

FREAKS AND GEEKS

"PILOT"

Written by

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COLD OPENING

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A title: "CHIPPEWA, MICHIGAN - 1980." "Party of Five"-esque teen soap opera music PLAYS.

We are on the football field of a medium-sized high school in a semi-rural part of Michigan. Flatlands. Roads stretch into subdivisions one way and green fields the other. The football team is practicing. YELLING. GRUNTING. COACH HOLLERING.

COACH

All right, you ladies. Let's see some hustle out there!

We MOVE UP AND OVER the football field and find the bleachers. In the bleachers is a couple, a FOOTBALL PLAYER and a CHEERLEADER. The closer we get, we see that they're very good looking teenagers.

CHEERLEADER

(serious; sincere)

You seem so distant these days.
Is there something I did wrong?

FOOTBALL PLAYER

No, it's just that I've got a lot on my mind. The homecoming game is a really big deal. There may be college scouts there.

CHEERLEADER

But it's not me? I'm still attractive to you?

FOOTBALL PLAYER

(taking her hand)

Ashley, when I asked you to "go" with me, I made a commitment to you. And I meant it. I don't care about those other girls. I only want you.

The cheerleader stares into his eyes and melts. They embrace and kiss passionately.

We MOVE DOWN from them and go UNDER THE BLEACHERS as the music switches to the opening chords of Van Halen's "YOU REALLY GOT ME." We find a group of burn-outs under here. These are the "freaks."

CONTINUED:

They wear either army jackets or old plaid hunting jackets and worn bell bottom jeans. They're surrounded by cigarette butts. The music is coming out of a large portable cassette player.

BURN-OUT GIRL

Whoa, you're right. There can't be a God if there's so much suffering in the world.

BURN-OUT GUY

But where did the earth come from if there's no God?

We FIND and MOVE IN on LINDSAY WEIR, a serious girl. We can see that she's a cute fifteen year old but her unwashed hair and burn-out clothes hide the fact. She's playing with a disposable lighter as she talks.

LINDSAY

It's science. It's evolution. It explains everything. People just invented the concept of God because they didn't understand the universe and got scared. God's just a pacifier for stupid people.

She flicks the lighter as the other burn-outs ponder this. They hear LOUD LAUGHTER and look over at its source.

LINDSAY (cont'd)

(rolling her eyes)
... oh, man.

We PAN OVER to find the "geeks" congregated outside the school auditorium, which is next to the bleachers. The Van Halen song FADES as we move toward them. The music switches to the opening brass of the theme from "STAR WARS."

The geeks aren't really nerds per se, as much as they're rather immature, under-developed guys. They dress in either pullover shirts or tucked-in plaid shirts and wear jeans in different colors. We MOVE OVER to them. They're talking animatedly.

GEEK GUY #1

... and Bugs Bunny goes, "One side, one side, let a rabbit through!"

GEEK GUY #2

Yeah, then he jumps onto the track and goes, "Halt!" And the dogs all go ...

CONTINUED: (2)

He acts out getting run over by a pack of dogs. Falls on the ground. The guys all crack up.

We MOVE IN on SAM WEIR, a tall, gangly fourteen year old. He's the very definition of awkward. His arms are too long, his ears are too big and he has a big cowlick. But he's very animated and is obviously the leader of this group.

SAM

But you know when the mechanical rabbit goes into that box and Bugs Bunny opens the door and kisses her? Well, she went in head first, so when Bugs Bunny sticks his head in that door, he's really kissing her butt!

This really cracks up the group, being something they never thought of before. We MOVE PAST THEM to the high school, which is attached to the auditorium. Three rather short BULLIES stand watching, staring at the two groups. Their leader is ALAN WHITE, a tough looking short kid.

ALAN

Freaks and geeks. What a bunch of losers, huh?

BULLY #2

I don't know who I want to beat up more.

ALAN

I know who I want to beat up.

They walk over to the geeks. Alan walks right up to Sam. He comes up to Sam's chest. Sam looks scared.

ALAN (cont'd)

Hey, Sam Weir. Weird. Sam Queer. Who told you you could stand in front of my auditorium?

Sam nervously looks to his fellow geeks but they all look away, happy not to be in the line of fire.

SAM

Alan, it's not your auditorium. We're building sets in there.

ALAN

Sets for what? A play? Is that what you queers do?

CONTINUED: (3)

SAM

C'mon, Alan, leave me alone.

Alan pushes Sam back hard. Sam stumbles and falls. The bullies all LAUGH.

ALAN

What's a matter, Weird? Can't you fight? Are you too much of a girl?

BULLY #2

C'mon, Alan. Beat him up.

Alan heads over to Sam and is about to jump on him when WHAM! Alan's knocked sideways by Lindsay, who tackles him from out of nowhere and pins him down on the ground.

LINDSAY

What's the matter with you, you little gutless jerk? You gotta pick on guys you know won't fight back to make you feel tough? I'll show you how tough you are.

She starts slapping Alan across the face hard.

ALAN

Ow, cut it out! That hurts! Get off me!

BULLY #2

Look out, Alan. She's high on pot!

Lindsay jumps up and yanks Alan to his feet by his collar, ripping his shirt.

LINDSAY

Next time you guys feel like being cool, go beat up someone your own size, ya midgets!

Lindsay throws Alan back into his friends. They look stunned, as do the geeks. Alan looks at his ripped shirt.

ALAN

You ripped my shirt! You're gonna buy me a new shirt!
(to Sam)
And I'm gonna kill you, Weird!

CONTINUED: (4)

Lindsay steps forward menacingly and the bullies all run off. Lindsay glares after them with disgust. Turns back to the stunned geeks. Sam stands up.

SAM

Wow. Thanks, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

Sure. C'mon, Sam. Mom and dad want us home early for supper.

SAM

Okay, Linds. And thanks.

Lindsay turns away. SIGHS, fed up.

LINDSAY

(to herself)

Man, I hate high school.

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE

ACT ONE

INT. WEIR FAMILY DINING ROOM - EVENING

The Weirs are gathered around the dinner table, having supper. Sam and Lindsay eat in silence, while their forty-something parents, HAROLD and JEAN, stare at Lindsay.

JEAN

You know, I ran into Mrs. Dunkle at Farmer Jack today. She was quite concerned about you, Lindsay.

Lindsay just makes a "what else is new" face.

JEAN (cont'd)

She said she saw you smoking. Have you started smoking?

LINDSAY

(impatient)

No.

HAROLD

You can let us know if you have, honey. We just want to help you.

LINDSAY

I haven't started smoking.

Sam looks at her. She shoots him a "don't say a word" look. Sam goes back to his food.

JEAN

(after a beat)

Lindsay, you want me to take you clothes shopping tomorrow? TJ Maxx has the cutest new skirts in.

LINDSAY

I don't wear skirts anymore.

JEAN

Well, you could really use some new clothes. Don't you get tired of wearing those dirty old jeans all the time?

LINDSAY

Mom, I don't need new clothes. I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

CONTINUED:

Jean looks at Harold, who makes a "let it rest" face. Jean SIGHS and goes back to her food. Sam looks up from his plate.

SAM

Hey, dad, guess what? They're gonna show "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" at Parkway Saturday night. Art and I are gonna watch it twice in a row.

HAROLD

Isn't the Homecoming dance Saturday night?

SAM

(confused)

Yeah.

HAROLD

Aren't you two going?

Sam and Lindsay exchange an incredulous look.

SAM

No. Why would we do that?

HAROLD

You know, I'm a little worried that you two aren't putting yourselves out there enough. High school's for learning but it's also where you should be learning to socialize. You can't just hang around in your little groups all the time. You've got to get out there and be a part of the whole. That's what school dances are all about.

LINDSAY

No, they're not. They're just a chance for all the popular kids to get together and experiment with sex in their cars.

JEAN

Lindsay!

HAROLD

Look, I really think it's important that you two at least try to go to that dance.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD (cont'd)
 I'm sure there's plenty of students who are just dying for someone to ask them. So, I want you two to promise me that tomorrow you'll try to find dates for the Homecoming.

LINDSAY
 Dad, that's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

HAROLD
 Honey, it's stupid until you consider how happy it'll make someone who really wants to go.

LINDSAY
 Nobody I know wants to go.

HAROLD
 Then you'll just have to ask somebody you don't know.

Harold gives them a stern, fatherly look. Lindsay tries to protest but gives up when she sees her father's face. She just SIGHS, defeated. Sam's wheels are already turning.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The great melting pot. All the students are sitting at the numerous round tables, each with their own group. We see the popular kids LAUGHING and being LOUD. The jocks are eating tons of food. Other students carry trays out of the kitchen.

We find Sam and his group of fellow geeks. Once again, they're not nerds. They're just normally dressed, backwards guys. Sam's meek best friend, ART THOMPSON, is sitting next to him.

SAM
 ... And then Obi Wan Kenobi goes,
 (doing Alex Guinness voice;
 to Art, acting)
 "You don't have to see his
 identification."

ART
 (as a stormtrooper)
 "We don't have to see his
 identification."

SAM
 "Move along."

CONTINUED:

ART
"Move along."

The guys all crack up at this. Sam looks pleased. The laughter dies as the guys go back to their food.

SAM
Are you guys going to the
Homecoming dance?

They all stare at him as if he'd spoken in a foreign language.

SAM (cont'd)
Yeah, I didn't think so.

CRASH! A lunch tray smashes onto the floor. The students start CLAPPING. The geeks look over to see BILL HAVERCHUCK, a big, droopy-lipped, slow-witted guy, looking down at his dropped tray. A JOCK stands in front of him, holding a tray of food.

JOCK
Hey, watch where you're going,
you retard.

BILL
I'm *not* a retard!

JOCK
Yeah, then why you in special ed?

BILL
'Cause that's where they put me.

JOCK
Yeah, with *him*.

The jock points over at ELI, an actual retarded guy who's walking happily by with his industrial metal lunch box.

ELI
(singing to himself)
Meatballs, meatballs, meatballs--

Eli looks over and sees Bill and the jock looking at him. Eli smiles broadly and runs over.

ELI
My buddy!

Everyone in the cafeteria looks over as Eli hugs the jock tightly. The jock looks around and sees everyone staring. He doesn't know what to do.

CONTINUED: (2)

JOCK

Uh ... yeah ... um. Thanks.

The jock gingerly extracts himself from Eli's grip and beats a hasty retreat. Eli waves merrily after him and heads off. Bill SIGHS and walks up to the geek table.

BILL

If I was on the football team,
that guy wouldn't make fun of me.

Bill sits heavily next to Sam.

SAM

If you were on the football team,
he'd make fun of you and the team
would do a dog pile on you in the
showers.

BILL

(horrified)
Really?

SAM

Yeah. Jocks are weird.

Just then, an attractive PREGNANT FREAK GIRL walks by. The geeks all stop eating and watch her walk by, in awe.

ART

Isn't that Patty's sister?

SAM

Yeah, they said she was out of
school because she's sick.

NEAL

Yeah, sick with morning sickness.

The guys all look over at NEAL, a fleshy geek with an underbite. He's got a glorified bowl haircut and is always running his hands through his hair when he thinks, causing it to stick up.

NEAL (cont'd)

Whenever my mom's had a baby,
she's gotten "morning sickness."
That's what ladies get when
they're pregnant.

SAM

What do they do?

CONTINUED: (3)

NEAL
They throw up.

The geeks all make horrified faces as they consider this. Sam stares after the pregnant girl again. His face is filled with both wonder and fear.

SAM
So, that means that she's had sex.

BILL
That's usually how it works.

We can see from Sam's face that the whole idea of sex is overwhelming. Suddenly, SMASH. A hand comes down on his unopened packet of Twinkies, smashing them flat.

ALAN
Oh, I'm sorry. Did I crush your Twinkies?

Sam looks up to see it's Alan White, the bully. Sam's scared but really upset.

SAM
What'd you do that for?

ALAN
What are you gonna do? Go cryin' to your sister, Sam Rear?

SAM
No. No, I'm not.

Sam turns around and yells over to MR. KOWCHEVSKI, a tough looking teacher who's a cafeteria monitor.

SAM (cont'd)
Mr. Kowchevski, Alan smashed my Twinkies.

Mr. Kowchevski heads over. Alan's in shock.

ALAN
(quietly; to Sam)
Oh my God. You are such a queer.

MR. KOWCHEVSKI
Alan, don't you have anything better to do than bother Mr. Weir?

CONTINUED: (4)

ALAN

Yes, sir. I was just bending over to talk to him and I accidentally leaned on his Twinkies.

MR. KOWCHEVSKI

Well, then, why don't you do the nice thing and go buy him some new ones?

ALAN

Yes, sir.

Alan glares down at Sam, then heads off to the snack bar.

SAM

Thank you, Mr. Kowchevski.

Sam smiles at Mr. Kowchevski, who just shakes his head, disapproving of Sam's handling of the situation. He walks away. Sam looks after him, confused.

MILLIE, the school brain, walks by Sam's table on a mission. We FOLLOW her as she looks around and heads to the back of the cafeteria. Through the windows we see a large crowd of freaks outside. Millie walks up to the window and TAPS on it.

EXT. SMOKING PATIO - DAY

Lindsay is standing with some friends in the center of the patio. There's lots of cigarette butts on the ground.

LINDSAY

Are any of you guys going to the Homecoming dance?

DANIEL, a Mexican-American kid with a large Afro, snorts derisively.

DANIEL

Naa, why would anyone want to go to that?

LINDSAY

I don't know. My dad wants me to get a date for it. You wanna go?

DANIEL

Naa. We're all going over to Tim's house that night.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL (cont'd)

His folks are out of town and my brother just sent me some mushrooms.

LINDSAY

Oh, man, then forget it. My dad told me to ask someone and I asked. I'm gonna go to Tim's.

DANIEL

Cool.

GENERAL LAUGHTER is heard. Lindsay and Daniel turn around to see that all the freaks are mimicking Millie, who's tapping on the window and pointing at Lindsay. Lindsay sees her. Millie motions for Lindsay to come in.

DANIEL (cont'd)

What's the Brain want with you?

LINDSAY

(sighing)

I used to be her friend.

Lindsay heads inside as one of the freaks flicks a lit cigarette at Millie's window. It hits the glass in front of her nose and bursts into sparks. Millie jumps back, startled. The freaks LAUGH and high five.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Lindsay comes into the cafeteria. Millie runs up to her.

MILLIE

Lindsay, today's the deadline to enter the Academic Decathlon. Mr. Rosso said you didn't turn in your application.

LINDSAY

Millie, I'm not entering.

MILLIE

What? Why not?

:

LINDSAY

I don't want to.

MILLIE

Lindsay, what happened to you? Why are you doing this?

LINDSAY

I'm not doing anything.

CONTINUED:

MILLIE

That's what I mean. Why are you a freak all of a sudden? What, do you think it's not cool to be smart anymore?

LINDSAY

Millie, I don't think it's cool to be anything anymore. I think it's great that you're doing the Academic Decathlon but don't judge me just because I don't want to do it.

MILLIE

But why don't you want to?

Lindsay stares at Millie, then looks down, SIGHS and looks Millie in the eye.

LINDSAY

Because I don't care anymore. I don't care about being smart, I don't care about doing the right thing, and I don't care about college or school records or any of the other stuff everybody tells me I'm supposed to care about. There's no point in any of it. So, unless you want to have a cigarette with me, we're finished talking.

Millie just stares at Lindsay, hurt and surprised. After a few beats, she slowly turns away and heads off. Lindsay watches after her. SIGHS. Heads back out to the smoking patio.

AT A CAFETERIA TABLE

the "popular" girls are eating lunch and having a great time.

POPULAR GIRL #1

(talking a mile a minute)

So, then, Steve goes, "Why are you following me?" and I go, "I'm not following you," and he goes, "then why are you behind me?" and I go, "cause you're in front of me!"

The girls all SCREAM WITH LAUGHTER. KLANK! Eli's lunch box hits the table as he plops down in one of their seats.

CONTINUED:

ELI
Hi! Do you like meatballs?

The girls all freeze, then force friendly smiles.

POPULAR GIRLS
Uh ... yeah.

ELI
Me too.

Eli smiles, opens the lid, pulls out a sandwich and starts eating merrily as the girls sit in silence, not sure what to do.

AT THE GEEK TABLE

Sam and the geeks are deep in discussion.

SAM
But if her sister's not married,
then who got her pregnant?

NEAL
Could be anybody. People have
sex every time they go out on a
date.

SAM
Where'd you hear *that*?

NEAL
Don't you watch movies? It
always happens.

BILL
I went out on a date once and I
didn't have sex.

The guys all turn and look at the semi-retarded Bill.

SAM
You went out on a date?

BILL
Yeah, I took a girl from my
Sunday school to a church picnic.

NEAL
Bill, real dates don't have the
word "church" in them.

BILL
My mom said it was a date.

CONTINUED:

NEAL

Look, all I know is, when people go out on dates that don't have anything to do with Sunday School, they have sex.

SAM

Kids don't have sex after the Homecoming dance, do they?

NEAL

Sure they do.

SAM

Everyone who goes to the Homecoming dance has sex?

NEAL

Yep.

Sam looks very concerned. Suddenly, BAM! A fist comes down hard on the table with a new packet of Twinkies pinched between the thumb and first finger. It's Alan.

ALAN

Here's your new Twinkies, Weird.

Alan lets go of the Twinkies, revealing that he's smashed the end of one of the Twinkies between his fingers. Alan looks over at Mr. Kowchevski and gives an "everything's fine" smile.

Mr. Kowchevski nods his approval and turns away. Alan immediately socks Sam sharply in the ribs.

ALAN (cont'd)

That's for telling on me. And all I can say is you'd better watch your ass in gym today.

Alan kicks the leg of Sam's chair hard and leaves.

NEAL

Why do you let him do that to you? You're taller than him.

SAM

I don't see you doing anything.

NEAL

My dad tells me to stay out of fights that don't affect me directly.

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Well, it'd sure be nice if you
guys backed me up once in a
while. My sister does and she's
a girl.

Art nods, guiltily. Just then, the guys all look up and stare.
Sam turns and sees that they're all staring at CINDY SANDERS,
the ultimate pretty girl-next-door. Sam's eyes light up.

ART

(sing song)

Hey, Sam, there's Cindy Sanders.

Sam just stares. He's obviously obsessed and has been for a
while. Cindy's looking around, then looks over at Sam and sees
him staring. His eyes go wide and he looks away quickly.

SAM

... oh, man.

NEAL

(looking at Cindy)

Uh oh. Incoming.

Sam looks at Neal questioningly. Neal points secretly back at
Cindy. Sam looks over and sees Cindy walking toward him,
staring right at him. Sam's eyes go wider than before.

SAM

... oh my God ...

Sam watches her walk toward him. He looks like he's going to
have a heart attack. Tries desperately to look composed. She
comes right up and kneels down next to him. Sam swallows hard.

CINDY

Hi. Is this your jacket?

She produces a white windbreaker and shows it to wide-eyed Sam.

SAM

... yeah ...

CINDY

You left it in science. I didn't
want it to get all dirty.

SAM

(too friendly)

Oh, thanks, Cindy!

CONTINUED: (3)

She smiles kindly and leaves. Sam watches after her, still holding his breath. The other geeks look at him in awe.

ART

Sam, she actually *brought* you your jacket. Science is on the other side of the school. You know what that means, don't you?

Sam looks at Art. Art makes a "figure it out" face. Then ...

SAM

Really?... Do you think?

NEAL

No way. She's too pretty.

BILL

That doesn't mean anything. Miss Piggy's in love with Kermit and she's pretty.

The geeks stare at Bill for a second.

NEAL

You're weird, Bill.

SAM

(thinking)

Cindy was in my sister's ballet class. I even told her she danced good after a recital once. She said "thanks."

(ponders; to himself)

I wonder if she has a date for the Homecoming dance ...?

Sam smiles as he considers this. In his own world.

ART

What'd you say?

SAM

Nothing.

Art shrugs and goes back to his food. Sam stares after Cindy, then nods to himself.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE/TROPHY CASE AREA - DAY

This is the most populated area of the school. The main entrance doors are in the front and the doors leading to the cafeteria are in the back. On each side are the main hallways to all the classes. Trophy cases are built into the walls.

All the students are pouring out of the cafeteria after lunch. Sam comes out with the geeks, who head off to class. Lindsay comes out, sees Sam and walks over to him.

LINDSAY

Hey.

SAM

Hey. You ask anyone to the dance?

LINDSAY

Yeah, and he said "no," so I kept my promise. I'm going to a party instead.

SAM

Dad's gonna be mad.

LINDSAY

Yeah, well, maybe dad oughta get some real problems.

RICK (O.C.)

GET AWAY FROM ME, MAN!

Sam and Lindsay look over to see RICK SUMMERS, a cool "popular" guy with perfect hair and a butthair mustache, being hugged tightly by Eli. Rick's trying to pry Eli off.

ELI

My buddy!

RICK

I'm not your buddy, man.

Rick shoves Eli away. Eli LAUGHS, thinking it's a game. Rick's friend, PETE, comes over to Rick.

PETE

Rick, it's just Eli. Be cool.

RICK

I don't like him touching me.

CONTINUED:

DIANE CREBS, Rick's pretty girlfriend, is watching with two of her friends. Diane starts LAUGHING.

DIANE
Rick, I think he likes you.
(to Eli)
Eli, do you like Rick?

Eli starts dancing around merrily.

ELI
Rick, Rick, Rick, Rick!

Eli continues singing and dancing as Diane and her friends LAUGH at him. Students start to gather around and stare. Sam and Lindsay watch, Lindsay's face filled with contempt.

LINDSAY
God, does everything in this world suck?

She storms over to Diane. Sam can't believe it.

LINDSAY (cont'd)
Leave him alone. That's so mean.

DIANE
What's the matter, burn-out? Is he your *boyfriend*?

Diane's friends SCREAM WITH LAUGHTER. Sam stares at his sister in awe.

BY THE PRINCIPLE'S OFFICE

A distraught Millie is walking down the hall with MR. ROSSO, the 30-something guidance councillor. He's a sincere guy who's basically a geek grown up.

MILLIE
Mr. Rosso, she wouldn't even come to my birthday party last week. She said birthdays are stupid!

MR. ROSSO
Millie, I'm sure Lindsay's just going through some phase.
(hears commotion up ahead)
Oh, now what?

BACK AT THE TROPHY CASE AREA

Lindsay stares at Diane, challenging.

CONTINUED:

LINDSAY

What if he was my boyfriend?
Would that be some big joke to
you?

DIANE

Wouldn't be any joke to me. I
think you guys make a perfect
couple.

Diane's friends LAUGH again. Millie and Mr. Rosso stop outside
the group and watch. Lindsay stares at Diane with contempt,
then turns to Eli, who smiles at her, unaware. Lindsay gets an
idea.

LINDSAY (cont'd)

(to Diane)

Yeah, I guess we do.

(turns to Eli)

Eli, will you go to the
Homecoming Dance with me?

Everyone goes SILENT. Millie's jaw drops. Eli looks stunned.
He stares at Lindsay, trying to read her face. She gives him a
sincere smile. His face lights up like a Christmas tree.

ELI

Yes!

Eli starts jumping up and down, celebrating. The crowd stares,
unsure what to think. Sam stares in shock.

SAM

... oh, man ...

Lindsay takes Eli by the arm and leads him away through the
staring and silent crowd. Eli continues to celebrate.

ELI

Meatball dance, meatball dance,
Eli's going to the meatball
dance!

Lindsay comes face to face with Mr. Rosso and Millie, who stare
at her, surprised. Lindsay gives them a defensive look and
heads off with Eli. Mr. Rosso stares after Lindsay.

MILLIE

(gesturing; to Mr. Rosso)

See?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Sam, Art and Bill are in the locker room, getting dressed for gym class.

BILL

If your sister dates retarded guys, how come she never asked me out?

ART

I thought you said you're not retarded.

BILL

Well, I'm not but she doesn't know that.

SAM

I don't know. She's been doing a lot of weird stuff ever since our grandma died.

Just then, Alan walks by in his gym shorts. BOOM! He hits Sam's metal locker hard with his fist.

ALAN

You're dead, Rear.

Alan points at Sam menacingly. Bill looks away. Art starts to look away, then looks at Sam, then musters his courage.

ART

Hey, Alan --

ALAN

What?!

ART

(scared; backing down)
... nothin'.

Alan gives them both a menacing look, then stalks off to the gym. They watch him go. After a beat ...

SAM

Thanks for trying.

ART

Sorry.

Sam keeps staring after Alan, depressed. Art SIGHS and continues tying his shoes.

INT. GYM - DAY

The large class of boys is sitting on the gym floor as MR. FREDRICKS, the gym teacher, addresses them.

MR. FREDRICKS

Well, guys, since it's Friday and in honor of the Homecoming game tomorrow, I thought I'd give you guys a day off.

The class REACTS positively. Sam looks absolutely relieved. He peeks over at Alan, who looks back, holds up his hand, draws a face on his palm with his finger and then punches his palm and points at Sam threateningly. Sam looks away, worried.

NEAL

(raising hand)

Can we go to McDonalds?

MR. FREDRICKS

C'mon, Schweiber, don't be an idiot. I mean we're gonna do something fun. I'm gonna let you guys play Dodgeball.

The class CHEERS, except for the geeks and freaks, who put their heads in their hands. Dodgeball is their Kryptonite.

MR. FREDRICKS (cont'd)

All right, break up into teams.

Everybody jumps up and scrambles to opposite sides of the gym. It's pretty much bullies, jocks, and huge, mean "farmers" on one side, and geeks and freaks on the other side. Sam sees Alan on the other side. Sam starts to head over to the tough team.

ART

Sam, where're you going?

SAM

Out of the line of fire.

Sam comes up to the other side. Alan and some other bullies and a huge farmer kid, SEIDELMAN, see him and form a wall.

ALAN

Hey, get back to your side, Rear.

SAM

I wanna be on your team.

CONTINUED:

SEIDELMAN
(big and dopey)
Yeah, 'cause you want to kiss us.

ALAN
No doubt. He's such a girl!

The guys all LAUGH as Sam turns and makes the long walk back to the freak and geek side.

BILL
Nice try.

SAM
Oh, man, I'd so dead.

CUT TO:

MINUTES LATER

Pandemonium! Red rubber playground balls of all sizes are flying back and forth like cannon fire. The balls coming from the bully side are whizzing in like bullets. BOOM! They make a huge sound as they hit the retractable wooden bleachers that make up the gym wall. BOOM! BOOM! The balls from the geek side arc lazily in and drop short of the enemy.

Sam, Art, Neal and Bill are huddled against one end of the wall as their fellow students run back and forth in front of them in a panic, occasionally getting hit and HOWLING IN PAIN. Balls continue to hit the wall around them. It's war.

NEAL
Somebody *please* tell me what's supposed to be fun about this.

ART
If we just let ourselves get hit, then we can sit out.

BOOOOOMMMM!!! A cantalope-sized ball rockets into the wall like a bullet, just missing Sam. They all jump.

SAM
Uh ... let's just *pretend* we were hit. Nobody'd know.

ART
I don't think we can.

Art points over at Mr. Fredricks. He's staring right at them.

CONTINUED:

MR. FREDRICKS
Hey, c'mon, you ladies! Get in
there and play!

BOOM! Another ball rockets in, this time scattering the guys.
Sam falls down. Bill starts to freak.

BILL
I can't take it, man. I gotta
get outta here!

Bill takes a deep breath, lets out a loud and long YELL like
Rambo running into battle and sprints across the gym.

SEIDELMAN
Look, the retard's making a run
for it!

BILL
I'm not a retaaaaaard--!!!

BOOM! A ball hits Bill full force in the head, ricocheting
straight up in the air. Bill goes down hard. The bully side
CRACKS UP.

ALAN
(to Seidelman)
Good shootin', Eugene.
(looking at Sam)
All right, now it's time to smear
the queer.

The group of bullies and farmers all grab balls and zero in on
Sam. Art and Neal are standing with Sam and see this.

ART
Uh oh.

NEAL
Art, get away from Sam! Quick!

Neal and Art try to run but it's too late. BOOM! BOOM! Neal's
hit in the chest and knocked backwards. Art takes one in the
groin. He doubles over.

ART
Oh, my God!

Art's down on his hands and knees, red faced with pain. The
bully side LAUGHS.

CONTINUED: (2)

SEIDELMAN

There's some crushed nuts for
your sundae!

Mr. Fredricks LAUGHS. Art's still on his hands and knees, beet red. He's trying not to cry.

MR. FREDRICKS

All right, Thompson. Walk it
off.

Art gets up, holding his groin with one hand and his stomach with the other. His eyes are red as he staggers off to the side when WHAP! Another ball hits him full force in the side of the face. He's dazed.

MR. FREDRICKS (cont'd)

Hey, Seidelman, that's illegal.
You're outta there.

Art stands stunned, holding his face for a second, then runs to the locker room to cry. Seidelman shrugs and walks to the sideline. When he gets there, Mr. Fredricks gives him a playful punch on the arm, shakes his head and LAUGHS.

MR. FREDRICKS (cont'd)

Sit down, knucklehead.

Alan looks at Sam, who is standing by himself in an empty area. Alan starts to stalk him. Sam runs over to a crowd of freaks.

FREAK

Hey, kid, get away from us. That
psycho's after you.

Alan hurls his ball at them. BOOM! It hits the wall as they all duck. The freak picks up the ball, winds up and throws it back at Alan with all his might, losing his balance and falling onto the floor. Alan catches the ball easily.

FREAK (cont'd)

(looking up)

He caught my ball. I'm out! Woo
hoo!

The freak celebrates and runs to the side. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! A volley of balls comes in, hitting all three freaks surrounding Alan. They fall over in pain, leaving Sam a sitting duck. Sam looks around. There's only two other guys left on his side. The bully side has about eight huge guys and Alan left.

ALAN

Nowhere to hide, Weird.

CONTINUED: (3)

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! A barrage of balls comes in as Sam takes off running. The balls just miss him. As he runs by the other two kids, they get hit and go down. Balls are flying in as Sam runs back and forth, arms and legs flying.

NEAL

Go, Sam, go!

Suddenly, the barrage stops. Sam stops and looks over, panting. He sees the big guys lined up, all holding balls, staring at him. They smile evilly.

ALAN

I told you you were dead, Rear.

Alan's holding the smallest, deadliest ball of the lot. He winds up to take the hardest throw of his life. Sam freezes in terror.

In SLOW MOTION, Alan unwinds and throws a comet straight at Sam. Sam puts his hands out to protect himself and closes his eyes.

BOOM! Back to real speed. We hear the ball hit Sam. Sam flies back into the wall. Then Alan's eyes go wide. Sam's stunned. He looks down and sees that he's caught the ball between his arms and chest. The geeks all CHEER. Alan turns red.

ALAN (cont'd)

(going ballistic)

Oh, my God! You QUEEEEEEEER!!!

SEIDELMAN

(laughing uproariously)

Ah ha ha! The girl got you out!

MR. FREDRICKS

All right, White. Take a seat.

Alan storms off to the side as Sam looks over at Neal and Bill, who give him a thumbs up.

NEAL

Throw it back!

Sam looks at the seven remaining guys. They're all huge. We see Sam get an idea. He smiles, then lobs the ball high in the air. Everyone watches it go up.

SAM

(to himself)

Catch it. C'mon, catch it.

CONTINUED: (4)

The ball descends. The huge guys watch it come down. A big jock holds his hands out to catch it. Sam smiles, breathes a SIGH of relief.

Suddenly, the jock puts his arms behind his back and steps back, letting the ball hit the ground, bouncing away. Then the jock looks at Sam.

JOCK

You're not getting out of this that easy.

MR. FREDRICKS

All right. One guy left. No borders. The floor's open.

Sam looks over at the teacher, incredulous.

MR. FREDRICKS (cont'd)

C'mon, you guys. Finish this game off. Everybody wants to play again.

The freaks and geeks all put their heads in their hands again. They definitely *don't* want to play again. The huge guys slowly surround Sam. Sam looks at the geeks helplessly.

SAM

(to huge guys)

C'mon, guys. I give up. Let's just start another game. You win, okay?

The guys all stop.

JOCK

Oh, really? You give up? Okay, we win.

The guys all voice agreement and turn to leave. Sam smiles, relieved. Then ... BOOOOOOOOMMMMMM!!!!!! The huge guys all turn back and blast Sam with seven balls at once as Alan CHEERS from the sidelines and all the farmers, bullies and jocks LAUGH and high five each other.

NEAL

(to Bill)

Dodgeball's kind of a stupid game, isn't it?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

It's empty. The bell RINGS and students pour out of their classrooms. Lindsay exits her class and starts down the hall.

As she walks, people start looking over at her. They WHISPER to each other and point, staring at her in awe, in confusion, in interest.

Lindsay realizes that everyone's looking. She starts to look uncomfortable. Tries not to show that she notices them. More students stop talking as she passes. They turn and stare. Eventually, the hallway goes SILENT.

Lindsay stops. She turns and looks at everyone. They stare back at her, their faces questioning and expectant. Lindsay seems to fill with confidence.

LINDSAY
(to everybody)
It's true.

Everybody takes this in for a second. They seem appeased. Then they turn away and resume business as usual. TALKING RESUMES.

Lindsay studies them for a beat, then turns back, smiles to herself, and continues down the hallway.

Behind her, WE SEE SAM CROSS THE HALL AND HEAD DOWN ANOTHER HALLWAY. WE FOLLOW HIM.

Sam's holding an ice pack on his cheek, looking upset. As he walks, he looks over and sees Cindy Sanders standing at her locker talking to Millie. Sam stares at Cindy as he walks. She looks beautiful. EVERYTHING GOES TO SLOW MOTION.

Cindy looks over and sees Sam as he passes. She gives him a friendly smile. Sam's eyes go wide in shock. He tries to recover and smiles back at her nervously. She smiles again, then goes back to Millie.

ART (V.O.)
You know what *that* means, don't
you?

BACK TO NORMAL SPEED. Sam keeps staring back at her as he walks, in shock. BAM. Sam crashes right into someone big. Sam looks up. It's the giant farmer, Seidelman.

SEIDELMAN
Hey, girl, Alan's lookin' for
you. He's gonna kick your ass
for gettin' him out in gym.

CONTINUED:

Seidelman walks off as the life seems to go out of Sam.

SAM
(then, to himself)
Oh, man, four more years of *this*?

Sam MOANS, puts his ice pack back on and trudges away.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Students are scrambling to get to their next classes. SLAMMING LOCKERS. YELLING. Sam is standing by his locker in front of a blank faced Neal, Bill and Art. After a beat ...

NEAL

Excuse me?

SAM

You guys have to help me fight Alan.

NEAL

Why would we do that?

SAM

'Cause you're my friends. Because every time he's been mean to me, you guys have done nothing to help me.

BILL

But if we did, he'd start being mean to us too.

SAM

Yeah, well, join the club.

ART

I'll help you, Sam.

Sam gives Art a "thanks" nod. Then he looks at Neal and Bill. They stare at him as if he were insane. Sam rolls his eyes.

SAM

Well, would you at least keep asking around to see if Cindy has a date or not?

NEAL

The dance is tomorrow and she's a cheerleader, for Pete's sake.

SAM

I know, but my dad always tells me that pretty girls never get asked out because guys are afraid to talk to them.

CONTINUED:

BILL
(serious)
Really? Maybe I should ask out
Farrah Fawcett Majors.

NEAL
Why, does she go to your Sunday
School? Besides, she's married
to the Six Million Dollar Man.

BILL
No, she's not. He's married to
Jamie Summers. That's why they
call her the "Bionic Woman."

NEAL
That's just on TV. It's not that
way in real life.

BILL
What's the difference?

The school bell RINGS. The hallway starts to clear.

SAM
Just ask around, okay?

Neal and Bill nod "okay" and take off for class. Art stops Sam.

ART
Are you really gonna go to the
dance tomorrow? I thought we
were gonna see the Monty Python
movie.

SAM
I know but my dad's making me go
to the dance.

ART
(disappointed)
Oh ... okay. Well ... um ...
good luck.

Art walks away. Sam sadly watches him go. We see Sam would
probably rather go to the movie. He SIGHS and heads for class
just as Lindsay walks by, dragging a loud Eli behind her.

ELI
(singing merrily)
Meatballs, meatballs, meatballs!

CONTINUED: (2)

LINDSAY
 (looking around; embarrassed)
 Eli! Shhhh. Why are you always
 saying that?

ELI
 Because I like meatballs.

LINDSAY
 Yeah, and I like chocolate cake
 but I don't go around yelling
 about it all day.

ELI
 Well ... you should.

LINDSAY
 (after a beat)
 I wish I could, Eli.

ELI
 Where we going? I have study
 hall.

LINDSAY
 You can miss it. I've got some
 friends I want you to meet.

Lindsay drags Eli down the hall and into

THE AUTO SHOP

A large industrial classroom. This is blue collar freak heaven. A few old cars are up on racks. There's two large garage doors that are open, revealing the gray day outside. Some freaks in greasy coveralls are working on various projects.

MR. GUYEVSKI, a thin, weathered Harry Dean Stanton-type in his late 50's, is helping the students. He's the freaks' father figure. KEN MILLER, an overweight freak with long greasy blond hair, walks over to him with a carburetor.

KEN
 Hey, Mr. G, this won't fit in the
 Duster.

MR. GUYEVSKI
 Miller, you're trying to put a
 Ford carburetor into a Chrysler.
 (MORE)

CONTINUED:

MR. GUYEVSKI (cont'd)

The stockholders of the auto industry have taken great pains to make sure that those two items will never accommodate each other.

KEN

That sucks.

MR. GUYEVSKI

Welcome to business 101.

Ken looks over and sees Lindsay and Eli. Looks confused.

KEN

Uh ... hey, Linds.

The other freaks and Mr. Guyevski look over.

LINDSAY

Everybody, this is Eli. He's my date for the Homecoming Dance.

Everyone's jaws drop. Then NICK BARON, a Peter Frampton wannabe with thick lips, LAUGHS knowingly.

NICK

Oh, I get it. Hey, that's really cool, Linds.

Daniel from the smoking patio comes over to Lindsay and Eli.

DANIEL

The jocks'll freak. That's great.

Daniel grabs Eli's hand and gives him a soul brother shake.

DANIEL (cont'd)

Eli, my man. Way to go!

Eli shakes Daniel's hand hard, overjoyed.

ELI

My man, my man, my man!

The freaks all LAUGH and pat Eli on the back.

LINDSAY

You guys, I want you to show Eli how to be cool. Let him hang around with you today. Teach him anything you can.

CONTINUED: (2)

NICK

Sure. Hey, Mr. G, can we let Eli help us change the oil?

Mr. Guyevski forces a smile.

MR. GUYEVSKI

If Eli wants to.

ELI

Oil, oil, change the oil!

The freaks LAUGH again. Eli LAUGHS too, excited to have friends. The freaks take him over to a car. Lindsay looks proud. Mr. Guyevski's smile drops. He pulls Lindsay to the other side of the garage.

MR. GUYEVSKI

I bet you think you're real cute, don't you? Think you're really clever.

LINDSAY

(taken aback)

Mr. Guyevski, what are you talking about? I'm serious about this.

MR. GUYEVSKI

Serious about what? Humiliating that poor retarded boy?

LINDSAY

I'm doing this because people were humiliating *him*! I want to help him prove to them that he's normal.

MR. GUYEVSKI

(angry whisper)

But he's *not* normal! He's mentally retarded. He doesn't act like you or me because he *can't* act that way. And in my book, for you to use him to make some point makes you worse than the people that were making fun of him.

This seems to snap something in Lindsay. She suddenly becomes very angry.

CONTINUED: (3)

LINDSAY

"Makes me worse?" I'm just trying to do something good and nice in this *stupid school* where nothing nice ever happens! You don't know anything about me or people like Eli, so I'd appreciate it if you'd just stop judging us like everyone else in this place does.

Lindsay stares at him defiantly. Mr. Guyevski looks surprised at her outburst, then smiles.

MR. GUYEVSKI

I'm going to tell you something that's going to make you feel very stupid. Do you want to hear it?

LINDSAY

What, that you used to be just like me? That my problems are just jokes compared to the adult world? Well, don't bother because I've already heard all that crap from my father and it's not true.

MR. GUYEVSKI

No, I just wanted to tell you that Eli's my son.

This stops Lindsay cold. She just stares at Mr. Guyevski, unable to speak.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sam is sitting in class, writing in his notebook, as his English teacher, MS. COLLINS, lectures. Millie is across the aisle from Sam.

MS. COLLINS

And remember, "a lot" is two words, not one. If you ever turn in a paper that has "alot" as one word, consider that paper an "E."

Ms. Collins turns and heads to the chalkboard. We see that Sam's writing "Mrs. Cindy Weir" over and over in his notebook. Millie leans over to him. She's a ball of insecurity.

CONTINUED:

MILLIE
 (whispering)
 Why does your sister hate me?

SAM
 What? She doesn't hate you.

MILLIE
 Then what's wrong with her?
 Everybody's worried.

SAM
 (surprised)
 They are?

MS. COLLINS
 Ms. Kentner, is there something
 you'd like to share with the
 class?

MILLIE
 (mortified)
 No, Ms. Collins. I'm so sorry.

Ms. Collins goes back to lecturing as Millie sits back in her chair, her hand on her face as if it's the end of the world.

MILLIE (cont'd)
 (to herself)
 Oh, my God. I can't believe I
 just got in trouble.

SAM
 (leaning over)
 Hey, does Cindy have a date for
 the dance tomorrow?

MILLIE
 (a quick, panicky whisper)
 Shut up, shut up, shut up.

INT. AUTO SHOP - MR. GUYEVSKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Lindsay sits in Mr. Guyevski's grease-stained office. Mr. Guyevski sits behind an old beat-up metal desk.

MR. GUYEVSKI
 Look, Lindsay, I do believe that
 your heart's in the right place
 on this. But I really don't want
 my son to be used as some kind of
 guinea pig for you to show up a
 few jerks.

CONTINUED:

LINDSAY

But it's not about that. I just really need to do this. And I think it'd be great for Eli. Mr. Guyevski, look, there's not that much in my life I feel good about right now.

(smiles)

C'mon, you know how much Eli likes to dance.

Mr. Guyevski LAUGHS as he thinks about this.

MR. GUYEVSKI

Yeah, that he does.

(stares at Lindsay, then)

Look, obviously I know if you take Eli to that dance, it's going to get a lot of attention. There's no getting around that. But I just need you to promise me that you're doing this first and foremost for Eli. If you can change the world with it after that, then fine.

LINDSAY

Mr. Guyevski, you have my word.

He gives her a fatherly, approving nod.

MR. GUYEVSKI

Call me Mr. G. Everyone else does.

LINDSAY

(standing)

Thanks, Mr. G.

(turns to go, then turns back)

How come you don't tell anyone Eli's your son?

MR. GUYEVSKI

Because high school's for learning about life. I don't want people to treat him any different than they will in the real world.

Lindsay gives Mr. Guyevski a playfully accusing look.

CONTINUED: (2)

LINDSAY

Then why are you giving me such a hard time about the dance?

MR. GUYEVSKI

Because I just don't want to see him get his heart broken.

(a sad smile)

Hey, he's still my boy, isn't he?

Lindsay gives Mr. Guyevski a warm, understanding smile and leaves.

INT. GYM - DAY

A pep rally is in full swing. All the bleachers are set up against the opposite walls of the gym. The freshmen and sophomores are against one wall, the juniors and seniors against the other. The cheerleaders are in the middle of a routine for the crowd. Cindy Sanders is in the front row.

CHEERLEADERS

Go, Big Greens! Tough mach-ines!
Break their line and make them
whine! Go, Big Greens, GO!

As they continue, we find Sam, Art, Neal and Bill sitting in the middle of the freshman section. Sam is staring moony-eyed at Cindy Sanders, who is giving the cheer her all.

NEAL

Okay, here's what I heard. Cindy might not have a date. She was supposed to go with Craig Goblatt until they went to the movies last weekend. Word on the street is that he tried to go to second base with her and she got mad.

SAM

(in shock)

So, you mean she went to first base with him?

NEAL

Unless he tried to run right from the batter's box over the pitcher's mound to second.

Sam seems quite surprised. He stares at her oddly. She continues to cheer, looking quite pure and virginal.

CONTINUED:

BILL
Harold Spencer told me that he
heard she lives in a tent.

The guys all stare at Bill.

NEAL
Where'd he hear that?

BILL
I don't know.
(beat)
Why, you think it's not true?

NEAL
You really are in special ed for
a reason, aren't you?

SAM
(to Art)
What'd you find out?

ART
That "Holy Grail" starts at seven
tomorrow night.

SAM
Oh. Thanks.

SMACK! A wet wad of soaked paper towel hits Sam in the side of the face. He grabs his cheek in pain and looks around. He sees Alan sitting with the other short bullies. Alan points and LAUGHS. The other bullies LAUGH too.

ALAN
Hey, Weird, why's your face all
red? You been cryin'?

The bullies all make mocking crying faces and LAUGH. Sam looks at Neal and Bill for help. They look back at the cheerleaders.

SAM
So you guys really aren't gonna
help me with Alan, are you?

NEAL
Sam, look, my dad always says
that violence only leads to more
violence. If we fight with them,
they're only gonna come back har--

WHAP! Another wet wad of paper hits Neal hard in the face.

CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN

Hey, look. I was aiming for a queer and I hit a dork!

The bullies all LAUGH again. Neal glares at them.

NEAL

All right, it's go time. We've just gotta think of a strategy.

They all lean in and start making their plan.

IN THE TOP ROW OF THE SOPHOMORE BLEACHERS

Lindsay is sitting with the freaks. Daniel, Nick and Ken are sitting near Lindsay. Eli sits next to her. They all watch the pep rally with contempt, except for Eli, who jumps up and starts cheering wildly.

ELI

Big Greens! YEEEEEEAAAAAAAAA!!!

Lindsay and Daniel grab Eli's arms and pull him down.

DANIEL

All right, Eli. Rule number one. The football team is not your friend.

ELI

But this is the pep rally.

NICK

For them. For us, it's just a chance to be out of class.

ELI

I like pep rallies.

KEN

Why?

ELI

Because everybody's happy.

The freaks look around at all the students in the bleachers. Some are cheering, many are talking to each other and goofing off. The rest just look bored.

DANIEL

Yeah, they're happy because they're not in class.

CONTINUED:

ELI
(pointing at cheerleaders)
They're happy.

KEN
Yeah, but they have to be happy
about this crap. That's their
job.

Eli watches the cheerleaders jump around and cheer.

ELI
Eli wants to be a cheerleader.

Eli jumps up again and starts dancing and CHEERING.

ELI (cont'd)
Meatballs! Meatballs! Goooo,
green meatballs!

Everybody around them starts LAUGHING. Students in other bleachers look over. Lindsay grabs Eli and pulls him down again.

LINDSAY
Eli, everybody's laughing at you.

ELI
They like me.

LINDSAY
Eli, people laugh for a lot of
different reasons.

ELI
They laugh when they're happy.

LINDSAY
Yeah, but people can be happy for
the wrong reason sometimes. A
lot of people get happy when they
see somebody they can make fun
of. It's called being laughed
at. That's bad. If people laugh
with you, then it's okay. It
means they respect you. It's
like you told them it's okay to
laugh at what you're doing
because you're trying to make
them happy.

ELI
I am trying to make them happy.

CONTINUED: (2)

LINDSAY

I know, Eli, but they don't know that. They're just laughing at you because you're retarded.

Eli stares at Lindsay. His whole face changes.

ELI

They laugh because I'm retarded?

LINDSAY

Yeah, but that's why I want to help you.

Eli just stares, upset. Something's wrong. Suddenly, Eli jumps up and starts YELLING and pointing at all the students accusatorially.

ELI

YOU'RE RETARDED! YOU DON'T LAUGH AT ME!! YOU'RE ALL RETARDED!!!

Eli jumps up and down, ranting. The wooden bleachers BOOM and ECHO. Lindsay and the freaks don't know what to do. Kids look over. Lindsay is trying desperately to control him.

LINDSAY

Eli, calm down! I'm gonna help you.

ELI

(to students)
YOU'RE RETARDED! YOU'RE RETARDED! YOU'RE RETARDED!!!

Eli tries to run down the bleachers but stumbles and falls down hard. A CRACK is heard. Eli has broken his arm. He SCREAMS in pain. Teachers rush up to him and try to calm him down as the students get up and move away. Eli flails, out of control.

ELI (cont'd)

NOOOO! NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

Lindsay just stares at the scene helplessly, in shock, unable to move.

LINDSAY

... oh, man ...

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. FRONT OF HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The school buses are all lined up as students head to them, happy to be out of school. About fifty yards away, we see Alan and his two bullies joking around and punching each other.

DOLLY OVER to reveal Sam, Art, Neal and Bill in the foreground. They stand watching Alan and crew, trying to look tough.

SAM

Well ... there they are.

ART

Yup.

SAM

(after a long beat)

So ... who's gonna take whom?

NEAL

I guess I'll take the short kid.

BILL

They're all short.

NEAL

Well, I'll take the shortest, then. Sam, you should take Alan.

SAM

Why me?

NEAL

Because he's *your* enemy. It's like Luke having to battle Darth Vader. He wouldn't have Yoda do it for him.

SAM

Well ... there's only three of them and there's four of us. Bill, you help me with Alan.

BILL

Uh ... I kinda just thought I'd watch this first fight. You know ... so I could learn.

CONTINUED:

SAM

Bill, we're not starting a gang.
It's not like we're gonna be
doing this all the time.

BILL

Oh ... well ... okay then.

They all stare, trying to find some resolve.

SAM

So ... are we ready?

ART

(determined)

Ready.

NEAL/BILL

Uh ... yeah ... ready ...

Just then, Alan looks over and sees our heroes staring. He alerts the other two bullies, who look over as Alan points right at Sam. Neal and Bill immediately scatter.

NEAL

I gotta go.

BILL

I have to get home. My mom's
gonna take me shoe shopping.

And they're gone. Sam and Art watch after them, then realize they're now only an army of two. They see Alan and the bullies heading toward them and exchange a look. Then ...

SAM

This can wait. See you tomorrow.

ART

Okay.

Art sprints to his bus. Sam turns to run and comes face to face with a serious Mr. Rosso, who stops him.

MR. ROSSO

Sam, can I talk to you for a
second?

Sam looks over his shoulder to see that Alan and gang have stopped, seeing Mr. Rosso. They make a threatening gesture to Sam, who looks worried but relieved.

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM
Sure, Mr. Rosso.

They head back into the school, Sam checking over his shoulder.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Lindsay is sitting in the waiting area, looking upset and feeling bad. She jumps up as Eli and Mr. Guyevski come out of the examination room. Eli has a cast on his arm.

LINDSAY
Is he okay? Are you okay, Eli?

MR. GUYEVSKI
He's fine. It's just a slight fracture.

LINDSAY
Eli, I'm really sorry about all this. I just wanted to be your friend. You know that, don't you?

ELI
You like Eli.

LINDSAY
Yes, I do. I really do. You're the only person who makes me happy right now.

ELI
Thank you.

Eli smiles at Lindsay sheepishly. Lindsay gives him an apologetic smile. Mr. Guyevski SIGHS wearily.

MR. GUYEVSKI
Well, it's nobody's fault, really. You meant well. We'll just chalk it up to a learning experience and move on with our lives.

ELI
What about the dance?

Lindsay and Mr. Guyevski both look surprised at this.

MR. GUYEVSKI
Oh, Eli, you don't still want to go to that dance, do you?

CONTINUED:

ELI
I want to dance.

MR. GUYEVSKI
I know, but you can dance at home.

ELI
No! I want to dance at school.
I want to dance with Lindsay.

LINDSAY
Eli, I don't know if that's such a good idea anymore.

ELI
Why?

Lindsay looks at Mr. G, then at Eli. Not sure what to say.

LINDSAY
I don't know. It just doesn't seem like the best thing to do.

ELI
Best thing for Eli.

Lindsay studies his face. Eli's dead serious.

LINDSAY
(brightening)
Would it be? Really? 'Cause I really want to.

ELI
Yes.

Mr. Guyevski looks at Eli. Sees his son's determined face.

MR. GUYEVSKI
Eli, what if people laugh at you?
Would you do what you did today?

ELI
No. I'd laugh at *them*. I'd dance. Lindsay's my friend.

Lindsay seems touched by this. Eli gives his dad a pleading look. Mr. Guyevski can't help but smile.

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. GUYEVSKI

Eli, the way you dance, you're gonna kill somebody with that cast.

ELI

I dance good! I dance good!

Eli starts to dance. Lindsay and Mr. Guyevski LAUGH.

MR. GUYEVSKI

(to Lindsay)

I'd say you still have a date.

LINDSAY

Great! That's so great!

Lindsay hugs Eli as Mr. Guyevski tousles Eli's hair, proud.

INT. LINDSAY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Lindsay is sitting on her bed, looking at a photo, a sad smile on her face. Her studious-looking room is very sparsely decorated. A light KNOCKING. Sam sticks his head in.

SAM

Um ... can I come in?

LINDSAY

Sure.

Sam comes in and closes the door behind him. He looks uncomfortable. Lindsay stares "yes?"

SAM

(a deep breath; then ...)
Why are you throwing your life away?

LINDSAY

Did Millie tell you to ask me that?

SAM

Uh ... no. Mr. Rosso did.

LINDSAY

I figured. Forget it.

Sam stands there, looking even more uncomfortable. Lindsay giggles. He makes a "cut it out" face.

CONTINUED:

LINDSAY (cont'd)
 How's things with Alan? I hope I
 didn't make it worse for you the
 other day.

SAM
 Nah. Couldn't be much worse.
 (beat)
 Do you think that me, Art, Neal
 and Bill could beat him up?

LINDSAY
 Just Alan? Yeah. Alan and his
 buddies? No to maybe.

SAM
 Yeah. That's what I thought.

Sam SIGHS, depressed, and starts to head out.

LINDSAY
 Hey, Sam. Did mom and dad ever
 tell you that I was the only one
 with grandma when she died?

SAM
 (surprised)
 No.

Lindsay stares at the picture in her hand. It's a picture of an
 old woman, kind and happy looking. After a beat ...

LINDSAY
 They went down to the cafeteria
 for coffee. All of a sudden,
 Grandma looked so terrified. I
 called for the nurse but there
 wasn't any time. Grandma grabbed
 my hand and said "I don't want to
 go." She was so scared. I said
 "Can you see Heaven or God or a
 light or anything ...?"

SAM
 What'd she say?

LINDSAY
 "No ... there's nothing."
 (beat)
 She lived a good life, she did
 everything you're supposed to do
 ... and that's what she got.

CONTINUED: (2)

Lindsay stares at Sam, troubled. Sam looks dumbfounded. They just look at each other, not knowing what to say.

INT. WEIR FAMILY DINING ROOM - EVENING

Sam and Lindsay are at the dinner table with their parents. They are halfway through their meals. Mr. Weir looks at them both as they eat.

HAROLD

So ... Sam, did you find a date for the dance?

SAM

Yeah.

HAROLD

Hey! That's great. I'm proud of you.

SAM

Uh ... I didn't ask her yet.

HAROLD

Sam, the dance is tomorrow.

SAM

I know. I'm going to ask her at the football game.

JEAN

You're going to the football game? That's a first.

HAROLD

Well, at least you're trying. Lindsay, any luck?

LINDSAY

Yeah, I'm going.

JEAN

Lindsay! I'm so happy. We have to get you a dress.

HAROLD

Good for you, honey. I bet you really made some boy's day, didn't you?

LINDSAY

Yeah, I sure did.

CONTINUED:

JEAN
Is he your age?

LINDSAY
No, he's older.

JEAN
What grade is he in?

LINDSAY
He's in special ed.

Silence. Jean and Harold stare, confused. Sam keeps eating.

JEAN
Special ed?

LINDSAY
(defying them to say
anything)
Yes. He's retarded.

JEAN
... Really?

LINDSAY
You wanted me to ask somebody who
really wanted to go to the dance.
Well, nobody wants to go more
than he does. May I be excused?

JEAN
... Of course.

Lindsay picks up her plate and exits into the kitchen. Harold and Jean don't quite know what to say. Finally ...

HAROLD
Sam ... are you asking someone
from special ed to the dance too?

SAM
Naa, I'm asking Cindy Sanders.

JEAN
(in disbelief)
The cheerleader? She's the
prettiest girl in the school.

SAM
Yeah, I know. Can I be excused
too?

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD
(after a beat)
Go right ahead.

Sam grabs his plate and leaves. Jean and Harold just look at each other.

HAROLD (cont'd)
It's going to be a long year.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The Homecoming game is in full swing. Students CHEER. The players clash. The school band PLAYS. The cheerleaders are doing a routine, separated from the crowd by a chain link fence. Cindy Sanders is in the front row.

CHEERLEADER
Big Green spirit! C'mon, let's
hear it!

Sam is standing at the side of the bleachers. He's staring at Cindy. He looks nervous but determined. He takes a deep breath and starts to walk through the crowd toward Cindy.

In the bleachers is Alan and his cohorts. Bully #2 taps Alan and points at Sam.

BULLY #2
Hey, Alan, there's Weir. You
wanna go mess with him?

ALAN
Do I? You kidding?

They LAUGH evilly and head down to Sam.

Sam's staring at Cindy as he moves closer to where she is. She's just finished a cheer and is next to the fence separating the football field from the crowd. Sam looks more determined than ever. He's almost there when ...

ALAN (cont'd)
Slow down, Weird. Who said you
could come to the football game?

Sam stops nervously, then takes a breath and becomes defiant.

SAM
Get away from me, Alan.

Alan's two cohorts do a loud "OOOOOOOOOO" to mock Sam's tough talk. This gets Cindy's attention. She looks over at them.

CONTINUED:

ALAN

I don't think I gave you permission to be anywhere near here today. So, why don't you get outta here before your boyfriend Mr. Rosso has to come and rescue you again.

SAM

I'm not going anywhere. None of us are.

Suddenly, Art, Neal and Bill appear out of the crowd and flank Sam, their arms crossed, looking as tough as geeks can look. Alan and the bullies look momentarily surprised, then quickly recover. They LAUGH.

ALAN

All right then, Queer, I guess we'll just have to kick all your geek asses.

Sam and his crew take a collective deep breath and get ready to fight. Just as they're about to charge ...

CINDY (O.C.)

Hey, why don't you jerks leave them alone?

Sam and the bullies all look over to see Cindy Sanders glaring at Alan and the bullies with her hands on her hips. Everyone's caught off guard.

ALAN

We weren't bothering them.

CINDY

Oh, get lost. I hate guys like you. You can't fight anyone tough, so you have to go after guys who are too nice to fight with you. Yeah, you're really cool.

The other cheerleaders hear this and jump in. They're all very pretty also.

CHEERLEADER #1

Who were they trying to fight?

CINDY

(pointing at Sam)
Them.

CHEERLEADER #2

Hey, he's in my science class.
They're really nice.

CHEERLEADER #3

Yeah, and those two guys helped
build the sets for our play last
year. They're really funny.

CHEERLEADER #4

Why don't you munchkins leave
them alone?

CHEERLEADERS

Yeah!

Alan and the bullies don't know what to do with every pretty
girl in the school yelling at them. They turn sheepish and try
to leave.

ALAN

We weren't doing anything.
They're just friends of ours.

CINDY

Get lost.

Alan and the bullies beat a hasty retreat, humiliated. The
cheerleaders go back to preparing their next cheer. The geeks
heave huge SIGHS of relief. Then ...

NEAL

Well, I guess I can look forward
to a major ass kicking on Monday.

Cindy's still at the fence, tying her shoe. Sam is staring at
her. Art sees and starts to pull Neal and Bill away.

ART

Let's go get a hot dog, you guys.

BILL

What about Sam?

Art points secretively at Cindy.

BILL (cont'd)

Ooo, cool, I wanna watch Sam ask
her out.

NEAL

It's not a spectator sport. Try
to be cool for once in your life.

CONTINUED: (3)

BILL

My mom says I'm cool.

Neal just shakes his head as he and Art drag Bill away. Sam watches them go, then musters his courage and approaches Cindy. She stands up from tying her shoe and sees him.

CINDY

Hey, you okay?

SAM

Oh, yeah. I'm fine. Thank you.

CINDY

Alan isn't really your friend, is he?

SAM

Oh, no. No way. I kinda hate him, actually.

CINDY

Yeah, I can see why.

Cindy gives Sam a smile, then looks back at the cheerleaders.

CINDY (cont'd)

Well, I gotta get back out there. See ya.

SAM

Yeah. See ya.

She turns to leave. Before he can think, Sam blurts out.

SAM (cont'd)

Hey, Cindy?

She turns back. Gives him a friendly look.

CINDY

Yeah?

SAM

Um ... do ... uh ...
 (takes a breath)
 Do you want to go to the Homecoming dance with me?

CINDY

(smiling)
 Oh, that's so sweet.
 (MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

CINDY (cont'd)

But I'm already going with Dan Lewis. He asked me two weeks ago.

SAM

Oh, okay. Just thought I'd ask in case you didn't have anyone to go with.

CINDY

Thanks. That was nice of you.
(a warm smile)
Well, I'd better get back. Say "hi" to your sister for me.

SAM

Oh, okay. See ya.

She waves and runs back onto the field to start another cheer. Sam watches her go. He has a huge smile on his face. He seems both happy and relieved. He turns and runs off into the crowd.

AT THE HOT DOG STAND

Art is putting ketchup on his hot dog as Neal and Bill are at the front of the line ordering. Sam runs up behind Art.

SAM

(Monty Python french voice)
"Go away, you small minded wiper of other people's bottoms!"

ART

"I blow my nose in your general direction."

SAM & ART

(in unison)
"I wave my panties at your aunties!"

Art and Sam LAUGH.

SAM (cont'd)

You wanna go to the movie tonight?

ART

She's got a date?

SAM

Yeah. Besides, who wants to go to a stupid dance?

CONTINUED:

Sam and Art share a smile that lets the world know they're best friends. Sam looks over and sees

MILLIE

sitting behind a card table next to the hot dog stand. There's candy bars on the table and a poster board sign that reads "SUPPORT THE HONOR SOCIETY." People walk by, not noticing. Millie looks beyond depressed.

SAM (cont'd)
I'll be right back, Art.

Sam walks over to Millie. She looks up at him.

MILLIE
Wanna buy a candy bar?

SAM
Naa. I don't have any money.

Millie goes back to looking depressed.

SAM (cont'd)
Hey, Art and I are gonna go see the "Holy Grail" tonight. You wanna meet us there?

MILLIE
(shocked)
Really? Yeah. Sure. I do.

SAM
Then be at Parkway by quarter to seven. We're gonna watch it twice.

MILLIE
Okay. Great.

Sam gives her a friendly nod and heads off. Millie looks stunned, then a big smile breaks onto her face.

MILLIE (cont'd)
GET YOUR HONOR SOCIETY CANDY BARS! ONLY ONE DOLLAR! GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE HOT!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

The Homecoming dance. It's packed. "PLEASE COME TO BOSTON" is playing. Couples are slow dancing.

CONTINUED:

Lindsay and Eli appear in the doorway. Lindsay looks pretty in a shiny prom dress. Eli wears a slightly ill-fitting black tuxedo, his cast showing.

Eli looks nervous. Lindsay looks slightly uncomfortable but does her best to hide it.

Rick and Diane are slow dancing. They see Eli and Lindsay and start GIGGLING. This makes other couples look over.

Lindsay stares everybody down. Not mean, just defiant. Eli takes her hand nervously, like a little kid.

LINDSAY

You all right, Eli?

ELI

(studies the crowd; then ...)

Eli's fine.

One of the greatest school dance songs ever, the J. Geils Band's "SOUTHSIDE SHUFFLE," starts up (it starts with just singing and a drum flourish that you can't dance to).

SONG

Do you wanna dance? ... Yeah!

Eli hears it and perks up. He starts to take in all the decorations and speakers. Lindsay watches his face as the drum intro starts. All eyes are on Lindsay.

SONG (cont'd)

*There's a place right down the
street/Where everybody loves to
meet ...*

Eli hears the music and starts to dance. Tentatively at first, then he starts to get into it. Lindsay studies him. He looks happy, slowly getting lost in the music. Lindsay starts to smile and leads Eli out to the dance floor, dancing slightly as she goes.

SONG (cont'd)

They do the Southside Shuffle ...

The students on the dance floor see this and start to dance tentatively also. Other couples start to move in from the sidelines. Lindsay and Eli are now in the center of the floor.

SONG (cont'd)

All night long!

The drums do a flourish. The song kicks into full gear.

CONTINUED: (2)

SONG (cont'd)

So c'mon, baby, won't you come
with me?/There's lots to do and
lots to see ...

Eli goes nuts, dancing in pure ecstasy, a man possessed by the music. Lindsay watches him. His face is pure joy. Lindsay's eyes well up. She smiles and starts dancing too.

Rick and Diane LAUGH meanly. A bunch of students around them give them dirty looks. Rick and Diane see this and become self-conscious. They move away to the snack table.

The place jumps to its feet. Girls kick off their shoes and dance. Guys throw off their tuxedo jackets and start dancing too. The place is alive.

Eli and Lindsay both dance wildly now, tears streaming down Lindsay's face. She keeps watching Eli's face. We've never seen a guy so happy.

A group of couples start dancing around Lindsay and Eli. They form a circle around them and start clapping for Eli.

STUDENTS

E-li, E-li, E-li!

Lindsay looks at their faces. She sees a few faces that are laughing at Eli, but the vast majority are laughing with him. The students look absolutely delighted and Eli's joy seems to be contagious. The students start to dance more and more animatedly, having a great time.

Lindsay watches them all, then looks back at Eli, who's in heaven. She starts LAUGHING. Her laughter seems to be releasing all her tension. She starts dancing and jumping around with him, happier than we've ever seen her.

We PULL UP AND OUT to see the Homecoming dance in full swing, and in one of those rare moments in high school, everybody seems to be having a great time.

FADE OUT.

THE END