out a box)
I had it made up special, just for
you.

Natalie takes the box and opens it, breaking into a grin when she looks inside. She lifts her present out of the box and shows it to the others: a t-shirt with "I AM NOT NICOLE" emblazoned on it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

(beaming)

I love it. It's perfect.

(beat)

Well...I guess I'd better go.

MARY CHERRY

D'ya need a ride?

NATALIE

Naw, my dad's picking me up. Man,
wait till I tell him about all
this.

LILY

We'll see you tomorrow, then.

NATALIE

(to Mary Cherry)

Thank you.

(looking around)

All of you.

She hugs each of the girls, and then leaves.

MARY CHERRY

I'm out. See y'all.

Brooke and Lily wave as Mary Cherry departs, leaving them
alone.

BROOKE

Did you ever find out about
Carmen?

LILY

No... I wanted to stop by her
place to check on her, but Sam
borrowed my car at lunch, and now
she's disappeared, too.

(beat)

I know, you don't care—you're
fighting with her.

BROOKE

No—I mean, yes, we're
fighting...but, it'll blow over.
It always does.

LILY

I don't know, Brooke... This is
bigger than...than sharing a
bathroom. This is about Harrison.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LILY (CONT'D)

Are you really sure everything's just going to work out?

Brooke hangs her head.

BROOKE

No. But what am I supposed to do? I'm not giving up Harrison.

Lily shrugs morosely.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

You know, you've been friends with Sam for a long time. Maybe... maybe you oughta just—

LILY

Uh-uh. I promised you—in fact, I promised both of you—I wasn't going to take sides. A little awkwardness isn't going to make me break that promise.

There is a knock on the door, and then Josh walks in.

JOSH

Hey, baby. Hi, Brooke.

LILY

Josh! What are you doing?!

JOSH

What? You girls aren't doing anything. And it's not like this is the first time I've been in here.

The girls look at each other, and shrug.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Sam called. She wanted to call you, but you don't have a cell phone.

LILY

I swear, in twenty years everyone in the country's going to be walking around with brain damage.

(beat)

Is she okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSH

She said something important came up, and she needed the car, and she was really sorry, and she'd bring it back as soon as she could. Oh, and she asked if she could bring some boxes over to our place for a couple days. Anyway, I said yes.

Lily sits and absorbs all of that.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Oh, and if we leave right now, Shug'll give us a ride.

LILY

(getting up)

Oh. Okay.

JOSH

Brooke? Wanna come? Shug'll take you home, too.

BROOKE

(shaking her head)

It's okay. I can get home by myself.

LILY

Okay. See you tomorrow?

BROOKE

Yeah.

After Josh and Lily leave, Brooke just sits on the tuffet for a moment, moping, before getting up.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S CAR - MOVING

Neither Mike nor Jane are in a very good mood; Mike keeps stealing glances at Jane, whose gaze is fixed on the passing scenery.

JANE

Mike?

MIKE

Hmm?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE

Are you sure we're doing the right thing?

MIKE

(sighs)

I'm not sure of anything.

(beat)

I'll tell you, that daughter of yours—

She looks over at him sharply.

MIKE (CONT'D)

—daughter of OURS...is quite a handful.

As they approach the house, Jane suddenly leans forward.

JANE

(pointing)

Look!

Mike follows Jane's finger, to see the front door wide open.

MIKE

Did we get robbed?

JANE

I don't think so...that's Lily's car out front.

Mike pulls into the driveway, and they climb out of the car just in time to see Sam emerge from the house, with her duffel bag slung over her shoulder and box of odds and ends under her arm. She closes the door behind her and locks it; only when she turns back around does she see Mike and Jane.

JANE (CONT'D)

Sam...

MIKE

(sternly)

This is getting a little old.

SAM

Yeah, well, then the good news is you won't have to worry about it anymore.

JANE

Sam, you can't just keep running away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM
I'm not running away.

She tosses the house key at Mike, who automatically catches it.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'm moving out.

JANE
(reasonably)
Honey, you can't move out. You can't live off of Josh and Lily, and you don't have any money to live on your own.

SAM
You don't think so?

She digs her paycheck out of her back pocket and waves it at them.

SAM (CONT'D)
Look familiar?

MIKE
(irked)
You broke into my desk?

SAM
(defiant)
What are you gonna do, call the cops? Go ahead—you can tell them you've been stealing my mail. That's a federal offense.

JANE
(holding up her hands)
Wait, wait, nobody's calling any cops. Sam, we weren't stealing. We were just...holding it. For a little while.

SAM
(jeering)
Really.

At this point Brooke enters the picture, taking in the scene.

BROOKE
What's going on here?

Sam turns on her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SAM

You—I suppose you're in on this,
too.

BROOKE

(shaking her head)

In on what? Sam, you're making
even less sense than usual.

SAM

You don't know what they did?

She nods in Mike and Jane's direction contemptuously.

SAM (CONT'D)

They went to the paper. Tried to
get me fired.

Despite her animosity towards Sam, Brooke—at least
momentarily—turns an accusatory look on her father.

BROOKE

Dad, you didn't.

JANE

Sam, I don't know what Art may
have told you, but—

SAM

(snarling)

"What Art may have told me"?! I
was there! I heard you!! What,
are you lying to my face now?!

Stunned by Sam's sheer ferocity, Jane takes a step back and
regroups.

JANE

Now look, young lady, I am still
your mother, and—

The cold, dead look in Sam's eyes alone makes Jane falter.

SAM

(dangerously quiet)

You try to ruin my life...my
career...try to keep me prisoner
in this house... What's next—
lock me in my room? Chain me to
the bed?

MIKE

Sam!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SAM
I don't know who you are anymore.

MIKE
(bleakly)
Is that really what you think of
us?

Sam turns the same flat stare on Mike.

SAM
(unrelenting)
That's what I see.

MIKE
You're wrong, Sam.

SAM
I don't think so.

Sam walks around them to Lily's car, the back of which is already filled with boxes. She opens the driver's-side door, tosses her duffel bag and the box onto the passenger seat, and climbs in.

At this point Jane is spurred into action: as Sam shuts the door, she runs over and pounds on the window.

JANE
Sam!

Unheeding, Sam starts the car. Jane rushes around to the front of the car and puts her hands on the hood.

JANE (CONT'D)
I'm not letting you leave, Sam!

Sam looks up at her for a long moment. Then she throws the car into reverse and pulls away backwards, using a neighboring driveway to execute a sloppy three-point turn and roaring off down the street.

Jane just stands there in the street, shaking; Mike has to come over, put his arms around her and lead her away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EST. JOSH AND LILY'S APARTMENT

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sam is curled up on the sofa; Lily comes out of the kitchen, hands her a glass of water and sits down next to her.

SAM

Thanks. Sorry about the car.

Lily reaches out and brushes the hair away from Sam's face.

LILY

I'm not worried about the car,
Sam, I'm worried about YOU.

SAM

(shrugs)
Well, don't.

They sit in silence for a moment.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you think this is my fault?

LILY

I don't think it's anyone's
"fault". I just...think
everyone's reacting to everyone
else, and...

Sam stares into her glass.

SAM

It's so weird... I feel like, I'm
falling, and there's no bottom,
and I just keep on falling...

(looking up)

Every time I think nothing else
can happen, nothing else can go
wrong, it does, and I—I just want
to know when it's going to stop.

As Sam sniffles, Lily leans over and hugs her tightly.

The phone rings. Lily holds Sam for a moment longer, then gently lets her go, gets up and reaches for the phone.

LILY

(into the phone)
Hello? Oh—Ms. McPherson.

She looks at Sam, who shakes her head emphatically.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Sam? Yes, but... No, she
doesn't... I'll tell her... Bye.

Lily hangs up the phone.

SAM
Tell me what?

LILY
She loves you. She misses you.

SAM
(eyes downcast)
I wish I could believe that.

Lily sits close and puts Sam's head on her shoulder.

LILY
(sadly)
Oh, Sam, of course you can believe
that. Look, if you want to stay
here—

SAM
No, it's okay. I found a place.
My own place.
(getting up)
I should go, get all my stuff out
of your car.

LILY
Are you sure? You're really not
going back?

SAM
Yeah. I'm sure.

Lily gets up.

LILY
(gamely)
I'll help you unpack.

Sam manages a grin, and they hug again before walking off.

CUT TO:

INT. AN APARTMENT

A dingy, old studio, obviously in a run-down neighborhood,
immersed in street noises.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lily and Sam come in through the open door, each carrying a box. After they set the boxes down, Sam looks around.

SAM
Did we miss anything?

LILY
I don't think so.

The landlady, a heavysset fifty-ish woman, walks in.

LANDLADY
Here you go.

She holds out a keyring to Sam, who takes it.

LANDLADY (CONT'D)
You got electricity and water—and the bed. Phone, anything else you want, you have to take care of yourself.

SAM
It's fine, thanks.

The landlady nods her satisfaction, and leaves.

LILY
Sam, you sure you don't want me to stay awhile?

SAM
(shaking her head)
You've got Josh to get home to, remember? I'll be fine.

LILY
Okay. Hey, I'm picking you up for school tomorrow. No way you're taking the bus from here.

SAM
(smiling)
Thanks.

Sam hugs Lily, and walks her to the door.

LILY
Well...okay. Take care of yourself, Sam.

SAM
Really, I'm okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LILY
(reluctantly)
Okay. Bye.

SAM
Bye.

Sam closes the door behind Lily, then turns and surveys the one-room apartment, sighing. Rubbing her hands together, she opens the nearest box, but before she can do much of anything, there is a knock on the door behind her. She steps back to the door and opens it. Standing outside is a raven-haired woman in her early twenties, who promptly sticks her hand out.

JAYCEE
Hey. You're the new girl, right?
Saw you moving in, thought I'd
come over and say hi. I'm right
across the hall. Jaycee.

Sam shakes her hand.

SAM
Sam.

JAYCEE
Hey, Sam. So, I thought, new
beginnings and all, right? A
little "welcome to the building"
offering.

Jaycee pulls two bottles of beer from behind her back.

SAM
Well, I...

JAYCEE
Why don'tcha come over to my
place?
(grins)
I've got actual furniture.

SAM
(considering)
Uh...

Finally she shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)
Sure—why not? New beginnings and
all.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam steps out into the hallway, closes the door behind her,
and then she and Jaycee go through the door on the other side
of the hall.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END