

ILLUSIONS

Written by

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SUPER: "Today I want you to think about all that you are instead of all that you are not."

FADE IN:

INT. MCGRATH HOME/SEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

A teenager's room filled with posters of bands, video games and basketball stars. Clothes crumpled everywhere. Sexy girls calendar on the wall.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
We can't do this anymore. You need to go somewhere else. Another school.

MAN (O.S.)  
It's not that bad.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
How would you know? I'm here and you're not.

MAN (O.S.)  
You're saying it's my fault?

SEAN (O.S.)  
Guys!

WOMAN (O.S.)  
I'm saying things would be a lot better if you wouldn't travel so much.

SEAN (O.S.)  
Enough!

MAN (O.S.)  
Come back here.

SEAN MCGRATH, 15, rushes in and slams the door shut. The argument goes on unintelligibly in the background.

Sean, a short, wiry Caucasian boy appears younger than his age. Angry all the time, but he hides it with a calm demeanor until it explodes at all the wrong times.

He sulks to his desk where he holds up a hand drawn picture of an airplane. Filled in color with markings labeling the plane "ESCAPE".

Sean puts the picture down and pulls wooden pieces out of his backpack. One piece cut out like the sides of an airplane. The markings on the wood matching the drawing.

Sean glues the cuttings together bringing his picture to life.

INT. TUCKER SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

SCHOOL BELL RINGS

A serene hall explodes with teenagers.

Sean steps out of one classroom into the shuffle. He sticks out in this crowd as a Caucasian in a sea of minority students.

Sean stops, looks around, then heads down a hallway far away from the crowd.

He opens a door to head outside.

RON (O.S.)  
Mr. Hendrick's' class isn't  
outside, Sean.

Sean stops in his tracks and smiles. It's a familiar voice. He spins around and sees RON WASHINGTON, 38, vice-principal. African American, athletic physique, former Army Sergeant.

His daily uniform now is a neatly pressed shirt, tie and slacks.

SEAN  
Ron. Hey. I was just feeling a  
little sick and need some fresh--

RON  
Cigarettes?

SEAN  
No, I--

Cigarettes fall out of Sean's coat pocket.

Ron grabs the cigarettes and waves Sean up the hallway.

RON  
Let's go.

SEAN  
Mr. Hendricks is that way.

Ron keeps walking.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Ron? Ron.

INT. TUCKER SCHOOL/RON WASHINGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

The classic school office. Long on paper and files, short on beauty or warmth.

Only sign of color is a Philadelphia 76'ers poster on the wall.

Sean drops into a wooden chair. He stares at Ron's Assistant Principal plaque on the desk. Chipped and worn.

Ron goes behind his desk and holds up the cigarette pack.

RON  
These things'll kill you.

SEAN  
Gonna die anyway.

RON  
Naturally or me ringing your neck.

SEAN  
Your call, Godfather.

Ron drops the pack in a drawer.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Aw, man. C'mon. I'm dyin' here.

Ron pulls out a bag of Peanut M and M's and tosses them to Sean.

RON  
Maybe this will calm your nicotine urges.

Sean digs into the sugar treats.

Ron sits across from Sean and pulls out his own bag of M and M's - plain.

SEAN  
How do you eat those? They're like hockey pucks.

RON  
Chocolate hockey pucks.  
(pointing to his bag)  
Those are too crunchy for me.

SEAN  
Battle sounds or something?

RON  
We all didn't crack up, okay?

SEAN  
What about Hendricks?

RON  
I'll tell him I found you smoking  
outside--again.

SEAN  
Fish gotta swim.

RON  
You're not a fish. How's the  
adjustment going?

SEAN  
I hate it here.

RON  
You hated the last school.

SEAN  
Private preppies ain't my thing. So  
the parental units sent me here.

RON  
They thought I could help.

SEAN  
The school's okay. No preppies, but  
some dudes want me gone.

RON  
It'll pass. Most students here  
couldn't care less about you.

SEAN  
Not all.

EXT. TUCKER SCHOOL YARD/BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

A court attached to a graffiti laden, one-level brick  
building.

White lines on the court barely visible. Baskets without nets. Cracked black tar court.

Sean and five AFRICAN AMERICAN TEENAGE BOYS play a rough game of basketball. No referees around, so the game is a bunch of guys crashing into one another heading toward the basket.

Sean dribbles toward the basket but is tripped by one of the teens.

Even with Sean sprawled on the ground, game rages on.

Sean re-joins the game and steals the basketball. He shoots a long ball that swooshes in, all net.

One Teen punches Sean in the stomach after the shot.

Sean tackles his assailant to the ground and punches the boy hard across his face several times.

The other teens scramble to pull Sean off, punching and swinging at him but few blows land for Sean is crazed.

A MALE TEACHER rushes out and pulls Sean off.

Sean swings wildly, hitting the teacher in the face by accident.

Everyone freezes.

EXT. TUCKER SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Ron pulls Sean to the side of the building. Just the two of them.

RON  
Why do you keep provoking them?

SEAN  
I can't play a game?

RON  
You know what I mean.

SEAN  
Showing them who I am and what I can do, okay?

RON  
Working great, I see. Chill.

SEAN  
Why's it on me to stop? What about  
them?

Ron pulls out his cellphone.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Oh, c'mon.

RON  
I can't let you go this time. You  
punched out Keenan pretty good. His  
parents will want to know what  
happened.

SEAN  
Tell'em their kid is a dick who  
called my white trash.

Ron does a one button call on his cell.

RON  
(on the phone)  
Yeah, Katrina. It's me.

INT. DAVID MCGRATH'S SUV - NIGHT

Sean sits in the backseat of his parent's SUV, earbuds on.

His parents, DAVID and KATRINA, mid-40's, Caucasian couple.  
Both in white collar work attire in the front seats.

David drives.

LONG PIN DROP SILENCE

Katrina motions Sean to take out the earbuds.

KATRINA  
Sean...Sean.

DAVID  
Sean!

Sean pulls them out and rolls his eyes.

KATRINA  
What's up with you?

SEAN  
Nothing.

DAVID  
Answer your mother, son.

SEAN  
Defending myself, okay? Those punks  
have been screwing with me since I  
got there. Just wanted to play a  
game and they turned it into a beat  
up the white kid session.

KATRINA  
Ron said that boy needed stitches.

SEAN  
Good.

KATRINA  
Not good.

DAVID  
You proved to them who you are,  
son. Showed your worth. Good.

Katrina glares at her husband.

KATRINA  
What?

DAVID  
A man's gotta do what a man's gotta  
do. Prove yourself. Show them who  
you are.

KATRINA  
Prove who you are.

DAVID  
That's right.  
(to Sean)  
You need to get through this  
semester and get back to your old  
school where they have teams.

SEAN  
Why'd you send me to a place that's  
got nothing? Just a crappy  
basketball court.

DAVID  
One semester, okay?

SEAN  
I didn't ask to go there.

KATRINA

We needed to do something. You lived in detention at the old school. Grades a mess.

SEAN

Wow, I'm doing so much better now. Thanks, Mom and Dad.

DAVID

Cut the lip.

KATRINA

Maybe he needs less sports and more father.

SEAN

Mom, chill.

DAVID

You're exaggerating again.

SEAN

It's okay, dad. I'm used to you not being around. If you were around it'd be real confusing.

DAVID

What's that supposed to mean, mister?

SEAN

Nothing.

DAVID

Let it out, boy.

SEAN

I'm done.

KATRINA

He's right. Being around would be very confusing for both of us.

DAVID

And you're around all the time. Need a good fit for helicopter wings. Give the boy some space.

KATRINA

Space. He's screwing up everywhere.

SEAN

Guys, I'm right here.

DAVID  
So you think I'm a bad father?

KATRINA  
I didn't say that.

SEAN  
Dad.

DAVID  
You didn't need to.

SEAN  
DAD!

DEAFENING CAR CRASH

CAR HORN

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A two-level home, basic furnishings. Bachelor pad chic with bare minimums. The big screen TV and game console the centerpiece of the living room. Sparse but livable.

Entering the living room holding a large box is ANDRE MAYFIELD, 16, African American teen with a short haircut and chiseled features of an athlete. The weight of his life makes him appear older. In many ways, he's far too old for his own good.

Andre puts the box near another box and a backpack on a table.

He looks around the living room, then sits as if waiting for an executioner.

Ron enters.

RON  
Hey, Andre. Sorry, I'm late. Issue at school.

Ron points to the pile on the table.

RON (CONT'D)  
You don't waste time.

ANDRE  
Gotta travel light. One box I never unpacked.

RON  
Annie tell you where your next  
placement is?

ANDRE  
No.

RON  
I guess that's what this is about.

Ron holds a manila envelope.

Andre stares at the envelope, then takes it.

He pulls out the letter, then his jaw drops.

RON (CONT'D)  
No more placements, you're staying  
here indefinitely.

ANDRE  
Are you adopting me?

RON  
We'll see.

Andre swallows hard then rushes into a bear hug.

RON (CONT'D)  
Let's party.

INT. PAPA'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A cozy, very Italian place with Old World sepia pictures  
splattered everywhere, olive oil bottles on a dozen tables.

PAPA TONY, 68, rotund owner serves a gigantic pepperoni pizza  
to Andre. Right off the boat Italian accent.

CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the entire staff and patrons. Ron  
places his arm around Andre, both with humongous grins.

PAPA TONY  
I put lots a extra pepperoni on  
there. You love it, yes?

RON  
You never gave me extra pepperoni.

PAPA TONY  
You never adopted me.

Ron sits back on the word "adoption". Looks like he wants to respond, then pulls back.

RON  
With your accent, I never would.

PAPA TONY  
Just as well, you'd make me too  
Americano.

Andre loves the banter, then digs in.

Papa Tony ruffles Andre's hair.

PAPA TONY (CONT'D)  
Both of you so lucky. Eat.

CELLPHONE RING

Ron grabs his phone, doesn't recognize the number, then ignores it.

Andre is half done with his slice and Ron joins in.

Both race to finish their slices first.

Contest over and Andre wins.

CHEERS and pats on the back for Andre.

CELLPHONE BUZZ.

Ron grabs his phone and reads the message transcription on his iPhone.

His smile flips to concern.

INT. MERCY HOSPITAL/ICU ROOM - NIGHT

DARLENE JAMISON, 35, hospital social worker walks Ron into the room.

Sean lies unconscious, a bandage filled with blood on his head, tubes running out of him everywhere. His right arm and leg in bulky braces.

HEART MONITOR BEEPS

Ron hovers over the boy, shocked by his condition.

INT. MERCY HOSPITAL/WAITING ROOM - DAY

Ron sleeps in a chair. Darlene wakes him up, snapping him out of a deep sleep.

DARLENE  
He's awake. I would like you to be there when I tell him.

RON  
Me? I don't think I can do that.

DARLENE  
You need to prepare to do a lot of things now.

RON  
What do you mean?

DARLENE  
We've found on file the parent's wishes. You're his Godfather. They want you to have custody.

Ron stammers in shock.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
They never told you?

RON  
They told me, I didn't think it would ever come to this.

DARLENE  
Are there any other relatives?

RON  
David was an orphan, Katrina...No, I don't think so.

DARLENE  
He needs to see a familiar face.

INT. MERCY HOSPITAL/SEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sean sits up in his bed and Darlene sits beside him. Fewer contraptions, but Sean is still tethered to an IV and braces still on his arm and leg.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

Ron watches Darlene deliver the news.

Darlene finishes talking.

INSIDE THE ROOM

Sean's chin quivers, then he drops his head into his hands.

Ron creeps into the room.

Sean sees Ron then turns away and stares out of the window of an overcast day.

All three stand as statues in the BUZZ of the neon light.

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ron enters with Sean behind him. Ron carries several boxes and a backpack over his shoulder.

Sean also with a backpack and his arm in a cast.

Andre strolls into the room, lifting barbells non-stop with his arms. His biceps bulging away.

RON  
Here he is.

SEAN  
Hey.

ANDRE  
Hey.

SEAN  
It's been awhile.

ANDRE  
Yeah.

Andre keeps lifting.

Ron glares at Andre to stop lifting.

Andre stops exercising.

RON  
Show Sean his room.

Andre pauses, then waves Sean down the hallway, pointing into the rooms.

Andre's door is closed.

ANDRE

This is my room. That's yours.

Sean looks inside his room. Bare with just a bed, lamp and side table.

A stack of boxes in one corner. A dog stain on the carpet.

SEAN

You got a dog? I love dogs.

ANDRE

She died a month ago.

Ron enters with Sean's belongings.

RON

We can get that stain out. And the boxes, I'll take them out tonight. This used to be my office, but everything's in my bedroom now. We can fill out the room soon with whatever you like.

ANDRE

Ron, the driver's test.

RON

Gotta go. Call if you need anything. We'll be back in a few hours. Make yourself at home.

Ron and Andre go.

DOOR CLOSES

Sean starts to take his backpack off, then keeps it on. He wanders into the

HALLWAY

Sean walks up to Andre's door, which pops open. Sean pushes the door open enough to see inside.

ANDRE'S ROOM

A room overflowing with dirty clothes. Free weights. Sports trophies, ribbons, and medallions fill the dresser top.

Karate belts up to a brown belt hang on a rack on the wall.

An IKEA box with some parts and instructions on the floor awaiting the builder.

## HALLWAY

Sean takes in the room, then closes Andre's door and enters the

## LIVING ROOM

A bookshelf holds pictures of Ron in military uniform, wedding pictures -- him in a tux and his now ex-wife, MICHELLE, in a wedding gown, all smiles. A display box with a Purple Heart and military ribbons.

Another shelf with a picture of Ron and Andre arm-in-arm from Papa Tony's restaurant -- smiles a mile wide.

Sean opens a drawer and finds a picture album filled with Polaroids and dusty Kodak prints.

He flips through various pictures of Ron with friends and activities. Sean smiles at the younger Ron.

Sean arrives at the end of the album and finds pictures of Ron in a tuxedo and Michelle in a flashy, sexy dress. Behind them is a trunk with a white rabbit in a top hat holding a magic wand. Emblazoned on the chest are the words "Mr. Magico".

Sean finishes up and puts the album back.

He retreats to

## SEAN'S ROOM

Sean sits on the edge of the bed and falls to the floor in shock.

He sees the top mattress is longer than the bottom causing the fall.

Sean growls and takes off his backpack, then his shirt.

On his right shoulder is a tattoo of an upside down cross in black and a red dagger plunged into the cross with blood at the knife's tip.

Sean looks about the monastic room, then turns his cast over revealing the only words on the white cast.

## INSERT P.O.V

Katrina & David.

## BACK TO SCENE

Sean stares into space with a sigh.

INT. SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICE/FRONT LOBBY - DAY

Sean sits in the lobby with plastic chairs, no sunlight, magazines from three years ago.

A Receptionist chews gum behind bullet-proof glass.

Darlene enters.

DARLENE

Sean, hi. Come on back.

Darlene and Sean enter the

INT. SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICE - DAY

A cubicle jungle of social workers with no sunshine and flickering lights. The professionally dressed case workers work with their less refined clientele.

Sean's upper middle class clothing of name brands and Nike shoes stands out as he walks through the office to a conference room.

People watch Sean with "what's he doing here?" stares.

INT. SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICE/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A window provides some sunlight. A metal gray conference table and faux leather chairs.

Darlene motions Sean into the room where ZACK TAPSCOTT, 35, dressed in a suit and tie, stands up and offers a handshake.

DARLENE

Sean, this is Zack Tapscott. The lawyer for your parent's estate.

They shake hands.

ZACK

I'm so very sorry about your parents. They were good people.

Sean nods.

DARLENE  
Have a seat. I know this is a  
difficult time, but we need to have  
this talk.

SEAN  
What talk?

DARLENE  
How's it going with Mr. Washington?

SEAN  
Okay, I guess.

Sean looks at Zack, confused about what's going on.

Zack gets the hint.

ZACK  
I'm here to talk about the estate,  
Sean. Your parent's life insurance  
policy left you with a nice sum of  
money that was put into a trust per  
your parent's wishes as outlined in  
their wills.

SEAN  
A trust?

DARLENE  
I know this is a lot, but you need  
to be clear.

SEAN  
So far, I'm not. What trust?

DARLENE  
Given you are underage, legally you  
are a ward of Pennsylvania until  
you reach eighteen.

ZACK  
At which time you control the  
trust.

SEAN  
Who owns it now?

ZACK  
You own it, but you have no control  
over how the money is spent. Not  
yet. As their attorney, I and my  
law partners control it.

(MORE)

ZACK (CONT'D)

We will honor the wishes of your parents which said the money is only for education and critically important things as we see fit. But, until age twenty-one.

SEAN

You have this in writing?

ZACK

Of course, you are welcome to review it anytime.

Zack gives Sean his card.

Sean stares at it on the table, then picks it up.

SEAN

This isn't a law office.

Darlene jumps in.

DARLENE

We will work in tandem with your counsel.

SEAN

My parent's counsel.

DARLENE

Yes, if financial needs arise. We are here to support you during this transition. We want us all to be on the same page. We will review this with Mr. Washington, of course.

SEAN

Why isn't here?

DARLENE

We feel it's important to allow a child to be able to speak freely with a case worker.

Sean looks toward Zack.

ZACK

If either you have any questions, you can call me.

Zack puts his hand on Sean's shoulder, then leaves.

DARLENE

Even though being with your Godfather honors your parent's wishes, being a Godfather is not guaranteed custody under the law.

SEAN

So the state has custody of me.

DARLENE

We'll be checking in for the next few months to make sure you and Mr. Washington are a good fit until formal adoption by Mr. Washington, if he so chooses.

SEAN

So he could change his mind about me any time he wants?

DARLENE

I would hope not.

SEAN

If things don't work out, then what?

DARLENE

Well, then you would go into a foster home of some kind. Hopefully, we won't cross that bridge. You don't want to get into that system, trust me.

SEAN

What if I do?

All look at one another surprised.

DARLENE

Should I be looking for another placement?

SEAN

I guess that's up to Ron. Everyone controls my life but me.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sean sits at a table with a PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT.

Ron stands nearby.

SAW WHIRLING

The Assistant cuts off Sean's cast. The cast has some writing and drawing on it, but very little.

ASSISTANT  
Bet your happy about that, huh?

SEAN  
You know it.

ASSISTANT  
Want the cast?

SEAN  
No. All yours.

Sean wipes his arm with a wet nap.

RON  
Got you arm back. Woot.

SEAN  
Yeah, at least I got control of something in my life back.

Sean grabs his coat and leaves.

ASSISTANT  
Teenagers. I got one of them at home.

RON  
Lucky you. I got two.

The Assistant bows his head with joyful reverence.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Two dozen people mingle around a memorial room.

Two cremation urns sit on pedestals at the front. Pictures of Sean's parents on the table.

The Urns: one blue with the shadow of a fisherman on the front, another ornate with lilacs and butterflies.

SIDE ROOM

Ron straightens Andre's tie.

ANDRE  
Why do I need to be here?

RON  
Because I asked you to.

Andre rolls his eyes and looks away. Ron grabs Andre's chin and spins his face around to look eye-to-eye.

RON (CONT'D)  
Hey. Those are the ashes of my best friend and his wife. The least you can do is support me and Sean.

ANDRE  
Sean?

RON  
Yes, Sean. Stop acting like a jerk. Got it?

Andre softens and nods.

ANDRE  
I'm sorry. Death freaks me out. Seen a lot of it.

RON  
I know.

Ron puts his arm around Andre and escorts him into the

MEMORIAL ROOM

Sean sits to the side as others walk up and offer condolences. He sits aloof, but forces a smile for a time.

Sean's eyes light up when ARIELLE GRAYSON, 50, walks up to him. Sweet faced woman with a bright smile and charming way about her.

They see one another and hug.

ARIELLE  
I am so very sorry, Sean. Your mom was such a dear friend. A good person. Your dad, too.

SEAN  
She called you her sister.

ARIELLE  
And you my nephew from--

SEAN/ARIELLE  
Another mother.

Both chuckle.

ARIELLE  
How are you? Things going okay  
with...?

SEAN  
Ron, yeah. Okay. It's cool.

ARIELLE  
If you need anything, let me know.

One final hug and she moves toward the urns.

Sean thinks, then runs up to her.

SEAN  
Can I ask you something? In  
private?

ARIELLE  
Sure.

Both move to the

SIDE ROOM

Alone, just the two of them.

SEAN  
You and Clark were good friends of  
my parents. I know you better than  
a lot of people, ya know?

ARIELLE  
I suppose.

SEAN  
Almost nephew, right?

ARIELLE  
Yes.

Sean shuffles his feet and looks away.

ARIELLE (CONT'D)  
What is it Sean?

SEAN  
Ron's a good guy and all but, I'm  
not sure this'll work out. So, uh,  
I was wondering.

She takes his hand.

ARIELLE

Clark and I are downsizing. The kids are gone and our daughter is due any time now. We plan to do a whole lot of grand baby sitting.

SEAN

Yeah. Sure.

ARIELLE

I'm sorry.

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/PORCH - NIGHT

Sean enters and looks out to the porch where Ron sits staring into a wooded area behind the house.

Ron sees him and waves him to the porch.

RON

Hey, how was the movie?

SEAN

Meh.

RON

Glad to see some old friends at least?

SEAN

Yeah, it was good.

RON

I spoke with Darlene and your lawyer. Filled me in on all the legal mumbo-jumbo.

SEAN

I hit twenty-one, I'm loaded. Lucky me.

Sean turns to go.

RON

Darlene asked me a lot of questions. Seems like she thinks you want to live somewhere else.

SEAN

Adults in charge always look for negative stuff, Ron.

RON  
Your father and I were good  
friends, Sean. I could trust him  
with my life. I'm going to honor  
your parent's wishes to be your  
Godfather.

SEAN  
Who takes that seriously?

RON  
I do. I'm gonna see you're taken  
care of.

SEAN  
Like a dog?

RON  
You know what I mean.

SEAN  
Do I?

RON  
I mean this.

Ron reaches out and hugs Sean.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Andre arrives just as Ron and Sean hug.

Andre glares, jealousy in his eyes, then leaves the room.

BACK TO SCENE

Sean tenses up making Ron back away.

Ron ruffles the boy's hair.

Sean puts his hair back in place and leaves.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sean enters, boxes and bags barely unpacked.

Sean looks through a box and pulls out the sexy models  
calendar and a push pin.

He pins the calendar to the wall.

Sean dumps a bag of clothes on the bed and hangs shirts in his closet.

INT. RON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Modest size bedroom. King size bed. Flower pictures on the wall. A long bureau with several pictures of Ron with family, friends and his ex-wife.

Ron stands before a mirror in business casual attire. He brushes off his shirt, then his pants, shirt again, pants again. Looks in the mirror, smiles, turns around to look at himself. Tucks in his stomach and frowns.

FRONT DOOR OPENS

Ron runs into the hallway and sees Andre and Sean enter.

RON  
Guys. Come up here, I need your help.

The teens shrug, then head upstairs.

BEDROOM

The boys arrive.

RON (CONT'D)  
I got a date.

ANDRE  
Great.

SEAN  
Good luck.

The guys turn to go.

RON  
No. Guys. How do I look?

The boys look at Ron, then one another and snicker.

SEAN  
You need more cologne.

ANDRE  
Is that your best shirt?

SEAN  
What's her name?

RON  
Timina. What's wrong with the  
shirt?

Sean starts to spray the cologne.

RON (CONT'D)  
No more cologne. I'm not sixteen.

ANDRE  
Damn, is that a grey hair?

SEAN  
He's old.

RON  
I'm not that old?

ANDRE  
How old is she?

RON  
Whoa, stop. You're messing with me.

The boys look at each other again.

ANDRE & SEAN  
Yeah.

ANDRE  
Seriously, you look dope.

RON  
I will never understand that word.

SEAN  
It's like when bad means cool.

ANDRE  
Or when--

RON  
I get it.

Sean gives a thumbs up.

RON (CONT'D)  
Thanks.

ANDRE  
(imitating a parent)  
Be home on time, mister.

RON  
What's my curfew?

ANDRE  
Ten.

RON  
AM?

ANDRE  
Sure.

Andre leaves.

Sean starts to go and notices the pictures on the bureau.

Ron sees him and walks over.

SEAN  
You still have Michelle's pictures.

RON  
Yeah. You're dating, who is it?  
Brie?

SEAN  
Bren. Why do you still have her  
pictures up?

Ron looks in the mirror, seeing if all is okay.

RON  
I didn't divorce her, she divorced  
me. I'd love to met Bren some time.

SEAN  
How'd you meet Michelle, anyway?

Ron stops fidgeting and reminisces.

RON  
Magic.

SEAN  
Magic?

RON  
I guess fidgeting around isn't  
gonna change anything, huh?

Ron walks Sean out of his room into the

HALLWAY

RON (CONT'D)  
Have a good night.

Ron runs off.

SEAN  
Yeah. You, too.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sean enters holding Ron's photo album.

He flips to the back and sees the photo of Ron as a magician.  
He takes the picture out and reads the back.

INSERT PHOTO

"Michelle and I. Zig-Zag, 2004."

INT. SEAFOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Casual but refined restaurant. Quiet, cozy atmosphere.

Ron and his date, TIMINIA WESTBROOK, 38, attractive African American woman.

Both eat, sip their drinks, and awkwardly smile at one another.

RON  
So, how did you meet Carla?

TIMINA  
We worked on a project together at  
u of P. She's quite a force there.

RON  
She's a force everywhere. Ask her  
husband.

TIMINA  
She said you're a school  
administrator?

RON  
Vice-principal at an alternative  
high school for problem kids.

TIMINA  
Demanding.

RON  
Very.

TIMINA  
Should I say that you for your  
service for doing that?

RON  
No, but I was in the Army. A tour  
in Iraq.

TIMINA  
That must have been tough.

RON  
If you like heat, sand, crappy  
food, and poor internet, it's the  
place to be.

Both laugh and silence again.

RON (CONT'D)  
Did Carla tell you I'm fresh off of  
my divorce from my wife?

TIMINA  
How fresh?

Ron hesitates, then leans back in his chair.

RON  
It wouldn't be fair to you.

TIMINA  
Pretty fresh, huh?

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ron arrives home from the date and finds Andre seated on the  
couch playing a video game.

Andre pauses the game with a sly smile.

ANDRE  
How'd it go?

RON  
Outta practice.

ANDRE  
You'll get better.

Ron ruffles Andre's hair and moves down the hallway.

He passes Sean's room and finds him asleep. Ron enters

SEAN'S ROOM

He stands at the door looking at the sleeping teen.

Ron smiles at the innocent young man and turns his head as he hears

VIDEO GAME SOUNDS

Ron snickers, slips out of the room, and closes the bedroom door.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Andre walks down the street in a beautiful neighborhood. A row of hydrangeas and a well manicured park.

He walks down the granite steps to a small lake. A heavenly oasis in the city.

Andre walks up to MADDIE MAYFIELD, 36, African-American woman. Frail, face worn, clothing crumpled and faded. She nods while sleeping.

He sees small, empty vodka bottle behind her hidden in bushes.

ANDRE

Nice spot.

Maddie wakes up, sees Andre and her face lights up.

She stands and hugs Andre tight. Maddie backs away and places her hands on his face.

MADDIE

I always want nice things for my boy.

They sit.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Have you grown a few inches since last time?

ANDRE

It was only a month ago, Mom.

MADDIE

How are you?

ANDRE  
I'm good.

MADDIE  
Ron treating you right?

ANDRE  
Yeah. He's great.

MADDIE  
He better or I'll come and get him.

ANDRE  
You got a place yet?

MADDIE  
Fourteenth street mission.

Andre spins around in his seat.

ANDRE  
That place take families?

MADDIE  
You know I can't do that, baby.  
It's best to keep it as it is.

ANDRE  
They why did you want to see me?

MADDIE  
I love to see my baby.

She touches his face.

ANDRE  
You know even vodka has an odor,  
Mom.

MADDIE  
No need to hide anything from you.  
You know who and what I am. That's  
why it's good to stay right where  
you are.

ANDRE  
I'm sick of bouncing around. Folks  
pawning me off like some damn  
slave.

MADDIE  
You've been with him for how long  
now?

ANDRE  
Six months.

MADDIE  
Be good and make sure you stay with  
him.

ANDRE  
Do I have a dad somewhere?

MADDIE  
That man's long gone, honey. Don't  
pay no mind about him.

ANDRE  
Do you even know who he is?

Maddie turns and stares into the water.

Andre looks away.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
Look, I just remembered that...I  
gotta go and....

Andre stands up, paces, then rushes back to hug his mother  
tight.

She kisses him.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
Dress warm, Ma.

MADDIE  
You too, baby.

Andre walks, then runs off.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY

Andre runs into an alley near dumpsters. He looks around to  
see if he's alone.

He leans against a brick wall and cries.

INT. RON'S CAR - DAY

Ron and Sean argue in the car.

SEAN  
Wayside School. Why?

RON  
Another school will give you some space. We live together now, people will think I'm giving you favoritism or whatever.

SEAN  
Screw them.

RON  
Sean.

SEAN  
Isn't that Andre's school?

RON  
You can hangout together.

SEAN  
Are you that clueless? He hates me.

RON  
It's an adjustment for Andre. He'll come around.

Sean leans back in his seat in frustration.

SEAN  
This is bogus.

RON  
They've got something you're gonna find awesome.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/SHOP CLASS - DAY

Sean and Ron stand in a large woodwork shop. Tools, old and worn, but still working. Planks of plywood. Sawdust everywhere.

SEAN  
Awesome.

RON  
Donnie, this is my godson, Sean.

Sean shakes hands with DONNIE ARNOLD, 50's, rotund and scraggly beard in a T-shirt and a raggedy work apron.

DONNIE  
How do, Sean. Welcome to the only working school shop for a thousand miles.

RON  
Need more of these.

DONNIE  
You wanna take my shop class, boy?

SEAN  
Yeah.

DONNIE  
Good. Let's do it. Grab an apron.

Sean rushes to put one on.

DONNIE (CONT'D)  
Take this broom and sweep. Welcome  
to shop.

Donnie hands him a broom and walks away, winking at Ron as he goes.

Ron chuckles seeing Sean McGrath's glee.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Sean walks down the halls of a school long forgotten; a school frozen in time. Light fixtures out. Walls in decay, graffiti, water fountains of old, a building built around World War Two and apparently never upgraded.

Sean opens his locker next to another locker with the door open. Sean ignores the person in the locker beside him.

The person beside him swings the metal door right into Sean.

SEAN  
Hey.

JILLIA CHO, 15, peeks from behind the locker door. Perky Asian girl always in worn jeans, T-shirt and a baggy zippered sweatshirt. Rapid fire talker to keep people at bay.

JILLIAN  
Who are you?

SEAN  
You just slammed a door into me?  
Hello.

JILLIAN  
So who are you? That locker's been  
empty all year.

SEAN  
Now it's not, genius.

JILLIAN  
You're white.

SEAN  
Two for two.

JILLIAN  
Not too many white boys around  
here. You got a name?

SEAN  
Yeah.

Sean grabs books from his locker and ignores her.

JILLIAN  
Gonna be that way, huh? I'll pick  
one of my own then.

SEAN  
Whatever?

JILLIAN  
Whatever? Weird name.

Sean slams his locker shut.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
Drop the attitude, white boy. Just  
having fun. Got to in this dungeon  
of education.

Sean shakes his head and zips to his next class.

Jillian slams her locker shut and scoots in the other  
direction.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/CLASSROOM - DAY

Sean enters a classroom, hands a paper to the TEACHER who  
points to a desk in the back.

TEACHER  
Everyone, this is a new student.  
Sean McGrath. Make him feel  
welcome, people.

Sean nods to the class and walks down the aisle.

Students smile, wave and nod. He sees Jillian drawing in her notebook, goofing off.

Sean deliberately runs into her, throwing off her drawing.

JILLIAN

Hey.

Jillian motions to him expecting an apology.

Sean feigns confusion.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

You did that on purpose.

TEACHER

Jillian, Sean. I've got a class here.

Sean uses the distraction to push Jillian's backpack in front of him, blocking his way.

SEAN

Sorry. Jillian was blocking my way. She dropped her backpack in front of me.

Sean steps aside revealing the obstacle.

TEACHER

None of your shenanigans today, Jillian. In fact, go to Mr. Grinaldi's office.

JILLIAN

He was the one that--

TEACHER

Now. Sean take a seat.

SEAN

Now, Jillian.

Sean takes his seat several rows from Jillian with a wicked smile.

TEACHER

Turn to page ninety-five, please.

Jillian grabs her things and marches out of the classroom, glaring at Sean as she goes.

EXT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/FRONT DOOR - DAY

The rush to leave at the end of the day.

Sean looks through his backpack on the steps.

Jillian walks up to him.

JILLIAN  
Nice touch. You're a pro, Sean.

SEAN  
Jill or Jillian?

JILLIAN  
Jill's a freakin' nursery rhyme.

They both stare at the street.

SEAN  
Bus or ride?

JILLIAN  
Ride. In fact--

She points to a car pulling up. A BMW, shiny and new, CHRIS, 42, African-American behind the wheel.

SEAN  
Sweet ride.

JILLIAN  
It's not.

Jillian marches to the BMW and gets in.

Sean watches as Chris and Jillian argue.

Jillian listens with her arms folded, staring out of the side window as the car pulls away.

INT. RON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ron sits in an oversized easy chair with Andre on the couch near him. On the other side of the couch sits Sean with his cellphone.

They watch a college football game.

RON  
YES!

ANDRE

WOO!

Ron and Andre hi-five.

Sean smiles, but this is not his thing.

Andre looks over at Sean playing a video game on his phone.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Level six? That's all?

SEAN

I just started this yesterday

RON

Ah, fumble. Ha, we got it.

FRONT DOOR OPENS

CARLA ROLLINS, 42, enters carrying a serving dish. African American, motherly smile with a strong presence that commands attention.

CARLA

People can hear you down the hall.

RON

Let'em.

(big play on TV)  
Alright!

ANDRE

Hey, Aunt Carla.

Ron walks up to Carla and waves Sean over.

RON

Carla, this is Sean. Sean, my distinguished professor at U of P and author, Carla Rollins.

Andre imitates a ROARING CROWD with APPLAUSE.

CARLA

Enough, you two.

Ron peaks under the foil of the serving dish.

RON

And a great cook.

Carla pushes the dish into Ron's hands.

CARLA  
Oven. Three-hundred fifty degrees.

Ron heads for the kitchen.

CARLA (CONT'D)  
(to Sean)  
I'm so sorry about your family,  
baby.

SEAN  
Thanks.

Carla smiles and looks at Sean for a time.

CARLA  
So you're Sean?

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Carla serves the lasagna on the table beaming with pride.

She glares at the guys in the living room.

Ron gets the stare and mutes the TV. He motions the guys to get to the table -- pronto.

Carla cuts the lasagna into squares and serves on plates.

Half the lasagna goes to Andre.

Smaller pieces to her and Ron.

The smallest piece to Sean.

Sean notices the huge portion given to Andre. He stares at Andre, expecting him to chime in with sharing his piece. Andre ignores him.

Sean watches everyone eat, then eats.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sean sits before his laptop while searching Amazon books.

He finds a title under Carla Rollins.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN

A book cover with the title: "White Privilege: A Plague on Society".

Sean leans back in his chair in thought.

EXT. RON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ron and Carla stand face-to-face in the middle of the room.

CARLA  
Why didn't you tell me?

RON  
It's not important.

CARLA  
You can be so naïve at times. How  
are you going to house and feed two  
teenage boys?

RON  
I'll find a way.

CARLA  
That's how you got so deep in debt.

RON  
What do you want me to do?

CARLA  
You need to make sure Andre is  
taken care of.

Carla pulls out her cellphone.

CARLA (CONT'D)  
Let me send you some article links  
about how African American boys  
need men in their lives.

Ron stops her.

RON  
And fight white privilege.

CARLA  
Do the right thing. You know what  
Andre's gone through. He needs one-  
hundred percent of your attention.  
And we do need to take care of our  
own.

RON  
I made a promise to his parents.

CARLA

You made a promise to Andre when  
you brought him into this house.

Ron looks away and sighs.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Taking care of that boy is better  
done with people who can pay his  
bills.

RON

So I should send him to foster care  
to be with his own?

CARLA

Yes.

RON

No.

CARLA

Are you doing what's best for those  
boys or you?

EXT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/GYM - DAY

Andre and five other TEENS of color play basketball.

Sean walks by the gym, stops, then enters to watch the game.

Andre sees Sean and smirks. They continue the game and a ball  
goes out of bounds.

Sean picks up the ball. The teens expect a toss in, but Sean  
throws up a shot and hits the basket, all net.

TEEN #1

Damn!

TEEN #2

Nice shot.

ANDRE

Lucky shot.

TEEN #3

(to Andre)

Aren't you guys like stepbrothers  
or something?

ANDRE  
No, my dad just lets him stay  
there.

SEAN  
He's not your dad.

Andre charges Sean, but Teen #1 stops him.

TEEN #1  
Hey, let's play a game with the  
man. First team to ten.

ANDRE  
No. Horse. One-on-one. You in,  
white bro?

Sean steps on the court.

EXT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

The last round of shots. A few other STUDENTS have joined in  
to watch, including Jillian.

Andre puts up a jump shoot from the top of the key. It rolls  
around and misses. Andre curses to himself and walks away.

Sean dribbles up to the line, stops, then dribbles all the way  
near mid-court.

Andre and the Teens laugh. Others murmur to themselves.

Sean stands still and quiet, then Sean shoots a moonshot to  
the basket.

The ball bounces off the backboard and into the net.

Sean wins!

Some CHEER and APPLAUD. Others GRUMBLE.

Sean looks toward Andre who shakes his head, then offers a  
handshake to Sean.

Sean hesitates, then accepts the handshake with a smile.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/FRONT DOOR - DAY

Sean heads for his bus. Andre runs up to him.

ANDRE  
Hey.

SEAN

Hey.

ANDRE

You got touch.

SEAN

My dad played college ball. Got the genes and the lessons from him, I guess.

ANDRE

You know about your dad?

SEAN

Of course.

As they walk, Andre grabs Sean by the throat and pushes him into an

ALLEY

Andre slams Sean against the brick wall.

ANDRE

I don't. Don't even know who the man is. Sure wasn't the junkie that beat up my mom every night.

SEAN

Get off me.

Sean struggles, but Andre pins him harder.

ANDRE

This is my turf. You show me up on the court again, you even touch a basketball, I will waste you. You feel me?

SEAN

Screw you.

Andre pins him harder.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Ok.

Andre lets go.

Sean drops to his knees.

ANDRE  
Don't you dare tell Ron about this,  
step-bro.

Sean catches his breath as Andre struts away.

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sean enters finding Andre studying and Ron reading a book.

RON  
Hey, where ya been?

Sean looks at Andre who never looks up.

RON (CONT'D)  
Dinner's in the oven and---

Ron stands up and notices Sean's jeans dirty at the knees.

RON (CONT'D)  
What happened? Are you okay?

As Ron moves closer, Sean backs away.

SEAN  
I'm fine.

RON  
Your neck is pretty red.

SEAN  
That happens with us white guys.

RON  
What?

Ron moves in.

SEAN  
I said I'm fine, okay? I tripped.  
I'm good.

Sean darts into his room and SLAMS the door.

Ron looks toward Andre.

ANDRE  
What are you looking at me for?

Andre returns to his homework.

Ron looks down the hallway perplexed.

EXT. WAYSIDE SCHOOL/MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Sean hops out of the bus and joins the rush of teenagers into the school on a bright, sunny day.

Sean walks along, then sees Jillian pull up in a car, this time ZOEY, 42, an African American female driver.

Jillian hugs Zoey, then jumps out of the car. Her once black hair now streaked purple.

Sean snickers.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Jillian is in her locker, grabbing her books.

Andre and a few boys walk up to Jillian. Andre pulls Jillian's hair and laughs.

ANDRE

Purple monster. How ya doing, Chew?

JILLIAN

Cho. My name is Cho.

ANDRE

You were just a geek. Now you're just a freak.

Jillian punches Andre, but it doesn't faze him.

The boys laugh and move on.

Sean walks up to his locker.

JILLIAN

You live with that jerk?

SEAN

Not for long. I'm gonna move somewhere else soon.

JILLIAN

You got a condo or something?

SEAN

I see my case worker next week.

JILLIAN

Foster care?

Sean nods.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
Don't be a doofus, McGrath. Foster care is the land of never-ending suck. I know.

SEAN  
So that's why.

JILLIAN  
What's why?

SEAN  
Folks who drive you here are--

JILLIAN  
My foster parents. Don't give up whatcha got because of that Andre turd. Not worth it.

SEAN  
I got no choice.

JILLIAN  
My foster parents are always on the verge of getting rid of me, then I do something to make them proud or happy with me. It'll work for you, too.

SEAN  
You're crazy.

JILLIAN  
Do it. I gotta suck up to two parents, you just gotta please one. What can you do to prove you should stay over that jerk?

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sean and Jillian walk from the school down an inner-city street filled with graffiti-laden buildings, broken liquor bottles, and cigarette butts.

JILLIAN  
We gotta find something to screw Andre.

SEAN  
Being an asshole isn't enough?

JILLIAN  
Need more. Some axe murderer  
tendencies or something.

SEAN  
Axe murderer? Are you high?

JILLIAN  
You wish. I get high, I feel horny.  
Too bad for you this time.

SEAN  
Excuse me?

JILLIAN  
Does he use drugs? That's A-one,  
gold blackmail potential.

SEAN  
No. And I'm not blackmailing  
anyone.

JILLIAN  
Goody two-shoes ain't gonna win the  
day, McGrath.

SEAN  
Name is Sean, Cho.

JILLIAN  
Fine, Sean. Change of plan.  
Something to get on Ron's good  
side. To suck up to him.

SEAN  
Suck up to him?

JILLIAN  
Play the game, Sean. Don't be a  
dweeb all your life. The game is to  
make sure he likes you. What do you  
know about him?

SEAN  
Not much.

JILLIAN  
You live with the guy and you don't  
know about him? He could be a  
serial killer.

SEAN  
He's not a serial killer.

JILLIAN  
That's what they said about Jeffrey  
Dahmer.

Sean glares at her, then shakes his head with amazement.

SEAN  
I've known him for years. He was my  
dad's best friend. We saw each  
other once in awhile. We became  
friends when I went to the Tucker  
School and I lived in his office.

Jillian stares at him.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
He was the Veep of discipline. I  
kinda spent a lot of time there.

JILLIAN  
Damn. A rebel after all.

She nudges him and they laugh.

SEAN  
Ron's kinda meh.

JILLIAN  
Everybody's got something unique  
about them. Something special.

Sean stops walking.

SEAN  
Like what? What's special about me?

JILLIAN  
You're a dweeb.

SEAN  
Great, I got that going for me.

JILLIAN  
Your eyes are kinda cool. Hazel  
eyes are pretty rad.

Sean smiles.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
Back to work.

Jillian starts walking, but Sean stops her.

SEAN

Not yet, your turn. What's special about you is you don't let crap get to you.

(touching her purple hair)  
You just let it all hang out. Also rad.

JILLIAN

Thanks.

They walk.

SEAN

I did check him out when I moved in. Looked around the place. Saw pictures of him and his ex. Spooky. He still loves her.

JILLIAN

Dude still has the hots for his ex. What else?

SEAN

Army guy. Fought in Iraq. Doesn't talk much about that or anything about himself.

JILLIAN

So he's wacko now? Gonna shoot up a liquor store or something?

SEAN

Less Dark Knight talk, okay?

JILLIAN

Snooping around and seeing pictures did anything stand out?

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/LIBRARY - DAY  
ON A COMPUTER SCREEN:

A picture of the Zig-Zag magical illusion.

JILLIAN (O.S.)

(grossed out)  
What the hell is that?

LIBRARY ROOM

Sean and Jillian stare at the screen.



Sean and Jillian stand with ALLEN MARKOWITZ, 70, owner of the store and master magician. Balding, rotund and very Jewish. He looks in a magic catalog.

ALLEN  
Twelve grand.

SEAN  
Twelve thousand dollars?

ALLEN  
Maybe more now. This is an old catalog. You can go online and check it out. Don't do the online stuff. Leave it to my grandson.

Sean and Jillian look dejected.

ALLEN (CONT'D)  
I got a smaller version of this, using a can of pop.

JILLIAN  
Pop?

SEAN  
Soda.  
(to Allen)  
No, I want the stage trick.

ALLEN  
Not a trick. An illusion. The Zig--Zag is a stage illusion. Are you kids magicians or something?

SEAN  
No, never did magic in my life.

ALLEN  
And you want a Zig-Zag because...?

SEAN  
I want to get it for my Godfather, Ron. He used to do it with his ex--wife.

ALLEN  
Ron? Ron Washington?

SEAN  
You know him?

ALLEN

Taught him as a kid. Then he sort of disappeared. He and Michelle used to do that illusion as their headline. Others did it, but something special about the presentation, the ease of which they performed together. Magical.

JILLIAN

Magical? Duh.

Sean gives the "cut it out" throat slash.

SEAN

Do you know how to make it?

ALLEN

I can track down the plans.

JILLIAN

How much?

ALLEN

Plans, free.

Sean and Jillian perk up.

SEAN

You get the plans and I can build it.

ALLEN

But you don't just make an illusion like that. Gotta learn how to perform it with a lovely assistant.

Guys look at Jillian.

JILLIAN

You sayin' I'm lovely.

SEAN

I'm saying I got nobody else to do it with. Can you teach us?

ALLEN

Build it and I will come.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/SHOP - DAY

Sean, Jillian, and Donnie look over plans for the Zig-Zag illusion.

DONNIE

Not easy. But seen worse. Mostly boxes. Key is to make sure the slide is smooth. Fitted perfectly or it speaks.

JILLIAN

Speaks?

SEAN

Makes noise.

DONNIE

That takes precision tools.

SEAN

When can we start? The class will love it.

DONNIE

Not here. No can do.

SEAN

Why not?

DONNIE

Only school board approved projects. Insurance crap. I can help you, but can't do it here.

Jillian light bulb moment.

JILLIAN

My garage. We can do it there. The fosters will love I'm helping somebody out, that I'm up to something good. Sure way to get a yes from them.

SEAN

Sweet.

DONNIE

Let's do it.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - DAY

The driveway of a two-level colonial home in an upper-middle class neighborhood.

Two-car garage with cabinets and everything neatly tucked away. Few immaculate garages in the world -- this is one.

Woodwork tools and machines in one area.

Jillian and Sean stand before Zoey and Chris Rickerts, Jillian's "fosters." An upper-middle class African American couple.

Zoey with a sweet smile, Chris the look of the resident cynic.

JILLIAN

You like it when I do stuff that's useful and all, right? This'll be great.

ZOEY

Love it.

Zoey hugs her husband who's remains skeptical.

SILENCE with all eyes on Chris.

CHRIS

You know how to use these tools?

SEAN

I'm the school shop foreman. I know how to do this. It's just cutting some hard plastic pieces. Wood frame. Screw it all together. Make the slides. Simple stuff.

JILLIAN

It'll keep me outta trouble, okay?

They all wait for the word from on high.

CHRIS

I need to see you use the tools and equipment just to be sure.

Chris shakes hands with both teens.

Chris heads inside.

Zoey looks to see if Chris is inside then gives a thumbs up.

Hi-fives all around.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/SHOP - DAY - MOS

Donnie and Sean view plans for the build and make a list of materials.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY - MOS

Stacks of tools, lumber and hardware abound in a huge store.

Sean and Jillian work the aisles getting materials for the build using carts.

They meet at the top of an aisle, smile at each other, then race their carts down separate aisles.

SEAN'S AISLE

Sean rushes by a BURLY MAN with tattoos and a beard. Sean blows by the guy, forcing him to jump out of the way, smashing into a shelf. Not a happy camper.

END OF THE AISLES

Sean wins the race.

Jillian spins around with mock frustration.

The Burly Man arrives and storms up to Sean.

Sean and Jillian race their carts down the floor far away from the man.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT - MOS

QUICK CUTS:

Sean works the saber saw to cut out hard plastic pieces for the build under Chris' suspicious eye.

Sean finishes, lifts his protective goggles, and shows Chris.

Chris' face jumps from suspicion to amazement. He's impressed.

Sean beams with pride as they fit a section together--IT'S PERFECT! They fist bump!

INT. ALLEN'S MAGIC SHOPPE - NIGHT - MOS

The backroom of the shop. Stack of tricks. Stacks of boxes. Stacks of dust.

Allen, Sean, and Jillian look at a video of the Zig-Zag as Allen describes how it's done.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Except for the painting, the illusion is done. Sean and Jillian admire their work then fist bump.

JILLIAN  
Thought I'd suck, huh?

SEAN  
You do suck. But, you're getting better. Fosters happy about this?

JILLIAN  
You won Chris over.

SEAN  
Gotta win Ron over.

Jillian rubs Sean's back.

JILLIAN  
You will.

They look into each other's eyes, then Jillian kisses Sean.

Sean pulls back, smiles, then returns the kiss. They do a deep kiss and move behind a cabinet out of sight.

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Andre plays a video game on the TV.

Sean charges in.

SEAN  
Ron. Hey, Ron.

ANDRE  
He's not here.

SEAN  
What? He's supposed to give me a ride to Jillian's.

Sean pulls out his cellphone.

INT. TUCKER SCHOOL/RON WASHINGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Ron sits in a meeting with a PARENT and STUDENT.

CELLPHONE RING

Ron looks at the phone, then realizes he blew it.

RON  
Excuse me.

Ron steps

OUTSIDE RON'S OFFICE

Ron answers the phone.

RON (CONT'D)  
Sean.

BACK TO SEAN

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SEAN  
Where are you? You're supposed to  
give me a ride to Jillian's today.

RON  
I totally forgot. I'm in a parent  
meeting right now. Is Andre there?

SEAN  
Yeah, but--

RON  
Put me on speaker.

Sean does.

RON (CONT'D)  
Andre.

ANDRE  
Yeah.

RON (V.O.)  
Can you give Sean a ride to  
Jillian's?

ANDRE  
I'm meeting friends in an hour.

RON  
Then you've got time. Please.

ANDRE  
Ron.

RON  
C'mon, Andre. You wanted the  
practice. Do it this once, okay?

Andre huffs.

ANDRE  
Yeah, whatever.

RON  
Thank you.

Ron hangs up and goes back to his office.

BACK TO SEAN

ANDRE  
C'mon. Why do you hang out with  
that dweeb all the time?

SEAN  
'Cause you're such great company,  
bro.

Andre stares at him then leaves the house.

Sean takes a deep breath and leaves.

DOOR CLOSES

EXT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Andre drives up and Sean jumps out.

Jillian waits by the closed garage doors. She points to the  
doors like a magical assistant and presses the remote.

The door opens revealing the completely painted Zig-Zag.

JILLIAN  
Voila.

SEAN  
Sweet.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Zoey, Chris, Allen and Donnie sit in folding chairs before  
the Zig-Zag.

Sean and Jillian perform the illusion.

There's little banter while doing the illusion, but Sean and Jillian execute it flawlessly to the delight of all.

APPLAUSE

All hug except Allen who's enjoyment is muted.

Sean and Jillian hug with glee.

Jillian gives Sean a kiss on the cheek.

ZOEY

Amazing. What is this trick called again?

ALL THREE TOGETHER

SEAN & JILLIAN & ALLEN

Illusion.

ZOEY

Illusion.

SEAN

The Zig-Zag. Ron used to do with his ex-wife.

ZOEY

Amazing.

OUTSIDE THE GARAGE

Andre stands to the side unseen by all.

INT. CARLA'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Open, airy space filled with cherry-wood furniture, a wall filled with books. The home of a well-to-do family.

Carla sits with Andre on a leather couch.

CARLA

He's trying to appeal to my brother's sympathies. Even my head in the sky brother knows reality over fiction. You need to solve a real problem, not stroke his emotions.

INT. COLLEGE PHYSICAL PLANT OFFICE - DAY

Cramped, institutional gray office with odds and ends of cleaning supplies, tools, a map of the campus pinned on a wall.

A tall man dressed in blue overalls with the name emblem "BRETT" sewn on his uniform. He holds a one-page resume.

BRETT  
This kid reliable?

CARLA  
Very. He's my brother's foster child.

BRETT  
It's part time, but wasn't looking to hire a kid of...

He looks at the resume.

CARLA  
...of sixteen. Part-time hours is more workable for a kid than an adult.

Brett nods agreement.

BRETT  
Okay, tell him can come see me...

Carla opens the door and Andre stands there.

CARLA  
How about now?

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - DAY

Sean, Jillian, Donnie and Allen stand near the Zig-Zag.

SEAN  
We plan to paint it better and practice the presentation.

ALLEN  
Good. You got no presentation now.

SEAN  
We'll get it.

Allen nods and stares at the illusion.

SEAN (CONT'D)

What?

ALLEN

It's more than the presentation.  
It's solid, but it speaks, makes  
noise while doing it. Messes with  
the magic of it all. The glide is  
uneven, choppy.

Donnie looks over the illusion.

DONNIE

You made it sturdy, but need to  
smooth parts out, make the cuts  
more even.

Donnie walks over to the tool area.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Not your fault. You need fancier  
tools or at least new blades.

JILLIAN

Are tools like that easy to get?

DONNIE

Any major hardware store has them,  
but they ain't cheap. You get what  
I mean, Sean?

Sean looks at the tools.

SEAN

Yeah.

ALLEN

Look, you did a great job. He'll  
love it.

SEAN

(obsessed)

No. It's gotta be perfect.

Sean's determination takes them all aback.

ALLEN

If you put it on wheels, casters.  
When Jillian gets inside, spin it  
around a bit as she gets set. Fix  
the glide and the gaps in the boxes  
and you're good.

JILLIAN  
Wheels. Better tools. Cool.

SEAN  
Get it done.

Sean nods to Donnie who nods agreement.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Sean at his locker during a busy class break.

Jillian runs up to him.

JILLIAN  
I got a friend who can get better  
tools. And the paint to dress the  
illusion up real sweet.

SEAN  
Awesome.

They hi-five, then Jillian heads down the hall.

She stops, sees an open locker where a LOCKER STUDENT kneels  
down to take books out of her backpack.

Jillian sneaks over, takes cigarettes from the student's coat  
pocket, and puts them into her jacket.

Sean stands shocked by the whole thing.

INT. ATHLETIC SHOE STORE - DAY

Fancy athletic shoe store. Stacks of Nikes, New Balance, and  
other sneakers, athletic gear, Under Armor attire abbondanza.

Ron enters with Sean and Andre.

ANDRE  
What's up?

RON  
New sneaks for both you guys. Both  
of you pick shoes you want.

ANDRE  
Alright.

Andre goes left, Sean right and a shopping they will go.

Ron smiles at his boy's delight.

INT. ATHLETIC SHOE STORE - DAY

Andre and Sean put boxes of Nikes on a counter before the SHOE CLERK.

RON  
What's the damage?

The Clerk computes it all.

SHOE CLERK  
Four-hundred twenty dollars plus tax.

RON  
Four-hundred dollars? Are you serious?

SHOE CLERK  
Yep, with tax it'll be--

RON  
Yeah, yeah. My shoes never cost that much.

Ron swallows hard and looks at the boys.

Sean picks up on Ron's embarrassment.

SEAN  
It's cool. Let Andre have his.

Andre nods agreement.

RON  
No, you guys are a team. I can save for it and we'll be back in a few weeks. Can't swing it now.

ANDRE  
I can't get what I want because of him? Screw him. I got a job now. I'll put in some cash from my first check, he can get his later.

RON  
Job? What job?

ANDRE  
Aunt Carla got it for me. Why does everything revolve around him?

SEAN

Revolve around me? Look at Ron,  
then look at me. You get whatever  
you want all the damn time.

RON

That's enough from both of you.

The patrons freeze and watch.

RON (CONT'D)

Let's go.  
(nothing)  
I said, let's go.

Andre starts to go, then Sean pushes him aside to exit.

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ron, Andre and Sean rush in after the store fiasco.

Andre charges to his room.

RON

Come back here.

Andre paces, then marches back.

RON (CONT'D)

What job?

ANDRE

I told you.

RON

No, you aren't doing any job.

ANDRE

Why not?

RON

Look, it's my job to take care of  
both of you, got it? I'll take care  
of it. Case closed.

ANDRE

I'm helping you out. What's the big  
deal?

RON

Case closed.

ANDRE  
 (pointing to Sean)  
 What's he doing?

SEAN  
 Leave me outta this.

ANDRE  
 What's the white boy doing?

SEAN  
 Stop calling me that.

ANDRE  
 Make me.

Sean goes over Andre, but Ron jumps between them.

RON  
 Hey, hey. Cut it out.

The boys separate.

RON (CONT'D)  
 Stop the white boy crap.

ANDRE  
 Why? He's white. And you always  
 stick up for him.

SEAN  
 Oh, bull. He picked you. I'm just  
 the poor orphaned white boy that  
 dropped on both of you.

ANDRE  
 Orphaned? You had two parents, not  
 me. You come in here with all his  
 rich boy crap and I brought in my  
 Goodwill junk.  
 (to Ron)  
 That honky will always have an  
 advantage over me.

RON  
 I'm trying it figure this out,  
 guys. I went from no kids to two.  
 Give me some slack.

ANDRE  
 Maybe I should be with my own kind.

SEAN  
 He is your kind.

ANDRE  
 Is he?  
     (to Ron)  
 Are you?

Ron glares at Andre.

RON  
 Go to your room, boy.

ANDRE  
 Yes, Massa. I'm a going.

Andre flies into his room.

Sean marches into the

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sean SLAMS the door and paces in the tiny room.

He throws water on his face. His shirt gets wet, so he takes it off.

Andre yanks the bathroom door open and backs away not expecting Sean to be there.

ANDRE  
 Get outta here.

SEAN  
 Screw you.

ANDRE  
 I gotta take a dump. Go!

Sean grabs his shirt and leaves.

Andre sees the tattoo on Sean's shoulder, then slams the bathroom door shut.

Andre hyperventilates and slams his fist against the vanity.

INT. CHAIN HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Jillian and Sean stand at the paint counter where the CLERK is at a register. She puts one paint tin on a shelf hidden from the Clerk and buys the other tin.

She hands the clerk a twenty dollar bill and the Clerk makes change.

CLERK  
Your change is \$12.28.

JILLIAN  
Thanks.

Jillian waits for the Clerk to turn around, then drops another small paint tin in a fake pocket in her sweatpants.

She walks away and a stunned Sean walks up to her.

SEAN  
What are you doing?

JILLIAN  
Chill. Let's go.

She moves to the front door where the ALARM BUZZES.

Sean stays far behind in shock.

A GUARD moves toward Jillian who stomps with anger.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
This happens all the damn time. He didn't clear the tag.

She shows the Guard her purchase and a receipt for the one purchase.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
See?

The Guard reviews the receipt and the purchase.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
You wanna frisk me or something.  
(spinning around)  
Frisk me.

GUARD  
No, it's okay.

JILLIAN  
No, do it.

Guard backs off.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
You sure?

Guard nods and Jillian exits the store.

Sean scoots out behind her to the

PARKING LOT

SEAN  
What the hell?

JILLIAN  
Free paint. They can afford it.  
Let's go. Got something to show  
you.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Jillian shows Sean tools and accessories still in shiny new boxes.

Sean lifts up one of the new power tools.

SEAN  
Where'd you get these?

JILLIAN  
What difference does it make? We'll  
make it perfect.

Jillian hugs Sean and they kiss.

SEAN  
Yeah. Let's do this.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A small rotunda classroom with swivel chairs and aisle down the middle.

Students file out. Carla collects her things after a lecture.

As the final students leave, Ron prances down the aisle.

RON  
You put that nonsense in Andre's  
head, didn't you?

CARLA  
What nonsense?

RON  
You told him to treat Sean like  
dirt because he's white.

CARLA  
I told him he needs to show you  
he's the one to stay.

RON

I can take care of both boys.

CARLA

You can't even take care of you.  
Where's the money coming from, huh?  
You're going to drive both of them  
away just like you drove Michelle  
away.

RON

This has nothing to do with that.  
Andre called me "Massa" like I'm  
some Uncle Tom or something.

Carla's taken aback.

CARLA

I never told him to say that.

Both Ron and Carla are face-to-face.

RON

I'm sick of the Uncle Tom crap.  
Been fighting that all my life  
against my supposed own kind. You  
don't talk black, Ron. Don't act  
black neither. Too white for black  
folks and too black for white  
folks. I've had it.

CARLA

We both have. But maybe you've been  
selling out to deal with it.

RON

Excuse me. I'm not the one who ran  
to get a million college degrees to  
fit in.

CARLA

I've earned the letters behind my  
name. What are you trying to prove  
taking in that white boy who's  
filled with privilege?

RON

I'm not trying to prove anything.

Carla smirks.

RON (CONT'D)

Why do any of us have to prove  
anything?

CARLA  
 What world are you living in? Join  
 reality. We all have to prove  
 ourselves in this world.

Ron paces.

CARLA (CONT'D)  
 I'm sure Sean's a good kid. But he  
 has advantages that--

RON  
 I heard it before. Stay out of my  
 kid's lives, sis.

CARLA  
 He's not your kid? You owe him  
 nothing.

RON  
 I made a promise.

CARLA  
 A promise you forgot about until  
 somebody had to remind you of it.

RON  
 Stay away from both boys, sis.  
 Choose. My family as it is or stay  
 out of our lives forever.

CARLA  
 Ron.

RON  
 Choose.

Ron rushes out of the classroom leaving Carla alone in  
 thought.

INT. CARLA'S OFFICE - DAY

Cramped professor's office overflowing with books by African  
 American authors, a poster of Maya Angelou and Langston  
 Hughes with their quotes on the wall.

Carla stands with Andre at her desk. They look at a print of  
 the tattoo on Sean's shoulder .

CARLA  
 Are you sure?

ANDRE  
Yeah. What is that?

INT. TUCKER SCHOOL/RON WASHINGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Ron stand before a PHILLIPS, 17, a disruptive male student.

RON  
That's enough. Good day, Mister  
Phillips.

PHILLIPS  
This is bull.

Phillips rushes out of the room as Sean arrives at the door.

SEAN  
Woah, what's up with him?

RON  
Caught stealing and denied it.  
Thieves don't do well with me.  
How'd you get here?

Sean hesitates.

RON (CONT'D)  
Sean?

SEAN  
Uber.

RON  
What's up?

SEAN  
I want you and Andre to come over  
to Jillian's Friday afternoon. Got  
a surprise for both of you.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

The open garage on a perfect night under the stars.

Sean stands by the new and improved Zig-Zag. Well painted,  
shiny and ready for use.

Chris and Zoey look over the project.

Allen places chairs for the audience.

Jillian steps into the garage from the house -- in a dress for the first time. Make-up, hair done, stunning.

Sean walks up to her and smiles.

SEAN  
You own a dress?

JILLIAN  
Don't get too used to it.

CAR DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE

Ron and Andre walk from the car to the garage.

As Ron approaches, he stops in his tracks and stares at the Zig-Zag.

Sean motions Ron to enter.

RON  
The Zig-Zag.

SEAN  
Jillian and I made it. For you.

RON  
How?

Allen CLEARS HIS THROAT.

ALLEN  
Long time.

RON  
Allen?

Allen and Ron hug.

ALLEN  
You were the master of this.

RON  
Once upon a time.

JILLIAN  
You did it with Michelle, right?

RON  
How did you all know about this?

SEAN  
Your sister.

Ron is speechless.

JILLIAN  
Have a seat.

Ron snaps out of it and sits. All sit facing the illusion.

Andre frowns and sits with arms folded behind everyone.

SEAN  
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Zig-Zag.  
My lovely, amazing assistant will  
give me a hand.

Jillian takes Sean's hand.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Many people believe that if you  
believe hard enough you can be in  
one, two, or even three places at  
once. Let's see if that's true.

Sean kisses Jillian's hand and together they spin the  
illusion on its casters.

Sean waves his arms inside the cabinet to show it's empty.  
Jillian steps in and out as further proof.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
(to Jillian)  
Do you believe?

JILLIAN  
For you, anytime.

Sean escorts Jillian into the cabinet. He closes the three  
doors of the three boxes securing her inside.

Jillian sticks her head through the top box, left foot  
through a hole in the bottom box, and her hand in a hole in  
the middle box.

Sean gives Jillian a colored silk to hold in her hand  
protruding from the middle box.

Sean spins the box around to once again.

Ron watches with jaw dropped and holding back tears.

Sean takes a deep breath, then slides the middle section out  
essentially cutting Jillian's body into three sections.

All are amazed, even Andre.

Allen beams, shaking his head with delight. The trick executed flawlessly.

APPLAUSE

Jillian smiles, wiggles her hand and feet proving she is all there -- all three pieces of her.

SEAN

But, even when we are all are broken into pieces, if we all believe we can be whole again. Do you believe, everyone?

ALL

We believe.

Sean puts all three pieces together and opens the cabinet door.

Out steps Jillian.

Sean takes her hand and both bow.

APPLAUSE and STANDING OVATION.

Andre begrudgingly rises to applaud.

Zoey and Chris hug Jillian with joyous delight.

Ron walks up to Sean and swallows hard.

Sean's face appears free of bravado or pretense for the first time.

SEAN

I know I've been a jerk, but I want to stay with you. I wanted to earn being with you. Please let me stay.

Ron gives Sean a long, intense hug.

Andre watches, but with a smug look as if he knows something.

INT. JILLIAN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Everyone has gone, only Chris. He finds a box of tools hidden away in a cabinet.

Chris looks over the illusion and inside the box of tools.

Jillian walks out with Zoey.

CHRIS  
Jill, you want to tell me how two teenagers could afford very expensive, right out of the box tools like these?

Jillian freezes.

EXT. RON'S TOWNHOME/PORCH - DAY

Ron and Sean face each other.

RON  
I got a call from Chris.  
Did you know Jillian was a thief?

SEAN  
What do you mean?

RON  
Tell me the truth.

Ron glares at Sean.

SEAN  
I don't know anything about her stealing tools and stuff.

RON  
How did you know it was tools?

Sean backs away.

RON (CONT'D)  
Were you with her?

SEAN  
No, I never saw anything.

RON  
But you knew you built that trick with stolen property, right? Huh?

SEAN  
I guess I did.

RON  
Guess.

SEAN  
Yes, I knew. I'm sorry.

RON  
Don't blow this off with an empty  
"I'm sorry". What else are you  
hiding?

ANDRE (O.S.)  
I can tell you.

Sean and Ron turn to Andre, who walks onto the porch.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
What's up with the tat?

Sean freezes with fear.

RON  
Tat? What tat?

ANDRE  
Show'em.

Ron turns to Sean.

SEAN  
It's nothing.

RON  
Show me.

Sean looks at both of them, stuck with nowhere to go.

RON (CONT'D)  
Do we need to go inside?

ANDRE  
It's on his shoulder, Ron.

RON  
Take off your shirt.

Sean hesitates, then pulls off his shirt revealing the tattoo.

RON (CONT'D)  
What is that?

ANDRE  
Tat you get when you join the  
Dragon Knights. Like the Klan  
except they're also atheist. Aunt  
Carla showed it to me.

RON  
Is that true? And don't you dare  
lie to me.

SEAN  
(rapid-fire)  
I got it years ago. It was to get  
along with jerks at my school who  
were messing with me. Screwed me  
around for weeks until I joined  
them and got the tat. They stopped  
messing with me then.

ANDRE  
You're lying.

SEAN  
I never did anything with them.  
Changed schools and it all stopped.

RON  
Have you been lying to me all this  
time?

SEAN  
No.

ANDRE  
Aunt Carla was right.

SEAN  
She's not your damn aunt.

ANDRE  
Shut up, Klan boy.

SEAN  
It wasn't the Klan. I was just  
trying to survive.

Ron shakes his head and turns away.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Ron, please. It's not what you  
think, I swear.

RON  
Maybe you don't see the truth.  
Maybe that's why you got so angry  
at Andre.

SEAN  
No.

RON  
Maybe the truth is coming out.

SEAN  
This tat isn't me, Ron. Please. I  
went through all that trouble with  
the Zig-zag and--

Ron holds up his hand to stop.

RON  
I got a lot to process here.

SEAN  
Ron.

RON  
Not now, Sean.

Sean sulks away.

ANDRE  
That little bastard needs to--

RON  
You, too. This is all too much for  
me. Maybe I'm not right for this at  
all. Maybe both of you should go.

ANDRE  
I need to be here.

RON  
Leave me be, Andre.

Ron sits down.

Andre rushes into the

HALLWAY

Andre charges toward Sean's room, then pulls back. He paces  
back and forth in anguish then runs into

ANDRE'S ROOM

Andre drops to the floor and rocks in tears.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Sean walks toward his locker and sees Jillian's locker door  
open.

He finds the locker empty.

JILLIAN (O.S.)  
Don't be a jerk around the next  
neighbor, round-eye.

Sean walks up to her.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
So, the goodie two-shoes that he  
is, Chris told me to return the  
stolen goods. Given I didn't  
actually take them, my colleagues  
did, they're not pressing charges  
just I can't be in the store, blah,  
blah, blah. Yuk, yuk, yuk.

Sean points to her empty locker.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
Yeah, Zoey and Chris are dumping me  
back into the land of suck. And,  
news flash. Since we built it  
"illegally", Chris plans to destroy  
the trick.

SEAN  
Illusion.

JILLIAN  
Thinking we can be something  
different was the illusion, Seany  
boy.

SEAN  
We could have figured it out  
without stealing.

JILLIAN  
It's what I do, who I am. Not all  
us Asians are polite, smart  
Brainiacs.

Sean paces.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
Stop being such a naïve joke, round-  
eye. We are who we are, give it up.  
I heard Ron ain't too hot on you  
either.

SEAN  
We haven't talked much in days.

JILLIAN  
So the Andre turd won.

SEAN  
Maybe not. Ron's pissed off at us  
both.

JILLIAN  
All around suckola.

Both stare at each other, then the BELL RINGS.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
Better go.

SEAN  
Hope you find a great land of suck.

JILLIAN  
You, too.

Sean walks up to her, but Jillian runs off into the crowd.  
Sean stands frozen in the sea of students filling the hall.

INT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/SHOP - DAY

Donnie sweeps the shop floor.

Sean arrives and stands in the door.

DONNIE  
So, I heard the illusion was a  
success and a failure.

SEAN  
It made a lot happen.

DONNIE  
Park it, kid.

Sean sighs and walks over to the stool and sits.

DONNIE (CONT'D)  
Spent a lot of time on an illusion.

SEAN  
Jillian's foster dad is tearing it  
down.

DONNIE  
Not the illusion I'm talking about,  
kid.

Sean is confused.

DONNIE (CONT'D)  
You spent all that time working on  
an illusion of winning over a guy  
with a magic trick.

Sean looks up to speak.

DONNIE (CONT'D)  
No, trick. Creating some illusion  
beyond yourself and trying to trick  
a guy into believing it. You can  
only be you, boy.

SEAN  
I know.

DONNIE  
No, you don't. You wanted a trick  
to create an illusion. Bound to  
fail.

SEAN  
What are you saying?

DONNIE  
What do you want?

SEAN  
I dunno.

DONNIE  
Bull. Why can't you just say that?

Sean just stares.

DONNIE (CONT'D)  
Say it or get outta my shop. We  
only deal with real things here,  
make plans come to life. No make  
believe.

Donnie grabs his broom, then Sean hops to his feet.

SEAN  
He won't have me?

DONNIE  
What do ya want?

SEAN  
I'm not--

DONNIE  
What?

SEAN  
He--

DONNIE  
Just say it, boy. Say it.

SEAN  
I want him for a dad. I want him to  
want me and be happy about it.

DONNIE  
Then you better show him who "me"  
is, boy.

SEAN  
But, Andre.

DONNIE  
Is just as scared as you to just  
let go. So's Ron for that matter.

SEAN  
What'll I do?

DONNIE  
Drop the tricks. Stop trying to  
prove something that you're not.  
Then look for what you want. Then--

SEAN  
Get it done.

Donnie nods and sweeps the floor.

INT. SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICE - DAY

Another busy day filled with people needing help.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
Hey, come back here.

Sean runs through the office and arrives at Darlene's desk.

He darts into the cubicle despite her meeting with a FEMALE  
CLIENT.

SEAN  
We gotta talk.

INT. TUCKER SCHOOL/RON WASHINGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Ron works on his computer and his cellphone CHIMES.

He picks up the phone and reads a text message with concern.

EXT. WAYSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Andre and his African American buddies at it again playing basketball hot and heavy.

Sean stands in the shadows, then sees Ron's car pull up.

The boy takes a deep breath, then walks onto the court interrupting the game.

ANDRE

I told you to stay off my turf.

SEAN

We gotta talk.

ANDRE

No we don't.

Sean walks on the court further.

SEAN

This is your turf, but we both share a home.

ANDRE

You think that dumbass magic trick will save you? That was so lame.

Andre and the other Teens laugh.

Ron sees what's happening, then decides to stand back and watch out of sight.

SEAN

Yeah, it was. Acting like a the tough guy's pretty lame, too.

Sean stares at Andre.

ANDRE

I'm not lame.

SEAN

No B.S. this time. Just wanna talk.

ANDRE  
Get lost before I waste you, white  
boy.

SEAN  
No.

Andre walks up to Sean, stares at him, then and pushes him.  
Sean stumbles back, but holds his ground.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
We both need a dad. I lost my  
parents and you never had one.

ANDRE  
Shut up.

SEAN  
We both need one and Ron's it. For  
both of us.

ANDRE  
Get outta here.

Andre pushes, Sean stumbles back further, but he's not  
budging.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
What is your problem?

SEAN  
We don't have to like each other,  
but we can live together.

ANDRE  
I ain't livin' with some Klan kid.

TEEN #1  
Klan?

ANDRE  
Yeah, he's got a white supremacy  
tat on his shoulder.

The teens surround Sean.

Sean stands strong.

Ron inches closer to the court, still unseen.

Sean removes his Under Armor T-shirt and exposes his  
shoulder.

The tattoo is now reconfigured to a different tattoo.

SEAN  
No more lies to fit in.

The Teens stand back confused.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
We both need Ron. You and me.

ANDRE  
I don't need anybody.

SEAN  
We both need him.

ANDRE  
Shut-up.

SEAN  
We can both stop hiding.

Ron walks on the court. Andre screams at Sean and Ron.

ANDRE  
I don't need any of y'all. Go away.  
They all go away.

RON  
I'm not.

ANDRE  
I don't need you.

RON  
Maybe not. But I need you. Both of  
you.

Andre turns away to hide his tears from everyone.

RON (CONT'D)  
We're family now. Family's not  
about blood, or looks, or color.  
It's what we say it is and what  
it's not.

Ron turns to Sean.

RON (CONT'D)  
I finally owned up to that myself.

SEAN  
Me, too.

Ron walks up to Andre.

Andre pushes him away.

Ron rushes Andre and forces a hug.

Andre struggles, then succumbs. Andre buries his head into Ron's shoulder.

Sean creeps up and hugs them both.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - SUNSET

A secluded trail along the top of a mountain. An overlook to a city below as the sun sets.

Sean and Ron walk up the trail to the edge of the mountain. They stop and look at each other.

Both pull plastic baggies out of their pockets containing ashes.

RON

Your mom wasn't big on spreading the ashes, but it was your dad's wish. So, we'll do a little of both. Some here and the rest--

SEAN

At home.

Ron nods agreement.

RON

Your dad proposed to your mom up here. Perfect spot.

Sean stares at the baggie, totally mesmerized.

SEAN

A life that comes down to a bunch of ashes in a cheap plastic bag. Is that it?

Ron holds up his baggie in the setting sun.

They separate and Ron places his hand over Sean's heart.

RON

Life isn't about ashes, objects or proving yourself. It's about the love and memories in your heart.

Ron unzips the baggie.

Sean does the same.

Both toss the ashes into the air in the hues of sunlight.

Ron puts his arm around Sean and both stare into the horizon.

INT. RON'S TOWNHOME/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sean and Andre put birthday candles on a white frosted birthday cake.

SEAN  
How many we need?

ANDRE  
A million.

Ron enters.

RON  
Respect your elders. I grew up with  
eight TV channels.

The boys feign mock horror.

DOORBELL

Ron answers the door while the boys set the table.

FRONT DOORWAY

Carla stands holding a covered serving dish.

Both stare at each other in an awkward silence.

RON (CONT'D)  
Sis.

CARLA  
Happy birthday.

RON  
Thanks.

CARLA  
I brought your favorite. Lasagna.

Ron takes the dish.

RON  
Thanks.

CARLA  
It's a dish for four, if that's  
okay.

Ron smiles.

RON  
Yeah.

Sean comes to the door.

SEAN  
You gonna join us, Carla?

RON  
Aunt Carla, Sean.

Ron waves her in.

KITCHEN

Carla enters and Andre hugs her and takes her coat.

Ron puts the serving dish in the oven.

CARLA  
Don't leave it in too long. Just...

RON  
Ten minutes, I know.

Sean watches everyone get to the table and takes it all in.

Ron points to a seat for Sean to sit.

CARLA  
Dessert before dinner?

RON  
Sis.

Carla holds up her hands to give in.

CARLA  
What kind of cake is this?

SEAN  
Chocolate cake.

ANDRE  
With white icing, of course.

All smiles as Andre lights the candles.

Sean beams with joy.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END