SYNOPSIS

In Anytown, USA it has happened again, another school shooting. But, why? What led to such a horrific occurrence? Does it only happen as a result of bullying or is there more going on? In Our Own Backyard attempts to answer these questions by peering into the lives of a group of teenagers as they navigate their way through a challenging time; one week prior to a school shooting and one year later.

LOG LINE

In Our Own Backyard by Rachel Lopez attempts to find sense and understanding in what has become a national epidemic in America, school shootings. We gain insight into the pressures and politics teenagers today have to endure both in school and on social media and how these pressures sometimes lead to disaster.
Cast of Characters

Chris: A hard working, popular honors student. He has just endured the loss of his younger sister in a tragic hit/run accident. This tragedy has changed him and he is doing the best he can to try to get through each day. He finds solace in his private conversations with his deceased sister.

Jake: The school’s star quarterback and relentless bully. He has many personal demons stemming from his life with an abusive, alcoholic father. Jake doesn’t have any real friends. He has alienated everyone over the years as his bullying has escalated. Heather only dates him due to his quarterback status.

Alison: Very bright and well liked, she is Chris’s best friend. Her concern for Chris is evident from the beginning of the play and she is trying her best to make sure he is okay, but she misses the old Chris. She is not afraid of Jake but is smart enough to just steer clear of him.

Stephanie: She is a straight A student but slightly socially awkward. She spends most of her time hanging with Randy but also considers Alison her best friend. Her dislike for Jake and Heather is obvious but she does her best to avoid trouble. She is very sensitive and is still very shaken by the shooting incident one year later.

Josh: He is a wannabe comedian and uses his humor to try and stay on Jake’s good side. His fear of Jake is what keeps him close to him. He is not a cool kid but has attained popular status by being Jake’s sidekick. We see his world turn upside down as the truth about Jake is revealed to him.

Heather: Your quintessential “mean girl”. She is the queen bee and makes sure everyone knows it. Her relationship with Jake is tumultuous and superficial. She also doesn’t have any true friends but keeps Kayla and Taylor around because they worship her. One year after the shooting we find her to be the most changed for the better.

Kayla: A shadow to Heather along with Taylor. She wants so badly to fit in she blindly follows Heather. She is the meekest of the three girls and puts on an act of being an
airhead but she is actually quite smart. She just wants to survive high school.

Taylor: She would be considered a sort of 1st Lieutenant to Heather. Her personality is a bit more dominant than Kayla but she still has a fear of Heather so she does whatever it takes to remain her friend.

Randy: A rebel of sorts and a slight loner. He marches to his own drummer and doesn’t care what people think of him. His close friend is Stephanie, but he mostly keeps to himself since the hit/run accident because he somehow feels guilty about it. He’s a straight A student who has been bullied by Jake for years. His patience and tolerance for Jake is running low.

Brooke: Randy’s younger sister and best friend to Cassie who was killed in the hit/run accident. Her relationship with her brother has always been close but the change in Randy since the accident is disconcerting. Although she is younger she is not afraid of Jake or Heather. She is an old soul with a very mature nature about her.

Cassie: Deceased. Chris’s younger sister who was killed in a hit/run accident. In life she was very close to her brother, hence the conversations in afterlife. She was also a promising young dancer so in all her scenes she is dancing fluidly with the exception of the last scene. She is dressed in a bright yellow leotard, tights and tutu.

Miss Williams: An eager young teacher in her first year. She has a true passion for her profession and genuinely cares for her students. A very intuitive person, she is aware of Jake’s role as school bully but is powerless to stop it. It’s important to note that she has true compassion for Jake as she realizes the bullying is most likely stemming from a difficult home life but she is not tolerant of his behavior.

Principal Anderson: She is never seen onstage, only on the video. Her twenty plus years in the school system could not prepare her for such a horrific tragedy. She struggles to find the good in the aftermath and is still working through her guilt of not seeing this coming. (This role can be either female or male).
Scene 1

SETTING:
The setting for this play should never resemble an actual school. It is my intention to have the audience imagine their own image of a school. Various locations are established by simple set pieces— a bench, a cot that is covered to look like a bed in the bedroom scenes and uncovered for the jail scenes. The original production had a black chain linked fence positioned upstage with multiple drawings of disturbing images hanging from the fence. Actors would hang these drawings up during crosses. There is a television positioned DSR, off the stage.

AT RISE:
In blackout we hear the sound of various media reports on school shootings overlapping and slowly rising to a louder volume until suddenly - a sound of a gunshot. Spotlight hits Chris as he bolts up in bed, covered in sweat and breathing hard. He tries calming down, taking deep breaths, after a few moments spotlight fades on him sobbing while sitting on the edge of bed. Music begins; lights up on stage. Students enter and begin walking quickly as if in the hallways of school. Cliques and social groups are revealed during this montage that lasts approx. 1:30. As students begin to exit the music fades down and school bell sounds as Chris is standing center stage alone. He exits. Television comes on.
REPORTER
Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us Miss Williams. We are honored to be interviewing a local hero.

MISS WILLIAMS
Please, I don’t consider myself a hero. Anybody in my situation would have done the same thing.

REPORTER
Is it true you were only a couple months into your very first year of teaching when the shooting occurred?

MISS WILLIAMS
Yes, that is true. I had been there eleven weeks and four days.

REPORTER
How do you cope with something like that so early in your career?

MISS WILLIAMS
I suppose the same way I would at any point in my career, as best as I can. Listen you never think something like this will happen. So when it does it just rips you to the core. It shakes your reality. But it hasn’t changed my passion for my job. I love what I do and I plan on doing it for a very long time.

(TV OFF)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 2

SETTING: Hallway at school

AT RISE: School bell rings. STUDENTS enter walking rapidly through the halls. ALISON is on floor DSC decorating a banner for homecoming. CHRIS enters.

PRINCIPAL
(over intercom)
Attention all students! Upper and middle school will have combined lunch today due to testing. Therefore, lunchtime will be extended by 10 minutes. But only 10 minutes. There will be no excuses for tardiness to your 5th period class. Thank you.

ALISON
(to CHRIS)
Hey! You never called me back last night.

CHRIS
Yeah, sorry. I was buried in homework and I had to study for three different tests.

ALISON
Chris you’ve got to take a break once in awhile. You know what they say “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”.

CHRIS
Who’s Jack?

ALISON
It’s a proverb.

(waits for reaction, gets nothing)

Never mind.

CHRIS
Nice banner.

ALISON
Thanks. Why don’t you get down here and help me? You are chairman of the homecoming committee; you should be the one wasting your lunchtime decorating this crap for the homecoming dance.

CHRIS
Okay, okay. Don’t get hostile. Hand me a marker.

ALISON
By the way, are we still going to homecoming together?

CHRIS
Oh god, Alison, I don’t know. Not sure I’m going to be up for it.

ALISON
It’s still a few days away. Think about it.

CHRIS
We’ll see. But if I can’t go you should still try to go.

ALISON
I will, but it will be more fun if you’re with us.

CHRIS
Us? Who else is going?

ALISON
Stephanie of course, and maybe a couple other people.

CHRIS
See, you’re covered. You don’t need me.

ALISON
Stop it! I want you to go. You need to have some fun!

CHRIS
I need to study. But you might talk me into it.

ALISON
I plan to.

(Chris chuckles)

Was that a laugh? I didn’t think you knew how to do that anymore.
CHRIS
Technically it was a chuckle not a laugh, so don’t get too excited.

ALISON
I’ll take what I can get. Speaking of laughing, did you catch a glimpse of the substitute gym teacher today?

CHRIS
No you know how I try to avoid the gym area. I hated that class.

ALISON
Right, well put your neurosis on hold for a moment and swing by there today. You won’t regret it.

CHRIS
What’s so funny about the sub gym teacher?

ALISON
Let’s just say you’ll notice the glow before you’re even close to the gym.

CHRIS
What are you talking about?

ALISON
That guy is whiter than this banner paper. It should be illegal for him to wear shorts.

(Gets out her phone and shows CHRIS a pic)

CHRIS
(laughing)

Whoa!

ALISON
I told you! But it’s even better in person. You have to go check him out.

CHRIS
He’s almost transparent.

(Both laughing)
ALISON

Now that’s a laugh.

(JAKE and JOSH enter)

JOSH
(jumping on banner paper)

Hey losers!

JAKE
(sarcastically)

Nice artwork. I see the school is sparing no expense on decorations.

ALISON

This is just the welcome banner for outside the gym. But thanks for your concern.

JAKE

Well I insist on contributing. I’ll bring a roll of toilet paper tomorrow.

(JAKE and JOSH begin laughing)

ALISON

Move along boys.

JOSH
(to JAKE)

Uh-oh, I think they want to be alone.

CHRIS

You’re right. We do, now leave.

JAKE

I think you both could use a break.

ALISON

What are you talking about?

JAKE

I just never see the two of you apart.

ALISON

We could say the same about the two of you.

JAKE
Are you calling us fags?

CHRIS
Hey, Jake! Back off! Leave her alone.

JAKE
Relax Chris. We won’t bother your girlfriend.

ALISON
I’m not his girlfriend. We’re just friends.

JOSH
Uh-oh! Did we just witness a breakup?

JAKE
Oh no not the junior class prince and princess!!

(JAKE and JOSH crack up)

CHRIS
Thank you dumb and dumber for your comedic genius! Now please go spread your humor elsewhere!

JOSH
(to CHRIS)
What’s with you? We’re just kidding.

JAKE
(intentionally to hurt CHRIS)
Yeah, you’re about as much fun as a car crash.

JOSH
OH!! OH!! No you didn’t!! Nice one!!

CHRIS
I’m going to pretend I didn’t hear that.

(exits)

ALISON
(visibly offended)
Wow, really? A little too soon, don’t you think?

(ALISON exits)

JOSH
(to JAKE)
That was classic!! Did you see his face?

JAKE
Yeah, whatever. Let’s get some lunch.

(JAKE and JOSH exit)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 3

SETTING: Outside lunch area

AT RISE: BROOKE enters and walks to bench and begins to eat lunch/STEPHANIE approaches BROOKE

STEPHANIE Hey Brooke! Where’s your brother? I tried texting him last night and this morning but he won’t get back to me.

BROOKE He stayed home today. He said he wasn’t feeling well.

STEPHANIE Again? He has to stop doing this. He’s going to flunk his freshmen year.

BROOKE I don’t think he cares. He doesn’t care about anything lately.

STEPHANIE I guess we just need to give him some time. It has only been a few weeks since the accident. Hopefully he’ll snap out of it soon.

BROOKE He keeps blaming himself, you know?

STEPHANIE Yeah, I know. He tries to hide it from me but I know him too well.

BROOKE And no matter how much my mom and I try to tell him that it wasn’t his fault he won’t listen to us. I mean she was my best friend and I don’t blame him.

STEPHANIE I’m not sure why he feels responsible either. Of course it probably doesn’t help that everyone looks at him like he’s some sort of serial killer.
BROOKE
Yeah and Jake and Josh won’t leave him alone.

STEPHANIE
They have always bullied Randy. They love picking on him.

BROOKE
And now, since the accident, it’s worse. I don’t blame him for not wanting to come to school.

(notices JAKE and JOSH)
Oh great. Speak of the devil, or devils.

STEPHANIE
C’mon let’s get out of here.

(JAKE and JOSH notice BROOKE leaving with STEPHANIE. They approach)

JAKE
Hey Brooke! Where’s your homicidal, psycho brother today?

JOSH
Let’s see, today is Monday, so he’s probably plotting out his week of terror on unsuspecting middle schoolers!

JAKE
Tell your brother we missed him today. We can’t wait to see him tomorrow.

BROOKE
Shut up!! Leave Randy alone!

(STEPHANIE pulls her away)

(BROOKE and STEPHANIE exit)

JAKE
(mimicking BROOKE)
Yeah, Josh! Leave Randy alone!!

(JAKE and JOSH crack up/MISS WILLIAMS approaches)
MISS WILLIAMS  
(sensing trouble)  
What’s so funny, gentlemen?

JAKE  
(covering)  
Oh…nothing. I just remembered a joke someone told me.

MISS WILLIAMS  
I appreciate good jokes. I would love to hear it.

(JAKE doesn’t engage)

JOSH  
(trying to help out JAKE)  
I have a joke.

MISS WILLIAMS  
Thank you Josh, but I want to hear Jake’s joke. The one  
that was making him laugh so hard just a few minutes ago.

JOSH  
Yes, maam.

(JAKE just stares at MISS WILLIAMS)

MISS WILLIAMS  
I’m surprised at you Jake.

JAKE  
Why are you surprised at me?

MISS WILLIAMS  
I would think the star quarterback would perform better  
under pressure.

JAKE  
(sarcastically)  
Yes, maam. I’m better at throwing than I am at joking.

MISS WILLIAMS  
Let’s hope so. I’ll see you boys in class.

(MISS WILLIAMS exits)
JAKE

(waiting for her to be out of ear shot)
God, I hate her! She’s only been here a couple months and she acts like she’s the principal or something!

JOSH

(trying to impress JAKE)
Yeah. I know. I hate her too!

JAKE

So what was the joke you were going to tell?

JOSH

What?

JAKE

(impatient with JOSH’s stupidity)
The joke! You told Miss Williams you had a joke.

JOSH

(lightbulb on)
Oh yeah! Okay, okay!

(dramatic pause)
What does a clock do when it’s hungry?

JAKE

(prepared for lameness)
What?

JOSH

It goes back four seconds!!!

JAKE

(no reaction/walks away)

JOSH

(following JAKE)
C’mon now! That was funny! You know you want to laugh...c’mon!

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 4

SETTING: Outside lunch area

AT RISE: Lights up on CHRIS studying/Cassie enters and dances around him

CASSIE

Jake and Josh were at it again.

CHRIS

So what else is new?

CASSIE

You may need to talk to a teacher about them.

CHRIS

What am I in 3rd grade? I’m not going to go “tell” on people.

CASSIE

Why not?

CHRIS

Because I’m not. It’s pointless.

CASSIE

They are relentless and it seems to be getting worse.

CHRIS

Agreed. But I don’t think reporting it to a teacher will do any good.

CASSIE

It can’t hurt. His tormenting of Randy is non stop. He can barely handle coming to school anymore.

CHRIS

Jake is the star quarterback. Nothing can get him in trouble.

CASSIE

Try Miss Williams. She’s new to the school and she isn’t biased.
CHRIS
True.

CASSIE
Jake and Josh were harassing Brooke earlier. Jake wanted to know when Randy was coming back to school.

CHRIS
This is getting out of control.

CASSIE
It is.

CHRIS
Maybe I should go talk to Miss Williams.

CASSIE
Maybe.

CHRIS
I’ll stop in after school.

CASSIE
Can I count on it, big brother?

CHRIS
You can count on it.

(CHRIS exits as CASSIE dances off)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 5

SETTING: Hallway at school

AT RISE: Bell rings/STUDENTS enter and start lingering in the hallway/JAKE is hanging with his friends. MISS WILLIAMS enters looking for JAKE.

MISS WILLIAMS (approaches JAKE) Mr. Simmons, may I speak with you a moment?

JAKE (Irritated) Sure, Miss Williams.

(to HEATHER) I’ll be right back.

(JAKE exits with MISS WILLIAMS/HEATHER grabs JOSH and pulls him DS)

HEATHER Why does Miss Williams need to talk to Jake? And why did she call him Mr. Simmons?

KAYLA Yeah, why?

TAYLOR Yeah, why?

HEATHER It’s never good news when your teacher calls you by your last name. What is going on?

JOSH (nervously) I probably should let Jake tell you.

HEATHER What?

KAYLA Yeah, what?

TAYLOR Yeah, what?
JOSH
(hesitating)
Jake didn’t do so hot on his last World Geography test.

HEATHER
Oh my god. Are you telling me Jake might not be able to play in the homecoming game?

KAYLA
(TAYLOR)
(very distressed)
Oh my god!

HEATHER
If Jake gets benched, I’m dumping him.

KAYLA
(TAYLOR)
Totally!

HEATHER
If Jake gets kicked off the team, I’m dumping him!

KAYLA
(TAYLOR)
Totally!

HEATHER
If Jake can’t go to homecoming, I’m dumping him! How could he do this to me?

(composes herself)
Kayla, find that hot picture of me in my homecoming dress and post it on Instagram NOW!

KAYLA
On it!

HEATHER
Taylor, get a tweet out about how I may be available to take to homecoming NOW!

TAYLOR
On it!

HEATHER
(to JOSH)
Heather Jones waits for no one! Be sure and tell Jake I said that, k?

(HEATHER exits)

KAYLA

K?

(KAYLA exits)

TAYLOR

K?

(TAYLOR exits)

(JAKE re-enters crosses to JOSH)

JOSH

What happened?

JAKE

Miss Williams said I have to retake our last test and get at least a B or I won’t be eligible to play in the homecoming game. And I’ll be banned from attending the dance.

JOSH

Okay. So just study your butt off and get a B.

JAKE

I can’t get a B! I am totally lost in that class! I just copy off other people most of the time. God, if I become ineligible my dad will kill me.

JOSH

Calm down. You’ll be okay.

JAKE

You don’t know what you’re talking about. You don’t know my dad.

JOSH

(trying to be helpful)

I got it! I know who can help.

JAKE

Who?
JOSH

Chris. He’s a genius.

JAKE

Yeah he is, but I doubt he’d agree to help me.

JOSH

True. True. Ummm.....How about that Stephanie girl?

JAKE

You mean Alison’s friend?

JOSH

Yeah, she’s super smart. Straight A’s.

JAKE

Isn’t she also friends with psycho?

JOSH

So what? You need the help.

JAKE

Yeah okay, go find her! I have to take the test the day after tomorrow!

JOSH

Relax. I’ll go find her.

(afraid to tell him)

You should probably go find Heather. She was kind of freaking out about all this.

JAKE

You told her!?

JOSH

(nervous)

Yeah, I mean no, I mean all I said was you may have to make up a test or something!

JAKE

Oh great! Nice job!

(threatening)
If she dumps me, you are a dead man!

(JAKE exits)

JOSH

(yelling after him)
She won’t dump you! She’d be crazy to dump you! Look at you! You’re crazy!

(JOSH exits)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 6

SETTING: Video of interview with PRINCIPAL ANDERSON Part 1

AT RISE: TV on/Lights out onstage

REPORTER
As your school embarks on the one year anniversary of this tragedy, as the principal, how would you say the healing process is going?

PRINCIPAL
Anniversary? That doesn’t sound right. Anniversary sounds too much like a celebration. I suppose the one year “mark” is the best description I can think to use. Since that day the entire vibe of our school has changed. We are all keenly aware of what we survived together. It’s a long, slow process of healing but we’re getting there.

REPORTER
In what way has the entire vibe of the school changed?

PRINCIPAL
In many ways. Our kids have really rallied together since the incident and the cliques and social hierarchy have dissipated. And may I just add that as principal of this school I am so proud of our staff for their hard work over this past year in creating a new normal for our students.

REPORTER
Could you describe the “new normal”?

PRINCIPAL
Our “new normal” is that awareness that we all have for each other that didn’t exist before. There is a type of newfound respect that the students have for each other particularly the ones directly involved in the incident.

REPORTER
This shooting is one of the very few out of the hundreds of school shootings in the last couple years to not have any fatalities, why do you think that is?
PRINCIPAL
The quick thinking and cool headed response of our staff. In the last couple years, with the increase in school shootings, we all received training on how to respond in the event of a campus shooting. And we owe so much to our bravest teacher here, Miss Williams. I know she rejects being credited with any act of heroism but her actions saved the life of a student that day, perhaps many students. She deserves all the credit. She is the true definition of a hero and I am so proud that she is still part of our staff.

(TV off)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 7

SETTING: Hallway of school

AT RISE: CHRIS enters looking for MISS WILLIAMS amidst a crowded hallway/He finds her and approaches

CHRIS
Excuse me Miss Williams, do you have a minute?

MISS WILLIAMS
Sure Chris, what can I do for you?

CHRIS
I want to talk to you about Jake Simmons.

MISS WILLIAMS
Okay, what about Jake?

CHRIS
I don’t know how well you know Jake since you are new here but -

MISS WILLIAMS
I know his type. Class bully, right?

CHRIS
It is that obvious.

MISS WILLIAMS
He tries to put on his best behavior around me but I’m not fooled.

CHRIS
So is there anything you can do about it?

MISS WILLIAMS
What did you have in mind?

CHRIS
I don’t know. Suspension, expulsion. Either one would be great!
MISS WILLIAMS
Unfortunately Chris unless I directly witness him bullying a student or physically assaulting a student there is very little I can do about it.

CHRIS
But that’s ridiculous. What bully is going to pick on kids in front of a teacher?

MISS WILLIAMS
I know. It’s frustrating for me as well.

CHRIS
I knew this was futile. But for the record, he has zeroed in on Randy Becker big time and he’s making his life a living hell!

MISS WILLIAMS
How so?

CHRIS
Randy has been picked on by Jake and his stupid sidekick, Josh, for years but ever since the accident things have gotten much worse. That’s why Randy has been missing so much school. He just can’t take it anymore. And quite frankly neither can I.

MISS WILLIAMS
Thank you for bringing this to my attention Chris. I really appreciate it and I want you to know that I will keep an eye on Jake and Josh. You never know, they may just slip up one time.

CHRIS
(defeated)
I doubt it, but thanks for listening Miss Williams.

MISS WILLIAMS
Anytime Chris.

(both exit in different directions)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 8

SETTING: A therapists office; one year after the shooting

AT RISE: Music blasts as lights fade up/STUDENTS quickly passing in hallway/ALISON, STEPHANIE & HEATHER enter with stools and set them in a row across the stage as STUDENTS pass/As STUDENTS clear, the music fades down /ALISON speaks as a single light illuminates her while the other two girls sit with heads down in darkness/Each girl is in their own therapy session. They all speak out to audience as if talking to a therapist.

ALISON

I’m not sure why I have to do this I don’t need counseling. I’m fine. My parents worry too much. Seriously, I’ve been the one giving emotional support to everyone. I like being there for people. I like being strong. It makes me feel useful and in control. Besides, I am completely aware that this was an isolated incident. I’m not going to school scared like it might happen again and I’m suffering from PTSD if that’s what this is about. So my grades have dropped a bit but isn’t that understandable? I’ll get them back up. It’s not like I’m going to flunk out or anything.

(beat) Yeah I think about it sometimes...okay maybe a little more than just sometimes. But it’s not really the actual incident that I think about. I think more about how it happened. I relive the days before the shooting and I try to figure out what I could have done differently that might have prevented it from happening. I’m not blaming myself, I just maybe feel a little guilty for not sensing the anger that was boiling up in him. Now, looking back there were signs but of course not in a million years would I imagine something this bad would happen. I can’t believe it’s already been a year. It feels like it just happened yesterday.
It feels like it just happened yesterday. Is it weird that I still jump out of my skin when I hear the slamming of a locker or a book drop? And not just at school; I can be anywhere and hear any kind of a “bang” and I jump back ten feet. It’s nerve wracking. I was right there for the whole thing, me and my friend Alison. I wish I hadn’t been there. If I had taken the bus home that day I would have missed it but we had heard there was maybe going to be a fight involving one of our friends and we hoped we could stop it. Isn’t it so weird how life happens? If we had been there a couple minutes earlier we might have talked him out of it but Alison got hung up talking to her teacher and we got there too late. Just a couple minutes and this may have never happened. It’s just so weird. That entire day and that single moment - I will never forget. I replay it over and over in my head. I live with that moment inside me now. We all do. I heard Principal Anderson call it a “new normal” and I guess that’s true. Everything has changed. I’ve changed. Everyone is so different now. How is everyone different?

I don’t know. I can only speak about myself. People tell me I’m nicer. But I never considered myself mean or a bully, I just thought I was being honest. I was bullied when I was in grade school and I hated it! Then in middle school I got prettier and suddenly I wasn’t the class geek anymore. It felt great! I swore I’d never go back to nerd status and I guess I thought if I kept other people down I
would always stay on top. I don’t know if that makes any sense but that’s how I felt. Then after the incident I just sort of woke up and realized how I was actually being mean like the kids who bullied me and I could finally hear how cruel I sounded. I’m not like some saint now or anything but I try to be more aware of how I speak to people. All in all I’d say I’m doing okay. It still doesn’t seem real. There are days I wake up and it takes me a second to realize that it wasn’t just a bad dream. I guess you could say...

(in unison with ALISON and STEPHANIE as lights illuminate all the girls)

I’m just doing the best I can.

(Music blasts and slowly fades down as girls exit with their stools)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 9

SETTING: Living room at the home of Randy and Brooke

AT RISE: Lights up on RANDY DSR with a pillow and reading a book/BROOKE enters and approaches him/RANDY doesn’t look up from book

Hey! Where’s mom?

SHOWING A HOUSE.

What’s for dinner?

I don’t know. Text mom and ask.

Randy, why didn’t you go to school today?

I’m not feeling well.

You look fine to me.

It’s a head and stomach thing.

Stephanie was asking about you. She said she tried texting you but you weren’t getting back to her.

I’ll text her later.

You have to stop missing school. You won’t pass your freshmen year.
RANDY
Um, I have straight A’s sis. So I wouldn’t worry about me passing.

BROOKE
Is this about Jake and Josh bullying you?

RANDY
(defensive)
No. I don’t care what those jerks say.

BROOKE
Why don’t you stand up to them?

RANDY
Maybe someday I will.

BROOKE
They only do it because they can get away with it. They’ve been picking on you since the 5th grade! And now since the accident -

(RANDY slams book shut and looks up at BROOKE)

RANDY
Don’t bring that up. Please.

BROOKE
(frustrated)
Randy, it wasn’t your fault. Why do you blame yourself? I don’t understand.

RANDY
No, you don’t understand! You weren’t there. You don’t get it. Don’t make me explain.

BROOKE
Randy, nobody blames you. She was my best friend and I don’t blame you. Her parents don’t blame you. Her brother doesn’t blame you. Jake and Josh blame you because they know it bothers you but everyone knows it was the driver’s fault. They hit her and took off! You just tried to help.

RANDY
(takes a moment)
I yelled at her.

BROOKE

What?

RANDY

I yelled at her.

BROOKE

What do you mean, you “yelled at her”? You never yell. Even when you’re mad, you don’t yell.

RANDY

Okay I didn’t yell at her, I yelled to her. I yelled to her while she was crossing the street. She asked me for that picture I took of the two of you last summer that was on my phone so I sent it to her.

(struggles to continue)

And as she was crossing the street I yelled to her to check her phone for the pic. I didn’t even look up from my phone. I just carelessly yelled and then the next thing I hear is a car screeching. I look up and she’s on the ground. No car in sight. It was like she just fell or something. It took me a couple minutes to understand what had happened.

BROOKE

You can’t blame yourself for yelling to her. You couldn’t know that a car was coming. How can you blame….

RANDY

(interrupts)

Yes, I could have! If I had looked up from my damn phone! If I had waited until she had safely crossed the street! If I hadn’t been so stupid to tell her to check her phone when she was crossing the street! It was my fault. Jake and Josh are right. I am to blame.

BROOKE

(frustrated)

Randy! Stop! That’s crazy! It was an accident, plain and simple. You can’t let it affect you like this.
RANDY
(regretting saying anything)
I know you’re just trying to help but seriously I don’t want to talk about this anymore. I need to deal with this on my own.

BROOKE
But you’re not dealing with it. This isn’t dealing with it.

(beat)

Maybe we should talk to mom about this.

RANDY
(adamant)
No. Please, Brooke don’t mention this to mom. You are the only person I have told about this and I wish I hadn’t. Please, I’ll work through this in my own way, okay?

BROOKE
(hesitant)
Yeah. Okay. But promise me you won’t listen to those jerks at school. Promise me you won’t let them get to you.

RANDY
I promise. Let me fight my own battles, little sister.

BROOKE
Okay. But fight them, don’t give in to them.

RANDY
I will, but in my own way, on my terms. Okay?

Okay.

RANDY
Now text mom and tell her to pick up some Taco Bell for dinner.

BROOKE
Ugh! Taco Bell again?! I feel more like pizza tonight!

RANDY
Hey! I’m the sick one, so it’s my pick.
BROOKE

Sick?

(under her breath)

Yeah, right, whatever.

(BROOKE exits)

RANDY

Hey! I heard that.

(RANDY’s phone beeps)

RANDY

(looks at phone)

Keep it up you dumb asses. Just keep it up.

(RANDY exits)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 10

SETTING: CHRIS’s bedroom

AT RISE: CHRIS sitting on edge of bed/ALISON standing/They are in the middle of a discussion

CHRIS

Don’t be upset with me.

ALISON

I’m not upset. I mean, I understand. It’s just a stupid football game and dance. It just feels like you have no interest in anything anymore.

(beat)

Ever since the accident –

CHRIS

God, why does everyone have to bring up the accident?! This is not about the accident! This is about me! I need to bring my grades up so I’ve been focusing on that lately, that’s all! But everyone around me keeps bringing up the accident and telling me I’m so different and that I’ve changed! Of course I’ve changed! You don’t have something like that happen to you and it not change you!

(pauses/calms down)

I just want to get through high school and get to college so I can get away from here and get on with my life. Everything I was interested in before just seems so trivial to me now.

(aware that ALISON might have taken that personally)

Look Al, I’m sorry if I haven’t been a great friend lately and I’m sorry if my attitude is bringing you down.

ALISON
You don’t have to apologize. I understand. I really do. I just want you to be happy. You’re my best friend and she was my friend and I miss her too. But I know she wouldn’t want you to waste your high school years feeling sad and bitter.

ALISON (cont.)

CHRIS
I’m not bitter. I’m sad but not bitter.

ALISON
You’re a little bitter.

CHRIS
How am I bitter?

ALISON
I don’t know. You just seem to be over everything and everyone.

CHRIS
(jokingly)
You say that like it’s a bad thing.

ALISON
See! Bitter.

CHRIS
Sorry. I’ll snap out of it, eventually.

(ALISON’s phone dings/she checks it)

ALISON
Oh god! What is this?

CHRIS
What?

ALISON
Looks like Jake has taken to harassing on Instagram now too!

CHRIS
What? Let me see.

(looks at pic)
God I hate that guy! He is seriously disturbed!

ALISON
Just ignore it. He wants to get a reaction from you; don’t give him the satisfaction.

CHRIS
I won’t. He won’t get the best of me.

ALISON
There’s the Chris I know and love!

CHRIS
I told you I’m okay.

ALISON
And I believe you. Well, I better get going. Please think it over about going to homecoming. It will be fun. And I promise I’ll have you home by midnight so you can get more studying time in.

CHRIS
Ha-ha. I doubt I’ll change my mind but I’ll think about it.

ALISON
That’s all I ask. See you tomorrow!

CHRIS
See ya!

(ALISON exits as CASSIE enters dancing/CHRIS has pulled out a book to study)

CASSIE
Alison is good friend

CHRIS
Yeah, she is. I hate to disappoint her.

CASSIE
How would you disappoint her?

CHRIS
By not going to homecoming.

CASSIE
Then just go.

CHRIS
I don’t want to go. I have too much studying to do and quite frankly the high school dance scene doesn’t exactly thrill me.

CASSIE
It used to.

CHRIS
Yeah, well…I don’t want to talk about it.

CASSIE
Want to talk about Jake and the Instagram pic?

CHRIS
Not really. It was only a matter of time before he started bullying me too. It’s fine. I can handle it.

CASSIE
You could go to Miss Williams about this. You can show her the post.

CHRIS
It won’t do any good. Somebody like Jake is untouchable. I think that’s what Miss Williams was trying to tell me the other day. She just didn’t want to upset me even more.

CASSIE
If I were you I’d –

CHRIS
Yeah, well you’re not me and in case you hadn’t noticed I’m trying to study so if you don’t mind.

CASSIE
Okay, I’m going. But reconsider going to the dance, if not for you for Alison. She is your best friend.

(CASSIE dances off)

CHRIS
Uh-huh.

(CHRIS closes book and curls up in fetal
position and begins to weep as lights fade)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 11

SETTING: Video of MISS WILLIAMS interview Part 2

AT RISE: TV on/Light off onstage

REPORTER
What would you say have been the biggest adjustments in your personal and professional life since the incident?

MISS WILLIAMS
I appreciate your interest but I only agreed to do this interview as long as it wasn’t about me. My stipulation was that we talk about the school as a whole surviving a very tough year.

REPORTER
Your principal, Mrs. Anderson stated that she feels this incident in many ways has brought the students and staff closer together. Would you elaborate?

MISS WILLIAMS
Each of us was changed that day in ways that may not have even surfaced yet. Lives were altered forever. But despite that, the real story is how much positive change has come from this experience. For example, there hasn’t been one altercation on campus since the incident. Many students who were doing C work or less have stepped up and brought their grades up this year. We have observed more kids spending their free time volunteering and giving back to their community. There just seems to be a newfound level of caring and empathy for each other that didn’t exist before. Don’t misunderstand me, this was a tragic event that I hope and pray never happens again to anyone or any community anywhere. I’m only pointing out that these students have used this horrific experience to make some positive changes. It’s been very inspiring to see.

REPORTER
And how has the community responded to the school?

MISS WILLIAMS
The response has been absolutely amazing! The outpouring of support from the families, local businesses, city council members and especially former students has been overwhelming.

MISS WILLIAMS (cont.)

REPORTER
Did you ever think of leaving your job after this tragedy? In light of what happened I doubt anyone would blame you for wanting to move on.

MISS WILLIAMS
I can honestly say it’s never crossed my mind. I have found my home here. This school and this community went through the unthinkable but we are coming out the other side stronger and better. Innocence may have been lost that day but compassion and understanding were found.

(TV off)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 12

SETTING: At school/outside lunch area

AT RISE: STEPHANIE enters and approaches CHRIS who is studying

STEPHANIE
Hey you! Where have you been hiding?

CHRIS
(does not look up from studying)
What do you mean?

STEPHANIE
I mean I never see you anymore.
(jokingly/trying to get a reaction)
You used to get on my nerves being around so much but now I’m almost starting to miss you.

(CHRIS has no response/buried in book)

STEPHANIE
Ah...hello, earth to Chris! I just told you I’m starting to miss you.

CHRIS
(realizing)
Oh. Sorry. I’m kind of out of it today. Not much sleep last night.

STEPHANIE
Let me guess, up late studying again?

CHRIS
Something like that. Listen, I hate to be rude but I really have to finish reading this chapter.

STEPHANIE
Oh, sure. I won’t bother you. I’m actually waiting for Jake. I agreed to help him study for a make-up test so I’m meeting him here in a few minutes.

CHRIS
You agreed to help Jake?

STEPHANIE
I know it sounds crazy but he said he’d pay me so I said yes.

CHRIS
(gets up and gathers his stuff)
Well, I’m out of here.

STEPHANIE
I don’t blame you.

CHRIS
Good luck with that.

STEPHANIE
Thanks. I’m assuming since I’m helping him he’ll refrain from insulting me.

CHRIS
If I know Jake he’ll wait until you’ve helped him and then he’ll insult you.

(JAKE has entered & is right behind CHRIS/he overhears that last line/CHRIS turns to go)

JAKE
(with tension)
Hey Chris! How are ya, buddy?

CHRIS
Hey Jake. I was just leaving.

JAKE
C’mon Chris! If I was paranoid I’d think you didn’t want to be friends anymore.

CHRIS
Jake we haven’t been friends since the 4th grade.
JAKE
What are you talking about? I consider you a friend.

CHRI
(trying to leave)
Your definition of friendship is obviously different than mine.

JAKE
Why are you dissing me like this? What have I ever done to you?

CHRI
(decides to confront)
It's what you do to everyone. Let's just say I'm not a fan.

JAKE
You know what your problem is Peterson? You're thin skinned! You can't take a joke.

CHRI
Sure, okay. I guess not. Bye.

(JAKE watches CHRIS walk away and contemplates how he will retaliate)

STEPHANIE
We better get to work.

JAKE
Wow, he is such a jerk! Can you believe that guy?

STEPHANIE
(ignoring his comments)
What chapter is the test on?

JAKE
(takes out his phone)
Well if he can't take a joke in person maybe he can take one online!

STEPHANIE
What are you doing?

JAKE
Just having some fun on Instagram!

STEPHANIE  
(looking at his phone)  
That isn’t Chris.

JAKE  
(laughing)  
It will be, once I photo shop his face on here.

STEPHANIE  
That’s not funny. Can we just get to work please? And I want my money up front!

JAKE  
(hands her money)  
Fine.

(HEATHER, KAYLA and TAYLOR enter just as the money exchange happens/HEATHER is not happy)

HEATHER  
What is going on here?

KAYLA  
Yeah, like what?  

TAYLOR  
Yeah, like what?

JAKE  
(goes to her)  
Hey baby! This Stephanie girl is helping me study for that make up test I have to take.

HEATHER  
Oh yeah? Well that better be all you’re doing.

(to STEPHANIE)  
You are aware he is MY boyfriend?

STEPHANIE  
Congratulations. I don’t care.

HEATHER  
(to KAYLA & TAYLOR)  
Did you hear that? She says she doesn’t care.

(to STEPHANIE)
You better start caring!

KAYLA  TAYLOR
You totally better! You totally better!

JAKE
Heather, chill out. She’s only helping me study. I mean get serious. Look at her. You really think I’d touch something like that? She’s like the female version of Randy.

(HEATHER, KAYLA and TAYLOR burst out laughing)

STEPHANIE
You know what Jake? Do your own studying. I’m done.

(STEPHANIE throws the money on the ground and storms off/visibly hurt)

JAKE
Wait Stephanie!! I really need your help! I didn’t mean it!

HEATHER
That was hilarious!! She is a female Randy! They should totally hook up. They would make a perfect couple of psycho freaks.

KAYLA
Yeah and they would have psycho, freak babies!!

TAYLOR
Yeah and none of them would ever have to dress up for Halloween!!

JAKE
Shut up!! Would you idiots get out of here! NOW!!

HEATHER
Hey! You can’t talk to my friends like that!

JAKE
Who says I was only talking to them?

HEATHER
(hugely offended)
WHAT?!! You better take that back or you won’t have a girlfriend anymore!
JAKE
Leave!!..... NOW!!!!

HEATHER
(shocked)
Fine, but don’t come crying back to me you jack ass!!

(she exits)

TAYLOR
(in his face)
Jack ass!

(she exits)

KAYLA
(also in his face)
Jack ass!

(she exits)

JAKE
(to himself/very serious)
What am I going to do? I am so dead.

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 13

SETTING: NONE

AT RISE: Lights are dim on an empty stage/audio of MISS WILLIAMS is heard of her leaving the following voice message for PRINCIPAL ANDERSON

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON
You’ve reached Principal Anderson; please leave me a message after the tone and I’ll return your call as soon as possible. Thank you and have a great day!

(BEEP sound effect)

MISS WILLIAMS

(voice over)
Hi Mrs. Anderson, this is Miss Williams. If you have anytime this week, I was hoping to speak to you about a matter that has been brought to my attention recently regarding bullying. I haven’t witnessed anything first hand but I did have an interesting discussion with one of our top students and I think you might be interested to hear what he had to say about some inappropriate behavior that might be occurring on campus. I’m here everyday after school coaching track if you need to find me after classes. Please contact me at your earliest convenience; I think we need to nip this matter in the bud. Thanks!

(BLACKOUT)

(ENDER OF SCENE)

(This can also be the end of ACT 1 if an intermission is needed)
Scene 14

SETTING: Video of interview of PRINCIPAL ANDERSON Part 2

AT RISE: TV on/Lights off onstage

REPORTER
Many people in this community aren’t aware that this incident was the second tragedy your school suffered last year. Just a couple months prior to the shooting one of your middle school students was killed in a hit and run accident. Would you care to comment on that accident?

PRINCIPAL
You are absolutely correct; our school has endured quite a lot lately. That horrific accident was extremely traumatic for our school. She was such a gifted student and an extremely talented, young dancer with so much promise. It was heartbreaking.

REPORTER
Do you think some of the emotional trauma from that loss helped fuel the fire that led to the shooting?

PRINCIPAL
I’m not sure. I know there are some definite connections with the people involved but I would just be speculating. I’m sure there were other factors as well. Clearly there was some deep ceded anger and resentment boiling up, but that still doesn’t help to make sense of any of this.

REPORTER
This might be a tough question but it needs to be asked. As principal of this school do you have any guilt for not noticing a warning sign or not being cognizant of the bullying reportedly taking place on your campus?

PRINCIPAL
Of course. I wish I had noticed a sign but I didn’t. I wish I had seen the bullying but I didn’t. It’s not easy to
notice when a student is contemplating violence, they know how to hide it fairly well. I am learning to accept that there was probably not much I could have done. It’s taken me this entire year to come to that understanding with myself. It’s easy to get caught up in the administrative part of this job and lose that personal connection with the students. I am certainly guilty of that and I am determined to never lose that connection again. That is the best I can do.

REPORTER
What would you like to say to the family of the student charged in the shooting?

PRINCIPAL
That we don’t blame your child and we are here if you need us. Our hearts go out to them. They have endured the unimaginable and lost so much.

(TV off)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 15

SETTING: Hallway at school

AT RISE: STUDENTS standing around at break/JAKE enters visibly defeated

HEATHER
(approaches JAKE)
Miss me yet?

JAKE
Leave me alone. You are the last person I want to see right now.

HEATHER
You are so going to regret saying that to me!

KAYLA
Totally regret it!

TAYLOR
Totally regret it!

JAKE
Not my problem.

HEATHER
Attention everyone! I, Heather Jones, have just dumped my dumb ass boyfriend Jake and will be looking for one lucky guy to escort me to homecoming. Follow me on Instagram and DM your pic along with one sentence as why I should go with you. I will reveal my pick within 48 hours.

KAYLA
#bestdateever

TAYLOR
#nogeeksplease

HEATHER
(to JAKE)
I wouldn’t go on social media for awhile, I’m going to ruin you.
(HEATHER, KAYLA and TAYLOR exit)

JOSH
(approaches JAKE)
Screw her, man! You don’t need her. She’s crazy! Just shake it off!

JAKE
I don’t care about that.

JOSH
Your girlfriend just dumped you in front of the entire school. Of course you care about that.

JAKE
No, I don’t. I have bigger problems.

JOSH
What’s up?

JAKE
I’ve been benched. For homecoming game, I’ve been benched.

JOSH
No way!! Coach can’t bench you. We’ll lose without you!

JAKE
He can and he did. I’m out. I failed that World Geography test.

JOSH
I thought Stephanie was going to help you.

JAKE
Well she didn’t, okay. Just drop it!

JOSH
But that doesn’t make sense she was supposed to meet you-

JAKE
I said drop it!!

(beat)
Look, I might have called her a female Randy okay!

JOSH
You did what?

JAKE
Heather was getting jealous so I called Stephanie a female Randy just to make Heather feel better and Stephanie freaked out and left.

JOSH
Smooth move.

JAKE
I know. I don’t know what I’m going to do. I am so dead.

JOSH
She can’t be that mad at you.

JAKE
Not Stephanie! You idiot! My dad!! I failed a test and got benched!!

JOSH
It’s just one test and one game. So what?

JAKE
You don’t get it. My dad doesn’t accept this kind of thing. He’s counting on me. All of his hopes and dreams are riding on me! If I let him down I might as well be dead. He is going to lose it on me.

(beat/uncomfortable to ask but desperate)

Do you think I could stay at your place tonight?

JOSH
(confused)
What? No. I doubt it. C’mon Jake you’re just being dramatic. Your dad won’t be that mad. He’s never lost it on you before. Has he?

JAKE
(realizing he’s sounding weak)
No, of course not. I’ll be fine. Everything’s cool.

(notices RANDY and needs a distraction/(JAKE
approaches RANDY/JOSH follows)

Well, what do we have here?

JAKE (cont.)

So look who decided to come to school. Taking a break from your killing spree, psycho?

JOSH

Yeah, psycho.

RANDY

Back off Jake. I’m not in the mood for you.

JAKE

Oh, did you hear that Josh, he’s not in the mood for me?

(Grabs RANDY by collar)

Well let’s see if I can get you in the mood, freak!!!

(Before an altercation can begin CHRIS steps in)

CHRIS

Let him go, Jake.

JAKE

Butt out Chris. This doesn’t concern you.

CHRIS

(physically intervening)

I said let him go!

JAKE

(pushing CHRIS away)

What the hell is wrong with you dude?

RANDY

(to JAKE/intensely)

That was the last time you will ever mess with me. Ever.

JAKE

You think so? Think again. You better sign up for home school now, freak show, if you want to keep breathing!
RANDY
(dryly and calmly)
Good. Keep threatening me. You’ll be sorry...very sorry.

CHRIS
Randy, stop it! Just walk away.

RANDY
(to CHRIS)
I am walking away. But don’t bother fighting my battles.

CHRIS
I’m not trying to fight your battles.

RANDY
Then next time you just walk away.

(looks JAKE up and down pathetically)
I got this.

(RANDY exits)

JAKE
(exremely irritated/yelling after him)
You’re lucky he didn’t walk away or you’d be dead! You better hope someone is around to save you next time!

CHRIS
(confronting JAKE)
Stop it already!! That’s enough!

JAKE
(pushing CHRIS)
What the hell, dude! Get off me! How can you defend that loser?!?

CHRIS
I’m not defending him and he’s not a loser! You’re the loser! You’ve made his life miserable for years! Not to mention everyone else’s! You and Josh need to back off and leave people alone!

JOSH
Me? What did I do?
JAKE

(to CHRIS)
You know what? I’m getting a little tired of you and your “I’m better than everyone” attitude! I’m sick of having to walk on egg shells around you just because you had a family member die! So what? We all have bad things happen to us. But for some reason we are supposed to feel sorry for you and your dead sister! Well, I don’t. And if you’d wake up from your pathetic pity party you’d realize you should be angry at that psycho mutant and hold that “sicko” responsible for what he did!

CHRIS
How do you know what he did? You weren’t there! None of us were!

JAKE
He was. He said he was! He was the first one on the scene!

(with venom)
He probably pushed her!

CHRIS
(disgusted/trying to remain calm)
Why would he do that?

JAKE
I don’t know, because Satan told him to!

CHRIS
You must be high or just incredibly stupid or maybe both.

(CHRIS exits)

JAKE
(yelling after him)
You’re the stupid one for not seeing him for what he is. People like him aren’t normal!!

(HEATHER, KAYLA, TAYLOR approach)

HEATHER
Oh look ladies; it’s our EX-star quarterback.

(to JAKe miming a microphone)
Tell us Jake, how does it feel to be washed up at 16??!

(HEATHER, KAYLA, TAYLOR laugh)

JAKE
(exploding into a frightening rage)
Get the HELL out of my face!

JOSH
(intervenes)
Whoa, Jake. Calm down dude.

(JAKE storms off/HEATHER visibly shaken)

JOSH
(to HEATHER)
Are you okay?

HEATHER
(upset/holding back tears)
You can tell your loser friend that he just lost the best thing that will ever happen to him. He better stay the hell away from me!

(beat)

Now who’s the psycho?

(HEATHER exits)

KAYLA
(as she exits/subdued)
Psycho.

TAYLOR
(as she exits/subdued)
Total psycho.

JOSH
(not sure of how JAKE reacted/freaked out)
What is happening?

(JOSH walks off in a daze)

(LIGHTS FADE)
(END OF SCENE)

Scene 16

SETTING: CHRIS’s bedroom

AT RISE: CHRIS is on his bed with his phone in hand/CASSIE is there dancing

CASSIE

What’s with all the texting?

CHRIS

I’m not texting, I’m playing a game.

CASSIE

A game? Is that possible? I didn’t think you knew how to play a game.

CHRIS

Hilarious.

CASSIE

Shouldn’t you be studying?

CHRIS

You’re the one always telling me I study too much. Now that I take a break you tell me I should be studying. Make up your mind.

CASSIE

Want to talk about what happened with Jake at school?

CHRIS

No.

CASSIE

Don’t let him get to you. His home life is pretty messed up.

CHRIS

So what? That does not excuse him from treating people the way he does. He’s always been a bully.
He’s learned from the best.

What do you mean?

You know what I mean.

His dad?

He’s learned to hide the bruises but hiding his anger isn’t as easy.

Plenty of kids have a crappy home life and they don’t go around harassing and tormenting other kids. Jake needs to learn he can’t get away with taking his anger out on others.

You said yourself he’s always been a bully. Why does it bother you so much now?

Because it’s escalated. And it’s gotten personal.

True but you did the right thing going to Miss Williams. Maybe you should just let the teachers handle it.

If I don’t stand up to him things will get worse for me and my friends. And Miss Williams said herself she can’t do anything about it. I’m just playing his game and talking his language so he understands where I’m coming from, that’s all.

As long as it’s just talk.

You are messing up my game. Could you bug me later?
CASSIE

You can count on it!

(CASSIE dances off)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 17

SETTING: THERAPIST’s office; one year after the shooting

AT RISE: Music blasts/STUDENTs quickly passing in hallway/BROOKE, TAYLOR and KAYLA enter with stools and set them in a row across the stage as STUDENTS pass/as STUDENTS clear, music fades down /BROOKE speaks as a single light illuminates her while the other two girls sit with heads down in darkness/each girl is in their own therapy session/they all face audience as if talking to therapist)

BROOKE (not sure what to say; awkward long pause) What do you want me to say? I didn’t really see anything happen. I was just inside the hallway and I heard this popping noise. Kinda sounded like firecrackers. And what’s weird is that since it sounded like firecrackers I knew it wasn’t firecrackers because I had heard somewhere that gunshots sound like firecrackers so when I heard that sound I immediately thought it was gunshots and not firecrackers. Is that weird that I automatically thought it was gunshots? Do you think I’m weird? When I was little my parents thought I was weird. Well, you see we have this coat closet in my house and when I was in kindergarten I would spend a lot of time in that closet. I would pretend it was my own little apartment. I would go grocery shopping in the kitchen and bring my food back to the closet and pretend I was having dinner in my apartment. I had a flashlight with me so I could draw and do puzzles or whatever. It was really cool.

(beat)
And before my dad left for good, my parents were fighting everyday. So I would find my dog Snappy and my favorite blanket and we would sit in there and I’d pretend the yelling was coming from some crazy neighbors that lived in the next apartment.

(remembering vividly)

I always felt so safe in there. That’s not weird, right? After the shooting I tried sitting in there again. I guess I was hoping I would have that safe feeling again.

(beat)

I didn’t. Please don’t tell anyone I told you that!

(the last line underscored is in unison with TAYLOR/single light illuminates TAYLOR as light fades down on BROOKE)

TAYLOR

(in unison with BROOKE)

Please don’t tell anyone I told you that! I know you are a counselor so I don’t think you are allowed to share anything I tell you. I watch a lot of Law & Order. But if you did, like accidentally tell anyone about that, I would like totally die!! So please don’t share.

(beat)

Actually there were two imaginary friends. I only told you about one but there were two – Ziggy and Zelda. They were brother and sister. I don’t know why I left out Zelda. Does that say something, like, psychological about me? They lived under my bathroom mat. So I usually talked to them when I was getting ready for bed or in the morning before going to school. They were the only friends I really had until they moved away when I was in the fourth grade.

(realizing she might sound crazy)

I know they didn’t actually move. I know they were imaginary and that I just outgrew them but what freaked me out is... I found myself talking to them the other day. That totally makes me sound crazy!
(the last line underscored is in unison with KAYLA/a single light illuminates KAYLA as light fades down on TAYLOR)

KAYLA
(in unison with TAYLOR)
That totally makes me sound crazy! Doesn’t it? But you can’t call me crazy. I know. I used to go to therapy when I was little. My mom made me go because I stopped eating. Of course I didn’t really stop eating; I just stopped eating around her. She was never home. I was alone after school everyday since I started school. So I caught on fairly quickly that if I stopped eating when she was home she would start to worry and pay more attention to me. She started rushing home earlier to fix me a nice dinner hoping I would eat it. To add even more drama to the situation I stopped talking too. That got her talking to me even more and reading to me at bedtime. It was great for a short time but when I didn’t make progress she signed me up for therapy. If I had made progress it would have stopped anyway, at least being in therapy I had somebody to talk to. Some people hate going to a counselor. I like it. I think...

(in unison with the BROOKE and TAYLOR as lights fade up on all three girls)

it’s nice to have somebody who listens to me.

(Music blasts and slowly fades down as girls exit with their stools)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 18

SETTING:

Hallway at school

AT RISE:

STUDENTS passing in hall/RANDY, STEPHANIE and ALISON are talking
MISS WILLIAMS enters looking for RANDY

MISS WILLIAMS

(casually approaching RANDY)
Hi Randy! Do you have a second?

RANDY

(a little curious and confused)
Sure. What’s up?

MISS WILLIAMS
I just wanted to check in with you and see how you’re doing.

RANDY

Fine.

MISS WILLIAMS
Good to hear. I wanted to let you know if you ever need to talk my door is always open. I know I’m new here but I’m eager to know my students so if you just want to pop in during lunch or break I’d be happy to see you.

RANDY

(suspicious)
Is this about the accident? Because honestly Miss Williams, I’m fine.

MISS WILLIAMS
Partly. But I’m extending this invitation to all my students.

RANDY
Thanks. I appreciate the invitation.
(RANDY starts to walk away but MISS WILLIAMS continues)

MISS WILLIAMS
May I ask you one more thing?

RANDY
Shoot.

MISS WILLIAMS
Has Jake Simmons been harassing you?

RANDY
Jake harasses everyone. Or I guess I should say everyone who isn’t just like him.

MISS WILLIAMS
I’m aware. However, it’s come to my attention that recently he seems to be pinpointing you even more than usual.

RANDY
(agitated with this information)
Miss Williams, I appreciate your concern but I’m more than capable of taking care of myself.

MISS WILLIAMS
I’m sure you are. It’s just that I’ve noticed you’ve missed quite a bit of school lately and I wanted to make sure it wasn’t because of Jake.

RANDY
(defensive)
I haven’t been feeling well lately but I’m keeping my grades up so I’m not sure why you’re inquiring.

MISS WILLIAMS
Because I care about my students, Randy, and not just their grades.

RANDY
Thanks Miss Williams but I can handle Jake or anyone else that messes with me.

MISS WILLIAMS
Randy, I guess what I’m trying to say is don’t stoop to his level. I know guys like Jake can wear on you but just shrug
it off. Remember everyone has their own stuff they’re dealing with and we can’t always know what somebody else may be going through.

RANDY
Right. Well thanks for the advice Miss Williams. Please don’t worry about me. I’ll be fine.

MISS WILLIAMS
I know you will be Randy. But remember if you ever need anything my door is always open.

RANDY
(as he walks away)
Got it!

(MISS WILLIAMS stands there for a moment/She wishes that had gone better/she exits)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 19

SETTING: Outside lunch area

AT RISE: STUDENTS crossing/JAKE enters and walks to DSR bench he is wearing sunglasses/Josh enters and approaches JAKE

JOSH
Hey man! There you are? I’ve been looking everywhere for you! Why didn’t you make it to first or second period? Did you cut without me?

JAKE
No I didn’t cut. I was just running late today.

JOSH
You okay? What’s with the sunglasses?

JAKE
I’m just tired. I didn’t get much sleep last night.

JOSH
Yeah right! You’re high aren’t you?

JAKE
What? No, dude! I told you I didn’t get any sleep. That’s it.

JOSH
Liar! That’s why you were late! You went and got high with Heather during first & second period didn’t you?

JAKE
How many times do I have to tell you? I’m not high just tired.

(JOSH goes to take off JAKE’s glasses but JAKE blocks his hand/JOSH thinks JAKE is playing so he continues until Josh succeeds in removing JAKE’s sunglasses to reveal a black eye)
JOSH
Holy crap! What happened to you?

JAKe
(quickly puts glasses back on)
Nothing. Me and my little brother were wrestling.

JOSH
(attempting to be funny)
Oh dude, did Heather do that to you?

JAKE
NO! I told you my little brother got carried away with me while wrestling. That’s it. Now drop it!

JOSH
(beat/suddenly realizing)
Oh my god. It was your dad.

JAKE
NO!

JOSH
Yes it was. God, Jake you weren’t kidding. I’m so sorry. I should have had you spend the night.

JAKE
(embarrassed and furious but calmly)
Don’t you dare say another word about this. I swear to god if you tell one single person I will kill you, slowly and painfully.

JOSH
(believing him)
Okay. I promise I won’t say a word.

(a moment of awkward silence)
Are you sure you’re okay?

JAKE
No. But I will be.

JOSH
(very uncomfortable)
So... do you want to go get some lunch?
(JAKE shakes his head)

JOSH (cont.)
Okay. Well what do you wanna do?

JAKE (can’t keep this inside anymore)
I wasn’t lying.

JOSH
What do you mean?

JAKE
I wasn’t lying when I said my brother did this to me.

JOSH
What are you talking about? Your brother is only 8 years old.

JAKE
Yep.

JOSH
I don’t understand. You’re telling me your scrawny, little brother who looks up to you, who worships you, gave you a black eye and it wasn’t an accident? That doesn’t make any sense.

JAKE (removes sunglasses)
My dad made him.

JOSH (confused and slightly horrified)
What? What are you talking about?

JAKE (slowly and struggling)
I had to tell my dad about being benched for the homecoming game. So I went over it in my head all afternoon on how I would tell him, hoping he would go easy on me. Only problem was - he already knew. Turns out coach sent him an email letting him know about my ineligibility. I could tell by the way he called for me when he walked through the front door that he was drunk and he had no intention of taking it
easy on me. He was extra livid because it’s the homecoming game and we had family coming in from all over to see me play. My dad’s family lives and breathes football. He was the star quarterback in high school and in college and he NEVER missed a game! I started to explain to him that I tried to get help to make up the test but he wouldn’t listen. He didn’t care. I knew there was nothing I could say that would make any difference, so I told him I was sorry for being such a failure and that I knew I deserved what was coming to me. I told him I wouldn’t resist and to go ahead and take his best shot.

(pauses/getting more upset)

JOSH

(doesn’t want to hear anymore)

You don’t have to tell me anymore Jake.

JAKE

(vulnerable and needing to finish)

Yes I do! So he grabbed me by the collar and said “You’re not worth an ounce of my energy, loser” and he dragged me into my little brother’s room. He threw me on the floor and yelled at Danny to kick me in the face. Danny didn’t understand what was going on and he started crying really hard. My dad was so drunk he just kept yelling at him to do it! “Kick him in the face”, “Kick your loser brother in the face”! But Danny didn’t want to and I was scared my dad would hurt Danny for not listening to him so I whispered to Danny that it was okay and that it was just a game and I wouldn’t be mad.

(beat)

So finally Danny kicked me. But he was so scared to hurt me that he barely touched me so my dad got even angrier and yelled “harder, HARDER”!!

(fully reliving the moment)

I didn’t know what my dad would do next so I got Danny to look me in the eyes and I gave him a look, a look like “go ahead, it’s okay” and he closed his eyes and kicked me as hard as he could! Then he ran to his bed screaming and sobbing. And my dad cheered like he had just made the winning field goal.
(JAKE puts the glasses back on and sits down/ few beats of silence)

JOSH
(horrified and not sure what to say)
Jesus Jake, I had no idea.

JAKE
(suddenly aware of what he has revealed/feeling uncomfortable)
Yeah well, whatever, right? The good news is he was so hung over this morning he didn’t say a word to me.

JOSH
(reaching for optimism)
Yeah...that’s good.

JAKE
(eerily composed)
Don’t you dare repeat a word of this, understand? If anyone asks I was wrestling with Danny and it was an accident.

JOSH
Yeah, of course. I understand.

JAKE
Have you seen Randy? I think it’s time him and I clear the air once and for all.

JOSH
(dazed and still shaken)
Yeah I saw him earlier. He’s around.

JAKE
Good. I’ve decided he and I are going to have little date after school today.

JOSH
Okay. I’ll go tell him.

JAKE
You know what? Just text me when you find him, I want to deliver the invitation myself.

JOSH
(frightened)
Okay. I will.

(JAKE exits/JOSH hangs back wondering what to do/STUDENTS begin entering as RANDY enters crossing with STEPHANIE and BROOKE/JOSH decides he should warn RANDY)

JOSH
Yo, Randy come here a minute.

RANDY
(looks at him like he’s crazy)
Yeah, right.

JOSH
Seriously, I need to talk to you.

RANDY
(noticing he sounds serious/approaches)
Okay, what is it?

JOSH
I’m supposed to text Jake when I found you but instead I think I should warn you.

RANDY
(suspicious)
Warn me about what?

JOSH
(looking spooked)
Jake is freaking me out a little. He had a bad fight with his dad last night and I think it’s pushed him over the edge. I’ve never seen him like this before.

RANDY
Screw you Josh! You think I’m going to fall for this?

(looks around)
Where is he? Is he hiding around here somewhere waiting for me to believe this crap so he can come out and blindside me? Is that your stupid plan?

JOSH
No, Randy you have to believe me! I know you have no reason to but I’m serious. You know me and Jake are buddies but today he really scared me with the way he was acting.

RANDY

How was he acting?

JOSH

Kinda psycho.

RANDY

Is that supposed to be funny? Are you trying to take another jab at me?

JOSH

(exasperated)

NO! I’m trying to tell you that something is wrong with Jake and he will be looking for you to tell you that he wants to fight you today after school! But I don’t think you should.

RANDY

Thanks for the advice but I can take care of myself. You tell your loser friend I accept his stupid invitation and that he better be prepared for some serious payback! Oh and be sure to let him know that THIS psycho is looking forward to it.

(RANDY exits/JOSH remains standing there dumbfounded/he exits as lights fade)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 20

SETTING: Hallway at school

AT RISE: STEPHANIE and ALISON are DSR looking at ALISON’s phone/they are both upset/CHRIS enters

CHRIS (approaches)
Hey guys!

(notices they look upset)

What’s wrong? Al, are you okay?

ALISON (trying to hide her emotions)
Yeah, I’m fine. It’s nothing.

CHRIS
Don’t tell me it’s nothing, I know you better than that.

TELL HIM.

CHRIS
Tell me what?

STEPHANIE
(to Alison)
If you don’t, I will.

CHRIS
Will somebody please tell me what is going on?

ALISON
Chris if I show you this you have to promise me you won’t completely freak out. Just remember it’s just a fake picture and it doesn’t mean anything.

CHRIS
Give me the phone, please. I don’t want to rip it out of your hands.

STEPHANIE

Give it to him.

(ALISON hands the phone over to CHRIS/CHRIS begins to seethe/His heart is broken)

CHRIS

(choking out the words)
What? What did he do? What is this?

ALISON

(attempting to calm him down)
It’s the workings of a sick mind, Chris. Please just delete it and forget about it.

CHRIS

How? How could he... How could he be so disgusting? That’s Cassie. And Randy?

STEPHANIE

He’s a monster Chris. A sick, demented monster. He photo shopped the whole thing as a cruel joke.

ALISON

Chris you have to let this go. He only posted that to get you upset and get a reaction. You have to be the bigger person here.

CHRIS

You know what, Al? I’m tired of being the “bigger” person. This completely crossed the line!

(realizing)

What if my parents see this?

ALISON

(desperate to get through to him)
Chris, look at me! Don’t. Don’t let him win. He wants to fight you. He wants to fight everybody. Just let him self destruct. Don’t involve yourself.

CHRIS
(eerily calm)
I’m already involved. When he involved Cassie, he involved me. Game on.

(CHRIS briskly exits/ALISON looks at STEPHANIE very concerned and they exit)

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 21

SETTING: Empty school hallway

AT RISE: Dim lights cover an empty stage with the backdrops visible. After approximately 15 seconds of silence, the sound of a gunshot is heard offstage.

(BLACKOUT)
Scene 22

SETTING: Outside of the school

AT RISE: JOSH and RANDY are standing on stage/their clothes are ripped and disheveled/RANDY has scratches and blood on his arms and face/each stand in their own light talking directly out as if to a police officer/blue & red lights are flashing to establish this is at the scene

JOSH (takes a deep breathe/terrified/confused)
I’m not sure what happened, officer. All I know is Jake wanted to fight Randy after school. Just a fist fight, no weapons or nothing and Randy was up for it so they agreed to meet. I went with Jake to back him up but he told me to stay out of it. He wanted Randy all to himself. At first it was just a bunch of yelling, you know, just name calling and stuff. Then a bunch of kids started gathering around and yelling “fight, fight, fight”! And I think that got Jake and Randy even more pumped up so they started pushing and shoving each other. Then Jake punched Randy pretty good but Randy got up and just tore into Jake and that’s when all of the sudden I look over and I see Chris standing there with a gun in his hand pointing it at them! It didn’t make any sense, you know, seeing him with a gun. At first I thought it was a fake but then he fired it in the sky, I guess to scare everyone and when he fired everyone screamed and ducked except Jake. He just stood there staring Chris down. And Chris had the gun pointed right at him. He was shaking and there were tears in his eyes but he looked determined. Like...

JOSH and RANDY (in unison)
he wasn’t going to leave without shooting Jake.
RANDY

You could see it in his eyes. I’ve never seen Chris look like that but Jake wouldn’t back down. Jake kept telling Chris to shoot. I kept telling Jake to shut up! And the more Jake spoke the more Chris was shaking and I thought the gun was going to just accidentally go off, you know from all the shaking. Then Jake started walking towards Chris and telling him to go ahead and take his best shot. He said he didn’t care if Chris killed him then Chris said “don’t make me do it, Jake” and then I heard Chris cock the gun and I knew something terrible was going to happen and I just reacted. It all happened in a flash. As soon as I tackled Chris the gun went off. I looked over and Jake wasn’t standing anymore and in that moment we all suddenly noticed what had just happened.

RANDY and JOSH

(in unison)

And everyone just started screaming.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 23

SETTING:
CHRIS in jail cell

AT RISE:
On the last line in prior scene lights come up on CHRIS who is sitting on the bed DSL with CASSIE next to him, this is the same bed as in the bedroom scenes but now all linens and pillows are missing from bed just like in SCENE 1/Chris should be in the same clothes as SCENE 1/CASSIE sits next to CHRIS/she does not dance in this scene

CASSIE
Why, Chris?

CHRIS
I couldn’t let him get away with degrading you like that. He went too far.

CASSIE
But you hate guns. You always told mom and dad to get rid of that gun.

CHRIS
I know. I just felt powerless and he had to be stopped.

CASSIE
Did you really go there to shoot him?

CHRIS
No. I don’t know. I know I wanted to terrify him.

CASSIE
Mission accomplished.

CHRIS
I didn’t mean to hurt anyone else. I didn’t even see her jump in front of him. Then the gun just went off.

CASSIE

She’s not dead, Chris.

CHRIS

(major relief)
Thank god.

(beat/reality sinking in)

Oh god, what have I done?

CASSIE

It’s going to be okay Chris. You’re going to be okay. Everything is going to be ok.

CHRIS

(for the first time in the entire play he turns and looks at her)

I wish you were here.

CASSIE

I am here.

CHRIS

I miss you so much Cassie. I miss you so much my heart hurts.

(CASSIE gets up, crosses in front of him to upstage of bed/CHRIS keeps looking at where she was sitting)

CASSIE

I’ll always be with you Chris……You can count on it.

(CASSIE exits/CHRIS puts head in hands/Sound effect of prison bars closing/TV comes back on to the final part of MISS WILLIAMS interview/CAST enters onto dark stage during interview/CHRIS remains frozen in final position with head in hands on the bed but in dim light)
The student who was convicted of the shooting, plead guilty and never gave a statement. He also refused an interview with us. Did you know this student and in retrospect were there any signs that may have been a red flag?

MISS WILLIAMS
Yes, I knew the student. And no, I definitely didn’t notice any signs. If I had I would have said something. He was an exceptional student and a good kid. All my students are good kids. We can’t always know what is going on in their lives and how they are dealing with it. I wish we could. But no matter how much you hear about tragedies like this occurring in our country and in the world you never expect that it could happen...

(Lights up to reveal MISS WILLIAMS DSC in a wheel chair and cast of students behind her)

MISS WILLIAMS
...in our own backyard.

(Cast freezes in final formation as CHRIS remains on bed/Sounds of media reports on school shootings overlap beginning at loud volume and fading to soft and eventually silent)

(LIGHTS FADE OUT)

(CURTAIN)

THE END
On set:
The set should NOT resemble a school in anyway. It is my intention as the writer to create a fairly blank canvas for each audience to fill with their own vision of a school. For the original production we had two chain link type fences about 8 feet in height and 10 feet in width that served as the backdrop. In the opener as the actors entered they would hang a picture on the fence. Then throughout the play, during certain crosses, they would continue to hang more. These pictures were drawn by young children who were told to draw an image of something they feared or a nightmare they could recall. By the end of the play both fences were covered in disturbing images. This created a powerful final picture.

On costumes:
All the costumes for scenes at the school should be black, white or gray with the exception of Cassie who is in a bright yellow leotard and tutu. Actors who are in the therapy scenes should be dressed in bright colors as should the teacher and principal in the video clips since these scenes are one year after the shooting.

On music:
The opener should have a gritty, urban sound with a strong downbeat. Something with a menacing tone. In the original production the song Psycho by Fifty Cent featuring Eminem was used. Licensing rights for use of this song for future productions is currently pending.

Songs used in the transitions into therapy scenes should be high energy and abrasive to add to the chaotic feel of the school. This helps to punctuate the actors as they enter the scene at a different pace working against the music and wearing contrasting clothing helping to clarify a change in time and place.

On video:
The actors playing the teacher and principal will have to agree to being videotaped for the video portions in the play. The reporter is always off camera so you only need an actor to vocally play the part. The interview should have a local news feel to it, not too polished. The principal is ONLY in the video clips. She or he should never make an appearance on stage.