

Pathways  
"The Art of Building Walls"  
by  
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TEASER

EXT. JONES HOUSE, BACKYARD (MORNING)

Establishing shot of the early morning - sun has just risen. We push in to see GABE and ANNA stand in the little yard, looking at a rather beaten-looking tree. Everything's soaked.

ANNA  
Looks like Herbie was hit pretty bad, huh?

Gabe gives her a weird look.

GABE  
Herbie?

ANNA  
What, like you've never named a tree?

GABE  
Maybe when I was two.  
(beat)  
I hate storms.

ANNA  
Who doesn't? They're the bane of every possible person in existence.

GABE  
Except weather men. That's sort of the reason they get paid.

ANNA  
True.

Gabe glances over to the wall, where an AXE leans against the fence.

GABE  
So, might as well do the deed-

ANNA  
No!

Gabe pauses, and raises an eyebrow at his mother.

GABE  
Mom. It's pretty dead. You know that, right?

ANNA  
Nope, it's not dead. It's just a  
little...

GABE  
Snapped? Broken? About to fall on  
our house?

Anna looks back over at the tree, looking worried.

ANNA  
I will admit it's looking a little  
worse for wear.

GABE  
It's gonna fall.

ANNA  
It's not gonna fall

GABE  
It could destroy the house.

ANNA  
It's not gonna destroy the house.

GABE  
What if it fell on me?

ANNA  
You're never back here.

GABE  
I could be.

Anna just looks at the tree.

ANNA  
I have an idea!

FADE TO:

Anna and Gabe are again standing near the tree, Anna smiling  
victoriously, Gabe looking a little dubious.

GABE  
Mom?

ANNA  
Yeah?

Gabe is speechless - and we can see why when we CUT to the  
tree.

It has wire wrapped around it, and the other ends are wrapped around four sticks of wood sticking out of the ground for support. Back to Gabe, who just looks at his mother.

GABE  
(deadpan)  
I have to go to school now. Anna  
nods, still looking at the tree.

Gabe disappears into the house.

ANNA  
(worried)  
It's gonna fall.

Anna glumly begins walking towards the backdoor, as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHTON (MORNING)

Gabe, SAM and MARK are walking outside the school, aimlessly.

GABE  
Power outage last night was a drag,  
huh?

SAM  
You kidding? It cut off Lost! Right  
in the middle! Now I'll never know  
if Jack's gay or not!

MARK  
Trust me, he's not.

SAM  
Damn.  
(beat)  
In other news, Julie still ceases  
to exist, Parker ignores the  
opportunity to throw words like  
'fag' at us,  
(notices Gabe's  
distraction)  
And Princess Peach is kidnapped by  
green dingoes.

Gabe SNAPS to attention. Mark YAWNS.

GABE  
What?

SAM

You were entering Deep Space Nine over there. Had to reel you back in somehow. What's the matter? Storm keep you awake last night?

MARK

I resent that!

SAM

I didn't even say anything!

MARK

Yet.

GABE

Umm... Guys? You know how do you sometimes do that thing where you talk about something and I have no clue what it is, yet you keep on going and I'm left behind scratching my head like a caveman? Now's one of those times.

SAM

Mark doesn't sleep during storms.

MARK

I do, too!

SAM

I distinctly remember you staying up all night-

MARK

We were eight!

SAM

Twelve. Anyway-

(pause)

Incoming missile. Shields on.

Gabe looks over to see KAIA approaching - she looks a bit like she's about to do something she does not want to do. Gabe raises an eyebrow, obviously intrigued. She stops in front of them.

MARK

(cold)

Hi. You need something?

KAIA

I need to talk to Gabe.

Off Gabe's look of confusion, we:

CUT TO:

INT. JONES HOUSE (MORNING)

Anna is in the laundry room, folding up clothes. She folds one shirt (hers, pink) and moves onto the next - an ugly striped shirt - obviously too big to be Gabe's. She scrunches her nose, and makes to throw it in the garbage.

Something catches her eye, and she looks closer. Scrawled on the tag in black pen is JAMES. She gives a little 'oops' gulp, before stashing it in a drawer, looking a little guilty.

CRACK! BAM! Anna's head SNAPS up, and she RUNS though the house to the back door. She EXITS the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. JONES HOUSE, BACKYARD (MORNING)

Anna steps out, and looks over at 'Herbie' the tree. She gulps, and looks as if something very bad has happened.

CUT to the tree... which has most definitely fallen over, and through the back wall.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

FIRST ACT

EXT. BRIGHTON -

Kaia stands with Gabe, Sam and Mark. Gabe looks at them.

SAM

You sure she won't eat your soul?

GABE

You guys go on. We'll be fine.

SAM

Alright, but if I hear screaming,  
I'm not turning back.

GABE

Wouldn't want you to.

The two smile, and Sam leads Mark away. Gabe turns to Kaia.

GABE (CONT'D)

(short to the point)

Hi. What?

Kaia pauses for a moment, then finally speaks.

KAIA

(quickly)

I'm sorry.

GABE

You don't sound sorry. And what  
exactly are you apologizing for,  
exactly? Because it had better be  
good-

KAIA

I'm sorry I outed you and your fag  
boyfriend, alright? I'm sorry I  
told the whole school Quiet-Boy was  
crushing on Maddox King. I'm sorry  
I told the school Parker was gay.  
And I'm sorry about every other  
little piece of crap I wrote in  
that stupid magazine.

(beat)

Can't we just go back to ignoring  
each other's existence? Being hated  
by regular people is bad enough.  
Being hated by *you* is just  
annoying.

GABE

You can take your apology and eat it or something. You can't just wish away something like that with words you don't even mean.

(beat, off her surprise)

By the way, by 'regular' people, I assume you mean straight, sex addicts like you?

Kaia takes a moment a stew, then slams her palms into Gabe's shoulders, pushing him back.

KAIA

(sarcastic)

Yeah, I meant those of us who must spend all day having sex. It's amazing I get out of bed in the morning to go to school, huh? I could just sex it up, 24/7.

(beat, calm)

Why I would care about the opinion of some meek little queer, I will never know.

Kaia leaves, and Gabe just stares at her back, confused.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIGHTON

Gabe, Sam and Mark are walking down the hallway. Sam is eating fries, and Mark is just staring at the floor.

GABE

She seemed sort of... hurt.

SAM

I'm sure it was the wind playing tricks.

(beat)

Though it is weird she'd call you a queer. She's an awful person, but she's no homophobe.

GABE

I guess.

(beat)

So, last night's storm. Any damage at your place? Mark chuckles a little bit.

GABE (CONT'D)

What?

MARK

It would take a jet dropping trees from the sky to damage Sam's *estate*.

(beat)

It's pretty big.

SAM

Yup, no damage the happy construction worker fairy couldn't fix.

(beat)

Why is it that I can't even use the word 'fairy' without a shiver down my spine?

MARK

Years of Parker sniping will do that to you, I guess.

Sam and Gabe share a look, and Sam puts his arms round Mark's shoulders.

SAM

Buddy ol' pal, we should hit the town tonight, really see the sights.

(beat)

Brokeback Mountain is in theatres, I think. What's sexier than gay cowboys?

MARK

No thanks. Work, remember?

SAM

Ah, yes. Work.

(beat)

Wait a second- Why didn't I think of this before?

MARK

What?

SAM

Skip work and have fun with your friends!

MARK

Not interested.

(beat)

I'm up for running the Eternal Flame. It's down to me and Yuki, and if I miss one more day than her, I'm out of the running.

SAM

Pretty competitive atmosphere for the Blaze.

(beat)

Wait, why do you want to man the biggest party of the year? When was the last time you even showed up?

MARK

Last year.

(beat)

You just forgot to pick me up.

SAM

Ah, yes. Well, rest assured, you will be unforgotten this year.

GABE

(weird look)

Unforgotten?

Sam just ignores him as we pass PARKER and stop on him as Gabe and co. move on. He's cornered MASON again.

PARKER

You do not want me mad today, kid.

MASON

What's today?

PARKER

Oh, wouldn't you like to know.

Parker pushes Mason into the lockers, and a hand clamps on his shoulder.

DOMINIC

Wow, Parker. We've been running into each other a lot lately.

Parker looks over his shoulder to see DOMINIC standing there.

PARKER

Hey, look, it's Superboy - saviour of gays and losers.

(MORE)

PARKER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Dominic, man. Why don't you go make out with your boyfriend or whatever, and leave the manliness to real guys.

Dominic doesn't respond - he just PUNCHES Parker in the mouth. Parker holds his jaw and looks at Dominic, and he's ON him in a flash. Both tumble on the floor, neither really hitting the other.

DOMINIC

If I didn't know better, I'd say you were crushing on me.

PARKER

If I didn't know better, I'd say I wasn't gonna kick your ass.

Dominic just KNEES Parker in the stomach and stands, then turns to Mason.

DOMINIC

Let's go.

The two walk away. Parker follows with his eyes, but doesn't move.

MASON

How's you do that?

DOMINIC

Parker's an ass. Show him you're not afraid to hurt him and he'll back down.

(beat)

Unless you really get him mad, but that's a different story.

The two walk off and JULIE walks onscreen. She looks at Parker.

JULIE

What did you do now, Parker?

PARKER

He started it.

JULIE

How? Did he stop you from beating on a freshman again?

Parker pauses for a moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
 I'm not judging, just...  
 (beat)  
 Bullying is wrong, you know, They  
 have a whole section in the  
 rulebook and everything. Parker  
 just looks at her.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
 Shut up.

Parker smiles and looks around, pulling her into the girl's  
 washroom and putting out a BEING SERVICED sign up.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIGHTON - GIRL'S WASHROOM

Parker and Julie are making out, both obviously enjoying it.  
 But Julie breaks away, leaving Parker a little confused.

JULIE  
 Parker. Can you just stop?

PARKER  
 Thought you liked this.

JULIE  
 I mean... Your puerile jokes, your  
 homophobia, your bullying, your  
 fighting, your flunking your  
 courses on purpose-

PARKER  
 How do you know I'm not just  
 stupid?

JULIE  
 Pythagorean Theorem

PARKER  
 A squared plus B squared equals C  
 squared.  
 (beat)  
 Good memory. Can't execute for the  
 life of me.

JULIE  
 Looked like you were about to  
 execute Maddox King's little  
 brother out there.

PARKER  
He pissed me off. Today.. I want it  
to be piss-less.

Julie almost laughs as she glances around the washroom.  
Parker moves on.

PARKER (CONT'D)  
It's our one month.

JULIE  
One month of what, sex on the  
beach?  
(beat)  
Sorry, that was insensitive.

PARKER  
No, no, that's fine. I meant our  
one month anniversary.

JULIE  
Wow, is that a big deal for you?  
For a guy who didn't even want 'us'  
to exist...

PARKER  
No, it's just... I take this sort  
of thing seriously.  
(beat)  
At least, when I'm not just with a  
slut I'm using for cover.

JULIE  
(fake playful)  
Are you saying I'm not a slut?

PARKER  
I'm saying you're not for cover.  
(beat)  
Real deal, Scouts honour.

JULIE  
You weren't a boy scout. I know  
you. You probably beat up the boy  
scouts.

PARKER  
Yeah, but I did get some of their  
badges.

The two pause.

JULIE  
Parker, what are we doing?

PARKER  
Being serviced. Didn't you read the sign?

He moves in for a kiss, but she dodges.

JULIE  
No, us. We have a one month mark, and I'm lecturing you on beating up freshman, and somewhere along all this we became a couple. And everyone forgot to tell me.

PARKER  
What do you mean?

JULIE  
I can't do this - hiding away in bathroom stalls for a quickie before History. I'm not that girl.

PARKER  
I know.  
(beat, realising)  
No. We talked about this.

JULIE  
But my friends already know, and somebody has to have suspicions. Though thanks to Kaia's magazine we might have another week or two. At most.

PARKER  
No.

JULIE  
Bu-

PARKER  
No.

JULIE  
(quickly)  
My mom knows!

PARKER  
My dad doesn't.

Julie pauses... then smiles.

JULIE  
We'll just have to change that.

PARKER  
Again, no. You're not meeting my  
dad, and I'd rather not have a  
round two with your mom.

JULIE  
(accusatory)  
I thought you were the one for  
serious commitment.

PARKER  
Julie, we're not doing this.  
(beat)  
I have to go to class.

Parker just kisses her and leaves. Her gaze stays on the  
door, and she seems unsure of what to feel, exactly.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES HOUSE

Anna is looking at the tree in her living room when FOOTSTEPS  
distract her. She looks to see JAMES move in for a kiss.

JAMES  
Hi. Tree trouble, miss?

ANNA  
And cometh my handsome hero to  
rescue mine wall?

JAMES  
And thus I shall.  
(another kiss)  
How's your day been, aside from  
violent trees?

ANNA  
I would say its in the category  
of... good.

JAMES  
Well, I'm here to make it better.

ANNA  
(joking)  
James, it's the afternoon. It's not  
proper.

James smiles and tickles Anna's neck with a small paintbrush. She giggles.

JAMES

I did mean the wall, but I may be persuaded for additional booty call services after lunch.

ANNA

(re: brush)

What's that for? Painting the wall, one itty bitty bit at a time after you're finished?

JAMES

Nope.

ANNA

Oh?

JAMES

It's for you.

Anna looks a little surprised.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I called last night and asked Gabe what you liked. He said painting.

ANNA

I think he must have said paintings, as in the finished version. The actual work part is beyond me.

JAMES

Ah.

(beat)

Well, if you ever feel the urge to learn, I was a painter.

ANNA

Really?

JAMES

For a few months when Parker was a kid, at least. Once he was old enough to destroy my paintings, I quickly took up football.

ANNA

Football, too?

JAMES

And soccer. I'm quite the sports man.

Anna nods. We can see she's feeling a bit awkward, but James is too smitten to tell. She turns to the wall.

ANNA

So, where do we start?

JAMES

Well, we'll have to take out the tree...

His voice fades out as we

CUT TO:

INT. BRIGHTON HALLWAY

Mason and Dominic are walking down the hallway together.

DOMINIC

You just have to learn to stand up for yourself, Mason. Once you do that, guys like Parker will back off.

(beat)

Now-

A girl, HANNAH, bumps into Dominic. Strawberry pink hair, a year older than him. She smiles flirtatiously at him.

HANNAH

Hey, Dom.

DOMINIC

Hey, Han! How've you been?

HANNAH

Eh, so-so. Finally debunked that stupid rumor from that lame girl's rag mag. I mean you. Gay.

(beat, hinting)

We both know that's not true.

DOMINIC

Yeah - That'd be weird.

HANNAH

Yeah. That would mean I'd have dated a gay guy. Not cool.

Dominic nods.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I mean, you're a great guy and all,  
but I'm a girl. I mean, nobody  
could ever mistake me for a guy,  
right?

DOMINIC

Are you kidding? If you were a guy,  
you alone would turn the whole  
gender gay.

Dominic winks, and she moves on, pleased.

MASON

Smooth. Can you show me how to do  
that?

DOMINIC

That? Takes a couple years dating.  
And while being  
(with quote fingers)  
'cool'  
(end quote fingers)  
helps, I think you'll pick it up  
easy. You're a good looking guy,  
you'll find a girl or two.

They continue walking. Dominic pauses and notices Gabe  
walking by. He catches his eye, but Gabe continues to walk  
away.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Hm.

MASON

Hey, aren't you two friends? Go on,  
I'm okay.

DOMINIC

I screwed up. He needs space... and  
I need to give it to him.

We cut to following Gabe down the hall the opposite way,  
where SHAWN is coming up behind him. He taps Gabe on the  
shoulder.

SHAWN

Gabe.

GABE

Hey, Shawn. Where's Sam?

SHAWN

That's exactly why I'm here - I don't know. I never know any more. I mean, I'm okay with him being his own guy and everything, but I haven't seen him in days!

(beat)

He's my boyfriend, Gabe.

GABE

I'll tell him you're looking for him, okay?

SHAWN

He knows that. He got my messages. I need to know what's going on.

(beat)

Can you set something up, or something?

Gabe nods, and Shawn grins.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

You're awesome. And Shawn sprints down the hall. Gabe watches after him, and we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. JONES HOUSE, BACKYARD (MORNING)

Anna stands at the back of the yard, wincing painfully as a SCREECHING sound drowns everything out. She yells something that we can't hear, and the sound stops. We PAN over to James, standing beside the tree with a chainsaw, yet to make a cut.

JAMES

What?

ANNA

Do we have to hurt it?

JAMES

Don't worry - you can tell by the roots that it's already dead.

There's a beat where James goes to turn the saw back on.

ANNA

Are you sure?

JAMES

Anna, it's a tree. It's got branches, leaves, and roots. It doesn't even have a soul. You can get another tree.

(beat)

Don't worry about it.

He turns back to it and turns on the saw, as a perturbed expression crosses Anna's face.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA

We come to a table where our heroes sit - Gabe, Julie, Sam and Mark. It should be noted that Sam is not eating a salad; Rather, some pancakes, which are being eyed by Julie.

JULIE

Sam, I'm thinking the pancakes are a bit much.

SAM

Troy fought the dean to allow these in. This is my celebration of his victory.

(to Mark)

How is Troy, anyway?

MARK

He's okay. His mom was caught selling pot to some kids, so it's a bit rough.

SAM

And I thought I had parental problems.

(beat)

Of course, mine are worse.

Mark just throws Sam an odd look and shrugs it off.

GABE

So, life after the gossip magazine. It's been a week, and while it's not quite hell after Kaia's outing, but I think it's pretty concretely confirmed that I'm gay.

(beat)

Now, the only one who doesn't know is my mom. And who knows when Parker will let that little tidbit slip.

JULIE

(fierce)

Trust me, I'll let him know what'll happen if he does.

GABE

(sort of excited)

You'll break up with him?

JULIE

Don't sound too excited.

GABE

(guilty)

Sorry. So, who knows about you two?

JULIE

You guys, Kaia... That's it, really.

KAIA (O.S.)

Well, that's lucky for you. Wouldn't wanna soil your goodiegood record.

Kaia is standing behind Julie.

JULIE

You do realize if you're still here in one minute, I'm going to have to severely hurt you.

Kaia walks slowly behind each person at the table as she speaks, stopping at an empty chair.

KAIA

Look at you four. Sitting here like your own private clique, watching everyone else like you're some type of gods.

GABE

Actually, we're just eating lunch.

Kaia leans on the back of the chair, looking at each of them.

KAIA

I apologized to Gabe this morning for what I did.

JULIE

Well, whoop-de-doo, we should just invite you-

KAIA

That's not why I'm here. I have a confession to make.

(beat)

I'm not sorry.

GABE

That's a surprise.

KAIA

(snappy)

Let me finish.

(beat)

Look at you guys, sitting here judging me like you know me. I find that hilarious, because you wouldn't even know my name if you  
(nods at Julie)

hadn't taken my guy. Julie tries to speak, but Kaia cuts her off.

KAIA (CONT'D)

Shut it.

(beat)

You four act like I ruined your lives.

(MORE)

KAIA (CONT'D)

Like it was the end of the world.  
Get some thicker skin. This is high  
school! Loosen up!

Before anyone can retort, she turns and leaves, and they all  
watch her, mouths agape.

SAM

Did she just tell us to loosen up!?

MARK

The nerve of some people.

(beat)

What? Someone had to say it.

SAM

I think we're not the only ones  
with issues. Are there any normal  
teenagers?

JULIE

She doesn't have issues - she  
creates issues. She's just a  
horrible human being.

MARK

Amen to that.

Gabe just watches Kaia leave, then turns back to his lunch.

JULIE

Don't let her get to you. Kaia's  
always been an attention seeker.  
Remember the stunt she pulled,  
saying it was a breast cancer  
fundraiser?

SAM

I imagine if I weren't gay, that  
streaking might have been  
pleasurable instead of feeling  
extremely uncomfortable.

MARK

What? When did that happen?

Sam just smiles and ruffles Mark's hair.

SAM

I have a feeling you were sick.  
We're lucky. You would have been  
sick, anyway.

KAIA

MARK

That would have been embarrassing.

GABE

(out of nowhere)

I think she's hurt.

The other three turn to look at him.

GABE (CONT'D)

What?

JULIE

That obviously isn't the case. Only people with souls feel pain. She's just annoyed it backfired.

Gabe continues to look guilty.

MARK

Don't be so beat up about it. She's just Kaia.

There's an awkward beat before Julie turns to Gabe.

JULIE

Gabe, I need you to do me a favor. Your mom is going out with Parker's dad, right?

Gabe nods, a little confused.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I need your mom to invite me to dinner - and for Parker and his dad to be there.

GABE

(confused)

Ooookay.

(realizing)

Oh.

Julie just nods, while Sam just looks from Gabe to Julie.

SAM

What?

GABE

She's doing the whole 'meet-the-parents' thing.

MARK

(casual)

Isn't it a bit soon for that? You guys just started dating, right?

Sam's still eating, but everyone notices Julie's silence. Sam looks up from his food, looking worried.

SAM

He's right... right?

Julie looks guiltily at her food.

JULIE

It's been... a month.

SAM

A month!?

People look over at Sam, and he quiets down.

SAM (CONT'D)

A month? I thought this thing would be over in, like a week?

MARK

Why didn't you tell us?

Julie looks up at Mark and Sam and glares at them.

JULIE

Because I didn't want to deal with this, alright?

They just look at her blankly.

JULIE (CONT'D)

*This!* When I sit down, you guys tense up as if Parker will show up any minute! Everything you guys say to me has the subtext of 'you could do better' in it - even 'Hello' seems like an accusation.

The others look a little guilty, and she just sighs and goes into a tirade, her hands all over the place.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Look, Parker and me like each other. You guys aren't okay with it, but I need you to be. For me. He's a jerk, but he's my jerk now.

(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)

Maybe, given enough time, I can manage to help him pull his head out of his butt, but don't think you can overstep your boundaries and expect me to break up with my boyfriend just because you don't like him.

(beat)

You're my friends. I love you. But Parker is my problem now.

Everyone else falls silent, and Julie realizes she just made a speech. To break the silence, Gabe looks at Julie.

GABE

(quiet)

I'll call my mom.

JULIE

Thanks, Gabe.

Gabe gets up and walks away and she smiles after him. Sam's eyes widen as he stares at something off-screen.

SAM

Shawn.

GABE

What?

Sam gets up and disappears into the crowd.

JULIE

Damnit.

Julie gets up and follows him. Mark looks over to see Shawn approaching. As he does, Mark looks worried

SHAWN

Where is he? He left, didn't he? We leave the scene, going through the crowd and finally

catching up to Julie, who reaches out and grabs Sam's sleeve, pulling him back.

JULIE

Sam, what are you doing?

SAM

Showing him what it's like to be stood up.

JULIE

It was his brother's birthday.

SAM

Then apparently it's been his brother's birthday for a week.

(beat)

He was avoiding me. So, now I'm avoiding him. Showing him what it's like.

JULIE

(rolls her eyes)

Geez. Sam, go back there and talk to him. You guys shouldn't spend all your time fighting!

SAM

We never fight - lately we're not in the room together long enough to.

JULIE

What happened to the 'chemistry' you had? That immense magic you felt for each other?

SAM

I thought you didn't like him 'cause he's a freshman.

JULIE

I don't.

(beat)

But that's not the point. All I know, is that you two were happy. And suddenly, you aren't. You're worth better than that.

SAM

You want me to break up with him.

JULIE

If need be, yes!

(beat)

Wait, I mean, no! Just give him a second chance.

Sam takes a moment to consider his choices.

SAM

No.

And he turns around and leaves. Julie just stares after him.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. JONES HOUSE

James is pondering over the work on the wall - the tree's out, at least, and it looks like he's moved quickly. There's a fair bit of work left to do yet. Anna appears in the background, putting the phone down and walking up beside him. She looks at the tree, cocking her head a little.

JAMES

You're lucky it's spring - there's no way I'll finish this tonight. Maybe a few days, if I'm lucky.  
(beat, looks at Anna)  
Dinner at my place?

ANNA

Any excuse, huh? She kisses him on the cheek.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, we'll be there. I doubt we'll want to stay here, especially if the storm makes a repeat appearance.

JAMES

Just make sure you keep the tarp on secure, so no rain gets in.

She glances at the clock, and makes her way into the kitchen. James follows.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(confused)  
Where are we going?

ANNA

It's a surprise.

JAMES

Should I be afraid?

She turns around and holds his hands, pulling him towards the kitchen... .. where a fabulous lunch sits, all ready. Two bowls of steaming onion soup, garlic bread, and a green salad.

ANNA

Bon appetit. Onion soup - one of my few cooking specialties.

She smiles, pleased with herself, and looks up at James's face - which is less happy than... awkward and pained.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You don't like onions. Or soups - you don't like soups. I get it, they're all liquid food and lots of people don't like that. I can-

JAMES

It's not that. I...

She looks at him expectantly, and he winces.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I really should have told you - I have a fatal onion allergy.

This is much worse than food preference. Anna's face falls.

ANNA

I should have asked.

JAMES

I should've told you. I'm sorry... you went to all this trouble-

ANNA

No, you're my boyfriend. We should know these sorts of things about one another.

(beat)

So, what should we do?

James glances at the food, awkward.

JAMES

I could make us something.

ANNA

No. You're doing the work - I'm repaying you. Food now...

(she winks)

And you can check off 'other' later.

(beat)

Except the food angle has sort have... broken.

JAMES

It'll be fine - let's just have some coffee and sit outside.

Anna goes over to the coffee machine and flicks it on.

ANNA

I don't even know how you take your coffee.

(beat)

We spend at least two nights a week together, not to mention additional lunch hour rendezvouses. Is that how you say that word?

(beat)

Doesn't matter. Anyway, we spend all this time with each other and we know practically nothing about each other!

JAMES

Calm down-

James reaches out and grabs Anna's hands, but she's stressing out.

ANNA

I don't know anything about you... or Parker? And you've barely met Gabe. You'd like Gabe, James, once you could get over the fact that I'm dating you. I don't even know if you were married! Were you?

JAMES

Yes.

ANNA

I don't know your shoe size, or what food you like - I know you like wine, but not whether you like beer-

She turns to the fridge and holds out a beer to him. He gives it a strange look, like he'd almost like to snatch it from her hands but doesn't want to.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Do you like beer?

JAMES

I like beer a lot. I'm a recovering alcoholic.

ANNA

Oh my God.

Her eyes widen and she quickly stores the beer in the fridge.

JAMES

It's been ten years. I can have a glass of wine every so often, but... no beer.

ANNA

I didn't know that - I could have broken your finely-tuned sobriety! I could have-

And he kisses her mid-sentence, breaking her off. He pulls back and smiles at her. She stops... and slowly smiles back, unsure.

JAMES

We're okay, right? Apart from the whole need for an information night?

Anna nods mutely, and James smiles.

ANNA

So...dinner tonight. Me, you, Parker, Gabe...

JAMES

Sounds good.

ANNA

And Gabe's friend Julie.

James looks confused.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Gabe asked me to invite her for dinner. And this is the first girl he's met since we got here.

JAMES

Ah. Well, good luck - she'll probably not be the last. Parker's been through girlfriends like he goes through food - there for a second, gone for the next, but you know it'll be followed up with something else within the hour.

ANNA

I just hope she's more serious than that. Do you think he met her at that 'Blaze' place Gabe mentions?

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

(beat)

If so, I have to thank his friend Sam for that one. James raises an eyebrow, and she kisses his cheek.

JAMES

She'll be great. What do you say to some lunch? I know somewhere that serves things full of grease and sugar.

ANNA

Sounds like a deal.

He puts his arm around her waist and they leave the room. The food sits on the table, untouched, as we hear a door close shut in the background.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY HALL

The study hall has a few scattered faces, but we focus in on one: Shawn, headphones in ears, who's focused on writing as fast as he can. So engrossed, he doesn't notice Julie is standing next to him.

She taps his shoulder, and he gives a little jump of surprise. He whips the headphones off and look up at her. The hesitance that it ever constant when he's not with Sam is present in his voice.

SHAWN

Hey... Julie.

JULIE

(awkward)

Yeah. Hi.

SHAWN

I hope you're not going to kill me or anything.

JULIE

No... Why would I do that?

(beat)

Anyway, I'm here about Sam. She sits down next to him.

JULIE (CONT'D)

He told me about the... tension, between you two.

SHAWN  
Tension he made.

JULIE  
He says you ignored him for a week.

SHAWN  
You know we're talking about Sam,  
right?  
(beat)  
We didn't go out for a week. Sam  
didn't like that, so he had a hissy  
fit. Why'd he send you after me?  
Break-up by proxy?

JULIE  
No. I just wanted you to know... He  
frequents the Blaze around seven  
now, table near the back exit.

She gets up and walks to the door, then turns back and  
smiles. She winks.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
See you at seven.

She leaves, and we fade back to Shawn, who isn't quite sure  
exactly how he feels about knowing this.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHTON GROUNDS - BEHIND SCHOOL

Julie and Parker are making out behind the school, away from  
everyone else. They break off, and Parker heads off.

JULIE  
Parker, one second!

Parker comes back, confused but intrigued. He moves in for  
another kiss.

PARKER  
And I thought you liked me going to  
class...

She gives him a small kiss, then just says-

JULIE  
Stop.

PARKER

Now I'm just getting confused. Easy  
with the mixed signals.

JULIE

No, it's not that.

(beat)

Gabe's mom invited me to dinner.

Now Parker's mad - he steps back from her and turns around,  
rubbing his forehead in frustration.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Parker-

PARKER

No, Julie.

He turns around - and we can see he really is mad.

PARKER (CONT'D)

You keep forgetting you're not in  
charge. You push, and push, and  
push until I push back

JULIE

I have to push, because I'm the  
only one taking this relationship  
seriously!

PARKER

You know what? Forget it. I don't  
care.

And Parker turn around and leaves, leaving Julie to watch him  
walk away. She bites her lip, holding back tears, and turns  
around to leave.

And she's GRABBED from the shoulders and turned around, and  
suddenly she's being kissed, and it's sudden but amazing and  
it doesn't stop. And then it does. Julie pulls back to find  
Parker.

JULIE

You came back.

Parker takes a moment to compose himself, then looks at her.

PARKER

I don't want this, us... I don't  
want to screw it up, alright?

(beat)

(MORE)

PARKER (CONT'D)  
 Look, this time we'll do it your way. But next time, I decide when we make the next move, okay?

She nods, and he smiles a little.

PARKER (CONT'D)  
 Alright.

And he's gone again. She turns the corner, out of sight, as we follow Parker and we:

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHTON GROUNDS - SIDE OF SCHOOL

Parker turns the corner - and there's Kaia, smoking and watching the cars go by. He raises an eyebrow. She's leaning against the wall, and doesn't even look at him as he approaches.

KAIA  
 What do you want?

PARKER  
 Nothing really.  
 (beat)  
 We never settled the score for that stunt you pulled last week, though.

She chuckles and looks at him.

KAIA  
 You really think you can do something to me, Parker? You think you can 'ruin my life'. Gonna get those 'thugs' of yours to beat me up?  
 (sarcastic)  
 Ooooh, scary.

PARKER  
 I think some of them might have a bone to pick with you. There are a lot of people who, frankly, hate you.

KAIA  
 Wow, and I thought those were looks of affection when I enter a room.

PARKER

And to think, it was all because of me.

KAIA

Oh, is that what this is? Well, sorry to burst your ego, but that had nothing to do with you. You're just a guy to me, Parker. Don't go getting a big head.

PARKER

(disbelieving)  
Really.

He moves closer to her, leaning close with both palms against the wall on each side of her.

PARKER (CONT'D)

So if I kissed you, you'd break away and hit me?

She hesitates... then gets a nasty look in her eyes and blows smoke in his face.

KAIA

I'm not going to fall for that.

PARKER

You're still hung up on me, though.  
(beat)

Oh, is it because I didn't have sex with you? Wow, some people really are never satisfied. Am I the *only* guy in our grade you haven't slept with yet? I must seem like a nice trophy for you.

KAIA

You're vile.

PARKER

(smiles)  
That's why the ladies love me.

KAIA

Yeah, well one day you're gonna wake up and all you'll have is you and your wit.

She practically spits the last word out. Parker just shakes his head and goes for the door.

KAIA (CONT'D)

By the way, McMann, Parker,  
whatever.

(beat)

I think you are gay. You sure that  
Julie chick isn't a guy in drag?

Parker just slams the door open, incensed again, and Kaia enjoys herself with a little smile before another puff of her cigarette.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIGHTON - GYM

Dominic is sitting against the wall, watching Mason throw punches at a punching bag. Dominic doesn't look like he's having much fun, but Mason is - he's really into it. After a moment he stops for a breath, and looks to Dominic.

MASON

(out of breath)

What'd you think?

DOMINIC

It was good. A lot of raw rage you  
needed to burn out.

Mason comes and sits beside him, sighing.

MASON

Dominic...

DOMINIC

Yeah?

MASON

You and me... We're friends, right?

(beat)

I mean, we've barely spent any time  
together, but-

DOMINIC

Yeah, we're friends.

MASON

Alright. I want to talk to you  
about something. Maddox never wants  
to talk about it, but... our mom is  
sick.

DOMINIC

Is it serious?

MASON

I really don't know. She can't leave her bed, and nobody will tell me anything. I have a few friends, but.. They wouldn't understand.

DOMINIC

Sounds rough.

MASON

Sometimes. Maddox has this perfect life here at school, but me... I'm like nothing to anyone.

DOMINIC

You're something to me.

(beat)

I mean, friends-wise. You're a good guy. You just need to find your niche.

Mason ponders for a moment.

MASON

So, what is it between you and Gabe, anyway? I mean, no offense, but there's... tension.

DOMINIC

We're just in a fight, that's-  
(realizing what Mason meant)

Oh, no, nothing like that.

MASON

You sure?

DOMINIC

I'm sure. We're... We're just friends.

MASON

Ah, okay.

There's a silence for a beat, then-

DOMINIC

Is there something? I mean, tension?

MASON

I think so, but I don't think anyone notices.

(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Anyway, what are you too fighting about? It can't be that bad.

DOMINIC

It isn't...not really. Just, after that whole thing last week. I thought Gabe had something to do with it, and...

(beat)

Point is, I was wrong, but I said some things I can't take back.

MASON

Why not?

Dominic tries to answer... but is lost for words. Mason grins.

MASON (CONT'D)

Look, there's that place you guys spend all your time at - The Flame?

DOMINIC

The Blaze.

MASON

Yeah. Why not stake it out for him? I'm sure he'll end up there tonight at some point.

Dominic nods, and looks at his digital watch.

DOMINIC

Well, we've been here for about an hour. Just keep up with this and Parker won't be able to lay a punch on you.

Both get up. Dominic looks over at Mason.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

I'm gonna head home. I'll see you later, alright? Mason nods and Dominic heads off as we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. JONES HOUSE

Gabe arrives home, a little out of breath, and walks into the living room, where Anna is stirring a cup of coffee, looking glum. She perks up when she sees him.

ANNA  
Hey, Gabe.

GABE  
No tree?

ANNA  
James came over during his morning break and took it out. We'll still need to cover the hole with plastic.

GABE  
Sounds like fun.

ANNA  
Yeah.

Gabe sits down, and after a moment, he speaks:

GABE  
You seem quiet.

ANNA  
I'm not! I have no reason to be quiet! I have absolutely no reason to not ramble on, so let us move on.

GABE  
Mom?

ANNA  
I'm alright, Gabe. Really. So, where's Julie?

GABE  
She's going to, uh, meet us there. Speaking of which, we should get ready.

ANNA  
Yes, ready. I need to plastic up that tarp- I mean, the hole. I need to put a tarp over that hole.

Anna gets up and leaves the room, leaving Gabe sitting there, confused.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES HOUSE - GABE'S BEDROOM

Gabe's on the phone, pacing across his room, sounding worried.

GABE

My mom's being quiet. And she's rambling. She's not saying anything.

JULIE

(filtered)

Hold on, is she rambling, or quiet?

CUT TO:

INT. LANE HOUSE - JULIE'S ROOM

Julie is rushing around the room getting ready - she's looking nice, but not formal or anything. She cradles the phone between her head and neck as she looks for something - her bag.

GABE

(filtered)

It's both - it's what she does when she's stressed. She goes quiet, then she rambles about nothing, then disappears.

(beat)

Can you pump Parker for answers? James was over here earlier-

JULIE

James?

GABE

(filtered)

His dad.

JULIE

Ah.

(beat)

Don't worry about it. Everything will be fine. She probably thinks I'm your girlfriend.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES HOUSE - GABE'S BEDROOM

Gabe looks like he was just hit in the head with something - hard.

GABE

(oh crap)

I hadn't thought of that. Gabe continues to pace, more worried than ever.

JULIE

(filtered)

Come on, Gabe. You're a teenager! You're supposed to be drinking and whoring it up. She should have stumbled on you making out with your slutty girlfriend by now.

GABE

If there's anything I didn't wanna hear-

JULIE

(filtered)

Gabe, get a grip. She thinks your straight - and you haven't led her to believe otherwise. Anyway, I'm letting it be known that I'm Parker's girlfriend, so don't be too worried.

GABE

Okay... so, I'll see you in ten?

CUT TO:

INT. LANE HOUSE - JULIE'S ROOM

Julie is in the bathroom, perfecting her makeup.

JULIE

Sere you in ten.

A doorbell RINGS and Julie turns out of the bathroom, heading towards the front door. She opens it to find Parker, looking a little awkward.

PARKER

Hi.

Julie smiles.

JULIE  
I'm heading out, mom!

DARA (O.S.)  
Alright, dear!

Julie exits the house and Parker closes the door as we

CUT TO:

EXT. MCMANN YARD

Two cars pull up at nearly the same time, and park on the road on each side of the house. Out of one comes Parker and Julie, out of the other comes Anna and Gabe. Anna notices Julie is with Parker and her faces falls a little, but she keeps up excitement.

ANNA  
Looks like it'll be a nice dinner.

GABE  
Yup.

They meet up with Parker and Julie. Anna gives a stiff nod to Parker, and smiles at Julie. Gabe and Parker don't say anything - they try not to even look at each other.

GABE (CONT'D)  
Shall we?

The four turn towards the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MCMANN HOUSE

Dinner is in full swing - a delicious POT ROAST sits in the middle of the table, with a bowl of steaming MASHED POTATOES. A CEASER SALAD sits to itself as a BOWL OF BREAD swings by the screen, en route from Anna to Julie. It's obviously been a while - the food is almost eaten, and it's dark outside.

Anna is sitting next to James, who is sitting next to Parker, next to Julie, next to Gabe. Julie and Parker are talking quietly, James and Anna loudly, and Gabe not at all, focusing on his food and listening to James and Anna.

First we swing to focus on Parker and Julie. Both are whispering.

JULIE  
I'm going to tell him, now.

PARKER

You think he can't tell? He probably thinks we're going to tell him I'm no longer a virgin or something.

JULIE

Ha. There's no way your father knows you're a virgin.

PARKER

Nope, caught me. But I never told him I wasn't.

JULIE

Ah.

Move over to Gabe, Anna and James. Anna is talking excitedly to James, who is also enjoying himself. She keeps, however, eyeing the wine glass in his hand.

JAMES

And so I told him, "You can take that horse and eat it!" Anna laughs, a little less excited.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I never even thought that story was funny until someone laughed at it. Seems popular at parties, though.

Anna doesn't seem to think so, but Gabe is chuckling into his potato.

ANNA

So... Julie!

Julie looks over at Anna, surprised.

JULIE

That's me.

ANNA

We have barely talked about you. And Julie seems like she's been put on the spot. She glances at Parker, a 'now is the time' look.

JULIE

Well, I'm Julie Lane. I go to Brighton Academy on scholarship, graduated elementary top of my grade.

(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)

Me and my mother live alone, but I've got a great group of friends. And, also, I'm Parker's girlfriend, but we haven't told anyone yet.

(beat)

This is sort of our 'coming out'. She looks to Gabe, and then to James.

JULIE (CONT'D)

So, yeah.

Anna looks a bit disappointed at the news.

JAMES

(awkward)

Well, I'm glad Parker finally found a nice girl. After Kaia, and God forbid after Alanna, I'm glad he finally found someone who can straighten him out.

James smiles winningly at Julie and returns to his food.

Julie breathes a sigh of relief and looks at Parker. He looks much less stressed. Julie's cell phone goes off.

JULIE

Excuse me.

She opens the phone and puts it to her ear, moving away from the table.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

SHAWN

(filtered over phone)

Hey, Julie.

JULIE

My number-

SHAWN

(filtered)

I keep Sam's friends on speed dial.

(beat)

Anyway, I'm going to confront him. Can you come? Like, now?

JULIE

Shawn-

(beat, calmer tone)

(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)  
Of course. Just give me ten  
minutes, alright?

JULIE (CONT'D)  
SHAWN  
(filtered)  
See you soon.

She clicks the phone off. Then re-enters the room.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
Um...I have to go. So does Gabe...  
and possibly Parker.

JAMES  
What's wrong?

JULIE  
A friend is about to get his head  
bitten off by his boyfriend.

ANNA  
His boyfriend?

GABE  
Uh, sort of hard to explain...

ANNA  
It's not Sam, is it?

JULIE  
You know Sam?

Julie gives her a puzzled look.

ANNA  
We've met.

JULIE  
Ah, yes.  
(beat)  
Gabe, Parker, come on!

Parker looks less-than-happy to get up, but Gabe seems positively ecstatic. All three leave the room, and we can hear their voices off-screen as they leave.

PARKER (O.S.)  
Why am I coming?

JULIE (O.S.)  
You have the car.

James and Anna are left alone. James puts down the glass and looks to Anna.

JAMES  
Looks like dinner's dead.

ANNA  
Looks like.

JAMES  
Let me take you dancing.

Anna pauses, but smiles.

ANNA  
That's unexpected. Nice, but unexpected. Where -

JAMES  
Don't worry - I know a place.

ANNA  
I don't dance.

JAMES  
Of course you do - your feet just don't know it yet. Come on.

He gives her a winning smiles, and Anna nods a little. They leave.

CUT TO:

INT. BLAZE

Gabe, Julie and Parker enter, as Dido's "Don't Think of Me" plays in the BG.

PARKER  
Tell me when you need me, alright?

Julie nods, and she and Gabe make a beeline for Shawn, who's dancing but looking around for someone. The two approach -

but he's found who he's looking for. He's heading towards Sam and CHARLIE, fire in his eyes.

JULIE  
Oh no.

She follows him, Gabe in tow.

GABE  
Why'd he call you?

JULIE  
I sort of told him to come here.

GABE  
But... Charlie!

JULIE  
I forgot about her!

GABE  
You did not. You've been giving her  
the evil eye every time she shows  
up here with Sam.  
(beat)  
Wait - you don't like Sam, do you?

JULIE  
(laughing nervously)  
That's just ridiculous. And stupid.  
It's ridiculous and stupid.

The conversation is cut short as they approach the  
confrontation.

SAM  
You're being unreasonable.

SHAWN  
So when you start avoiding me and  
go to the Blaze every night with a  
girl, I'm supposed to think we're  
still together and happy?

CHARLIE  
What's going on here?

JULIE  
Shawn, calm down.

SHAWN  
See how you feel-

As Gabe approaches, Shawn turns to him, grabs him and KISSES  
him, straight on the mouth. Gabe doesn't pull away - he's too  
surprised. It's soon over as Shawn pulls out and glares at  
Sam. Sam stands up and glares at Shawn.

SAM  
You're being ridiculous.

SHAWN

Actually, I'm the one of us who  
knows what they're doing.

(beat)

We're over, Sam.

And Shawn turns and leaves. Sam just stares after him,  
sitting down. Julie gives Charlie a glare and storms off,  
while Gabe looks to Sam.

GABE

Sam-

SAM

I need some alone time, Gabe.

Gabe seems awfully shot down, and turns to the crowd - and  
there's Dominic, on the other side of the room, heading for  
him. He turns away from him, but Dominic catches up to him.

DOMINIC

Gabe.

GABE

Dominic... I can't. He turns, but  
Dominic holds his shoulder.

DOMINIC

I'm sorry.

GABE

Dominic-

DOMINIC

I know I said some harsh stuff, and  
I know I hurt you. But we're  
friends - good friends. Would you  
block out Sam if he'd done that?

GABE

... No. But he's Sam - he does that  
sort of thing without realizing it.

DOMINIC

Come on. I don't need much... I  
just think I could use a friend.

Gabe pauses for a moment and looks at Dominic - he's serious.  
And he smiles a little.

GABE

Alright.

DOMINIC

Now, question - why was that guy  
kissing you?

And we cut over to Parker, who's with HANK, BAILEY and DEAN.

DEAN

Come on, Parks. You got to get  
yourself a woman. Need that tender  
loving care, if you know what I  
mean.

HANK

Yeah, seriously dude. You need  
someone we can eye and play footsie  
with while you're in the bathroom.  
(Parker glares)  
Kidding! But you've been mopey for  
days.

BAILEY

Come on, guys.

Parker spies Julie walking through the crowd.

HANK

Hey, it's scholarship girl.

BAILEY

Hey, least she has some legs. Some  
of the girls our Parker goes  
through don't even have that.

DEAN

Hey, Parker wouldn't go for someone  
like that.  
(beet)  
You know...

Parker glances at Dean, then gets up and chases after Julie,  
swinging her around and having a full-on makeout session with  
her despite the shocked looks on his friends' faces.

JULIE

(breathless)  
What was that?

PARKER

That was me...making the next move.

The grin at each other, and start to walk away, and on this we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE