

# POPULAR

Written by

Hannah Hafey & Kaitlin Smith

Jack Greenbaum  
The Arlook Group  
[jgreenbaum@arlookgroup.com](mailto:jgreenbaum@arlookgroup.com)

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH GYM - PROM NIGHT

Ill-fitting tuxedos, bedazzled dresses and desperately covered up pimples litter the room. The stench of expectation is masked only by Axe Body spray.

COOL KIDS pour vodka into the punch bowl as WALLFLOWERS shift in their seats at the stag table watching the dance floor.

The music cuts out to the distinctive clink of a fork on glass. On stage stands SEÑOR SULLIVAN, a late 30's white dude with a hacky fade in his hair in a desperate attempt to be hip. We can't hear what he says but we see him ramble enthusiastically at the microphone.

OLLIE (V.O.)

That's Señor Sullivan. He's trying to "organically" work his own high school experience into a night that's supposed to be all about us.

All you have to know is that back when America's hot button issue was *Shakespeare in Love* winning best picture, Sullivan was popular. But who cares? Just like Gwyneth Paltrow became Goop, Señor Sullivan became old, which means there is no room for him in our story.

We see OLLIE ST. JOHN, a cute twink, impeccably dressed in an emerald tux and a lavender orchid boutonniere that he no doubt gave to himself. He studies the room.

OLLIE (V.O.)

In case you're illiterate or just hopelessly straight, my name is Ollie St. John, editor of the Harrington Herald *and* the Harrington Underground: the reigning Gossip Girl of all that I see. And I see *all*. Because high school is better than peak TV. It's prestige, it's real, it's raw, and it's *free*.

We see JACKIE POWERS at the stag table, uncomfortably stuffed into her dress, hoping to get through the night unnoticed.

OLLIE (V.O.)

What? Was I *not* supposed to let the people in on when Jackie Powers let a Golden Retriever lick peanut butter off her snatch?

We pan over to CHRISTIAN KATZ, a cocky bro teaching a fellow BRO how to butt-chug through very explicit hand motions.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Or how about when Christian Katz  
got gonorrhoea and the only people  
who had to get checked were Madison  
McDonald and her *little sister*  
Chloe? Not very *Christian* of him,  
if you ask me.

We search the crowd before finding HARPER WEST, the epitome of high school chic. This girl was *born* for teen popularity.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Without a doubt, my prize subject  
has always been Harper West.

Harper is teen-girl-hot in a way that will one day mature into beauty. And usually Harper would love that compliment but tonight she's busy brooding, swilling her punch.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I have spent four years dragging  
Harper through my gossip column  
without an ounce of pity or regret.  
And why not? Harper was the most  
popular girl at Harrington High.  
*Someone* needed to toughen her up.

Back on stage, Sr. Sullivan finishes laughing at his own joke.

SR. SULLIVAN

And that's why I can say with  
*personal knowledge*, how much Prom  
King and Queen will mean to you.  
Cherish it guys!

Señor Sullivan chokes up on his moment of indulgent self-reflection, then lifts up two plastic crowns.

OLLIE (V.O.)

And here we are, the moment no one  
could've anticipated, but has  
seemed inevitable ever since Ava  
*LaMonte* arrived at Harrington High.

Hard cut to: AVA LaMONTE, an adorable ingenue with an edge, dressed to the nines, listening attentively in the front row. The BAND gives a light drum roll as Señor Sullivan fumbles to open the envelope, milking every second.

SR. SULLIVAN

This year's Harrington Queen is--

We freeze on a very unflattering Señor Sullivan.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I'm going to stop us right here,  
because to truly understand the  
deliciousness of what will happen  
next, you need to understand how  
Ava LaMonte got *here* ready to  
accept Harper West's crown.

We see a frozen Ava, perfectly poised and ready to contort her face into faux surprise.

We cut to the frozen, unhappy face of Harper West, *former* Most Popular Girl of Harrington High™.

INT. FORMAL USA DRESSING ROOM - DAY - 4 MONTHS AGO

Harper stares at herself in the dressing room mirror as some shitty top 40 plays over the store's speakers.

Harper is constantly seen as a hot girl more mature than other teens, but right now she looks young and vulnerable. She wears a glittery prom dress most girls couldn't pull off, but she's not sure about it. She sucks her stomach in.

On the stool in the corner sits a small plastic tiara. Harper picks it up. She takes a deep breath and sets it on her head. Her face instantly breaks into an genuine smile when--

APRIL (O.S.)

Stop jerking off to your reflection  
and get your boney butt out here!

Harper snaps out of it. She adjusts her crown confidently.

HARPER

Is that how you speak to your  
future queen?

INT. FORMAL USA - CONTINUOUS

APRIL EAGAN, spazzy but loveable, perches on a couch. She rocks a flapper dress complete with a feathered headband and a long cigarette holder a la Holly Golightly.

The dressing room door swings open to reveal: Harper West, Most Popular Girl of Harrington High™.

Harper holds an elegant pose, which she drops the second she sees April. Harper tosses the crown on the couch.

HARPER

Oh my god April, I know *The Great Gatsby* Spark Notes changed your life but this is prom, not a costume party.

APRIL

Open your eyes Harper, prom *is* a costume party. Right now you're dressed as Prom Queen, I'm the Cool Lit Chick and Bertie--

BERTIE CRUZ, a big butch lesbian, wanders in, busy with the buttons on her rad lady suit.

APRIL (CONT'D)

...is a dope power butch and my future prom date.

(kisses Bertie)

Even if she hasn't asked me yet.

BERTIE

It's *January*. We should be soaking up the last few hours of winter break. But instead we're *here*--

HARPER

Whenever people *decide* it's prom season these racks will be as empty as Ollie St. John's cold black heart.

BERTIE

Still salty about his latest column?

HARPER

(exasperated)

I didn't get a boob job! I can't even get a part-time job!

Harper turns to the mirror. April appraises.

APRIL

Let's see it again with the tiara.

Harper hands it over. April puts it on Harper's head.

BERTIE

You brought a crown with you?

HARPER

*Obviously* the Homecoming Crown is different from the Prom Tiara but--

BERTIE

No, I meant like, isn't it... a little... presumptuous?

Harper and April share a laugh off that preposterous thought.

APRIL

Babe, Harper *will* win. She doesn't have a choice. It's who she *is*.

Harper shrugs in agreement, applying lipstick in the mirror.

HARPER

I technically *could* lose. I'd just be surprised.

Harper blows herself a kiss in the mirror.

EXT. OUTLET MALL - FORMAL USA STOREFRONT - DAY

Harper, April and Bertie walk out with bags slung over their shoulders. We're somewhere in Connecticut, probably.

Now in civvies: Harper sports a Columbia sweatshirt, Bertie is butch-chic in a short sleeve button-up despite the January weather, April is dressed performatively in all black.

HARPER

So is this health-goth phase more than just a Winter Break look?

APRIL

This isn't health-goth, it's beach-witch. And it's not a phase. This is my *college* look.

Harper rolls her eyes, then gestures to her own sweatshirt.

HARPER

This better be my college look or I'm going to University of My Mom's Basement.

APRIL

You *will so totally* get in--

HARPER

*Whatever!* Who cares about next year! It's second semester senior year! It's our civic duty to *live it up*. These four months will be the *best ya ever seen--*

APRIL  
Seniors 2019!

BERTIE  
Seniors 2019!

They bump hips. It's Donna and The Dynamos-esque. These guys are real best friends.

SFX: THUNDER

INT. RAINFOREST CAFE - NIGHT

Fake lightning strobes across the Rainforest Cafe. Stuffed tigers emit animatronic roars. Fog filters across the floor.

Under the monkeys and next to the giraffes sits Harper West.

HARPER  
A bottle of champagne, please.

Harper flashes her 1000 watt smile at a teenage WAITRESS with coke-bottle glasses (read: uncool) dressed in a full safari outfit. Her name tag reads RANGER DEB.

RANGER DEB  
We don't have that here. Can I interest you in a Mongoose Mai Tai?

HARPER  
Mai Tais all around. Let's be *wild*.

RANGER DEB  
...can I see your I.D.?

Harper rummages through her purse, then feigns surprise.

HARPER  
I must have left it in Brooklyn... where I live. I'm 23, 1995, year of the Pig!  
(reading her name tag)  
Think you can make an exception, *Ranger Deb*?

Harper repeats that same disarming smile. Ranger Deb caves.

RANGER DEB  
Three Mai Tais, coming right up.

Ranger Deb leaves and Harper's smile turns mischievous as she looks across the table and winks.

HARPER  
Suck it, Dad! You owe me ten dollars, *and* an apology.

Across from her sit SUSAN and DEAN WEST. They're hot parents straight out of a catalog. Hotness begets hotness - MLK Jr.

DEAN

I don't know whether to be proud or scared of your confidence.

Ranger Deb returns with the Mai Tais. Susan raises her glass.

SUSAN

To the end of high school, bitches!

HARPER

Mom!

Harper laughs and side eyes Ranger Deb as if to say *not while she's still here*. Ranger Deb skulks away in embarrassment.

DEAN

(toasting his glass)

To our--

Suddenly a THUNDER STORM breaks out. Other PATRONS of the Rainforest Cafe clap. Dean patiently waits. Once it passes--

DEAN (CONT'D)

To our amazing daughter, the--

*THUNDER STORM!*

We track over to the other side of the Rainforest Cafe, where who should we see but AVA LaMONTE, in a safari outfit, staring at the Wests as she flicks a switch labeled THUNDERSTORM on and off. Every time Dean tries to speak.... *THUNDER!*

This Ava looks *totally different* than Prom-Ava. She's mousey with glasses and a ponytail. A movie version of a "loser".

She watches as Harper laughs at Dean. Watches as Harper tosses her silky hair over her shoulder. Ava tosses her oily ponytail over her own shoulder in a sad imitation.

She watches as Harper's perfect lips part to drink her orange Mai Tai. Ava touches her own lips absentmindedly when--

RANGER DEB

I slipped a Dulcolax in her Mai Tai. Think she's a puker or a shitter?

AVA

*Again?* Deb, why!

RANGER DEB

This bitch goes to my rival school  
and steals the Best Actress Cappie  
every year. She's not even good,  
the judges are just repressed!

Ava takes a step toward Harper as if to warn her, when RANGER  
TODD, a self-serious manager, stops her.

RANGER TODD

Not so fast, Ranger Ava! A kid  
vomited in the bush babies again.

Ranger Todd hands Ava a mop then flips the thunderstorm  
switch off and gives Ava and Deb a suspicious look.

RANGER TODD (CONT'D)

I've heard you both call *kookaburra*  
wings "chicken". People don't come  
here to eat chicken. They come here  
to go on a jungle safari.

Back at the table: the Wests eat their jungle fare.

SUSAN

Seems like only yesterday you were a  
ninth grader, practically in diapers--

Harper is saved by her boyfriend, DIEGO OLVERA (17), who  
rushes up to the table and slides into the booth.

DIEGO

Sorry, I'm late! Practice ran long.

Diego is that high school hunk that "losers" have a crush on  
because he takes the time to smile at them. Right now he's in  
a sweaty lacrosse uniform but he makes it look good. He  
shakes Dean's hand and gives Harper a quick cheek peck.

HARPER

You're going to blow my cover.  
Everyone here thinks I'm a 23-year-  
old Brooklynite on Safari.

DIEGO

I could be 23.

HARPER

Adults don't play lacrosse.

DIEGO

This adult will. The coach at  
Fordham said he has his eye on me.

(MORE)

DIEGO (CONT'D)

I'm going to apply early next year.  
Maybe we could both be New Yorkers?

Diego looks at Harper expectantly.

HARPER

I haven't gotten in yet, don't jinx it.

Harper takes a huge, annoyed bite of her Rainforest Burger.

DEAN

Speaking of New York, I pulled a few strings and got you an alumni call with Columbia this week. Just remember to slip in how much you love the school and what you're excited for next year.

DIEGO

I can't wait for college. Dorms, parties, midnight breakfast, no parents!

(to Dean and Susan)

No offense.

SUSAN

Parents are lame.

DEAN

Parties rule.

DIEGO

I just can't wait to get out of high school and start my *life*. Right, Harper?

HARPER

Why can't we all just live in the now? You know? *Carpe diem*. Ever heard of her?

She starts to look sicker and sicker. It's Dulcalax o'clock.

HARPER (CONT'D)

It's like, why not enjoy high school? It's always been really good to me. Best ya ever seen...

Harper gags. Ranger Todd eagle eyes it from across the room--

RANGER TODD

Not in the jungle!

Harper beelines for the door.

EXT. RAINFOREST CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Harper makes it less than a foot out of the door before she vomits bright orange Mai Tai EVERYWHERE...

...onto the feet of a *disgusted* Ranger Deb on a vape break, making her bad day even worse. Harper looks up pathetically.

HARPER

I'm not really 23, Ranger Deb.

RANGER DEB

Duh! I'm legally blind, not stupid!  
But it doesn't matter. My Mom says  
my life only gets better from here.  
Dumb hot girls like you always peak  
in high school.

The words reverberate in Harper's head as we SMASH TO--

INT. WEST FAMILY LEXUS - NIGHT

Harper zones out in the back seat covered in bright orange Mai Tai vomit. Dean, Susan, and Diego chat convivially, Diego stroking Harper's hand.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Like the Mongoose Mai Tai expelled  
from her body, so too did Harper  
throw up all of her confidence and  
composure that night. Ranger Deb's  
words shattered Harper like the  
first brick thrown at Stonewall.

Speaking of Judy Garland, it's time  
to talk about me.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR LOCKER HALLWAY - DAY

Ollie St. John struts through the crowded hall.

Ollie is way overdressed for high school: he wears well-fitting pants and a button down with a slim tie. He observes STUDENTS like animals in a zoo. Particularly the hot kids, laughing in slow motion, flipping their hair.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I'd spent high school studying  
popularity like a scholar. I knew  
how it walked, talked, laughed,  
moved. I knew it washes over people  
like holy water on a cripple.

(MORE)

OLLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 It clears your skin, boosts your  
 ego and frees you of mortal  
 burdens.

He stops in front of a chart on the wall which reads  
 "WHERE WILL YOU BE NEXT YEAR?"

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 And I also knew I could never have  
 it. So I'd decided to be the next  
 best thing, *an influencer*.

OONA STAMAKOS walks up and sheepishly writes down "UCONN". A  
 pack of GIRLS run up and hug her. The crowd applauds.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 The Ollie St. John Social Treatment is  
 all about PR plus positioning. Take  
 Oona Stamakos. A recovering Horse Girl  
 with a weakness for bedazzled denim and  
 rainbow braces desperate to break into  
 society. Luckily she came to me. All it  
 took was a revamped wardrobe and a well  
 timed game of Truth or Dare.

JERRY RIGGS struts up to the board wearing headphones. He  
 writes down "Chasing the dream in NYC". People cheer.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 Or Jerry Riggs, who was on the fast  
 track for Most Likely To Smell Like  
 Mayonnaise until I broke into  
 Harper's Pumpkin Day Soiree to get  
 his mixtape into the right hands.  
 Harper might be a tastemaker, but I  
 have to tell her *what to taste*.

Ollie walks up to the board and confidently writes  
 "NORTHWESTERN JOURNALISM". Ollie proudly turns around.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 But as our fates hurdled towards  
 our ever looming graduation, I  
 started wondering... to what end?

But everyone has left. Ollie is all *alone*.

INT. HOME EC - DAY

Harper stares into space when suddenly DR. VAJRAYANA zooms  
 into the room, slamming the door behind her.

DR. VAJRAYANA

I'm *Dr. Vajrayana*. You can call me  
*Dr. V!* I know what you're thinking.

(mocking voice)

*Home Economics in 2019? Taught by a  
woman? Isn't that archaic? Is it  
archaic to know how to do your  
taxes? Haggle down a broker's fee?  
Fight with your spouse  
productively?*

(directly at Harper)

You! What do you want to get out of  
this class?

Harper is caught off guard.

HARPER

I thought we'd make cupcakes and  
like, learn how to sew?

DR. V

For your future career as a  
character in *Little Women*?

Dr. V cracks up at her own joke. The class chuckles along.  
Harper frowns, are they laughing at her?

DR. V (CONT'D)

Everyone, please take out your  
winter break homework assignment.

Harper clearly forgot. She immediately turns on the charm.

HARPER

Wow, talk about irony, Dr. V, but I  
must have left my Home-Ec assignment  
at home. I will *totally* get it to  
you first thing tomorrow morning.

Harper flashes her most charming smile, but Dr. V looks at  
Harper with disappointment then turns on her heels--

DR. V

Pop quiz! What's something that can  
make you or break you and once it's  
gone, you can't get back?

KID IN THE BACK

Your virginity!

DR. V

First impressions! And my first  
impression of you is that you came  
here unprepared!

(MORE)

DR. V (CONT'D)

You might be able to coast right now but next year is a whole different ball game. Time to build foundations for the future, people!

Dr. V smiles at the class. Harper's face is set in a panicked grimace. We MATCH CUT TO:

INT. JOURNALISM CLASSROOM - DAY

Harper West's senior portrait is pinned up in the middle of what looks like a conspiracy chart. We pull back to see--

Ollie stands in front of a roll-away chalkboard covered in mock-ups for *The Harrington Underground*. Early superlative predictions, winter break rumors and the quarterly Hottie List surround Harper's central headshot.

MS. KILGALLEN, a middle-aged teacher counting down the years until retirement walks in. Ollie scrambles to flip around the chalkboard, now showing mock-ups for *The Harrington Herald*.

MS. KILGALLEN

Ollie.

OLLIE

Karen.

MS. KILGALLEN

It's Ms. Kilgallen.

OLLIE

And it always will be.

MS. KILGALLEN

(eyeing the chalkboard)

Let's try something new this semester. Focusing on the school paper instead of that gossip rag you run behind my back?

OLLIE

All news is gossip, and all gossip is news. Doesn't matter if it's on TMZ or the Failing New York Times.

Ollie crosses himself and blows a kiss into the sky. Ms. Kilgallen isn't buying it. Ollie shrugs and flips the chalkboard back to the *Harrington Underground*.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

I'll level with you. I've spent the last four years driving Princess Di off the road for a snap of Harrington Royalty. But gossip is time and place, and with the time dwindling and the place fading, I don't know what else I can say.

MS. KILGALLEN

Why not take these last few months to just enjoy high school?

OLLIE

*That's* an oxymoron.

MS. KILGALLEN

Uh-huh, well how about this, if I catch you covering students like a tabloid, I'm firing you as editor.

OLLIE

Is that a threat?

MS. KILGALLEN

It's a *suggestion* to *befriend* kids instead of *reporting* on them. You're cute, smart and frankly, ruthless. There's no reason you shouldn't be *up here*.

Kilgallen taps Harper's nose at the center of the chalkboard.

OLLIE

I'm like Ryan Reynolds in mid-2000's romcoms. I'm hot, I'm here, but it's not my time.

MS. KILGALLEN

Then make it your time. You've given half the students in this school the Ollie St. John Social Treatment. Maybe it's time to treat yourself?

A light bulb goes off in Ollie's brain.

OLLIE

You're always saying you went to Harvard, Karen, but this is the first time I actually believe it.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR LOCKER HALLWAY - DAY

Ollie confidently strides through the locker hall, swerving through incoming students.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Harper and my relationship was very Liz and Dick, except all divorce and no marriage. But in the dog days of senior year, a little weaponized nostalgia can go a long way.

INT. FRONT OFFICE - DAY

Harper holds a stack of flyers as Bertie and April staple a cluster of them on the bulletin board. The flyers read: "*Harrington Drama Presents The Unsinkable Molly Brown: Auditions Tomorrow!*" under which is a drawing of the Titanic sinking.

HARPER

It's just Home-Ec. Like, big whoop.  
It's not indicative of my *whole life*.

Harper takes a flyer and staples it up aggressively. She sighs.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Guys, I think I'm having a quarter-life crisis.

BERTIE

Harper, you're not even 18.

HARPER

My fake ID says I'm 23, at which point I'll be showing off Ollie's gossip pieces like they're trophies of my youth.

As if on cue, Ollie struts in. Harper rolls her eyes and staples up a flyer.

OLLIE

Harper! Funny running into you here.

APRIL

I'm sure it was a *total* coincidence.

OLLIE

Ok so I *might* have followed the trail of Titanic flyers. So! How was break? I heard your New Year's party was truly something to journal about.

HARPER

Oh, were you not there? I guess your invitation got lost in the void of my indifference.

OLLIE

Aw, you'd *kill* to be indifferent to me, wouldn't you?

APRIL

You're scaring Kathy, Ollie.

Ollie eyes KATHY, the shrewd front office lady listening to the whole conversation like she's watching TV.

OLLIE

I think you're doing that all by yourself, Vampyra. If you want to go Winona, your next phase should shade a little less *Beetlejuice* and a little more *Girl, Interrupted*.

APRIL

(for the last time)  
It's *not* a phase!

OLLIE

(back to Harper)  
Speaking of our inextricable bond, as the sun sets on our high school career, why not call a social truce?

Harper looks at Ollie a moment then bursts out laughing.

HARPER

Ollie, Ollie, Ollie, I know we don't always get along but I love that we can share a laugh. Honestly it's a sign of our maturity.

Ollie's eyes narrow. He grabs one of the flyers.

OLLIE

Imagine how *mature* our power-friendship could be. Maybe I could even lend my beautiful tenor to your doomed luxury cruise.

BERTIE

If you were on board, people would jump ship before the iceberg.

OLLIE

Oh, I'm sorry, Bertie, I forgot  
your pronouns were she/her/*bitch*.

Kathy suppresses a snort.

HARPER

Run along now, Ollie, and as usual,  
keep my name off your chapped lips.

Harper goes back to the flyers. Time slows as Ollie watches  
Harper laughing with April and Bertie.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I stared down Harper's perfectly  
symmetrical face and realized my  
four years of accumulated shit could  
not be wiped away with a single wave  
of Dido's white flag. As long as I  
was Ollie St. John, I'd need an  
angle as strong as Faye Dunaway's  
cheek bones to get in with the  
popular crowd.

The door opens and in walks TOVAH SILVERSTEIN, a type-A with  
crazy eyes so intense they might pop out of her head.

TOVAH

(mile-a-minute)

This is the front office! And-- Oh my  
god, and that's Harper, April and  
Bertie! Hey ladies! New student alert!

Tovah steps aside to reveal: a girl we know as Ava LaMonte.  
But no one else knows her at all. Ava bashfully waves.

Harper snatches the flyer out of Ollie's hands and pointedly  
gives it to Ava.

HARPER

Welcome to Harrington, auditions  
are tomorrow. Hope you can come!

Harper smiles her absolute most charming smile. Ava clutches  
the flyer, a huge smile breaking across her face. She stares  
at Harper like she's a celebrity.

AVA

Thank you. I'm--

But Harper is already halfway out the door, followed closely  
by April and Bertie.

Ollie looks wistfully after Harper until he notices that he's not the only one. Ava also gazes longingly after her.

Ollie scrutinizes Ava. The glasses, the hair, the lost look.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Ava LaMonte. Like a movie loser sent from casting heaven. You know, the type of girl who takes off her glasses in the second act and is suddenly Rachael Leigh Cook? *That* was Ava. *That* was my opportunity.

Tovah grabs Ava's hand, leading her back to the hallway.

TOVAH

Now I'll show you the science lab! Caleb Decker set a chemical fire in there this morning but if you close your eyes it kind of smells like s'mores!

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR LOCKER HALLWAY - DAY

Ollie bursts into the hall, catching up with Ava and Tovah.

OLLIE

Wait! Tovah! Harper was just saying how she has a special cameo for you in the play.

Tovah zooms down to Harper, April and Bertie at their lockers.

TOVAH

What is it? Do I drown? I accept! Now that I'm in Drama, you three should totally come to the Student Government's food drive next week! A can of succotash from Harper would go a long way for SGA's PR!

As Harper humors Tovah, Ollie links arms with Ava.

OLLIE

Now *I'm* your tour guide and our first stop is my office--

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Beyond the mops is a relaxation station set up for the janitor. Ollie takes Ava's shoulders and sits her down on a bean bag. Ollie sits on a real chair, backwards.

OLLIE

Hello. What the fuck might you be?

AVA

What's going on? What's it to you?

OLLIE

It's my job to know *everyone*,  
especially a little snack pack  
senior transfer like yourself.  
Ollie St. John, editor of the  
Harrington Herald.

Ollie offers out his hand. Ava eyes it, considering, before  
grabbing it to shake.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

So you met our reigning Queen,  
Harper West. Like what you saw?

AVA

She seems really... nice.

OLLIE

Of course she seems nice, she's  
popular. When you're near popular  
people the sun shines on your face  
and you feel *thankful*. Unless you  
are human sunblock like me.

AVA

My mom says popularity is a mirage.

OLLIE

Your mom must be a loser. But that  
doesn't mean you have to be. Where  
are you from?

AVA

Small town in Utah. This is my  
first real high school.

The gears in Ollie's brain start churning. He paces.

OLLIE

One stop past Nowheresville. Strong  
brand. Backwards cowgirl who just  
walked out of the cornfield.

(off Ava's face)

No, it's cute. For a bit. Then it  
becomes your identity.

(MORE)

OLLIE (CONT'D)

You need to use it like a trampoline to launch yourself into society, then shed this Norma Rae act like a streaker drops a trench coat. With your clean record and ingenue energy, you have a chance to be snatched up by the beautiful people. But you'll need my help.

Ava studies Ollie a moment. The bell rings. But they stay.

AVA

How do you know I even want that?

OLLIE

Please. I saw the look you served Harper in the front office. You want to be just like her. That's where I come in. I'll make introductions and write you up in my column like you're an unreleased Barbra Streisand song.

Ava lets a smile slip out. The noise level outside rises as students flood the halls.

AVA

And what do you want in return?

OLLIE

Bring me along. Invite me to parties, include me at lunch, *normalize me*.

AVA

Why do you need *me*?

OLLIE

I'm damaged goods too proud to make myself over. So I won't. I'll make you over and bring myself along. Consider me your platonic Svengali. So I guess the question is, do you want to spend the last four months of high school at the bottom of the food chain or do you want to spend them on Harper's right hand?

Ava considers for a beat. The noise quiets down outside. Students are back in class.

AVA

When do we start?

OLLIE  
Tomorrow. How's your soprano?

Ollie snatches Ava's flyer and holds it out in front of her:  
*Unsinkable Molly Brown Auditions.*

INT. WEST HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Harper picks at her food. Susan tries to break the silence.

SUSAN  
So, auditions tomorrow. Break a leg? Yours or the competition's?

HARPER  
I don't have competition, Bertie's casting me if I like it or not.

DEAN  
Great! You should mention it in your phone interview.

Harper groans and drops her head down on the table.

HARPER  
Who were the most popular girls in your high schools?

Susan and Dean are both taken aback by the question.

SUSAN  
And why do you assume it wasn't me?

Harper pops up, relieved.

HARPER  
It was you?

SUSAN  
No! Allyson Moorehead. She ran for Class President under the slogan "Ask for Moorehead and ye shall receive." She spanked me in the polls. But I got the last laugh. She dropped out of college, coached Cheer at our high school and lived in her parent's basement until they died and I got to personally foreclose on her house.

Harper looks *shook*. Dean notices.

DEAN

Some people like high school too much. Similar thing happened to my school's queen bee. Except she went to college, got married, had two kids, whole shebang. But ultimately she was dissatisfied. Spent her life dreaming of her glory days.

HARPER

It said all of that in the alumni newsletter?

DEAN

No, her obituary! She put rocks in her pocket Virginia Woolf style and walked into the ocean on the beach where she used to lifeguard.

HARPER

(after a long beat)  
...Can I be excused?

Harper leaves the room. Susan and Dean look at each other.

DEAN

Why do I feel like I *just* gave my kid a complex?

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper flops on her bed. Harper's room is that of a truly loved child. Photos clutter the walls: Harper with her parents, with April and eventually Bertie, with Diego. Homecoming sashes and a Columbia pennant surround her Cappie awards for excellence in high school theater.

But Harper isn't looking at any of that. All Harper is looking at is the ceiling, staring into the void.

SR. SULLIVAN (PRE-LAP)

Look around you. Soon all of this will be gone.

INT. YEARBOOK - DAY

Señor Sullivan stands at the front of the class, which is actually just a half-dozen SENIOR GIRLS including Harper.

SR. SULLIVAN

All you'll be left with is memories.  
Of friends, classes, teachers, and  
most importantly *yourself*.

Sullivan clicks on a projector. A photo of a late 90's teen boy shoots onto the wall. Bleached tips. Puka shell necklace. It's Sullivan's high school yearbook picture. Underneath is the quote: "*I don't care if it's the blue pill or the red pill, I just hope she's on the pill!*"

The whole class grimaces but Sullivan doesn't notice.

SR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

I look up there and say, who *is*  
that adorable hunk?  
(whispering, secretively)  
It's *me!*

Sullivan gazes admiringly at his younger self for a moment.

SR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Without my high school yearbook I  
might have forgotten my sweet duds  
or my long eyelashes or killer  
sense of humor. Because a yearbook  
is a *time capsule*.  
(letting this wisdom drop)  
This class is about preserving who  
you are *now*. Because who knows who  
you'll be next year?

Something catches Harper's eye in the hallway, it's Diego. He waves his hall pass and winks. Harper understands. So does the rest of the class that just watched this interaction.

DARRAH JAY and MIWA TAKAHARA, the type of scary art girls who watch Lars Van Trier movies for fun, scoff in unison.

HARPER

(raising her hand)  
Can I go to the bathroom?

Sullivan holds up a reflective vest with "HALL PASS" written on the back, but as Harper reaches for it, he yanks it back.

SR. SULLIVAN

I want you to come back with one  
detail you want to remember. It can  
be big or small. *Describe it to us.*

Harper gives a strained smile and takes the vest.

INT. GIRLS' BATHROOM - DAY

Harper, now in the reflective yellow vest, slams up against the stall making out with Diego.

Out of the corner of her eye she notices *her detail*: the wall of flyers in the bathroom, more specifically one of *her* faded flyers: a smiling photo of Harper with the words: *Harper? Homecoming? Harrington High? Hell yeah!*

Harper pulls away, deep in thought as Diego kisses her neck.

HARPER

I might shave my head next year.  
Or maybe get white dreads...

DIEGO

Great, babe.

HARPER

So you'd like me bald?

Diego's turn to pull away.

DIEGO

What? No! Do you have alopecia?

HARPER

Why? Would you be repulsed by me?  
You're *really* shallow, Diego.

Harper is *looking* for a fight. Diego starts pacing.

DIEGO

Why are you doing this? I have my game against Davis later. I need confidence! Not... headfuckery!

HARPER

What about me? I have my Columbia call today and do you know what I'm excited for next year? Nothing!

Diego softens and goes to comfort her.

DIEGO

But Columbia is your first choice!

HARPER

I mean, yeah, like in the *abstract*. Like how I talk about getting a septum piercing. It's fun to imagine but I don't actually want to do it. I like how I am.

Diego is truly not following. Harper sighs.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
You're a Junior, you don't understand.

DIEGO  
Calm down, you're going to do great. You're *Harper West*.

HARPER  
Exactly! But who will I be next year? Just some washed up Prom Queen you'll dump for Harper West 2.0.! Chloe McDonald's pretty cute.

Diego grabs Harper's hands reassuringly.

DIEGO  
I can't wait until we're just two dirty college kids *together*, eating midnight breakfast.

Harper yanks her hands away.

HARPER  
What is it with you and midnight breakfast! Eat eggs in the dark and save the tuition!

DIEGO  
You're being crazy, Harper!

Diego pushes past Harper. Harper freezes, allowing this to ring in her ears. The ringing morphs into...

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - DAY

...the dulcet tones of "ZIP ZAP ZOP!", floating out the door to where Ava nervously watches with Ollie over her shoulder.

AVA  
What if I'm not good enough?

OLLIE  
Join stage crew, I don't care. Just get in there and get *collected*.

AVA  
What about you?

OLLIE

They can't see us together yet. I'm social poison.

AVA

Do you really believe that?

Ollie is touched by Ava's sincerity. Then shakes it off.

OLLIE

I've made my bed and I sleep like a baby. But I'll sleep even better once we're popular. Just remember: *be whatever Harper West needs.*

Ollie scoots Ava in the door.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - CONTINUOUS

THEATER KIDS sit in a wooden LIFEBOAT on stage. April sits in the middle holding a script, reading for Molly. The EXTRAS in the lifeboat audition for Bertie, sitting front and center.

KID 1

*We're going to sink!*

KID 2

*We're going to die!*

APRIL

(completely dispassionate)  
*I won't die because I've barely begun to live.*

BERTIE

April, everyone's audition depends on each other. Some energy, please!

APRIL

I'm not auditioning. I'm helping. Be grateful for what you can get!

Just then Harper hustles down the aisle, *extremely* flustered.

HARPER

*Boy problems! Sorry I'm late!*

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Harper grabs a blanket to drape herself in when her phone buzzes: *Reminder: 15 Minutes: Columbia Interview!!!*

Harper throws her phone at the couch in a tantrum. She paces.

AVA (O.S.)  
You dropped this.

Harper jumps, regains her composure. Ava holds up her phone.

HARPER  
More like spiked it. Thanks.

AVA  
Is... something wrong?

HARPER  
Besides everything? I'm late to Bertie's auditions, Diego's mad at me, and I'm getting pit stains from stress over this stupid Columbia interview--

Ava offers a box of tissues, which Harper grabs, stuffing a few under each armpit. She calms down a bit.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
And to cap it all off, I'm totally ranting to a stranger. I'm sorry--

AVA  
I'm freaking out too. Second semester senior year at my first real high school. What could go wrong? I'm Ava.

Harper looks at Ava thoughtfully, considering.

BERTIE (O.S.)  
*Harper*, get your butt into this lifeboat and tell all these first class bitches it'll be okay!

Harper gives Ava an apologetic smile and hustles on stage.

Ava writes her name on the Stage Crew sign up when she realizes she's still holding Harper's phone.

AVA  
Harper you--!

Harper can't hear her, she's up on stage talking to Bertie.

Suddenly the phone rings. Unknown number. Ava thinks fast.

*Ava LaMonte answers the phone.*

KELLY FROM COLUMBIA (V.O.)  
 Harper? This is Kelly, calling from  
 Columbia University. I know I'm a  
 little early, is this a good time?

Ava takes a long beat, staring at Harper on the stage.

AVA  
 ...Yes, this is Harper.

Ava mouths "holy shit" to herself. Takes a deep breath.

Then she *turns it the fuck on*.

AVA (CONT'D)  
 This is a great time. So nice to  
 finally get to talk to you.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 This is where you might ask, what  
 the *Hell-en Hunt* is happening here?  
 Well, fortune favors the bold and  
 it turns out Ava LaMonte is the  
 boldest motherfucker around.

AVA  
 Will you give me a minute to find a  
 quiet space to talk?

Ava hits the MUTE BUTTON and--

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - CONTINUOUS

--rushes out of the stage door to a waiting Ollie.

AVA  
 It's Harper's college interview. I  
 need you as my inside man if she  
 tries to stump me. Can you help me?

Ollie is taken all the way back by Ava's sudden intensity.  
 But his face contorts itself into a grin.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 Because a simpleton might sabotage  
 their rival, but to succeed on  
 their behalf? Honey, *that's*  
 intolerable cruelty.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - BACKSTAGE - LATER

Harper panics. She flips couch cushions for her phone.

HARPER

Does anyone know where my phone is?

Ava comes running back into the theater.

AVA

Harper! Can I talk to you--

HARPER

I have an interview in 5 minutes  
and I can't find my phone--

AVA

It's about the interview.

Ava is back to her Little Bo-Peep schtick. Ava holds up Harper's phone.

AVA (CONT'D)

I kind of sort of... did your  
interview for you.

Ava smiles innocently. Harper goes white with anger.

HARPER

You...

AVA

I know, I know, I'm sorry, I  
obviously shouldn't have done it,  
but it went really well!

HARPER

Who the fuck--

AVA (CONT'D)

Your dad talked you up so I  
barely did anything--

HARPER

Holy shit.

AVA (CONT'D)

But you're right, I'm so  
sorry, it was crazy of me.  
I'll call the school and  
apologize!

A long beat. Suddenly, a TEXT DING. Harper looks down:

DAD: JUST GOT AN EXTREMELY ENTHUSIASTIC CALL FROM KELLY AT  
COLUMBIA. YOU NAILED IT! LOVE YOU!

Harper looks back up at Ava, who is braced for the worst.

HARPER

Apologize?! Ava! You're my *angel!*

Harper grabs Ava in a bear hug. Ava *beams*.

HARPER (CONT'D)

We have to celebrate! What are you doing Friday? You should come to the bonfire!

EXT. WOODS - BONFIRE - NIGHT

A huge bonfire illuminates a clearing next to a stream.

It also illuminates a ton of DRUNK TEENS partying their faces off despite the cold weather. Teens are invincible!

Bottles and cans litter the ground as shitty house music blasts into the trees. Tovah frantically cleans up trash.

TOVAH

Come on guys, partying is cool but littering is not!

Just as she says it Jerry Riggs throws a liquor bottle into the fire, shattering and causing a small explosion.

TOVAH (CONT'D)

Stop! Drop! Roll!

Tovah instantly stop-drop-and-rolls. No one else does.

JERRY

Best Ya Ever Seen! Seniors 2019!

INT. ANCIENT VOLVO STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Ollie white-knuckles the wheel as he drives slowly down a dirt road. He sees the small explosion through the trees.

OLLIE

I don't think this is a good idea.

Next to him sits Ava, girlishly primping herself in the mirror, with more confidence than we've seen from her.

AVA

You wanted a party. *Here's* a party.

Ollie parks the car, revealing the scene.

OLLIE

It's too soon. If they see you with me they'll think you're my spy--

AVA  
 No, they'll *think* I'm--  
 (putting on a voice)  
 A simple new girl from Utah who  
 just met a nice gay boy.

Ollie looks impressed if a little taken aback.

EXT. WOODS - BONFIRE - CONTINUOUS

Harper stands at the beer-pong table across from Bertie, whose hands are behind her back. April stands behind Bertie, her arms fed through Bertie's, playing and gesturing for her.

BERTIE  
 Are you sure you didn't do the  
 interview in a disassociated state?  
 Maybe "Ava" is your Tyler Durden.

April takes a shot for Bertie, not even hitting the table.

HARPER  
 For the last time, Bertie. I've  
 made out in *Fight Club* six times  
 and have never seen the movie.

Harper takes a shot, sinking it.

ACROSS THE PARTY - Ollie takes a deep breath before he takes Ava's hand and leads her through the social scene, weaving through the crowd and pointing out notables.

OLLIE  
 Okay Utah, listen up. There's a  
 hierarchy to teen royalty and to  
 infiltrate the high court you need  
 to understand how it functions.  
 Lucky for you, I'm a first-rate  
 guide to who's who in this cast and  
 crew. Starting with Tiffany Beaver,  
 at your twelve o'clock.

Above the crowd rises a horizontal TIFFANY BEAVER, currently being bench pressed by a BRO.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
 Cheer Captain Beta Bitch who might  
 have had a shot at Alpha if not for  
 Rhonda Ross who dropped her on a  
 simple basket-toss dismount at  
 first cheer of freshman year. Don't  
 worry, her teeth broke her fall.

Tiffany smiles. Her teeth are *gnarly*. Some real British shit.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

If Harper ever gets pushed down the stairs, that's the smile that did it. But snagged or not, Beaver holds onto her power via put-downs and hook-ups. Her office is the sports shed and she has a bi-weekly meeting with sports hottie co-chair, Christian Katz.

Christian Katz dizzy-bats with his lacrosse stick, bongs a beer, and rips a bong of weed. He immediately throws up.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Christian's a lacrosse prodigy, whatever that means. He sports a 1.4 GPA, 2.5 STD's and has a secret thing for future gallery girls, which they do not reciprocate.

Christian cradles a beer can in his lax stick as he saunters over to Darrah and Miwa, who smoke cloves and drink PBR.

CHRISTIAN

I thought you told me to send you a dick pic!

DARRAH

She told you to send her a *diptych*--

CHRISTIAN

That is... *confusing on purpose!*

OLLIE

No politician would dare cut arts funding if they met Darrah Jay and Miwa Takahara. If their dripping condescension doesn't turn you to stone, they'll make you wish it did once they start on the merits of Vorticism.

Darrah laughs and blows a puff of smoke into Christian's face.

TOVAH

No smoking in the woods! Are you crazy! Listen to Smokey the Bear!

Tovah rushes over and stamps out their cigarettes.

OLLIE

Tovah Silverstein, who you've met.  
President of Student Government,  
Valedictorian, and shoe-in for Most  
Likely to Be Stressed. But her hand  
in school politics gets her a seat  
at the table of small council  
members, who all ultimately bow to  
our Iron Throne. Harper West.

The crowd parts revealing *Harper*: poised and beautiful. Ollie  
stares in admiration. Ava turns to Ollie.

AVA

But what about you?

OLLIE

What *about* me?

AVA

Where do *you* belong?

Ava looks positively luminous in the light of the bonfire.

OLLIE

I...

Harper spots them.

HARPER

Ava! Over here!  
(to Bertie and April)  
See?

BERTIE

I *see* Ollie St. John on her arm.  
You *sure* that interview went well?

HARPER

She's new, she doesn't know better.

Harper walks over and greets Ava with a big hug.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Hey girl! Thanks for coming.

AVA

This place is great! Oh do you know  
Ollie? He writes for the paper.

Harper and Ollie share terse, mutually distasteful smiles.

HARPER

Ollie. Here to confirm whether I really chase vodka with Cheez Whiz?

OLLIE

Please, you have cheddar written all over you. But alas, no. Tonight is *off the record*. I... just want to be included.

Ollie chokes that out. Harper studies him, suspicious. Then--

HARPER

Off the record: I did... *just once*. With Pepper Jack.

Ollie smiles. Harper is allowing him to stay. He lets himself recede into the crowd. Harper leads Ava to April and Bertie.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Ava, this is April Egan, she's... trying a thing.

APRIL

For the very last time, it's not a phase. This is the *real* me!

Bertie finds this cute and pathetic. She kisses April.

HARPER

And this is Bertie Cruz.

BERTIE

Short for Liberty. It was 2002. My mom was stressed, pregnant and eating Freedom Fries.

HARPER

Bertie is America's favorite soft-but~~ch~~ theater director and the Carol to April's Therese.

AVA

...What does that mean?

BERTIE

It means April used to date Caleb Decker before entering the Ruby Fruit Jungle.

Bertie points to CALEB DECKER, a true Lax Bro currently holding up a whole pizza, folded in half as a funnel, into his mouth. Christian Katz pours two beers down the pizza.

LAX TEAM  
Pizza Luge! Pizza Luge!

DIEGO  
Guys! Pizza is Italian! You need a nice *Lambrusco*!

Diego pours a bottle of wine down the luge, causing Caleb to quickly start vomiting. The bros all laugh.

HARPER  
Ugh, I should just go gay too.

APRIL  
(aside to Ava)  
That's Diego. Him and Harper are kind of on the rocks right now.

Harper angrily finishes her drink.

HARPER  
I can't even get another drink without entering Lax Land!

AVA  
I'll get it!

Ava dashes off towards the mountain of alcohol.

BERTIE  
She's eager.

Ava walks up to the tower of bottles and 30 racks against a tree. She grabs a bottle randomly, about to pour it when--

DIEGO  
I would *not* do that if I were you.

Diego grabs the half-empty bottle from a startled Ava. Ava stares at Diego's dreamy lips until they form words--

DIEGO (CONT'D)  
Wasabi Vodka. Kevin Tang brings it to every party since freshman year. It sets your sinuses on *fire*.

Ava laughs girlishly as Diego winks and walks away. Ollie appears, holding up a bottle of 99 Peaches.

OLLIE  
Harper drinks 99 Peaches straight. So now you do too.

Ava grabs the 99 Peaches when suddenly, *POLICE SIRENS*. Lights flash in the trees as Ava hurries back to the group.

HARPER

(calmly)

Time to go.

(off Ava's face)

It'll take them at least 20 minutes to find the turn for this place.

It's the perfect party spot.

Harper, Ava, April and Bertie start towards the parking lot.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Are you catching a ride with Ollie?

Ava looks over Harper's shoulder directly at Ollie.

AVA

Um... I think he left.

(innocent)

I hope my parents don't freak...

Maybe I can sneak in the back.

HARPER

Wait, is this your first party? You can totally crash at my place.

AVA

Is that cool with your parents?

INT. WEST HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dean and Susan curl up on the couch watching a conveyer belt of jewels slowly rotate on The Home Jewelry Network.

ANNOUNCER ON TV

*Call in the next minute and all of these diamonds are only \$79.99!*

DEAN

I have to call. What a deal!

In the other room the door opens, some giggles. Harper and Ava are clearly *trying* to be quiet. But failing miserably.

SUSAN

Harper! Dad's trying to blow your college tuition on blood diamonds!

Harper walks in, followed by Ava. Harper puts on a Mom voice.

HARPER

Susan West, it is *one-thirty* in the morning. What are you doing up?

SUSAN

(playing along)

Oh no are you going to tell my mom?

Harper frowns, dropping the act.

HARPER

Mom, grandma *just* died.

SUSAN

Then I guess I'm off the hook.

Susan and Dean high five. This whole interaction is so foreign to Ava, she drinks it in.

DEAN

You however smell of... dare I say alcohols? Let's call your punishment cleaning the bathroom. And family din-din.

Harper rolls her eyes playfully and leads Ava out of the room.

SUSAN

Good night Harper and Harper's friend who we will one day meet sober!

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harper flops on the bed. Ava studies the room admiringly.

AVA

Your parents are... so cool.

HARPER

I know. I've had zero things to rebel against... which is a totally lame thing to complain about.

AVA

No, everyone has their own stuff.

HARPER

Lately it feels like my stuff's been escalating into a tornado. And I'm that cow in *Twister* that's going to splatter on a windshield.

Harper sees Ava looking at a picture of her and Diego. Harper flops back into her pillow. She's Drunk Monologuing.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I just keep thinking all of this will go away next year. Like nothing will ever be as good as it is right now, like *I'll* never be as good. And I keep daring Diego to prove me right... you think I'm crazy. Everyone else does.

Ava perches next to Harper on the bed, and gazes at her compassionately... almost lovingly.

AVA

I think you're human. And Diego is too. He'll understand.

HARPER

I tried to talk to April about it but she's so hyped on Bertie and college... you're a really calming presence, Ava.

Harper and Ava smile at each other. Harper is *drunk*.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I don't know if it's the future or all 99 of those Peaches but...

Harper runs into the bathroom and starts vomiting. Ava dutifully holds Harper's hair back as she pukes.

OLLIE (V.O.)

The puke hair hold. Friendship 101. A second to learn, a lifetime to master. Because it's so much more than keeping yesterday's enchiladas out of those ombre'd locks. It's about support. Trust. The favorite saying of hot girls everywhere: if you can't handle me at my worst, you don't deserve me at my marginally better.

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH PARKING LOT - DAY

Harper's car pulls up and out hops both Harper *and* Ava, to the surprise of April and Bertie, but they shrug it off.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I imagined I would be spending the semester coaching some yokel in the mores of high school society but this one came ready made. And I immediately reaped the benefits.

Ollie watches across the parking lot with a devious smile.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH CAFETERIA - DIFFERENT DAY

Harper, Ava, April and Bertie eat lunch together. Harper applies lipstick on Ava. Ava waves over Ollie.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Days after the bonfire, Ava invited me to the royal round table.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH CAFETERIA - DIFFERENT DAY

Ollie sits next to a lightly annoyed Bertie.

OLLIE (V.O.)

By the following week, I no longer had to ask permission.

On the other side of the table, Ava squeezes in between Harper and April, who doesn't like being pushed aside.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR HALLWAY - DAY

Harper walks down the hall in her usual fashion, all eyes on her. Except for the few eyes that wander next to her... to Ava. Who isn't wearing glasses anymore. She looks... hot!

OLLIE (V.O.)

With the help of contacts and yellow journalism, PR was up.

Ollie watches as students read the Harrington Underground.

Splashed across the front page is a picture of Ava with the headline "*Southwestern Heatwave: Global Warming? Or Harrington's Newest Hottie?*".

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - DIFFERENT DAY

Harper sits in the lifeboat with OTHER ACTORS. Ava fixes Harper's hair, takes away her script, and scurries off stage.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Even Harper was in a better mood. Because Ava's all-consuming attention quelled Harper's fears while also making her feel like high school would never end. Even if her pussy posse didn't always love their newfound member.

The scene begins. A tense Bertie watches next to April, who stares disdainfully at Ava, mouthing the lines in the wings.

HARPER

*And that's what I got, hope! For some place better, some place cleaner, and hell, if I gotta eat catfish heads all my life... I'd... (breaking character) I don't know, kill myself?*

BERTIE

Cut! Harper! Did you read the script at all?

HARPER

I watched the movie? Well part of it. Then I just watched *Titanic*. I'm sorry, Bertie.

BERTIE

Sorry isn't getting me into Julliard. Sorry isn't allowing NYU to bleed my parents dry. We open in two weeks! Get it together!

Ava hustles back on stage with a script to show Harper.

BERTIE (CONT'D)

Ava! Stage Crew is Papier-mâché-ing the iceberg in the gym right now.

HARPER

She's *helping* me.

BERTIE

I'm sorry, I forgot you had an assistant! And were suddenly too famous to learn your lines!

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - GREENROOM - LATER

Ava removes Harper's make-up in front of a vanity mirror. Folded up on the table is another Harrington Herald and another front page picture of Ava LaMonte.

HARPER

Can't she see I'm trying?! I have a lot on my plate right now!

AVA

Don't worry, I'll help you run lines. It'll be fun.

Harper smiles thankfully at Ava in the mirror. Ava gazes back with pure love and devotion.

TOVAH (PRE-LAP)

*I love you!*

INT. HOME EC - DAY

An extreme close-up of Tovah's angry face.

TOVAH

But you don't appreciate me!

Extreme close-up of Harper, a little uncomfortable.

HARPER

I had a long day at work and--

TOVAH

What do you think I do all day? Sit on my ass? I have dreams too, you know! I'm not just here to support you! I made a five course dinner and all you wanted was a beer!

Tovah fights back tears, channeling some *real* emotion here. Harper is at loss, this got *real real, real* fast.

DR. V

Time out!

Dr. V steps in, this is an exercise in front of the class.

DR. V (CONT'D)

Love the energy, Tovah. But Harper, I asked for a *productive spousal* fight! Not some namby-pamby *bullshit* about how you work harder. Tovah bore your *children!*

Tovah gently rocks a bag of flour with a martyred expression. Dr. V takes Harper aside.

DR. V (CONT'D)

You're defensive. You want Tovah to forgive you but you're not *explaining* yourself. You need to think about *her*.  
(to the class)  
Communication people! Again!

Tovah and Harper reset, then--

TOVAH

I dropped out of medical school to raise Harper Jr.!

HARPER

I'm sorry, Tovah. I put my bad day on *you*, which wasn't fair.

Harper glances at Dr. V, who nods encouragingly. *Go on.*

HARPER (CONT'D)

I've been taking support without giving it. We should use my Christmas bonus for childcare so you can go back to school...?

Dr. V leads the whole class in a round of applause. Tovah runs into Harper's arms, crying on her shoulder.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR LOCKER HALLWAY - DAY

Harper walks down the hall with April, Bertie and Ava. April struggles to balance her books and read Harper's palm.

APRIL

Okay so this is your heart line. It's kind of squiggly, which either means you have a complicated love life... or a heart murmur?

April checks her guide book. Harper sees Diego at his locker. He makes eye contact with her then scurries down the hall.

HARPER

I'm going to talk to him. Today. I'm going to lay it all out on the table and apologize.

AVA

Won't that ruin his--

HARPER

I don't care about his game. This is more important.

AVA

But it'll stress him out on his--

HARPER

(snapping a bit)

This is between me and my boyfriend so maybe just stay out of it, Ava.

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH LACROSSE FIELD - DAY

Harper walks up to the lacrosse field, determined.

HARPER

(to herself)

Diego, I've put my stress on you...

She sees Diego sitting on the bleachers, and hustles over.

DIEGO

You wanted to talk?

HARPER

Diego! Hey so... I've been really worked up about next year and...

Diego rolls his eyes.

HARPER (CONT'D)

What!? I'm apologizing! I've been totally in my head lately--

DIEGO

Seriously, Harper? Why can't today just be about me?

Suddenly a CYMBAL CRASH. The MARCHING BAND stomps out onto the field playing a jazzy HAPPY BIRTHDAY. A confused Harper looks around to see whose birthday it is.

Then ENTIRE LAX TEAM bursts out of the dugout, in cheerleader uniforms and full makeup. They look ridiculous, but great.

CHRISTIAN KATZ

Give me a D!

The whole team cups their junk and screams--

TEAM

D!

Harper freezes. She looks at Diego, who smiles ear to ear.

CHRISTIAN KATZ  
Give me an I!

The team starts FLOSSING or whatever kids do these days, continuing their "DIEGO" cheer. Harper starts sweating.

HARPER  
Listen, Diego--

But Diego isn't listening, he's lapping this up! Harper takes a deep breath. The team finishes the cheer--

THE TEAM  
Happy Birthday Diego! *Love, Harper!*

Harper's jaw drops. *Me?*

DIEGO  
Babe! I thought you forgot!

Harper tries to play it off.

HARPER  
...Surprise?

DIEGO  
I keep thinking you're being selfish but you're just stressed and I haven't been there for you.

HARPER  
I... just didn't know how to say sorry.

Diego pulls her into a crushing hug. On the other side of the embrace Harper notices Ava sitting in the dugout next to Ollie. Ava gives Harper a thumbs up. *What the fuck?*

INT./EXT. DUGOUT/LACROSSE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Ava and Ollie huddle on the bench.

OLLIE  
Getting Christian Katz in drag was almost too easy. I knew there was some curiosity there.

But Ava isn't listening, she stares intensely at Harper.

AVA

She told me to stay out of it. *Me!*  
Harper hasn't talked to Diego in  
weeks and picks today of all days to  
apologize? She'd be *lost* without me.

Ollie side-eyes Ava, studying her.

OLLIE

Maybe we've been thinking too  
small. Popular adjacent is nice but  
know what's nicer? *Prom Queen*.

Ava lets that sink in. Ollie gets up to leave.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Keep up the good work, killer.

Ollie slips out just as Harper rushes into the dugout. Ava  
gives an innocent smile, but Harper looks perturbed.

AVA

Surprise! Did he like it?

HARPER

What? Yeah, he did.

AVA

Apologizing on his birthday was a  
great idea! I'm sure you got him  
something incredible but I just  
wanted to help.

Ava smiles as Harper's guilt sets in.

HARPER

... Thanks. I think.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - GREENROOM - DAY

A sign on the door reads: DRESS REHEARSALS TOMORROW!

Harper, decked out in a turn of the century gown, appraises  
herself in front of a mirror as a tense April hems her dress.

HARPER

Is it a little long in the back?

April accidentally pricks Harper with the needle.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Ow! Watch it!

APRIL

Just get Ava to do it.

April puts down the sewing kit. Harper has struck a nerve. Bertie walks in, flipping through the script.

HARPER

Does Ava seem a little *off* to you?

APRIL

You're the one keeping her around.

HARPER

No, she's great just... The whole birthday thing--

BERTIE

Saved your ass. Look, we've been over this, Ava's weird. She's got that creepy home-schooled vibe and I don't know if she wants to have your babies or wear your skin as a coat. But as long as you know your lines, I don't care.

HARPER

I know I forgot Diego's birthday, but why didn't she just tell me?

APRIL

I don't want to talk about her anymore. Let's talk cast party.

AVA (O.S.)

There's a cast party?

Ava walks out of the wings, how long has she been there? Harper, April and Bertie exchange a look. Harper resets.

HARPER

Tracy Liman's parents used to throw a rager. They were "if you're going to drink, do it here" parents.

BERTIE

But Tracy graduated last year.

APRIL

We could have it at my step-mom's but we'd have to pay the Betty tax.

HARPER

(to Ava)

She lets us throw parties but only if she gets to attend. And the woman gets *sloppy*.

BERTIE

We can always just do midnight IHOP and spike the coffee.

HARPER

I did not learn 100 pages of period gibberish for dollar pancakes and burnt coffee with Kahlua.

Ava's gears turn as she takes over hemming Harper's dress.

INT. WEST HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harper walks in and drops her backpack when Dean and Susan rush in, catching Harper in a bear hug and a kiss sandwich.

HARPER

Wow, honestly, I needed this!

DEAN

And we needed *this!*

Dean holds up an overnight bag.

SUSAN

You remembered our anniversary.

DEAN

This means a lot sweetie.

Harper is extremely confused.

SUSAN

We'll miss opening night but we'll be back for the Cappie show.

A knock on the door. Ava walks in, this is clearly routine.

AVA

I thought I heard celebrating!  
Happy Anniversary!

Harper gapes as if she's seeing Ava for the first time.

DEAN

Wedding anniversaries are just guilt trips parents keep in their back pocket. Why would a kid remember?

SUSAN

But *ours* did. We're going to miss you so much next year but we are so *proud* of the woman you've become.

Susan carries bags to the other room. Dean whips out two tickets to The Great Wolf Lodge.

DEAN

Now excuse us. We have an early morning. I didn't know there was a Great Wolf Lodge in Utica but I'll be damned if I get stuck in a long line for the water slide. You know, you have to grow older but you *never have to grow up*.

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harper slams the door behind Ava.

HARPER

What the fuck was that?

AVA

I just thought that--

HARPER

You'd send *my* parents on vacation?

AVA

You've just done so much for me--

Ava steps towards Harper deliberately... suggestively?

HARPER

What are you doing? This crosses a line. Go tell them what you did--

But then Harper's phone starts buzzing. Texts flood in.

April: *You are a party angel. Skinny Girl on me.*

Bertie: *You're an evil genius.*

Drama Group Text: *Cast Party tomorrow night at Harper's! Bow down to your Unsinkable Queen. \*prayer hands emoji\**

AVA  
 I'm sorry, I just knew you wanted  
 this year to be perfect. Best Ya  
 Ever Seen! Seniors 2019!

Harper sits on her bed. Not sure what to say.

AVA (CONT'D)  
 Do you want to run lines?

HARPER  
 No! No. I think you better just  
 go... I'll see you tomorrow.

AVA  
 I really just wanted to help you  
 throw the perfect cast party.

Ava closes the door behind her.

INT. JOURNALISM ROOM - NIGHT

Ollie works late on the school paper. He pauses to look at a  
 "CAST PARTY AT HARPER'S!!" Instagram post by Ava.

He calls Ava. It rings and rings. She doesn't pick up.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 I should've realized I was losing  
 control. That *our* scheme was  
 becoming *her* scheme, but I was too  
 caught up in the glamour of it all  
 to notice. And, off the record, I  
 was having the time of my life.

Ollie flips around the Harrington Underground chalkboard and  
 pastes a picture of Ava in the center, right next to Harper.

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper paces as she Facetimes with Diego, she's freaking out.

DIEGO  
 Babe, calm down--

HARPER  
*Calm down?* Diego this girl just  
 sent my parents on *vacation*. She's  
 like an... evil travel agent!

DIEGO

Well... it kills two birds with one stone! We get a cast party and your parents get a vacation.

HARPER

Why are you taking her *side*?

Harper slams down her phone and flops on her bed, tearful. She stares up at her Columbia pennant.

OLLIE (V.O.)

For the first time Harper West looked like any other teen. Her royal glow had fully given way to paranoia, self-doubt and even... a pimple.

Harper suddenly reaches her hand to her face. A lone pimple has just sprouted on her chin, as if Ollie willed it.

EXT. WEST HOUSE - MORNING

Harper rushes out of her house to check the mailbox. *Nothing.*

OLLIE (V.O.)

But no matter how craterous her zit, Harper's crisis would barely make the second page. Because heading into opening weekend, there was something greater in the air. *Hopes, dreams, acceptance letters.*

Harper groans, then hops in her car and jerks away.

INT. HOME EC - DAY

Dr. V hands back quizzes. Tovah gets a 83%.

DR. V

Tovah, I'm sorry--

TOVAH

No, you're NOT sorry!

Tovah stands up, crumples her quiz, and punts it.

OLLIE (V.O.)

The blood pressure of the entire senior class was spiking harder than the first time I saw the volleyball scene in *Top Gun*.

INT. YEARBOOK - DAY

Half-finished collages sit in front of the distracted class. Everyone compulsively checks their phones, including Harper.

SR. SULLIVAN

I know everyone's excited about the future, but this class is about the present! So if we could just--

Darrah hops out of her seat with a shriek!

DARRAH JAY

YES! RISD!

Miwa's face drops. She frantically refreshes her phone.

MIWA

I need Wifi!

Miwa dashes out of the room, without even taking the vest.

OLLIE (V.O.)

And long simmering tensions were bubbling to the surface.

Miwa stomps back into the room, right up to Darrah, angrily sweeping her yearbook supplies off her desk.

MIWA

Your *bicycle* was *derivative trash!*

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR LOCKER HALLWAY - DAY

Harper walks down the hall by herself. She has dark circles under her eyes. She looks stressed and a little paranoid.

OLLIE (V.O.)

It would take Spencer Pratt and Heidi Montag's entire crystal collection to neutralize the energy of the senior class this week.

People say hi to her, and wave, but Harper just stares forward. Unable to please the masses.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - GREENROOM - DAY

Harper bursts in only to find Ava wearing Harper's costume. This is the last goddamn straw.

HARPER

What the *fuck* is going on here?

Ava turns around, startled. But Bertie wanders in, nose buried in some technical directions.

BERTIE

(nonchalant)

I couldn't find you for your final fitting, and Ava pointed out that you guys are the same size.

(to off-screen)

SWEENEY! Why does the lighting schema for *Belly Up To The Bar* just say "house lights"? Are you *daring* NYU to rescind my acceptance?

Bertie rushes back to the stage. Ava smiles and starts to disrobe. Harper watches, speechless. Shook.

AVA

Harper? Are you okay?

Ava looks comically innocent. Harper doesn't respond.

AVA (CONT'D)

I know you're under a lot of stress with the play tonight, and admissions decisions this week...

HARPER

What colleges did you apply to?

Without missing a beat.

AVA

I'm going to a community college while I save money to transfer. It's no *Columbia* but...

Harper looks embarrassed, then realizes how crazy she looks.

HARPER

I'm so sorry, I--

That's all Ava needed.

AVA

It's okay. I'm sorry if I overstepped. I was trying to help. I've never had such a good friend before and I'm still... learning.

Harper softens, guilt sets in. She rubs her eyes.

HARPER  
I'm going crazy.

AVA  
No you're not. You have a big night. I'll tell the front office you're in rehearsals all afternoon. Go to the teachers' lounge and *relax*. It's closed all day for the exterminator, but he already left.

Ava offers Harper a pill. Harper looks skeptical.

AVA (CONT'D)  
It's Xanax. My mom takes them all the time. Chill out, rest up and in a few hours you'll be ready to kick some *Titanic* ass.

Harper softens, accepting the pill and water. She downs it.

HARPER  
Thanks, Ava.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
*Thanks, Ava. Not quite as iconic as Et Tu, Brute? but no less foreboding--*

INT. HARRINGTON TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

Ava was right: the door to the teachers' lounge has an exterminator's keep-out sign. Harper pushes the door open. It's empty. She nestles into the couch and clicks on the TV on a roll-away cart. *Home Jewelry Network*.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
Roman politicians might stab each other in the back but teenage girls are partial to poison apples.

She sleepily watches the huge diamonds go around the conveyer belt, her eyelids getting heavier with each rotation until--

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

A HIVE OF ACTIVITY as the cast and crew prepare last minute.

TOVAH  
Peanut Butter! Watermelon! Peanut Butter! Watermelon!

Bertie paces as April makes last minute costume alterations.

APRIL  
Bertie. It's fine. She'll be here.

BERTIE  
She's just cutting it *so close*.

Bertie runs off. Diego arrives, bearing flowers.

DIEGO  
Hey! Where's Harper?

APRIL  
Shh! We don't know. Bertie is  
freaking out, so keep it down.

INT. HARRINGTON TEACHERS' LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Harper snoozes on the couch as diamonds and rubies float  
across the TV with the lull of the announcer.

Her phone lights up and buzzes: *BERTIE*. Adding to her phone's  
trillion notifications. But Harper is passed the fuck out.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Bertie nervously watches the crowd file in. Full house. She  
whips around to a scared April and Diego. She's *PISSED*.

BERTIE  
Curtain is up in fifteen minutes!  
I'm allowed to panic now!

Ava walks in innocently, noting everyone's stressed faces.

AVA  
Where's Harper?

BERTIE  
She's out *fucking up my future!*

APRIL  
Maybe we can push curtain?

BERTIE  
No! The school has a *curfew!!!*

AVA  
...I could do it.

Everyone turns towards Ava.

AVA (CONT'D)  
 I've been helping Harper practice  
 her lines, I know it all. It's  
 crazy but... I can do it.

Bertie looks around the room, aghast. The entire CAST AND  
 CREW watch. Including Ollie, hiding in the back.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 I blessed myself. In the name of  
 Judy and Liza and Vincente  
 Minnelli. If this went wrong, it  
 would all be over.

AVA  
*I can do it.*

Bertie grabs the Molly Brown costume from the stacks.

BERTIE  
 Then you're on.

April bites her lip. She gives Harper one more try.

INT. HARRINGTON TEACHER'S LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

April's face lights up Harper's screen, then fades. Harper  
 rolls over, still fast asleep.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The OVERTURE plays on shitty school speakers. Lights UP on  
 the curtains... which open to reveal: Ava LaMonte in tattered  
 "country" clothes. The audience gasps and whispers.

AVA  
*I ain't down yet! And even if I  
 was, you'd sure never hear it from  
 me! I hate that word down! But I  
 love the word up! Because up means  
 hope! And that's just what I got,  
 hope! For some place better, some  
 place cleaner. Hell, if I gotta eat  
 catfish heads all my life, can't I  
 have them off a plate once?*

Ava steps back and begins to sing--

AVA (CONT'D)  
*And then! Someday! With all my  
 might and all my may! I'm gonna  
 learn to read and write!*

And holy SHIT... Ava is spectacular. The crowd goes WILD.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Science isn't my strong suit, but I paid enough attention in Astronomy to learn that when one star burns out... another star is born.

INT. HARRINGTON TEACHER'S LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Harper JOLTS UP. She's *groggy*. She looks around at the DARK ROOM and realizes what's happened. *FUCK*.

HARPER

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

She checks her phone. 8:30. 40 missed calls. Harper *SCREAMS*.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - LATER

The final scene. Ava stands up in a rowboat wearing formal wear. The Titanic sinks in the background.

AVA

*Stop it! Sit down! You're rocking the boat! Stop yelling!*

Harper sneaks in the side of the theater. Her jaw drops.

CREWMAN

*We're going to die!*

AVA

*No, we ain't! I ain't ready to die! Hell, I'm just learning how to live!*

The sound fades as Harper internalizes Ava's performance.

Harper internalizes the phone interview. Ava's perfect lips and teeth chatting up Kelly the Interviewer are superimposed on either side of Harper's face.

The image changes to Christian Katz in drag giving Diego a D... to Harper's parents on a Water Slide... to Ava in Harper's costume, feigning surprise... to Ava giving Harper the pill... Something is very wrong here.

Sound floods back in as Ava hits one last perfect note.

A *RAUCOUS STANDING OVATION*. Flowers fly to the stage!

Harper sees Bertie applauding backstage like never before.

BERTIE  
 Holy shit. This is the best show  
 I've ever put on.

SFX: WHOOSH

EXT. HARPER'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Tiki lamps line the yard: nice, big, with an outdoor pool.

The DRAMA CLUB stands in a circle playing "pass the sound". One person says "Whoosh" and swings their arms towards the person next to them, passing the "Whoosh" around the circle.

The Whoosh crescendos. Bertie stands in the center and uses her spatula as a faux microphone--

BERTIE  
 Ladies and gentleman, and every  
 identity in between. I give you:  
 The Unsinkable *Molly Brown!*

The backyard gates fly open to reveal Ava, walking in on the arm of Ollie. The crowd goes *WILD*.

OLLIE  
 Go get 'em, killer.

Ollie releases Ava into the waiting crowd, where she is quickly swallowed.

Bertie flips burgers. April delivers her drink.

APRIL  
 It feels weird having the cast party  
 in Harper's backyard without Harper.

BERTIE  
 She better be down a limb at the  
 very least for missing tonight.

Just then, the gate blows open and in walks *Harper*. April and Bertie rush over. Harper pretends nothing is amiss.

APRIL  
 Harper! We were so worried!

HARPER  
 I'm *so* sorry you had to cancel the  
 performance but I *promise* I will  
 make it up to you tomorrow night.

April and Bertie both flush. Unsure what to say.

BERTIE  
Harper look...

APRIL  
(blurting out)  
Ava went on instead.

Harper looks at them like they *must* be kidding.

HARPER  
Ava? Ava Ava? As... Molly?

BERTIE  
We waited as long as we could. Ava  
knew the part... it was kind of a  
disaster but we got through it.

Harper studies Bertie's face. Then stops a FRESHMAN.

HARPER  
Be a dear and get me Vodka Redbull,  
with a twist.

FRESHMAN  
What's the twist?

HARPER  
The twist is you do it without  
*talking* to me.

Bertie and April share a look. April tries to pull Harper  
aside, but Harper spies Ava talking to Diego.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Ava! Or should I say... Molly?

Ava turns around and rushes to Harper. Her body language  
immediately changes. She's small, subservient.

AVA  
Harper! I was so worried.

HARPER  
(eyes on Diego)  
It seems like you're managing.

AVA  
What *happened*? Did you oversleep?

HARPER  
If you call *drugging me*  
"oversleeping".

Bertie and April squirm. Ava puts her glasses on, almost like a shield, but Harper snatches them off her face.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
You're getting on fine without  
these bad boys.

Harper puts on Ava's glasses.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Look, now I'm you and you're me.  
(mocking Ava)  
*Harper are you hungry? Harper do  
you need a back rub? Harper do you  
need your ass wiped?*  
(dropping it)  
Now you do me!

Ava stares at Harper, unsure what to do.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
What? I thought it was easy to be  
me. You already did once tonight.

The Freshman hands Harper her drink, which she downs in one chug and throws on the ground.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Hold onto your tits, it's going to  
be a bumpy fucking night.

Harper beelines across the backyard toward Diego.

DIEGO  
Are you drunk?

HARPER  
Wouldn't you be?

Harper snatches the drink out of Diego's hands and chugs it, then immediately spits it out on the ground.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
What is this?

DIEGO  
Blue Cherry Gatorade. I have a  
tournament tomorrow.

HARPER  
Blue cherries *aren't real!*

Harper is causing a scene. *Everyone* is watching. Across the party, Ollie walks up to Bertie and April.

OLLIE

Looks like someone still needs  
their dose of the spotlight  
tonight. Cappie's show is tomorrow.  
Which Molly will we see?

Bertie looks deep in thought.

Back with Harper and Diego:

HARPER

I can't believe I thought you'd  
wait until next year to upgrade me.

DIEGO

Harper, *please* don't start this.

Harper stares across the party at Ava, who is attempting to  
smooth things over with the crowd.

HARPER

What did she possibly say to you?  
If it's anything like what she says  
to me, I know it's hard to say no.

DIEGO

You're drunk and paranoid. Ava's  
like a kid sister to me.

HARPER

Do you make out with Camilla too?  
Do I need to report this?

DIEGO

This was supposed to be your night,  
but you fucked it up so you have to  
ruin it for everyone. Why can't we  
just have fun tonight?

HARPER

You want fun? I can have fun!

Harper does a running jump into the pool. Harper gasps as she  
comes up for air. Clearly the pool isn't heated yet. People  
walk over to witness the scene. Ollie comes up to the edge.

HARPER (CONT'D)

(teeth chattering)

Let me guess, tonight is on the  
record?

OLLIE

I couldn't suppress this story if I  
tried. Which I won't.

Bertie rushes over.

BERTIE  
Harper, let's get out of here.

HARPER  
Why are you whispering? You think  
I'm going to FREAK OUT?

Harper climbs out of the pool. She grabs a roasting fork and casually roasts a hot dog on the grill, still sopping wet.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Because I'm fine. See? I'm popular!  
I have everything! That's what you  
all think, right?

The crowd is frozen. No one wants to make a sudden move.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Say it with me guys, *hot people  
don't have problems.*

Harper laughs a little too loudly then stops, pointing the hot dog at the crowd threateningly.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
I know you're all chorus members  
but you can remember one line,  
right? Ava remembered *all of mine.*  
(eyeing Ava with a smile)  
*Now say it with me. Ready? And--  
Hot people don't have problems.*

The crowd is silent. Harper throws the hot dog on the ground.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
Well, screw you all! I gave you my  
house, I gave you (to Ava) my part,  
and I gave you all the best years  
of my goddamn life!

That's enough. Bertie and April each grab one of Harper's arms and carry her away. Harper shouts on her way out--

HARPER (CONT'D)  
At our reunion remember me as the  
girl who was so hot she burned up  
in high school!

INT. WEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bertie and April toss Harper on the couch.

APRIL  
Harper, calm down.

Harper hops up, standing on the couch, Tom Cruise style.

HARPER  
*I hate that word down! But I love  
the word up! Because up means hope--*

Harper stumbles and tips over the back of the couch. *THUD*.  
April and Bertie lean over the couch to see Harper flat on  
her back.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
(more subdued)  
Guys, she's stealing my life.

APRIL  
No one could ever replace you,  
Harper.

HARPER  
(sharper, at Bertie)  
Really? Because I heard it was *the  
best production you ever put on.*

Bertie's face falls.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
You've been saying all semester  
something wasn't right with Ava--

BERTIE  
You let us look like idiots out  
there explaining ourselves to you--

HARPER  
Yet *you're the one* who allowed her  
to finally ruin my life.

APRIL  
Harper, that's *unfair-*

BERTIE  
Just because she ruined your life  
doesn't mean you can ruin mine! You  
*knew* how important tonight was to me.  
This is my last chance at a Cappie--

HARPER  
It's just *high school* theater!

BERTIE

Well if it's just high school theater  
then why do you care so much?

Bertie storms off. April shakes her head at Harper and goes after Bertie.

APRIL

Cool off. This isn't you.

EXT. HARPER'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

The crowd outside is a little shaken up. Ava approaches Diego, licking his wounds on the outskirts of the party.

AVA

I'm sorry if I made things worse.

DIEGO

It's not you, it's Harper. I try to help but she keeps pushing me away.

Ava rubs Diego's arm consolingly... suggestively.

DIEGO (CONT'D)

She has this insane idea I only like her because she's popular, it's like she's daring me to leave her.

(a sigh)

You're a good friend. Thanks for sticking by her. She's not usually like this.

AVA

I just want to be there for her. But instead I'm *here... with you*.

Diego looks up. Suddenly, Ava goes in for the kiss. It's only a short moment until Diego pushes her away but the crowd TAKES NOTE. Diego is furious.

DIEGO

What the fuck, Ava?

Ava licks her lips.

AVA

Is that blue cherry?

Diego storms out of the party. Ava locks eyes with *Harper* who saw everything. Harper turns around but Ava chases after her.

AVA (CONT'D)

Harper wait!

HARPER

You took my part, you took my  
parents, you took my friends, and  
now Diego. What else do you want?  
You want the shirt off my back?

Harper takes her wet shirt off.

Harper and Ava lock *intense eyes*.

As Gilda says, hate is a very exciting emotion. That's when--

Ava fucking does it. She goes in FOR THE KISS.

Everything slows down, the sound drops out. In the background,  
party-goers lose their minds. Ollie drops his drink in shock.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Yes Ava took the starring role. Yes  
Ava took the leading man. But until  
now it was all just imitation.

By the time Ava releases Harper, Harper is in a complete  
daze. Unsure what to do. Sapped of her power.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Ava had out legged Harper by a mile  
but now she dominated her. Turned  
queer subtext into text. A perfect  
teenage moment that would have  
graduated to myth and legend unless  
someone wrote it down. And *everyone*  
wrote it down.

People text and snap pics of this legendary event.

Harper tears herself away and leaves the party. But not in  
anger, *in fear*.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - THE NEXT NIGHT

The crowd files into their seats. The front two rows are  
roped off for "Cappies - Student Theater Critics".

Ollie takes his seat, notebook at the ready. He opens the  
program and sees Harper is still in the cast list.

OLLIE (V.O.)

The next night, Bertie put Harper's name in the cast list but no one, not even Bertie, actually expected her to go on. It might as well have said "In Loving Memory."

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bertie dials Harper's phone number, it rings and rings. She makes eye contact with Ava, who starts doing her makeup.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - NIGHT

The house lights up, Ollie sees Ava, in full costume, peek out from the wings and give him a thumbs up. He smiles.

OLLIE (V.O.)

It's crazy but I almost felt bad for Harper. But alas I--

Another CAPPIE knocks into Ollie, cutting off his internal monologue as she tries to shuffle past to her seat.

OLLIE

Excuse you, Diane Keaton. You dropped your lobster.

The Cappie mimes picking something off the ground and pulls up her middle finger.

It's RANGER DEB-- out of the safari outfit and into an over the top "I'm a theater kid, did you know?" outfit, which is basically just Annie Hall, hat and all.

RANGER DEB

What are you supposed to be? An emaciated Alan Cumming?

Ollie is less stung than impressed. He is about to retort when the lights flicker and a drum roll starts. Ava runs on stage in her tattered costume.

Ranger Deb *gasps*.

AVA

*I ain't down yet! And even if I was, you'd sure never hear it!*

Ava starts the opening number which continues over--

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper lies in her dark bedroom, eyes dried out from crying. She looks at her phone, littered with missed calls and texts.

A door SLAMS. Shuffling downstairs. Harper pops up, confused.

HARPER

Mom? Dad?  
(off no response)  
Diego?

No response. Harper grabs a baseball bat and goes downstairs.

INT. WEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dean and Susan harriedly unpack their suitcases. They are surprised to see Harper.

DEAN

Why aren't you at your show?

HARPER

I... it's a long story --

SUSAN

Are you doing pot, Harper? Because I really don't know what's going on with you these days. Was this trip some idea of a joke?

DEAN

That wasn't the Great Wolf Lodge. It wasn't even a Good Wolf Lodge!

SUSAN

It was just a motel run by a ghoul named Ichabod! Who snuck in our room in the middle of the night to smell my underwear!

Dean opens the recycling bin and pulls out a vodka bottle.

DEAN

What's going on, Harper? Did you want your mom's underwear to get sniffed? Did you want me to day dream of water slides in an itchy bed in the woods? Or was this all just a ploy to throw a party?

Dean and Susan wait for an answer but Harper bursts into tears and turns to run upstairs. Dean and Susan deflate.

SUSAN

Wait! Harper.

Harper comes back into the kitchen.

Susan hands her a letter from Columbia University. Harper tearfully opens it. She takes a deep breath. Sighs.

HARPER

Waitlisted.

Without another word, Harper turns around and leaves the kitchen. Susan and Dean look at each other. *Well. Damn.*

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - NIGHT

The curtains close on intermission. The audience ROARS--

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ava sits in front of her lighted mirror reviewing the script as one KID does her hair and ANOTHER touches up her makeup.

Ollie walks in, slow clapping. He shoos away her attendants.

OLLIE

Buzz in the Cappie row is phenomenal. The scrappy little nobody next to me literally gasped when you walked on stage.

Ava smiles smugly. Ollie puts his hands on her shoulders and leans down. He puts his face next to hers, cheek to cheek. They stare at themselves in the mirror.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Where does my star wish to go tonight? Sardi's is a hike but I bet Caleb Decker's unfinished basement could be just as wicked. We can bathe in cheap Pinot and watch the sun rise on our new life.

Ava's smile drops a bit, she pats Ollie's hand patronizingly and shakes him off. She goes back to primping her hair.

AVA

Ollie, dear, I've been meaning to tell you. With your fair skin, I'm not sure popularity is such a good shade on you. Perhaps you should *stick to criticism.*

Ollie's face drops.

AVA (CONT'D)

I have plans tonight, and I'm  
afraid with you there, people will  
assume it'll be *on the record*.

Ollie's face hardens as we match cut to:

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - NIGHT

Ollie watches, stone-faced, as Ava, in full evening wear,  
tries to cheer everyone up as the Titanic sinks behind them.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I was Frankenstein and Ava LaMonte  
was my monster, here to ruin me,  
mock me, put me in a hell of my own  
making. And even as my plan  
crumbled around me, I couldn't help  
but respect her killer instincts.

Ollie begrudgingly stands with the rest of the crowd in an  
ovation. But his claps are slow, his eyes narrowed.

Next to him Ranger Deb sits still, not clapping at all.

OLLIE

No applause? Are you immune to her  
girlish charms?

RANGER DEB

I'd rather fuck a cactus with chlamydia.

OLLIE

Lord knows you need the action. But  
what do *you* possibly have against  
Harrington's newest ingenue, Ava--

RANGER DEB

*Ranger* Ava. And she's *no ingenue*.

Ollie's eyes light up. We punch in close.

OLLIE

I am full on bisexual for your  
information.

INT. JOURNALISM ROOM - NIGHT

Ollie and Ranger Deb are only illuminated by moonlight.

RANGER DEB  
Are you actually bisexual?

OLLIE  
Don't insult me.

RANGER DEB  
I want a plug in your school paper.  
I'm playing Tevye in our  
Experimental Drama Showcase.

OLLIE  
No one is going to Fiddler. It's not  
Cappie qualifying. I'm supposed to  
review it and I'm not even going.

Ranger Deb hands him her "card". Jr. Manager, Rainforest Cafe.

RANGER DEB  
No plug, no dirt. Find me in the  
jungle once you've sung my Yiddish  
praises.

Ranger Deb turns tail and leaves. Ollie's glare is illuminated  
by the moonlight.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
But as *thirsty* as I was for Tevye's  
dirt, everything melted away as we  
entered National Hot Kid Holiday...  
Spring Break.

INSERT: INSTAGRAM VIDEO - Diego cannonballs into the pool  
with a *splash!* Ava and Tiffany Beaver perch on Christian Katz  
and Caleb Decker's shoulders in a game of chicken.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Ollie watches this video under a mahjong table, surrounded by  
OLD LADIES.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
While I'd usually find vicarious  
joy watching pretty people do dumb  
things, this year I felt *robbed* and  
I wasn't handling it well.

DORIS plays a tile. Ollie instantly snatches it up.

OLLIE  
*This is a dominos tile, Doris! And  
don't you dare use dementia as an  
excuse! You know what you're doing!*

Ollie navigates to his messages to text Ava. We can see that she hasn't responded in a while. Ollie puts his phone away.

OLLIE (V.O.)

The only solace I could find was that for the first time in our intertwined lives, Harper was in the same situation.

EXT. WEST HOUSE - POOL - DAY

Harper floats by a la *The Graduate*, alone and discontent, but still glamorous.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Harper's version of it at least. Beautiful, sad, self-indulgent.

Susan walks out and bends down by the pool.

SUSAN

April's here, honey.

HARPER

Well tell her I'm not.

Harper rolls off her float, splashing into the water.

We follow Harper UNDERWATER as she willfully sinks to the bottom of the pool.

OLLIE (V.O.)

A washed up beauty queen at only 18. Harper's senior year spring break melted away faster than the popsicle from her iconic July 2017 profile picture. By the time we were back in school, Harper West was a memory from a fading dream. Replaced by a new world order.

A TV SCREEN FILLS UP THE FRAME

Ava's face fills up the screen on the morning announcements.

AVA

Good morning Harrington High! I'm Ava LaMonte, your guest anchor filling in for Marta Chang!

MARTA CHANG leans into frame and waves.

AVA (CONT'D)

Today I'm here with a special senior bulletin! Prom is officially two weeks away! Boys, start planning your promposals now! It's 2019, girls might beat you to the punch!

Marta Chang walks back on screen. Ava nods encouragingly.

MARTA CHANG

(to camera, deadpan)

Breaking news... Dylan Costello has just learned that he will be asked to Prom by Marta Chang... no word yet on whether or not he accepts.

DYLAN COSTELLO (O.S.)

... What?

Marta Chang smiles directly at the camera. The camera itself tilts up and down. *Yes.* Marta smiles and runs off screen. The camera tilts down to face the ground, clearly forgotten. We hear furious teenage making out.

Ava leans down, just into frame.

AVA

Don't forget to vote for Prom Court because we're all Kweens but there's only one crown!

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Harper watches the end of the Morning Announcements. She slams her locker shut. Hard.

Harper trudges down the hall in sunglasses and a hoodie, trying to go unnoticed. She passes Tiffany Beaver and the Cheer Biddies who snort with laughter.

TIFFANY BEAVER

Oh my god, *Harper*? You're serving some '07 Britney *realness*.

Harper stops, mustering all she has.

HARPER

Well... Britney is a national treasure wronged by society so...

Tiffany and her cheer biddies lose it laughing.

Just then, Ava rounds the corner carrying a cup of coffee. She SLAMS into Harper, spilling coffee *all* over her. Harper could have *sworn* she did it on purpose but Ava plays innocent.

AVA

*Harper! Are you okay?*

HARPER

*Stay away from me.*

Harper storms down the hall. She rips a Harrington Herald out of a KID'S hand, using it to mop up the coffee.

She holds up the soggy paper: Ava as Molly. She hurls it down the hall with a shriek.

MS. KILGALLEN (PRE-LAP)

I asked you to write a current event piece... and you wrote a dating profile... for me.

INT. JOURNALISM ROOM - DAY

Ms. Kilgallen stares at an apathetic ACNE SCARRED JUNIOR.

MS. KILGALLEN

Who told you I had osteoporosis?

Ollie strides into the room, completely ignoring Acne Scars.

OLLIE

Karen! I have a code red. And if I don't get your undivided sympathy I will *Meet Joe Black* myself into oncoming traffic!

Ms. Kilgallen sighs and hands the profile back to Acne Scars.

MS. KILGALLEN

Take this to detention, and drop my class.

Acne Scars scurries out of the room. Ollie flips his chalkboard to the Harrington Underground, which now centers on Ava.

OLLIE

I hate to tell you this, Karen, but everything *is* better when you're popular! And after a glorious few months in the sun, I'm back shivering in the shadows.

Ollie dramatically flops down at a desk.

MS. KILGALLEN

Okay let's slow this down. When you say *Meet Joe Black*...?

OLLIE

Have one car hit me, launching me into another car, which will then... also hit me.

Ollie mimes this. Kilgallen gives the go-ahead to continue.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

I followed your advice, I put Ava up there. But I'm back in the gutter.

Ollie gestures to Kilgallen's classroom as "the gutter".

OLLIE (CONT'D)

You went to "Harvard", what would you do?

MS. KILGALLEN

Ollie, this whole conversation feels like I'm risking my job but frankly, I hate this place, so I'm going to give it to you straight. You put Ava up there. She cut you out. *So put somebody else up there.*

OLLIE

The sheeple wouldn't buy someone new this late in the game. Even Ava was a PR nightmare.

MS. KILGALLEN

Then don't get someone new. Get someone... old... and *blonde*.

Just then Harper, covered in coffee, throws open the door.

HARPER

(out of breath)  
Ollie. You. Now.

Ms. Kilgallen does a "told you so" face.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - DAY

Ollie sits on the bean bag this time. Harper stands across from him impatiently.

HARPER

What is this place?

OLLIE

I gave Frank the seed money in exchange for exclusive privileges. Have a seat.

Harper doesn't budge.

HARPER

I want your help taking down Ava.

OLLIE

Now, why would I do that?

HARPER

I didn't see your pasty shoulders in any of Ava's Beach Week pics but I did see you check into Harold's Seafood Palace.

OLLIE

I *knew* Doris wasn't just looking up the weather. Well, luckily our interests align. Stumbling at the finish line after a four-year-reign is a bad look. But nothing *Prom Queen* couldn't fix.

HARPER

What, are you my publicist now?

OLLIE

For a price.

HARPER

Name it.

OLLIE

You take me as your King.

HARPER

You've spent four years trying to ruin me and now we're going to be some happy couple.

OLLIE

I never wanted to ruin you. I just wanted to know... what it was like to *be* you.

HARPER

Well this is me. And I'm in a closet. With you. Begging for help.

OLLIE

I can't believe I'm saying this,  
but I want to help you. But we need  
to act *fast*. Because Ava LaMonte is  
playing *dirty*.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH CAFETERIA - DAY

Ava flits around the cafeteria handing out cupcakes with  
icing crowns. She stops by April in line for some lunch goop.

AVA

Hey April! Want a treat?

Ava hands April a cupcake and keeps moving down the line. As  
soon as her back is turned, April lifts the cupcake to throw--

APRIL

I'll give her a treat...

But Diego catches her arm.

DIEGO

Hey, have you talked to Harper?

APRIL

She's dodging me. She's always had a  
narcissistic, "I'm the only person  
with problems" schtick but usually  
it's kind of cute. This is *testing* me.

DIEGO

I don't care how bad she's been. I  
want to help.

Bertie comes rushing over, out of breath, but exuberant.

BERTIE

You guys!! We were nominated! Molly  
was nominated! We're going to the  
Regional Cappies! NYC baby!

DIEGO

Wait what!! That's amazing!

APRIL

Babe! I'm so proud of you!

BERTIE

We get to put on a number for the  
showcase! We'll do the Lifeboat  
number, I think...

APRIL

Are you going to take Harper?

BERTIE  
 ("obviously no")  
 I don't know, am I insane?

April and Diego's smiles fade.

BERTIE (CONT'D)  
 Oh come on guys!

April points over to Ava giggling with some Drama Biddies.

APRIL  
 Bertie. There is something rotten  
 going on here and we both know it.

BERTIE  
 (kind of whining)  
 But I'm going to be on the same  
 stage as Laura Benanti so I don't  
 care right now!  
 (shouting to the caf)  
 We're going to the Cappies!!!

Ollie, a few people behind in line, raises his eyebrows.

INT. WEST HOUSE - NIGHT

Susan opens the door to find Ollie with an overnight bag. He puts on a comically innocent tone.

OLLIE  
 Hello Mrs. West, is Harper home?

SUSAN  
 Harper, there's a Jehovah's Witness  
 here to see you.

Harper walks in. Ollie drops the act.

OLLIE  
 Pack your bags. Bertie was  
 nominated for the Cappies.

HARPER  
 She was?

She looks happy but also sad she's hearing about it this way.

OLLIE  
 I voted for Baxter High's bold  
 interpretation of Spider-Man: Turn  
 Off The Dark, but alas.

HARPER  
I need to call her.

OLLIE  
No you *need* to go to New York. I have a perennially under-utilized plus one. We leave first thing in the morning so...

Ollie holds out an overnight bag.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Warm up your Mezzo-Soprano because if we play our cards right, we will get you on that stage, *and* a second shot in the spotlight.

HARPER  
You mean win my friends back?

OLLIE  
I'm not your life coach. I'm the devil on your shoulder. And the devil says...  
(sniffing the air)  
Is that pot roast?

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper struggles with an air mattress as Ollie investigates Harper's room like a serial killer.

HARPER  
You know, I could have just picked you up in the morning.

OLLIE  
And pass up a chance to see the innermost lair of Harper West?

Ollie continues to poke around. In a drawer Ollie sees--

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Kevin Tang's Wasabi Vodka?

He holds up the bottle, shaking it. Harper smirks.

HARPER  
It's actually mine. I've been pinning it on the guy for years.

Harper and Ollie both make eye contact, smiling.

CUT TO:

Harper and Ollie lay head to toe on the air mattress passing the vodka. Ollie takes a big swig. Sinuses on fire.

OLLIE

Biggest scandal I never knew about?

HARPER

You know sophomore year when the Winter Ball was canceled so I threw that rager in the model home my mom was trying to sell?

OLLIE

How could I forget! Grounded for three weeks. You died for our sins and rose again as a folkhero.

HARPER

I asked my mom's permission first.

Ollie bolts up, stunned. Harper takes a swig.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Biggest story you ever made up?

Ollie looks at Harper, considering her. He lays back down.

OLLIE

...Bray Wilson never cheated on you with Tiffany Beaver.

HARPER

I broke up with him over the PA system. I told everyone!

OLLIE

He *did* cheat on you. Just not with Bucktooth Beaver.

(long beat)

He cheated with me.

Harper bolts up, spilling some vodka, which is for the best.

HARPER

Bray was gay?! Honestly that would explain some things.

OLLIE

Questioning at the very least.

HARPER

But that would've been a *big* story.  
And a serious status boost for you.

OLLIE

Even my ruthlessness has its limits.

HARPER

Oh my god. Is this confirmation  
that Ollie St. John does in fact  
have a beating heart?

OLLIE

It's sickening, I know.

Harper crawls off the air mattress and tumbles onto her bed.

HARPER

You know, being popular wasn't as  
perfect as it seemed.

OLLIE

Liar.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE MARRIOTT OR SOMETHING LIKE IT - DAY

A banner hangs: "Welcome Teen Thespians!". Excited TEENS in  
various costumes dash in.

INT. MARRIOTT AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE

Bertie peeks through the wings to see some prepubescent TEENS  
sing an inappropriate version of *Chicago's Cell Block Tango*  
for some uncomfortable JUDGES.

BERTIE

A 14-year-old is about to do Velma  
Kelly's Sister Act alone. We have  
them beat by a mile. Huddle up.

Bertie huddles up with Ava and the Theater Biddies, all in  
evening wear, ready to do the lifeboat number.

MEANWHILE

Ollie and Harper rush down the aisle towards backstage.

OLLIE

Here's the plan: We discredit Ava.  
Rub a little dirt on it.

(MORE)

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Then you hit the notes, win your friends back, the Cappies go all over social media, and you become beloved again.

HARPER

So what's the dirt?

OLLIE

If you tell someone "I know your secret" 8 out of 10 people will react by divulging a secret. Let's just hope Ava carries around something worse than a swear jar.

HARPER

That's the best you have? Wing it? I thought you had information!

OLLIE

She's hiding something, I just don't know what! Fiddler doesn't open until next week!

INT. MARRIOTT AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Ava and the Biddies have taken their places in the row boat, which April and Diego roll into place.

BERTIE

Looks great. Thanks for the back up today, guys.

Suddenly, they all hear--

OLLIE (O.S.)

(bickering with security)

Yes, I'm a critic but I have a good reason to be back here--

Ollie and Harper, shaking off security, appear backstage, face to face with a shocked Bertie.

BERTIE

What are you doing here?

Harper puts on a smile.

HARPER

I know how important this is to you. I'm showing up this time.

BERTIE

It's too late. Ava got us here,  
Harper. Not you. This is the *real*  
*world*, not high school--

OLLIE

Unsinkable Ava, *Ranger Deb* wanted  
me to tell you to... *break a leg*.

Ava narrows her eyes, studying Ollie's face.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

And that's not all she told me...  
so if you want to step down and let  
Harper take over, it's okay.

Everyone exchanges looks. Bertie is panicking.

BERTIE

Ava, what's he talking about?

Ava never takes her eyes off Ollie, talking slowly.

AVA

It seems that Ollie has discovered  
my deep dark secret... that I...

Ava takes a deep breath.

AVA (CONT'D)

...work for the Rainforest Cafe.  
That's right, I'm not fully  
dedicated to the theater... I have  
an after school job.

Ollie and Harper exchange despondent looks. *Fuck*. Molly's  
music cue starts. Bertie pushes Ava on.

BERTIE

(to Harper)

Get the fuck off my stage.

EXT. STAGE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

April bursts out right behind Harper.

APRIL

You wouldn't see me over break but  
you'll show up in New York?

HARPER

I came to support Bertie.

APRIL

You came to support *Harper*.

HARPER

Can you blame me? I slide down the social ladder and suddenly lose all my friends?

APRIL

If you're connecting those two things you are *seriously* deranged.

Just then Bertie comes out.

BERTIE

You know you didn't have to try to ruin my show again. A simple *apology* would have done the trick.

HARPER

Is that what you want from me now? An apology? Well I'm *sorry* Bertie. I'm *sorry* my *nervous breakdown* got in the way of your musical! I'm *sorry* no one bothered even asking if I got into Columbia, which I didn't by the way! I'm *sorry* that I'm *terrified* about graduating!

APRIL

Why didn't you just... *talk to us*?!

HARPER

How am I supposed to talk about being afraid of the future to someone who changes *all the time*! It's always 'not a phase' until the next phase takes over! Last year it was cheer and this year it's Bertie.

Harper catches herself but it's too late. She's gone too far.

APRIL

Come on. We're going.

April grabs Bertie and opens the door to BOOMING APPLAUSE.

INT. MARRIOTT AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Harper rushes in behind April and Bertie to apologize but stops in her tracks at the sight of--

Ava is on stage, on one knee to Diego, who has clearly just been pulled on stage, looking like a deer in the headlights.

AVA

Will you go to Prom with me?

Harper gasps.

Diego looks truly stuck as he considers the crowd. Considers his friends, considers *Harper*. But he doesn't cause a scene. He nods. The crowd goes wild.

EXT. STAGE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Harper bursts out, fully in tears. Really *ugly crying*. Ollie rushes out behind her trying to comfort her.

A triumphant Ava steps out and eyes Ollie.

AVA

I see you inherited my dead-weight.  
He's the one who put me up to it,  
you know? I just wanted to be your  
friend. *He* wanted your life.

Ava walks back inside, leaving Harper alone with Ollie.

OLLIE

Harper I--

Harper doesn't want to hear it. She leaves.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Harper wanders up the street in a daze until she sees--

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - DAY

Harper nervously wanders onto campus. Like at any moment someone will realize she doesn't belong. But then--

VOICE

Harper West?

Harper turns to see a COLLEGE CUTIE walking towards her.

HARPER

...Bray? Bray Wilson?

BRAY

Oh my god, are you going here?

HARPER  
Hopefully! I was waitlisted.

BRAY  
I hope you get in! I love it here.

A HILARIOUSLY HOT MAN jogs over and kisses Bray.

BRAY (CONT'D)  
This is my boyfriend, Giancarlo. If you come here, look us up!

HARPER  
Wait! Bray! ...You liked high school, right?

Bray stops and thinks for a moment.

BRAY  
Yeah, wow, it feels like such a blur now. I had a good time, despite its inherent shittiness.  
(with a wink)  
Don't you remember? I was Prom King.

GIANCARLO  
Really babe? That's so funny.

HARPER  
You... didn't even tell your boyfriend you were Prom King?

BRAY  
Just never thought to, I guess. I'd love to stay and chat but I have to get to class! Nice seeing you!

Bray smiles and waves as he and his hunk boyfriend walk away.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

Harper sleeps against the window.

INT. WEST HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harper walks in, despondent. Susan rushes over.

SUSAN  
Where have you *been*?

But Harper just walks upstairs.

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harper stares at her Columbia pennant before rolling over.

OLLIE (V.O.)

In just a few months I went from pariah to included to nobody to Harper West's best friend, if only for a night. But it still wasn't over. I had one more card to play.

RANGER DEB (PRE-LAP)

*Tradition! Tradition!*

INT. DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL THEATER - NIGHT

Ollie puts his head in his hands, suffering through Ranger Deb's tiresome portrayal of Tevye.

INT. RAINFOREST CAFE - NIGHT

Ollie slams down a copy of the Harrington Herald on the Rainforest Cafe's Tiki bar. The Arts headline says "Nothing Traditional about Davis's Female Fiddler."

OLLIE

I'll take a margarita, a booth, and whatever sex, lies and videotapes you can muster.

CUT TO:

Ollie sucks down a frozen margarita opposite Ranger Deb.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Okay Ranger Tevye, spill. And make it worth my time. That paper won't run until Monday and I can retract it before you can say Yentl.

RANGER DEB

What story has she been feeding you? I need to know how much I'm going to blow your mind.

OLLIE

Transfer from Nowheresville. First real high school experience. But I've already surmised that's not true. What are we talking here? Larceny? Grand Larceny? Army Brat?

Ranger Deb closes her eyes.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
What are you doing?

RANGER DEB  
I'm savoring this moment.

Ollie waits impatiently. Ranger Deb takes a deep breath.

RANGER DEB (CONT'D)  
Ava isn't from Utah. She's from Davis.

Ranger Deb slides a YEARBOOK across the table, open to senior portraits, more specifically: AVA SCHATZ. A four-eyed loser with braces, pimples, frizzed hair, the whole shebang. But make no mistake: this girl is who we know as Ava LaMonte.

Suddenly, a rumble of *thunder*. Ranger Deb *slams* the yearbook shut. Faux lightning flashes across her face as she says:

RANGER DEB (CONT'D)  
*Class of 2013.*

Ollie completely freezes, his face is unreadable. Finally... a single tear falls from his eye as he starts a slow clap for Ranger Deb in the empty Rainforest Cafe.

OLLIE  
You just gave this gay the greatest thrill of his young life.  
(finishes his drink)  
We're going to need another round.

RANGER DEB  
That's a virgin.

OLLIE  
Aren't we both.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH SENIOR HALL - DAY

The hallway buzzes with prom excitement. Ava parts the hall with a POSSE speaking loudly and projecting for all to hear:

AVA  
I'd be surprised if Harper even shows up at Prom. Hasn't she embarrassed herself enough already?

Harper hides in her locker, waiting for Ava to pass, then slams it shut and hurries down the hall. Ollie tentatively follows, but Harper keeps walking.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I intended to tell Harper, I really did. In our brief friendship I caught a glimpse of the person behind the popularity, which though jarring, was ultimately... nice. But I didn't come this far to make friends. High School functions like a reality show. *And I came to win the grand prize.*

PA ANNOUNCEMENT (PRE-LAP)

Ava LaMonte to the Front Office.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH FRONT OFFICE - DAY

Kathy releases the intercom and looks up at Ollie.

KATHY

He'll be out for another 30 minutes. Our secret, as long as--

OLLIE

Your son will win "Most Likely to write the Great American Novel" even though I *promise* you he won't, Kathy.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ava walks in hesitantly. The back of the chair faces her.

OLLIE

Thank you for joining me Ava.  
(spinning around)  
Or should I say *Ranger* Ava.

AVA

(rolling her eyes)  
*Again?* I'm a teenager with a job--

OLLIE

You have a job all right, but your teen years melted away long ago.

For the first time in a long time, Ava looks nervous.

AVA

Excuse me?

OLLIE

You're 23, you crazy cun--.

Ava lunges across the desk but Ollie jerks back.

AVA  
How dare you--

OLLIE  
Hey! I did not bribe the front office lady for some girl-on-girl violence. I came to talk.

Ollie motions for Ava to sit down on the coach. She complies.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
And I know you're nervous but that couch is 100% leather so don't shit yourself. Or is it *Schatz*?

Ava looks like the girl she once was: small... pathetic.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
I don't want to know the how, only the why. For instance, why would a grown-ass adult scheme her way back to gym class?

Ava takes a breath. Her eyes brim with over-the-top tears.

AVA  
Oh Ollie, I've wanted to tell you for so long. You were my first true friend at Harrington--

OLLIE  
We're past this little act, Mommie Dearest. Give me the details.

Ava hardens. Then softens.

AVA  
Fine. I was a loser in high school. Ugly, lonely. I loved the stage but was too "weird" to be cast.

This hits for Ollie. He's *listening*.

AVA (CONT'D)  
I couldn't wait for high school to be over but when I got to the real world I felt the same. Like failing in high school sealed my fate. And then one night I saw Harper West.  
(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

How she smiled, how people smiled  
at her and I thought, if I could  
redo high school, be more like  
Harper, maybe everything would be  
better. Maybe *I* would be better.  
And from there it was easy to--

OLLIE

To destroy Harper West's world?

AVA

*To get a second chance.* You are not  
blameless in this situation.

OLLIE

I told you to become her friend.  
Not Single White Female her.

AVA

(shrugging)

Are you going to tell everyone?

OLLIE

Well I *did* write up a beautifully  
savage article on the hopes and  
dreams wrapped up in teen popularity  
and how one psycho bitch *Never Been  
Kissed* her way back to high school.

Ollie holds his phone out, open to the article, but right  
when Ava leans towards it, Ollie snatches it back.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

But! I was taught to respect my  
elders so... I thought I might  
forget the whole thing... providing  
you fulfill some promises. Starting  
with taking me to the top with you.  
More specifically, *Prom*.

(beat)

I'm wearing emerald.

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH LACROSSE FIELD - DAY

Diego checks Christian *hard*. He falls to the ground,  
whimpering like a baby. COACH WU blows his whistle.

COACH WU

Olvera! Hit the bench.

Diego throws his lacrosse mask in anger. Coach Wu jogs over.

COACH WU (CONT'D)

Save it for Davis, not Katz.

(off Diego's sullen face)

My guy my guy my guy, all this bad female energy is messing you up!

DIEGO

It's not bad *female* energy, it's just bad *energy*. Get misogyny out of sports!

But on cue, Ava saunters straight across the field, to Diego.

AVA

(bluntly)

Diego, I have to un-invite you to prom. My needs have changed and honestly, my date can't be a *loser*.

Coach Wu I-Told-You-So's Diego.

DIEGO

Who cares? I never wanted to go with you anyway.

AVA

I've been asked to prom six times so I find that hard to believe.

Ava leaves. Diego picks his mask up and throws it again.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I'm not going to lie and tell you I blackmailed Ava out of the goodness of my itty bitty heart.

But I did hope that Ava dumping Diego might give Harper a chance to get back on the horse. But Prom waits for no man, and as Prom Fever spread through the halls of Harrington, Harper West looked as lifeless as Jackie Powers's hair.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH CAFETERIA - DAY

Harper sits next to Jackie Powers, sullenly watching as Caleb Decker flexes in front of ASHLEY, a cheerleader. In Sharpie one muscle says: HEY, the other says: ASHLEY then he lifts up his shirt and across his abs reads: "PROM?" Yes!

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH THEATER - DAY

Bertie, sweaty, nervous, and *teenage*, kneels in front of April. She reads from a crumpled piece of paper:

BERTIE  
Roses are red / you're super cute /  
let's go to prom / I'll wear a suit?

Bertie winces. But of course April says yes! They kiss.

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH PARKING LOT - DAY

Christian Katz puts the finishing touches on a car windshield painted to say "PROM?" Then ducks behind another car.

Miwa walks up, sees the car and Christian, then wordlessly gets in and turns on the windshield wipers.

INSERT - INSTAGRAM

Christian Katz running out, dejected, plays over and over.

INT. HOME EC - DAY

A crowd huddles around watching the video, laughing. Tovah sidles up to a quiet Harper.

TOVAH  
Are you going to the after party in Caleb Decker's basement? I heard he has cough syrup on ice. But I've had enough bad experiences with sizzurp to last a lifetime.

Harper looks at Tovah like: really?

HARPER  
I'm busy this weekend.

TOVAH  
...You're not going to prom?

HARPER  
Though Prom seems like an exciting opportunity to hit a new personal low, I'd rather not give Ava the satisfaction. You braving it stag?

Tovah looks mildly offended.

TOVAH

No, I'm going with... okay yes. I'm too mature for teen boys.

Harper smiles. Dr. V enters the room.

DR. V

I know you guys are Prom crazy, so today is for practicing civil conversations with co-workers.

The students don't react.

DR. V (CONT'D)

That means stay in the room but you can chat amongst yourselves.

Chatter resumes. But Harper just scrolls through her phone.

DR. V (CONT'D)

Harper? Can I see you up here?

Harper begrudgingly walks over.

DR. V (CONT'D)

I know you'd rather wallow in teen angst right now but I want to throw it back to day one. Know what my first impression *really* was?

(beat)

That you were scared. That you were staring down your future like a deer in the headlights and that you were trying to hide from the pressure in Home-Ec, land of the easy A.

HARPER

... did I get it?

DR. V

B+. But that's my point. It doesn't matter. Right now everything feels *huge*. But when you get to my age, you'll wish you just enjoyed it all a bit more. So if I were you, I'd focus on the good times, like how I made out with Joey Parker at my prom. And let go of the bad ones. Like how I vomited on his shoes a minute later. You're going to be fine, Harper.

Harper gives a weak smile just as the bell rings. Sullivan waits at the door to hand out yearbooks to exiting students.

SR. SULLIVAN  
 Who wants to smile at memories!  
 (seeing Harper)  
 Harper! Time-capsule?

Sullivan holds out a yearbook which Harper accepts.

QUICK SNAPSHOTS: INSTAGRAM PROM PICS

-Flapper April and Suited Bertie  
 -Marta Chang and Dylan Costello  
 -A Beaming Ava and an Assured Ollie

INT. LIMO - DAY

The music is BUMPIN'. The lights are STROBIN'. The Prom Limo is full of Harrington's hottest *hotties*. The High Court.

Miwa and Darrah take a droll selfie. Caleb whispers something naughty in Ashley's ear. Christian and Tiffany make out.

Bertie and April hold hands and look out the window sulkily.

APRIL  
 I can't believe the year is ending  
 like this.

BERTIE  
 I know, but we'll have fun  
 tonight... Right?

April doesn't answer.

INT. WEST HOUSE - HARPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harper lays on her bed, scowling at the Instagram of Ollie and Ava. She switches gears, flipping through her yearbook. She looks at pictures of her, Diego, April and Bertie.

Dean knocks on the open door. Harper looks up.

HARPER  
 Have I been a nightmare lately?

DEAN  
 Teens are nightmares. That's why  
 when you hit puberty, adults lock  
 you all up in high school.

Dean smiles but Harper doesn't. He sits down on Harper's bed.

DEAN (CONT'D)

It's *okay*. Will I ever go on a Harper vacation again? Probably not. But you're allowed to screw up. Especially now. No matter how good or bad it gets, one day high school will fade into a rosy, if still traumatic memory.

HARPER

That's kind of what I'm afraid of.

DEAN

One day, when your body chemistry evens out, you will love not being able to remember what it's like to be a teenager... but while you're still in the thick of it, you might want to say hi to the cutie standing on our lawn.

Harper looks confused. Suddenly the jammin' vibrations of Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time" float through the window.

EXT. WEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Harper sticks her head out the window. Diego holds a portable speaker over his head a la *Say Anything*.

DIEGO

I don't care if you're Prom Queen or if we dance alone all night! And I don't know what will happen next year or the year after that! If you'll get white dreads or trade me in for Diego 2.0. All I know is when you're old and gray and trying to remember high school, I want you to remember going to Prom with me!

Harper breaks into a smile.

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH GYM - NIGHT

Light flashes out of the windows of the gym. Muffled music blares. Balloons spelling out PROM are tied to the staircase.

COUPLES and GROUPS spill from their cars into the gym. ONE KID puts out her cigarette on the "O" balloon, popping it.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH GYM - FUTURE TUNNEL - NIGHT

The hallway outside the gym has been converted into a papier-mâché and Party City disco ball version of the Tunnel in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*.

UNDERCLASSMEN VOLUNTEERS hold fans to create a wind tunnel.

Something like a remix of "Virtual Insanity" by Jamiroquai blasts as the seniors make their grand entrance through the tunnel, which spits them out into--

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH GYM - PROM NIGHT

We're back to Prom Night! Same ill-fitting tuxedos, same bedazzled dresses.

The gym is made over in a very homemade "The Future" theme. Glow sticks litter the floor, kids pose with robot cut-outs.

Tovah stomps around cleaning up crumbling decorations.

KIDS sloppily eat from a chocolate fountain then promptly get in line to see Dr. V who uses a Tide Stick to get stains out.

Jerry Riggs deejays in a fedora, tries to hype up the crowd.

JERRY

There's a hundo p chance we're about to get turnt!

OLLIE (V.O.)

And here we are. Back to where we started. But now burdened with backstory.

Ava sits at the Royal Round Table, surrounded by the High Court: Christian with Tiffany, Darrah and Miwa both with septum pierced TWIN ART BOYS, and a sullen April and Bertie.

A steady flow of people greet Ava: compliment her dress, ask her to sign yearbooks, tell her she has their vote for Queen.

Meanwhile, April grumpily checks her phone and the door.

BERTIE

April, can we have a good time? We can't do anything about Harper--

APRIL

But it's *Senior Prom*. We've talked about this since fourth grade when we watched *Carrie* at a sleepover.

ACROSS THE ROOM: Kilgallen mans the punch table in a lady suit. Ollie walks up, swilling his cup of foamy pink liquid.

MS. KILGALLEN  
Shouldn't you be with your date?

OLLIE  
It's a lavender marriage, hence the boutonniere.

MS. KILGALLEN  
Are you going to miss this at all?

OLLIE  
Are you kidding? On the way in here I saw kids alternating shots of tequila and the caf's beef chili.

Ms. Kilgallen looks at Ollie. His face softens.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Against my better judgement, there are things I will miss.

MS. KILGALLEN  
Me too.  
(Off Ollie's face)  
I just gave my notice. You were such a nightmare that I started writing again. A book actually.

OLLIE  
So I *was* an inspiration. Is it about a young gay navigating his way through adolescence?

MS. KILGALLEN  
Close! It's a dystopian lesbian robot romance called LGBTQ-AI.

OLLIE  
I'm happy for you, Karen.

They clink their plastic cups in a toast.

ACROSS THE ROOM: Harper nervously emerges from the tunnel, arm in arm with Diego.

DIEGO  
None of these people matter, okay?

Harper tries to believe him, but everyone is staring at her.

Ava excuses herself from her table and beelines for Harper. Harper takes a deep breath, readying herself.

AVA

Can't believe you showed your face.  
(eyes Diego)  
Bringing my sloppy seconds seems on brand though.

HARPER

You know Ava, I've been so scared for high school to end but honestly, every time I see you, I can't wait for college.

Before Ava can retort, Harper grabs Diego's hand.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I came here to party.

Harper drags Diego to the dance floor and they start burning it the fuck down. *This* is why they're Harrington's It Couple.

Ollie watches from the punch table.

Watches as Harper and Diego dance like nobody is watching, perhaps the hardest thing for a teenager to do.

Watches as Ava monologues to her mostly unhappy table.

OLLIE (V.O.)

I don't know if it was the wine-drunk feeling I got from actually being wine-drunk or I was getting soft in my old age, but I suddenly realized how much I was going to miss Harper West.

Ollie takes it all in, then nods, takes a deep breath, downs his punch and marches over to his seat next to Ava.

OLLIE

Hello prom date, dear. A word?

They both lightly scoot their chairs back, leaning together.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Here's the deal. You're going to stand up, you're going walk back through the tunnel and you're going to disappear into the night. I will never tell a soul and you will enter into Harrington Myth. Stay and I publish my article.

Ava simpers, not shaken by this at all.

AVA

Oh Ollie, sweet, dear, *fake* Ollie.  
I expected some last minute show of  
faux-gallantry. You have a deranged  
idea that you're a victim in all of  
this. Like a brave little high  
school crusader. But you're not.  
And you won't tell anyone.

Ava condescendingly pats Ollie's cheek.

AVA (CONT'D)

Here's what will *actually* happen.  
They'll announce my nom de plume,  
and I'll bring you on stage with  
me. Rising together and sharing the  
crown, just like we always planned.

Ollie looks at Ava longingly, like this is all he wants.

AVA (CONT'D)

Because *you and I are the same*,  
Ollie and it doesn't make us  
villains. It makes us honest.

Ava casually leans back to the table, leaving Ollie shaken.

The music ends. A distinctive clink of a fork on glass.

Everyone clears the floor, including Harper and Diego, who  
wind their way to an open table in the back of the room.

Sr. Sullivan grabs the mic but we can't hear what he says.  
Instead we're on Ollie, deep in thought.

Finally, Sr. Sullivan finishes laughing at his own joke then  
gets back on track. He lifts up two plastic crowns.

SR. SULLIVAN

And that's why I can say with  
*personal knowledge*, how much Prom  
King and Queen will mean to you.  
Cherish it guys!

The BAND gives a light drum roll as Sr. Sullivan fumbles to  
open the envelope, milking every second.

Ava straightens out her dress and puts on a Vaseline smile.  
Harper fidgets in her seat, accepting her fate.

SR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)  
 This year's Harrington Queen is...  
Ava LaMonte!

Suddenly everything slows down. In slow motion we see:

Ava cups her mouth in overdone surprise. Very Sally Field at The Oscars. She hugs Ollie, grabs his hand, and together, they walk towards the stage. Ollie scans the room as they climb the stairs.

The senior class *beams* at them. Applauding *him*. Loving *him*. This is all Ollie has ever wanted. We see close ups of the crowd. They are truly just teenagers... kids. Pimples, braces, ill-advised cummerbunds.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 In that moment, looking around the room at the wonderful, pimped, stressed faces of my peers, I realized that Ava and I weren't alike at all. I was a teenager with raging hormones, confusing brain chemistry, and no outlet for my angst. And she, Ava Schatz, was a grown adult preying on kids during their most vulnerable years.

Ollie pulls his hand away from Ava's. Ava continues up the stairs without him. Ava looks Ollie directly in the eyes as she takes the mic. But then Ollie is completely forgotten to her.

AVA  
 Let's give it up for Prom, ya'll!  
 I'd like to thank all the ladies  
 out there. I might have the crown,  
 but we're all queens!

Ava looks directly at Harper, who coldly raises her glass to Ava only to pour the drink out into the flower arrangement.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 And as the sun set on the cruel experience that is High School, I realized that all of us, losers and hotties alike, would go on to change and evolve and become different people. Except for one... The one who is not a teen trouble maker but a real life villain.

AVA

When I came here, I'd never been to a real school before, but you made me feel like I belong!

Ava forcefully smiles at Ollie, who still stands halfway up the stairs. Ollie smiles back as he takes out his phone and smugly hits a button. A loud NOTIFICATION goes off in the crowd.

AVA (CONT'D)

It's only been 4 months--

Another notification goes off. A few phones vibrate.

AVA (CONT'D)

--but I consider Harrington my home.

Suddenly phones across the crowd start lighting up, vibrating, chiming. It's like an amber alert in here.

People stare at their phones, no one listens to Ava anymore.

SR. SULLIVAN

Hey guys! Let's make some memories--

Sr. Sullivan's phone *chimes*. He checks it, mesmerized. Ava tries to bumble on, not sure what to do.

AVA

But now that I have the crown I...

Harper's phone vibrates. It's a Harrington Underground update from OLLIE ST. JOHN.

She makes eye contact with Ollie. He nods for her to open it.

**ALL ABOUT AVA LaMONTE: THE 23-YEAR-OLD IMPOSTER.**

The article follows. Harper's jaw falls open, she laughs through her shock, then looks at Ollie, who smiles apologetically.

Sr. Sullivan scrolls through his phone.

SR. SULLIVAN

Well this is... troubling. Ava--

Sullivan looks up only to catch Ava running towards the exit.

SR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Catch that grown up!

Coach Wu rips off his bowtie and takes off after her.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH GYM - FUTURE TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ava sprints through the tunnel with one hand on her crown.

UNDERCLASSMAN  
Congrats on Prom Queen!

Too late, Ava blows out the door.

A beat later, Coach Wu comes tearing after her.

INT. HARRINGTON HIGH GYM - PROM NIGHT

Sr. Sullivan stands on stage awkwardly, stalling.

Harper walks up to April and Bertie.

HARPER  
(trying to break the ice)  
I hate to say I told you so... so I  
won't. I'll say I'm sorry for--

April launches into Harper's arms.

APRIL  
Oh thank *god*. We know you're sorry,  
we love you.

Harper smiles but turns to Bertie, sobering up.

HARPER  
Bertie, I'm sorry I almost ruined  
your show--

BERTIE  
Twice.

HARPER  
I'm sorry I almost ruined your show  
*twice*. How can I make it up to you?

BERTIE  
Never act in my stuff again and...  
get in here.

Bertie pulls Harper and April into a bear hug. Diego rushes over to join in. It's a giant pile on.

Coach Wu comes back, he raises his arms. A shrug. She's gone.

SR SULLIVAN

Okay well... while Coach Wu notifies the proper authorities I'm going to move onto... Prom King?

A half-hearted drumroll starts but no one is listening.

SR SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Christian Katz...!

Christian shrugs and grabs the crown.

CHRISTIAN

Dope!

ACROSS THE ROOM: Harper walks up to Ollie at the punch table.

OLLIE

Before you thank me, I didn't do it for you. Did you read that Pulitzer shit? I'm going to renegotiate with Northwestern for a full ride.

Ollie glances over at Harper and softens into a smile.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Maybe there's some popularity award I can win in college.

Ollie and Harper share a smile. Suddenly the music cuts, as Tovah runs on stage.

TOVAH

Stop the music! According to Prom Court rules, if a winner is disqualified, in this case due to age, the runner up will be awarded.

Tiffany Beaver primps herself as--

TOVAH (CONT'D)

Harper West? You're runner-up so...  
(searching the crowd)  
On behalf of the prom committee,  
accept this sash.

Tovah holds up a DIY toilet paper sash that reads: QUEEN. Harper's face falls in shock, she walks towards the stage.

JERRY RIGGS

Oh shit! Another Queen! Can we get an ID check on her? Ma'am, do you remember Y2K?

People circle around Harper. Tovah puts the sash around her.  
 Jerry tosses a mic to Harper. She turns to face the crowd.

HARPER

Thanks everyone but... honestly I don't really want to be Prom Queen. I *did*. I actually wanted everything about this semester to be *perfect*.

(palming the sash)

Which is crazy because... nothing about high school is perfect. Even with the best friends in the world--

Harper looks at April, Bertie and Diego, who smile at her.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Or "popularity", or Prom Queen. At the end of the day, a 23-year-old psychopath systematically ruining my life feels really on brand for how horrible high school is.

Kids and a few teachers *cheer*. Yeah, high school *does* suck.

HARPER (CONT'D)

But a safari ranger once told me life only gets better from here. And I don't know about you but I can't fucking wait for the future.

Big cheers from the crowd.

HARPER (CONT'D)

But while I'm temporarily in power, I suggest we give this sash to the true Queen of the senior class.

(beat)

Ollie... will you accept this roll of royal TP?

Ollie's face drops, and does a point to himself, like *me*?

He makes his way towards Harper, who removes her sash and places it on Ollie.

Ollie takes the stage in a daze.

OLLIE

I mean it's no crown but...

Christian Katz tosses his crown up to Ollie.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Um... wow... earlier tonight I came to the conclusion that high school popularity didn't matter... because high school doesn't define us.

(beat, palms his crown)

But honestly, now that I'm Queen. I can confidently say I was wrong. Being popular rules and has instantly solved all my problems.

Ollie smirks, flipping imaginary hair over his shoulder.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

I don't know what the future will be like, but fuck me if it's bad enough to go back to high school.

(beat)

I guess what I'm trying to say is, HAGS bitches, see you at our five year, I'll be the one too famous to show up.

Ollie blows a kiss to the crowd. And, in a perfect end of senior year way, they love it. Harper leans into the mic.

HARPER

Afterparty at my place!

The crowd cheers as the sound slowly melts away.

OLLIE (V.O.)

So there you have it, all along I was telling you this story to brag about being Prom Queen. This should surprise no one.

CUT TO BLACK... FOR A LONG BEAT

OLLIE (V.O.)

As if I could resist a follow up.

EXT. HARRINGTON HIGH - LACROSSE FIELD - GRADUATION DAY

The stands are filled with caps and gowns. A boring BUSINESS MAN jabbars on at the podium but we can't hear him.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Don't mind him, that's just some local commencement speaker explaining how ninth grade band led him to open a super market.

(MORE)

OLLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But you don't care what became of  
*him*. You care what became of *us*.

April wears a cap painted with her Zodiac sign (Libra, duh).

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 April went to Bard, and just like  
 she threatened, became a full on  
 Queer Lit Witch, majoring in  
 Women's Studies and flannel. Every  
 weekend she took the train into the  
 city to see her very much not a  
 phase girlfriend, Bertie.

Bertie falls asleep then abruptly nods awake.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 Who went to NYU for theater. Junior  
 year she dropped out to become  
 Bernadette Peters' assistant, and is  
 currently about to open her first  
 one act at the Fringe Festival.

We move to Diego, cheering on the sidelines.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 The next year, Diego went to Fordham,  
 played lacrosse, and ate midnight  
 breakfast any chance he could. He  
 loves it so much he's staying to open  
 a 24-hour diner so he can eat  
 breakfast anytime he wants.

We move to a truly, genuinely happy and *relieved* Harper.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 Harper didn't get into Columbia.  
 She went to Syracuse where she was  
 offered a bid to every sorority on  
 campus but declined in favor of  
 running campus politics. She now  
 works for the DA's office in  
 Brooklyn, which one could say is  
 working for a grown-up popularity  
 contest. But I'm not saying that.

Ollie sits in the bleachers, relaxed.

OLLIE (V.O.)  
 Oh, and as for Little Ollie St.  
 John? I went to Northwestern on a  
 full ride... which I lost when I  
 wrote an exposé on my advisor's  
 kinky internet presence.

(MORE)

OLLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But it didn't matter. I graduated with honors and *considered* founding what Karen would call "a merciless gossip blog" but believe it or not, I decided to be the bigger person.

The students walks across the stage, accepting diplomas.

OLLIE (V.O.)

And by that I mean, I'm following the footsteps of investigative journalist Ronan Farrow, who I will either marry or kill. Whatever it takes to be on top, honey.

Ollie walks across the stage, accepting his diploma.

OLLIE (V.O.)

Tonight, at our five-year reunion I plan to downplay my accomplishments as a power move. Who cares if I'm in 30 under 30? And by that I mean, who cares if *I* tell them. But if they find out organically-- like if a student working the event asks for my autograph on a copy of Forbes I gave him along with \$50-- Now that would be something.

Everyone throws their caps into the air in pure celebration.

OLLIE (V.O.)

As for Ava LaMonte... she was never seen again. And yes, I'm an investigative journalist now, and yes I could easily find her. But I don't want to. She lives now only in high school myth, passed down from generation to generation... and in the "scandal" section of Harrington's Wikipedia.

SFX: THUNDER

INT. RAINFOREST CAFE - NIGHT

HARPER

A bottle of Champagne please.

Harper flashes her smile at a nervous TEENAGE RANGER.

TEEN RANGER

Can I see your ID?

Harper hands it over. She's 23 and *does* live in Brooklyn now. She looks a little more mature and a little less crazy, but hot people don't age. Dean and Susan smile at her lovingly.

DEAN

I remember my high school reunion.

HARPER

I thought you refuse to go to them?

DEAN

That's because at my ten-year I smoked a J behind the bar, set off the fire alarms and was accused of coming back from the grave to haunt Principal Tomlin. My photo was on the deceased table. Who knew?

HARPER

Who knew that you were a ghost?

Dean shrugs. Susan considers responding but moves on.

SUSAN

Will April and Bertie be there?

HARPER

April got in last night and Bertie is flying in from Edinburgh, I think she gets in at eight.

The Teen Ranger returns with champagne.

The Wests hold the glasses in a toast, but Harper *freezes*.

She sees her: AVA LaMONTE.

Harper blinks hard and looks again. *It's... not Ava?*

SUSAN

Everything okay, sweetie?

HARPER

Yeah... it's just. Never mind.

It's just a FACELESS TEEN. Harper breathes a sigh of relief.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I'm just so glad I'm not in high school anymore.

THE END!