

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

by

Anthony Jaswinski

May 3rd, 2008

*The finest day I ever had
Was when I learned to cry on command.*

Nirvana

FADE IN.

OVER TITLES/CREDITS

THE TOWN OF TOMS RIVER, NEW JERSEY

Pastel autumn colors. Starbucks on Main Street.
Suburban familiarity.

A BLACK CARGO VAN passes through town. Motors silently
down clean roads and freshly-painted stop signs. Under
fieldstone bridges. Turning calmly, cleanly at
neighborhood corners.

Something elusive, foreign about it.

The van makes its final pass. Turning down a rougher,
less polished neighborhood street.

PANNING UP TO A BRIGHT BLUE MORNING SKY

END CREDITS

SMASH TO:

COMPUTER GAME FILLING FRAME

Valve's Counterstrike. Huge online shooter.

Someone's working their PLAYER good. Taking down enemy
combatants, securing flags. Could be military.

No. It's a TEN YEAR-OLD GIRL. Working the keys from her
BEDROOM PC. A little scary how well she plays her
soldier. Happens every morning at 6 am.

COMPUTER SCREEN. Fills with rival commentary. Lots or
respect and props.

The girl, TARA, takes it in stride. From somewhere
downstairs, a mother's voice:

YVONNE (O.S.)
Tara. Get your brother up.

Tara plays a moment more. Detonates a grenade and takes out the whole team. Angry server feed scrolls down the page.

INT. BEDROOM HALL - NEXT MOMENT

Tara comes to the closed bedroom door of her older brother. There's no KEEP OUT sign, no tell-tale teen angst. It's just a door.

INT. SETH'S BEDROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Tara peeks her pigtails in. Morning sunlight struggles through dark curtains. Reflects on posters of Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, The Clash. Non-conformity is alive here but not obvious.

TARA
(a whisper)
Seth.

FAST HANDS grab her. She SCREAMS, hurtled into the air. Twirled around by her slightly twisted, all-loving brother, SETH DEACON (18).

Mop hair. Thin build, pushups and crunches. Wears it well.

SETH
Always check recon!

Tickles her, painful. She cries, giggles.

TARA
Put me down, put me down!

SETH
Mosh pit!

Throws Tara on the bed. Cranks up the Korn. Tara giggles, hits Seth with pillows. War breaks out.

TARA
You mosh like a girl!

SETH
You are a girl!

TARA
Kick your ass!

YVONNE (O.S.)

Hey!

YVONNE DEACON (30s) moves into the room. Hits the stereo off. Dressed in a casual RN's uniform.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

Watch that mouth, little lady.

TARA

I'm not little, I'm young, there's a difference.

YVONNE

You're gonna be red in the rear if you don't finish those Eggos.

Tara reluctantly climbs off Seth's bed.

TARA

To be continued.

Tara moves out the door. Yvonne just looks at Seth. Motherly anxiety.

YVONNE

You should have been up ten minutes ago.

SETH

More like twenty.

YVONNE

Keep cracking wise and see if you get a ride to school.

Seth sighs, starts through the room.

SETH

Wouldn't be an issue if I had the bike.

YVONNE

It wasn't a bike, it was a motorcycle. I didn't raise my only son to be a stain on the highway.

SETH

Dad didn't have a problem with it.

YVONNE

Your father doesn't work ER, I do. Drop by, I'll show you some lovely X-rays.

Seth grabs a tee shirt, goes to leave.

SETH

When I turn 18, I'm buying one.

Yvonne follows.

YVONNE

Seth.

Stops him.

Yvonne approaches. An open, somewhat fragile stare.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

Whole new school. Blackboard's clean.
Be good?

Seth regards her. Mixture of hope, frustration. Like every teenager, still trying to find his way.

SETH

I gotta get ready.

He heads off. Grabs a pair of jeans as he does.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

TV on the counter. CNN American Morning. Video of SENATOR PAUL BALANTINE. Addresses a state council. The perineal new broom.

CANDY CROWLEY

Senator and Presidential hopeful Paul Balantine is back in New Jersey this week to promote his singular message of change. That message is most assuredly not wasted on the young men and women he'll be addressing on the first day of classes at Deerbrook High School in Tom's River-

Yvonne lowers the volume as Seth moves down the stairs, now dressed in the standard uniform: Vans, jeans, autumn zip-up with the Clash tee shirt.

YVONNE

I have to take the Honda into Sears for tires, then I'm dropping Tara off for flute. You'll have to take the bus back.

SETH

Bus sucks, Mom.

TARA
Sucks more than walking?

Seth steals an Eggo from Tara.

TARA (CONT'D)
Mom, Seth's stealing my breakfast!

YVONNE
As long as that's all he's stealing.

SETH
Ha ha.

Seth faces the TV. Balantine's now talking about education reform.

YVONNE
Exciting stuff. Possible future president on your first day of school. Make sure you shake his hand for good luck.

SETH
That's a priest's hand, not a politician's.

YVONNE
At this point, either would suffice.

Seth steals away Tara's milk.

TARA
MOM!!!

EXT. APARTMENT TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Tarnished rentals in a working class neighborhood. Cheesy Swiss chalet facade.

Yvonne hurries out the door with Seth and Tara. Both have backpacks, dressed for school. Heading to Yvonne's used Honda Civic.

Tara climbs into the car, a ball of fire compared to Seth's loping wolf. He suddenly stops. Sees it on the curb:

That BLACK VAN. Silent and tinted. Some scribbling about satellite instillation.

YVONNE
 (fumbling keys)
 Seth, did you call your father and tell
 him about Sunday?

Seth absorbs it a moment more.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
Seth.
 (off Seth's attention)
 Did you call your father -- ?

SETH
 Yeah. Left a message.

YVONNE
 So is he picking you guys up for the game
 or what?

Seth just shrugs, starts into the car.

SETH
 Guess he had better things to do.

Yvonne glances at her two children. Hurt but used to it.

She gets behind the wheel. Slams the door.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Main hub of Toms River. Yvonne's Honda cruises into an
 escalating gridlock.

INT. HONDA

YVONNE
 Four blocks from your school and we run
 into this crap. Make sure you ask the
 senator when they're going to do
 something about this intersection.

Seth in the back. Spots the MOTORCYCLE DEALERSHIP just
 beyond the school's grounds. Some rich jackass revs up a
 955cc. It's torture for Seth.

More car honks.

SETH
 Mom, just use the emergency lane for
 chrissakes.

YVONNE

That's breaking the law. We don't do that in this family.

TARA

Dad does.

YVONNE

So that makes it right?

SETH

It makes it fast.

Yvonne regards this. Tension building.

YVONNE

Yeah, Mr. Slick. Zipping around with his used Jag and dopey redhead, but can't take his kids to a cruddy ballgame once and awhile.

(slams the horn)

C'mon, honey, the light's green!

Seth regards his mother's frustration. Leans up. Puts a hand on her shoulder.

SETH

It's all right, Mom. Just let it merge.

Yvonne. Takes Seth's hand. Looks in the rearview. A little grin.

CUT TO:

ESTABLISHING SHOT - DEERBROOK PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Big and utilitarian. Every American high school. Yvonne's HONDA cruises through the entrance.

INT. HONDA - SAME

Seth watches every face, every clique and its obvious distinctions. Many things in this world change. High school doesn't.

A row of NEWS VANS with reporters doing the satellite feed.

YVONNE

Look at all those cameras. It's like the Oscars.

TARA

The Oscars are for dorks.

Seth notices a pack of kids sitting around a Mustang convertible. Among them, a pretty face in varsity jacket. RORI GANT. We'll see her again.

YVONNE

Seth, it looks like a traffic jam, I'm gonna just let you up here, okay?

SETH

Sure, Mom. Parent pick-up is always a cool place.

EXT. PICK-UP/DROP-OFF - NEXT MOMENT

Yvonne's Honda circles the round. Stops just enough for Seth to climb out, backpack and pride still in tact.

SECURITY's already directing Yvonne out of the round.

YVONNE

I put some Ho-Hos in your backpack when you weren't looking. You have your lunch money so don't spend it on junk.

Skaterats overhearing Mom's chiding. Loving it. Seth's in hell.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

Be nice to your teachers. First impression is always the most-

SETH

Mom, please. Just go.

YVONNE

(mouths it, silently)

I love you.

Tara motions her brother up to the front window. When he gets close, she plants a kiss on his cheek.

Awwwss from the skaterats hanging at the benches. Tara giggles, waves bye as Yvonne zips off.

Seth shoots a wayward glance at the punks.

KID

Yo, dude, can I have them Ho-Hos?

Punks crack up. Seth just splits.

PANNING AWAY...

To a GIRL (17). Sitting alone, away from the press spectacle. Suburban indie. Dark mascara but let's not brand her Goth. Follows no clique or order but her own. For the record, CHLOE. Watches Seth head in.

As the MORNING BELL RINGS.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

WALL CLOCK READS 8 A.M.

Seth making his way through the horde.

Glee club's putting up huge welcome banners for Senator Balentine's visit. Seth has to navigate through the paper mache and confetti. Like walking a mine field.

NEW ANGLE

With his schedule as a map, he finds his new locker: 412.

CUTE GIRL with her FRIEND at a neighboring locker. Both wear Go Balantine buttons. Can't stop talking about her flash interview with local news. Opens her locker:

ON A DEAD AND BLOODY RAT!

SCREAMS as the rat falls to the ground. It's just a rubber fake.

WHIP PAN TO:

SOPHOMORE DIRK. Class prankster idiot. Cracking up with his nerd BUDDY.

GIRL

Dirk, you asshole!

DIRK

Ratagooney!

Girl slams shut her locker, heads off.

FRIEND

How'd he even get it in your locker?

GIRL

Loser.

They power by Seth, nearly knocking him over. He stands there like a stranger in a strange land.

LANE (O.S.)

Cursed.

Seth hears the voice. Turns into:

DWEEBISH LITTLE GUY (LANE) at 414. Mousy frame, soccer-rocker hair. Slaps Bubbleicious. Sees Seth having a hard time with the combination.

LANE (CONT'D)

That locker. 412. Cursed, bro. Ask me why sometime.

The guy slips off.

BIG FIST suddenly punches Seth's locker. Opens on cue.

Varsity star WALT TREVERS. One of the rich kids from the Mustang. Smirks at Seth, keeps moving with his chuckling gang of Lacrosse dipshits.

Seth stares them down a moment more. A guy trying to control his anger. Throws his bag in the locker. Slams it closed.

INT. FIRST PERIOD ENGLISH - MOMENTS LATER

Final bell. Kids sitting on desks, busting balls, telling jokes.

Seth comes through the door, schedule in hand. Quietly makes his way to a back row. Rori's here. Sitting close by Trevers. Can't help but give him a once-over.

MS. HEALY (O.S.)

Okay, okay, take your seats. Assume the position all you newly minted seniors.

MS. HEALY. English 4. Elitist hairbun. Heads up to her desk. Swats away sneakers.

MS. HEALY (CONT'D)

First day of the school year and you're treating my class like the East Village. What would the senator think?

DUDE

He don't, that's why he's a senator!

Everyone laughs. Healy goes to the blackboard.

MS. HEALY

Very clever, Thomas, wonderful use of the double negative. Very happy to be teaching you for another long year.

DUDE 2

Ms. Healy, when's our first field trip?

MS. HEALY

Next week, you're walking off the edge of a cliff.

(more laughs)

Speaking of cliffs, we all hopefully dedicated our summer reading to one special cliff. Miss Rori?

RORI

(autoshow delivery)

Heath-cliff.

MS. HEALY

Goldstar for the cheerleader. Heathcliff and Catherine. Such lonely, yearning souls. Such damaged young folk that I'm almost certain many of you can-

OFFICE AID comes in, hands her a pink slip. Heads out.

MS. HEALY (CONT'D)

(reviews slip)

Seth Deacon?

Seth, in the spotlight. Slowly raises a hand.

Rori gives a cute little grin. Trevers doesn't.

MS. HEALY (CONT'D)

I am to forward you greetings and salutations from our illustrious new student counselor, Ms. Fenn.

SOME KID

Dude, she's hot.

MS. HEALY

She's very pleasant and wants you in her office, ASAP.

ANOTHER

Yeah, baby.

More chuckles. Trevers watches Seth climb out of his seat. Says something to his jock buddy, COLLIN. Sears Tower with a bad haircut.

Seth takes the hall pass from Healy.

MS. HEALY

Right at the hall. Fourth door down.

TREVERS

Got all that, newbie?

Seth regards Trevers. Nods.

SETH

Yeah, I got it.

Seth finally heads out. Trevers smirks.

TREVERS

(coughs)

Douche bag.

Kids crack-up.

INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - DAY

Seth comes through the frosted-glass door. Busy typing and gossip fill the air of the administration wing.

PRINCIPAL's being interviewed by CNN regarding the senator's visit. Nerd from the Yearbook Club is taking photos.

Seth regards the cameras. Goes to a receptionist.

SETH

I'm supposed to see Ms. Fenn?

INT. FENN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Knock at the door. Receptionist comes through. Addresses an unseen administrator:

RECEPTIONIST

Seth Deacon.

HAND waves him in.

Seth lopes into the room, throwing bangs from his face. Receptionist shuts the door.

VOICE (O.S.)

Come over here and take a seat, Seth.

MS. GAIL FENN (30s) wears wired specs, but it doesn't diminish the striking beauty. Gybox body showing through her Calvin Klein blouse and skirt.

Moves around the desk with an air of sophistication. Shakes Seth's hand.

FENN

I'm Ms. Fenn. Call me Gail or Ms. Fenn. Either one works.

Seth can't help get a quick look at the long leg peeking out from her skirt slit. Quietly takes his seat before her desk.

Fenn motions to the activity outside her door.

FENN (CONT'D)

Pretty exciting first day, huh.

Seth barely nods, says nothing back.

Fenn tries to get a read. Hunched shoulders. Guarded face tucked under dark bangs.

FENN (CONT'D)

We have something in common. We're both new to Deerbrook.

Seth looks over her desk. Spots a small photo of a feline.

FENN (CONT'D)

My kitty, Laslow. He likes to watch Jeopardy. Don't ask.

Seth. Doesn't.

Fenn goes to her PC.

FENN (CONT'D)

All right, guess it's time for the serious stuff.
(looks down a computer page)
You were at Edison last year.

Seth barely nods. Doesn't look right at her, doesn't look away.

FENN (CONT'D)

Natives aren't too friendly. You like getting into homeroom fights?

Seth clears his throat, leans back.

SETH

No, not particularly.

FENN

You were asked to leave.

SETH

I didn't start the fight. Whatever your little file might read, I didn't start it.

FENN

I don't have a little file. I have a very big one. Some would use the word impressive.

Shuts Seth up. Fenn taps a key on her computer. Looks down the list.

FENN (CONT'D)

Larceny-solicitation in Phillips. Busted shoplifting jeans at Rehoba Mall. Marijuana possession on school grounds, that's a tough one.

SETH

It wasn't my joint.

FENN

It never is.

Seth makes eyes with the carpet. Keeps his anger in check. Fenn sees every inch of it in his face.

FENN (CONT'D)

Look. I'm not here to bring up your past, Seth. I'm here to help guide your future.

Seth feels it out, nods.

SETH

Guide my future. I like that.

FENN

Whether you like it or not, that's my job.

(MORE)

FENN(CONT'D)

The fact is, this is your third school in the last two years.

(leans forward, hard)

You have a tested 142 IQ. That tells me you have the ability to be extraordinary. But coupled with your troubled behavior, it can be a nasty cocktail if not properly honed. And it puts us at an awkward dilemma.

Seth buys a moment. Takes a deep, resigned breath.

SETH

Look. Ms. Fenn. Gail. I just want to get along with my senior year. I'm not looking for anymore trouble.

Fenn nods, encouraged.

FENN

I'm very glad to hear you say that. You show the will to turn the leaf, it makes my job a little easier.

Seth raises an eye.

SETH

Well, that's what I'm here for. To make your job easier.

Beat. Fenn quietly takes off her glasses. Reveals sharp, bright eyes that can cut through steel.

FENN

Seth. I pride myself on having a pretty good sense of humor. But I swear to God, if you don't cut the negative attitude, I might just have to put your head through the fucking wall.

The harsh, expletive-laced tone startles us all. Fenn's mall-spa face, now showing tinges of darkness. Trained intensity.

SETH

Excuse me?

FENN

You heard what I said.

Seth sits there, stunned, unsure. Fenn looks closely at him.

FENN (CONT'D)

It's funny. You don't look much like her. Tara's more... gingerly.

Seth weighs this. Eyes sharpen.

SETH

Tara. You're talking about my sister?

FENN

I'm talking about your sister.

Seth shows some quiet impact. Anger, confusion begin to dye his face.

SETH

Why?

Fenn takes a small moment. Pulls out a sleek iPhone. Elite grade. Shows Seth the image on the phone:

LIVE VIDEO FEED OF HIS SISTER TARA SKIPPING HOP-SCOTCH

Another of her in third-grade class, working long division. Laughing with students. Playing on swings.

All taken from sinister telephoto POVs.

HARD ON SETH

Can't describe his face. All color suddenly, dramatically drained. Fenn stares him down.

FENN

Listen to me very carefully, because I'll only say it once: I have a partner. Call him Clark. Since the morning she began classes last week, Clark has been watching over your little sister. Every day at 1:30, she spends her recess in the school play ground. Now if you cooperate with us, carry out my orders and execute your mission, I promise you this will all be over by the afternoon. Tara comes home like she always does, milk money and all. But if you decide to challenge us and fail your tasks... she never makes it off the monkeybars.

Seth absorbs this, eyes go long. Fenn shakes her head, almost solemnly.

FENN (CONT'D)

Imagine the look on Yvonne's face when they wheel her little girl into ER. Tragically, mothers have been known to experience heart attacks upon seeing their children dead before them.

Seth, on the verge of exploding. Fenn sees it.

FENN (CONT'D)

Okay. Deep breaths.

Seth stumbles up, overwhelmed. Knocks over his chair.

SETH

What the fuck is going on?!

Motion in the reception area, alerted to Seth's voice.

Fenn snaps up the iPhone.

Seth regards her shinny red fingernail over that pound symbol. Frozen in it.

FENN

You're making this happen. Not me.

(off his silence, confusion)

Tara needs you to be in control. Are you in control?

Seth realizes the stakes. Finds himself nodding.

SETH

Yeah.

She holds up the cell phone.

FENN

I don't believe you. Are you in control?

Beat.

SETH

Yes. I'm in control.

FENN

Then take your seat. Concentrate on my eyes.

Seth struggles against his own bodily instincts. Manages to find Fenn's icy-blues.

FENN (CONT'D)

You're here for a reason, Seth. You were diligently screened, unanimously selected because of your record as a troublemaker and propensity to violence. Nothing earth-shaking. A fight or two, some mailboxes busted. But enough to make the profile stick. You see, teen rage coupled with anonymity equals the rogue assassin.

SETH

(breathless)

Assassin.

Seth, sweating. Can't comprehend.

Fenn rises. Heads over to a water cooler. Pours a cup for Seth.

FENN

There's a lot to break down, and we don't have much time. But I want you intact and alert, so I'm going to send you back to class and let you mull over the sobriety of our situation. We'll talk very soon again. You can be sure of that.

Offers Seth the cup of water. He's not sure what to do.

FENN (CONT'D)

Go ahead, take a sip. It helps.

Seth, trembling. Finally takes the water.

Fenn looks down at him. Chilling in her composure.

FENN (CONT'D)

Your silence is a positive signal that you're willing to carry out our dilemma. Although I should clarify an obvious point: we're watching you, Seth.

(sits on the desk corner)

Operative cells like me have been planted all around this institution. Their positions, while temporary, are as real as mine. You'll never know who or how many, but they are watching. You make one crucial lapse in judgement and they'll spring from their sleep. And Tara will have to take hers.

On that cue, door opens. Clueless receptionist peeks through.

RECEPTIONIST

Gail, your 8:40's here.

FENN

Thanks, Franny. You can leave the door open.

Fenn takes the paper cup from Seth. Squashes it in hand.

FENN (CONT'D)

(back in character)

I hope this discussion was beneficial, Seth. I look forward to our working together to make your senior year at Deerbrook a productive and fulfilling one.

Puts her hand out. Seth, face frozen. Finds himself rising up. Shaking her hand. Fenn's razor fingernails bury into his skin.

Seth pulls his hand free. Heads off in a daze through the door.

SOPHOMORE GIRL moves into Fenn's office. "Welcome Senator Balantine" tie-dye.

FENN (CONT'D)

Love. The shirt!

Sophomore smiles, big pigtails.

EXT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Seth walking back to class. Sweating. Eyes like he's seen the reckoning.

JANITOR moping the floor. As Seth passes by:

JANITOR

Watch your step.

Seth does. Will.

Off the ring of a bell...

INT. NEW HALLWAY - NEXT MOMENT

Students hauling off to make the final bell.

Seth. Worlds of worry in his face. Sees a pair of doors leading to the outside campus. Debates the chances.

RORI (O.S.)

Hey.

Seth snaps...to Rori. Approaching him despite the disapproval of her friends.

RORI (CONT'D)

Thought you might need these.

She hands Seth some assignments. Gives a little smile.

RORI (CONT'D)

Study pages, care of Ms. Emily Bronte.

Seth, still rattled. Finds himself nodding.

SETH

Thanks.

Warning bell rings. Girlfriends motion for Rori to come along. Walt Trevers is now back from the water fountain. Looking at Seth with dagger eyes.

Rori leans a little close. Gives Seth a quick whisper:

RORI

You have nice eyes.

She steals off, rejoining Trevers. The big jock gives Seth the death stare.

All Seth needs. Fuck this. He heads out the exit doors.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELDS - NEXT MOMENT

Seth walking double-time.

MARCHING BAND practicing their school assembly number. Teacher's not impressed. *Sync's all wrong, guys! You looking to make the senator squirm?!*

Seth keeps going, uses the linebacker blockers for cover. Sees it past the bleachers: half-broken fence.

One hop and he's out. 7-8 minutes to his sister's elementary school if he can catch the bus?

NEXT MOMENT

Seth makes a duck under the bleachers. Twenty feet and he's there. Suddenly stops. Sees her sitting alone on top the bleachers: That loner girl, Chloe.

Trades an indifferent look with Seth. She won't rat if he won't.

Seth pays her a final glance. Starts out.

GOLF CART PEELS TO A STOP!

Scares us all. Seth backs-up, almost blinded by the hot sun reflecting off the sunglasses of ASSISTANT DEAN GREYS. Ditka moustache. Ridiculously pumped arms.

Stops him cold.

GREYS

Going somewhere, fella?

Seth struggles to answer. Can't find words.

GREYS (CONT'D)

Yes, no?

SETH

Just. Thought I dropped my keys back here.

GREYS

Get in the cart.

SETH

Just on my way back to class-

GREYS

I said in the cart!

NEXT MOMENT

Seth sitting in the silly golf cart with Greys driving away. Seth shoots a glance at the top of the bleachers.

Chloe's long gone.

INT. CART - MOVING

Greys drives it like a Hummer.

GREYS

I don't know your face. You new?

Seth barely nods. Greys shakes his head.

GREYS (CONT'D)

Helluva start.

INT. HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Greys has a hand on Seth's arm. Moves him along the endless linoleum.

INT. CLASSROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Door opens. Greys heads in with Seth. Interrupts DOC BARD's algae lecture.

GREYS

Seth Deacon. One of Deerbrook's new fish, Doc Bard.

(quiet, to Seth)

First catch I throw back. Every other I hook. Capiche?

Seth nods. Greys pushes him into the wind. Eyes watch as Seth finds a seat in the middle aisle. Right next to Lane the mouse.

Bard motions to the text book.

BARD

Page 114. I and microscopic algae welcome you to the discussion.

Bard gets back into it. Lane keeps mum until Greys heads out. Then:

LANE

(whisper)

Heard you're on Walt Trevers' shit list. Told you that locker's cursed.

Seth regards this as Lane goes back to his notes. Nerdy little smirk.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

SCIENCE FILM projected on the blackboard. Wonderful World of Micro Algae. 95% of the class dozing.

ONLY SETH

Completely immersed, chilled by the otherwise mundane footage.

Algae micro war. Breaking apart a defenseless piece of seaweed. Violent and cruel.

SCREAM OF A GYM WHISTLE

SMASH TO:

BIG RED BALLS FLYING

Slamming into bodies. Firing against walls.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Full scale bombardment war. Kids getting pegged. Faces red from adrenaline and rubber.

Some jock goons from Trevers' clique. Throwing their weight around. Smashing the opposing team to pieces. The front line's quickly deteriorating. They're working their way to:

SETH

Keeping hidden in the rear. Ducks a ball, nearly slams into his face. P.E. TEACHER sees him cowering.

P.E. TEACHER

GET THAT BALL, GOMER!

Seth. One of the last left. Has no choice. Stumbles, picks it up. One of the goons tries to nail him. Seth deflects with his ball.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Good block, good block!

Captain yells at Seth to throw it.

Seth chumps the ball across the line. Pathetic miss. Teammates react.

Balls in enemy court. The jock goon has a nasty plan. Motions for his guys to gather three at once. Setting up an ugly sting combo.

GOON

One, two, KILL!

Launch an all-out assault. Balls smash into Seth's remaining two teammates. Third ball skins Seth's head.

Jock goons love it. High fives.

Goon 3 is in the kill zone. Sees only Seth's instant and caustic destruction.

As the balls bounce back to Team Asshole.

An eerie, dark chant of *Kill* begins to overtake the gym.

Seth, backed against a wall of bleachers. A man before the firing squad.

AT AN OPEN GYM DOOR

Gail Fenn has quietly entered. Studies the battle from afar.

BACK ON: THE THREE JOCK GOONS

Goon 1 points to Seth. Makes a slit motion with his throat. Another makes a gun hand.

HARD ON SETH

Something changing in his face. Mixture of anxiety and rage. With all the pressure building up, can no longer control.

GOON (CONT'D)

KILL HIM!

Goons fire their bombardment balls. Seth dodges the FIRST. Catches the SECOND, uses it to deflect the THIRD.

ON FENN

Watches. Impressed.

THE SIDELINES

Big cheers. But Seth's tuned out. Rams forward, SCREAMING. Fires a missile into Goon 1's face. Sends him hard to the ground.

Place goes crazy. Seth FIRES again before his buddy can get a ball. Slams Goon 2 in the back of the head. Dude crashes down on top his pal.

Goon 3 backs away, caught off guard by Seth's comeback. Picks up a ball. Throws it hard at Seth.

Seth catches. Whistle fires off.

P.E. TEACHER
Blue Wins! That's game!

Seth doesn't stop. Fires the ball at the punk. Smashes him in the mouth.

Sidelines react.

P.E. TEACHER

Blows his whistle again. Freaking out.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)
I SAID THAT'S GAME!

Seth scoops up another ball. Crosses the battle line. Smashes it down on Goon 3 as he tries getting up.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)
HEY, HEY!

Kids go wild as Seth continues to slaughter.

FENN

Seen enough. Heads out.

SETH

One more vicious head-sting before two dudes have to finally grab hold of him. Drag him away.

ON THE JOCK GOONS

Crushed on the gym floor.

INT. GREYS OFFICE - DAY

Seth sits before the desk of Assistant Dean Greys. The man's a boot ready to crush an ant.

His mouth moves but all Seth hears are the loud ticks of the CLOCK. 10:50

Greys leans forward. Crisp and direct:

GREYS
I asked you a question.

Seth faces him. The ticks are gone.

GREYS (CONT'D)

You come to my school to try me?

Seth swallows a breath.

SETH

No, sir.

Greys regards him. Abruptly snatches up his pad of detention slips. Starts to write one out.

GREYS

You wanna play psycho warfare, you do it on your own time, not on Mr. Lanker's bombardment field. You understand me?

Greys scribbles on the detention pad. Tears one out.

GREYS (CONT'D)

One month's detention. Starting this afternoon.

Seth absorbs this. Reluctantly extends his hand to collect the detention slip. Greys locks down on his grip. As though provoking a reaction.

GREYS (CONT'D)

Don't F with me.

Seth shows nothing. Greys. Finally releases his grip.

GREYS (CONT'D)

Out'a my sight.

Seth. Snaps up his backpack. Heads out fast.

INT. DEAN'S HALL

Seth busts out the door. Spots her sitting before an aide's desk: Chloe. Like Seth, in trouble for something.

They share a small moment.

Chloe motions for a doobie. Mouth the words: *got weed?*

Seth. Doesn't answer. Heads out the office.

RING OF A CLASS BELL...

INT. HALL - DAY

Kids rushing all over the place.

Seth mopes down the hall, approaching his locker. A POST-IT NOTE on the door. Written in officiatory typeset:

RM. 301

INT. MINI AUDITORIUM - DAY

Seth comes through door 301. It's a small auditorium where the DEBATE CLUB is prepping questions for the senator's visit.

A quick lip whistle snaps him around. The dark, sinewy form of Ms. Fenn stands at the LIGHTING/AUDIO BOOTH. Motions him to follow.

INT. LIGHTING BOOTH

Seth cautiously moves in. First thing he sees are those long legs politely folded over one another. An air of confidence and threat. Fenn has the thing down to a tee.

FENN

Pull up a seat. It's okay, we're soundproof.

Seth regards this. Quietly shuts the door. Sits down beside Fenn. For a moment, both are silent. Staring through the glass at the stage where the debate club goes through practice runs.

FENN (CONT'D)

I saw your little dodge ball meltdown in the gym. It confirms what I knew all along: you and trouble go hand in hand.

She takes one of his bangs. Gently wipes it to the side, exposing his tense eyes.

FENN (CONT'D)

You have a nice face. It's a shame really. The glimmer of possibility forever suffocating under scowl.

Long beat. Seth buys a breath. Faces her.

SETH

What do you want from me?

Fenn eases back. Motions to the debate club.

FENN

Take a good look. A.P. Status. The eschelon of the high school food chain. Sure, the cheerleaders are perky and the jocks get laid, but their futures are based upon the degree of their talent. Most are drowning in mediocrity, condemned to a life of C-list trophy wives and beer-swigging Best-Buy salesmen. The smart kids, Seth. That's where the money bets are. Speaking of.

Fenn holds out a TRANSCRIPT COPY. Seth's own name next to a 3.9 GPA. A list of solid As and Bs.

Seth goes cold at the revelation.

FENN (CONT'D)

It's legit. County certified. Processed through the superintendent's mainframe. Your life on the D list is over. At least for today. In the eyes of the New Jersey Board of Education, you're one of the elite. Advanced Placement.

Seth stares down his own doctored grades.

SETH

I... I don't understand.

FENN

You don't need to understand, Seth. You need only listen. Remember?

Fenn flicks out her cell phone. Shows Seth new video. SENATOR PAUL BALANTINE giving commencement speech to last year's graduating class of Rutgers.

FENN (CONT'D)

In case you've been living on Pluto, this is Senator Paul Balantine of New Jersey.

Seth stares at the image. Balantine shaking hands with the students, always ready for the photo-op.

FENN (CONT'D)

As you know by now, the illustrious senator will be making a P.R.

(MORE)

FENN(CONT'D)

stopover at Deerbrook High to sell his Future-Is-Hope bullshit. The assembly will commence in the gymnasium at 2 pm. Naturally, the students with the best overall GPAs will have the privilege of sitting on the stage. You'll be sitting there with them. And when the lights dim and the senator takes the podium, it will most assuredly be you who blows his head clean off his neck.

Seth absorbs this. Mind freeze.

SETH

You want me to kill a senator.

FENN

We want you to blow. His head off.

Seth fathoms. Shakes his head no.

SETH

I can't. I can't kill someone!

FENN

I disagree, it's what you do best. At least online. One crafty sniper taking on a militia of Counterstrike insurgents.

Seth goes cold. She knows that.

FENN (CONT'D)

You even taught Tara. That will play especially well with the authorities into determining the root of your motives.

SETH

That's not real.

FENN

Says who? You think violence is bound to a PC? The only thing stopping half those idiots from firing off the real thing are the consequences.

SETH

There's right and wrong.

FENN

This coming from a pent-up trouble case who's been suspended more times than a bridge.

(beat, off his distress)

(MORE)

FENN(CONT'D)

Look, you and I can debate moralistic imperatives all day. But we both know there's more pressing influences.

Fenn clicks her video phone to the live feed of little Tara. Now coloring with fellow kids.

FENN (CONT'D)

You may not be Stephen Hawking, but I refuse to believe you don't understand one simple equation: if Paul Balantine doesn't die... Tara does.

Fenn takes the transcript back from Seth.

FENN (CONT'D)

At 1:45, fifteen minutes before the assembly, you will go to your locker. There will be a Lorcin L-380 semi automatic planted, four bullets in its chamber. The gun's shell is plastic rubber casing, metal-detector-proof. All you have to do is take the stage and wait for the senator's handshake. When it comes, you pull the trigger. If you deviate from any of these steps, Tara dies. If you get caught, Tara dies. If a bolt of lightning should strike through the ceiling and prevent you from fulfilling your mission, Tara dies. Is there any part of Tara-Dies I need clarify?

Seth says nothing. Pale, but listening.

FENN (CONT'D)

Now if all goes according to plan, I and only I will make a 2:10 phone call to our friend, Clark. I tell him to cancel his acquirement and you'll have saved the life of your sister. It's your job to make sure I make that phone call, Seth.

Seth shakes his head. Blown away. Fathoms it.

SETH

It won't work. Somewhere down the line, they'll find out I'm not real AP.

FENN

Only after they discover a hacker link tied directly into your DSL modem. Hence our lovely installation van this morning.

(MORE)

FENN(CONT'D)

As far as today, you have nothing to worry about.

Seth absorbs this. Too horrible to rationalize.

SETH

(breathless)

Who the fuck are you people?

FENN

I don't have the time and you don't have the stomach. Let's just say we're the only people you need to impress.

Seth looks at her.

Fenn's tone suddenly takes on more of a mentor's.

FENN (CONT'D)

Like it or not, Seth, by the end of the day, you'll have killed someone. And by doing so, you'll have truly accomplished something. 20 million hits on You-Tube will be yours.

Seth. Cold-shocked. Stares into the hot light of the debate stage. Fenn watches him watch the students.

FENN (CONT'D)

Don't be jealous. What they have in brains, they lack in guts. I look into your face and I know you have special qualities. Qualities that tell me you'll go the impossible mile for the people you care for. Sacrifice. It's what makes us who we are. Take comfort in the fact you were never much to begin with.

SETH

Fucking bitch.

Fenn chops Seth's throat, Brazilian JuJitsu. He crashes to the ground. Chokes back, wind knocked out of his sails.

Fenn rises up, fixes her smart blazer in the glass reflection.

FENN

Remember: 1:45 pm. Should you have any questions, my door is always open. Enjoy your lunch.

She slips away. Seth coughs, breathes again.

Looks up. Fenn is long gone.

A DEBATE JUNIOR stares at Seth from the open doorway. A little confused.

DEBATE JUNIOR

Are you okay?

Seth feels his throat. Sits up on the floor. Barely nods. Junior gestures to the stage.

DEBATE JUNIOR (CONT'D)

Mr. Adams needs more light on the podiums.

Seth. Gets up, moves past the Junior.

DEBATE JUNIOR (CONT'D)

(watching him leave)

Hey, are you coming back?

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Crowded with First Period lunch.

Seth moves down the utilitarian lunch line. Snags a milk and cold sandwich. LUNCH LADY gives him dagger eyes as he passes. Another operative? Or just a bitter lunch lady?

NEXT MOMENT

Seth sits down at a corner table. Looks more like the loner than ever. Four tables ahead, Walt Trevers sits with Rori and his squad of jocks. Some still showing red faces from the dodge ball slaughter.

Their visibility is suddenly dwarfed by the arrival of CHLOE. Plops down in front of Seth. Big, mascara-blotched eyes.

A moment of silence, tension between them.

CHLOE

Be aware... I totally know what you're up to.

Seth reacts. Not sure what to say or do. Keeps quiet, tense.

Chloe looks around, back on Seth.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

If you think you can ditch this prison by just hoping a fence, think again.

Beat. Blood returns back to Seth's face.

SETH

Yeah. I found that out.

CHLOE

Greys, that steroid-sucking asshole with the golf cart? He'll follow you off school campus. He gets his rocks off busting kids.

Seth shrugs, peels the plastic from his sandwich.

SETH

It was a stupid thing, I shouldn't have tried it.

CHLOE

I'm just saying. There's better exits at our disposal.

Seth doesn't feel like getting into it. Chloe leans in.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

If you should care, I'm Chloe. And no, my mascara wasn't seared on with a blowtorch.

Seth pays her a small glance. Goes back to his sandwich.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I've seen you before. Rehoba Mall this summer? Nice catch and snatch on those Lucky Jeans.

SETH

I don't steal anymore.

CHLOE

Sure. And Paris is a Mensa member.

Seth looks at her.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Hey. There's nothing wrong with the clepto-culture. I myself have a sorted, albeit spirited history in the field of loss prevention.

(MORE)

CHLOE (CONT'D)

So we steal shit that other assholes sell to suckers at an inflated rate. Sticking it to the man. It's the New Jersey way.

Chloe pulls out a small PEN/RECORDER. Hits PLAY.

CHLOE'S VOICE

Sticking it to the man. It's the New Jersey way.

Chloe grins.

CHLOE

Brilliant, huh? Snagged it from a certain dean's assistant with a Sharper-Image fetish. Not sure if he even knows he lost it-

SETH

Just stop, all right?

Chloe does. Look at him. Seth sighs, frustrated.

SETH (CONT'D)

I get it. You can steal shit. Now leave me alone.

Chloe regards the abrupt tone.

Seth looks away. Sees that one Lunch Lady staring back. Line cooks and dishwashers. The faces of ex-cons who may or may not be on the payroll.

He turns back to Chloe.

SETH (CONT'D)

I just want to be left alone-

She's already gone.

EXT. CAFETERIA - NEXT MOMENT

Seth comes out the doors, into the hallway. Looks for any trace of her. Sound of a mop sweeping back and forth.

LONG SHOT

The Janitor. Dark in silhouette. Stops his mopping. Stares down the hall at Seth.

An eerie, grim feeling consumes Seth. He starts back to the cafeteria.

TURNING A CORNER

Suddenly spots the open door of the LIBRARY. Books and internet. An idea suddenly forms.

INT. LIBRARY - NEXT MOMENT

Seth moves through the aisles of books, coming to a COMPUTER STATION. Sits down in the wooden cubicle.

Begins double-clicking Windows. Gets an IM out to the authorities. The computer screen:

OPERATOR: *What is your emergency.*

Seth types it quickly: NEED POLICE!

OPERATOR: *Situation?*

Seth types harder, angrier:

POLICE! DEARBROOK HI, PSYKOS TO KILL SENATOR, 2DAY 2PM.
POLICE NOW!

Smacks ENTER. Waits for response.

Beat. New scroll:

OPERATOR: *U just dont get it. Do U Seth.*

Seth freezes up. Blown away.

Type continues:

Ballgame is fixed. We R in control.

U just gave up last strike

;)

IM clicks out. Seth, staggering. Before he can take a breath:

BIG JOCK HANDS suddenly pull him from the computer station. It's Collin and a Goon. Quickly dragging Seth out the library.

COLLIN

Enjoy your gay porn?

INT. WOODSHOP CLASS - DAY

Door slams open. Seth's thrown into the room where Walt Trevers and his goons are waiting with closed fists.

Half a dozen saw bands and drills.

COLLIN

Here he is: Miss America.

JOCK

Watch out, Wall, little faggot throws a mean dodge ball.

JOCK 2

You mean he sucks a mean ball.

Trevers pulls off his varsity jacket. Hands it to one of his goons.

TREVERS

Yeah. Heard you like to play dirty. Smashing my buds in the face?

JOCK 2

Bitch gets into a couple'a mall scraps, thinks he's badass.

TREVERS

That true? You think you're badass?

Seth turns to leave. Met by the wall that is Collin.

COLLIN

He asked you a question, mofo.

Seth pauses, faces Trevers.

SETH

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to go off, all right? I'm having a shitty day.

Two goons viciously grab Seth. Slam him up against a band saw. Trevers moves up to Seth, gets in his face.

TREVERS

Asshole, your fucking day is about to get a whole lot shittier. What gives you the balls to come in on my chick?

SETH

I'm not on your chick.

COLLIN

Little shit had his eyes crawling all over Rori. You gonna do something about that, Walt?

Seth, rage building. Shuts his eyes for a moment. Tries to think straight.

SETH

Look. I'm not here for trouble. Just... just let it go.

Trevers stares him down. As though actually weighing the request. Slowly nods.

TREVERS

Sure thing.

Beat. Trevers turns away... then abruptly nails Seth in the gut. Seth coughs, in pain.

TREVERS (CONT'D)

You heard the man. Let it go.

Jock clicks on the band saw. 400 razor-sharp teeth start their scary spin.

Collin and a goon grab hold of Seth, shoving him onto the band saw's entry plate. Seth struggles against it as Collin tugs on his hair. Starts cutting close.

SETH

NO!

COLLIN

Hold still and you'll get a lollipop!

Hair begins to slice. Clumps fall to the ground. Seth SCREAMS.

TREVERS

I think he likes it.

COLLIN

Shit, I know he likes it-

HAND suddenly grabs Trevers, throws him up against the wall. Slams head into concrete.

Collin turns around. Smashed in the face with a broom handle.

Jock goons try to scurry. Tripped and slammed to the floor. BLACK BOOT nails one in the head.

Trevers, struggling to recover, snatched up by the JANITOR from the hallway. With one hand, pulls Trevers two feet off the floor.

Trevers coughs, chokes in the man's heavy vice grip.

Collin, nose bleeding, eyes watery. Scurries off with his two goons, freeing Seth of the band saw.

Janitor watches Trevers' face turn blue. Low and cold:

JANITOR

You see this kid?

Trevers, eyes bulging out his sockets, barely glances at Seth.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

Keep 50 yards away from this kid at all times. You got that?

Seth. More shaken than afraid.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

(hard to Trevers)

If I see you walk, talk, or shit near this kid, I tear your heart out and feed it to the field lawn. We clear?

Trevers gasps.

TREVERS

(wincing)

Yea -- yeah.

JANITOR

Anyone asks, you all took a tumble in your silly-ass lacrosse.

Janitor holds him a moment more. Finally throws him across the floor. Trevers slide-smashes into the door.

Janitor throws back his stupid varsity jacket. Smacks into Trevers' face. He stumbles out into the hallway.

ON SETH

Quietly blown away. Watches the Janitor move over to him.

SETH

Thanks-

Janitor viciously grips Seth by the throat. Throws him back onto the bandsaw.

WHIP PAN: TO GAIL FENN

Having come into the room. Shuts the door.

FENN

Full power.

Janitor revs it up. Seth struggles against the man's heavy grip. Janitor begins shoving Seth's groin close to the buzzing saw.

Fenn kicks Seth's legs apart.

FENN (CONT'D)

Who's in charge, Seth? WHO'S IN CHARGE?!

SETH

YOU ARE!

Fenn grabs him by his hair.

FENN

YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?!

Janitor feeds Seth another inch closer.

SETH

YOU'RE IN CHARGE!

FENN

YOU GONNA FUCK UP AGAIN?!

SETH

NO!

SLAPS HIS FACE. Loud.

FENN

I DIDN'T HEAR THAT!

SETH

NO! NEVER! NEVER AGAIN!

Fenn gives a nod. Janitor throws him off the bandsaw. Smashes to the ground.

Fenn clicks it off. Stares down at the mess Seth Deacon has become. Her hand imprint deep in his face.

FENN
(to the janitor)
Back to position.

Janitor complies. Retrieves his mop. Exits. Fenn crouches down before Seth.

FENN (CONT'D)
Listen to me you little shit. There are no angles, no exits we haven't covered. There is no strategy that I haven't already anticipated. And there is no fucking escape from your destiny.

Seth, still cradling his face.

FENN (CONT'D)
No more IMs, no more testing my authority?

Seth shakes his head no. Fenn absorbs it.

FENN (CONT'D)
I almost believe you.

With that, she KICKS him bad in the balls. Not the funny ha-ha bad. Prison-rape bad.

Seth cowers over. Coughs, wind knocked out of him.

Fenn looks down at him. Satisfied.

FENN (CONT'D)
Pick yourself up and return to class.

She heads off. Heels echo every step. Leaves Seth alone and in pain.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Seth comes out into Jersey air, still holding his crotch. Distraught, no hope in sight. Falls against a wall. Slides down to the ground, face in his hands. Not sure what to do, where to go.

Beat. From his wallet, Seth pulls a single thumbnail PHOTO of little Tara. Pretty as a Sunday morning.

His eyes well. Everything appearing hopeless. Seth sighs heavy. Staring down at his Vans sneakers. Suddenly realizes something. An odd, metallic reflection in one of the lace holes. Unlike the others.

Seth steels himself. Gently peels the sneaker's outer canvas up. Realizes a micro cut in the inner fabric. Seth digs into his pocket, pulling a pencil. Very carefully, uses the pencil's lead tip to pry open the stitch.

Finally exposing a tiny MICROCHIP. GPS tracker. This is how they have a fix on him.

Seth, eyes tense.

SCHOOL DOORS BURST OPEN

A GIRL from the Glee Club. Wears a Balantine tie-dye. HAND in her tote bag.

Seth, on alert. Watches that hand.

Girl stops. Hovers over him. For a moment, the world freezes.

GLEE GIRL

Die.

Seth says nothing. Girl regards him a moment more. From her bag, pulls a FRESH TEE SHIRT.

GLEE GIRL (CONT'D)

(cheery smile)

Tie-dye!

Offers him the Balantine shirt. Seth regards this. Takes it.

GLEE GIRL (CONT'D)

Deerbrook Warriors #1!

Girl gives him a candy cane. Does a cartwheel and clap. Heads off to her friends, all lining up in the parking lot.

Sudden sound of a motorcade, police sirens.

NEXT MOMENT

Seth comes around the corner. Stares at the front parking lot. Where a convoy of SUVs are rounding the school's entrance. State Troopers lead the way.

PRINCIPAL and his staff are there to greet SENATOR PAUL BALANTINE. Climbs out an SUV, already wearing the Deerbrook HS jacket. Surrounded by PR aides, cameras.

Glee club spells out "Welcome Senator Balantine" with their tie-dyes.

Balantine loves it. Gives big shakes and smiles. Principal introduces his staff. Among them, a pleasant Gail Fenn.

Hiding in the corner, Seth stares into the scene.

Fenn nods at something the Principal says. Very slowly, subtly turns her head. Homes in on Seth. Eyes engage. Has his fix 24/7. Knows every step he makes.

Seth, eyes growing fierce. Suddenly spots the BIG BANNER over the school doors:

Balantine 2012: "If It Has to Be, It's Up to Me"

HARD ON SETH

Crystallizing its meaning. Quiet intensity building. Never before have words spoke so forcefully.

FENN

Walking back into school with the senator's entourage. Smiles pretty. Fake laughs of superiority.

CLOSE ON SETH

CANDY CANE SNAPS IN HIS GRIP

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - NEXT MOMENT

Kids going to Fourth Period.

Seth among them. Renewed sense of purpose. Wears the Balantine tee shirt. Spots Chloe at her locker. Starts towards her.

NEW ANGLE

Seth abruptly passes Chloe, bumps her. Hard enough to send their books crashing to the ground.

CHLOE

Jesus!

SETH

Sorry.

Seth reaches down, helps her with her materials.

CHLOE

It's all right Mr. Personality, I can do it myself.

SETH

No, lemme help.

Seth quickly tucks something in her hand. Clepto-quick. Chloe regards it, but doesn't react. Seth hands her back her books.

SETH (CONT'D)

You got em?

Chloe reads his face. Unsure:

CHLOE

Yeah.

Seth heads out. Chloe watches him slip away. Subtly checks the tiny piece of paper Seth just slipped her:

VALVE ROOM, 12:45

Meanwhile...

EXT. A PRACTICE FIELD - SAME

KARATE CLUB in the grass, barefooted, doing their drill for the big assembly.

PANNING AWAY... TO THE BLEACHERS

Where Prankster Dirk is secretly putting ketchup packs in the karate kids' sneakers. Childish but effective. Going from one to the other. Finally stops cold at BIG NIKES. Someone in them.

HAND grabs Dirk by the throat before he can breathe.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Dirk gets shoved through the door by big Collin. There to meet him is the swollen, bruised face of Walt Trevers.

TREVERS

Prankster Dirk.

Dirk looks around him. A little scared.

TREVERS (CONT'D)

I hear you're planning on settin' off a cherry bomb at the school assembly.

Dirk absorbs this. Tries looking tough.

DIRK

Vicious fucking rumor.

Trevers motions to Collin. Who instantly pulls Dirk's scared BUDDY into the light.

Dirk shrinks back.

Trevers looks at him, hard.

TREVERS

You're working for me now.

Dirk surmises. Off his slight confusion...

INT. EUROPEAN HISTORY - DAY

WALL CLOCK: 12:35

Teacher's going over the French Revolution. Paces the front.

TEACHER

The Battle of Marengo was slow, it was bloody. And in the end, it drove the Austrian army into debt. This was what the French were praying for-

Seth raises a hand, gets the teacher's attention.

SETH

I'm sorry. May I go to the bathroom?

TEACHER

Is Napoleon's tyranny causing you to urinate?

SETH

No, just the Sprite.

Laughs from the kids. Teacher waves him off. Seth gets up, heads out the door.

PANNING TO: LANE

Tucked in a corner by the windows. Regards Seth's sudden departure.

INT. RESTROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Seth comes through the door. Darts into a STALL. Locks it shut. Works quickly to remove his Vans sneakers.

INT. EUROPEAN HISTORY - SAME

Lane raises a hand.

LANE

Sorry, Mr. Connors, I need to go, too.

TEACHER

You go when he comes back, stop interrupting my lecture.

Lane hunches down. Glances at the door.

INT. RESTROOM - SAME

Seth's locked stall door. PANNING UP... to an AIRDUCT GRATE above. The fleeting image of Seth's jeans, barely squeezing through.

INT. AIRDUCT - NEXT MOMENT

Seth carefully crawling through the overhead. Making his way through the slim duct. Comes to a vent.

Voices down below. TEACHER'S LOUNGE. Doc Bard and Ms. Healy. Alone. Slamming each other against the wall. Making out.

Bard's talking dirty. We'll fuck like parasitic microbes. Gets Healy all hot and bothered.

Seth. Let's just blank this one out and press on.

INT. EUROPEAN HISTORY

Lane fidgets. Raises his hand again.

LANE

Mr. Conners. I really, really have to go.

Lane crosses his legs like he's ready to unload.

LANE (CONT'D)

This is Defcon-1.

Teacher fumes, nods to the door.

TEACHER

Peace be with you.

Lane tears out the door. Kids crack up.

INT. HALLWAY - NEXT MOMENT

Lane moves down the hall. Something dark in his face. No longer that short, nerdy little guy.

Subtly pulls a cell phone from his pocket. GPS detection. LCD tracks a blinking cell.

Meanwhile...

INT. VALVE ROOM - SAME

Door opens. Chloe cautiously moves through. Seth's note in her hand.

CHLOE

Hello -- ?

She checks her watch. Stares down at the tangle of industrial piping. Ominous and final. Meanwhile...

INT. RESTROOM - SAME

Lane quietly moves through the door, GPS tracker in hand. Makes his way towards that closed bathroom stall.

Silently bends down to ground level, peeking underneath. Seth's Vans are parked on the floor. Looks as though he's sitting on the bowl.

Lane regards this. Needs to be sure. Moves in for a closer look.

Door slams open. SCIENCE TEACHER with a SCARED FRESHMAN.

SCIENCE TEACHER
Water, let's put some water on it.

FRESHMAN
Aw, it itches!

SCIENCE TEACHER
It's not burning, that's what's important.

They quickly go to the sink. Lane, can't finish his inspection. Reluctantly heads out.

INT. VALVE ROOM - DAY

Chloe moves through the elaborate piping. A little scared.

CHLOE
Hello?

Strange knocks come from everywhere. Chloe swallows a breath, checks her angles.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
(echo)
Asshead. I've seen Nightmare On Elm Street a hundred times, this is chickenshit.

No one answers. Chloe looks around her. Finally fed up.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Jerk.

She heads back. Turns a corner. Seth right there! Scares us all.

Chloe falls back against a wall. Ready to shout something.

SETH
Sshhh, take it easy-

CHLOE

Fuck you, take it easy. You bring me here to get your rocks off or something?

SETH

You got my note.

CHLOE

Yeah, very cute.

(realizes his small bandsaw buzz)

The fuck happened to your hair?

SETH

You said you saw me back at Rehoba mall.

CHLOE

Yeah, so?

SETH

How long ago?

CHLOE

Sorry, why are we here?

SETH

How long ago?!

Chloe sees the tension in his face, shrugs.

CHLOE

I dunno, July, I think.

Seth gets close to her.

SETH

What about last year?

CHLOE

What?

SETH

Last year? Did you or did you not see me at the mall last year?!

CHLOE

No! It wasn't even built yet, genius!

Seth regards this. Somewhat assured by her answer.

SETH

So you know it's new.

CHLOE
Of course I know. I live two blocks from
the hideous place.

SETH
You're not a plant.

CHLOE
A what?

SETH
I need your help.

CHLOE
After the way you shut me out?

SETH
I'm sorry, okay? But please, this is
important. This is very, very fucking
important. I'm running out of time and
you're the only person I can trust.

CHLOE
Dude, I barely know you.

SETH
Still, you came.

CHLOE
Yeah, and now I go.

She starts off. Seth gets in front of her.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Hey, seriously. You need to remove
yourself.

SETH
They set me up! They want me to do
something horrible, and if I don't do it,
they'll kill my sister.

Chloe regards this.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Lane hanging outside the boys restroom. Checks his GPS.
Growing impatient. Hears the science teacher barking
about the advantages of protective gloves.

INT. VALVE ROOM - SAME

Seth moves closer to Chloe.

SETH
(slow whisper)
I need... I need you to help me get off
campus, I need you to help me save her!

Chloe raises an eye, takes a deep breath.

CHLOE
O-kay.

SETH
I'll pay you, all right?

CHLOE
Asshole, I don't need your money.

SETH
Please, just help me get off.

CHLOE
Get yourself off, perv.

SETH
(gets close)
I mean get off campus! They're gonna
kill her, you have to help me!

CHLOE
Dude, you need to back off.

Seth grips her.

SETH
Listen to me!

Chloe knees him in the balls. Seth crashes to the
ground. Feeling it. Again.

Chloe, somewhat remorseful. Tries to keep it inside.
Adjusts her shirt.

CHLOE
Come near me again and the other one
goes.

She heads off, out of his life. Seth on the ground,
coughing.

It's all shot to hell.

Meanwhile...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Science teacher and Freshman finally come out the boys restroom.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Just keep pressure on the hand.

FRESHMAN

Do I still have to finish the experiment?

They abruptly pass Lane at the water fountain. With the coast clear, Lane comes up from the nozzle. Faces the restroom.

INT. RESTROOM

Lane comes in. Heads right up to the last stall. This time, gets on his knees. Goes to look directly underneath...

THE FLUSH OF A TOILET.

Door opens. Seth right there, wearing his Vans. Came back in time. Looks hard at Lane.

Lane grins sheepishly.

LANE

Sup, bro. You didn't find a contact in there, did you?

Seth says nothing. Heads off. Lane's grin diminishes. Looks suspiciously into the stall.

RING OF A SCHOOL BELL...

INT. HALLWAYS - DAY

Kids filling them. Seth comes out of class, books at his side.

HITCHCOCK PAN AWAY...

... TO PRANKSTER DIRK

Heading down the hall with purpose. Subtly pulls a CHERRY BOMB FIRECRACKER. Not sure what he's planning to do with it.

PAN BACK...

... TO SETH

Stops mid-hall. Sees Dirk moving over to his locker. Dirk drops the cherry bomb through the locker's crease. Heads off.

PAN AWAY...

... TO DEAN GREYS

Heading down the hallway with COP and his LABRADOR DOG. Sniffing the lockers for drugs and-or firearms. Normal routine for 21st century high school.

PAN BACK...

... TO DIRK

Makes his way to a hallway corner where Trevers and Collin are eagerly awaiting.

TREVERS

Sure you got it in there?

DIRK

Dude, I'm Dirk.

Collin slaps Dirk a ten spot. Dirk heads off.

PAN...

...TO LANE

Spots the DOG. Gives a quick glance:

... TO GAIL FENN

Talking friendly with a fellow counsellor. Her cue to come and check this out.

PAN BACK...

TO THE LABRADOR

Sniffing mad. Picks up the cherry bomb's gunpowder scent. Stops cold at Seth's locker. Scratches on metal.

Greys reacts, goes to his walkie.

FINAL PAN...

... TO SETH

Still standing mid-hall. Realizes they're getting permission to inspect. Has to beat them to the punch. Starts forward.

NEW ANGLE

He moves up to his locker before Greys and the cop can circumvent.

GREYS

This yours?

Seth. Swallows a breath. Nods.

GREYS (CONT'D)

Open it up, let's go.

Seth stalls. Spots Fenn watching with hard eyes.

GREYS (CONT'D)

Cotton ears. You heard what I just said?

Seth faces Greys.

SETH

There's nothing in there.

Greys and cop trade a look. Words of the guilty. Greys almost smirks. Addresses Seth:

GREYS

Open it.

Seth stares back at Fenn. A moment between them. A warning.

Seth reluctantly approaches his locker. Starts turning the combination. Each click's like a gun hammer pulled back.

ON FENN'S HAND

She's slowly reaching into her blouse pocket. Puts her hand around that horrible iPhone.

CLOSE ON SETH

Final turn of the lock. Pulls down. BOLT UNLOCKS. He looks across at:

FENN

Ready to make a move and push a phone button if shit goes bad.

COP moves forward with his mutt.

GREYS (CONT'D)

What do we have?

COP

Something that shouldn't be there.

Seth turns back to Fenn.

Her eyes: You can't afford to be expelled right now. Better think of something fast. I'm ready to push this button and kill your sister.

The dog's snout is ready to explore.

As the Cop opens the locker...

Seth. Makes the move. Springs forward, reaching into his locker --

COP (CONT'D)

HEY!

-- and grabs his BACKPACK. Greys reacts, slams Seth against the wall.

GREYS

RIGHT THERE, PAL!

The labrador BARKS, shifts to the backpack in Seth's grasp.

GREYS (CONT'D)

DROP IT NOW!

Seth does. Backpack spans to the linoleum floor.

Cop moves the dog to the backpack.

In the diversion, Seth quickly snaps up that CHERRY BOMB. Fists it. He's that good.

Trevers and Collin still watching and waiting. Didn't see shit.

Chloe in the far back. Pushes through excited faces.

THE COP

Goes to the backpack.

COP

Keep him away!

GREYS

(hard into Seth)

You got it.

Cop crouches down, goes to open Seth's backpack. Seth and Fenn trade a final, fateful glance.

COP

Digs through the backpack. Finally comes up with nothing more than squashed HO-HOs. Mom's contribution to Seth's snacktime.

Pooch wags her tail.

COP

(disappointed)

Ho-Hos.

Greys regards this. Gets some smiles and smirks from the student class. Looks more like an ass than ever.

ON FENN

Genuine satisfaction in her tense face. Sense of newfound respect for:

SETH

Still against the wall. Greys puts the Ho-Hos in his face.

GREYS

No snack cakes, cookies, or candy bars in school lockers.

SETH

(mumbling)

Yes, sir.

GREYS

I didn't hear that.

SETH
(clear)
Yes, sir.

Greys wants to break this kid in two. Finally lets him go. Confiscates the contraband. Gestures to the Cop.

GREYS
Let's keep moving, Jeff.

The dog's staring up at Seth. Big, brown nose pointed to his fist. Smells the illegal firecracker.

Cop tugs on her leash.

COP
C'mon, Annie!

Lab trots away with the men. Crowd begins to disperse.

Finally alone, Seth falls back against the wall.

Chloe regards Seth a final moment. Heads off.

Fenn, glimmer of a grin. Mouths the words *My Office*. Slips away.

ON SETH

Stares up at a HALL CLOCK: 1:15. He looks back at his locker. SLAMS IT CLOSED.

INT. FENN'S OFFICE - DAY

Seth sits before the desk. Worn, sunken eyes.

Fenn in BG, closing her door. Comes up behind him.

FENN (O.S.)
You have something for me?

Seth contemplates. Hands over that CHERRY BOMB.

NEW ANGLE

Fenn takes a seat on the corner of her desk. Legs folded sexy. Juggles the cherry bomb like a magician's trick between her fingers.

FENN (CONT'D)

Those miscreants could have cost you big. Your expulsion would have yielded devastating consequences for your sister. Fortunately, you improvised. Bravo to you, Seth.

She finishes the juggle, dropping the CHERRY BOMB in the pocket of her power blazer.

Seth closes his eyes. Takes a deep, defeated breath.

SETH

The gun's still in the locker.

FENN

Fake compartment, rear. But don't worry. Fido would have never found it. He just wanted the cherry bomb.

SETH

She.

FENN

Sorry?

SETH

The dog's a female.

FENN

Get a close look, did you?

Seth. Wants to spit in her face. Fenn sees every inch of his hate. Likes it.

Seth sighs, defeated. A thought that's been eating his mind:

SETH

What did this guy ever do to piss you off? He's a senator, he's got a family for chrissakes.

FENN

So do you. You have to decide which one is more important.

Seth can't answer. Torn in two. He's scared. Fenn sees it. Takes the tone down a notch.

FENN (CONT'D)

People don't like change, Seth. It makes things... messy. Drains pockets.

(MORE)

FENN(CONT'D)

But that's not our corner store. For you and I, this is strictly business. The oldest business in town.

Seth shakes his head.

SETH

Not my business. Not mine.

FENN

Yes, yours. This is the world you people have made for yourself. Ordinary chaos spawned from the daily shark feeding of High School, USA.

SETH

We're not all psycho killers here. Some of us actually bitch about homework. Chew gum in class. Care about each other.

FENN

Yeah. That jock-itch welcome committee in the woodshop was a regular Hallmark moment. Face it, Seth: you're a fuck-up in a fucked-up world. I'm giving you the chance to be something more. This is the greatest day of your life and you're sleepwalking through it. Don't turn away from your destiny. Embrace it.

Long beat. Seth, can't win. Closes his eyes. Fenn gauges.

FENN (CONT'D)

Now. Have you finally come to accept the sobriety of your situation?

Long beat. Seth opens his eyes again.

SETH

If I do this. You promise not to kill her? My sister?

FENN

My clients require only one enemy dead. Anyone else is strictly collateral.

SETH

You didn't answer my question.

FENN

The life of your sister depends on the strength of your performance.

(MORE)

FENN(CONT'D)

You know that. Once you step up to Balantine and fire three into his head, I'm fairly confident there's no reason to worry about Tara's future.

Seth. Reeling in this hell.

SETH

My mother. I want to talk to her.

FENN

Excuse me?

SETH

You heard what I said.

Fenn regards this. Pulls off her glasses.

FENN

Seth, you're finally on the straight track. Let's not derail.

SETH

I want to hear her voice a final time. Either I speak to her or this ends right now.

FENN

Then your sister dies.

SETH

And your target lives.

Fenn regards his composure. Seth isn't flinching.

A tense standoff. Two people playing chess.

Fenn finally relents. Picks up her office line.

FENN

Number.

SETH

You already know it.

Fenn, glimmer of grin. He's right. Dials the hospital listing.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Toms River General, how may I direct?

FENN

ER desk.

Call transfers. Fenn offers Seth the receiver.

FENN (CONT'D)
 You have sixty seconds.
 (holds back receiver)
 And Seth. Need I even remind?

Seth absorbs this, shows an understanding. Fenn passes him the phone receiver.

INT. ER NURSES DESK - HOSPITAL - DAY

Yvonne Deacon argues with nurses on lab charts. Grabs her desk phone.

YVONNE
 (shouts to an aide)
 And he needs to know about the MRI! I don't care if he's an intern, he's on Strike 4 with the procedure-
 (answers phone)
 Nurse's desk.

SETH (O.S.)
 Mom.

Yvonne takes a beat.

YVONNE
 Seth?
 (looks at her watch)
 Where are you calling from?

INTERCUT: YVONNE/SETH

Seth has the receiver to his ear. Faces the viper eyes of Gail Fenn.

SETH
 Student counsellor's office.

Yvonne sighs, has to sit down.

YVONNE
 Jez, Seth -- what now?

SETH
 It's not like that. I'm just here... for a talk.

Fenn likes this, crosses her arms.

YVONNE
What kind of a talk?

SETH
Mom, everything's fine. I just wanted.
(hard to say, clears his
throat)
I just wanted to tell you that I got a
ride home. So you can take the car to
pick up Tara before Sears.

YVONNE
No, Seth. I said I had to drop the car
off first.

SETH
Yeah, I know, Mom. She'll be waiting for
you at the pick-up. Then you guys can go
to Sears.

YVONNE
Seth, are listening to what I'm saying?
I'm picking Tara up after Sears.

SETH
She'll be waiting.

Yvonne regards this. Something strange in Seth's voice,
subtle communication.

YVONNE
Seth, are you all right?

Seth rubs a hand over his face. Nods.

SETH
I'm fine. I just. Just wanted to say
hello. Mom.

Yvonne contemplates. Grins a little.

YVONNE
Hello.

Fenn checks the time. Motions to the phone receiver.

SETH
Mom, I have to go now.

YVONNE
Is your counsellor there? Can I talk to
her?

SETH

Mom, I lov-

Fenn clicks the hanger, kills the phone call.

YVONNE

Seth? Seth, are you there?

INT. FENN'S OFFICE

Fenn takes back the phone receiver.

FENN

Curb any emotional outbursts. You need to get ready for the assembly.

Seth, still sitting in the chair. A sulking, heavy stare. Less fear. Something changed.

FENN (CONT'D)

Earth to Seth.

Seth looks away for a moment. Back at her. Inevitably rises from the office chair and heads out.

FENN (CONT'D)

And don't slouch for fuck's sake.

Seth stops at the door. Faces her a final moment.

SETH

I hate you.

Fenn holds on this. Sees that quiet strength, resignation in Seth's eyes.

FENN

Feels good, doesn't it?

Seth regards this. Looks at the kitty photo on her desk.

SETH

I hate your fucking cat, too.

He heads out. Shuts the door behind him. Leaves Gail Fenn to contemplate the last words of Seth Deacon.

INT. HOME EC - DAY

Class making apple turnover cakes. Rori's is particularly pretty.

ON CHLOE

Alone to herself at the end of the table. Her cake is a sad, decaying mess of a volcano.

Teacher on the walkthrough. Regards Chloe's pathetic attempt.

TEACHER

Did you use the baking soda or did the
baking soda use you?

Chloe blows it off. Takes another look at the clock.
Seth and his bizarre confession is tracking on her mind.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Five minutes, people. Let's get those
cakes on the done table.

Rori moves by Chloe with her perfect turnover. Puts it
on the done table. Notices Chloe has secretly pocketed a
block of baking chocolate.

RORI

(quiet)

It's so obvious.

CHLOE

Like your nose job.

Rori shakes her head. Passes her.

RORI

By the way, you can have him. Losers
tend to have more in common.

Chloe reacts to this. Rori, bitchy little cheerleader
smirk. Heads back to her seat.

RORI (CONT'D)

Mrs. Randall, we have to get ready for
the assembly.

TEACHER

Go ahead, girls.

Rori grabs her books. Struts off with two peppy friends.
Shoots a final little grin to Chloe.

Chloe, fuming. Watches them exit the room. Snaps up her
backpack. Starts out through the tables with her plate
of turnover.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Excuse me, young lady, where do you think you're going?

Chloe ram-rods out the door.

INT. GIRLS BATHROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Rori dressed in her cheerleading uniform. Putting on finishing lipstick in the mirror. Her two friends are throwing on their skirts.

FRIEND

So he puts me in his Five just to try a hook-up. Like he thinks that's gonna work or something.

RORI

My God, he always thinks that shit's gonna work.

Door's thrown open. Chloe marches in. Right up to Rori. Shoves the apple turnover into her face.

Rori SCREAMS as her friends back away. Chloe gets in Rori's strudel-covered face.

CHLOE

Care of Losers Incorporated.

Chloe shoves past Rori's stunned friends. Heads out.

Rori stands there, covered in apple turnover. Gets a smirk from her fellow cheerleader.

RORI

Fuck you, Anna.

FRIEND

What -- ?

CUT TO:

ESTABLISHING SHOT - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

3rd and 4th graders burst out the doors as a WHISTLE BLOWS. 1:30 recess at J.C. Mitchell Elementary.

Another chance for Tommy Lanogan to make butts red in bombardment. Another opportunity for Shakira Hobbs to pull off that triple snap in Double Dutch.

Another grasp at the big monkeybars for Tara Deacon.
Running with a Tomboy's speed into the sanded lot.

PULLING BACK TO REVEAL... A BLACK VAN

Perched on the cusp of the school fence.

INT. VAN

Carol King on the radio.

Baume-Merceir WATCH shows the time of 1:32. The shadowed form of CLARK. Takes a quick potato chip from the bag on the dashboard.

Opens his glove compartment. Pulls a sleek, sinister Glock .44 with telescopic lens. Quietly, professionally attaches a separate silencer barrel. Done it so many times, it's almost banal.

Laughter and screaming from the kids playing in the fields. Clark fazes it all out. Snaps in an ammo clip.
Locks and loads.

SMASH TO:

INT. GYM - DEERBROOK HIGH - DAY

Baton twirlers performing as the band strikes up.
STUDENTS filing through the doors.

CAMERAS getting checked and positioned. Goofballs put their faces in the lenses. Everyone wants to be on TV.

Cheerleaders enter. Rori, red in the face. Food particles in her hair.

ON THE STAGE

MAINTENANCE TEAM putting the final checks on the microphone. That one ominous JANITOR, folding open chairs. Big, hulking eyes focus on GAIL FENN coming in with the Principal and Dean.

She checks back with a glance.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - SAME

Freshman jumping over each other. Chloe reluctantly follows the herd towards the open gym doors.

LANE

(subtly)

Go head, homeslice. Got your shit covered.

Seth realizes the dark smirk in the skaterat's face. Knows he's a plant. Fumbles open his locker as Seth opens his. All of it is just a ploy to block Security's sight.

LANE (CONT'D)

Push twice on the rear.

Seth begrudgingly complies. A fake metal compartment opens to reveal a sleek Lorcin L-380. Ready to kill.

Lane keeps the block going as Seth slowly pulls the gun out.

LANE (CONT'D)

Right pocket's the easiest.

Seth regards this. Quickly, clumsily tucks the gun into the right pocket of his knit zip-up.

ON SENATOR BALANTINE

Shakes a final hand of the Leadership Club. One more digital snapshot and he's off.

Lane watches the senator's entourage head off into the gym. Satisfied, he slams his locker closed. Snags a candy cane from a passing Glee Girl.

Seth shuts his locker. Faces Lane with hard eyes.

SETH

This locker. You never told me why it's cursed.

Lane regards this. A creepy, sinister smirk. Pops the candy cane in his mouth.

LANE

It's yours.

Seth stares him down, wants to break his face.

Lane gives him a farewell salute. Heads out as the final bell rings.

TEACHER (O.S.)
 ALL RIGHT, LADIES AND GERMS, LET'S GET TO
 THE GYM, ASAP!

Seth buys a final moment. Checks on the gun bulge.
 Steels himself and starts out.

INT. GYM - DAY

CLOSE ON THE BIG GAME CLOCK 1:50

FULL BLEACHERS. The entire student body and faculty of
 Deerbrook High is packing the place in.

JAZZ BAND on the prowl, doing a funky rendition of Q
 Lazereth's Goodbye Horses.

EERIE SLOW MO - CHEERLEADERS

Cartwheeling across the gym wood. Pom-poms shaking,
 bodies moving.

ON CHLOE

Files into the gym. Immediate concern in her face.
 Knows something big now.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - SAME

Final crowd of kids heading through the gym doors. Seth
 lagging behind. Hands in his pockets. A cold sweat.
 Passes a pack of private security agents. Barely catches
 a glimpse of a mean .44 tucked behind the suit.

Straight ahead is the METAL DETECTOR. SECURITY motions
 him through.

SECURITY

Next.

Seth's unsure. Catches a stray look from Lane: no
 worries.

SECURITY (CONT'D)

C'mon, son, let's go!

Seth surmises. Steps through the detector. Nothing
 happens. The gun is immune.

SECURITY (CONT'D)

Keep going, keep going.

Seth reluctantly does. Passes through the DOORS...

INTO THE BIG GYM

As the band brass kicks in. White strobe dances around his face. Polynesian lawn torches on fire. Apocalypse Now, the Du-Long bridge. That weird and eerie.

Seth's pushed right into the face of Walt Trevers and his beat-up lacrosse legion. A moment of wary.

Janitor off to the side, makes eyes: don't fuck with him.

Walt obeys, takes a big step back. They all do. Clear the way for Seth to keep on going.

NEW ANGLE

Seth being forced up the bleachers by the crowd's inertia. Chloe, mid-bleacher. Watches his journey.

A HAND grips Seth's shoulder. He turns into the face of Gail Fenn. Clipboard in hand. Surreal against the glow of Polynesian torches.

FENN

Seth Deacon, right?

Seth. Like you don't know.

Fenn takes him by the hand, gently gestures him to follow.

FENN (CONT'D)

You're over here.

Seth spots the CENTER GYM STAGE. Where A.P. kids are taking their seats before the grand podium.

FENN (CONT'D)

(sweet smile)

C'mon.

Seth. Reluctantly follows in Fenn's fingernail grasp.

ON CHLOE

Watching it happen. Knowing something the 2500 other students and faculty don't.

AT THE STAGE

Fenn leads Seth up to the steps. Gestures to his one seat at the end of the row.

FENN (CONT'D)

All aboard.

She gives Seth a final, insidious little grin. Gently feels the bulge in his jacket. Pleased.

Seth. Spent, bottled-up. Breaks from Fenn's subtle grasp. Takes the stage to the brass thunder of Rocky.

PRINCIPAL shaking hands with the smart kids. Comes up to Seth as he takes the last seat.

PRINCIPAL

And you are?

FENN

(shouts it over the brass)

Seth Deacon! One of our tops!

Principal nods, smiles. Shakes Seth's hand.

PRINCIPAL

Congratulations. You're the pride of Deerbrook High.

Seth shakes his hand, all formality. Principal takes the podium as the lights cue and the band breaks.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Deerbrook Warriors #1?

Some eruption from the crowd. Barely.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

I DIDN'T HEAR THAT! DEERBROOK WARRIORS #1?!

Crowd goes louder, fiercer. Fenn grins, standing with other faculty members off-stage.

ON SETH

Shows nothing. Stage lights expose the tinge of sweat rolling off his face.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

I heard a little rumor that we may have a special guest today.

Crowd balks. Senator Balantine stands by the doors, smiles with the rest of them.

Seth regards him. As does Fenn.

Principal leans into the mic.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Maybe you can tell him which school has the most pride.

CROWD

DEERBROOK!

PRINCIPAL

Maybe you can let him know who has the best Debate Team in the county, three years running?

DEERBROOK again. WARRIOR MASCOT with the loudspeaker. Pumps up the bleachers. CHEERLEADERS do flips and claps.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

WHO HAS THE GREATEST PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS IN ANY NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL THIS YEAR?

CROWD

DEERBROOK!

BRASS SOUNDS OFF. A.P. Kids on the stage, loving every second. Only Seth appears frozen.

PRINCIPAL

(over the music)

LET'S GIVE A BIG DEERBROOK ROAR FOR NEW JERSEY STATE SENATOR AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PAUL BALANTINE!

Place erupts into cheers and applause. CAMERAS and LIGHTS turn on Balantine. Crossing the bleachers with a big wave. Basketball team flips him the ball.

Balantine, two-time NCAA champ. Throws a nifty two-pointer. Scores.

Fenn laughs. Kids love it.

Seth shows nothing.

SENATOR BALANTINE

Trots up onto stage. Young and idealistic. Gets a warm reception. CAMERAS FLASH as he shakes the Principal's hand. Gives a friendly wave to the Honor elite.

Takes his place on the podium. Genuinely happy to be surrounded by youth.

Clears his throat as the applause and band die down.

BALANTINE

Now someone told me we have a little
something called the Deerbrook Battle
Roar.

Warrior Mascot ROARS into his loudspeaker. Gets everyone charged.

BALANTINE (CONT'D)

I WANT TO HEAR IT!

Entire gym ROARS. Rori and the cheerleaders do a sexy little twirl. The place is on fire.

Fenn and Seth exchange a small look. She reaches into her pocket. Subtly extracts that iPhone.

BALANTINE

Reacts with a big, practiced smile to the trumped-up school spirit.

BALANTINE (CONT'D)

This is the kind of energy, the kind of
hope that makes the world take notice!
The kind of spirit that wins football
games and launches athletic scholarships!

(off the cheers)

This is the kind of school that
Washington needs to know about! Get the
cameras on those faces!

Crowd goes wild as the TV CAMERAS turn their lenses on the bleachers. Dudes act stupid. Girls blush. It's all in good fun.

ONLY CHLOE

Keeping it reserved. Trades a small, powerful stare with Seth. As though silently telegraphs an understanding.

Seth sees this. But unsure what comes next.

BALANTINE

Gets another basketball thrown at him. Makes a jump shot from the stage. Hits a three. Band strikes up. Cheerleaders dance.

Kids go crazy. Faculty applauds, Principal loves it.

ON FENN

Big smile. Subtly faces Seth as the lights turn on the A.P. kids.

BALANTINE

Starts down the row of seats, shaking each hand. Seth, last in line. Trades a glance back at Fenn. She's got that phone cradled, ready to make a move.

ON CHLOE

Watching with tense eyes. The Warrior Mascot runs through the bleachers, loudspeaker in hand.

BALANTINE

Crossing the stage. Eight hands shaken, four to go.

SETH

Hand subtly reaches in his gun pocket. Trembling.

FENN

Watching every moment.

BALANTINE

Only two hands left to shake. Police stand before the stage.

SETH

Sweat trail running. Gets his hand around the butt of the gun. Two seconds left to decide what to do...

BALANTINE

Says a little congrats to the kid next to Seth. Moves over to the final chair.

FENN

Hard eyes on Seth. His moment. As the light falls on Seth's face.

BALANTINE

Puts his hand out.

BALANTINE (CONT'D)
 (over the crowd roar)
 And what's your Honor subject, my man?

SETH

Can't speak. Pale, Arctic sweat. Just looks at Balantine's hand.

CUT TO:

CHLOE IN THE BLEACHERS

A moment of decision. Fuck it. She grabs the LOUDSPEAKER from the oblivious Mascot. Hits reverb.

A SHRILLING MIC ECHO

Stops everything. The music, cheers, smiles. Chloe shouts it into the speaker:

CHLOE
 POLITICS SUCKS!!!

FENN, THE PRINCIPAL

All snap to the voice. Balantine turns to the new commotion. Entire gym does.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
 IT'S THE SAME SHIT EVERY DAY!
 REPUBLICAN, DEMOCRAT! THEY'RE ALL THE
 SAME!

Some reaction, laughs from the students. Class President screams that she's out of order.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
 I'M OUT OF ORDER! YOU'RE OUT OF ORDER!
 THE WHOLE DAMN SYSTEM'S OUT OF ORDER!

Chloe fights back the Mascot. He wants his loud speaker back.

More laughs.

Rori on the gym floor, super-pissed. Her cheerleading talents have been severely interrupted.

Cops and security go on alert. Greys and his junior security team are already up in the bleachers, heading for her.

Chloe works away from them all, heads for the top bleacher.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
WE NEED TO START HAVING SOME REAL
DISCUSSIONS! NOT THIS POMP-AND-
CIRCUMSTANCE-PEP-RALLY-BULLSHIT!

Cameras zoom in. Balantine takes the chastening with a mild grin. Fenn, distracted, motions for other faculty to shut her up.

Chloe suddenly pulls that Sharper Image PEN RECORDER from her pocket. Holds it up to the loudspeaker.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
REAL TALK LIKE THIS!

She hits play. NEW VOICES SUDDENLY ECHO OVER THE GYM:

SETH ON RECORDER
*If I do this. You promise not to kill
her? My sister?*

GUSHES FALL OVER THE CROWD

Everyone on guard. Is this a joke?

FENN ON RECORDER
*Our clients require only one enemy dead.
Anyone else is strictly collateral.*

FENN

Stunned cold by her own voice being broadcast across the entire gym.

FENN ON RECORDER (CONT'D)
*Once you step up to Balantine and fire
three into his head, I'm fairly confident
there's no reason to worry about Tara's
future.*

Security goes lock down, grabbing Balantine before he can shake Seth's hand.

Off Chloe's hopeful stare...

CUT TO:

SETH AND CHLOE IN BOILER ROOM (FLASHBACK)

Seth pleading for help. Pushes up against her, secretly steals her PEN RECORDER before she knees him.

*SETH (V.O.)
My mother. I want to talk to her.*

CUT TO:

SETH IN FENN'S OFFICE (FLASHBACK)

FENN'S SPEAKING TO A DOUR SETH WITH SUPERIOR CONFIDENCE.

FENN
Seth, you're finally on the straight track. Let's not derail.

PANNING DOWN TO SETH'S JEANS.

He's got that PEN RECORDER tucked into his pocket. The green light on.

CUT TO:

SETH IN THE HALLWAY WITH CHLOE (FLASHBACK)

*SETH (V.O.)
I want to hear her voice a final time.*

The mystery item he put in her backpack: THE PEN RECORDER. Written on masking tape on the pen:

PLAY ME NOW!!!

Chloe realizes. That's why she heads to the restroom.

BACK IN PRESENT - CHLOE

Holding the loudspeaker high.

SETH ON RECORDER
Either I speak to her or this ends right now.

FENN ON RECORDER
Then your sister dies.

KIDS react with horror, start running. The bleachers become a slalom run. Greys and his deans are trapped in the exodus.

ON FENN

Screams to that one sinister Janitor to get Chloe.

Seth spots the PHONE half-exposed in her hand. It's now or never. As cops race to secure perimeter, Seth jumps off the stage as Fenn turns into him --

SLAMS HER DOWN TO THE GROUND!!!

Both hit the cement with a hard thud. Seth's gun slips out his jacket. Slides across the floor.

Rori sees it and SCREAMS. The place turns chaos.

ON SETH

Quickly takes Fenn's clipboard. CLUBS her face with it! She smacks back to the floor. SCREAMS in rage.

Seth topples off, grabbing her PRIZED iPhone. Digs through that one blazer pocket, pulling the CHERRY BOMB. Tears off into a run.

ON FENN

Recovers with cyclonic rage. Matrix-sweeps the Lorcin gun before the cops can even turn around. Plows past Rori, slamming her to the ground.

SETH

Tearing through the mass exodus of frightened students. Working against the grade.

Chloe spots him. Leaps off the last four rows of bleachers. Grabs his wrist, pulling him underneath.

COPS close by. Running hard to detain.

Thinking fast, Seth lights the cherry bomb on one of the Polynesian torches. Fires it into the crowd.

BIG BANG. Every cop goes to it.

Chloe and Seth use the fast diversion to flee.

WHIP PAN: TO LANE

Hard eyes. Spotting their escape.

UNDER THE BLEACHERS

Chloe leads Seth through the maze of steel and wood.

SETH

I wasn't sure if you were gonna help me!

CHLOE

Neither did I. But shit happens!
(shouting through the noise)
THERE'S A MAINTENANCE SHAFT! C'MON!

ON FENN

Moving against the waves of fleeing students and faculty.
Keeps the gun close at her side. Pulls a TRANSPONDER
CHIP from her pocket.

INT. SHAFTWAY - NEXT MOMENT

Chloe and Seth duck a cop, making their way through the
industrial shaftway.

They stop short. Shadows following ahead and behind.
Chloe whips around. Spots a SHAFT DOOR in the piping
mesh.

CHLOE

Down here!

She leads him down a small flight of steps.

CUT TO:

FENN WITH THE TRACKING CHIP

Marching hard, ready to kill. Chip's beeping like hell.
Comes to the position Seth and Chloe had just stood.

Transmitter's leading her down those steps to a closed
HATCH DOOR.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Seth and Chloe in the tiny room. Waiting it out.

FENN

Hard eyes. Readies her gun.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Seth and Chloe. Silent as the moon.

FENN

Fuck it. Kicks open the door. FIRES SHOTS --

-- ON A VANS SNEAKER! Hanging by laces. TRANSMITTER stitched within.

Can't describe the rage in Fenn's face.

SMASH TO:

SETH AND CHLOE, HOLED-UP IN ANOTHER SHAFTROOM

Opens the door. No one around. Coast clear?

IN THE MAINTENANCE SHAFT

Chloe leads Seth (now shoeless) out the small room, through the mesh of pipes and concrete. Both running hard. JANITOR OUT OF THE CORNER. Slams into Chloe. Sends her against a wall.

Janitor strikes Seth hard. Crashes to the ground.

Janitor, dark face. Breaks a broom stick in two. Clamps a boot on Seth's chest.

Chloe sees a PRESSURE VALVE on the wall. Releases it.

FUME OF HOT STEAM BLASTS INTO JANITOR'S FACE

He screams, falls back. Seth scrambles up, snatches the KEY RING from his belt. Tears off with Chloe.

REACHING THE EXIT SHAFT

Door locked. Seth fumbles for the keys. Has to try them one by one.

THE JANITOR

Gets back on his feet. Starts for them.

Chloe sees him stumbling, starting into a run.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

C'mon!

Seth curses under his breath, goes for another key.

Janitor gaining ground.

Seth fits in a fourth key. Twists and opens.

Chloe and Seth break through the door, into the afternoon light. The Janitor powers towards them. Fires one of the stakes -

-- Just as Seth slams the door from the OUTSIDE. Jams key into hole, sealing it permanently.

FURIOUS BATTING ON THE OTHER SIDE

Chloe takes Seth's hand, leads him off.

SETH

Guess you do know all the exits.

CHLOE

It's my only elective.

They take off around a school corner.

NEW ANGLE

Chloe guides Seth through the labyrinth of FACULTY PARKING. In the distance, they can see Balantine and his men taking off in a police-protected convoy.

If only he can reach his sister in time.

Suddenly:

LANE

Breaking from the other side of a parked SUV. Candy cane in his smirking mouth. He's small and skinny and doesn't appear too intimidating.

Seth steps forward, takes the initiative.

Lane suddenly pulls the candy cane from his mouth. SUCKED IT INTO AN ICE PICK MOLD. Holds it like a makeshift shiv. Ready to stab.

LANE

Who wants candy?

Before he can advance: GREYS GOLF CART -- skids to a halt right between them.

GREYS

RIGHT THERE, FELLA!

Greys scrambles out the cart, faces them all.

GREYS (CONT'D)
EVERYONE AGAINST THE FENCE, NOW!

FENN (O.S.)
Mr. Greys!

ON FENN

Marching through the parking lot. Hand behind her back.

FENN (CONT'D)
I'll take it from here.

She pulls the Lorcin. FIRES a shot into Greys. Blows out a shoulder.

Chloe SCREAMS.

Greys crashes down to the ground with his little whistle. Injured but alive.

Seth throws Chloe into Greys' puny golf cart. Slams the peddle. The thing actually has some power. SMASHES INTO LANE.

He hits the pavement hard.

FENN

Fires another round. Pings the golf cart before it steals away into the armor of parked cars.

EXT. EDGE OF LOT - NEXT MOMENT

Fenn charging up to the scene. Spots the golf cart abandoned by the breached section of fencing.

Lane stumbles up, dazed, still hurting.

LANE
Gut them, I'll fucking gut them-

Fenn strikes Lane hard.

FENN
THEY'RE CROSSING THE HIGHWAY, LET'S GO!

FORD EXPLORER brakes hard. Janitor at the wheel, ready to drive. Fenn and Lane rush into the truck.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

Seth and Chloe in the run of their lives. Navigating through the congested construction zone. Everything's a mess.

Seth, frantic, looks at his watch. 2:01

Chloe suddenly spots the pitch-black Ford Explorer racing out the faculty lot. Lane in the back, pointing them out.

CHLOE

SHIT!

SETH

C'MON!

NEXT MOMENT

Seth and Chloe making their way around the grid lock and construction. Horns HONK as they keep running. Drivers swerve, nearly hitting them.

Seth looks back. The black Explorer's swerving through the cluster mess. In moments, it'll be right on them.

Chloe spots the gridlock. They're trapped in the middle of a highway.

CHLOE

What now?!

Seth turns around. Looks for anything. There it is:

THE HONDA MOTORCYCLE DEALERSHIP

EXT. DEALERSHIP - NEXT MOMENT

DUDE stands beside a new 970 Enduro Hawk, kickstand down. Revs it up. Likes the sound. Salesman's ready with the big pitch.

SALESMAN

Dual exhaust this year, very capable for off-road.

DUDE

Yeah, I just don't know if I like the color.

Seth out of nowhere, jumps onto the bike.

SETH

Color sucks!

Floors down on the shifter, takes off.

SALESMAN

HEY!

Seth tears out onto the highway where Chloe jumps on.
Salesman runs off after him.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)

You little prick, get back here!

GUNSHOT makes him dive to the ground.

ON FENN

In the SUV with Janitor and Lane. FIRES another shot.

SETH

Ducks the bullet, floors the bike through the heavy
traffic congestion. WORK CREW spots him coming on hard,
waves him off.

Seth breaks through the road work. Jumps a plot of dirt.
Chloe holds on hard as they hit the pavement.

Fenn's devious iPHONE falls from Seth's pocket. SMASHES
dead to the ground.

INT. VAN - SAME

Clark at the wheel. Reacts to the sudden chirp on his
iPhone's IM: PBR OFFLINE

EXT. ROAD - SAME

THE SUV

Busting through the clog of traffic. Crashes through
road barriers. Nearly puts a worker on the front bumper.

INT. SUV

No more bullets in the Lorcin. Fenn throws the gun into
the back seat, dials on Lane's secured cell phone.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Seth and Chloe on the bike. Zipping, navigating through the fat traffic.

CHLOE
THIS IS WORSE THAN THE LINCOLN TUNNEL!

Seth knows it, looks for another way out. Sees it.

SETH
HOLD ON!

They take a sharp, right turn through a stripmall. Suburban skaterats jump out of their path.

THE SUV FOLLOWS

Slips through the alley. Side mirrors cut off at the small, narrow space.

INT. SUV

Fenn on Lane's cell phone. Controlled rage.

INT. VAN

Killer Clark sees his iPhone pulse. UNIDENTIFIED CALLER. He's reluctant to take it. Will only respond to Fenn.

EXT. ALLEY

Seth rides the bike through the strip mall's long, skinny alley. Chloe has both arms around him. Takes a look behind.

The SUV, crashing through boxes and trash cans. Will ram them.

CHLOE
Can't we go any faster?!

SETH
They have a governor attached, it'll only go to third! SHIT!

GARBAGE TRUCK!

Seth turns the bike inward. Darts through the small space of truck and wall!

COMES OUT THE OTHER SIDE

Trash cans right there. They smash through them. Ugly but efficient.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

SUV roars up to the truck. Brakes hard.

INT. SUV

Lane eats leather seat. Fenn braces as the cell phone drops to the floor mat.

EXT. ALLEY

Sanitation worker comes out his truck, motions for the Janitor to reverse his SUV.

Lane sticks his head out the window. Lorcin aimed.

LANE
MOVE THAT PIECE OF SHIT!

Worker. Will do. Runs over to the wheel.

EXT. ALLEY

Seth and Chloe roar up to a fence, nearly become part of it. Seth skids the bike hard. Takes off back onto the street.

WHIP PAN: THE GARBAGE TRUCK

Pulling away as the SUV resumes its chase.

INT. SUV

Fenn recovers the cell phone. Dials again.

EXT. STREET

Seth running reds. Scrambling through intersection traffic. Can now make out the distant corner of J.C. Mitchell Elementary.

INT. VAN

Clark looks at his watch. One minute til execution. He takes a final glance at little Tara. Teacher's beginning to corral the kids back into class.

PHONE pulsates once again.

EXT. STREET

Seth going full throttle. Two blocks away.

EXT. ALLEY

SUV tears out of it. Back onto street. Sidelines a Nissan Maxima.

INT. SUV

Fenn on the phone. Eager, vicious eyes.

FENN
Pick up, you psycho.

INT. VAN

Clark kills a final potato chip. Answers the phone.

CLARK
Instillation, identify.

INT. SUV

Fenn on the phone.

FENN
PBR Streetgang. Execute.

INT. VAN

CLARK
Confirmed.

Clark clicks off. Grips that lethal, telescopic Glock.

EXT. STREET - SAME

Seth brakes at the corner of the elementary school. Hard eyes on everything. The girls skipping rope. The bored security. The lines of second graders.

THE BLACK VAN parked at the fence!

Seth spots his sister on the monkey bars. Upside down, laughing.

 SETH
 (to Chloe)
 My sister on the monkey bars! Take her
 to the front of the school!

Chloe slides off the bike, starts into a hard sprint. Hits the fence. Jumps over it.

ON SETH

Stares down the van. Can barely make the barrel of a Glock poised out the black tint.

 SETH (CONT'D)
 (breathless)
 Bastard.

He revs up the bike. Floors it.

INT. VAN

Clark aims hard. Gets his sites on little Tara. Kids in the way. In three seconds, he'll have a clean shot.

EXT. STREET

Seth takes the bike full throttle. Homing in on the black van.

INT. SUV

Lane can see him from three blocks away.

 LANE
 There he is!

JANITOR

The mission's compromised, we have to
exfil.

FENN

Only after I finish this. Now go!

EXT. STREET

Seth tears across an intersection. Going full force
towards the black van.

INT. VAN

Clark with his eye to the site. Tara's now in full
visibility. Finger rubs against the trigger. Suddenly
spots Chloe heading up to Tara.

MOTORCYCLE REV. Clark removes his eye from the site.

SETH RIGHT THERE!!!

JUMPS FROM THE BIKE AS IT SMASHES INTO THE VAN'S SIDE!

SHATTERS GLASS

Clark falls back, bracing from the collision. Glock
drops to the floor.

EXT. PLAYGROUND

Tara giggles upside down. Chloe suddenly snatches hold
of her. Runs her off the playground.

TARA

Let go of me!

CHLOE

It's okay! I'm with Seth, your brother!

TARA

I don't give a crap! Let me go!

Tara claws and kicks for freedom.

Teachers and security alerted. People screaming.
Faculty starts towards her.

ON SETH

Bruised from his spill. Sees Clark desperately trying to recover from the abrupt smash. Van door's swung partially open.

Seth stumbles up. KICKS the door into Clark's head before he can reach for the modified Glock.

INT. SUV

Janitor speeding hard for Seth --

FENN

Kill them both.

-- and floors the van.

EXT. SCHOOL PERIMETER

Seth struggles to get to the dropped Glock. He's suddenly, viciously grabbed by a bloodthirsty Clark. Bloody head wound from Seth's door smash.

CLARK

Fucking punk.

As Clark fumbles and gets his hand around the Glock. Suddenly freezes as the two tons of SUV charging towards them.

Seth gives a final kick to Clark's face. Gets free. Dives for cover:

THE SUV SMASHES INTO THE VAN!!!

Impact shatters recess hour. Automotive guts and glass spill over. The stunned teachers and kids who haven't yet fled are now doing so.

IN THE SUV

Janitor, KO'd at the wheel. A constant, eerie drip-drop of fuel leaks.

Lane, coughing in the back. Bashed up but alive.

GAIL FENN

Face bruised from the dashboard. Bloody lip. Looks through the splintered glass at the lanky form of Seth Deacon. Already running through the playground.

Whatever dazed grogginess slips away at the hate she has for this little shit. Kicks open the door.

ON SETH

Running hard through the playground.

FENN

Heads over to the van. Ignores the dead body of Clark. Recovers his glistening 9mm. FIRES silencer shots.

They ping hard on the monkey bars, metallic slides. Missing Seth by inches.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - NEXT MOMENT

Chloe runs with Tara in her arms.

WHIP PAN -- TO YVONNE DEACON'S HONDA

Turning into the rotunda. Having answered Seth's cryptic message about picking up Tara. Scrambles out of her car at the sight of a stranger clutching her screaming daughter.

YVONNE

GET YOUR DAMN HANDS OFF MY DAUGHTER!

ON SETH

Tearing out from an open walkway. Screams out:

SETH

MOM, GET IN THE CAR!

YVONNE

SETH?!

SETH

GET IN THE FUCKING HONDA, MOM!

Seth grabs his mother before she can react. Chloe gets Tara into the rear seats.

INT. HONDA

Everyone in. Seth, sweat pouring down his face. Goes to the wheel.

GUNSHOT. Cracks the windshield. Everyone SCREAMS.

Seth fires the car into hard reverse.

EXT. SCHOOL ROTUNDA

Fenn comes onto the walkway. Fires THREE MORE. Pings the hood, kills a headlight.

INT. HONDA - HARD REVERSE

Chloe cradles Tara in the backseat.

YVONNE
WHO IS THAT?!

SETH
My new guidance counsellor. Hang on.

EXT. SCHOOL ROTUNDA

Honda does a mean 180. Peels out all over the grass of J.C. Mitchell Elementary.

ON FENN

They're getting away. Turns about face. Starts across the lawn.

INT. HONDA

Seth, trembling from sheer adrenaline. Floors Yvonne's Civic onto the main road.

YVONNE
(facing Tara)
Honey, are you all right?

Tara nods. Yvonne looks at Chloe.

CHLOE
I'm Chloe.

YVONNE
(blown away)
Yvonne Deacon.

TARA
Where are we going?

EXT. ROAD

Honda spitting out tire tread on the road.

Fenn fires the last rounds. Sudden fear, incredulity in her face. Seth's not turning back.

INT. HONDA

All between Seth and Fenn. He struggles to keep the car straight. 50 mph charging into:

FENN

Slams onto the hood! Face pressed up against the shattered windshield. For a moment, they're eye to eye.

Fenn plunges a hand through the glass. Grips Seth's throat. Even here, even now, she's aiming to choke the life out of him.

Yvonne, maternal instinct. Fucking bitch, you leave my son alone. Pulls the EMERGENCY BRAKE.

ON THE STREET

Fenn goes flying backwards. Slams onto the pavement, head-first. Looks bad, is bad.

IN THE HONDA

Seth staring in shock, anticipation. Fenn's not moving.

SETH

Mom, take the wheel.

Seth starts out the car.

YVONNE AND CHLOE

Where are you going?!

SETH

Take Tara to the hospital.

TARA

I'm not hurt.

YVONNE

Seth, you're not going out there!

SETH

Mom. I'll be all right. Just get her out of here.

A small moment between them. Seth gives a thankful look to Chloe in the backseat. Smacks the door shut.

EXT. STREET - NEXT MOMENT

Sound of police and fire sirens in the distance.

Seth, on guard, cautiously approaches Fenn as Yvonne's Honda puttters away like a pathetic cripple.

Seth crouches down. Sweeps up the Glock 9mm. Hands trembling, he goes to check the clip.

FENN (O.S.)

Don't bother checking.

ON FENN

Still lying on the pavement. Beaten up, bloody.

FENN (CONT'D)

There's only one bullet left. Trust me, I know.

Seth regards this. Moves close to her. She takes a hard breath. Glances up at him.

FENN (CONT'D)

Are you going to kill me, Seth?

Seth can't answer.

Fenn listens to the sirens grow louder. Reacts from the pain.

FENN (CONT'D)

I'd like to see you try. I really would.

Seth has no problem pointing that gun into her face. Fenn studies the slight fear, uncertainty in his eyes. A sinister scowl.

FENN (CONT'D)

So pathetic.

Before Seth can absorb this: the skid of police tires. Behind him, a SHERIFF'S SEDAN brakes hard. OFFICER comes out, gun on Seth:

OFFICER
Drop your weapon now!

Fenn's grin dissolves. Begins acting the part.

FENN
He's going to kill me! He tried
assassinating Senator Balantine!

SETH
That's a lie, she's the killer!

OFFICER
I SAID DROP YOUR WEAPON!

Seth won't relinquish. Wants to pull the trigger and
take apart Fenn.

Fenn struggles to shout it:

FENN
Officer! My name's Gail Fenn, I'm a
guidance counsellor at Deerbrook High!
This young man's one of my own, severely
troubled-

SETH
SHUT UP!

FENN
He's psychotic, he's already shot a cop!
He'll kill us both!

OFFICER
DROP YOUR WEAPON OR I WILL FIRE!

Seth, seething. Doesn't want to let her win.

Fenn looks up at him. A steely, smooth grin barely
permeates. Seth, exhausted. Has no choice but to
finally throw the weapon down.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
ON THE GROUND! FACE TO THE FLOOR!

Seth reluctantly complies. Lies face-down. His eye line
now in sync with Fenn's.

Meanwhile...

EXT. SCHOOL PERIMETER - SAME

Lane, bruised and limping, hauls ass through suburban backyards and sidewalk shrubs.

Leaves behind a burning SUV ready to explode.

EXT. STREET - SAME

Officer, gun ready, approaches Seth and Fenn.

OFFICER

(to Fenn)

Ma'am, are you injured? Are you hurt?

Fenn squirms, fakes it well.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Just lie still, I'm calling in an ambulance.

FENN

Thank you.

SETH

You bitch.

Officer puts a firm boot on Seth's back.

OFFICER

Shut your mouth!

Holsters his firearm, goes to retrieve the Glock 9mm. As he does --

THE SUV EXPLODES

Booms across the block.

Jolts the Officer. Fenn's cue to viciously LEG SWEEP the man. Cop crashes to the pavement. Fenn kicks his face. Cold-cocks him. And scrambles for the Glock.

SETH

NO!!!

They both dive for it. HANDS grab at the same time. Interlock. Seth SCREAMS, rolling on top of her. She SCREAMS right back. Headbutts him. One more will kill.

A trigger suddenly pulls. A shot FIRES.

CLOSE ON SETH'S FACE

Stunned in the moment. Was it him?

ON FENN

Wearing that sinister face. But slowly dissolving. Stares down at her smart Calvin Klein blouse. Now stained in fresh blood.

An incredulous silence as she spots her own finger pressed on the trigger. Engaged by Seth's grasp. Accidental discharge.

A strange wonder transforms in her eyes.

Seth slowly lets go as Fenn falls to the pavement beside him. She has to smile a little. Puts a hand on his swollen forehead from the headbutt.

FENN

(breathless)

I told you...

Fenn stares at him a final moment. Big sister to a kid brother:

FENN (CONT'D)

... by the end of the day... you'll have killed someone.

Seth regards this. Almost sadly.

Fenn gazes at him a final moment.

Beat.

Eyes freeze. And she dies.

HARD ON SETH

Staring back. Something quiet and powerful about the moment. Throws the gun away. Backs off. Tuned out to the roar of new sirens.

For now, he just lies back. Stares into the Autumn sun. And closes his eyes.

CRANING AWAY...

Leaving him in the middle of the street. Next to a dead assassin and a blood-stained detention slip.

FADE OUT

Beat.

UP FROM BLACK:

A SLOPPY BURRITO FILLING FRAME

Belching with cheese and beans. Mall variety.

INT. ROHOBA MALL FOOD COURT - MONTH LATER

Seth stands at the counter of Taco Kingdom. Bruises and scars healed. New hair cut. Better.

Counts out the eight bucks he's blowing on this questionable Mexican and its processed guac.

Bored GIRL at the register. Has the job for pot money. Gives him the once over. Realizes.

GIRL
You're that guy.

Seth barely reacts.

GIRL (CONT'D)
(delighted)
How does it feel being on Larry King?

SETH
Beats Tyra.

Girl smiles, cute in her braces. Hands Seth back his change. Makes sure their hands touch. She motions to the sauce selections.

GIRL
(flirt)
Hottie or Spicy Extreme?

Before he can answer, Chloe grabs his hand. Like Seth, recovered and looking good.

CHLOE
Don't answer, it's a trick question.

She pulls Seth away.

Girl, bummed. Goes back to restocking napkins.

DINING PATIO - NEXT MOMENT

Chloe and Seth find a seat before a mall fountain.
Pennies sparkle in the water.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Fame sucks. One news shot of the month,
you're suddenly Bon Jovi.

SETH
Bon Jovi?

CHLOE
All right, bad analogy.

They set their food down, take their seats.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
I'm just saying it'd be nice to steal a
pair of jeans without Fox News ready with
a mic.

SETH
We don't steal jeans anymore. We buy
them.

Chloe regards this. Nods with some humility.

CHLOE
We buy them.

Seth grins. Holds his Coke up to her.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
To mall food and straight Cs.

Chloe clinks cups.

SETH
God bless America.

They take sips. Chloe stirs her Panda Express noodles
around. Has to ask it:

CHLOE
You still think about her, don't you?

SETH
Every thirty seconds.

Chloe looks at him.

SETH (CONT'D)

Weird thing about it. I never had anyone challenge me as much as she did. It's like she almost wanted me to succeed.

CHLOE

Yeah, if she wasn't a covert assassin bitch, you could have nominated her for Mentor of the Year.

SETH

She had her job, I had mine.

Chloe thinks about this. Takes a bite of her chow mein. Spits it out.

CHLOE

Panda Express dipshits, I wanted chicken, not shrimp!

SETH

It's okay, just send it back.

CHLOE

Send it back, I'll kick their fast food asses.

SETH

Hey. Look at me. Focus on my eyes.
(gets her attention)
Deep breaths. It's okay.

Chloe absorbs this. Indeed, Seth has taken some cues from Fenn.

SETH (CONT'D)

Just send it back.

Chloe stalls. Sighs a bit.

CHLOE

Bitch-One to Base.

SETH

You're not Bitch One. You're sensitive and misunderstood.

CHLOE

That's what the shrink keeps telling me.

Seth grins. Makes her smile, too.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Be right back.

She rises up with the shrimp chow mein. Heads off, leaving Seth alone with his jumbo burrito and thoughts.

Beat.

HUMAN SHADOW suddenly lengthens on Seth's table. Skaterat proportions.

DUDE (O.S.)

Yo, dude. You Seth Deacon?

Seth, head down in his burrito. Doesn't stare up at the kid.

SETH

That's me.

DUDE (O.S.)

Wow. Awesome. You think I can have your autograph?

Seth takes a moment, wipes his face with a napkin.

SETH

You got a pen?

Looks up, realizes the dude is LANE. Ducked down in a baseball cap.

DUDE

Steel tip.

Lane spins the stab pen like a shuriken. Goes to kill. Seth jumps back as the steel tip smashes through the table.

Puma-fast, Lane swipes the pen past Seth's stunned face. Goes for the jugular. Seth ducks another lethal pass.

Thinking fast, Seth grabs an old man's decaf. Throws it in Lane's face. The young operative SCREAMS. Whips around --

A FOOD TRAY SLAMS HIS FACE

Lane crashes onto the ground. Slams his head on the marble tile. Out cold.

Face covered in chicken chow mein.

HARD ON SETH

Recovering, blown away. Stares across at:

CHLOE

Holding the food tray from Panda Express. A titan in black mascara and Sex Pistols tee shirt.

CHLOE

That's the one thing I truly hate about
the food court: all the fucking assholes.

She throws the tray down.

SOUNDTRACK: Sex Pistols' My Way.

SLAM TO BLACK

END CREDITS