

Popular: Senior Year
"Wild Card"

by

The Wild Pikachu

POPULAR: SENIOR YEAR

WILD CARD

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. AN INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A bare room with a table and two chairs—a stereotypical interrogation room, complete with one-way mirror. One of the chairs is occupied by Sam. She sits there, motionless, seemingly in shock. The door opens abruptly, and Detective Harris stalks in. He stomps over to the chair opposite Sam, pulls it out roughly, and plunks himself down in it, slamming the folder he's carrying down on the table. Sam doesn't react to any of this at all.

DET. HARRIS

Well, well, what have we here?

No response from Sam. Harris slams his hand down on the table.

DET. HARRIS (CONT'D)

Hey! I'm talking to you, girl!
Don't sit there acting like your
friend!

Sam's face comes to life.

SAM

What happened to Jaycee?

DET. HARRIS

What, you think you get to ask
questions here?!

SAM

I want to know what happened to
Jaycee!

DET. HARRIS

This isn't about what you want! I'm
gonna ask the questions, and you're
gonna sit there and answer 'em!

Unnoticed by either of them, the door opens and Detective Candido slips in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM
I'm not answering anything!! I
WANNA KNOW ABOUT JAYCEE!!

Harris bolts out of his chair, leaning forward on the table.

DET. HARRIS
Don't you get smart with me!!

DET. CANDIDO
Whoa! Whoa.

Harris and Sam both freeze at the unexpected interruption. Candido smoothly slides Harris' chair away, settling into it herself.

DET. CANDIDO (CONT'D)
(to Harris)
Why don't you take a break?

Harris scowls at her, but after a moment he turns and storms out. She watches him go with equanimity, then turns back to Sam.

DET. CANDIDO (CONT'D)
Sorry about that.

SAM
(sullen)
What about Jaycee?

Candido's gaze drops.

DET. CANDIDO
I'm sorry. It was much too late
for anyone to do anything.

It takes a moment for Sam to digest this. Then she throws her head back and shrieks to the ceiling, a wail that eventually peters out when she drops her head to the table, pounding her fists and shuddering. Candido reaches out and puts a sympathetic hand on Sam's shoulder.

DET. CANDIDO (CONT'D)
I'm really sorry.

Sam lifts her head up slowly, eyes brimming. She might be trying for combativeness, but her spirit is clearly gone.

SAM
(dully)
What are you, the good cop?

Candido laughs quietly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM (CONT'D)

What?

DET. CANDIDO

Brooke McQueen asked me the same thing.

SAM

And? What did you tell her?

DET. CANDIDO

(smiling)

Only by nature.

(beat)

Don't mind my partner. He's just seriously pissed off at you.

SAM

(puzzled)

Why?

DET. CANDIDO

Are you kidding? You did a real number on him. Nothing gets a cop going like being made a fool of.

SAM

(slowly)

I'm not following.

DET. CANDIDO

He bought into your little scheme to frame Brooke McQueen and Natalie James, whole hog. I mean, hook, line, sinker, the whole fishing boat. If he'd had his way, those two would have been shipped off to a federal penitentiary the first day.

SAM

(flustered)

Wait, hold on...I didn't--

Candido holds up a hand to stop her.

DET. CANDIDO

Please, let's just skip all the pointless back-and-forth? Let me clue you in to something neither you nor your accomplice knew.

She opens the folder that Harris left on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DET. CANDIDO (CONT'D)
What you didn't know is that even though the bank digitizes its records, they keep the paper originals for thirty days before destroying them.

She pulls out a color copy of the account application, which includes the fake Brooke McQueen ID with the photo of Sam in the blonde wig, and lays it on the table. Sam goggles at it.

DET. CANDIDO (CONT'D)
You see? Open and shut, as they say.

WHITE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EST. KENNEDY HIGH - MORNING

Stock shot of the quad.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Josh, Lily and Harrison are among the throngs of students making their way to class.

JOSH

Dude, I am really glad you got over that whole "monk" thing.

HARRISON

Yeah, but I still don't know what I'm supposed to do about Brooke. Or Sam.

At that moment, Natalie appears in their path, headed in the opposite direction down the hall.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

...or Natalie.

As Natalie approaches, Harrison grimaces, no doubt bracing for another close encounter. But—

NATALIE

Hey, guys.

And with that, she passes by, heading on down the hall.

Harrison blinks in surprise and twists his head around to look at her departing form as they continue to walk in opposite directions.

JOSH

Man, she doesn't sound interested.

HARRISON

(unconvinced)

Yeah....

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - LATER

The patio doors open and Brooke rushes in, her arms fully loaded down with books and papers. She drops everything in a pile on the kitchen table, at which point Jane comes down the stairs.

JANE
Who—? Oh, Brooke!
(beat)
What are you doing home from school?

BROOKE
(out of breath)
Mr. Osbourne gave me his period off.

JANE
(concerned)
Can he do that?

BROOKE
He's a teacher. Of course he can do that.
(beat)
Besides, I just need to fax some stuff.

She starts picking through her pile.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
...if I can find it.

The phone rings. Jane walks over and picks it up.

JANE
(into the phone)
Hello?... Oh, of course, Mrs. Sims. I'll be right over.

Jane hangs up the phone and turns to Brooke.

JANE (CONT'D)
Brooke, would you mind watching Mac for just five minutes? I have to run across the street and pick up a casserole dish.

Brooke can't manage to get out more than a strangled gasp.

JANE (CONT'D)
Thanks so much, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And with that, Jane rushes out the patio door, leaving Brooke flustered in her wake.

BROOKE
(muttering)
Great. Just great.

She looks over to Mac, cooing in her bassinet.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
No offense.

The phone rings again. Brooke glares over.

INSERT - THE ANSWERING MACHINE

Which is clearly off.

Brooke trudges over and picks up the phone.

BROOKE
(into the phone)
Hello?

SAM (V.O.)
(belligerent, over the phone)
Brooke? Where's mom?

Brooke's already-sour mood instantly descends to match Sam's.

BROOKE
Out.

SAM
Dammit, Brooke, out where?

BROOKE
Just out doing something? What's
it to you?

SAM
I need to talk to her!

BROOKE
Well, she's not here, so tough.

With that, Brooke hangs up the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks at the phone, and hangs it up. Then she turns to the burly guard standing behind her.

SAM
I need to make another call.

GUARD
Nice try. One call per customer.

SAM
But—!

The guard pushes Sam away from the phone.

GUARD
That's the rules. See your lawyer.

SAM
I don't have a lawyer!

GUARD
You'll get assigned a P.D., don't worry.

The guard leads Sam away.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Back at the McQueens', Brooke takes a second to scribble a note on a pad, and hurriedly tacks it to the fridge.

INSERT - THE NOTE

which simply reads: "Sam called."

Brooke hustles back to the kitchen table, gathers all of her books and things together, and sweeps out of the room. As she passes by the fridge, the notes flies off.

INSERT - THE NOTE

settling into the crack between the fridge and cabinets.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - NOON

Lunch is in full swing as Harrison takes his tray from the cashier and makes his way through the aisles, looking for a seat. At the back of the room, he finds a small empty table. He sits down and takes a bite of something. When he looks up, he groans—Natalie is standing there, tray in hand.

NATALIE

Mind if I sit?

Harrison looks pained. He opens his mouth, but before he can say anything—

CARMEN (O.S.)

Natalie!

ANGLE: CARMEN

standing at a table halfway across the cafeteria, holding an empty seat. She is waving exuberantly. Natalie waves back.

NATALIE

Sorry, Harrison.

And she takes off, headed Carmen's way. Harrison watches her go, thoroughly discombobulated.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EST. JAIL BUILDING - NIGHT

A suitably imposing structure.

FADE TO:

INT. A JAIL CELL - NIGHT

This cell could be similar to the one Brooke and Natalie were in, but somehow it seems darker and dingier. Sam is huddled on a bunk, knees pulled up to her chest. Suddenly a hulking form is towering over her.

INMATE

Hey, meat!

Sam looks up, more sullen than fearful.

SAM

Leave me alone.

The inmate does a contemptuous double-take.

INMATE

What?! Did I hear right?! You want me to leave you alone?!

Instead, she grabs Sam by the front of her shirt and hauls her up off the bunk. Sam stumbles a few steps, and finds herself surrounded by stereotypical girls in prison. (These girls are just over-the-top enough to lend a slight comic edge to the scene, however.) The girls close in menacingly, poking at Sam, who throws up her hands futilely as the scene dissolves into a kaleidoscope of distorted images and noises.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

ANGLE: SAM

her eyes closed.

GUARD

Sam McPherson!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam's eyes snap open. She is lying on the bunk, and it's impossible to tell if the previous scene really happened or not.

GUARD (CONT'D)
McPherson! Get up! Your lawyer's here.

SAM
(uncomprehending)
Lawyer?

SWEEP CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

A rotund, timid-looking bespectacled little man is sitting in one of the chairs at the table. The door opens and Sam is ushered in. She sits sullenly in the other chair as the guard leaves. The lawyer, meanwhile, is fumbling through a massive stack of disorganized papers.

PHILLIPS
(peering at his notes)
Ah, good morning, Miss...McFinley.

SAM
McPherson.

The lawyer doesn't seem to notice the correction. After a moment he looks up, peering at her owlshly.

PHILLIPS
I've been assigned by the, ah, Public Defender's office to be, ah, your attorney.

SAM
Oh, Well, Mr....?

PHILLIPS
Ah, Phillips.

SAM
Mr. Phillips—

PHILLIPS
You can call me, ah, Wilson. If you, ah, prefer.

SAM
(eyes narrowing)
Wilson...Phillips?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHILLIPS
(blank)
Yes?

SAM
(shaking her head)
Never mind.

Phillips pulls a file folder out from the pile, seemingly at random.

PHILLIPS
Now, then, Miss McFerris...

SAM
McPherson.

Again, Phillips doesn't seem to notice the correction.

PHILLIPS
Your preliminary hearing is, ah,
scheduled for, ah, Tuesday after
next, but, ah, I'll have that
pushed back...

Meanwhile, Sam is trying to get Phillips' attention.

SAM
Mr. Phillips!

PHILLIPS
Wilson, please, ah, Miss
McForeman...

SAM
(exasperated)
McPherson!

PHILLIPS
(confused)
Excuse me?

SAM
It's McPherson. Sam McPherson.

PHILLIPS
Of course.

SAM
(carefully)
I need you to do something for me.

PHILLIPS
Ah, of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

I tried to call someone last night, but I couldn't get through. Is there any way you can let my family know I'm in here?

Phillips positively beams.

PHILLIPS

Ah, absolutely! I would be more than happy to pass a message along, Miss...

Sam tenses anxiously.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

...McPherson.

Sam relaxes a bit, picks up a pen and starts to write on a pad.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Brooke and Natalie are walking side by side down the corridor.

NATALIE

Do you really think that Mr. Osbourne can help get Sam?

Brooke nods confidently.

BROOKE

Absolutely.

If Natalie has her own opinion on this, she keeps it to herself. And before anything else can be said:

ANGLE: HARRISON

Harrison appears at the intersection ahead, takes one look at the two girls, and high-tails it in the other direction. Brooke and Natalie glance at each other.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

What was that about?

Natalie shrugs gamely.

NATALIE

Beats me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After a moment, Brooke apparently decides to take that at face value, and the girls resume walking. A moment later, Brooke's cell phone rings. She pulls it out and puts it to her ear.

BROOKE
 (into the phone)
 Hello?... Oh--all right. I'll be
 right there.

Brooke puts her phone away and turns to Natalie.

BROOKE **(CONT'D)**
 I gotta go. Can we meet up later?

BROOKE **(CONT'D)**
 Sure.

Brooke takes off in a trot. Natalie, who has reached the intersection, stops and considers for a moment, then turns and heads off in the direction that Harrison went.

CUT TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke rushes into the classroom to find Osbourne sitting at his desk, waiting for her. Brooke comes to a skidding halt.

BROOKE
 (breathless)
That fast?!

Osbourne is the picture of equanimity.

OSBOURNE
 Please bear in mind, Miss McQueen,
 that this is merely a preliminary
 step.

Brooke nods soberly.

OSBOURNE **(CONT'D)**
 However, your package in the
 aggregate was quite impressive. I
 myself am not surprised in the
 least by the speed of the
 response.

Brooke flushes at that for a moment, then recovers.

BROOKE
 What should I do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE
(smiling benignly)
Simply be yourself, Miss McQueen.

BROOKE
(skeptical)
Simply?

OSBOURNE
"To thine own self be true." Sound
advice, and in your case, more
than sufficient, I assure you.

This produces another momentary flush from Brooke.

BROOKE
But...how do I prepare?

OSBOURNE
As for any other interview. I
assume you have already taken
those customary steps.

BROOKE
(slightly offended)
Of course.

OSBOURNE
Then your preparations are
complete. All that remains is to
"seal the deal," so to speak.

BROOKE
It sounds simple when you say it.

OSBOURNE
Because it is. You shall soon see
for yourself.

BROOKE
That's what I'm afraid of.

OSBOURNE
Then your fears are unfounded.
There is no doubt in my mind that
you will perform brilliantly.
Trust me.

BROOKE
(solemnly)
I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Osbourne nods, equally solemn for the moment.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Harrison is about to head down the stairs when Natalie calls out to him:

NATALIE
Harrison! Wait up!

Harrison sighs dramatically and stops at the head of the stairs. It takes a second for Natalie to catch up to him. For a long moment the two of them just stand there, staring at each other warily.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Well?!

HARRISON
(angry)
Well, what?!

NATALIE
I don't know! You tell me!!

HARRISON
This is just—

Giving up, Harrison throws up his hands and starts down the stairs. Natalie reaches out and grabs at his arm, which throws him off-balance. Instinctively, he clutches at her, which sends them both tumbling down and out of the frame, followed by a comical SOUND EFFECT of bowling pins being knocked down.

FLIP CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S JAIL CELL - LATER

Sam is sitting on the bunk, doing nothing in particular, when the guard walks up and raps on the bars, cliché-style.

GUARD
McPherson!

Sam looks up blankly.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Your lawyer's here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM
(muttering)
Again?

But Sam gets up anyway, waiting for the guard to open the cell door.

SLIDE CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sam is escorted into the interrogation room to find someone waiting for her—but it's not the owlish Wilson Phillips. Everything about the man sitting at the table screams "high powered attorney." He rises smoothly from his chair and extends his hand.

ARMSTRONG
Good afternoon, Ms. McPherson. My name is Alexander J. Armstrong, Esquire. I have been retained to represent you in this unfortunate matter.

Sam looks a bit stunned, but dutifully shakes his hand anyway.

SAM
I thought I already had a lawyer...Wilson Phillips?

ARMSTRONG
You had a public defender assigned to your case. That isn't quite the same.
(droll)
But it's your choice, obviously.

Sam does a quick once-over of Armstrong, and comes to the obvious conclusion.

SAM
No, I think I'd rather have you.

ARMSTRONG
Yes, you are supposed to be a smart young woman. Now, as to the matter of your bail—

SAM
(glum)
I don't have any money. I can't make bail anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMSTRONG

That's already been arranged, I understand.

SAM

(taken aback)

Really? I mean—

ARMSTRONG

Unfortunately, the paperwork won't be processed until tomorrow morning.

SAM

I have to spend another night in here?

ARMSTRONG

I'm afraid so. If someone had been paying proper attention to your case earlier, then...but I was only retained a short time ago.

Armstrong picks up his legal pad—the only thing of his on the table—and smoothly slides it into his very expensive briefcase.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

My secretary will be calling you to set up a strategy session later this week.

Sam's brain is just starting to catch up.

SAM

Wait—how did my mother find you?

ARMSTRONG

(puzzled)

Your mother? I've had no contact with your family thus far.

SAM

But—you said you were retained? By who?

And as Armstrong looks at her, surprised—

CUT TO:

EST. L.A. SKYLINE - MORNING

The next morning.

CUT TO:

INT. A SMALL OFFICE - MORNING

A well-used, somewhat cluttered administrative office, in the center of which is a somewhat cluttered desk. And in the middle of the desk is an open laptop. The door to the office opens, and Osbourne ushers Brooke in.

BROOKE

(nervous)

I'm not sure I'm ready for this.

OSBOURNE

I am quite certain, Miss McQueen.
You are, in fact, ready for this.

He gently but insistently herds her into the desk chair.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

The connection is already open.

Standing over Brooke's shoulder, Osbourne reaches down and taps a couple of keys.

ANGLE: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

On the screen is a webcam view of a group of three distinguished gentlemen.

BRAYDON

Good morning, Miss McQueen. I am
Alistair Braydon, Director of
Undergraduate Admissions. My
colleagues, Marion Gentry—
(nods to his left)
—Franklin Richardson—
(nods to his right)
—and I are most pleased to make
your acquaintance face-to-face, as
it were.

After the briefest of moments, Brooks slides smoothly into a picture of perfect poise.

BROOKE

Good evening, Doctor Braydon,
Professor Gentry, Doctor
Richardson.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I'm very honored that you've
extended your day to meet with me.

Brief satisfied nods are exchanged between the three gentlemen.

RICHARDSON
You have been highly recommended
to us by our good friend, Doctor
Osbourne.

GENTRY
Your materials were quite
impressive, as well.

BRAYDON
Indeed. To business, then, Miss
McQueen, if you are quite
prepared?

Her earlier anxiety apparently forgotten, Brooke nods confidently.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

At the end of the corridor, the double doors slam open noisily. A slow pan reveals Harrison and Natalie standing side by side, sporting matching leg casts. Both look extremely cranky.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Harrison and Natalie clumsily shuffle down the hallway.

NATALIE
(growling)
Don't talk to me.

HARRISON
Me?! I should--! Never mind.

NATALIE
Fine.

HARRISON
Fine.

Step by step, the two of them continue on, stonily refusing to look at each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER

The front doors open and Sam steps out, blinking in the bright sunlight as though she had been in an actual dungeon. She trots down the front steps and stops on the sidewalk, unsure of what to do next. Then (on cue) Krupps' car comes zipping up, stopping in front of her. Krupps leans over and pushes open the passenger-side door.

KRUPPS
Get in, Sam.

After a moment's hesitation, Sam climbs into the car, without saying a word, and they speed away.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL OFFICE - LATER

Brooke's interview is wrapping up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

...but I'm a little overwhelmed
when I think about the tradition,
the history of your school,
Professor. Your standards are so
high—

GENTRY

(interrupting)

And do you think you're up to the
task?

BROOKE

(off-guard)

I'm sorry?

GENTRY

(plainly)

Do you think you're worthy, Miss
McQueen?

Brooke hesitates, and—out of sight—Osbourne tenses just a
bit.

BROOKE

With all due respect, Professor,
that's for you to decide. All I
can say is that, if you choose to
accept me, I will do whatever it
takes to be worthy of it.

The three men exchange more glances, and Osbourne smiles
slightly.

BRAYDON

Is Doctor Osbourne still there?

Osbourne leans down over Brooke's shoulder.

OSBOURNE

Yes, Alistair?

BRAYDON

Eric, old chap, might we have a
moment to confer?

Osbourne seems taken aback.

OSBOURNE

Now?

Braydon looks left and right to his colleagues, and gets a
pair of concurring nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRAYDON
Yes, I believe that now is the most
appropriate time.

OSBOURNE
Well...of course, yes.

Braydon nods, reaches out and touches a key, and a "MUTE"
graphic appears on the screen. Brooke looks up at Osbourne,
a hint of worry in her eyes.

BROOKE
What does this mean?

OSBOURNE
(disturbed)
I'm...not sure.

CUT TO:

INT. KRUPPS' CAR - MOVING

A somewhat uncomfortable silence between Krupps and Sam.

SAM
(abruptly)
You didn't have to do it.

KRUPPS
Excuse me?

SAM
Bail me out, get me a lawyer....
How did you even know I was in
jail?

KRUPPS
(chuckles)
I have...connections.

Another awkward silence.

SAM
Where are you taking me?

KRUPPS
Home, of course.

SAM
Whose? Yours? Mine?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRUPPS

Yours. Which is also mine at the moment, but that's beside the point.

SAM

As long as you're not taking me back to my mother.

KRUPPS

Well, that's obviously not what you want. Although, to tell you the truth, I'm a little surprised at you, Sam. I know you and your mother aren't on the best of terms right now—

Sam snorts, either at the "best of terms" part or the "right now" part.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)

—but I can't imagine that you would rather stay in jail than turn to her for help.

SAM

What?! I did!

KRUPPS

(surprised)

You did?

SAM

I'm not that stupid. I called home day before yesterday, as soon as they let me. Talked to Brooke, she was no help, of course. And I wrote a note for that other lawyer to give to her.

KRUPPS

(dark)

I see.

SAM

Yeah, no visit, no phone call, nothing...when that Mr. Armstrong showed up, I thought Mom hired him, but it was you.

KRUPPS

I'm sorry, I assumed you hadn't told her. I can't imagine her leaving you in jail

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KRUPPS (CONT'D)

(beat)

Well, don't worry, Sam. I have no intention of abandoning you.

A flicker of uncertainty crosses Sam's face at that, but she keeps silent as they drive on.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL OFFICE - LATER

Brooke and Osbourne are awkwardly waiting and watching the three gentlemen on the screen talk amongst themselves and compare notes.

BROOKE

Is this a really bad sign?

OSBOURNE

I hadn't anticipated this...

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

Suddenly the "MUTE" graphic disappears from the screen. Brooke and Osbourne both lean forward slightly in anticipation.

BRAYDON

Miss McQueen?

BROOKE

(tentative)

Yes?

BRAYDON

Firstly, we would like to thank you for your time today. It has been...an interesting experience.

BROOKE

Well...thank you.

BRAYDON

Yes...most interesting. In any case, my colleagues and I have discussed your case, and I believe that we've reached a decision.

This announcement startles Osbourne enough that he (uncharacteristically) leans down and breaks in:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE

Now? Are you quite certain,
Alistair? Perhaps another
interview...?

Braydon holds up a hand to forestall Osbourne's objections.

BRAYDON

Not necessary.
(to Brooke)
We have heard all that we need to
hear.

Clearly Brooke is steeling herself for the worst.

BROOKE

(stone-faced)
I see.

With one more look at his colleagues, Braydon adopts an even more formal tone.

BRAYDON

Brooke McQueen, in the short time
since we have made your
acquaintance, you have
demonstrated, to the highest
degree, the maturity, dedication,
and principles which our
institution most highly prizes.

(beat)

While there are, of course,
perfunctory steps to be completed,
at this point I, on behalf of
myself and my colleagues, would
like to say that we would be most
honored to offer you a place with
us.

Throughout all this, Brooke blinks, seemingly unable to
generate any other reaction. As silence falls, she still
sits, frozen.

BROOKE

I...uh...well....

Osbourne claps his hand on Brooke's shoulder, which seems to
snap her out of it, at least partially.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

The honor is mine, Professor. I—
I just can't say—

Braydon smiles rather warmly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRAYDON

It's quite all right, Miss McQueen. You needn't be a paragon of detachment.

(wry)

You are American, after all.

At this, Brooke breaks into a wide grin.

BROOKE

I promise you won't regret this.

BRAYDON

We are quite certain of that. If there were the slightest doubt in our minds, we would not be taking this step.

Brooke nods, still a bit dumbfounded.

BRAYDON (CONT'D)

Eric?

Osbourne leans down again.

OSBOURNE

Yes, Alistair?

BRAYDON

Congratulations, old chap. Top drawer with this one, absolutely top drawer.

Osbourne seems mildly discomfited, and he misses the vaguely disturbed look that passes across Brooke's face.

OSBOURNE

I confess to being surprised by the speed of your decision.

BRAYDON

Nonsense. Even without your recommendation, Miss McQueen would have rated high consideration.

(to Brooke)

And so, Miss McQueen. Given your entrance at the next term, there shall be housing and other arrangements to be made. Do you intend to see to these remotely, or might we, perchance, have the opportunity to make your acquaintance in person before autumn?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Brooke's jaw falls open.

BROOKE
Is that possible?

The three gentlemen all put on their most welcoming smiles.

BRAYDON
You are more than welcome to visit
us at any time. We should be most
pleased to host you.

BROOKE
Well, I— Oh! School! Don't I
have to wait until summer?

Brooke twists in her seat to look up at Osbourne.

OSBOURNE
Time away from class can be
arranged, if you wish to go sooner.

BRAYDON
Indeed, there is a rush of sorts
during the summer months. You
would be much better advised, if
possible, to see to matters before
then.

Brooke looks hopeful, but then her face falls again.

BROOKE
I don't know how I can afford it.
I don't even know how I can afford
Oxford. I mean, I have some money,
but...

BRAYDON
Beg pardon?

Braydon's eyes flick upward slightly.

BRAYDON (CONT'D)
Eric, you haven't fully explained
the situation?

OSBOURNE
Ah—I thought it best to wait
until matters had progressed
somewhat. As I said, the
expeditiousness of your decision
caught me unawares.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BRAYDON

Of course, Eric. Quite understandable.

(to Brooke)

Miss McQueen, there shall be no issue of cost. We have set aside some small sums for exceptional cases. Such as yourself. Rest assured, all of your expenses—excepting incidentals, of course—shall be taken care of.

BROOKE

(uncomprehending)

Excuse me?

OSBOURNE

(dryly)

In educational parlance, it's known as a full scholarship.

For the first time, Brooke loses it.

BROOKE

(goggling)

Are you serious?!!

BRAYDON

I assure you, Miss McQueen, we are the most serious of men.

But even as he speaks, a smile plays at the edges of his mouth.

BROOKE

No, really, are you serious?!!

Osbourne, meanwhile, makes no effort to conceal his grin.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The classroom door opens, and Osbourne and Brooke walk in—with Brooke practically bouncing.

BROOKE

Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God!
I'm going to Oxford! I'm really
going to Oxford!!

Osbourne settles into his chair easily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE

Indeed you are, Miss McQueen.

Then, rather abruptly, Brooke's euphoria fades, and she stands facing Osbourne across his desk, arms folded.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

Something troubles you?

With an embarrassed expression, Brooke's eyes drop, and she makes a dismissive gesture.

BROOKE

It's nothing. It's stupid.

OSBOURNE

I highly doubt that.

BROOKE

(hesitant)

It's just... I'm not the first.

OSBOURNE

I'm sorry?

BROOKE

(shrugging)

I'm not your first girl.

After a moment of awkwardness:

OSBOURNE

You are not the first student I have referred to the committee, correct.

BROOKE

(sighs)

I know I'm being silly. It was just nice...to feel special.

Osbourne stands and walks around his desk.

OSBOURNE

In this one, insignificant regard, you are not unique. However, I assure you, you are very special.

BROOKE

(flushing)

I...don't know what to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OSBOURNE
(light)
I believe "thank you" is the
traditional response.

BROOKE
(intently)
Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

The sound of the doorbell reverberates through the empty room.

Jane appears, heading for the front door. When she opens it,
she is startled to find Krupps standing there.

FLIP CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane and Krupps are standing in the living room, and Krupps
has just delivered his news.

JANE
(shocked)
Sam's in JAIL???

She starts to pace back and forth in a panic.

JANE (CONT'D)
Oh my God...what do I do?! How do
I get a lawyer?! Does she need
bail?! How do I raise bail?!

Jane turns to Krupps wildly.

JANE (CONT'D)
I need to get her out of there!

Krupps holds up a hands in a calming gesture.

KRUPPS
It's been taken care of, Mrs.
McQueen.

JANE
What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRUPPS
I've posted Sam's bond, and
retained a very good attorney to
represent her.

JANE
(catching up)
You have.

Meanwhile, Krupps is doing some catching up of his own.

KRUPPS
You didn't know she was in jail.

JANE
(incredulous)
What—?! Of course not!! How
could you—how could you think I
would leave my baby in jail?! I
know you don't think much of my
parenting skills, but—

Krupps throws up his hands again, this time to ward her off.

KRUPPS
I'm sorry, Mrs. McQueen. I
apologize. Sam said—

She looks at him expectantly.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)
—she said she called here day
before yesterday.

JANE
(off-balance)
Our answering machine is broken—
if she called when I wasn't
home...

KRUPPS
She said she spoke with your step-
daughter.

Jane stares at him glassy-eyed.

JANE
Brooke?
(shaking her head)
No...if Brooke talked to Sam, she
would have...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KRUPPS

All I know is what Sam told me.
The two of you aren't getting
along at the moment, but she did
try to reach out to you rather
than remain in jail.

Instead of answering, Jane walks over to the phone and picks it up.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

The bell rings, doors open, and multitudes of students come pouring into the hallway. Among them are Brooke and Lily.

LILY

(wide-eyed)

This is...fantastic!

BROOKE

I know, can you believe it?

LILY

But, how did you—? With your
grades all messed up and
everything.

BROOKE

(glowing)

Mr. Osbourne took care of
everything. He submitted my
application, he arranged an
interview with the admissions
committee...

LILY

Wow... He really believes in you.

Brooke thinks about that for a moment, as though she were trying it on for size.

BROOKE

Yeah, he really does.

Lily breaks into a trot.

LILY

(calling back)

Gotta go, Josh is waiting for me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
Tell him hi for me!

Brooke is only alone for a moment when Natalie comes hobbling across her path.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
What happened to you?!

NATALIE
(grumbling)
Harrison happened.

She holds up a hand to forestall Brooke's inevitable questions.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
It's a long story. Let's just say
I would be thrilled if I never saw
Harrison John again.

With that, she hobbles off, leaving Brooke somewhat confused. Then her cell phone rings. She digs it out and puts it to her ear.

BROOKE
(into the phone)
Hello?

JANE (V.O.)
(on the phone)
Brooke, it's Jane.

BROOKE
(gushing)
Jane! You'll never believe what
just happened—

INTERCUT BETWEEN BROOKE AND JANE

JANE
(interrupting)
Not now, Brooke!

BROOKE
But—

JANE
(sharp)
I said, not now! Did Sam call home
the day before yesterday?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE
(thinks)
Yeah. So?

JANE
Young lady, your father and I are going to have a long talk with you when you get home. You are in serious trouble.

BROOKE
What?!

JANE
You heard me. You come home right now, Brooke. I'm calling your father.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jane hangs up the phone, and turns to Krupps contritely.

JANE
Principal Krupps, I—

KRUPPS
(shaking his head)
No, I was wrong for thinking that you would turn your back on Sam.

JANE
(worried)
Is she all right?

KRUPPS
(shrugs faintly)
It's hard to say.

CUT TO:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Osbourne is writing at his desk when there is a knock at the door. He looks up to see Brooke standing in the doorway with a fierce expression on her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
That trip to Oxford?
(beat)
How fast can we set that up?

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM - LATER

A printer hums and spits out a piece of paper, which Osbourne picks up. He takes it to his desk and makes a few notations on it, under Brooke's watchful eye.

OSBOURNE

There. All it needs are the dates and a signature, and it can be filed.

BROOKE

Does my father or Jane absolutely have to sign this?

OSBOURNE

Well...generally the form is signed by a parent...

Brooke eyes him intently.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

...however, given exigent circumstances, an instructor's signature may be substituted.

He takes his pen and scrawls his name at the bottom, while Brooke smiles wanly.

OSBOURNE (CONT'D)

(as he is signing)
For the life of me, I can't imagine your father or stepmother objecting.

BROOKE

(scornful)
Then you haven't been paying close enough attention.

OSBOURNE

(dryly)
If memory serves, you've said that before.

BROOKE

And I've been right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSBOURNE

(sighs)

Very well. I shall hold these papers until the appropriate time. But I would strongly encourage you to at least attempt to discuss this rationally with your father and step-mother.

BROOKE

I'll try...but I'm not promising anything.

OSBOURNE

(placating)

That is all I ask.

Brooke goes to the door, stops there and turns back.

BROOKE

I don't know where I'd be without you. You've helped me so much.

OSBOURNE

You've made it extremely easy to. And extremely rewarding, as well.

BROOKE

(blushing)

Still...thanks.

And with that, she's out the door.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. KRUPPS' STUDY - EVENING

ANGLE: SAM

Sam is curled up on Krupps' sofa, asleep. A pair of hands (belonging to Krupps, off-screen) pulls a blanket over her. She shifts slightly, but doesn't wake up.

FADE TO:

INT. JAMES' FRONT DOOR - EVENING

The doorbell rings. After a moment:

NATALIE (O.S.)

Coming!

Clumsily, Natalie makes her way to the door and opens it. And standing on the doorstep is—

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Harrison??

Before Natalie can do or say anything else, Harrison takes one unsteady step across the threshold and kisses her full on.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - EVENING

Brooke enters quietly through the patio doors. Not quietly enough, though, because a moment later Mike and Jane are standing there.

MIKE

(simmering)

Where have you been? Jane told you to come straight home.

BROOKE

(warily)

I was busy.

MIKE

I don't like your tone, young lady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
Look, I don't know why the two of
you are mad, but—

JANE
(incredulous)
You don't know?!

BROOKE
(annoyed)
No!

JANE
You talked to Sam and didn't tell
us!

BROOKE
I—
(thinks)
Yeah, Sam called the other day.
So? I left a note.

JANE
No, you didn't.

BROOKE
(indignant)
Yes, I did!

Brooke looks around the kitchen.

JANE
Brooke, stop lying.

That turns Brooke outraged.

BROOKE
You think I'm lying?!

Brooke's search intensifies, as she looks under and around things. After a couple of moments, she reaches down into the space between the refrigerator and the counter and pulls out the note. She slaps it down on the kitchen counter defiantly. Jane picks it up and reads it.

JANE
This just says, "Sam called."

BROOKE
Yeah. Sam called. I left a note.

JANE
This doesn't say anything about Sam
being in jail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE
(blank)
What? Sam's in jail?

JANE
Not anymore.

BROOKE
She just said she wanted to talk to you.

JANE
I can't believe she didn't tell you she was in jail.

BROOKE
(steaming)
You know what? I'm getting tired of you calling me a liar.

MIKE
Okay, that's it. Brooke, you're grounded. Go to your room.

BROOKE
(outraged)
Dad!

MIKE
Now, young lady!

Brooke glares at her father, but instead of continuing to argue, she just stomps up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke stalks into her room, slamming the door behind her. She goes straight to her closet and pulls out a suitcase, tossing it onto the bed and unzipping it open. She starts back towards the closet, but then thinks of something else and reverses course. She goes to the end table, picks up the phone and dials. After a few moments:

BROOKE
(into the phone)
Oh, hello, Mrs. John. Is Harrison there?... Do you know where he went?... No, that's okay.... Thanks. Bye, Mrs. John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frowning, she hangs up the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. KRUPPS' STUDY - EVENING

Krupps is reading when the door opens and Sam pads in. He puts down his book and looks up at her.

KRUPPS
How are you feeling?

Sam thinks about that for a bit.

SAM
I...don't know.

KRUPPS
Well, you certainly look better.

Sam's grimace says that she doesn't agree with that.

SAM
There's no reason I can't go back
to my place.

KRUPPS
Nonsense! You're welcome to stay
here as long as you like. In fact,
I insist on it. You shouldn't be
alone now.

SAM
(dully)
I'll be fine.

Sam turns around and starts to go, but Krupps leaps up, catches her by the shoulders and leads her to a reading chair. She is unresisting as he gently sets her down.

KRUPPS
You can stay in the same room as
before.

Sam nods listlessly.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)
I spoke with the police. I know—

Sam's head jerks up, her eyes flashing to life.

SAM
What do you know??

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRUPPS
Your friend died of a cocaine
overdose. That must be very hard
for you.

Sam mutters something under her breath.

KRUPPS (CONT'D)
Excuse me?

SAM
I said, she was stupid!

Sam propels herself out of the chair, coming nose-to-nose with
Krupps.

SAM (CONT'D)
She was twenty-five! And she's
dead!

KRUPPS
(calming)
It's tragic...but some people just
don't have the opportunities--

Sam is shaking her head.

SAM
She had everything. She was rich.
Did you know that?

KRUPPS
No, I didn't.
(beat)
But it's not just about money.
Money isn't the same thing as
opportunity. It's about giving
someone the chance to flourish, to
spread her wings—

SAM
(screaming)
Stop! Just stop it!!

She turns her back on him, arms crossed tightly over her
chest.

KRUPPS
Sam?

SAM
Stop being so nice to me! And—
and understanding, and supportive,
and—and—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KRUPPS

I'm afraid I can't do that, Sam.

SAM

I don't deserve it! I'm nothing!
A failure! A—a disappointment to
everyone—

KRUPPS

Sam...you're not a failure. Even
if you fail at something, you're
not a failure until you give up.
And you're not the giving-up type.

SAM

(whisper)

You don't know that.

KRUPPS

Yes, I do. And you never, ever
need to worry about disappointing
me.

SAM

I—if you—

Krupps just waits, patiently.

SAM (CONT'D)

I've done...things...

KRUPPS

(kindly)

Sam—

Then she rounds on him, the floodgates breaking loose.

SAM

I used, okay?! I popped pills,
and did coke, and—and I don't
even know all the stuff I took!!
And—and—there's so many things—

KRUPPS

(comforting)

Sam...

While Krupps is standing there looking at Sam, his expression
unchanged, she stops and peers at him closely for a few
moments, before a incredulous look spreads across her face.

SAM

Oh my God... You KNEW???

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SUPER: TO BE CONTINUED

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END