

Popular: Senior Year
"Thanks for Nothing"
by
The Wild Pikachu

POPULAR: SENIOR YEAR

THANKS FOR NOTHING

TEASER

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - CHERRY MANSION - DAY

A series of extreme close-ups, all depicting elaborate and meticulous preparations for an elegant event: china and crystal being arranged, wine bottles being examined, mounds of food being carefully attended to.

CUT TO:

INT. CHERRY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The cavernous kitchen is deserted and silent for the moment. From around a corner pops Mary Cherry's head. She looks this way and that nervously, then tip-toes out and begins to make her way towards the back door. Halfway across the room, she freezes at the sound of approaching voices, and drops down behind a counter.

A moment later one of the doors swings open and Cherry Cherry comes sweeping in.

CHERRY CHERRY
(looking around)
Frankie?! FRAAAANK-IE!!!

Behind her, through the same door, the Cherrys' immaculately polished butler emerges.

CHERRY CHERRY (**CONT'D**)
(spinning around)
Baxter! Where is that darn French chef?

BAXTER
(drolly)
I believe Françios is taking a delivery, Madam.

CHERRY CHERRY
Well, go find him and tell him I wanna see him, pronto!

BAXTER
Yes, Madam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Baxter nods solemnly and goes back through the doors, while Cherry Cherry huffs. In the silence that follows, Mary Cherry begins crawling on her hands and knees towards the door leading outside. Unfortunately, she manages to bump right into her mother's legs.

CHERRY CHERRY
(looking down)
Mary Cherry, what in tarnation are
you doing down there?!

Mary Cherry gets up, dusting herself off.

MARY CHERRY
(scrambling)
I, uh, I...I was lookin' for my
contact lens!

CHERRY CHERRY
(scowls)
You don't wear contacts!

Mary Cherry seems astonished by this news.

MARY CHERRY
(snapping her fingers)
That's why I couldn't find it!

CHERRY CHERRY
If I didn't know better, I'd think
you were tryin' to git out of
gettin' ready for the annual
Cherry Family Thanksgiving Dinner!

MARY CHERRY
(seemingly shocked)
Why, Mama, you know that I just
love our family git-togethers!

INSERT

Mary Cherry's fingers crossed behind her back.

CHERRY CHERRY
I do declare, child, sometimes you
are more trouble than a henhouse
full of—

The door suddenly swings open, and the chef storms through, cursing in French. He storms up to Cherry Cherry, waving a handful of mushrooms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANÇIOS

Madame Cherry! Zeeese mushrooms
are completely unacceptable!

CHERRY CHERRY

Now, hold on, pardner. Those are
the finest Texas mushrooms around.
There's been award-winnin' chili
made with them there exact
mushrooms!

FRANÇIOS

No, no, no! I must have zee
mushrooms from France!

CHERRY CHERRY

Look, Frankie, those foreign
toadstools might be OK for them
fancy French dishes, but if you
wanna cook real live Tex-Mex, ya
gotta use good ol' American
fixin's.

FRANÇIOS

Madame Cherry—!

While Cherry Cherry and Françios continue to argue, Mary Cherry sneaks towards the exit.

CHERRY CHERRY

Dammit, I don't care how many
institutes you've been to! In
this mansion, I am the boss of
you, and I say—

The sound of the outside door closing makes her stop and spin around.

CHERRY CHERRY (CONT'D)

Mary Cherry!

She hurries to the door and throws it open, just in time to see Mary Cherry's hummer roar away.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - DAY

Brooke is in the kitchen, looking over a bowl of fruit with all the seriousness of a scientist watching a Nobel Prize-winning experiment. After several false starts, she finally pulls out an orange.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Muffled voices from the next room make her start, and she hurries to the back stairs, trying to get out of sight. She almost makes it before Jane walks in.

JANE
Brooke!

Brooke freezes on the first step.

JANE (CONT'D)
We need to talk.

She turns around, trying to smile, but with a distinct condemned-prisoner look on her face.

WHITE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. MCQUEEN DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane and Brooke are seated at two sides of the dining room table. If Jane looks nervous, Brooke looks as if she's about to be grounded for life.

JANE

(wringing her hands)

Brooke...I want to apologize.

BROOKE

(blankly)

Why?

JANE

Well, for...lying, basically. Your father and I, we know we should have told you about us getting married right away, and we completely understand why you're upset. I just hope, someday...you can forgive me.

Brooke, meanwhile, has gotten wide-eyed.

BROOKE

Oh—no! Jane, I...

JANE

(patiently)

It's been pretty obvious. You've been tip-toeing around here for a week, you've barely said two words, and you've definitely been avoiding me in particular.

BROOKE

Jane—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE

Please, hear me out. I know that your father and I getting together was very sudden, and that at first you were very much against our relationship, but...over the last two years, I've felt—I'd hoped—I've come to think of you like my own daughter, and...I would never want to replace your mother, but...I've felt that you've come to accept me in your life...

Brooke is reduced to nodding along dumbly.

JANE (CONT'D)

I can't tell you how sorry I am that I've jeopardized that acceptance by not being honest with you. We really weren't trying to exclude you—it was a complete spur-of-the-moment thing, we just wanted to find the right time to tell you...

Meanwhile, Brooke is gesturing emphatically, and finally finds her voice.

BROOKE

Jane, please, stop. I don't feel that way at all, I swear!

Now it's Jane's turn to be confused.

JANE

You don't?

BROOKE

(earnestly)

I think that you're the most wonderful stepmom I could ever hope for. And, except for my mom, I could never imagine my dad with anyone else.

JANE

(cautiously)

And...you don't resent that we got married, just like that?

BROOKE

God, no! Okay, I was a little shocked at first, but—I am so happy for you two!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JANE
Well...if it's not the marriage...
then what's been bothering you?

Brooke's mouth drops open again.

SLIDE CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM - DAY

ANGLE: BROOKE

BROOKE
...I couldn't tell her. What was I supposed to say? "Sorry, Jane, the reason I've been avoiding you is that Sam is doing drugs." Yeah, that would gone over real well.
(beat)
I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm dumping all of this on you. I just don't know who to talk to.

The angle widens, and it turns out that person Brooke is talking to is...Mr. Osbourne, looking unperturbed as always.

OSBOURNE
Have you considered confronting Miss McPherson yourself?

BROOKE
(wide-eyed)
No! Oh my God, she'd kill me!
She already hates my guts anyway.

OSBOURNE
Surely she has friends. I know this because I've seen her be friendly to other students.

BROOKE
Lily, it's like she's burned out taking care of everyone, and Carmen, I don't know what's up with her lately...Natalie saw something wrong before anyone else did, but I don't know what she can do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE

(nods absently)

Miss James seems to have a level head on her shoulders. Even if her taste in philosophy is...a bit odd.

BROOKE

Everyone just seems so wrapped up in their own problems.

OSBOURNE

Including you?

BROOKE

(grimacing)

Me? Let's see...I've got a boyfriend who I basically stole from my step-sister, which is why she hates me...I've been sulking around my dad and stepmom so much that they think I'm mad at them... plus I'm supposed to start applying to colleges, which is great except that I have no idea what I'm supposed to be doing with my life. Me? I'm just fine.

Mr. Osbourne takes stock of all of this.

OSBOURNE

Let's stay with the immediate issue for the moment. Miss McQueen, if you wish to solve this problem yourself, you must endeavour to do so. I believe that the first step to this must involve your sharing the burden with others. I advise you to tell someone what you know.

BROOKE

(at a loss)

Well...I'm telling you.

OSBOURNE

Yes, and in doing so, you've placed me in a rather interesting position.

Brooke's hand flies to her mouth; apparently she hadn't thought about that before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE

Oh my God, you have to tell
Principal Krupps, don't you? Of
course you do! God, I've screwed
up everything!

OSBOURNE

(raising an eyebrow)

Is that what you want? For me to
pass the word to higher
authorities?

BROOKE

No! No! It's absolutely the last
thing I want!

OSBOURNE

Then...I think I can refrain from
repeating this conversation to
anyone.

Brooke peers at him, confused.

BROOKE

I thought reporting things like
this was mandatory.

OSBOURNE

(reasonably)

Well, let's review: all that
you've told me of substance is
that you've seen Miss McPherson in
the company of an individual who
has a certain reputation. Absent
any supporting evidence, I believe
I can keep this within my
discretion.

Brooke looks extremely relieved—for a moment.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

But—that doesn't mean that I'm
willing to turn a blind eye.
Substance abuse is not an issue to
be taken lightly. I require your
assurance that you will take
positive action to remedy this
situation.

BROOKE

(nodding solemnly)

I promise, I'll sit down with Lily
and Carmen, and we'll figure out
what to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Mr. Osbourne stands and ushers Brooke to the door.

OSBOURNE

I also want your word that you will call on me or another responsible adult, if you're unable to change Miss McPherson's behavior yourselves.

BROOKE

(putting her hand over her heart)
I swear. Thank you, Mr. Osbourne.
For understanding.

He opens the door.

OSBOURNE

Nonsense. A good teacher must always be prepared to counsel his students.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Osbourne and Brooke walk out of the classroom and down the quiet corridor.

BROOKE

You're so different than other teachers. God, I can't imagine what Miss Glass would do if she knew.

Mr. Osbourne considers that.

OSBOURNE

As we're exchanging confidences, I must admit that at times I share your opinion of Miss Glass.

BROOKE

(stifling a grin)
I won't tell anyone.

OSBOURNE

Your secret is safe with me, as well. I shall be keeping an eye on Miss McPherson. And I wish you success.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brooke smiles and nods, and they go their separate ways. A moment later, from the same direction, Miss Glass appears, twirling a pen.

GLASS
(to herself)
Now, what are you hiding, Mr. High-and-Mighty Attitude?

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Off to the side of a much more crowded hallway, Natalie and Harrison are huddling.

NATALIE
(holding out a paper)
Read this for me.

Harrison takes the paper and squints at it.

HARRISON
(haltingly)
The...supplies...knocked over...
the rooster...quickly...
yesterday...in a paint can?

Natalie hangs her head.

NATALIE
I suck at Spanish.

HARRISON
Uh...yeah.

NATALIE
(snatching the paper away)
Thanks a lot!

HARRISON
(laughing)
Sorry, but it's true.

They start to walk.

HARRISON **(CONT'D)**
I don't understand why you have to
take Spanish anyway. You speak
like three languages already.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

(sourly)

The school doesn't teach German.
Or Swedish. Since they don't
teach them, I can't use them for
my foreign language requirement.

HARRISON

That sucks.

NATALIE

Totally. So I'm stuck sucking at
Spanish.

HARRISON

Looks like.

She turns and grabs him.

NATALIE

Harrison! Help!

HARRISON

(holding up his hands)

Okay, okay...I'll see what I can
do...

He takes the paper back and looks over it again, shaking his head.

PAN TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

In another part of the hall, Lily and Carmen are walking.

LILY

So, how's it going?

CARMEN

(groaning)

I swear, this is worse than food.
Right now, I'm just trying to find
a spot that's equal distance from
the refrigerator and the computer,
you know, so maybe they'll cancel
out.

Lily laughs and puts her arm around Carmen's shoulder as they walk on. At a corner, though, they stop short when Brooke runs up to them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
Guys, I need to talk to you. It's
really important.

The bell rings, making them all look up.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Before lunch, okay?

Lily and Carmen exchange a look.

LILY
Okay.

CARMEN
Sure.

BROOKE
(relieved)
Okay. Good.

She runs off, and the hallway begins to clear out.

PAN TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Through the double doors at the end of the hall walks Sam,
looking fairly normal. She stops at the water fountain, pops
a couple of pills into her mouth and washes them down. Then
she jogs to a class, catching the door just before it closes,
the last person out of the hall.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - LATER

Mary Cherry and Lily are having a "discussion," while Mr. Osbourne moderates from his usual perch on his desk.

MARY CHERRY

Lil Lily, ya know I think you are
one of the most darlin' lil ladies
on God's green Earth...but ya are
also totally bonkers!

LILY

(indignant)

Excuse me?! I think everyone
knows who's bonkers around here!

MARY CHERRY

I'm tellin' ya, y'all go to Texas
with that attitude, and they's
liable to take yer fool head clean
off!

LILY

Well, maybe people in Texas need
to be more enlightened!

OSBOURNE

Ladies, let's not get personal.

NATALIE

(tiredly)

Haven't we had this argument
before?

OSBOURNE

The whole world is interconnected,
Miss James. You can't cover new
ground without occasionally
trampling across the old.

Mr. Osbourne casts a brief glance at Sam, who is sitting in the far corner looking supremely disinterested; then he checks the clock on the wall.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

However, I see that our time is
almost up. So—

He reaches back, picks up a stack of papers and begins to hand them out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)
As this is a three-day week, your written assignment shall be shortened accordingly, and shall also be due tomorrow.

CARMEN
(reading, dubiously)
"What Thanksgiving means to me?"

OSBOURNE
Indeed, Miss Ferrera. I want to see not only what you believe, but why. I shall expect a reasonable effort to identify and analyze the persons or other societal elements which most influenced the formation of your beliefs.

NATALIE
All that in one night?

OSBOURNE
(pained)
It needn't be exhaustive, Miss James. A rough sketch will do.

The bell rings, and everyone gets up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EST. CAFETERIA - NOON

A typical view of the crowded lunchroom.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM

Lily and Carmen are sitting on the tuffet, looking stunned, while Brooke stands nervously before them.

CARMEN
I—I don't believe it. I mean, even after Natalie said...it just seems so unreal.

LILY
I know...
(looking up at Brooke)
Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
(adamantly)
I saw her buying them.

LILY
Oh my God...what are we gonna do?

BROOKE
(frustrated)
I don't know! I talked to
someone—

CARMEN
What?!

BROOKE
—don't worry, it's okay, he won't
tell anyone. But from what he
said, I think we have to talk to
Sam.

LILY
"We?" Brooke, last week you
didn't want anything to do with
it.

Brooke sits down on the other side of the tuffet.

BROOKE
(miserably)
But it's all my fault.

LILY
What?

BROOKE
It is, isn't it? I'm the one who
took Harrison away from Sam. I'm
the one who went sleeping around
with him behind her back, like
some soap-opera slut. I created
this whole mess.

LILY
No, you didn't. Right, Carm?

At the ensuing silence, Lily nudges Carmen.

LILY (CONT'D)
Right, Carm?

Carmen hesitates, then takes the plunge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARMEN

(standing up suddenly)

All right. I wasn't comfortable
with you and Harrison sneaking
around behind Sam's back.

LILY

Carmen!

CARMEN

I'm sorry, okay? It's how I feel.

Brooke buries her face in her hands. Carmen walks around the tuffet and kneels down beside her.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Okay. No, it's not your fault.
Whatever you did, it's not an
excuse to do drugs. The only
person responsible for Sam's
addictions is Sam.

(tittering)

God knows I've tried palming off
my problems on other people. It
doesn't work.

Brooke looks up and manages to smile a little, wiping away her tears.

BROOKE

Thanks.

CARMEN

(turning to Lily)

Hey, what about Harrison? He's
known Sam longer than any of us.
Maybe he could...

Brooke goes wide-eyed.

BROOKE

No!

LILY

(shaking her head)

Bad idea, Carm.

BROOKE

I don't want him to know anything
about this!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CARMEN

Hey, no problem. My lips are sealed. See, this is me sealing my lips.

She makes a zipper motion across her mouth.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Mmmm-mmm-mmmmm-mmm.

That actually makes Brooke laugh, a little.

The door opens, and Jane walks in.

BROOKE

Jane! Is—is something wrong?

Jane seems as shocked to see Brooke as Brooke is to see Jane.

JANE

No, not at all. I...actually, I came to...talk to Lily.

BROOKE

Oh.

Carmen gathers Brooke up.

CARMEN

We'll just leave you two alone.

JANE

Thanks, Carmen.

After Brooke and Carmen leave, Lily stands up to face Jane.

LILY

Mrs. McPherson—Mrs. McQueen. I heard.

JANE

Yeah...about that...

Jane sits down, and Lily joins her.

JANE (CONT'D)

We thought that telling the girls that we were an official family might help bring them a little closer together.

LILY

(sympathetically)

Didn't work out that way, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JANE

(shakes her head)

Sam just saw it as one more lie,
one more secret...one more thing
to drive her away.

(ruefully)

You know, it's hard enough arguing
with Sam when she's wrong.

(beat)

And Brooke...she says she's not
upset, but she hasn't been the
same since Mike told her.

LILY

(cautiously)

It could be something else is
bothering Brooke.

JANE

Maybe, but she still obviously
isn't comfortable talking to us
anymore.

LILY

I'm sorry, I wish there was
something I could do.

Jane turns and takes Lily's hands in hers.

JANE

That's why I wanted to talk to
you. I didn't want to say
anything in front of Brooke, but—
it's going to be Thanksgiving in a
couple of days. I was hoping—I
know it's a longshot, and I'm not
expecting any miracles, but—if
you could talk to Sam, maybe try
to convince her to give it another
chance...

LILY

(hesitating)

I...

JANE

I know this is asking a lot,
but...we're desperate. We just
don't know what to do.

Lily finds herself nodding.

LILY

Okay, Mrs. Mc—Queen. I'll try.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Jane hugs her.

JANE
Thank you, Lily.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAIRWELL - LATER

Josh is sitting on the stairs when Mike finds him.

JOSH
Mr. McQueen!

He stands up hastily and sticks out his hand. Mike shakes it, and waves him back down.

MIKE
Mind if we sit?

JOSH
Uh, no, sure.

They sit down, side by side, on the stairs.

JOSH (CONT'D)
So...how are things?

MIKE
To tell you the truth, not all that good. You know things are bad between Brooke and Sam.

JOSH
Yeah, I heard. Lily's real broke up about it.

MIKE
Well, I was hoping you might be able to help.

JOSH
(puzzled)
Me? How?

MIKE
Look, you and Brooke go back a long way. If you could...talk to her, try to get her to patch things up with Sam...

JOSH
I don't know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

I'm not looking for any promises.
I'm just asking you to try. I
know it probably won't work, but
I'm using all of my options now,
you know?

JOSH

Yeah, I know. Okay.

Mike claps Josh on the shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Mary Cherry is sneaking through the hallways. She darts around a corner and runs smack into Lily, who yelps in surprise.

LILY

Mary Cherry, what are you doing?!

MARY CHERRY

Shhh!

(peering around)

I'm looking out for Baxter.

LILY

What's a baxter?

MARY CHERRY

Oh, he's Mama's butler.

LILY

(laughing)

Really, Mary Cherry, I think if there were a butler at this school, we'd notice.

With that, they turn around—and come face-to-face with Baxter.

BAXTER

Excuse me, Miss Cherry. Your mother has dispatched me to remind you that you are due at the mansion immediately following school hours.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY
 (trying for bravado)
 Fine, fine, I'm reminded. Now go
 on, shoo.

BAXTER
 I shall collect you upon the final
 bell.
 (bows)
 Miss Cherry.

Baxter backs away. Lily casts a puzzled look at Mary Cherry.

LILY
 What was that all about?

MARY CHERRY
 Oh, it's just the biggest
 boondoggle in history, that's all!

LILY
 Huh?

MARY CHERRY
 Every year, the whole cotton-
 pickin' Cherry family comes
 together for this humongous
 Thanksgiving dinner. And this
 year, Mama is hostin' it.

LILY
 (shrugs)
 Sounds fun.

MARY CHERRY
 Fun? Fun?! Mama's runnin' around
 like a chicken with its head cut
 off—and the dinner! The dinner
 is always the most gawd-awful
 affair ya ever did see. I'm
 thinkin' of runnin' away to
 Canada.

They walk off down the hall.

LILY
 It's cold in Canada.

MARY CHERRY
 Darn. How 'bout Mexico then...?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KENNEDY HIGH PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Lily and Carmen are walking along the sidewalk when the Cherrys' cherry-pink limousine rolls past. As the limo cruises off, they see Mary Cherry framed in the back, pounding on the rear window and looking like a victim in a horror movie.

LILY

Aren't there times you just feel
sorry for Mary Cherry?

CARMEN

(considers)

Not really, no.

As they walk on...

PAN TO:

EXT. KENNEDY HIGH PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Not far away, Harrison comes up behind Brooke.

HARRISON

Hey, Brooke. Didn't see you at
lunch.

She shies away from him when he leans over to kiss her.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

All right, what's going on?

BROOKE

(distracted)

What?

HARRISON

You've been acting strange all
week. Come on, what's wrong?

He tries to put his arms around her, but she shoves him away roughly.

BROOKE

(annoyed)

Nothing! Just leave me alone!

With that, she runs ahead to catch up with Lily and Carmen, leaving him to throw up his hands in frustration. As he watches the three girls engage in an animated discussion, he feels a tap on his shoulder; when he turns, he finds Natalie standing there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Okay, before you say anything, I know I'm being a total pest, but apparently what Thanksgiving means to Miss Alvarez is a good time to torment students with irregular verb forms. I don't even get regular verb forms!

HARRISON

Ah...

She clasps her hands together in a supplicating gesture.

NATALIE

Please, please, pleeeease help me? I swear, I'll do anything you want. I'll be your slave for life if you just help me not flunk Spanish.

HARRISON

I—I don't think you have to that far. Um...sure. Whatever I can do.

NATALIE

Great! My place, seven?

HARRISON

(just keeping up)

Ah...okay...

She pulls out a card and scribbles on it, then presses it into his hand.

NATALIE

Thank you, thank you, thank you. You're really saving my life. See you then!

And she's off, with a still-slightly befuddled Harrison in her wake.

CUT TO:

EST. JAMES HOUSE - EVENING

The Jameses live in an upscale, two-story French-style home.

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S BEDROOM

Natalie's room is itself rather upscale and luxurious.
 Natalie and Harrison are sitting on the bed, papers and books spread out around them.

HARRISON
 (holding up a card)
 How about this one?

Natalie looks both dazed and confused.

NATALIE
 Ella...esté?

HARRISON
 Estoy.

She puts her hands to her head and falls back on the bed.

NATALIE
 I'm never going to get this!

HARRISON
 Sure you will.

NATALIE
 I hate Spanish. I hate Spanish.
 (lifting her head)
 Can you teach me to say "I hate
 Spanish" in Spanish?

HARRISON
 (laughs)
 Come on.

Natalie hauls herself back up, but sends some of the papers between them falling to the floor in the process.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
 Whoops.

They both bend down to pick the papers up at the same time, and for a second their faces come this close...

After a moment, Natalie hastily stands up.

NATALIE
 I'm...going to get us something to drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With Harrison looking after her quizzically, she makes tracks for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JAMES HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Just outside her room, Natalie casts a half-glance back in the direction of the doorway, a very strange expression on her face, before continuing on.

CUT TO:

EST. CHERRY MANSION - EVENING

The standard huge mansion.

CUT TO:

INT. CHERRY DINING ROOM

Mother and daughter are just passing through.

CHERRY CHERRY
Lor' sakes, Mary Cherry, I don't
know why you're makin' such a
fuss!

MARY CHERRY
(whining)
Mamaaa!

Cherry Cherry spins around, hands on hips.

CHERRY CHERRY
Oh, just bring one of your little
friends, if ya hafta!

MARY CHERRY
Really? I can bring someone?
Anyone I want?

CHERRY CHERRY
That's what I said! If you'll
quit yer yappin'!

Mary Cherry claps her hands in glee.

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Studying has ended, and the atmosphere is much more sedate. Natalie is lounging on the bed, while Harrison is sitting on the floor with his back against the end of the bed.

NATALIE

(idly)

So, what's up with you and Brooke?

He cranes his neck in her general direction.

HARRISON

What do you mean?

NATALIE

I dunno...you seemed like you were fighting before.

HARRISON

Oh...I don't know. She's got problems at home.

NATALIE

Yeah, Lily finally told me the whole story. About Brooke's dad and Sam's mom, I mean. Man, that's weird. No wonder they hate each other.

HARRISON

But they didn't, though. I mean, yeah, for a long time they didn't like each other...even before their parents got together. Just because Brooke was always the cheerleader, popular, and Sam was...not. But there was a time, a few months ago, where they were really getting along.

Natalie rolls over and props herself up on her elbows.

NATALIE

Really? What happened?

HARRISON

I happened.

NATALIE

(blankly)

Ohh...

Suddenly Harrison gets up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON
I really ought to get home.

Natalie manages to roll off the bed and get to her feet.

NATALIE
Well...all right...

After an awkward moment, she sticks out her hand for him to shake.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Thanks for, you know, trying to help. Maybe I can look forward to a D in Spanish now.

HARRISON
You'll get it. Just keep practicing.

NATALIE
Well...thanks...

HARRISON
Yeah, it's no problem.

He puts up a hand in farewell in the doorway before disappearing. Natalie smacks her forehead.

NATALIE
(muttering)
Stupid, stupid, stupid...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The apartment is still and deathly quiet...

INSERT: THE ALARM CLOCK

ticking over from 6:59 to 7:00.

The clock begins to buzz harshly. After a second a hand snakes out from under the bedcovers and comes down on the clock, silencing it. The covers lift up for a moment, Sam peeks out before diving back under again.

INSERT: THE ALARM CLOCK

this time, ticking over from 7:19 to 7:20.

The buzzing noise fills the room again. Sam throws back the covers with a groan before shutting off the alarm.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LATER

Sam, dressed but still looking haggard, shuffles over to her tiny table with a glass of water in hand and sits down heavily. She tips over an unmarked prescription bottle, scoops up a couple of pills from those that spill out and swallows them.

Then she spots the assignment paper from Mr. Osbourne lying on the table. With a groan and a roll of the eyes, she picks it up and studies it for a moment. She flips open her laptop and begins to type.

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

which says

WHAT THANKSGIVING MEANS TO ME

BY SAM MCPHERSON

For a while Sam just sits there, staring at the screen.

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

still blank, except for that title.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally, with a dismissive snort, she leans forward and starts tapping away.

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

which now shows a flashy website titled "InstantEssay.com". In a blank box she types "Thanksgiving". A moment later the screen changes to a list of essays, including one titled "What Thanksgiving Means to Me, by Bernie Barnaby". She clicks on that one, and an essay appears on the screen.

Sam reads for a few moments, then starts tapping the keys again.

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

Sam has cut-and-pasted the entire essay; now she deletes the "Bernie Barnaby" and replaces it with "Sam McPherson".

With her work done, she closes the laptop, smiling for the first time.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Harrison is walking along when Natalie veers across his path.

NATALIE

Hey, Harrison.

HARRISON

Oh, hey.

NATALIE

I just, uh...I wanted to say I'm sorry. About last night.

HARRISON

(puzzled)

What about last night?

NATALIE

You know...I think I got a little too personal.

HARRISON

No. Don't worry about it—I mean, you didn't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Still...if you'll keep helping me with Spanish, I promise no more personal questions.

HARRISON

Look, I'll help as much as you need. You don't have to promise anything.

NATALIE

Whew. Great. Okay, I'm off to class.

She holds up a finger and tries her Spanish again.

NATALIE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

I'm sweep the shrub!

For a moment Harrison opens his mouth to correct her, but as she turns and trots off, he decides against it.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Another hallway, where Josh and Lily are conferring by his open locker.

JOSH

I dunno, babe. I got a bad feeling about this.

LILY

Josh...okay, I have a bad feeling too, but...they asked us. Can you imagine how bad it must be if they had to ask us? Besides, you want to help, right?

JOSH

Yeah...well....yeah...

LILY

So we have to at least try. Besides, what are you complaining about? You've got the easy part.

JOSH

Yeah, I sure wouldn't want to talk to Sam after that whole Harrison thing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH (CONT'D)
 I mean, if someone was going
 around with you behind my back,
 I'd want to kick his ass.

LILY
 Josh!

JOSH
 I'm just saying, I'd really hate
 the guy. So, you know, I
 understand how Sam feels.

As the bell rings, Lily sighs at the daunting task ahead of her.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

A series of brief shots, sans any real dialog, of various classes, including: Miss Glass pontificating in Chemistry, Natalie still struggling in Spanish, Mr. Osbourne's usual free-flowing discussions, and everyone—including Sam—turning in their papers.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

where Mary Cherry has cornered Lily.

MARY CHERRY
 ...and Mama said I could bring
 anyone I wanted. So I'm bringin'
 you.

LILY
 (slightly bemused)
 Well, I appreciate it, Mary
 Cherry, but I think Josh and I are
 going to have our own little
 Thanksgiving this year.

MARY CHERRY
 But...but...ya hafta save me from
 her!

LILY
 So just take someone else. I'm
 sure there are lots of people who
 would love to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY
 (considering)
 Ya know, you're right. It is an honor, after all.

SLIDE CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

BROOKE
 Sorry, Mary Cherry, but with things as bad as they are at home, I just can't skip out on Dad and Jane.

SLIDE CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

CARMEN
 I'd love to, really—especially with all that food—but it's just going to be me and my mom this year.

SLIDE CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Another short montage, again without dialog, of several other students turning Mary Cherry down, while she cajoles, pleads, and even begins to offer cash. Finally...

SLIDE CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

HARRISON
 As much fun as it sounds, I'm planning on spending Thanksgiving at home.

By this time Mary Cherry looks utterly defeated.

HARRISON (**CONT'D**)
 Besides, fancy dinner parties aren't really my thing. I'd be worried that I was going to do something obnoxious and ruin the whole evening for everyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY
 (thinking)
 Something obnoxious...?

HARRISON
 Well, yeah, you know me...

Suddenly she is hugging him.

MARY CHERRY
 That's it! Joe, you're a genius!
 A bona-fide genius!

She runs off down the hall.

HARRISON
 (looking after her)
 I am?

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Brooke is walking down the hall when Lily grabs her by the arm and pulls her into the Novak.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lily sits Brooke down on the tuffet.

LILY
 Okay, Brooke, the thing is this:
 sometime today, Josh is going to
 come talk to you...about making up
 with Sam.

BROOKE
 Why?

LILY
 Because your dad asked him to.

BROOKE
 (doing a double-take)
 What???

LILY
 (nods)
 And Sam's mom asked me to talk to
 her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

Wow...they're desperate.

LILY

Yeah, I think so.

BROOKE

(thinking)

Sam'll never go for it, you know.
She really hates me.

(beat)

Not that I don't deserve it.

LILY

I still have to try. I just
wanted to warn you about Josh—
he's really nervous about it, and
I didn't want you to be too hard
on him.

BROOKE

Thanks. Don't worry—I'll be
gentle with him.

Brooke can't resist wagging her eyebrows a bit while saying that, and in a moment both girls break out giggling.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - LATER

The classroom is empty, except for Miss Glass, who is cleaning up. Mary Cherry sticks her head through the doorway, then walks in.

MARY CHERRY

(sweetly)

Miss Glass?

Miss Glass looks up, annoyed.

GLASS

What do you want?

MARY CHERRY

I was just wonderin' what you're
planning on doing for
Thanksgiving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLASS

I'm going to do what I always do on Thanksgiving: stick a frozen turkey dinner in the microwave, put on Tom Jones' Greatest Hits, and curl up with the latest edition of Meow Life.

(beat)

Well, either that or a John Waters film festival.

MARY CHERRY

(making her pitch)

How would you like to be my guest at the annual Cherry Family Thanksgiving Dinner?

GLASS

The what?

MARY CHERRY

It's a huge party, with lots of people, and lots of free food, an' Mama said I could bring anyone I wanted, an' after considerin' everyone, I decided I wanted to bring you!

Miss Glass seems flattered in spite of herself.

GLASS

Well...I was never one to turn down free food...

MARY CHERRY

Great! Thursday, three p.m., don't be late!

And she's out the door before Miss Glass can change her mind.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM - LATER

Lily is trying to talk to Sam, who is absolutely livid.

SAM

No! NO!!! I can't believe you're even asking me that!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
 (placating)
 Sam, come on, your mom just asked
 me to—

SAM
 Oh, my mom asked you, that's just
 great!

LILY
 I think Brooke might be willing to
 talk—

SAM
 Brooke?! That little slut?! Of
course she does!!! She stole
 Harrison, she single-handedly
 ruined my life—of course she
 wants to wipe the slate clean now,
 that she has everything!

Lily regroups, and plunges forward again.

LILY
 Sam, I'm sure your mom doesn't
 expect you and Brooke to be
 friends—

SAM
 That's good, because it's never,
 ever going to happen.

LILY
 —but it's going to be
 Thanksgiving, and—

SAM
 (biting)
 And what?! Seriously, what do
 they expect me to do? Come
 crawling back, sit down for a nice
 family dinner?! I don't think so.

She shakes her finger at Lily.

SAM (CONT'D)
Never.

With that, Sam storms out.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - DAY

Mr. Osbourne is addressing the class.

OSBOURNE

Now, I know that to some of my colleagues, a four-day weekend is a good reason to assign four days' worth of homework. I do not share this view. Therefore, I wish only that you enjoy your holiday.

A mild cheer rises; Mr. Osbourne puts up a hand.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

However, you should all find time to read the next two chapters of "Red and White in America." We will spend some time next week discussing various influences of Native-American culture.

He picks up a stack of papers and begins to walk around the room, handing them out.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

As for your thoughts on Thanksgiving, for the most part I found them at least mildly interesting.

After he hands her her paper, Sam looks up, a hurt expression on her face.

SAM

(protesting)

Mr. Osbourne—!

OSBOURNE

(cutting her off)

Be assured, Miss McPherson, that I gave each paper due consideration.

The bells rings, and Mr. Osbourne sits behind his desk as the class files out.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

(beckoning)

Miss McPherson...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam stops at the desk and holds up her paper.

SAM
A zero???

In return, Mr. Osbourne holds up a paper of his own: a printout of the original essay.

OSBOURNE
Does this look familiar, Miss McPherson? It comes from a certain website which offers papers for those unmotivated to write themselves.

(sighs)
I am disappointed, Miss McPherson. Not only plagiarism, but lazy plagiarism at that. You didn't bother to change even one word.

Caught out, Sam turns from outraged to contrite.

SAM
(resigned)
All right, yes, I did it, I didn't have time, I just panicked this morning, please, please don't report me, I swear I'll never do it again.

She stands there sweating under his gaze as, for a long moment, he eyes her intently.

OSBOURNE
Very well. This one time, I will allow this to remain in the classroom. However, I shall not tolerate a repetition of this behavior. If anything similar to this occurs again, you shall be immediately removed from this class and suspended from school. Is this clearly understood, Miss McPherson?

Sam nods compliantly, unwilling to chance saying anything.

OSBOURNE **(CONT'D)**
Good. You began this session as a capable student, but your work has slipped considerably. I shall expect better from you in the future.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He turns his attention away, effectively dismissing her.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam emerges from Mr. Osbourne's classroom and stands there in the empty corridor for a moment, looking miserable and silently berating herself, before walking away.

CUT TO:

EST. THE L.A. CHRONICLE - EVENING

A stock night shot of the mid-rise building.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHRONICLE NEWSROOM

Sam is sitting at her tiny desk, shuffling through papers, when Fleischer comes up lugging a cardboard box, which he sets down on the desk.

FLEISCHER
What's this?

SAM
(looking)
Those are the old Planning
Commission reports you wanted.

FLEISCHER
(patiently)
Sam, they have to be cross-indexed
by project location.

Sam's face screws up; she grabs the top sheet off the box.

SAM
What? No, I'm sure it said—

Reading, she lets out an anguished groan and buries her head in her arms.

SAM (CONT'D)
(reaches for the box)
I'm sorry, I'll do it over, I
swear...

Fleischer holds out a hand to stop her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER
Whoa...Sam, are you okay?

Sam just lays her forehead down. He kneels down and puts an arm around her shoulder.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
What's going on? Lately you've
really lost your edge.

SAM
(muffled)
It's not a good time.

FLEISCHER
Tell you what—it's late. Go
home. Take tomorrow off.

SAM
(looking up)
Tomorrow's Thanksgiving.

FLEISCHER
(grins)
The secret to being magnanimous.
Don't tell anyone.

Sam manages a very weary laugh at that.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
Seriously...what are you doing
tomorrow?

SAM
(gloom)
I don't know...maybe find a diner
that's open and has a turkey
dinner special?

FLEISCHER
You should go home.

SAM
You said that already.

FLEISCHER
No, I mean...home. Be with your
family.

SAM
(muttering)
I don't think I have a family
anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLEISCHER
Come on...you never know what a little Thanksgiving spirit can accomplish.

He stands up and pulls Sam out of her chair.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
I mean it—get out of here. All this stuff'll keep.

Sam finally assents, picking up her coat.

SAM
I'm coming in Friday morning and doing these over, I promise.

FLEISCHER
(laughing)
I believe you! Now go!

Sam manages something that might be an encouraging smile as she pulls on her coat.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE SAM'S APARTMENT - LATER

Sam trudges up to her door, only to find a note taped to it. She pulls the paper off and unfolds it.

SAM
(reading)
"Sam—raving up the coast for the weekend. Happy turkey day—
Jaycee"

She crumples up the note and jams it in her pocket.

SAM (CONT'D)
Great.

With a heavy sigh, she unlocks the door and disappears inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EST. THE CITY - DAY

An aerial panorama of the L.A. suburbs.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Sam is sitting at her little table, which is empty except for a lone apple. She picks it up and starts to take a bite, but then abruptly drops it, stands up and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. CHERRY MANSION - LATER

In one of the mansions great rooms, people are mingling as music wafts through the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHERRY MANSION

A parade of limousines and expensive sports cars lines the circular drive—and into this exclusive scene rolls the Glass-mobile, honking its distinctive musical horn, while the valet looks like he's watching aliens land.

The car door opens and out steps Miss Glass, wearing a formal outfit which still somehow looks like a version of her lab coat—and a full-blown, ten-gallon cowboy hat to top it all off. Baxter, standing at the door, looks completely lost. Then Mary Cherry appears in the doorway, and pushes her way past him.

MARY CHERRY
 Miss Glass! There ya are!
 (beckoning wildly)
 Come on in!

GLASS
 (with an exaggerated accent)
 Why, thank y'all, don' mind if I
 do.

She hands her hat to Baxter on her way past.

GLASS (CONT'D)
 Much obliged, parder.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brooke is sitting on the sofa reading a magazine when Mike comes down the stairs and heads for the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
 (without looking up)
 I'd stay out of the kitchen if I
 were you.

Mike stops and turns around.

MIKE
 Why?

BROOKE
 You might get drafted for chopping
 duty.
 (setting her magazine down)
 Did you know that Jane has this
 insane side to her that only comes
 out when she's cooking holiday
 dinners?

MIKE
 (shaking his finger at her)
 Funny.

He continues on into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is, if not a mess, then at least busy: food seems to be piled everywhere.

MIKE
 So, honey, how's it—?

Before he can finish, Jane has swept around him, putting an apron over his head and a knife in his hand.

JANE
 (pointing)
 I need those tomatoes diced.

Stunned, Mike hesitates for a moment—a moment too long for Jane, who gives him a push.

JANE (CONT'D)
 Now! Go go go!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In a daze, Mike heads for the counter.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brooke folds up her magazine and sets it down on the coffee table. After looking bored for a second, she reaches behind the sofa and comes up with the phone. Settling back down, she dials, and waits for several rings before she gets an answer.

HARRISON (V.O.)
(on the phone)
Hello?

BROOKE
(smiling)
Hey, you. What's going on over there?

HARRISON (V.O.)
Ah...nothing, why?

BROOKE
Just wondering. Is your mom cooking up a storm?

HARRISON (V.O.)
Well...no. You remember my Aunt Nelly?

BROOKE
(frowning)
The one with the square glasses, who always called me "B.B."?

HARRISON (V.O.)
Yeah. She got appendicitis last night. So Mom drove down to San Diego to be with her for a few days.

BROOKE
Oh, that's too bad...
(beat)
Wait a minute—you're sitting home alone?

HARRISON (V.O.)
Uh...yeah.

BROOKE
Come over here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON (V.O.)
Ah...Brooke...

Brooke jumps off the couch, phone in hand.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke appears in the kitchen entryway, holding the phone against her chest.

BROOKE
Dad, can Harrison come over for dinner?

Mike doesn't seem to know quite what to say.

MIKE
Uh, Brooke—

BROOKE
His mom had to go out of town, and he's sitting at home all alone.

MIKE
(wavering)
I don't know...

Brooke sighs and looks at him through hooded eyes.

BROOKE
(edgily)
Dad, she's not coming.

Finally Mike, with a glance, passes the buck to Jane. She stares hard at the counter space for a couple of moments before looking up.

JANE
There's no reason why Harrison has to spend Thanksgiving by himself.

Brooke puts the phone back to her ear.

BROOKE
Harrison? If you're not over here in five minutes, I'm going to come over there and drag you back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Happily she turns and skips out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - LATER

Harrison comes up the walk to the front door, and apparently Brooke has been looking out for him, because the door opens and she comes out to meet him. Harrison actually looks like he's a little nervous to be around her.

BROOKE

Okay, before we go in, can I say
I'm sorry for acting psycho
lately?

HARRISON

It's okay, Brooke.

BROOKE

No, it's not. I don't know why,
whenever something goes wrong, the
first thing I do is push you away.
I don't want to. I hate fighting
with you.

HARRISON

Yeah...me too.

BROOKE

So, no more pushing away. Okay?

HARRISON

Are you going to tell me what's
wrong?

Brooke looks away for a long moment.

BROOKE

I guess...I have to.

(beat)

Can we talk about it tomorrow,
though?

HARRISON

Yeah.

BROOKE

(relieved)

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She leans in and kisses him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

The view from across the street and a couple of hundred feet away, where Sam watches Brooke kiss Harrison, then take him by the hand and lead him into the house. Shaking her head in frustration and anguish, running her hands through her hair, she turns and runs away.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

A final montage, once more without dialog, of the various Thanksgiving dinners:

First, the Cherry Mansion, where dinner is in full swing, and Miss Glass is in even fuller swing, boisterously taking over the dinner table, with the other guests looking, to various degrees, horrified, mortified, or just shocked. Mary Cherry is eating it all up, of course.

Next, dinner at the McQueens, which actually looks fairly normal, with Mike, Jane, Brooke and Harrison sitting around the dining room table, talking and laughing like a real family.

And finally, Sam, sitting by herself in a booth at the coffee shop, picking at a turkey plate.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHERRY MANSION - EVENING

Servants are cleaning up after the party is over. Mary Cherry walks into the great hall, only to be confronted by the rest of the Cherry family, standing in a group.

MARY CHERRY
What's goin' on?

Cherry Cherry detaches herself from the group and steps forward.

CHERRY CHERRY
Baby, we got somethin' to tell ya,
and it's gonna hurt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY CHERRY
Why...whatever is it, Mama?

CHERRY CHERRY
The whole family's had a major pow-wow, and...well, you're no longer allowed to attend Cherry family dinners.

MARY CHERRY
(shocked)
Yer...yer banishin' me?! Y'all can't do that! I'm a Cherry!!

CHERRY CHERRY
I'm sorry, darlin', but it's been decided. Yer jus' going to hafta accept it, an' move on.

Mary Cherry sniffs, and wipes a tear away from her eye before turning and, head hung low, disappearing through a doorway. The various members of the Cherry family exchange sympathetic glances—until the silence is shattered by:

MARY CHERRY (O.S.)
(from the next room)
YEEEEEE-HAWWWWW!!!

Cherry frowns suspiciously.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END