

PATHWAYS

"The New Kid"

Written By

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TEASER

1 EXT. BRIGHTON ACADEMY - DAY 1

A dark brown Jeep Grand Cherokee pulls up in front of BRIGHTON ACADEMY, a beautiful, gothic-looking building with well-manicured lawns and various students milling around the campus.

CUT TO:

2 INT. JEEP - DAY 2

ANNA JONES, 35, dark brown hair, glasses, a beautiful face, puts the car into Park. GABE, her son, 16, similar looks, is wearing a school uniform.

ANNA
Here we are. The big day.

GABE
(wary)
Here we are...

ANNA
You're gonna be fine. It's just school. You love school.

GABE
Public school. With free books and wild and wily students who don't pay thousands of dollars to sit in class with vacant looks on their faces.

ANNA
Somebody woke up on a soap box.

GABE
Sorry, mom...It's just, why did we have to pick this place? It's just so...

ANNA
Beautiful? Prestigious? Able to help you get into any college you want?

GABE
Not exactly what I was thinking.

ANNA

It's gonna be great! Brighton Academy is supposed to be one of the best schools on the West coast.

GABE

So say the pamphlets.

ANNA

Just give it a chance.

GABE

Can't we just pretend I did?

ANNA

Gabe...

GABE

I'll give them a chance.

ANNA

Just remember: I love you, you're a genius, and everybody is going to think you're great.

GABE

You didn't read that in a pamphlet, did you?

ANNA

(grinning)
Get out.

GABE

Getting out, now.

CUT TO:

3

INT. BRIGHTON ACADEMY - DAY

3

Gabe manuevers through the FRONT HALL of the academy. The cavernous entryway is full of students walking around, all of them dressed in uniforms like Gabe's.

Several students walk right past Gabe as if he is invisible. Gabe tries to speak up and say something to a couple of people, but clamps his mouth shut.

GABE

(to himself)
So much for the "inviting atmosphere"...

SAM (OS)
Who 'ya talking to, newbie?

Gabe looks up to see SAM DAVIDSON, 16, bright red hair and a joker's grin plastered on his freckled face.

GABE
Huh?

SAM
So you're a wordsmith.

GABE
Sorry, I...do I know you?

SAM
I saw you at orientation. You're new around here, right? My name's Sam. Sam Davidson.

Sam puts his hand out and Gabe slowly accepts the handshake.

GABE
I'm Gabe Jones.

SAM
Nice to meet you, Gabe Jones. So, what brings you to the wonderfully small town of Crestview?

GABE
Mom wanted a white picket fence.

SAM
(smirking)
I like you. Come on, I want you to meet somebody.

Unable to do anything but comply, Gabe follows Sam over to a row of lockers where they come across MARK ROBERTS, 16, light blonde hair, glasses, kind of nerdy looking, who is going through his locker.

SAM (CONT'D)
This is my best friend, Mark. Mark, this is Gabe. He's the brand-spanking new student everybody's been talking about.

MARK
Hi.

GABE
Everybody's been talking about me?

SAM
Small town. Not much flowing
through the rumor mill.

GABE
I see...

MARK
Okay. It's official. I'm doomed.

SAM
What fresh hell is it now, Marky?

MARK
I'm already behind. My AP English
class has a paper due on Thursday,
and I haven't even finished reading
the assignment.

GABE
Um...it is the first day of school,
right? Did I write it down wrong?

SAM
Mark here's an overachiever. You
get used to it.

MARK
I'd be done if you hadn't dragged
me to Paris for the summer.

SAM
Oh, the woes of life.

GABE
Wow, Paris? That must be exciting.

SAM
The novelty wears off after awhile.
My parents have a summer house
there. I've been going since I was,
oh, I dunno...three? Mark was my
buffer.

GABE
Buffer?

SAM
My parents can be more than a
little grating.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
So rather than start popping the
happy pills, I let Mark help me
take the edge off.

MARK
You don't travel?

GABE
Oh, sure, yeah...
(beat)
Very familiar with the open road.

SAM
You've never been out of
California, have you?

GABE
Not so much.

Sam throws an arm around Gabe's shoulders and begins to guide
him down the hall, Mark right behind them.

SAM
You have much to learn, my friend.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

4

INT. BRIGHTON - CLASSROOM - DAY

4

Gabe is sitting at a desk near the rear of a mostly empty classroom, looking over his schedule. A FIGURE looms in front of him. Gabe looks up to see PARKER MCMANN, 16, dark hair and eyes, a jock-type, standing in front of his desk.

PARKER

You're in my seat.

GABE

Excuse me?

PARKER

My seat. You're in it. You're in my seat.

GABE

It's the first day of school.

PARKER

And this is my seat. You're in it.

GABE

Do we have assigned seats?

PARKER

No, smart ass, we do not have assigned seats. But I always sit here.

GABE

I wasn't trying to...

PARKER

Look, I don't know who you are, but you need to move.

DOMINIC (OS)

Is there a problem here?

DOMINIC, 16, gorgeous, swimmer's build, light brown/blonde hair, is now standing beside Parker.

PARKER

I was just telling this kid that he's sitting in my seat.

DOMINIC

It's the first day of school.

GABE
That's what I said.

DOMINIC
Parker, why don't you just sit in
another seat?

PARKER
Who are you, the nerd protector?

DOMINIC
(to Gabe)
Look under the chair.

GABE
What?

DOMINIC
Under the chair. Look.

Confused, Gabe leans down and glances under the chair. He slowly sits up and looks quizzically at Dominic and Parker.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)
(continued)
See any names under there? Anything
resembling Parker McMann?

GABE
Just some gum. Something that
looked kinda like a booger. Which,
ew.

DOMINIC
That's what I thought.

Parker sighs in frustration and marches away, muttering, where he sits across the room and immediately begins venting to some other kids, sending furious glances towards Dominic and Gabe.

GABE
Thanks. For the save, I mean.

DOMINIC
No problem. I'm Dominic O'Neil. You
must be new around here.

GABE
Yeah. I'm Gabe. World renound seat
stealer.

DOMINIC

Be careful with guys like Parker.
He can ruin you here at Brighton in
a heartbeat. Guy's a real jerk.

GABE

Good to know. You know, maybe I
should just apologize, let him take
the seat.

DOMINIC

That would be a mistake.

GABE

How's that?

DOMINIC

See, you've established
dominance. To give in now would
show that you're the weaker
opponent.

GABE

But I don't wanna be anybody's
opponent.

DOMINIC

Trust me, this place is like a war
zone. Every man for himself.

GABE

How very North Korean.

DOMINIC

Just the way it is.

GABE

You know he could just as easily
come in early tomorrow and reclaim
his territory.

DOMINIC

Then you'll just have to beat him
to it, won't you?

Dominic walks away, leaving Gabe looking puzzled but with a
slight smile on his face.

CUT TO:

5 INT. BRIGHTON - HALLWAY - DAY

5

Gabe is exiting a classroom and sees Dominic standing at his locker, rearranging some books and papers. He quickens his step and approaches the taller boy, looking kind of nervous.

GABE

Dominic?

Dominic looks over his shoulder and sees Gabe.

DOMINIC

Ah, Gabe. Stealing anyone else's seats today?

GABE

I'm cutting back. Bad habit, you know.

Dominic shoves his locker closed, turning and leaning against it, holding his bookbag over one shoulder.

DOMINIC

Good idea. So how are you liking Brighton so far?

GABE

It's okay. You know, school. So, not exactly the most fun. But...most people are nice. Although I seem to have made an enemy in Parker.

DOMINIC

I've known Parker for years. He's mostly bark and no bite. He's got attitude problems, that's all.

GABE

Well, it'll be fodder for the memoirs one day.

DOMINIC

Memoirs?

GABE

You know, when I write a book someday about my life and publicly humiliate everyone I've ever known?

They share a laugh.

DOMINIC
So you're a writer?

GABE
I try.

DOMINIC
What do you write?

GABE
I don't know...things.

DOMINIC
Interesting.

GABE
(grinning)
Sort of.

DOMINIC
Well, hey, I've gotta get to class,
and I'm guessing you do too, so I'm
thinking we should probably...

GABE
Right. Probably should.

DOMINIC
I'll see you around, Gabe.

GABE
Yeah, sure. See you around.

Dominic walks away, and Gabe stays rooted where he is standing, unable to move, watching as Dominic leaves.

PAN BEHIND Gabe to see that Sam and Mark have been hiding around the corner the entire time, watching.

CUT TO:

6 INT. LUNCHROOM - DAY

6

Gabe enters the Brighton Academy lunchroom, and it is full of students. Carrying a lunch tray, he looks lost at sea in the middle of the throngs of people.

Across the way, SAM waves towards Gabe, smiling. Gabe perks up a little, and heads towards the table.

SAM
Hey newbie.

GABE
So. This is lunch.

SAM
Fascinating, isn't it? Care to take
a seat, or do you wanna be a horse
today?

GABE
Horse?

SAM
You gonna eat standing up?

GABE
Oh, right..

SAM
Ladies and gentleman, our
valedictorian.

Gabe blushes a little but sits down across from Sam. Mark is on his left, and next to Sam is a beautiful Asian girl, JULIE LANE, with a killer smile and an intellect to match.

SAM (CONT'D)
Julie, this is Gabe, the guy I was
telling you about.

JULIE
Nice to meet you, Gabe. How do you
like Brighton so far?

GABE
Oh, it's okay. Totally different
from my old school.

JULIE
Public?

GABE
Yeah.

JULIE
Ah.

GABE
Ah, what?

JULIE
Oh, nothing, it just explains a
lot.

GABE

(to Sam)

Please tell me what she means.

SAM

Don't mind her. Some people can't deal with change.

JULIE

It's nothing personal. I used to go to public school. Hated it. Nothing but ruffians and vagabonds.

GABE

I think it's safe to say I'm neither.

MARK

Julie fought tooth and nail for a scholarship. Her parents couldn't afford Brighton, but she hated Crestview High.

JULIE

(scoffs)

Thanks, Mark.

MARK

What?

JULIE

Oh nothing. Do go on. Gabe, do you want to know my parents' social security numbers now? How about the pin number for their checking account?

MARK

I didn't mean anything...

GABE

Really, it's fine. My mom isn't exactly bathing in gold coins.

JULIE

Whatever. I'm over it.

SAM

So, new topic! Has anybody checked out Dominic lately? Somebody's been spending some extra time in the gym!

MARK

Sam...

SAM

C'mon, you cannot deny beauty in its truest form.

MARK

You're gonna make Gabe uncomfortable.

SAM

Oh, I'm sorry. Gabe, are you uncomfortable right now?

GABE

Um...no?

SAM

I didn't think so.

MARK

Sam...come on...

GABE

What's going on?

JULIE

(re: Sam)

Don't mind him. Some people have a hard time accepting change.

SAM

What's that supposed to mean?

JULIE

Not everybody is gay, Sam.

Gabe almost spits out a drink of his soda. Mark looks around uncomfortably.

SAM

I didn't say anything about being gay. The word didn't even pass through my lips.

JULIE

You were baiting him. Seeing if he would react.

SAM

Was not.

JULIE

I've seen you do it before. I know your ways.

SAM

I do not bait people!

Sam looks at Mark for support, but Mark can only shrug and look uneasy.

GABE

Actually, Dominic's in my third period English Lit class.

SAM

Oh really!

GABE

He seems really nice. Helped me get rid of this guy who was being a real jerk. Parker-Something.

JULIE

Parker McMann?

GABE

Yeah, that's right.

SAM

Uh-oh.

GABE

I know, I know. Dominic gave me the scoop; Parker can ruin me, yadda yadda yadda.

SAM

He's not wrong.

GABE

I'm not worried.

JULIE

You should be.

Off the look on Gabe's face, who now looks a little worried, we

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

7 INT. BRIGHTON - HALLWAY - DAY

7

Gabe is putting things in his locker. The halls are mostly empty as kids get ready to head home. Mark approaches him from the other end of the hall.

GABE

Mark, hey...

MARK

Hey...I just wanted to say sorry. Sam can be a jerk sometimes without realizing. Baiting you like that. It wasn't very cool.

GABE

It's okay.

MARK

Sam's...well, he's Sam. He'll say or do practically anything. He's harmless though. And he likes you.

GABE

As in...?

MARK

Oh God, no, nothing like that, you're nowhere near his type.

Gabe frowns, not sure how he should take that.

MARK (CONT'D)

No offense! I mean, you're great! Very, very handsome. I mean...
(trails off)
You know...If you...go for that...sort of thing...

GABE

Wait...are you..."you know"...too?

MARK

Who, me? Oh, well...
(chuckles)
Um, well, yes, actually.

GABE

Oh.

MARK

That's sort of why Sam and I are so close.

GABE

You mean, the two of you are...?

MARK

Oh God no!

(laughs)

No, no, we aren't boyfriends or anything. Just friends.

GABE

Got it. Just friends.

MARK

What about you?

GABE

What about me?

MARK

Are you... "you know"?

GABE

Oh.

MARK

(quickly)

You don't have to answer! God, I should know my limits. That was way too personal. Sorry.

GABE

No, no, it's okay. I just...

(whispers)

I've never really talked about that...ever.

MARK

I shouldn't have pried.

GABE

Trust me. It's okay.

Suddenly, Sam appears from behind them, appearing from further down the hallway.

SAM

'Sup, lovelies?

MARK

Just chatting. You know me and Gabe, we're old pals and all.

SAM

(surprised)

You were fishing for info, weren't you? Well, well, the student has surpassed the teacher.

GABE

Don't fill out the diplomas just yet. Mark and I were just talking.

SAM

Uh-huh...Hey, a really cool band is playing at the Blaze tonight. Wanna join us?

GABE

The Blaze?

SAM

Pretty much the only cool spot in Crestview. It's a club, but they let the under-age crowd in all the time.

MARK

They've got great hot wings.

GABE

Sounds fun.

SAM

Pick you up at eight?

GABE

I just have to run it by my mom, first.

SAM

(groans)

Oh God..

GABE

What?

SAM

You're one of those.

MARK

Not everybody has a non-existent relationship with their parents.

SAM

Sperm donors and uteruses, and nothing more.

MARK

Ignore him.

CUT TO:

8

EXT. BRIGHTON ACADEMY - FRONT WALK - DAY

8

Gabe is standing at the edge of the front walk of the school, all alone, holding a cell phone to his ear.

ANNA (O.S.)

(through the phone)

This is Dr. Jones, I am currently unavailable, please leave your name and number and I will get back to you soon! Bye!

Frustrated, Gabe hangs up his phone with a BEEP and looks straight ahead, defeated.

VOICE

Everything okay?

Gabe turns around, and there's Dominic, standing behind him, an easygoing smile on his face. Gabe immediately brightens up at the sight of him.

GABE

Dominic, oh, hi...I didn't see you there.

DOMINIC

That's because I was behind you.

GABE

Right! Of course.

(forces a laugh)

Makes sense. So, uh...what's up?

DOMINIC

I was going to ask you the same thing

(re: cell phone)

Having reception problems?

GABE

It's just...my mom. She's really busy, she just opened up her own practice here in town, and...she must have forgotten to pick me up.

DOMINIC

Oh, well...I could give you a ride.

GABE

No! No, no...I wouldn't want to put you out. God, no, I'll be fine.

(nodding vigorously)
I'll be fine. Really.

DOMINIC

Are you sure? 'Cause I've got time. You live here in Crestview, right?

GABE

Yeah, the old Cherry place?

DOMINIC

I know exactly where that is. Come on.

Dominic begins to lead the way to the parking lot, and unable to resist, Gabe follows him. As we trail after them, we:

FADE TO:

9

INT. DOMINIC'S CAR - DAY

9

Now seated inside a brand-new Ford Explorer, Dominic is driving along the roads carefully, Gabe sitting nervously beside him in the passenger seat.

GABE

This car is...really nice.

DOMINIC

Well, you know...the parents, they think it keeps me happy.

GABE

(curious)
It doesn't?

DOMINIC

I could care less if I was rolling around in a tin can.

(MORE)

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

(beat)

They like to believe they are giving me incentive to do well in school. What they don't know is that I don't mind school. School is easy.

(beat)

It's...everything else.

GABE

(not getting it)

Right...

DOMINIC

I hate kids who are obsessed with how rich their parents are. You'll get that a lot here. Welcome to upper-class suburbia, and all that.

GABE

Yeah. Hate that.

DOMINIC

Are you all right?

Focus in on Gabe's hand which is tightly clenching the door handle, so that his knuckles have gone completely white.

GABE

Oh, I'm fine...just...you know, not a good passenger.

DOMINIC

I see.

GABE

There it is! There's my house.

Dominic comes to a stop in front of Gabe's house, a very nice, but somewhat modest-looking two-story colonial style home with a beautiful lawn and trees in front.

GABE (CONT'D)

Thanks a lot for the ride!

Without preamble, Gabe leaps out of the vehicle and tears up the front lawn, entering the house a moment later. On Dominic, who looks up at the house with a quirked eyebrow.

DOMINIC

Well that was...weird.

CUT TO:

10 INT. JONES HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

10

Gabe bursts into the kitchen, face flushed.

GABE
Mom!? Mom!

Anna looks up from some paperwork splayed out on the kitchen table, wearing reading glasses.

ANNA
Gabe? Honey, what are you...
(beat)
Oh God. Oh. Oh no.

GABE
Save the apologies for forgetting
to pick me up later!

ANNA
Um. Okay.

GABE
Answer me this, and answer me now!

ANNA
You're scaring me. Did they give
you caffiene at school today?

GABE
Are we rich?

ANNA
Gabe...what are you talking about?

GABE
Are we rich? Are we rolling in
dough and I didn't realize it? Are
you holding out on me, and we are
Donald Trump'ing it throughout
town? 'Cause I never thought we
were rich, but maybe we are, I
mean, you are paying for my tuition
at Brighton, which I know can't be
cheap, and...

Anna leaps from her chair and runs to Gabe, holding him by the shoulders.

ANNA
Gabe. Gabe, calm down. What has
gotten into you?

Gabe walks over to the kitchen table and slumps down into one of the chairs, as if exhausted.

GABE

Long day.

ANNA

Wanna talk about it?

GABE

Long day.

ANNA

Did somebody say something to you? One of the other kids? Did they...make a comment? Something to send you into this tirade?

GABE

Not really. I just...I don't want to be seen as some poor little rich kid who gets whatever he wants.

ANNA

Trust me. That is not the situation at all. You know how things have been.

GABE

Well, I know when Dad left...

ANNA

Oh, we so do not need to go down that road right now, honey. It was a long time ago. We're starting over now, remember?

GABE

I remember. So...not rich.

ANNA

Definitely not.

(beat)

So tell me, what was it like? Were the teachers nice? Oh, were any of them British? I love British teachers. Did anybody wear a monacle?

GABE

No monacles spotted as of yet.

ANNA

Darn. A good monacle is hard to find these days.

(beat)

Are the people nice?

GABE

Very nice. I...actually got invited to hang out tonight.

ANNA

Really? Well aren't you just my little trailblazer! Did you make some new friends already?

GABE

Just some guys I have some classes with. I guess there's this club not far from here, they hang out there a lot.

ANNA

A club? Like...a horseback riding club, or a chess team?

GABE

No, like...a club-club. They have bands play, people hang out.

ANNA

Then they get drunk, have sex, and get somebody pregnant?

(beat)

Nuh-uh. No way. Not happenin', mister.

GABE

Mom! It's not that sort of place.

ANNA

How do you know?

GABE

Because I trust these people.

ANNA

Well...

GABE

Come on. Don't you trust my judgment?

ANNA

All right. I'll let you go on one condition.

GABE

You name it.

ANNA

I want to meet these people. And soon.

GABE

You got it.

ANNA

If they're going to be dragging you off to nightclubs and God knows where else, I wanna know who to call first.

GABE

Thanks, mom.

ANNA

You're welcome.

(beat)

So are you good now?

GABE

I'm good.

They share a smile, and we:

FADE TO:

11 EXT. JONES HOUSE - NIGHT

11

Gabe is standing at the edge of his driveway, and he checks his watch. He looks back up at the road just in time for a bright red Firebird to pull up in front of him. The windows are down and the top is off. Sam and Mark are seated in the car.

GABE

Oh my God. Is this your car?

SAM

Sixteenth birthday present.

MARK

He's spoiled.

SAM
I consider it a consolation prize
for being born to my parents.

GABE
Whatever it is, it's beautiful.

SAM
C'mon, get in!

Mark leans his seat forward and Gabe begins to climb into the backseat.

12 EXT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

12

Gabe, Sam and Mark are making their way down an alleyway between two warehouse-type buildings.

GABE
This is it?

SAM
Looks can be deceiving, my friend.

They reach a large bronze door guarded by a BOUNCER who is standing menacingly with his arms crossed. Sam simply walks right past him through the door and the Bouncer ignores him.

SAM (CONT'D)
(continued)
Come on!

As Gabe follows after him, we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

13 INT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

13

The three boys enter the Blaze, where the music is playing from speakers all around the club. There are several tables spaced sporadically throughout the place, all surrounding a dance floor situated in front of a small stage.

A BAND is playing loud but funky rock music in the B.G.

Off to the side, there's a bar/restuarant counter where drinks and food are ordered. It looks rustic and modern at the same time.

On the far wall is a neon sign made up of flames that seem to dance as the lights change, surrounding bright red letters reading "THE BLAZE".

GABE

Wow. I mean, wow.

MARK

Pretty cool, huh?

GABE

It's amazing. I've never seen anything like this before!

SAM

They don't have clubs in LA? I figured you'd be a regular circuit boy.

GABE

Not really my scene. If you couldn't tell.

MARK

It's all right. I'm not really a clubber myself, I just come here for the food, really.

GABE

Right, the wings! Been waiting on them all day.

Sam points across the club, practically ignoring the other two guys.

SAM

Ah, look, it's Julie. Let's hurry up and get over there before she gets angry.

GABE
Why would she get angry?

SAM
You met her today, right?

GABE
Well, yeah.

SAM
Now think about how dumb your last question was.

Gabe only nods, laughing nervously.

GABE
Let's not keep her waiting, then.

They all quickly head over to a nearby table where Julie is already sipping on a drink, a big bright yellow band around her wrist.

SAM
Evenin', little lady.

JULIE
(re: yellow band)
I've been branded. As if I wanted to be reminded that I'm underage and don't even really belong here, now I have physical evidence which positively indicates it.

SAM
You're in a good mood.

JULIE
Must be the caffeine.
(beat)
Oh, hi Gabe. Didn't expect to see you here tonight.

SAM
I told you he was coming.

JULIE
Oh. Must have slipped my mind.

GABE
I hope it's okay. I don't wanna intrude or anything.

JULIE

Oh, it's fine. We just usually come here alone. You know, the three of us. Sometimes Mark doesn't come because he studies too much.

MARK

Hey! I heard that.

GABE

Oh...well...I mean, I can go...

SAM

Don't let the Wicked Witch of the West Coast scare you off, newbie. I invited you, so you are welcome.
(to Julie)
Right?

JULIE

Sure. Okay.

She begins watching the band on the stage intently, her attention obviously not on the guys anymore.

GABE

Man, I am feeling the love tonight.

MARK

(quietly)
Don't mind her. She's territorial. You know how girls are.

GABE

(not knowing)
Right...

Sam picks up his drink and raises an eyebrow.

SAM

Didn't you know? Julie isn't a girl. She's one of the guys.

Julie slaps Sam on the arm and scoffs.

JULIE

You wish.

SAM

Don't look now, but Dominic just walked in!

Gabe immediately looks over at the front doors to the club, and for a fraction of a moment catches Dominic's line of vision, but he quickly breaks the stare.

SAM (CONT'D)

Uh, what part of "don't look now"
did you not understand, newbie?

GABE

(distracted)
Huh?

JULIE

Here we go.

SAM

I totally know where this is
headed.

MARK

Please don't start.

SAM

Oh, no, I am going to call this now
so later, you guys can give me
props on being the smartest guy in
Crestview.

GABE

Please tell me what you are going
on about.

SAM

You. Dominic. Those cute little
cherubs flying around shooting
darts with hearts for arrowtips.
Romantic music playing in the
background.

GABE

Oh my God, somebody stop him!

MARK

Afraid that's impossible, my
friend. Once he starts, there's no
stopping him.

SAM

I saw you this afternoon, totally
ogling Dom in the hallway.

GABE

What?

SAM
You. Hallway. Moon-eyes. Total
sparks flying.

GABE
Sparks?

SAM
Sparks.

GABE
There were no sparks.

SAM
Total sparkage.

GABE
(to Mark and Julie)
Can I get some help here?

MARK
(nodding)
Total sparkage.
(beat)
I had to shield my eyes a little.

JULIE
We don't even know if Dominic is
gay. Sam has this pet project
where he's been trying to confirm
it. I've seen the charts. Graphs,
analysis records. It's a little
scary.

GABE
(grinning)
Are we perhaps projecting our own
feelings onto a helpless,
impressionable new guy?

SAM
Ew, no! Dominic is nowhere near my
type. I just have to keep a
running tab on all the homos at
Brighton. It's...my thing.

MARK
Here we go again.

SAM
Let's examine the evidence.

Sam begins ticking off examples on his fingers.

SAM (CONT'D)

(continued)

One: no girlfriend. I've known, or been in proximity to, Dominic O'Neil since sixth grade, and he has never, ever had a girlfriend.

GABE

Maybe he's private.

SAM

(ignoring Gabe)

Two: he's a jock. He's been on the track team since eighth grade, with no one to release all those pent-up teen angst hormones with.

MARK

He's been holding onto this theory for years.

GABE

Why do you care so much if he's gay or straight?

SAM

(scoffing)

Why do I care? He asks why I care! Ha! To know the nature of the beast is to conquer it, my sweet.

GABE

You want to conquer him?

SAM

It's more than that. I just have to know. And by God, I will discover the secret one day!

GABE

(to Mark)

Has he always been like this?

MARK

Maniacal and one-track-minded? Since he was eight.

Sam notices that Gabe's eyes keep flicking over to Dominic.

SAM

(to Gabe)

You should go talk to him.

GABE

Who?

SAM

Do I even need to answer that?

GABE

Why don't you go talk to him?

SAM

I'm not the one interested in him.

JULIE

You're better off doing what he says. It's pointless trying to resist.

MARK

She's right.

SAM

I've taught my minions well.

GABE

You're kind of annoying, you know that?

SAM

(grinning)

But I'm damn cute, so get used to it, pal.

(beat)

Now scoot.

GABE

But...

SAM

Go! You need to do some field work for me! Remember every detail.

JULIE

Got a pen and paper?

GABE

Are you serious?

MARK

(hands him a pen)

Grab a napkin.

JUMP CUT TO:

14 INT. THE BLAZE - MOMENTS LATER

14

Dominic looks to be sitting at a table all by himself, sipping a drink. The band continues to play in the B.G., and he is nodding along to the music.

GABE

Hey! Great band, huh?

DOMINIC

Oh, hi! Gabe...I wasn't expecting to see you here.

GABE

Yeah well, I usually leave my street cred at home when I go to school.

DOMINIC

I mostly meant because you took off like you'd seen a ghost this afternoon when I dropped you off.

GABE

Oh.

(beat)

That.

(beat)

Right. Uh, well, you know...

DOMINIC

Yeah?

GABE

I had to...you know...um...

(beat)

Nature was calling.

DOMINIC

Say no more!

They share a laugh and Gabe eases into the seat across from Dominic.

GABE

I just wanted to say I was sorry. For that. I didn't mean to run out on you like that.

(beat)

I guess I just wanted to say thanks.

DOMINIC
You're welcome.

GABE
So...I should go. You're probably
waiting for someone, and I don't
want to intrude.

DOMINIC
No, it's fine.

GABE
Oh. Okay. You aren't waiting for
someone?

DOMINIC
I was. But they called and
couldn't show up.

GABE
Oh. Well, okay then.

DOMINIC
Your friends won't mind?

GABE
I don't think so.

PAN DOWN as we see Gabe jotting a note down on the napkin, a
wide smile on his face.

BACK TO:

15 INT. THE BLAZE - SAM'S TABLE 15

Over at the other table, Sam, Mark and Julie are watching as
Gabe and Dominic converse and laugh.

SAM
And they never saw him again.

MARK
Don't say that.

JULIE
He'll come back.

SAM
Why do you care?

JULIE
He was nice.

SAM
You acted like you hated him.

JULIE
I thought I was showing my good side?

SAM
Wow. We'll talk about that later.
Check out the recent developments!

They look over to see that Parker is now standing beside Gabe and Dominic, and they look to be having an animated conversation.

Back on Sam. He looks worried.

SAM (CONT'D)
That cannot be good.

MARK
Should we do something?

JULIE
And risk our shaky reputations for a newbie? Not happening.

SAM
We'll wait it out. If he survives this, he can make it through anything.

BACK TO:

16 INT. THE BLAZE - DOMINIC'S TABLE

16

Parker is fuming at the sight of Gabe, who now looks extremely uncomfortable and wishing he was not sitting with Dominic right now.

PARKER
What is going on, Dominic? First you diss me in class for this guy, and now you're hanging out with him here? Are you losing it?

DOMINIC
Parker, calm down. You sound like a lunatic right now.

PARKER
And you look like one! Hanging out with...this!

He gestures at Gabe, who snorts indignantly.

GABE

Hey! Sitting right here. And I don't know who you are, but Dominic can sit with whoever he wants. He doesn't need your permission.

PARKER

Wow, the new kid thinks he can grow a pair overnight. You wanna make this personal?

DOMINIC

Parker, seriously. You gotta calm down.

PARKER

You know what, whatever. You wanna hang out with a fag-lover, go ahead. But don't come crying to me when your reputation is ruined.

GABE

Please tell me you were dropped on the head at birth to explain what is going on right now.

PARKER

Was anyone talking to you?

DOMINIC

Hey, you need to stop right now!

PARKER

Man...I thought you were better than this, Dom. I am out of here.

Parker storms off, leaving a distraught Gabe and a confused Dominic alone at the table, sitting in silence, save the music still playing in the B.G. Off their contemplative stares, we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

17 INT. THE BLAZE - SAM'S TABLE

17

Looking worried, Sam stares over at the aftermath at Dominic's table after Parker's loud exit. Julie is nervously playing with her napkin, and Mark seems to be waiting for advice on what to do.

SAM

We should go over there.

MARK

It would be the right thing to do.

JULIE

He probably needs support.

MARK

Somebody call FEMA, Hurricane Parker just came through.

SAM

Dispatch the cleaning crew.

The three of them head over to Dominic's table, where the silence between them is tangible.

MARK

Hey, guys. What's new?

Neither of them answer.

SAM

I heard the mime competition ended last week. So probably best to save your new material for next year.

GABE

Hey, would you guys mind if I headed home?

SAM

Sure. Uh, Dominic, you gonna be all right?

DOMINIC

I'll be fine. You guys should go.

MARK

Come on. We'll try those wings next time, okay?

GABE

Sounds good.

The four of them exit the club, leaving Dominic all alone at his table. He gets up and moves across the club until we find Parker sitting on a couch in the corner talking to a couple of girls.

Without a word, he grabs Parker by the arm and drags him away, ignoring his protests. The girls look extremely confused and begin chattering amongst themselves.

JUMP CUT TO:

18

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

18

Dominic slams Parker against the wall in the alley behind the Blaze, and the other boy looks at him, red in the face, eyes wild.

PARKER

Now who's the lunatic, huh?

Parker shoves Dominic off of him.

DOMINIC

What was that all about in there?

PARKER

I was just giving you a hard time. Like we used to, back in the day.

DOMINIC

There is no more "back in the day". We aren't friends anymore, Parker.

PARKER

Look, whatever. You wanna go do your own thing, be my guest. But you know as well as I do, hanging out with someone like him is social suicide. I mean, look at who adopted him.

(beat)

The geek squad.

DOMINIC

Well maybe I'm done labeling people like that. Ever think of that?

PARKER

Fine. You know what? Consider our friendship over, Dominic.

Parker shoves past Dominic, and he stares after him, looking very much lost in thought. On this, we:

CUT TO:

19

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

19

Sam, Gabe, Mark and Julie are making their way through a mostly abandoned parking lot towards Sam's Firebird. The mood is a bit heavy considering the events at the Blaze.

SAM

So...

(beat)

That was...

(another beat)

Different.

JULIE

The Blaze is usually low-key.

GABE

Nothing low-key about what happened tonight.

MARK

Are you okay?

GABE

Yeah, why not?

SAM

Not many people come out of a Parker attack unscathed.

MARK

It looked...brutal.

JULIE

Just wait until this gets around school. Parker's going to have his goons out in force.

(beat, to Gabe)

It's not gonna be pretty for you.

GABE

Gee, thanks, I feel so much better now.

JULIE

On the plus side, you got to talk to Dominic.

GABE
Yeah. Big plus.

SAM
Don't let Julie scare you, Gabe.
Everything's going to be fine.
Besides, you've got me to protect
you.

GABE
That's supposed to make me feel
better?

SAM
Consider yourself lucky, newb.

He throws an arm around Gabe's shoulders, grinning.

SAM (CONT'D)
You're hanging with the cool kids,
now.

They all share a laugh as they pile into Sam's car, and as it
starts up, we:

CUT TO:

20

INT. JONES HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

20

Gabe slowly closes the front door behind him, and he leans
against it, looking thoughtful. He sighs heavily, and begins
walking further into the house, clicking on the hall light.

ANNA (O.S.)
Gabe? Is that you?

GABE
No, it's the neighborhood burglar.

ANNA (O.S.)
Not funny!

Gabe lingers in the front entryway, putting his keys down on
a small table for keys and mail.

GABE
Where are you?

ANNA (V.O.)
Living room!

Gabe keeps walking, and we:

JUMP CUT TO:

21 INT. JONES HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

21

Gabe enters the living room, a few boxes still scattered here and there, to find Anna curled up on the couch with a book.

ANNA

Hey you.

GABE

Hey back at you.

Gabe sits down on the couch next to her and snuggles up next to her. She wraps her arm around him and rests her head on top of his.

ANNA

Did you have fun?

GABE

You know...I think I did.

ANNA

Good. I'm glad. You know, I was kind of worried at first.

GABE

Worried? Why?

ANNA

You didn't seem too excited about the prospect of private school.

(beat)

I know you miss your old house, your old school...everything. But you understand why we did this, right?

GABE

I think so.

ANNA

We needed a change.

(beat)

I needed a change. It was just...time, you know?

GABE

I know.

ANNA

This is gonna be good, you know?
You and me. Starting over. We're
gonna be all right.

GABE

I believe you.

ANNA

Good.

They sit in silence for a few moments, content to just relax for a minute. After a moment, Gabe stirs, and he turns and faces his mother, a somewhat serious look on his face.

GABE

Mom?

ANNA

Yeah, hon? What's wrong?

GABE

I just...

ANNA

What is it?

GABE

Nothing.

ANNA

That doesn't look like a "nothing"
face.

GABE

Really. I just wanted to say...I
think I like my new school. So
don't worry about me not being
happy or anything, okay?

ANNA

Fine. Is run-of-the-mill Mom-
worrying still allowed? You're not
gonna start smoking and staying out
all night or anything.

GABE

Mom, I'm going to private school,
not juvie!

ANNA

Same thing!

GABE
Stop.

ANNA
But it's so fun.

GABE
I'm gonna head to bed. You good
here?

ANNA
I'm good.

GABE
Okay.
(beat)
Love you.

Anna plants a quick kiss on the side of Gabe's head and he stands up, ready to head upstairs.

ANNA
Love you too.
(beat)
Oh, and Gabe?

Gabe stops and turns to face her right before going up the stairs.

GABE
Yeah, Mom?

ANNA
This is gonna work, right?

GABE
Yeah. I think it is.

They share a smile, and on this moment, we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE