

Paint It Black
By Meg Gifford

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

JOYCE, 40's, tired-but-determined, rattles on, angrily, with a teacher, MRS. SILBERSTEIN, who nods at Joyce with sympathy, which only causes her anger to escalate.

Joyce's daughter, Marie, 11, watches through the window.

NIELS, 12, freckles, perpetual mischievous grin sits in the back and kicks Marie's seat.

JOYCE

I don't know why she won't talk in class, but I can assure you, she's very verbal at home.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

Are her sentences completely discernible? Meaning one can clearly distinguish each word?

JOYCE

She. Talks. Just. Fine.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

Okay, well, our specialist should have no trouble seeing that.

Niels leans into the front seat and HONKS the horn, and Joyce, angrily gets into the driver's seat.

INT. CAR - DAY

JOYCE

Your teacher's a fool. Her class is too easy for you. You aren't talking in class because it's too easy.

Niels stops kicking Marie's seat, finally, and leans forward.

NIELS

Marie's not talking at school? Do they think she's mute?

JOYCE

If you don't start talking at school, Marie, they are going to put you in special classes, maybe speech therapy.

Niels leans forward, delighted.

NIELS

They think she *can't* talk? Man! That's awesome!

JOYCE

Niels, that's enough.

EXT. GEBHARDT DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Joyce hustles Niels inside.

Marie stops in the driveway to look at the large house.

MARIE'S POV-

In a WINDOW a gangly teenage EINSTEIN, 17, writes equations on a chalkboard. He wears dark framed glasses and a suit and tie.

POSTERS of PHYSICISTS RICHARD FEYNMAN, STEPHEN HAWKING as well as TECH GURU ROBERT SCOBLE decorate walls where most teenagers would hang band posters.

A TUTOR looks on.

In another WINDOW, PASCAL, 15, tall, thin, graceful but lacking confidence, practices ballet as an instructor scolds her.

The GARAGE lights up as Niels enters and a laboratory is seen in the background.

Niels drops sodium metal into water and it erupts violently. He smiles as he eyes the fish tank.

MS. DANNERS, the tutor, 60's, walks into view.

MS. DANNERS

Niels! Don't even think about it!

Joyce opens another window and peers down at Marie.

JOYCE

Marie, don't dawdle. Ms. Danners is only here until eight.

The front door opens, their father, DAN, 45, sticks his head out. Dan is short, stocky; compensates with a dictatorial manner at times.

DAN

We're paying good money to send you to that school and you'd damn well better start talking.

Marie walks to the porch.

She wistfully pauses on the EMPTY YARD with a 'FOR SALE' SIGN next door.

JOYCE (O.S.)

Dan, remember what the counselor said? Encourage don't criticize.

DAN (O.S.)

The counselor with the online degree? He doesn't even have kids.

Dan opens the door again.

DAN

Marie. Right now. I've just about had it with you.

Marie enters slamming the door behind her.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Marie and Niels mix chemicals as Ms. Danners scrawls on a clipboard in the corner.

NIELS

Did you see the chore list this week?

Marie shakes her head. Stirs a beaker.

NIELS

We're supposed to clean up the dog poop from the yard next door.

MARIE

The Finley's left it. They should have to come back and do it.

NIELS

Yeah, but dad says if we do it, we can maybe get a dog for Christmas.

MARIE

He always says that. We never do.

NIELS

What if we don't actually *touch* it?

MARIE

Huh?

NIELS

(whispers)

We blow it up.

MARIE

How?

NIELS

Ms. Danners, didn't you say that
fertilizer was used in World War
One for making explosives?

Ms. Danners looks up from her notes.

MS. DANNERS

That's right, never would have
become such a giant industry
without the research that went into
it during the war.

She smiles at their interest in chemistry.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Niels and Marie are on their stomachs near the garage.

They cover their ears in anticipation. Dirt flies as a patch
of lawn EXPLODES and they run into the garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

They duck down as fifteen more explosions send dirt up
against the house, rattling the windows of the garage.

Marie covers her nose.

MARIE

I don't think we destroyed it.

NIELS

We should have used more.

MARIE

More?

JOYCE (O.S.)

Niels!

They bolt from the garage and head for the treehouse.

Their dad runs out trying to hit them with a fly swatter. He swats Niels' legs as he climbs up into the treehouse. Niels quickly pulls the ladder up behind him.

JOYCE

(to Dan)

What are you doing?

Einstein leans out of an upstairs window and looks down, while covering his nose.

EINSTEIN

God! What did you do?

DAN

Keep the windows closed!

Many of the first floor walls and windows are covered in dirt and excrement.

JOYCE

You will wash every brick, every window, and you will not come inside until it's finished.

NIELS

We were trying to destroy it.

JOYCE

The *house*?

DAN

You could have actually killed your sister this time.

NIELS

Marie *helped*.

JOYCE

Whose idea was it?

Silence.

JOYCE

That's what I thought.

DAN

I built that lab for Marie. You won't be setting foot in there again.

NIELS

Marie doesn't even like the lab.

DAN

Of course she does.

Dan and Joyce return inside.

NIELS

It would've worked, if we'd used more.

MARIE

It was a stupid idea.

NIELS

Well, I'm not cleaning it.

Marie stares at her brother but he's not budging. She wraps her arms around her legs and squats with him.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Dan and Joyce walk out onto the porch.

DAN

Treating them like adults in this situation is bullshit! They're still acting like kids because they aren't being disciplined.

JOYCE

They are kids! Who locks an eleven and a twelve-year-old out of their own home?

DAN

Just for a night. It'd teach them a lesson.

Marie and Niels are still crouched in the tree house.

MARIE

I'm hungry.

NIELS

Go clean it then, you big baby.

Einstein walks to the foot of the tree house. He's eating a hot dog.

EINSTEIN

Mom and dad are arguing because of you.

MARIE

Mom and dad always argue.

EINSTEIN

Well, right now it's your fault, so get down here.

Marie eyes the hot dog.

EINSTEIN

Come down and you can have one.

Pascal walks over to the tree house. She stares at Marie and Niels with a wicked smirk and then BLASTS them with the HOSE.

They scream and scramble out of the tree house.

INT. PORCH - DAY

They run past their arguing parents and into the house.

DAN

This is what I'm talking about.

JOYCE

There are ways of disciplining that are peaceful.

DAN

They won't listen because they don't ever feel really threatened.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Einstein hoses off the house. Pascal sits in the tree swing and watches her parents argue.

Einstein sees Marie and Niels standing in the upstairs window. He makes a cutting sign across his throat and Niels sticks out his tongue.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Pascal BANGS on the door as Marie and Niels sit on the rug.

PASCAL (O.S.)
Marie? Niels? Come on, unlock the door. You need to eat something.

MARIE
She doesn't sound mad.

NIELS
Subterfuge. Ignore her.

MARIE
I always think that and then I wonder how we got chosen.

NIELS
Got chosen?

MARIE
To be here. We could've just as easily been born in Africa or Vietnam. Mom and dad could have been Tribal leaders.

NIELS
They are tribal leaders.

Marie again sits on the rug.

MARIE
We're going to lose.

NIELS
Why'd you quit talking at school, anyway? Something happen?

Marie shrugs.

MARIE
What's the point? It's not going to change anything.

Niels scoots closer to her. Breaks a granola bar in half and gives it to her.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Niels and Marie dig in the fridge in the dark and talk in hushed whispers.

NIELS
If we ration this food, it can last until morning. We can get more when they leave for church.

The light comes on. Their mother, Joyce looks at them wearily.

JOYCE
Get upstairs and go to bed.

Marie and Niels look at each other surprised and exit.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

NIELS
I can't believe it. They
surrendered.

MARIE
They would never surrender.

NIELS
What then?

Marie shrugs, goes to her room.

INT. KITCHEN WINDOW - DAY

Marie and Niels watch the family pack the car.

MARIE
They're not even making them go to
church.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The car is full of RAFTS, a BOAT attached to the back.

Einstein and Pascal climb in. Einstein looks at the windows,
gives them a thumbs up.

INT. KITCHEN WINDOW - DAY

Niels leans against the window. Glum.

JOYCE (O.S.)
I want everything on that list done
by the time we're home. Do you
understand me?

Marie looks at the note pad, and turns page after page of
instructions.

EXT. SCHOOL - TETHERBALL COURTS - DAY

Marie stands next to a tetherball, hits at it by herself.

CATHY (11) stands on the other side. Cathy's in a too-big cheerleading outfit that appears circa 1980's. She's as awkward as Marie, but she tries. Too hard.

CATHY

I can't play you anymore, I'm practicing for cheer squad.

MARIE

We don't have a cheer squad.

CATHY

We could one day. You're so negative, Marie. Everyone thinks it's weird you just decided to quit talking in class. I need to be around people who are just a little more talkative and cheerful right now, okay?

Cathy walks off to join two GIRLS waiting for her and Marie looks on.

INT. SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Mrs. Silberstein stands at the front of the room. She underlines the words cinquain and free verse on the board.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

Now everyone take out a sheet of paper and write down what type of poem you'll be writing.

The kids begin writing as Mrs. Silberstein walks up and down the rows.

The bell rings and while most of the kids fly out of the classroom, piling their poems on the desk as they race, Marie remains seated and Mrs. Silberstein gives her a sympathetic glance.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

Marie, if you need extra time, you may remain.

She doesn't even look up, as she continues writing.

EXT. SCHOOL SIDEWALK - DAY

Marie slowly walks toward home, careful not to step on a crack.

When she hits one, she goes back to the beginning of her walk and starts again.

SAM, 15, walks with his younger brother, MARTIN, 12, and watches her in amusement.

SAM

Hey! What are you doing? You have OCD or something?

MARTIN

She doesn't talk.

SAM

What do you mean she doesn't talk? Like, she can't talk?

MARTIN

No, she talked maybe the first week of school. Someone heard her. I think.

They walk by a SERIES OF CRABAPPLE TREES.

Sam picks a MUSHY CRABAPPLE from the ground and hits the back of her leg.

Marie freezes, stares at them.

SAM

Come on say something!

He throws another but misses.

MARTIN

Stop it, Sam!

SAM

If she doesn't talk, it's not like she's going to tell anyone.

He hits the back of her head with the third.

Marie turns and glares at him.

SAM

You want me to stop? You only have to ask.

He throws another and she starts running.

SAM
Come on, I want to hear you talk!

He takes off after her.

EXT. GEBHARDT PORCH - DAY

Marie tries the door but it's locked. She leans on the bell. The door suddenly opens and Marie runs past Pascal.

Pascal looks around and spots Sam on the edge of the yard. Martin arrives, out of breath.

MARTIN
Come on, Sam! They're going to
call mom and dad.

SAM
Hello?

Pascal glares back.

SAM
You don't talk either? Badass, a
family of mutes.

Pascal slams the door.

INT. GEBHARDT FOYER - DAY

Marie walks in; covered in apple slime. Her dad examines her.

DAN
Who did this to you?

Marie looks in the foyer mirror and then runs upstairs.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Marie climbs into the shower with her clothes on.

She lets the water wash away the slime and slowly sheds her clothes. There's a KNOCK at the door.

MARIE
I'm not dressed.

Pascal opens the door a crack.

PASCAL

It's me.

She sits on the toilet.

PASCAL

Sam do that to you?

MARIE

You know him?

PASCAL

Yeah. No. I know who he is. He goes to Lefler. He's popular just because he's in some stupid garage band.

MARIE

He's a musician? And people like him?

PASCAL

He just screams into a stupid microphone.

MARIE

And that makes him popular?

Pascal tries on red lipstick in the mirror.

PASCAL

People say I look like Gwen Stefani when I wear this.

With her pale skin, and poor execution, she looks more like a Geisha.

PASCAL

Dad wants me to start walking home with you.

MARIE

You don't have to.

PASCAL

Yes, I do.

Marie looks surprised at the offered protection.

PASCAL

Dad says.

MARIE
(disappointed)
Oh.

LAUGHTER drifts up from the yard and Marie and Pascal go to the window.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Their mother, Joyce, talks to a man inside the GAZEBO across the street.

MARIE (O.C.)
Who is that?

PASCAL (O.C.)
Pastor Wagner. He's been with mom
all afternoon.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

MARIE
Now he delivers?

Pascal looks at her and laughs.

A MOVING VAN pulls up along the street blocking their view of the Gazebo.

PASCAL
Get dressed.

Pascal exits.

Marie remains at the window and sees LIT FLAME TORCHES being removed from the moving van. TWO MEN carry a TAXIDERMIED ZEBRA as well. A SMALL MAN barks orders at them.

EXT. GEBHARDT DRIVEWAY - DAY

A large PORTRAIT of young, darkly good-looking man is lifted out of the moving van and gingerly carried to the house next to the Gebhardt's home.

The man in the portrait is tan, wears side burns. He's grungy, yet hip.

INT. GEBHARDT ATTIC - DAY

Niels watches from the upstairs window through a pair of binoculars.

EXT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Flaming torches line the driveway.

An abstract nude and a rather naughty sculpture of a man and a woman.

A bathtub that's been converted into a couch.

A collection of guitars and drums.

A man's legs in leather pants.

A man's eyes looking directly into the binoculars; amused.

This is MALCOLM BLACK, 63, an older version of the man in the portrait, still dressed the same.

INT. GEBHARDT ATTIC - DAY

Niels sinks back behind the curtains as Marie runs in.

MARIE

We finally have new neighbors!

NIELS

Shhhh!

Marie looks through the window and sees Malcolm directing the MOVERS. Literally.

EXT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Malcolm sits in a canvas chair and talks through a megaphone each time a piece is removed.

Malcolm's mannerisms are younger than his age but cigarettes and alcohol have left deep creases in his face. He's easy-going, radiates neither happiness nor anger. Speaks with a heavy British accent.

MALCOLM

Upstairs loo! First floor library!

He comments as each piece is unloaded.

INT. GEBHARDT ATTIC - DAY

MARIE
You're paranoid. He can't see us.

NIELS
(whispers)
What's he doing now?

MARIE
Look for yourself, chicken.

Niels pushes Marie aside and finally looks out the window.

NIELS
He looks...
Cool.

MARIE
Are there any kids?

NIELS
Haven't seen any.

Einstein and Pascal enter the attic. Einstein wears his hulking glasses and Pascal is in a leotard and ballet slippers.

MARIE
They look like circus people.

Einstein takes the binoculars from a reluctant Niels.

NIELS
Hey...

Einstein ignores and peers through the binoculars.

EINSTEIN
He's got a human skeleton.

PASCAL
Let me see.

Niels and Marie are pushed to the back.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

A human skeleton is removed from the truck as Malcolm runs his fingers over a guitar.

KATIE BLACK, 47, long, red hair, bell bottoms takes another guitar from the truck. They strum together.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

PASCAL

That's his wife, Katie. His name is Malcolm Black and I guess he used to play with the Stones or something.

EINSTEIN

You talked to them?

MARIE

Mom talked to *her*.

EINSTEIN

She looks dollar-store.

PASCAL

Not at all like the class you're used to from your favorite computer sites?

Niels pushes his way to the window again.

BINOCULARS POV:

Her long, wavy hair and false eye lashes. Her layers and layers of jewelry. Her rhinestone top and jeans. Her red alligator boots.

NIELS

(delighted)

She's shiny.

They all stare at him.

INT. GEBHARDT DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan and Joyce sit at opposite ends of the table. Marie, Niels, Einstein and Pascal sit between them.

There is a RUCKUS coming from Malcolm's house and while Dan and Joyce do their best to ignore it, Niels strains to see through the window.

None of the kids have begun eating.

JOYCE

What's tonight?

DAN
The presidents.

JOYCE
Fine. Let's go. I'm starved.

DAN
Pascal, you go first.

Pascal stands.

PASCAL
Dwight D. Eisenhower. 34th
president. In office 1953 to 1961.
Made nuclear weapons a higher
defense priority.

DAN
Good. Einstein?

Pascal sits down and begins eating while the others must wait
their turn to begin the meal.

Einstein stands.

EINSTEIN
Jimmy Carter...

His attention wanders to the nearby window.

EINSTEIN
Holy shit!

JOYCE
Einstein!

The kids are all on their feet and at the window.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Malcolm has wandered out of his house, away from the party
and urinates next to a three-tiered fountain.

A cherub stands on top, one leg in the air as he spills his
watering can.

INT. GEBHARDT DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Gebhardt's strain to watch him.

Malcolm poses so that he resembles the cherub pouring water
as he urinates.

Joyce closes the curtains as if that will erase Malcolm from their minds immediately.

JOYCE
Everyone back to the table.

Reluctantly they return to their seats.

JOYCE
Pascal, I believe you were doing
Carter?

Einstein stands.

EINSTEIN
I was.

Marie and Niels beam in the direction of the curtains as
LAUGHTER drifts into the window.

MARIE
I um, I'm not feeling very well.
Can I be excused?

JOYCE
You haven't even touched--

DAN
--You're making the adult decision
not to eat during the dinner hour?

Marie nods.

Dan and Joyce look at each other, it's another showdown.

Dan nods that it's okay. Joyce angrily cuts her chicken into
particle-sized bits as Marie exits.

DAN
Understanding. Mental discipline.

Einstein interrupts.

EINSTEIN
Jimmy Carter. 39th president. In
office from 1977 to 1981--

JOYCE
You know what? Let's just eat
tonight.

Einstein sits down and exchanges an awkward glance with
Pascal.

NIELS
I'm not feeling so great either.

Niels shrinks back as his parents stare him down.

JOYCE
Go. You're excused.

Niels tears out of the room.

JOYCE
Anyone else?

She looks from Einstein to Pascal. They silently return to eating.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marie stops at the large window and watches Malcolm in the yard.

Malcolm waves and Marie quickly moves away from the window. She peeks again and sees Malcolm left the front door open.

Niels appears next to her.

NIELS
Let's go.

MARIE
Where?

NIELS
Where else?

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - NIGHT

Niels and Marie walk through the party like conjoined twins. They trudge slowly, taking it all in.

Malcolm's CROWD look like rock musicians from a different era. In fact, they are rock musicians from another era.

They smoke and clink drinks and follow the kids with their eyes as if they're the ones out of place here.

Music reverberates throughout the house. Niels bumps into someone.

NIELS
Sorry, I uh...

He looks up into her permanently happy face and realizes she's a mannequin.

They see a pig run through carrying drinks on a tray strapped to her back.

Malcolm finally sees them.

Malcolm tries to grab a drink from the pig's back but it squeals and runs off.

MALCOLM
Bloody hell, he's got to be
trained.

The pig eats nuts out of the bowl on the coffee table. Malcolm stumbles in their direction. He puts a cigarette in his mouth and looks at Marie.

MALCOLM
You got a light?

Marie shakes her head. Malcolm picks up a BLOW TORCH and lights his cigarette.

MALCOLM
We've been tearing things out and
building them back up all day.
Fortunately, I forgot to put away
the tools.

Niels ducks as A PARROT flies just past his head and lands on A WOMAN with a VINTAGE FRUIT HAT. The woman bats him off.

MALCOLM
What are your names then?

NIELS
I'm Niels and this is my sister,
Marie.

MALCOLM
Ahh, Marie. I saw you in the
window.

Marie takes a step closer to her brother.

MALCOLM
Wasn't it you?

Marie looks sheepish, says nothing.

MALCOLM
You do speak?

NIELS
No. She's special.

Malcolm shrugs. Seems feasible.

MALCOLM
Who were the others?

NIELS
The old ones are my parents. The one in the ballerina outfit is our sister, Pascal, and the tall, angry-looking one was our brother, Einstein.

MALCOLM
Your parents are scientists?

Niels shakes his head.

NIELS
No, they just thought giving us the same names as successful people might help us become more successful.

MALCOLM
Is it working?

NIELS
(clearly quoting)
I have not yet shown an aptitude for anything.

Katie comes over with a glass of water for Malcolm.

KATIE
You've had enough alcohol and you're not even supposed to be drinking while on medication.

Malcolm takes the water.

MALCOLM
Meet Niels and the very special Marie.

Niels is taken with the smiling Katie and he too falls mute.

MALCOLM
They were all named for success.

KATIE
Niels Bohr and Marie...

MARIE

Curie.

MALCOLM

She speaks!

KATIE

Curie, of course. She died of over-exposure to radiation.

MALCOLM

Well, there you have it. Stay out of the sun, Marie.

KATIE

Why not show them the sound studio you've been working on?

She then whispers to Malcolm.

KATIE

Too much smoke and angst in here for kids, you know?

NIELS

(quickly)

I'll be thirteen in five weeks.

KATIE

Old enough to help with the construction then.

Marie and Niels look at Malcolm in expectant curiosity.

MALCOLM

Follow me.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The basement is dusty as several walls have been knocked to rubble.

Malcolm gives Niels a hammer and goggles. Niels looks at them surprised, but puts the goggles on.

Marie wanders over to a STACK OF BOOKS in the corner.

Malcolm directs Niels to a fresh wall and grabs a SLEDGEHAMMER.

MALCOLM

All of this has to go if we're
going to make a decent recording
studio. Now give it a good whack.

Marie looks up from A JOURNAL filled with pictures of India, Morocco, Britain. Photographs of bands are strewn throughout.

Marie practically drops the journal as Niels hits the wall with a POP!

MALCOLM

That won't do. Hit it like you've
got some bullocks.

Niels hits it again and this time parts of it crumble.

He looks at Malcolm, both delighted and frightened.

MALCOLM

Have another go.

He hits it several more times, knocking most of it out.

He wipes the plaster off and grins.

Marie watches them and tucks the journal into the back of her pants.

MALCOLM

How was that?

NIELS

When do we use the blow torch?

MALCOLM

You know, I think we're going to
get on.

They look at Marie, as she guiltily tries to smile. They both take in her sketchy grin with some suspicion.

INT. NIELS' CLOSET - NIGHT

A PAINTING, slowly coming into focus, but never completely, as it is an impressionist painting of a doll house.

Niels steps away from the painting. Marie enters and sets a plate of food on his bed.

Niels' entire closet is filled with artwork. Sculptures, drawings and paintings lay in disarray.

Their father, Dan, walks in holding a stack of books.

DAN

You two seem to be feeling better.

Neither Marie nor Niels acknowledge this.

DAN

(to Niels)

Your mother and I have talked and we can't yet determine what subject might suit you best in college.

Dan squints at the painting and frowns.

DAN

It's obvious that you're not going to be a chemist or a lawyer. If you want to major in economics, I think you will do okay, and we will support you.

Niels stops painting and looks at his father.

NIELS

I'm in the seventh grade.

His father hands him the ECONOMICS BOOKS and exits. Niels returns to painting.

MARIE

You know Malcolm met Katie in India? She was a belly-dancer.

NIELS

Mom tell you that?

MARIE

Maybe.

NIELS

I heard mom and dad talking about how they used to be swingers.

MARIE

Like baseball?

NIELS

I think so. He still doesn't like them though.

MARIE
Dad doesn't like anyone.

NIELS
Not even us.

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

Marie and Niels freeze. They hear the DOOR OPEN.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN, the school principal enters the foyer.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN (O.S.)
Hi, Mrs. Gebhardt? Am I
interrupting dinner? Whoooh-hoooh
it sure smells good in here!

Marie and Niels stare wide-eyed at each other.

MARIE
What did you do?

NIELS
Nothing.

They race out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY-NIGHT

Einstein and Pascal are already at the top of the staircase,
hidden but with a view of the action. Marie and Niels crouch
beside them.

PASCAL
What happened? What did you guys
do?

NIELS
I didn't do anything. It's
probably Marie. She's special, you
know.

Marie pinches him on the arm. He starts to scream but
Einstein puts a hand over his mouth.

INT. FOYER-NIGHT

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN
Thanks for agreeing to meet on such
short notice.

Dan walks into the foyer and shakes Mr. McGlaughlin's hand.

DAN

Well, our childrens' future is our central focus.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

Yes, I know. I taught your older kids, myself. They are just...neat.

Joyce is on edge, winces at the word, 'neat'.

JOYCE

Marie doesn't really have any problems talking. I don't know why she behaves like she does at school. I think she is--

He cuts her off.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

--Yes, it seems that they were planning on placing her in some of our courses to help her out.

DAN

She doesn't need special courses, what she needs is a swift kick in the pants.

Joyce motions for Dan to be quiet.

Mr. McGlaughlin sets a file on the table and pulls out a sheet of paper.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

She wrote a poem today. It's called '*If The World Were On Fire, There Would Be No Escape*'.

Joyce laughs nervously.

JOYCE

She's always had a flair for drama you see.

DAN

Which she gets from her mother.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

It brought Mrs. Silberstein to tears.

JOYCE

It's just her way of self-express...it did?

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

We also have Niels' artwork here.

He pulls out three abstracts.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

We think that both of them have natural abilities in the creative arts.

DAN

Our kids are training in math and science.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

But their *aptitude* seems to be in other subjects?

JOYCE

It's possible they get this from me as well.

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

We want to send someone in to test them and they may even end up in our phase four advanced creativity program-Y.E.A.S.!

He does an awkward pump-fist move on the Y.E.A.S!

DAN

Your what?

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

Y.E.A.S.!: Youth Enlightened by Artistic Schooling. Only high school students have been enrolled thus far.

JOYCE

So they would be the youngest?

DAN

What do they do? Paint and write about their feelings all day?

MR. MCGLAUGHLIN

We seek to develop talents that might otherwise go neglected.

DAN

These things are fine for a hobby,
but how will they make a living?

JOYCE

It's an incredible opportunity.

DAN

You hadn't even heard of the phase
four, whatever, and suddenly it's
incredible?

JOYCE

Hear him out.

DAN

We've spent the past five years and
thirteen thousand on after-school
tutoring so our kids could learn to
express themselves? *Artistically?*

JOYCE

(hushed, but firm)

They are going to do this program
and that's all there is to it.

INT. HALLWAY-NIGHT

The kids are still pressed against the rail, straining to
hear.

NIELS

Well, I'm definitely artistically
gifted. They're making a mistake
with Marie.

Marie moves to punch him, but he dodges. Einstein looks
envious, Pascal bored.

EINSTEIN

If you pass their tests, then you
are getting sent away to an
entirely different school. Maybe
in a different city.

PASCAL

Cool. I can turn Niels' room into
a dance studio.

Marie and Niels exchange frightened looks.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The ENTIRE CLASS buzzes over MALCOLM'S JOURNAL as it passes hands.

Martin whispers to Marie.

MARTIN
He's really living next door to
you?

MARIE
I already told you. We went to his
party.

MARTIN
I can't believe he toured with the
Stones. Can I maybe come next
time?

Mrs. Silberstein turns around and sees the JOURNAL as it is
passed back to Marie.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN
Marie? Bring that here.

Marie reluctantly goes to the front of the classroom.

Mrs. Silberstein opens the book. It's a page that shows HALF-
NAKED FANS in Europe. Mrs. Silberstein blushes and quickly
close it.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN
Where did you get this?

WHISPERS about Marie's vow of silence.

MARIE
(proudly)
At my neighbor's party.

Everyone is equally shocked that she's spoken.

But, Mrs. Silberstein looks at her with disdain.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN
Sit down, Marie.

The bell RINGS and everyone bolts for the door.

Marie remains near the door and watches as Mrs. Silberstein
pores over the journal.

MARIE
Can I have it back?

Mrs. Silberstein doesn't even answer her as she's so absorbed.

Marie hears VOICES behind her.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Cathy appears in cheer garb.

CATHY
We took a vote, and decided that
you can join our cheer squad!

MARIE
I really wouldn't be good at that.

CATHY
Okay, it wasn't my idea, but the
others wanted me to ask you.

Marie looks past Cathy and a bunch of CHIPPER GIRLS wave.

MARIE
You were right. I'd bring too much
darkness to your joie de vivre.

Cathy's shoulder's slump as she walks away and Marie smiles to herself as she exits the school.

EXT. SCHOOL SIDEWALK - DAY

Marie waits impatiently in front of the school. Sam walks up behind her, and Martin races to intervene.

MARTIN
Her neighbor's a rock star.

SAM
Yeah, right.

Pascal walks up and Marie's face falls.

Her old shirt is about two sizes too small and she is busty, braless and her nipples protrude.

Marie walks without acknowledging her sister and Pascal grows irritated but follows her.

SAM
Whoa! Turkey's ready.

PASCAL
What's that supposed to mean?

MARIE
Ignore him.

SAM
She talks! Did she talk? I heard her.

MARTIN
Yeah, she talks now. So can we go?

Sam follows Pascal and Marie.

PASCAL
You're the reason I have to walk my sister home from school today.

SAM
Yes, and lucky for you, or we wouldn't have met.

PASCAL
My planets must be aligning.

SAM
Actually, nothing on you is fully aligning.

PASCAL
What did you say?

MARTIN
Come on. You're going to get into trouble again.

Pascal turns beet red.

PASCAL
You're a real A-hole, do you realize that?

SAM
An A-hole? Your family Mormon or something? Was that some religious vow of silence I witnessed earlier?

Marie and Pascal walk without looking behind them.

SAM

(shouts)

Come hither my child, show me the light. I have fallen and must be redeemed.

INT. DINING ROOM-NIGHT

Einstein, Niels, Pascal and Marie wait for their parents to come in.

They stare at each other as HUSHED ARGUING is heard in the other room.

PASCAL

It's getting worse.

EINSTEIN

I can't study here anymore.

NIELS

You spend more time in the bathroom than studying anyway.

EINSTEIN

That's the only place I can find peace enough to read.

PASCAL

You should try real girls sometime.

Pascal and Niels laugh. Marie rolls her eyes.

EINSTEIN

Oh yeah. Because you're the romance expert. Miss too-busy-with dance-to-date. More like you're too scared to talk to anyone who might--

Dan walks into the dining room.

DAN

Enough with the bickering.

EINSTEIN

Our bickering? We've been here for like, twenty minutes.

Joyce walks in after him, takes her seat. Forces a smile, plays her role.

JOYCE
How is everything? Everything okay
at school today?

She looks at Marie.

JOYCE
Your big sister scare him off?

Pascal looks at her plate.

MARIE
Pascal needs a bra. Baaaad.

EINSTEIN
Jesus.

Niels starts to laugh but coughs instead.

JOYCE
Marie, that's not something we say
at the dinner table.

MARIE
They call her porno boobs at my
school.

PASCAL
They do not!

NIELS
They do at my school too!

JOYCE
Okay, fine. Pascal needs a bra,
I'll take her. But it will have to
be next week. I have the church
retreat this weekend.

MARIE
She needed one *last* week.

PASCAL
Marie!

DAN
I'll take her tonight.

PASCAL
No! It's fine...I...

JOYCE
Yes, your father can take you. Now
what's the topic? I'm starving.

Pascal glares at Marie from across the table.

INT. LINGERIE DEPARTMENT-NIGHT

MARIE

Hey, what about this kind?

Marie holds up a black, lacy bra.

Pascal, still furious, ignores her completely.

Pascal walks behind her father with her arms across her chest, protectively.

DAN

Pascal, hurry up!

A cougarlicious sales lady named JASMINE walks over to them. Experienced, she knows the most uncomfortable girl is the one bra shopping with her dad.

JASMINE

Let's make this as painless as possible.

She winks at Dan.

JASMINE

What size are you sweetheart?

PASCAL

Medium.

Jasmine laughs and looks at Dan.

JASMINE

Wouldn't it be nice if women were so simple?

DAN

You have no idea.

Jasmine looks at Pascal's chest.

JASMINE

I'd say you're at least a 36C, but let me get my tape.

Marie tries on bras over her clothes, not yet busty enough to exhibit Pascal's mysterious self-conscious behavior.

She tries on a HEAVILY PADDED BRA and pushes in the cups so they're inverted.

DAN

Marie...

Jasmine returns and sees her.

JASMINE

Now what are you going to do with that darlin'?

MARIE

Soda holders. I can lie on my back and a coke will fit right in here.

PASCAL

Just stop, okay!

Jasmine holds up her tape.

JASMINE

Why don't you step into the boudoir and we'll get you all set.

Jasmine follows Pascal into the fitting room and Dan watches Jasmine's feminine sway.

Marie notices her father watching her as she repeats the word 'boudoir' to herself.

INT. CASH WRAP-NIGHT

Jasmine rings up the bras as Pascal scans the mall to make certain no one sees them.

JASMINE

I'll include a sachet to celebrate the purchase of your first bra.

Pascal nods at her, wishing she'd quit talking.

Dan leans on the counter.

DAN

Well, we really appreciate all of the personal attention.

Pascal blushes, realizing her father is flirting.

PASCAL

We told *mom* we'd be home in an hour.

Jasmine puts a card in the bag.

JASMINE
My card. It will be easier next
time because I know your
measurements.

PASCAL
I'll find Marie.

Dan shakes Jasmine's hand.

DAN
You just made my night easier than
I could have ever imagined.

She winks and watches them exit.

INT. PASCAL'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

Pascal lays out her assortment of bras across the bed.

Marie walks into the room.

MARIE
I'm sorry. I just wanted them to
stop teasing you at school.

Pascal ignores her, searching the sack carefully.

MARIE
Did she forget one?

PASCAL
Her card is gone. You saw her put
that card in here?

They both FREEZE as a door SLAMS and SHOUTING is heard.

Marie backs against the wall, staring at the vent.

PASCAL
The tree house!

Marie nods.

INT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Marie, Niels, Pascal and Einstein are in the tree house,
seated around an ipad.

They trade off the only pair of headphones, each using a
single bud.

FIGHTING is heard from the top floor of the house.

They nervously watch their parents yell through the window.

Joyce opens the window.

JOYCE

You know the rules! No television
on a school night.

NIELS

It's educational.

JOYCE

What are you watching?

MARIE

A documentary on the making of the
atomic bomb.

JOYCE

Fine.

Joyce is distracted by Dan and she moves away from the window
as they return to bickering.

Malcolm walks just under the tree house. He sings to himself
and peels an orange. It takes him a second to see them.

MALCOLM

Oh, Hello.

Niels climbs down.

MALCOLM

Must be after ten o'clock. Aren't
you kids supposed to be practising
something?

EINSTEIN

(annoyed)

It's nine.

MALCOLM

Nine? So why aren't you
rehearsing? Studying?
Planning a political campaign?

Malcolm follows their glance to Dan and Joyce bickering.

MALCOLM

Oh, I see.

EINSTEIN
(quickly)
We get better wifi signal out here.

Einstein scowls as Joyce forgot to shut the window and it's impossible to ignore.

MALCOLM
Watching old Adam Sandler stand-up?
First became friends in Brooklyn.

EINSTEIN
Yeah, right.

MALCOLM
His brother was with him. It was
one of his first major
performances and he was nervous as
hell.

Einstein rolls his eyes.

MARIE
It's true. I saw the photos.

EINSTEIN
You saw the photos? Where?

Malcolm looks at her quickly, knowingly, but says nothing.

Malcolm looks in the direction of the fighting parents.

MALCOLM
Listen, why don't you all come over
and I'll show you?

PASCAL
We don't have permission to leave
the property.

MALCOLM
You don't have permission? How old
are you, anyway?

NIELS
I'll come!

Marie climbs down and hurries to join them.

EINSTEIN
Niels! Marie! Get back here!

Malcolm smirks, watching the two youngest already on his porch.

EINSTEIN

I guess it'll be okay, for a little while.

They all follow Malcolm to his house.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S-NIGHT

They look around the living room in silence.

Marie and Niels take in the decor for the first time, since the party was too crammed to see everything.

They examine Malcolm's bathtub/couch convert, his well-lit guitar collection, the many photos of celebrities from the seventies and eighties, a strange collection of taxidermy.

It vaguely resembles a Ripley's Believe It Or Not! museum.

Niels holds out the ARM of the SKELETON.

NIELS

He's missing a finger?

MALCOLM

Dog loves bones more than anything.

A great dane, HENRY, head resting on his giant paws, innocently looks from one human face to the next.

Niels leans back on the couch, arms behind his head, like he's finally found home.

Einstein stops on a picture of Keith Richards.

EINSTEIN

You really played with the Stones?

MALCOLM

We worked together, yeah.

Katie comes into the room.

KATIE

Malcolm's a songwriter.

MALCOLM

Was. Really.

Katie gives him a defiant look.

KATIE

Is. And always will be.

Pascal takes in Katie's outfit.

She's sexy, but it's from another decade.

Yet, she remains more feminine and hipper than any of the female figures in their world. Some people wear bangles and look like a hippie, burn-out, this woman was born in bangles.

PASCAL

I like your earrings.

Katie takes them off and hands them to her. Pascal doesn't quite know how to respond.

KATIE

Go on. I made them. I can make more.

Pascal puts them on in front of the mirror.

KATIE

You have beautiful eyes. A little shimmer could really bring them out.

EINSTEIN

Pascal doesn't believe in unnatural things.

MALCOLM

Huh. Those are the only things I've ever believed in.

PASCAL

(apologetically)

Our mother doesn't wear makeup, so, I guess I've never really learned how to use it. I mean, like you're supposed to.

KATIE

I can show you, if you like.

Pascal smiles.

KATIE

So, what brings you to this side of paradise?

PASCAL

Mom and dad are...well they're holding debates tonight.

KATIE
Holding debates! I like that.

Henry walks across the room and drops a BONE at Einstein's feet.

He picks it up and notices AN INSCRIPTION.

EINSTEIN
(reading the bone)
Education is one of the chief
obstacles to intelligence and
freedom of thought?

KATIE
Ahh, Bertrand Russell. Love that.
Henry likes to remind us of what's
important.

EINSTEIN
He doesn't even know what it says,
and it's probably a good thing,
since it's not true.

An awkward silence ensues.

MALCOLM
Want a glass of wine, Einstein?

EINSTEIN
What? Okay.

MARIE
I smell...bananas?

KATIE
I'm making banana nut waffles and
steak. Have you eaten?

EINSTEIN
We ate *breakfast* this morning.

PASCAL
And dinner three hours ago.

KATIE
We don't believe in mealtime.

EINSTEIN
How can you...that's like not
believing in seasons.

KATIE

You eat when you're hungry and give
your body what it craves. Your
body knows best.

MARIE

My body always craves whipped
cream. Straight from the can.

Einstein rolls his eyes.

EINSTEIN

She also ate chalk when she was
little.

KATIE

Chalk?

Katie looks at Marie thoughtfully.

KATIE

You're craving calcium.

Malcolm hands Einstein the glass of wine.

He swirls and sniffs, having no real idea what he's doing.

He then takes a swig and looks like he wants to spit it out,
but it goes down.

Katie disappears into the kitchen and Malcolm picks up a
guitar.

They fall silent around him as he plays a riff of *Stairway to
Heaven*.

EINSTEIN

Led Zeppelin, big surprise.

MALCOLM

Actually it's Taurus. Led Zeppelin
toured with them two years before
this tune came out.

PASCAL

You're saying...they stole it?

MALCOLM

Nothing is new except arrangement.
Durant. (shouts)
We need to get that one on a bone,
Katie!

Einstein and Pascal exchange smirks.

Pascal sits on the floor next to Niels and Marie.

Marie sees a SMALL FERRET in a TUTU run past the door.

She BLINKS hard and whispers to Pascal.

MARIE

Did you see that?

PASCAL

What?

Malcolm saw it and grins at her.

MALCOLM

You don't miss a thing in your
attentive silence, do you?

NIELS

She sees everything. Even things
that aren't there.

Malcolm looks at her thoughtfully.

MALCOLM

Do you then?

KATIE

Well, I don't suppose you've seen
Malcolm's old journal? He nearly
tore the house down looking for it.

Marie reddens. Shakes her head. Malcolm watches her
thoughtfully.

Einstein gestures toward the stuffed Zebra.

EINSTEIN

My dad and I hunt. We were
supposed to go to Africa last year
but something came up.

MALCOLM

Good God. We don't hunt. We bought
him *alive* from a retired performer
in Vegas. Had a bigger yard out
there.

EINSTEIN

(weirded out)

You have all your pets stuffed?

MALCOLM

Well I don't know if you've ever
looked, but it's bloody tough
finding a casket for a zebra.

Katie returns with the food and sets out floor cushions and
passes around bowls.

KATIE

(to Einstein and Pascal)
So why is it we've not seen you
here before?

EINSTEIN

We're usually quite busy.

KATIE

Doing?

EINSTEIN

I have my math tutor, Pascal has
dance lessons, Marie has her
chemistry tutor. God only knows
what Niels does.

KATIE

You have school after school?

They all nod in unison.

KATIE

That sucks.

MALCOLM

What Katie means to say is, that
could suck. Unless you really like
school?

He looks at each of their faces, hopeful.

EINSTEIN

I guess the after school part is
fine but school--

NIELS

--What Einstein means to say is.
Yes. School does suck.

Malcolm plays the opening chord to *Another Brick In The Wall*.

MALCOLM

School isn't really the problem
though is it? It's fitting in for
American kids, I guess.

EINSTEIN

We fit in just fine.

Niels and Marie both have a laugh at this.

MALCOLM

You, my dear ones, are culturally
confused.

EINSTEIN

Excuse me?

MALCOLM

What's your background? In
England, it's fairly simple, we're
all quite British. We pretend to
be proper but often we're naughty
and we know where we came from.
Where do you come from?

PASCAL

We're mostly German, but also a
little bit Welsh and some Cherokee
on our mother's side.

MALCOLM

Cherokee!?

Malcolm plays a riff of *Cherokee People*.

PASCAL

Yes!

MALCOLM

Well that there's your problem.
You have an inclination towards
structure and order on your German
side and a desire to be freer on
your Cherokee side.

EINSTEIN

That's ridiculous.

KATIE

You can't deny the Cherokee side.

MALCOLM

You're going to have to develop a culture for yourselves that includes all parts.

Niels nods, somber.

EINSTEIN

That's infinitely more ridiculous.

MALCOLM

Okay, so let me ask you this. What would you do if you didn't have anyone telling you?

EINSTEIN

What do you mean?

MALCOLM

What do I mean? Man, I mean if you had no schedule.

The Gebhardt's sit in silence. No one knows.

EINSTEIN

I'd still be studying, doing my homework. I'm sure it would be the same as now.

NIELS

(quietly)

I'd paint and stuff.

MALCOLM

Now see that! That's beautiful. Don't ever let anyone take that away from you.

NIELS

Huh?

MALCOLM

Your id, man. Some people spend their whole lives searching for it. And if they hadn't ever been messed with, they wouldn't have lost it in the first place.

PASCAL

I *used* to like ballet. I guess I'm someone who has lost her id.

EINSTEIN

What do you mean *used to*? That's all you ever do.

PASCAL

Yeah, but I hate it now.

EINSTEIN

What?

MALCOLM

That's tragic. Dance is one of the few things that's universal. We've spent enough time in other countries for Katie to have studied everything from belly dancing to Tango.

KATIE

I never studied ballet. I'm so envious of you for knowing that.

Malcolm plays the opening chords to *Paint It Black* on the guitar.

MALCOLM

Come on. Dance for them.

She waves him off and he plays more furiously.

Slowly she starts to do a Persian style dance that picks up with the intensity of the music. His guitar dissolves into the actual *Paint It Black*.

Everyone except Einstein claps to the beat.

Einstein looks annoyed and stands off to one side.

Pascal watches her, completely enchanted with the style.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S-NIGHT-LATER

Einstein sits sulkily in a chair in the corner.

Niels, Marie and Pascal are asleep on the rug and Malcolm lightly strums the guitar.

Pascal is now in light, shimmery sixties make up.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

Katie opens the door to find Dan on the porch. He looks tired. Still angry. No attempt at hiding it this time.

EINSTEIN

Dad?

Pascal, Niels and Marie slowly wake up.

DAN

We've been looking all over the neighborhood for you. Do you have any idea what time it is?

MALCOLM

I guess we lost track.

Einstein stands.

EINSTEIN

I told them we needed to stay on the property but they would only listen to him.

He nods, accusingly at Malcolm.

DAN

Have you been drinking?

KATIE

He had a glass of wine.

DAN

He's *seventeen* years old.

MALCOLM

That's why it was only *one* glass.

Dan falters.

DAN

Well. It's a school night.

MALCOLM

I'm sorry, I guess, while you were busy debating I thought they could come over here and enjoy some quiet time.

Malcolm winces, realizing how this sounds. Dan points a finger at Einstein.

DAN

This is the last time.

Einstein and Niels are led out by their father. Pascal follows and Marie hesitates.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Marie waits in front of her school.

Sam and Martin wait as well.

Pascal walks up wearing a bohemian style dress and shimmery, sixties make up. She doesn't look anything like the frumpy girl who normally meets Marie.

MARIE

I didn't see dad buy you that?

PASCAL

(whispers)

Katie lent it to me.

Sam is on his feet, but for once, he's speechless.

Pascal looks him over critically and puts an arm around her sister, leading her away. Sam and Martin follow behind them.

SAM

You look different today.

Pascal doesn't turn around. He runs in front of her and walks backwards.

SAM

I wanted...no, I needed to say that
I'm sorry.

PASCAL

For?

SAM

For throwing apples at your sister
and for talking about your--

As Sam walks backwards, he approaches an SUV protruding out of the driveway.

PASCAL

--Apology accepted.

SAM

So what's your name?

He falls backwards across the car and Martin grabs his books as they tumble towards the street.

PASCAL

(shouts behind her)

Karma!

SAM
Her name's Karma?

MARTIN
No, it's weirder. Pascal.

SAM
Like the mathematician?

MARTIN
I guess.

SAM
Huh. Pascal.

Sam rubs his back and watches her.

INT. GARAGE-DAY

Marie walks into the dark garage and sees no one but HEARS NOISE.

She walks through it quietly looking through beakers, and erlenmeyer flasks, following the noise.

She gets down on all fours and peeks around the table.

MARIE
Mom? What are you, praying?

Joyce kneels, her head on Pastor Wagner's lap.

Pastor Wagner sees Marie; his mouth forms an 'oh', eyes become moon-sized. He tries to get Joyce's attention.

Joyce sees her daughter just as Marie runs out.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Niels sits in the middle of the room flipping through art books with Malcolm.

Marie walks in with Katie.

MALCOLM
Marie, you look as if you've seen a ghost.

Marie shakes her head slowly.

MARIE

I see things all the time, but
never ghosts.

MALCOLM

Huh. Lucky. I see ghosts all the
time.

Both Niels and Marie look at him as though he's putting them
on. Katie shifts uncomfortably.

NIELS

You do not.

MALCOLM

Yeah, I do. It's why we moved here
actually. Wisconsin was just
rattling with 'em.

MARIE

Do they look like smoke or people?

MALCOLM

Sometimes like people. Sometimes I
just see that they've moved
something. Sometimes I hear them
playing my guitar.

Marie smiles.

MARIE

Are they any good?

MALCOLM

There's nothing good at all about
them. They are pure evil.

Niels notices Katie's discomfort.

NIELS

Do you see them too?

Katie ignores the question.

MALCOLM

One of them actually followed us
here.

Katie BANGS the chest closed.

MALCOLM

(to Marie)

What do you see?

NIELS

After watching this special on
atomic warfare, she started seeing
bombs.

Niels laughs. Malcolm looks at her quite seriously.

MALCOLM

Really?

MARIE

(tries to play it down)
I know it isn't real, of course.

MALCOLM

How can you be certain?

MARIE

I don't know, you just do. What do
your ghosts do?

KATIE

That's enough talk about ghosts.
We don't want them to be afraid of
coming over here.

She casts a meaningful look at Malcolm.

The DOORBELL rings. Katie answers it to find Einstein
standing on the porch.

EINSTEIN

Niels and Marie need to come home.
Now.

Katie opens the door wider and Einstein skulks inside.

NIELS

We don't feel like it.

MARIE

(to Malcolm)
We're supposed to see some
psychologists who want to find out
if we're gifted or something.

KATIE

Oh, you're gifted, you don't need a
psychologist to know that.

EINSTEIN

No, they're not.

MALCOLM
I hate psychologists.

MARIE
We do too.

MALCOLM
Are you scared?

NIELS
No, we stayed up last night and
rehearsed.

Katie laughs, not realizing how serious they are.

MALCOLM
Katie, get those books we found for
Einstein.

EINSTEIN
I don't have time to read anything
outside of what we're covering in
school and what my tutor--

NIELS
--Victoria's Secret takes up all of
his time.

Malcolm grins as Einstein blushes.

Katie presents him with a stack of books.

Einstein PAUSES on HAWKING'S *A Brief History of Time*.

EINSTEIN
I read that like five years ago.

Malcolm starts to set it aside when a PHOTO falls out.

Einstein picks it up.

EINSTEIN
Is this really you and Hawking?

MALCOLM
Yeah, I sat in on a lecture. Mad
as a box of frogs.

EINSTEIN
How did you get in?

MALCOLM

Well it was tough with all the
computer wankers lining up at
Cambridge four months in advance...

Malcolm stops, realizing he's just defined Einstein.

EINSTEIN

You studied at Cambridge?

MALCOLM

For a time. If you've read it then
you should try these.

He hands him a PILE OF NIETZSCHE. Einstein looks at the
books in repugnance.

MALCOLM

(shrugging)

Some of Hawking's favorites.

Einstein picks one up and flips through it.

MALCOLM

I have photos of Hawking at the pub
with us too, but they were in that
journal...

Marie guiltily bites her lip.

INT. CAR-NIGHT

Marie sits in the back seat and her mother glances at her
nervously.

Niels plays with marbles in one hand.

JOYCE

What are those?

NIELS

Malcolm gave them to me.

JOYCE

You know how to play?

NIELS

They're not for *playing*.

NIELS

Malcolm says Dali would fall asleep with marbles in his hand and a plate underneath and as soon as he dropped it, he'd wake up and paint his dreams.

JOYCE

That's why his paintings are so weird?

NIELS

Yeah, because he believed that when you create something you don't have to know the meaning. Your id will know even if you don't.

JOYCE

Why don't you ever get this excited about our dinner table topics?

NIELS

Who cares about businessmen and politicians?

JOYCE

You may think you don't care, but one of these days you're going to realize how much all of this knowledge has helped you succeed.

NIELS

Succeed at what?

JOYCE

Life.

Joyce glances again at Marie in the rearview.

JOYCE

You're awfully quiet back there.

Marie ignores her and stares out the window.

JOYCE

Marie! Don't even think about pulling that silent stuff with the psychologist today.

MARIE

Are you still going to the church retreat this weekend? Without dad?

They stare each other down in the rearview mirror. Joyce loses.

JOYCE
(to Niels)
What other artists do you like?

NIELS
Picasso.

JOYCE
Of course. Picasso.

INT. OFFICE-DAY

Marie and Niels sit in front of a PSYCHOLOGIST, 30's at a large table.

Joyce sits off to the side, her crossed leg bobbing up and down nervously.

The psychologist has placed puzzle pieces in front of Marie. She sets out a timer.

Niels speaks to Marie, subtitles translate their speech.

NIELS
Beezle ood a oozlooop.
(Don't do the puzzle)

MARIE
Eellaa ood ti onnwraaa.
(I'll do it incorrectly.)

The psychologist smiles nervously at Joyce.

PSYCHOLOGIST
What are they doing?

Joyce's irritation grows.

JOYCE
They're speaking a language they
invented. They think they need
more of a culture.

The Psychologist looks them over thoughtfully.

Marie places the pieces so that they form a giant arrow pointing directly at the Psychologist.

The Psychologist looks uncomfortable.

MARIE
Soggy esh a puthuk no tirsh.
(Gross, she has ketchup on
her shirt)

Niels points directly at the stain.

NIELS
You have some ketchup on your
shirt.

The Psychologist looks down and begins rubbing her shirt.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Marie and Niels sit on the couch. Their mother stands beside them, their father across from them.

JOYCE
Why do you always do this?

They stare straight ahead.

JOYCE
Be average then. I would have
jumped at the opportunities you two
have. You think this is the life I
wanted? I would have liked to have
had the freedom to do what you can.

Marie and Niels look at each other, barely suppressing grins.

JOYCE
It's not funny.

NIELS
We've never known freedom.

Marie really starts laughing.

DAN
Irregardless of how amusing you
find this--

JOYCE
It's regardless. Irregardless
isn't a word.

DAN
Why is it in the dictionary then?

Joyce walks to a shelf and removes the dictionary.

DAN
Are you serious? Right now?

Marie and Niels use this as an opportunity to escape.

Niels bolts, Marie moves more slowly; watching her parents.

JOYCE
It's not in here.

She opens a page and Dan's face turns red.

DAN
Well we can't all be a Goddamn
valedictorian.

JOYCE
I had a full ride to Yale, you
didn't want me to go.

DAN
I encouraged you to go.

JOYCE
No, you got me pregnant. Then I was
stuck.

DAN
I got you pregnant? You think I
got you pregnant on purpose?

Marie stands in the door and watches them. They're oblivious
to her presence.

JOYCE
I accepted my fate and I started
making sacrifices so that the kids
could do things differently. I
wanted them to have opportunities--

DAN
--The kids couldn't care less about
our opportunities.

Marie soaks this in, but what she thinks about it, is
difficult to discern from her expression.

JOYCE
You're wrong. They care. At least
they did until the Osbournes moved
in.

Dan finally sees Marie, frozen in the doorway.

DAN

Marie.

She runs like mad out of the room.

They stare at each other in silence.

JOYCE

How much did she hear?

DAN

All of it. As usual.

INT. SIXTH GRADE CLASS - DAY

Marie peeks inside her empty classroom. The sun is just rising.

SOUNDS of STUDENTS TALKING drift through the windows.

She creeps up to Mrs. Silberstein's desk and opens a drawer:

There are stamps, stickers, a candy bar, even a small bottle of perfume.

Marie pauses, tempted.

She opens another to find a pile of un-graded exams.

Marie is again tempted, touches one, then quickly closes it.

She hurriedly opens all of the drawers.

She discovers MALCOLM'S JOURNAL in the last one just as the LIGHT comes on.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

Drop it!

She drops the journal and it BOUNCES IN SLOW MOTION as Mrs. Silberstein steps inside.

Mrs. Silberstein walks to the desk and picks up the journal, hugging it to her chest.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

Marie, you're a smart girl, and you don't need to use associations with rock stars to earn the respect of your peers.

Marie looks at her seriously.

MARIE

Yes. I do. But, also, that journal, it's not actually mine. I need to give it back to someone.

MRS. SILBERSTEIN

You're not getting it back today.

Mrs. Silberstein points to the door and Marie pauses only for a moment before racing outside.

As soon as she exits Mrs. Silberstein opens the JOURNAL, removes a bookmark and continues reading.

She laughs to herself and shakes her head as she holds up a PHOTOGRAPH OF NUDE BAND MEMBERS PLAYING ON STAGE.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Marie walks through the CROWD OF STUDENTS, her head down.

Cathy and the cheer-squad call out to her as she passes.

CATHY

Hi, Marie!

CHEER SQUAD

Hi Marie!

Marvin walks by with his friends.

MARVIN

Hey, Marie. Any chance you could get Malcolm to play here for our end of the year dance?

She shrugs, smiles as more and more people greet her.

INT. PASCAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marie knocks on the door and peeks inside.

Pascal dances a modern dance. Bongos play in the background.

MARIE

What are you doing?

PASCAL

It's experimental.

MARIE

It's weird.

Marie sniffs.

MARIE
Are you smoking pot?

PASCAL
It's incense.

Bras are spread out across her bed and several large sacks lean against it.

MARIE
What's all this?

Pascal shrugs.

PASCAL
Every time they have a fight, dad goes shopping.

MARIE
Why doesn't he shop for me?

PASCAL
He wanted to, but mom told him you're too young for a bra.

MARIE
No I'm not.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Pascal is up and beats her to the door.

EXT. GEBHARDT DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Marie stands on the porch and watches SAM rev his MOPED.

Pascal primps in the doorway behind her.

MARIE
That Asshole?

Then. Hopeful.

MARIE
You hate him.

PASCAL
Shhh. Don't call him that.

MARIE
It's what you called him?

Pascal gets on the back of Sam's MOPED. She has trouble with her platform sandals.

They speed off and Marie stares up at the HOUSE.

-In one room Einstein ignores his tutor and reads *The Genealogy of Morals*. He no longer wears his trademark suit and glasses.

-In the garage Niels wears goggles and uses a BLOW TORCH to mold GIANT METAL SCULPTURES.

-Marie walks across the yard and KNOCKS on Malcolm's door.

The door opens and she disappears into the bright, imaginative belly.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - NIGHT

Malcolm sits on the couch and strums his guitar.

Katie sits in the middle of the floor sculpting clay pots.

Marie stands awkwardly between them.

KATIE

Come help.

MARIE

I need to tell you something.

They stop what they're doing, giving her their full attention.

MARIE

You're the only people I now who really do that.

KATIE

Do what, sweetie?

MARIE

You listen. To me. Whatever I say. You *really* listen.

Marie sighs.

MARIE

And in ten seconds you're going to hate me.

KATIE
We could never--

MARIE
--You know that missing journal?

Malcolm and Katie exchange quick glances.

MARIE
I have it. Well I had it. It was
confiscated at school.

KATIE
(sharply)
Why did you take it?

MARIE
I needed proof.

Malcolm leans in with interest.

MALCOLM
Proof?

MARIE
That you're real. That we're
neighbors...and that we're friends

KATIE
That journal had all of our *wedding*
photos in it. It had all of
Malcolm's concert photos. You
can't just go into people's houses
and--

Malcolm watches Marie keenly as she backs toward the door.

MALCOLM
Katie was the most beautiful woman
I'd ever seen.

KATIE
No. What she did was wrong. You
can't just philosophize this one
away--

MALCOLM
--Wouldn't even have met her if she
hadn't stolen her best friend's
concert ticket.

Katie's eyes narrow.

MALCOLM

She might not have been caught
either if that photo of us snogging
backstage hadn't ended up in the
local paper.

KATIE

You have a good memory when you
want to Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Maybe that's the only thing that
unites all of us; The struggle of
gaining acceptance.

Marie smiles meekly.

MALCOLM

Well, that and music.

KATIE

At least we know where it is and we
can get it back.

MARIE

I'll get it back. Some of the kids
were wondering if maybe you would
hold a concert at the school. I
know if you came for even an hour,
my teacher, she'd give it to you
personally.

KATIE

A concert?

MALCOLM

(mulling it over)
Why not?

KATIE

(cross)
We can't have a concert when we
don't even know if we'll still be
here.

MARIE

You're leaving?

MALCOLM

No. Don't mind her.

Katie's pot breaks and she wads the pieces up and exits the
room.

MALCOLM

A concert would do us all a bit of good around here.

MARIE

Seriously?

They exchange grins.

EXT. ROAD-NIGHT

Sam parks the moped next to parked cars, a total hidden, make-out zone.

PASCAL

What are we doing?

SAM

C'mon flower child. Don't tell me you've never been here before.

PASCAL

I thought we were going out to eat?

SAM

We will, but I want to show you something first.

She takes his hand and follows him along a DARK TRAIL.

They come to a LAKE near a SMALL BOAT. Sam gets in it.

PASCAL

What are you doing?

SAM

I'm going to paddle you out to a remote place and kill you.

PASCAL

That's not funny.

SAM

I'm kidding. Now c'mon. A raccoon is going to be in the food before we even get there.

Sam pulls a bottle of wine out of a bag in the boat.

SAM

And I'm going to get killed when they find this missing, but it's worth it because it's for our dinner.

PASCAL

We're having a picnic?

SAM

A moonlight dinner. If it's still there.

PASCAL

That's sweet.

SAM

Will you get in?

Pascal gets in and he starts paddling across the lake.

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marie stares at the ceiling. ARGUING is heard above her head.

Niels appears in her room with a blanket and a pillow.

NIELS

Get your stuff. We're moving.

EXT. SUV - NIGHT

Niels, Einstein, and Marie sleep inside the large family SUV.

Joyce and Dan stand outside in their night apparel. They tap on the windows

JOYCE

You kids come inside right now!

Niels cracks the window.

NIELS

We live here now, mom.

EINSTEIN

We'll give you back the keys in the morning.

Dan fishes in his pocket but comes up empty-handed.

Niels dangles the keys in front of the window and grins.

DAN
Unlock these doors!

A NEIGHBOR'S light comes on. Then another.

Joyce goes to the drivers side and tries to reason with Marie.

JOYCE
Sweetie, come on and hit unlock.

Marie leans on the HORN. Another NEIGHBOR'S LIGHT comes on.

TWO NEIGHBOR'S step onto their porch.

DAN
Malcolm put you up to this?

EINSTEIN
You're not going to win this one,
Dan. Now go inside and we'll
discuss this tomorrow like adults.

Dan tries the door again and again Marie LEANS on the horn.

Malcolm and Katie come out onto their porch.

JOYCE
Leave them. They'll come in when
they get hungry.

Dan looks angrily at the Blacks.

DAN
Don't you dare feed them!

They return inside and the neighbors do as well.

Katie and Malcolm watch them for a moment, but eventually they too return inside.

NIELS
Where's Pascal?

MARIE
She never came back from her date
with the asshole.

NIELS
Mom and dad didn't even notice.

MARIE
We have the keys, we could look for
her.

EINSTEIN
Dad will call the cops if this car
leaves the driveway.

MARIE
But it's after two?

EINSTEIN
She'll be fine.

NIELS
Why didn't Malcolm or Katie come
and talk to us?

MARIE
(quickly)
They're not mad.

EINSTEIN
Why would they be?

MARIE
They're going to hold a concert at
school.

NIELS
He said that?

MARIE
Yeah.

EINSTEIN
You're making that up. Go to
sleep. Now.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Marie wakes up in time to see Pascal walking towards them.

MARIE
Pascal.

Niels sits up groggily.

NIELS
Where?

Marie points and they see her slowly coming up the sidewalk.

Einstein opens the door.

EINSTEIN
(whispers)
Where have you been all night?

Pascal seems lost in a dream. She's smiling, quiet, happy.

She goes inside the house.

They all exit the wagon and enter the house; pillows and blankets in tow.

INT. GEBHARDT HOUSE - DAY

Niels and Einstein head upstairs.

Marie tip-toes into the kitchen and looks at the buffet-style breakfast her mom has prepared.

Pascal is already at the table.

JOYCE
Hey sweetie, I knew you guys would
be hungry when you came in.

Marie won't look at her so Joyce turns to Pascal.

JOYCE
Must be uncomfortable sleeping in a
car all night.

Joyce looks at her watch.

JOYCE
I have to get going. Appointment at
the church.

She exits the kitchen as Dan enters.

DAN
How are my girls?

PASCAL
Fantastic!

Marie's eyes narrow as she watches her dad flip pancakes.

MARIE
What are you up to?

DAN
What are we up to? Do we have to
be up to anything to make our sweet
ones a homemade breakfast?

MARIE

Usually.

Dan flips a pancake, doesn't respond.

INT. GEBHARDT DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The children sit around the kitchen table, only Pascal is missing. Dan and Joyce sit at each end. They look exhausted.

MARIE

Where's Pascal?

JOYCE

She's sleeping since she didn't get any in the car.

Niels and Marie exchange smirks.

Einstein stands.

EINSTEIN

You forgot to give us a topic this morning so we've chosen our own.

JOYCE

What?

EINSTEIN

Socialist philosophers.

DAN

Jesus.

JOYCE

Skip it. Let's just eat.

DAN

I can't take this anymore.

Dan exits the dining room.

EINSTEIN

Where is he going?

MARIE

Probably bra shopping.

JOYCE

Enough.

Niels sits on the edge of his seat, straining to see out of the window.

NIELS

Why is he going to Malcolm's?

JOYCE

We've decided you don't need to spending quite so much time over there.

EINSTEIN

What? How can you just make a decision like that?

JOYCE

I know he may seem like something of a celebrity figure.

NIELS

We've never cared about that. He *knows* things, mom. He's smarter than our tutors.

MARIE

And he *cares* about us.

JOYCE

He must seem very exciting, but your father's been doing some checking--

EINSTEIN

--Oh my God. Tax evasion?

JOYCE

It's a bit more serious than that.

Niels gets up from the table and exits.

JOYCE

You can't just walk off from supper like that, mister!

EINSTEIN

You just can't handle the fact that someone doesn't buy your beliefs. Malcolm's a nonsecular, nonconformist and so what if he doesn't fucking pay his taxes?

JOYCE

Enough.

Einstein walks out too.

Joyce stands, realizes she can't do anything and sits back down.

Marie stares at her as she leans to watch her dad through the window.

His voice rises and falls in anger but what he says can't be discerned.

Joyce notices Marie watching her and attempts a smile.

Marie gets up from the table, leaving her sitting there, alone. Joyce clears her throat and then returns to cutting her food into careful bite-sized pieces.

INT. PASCAL'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

Marie enters her sister's room and sees Pascal lying on her bed in the dark.

PASCAL

I'm awake.

Marie enters, closing the door behind her.

MARIE

Can I get in?

Pascal lifts the quilt and Marie climbs in with her sister.

PASCAL

Do I look different to you?

MARIE

No. You were lucky we decided to run away last night and mom and dad didn't catch you.

PASCAL

You ran away to the car?

MARIE

And now they've decided we can't spend time with Malcolm and Katie.

PASCAL

They're just scared.

MARIE

Of what?

Pascal studies Marie's face.

PASCAL

Losing us. Mom and dad are getting divorced.

Marie sits up in bed.

MARIE

Did they tell you that?

PASCAL

No, but dad's having sex with Jasmine, the sexy bra lady.

MARIE

How do *you* know?

PASCAL

The kids at school see them at the mall together.

MARIE

They *have sex* at the mall?

PASCAL

Of course not, people can just tell.

MARIE

How?

PASCAL

Because you act differently afterwards. You look different afterwards.

MARIE

Oh my God. You had sex with the asshole? We're all falling apart.

PASCAL

He's not an asshole. Go to sleep, Marie.

Marie lies back down but turns over so that she's not looking at her sister. She's wide awake.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The entire Gebhardt clan sit in a row towards the front of the church.

Pastor Wagner is in the middle of his sermon and everyone appears to be caught up in it.

Marie looks at Einstein who acts as though he has a bullet in the gut and the pain gets more intense as Pastor Wagner continues preaching.

Marie stares at her father's profile.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE CHANGING ROOM - DAY

Her father and Jasmine, the sales clerk, are locked in an embrace up against the mirror of the changing room.

Jasmine drops the bras she's been holding and a CUSTOMER beats on the door.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Marie's father looks at her and winks. Marie looks as though she may vomit.

She turns back to the Pastor.

PASTOR WAGNER

The resounding voice of God calls
to us each and every day and if you
don't believe me...

Marie stares at her mother's profile, Joyce sighs, as though she's caught up in the sermon.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Pastor Wagner and Marie's mother are engaged in a passionate kiss.

He picks her up and sets her on the bench causing the beakers and test tubes to clink together rhythmically.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Joyce notices Marie's expression and she motions for her to direct her attention to the sermon.

Sam is with a group of boys two pews ahead of the Gebhardt's.

Pascal smiles at him and blushes.

He and several boys turn to look at Pascal with grins.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Pascal exits the church with Marie, she stretches her dancer limbs with the help of the car bumper.

Einstein leans against it, sulkily reading. Niels sits up front honking the horn.

A GROUP OF TEENAGE BOYS pass.

FRECKLED BOY
Hi Pascal.

SHORT BOY
Exotic name Pascal.

FRECKLED BOY
Means God's playground in Latin.

EINSTEIN
(clueless)
No, it doesn't.

Pascal ignores them but walks over to Sam as he approaches the car. She pushes him.

PASCAL
Did you tell them?

Sam looks shocked. But also, guilty.

SAM
Tell them what?

Pascal rolls her eyes and climbs into the car.

PASCAL
I should have known. You're immature.

She slams the door, as Joyce and Dan come out. He skulks away.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dan drives, Joyce sits next to him.

Marie sits in the middle back.

JOYCE
What did you think of the sermon guys?

No one answers her.

As they start to pull out of the church Einstein rolls down the window and SHOUTS at the departing PARISHIONERS.

EINSTEIN
You're all a flock of sheep! A
flock of sheep following the herd.

Dan can't get the windows up fast enough.

DAN
What are you doing?

EINSTEIN
Come on, turn off the child safety
locks.

DAN
Sit the hell down! Now listen,
I've overlooked the attitude and
the makeup and the clothes and the--

PASCAL
--Everyone my age is wearing make
up.

DAN
I was talking to your brother.

Einstein rubs his eyes, and a little eye-liner does indeed smudge.

JOYCE
Dan.

DAN
It's time we told them the truth
about Malcolm.

Dan pulls into the driveway.

JOYCE
Stay in the car and hear your
father out.

DAN
Now listen I'm going to tell you
something you may not want to hear.

NIELS
I'm going to Malcolm's. It doesn't
matter what you say.

JOYCE

You need to listen to your father first.

EINSTEIN

So Malcolm's wanted for tax evasion. So is everyone. So what?

JOYCE

It's not tax evasion.

DAN

Well actually he is, but that's beside the point.

PASCAL

What then? What did you find on Malcolm that's so bad that we're all being banned?

DAN

You've heard of delusions?

PASCAL

Of course we know what delusions are.

EINSTEIN

God, just because he's not like you doesn't mean he's got something wrong with him.

JOYCE

Has Malcolm ever acted out around you? Become violent or threatening?

NIELS

What?

DAN

Malcolm's a very, very delusional man.

JOYCE

And when those delusions come into question he's been known to turn very violent.

EISNTEIN

That's ridiculous.

DAN

He put a man in the hospital. A man he accused of sending him evil spirits.

JOYCE

A delusional person can sometimes become violent if what they imagine to be true is contradicted.

Niels starts to exit the car.

JOYCE

Wait.

DAN

It's also unlikely Malcolm ever did any of the things he's claiming. His last home was a mental institution.

PASCAL

Katie's been with him for years? She would say something if it weren't true.

Dan shakes his head.

DAN

Not if she wanted to protect him.

EINSTEIN

Or a fresh start...

PASCAL

You're saying that she just goes along with it?

DAN

Sometimes, yes. But even she...has Malcolm ever talked to you about the ghosts? It's why they moved in the first place.

Marie and Niels exchange quick looks.

NIELS

I don't care what you say.

Niels gets out the car and heads straight for Malcolm's.

Joyce gets out too.

JOYCE

Niels!

EINSTEIN

He did study at Cambridge. He knows Hawking.

Dan shakes his head.

EINSTEIN

I don't believe you. I saw the photo.

DAN

It's possible he met Hawking at a book signing. But the bulk of it is the result of a very creative person...perhaps he could've been a songwriter if he'd--

EINSTEIN

Why would anyone do that?

JOYCE

A fantasy is often better than reality and people will go to great lengths to maintain their fantasies.

PASCAL

But it's more than that. He knows things.

DAN

From what I saw he's quite a collector. I would guess he's created this world off of ebay.

JOYCE

Have you never seen him do anything strange?

They all fall silent.

PASCAL

But...that's why we liked him.

EINSTEIN

(to Pascal)

God! He mentioned ghosts, a lot!

PASCAL

(to her parents)

If you're lying about this too...

Pascal gets out of the car, SLAMMING the door behind her.

Einstein reluctantly follows her.

Only Marie remains. Dan smiles at her sympathetically.

MARIE

How do we know you're not
delusional?

His smile fades.

EXT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Niels leans on the doorbell. Joyce stands on the sidewalk.

JOYCE

Niels. They clearly don't want to
be bothered today, now come on.

Niels opens the screen door and presses his nose against the glass.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Papers and books lay everywhere, the house is in disarray.
It looks like someone left in a hurry.

EXT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Niels turns to his mom.

NIELS

What did dad say to him?

He runs around to the side of the house, jumping up to see in the windows. All rooms are empty or full of boxes.

JOYCE

Niels!

NIELS

He wouldn't have left without
saying good-bye. What did you do?

JOYCE

I don't think they're gone, honey.

NIELS

Why is it empty then?

Marie stands next to him.

MARIE

He was going to put on a concert at school. They wouldn't have just left.

NIELS

They left right after dad yelled at him. He probably threatened to have him arrested for something, like not paying his taxes.

JOYCE

Your father didn't threaten them and I'm sure they're coming back. Now come on home and wait.

Niels stares at her in sheer hate.

NIELS

I'm never coming home.

Niels walks to Malcolm's front porch and sits on it. Marie goes with him. Again, they're in for a good, long squat.

Joyce watches them but says nothing and returns to the house.

EXT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - NIGHT

Niels and Marie still squat on the porch.

Einstein comes out, his glasses back on.

EINSTEIN

He's not coming back now that people know. Why don't you come in and eat?

NIELS

Mom and dad are lying.

EINSTEIN

I'm afraid they aren't.

NIELS

How do you know?

EINSTEIN

Because it all just makes sense. Nothing even really comes up about him on google, except for a wiki page, and I'm sure he created it.

MARIE

What about the concert he promised to do, why would he do that if he were lying?

EINSTEIN

There was never going to be any concert. He knew that and that's why they left now.

NIELS

If you believe that, then you don't know him.

EINSTEIN

If he was lying about everything, then neither do you.

He goes back inside the house. Marie and Niels continue to squat.

NIELS

I know you took his journal, where is it?

MARIE

Confiscated at school.

Niels falls somber.

MARIE

I am hungry.

NIELS

So go, you big baby.

Marie gets up and goes inside.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Niels lies in the tree house in a sleeping bag.

He starts to nod off and MARBLES fall out of his hand.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Marie plays tetherball alone. Some KIDS walk by.

KID

Where'd your "rock-star" best friend go? Celebrity rehab?

The kid does air quotes when he says 'rock star'. Marie does them back.

MARIE
"Fuck off."

KID
I liked you better when you didn't talk.

Martin walks by, and he pauses.

MARTIN
What's going on?

MARIE
(a little startled)
Nothing.

The BELL rings and the kids file past her in silence. Marie notices Martin still lingers.

MARTIN
Hurry up! We're going to be late for class.

She runs to catch up with him.

EXT. SCHOOL SIDEWALK - DAY

Marie walks home with Pascal. Pascal still wears light make-up, looks a little boho, but much more subtle.

A CAR SPEEDS by and Sam sits in it.

A GIRL leans her head out the window as they screech by.

GIRL
Slut!

Pascal doesn't react.

PASCAL
I've got to get into Juilliard.

MARIE
Did you read that book mom gave you?

Pascal winces.

PASCAL
God, no! If she knew anything she
wouldn't have ended up here. With
all of us.

INT. PASCAL'S BEDROOM - DAY

THE BOOK, *Why He Won't Buy the Cow* is being used as door
stop.

EXT. GEBHARDT DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Pascal opens the front door.

Marie pauses on the Black's house; the grass is overgrown.

MARIE
Think they'll ever come back?

PASCAL
Doubt it.

Marie looks through the windows at the activity in her own
house.

Einstein sits in one room working with a tutor. He no longer
wears his suit and tie but the trademark glasses are back.

Pascal practices ballet in another room, she's returned to
classical.

Niels sits in the tree house reading a book. He's set up
enough supplies to survive an apocalypse. He's not going
inside any time soon.

INT. GEBHARDT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Einstein, Marie and Pascal sit awkwardly on the couch and
chairs.

Dan and Joyce stand across from them.

Pastor Wagner stands off to one side.

EINSTEIN
(whispers)
Why is he here?

JOYCE
For spiritual guidance.

PASTOR WAGNER
Isn't there one missing?

MARIE
Niels' moved.

PASTOR WAGNER
To where?

No one answers him.

JOYCE
It's fine, we'll tell him later.

DAN
We have something important to tell
you.

PASCAL
I knew it, you're getting a
divorce!

Pascal gets up off the couch and exits.

DAN
Wait, Pascal!

JOYCE
I'll get her.

Joyce exits after her.

EINSTEIN
So you are?

DAN
Well, let's just wait until
Pascal's back in here.

MARIE
Are you or aren't you?

Dan's caught, he can't announce anything without Joyce.

PASTOR WAGNER
(quickly)
I heard about your friend.

They look at Pastor Wagner surprised, they'd forgotten he was
present.

PASTOR WAGNER
The one who used to live next door.

MARIE

Malcolm.

Pascal returns and stands somberly in one corner while Joyce stands next to Dan.

PASTOR WAGNER

Yes, Malcolm. Such a sad thing.
You can only pray for someone like
that to get better.

MARIE

What?

PASTOR WAGNER

(to Dan)

I thought you had explained it?

DAN

They know about his delusions.

MARIE

What about it?

PASTOR WAGNER

Well it's a very debilitating
disease that shouldn't be taken
lightly. And you shouldn't blame
him.

EINSTEIN

Disorder.

PASTOR WAGNER

What?

EINSTEIN

It's not a disease it's a disorder.

PASTOR WAGNER

A disorder, okay. But it's a
serious disorder; one that blurs
reality.

MARIE

How does that make him any
different from you?

Pascal looks at her and bites her lip to suppress a grin.

DAN

Well, we know what's what is how.

PASCAL
No, you don't.

DAN
Yes, we do, we are the adults in
this house and don't you--

Marie stands up, looks determined, as the fighting erupts.

MARIE
Mom's been having sex with our
spiritual guide!

She immediately wants to take it back.

DAN
What did you say?

EXT. GEBHARDT HOUSE - NIGHT

The scene through the window is CHAOTIC. Dan and Joyce SHOUT
and Joyce blocks Pastor Wagner from Dan's reach.

Pascal stands on the couch YELLING.

Einstein tries to hold back his father.

The wind picks up, blowing papers into the tree house.

Niels sits up and listens.

EXT. GEBHARDT HOUSE - NIGHT

Amidst the chaos Marie quietly moves to the window and looks
out.

Malcolm Black stands on the sidewalk taking in the scene
inside the Gebhardt living room.

Marie quietly slips outside.

EXT. GEBHARDT HOUSE - NIGHT

Marie places her hand in Malcolm's.

MARIE
I knew you wouldn't just leave us
like that.

They walk towards the tree house.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Niels stares at Malcolm from the tree house, his feet dangling over the edge.

Niels lowers the ladder and Malcolm and Marie climb up.

The three of them lie on their backs looking at the stars.

NIELS

Where were you?

MALCOLM

I got sick. I had to go away for awhile.

Niels and Marie exchange looks.

MARIE

Did Katie go with you?

MALCOLM

Of course. She's in the house packing right now.

MARIE

You're not staying?

Malcolm shakes his head.

MALCOLM

No, there's something wrong with that house.

Marie and Niels are quiet.

MARIE

There's something wrong with our house too.

MALCOLM

What is it?

MARIE

I don't know. But it sort of got better when you moved in and then it got worse when you left.

MALCOLM

How did it get worse?

MARIE

Mom and dad are getting divorced.

NIELS

They are?

Marie nods.

NIELS

Where will we live?

MARIE

Maybe here.

MALCOLM

You alright with that?

MARIE

It will be quieter.

Malcolm nods.

MALCOLM

What else?

MARIE

Then Pascal started getting teased at school so bad that she wanted to quit. She wants to start Juilliard early just to get away.

MALCOLM

Teased for what?

NIELS

She went out with some guy and he told some people some stuff and then everyone started calling her names or something.

MALCOLM

What's his name?

MARIE

Sam Kaplan.

NIELS

He lives behind us, he used to bully Marie on the way home.

MALCOLM

And then what?

MARIE

Niels moved out here and Einstein went back to being an A-hole.

MALCOLM
You live out here now?

Niels nods. Malcolm checks it out.

MALCOLM
Nice.

Einstein and Pascal walk outside and squint at the tree house.

EINSTEIN
Marie?

MARIE
Malcolm's back!

Einstein stops short. He looks happy at first; then angry.

EINSTEIN
Inside. Now. You too Niels.

MARIE
(to Malcolm)
See?

NIELS
Don't worry. They can't get up here unless I lower the ladder.

EINSTEIN
Come down, it isn't safe.

Pascal and Einstein gaze at Malcolm nervously.

MALCOLM
Well, don't be such strangers.

NIELS
Mom and dad told them some lies about you.

MALCOLM
I don't understand--

Malcolm lowers the ladder and climbs down.

Einstein's confidence grows.

EINSTEIN
--Dad called some people at...that place you were at before you came here.

NIELS
Leave him alone.

Pascal starts to back away.

PASCAL
You said you moved here to get away
from evil spirits?

MALCOLM
That's true.

EINSTEIN
There aren't any evil spirits just
like you never wrote songs for the
Stones.

PASCAL
Einstein, that's enough.

MARIE
Yes, he did.

EINSTEIN
You never did any of it, did you?

MALCOLM
(confused)
We have a lot of packing to do.

Einstein and Pascal watch him walk back to his yard.

PASCAL
Now come inside.

NIELS
Why are you always such assholes?

Marie pulls the ladder back up.

MARIE
I'm staying.

PASCAL
It's supposed to rain tonight.

EINSTEIN
Leave them. They can get soaking
wet if that's what they want.

Einstein and Pascal return to the house.

INT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

MARIE
He did do those things though.

NIELS
It doesn't even matter.

Marie settles in for the night.

EXT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

Marie and Niels walk onto the porch. The door is open.

INT. MALCOLM BLACK'S - DAY

The living room is empty.

MARIE
They've left without saying good-
bye again.

NIELS
After what Einstein said, what do
you expect?

They hear *music* playing in another room.

They follow the sound to...

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Einstein and Pascal sit in front of an old movie projector.

On the wall is footage of Malcolm on stage with the Stones.

The film changes to biking through India with Katie.

And then the Cambridge Campus.

No one says anything and the footage ends.

EINSTEIN
He left us each something.

PASCAL
He left a bone for me and Einstein.

NIELS
What does it say?

EINSTEIN
Mine says 'Everything You Can
Imagine is Real.'

Niels grins.

NIELS
Picasso.

EINSTEIN
Yeah. He left you his art books.

PASCAL
He left a gift for you too Marie.

Pascal points in the corner at the taxidermied zebra.
She walks to it and sees a JOURNAL attached to it's neck.
She removes it.

INT. MARIE'S ROOM - DAY

Marie's tiny room is dominated by taxidermied zebra.

She sits on the bed with the journal.

The inside flap reads:

*To a quiet girl who sees everything. Here's a book to write
it down.*

INT. GEBHARDT DRIVEWAY - DAY

Dan walks up the steps and rings the doorbell.

Joyce answers the door.

DAN
Weird, ringing your own doorbell to
get your kids.

JOYCE
Not your doorbell any longer.

DAN
No, I guess--

The four kids push past their parents all carrying rafts and
they run for Dan's car.

JOYCE
Still your kids.

Dan let's out a big sigh.

DAN
You happy?

JOYCE
Getting there.

Jasmine, the bra-lady, laughs, looking a little overwhelmed as the four noisily wedge themselves into the backseat of the car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dan watches his kids through the rearview mirror for a few seconds before pulling out of the driveway.

DAN
How's school?

Groans erupt, and his question is disregarded.

PASCAL
I forgot my sunscreen!

JASMINE
I have sunscreen.

EINSTEIN
Dad. We staying at the same cabin
as last time?

DAN
I have a surprise for you.

He lifts up a basket from the front seat to reveal a PUPPY and the car fills with the inevitable 'Oohs' and 'Awws' that puppies always bring.

JASMINE
(whispers)
You're lucky. You get them for the
fun stuff. My kids only view see
me as the rule commander.

Dan squeezes her leg, Marie takes this in, looks away, embarrassed, but smiling.

INT. SCHOOL SIDEWALK - DAY

Sam appears looking sullen. He waits for Martin outside the school.

Marie walks out of the school and Sam quickly moves away from her and walks the other way.

MARIE
Bye, Martin.

MARTIN
(whispers)
He's scared of you now.

MARIE
Why?

MARTIN
Your friend threatened him.

Marie grins as Martin follows Sam in the opposite direction.

INT. JUILLIARD - DAY

Pascal performs a flawless and beautiful modern dance, not unlike the one Katie Black performed.

The auditorium is completely silent, this dance is for her, and for her alone.

INT. NIELS' ROOM - DAY

The floor space is filled with metal sculptures, and Niel's now utilizes a blow torch and face mask.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A line of HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS stand before easels, focusing on A MODEL in the middle.

Niels is dwarfed by them.

INT. EINSTEIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Einstein sits at a desk studying, original glasses, stressed expression, some things never change.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Einstein, Pascal, Niels and Marie pose for the camera.

They are finally all dressed and behaving like kids.

The camera flashes.

The photo has all of the kids fumbling to find their pose, eyes are closed, Pascal's mouth open.

Only Marie looks directly into the camera, smiling.

INT. BACKYARD - DAY

A puppy plays with Marie and Pascal in the yard. Niels walks out with a bone.

NIELS

Look what just arrived from
Cambodia this afternoon!

Pascal sits on the swing, as Marie snatches the bone out of his hand.

PASCAL

What does it say?

Marie reads.

MARIE

Chaos gives way to great change,
but change only happens when a
person is willing to have a voice.

PASCAL

Nice, who said it?

Marie grins.

MARIE

It says, 'Malcolm Black'.

She throws it to the puppy.

Paint It Black plays.

FADE OUT.