

LOVE, THE SINNERS

By Maggie Smith

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Draft Eleven

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THE UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE

ASH (they/them) — senior; the president of the Underground Queer Alliance; strong, loud, a natural-born leader; must be played by a non-binary, agender, genderfluid, or otherwise gender non-conforming performer

RICHIE (he/him) — sophomore; has only recently come out; lighthearted, kind, stubborn when he wants to be; still gives everyone the benefit of the doubt; must be played by a transgender performer

LAINE (they/them) — junior; viewed as a rebel, doesn't care enough to be one; always lounging, constantly getting written up for violating the uniform, must be played by a non-binary, agender, genderfluid, or otherwise gender non-conforming performer

WILDE (she/her) — senior; outspoken and hardworking; always ready to say yes to anything; thinks outside of the box

PERCY (she/he/they) — junior; all smiles but unfortunately cares about being polite more than his own well-being; not yet out to their parents; always has snacks or a pen to lend someone; must be played by a genderfluid, or otherwise gender non-conforming performer

CAM (he/him) — senior; the absolute most fun to be around; full of energy, laid-back, and charismatic; must be played by a transgender performer

THE FACULTY

MIA ROCKWELL (she/her) — a guidance counselor who is genuinely good at her job; keeps everything students tell her confidential, even if it could come at the cost of her job; must be played by a transgender performer

AMANDA GARRETT (she/her) — the head of administration stuck between following the policies set in place by the Archdiocese and protecting her students

SETTING

An “all-girls” Catholic high school

NOTES

There's a lot to go over, here.

I say what I say always— Race and disability are not reasons to not cast a performer. This show not only encourages diverse casting, but needs it. Please keep this in mind.

Gender is very important to this piece, as I'm sure you can tell. I've specified which actors should be trans, which ones should be gender non-conforming, genderfluid, nonbinary, etc. And then the rest are open. But there are specific roles for non-cis performers, here. Please cast accordingly.

Switching gears, this play is meant to make a statement on something very real and very harmful. I'm not here to say, "Anyone identifying as a Christian is bad." That's not the case, I know very nice, kind, Christian people who are genuine allies. I know nice, kind Christian people who are queer. This isn't a thing to say that religion as a whole is bad. This is meant to talk about an intersection of religion and queer identities, having to do with sexuality and gender. I grew up Catholic. I'm queer. I still believe in God. And if you don't, that's totally cool, too! But this isn't a play that's meant to critique a religion, it's meant to critique anti-queer policies put into place by the people in charge of and in the name of religions. It's meant to open eyes and hopefully start a real conversation to explain why so many queer people feel ostracized by the Church.

Finally, I'm aware that this play has strong language. I don't want that to deter anyone from performing it. This is a story for every community, and if the biggest issue in all of this is the cursing involved, please reach out to me and we can come up with solutions. I do ask, though, that you keep everything I've written above in mind when censoring these words. You cannot change the identities of any characters without explicit permission, and you cannot change the identities of these characters to silence any particular voices.

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE
DO YOU REMEMBER FANTINE IN LES MIS?

[Underneath a stairwell, in a cramped and windowed nook, sits the UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE. It is filled with couches, armrest touching armrest. Each student is wearing a variation of the school uniform, WILDE and PERCY in skirts, ASH, RICHIE, and CAM in pants. LAINE, is wearing a pair of pants made out of the same fabric as the uniform skirts. That is not allowed. The kids are clustered around ASH, who is sitting on the back of a couch against the wall, and RICHIE, who is sitting in a chair in front of them. They're cutting his hair.]

ASH

Would you stop moving around? It's going to be uneven.

RICHIE

I'm trying! The hair keeps getting underneath my collar.

ASH

Well, if it's uneven I'm going to have to buzz it.

WILDE

It's already uneven.

RICHIE

It's what?

WILDE

I said it's already uneven.

RICHIE

No, I heard what you said. I just need some clarification as to whether this haircut is or is not uneven.

ASH

It is not uneven!

LAINE

It looks fine from the front. Just make sure no one is behind you and you're good to go.

RICHIE

I'm in the front row of all of my classes!

CAM

Don't have a last name that starts with an A and you won't have that problem. Percy, tell him. You're in the last row of every class.

PERCY

I don't want to be involved in this.

CAM

Have a little fun.

PERCY

Class starts in five minutes and you all are deciding that now is a good time to start playing hairdresser. I'm not going to be late, I need to make a good first impression.

CAM

Suit yourself.

WILDE

It looks like he has a bald patch.

ASH

It's not a bald patch!

WILDE

What is it, then?

ASH

It's just... A part of his hair... That's shorter than the rest.

RICHIE

So, it's uneven?

ASH

No!

CAM

Hand me the scissors.

WILDE

Don't hand him the scissors.

CAM

I've done this, like, fifty times to myself. I'm a professional.

RICHIE

You have to wear a hat for at least a week after cutting your hair!

CAM

You could pull off a hat.

PERCY

No he can't. Hats aren't allowed with the uniform.

RICHIE

But Laine gets to wear a hat.

PERCY

Laine doesn't get to wear a hat. Laine chooses to wear a hat. Laine should not be wearing a hat.

LAINE

The consequences don't outweigh the actions.

RICHIE

I'm supposed to volunteer at the school's open house next month! They're never going to let me give tours if I look sloppy.

CAM

I don't really think they're in a position to turn away volunteers.

WILDE

Have you ever thought of just shaving it all off? You'd look like a celebrity.

RICHIE

Really? Which one?

WILDE

Caillou.

ASH

Okay, enough. Does someone have a comb?

[The students look to each other.]

ASH

Really? No one? Come on, Percy, I know you have one somewhere.

PERCY

I said I don't want to be a part of this.

ASH

Please.

PERCY

It's aiding and abetting and I'm already nervous enough as it is just watching you do this. I cannot participate.

RICHIE

Perce. Please?

PERCY

But I don't... Fine. Fine. Just don't say you got it from me, okay?

ASH

Give it.

[PERCY pulls out a comb from their bag. ASH takes it and uses it to align the edge of RICHIE'S hair. Their hand slips.]

ASH

Uh oh.

RICHIE

"Uh oh" what?

[The kids are silent, looking at his hair.]

RICHIE

“Uh oh” what? “Uh oh” what? Someone tell me what the “uh oh” is!

WILDE

I don’t... Want to.

ASH

Shut up, I can fix this.

WILDE

Good luck.

RICHIE

What happened?

CAM

I don’t think it’s that bad.

WILDE

That wasn’t convincing.

CAM

No, it wasn’t.

PERCY

Richie, do you want a fruit snack?

RICHIE

Why?

PERCY

I always feel better about bad news if I have a fruit snack before I hear it.

RICHIE

What?

LAINE

Oh my God, give me the scissors.

[No one fights LAINE on this. It takes them three snips. The kids murmur to themselves that, yeah, LAINE actually fixed the problem.]

RICHIE

I want to see!

[PERCY hands him a mirror that was sitting to the side.]

RICHIE

Oh, yeah, that actually looks pretty good. Nice job, Laine.

ASH

I laid the groundwork.

RICHIE

My bad. Mediocre job, Ash.

ASH

Mediocre? What do you mean, “mediocre,” I did fine. The haircut was fine. You said it looks good, how the hell can it / be mediocre?

WILDE

Does anyone have a broom?

CAM

Do I look like I carry around a broom?

PERCY

Hold on, there’s a dustpan somewhere under the couch. Wilde, get it.

ASH

Are we going to acknowledge what Richie just said to me?

[WILDE is half underneath the couch, searching for the dustpan.]

WILDE

Play stupid games, win stupid prizes.

CAM

And in this case the stupid game is...?

[WILDE emerges from underneath the couch with the dustpan.]

WILDE

Cutting Richie's hair.

CAM

And the stupid prize?

[WILDE hands the dustpan to ASH.]

WILDE

They get to sweep all the hair off the ground.

ASH

This is what I get for being kind?

WILDE

This is what you get for being bad at what you volunteer to do.

[MIA ROCKWELL walks by, clearly intending on passing the students, only to see the mess on the floor.]

MIA

[Excited] Richie! Your hair!

RICHIE

We just cut it.

MIA

I can see that. It's all over the floor.

ASH

Yeah, I'm working on it.

MIA

Well, I'd work faster, the bell's ringing soon.

ASH

I'll just leave it. It's not like they can prove whose hair it is.

WILDE

You're going to lose your mind when you find out about DNA testing.

MIA

I think it looks great. Very you.

LAINE

Thank you.

MIA

But, you know, normally students get their haircuts before the first day of school, not during it.

CAM

Yeah, but this was cooler. And there's nothing against it in the handbook. Not this year's, at least.

MIA

Just clean up the evidence and it won't show up in next year's, either.

[The bell rings.]

MIA

Alright, sweep it under the couch for now, then.

[ASH does exactly that. The rest of the students grab their backpacks and begin to exit.]

MIA

Hey, Laine. Ms. Garrett's making rounds today, checking to see who's out of uniform. I'd suggest you don't let her see the pants you made.

LAINE

[An excuse] I don't have time to change. I'm gonna be late for physics.

[MIA sighs and pulls a notepad from her pocket. She scribbles a note, then hands it to LAINE.]

MIA

Give this to your teacher. Just... Don't be super late, okay?

[Everyone exits. Before leaving, LAINE begrudgingly grabs approved uniform pants. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE TWO
ONE OF THE FEW GOOD GUIDANCE COUNSELORS IN ACADEMIA

[MIA'S office. It's comfortable. There's a sofa, an arm table, and other decor that makes it feel safe. MIA sits at her desk on her computer while ASH, WILDE and CAM lounge around.]

WILDE

Right, so, the four humors— It's blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm. And if your body has too much of one of them, you'd get sick. So, like, if you had too much blood, they'd put leeches on your skin until you'd get better. Or just get rid of the blood. That's how Raphael died.

CAM

The Ninja Turtle?

WILDE

The painter.

ASH

So you spent all summer just learning about the four humors?

WILDE

No, I spent all summer making a list of famous people who died of bloodletting.

MIA

Do you not all have something better to do than sit around doing nothing?

CAM

No. Having a free period first thing in the morning is kind of bullshit.

MIA

I'm not your friend, you don't get to curse with me.

CAM

Noted.

MIA

Do you plan on spending all of your free periods in my office?

CAM

I mean, I'm missing school for a dentist appointment next week, so I guess not all of our free periods.

ASH

But Wilde and I will still be here.

CAM

Well, I invited you guys to come with me.

MIA

What if I have a student that needs to talk?

WILDE

We're good at group therapy.

MIA

Wrong answer.

ASH

We'll leave. If we have to.

CAM

But in the meantime, can we stay? Because otherwise we'll just be roaming around the school... All alone... Absolutely unsupervised—

MIA

Fine. Just... Don't be too disruptive.

ASH

We won't.

[WILDE stretches and knocks a stack of papers off of a table.]

ASH

Starting now.

MIA

Hmm.

CAM

Do you want to come to my house after school today?

WILDE

Yeah. My mom dropped me off today, though. Do you have your car?

CAM

I walked today.

WILDE

That's, like, a twenty minute walk.

CAM

Thirty. I stopped for coffee on the way.

WILDE

And are you stopping again on the way back home?

CAM

Probably. They know me there. They give me free drinks half of the time, I could get you one, too.

WILDE

And if they don't give you free drinks?

CAM

I'll pay, then.

WILDE

Okay, that works.

ASH

I'm assuming this invitation is not extended to me?

CAM

I mean, if you want to come you can.

ASH

No, I'm busy.

WILDE

Busy with what? It's not like you have anywhere else to be.

ASH

I can have plans.

CAM

Alright, then.

WILDE

Are we having a meeting after school tomorrow?

ASH

No. We're starting meetings on Thursday. I'll let everyone know at lunch.

WILDE

I thought we were doing Tuesdays too. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

CAM

The gayest days of the week.

ASH

Yeah, I know. Laine and I just thought it would be better to give everyone time to adjust to classes again before we started. We'll do Tuesday and Thursday next week.

WILDE

Oh, but I cleared my whole schedule for a meeting tomorrow.

ASH

I mean, we could still hang out tomorrow, if you wanted to? Just unofficially.

WILDE

Isn't every meeting already unofficial?

ASH

It is. Unless...

[ASH looks at MIA.]

MIA

No.

ASH

Come on.

MIA

I already told you the past two years. I'm not mentoring your unsanctioned club.

WILDE

It's only unsanctioned because you refuse to moderate it.

MIA

It's unsanctioned because Ms. Garrett hasn't signed off on it. I told you, you need the Dean of Students to—

CAM

You know that Ms. Garrett isn't going to sign off on a Queer Alliance. The last time we asked, the school board broke for recess and didn't come back.

MIA

I'm in your corner. I'll stand up for you when I can. But Ms. Garrett and I have already butt heads more than she has with any other teacher— This might be the final nail in the coffin.

CAM

Come on.

MIA

Don't you have any other teachers that you could ask? It's a big school.

ASH

It's not that big. We've only got eighty-seven people graduating in our senior class this year.

WILDE

Eighty-six.

ASH

Right. Eighty-six.

MIA

I don't want to get fired over this. I'm sorry.

ASH

It's fine. I'm going to make sure that the members next year bother you about it, though.

MIA

And I'd imagine my answer will be the exact same as this year's.

WILDE

Boring.

[The bell rings. ASH, WILDE, and CAM gather their belongings.]

CAM

See you later.

WILDE

Bye.

[CAM and WILDE exit. ASH begins to leave, but stops at the door.]

MIA

Ash, wait a sec.

ASH

What's up?

MIA

I know things have been rough since Eloise left last year—

ASH

She didn't leave. She got pulled out.

MIA

Right. I know we were doing weekly appointments last year, and I wanted to see if you were interested in starting those up again? We don't even have to talk about any of that, if you don't want to. There's gotta be a million other things on your mind— I can help with those, too, if you needed.

ASH

I have to get to class.

[ASH exits, leaving MIA alone in the office. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE THREE
OH GROSS, SO I HAVE TO GO AGAINST MY JOB TITLE?

[GARRETT sits in her office with MIA across from her, in the middle of a heated discussion.]

GARRETT

While I appreciate your concern, Ms. Rockwell, I don't think you have much say in the matter regarding these policies.

MIA

Much say? I'm here to counsel teenagers. I feel like any ruling made by the Archdiocese that directly inhibits my ability to do my job gives me a lot of say, wouldn't you, Ms. Garrett?

GARRETT

I am not the decision-maker on what is and is not allowed in the Catholic Church. While it may be well-within your boundaries to discuss this issue, I am not the one to take it up with.

MIA

These policies are targeting queer and trans teenagers in your school. Look at this.

[MIA pulls a copy of the document that is sitting in front of her.]

MIA

The first page. "All students must act in accordance with the Archdiocesan rulings on gender and sexuality. In doing so, students are expected to conform to their biological sex." Conform to their biological sex— Do you understand how damaging that is?

GARRETT

I don't like this any more than you do. But the Archdiocese is entirely within its right when making rules for students while on school grounds.

MIA

But it's not just on school grounds. The final paragraph on page 7: "All students are expected to be representatives of not only the school of which they attend, but the Catholic Church as a whole. Schools are not to tolerate any behavior that challenges any Catholic beliefs, whether that be verbal, physical, or through social media." They can't do that. Students deserve a private life.

GARRETT

A student can be expelled for bullying online. This is no different.

MIA

It's severely different. This whole document is based on discriminating against students. It's dividing.

GARRETT

There is no discrimination.

[GARRETT pulls the document from MIA.]

GARRETT

On page 3. There is a specific note that no student will be denied entry because of their gender identity.

MIA

Right. Considering that that student will be willing to ignore that gender dysphoria and agree to be dead-named and misgendered for the next four years. Glad we have that covered.

GARRETT

And then on the final page— “At its core, Catholicism fundamentally teaches that every creature on earth is worthy of love. As such, all members of any Catholic institution, regardless of identity, are expected to follow this teaching. Should a student experience any dysphoria in regards to their gender they are still worthy of God's love.”

MIA

Right. And then it goes on to say that gender dysphoria isn't real and can be fixed. Because that's how God's love works.

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell, please.

MIA

Because nothing is more dignifying than telling someone that the way they exist isn't valid— That they as people are not valid.

GARRETT

It is not them as people.

MIA

No, just their love, and their gender, and their bodies, and their minds—

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell, it is—

MIA

It is endangering them. It is telling them that there's something wrong with them. It is telling other students that there's something wrong with them. It is creating a divide and othering students and regardless of the anti-bullying policies schools have, it won't stop anything. You know that. They know that.

GARRETT

I assure you, we will take any complaints of harassment seriously.

MIA

Harassment at school, sure. But what about cases at home? Last year, Eloise Hammond—

GARRETT

Ms. Hammond's situation was regrettable, I agree. But the parents' reactions to their child's identity is not our responsibility. They have a right to know about their children, just as they have the right to take them out of the school if—

MIA

They don't have a right to anything! Their children have a right to privacy! And when did the parents become the focus of this? Why do they matter?

GARRETT

All of them, regardless of their child's involvement in this document, had a vision of the type of education their daughters would be receiving when they were enrolled in an all-girls school.

MIA

But we aren't an all-girls school anymore! You have trans students, non-binary students, students that are looking for your support during all of this. And you care more about their parents instead of them!

GARRETT

I am not asking you to turn away students in need of support. I'm asking you to do your job.

MIA

My job is to help, not to force them into a dangerous situation!

GARRETT

Your job is to watch the kids, advise them, and tell their parents if they become a threat to themselves or our community!

[A beat.]

MIA

Being queer is not a threat. To the community or otherwise.

GARRETT

My... Apologies, Ms. Rockwell. It wasn't my intention to be so forceful on the matter. I understand you're upset about this situation, but my hands are tied, here. This ruling didn't come from me. It came from the Archdiocese. I didn't write it, and I never would have. But we are walking a very fine line here when it comes to following these rulings. And if I hear of you or any other teacher breaking these rulings, then the only options left will be to fire you or lose our official standing as a Catholic institution.

MIA

But the students—

GARRETT

Can choose what is right for them. If we have a student who disagrees with the ruling, they are more than welcome to enroll with a different school. And I don't doubt some will. And we will hold nothing against those students who choose to remain true to themselves.

MIA

So then what about me?

GARRETT

What about you?

MIA

Are they going to fire trans faculty, too?

GARRETT

This document is only regarding the students. Faculty haven't been mentioned.

MIA

You know they aren't going to stop at students, though!

GARRETT

I cannot sit by and ignore direct orders given to me by the Archdiocese. Imagine how that would look. I am the Dean of Students.

MIA

Exactly. Imagine how that would look to the students that need you to protect them.

[A beat.]

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell, I'm not telling you what to do. If you break the rulings, that is your own choice. But I had to make you aware of the consequences you'd be facing if you choose to do so.

MIA

Thank you for your time.

[MIA gets up to leave.]

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell. For what it's worth, I also wish it didn't have to be this way.

MIA

Then do something about it.

[MIA exits the office. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE FOUR
THE KIDS ARE UNDER THE STAIRS AGAIN

[An after-school meeting for the UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE. The students sit in various chairs under the stairwell, except for LAINE, who is nowhere to be seen.]

ASH

Alright. I guess we should just start without Laine. Let the first official after-school meeting of the Underground Queer Alliance commence.

PERCY

Are we really the Underground Queer Alliance still? We can't come up with something better? We've had all summer to think up a new name.

ASH

Would you prefer the Under-the-Stairs Queer Alliance?

PERCY

No.

ASH

Great. First order of business?

WILDE

Uh... I got some cool new socks while shopping with my mom yesterday?

CAM

Are you going to show them to us?

WILDE

No, they break the dress code.

ASH

Any real business?

RICHIE

I got moved up to a different math class.

PERCY

Wait, which one?

RICHIE

Pre-Calculus. First thing in the morning.

PERCY

Oh, I took it last year! You're going to hate it.

ASH

Can we move on?

WILDE

Wait, Richie, are you good at pre-calc?

RICHIE

A little. I could help you, if you want?

WILDE

I don't understand the homework.

ASH

We're in the middle of something!

PERCY

I used to have to spend three hours every night at home trying to find videos online that explained it.

RICHIE

Wait, there's homework?

ASH

Hey! Come on, we don't have a lot of time. Do we have any relevant matters to discuss?

[Beat.]

WILDE

I can describe the socks if you want?

[LAINE bursts through the door, holding a packet of papers.]

LAINE

Have you seen this shit?

ASH

You're late. How are you late? You knew we were supposed to meet at 3:05. We waited, like, forty minutes for you.

[LAINE waves the pages.]

LAINE

If you were good at your job you'd know exactly what it was that made me late. Like I said, have you seen this shit?

ASH

What, you get detention already? We're, like, a week into classes.

LAINE

[Reading from the page] "The Archdiocesan Policy on Christian Gender and Sexuality in Schools." A fifteen page document sent out this morning to the head of each Catholic school in the area.

CAM

Fifteen pages?

ASH

And how did you get a hold of this?

LAINE

It was up on Garrett's computer while I was in her office this afternoon. And when she left I snuck back in and sent it to myself.

ASH

And why were you in her office?

LAINE

So maybe I had detention, sue me, it doesn't matter. The point is I have hands on a document that's a danger to all of us.

PERCY

What does it say?

LAINE

What doesn't it say?

RICHIE

Who does it target?

LAINE

Who doesn't it target?

WILDE

When do the rules go into effect?

LAINE

When don't the—

ASH

Oh my God, give me the papers.

[ASH pulls the papers from LAINE'S hands and reads.]

ASH

“In response to recent social and political changes, we, the Archdiocese, have met in order to determine our official policy on human gender and sexuality and its place in our Catholic community. We request that each school under jurisdiction and in association with the Archdiocese implement these rules into any and all school standards and/or curriculum.” What the hell is this?

CAM

Wait, so what about us? Are we supposed to follow these rules?

RICHIE

What are the rules?

WILDE

Yeah, wait, Ash— Keep reading.

ASH

They're divided by section— Some on sexuality, some on gender. Some... both, I guess?
Schools can't host events that are for queer communities, schools can't condone queer identities,
schools have to use pronouns and names that are associated with "biological sex"?

RICHIE

Yikes.

LAINE

Don't forget they're allowed to deny trans students.

CAM

[Sarcastic] Oh, cool, so a free pass to discriminate?

WILDE

Seems that way.

LAINE

And it's bullshit, too, because we aren't even an Archdiocesan school.

PERCY

What does that mean? Why aren't we Archdiocesan?

LAINE

The nuns founded the school— They're their own separate thing. A convent.

WILDE

I bet I could start a convent.

RICHIE

Okay, hold on. What does this mean, exactly?

PERCY

Are they adding these rules to the manual? Because if they do then we're massively screwed.

LAINE

The school isn't implementing anything, yet. Garrett sent it to Ms. Rockwell this afternoon. They had a meeting about it today.

CAM

Why Ms. Rockwell? What does she have to do with any of this?

LAINE

Something about how it'll affect her position as a counselor. At least that's what it said in the email.

PERCY

What do you mean, "affect?"

LAINE

She's going to have to out students to their parents. Garrett said in the email that she was calling an all-faculty meeting for this tomorrow morning.

PERCY

Are we going to get expelled?

WILDE

They can't expel me. I have a scholarship! I've spent the past three years working my ass off, and you're telling me that I could get expelled just because I like girls?

CAM

We don't know that, yet, everyone calm down.

ASH

It literally says right here—

CAM

Yeah, no, I got the message, Ash. But we don't know what Ms. Garrett is going to tell the other faculty members tomorrow. What if she tells everyone that the school is going to ignore the policy?

PERCY

And how likely is that, exactly?

WILDE

It's not. It's not likely at all.

RICHIE

What do we do? Can we do something?

LAINE

When was the last time the school let us do anything about anything?

PERCY

Oh my God, I'm gonna have a panic attack.

CAM

Okay, okay, stop!

[The room silences. All wait for CAM to speak.]

CAM

Clearly, none of us are going to be at ease until we know what they say in that meeting. So, we'll just have to hear what they say.

LAINE

And how are we going to do that?

CAM

That's a me problem.

ASH

Wait, are you crashing the meeting?

CAM

Do you have a better idea?

PERCY

Not crashing the meeting. My better idea is not crashing the meeting.

CAM

I think you all just need to take a breath.

PERCY

But I can't breathe!

WILDE

You can't go to a faculty-only meeting, Cam.

CAM

Okay. How about we got to a faculty-only meeting, then?

RICHIE

We can't all go to the meeting, though. It'll be too disruptive.

ASH

Then I'll go with.

LAINE

You should not.

ASH

What? Why?

WILDE

You're...

ASH

Passionate. A free-thinker.

WILDE

Abrasive.

RICHIE

Loud.

PERCY

Scary.

ASH

No I'm not.

CAM

Are you and Ms. Garrett on particularly good terms right now?

ASH

We don't have to be. That's why you're there.

WILDE

I don't know how much I trust this pairing.

ASH

Do you trust Cam?

WILDE

Yeah.

ASH

And do you trust me?

WILDE

On a general level. I wouldn't ask you to give me CPR, though.

ASH

We'll be fine. I've got the logic, and Cam's got the fact that he's well liked.

CAM

By faculty and students. We can get our point across.

PERCY

What if we don't like what they have to say?

ASH

Then we plan a course of action.

WILDE

Can we at least listen in? Outside of the room?

ASH

Absolutely not.

RICHIE

How about an emergency meeting? Tomorrow after school?

PERCY

I have violin on Fridays after class.

Before school?

RICHIE

I don't come until 8:30.

LAINÉ

School starts at eight, though.

RICHIE

What aren't you getting?

LAINÉ

How about lunch?

RICHIE

[No one disagrees.]

Lunch, then. In here.

CAM

Great. Does everyone feel better?

ASH

[Apprehensive nodding heads. PERCY is visibly shaking, the poor kid.]

Good. Now, does anyone have anything good they want to discuss?

ASH

[A beat.]

Can I talk about my socks now?

WILDE

[Blackout. A transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE FIVE
YOU MADE HER MAD, BUT PROUD OF YOU FOR STANDING UP TO THE DEAN

[Outside of the faculty room. CAM and ASH exit the faculty room, with GARRETT right behind them.]

GARRETT

I suggest you never find yourself in one of these meetings uninvited again. Is that clear?

ASH

Profoundly so.

GARRETT

Cam. Always a pleasure.

[GARRETT exits. MIA leaves the faculty room walking past CAM and WILDE.]

MIA

Could you two be more careful? Now isn't the time to get on Ms. Garrett's bad side.

ASH

Seeing as we're on the entire Archdiocese's chopping block, Garrett is the least of our worries.

MIA

Still, you should have come and talked to me before you crashed a faculty meeting.

[Beat.]

MIA

But it was pretty cool. Don't do it again.

[MIA exits, leaving CAM and ASH alone.]

ASH

You were supposed to calm her down!

CAM

I did! She said it was a pleasure to see me! I'm sorry if a good handshake and a smile can't fix the tension when you almost get into a fistfight with the Dean of Students!

ASH

“Almost!” That’s the keyword! And if I didn’t, you would have.

CAM

Wrong! I use my words! I wasn’t put on earth to be a violent man!

ASH

I just— I can’t believe her. “We need to respect the wishes of our leaders and trust they know best—” Who says that?

CAM

She’s never been one to take a stance on controversial topics. It took her half a year to agree to let the priests here not say Mass in Latin.

ASH

We can’t just let this happen.

CAM

And what exactly are we supposed to do about this? Ms. Garrett’s pissed already.

ASH

Well, so’s the rest of the Underground Queer Alliance. Damn, I really don’t want to tell them about this.

CAM

Okay, okay, let’s just... Think. There has to be a way to fix this, right?

ASH

There... Could be a way.

CAM

There could be?

ASH

What do adults love more than anything else?

CAM

Taxes.

ASH

What? No. Apologies.

CAM

That can't be true.

ASH

They love it. Taking accountability. Being responsible. Bettering oneself. You have to apologize.

CAM

Me? Why? You're the one that pissed her off.

ASH

Teachers love you. And you aren't even a good student, it's just your personality. You can calm her down.

CAM

I'm a good student.

ASH

What's your GPA?

CAM

Either a 2.5 or a 5.2, I don't remember.

ASH

Well, one of those is impossible to have. But it doesn't matter.

CAM

Fine. When?

ASH

Today. At lunch. You're going to go into Garrett's office. And you're going to apologize.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE SIX
WILL YOU ALL PLEASE GET OUT OF MY OFFICE I HAVE WORK TO DO

[Lunch. GARRETT sits at her desk, typing at her computer. She stops every so often to look at some notes on her desk, then goes back to typing. CAM enters.]

CAM

I want to apologize.

GARRETT

For the way you spoke in the meeting?

CAM

No. For what's about to walk through the doorway behind me.

[The rest of the UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE enters the office. It's severely cramped now. They all speak, overlapping one another. Please ad-lib.]

GARRETT

Stop! Stop this! Stop!

[The room is silent.]

GARRETT

What is all of this?

[THE UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE all begin speaking at once again.]

GARRETT

One at a time!

[A pause. The students look at each other.]

ASH

We don't... Really have a running order of who talks first.

GARRETT

You have seven minutes before the lunch bell rings. You'd better figure it out.

ASH

Cam, go.

CAM

In 1889—

ASH

I knew that would be a mistake. Percy, your turn.

PERCY

Oh. Uh... Why did you— I mean, what was the— When you— Ash, I don't know what to say.

ASH

Okay, let's try Richie?

[LAINE pushes a small amount of items off of GARRETT'S desk, gathering everyone's attention. A beat.]

CAM

Much like Jesus in the Temple—

WILDE

Cam.

CAM

Understood.

LAINE

What the fuck happened today?

[GARRETT sighs, pulls out a pink slip of paper, scribbles on it, and hands it to LAINE.]

LAINE

Badge of honor. Thank you very much.

ASH

You're all awful at this. Ms. Garrett, we have to talk about what happened in that meeting—

GARRETT

Which you had no authority to attend.

ASH

We're aware, and we're sorry. But we think you're making a big mistake. There's a lot of students at risk here.

GARRETT

I can assure you, nothing has gone into effect, yet. There's enough time for you all to get your affairs in order. But the decision is final, and out of my hands.

CAM

It's absolutely in your hands.

RICHIE

Can we go back to how she said we need to get our affairs in order?

GARRET

I believe you overestimate how much control I really have over this school.

WILDE

You write the handbook!

GARRETT

Based on Catholic teaching, which came straight from the Archdiocese. And how did you learn about the faculty meeting in the first place, it was meant to be kept private.

[There's a pause. The students all mumble various unconvincing answers.]

GARRETT

Nevermind that. My hands really are tied, here. This has been sent out to all Catholic schools in the area as the official Archdiocesan teaching. It's in line with the beliefs of the Catholic Church. If we go against the grain too much, we'll lose our status as a Catholic institution. And I don't need to tell you why that would be a problem.

CAM

Okay, but I raise you this— *[A beat.]* What do I raise her?

WILDE

The rules are bad?

CAM

The rules are bad!

GARRETT

I understand you're of that opinion, and you certainly have the ability to attempt to contact the Archdiocese on the matter.

PERCY

But you know that won't do anything!

GARRETT

I appreciate that you all are concerned about this. But I regret to inform you that there is very little I can personally do to change an official stance.

RICHIE

But it's a stance against us!

GARRETT

I'd like to emphasize that it is not a stance against you.

LAINÉ

Who else could it be against? Because I certainly don't see any of your non-queer students worried about these rules.

GARRETT

If you would let me speak. This is not meant to target any individual students. And I do extend my sympathy to all of you, but there are certain... Elements of the individual that the Archdiocese believes negates the beliefs of the Church.

PERCY

Elements?

GARRETT

Hate the sin, love the sinners.

ASH

Excuse me?

GARRETT

Say, for instance, a student is constantly threatening other students. That is something the Catholic Church would not stand for.

CAM

We're not threatening anyone! And that's not even a Catholic moral, any school would kick a student out for threatening other people!

GARRETT

Bad example. Let me try again—

LAINE

Yeah, I'm sure anything you can come up with will change our minds on this.

RICHIE

Ms. Garrett, we don't have to do this.

GARRETT

I've already gone over this. It is not my decision to—

RICHIE

We're not an Archdiocesan school. You don't have to answer to them.

[A beat. GARRETT is taken aback.]

GARRETT

Where did you...

RICHIE

Laine said so. They're right, aren't they? We're not Archdiocesan?

GARRETT

We are not.

RICHIE

Then we don't have to follow their rules. So why are you considering this?

GARRETT

The Archdiocese is a leading body of the Catholic Church. I'm allowed to contemplate what they say, regardless of if we are required to follow their rules or not.

RICHIE

But not all of your students are practicing Catholics!

LAINE

I'm not.

WILDE

Me neither.

PERCY

I am. But that doesn't really help our case at this exact moment, I'm sorry for speaking.

GARRETT

Regardless of the religious status of each individual student, you have enrolled in a Catholic institution. You all attend weekly Masses with the rest of the student body, you all are enrolled in Theology courses, and you all are expected to embody the Catholic teachings that you have been taught. You knew what was expected of you when you registered for the school year.

ASH

You mean the registration that occurred before this ruling got released?

LAINE

We're going to be at a point where this whole school'll have an "us versus them" mentality.

GARRETT

This student body has never been that way, and it certainly will not now.

RICHIE

Are you sure about that? Because I know for a fact that you've had parents call in complaining about how there are queer students allowed at this school.

GARRETT

Regardless, the document asks that all students are treated with respect, even those who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community.

[GARRETT overemphasizes each letter in that acronym for allyship points.]

WILDE

But you know there are some people who won't rest until every queer student is kicked out of school. If you go through with this, there's going to be a witch hunt.

CAM

"I saw Goody Proctor with the GSA."

GARRETT

I can assure you, we have no student enrolled here by the name of Goody Proctor.

CAM

How long have you been the Dean here, Ms. Garrett?

GARRETT

Ten years.

CAM

Wow. Congrats. The big one-oh.

GARRETT

Do you have a point?

CAM

Right. In your time here, how many students have you had to expel?

GARRETT

None.

CAM

Oh. Well, I was going to ask if you were prepared for that number to double, but I guess two multiplied by zero is still zero.

ASH

What Cam means is— You're going to lose a lot of students to this. Like, a lot.

GARRETT

There are only six of you in this room right now.

ASH

You can't really think we're the only queer students in this school.

GARRETT

Who else?

LAINÉ

Do you really think we're about to out students when expulsion is on the line?

GARRETT

That is... A fair point.

[GARRETT takes a deep breath.]

GARRETT

I truly do respect your willingness to speak with me on this matter. I do. But, as I've already said, my hands are tied. The Archdiocese has made it clear that they do not want us condoning anything that goes against Church teachings, and this, unfortunately, falls under that category.

ASH

Let's ban *Hamlet*, then.

[A pause.]

GARRETT

I'm not following.

ASH

It goes against Catholic teachings.

GARRETT

That's ridiculous.

WILDE

No, they're right. We're a Catholic school, and we should abide by the standards set for us. *Hamlet*'s simply too violent to study. And there are ghosts in it, surely something else that the Pope doesn't want us to believe in. And we can't forget about all of the sexual innuendos.

GARRETT

The moral of *Hamlet* is not the violence.

CAM

Uh, yes it is. The moral is “kill fast, die young.” Speaking of, we should probably get rid of *The Great Gatsby*, too, just to be safe. For murder. And gay sex.

GARRETT

There is no— That does not occur in *The Great Gatsby*.

CAM

You’d better reread chapter two, there, buddy.

GARRETT

I’m not your “buddy.”

CAM

I think we would have been friends in high school.

LAINE

We should probably ban *Catcher in the Rye*, too. There are a lot of “fucks” in that book.

[GARRETT pulls out another pink slip.]

LAINE

Woah, you can’t blame me for that one. I’m only quoting a book that you’re allowing this school to teach. At the end of the day, shouldn’t you be the one in detention?

[GARRETT puts away the slip.]

ASH

The Senior Lit syllabus has *Frankenstein*, who quite literally plays God and grave robs, so that’s probably out. *O Pioneers!* has some murder— Sorry for spoiling that one.

CAM

No, it’s completely understandable that you did.

ASH

There’s *Slaughterhouse Five*, 1984—

WILDE

Animal Farm.

ASH

Animal Farm! How could I forget *Animal Farm*? Yeah, we'll have to ban *Animal Farm*.

GARRETT

You just listed off the entire Senior English syllabus.

ASH

It's not my fault the English teachers wanted to focus on banned books.

RICHIE

We should probably go through the syllabi of other classes, too. Just to be sure.

LAINE

Yeah, I have to read *Lord of the Flies* later this year.

ASH

Oh, that'll be banned.

CAM

Someone threw up during class while reading it last year.

WILDE

What about the elective classes? I'm in the Monstrous Women in Lit class this year and I already bought my copy of *Carrie*. My mom signed a permission slip and everything.

GARRETT

Carrie has an anti-bullying message.

ASH

Carrie is about a telekinetic teenager committing murder.

LAINE

And also she gets her period at the beginning of the book. Which wouldn't happen if Eve didn't eat the apple. Another sin.

ASH

Sorry, Wilde, you're going to have to drop your class. It's just not appropriate for high schoolers.

GARRETT

Alright, alright. So all of these books feature something or other that goes against Catholic morals. So what? None of them condone sinning. They don't tell you to be bad people or to hurt others. You do not cheer when crimes are committed.

LAINE

Depends on the circumstance.

GARRETT

Enough! The message of these books are anything but harmful, yet you want them taken out of the syllabus.

WILDE

Sounds like you're getting the message.

GARRETT

So what? You're all just refusing to do your homework, then.

ASH

It sure does look like that, doesn't it?

GARRETT

You can't maliciously disobey the presiding authority of the Church.

ASH

It's not malicious. Right, guys? It's with love.

[The students all nod their heads and mumble agreements.]

ASH

See. So just tell the Archdioceses what we have to say, and we'll all be on the same page.

GARRETT

And what exactly is it that you have to say?

ASH

"Hate the policies. Love, the Sinners."

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE SEVEN
HEY, RICHIE

[MIA'S office, after school. MIA sits at her desk, waiting patiently. She fiddles with whatever is on her desk, rearranging things to look organized. RICHIE knocks on the door.]

RICHIE

Hi, Ms. Rockwell.

MIA

Hey, Richie! Come on in!

[He takes a seat across the desk. The silence is so weird, in a way that it can only be between a teacher and a student where neither knows what to say.]

MIA

So, it's been an eventful month.

RICHIE

Kind of a bad month, honestly.

MIA

How are you feeling?

[RICHIE lets his head fall onto the desk.]

MIA

That bad?

RICHIE

I can't put it into words. But yeah.

MIA

Do you want to try those breathing exercises I—

RICHIE

[Sudden] Am I going to be kicked out of school?

[The air in the room changes completely. This has been on his mind for a while. MIA doesn't know how to broach this subject. Like, at all.]

MIA

They haven't put any rules into place yet.

RICHIE

No, I know. Everyone keeps saying that, but what happens if they do?

MIA

Then it most likely wouldn't be going into effect until next year.

RICHIE

I still want to go to school here next year, though.

MIA

Then it means we have a year to fight it.

RICHIE

And if we don't win?

MIA

How old are you?

RICHIE

Fifteen.

MIA

Fifteen. Okay. I was twenty when I started my transition. It was... Hard. You're young. You're very young. Way too young to be facing things like this, and I'm sorry it's happening here, of all places. I want you to be safe. Your parents want you to be safe. Your friends, too.

RICHIE

I know.

MIA

You've got good people in your life, bud. I don't want you to think the world is a bad place. It's not always. But there are horrible people who do horrible things. And right now this is one of those horrible things. But Rich, you're one of the strongest kids we've got here.

RICHIE

I'm not a kid.

MIA

It doesn't feel like it, huh?

RICHIE

This isn't kid stuff.

MIA

No. It's not. *[Beat.]* I... Don't know what's going to happen. I don't know if you'll have to change schools or if I'm going to get fired. I don't know what's going to come out of any of this. But if we do have to leave, I don't want you walking out thinking that the rest of your life is going to be like this. You have a good future.

RICHIE

Is this some kind of "it gets better" talk?

MIA

It does. *[Beat.]* How are classes?

RICHIE

All of the English teachers are pissed off.

MIA

I've been in the faculty room. I can tell.

RICHIE

Yeah.

MIA

And how are the others doing with all of that?

RICHIE

I mean, I know the seniors are all on board. They haven't read a single page for class yet. I really didn't think that this would last this long. But I'm still not feeling optimistic.

MIA

Isn't it a good sign that they're not giving up?

RICHIE

Yeah. And nothing's changed.

MIA

Things don't change overnight.

RICHIE

But shouldn't they change after a month?

[Silence.]

RICHIE

It feels stupid. Trying to fight all of this. No one's going to change their mind. I'm failing half of my classes. And...

MIA

And?

RICHIE

It's not fair, I know. But... When I was younger, everyone always told me to find an adult if I was in trouble. If I needed help. And now all I'm doing is going to adults and it feels like no one has the answer.

MIA

No, I guess I don't have the answer. But if we keep going the route we're on, you protesting, me talking with Ms. Garrett, maybe even getting other teachers onboard, we might be able to find an answer together.

RICHIE

So what are we supposed to do?

MIA

Get people talking.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE EIGHT
POLITICAL CANVASSING FOR GAY PEOPLE

[The students stand, facing outward. They are all separated, talking to different teachers.]

CAM

Hello!

WILDE

How are you doing?

ASH

I'm sure you remember me.

RICHIE

From class. Yesterday.

LAINE

Haven't seen you since last year.

PERCY

I'm Percy.

[PERCY bares their teeth in what could be a smile.]

PERCY

I also don't know why I've been sent to talk to you. I think it's safe to say that I'm an overachiever, but I need you to know before I get anything out that I am beyond stressed to be having a conversation with you.

WILDE

I'll keep this quick. Ish.

ASH

I'm sure you've got a lot of things to do.

RICHIE

I wanted to talk to you about—

CAM

You've probably heard—

LAINE

It's not really a secret that—

ALL

We haven't been doing our English homework.

PERCY

I promise I'm a good student. I know I was never in your class, but—

WILDE

I know that look on your face.

RICHIE

I'm sure that if I were a teacher, I'd be frustrated, too.

LAINE

This argument would be a lot more impactful if it came from someone who actually tried at school—

WILDE

But you can trust me. I have a scholarship.

PERCY

Last year I spent four hours each night doing homework, I promise you I don't like this any more than you do. I'm shooting to be Valedictorian next year, so you and I are for sure on the same page when I say that homework is so important to mold young minds—

LAINE

But just trust me when I say that this is necessary.

WILDE

Invaluable, even.

CAM

You know what this is about, don't you?

ASH

You can say queer. It's fine. That's what I am.

WILDE

Oh, no, I'm not coming out to you, I've already been out. But I, uh, appreciate your support? Oh, you have a gay brother.

CAM

You have a gay brother?

RICHIE

You have a gay brother!

ASH

You have a gay brother.

LAINE

Are they all the same gay brother?

PERCY

The odds of having a queer sibling can actually be solved with a really simple mathematical formula—

RICHIE

I'm sure you can guess that I'm telling you all of this because I see you as a safe adult. I do a lot of volunteering with the Big Brother program, so I know how important it is to have—

WILDE

Someone I can trust.

ASH

A really good teacher.

PERCY

And if I'm honest there's a possibility that I've been over-exerting myself to prove that queer students are beneficial to our academic environment, which I'm sure if you had ever had me in class you'd be able to recognize, but I wasn't allowed in your class because my understanding of science is too advanced for the course you teach—

RICHIE

I wouldn't ask this if I didn't mean it. I need your help.

CAM

I need your help.

LAINE

I need... Your help.

WILDE

You saw what I had to say at that meeting. The new policies against queer students are dangerous for us.

CAM

The past three years here have been great for me.

ASH

And I think this year could be great, too.

LAINE

But what's going to happen when, let's face it, all of your cool students get expelled.

RICHIE

When I leave, who's going to teach me American History?

ASH

Earth Sciences?

WILDE

World Religions?

CAM

Psychology?

LAINE

Whatever the fuck it is you teach?

PERCY

I absolutely cannot handle any teacher being mad at me in any capacity, so what I'm really asking is for you to agree to no longer teach any material that could be argued to go against Catholic teaching, in order to help and support your queer students.

LAINE

It's math? I'm sure there has to be something about math that goes against God.

CAM

I'll even take a maybe at this point.

LAINE

Did Jesus even use math?

RICHIE

If you need help looking through your syllabus to find what to refuse to teach, I've got you covered. I wrote a list of problematic moments in American History starting on July 4th, 1776—

LAINE

I'm aware he was a carpenter. But did he use math?

PERCY

[Shouting] Just please say yes, please, please, say yes, please!

[A beat. PERCY is gasping for breath.]

PERCY

Thank you for your time.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE NINE
IDLE HANDS SCREW OVER THE QUEER ALLIANCE

[Under the stairwell after school. The UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE gathers around CAM, who is scribbling on a notebook.]

ASH

Do we have a number, yet?

CAM

I'm working on it.

WILDE

It's basic math, Cam, come on.

CAM

It's not that basic— Mrs. Roeder said she's not going to teach her Biology classes and her Chemistry classes. Do I count that as one or two?

LAINE

One.

ASH

Two.

RICHIE

We're counting the teachers that are protesting with us, not the subjects.

ASH

But there are more subjects than there are teachers.

PERCY

Make a note of how many teachers teach more than one subject. And then make a tally of all of the subjects, separately.

CAM

I'm not doing this again.

PERCY

You're going to have to. I'm sure by tomorrow there'll be even more.

RICHIE

Mr. Evans stopped teaching computer sciences.

ASH

I thought he said he couldn't find a reason that fit our mission?

RICHIE

At first. Then I told him they were invented by a gay man and he said he was one, too, and suddenly I don't have to memorize the keyboard anymore.

ASH

We're getting there, then.

WILDE

Parents have to be pissed about this, right?

LAINE

I'm doing the same amount of homework now as I did last year. If anything, mine are happier because at least I have a reason for it.

RICHIE

Mine are worried about my grades.

PERCY

Well, mine don't know, and I'd rather keep it that way.

ASH

Don't know? How do they not know?

PERCY

I'm not about to out myself to my parents.

WILDE

But you're not doing homework. Do they think no teachers are assigning any?

PERCY

I'm writing fake essays.

[PERCY pulls a notebook out of his bag.]

PERCY

Here's all of the stuff I've written. I sit at the kitchen table and I write fake essays. They have no idea it's all a lie. My heart rate is going insane.

RICHIE

Couldn't you just use old essays?

LAINE

Or just hang out in your room for a few hours and say you're doing work?

PERCY

But I like hanging out around my parents. They're cool.

CAM

[Cutting in] Hey, hey, hey, I got it. I got it.

[The students all stop and watch CAM, no distractions.]

CAM

After three days of canvassing to teachers... Three, four, five... Six have agreed to stop teaching in solidarity.

[A beat.]

LAINE

Six? Just six?

CAM

Let me count again...

RICHIE

There's no way it's six.

CAM

You're right. It's not.

LAINE

It's not?

CAM

It's five, I counted wrong.

LAINE

Oh my God.

WILDE

Five isn't... Bad.

RICHIE

It is. It's really bad.

CAM

I guess I could count again...

ASH

It'd be a bigger number if we counted subjects instead of teachers like I said.

CAM

If we're doing subjects, the answer is back to six.

ASH

See?

CAM

Wait, no... I miscounted again.

ASH

Doesn't matter. We're growing. We've got people on our side. And I say that's a good thing.

WILDE

We're getting closer. Cam, show everyone the petition.

CAM

Oh, yeah!

[CAM flips to another page of the notebook, filled with names.]

CAM

Look what I did!

PERCY

What did you do?

CAM

These are all the students I got to agree to stand with us.

LAINE

You got students on board?

CAM

Yeah. I started with the chess club—I just talked with them at practice between games. And then at the pep rally I talked with the soccer team, tennis team, the golf team, the basketball team—

ASH

Get to the point.

[LAINE's phone buzzes. They pick up their phone and silently look at it.]

CAM

I talked to every club except for journalism. They don't like me. But everyone else does!

PERCY

Wait, why don't they like you?

CAM

I'm not a credible source. But that doesn't matter, because look. I got 120 names. That's, like, half of the school.

PERCY

[Shaking their head] Thirty-five percent.

CAM

Half of the school won't do their homework. For us.

ASH

But if students don't do homework, it just looks like teenagers slacking off. It's not

PERCY

If we kept focusing on teachers that have said no... We could certainly get more.

RICHIE

What about the language teachers? Or the theology department? There's no way they'll be able to budge.

LAINE

Wait, wait, hold up. Email from Garrett.

WILDE

Come on.

RICHIE

What is it?

LAINE

She said she wants a meeting with us. Now.

ASH

How does she even know we're still here? School ended forty-five minutes ago.

LAINE

She said she can hear us echoing up the stairwell.

CAM

It's because I'm so good at projecting.

PERCY

It's because we're a group of teenagers in a small space, we're going to be loud. Is that what she's mad about? We can be quieter.

WILDE

It's gotta be about getting the teachers onboard for the protest.

CAM

And the students!

WILDE

And the students. Right?

ASH

There's no way it's not.

RICHIE

Let's go, then. Get this over with.

ASH

We can't all go. That'll be too chaotic.

LAINE

Let me go. I can do it.

ASH

Why you?

LAINE

I can handle it. Besides, I hate missing out on stuff like this. I want to go.

ASH

I'm the club president!

LAINE

And sometimes, a president has to step back. Let the V.P. do some work.

ASH

You're not the V.P. We don't have a V.P.

LAINE

Ash, let me do this!

ASH

Fine! Fine. But you aren't going alone. Someone else is going with you.

LAINE

Who?

ASH

I don't know. Choose someone.

LAINE

Do I have to?

ASH

Absolutely.

LAINE

Um...

ASH

This isn't kickball, just choose someone.

LAINE

Percy.

PERCY

Me?

LAINE

Yeah, you. Let's go.

ASH

Laine, sidebar.

[ASH pulls LAINE aside.]

ASH

Are you sure about that?

LAINE

Yeah, why not?

ASH

Percy's a little... Skittery.

LAINE

Skittery?

ASH

She's anxious. Like, all the time.

LAINE

So? They're persuasive. They've got the dictionary memorized, basically. Garrett's going to love talking to them.

ASH

I don't want to regret this.

LAINE

And you won't. Perce— Let's roll out.

PERCY

Okay. Do I need anything?

LAINE

Why would you need anything?

PERCY

I don't know, like an offering of some kind?

WILDE

You're talking to Garrett, not meeting your God.

PERCY

Okay, okay, wait.

[PERCY tucks in their shirt and straightens their hair.]

PERCY

Does this look professional?

CAM

You look like a narc.

PERCY

Perfect. I'm sure she loves those.

LAINE

Alright. Let's go. See you later.

[LAINE and PERCY exit.]

CAM

We should have given her a Xanax before she left.

WILDE

Too late now.

ASH

Do you think they'll be able to handle it?

RICHIE

I think they'll balance each other out.

CAM

And if they don't, there's no way they can make things worse than they already are.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE TEN
KEEP TRYING

[GARRETT'S office. She's on the phone, having a conversation with a clearly disgruntled parent. LAINE and PERCY enter, watching her have the conversation. They slowly sit down in two seats across from GARRETT.]

GARRETT

I agree. Yes, I agree. Ma'am, I understand. I'm doing my best to get the situation under control, but as of now— Yes. Yes. I— Yes. I can assure you that I am handling these incidents. Yes, I'm about to meet with— Yes. When it is handled you will be the first to know. Yes. You have a good—

[The parent hangs up. GARRETT sets the phone on the receiver.]

GARRETT

Do you see what I'm dealing with?

LAINE

Parents?

GARRETT

Angry parents. Infuriated parents. Parents with no qualms about yelling at me, even though I'm the one who's trying to organize their child's education.

PERCY

Why are they yelling at you?

GARRETT

You!

PERCY

Me?

GARRETT

Both of you! You and your protests. Your mission. All of the teacher's you've gotten on board— No teachers teaching. No students learning.

LAINE

I'd say we're learning. We're seeing something through. Fighting for our rights, one might say.

GARRETT

And what about the other students?

LAINE

What about them?

GARRETT

It's a disruption to their schooling.

LAINE

It's only a disruption because it's not convenient for you.

PERCY

What Laine means is — We've been taught our entire lives to fight against oppression, right? You can't make us learn about the Revolutionary War for ten years in a row and then get mad when we throw tea in the harbor.

GARRETT

This is not about the right of taxation without representation.

LAINE

No. It's about the right to exist.

GARRETT

No one is telling you that you cannot exist.

LAINE

No, just that we can't be educated here if we do.

GARRETT

I'm not the one who controls this situation.

LAINE

You can say no!

GARRETT

I cannot!

[There is a tense silence between the three.]

GARRETT

I can claim plausible deniability, I can look the other way, but I need you to meet me halfway. Now, if a student flies under the radar, presents themselves as feminine—

PERCY

Feminine?

GARRETT

— Then there won't be a problem. No expulsions. But if a student is open about their anger toward the Archdiocese and displaying flags—

LAINE

Being openly themselves?

GARRETT

— Then I'll have no choice but to report it. To both the Archdiocese and the student's parents.

PERCY

That's unethical!

GARRETT

It is what is being asked of me. I support every single one of your students whom this affects. And I'm sorry that this is not the news you want to hear.

LAINE

This isn't what support looks like.

GARRETT

I'm sorry you feel that way.

PERCY

What about uniforms? Will we be sent home just because we're wearing pants during the winter?

GARRETT

That's absurd.

LAINE

Is it? Because that's where this is going next. I can guarantee it. And if it doesn't come from the Archdiocese, it'll come from somewhere else.

GARRETT

It won't come to that.

LAINE

It will! You just don't see it yet because you think you're safe— Because no one is targeting you! At least not now! But what's going to happen when they find a way to target non-Catholic students in general? Then they get kicked out! And then they'll find students with divorced parents—

GARRETT

That is ridiculous.

LAINE

Those kids would get kicked out for something entirely out of their control! It'll keep going and going until there's nobody left except for the faculty, and then they'll come for you. They'll find a reason. Probably because you're a woman in charge, you know the Church doesn't like that.

GARRETT

Enough!

LAINE

You're not safe. You can think you are, but you're not. And by the time you need someone to stand by your side, there'll be no one left to fight for you.

GARRETT

I've had enough of this conversation. I don't want to hear any more about this. By tomorrow, everything will return to normal. I will not have you refusing to do your homework assignments. I expect all late work to be turned in no later than next Monday, and all faculty will be instructed to continue their scheduled syllabi and lesson plans.

LAINE

And if they don't?

GARRETT

Then it will result in the termination of their contracts and the suspension of any student who chooses to go along with your protest. Potentially their expulsion.

[A beat.]

GARRETT

Am I understood?

[LAINE and PERCY rise to leave.]

GARRETT

And for the record? I'm not the person you're fighting against.

PERCY

Are you going to keep staying silent?

[No answer. GARRETT looks uncomfortable.]

PERCY

Then you're certainly not the person we're fighting for.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE ELEVEN
THE NATURAL PROGRESSION OF A PROTEST

ASH

What?

RICHIE

So we're all alone?

CAM

We're not alone.

RICHIE

Who else is there?

LAINE

Ms. Rockwell. She has to be.

ASH

Do we know that for sure?

LAINE

I'm hazarding a guess.

WILDE

I'm for sure losing my scholarship.

CAM

You don't know that.

WILDE

It's not looking good, though.

PERCY

I think we just need to take a second and regroup.

CAM

We don't have time to start over.

PERCY

We can come up with something. Something huge. A... A walkout or... We can think of something.

LAINE

Won't that just piss Garrett off more?

RICHIE

Maybe that's what we need to do. It'll get us more attention. Ms. Rockwell said we need to get people talking.

CAM

Attention... Could be good. It would get more people on our side.

ASH

Or it could get more people against us.

PERCY

The louder we get, the more people will hear us.

ASH

People hearing us isn't going to change anything. The public doesn't get to make a decision on this. Garrett does.

LAINE

If we tell more people what's going on, people outside of the school—

ASH

Then she'll just get more angry with us! All it takes is one more mistake and we're done. She said we'll get suspended. Expelled. It's over.

LAINE

Ash, come on.

ASH

Don't do that. Okay? Don't look at me like I'm wrong. What happens if she goes through with it? You all are the only people I talk to. If we get expelled, if we're sent off to different schools... If we keep fighting this it could ruin our lives.

LAINE

And if we don't it could still ruin them. You can't give up now.

ASH

I am not giving up. I'm finding a way to stay safe. I know that might not make sense for someone who goes out of their way to pull attention to themselves every day, but it's what I have to do.

LAINE

That—

ASH

What? Am I wrong? You collect detention slips like they're currency.

LAINE

I'm sorry that I'm brave enough to stick out.

ASH

I'm tired of sticking out! I want people to treat me like a person!

CAM

Ash—

ASH

Do not try to jump in now. After you've done absolutely nothing during all of this.

CAM

What are you talking about? I've been by your side this entire time. Not just with this. These past four years, with everything. Running club meetings, taking notes— Me and Wilde came over to your house every day after Eloise was pulled from school just to make sure you were okay. And you're telling me that I'm not doing anything?

ASH

You've done the bare fucking minimum.

CAM

Who's the one that got all those students on our side? Me! It was me! I spent days trying to get people to support us!

ASH

So while we were all working, you were participating in social hour?

CAM

Oh, so you're mad that I have friends.

ASH

That's crazy.

CAM

No. You are. You're mad that I have friends and that you've only got the people inside of this room.

ASH

You think I want to be the token gay friend? I thought you were faking it to get people to like you this whole time, but maybe you really are stupid.

WILDE

Don't talk to him like that.

ASH

And you— This entire time you've been worried about your scholarship, like it's so much more important than the rest of us and our education being at risk.

WILDE

If I lose my scholarship—

ASH

I get it. You need your scholarship otherwise you can't go to school. Because it's been such a tough choice to make a stand with us.

WILDE

I'm still here, aren't I? That counts for something. You're the one trying to back out all of the sudden, not me.

ASH

And then there's Percy. You were in the meeting. What did you contribute to that conversation?

RICHIE

Let's stop this.

ASH

What did you say? Because I'm sure whatever you had to add was the peak of persuasive speaking. Definitely made an impact.

LAINE

He said a lot.

ASH

Said a lot? Come on, Percy, tell me, then. What did you say?

PERCY

I... I don't know, I said... Things.

ASH

Things? And did it help? Did it help at all? Or did you freak out like you always do?

PERCY

What?

[The room is silent.]

PERCY

Like I always do?

WILDE

Way too far.

ASH

That was... I'm sorry. I was just—

PERCY

You don't understand what is going on inside my head every second of every day.

ASH

I didn't mean that.

PERCY

I am, though. I am freaking out all of the time, and I can't stop myself. I can't stop, I can't stop. I keep going to Church with my parents, and I keep praying that everything will be okay, but I just

PERCY (cont.)

feel so wrong. I feel wrong with the people at Church because half of them are going to hate me. I feel wrong here because I know— I know you don't want me to go to Church anymore, Ash. I know that there's so many people like me that religion failed, but... I still believe in it. I don't know why, I just do. It's just who I am. You don't have to believe in it— Any of it— But I still do. And the one time, the only time I feel completely calm is when I'm praying. I am praying to be good at school, I am praying to be a kind person, I am praying to be absolutely perfect. But the minute I stop, everything comes crashing down on me, because I'm afraid that if I make one mistake, I'll be the one who ruins it for everyone. If I'm bad at school, they'll think it's because I'm queer. That I need to be fixed so that I can be good again. Or if I'm hard to work with, or annoying, or quiet, or weird, or mean, or— And what if it's not just people. What if everyone who told me that God hates gay people are wrong? Because I think they're wrong. I think God loves me. But what if I mess it up so bad that it all changes? What if I mess it up so badly that God hates all of us?

LAINE

Alright, we're going home.

PERCY

No. No, I'm fine.

LAINE

Come on.

PERCY

I'm okay.

LAINE

Percy.

ASH

No, wait. The meeting isn't over.

LAINE

You are on thin fucking ice. Back off. I'm taking Percy home.

[LAINE and PERCY exit.]

ASH

I'm...

CAM

Save it. I'm going home.

ASH

Cam. Cam, please. I didn't mean to—

CAM

Yeah, but you said it, didn't you? It's out there.

ASH

I was mad.

CAM

And when you're mad you lash out. I get it. That's all you do. Thanks for the apology, but it doesn't make it hurt less. Wilde, do you need a ride home?

WILDE

Yeah.

CAM

Richie?

RICHIE

Um, my mom is picking me up soon. I'll wait for her.

CAM

You sure?

[RICHIE nods. CAM and WILDE exit. ASH sighs and sits on a couch, head in their hands.]

ASH

I really am sorry.

RICHIE

I know. I still think it was messed up, though.

ASH

What the hell am I supposed to do now?

RICHIE

I always feel better when I talk to Ms. Rockwell.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE TWELVE
THE PERKS OF BEING A CARPOOL

[LAINE and PERCY enter LAINE'S car. Both sit silently for a moment. Then, LAINE'S anger builds up.]

LAINE

Fuck!

[PERCY jumps.]

LAINE

Sorry, I— Sorry.

PERCY

It's fine.

LAINE

I didn't mean to freak you—

PERCY

I said it's fine. Don't make this weird.

LAINE

I'm not— It's not weird. Nothing about that was weird.

PERCY

Yeah, it was. Doesn't matter, though. We've got stuff to do.

LAINE

What are you talking about? You're going home. Eating dinner or writing a fake essay. Resting.

PERCY

We don't have time to rest. We've got to get ready for the protest.

LAINE

That can wait.

PERCY

Drive me to the craft store. We need poster boards. We need a lot of poster boards. I can text everyone and see what they need for their poster boards.

LAINE

Take a breath.

PERCY

Wilde's going to want glitter, too, so we should get that. And a tarp for the floor.

LAINE

Percy.

PERCY

Shirts? We could make shirts— Matching shirts. We can get shirts at a craft store, right?

LAINE

I'm not driving you to the craft store.

PERCY

Then I'll walk.

[PERCY opens the car door, LAINE pulls them back in.]

PERCY

What?

LAINE

Are you... Doing okay?

PERCY

I'm fine, yeah.

LAINE

Okay. It's just, you're doing a lot of talking.

PERCY

I'm planning.

LAINE

Yeah, sure, but... You used to be okay with silence.

PERCY

I am okay with silence.

[The two look at each other. The silence doesn't last long.]

PERCY

See, this is fine.

LAINE

Are you sure?

PERCY

What are you asking, Laine?

LAINE

Back there, you said a lot of stuff—

PERCY

I don't want to talk about that. I don't have to talk about that.

LAINE

You don't have to be embarrassed.

PERCY

I do. None of that was stuff for anyone else to hear. It's just for me. I was stressed, I was panicking, and it got the best of me. End of story.

LAINE

It doesn't have to be just for you.

PERCY

Who else am I going to tell?

LAINE

Ms. Rockwell might be able to—

PERCY

I've talked with her already. It didn't help.

LAINE

What about me?

PERCY

What about you?

LAINE

I could listen.

PERCY

Sure you could.

LAINE

I'm good at listening.

PERCY

Well, I'm not good at talking.

LAINE

Just... Try?

PERCY

I... Even if I wanted to, I don't know where to start.

LAINE

Anywhere.

[A beat.]

PERCY

What happens when my parents find out?

LAINE

Then we'll figure it out when we get there.

PERCY

I need to figure it out now. I need to know the answer to every possible scenario so I can be prepared. What if they disown me?

LAINE

They won't do that.

PERCY

What if they hate me?

LAINE

Percy, calm down.

PERCY

What if they throw me out?

LAINE

They love you.

PERCY

So did Eloise's parents, and they still shipped her off!

LAINE

Your parents are different!

PERCY

How do you know?

LAINE

I just do!

[A beat. LAINE collects themselves.]

LAINE

I just... I do. Call it wishful thinking or just not wanting to go through all of that again. But I'm not losing another friend. I'm not losing you. It sucked when all of that happened.

PERCY

You didn't really say much back when she left, did you?

LAINE

Ash was upset. Wilde and Cam were upset. We all were upset. It wasn't going to help anyone for me to voice what everyone else was thinking.

PERCY

I'm sure you had some original thoughts.

LAINE

I was scared. I am scared. I thought back then that... We all felt untouchable, you know? You hear about those things happening, about kids' parents sending them away... I just never thought it would happen to one of us. And now it's happening again. Your parents love you, Percy. They have to love you.

PERCY

I don't know what we're going to do if they don't.

LAINE

We'll come up with a plan.

PERCY

Like...?

LAINE

We've had a guest room since my sister went to college. My mom wouldn't mind if you stayed.

PERCY

Really?

LAINE

Yeah, she loves you.

PERCY

No, I mean... You'd do that for me?

LAINE

Yeah. I love you, too.

[PERCY takes a deep breath.]

PERCY

What do we do now?

[LAINE starts the car.]

LAINE

Let's go.

PERCY

I don't want to go home, though.

LAINE

[Giving in] We're not going home. I'm taking you to the craft store. We've got a protest to plan.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE THIRTEEN
MAYBE THERAPY IS A GOOD THING

[ASH and MIA sit across from each other at a desk in MIA'S office.]

MIA

Haven't seen you in here for a while.

ASH

Things got better. Besides, you're busy. You've got meetings with Richie, probably a ton of other kids, too. I don't need to take up any of that space.

MIA

I meet with Richie once a month, you're telling me you can't come any other time?

ASH

Um...

MIA

You'll need a better excuse than that.

ASH

Have you considered that maybe I don't need help anymore?

MIA

If that's the case, you're more than welcome to leave.

[MIA waits. ASH doesn't move.]

MIA

Uh-huh.

ASH

I asked if you had considered, not if—

MIA

You're not here to argue about semantics.

ASH

No. I'm not. I messed up with Percy. Kind of with everyone, I guess. You heard about Garrett threatening to suspend us?

MIA

She told me about it.

ASH

Hearing about it just made me... Mad. So, so mad.

MIA

A lot of people are mad about it, Ash.

ASH

It's not supposed to go this way. We're the good guys— We're supposed to be the ones who win.

MIA

You haven't lost, yet.

ASH

And hearing all of that, I just— I thought— What if this was all a waste? What if we could stay under-the-radar for just a little while longer? And then I... I don't know, all of this stuff started spilling out after Percy— He wanted to stage a walkout— And I was just so tired of fighting and fighting and losing that I just... I lost my cool, and I took it out on everybody else, and now they're all mad at me, and I'm mad at me, and I'm sure you're mad at me, too. And they're still doing the walkout, and what happens if they all get expelled and I'm stuck here by myself?

MIA

That was...

ASH

A long-winded way of saying I messed up? Yeah.

MIA

Alright. Ash.

ASH

I don't mess up. I just don't. I'm supposed to be there for them, I'm the one who gets them out of stuff like this— I'm not the one who makes them feel bad, or screams, or panic— Why did I do that?

MIA

Okay—

ASH

Because I'm not meant to lead. I'm not meant to be a leader. When does a leader ever do anything like what I've done? I'm not a leader, I'm not, I can't be.

MIA

Or maybe you're not supposed to have one?

ASH

What do you mean?

MIA

So, you're vocal. You're vocal, and Percy is logical, and Laine's a fighter, Wilde's creative, Cam's charismatic, and Richie's unbelievably kind. You all have your strengths.

ASH

So?

MIA

So, which one is best for a leader?

ASH

Okay, I see what you're doing.

MIA

Which one?

ASH

All of them.

MIA

There we go.

ASH

It doesn't change the fact that I messed up.

[A beat. MIA considers this.]

MIA

Why did you stop showing up to our meetings?

ASH

I was having a rough time.

MIA

We talked about it being a safe space, though.

ASH

Safe spaces aren't enough anymore. We're not playing a game of tag. There isn't a home base we get to stand on. I have to leave this room eventually, I don't just get to stay here forever. The fact that we even have to have safe spaces means that you can't guarantee that we're protected outside of here. We shouldn't have to have them. And I appreciate it, don't get me wrong, but it...

MIA

Sucks. But that doesn't mean you need to swear off all places created for you.

ASH

I'm the reason Eloise got sent away.

MIA

That's not true.

ASH

We were dating. We didn't tell anyone. Only the club knew. She was nervous about word getting back to her parents. But I was... Too optimistic. I thought maybe she was worried over nothing. That if she came out then her parents would be fine with it. And I guess she believed me, because I got this text on Christmas from her, saying she was going to come out to her parents. I sent back all of these messages telling her how proud I was of her, that everything was going to be okay... And that was the last I had heard from her. I didn't even know that she had gotten sent off to live with her grandparents until you told us all the first day back from winter break.

MIA

Ash, that's not your fault.

ASH

I kept trying to call her. Everyone tried. But it was like her parents wiped her off of the face of the earth. No social media, new phone number, new email. Every trace of her was gone. She had a safe space, and it didn't help her in the end. I can come in here every day talking about how sad I feel that she's gone. But at the end of it all, I'm the one who got her sent away.

MIA

Would you have told her to come out to her parents if you knew it would end up this way?

ASH

No.

MIA

And do you think that her leaving makes this room any less valuable? Or the club?

ASH

It's not that simple.

MIA

Is it? Because I can't tell you where she is now. I can't tell you how she's doing. But what I can say is that you and the rest of the club gave her a place where she didn't have to pretend to be someone else. At least for a little bit. Was she happy with you?

ASH

I think so.

MIA

You think?

ASH

She was. Yeah.

MIA

You're not the reason she was pulled out of school. Plain and simple.

ASH

Okay.

MIA

And if you want to make sure no one else gets pulled out, either, then you're going to make up with Percy and everyone else and help them with that walkout. Alright?

ASH

Got it.

MIA

And whenever you're ready to come back, I'll be here.

[ASH nods, and exits. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE FOURTEEN
BOB ROSS WOULD LOVE THIS

[The students are under the stairwell— All except ASH. It's cramped. The area is cluttered— Paint supplies, posters, and other protest materials are scattered throughout the space. The students sit in any space they can fit themselves into, each working on something for their walk-out. LAINE is watching. PERCY, RICHIE, and CAM all paint poster boards. Notably, WILDE is working on tee-shirts. RICHIE sits on the floor, steadily painting his poster board. He stops in frustration.]

RICHIE

It doesn't look neat.

PERCY

That's fine.

RICHIE

The spacing isn't even.

PERCY

Can people read it?

RICHIE

Yeah.

PERCY

Then it's serving its purpose. It's just a walk-out, too. It's the action that matters.

LAINE

Besides, at least all of your words are right. Cam misspelled "underground."

CAM

What? Really?

[LAINE leans over CAM'S shoulder.]

LAINE

[Reading] "We will not stay 'undergournd.'"

CAM

Aw. That's the second board I've messed up.

PERCY

I'll help you outline a new one.

[CAM and PERCY start on a new board.]

WILDE

Rich, come help me with these tee-shirts. They're easier than poster boards.

RICHIE

What do you want me to help with?

[WILDE hands him a shirt.]

WILDE

Paint on this one.

RICHIE

What should it say?

WILDE

It's yours. Whatever you want it to say.

[RICHIE nods with a little smile.]

RICHIE

Does anyone have an extra paintbrush?

[PERCY pulls a brush out from their bag without looking up and hands it to RICHIE.]

RICHIE

Thank you.

PERCY

Wash it when you're done.

RICHIE

I will.

CAM

It feels like everytime I look at the poster it just looks worse.

RICHIE

Are we actually going to get all of this done tonight?

LAINE

There's no way.

CAM

This seemed a lot more doable when we came up with these ideas, right?

PERCY

Finished!

WILDE

What's it say?

[PERCY turns the posterboard around. "HATE THE POLICIES. LOVE, THE SINNERS."]

LAINE

Ash might suck, but they sure do come up with a good slogan.

[The room quiets.]

RICHIE

Has anyone heard from them?

LAINE

My bet is they gave up. Too embarrassed to say they're sorry.

RICHIE

I'm sure that's not true.

LAINE

Have you ever heard them apologize? Like, actually apologize?

RICHIE

I'm a sophomore, that doesn't mean anything. I've been here for a year.

LAINE

Cam? Wilde? You've known Ash for almost four years.

CAM

Nope.

WILDE

Absolutely not.

CAM

Ash doesn't apologize.

WILDE

And the fact that you think they might, Richie, is sweet of you. And also laughable.

RICHIE

You don't seem surprised.

WILDE

I'm not. It was a matter of time before all of this happened.

LAINE

That's jaded.

WILDE

It's true. Right? I knew this wouldn't end well, no matter how hard we fought.

ASH

[Offstage] You're not giving up that easily, right?

[ASH enters, holding paint supplies. The room stills.]

ASH

You wouldn't be here if it didn't matter. What, do you think you're just here for fun? Or is it because, deep down, you know things could be different? That you could fix it? I brought extra supplies. You know, in case you needed any.

[A beat.]

ASH

Lots of different colors. And new paint brushes, too. I can just—

[ASH puts the supplies on the floor. No one moves to get them.]

ASH

Look, I owe you all an apology. I fucked up. Big time. And I'm sorry I did that— I talked with Ms. Rockwell and— It doesn't matter. I shouldn't have said that stuff. I'm sorry.

PERCY

It wasn't fair for you to say that.

ASH

I know. I got caught up in the moment and... What I said wasn't true.

PERCY

It's not. I've done a lot of work.

ASH

I can see that now. You too, Cam.

CAM

It's not that easy.

ASH

I didn't expect it to be.

CAM

I'm not... I'm not stupid.

ASH

I know.

CAM

I'm bad at school. I am. I know that. But I'm not... I don't like that people think that about me. That I'm not smart.

ASH

I don't think that. I said it but I don't. Things came out and... I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. And I want to make it up to you, if you're all okay with it. I'd like to help out with the protest.

[A beat. The students look at each other.]

PERCY

Every protest needs a leader.

ASH

No. I'm not coming back as a leader. We don't need one. If we're going to win, we're going to do this together. No leaders, just one unit.

RICHIE

Does that mean that you're not the club president anymore?

ASH

I guess... We all are?

RICHIE

That's going to look really good on my college applications.

ASH

So we're agreed?

PERCY

I am. Everyone else?

[The rest of the students show some form of agreement. ASH stretches out their hand. CAM accepts it and shakes it, but PERCY pulls them into a hug.]

ASH

You've gotten a lot more brave, huh?

PERCY

I have to be if I'm about to be suspended.

ASH

Let's make sure it doesn't go to waste, then. *[To the rest of the group]* Alright. So what's the plan?

[Blackout. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE FIFTEEN
THE PROTEST

[Silence. Six desks sit in the center of a room, circled and facing outward. The members of the QUEER ALLIANCE sit. None of them are in uniform. Instead, they each wear the shirt that WILDE made for them at the protest planning. Each shirt has a different phrase, which should be chosen by the performer portraying the character. Ex: "Trans Rights are Human Rights," "We're Here We're Queer," etc. Each desk holds a book, catered to the personality of its corresponding team member. Banned books. By the end of this scene, these books will be demolished.]

The students rise from their desks. ASH is the first to pull a page from their book. The others follow suit, rhythmically or chaotic. They leave their desks, still pulling pages.

They make as big of a mess as they can in any possible way. This is about visibility. They play loud music, pull streamers from their pockets, set off fire alarms, waving their banners and posters they've made. Any ideas are welcome. Whatever this is, it's passionate.

Their work is interrupted by a whistle offstage. The students look in the direction of the whistle, their eyes wide. Blackout. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE SIXTEEN
JUST TWO KIDS ON SUSPENSION

[The day after the protest. Lights up on CAM and WILDE, opposite ends of the stage. They're both out of uniform and disheveled. They're both on the phone.]

CAM

I mean, no, they aren't happy. But they aren't mad, either.

WILDE

What about the fact that you're home all day for the foreseeable future? Are your parents happy about that?

CAM

No, they're really not excited about that. They want me out of the house. I get... Sad if I'm not around people.

WILDE

I know.

CAM

What if I came over to yours?

WILDE

Mine? I'm a twenty minute drive from you.

CAM

Yeah, but you've got the cooler house.

WILDE

It's just a house in the suburbs.

CAM

With a big basement.

WILDE

If it's just the two of us, we don't need a big basement. That's only good for holding meetings. And it's not like we're going to get to have those anytime soon, are we?

CAM

Don't give up hope. Not yet, anyways.

WILDE

It's kind of getting hard not to.

CAM

What? Why? I mean, yeah, we're suspended. And we're probably gonna stay suspended for a while. But...

WILDE

But what?

CAM

I don't know. I was hoping I'd find something optimistic to say by the end of the sentence.

WILDE

I don't really have time to sit back and believe good things are going to come to me.

CAM

You have all the time in the world right now.

WILDE

What am I gonna do, Cam?

CAM

Um... Sleep in?

WILDE

No, about my scholarship.

CAM

Is there anything you can do? It's kind of in the school board's hands, right?

WILDE

I can't handle that! Not knowing what they're gonna say!

CAM

Well, how likely is it that they're going to take away your scholarship?

WILDE

I don't know. And my parents are so stressed out— They want to act like they aren't, like this isn't a big deal, but I know it is.

CAM

Okay. Hold on.

WILDE

Hold on?

CAM

I know what to do.

[CAM starts to dial another number into his phone. It rings. Lights up on MIA, holding her office phone.]

MIA

Hello?

WILDE

What? Ms. Rockwell?

MIA

Wilde?

CAM

And Cam!

MIA

How did you get my number?

CAM

Your work number was on the school website. Is it okay that we called?

MIA

Doesn't matter. How are you?

WILDE

Everyone's fine.

MIA

Percy?

CAM

His parents are good. Supportive. But he's... Not happy with the way things went.

MIA

Wanted it to be on their own terms, I get it. Not to sound rude, but why did you call?

WILDE

I didn't. Cam did. I didn't know he was going to call you.

CAM

Wilde's worried about her scholarship.

MIA

Okay...

CAM

Like, really worried. Phenomenally worried.

WILDE

I just... I want to know if the suspension is going to affect it. Like... Really affect it.

MIA

Okay. Can you be more clear—

WILDE

Am I going to lose my scholarship?

MIA

Right. Look, Wilde, I'm going to fight for you on this—

WILDE

Fuck—

MIA

But the financial aid department is probably going to review your file.

WILDE

If I lose my scholarship I won't be able to go to school here. They said I have to keep my transcript clean.

CAM

Wilde, take a breath.

WILDE

I did everything I was supposed to do! I got straight-As every semester. I did extracurriculars—I was on the Academic Decathlon team! Do you know how hard Aca-Deca is?

MIA

If anything, they'll only revoke the scholarship for your final semester.

WILDE

I still won't be able to afford school.

MIA

We'll get this sorted out.

WILDE

This is so stupid. This is all so stupid.

CAM

I don't get why Ms. Garrett's doing this. We aren't even an Archdiocesan school, and somehow we're caught up in this.

MIA

Wait, what do you mean?

CAM

What?

MIA

The Archdiocesan thing. What do you mean we aren't Archdiocesan.

WILDE

We aren't Archdiocesan, we're just Catholic. The school isn't run by the Archdiocese.

MIA

Does Ms. Garrett know this?

CAM

She's the Dean of Students.

WILDE

And even if she didn't before, we already told her. She said she's allowed to think about it even if we aren't required to follow the rules. That we don't have to be Archdiocesan to instill their teachings.

MIA

She said that?

WILDE

Are you surprised?

MIA

Okay. Okay. I'm going to go.

WILDE

Oh, is there a student there? I'm sorry, I didn't mean to—

MIA

No. I'm talking to Ms. Garrett.

CAM

Wait— I want to come with you! Wilde, I'm coming to pick you up.

MIA

Absolutely not.

WILDE

What? Why?

MIA

It's time I take a stand, too.

[MIA hands up the phone. Lights off of CAM and WILDE. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE SEVENTEEN
VERBAL MIXED MARTIAL ARTS IN YOUR BOSS'S OFFICE

[GARRETT sits in her office where she is eating lunch alone. MIA enters.]

GARRETT

Excuse me, Ms. Rockwell. My office is not open for conversation at this moment.

MIA

Shut up, this is important.

GARRETT

Shut up?

MIA

We aren't Archdiocesan.

GARRETT

What are you talking about?

MIA

You know what I'm talking about. We're not run by the Archdiocese. The school was founded under a separate order— Nuns back in the nineteenth—

GARRETT

Thank you, I know the history of the school that I run.

MIA

We follow our own rules, then.

GARRETT

We follow the rules that I set, under the guidance and advice of theological governing bodies. The Archdiocese, for example.

MIA

But you don't have to take that advice.

GARRETT

I'm aware of that, Ms. Rockwell. And I've yet to make an actual decision on the matter.

MIA

It's been weeks.

GARRETT

This is not a decision to be taken lightly.

MIA

Of course it isn't. Because there are students' lives on the line.

GARRETT

I don't think you can appreciate the difficulty of this situation. The stress I'm under, not only as the one to make the call on this ruling, but the Dean of Students as a whole. We will lose donors. Parents will pull their students out of school. We could lose our standing as a Catholic Institution.

MIA

For refusing a policy that you have no obligation to impose? Try again.

GARRETT

You aren't able to grasp the severity of the situation.

MIA

You know what I see? A woman in front of me who hasn't made a decision. Not because it's a hard one. But because, deep down, she knows it's wrong.

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell—

MIA

I'm not finished. The students— My students told you that we aren't Archdiocesan. They came to you with an out. And you didn't take it. Yet you still haven't made a decision. You have control over their lives, now. They could be expelled. College offers rescinded. Scholarships revoked. And beyond that, their optimism is gone. How are they supposed to have any confidence, any love for themselves, if they're about to be kicked out of their home because of who they are? At the end of the day, you're not standing up for Catholicism, or for Christian values. You're standing up for hatred.

GARRETT

There's a lot more at stake here.

MIA

There's really not. Because this is where you choose: Is this an institution that cares more about the image of the building or the people inside of it.

[A beat.]

GARRETT

Then what do you suggest I do?

MIA

Here's how it's gonna go. First, the ordinance will be rejected. Second, all suspended students will be allowed back in school immediately. And third, the Underground Queer Alliance will be officially sanctioned by the administration. No more hiding.

GARRETT

I... This is a lot of information.

MIA

I'm very logical. I'm a fucking guidance counselor.

[A beat. GARRETT looks through some papers on her desk, a nervous fidget.]

MIA

So, what's the decision?

GARRETT

I'm not sure.

WILDE

Do you have an instinct?

GARRETT

Of course I do, I'm human.

MIA

And what's that instinct telling you to do?

[GARRETT takes a deep breath.]

GARRETT

I'll email all suspended students' parents before the end of the school day, requesting they return to classes tomorrow. All suspensions will be lifted and will not be acknowledged on any student's transcript.

MIA

[With a smile] Meaning?

GARRETT

The policy will be refused.

[Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE EIGHTEEN
THERE'S ALWAYS MORE TO COME

[MIA'S office. A school bell rings. All the students of the UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE sit around, ready for the club meeting. MIA sits at her desk.]

PERCY

I would like to bring this meeting of the Underground Queer Alliance to order.

WILDE

Technically we're above-ground, now, right?

CAM

This looks pretty above-sea-level to me.

ASH

But it doesn't sound as cool, does it?

PERCY

If you'll stop interrupting me— First order of business, I'd like to welcome Ms. Rockwell as our faculty moderator. Ms. Rockwell, thank you for joining us.

MIA

Thank you for having me.

RICHIE

Wait, why did you agree to moderate this time?

MIA

I think... I saw you all and figured, if they can be brave enough to risk getting expelled to be themselves, I can help them out with their club. And if that means I have to spend two hours each week making sure you don't set a classroom on fire, then so be it. Also, Ash said there'd be snacks.

CAM

Which brings us to the second order of business.

[CAM looks to ASH, pointedly. ASH stands.]

ASH

I just wanted to say again that I'm sorry for being a jerk to all of you. And if getting suspended with you all wasn't enough of a reason to forgive me, I also brought cookies to make up for it.

[ASH holds up a box of store-bought cookies. The students go wild. ASH hands them to one of the students, and they begin to pass them around.]

MIA

Perce, how's everything with your parents.

PERCY

Actually? Good. I feel... Better, I think.

LAINE

Better?

PERCY

Not one-hundred-percent. But I'm working on it. When I got suspended and Ms. Garrett told my parents about everything, they sat down with me and we just talked. It was nice. And then I started telling them about everything else— With me being anxious all the time and the Church and the praying and all of that...

MIA

What did they say?

PERCY

Did it cross anyone's minds that I might have an anxiety disorder?

LAINE

There's no way you didn't know that before now.

PERCY

Great. Well, we're getting it sorted out. And in the meantime, everything else will be normal. Ish.

LAINE

Does this mean we have to start doing homework again?

MIA

Yes As soon as you possibly can. I need all of your teachers off my back.

LAINE

Even though we're basically superheroes?

RICHIE

Has anyone talked to you about all of this? Like, people you don't even know? It was like everyone in my homeroom wanted to know me. I might have made friends.

LAINE

You do have friends.

RICHIE

Yeah, but... You know. It's different. Like when all of you are gone, I'll still have people in my corner.

PERCY

Might be getting a few more, too. Someone in my French class asked about joining the club.

LAINE

Someone in my Econ class asked, too.

MIA

I had two students come in during their free periods asking for more information.

WILDE

Damn, maybe we are superheroes.

CAM

David Bowie was right.

ASH

Did anyone else get an email from Garrett today?

[The room pauses.]

LAINE

Okay, so we're all talking about it, then?

PERCY

I did.

CAM

Me, too.

WILDE

Mine said that my scholarship wasn't going to be revoked.

MIA

What else did it say?

ASH

She wanted to apologize for any trouble that all of this may have caused us.

MIA

May have caused?

RICHIE

She seemed... Genuine. Like she really wanted to make up for it.

WILDE

You think?

RICHIE

I think... She's not the best with things like this.

CAM

You mean her job?

RICHIE

She did the right thing.

PERCY

Took her a while, though, didn't it?

RICHIE

She said that she'd be willing to offer us support. All we have to do is ask.

WILDE

It's going to be a while before I trust her enough to take her up on that offer.

LAINE

I don't know, if she wants to excuse any uniform violations I have on my record, I won't complain.

MIA

Right. And what about the detentions? You want those off the record, too?

LAINE

No. Those are a point of pride.

CAM

The school made that statement over the weekend.

RICHIE

I thought it was well-written.

CAM

We're a college prep school. It would be embarrassing if it wasn't well-written.

WILDE

[Reading from her phone] "Our institution will refrain from implementing any Archdiocesan policies regarding gender and sexuality."

MIA

Looks like you all won.

CAM

Did we really, though?

MIA

You're all still here, aren't you?

CAM

Since the school made their statement, how many calls have they gotten from parents asking Ms. Garrett to reconsider?

[A beat. CAM waits for an answer.]

CAM

Right. And how many calls from people threatening to stop donating to the school?

MIA

It's not going to be perfect right away. But you all fought. You won.

ASH

For the time being.

MIA

That's what every fight is.

LAINE

I don't want to sit on the edge of my seat waiting for the next problem to show up, though.

MIA

And you won't.

PERCY

What are we supposed to do, then?

MIA

Bad things don't outweigh the good. Not always. You got through this once, right?

[The students nod.]

MIA

You can get through it again, then. No problem.

WILDE

It doesn't feel like things can be good, though.

CAM

Even though we won, it feels... Different.

WILDE

Like it all can go wrong again.

ASH

So what do we do now?

MIA

You're here. You fought it and you're still here. So there's a lot you can do, right? You can celebrate. You can go to classes. Keep going to meetings. Apply for colleges, spend time with your friends. You can experience joy. In big things and little things. You can keep having these meetings.

[The students all look at each other.]

MIA

You've got the entire school year ahead of you. So, what are you going to do?

[The students look at each other, uncertain. RICHIE slowly smiles. One by one, the rest join him, until each student is smiling. ASH is the final one to join.]

ASH

Next order of business?

[Lights dim. END OF PLAY.]