

THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE

Written by

Ilker atak & Johannes Duncker

1

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

1

CARLA NOWAK (29) is holding a telephone receiver to her ear - the teachers' lounge is a place where people still use landlines. The conversation has been going on for some time. Carla glances at her watch.

CARLA

Yes, I understand. Like I said, we went over this last week...

The person on the other end interrupts her. Carla listens patiently.

CARLA (CONT'D)

One second.

She grabs a pen, searching for paper to no avail.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Yes, I'm still here.

She writes a number and an address on her palm.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Yes... 0153... 4, yes...

A colleague, MILOSZ DUDEK (45), appears in the background, giving Carla the sign that it's time. She nods and he starts off without her.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Yes, you'll hear from me. I've taken a note and will look into it. Great. Bye.

She hangs up, hurriedly packs her stuff away, then heads off...

2

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

2

... down long corridors. She reaches a classroom door, takes a deep breath, and enters.

3

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

3

Carla enters a plain room of the kind we're all familiar with from school days. A couple of tables have been pushed together, and at the end of this arrangement sit JENNY (12) and LUKAS (12).

Opposite them, teachers Milosz Dudek and THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (42) have taken their seats.

Lukas is silently looking at the cap he has placed on his lap. Jenny, the textbook teenager, has long hair and braces.

The mood is tense as Carla sits down between the two parties on the long side of the table.

CARLA
Sorry I'm late.

MILOSZ DUDEK
It's fine. Mr. Liebenwerda has given us the essentials.

CARLA
Good.
(to the children)
So you know know what happened.

Lukas nods.

JENNY
Yeah, but we told them we don't know anything.

MILOSZ DUDEK
You may not know anything for certain, but do you have any leads?

Jenny and Lukas look at each other à la search me.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Have you seen anything unusual recently? Students acting strange?

Jenny looks at Lukas, who shrugs.

MILOSZ DUDEK
I know this is unpleasant for you.

CARLA
And not just for you.

MILOSZ DUDEK
But put yourselves in the victims' shoes. We need to put a stop to this. And you two are class representatives.

JENNY
But what can we say if we don't know anything?

Lukas continues to retreat into himself, staring at the floor. Carla looks at Thomas, her gaze eloquent: Just leave it.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Lukas?

Lukas looks up.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

Does no one spring to mind? Someone with a new smartphone, expensive clothes or loads of cash?

LUKAS

I don't wanna talk about it.

The teachers look at Lukas. Jenny turns to him in confusion.

JENNY

(softly)

Hey.

CARLA

Then you don't have to, Lukas.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

That's right. We don't have to talk at all.

Thomas Liebenwerda gets up and goes to the other side of the table. He places the register in which all the names of the children in 7B are listed in front of Lukas.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

I'll go down this list with my pen and all you need to do is nod if you harbor suspicions.

Liebenwerda starts to run his pen down the list of names. Lukas is looking at it and repeatedly shaking his head.

Milosz Dudek and Carla eye each other - Liebenwerda's method hadn't been agreed upon.

CARLA

Mr. Liebenwerda?

She looks at him: Shall we stop this?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Of course you don't have to if you don't want to.

Lukas barely reacts.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

But I suggest we continue. We're almost done.

Lukas gives a shrug. Liebenwerda starts once again.

We remain on Carla: The events around her are reflected in her face - a face which, by degrees, is growing stony.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

This kid? Him? Thanks, Lukas.

MILOSZ DUDEK (O.S.)
 I'd like to remind you that you're
 to keep what we've discussed to
 yourselves.

The children nod half-heartedly, but Carla is barely aware of what's going on around her now. She only knows that what just happened was not okay. But the bell for the next lesson is already ringing.

CUT TO:

TITLE: THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE

CARLA (PRE-LAP)
 Good day, dear class.

4 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

4

CLASS
 (in chorus)
 Good morning, good, good, good morn-
 ing, morn-ing...

Carla is standing at the blackboard with class 7B in front of her and completing a ritual greeting of clapping, patting and finger-clicking to the words they repeat.

CARLA
 I see the books.

The children hold their math books up in the air. Carla checks to see if anyone has forgotten theirs.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 I see the files and notebooks.

The children hold up their files and notebooks.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Great. Then put out your homework,
 I'll come around. In the interim,
 look at the warm-up in silence.

She points to the blackboard. It reads:

WARM-UP: $0.999... = 1?$ PROOF!!!

Carla walks down the rows and checks the homework while the children attempt the warm-up - among the kids are Jenny and Lukas. She offers attention to the students, makes comments, praises and offers constructive criticism.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Good... Yes, good. Ali... Take
 another look at exercise two.
 (MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)
 (to another student)
 Can you explain it to him?

She walks on, bending over another group.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 You need the same denominator so
 you can add them together.

The class grows too loud.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Hey!

She claps her hands four times. The class takes the prompt
 and claps back twice - silence.

Carla returns to the front.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Okay, who wants to solve the warm-
 up? Is 0.999 the same as 1?

HATICE (12), a girl in a headscarf, holds up a hand.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Yes, Hatice?

HATICE
 It's actually not the same.

CARLA
 Actually? Please come up to the
 board and show us why not.

Hatice approaches the board and starts providing proof.

HATICE
 Well, if you subtract 0.999 from 1,
 there's still a remainder. Of 0.000
 and then a 1.

She writes her deductions on the board.

CARLA
 So you think there's a number
 between 0.999 and 1?

HATICE
 Yeah.

CARLA
 (to the class)
 So, is this proof or an assumption?

JENNY
 That's not really proof, is it?

Carla looks at the class. Oskar holds up a hand.

CARLA
Okay. Oskar wants a try. Thanks,
Hatice.

Hatice sits back down and Oskar approaches the board. He writes quickly and without much by way of explanation.

OSKAR
Alright, 0.1111 is equal to one
ninth.

He writes on the blackboard: $0.11\dots = 1/9$

OSKAR (CONT'D)
And nine times one ninth equals 1.

$9 \times 1/9 = 1$

OSKAR (CONT'D)
So 0.999 equals 1.

$0,999\dots = 1$

He stands shyly beside the blackboard. Carla tries to conceal her enthusiasm.

CARLA
(to the class)
What do you all say?

Carla sees that some of the children don't quite follow.

JENNY
Makes sense.

CARLA
Makes sense, doesn't it? Hatice?

HATICE
I still don't really get it.

TOM
(calling out)
There must be a gap between nine
and one.

TOM (12) is a big kid with a loud voice.

Oskar is still at the blackboard. Carla looks at him questioningly. He shrugs and returns to his seat.

CARLA
Thanks, Oskar. Does anyone else not
understand?

The majority of the children raise their hands.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Right, well it was complex. But the crucial thing to understand is that a proof needs a derivation that builds up step by step. We'll get there, don't worry.

There's a knock at the door.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Come in.

But the door has opened even before Carla has spoken.

The principal, DR. BETTINA BÖHM (64), Thomas Liebenwerda and Milosz Dudek enter. One can see how long the principal has been in the profession - her every breath shows how versed she is in such situations.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Sorry to disturb you. If I might.

She turns to address the class.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)

Hello, everyone. We have to interrupt briefly. Mr. Dudek?

MILOSZ DUDEK

Would the girls please stand up and leave the room?

The girls look at each other. The first ones stand up.

MILOSZ DUDEK (CONT'D)

Go on and wait outside. We'll bring you back in shortly. Close the door.

The girls do so.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Right. The rest of you: Listen up. Take out your wallets, put them on your desks and come up front.

The boys look at each other perplexedly. Carla doesn't understand what's going on, either.

Dissenting voices can be heard.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)

It's voluntary, of course. But if you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear.

The children do as the principal tells them. One by one, the boys take out their wallets and place them on their desks.

CARLA
(whispering to Dr. Böhm)
Excuse me, but what is this?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
(whispering back)
Weren't you there when they were
questioned?

While the boys make their way up to the blackboard, the other teachers check the wallets - they look inside them, and if the contents are inconspicuous, return them to their place.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Who sits here?

LUKAS
Oskar.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Oskar, where's your wallet?

OSKAR
I don't have one.

CARLA
You don't have to show it.

OSKAR
I just said I don't have one!

MIŁOSZ DUDEK
And this one?

He holds up a wallet.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Guys, whose seat is this?

Silence.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Ms. Nowak?

CARLA
It's... Ali's.

All eyes are on ALI (12) - fear is writ large in his face. Carla looks at Lukas, who averts his gaze.

MIŁOSZ DUDEK
Ali, come with me, please.

5 INT. OFFICE BÖHM - DAY

5

Ali's parents have come to the school and are sitting beside their son, who endures the silence. Dr. Böhm and Carla are seated across from them.

ALI'S MOTHER

I gave him the money this morning so he could buy a gift later for his cousin.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Might I ask what he was going to buy?

ALI'S MOTHER

I think it was a computer game. Right? *Ali, konuşsana.*

ALI

Yeah, a computer game.

CARLA

Well, dear Ali, Mr. and Mrs. Yılmaz, I think that clears things up. Let's put this behind us.

Carla looks over at Dr. Böhm, who gives a fleeting nod.

MOTHER OF ALI

What gave you the idea?

CARLA

Sorry?

MOTHER OF ALI

Why my Ali?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

He had an unusual amount of money.

MOTHER OF ALI

So? What if a mother likes to put money in her kid's pockets?

CARLA

Yeah.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Ms. Yılmaz--

MOTHER OF ALI

Carrying money isn't a crime.

CARLA

True.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

We have a zero tolerance policy,
which means we look into every
matter, no matter how small.

MOTHER OF ALI

But what will the other kids think
of him now? You know how children
are.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Don't worry, Mrs. Yilmaz. We'll set
it right.

MOTHER OF ALI

Set it right?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Yeah. We're lucky the suspicion
didn't prove true or this would be
much graver.

CARLA

Sorry you had to come in.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Yes, we're sorry.

FATHER OF ALI

(in Turkish to his wife)
*You dragged me in here for this
shit?*

MOTHER OF ALI

(in Turkish)
It's important.

FATHER OF ALI

(in Turkish)
*So important that they're sending
us back home again?*

MOTHER OF ALI

(in Turkish)
Don't make a scene.

FATHER OF ALI

(in Turkish)
*Then you try explaining to my boss
why I had to leave mid-shift.*

MOTHER OF ALI

(in Turkish)
*This is about our son, Hikmet. They
asked to see both of us.*

FATHER OF ALI
 (in Turkish)
*Like you couldn't take care of this
 bullshit on your own.*

Dr. Böhm clears his throat.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
 Might I ask you to please speak
 German?

FATHER OF ALI
 (in unaccented German)
 Right, German it is. My son doesn't
 steal. Ever. And if he did, I'd
 break his legs.

The teachers hadn't been expecting this. Ali's father summons
 his son and they depart.

6

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

6

A number of colleagues have gathered. Besides Thomas
 Liebenwerda and Milosz Dudek, there's also LORE SEMNIK (49),
 a sharp-eyed teacher of German and music who's objective in
 her dealings and a guidance counselor.

Beside them is also VANESSA KÖNIG (42), an attractive French
 teacher in eye-catching, patterned pantyhose and with a
 foible for self-dramatization.

In the kitchenette, Carla pours filter coffee into her cup
 and puts fifty cents into the piggy-bank while listening.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 ... That's just the way it is. The
 children don't have anyone at home
 they deem worthy of respect.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 And this is why we have to be
 tough?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 Those were *your* words.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 But *you* implied it.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 All I'm saying is, we can't let
 them walk all over us.

LORE SEMNIK
 And who, precisely, is walking all
 over you, Thomas?

Ms. Kuhn is filing pieces of paper at the pigeonholes. Carla walks past her.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

Ms. Nowak? The substitute teacher plan is in your pigeonhole. Ms. Holbach is on sick leave until next week.

CARLA

I saw, thanks.

Ms. Kuhn carries on at the pigeonholes, then goes back into the office. Carla sits down with the group, whose discussion has progressed.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

That's what we're trying to figure out.

LORE SEMNIK

But not like this. Think about what it does to children when they're frisked in class.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

No one got *frisked*. It was voluntary.

CARLA

You know perfectly well it wasn't voluntary. A heads-up would've been cordial.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

You don't know how long this has been going on. Kids here steal all the time. We need to act when we have the chance.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Did those pencils ever reappear?

MIŁOSZ DUDEK

No.

Dudek chews on a breakfast roll that he washes down with tepid filter coffee. Carla packs her things.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

A thousand pencils. Who needs a thousand pencils? Can anyone explain that to me?

VANESSA KÖNIG

I still say it started when we got the new cleaning company.

LORE SEMNIK
 Watch what you say, Vanessa. Those
 women are really nice.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 (half-joking)
 How about we hire a private
 detective?

LORE SEMNIK
 Right, some guy lurking about the
 school yard smoking a pipe.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 Like in stores.

CARLA
 I'm off.

VANESSA KÖNIG
 There's no budget for that.

CARLA
 We need to act. Right, Mr.
 Liebenwerda?

She exits, her jacket still hanging from her chair.

7 INT. GYM - DAY 7

SLO-MO: The students run in a circle, their knees high. At
 its center, in her sports gear, is Carla, a whistle dangling
 from her neck. With hands and feet, she has the children
 adopt her rhythm.

8 INT. GYM - LATER - DAY 8

The children are lying on their stomachs in a circle with
 Carla in the middle.

CARLA
 On three, we raise our arms and
 legs: one, two, three!

Carla does so, as do the children.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 And those who can, or want to, can
 shake them.

LATER, the children are divided into two teams, one wearing
 red straps and playing basketball.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Go on, Enno. Nice dribbling.

JIEUN (12) and LUISE (12) are sitting on a bench. At first glance, Jieun could pass for a boy. Luise is delicate with pale skin, freckles and red hair. Both aren't taking part in the gym class.

CARLA (CONT'D)
You two okay?

They whisper to each other, giggle, and exit when Carla is distracted.

Lukas fouls Ali and they both go down. Carla blows her whistle.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Hey, keep it clean!

ALI
But Ms. Nowak!

CARLA
Ali, get up. It happens.

He points behind her.

ALI
I've had it. Luise and Jieun do whatever they want.

Carla notices that Jieun and Luise are gone. She looks around the hall, but no sign of them. The door to the gym stands ajar.

CARLA
Calm down and play on, Ali. It wasn't that bad. Come on.

She goes over to the other end of the gym.

CARLA (CONT'D)
(to Jenny)
Jenny, can you check on Jieun and Luise?

Jenny skips off. The game continues while Carla's eyes again wander to the door: Where are they?

It seems like an eternity until she turns to one of the children on the bench.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Ruben, come here. Take over as ref.
I'll be right back.

She gives the boy the whistle and exits.

9

INT. GYM HALLWAY - DAY

9

Carla walks through the empty gym hallway.

CARLA
Jieun? Luise?

No answer. The hallway is in darkness. The shrieking of the children echoes out from the gym. Carla walks outside, where the girls are sitting. Carla sees Luise hide something between her legs.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Are you coming back in?

LUISE
Sorry, Ms. Nowak, we needed some fresh air.

CARLA
Show me what you hid between your legs.

LUISE
Nothing.

CARLA
Come on, show me.

Luise opens her palm: a fancy Zippo. Carla takes it from her.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Were you smoking?

LUISE
Not us.

CARLA
So why the lighter?

JIEUN
To cook heroin.

Luise and Jenny giggle.

CARLA
Jieun, that's not funny.

JIEUN
I think it is.

CARLA
You said you were sick. I believed you.

JIEUN
(interrupting)
We needed fresh air.

JENNY

It's true.

CARLA

In you go.

She indicates the direction.

LUISE

What about my lighter?

CARLA

I'm keeping it for now.

LUISE

For how long?

CARLA

Until I've spoken to your parents.

LUISE

Please don't do that.

Luise has fear in her face.

LUISE (CONT'D)

It's a gift for my father. It's his birthday tomorrow.

Is she lying? Carla hesitates.

CARLA

Fine. But next time, tell me before you leave the hall, got it?

LUISE

And the lighter?

CARLA

Got it?

LUISE

I get it.

JIEUN

Yes, Ms. Nowak.

CARLA

Fine. Pick up your lighter at the end of the day. Now in you go.

The girls go into the hall, Carla glancing after them.

10

INT. ADMIN OFFICE - DAY

10

Carla enters the admin office Oskar is just exiting.

CARLA
Hey Oskar!

He smiles thinly, walking past her without a word.

Ms. Kuhn is sitting behind the counter with a second secretary, a young trainee called MARIAM (23).

CARLA (CONT'D)
Hello, this was in the gym - and isn't one of my students'. The diary of some Steffi. No last name.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
A diary? Did you read it?

CARLA
I'd never.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Cross your heart? Nor would I.

Ms. Kuhn takes out a box marked Lost & Found and puts the book inside.

CARLA
I was still having trouble with my email account yesterday.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Uh-huh?

CARLA
Could you check my login with IT?

A phone rings. Mariam answers it.

MARIAM (O.S.)
Hello, Emmy Nöther High... Sick? Oh dear. Get well soon. I'll pass it on... Sure...

MITRA (16) and KRISSI (16), two seniors, enter the office.

MITRA
Ms. Kuhn, I need a sanitary product. It's kind of urgent.

Ms. Kuhn goes to a first aid cabinet.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
T or N?

MITRA
T, please.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 (to Krissi)
 And you?

KRISSI
 I'm good.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 (to Mitra)
 How many?

MITRA
 Two. Thanks, Bye.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Bye.

CARLA
 Ms. Kuhn?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Yes?

CARLA
 My login details?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Like I said, sorry, but I can't.

CARLA
 Why not?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Because Mariam already did. It's in
 your pigeonhole.

CARLA
 You're great. Thanks.

MARIAM
 Sorry?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 You're great.

11 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

11

Carla enters. One of her colleagues is unobserved in the kitchenette; she has just poured herself a cup of coffee and has a hand on the piggy bank. But instead of putting something in the kitty, she seems to remove a bill and pocket it. Carla watches as she goes over to a seat. The colleague glances back towards her.

12 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

12

The class is taking a test. Carla goes through the registry. She glances around the class. All, as yet, are engrossed in their work.

Oskar gets up and places his test on the teacher's desk.

CARLA
(quietly)
You're already done?

Oskar nods.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Don't you want to double-check your answers?

OSKAR
Can I go outside?

Carla nods.

CARLA
But keep quiet.

Oskar nods and exits.

There's a rustling. Carla turns and sees Tom playing with some papers. She approaches and reaches for the cheat sheet.

CARLA (CONT'D)
(in disappointment)
Oh, Tom.

TOM
It's not mine.

CARLA
It's your handwriting, of course it is. Give me the test.

TOM
No.

CARLA
Please.

TOM
No.

ALI
It's not his.

CARLA
Ali, I'm talking to Tom. Be quiet.

Turning to Tom.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Give it to me.

TOM
No.

CARLA
Tom!

He reluctantly hands it to her.

Students turn around as the class grows restless. Carla takes a fresh sheet from her desk and goes back to Tom.

CARLA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Start over again. You have 20 minutes.

Tom doesn't take the paper.

TOM
What use is that?

CARLA
Either try again or fail for cheating.

TOM
(loudly)
It wasn't mine.

CARLA
Tom, no discussion.

She holds the sheet out to him once again. Tom reluctantly starts writing his test again.

13 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

13

The school bell rings. Children hand in their tests and exit. Only Tom and two others still write.

CARLA
Pens down and bring your tests up front.

The children do so.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Tom, one moment, please.

Tom and Lukas exchange glances. Lukas holds a basketball.

LUKAS
I'll be outside.

CARLA

Well, Tom, I don't approve of your behavior.

TOM

What did I do?

CARLA

First you cheated, then you argued with me and distracted your fellow students.

Tom avoids her gaze.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I looked at your cheat sheet. When you make a cheat sheet, at least get the stuff right. You made the same errors on your test, then claimed it's not your sheet? How would you feel if I lied to you?

Tom shrugs.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Not cool, right?

Beat.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Tom.

TOM

What am I to say?

CARLA

I want you to understand that your behavior isn't fair to the others. The rules apply to everyone. Got it? You got it, Tom?

TOM

(mumbling)

Yeah, I'm not an idiot.

CARLA

Anything to add?

TOM

Sorry.

CARLA

(confirming)

"Sorry."

TOM

Isn't that what you want to hear? Can I go now?

CARLA
Yes, you may.

14 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

14

Carla is in a corner skyping with an English colleague.

CARLA
(in English)
We'll let the parents know.

TIM (VIA SKYPE)
(in English)
*Alright, great. When do you think
you'll have a list of the
participants?*

CARLA
(in English)
I hope to have it by the end of
next month. Is that good for you?

TIM (VIA SKYPE)
(in English)
*Sure. We still have more than
enough time.*

Carla's line of thought is interrupted when Vanessa König approaches.

VANESSA KÖNIG
Your next period's in the gym,
right?

CARLA
Yeah.

VANESSA KÖNIG
Sorry, I wanted to ask if we can
discuss one of your students, it's
important.

CARLA
Of course.

VANESSA KÖNIG
It's Ali.

CARLA
What is it this time?

VANESSA KÖNIG
He barely passed last semester.
He'll flunk if he doesn't improve.

CARLA
Oh.

Thomas Liebenwerda joins them.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Morning.

VANESSA KÖNIG
We're discussing Ali, Thomas.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Oh, tricky.

CARLA
Tricky? Why?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Just tricky. In danger of flunking.

VANESSA KÖNIG
Absolutely.

CARLA
One second.
(stressed, in English,
into the laptop)
Tim, we're going to have to catch
up some other time. I'm sorry, I
have to go.

Tim says his goodbyes, largely unregarded by Carla, whose attention is now on Ali.

CARLA (CONT'D)
(to Thomas)
Is it his oral exam?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
That, too.

She shuts the Skype app.

CARLA
The semester only just began. He
might still make it. Have you
spoken to his parents?

VANESSA KÖNIG
Not yet.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Do you know what their professions
are?

VANESSA KÖNIG
I think his father drives a cab.

CARLA
How is that relevant?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA.

Maybe no one's at home to help him study.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Did you believe them?

CARLA

The parents?

VANESSA KÖNIG

Yeah.

CARLA

Is this about Ali's grades or the theft?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Nonsense, it's not about that. That doesn't matter.

CARLA

Right. But to answer your question, Vanessa, I believe the parents. I believe they have integrity and that Ali didn't steal.

VANESSA KÖNIG

It was a question, Carla. A simple question.

Carla's look: Don't go asking such dumb shit.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Calm down, Vanessa.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Everyone's so uptight. Thanks a lot, Carla.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Let's get back to work.

General dismay. Vanessa and Thomas leave. Carla watches them go, anger writ large in her face - and not letting up.

She watches her colleagues before her gaze falls on her laptop again. She opens her webcam image in a small window and slides her computer slightly to the right, thus observing what is happening behind her.

She takes her wallet from her bag and glances inside: 50 euros in small bills fresh from the ATM.

She puts the wallet in her jacket pocket, then pulls it back out a little so it's visible to a potential thief. She hangs the jacket over the chair.

Carla sits back down at the laptop, the jacket on the chair is visible via the webcam. She presses the red RECORD button on the app, then minimizes the window and takes the laptop lock from her pocket. She attaches the computer to the table's leg and stands up.

Before she leaves, Carla glances at the computer one last time: Her screensaver is of a hammock hanging on a heavenly white beach.

15 INT. GYM/TEACHERS' CHANGING ROOM - DAY 15

Carla is standing in the teachers' changing room.

She pulls up the blinds. The view behind the glass is that of the gym, into which the first of the children are now running. Carla takes a sip of her water and hearkens in the silence. She switches off the light before leaving the room. The children's muted voices can be heard.

16 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 16

Carla is back in the teachers' lounge. There are only a few teachers there. Her laptop is still where it was. The first thing she does is to shut it.

Then she goes over to her jacket and checks her wallet, counting the bills. It's soon clear: Some of the money is missing. The perpetrator has struck again. She nervously puts away her wallet.

She takes her laptop and angles it surreptitiously. She loads the video and presses PLAY. Nothing happens for a while. She fast-forwards. Colleagues speed past, but her jacket remains untouched.

MILOSZ DUDEK (O.S.)

Hey.

Startled, Carla shuts the laptop. Milosz is standing beside her. Did he see any of this?

CARLA

Hey.

MILOSZ DUDEK

I just wanted to say I'm sorry about yesterday.

CARLA

For what?

MILOSZ DUDEK

(in Polish)

Frisking your class was not alright.

CARLA
 (in German)
 It's okay. Forget about it.

She smiles at him. Is there anything else? Milosz considers, but Carla beats him to it.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 And do me a favor: Let's talk
 German at work, please.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 Why? Are you ashamed?

CARLA
 Because of our colleagues.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 Fine, why not?

They look at each other uneasily.

CARLA
 Thanks.

She takes the laptop and leaves the teachers' lounge, going into the...

17 INT. REST ROOMS - DAY 17

Carla locks herself in a cubicle.

She sits down on the lid, flips open the display and presses PLAY again.

Again, we see only her jacket. People cross the lounge - but no one touches it.

A spellbound Carla finally comes upon the moment: Someone approaches her jacket and tampers with it, but the shot cuts the person off at the neck. Carla can't tell who the person is. All she can make out is a light blouse patterned with small yellow stars. She once again views the instant of the theft and zooms in: an arm, a pattern. With that, she goes back into the hallway.

18 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 18

Carla exits approaches the teachers' lounge. Some of her colleagues walk in her direction. Carla examines them as she passes: a white shirt, a gray sweater, a mustard-yellow waistcoat...

19 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

19

Carla enters and examines her colleagues' clothing. Here, again, there's no one in comparable dress.

Then she notices Ms. Kuhn beyond the glass window of the admin office. The secretary is in conversation with Mr. Stahlmann (59) and is wearing a blouse with little yellow stars on it.

20 INT. ADMIN OFFICE - DAY

20

Carla is by the door, waiting because Mr. Stahlmann is still talking to Ms. Kuhn.

STAHLMANN

... oh, and, Ms. Kuhn, the printers are on strike again.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

Again? Sounds like the union to me.

STAHLMANN

Paper jam.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

Try the flap on the side.

STAHLMANN

I'm useless with these things.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

It's usually stuck there.

STAHLMANN

I have class and you're faster.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

(interrupts)

We'll look into it when we have a second.

STAHLMANN

Thanks.

Kuhn nods meaningfully. Stahlmann exits.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

He doesn't want to fix it. He wants us to.

Carla enters, her laptop protecting her chest.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)

Ms. Nowak. How can we help?

Carla hesitates.

CARLA

I have a huge problem, Ms. Kuhn.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

What can we do for you?

CARLA

How do I put this nicely?

Carla breaks off and turns to Mariam, who's working on email.

CARLA (CONT'D)

(to Mariam)

Excuse me, may Ms. Kuhn and I speak privately?

Confused looks.

MARIAM

Sure. You want me to leave?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

Mariam, take a look at the printer.
A physics degree obviously isn't
enough to solve the problem.

Mariam exits. Carla closes the door. Now it's a tête-à-tête.
Ms. Kuhn's smile gives way to a serious expression.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)

You wanna sit down?

CARLA

No, thanks. So, Ms. Kuhn, I was in
gym class and my jacket was hanging
in the teachers' lounge.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

A-ha. And what's with the jacket?

CARLA

The jacket's still there.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

So what's the problem?

CARLA

My wallet was inside the jacket,
and inside the jacket there was...

Carla makes a gesture that prompts Ms. Kuhn to complete the sentence.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

... money?

CARLA

That's right. WAS.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 You mean someone from the
 faculty...?

CARLA
 What makes you say faculty?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Well, the jacket was in the
 teachers' lounge, so it couldn't
 have been students.

A MESSENGER comes in. Kuhn signs for the package.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
 So who was there?
 (to the messenger)
 Thank you.

The messenger exits.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
 Liebenwerda. Ms. Semnik. I wasn't
 here the whole time, so... Mariam,
 of course.

CARLA
 Liebenwerda, Semnik, Ms. Irfan...
 Can you imagine they did it?

Ms. Kuhn shrugs, her look reading: I can imagine many things.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Ms. Kuhn... Do you have something
 to say?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Like what?

CARLA
 Your blouse, I've never seen it
 before.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 My blouse? What about my blouse?

CARLA
 Ms. Kuhn, this is very unpleasant
 for me, but there are indications
 that you did it.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 I did what. You're kidding.

CARLA

I don't want this to make waves.
Return the money, promise this will
stop, and we'll forget it here and
now, okay?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

You mean this for real?

CARLA

Think of it as a chance to be done
with this and we'll never mention
it again.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

(interrupting)

A chance? This is an outrage.
Please leave now! Leave!

The laptop under her arm, Carla exits.

21 INT. CORRIDOR - DAY 21

Carla enters the corridor, where Mariam stands in front of
the door.

MARIAM

Can I go back in?

Carla can't answer; she turns away, suppressing bitter
laughter at Ms. Kuhn's audacity.

She goes into the...

22 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 22

... and reflects before coming to a decision.

23 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF OFFICE BÖHM - DAY 23

Carla makes for the door to Dr. Böhm's office. She hesitates
before entering.

24 INT. OFFICE BÖHM - DAY 24

Carla stands in Dr. Böhm's office, not knowing what to do.

CARLA

Can I show you something?

She holds up her laptop.

25

INT. OFFICE BÖHM - DAY

25

While Carla is still waiting in Dr. Böhm's office, the latter steps out into the hallway. Carla is plainly dismayed. She watches Dr. Böhm enter the admin office and talk to Ms. Kuhn. Oskar, Ms. Kuhn's son, is there waiting for his mother to finish work.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Ms. Kuhn, please stop what you're doing and come to my office.

Ms. Kuhn rises and follows Dr. Böhm.

OSKAR

Mama, have you eaten yet?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

No, we'll eat together. Wait for me.

OSKAR

But hurry, I'm starving.

Dr. Böhm and Ms. Kuhn enter the office and Dr. Böhm shuts the door. A brief gaze passes between Carla and Oskar as the door closes.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

(to Kuhn)

Please have a seat.

Ms. Kuhn sits down on one of the two chairs facing Dr. Böhm's desk. She doesn't deign to give Carla a glance.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)

Ms. Kuhn, you can guess what this is about. Do you have something to tell us?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

This allegation is totally impertinent.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

All right, but we have a problem and need to talk about it. It's not yet an allegation.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

Yes, it is. I mean, do you have proof?

Carla and Böhm exchange glances.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Hand it over, Ms. Nowak.

Dr. Böhm turns the laptop to Friederike Kuhn and shows her the relevant footage. Carla tries to read Ms. Kuhn's expression. As the arm comes into shot, Böhm pauses the video.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)
Knowing you, Ms. Kuhn, I can't believe what I'm seeing here.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
This is your proof? You can't recognize anyone.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
It's your blouse.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Yeah?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
And what about the pattern?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Are you kidding me?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
If I'm not mistaken, it's the blouse you're wearing right now.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
And none of the 70 people who come in and out wear a similar blouse?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Fifty percent of those people are men, so they don't wear blouses, and the other fifty percent were in class or are sick.

Dr. Böhm shuts the laptop - end of discussion.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)
If we can't find a common solution, I'll have to report what happened.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
What kind of solution?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
A *common* solution.

Böhm looks both Carla and Kuhn in the face.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)
As a start, you could give Ms. Nowak back her money.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 So you've already made up your
 mind.

Ms. Kuhn is fighting back the tears. She takes her wallet and casts it on the desk.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
 Here you go.

Dr. Böhm hands it back to her.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
 There, take it!

Ms. Kuhn rummages through it, but it's empty.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
 As luck would have it, I have to go
 to the ATM because I have no money
 at all. Or is there anything that
 belongs to you here? Please, take
 it. Or do you wanna frisk me?

She turns out her pockets.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
 Here! This is part of our daily
 routine now.

She abruptly leaves the room. Carla follows her.

26

INT. ADMIN OFFICE/CORRIDOR - DAY

26

Carla hurries after Ms. Kuhn and sees her hastily packing her things, Oskar standing awkwardly beside her.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 (moving towards her)
 You okay?

CARLA
 Hang on.

As Carla approaches, Kuhn throws on her jacket and grabs Oskar by the shoulder.

OSKAR
 Mama, what's wrong?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
 Nothing.

CARLA
 Ms. Kuhn?

Kuhn drags Oskar out of the room. The two of them make straight for the exit. Carla follows.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Ms. Kuhn, can we talk?

OSKAR
(to his mother)
Where are we going?

CARLA
(shouting)
Ms. Kuhn, please stop for a second!

OSKAR
(to his mother)
What happened?

Ms. Kuhn drags Oskar out of the building while people, including Lore Semnik, watch. Carla follows them to the door.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Come on.

OSKAR
Let go of me!

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Now. Come on, please. Let's go

Carla turns back. Her colleagues stand there in confusion - among them Lore Semnik. Carla ignores her colleagues and goes back to...

27 INT. OFFICE BÖHM - DAY

27

A distressed Mariam exits the office.

Milosz Dudek and Böhm have been conferring.

CARLA
(to Dr. Böhm)
Can we talk privately?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
You can speak in front of Mr. Dudek.

CARLA
I think we're making a big mistake.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Oh, really?

CARLA
Strictly speaking, the video isn't clear proof.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
It's too late to fear your own
courage.

MILOSZ DUDEK
And there's another problem, Carla.
Your video violates personal
rights. Not only Ms. Kuhn's, but
the entire faculty's.

CARLA
Shit. We shouldn't have shown her
the video.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Spilled milk, Ms. Nowak.

CARLA
What now?

<p>DR. BETTINA BÖHM I'll call our lawyer, who'll advise us to turn the video over to the police to file charges against unknown persons...</p>	<p>CARLA (CONT'D) (interrupting her) The police? Is that necessary?</p>
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DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)
Until then, we must all agree on
one phrasing, one wording, okay?
And we must refrain from any
accusation, suspicion or prejudice.

MILOSZ DUDEK
Got it. I'll communicate it.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
(to Carla)
Understood?

CARLA
And Oskar?

28 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON

28

Carla is correcting the last math test and stacking the
papers by seating order.

She turns pages, marking mistakes, but also gives praise.
When she gets to Oskar's test, she puts down her pen and
grows contemplative.

30 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

30

Carla hands back the tests.

CARLA
Not bad, Luise. Well done. Ruby and
Ela.

ELA
Awesome.

CARLA
Did you guys study together?

ELA
Yeah.

CARLA
Tom, you've still got work to do.
Ali, much better.

ALI
Awesome, a C!

CARLA
(to another student)
You usually get at least a C. What
happened here?

Carla approaches Oskar. He looks at her expectantly. She
hands him the test.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Congratulations. Great job, Oskar.
Really great. Vera, well done.

The children chatter about their results.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Everyone! Hey!

The children are too loud for Carla. She claps her hands four
times.

The children clap back two time - and silence!

CARLA (CONT'D)
I emailed your parents about the
deposit for our trip to England.
Could you remind them?

The children assent.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Good. Josephine?

JOSEPHINE
Could you put the overview of
grades on the board?

Agreement, loud dissent.

CARLA

Who wants to see the overview of grades on the board?

Some students raise their hands.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Who of you would rather not see it displayed on the board?

Others raise their hands.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Josephine, why is this important to you?

JOSEPHINE

I'd like to know where I stand.

LUKAS

You're sitting in a chair.

CARLA

Tom?

TOM

What if I got the worst grade?

STUDENT

Tough luck. Then study harder.

CARLA

Yeah, what if you got a bad grade and everyone wants to see it? Ruby?

RUBY

It'll pass in a week or two. No one will remember who got an A or an F.

CARLA

If it's irrelevant, you don't need to see it.

The class grows loud, Carla claps four times and the students twice.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Let's continue. I won't display the overview. If you want to know where you're at, see me after class.

The bell for recess sounds, the children jump up and rush out.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Everyone put up your chairs.

The children put their chairs up.

VERA

Ms. Nowak, I need the register.

Carla hands it to her. She exits with her classmates.

Only Oskar remains motionless in his seat.

CARLA

Are you waiting for something,
Oskar?

He looks at her, his childlike face under thick locks.

CARLA (CONT'D)

You can be proud of your
outstanding test.

Oskar shrugs. Carla pulls a Rubik's Cube out of her bag.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Look at this. I meant to give it to
you. Know what it is?

Oskar shakes his head.

CARLA (CONT'D)

A magic cube. But it's about
mathematics, not magic.

Oskar straightens up, his interest awakened.

CARLA (CONT'D)

There are algorithms that can solve
the cube in no time. Know what an
algorithm is?

Oskar shakes his head.

CARLA (CONT'D)

A clearly defined set of steps to
solve a given problem. Look:

She swiftly twists the cube in different directions and
presto: She already has two sides of a uniform color.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Wanna try?

She holds the cube out to Oskar. He takes it and cautiously
twists one side.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I can lend it to you, if you like.

OSKAR

What's the goal?

CARLA
For every side to show only one
color.

Oskar turns the cube and realizes it's not easy.

OSKAR
It's getting worse.

He makes to give it back.

CARLA
Keep it until you've solved it,
alright?

Oskar continues to twist it cautiously.

CARLA (CONT'D)
And if something's on your mind,
let me know, alright?

Oskar turns from the cube, nods.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Or Ms. Semnik, your guidance
counselor.

OSKAR
Why did my mama cry yesterday?

CARLA
Didn't she tell you?

Oskar shakes his head.

CARLA (CONT'D)
I see.

OSKAR
Did you fight with her?

Carla looks at him uneasily.

32

INT. OFFICE BÖHM - DAY

32

Oskar and Carla enter. Dr. Böhm rises.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Hi, Oskar. Come in. Have a seat.

LORE SEMNIK
Hello, Oskar.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
We called your mother, but she
didn't answer. Want some candy?

Böhm points to a bowl full of candy. Oskar grabs a piece.

OSKAR
She slept in and didn't want to
talk.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Could you call her from your cell?

This idea displeases Lore Semnik, she almost imperceptibly
shakes her head. But Oskar has already taken it out and is
dialing.

OSKAR
What do I say?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
That we'd like to talk.

Oskar listens to the ringing. Ms. Kuhn answers.

OSKAR
Hi, Mama. I'm in Dr. Böhm's office.
She wants to talk to you.

Ms. Kuhn talks for quite a while from the other end of the
line. The adults look at each other.

OSKAR (CONT'D)
Okay, Mama. Bye.

Oskar hangs up. Questioning looks.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
What did she say?

OSKAR
That she... doesn't want to talk to
you. And...

CARLA
And?

OSKAR
That you should stay out of it.

Beat.

OSKAR (CONT'D)
What did Mama do wrong?

LORE SEMNIK
You better have your mother tell
you.

OSKAR
No, why? Just tell me.

The adults look at each other in perplexity, a state that Dr. Bettina Böhm can't tolerate.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Okay, you're old enough and you'll hear about it anyway. Your mama won't be working here for now. I say "for now" because we need to find out what happened.

OSKAR
So what happened?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Well, like I said, we need to find out.

OSKAR
I want to know now.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Oskar, I can't tell you more right now.

OSKAR
Is it related to the stealing?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Why do you ask? We weren't discussing the stealing.

Oskar looks at all assembled.

OSKAR
You won't tell me stuff and my mama won't be working here.

The teachers eye each other.

OSKAR (CONT'D)
It wasn't her.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
Nobody said it was her. Nobody is accusing your mama. But tell her we need to talk.

LORE SEMNIK
Oskar, let's step outside.

Lore Semnik touches him lightly on the shoulder. He gets up, throws the candy back in the bowl and leaves the room. Ms. Semnik follows him out.

Carla and a sighing Dr. Böhm remain behind.

CARLA
That was unnecessary.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Indeed.

CARLA

I thought we'd tone it down. You mentioned "phrasing" and "wording."

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Firstly: I didn't say anything he didn't already know. Secondly: It was you who brought him here.

CARLA

Yeah, but not to make innuendos. That's what we wanted to avoid.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Do yourself a favor and trust in my experience.

CARLA

The boy is confused. Can't you see that?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

He's as clear as glass and knows what's what. We're the confused ones.

Carla looks dismayed.

33 INT. SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL - DAY 33

Carla and Lore Semnik smoke in a secluded corner of the school grounds.

34 INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT 34

Carla is pouring water into a vase she then puts a small bouquet of flowers into. She places the bouquet on her desk in preparations for parents' evening.

She goes over to the window, looks out and nods to someone.

35 INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT 35

It's raining hard and wet umbrellas are scattered around the room. Some 20 parents have taken seats on their children's inconveniently small perches and are listening to Carla. Mostly it's mothers who've come. Oskar's seat is empty.

CARLA

The kids are great. They're friendly. They help each other.
(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

All in all, it's a very cooperative class. Of course there's room for improvement...

A knock at the door. TOM'S FATHER (48), who's still on the phone, enters in a gray suit that marks him as an executive of a medium-sized company.

FATHER OF TOM

Gotta go. Alright, bye.

He throws a semi-apologetic look at Carla.

CARLA

Hello.

FATHER OF TOM

I'm Mr. Neuhaus, Tom's father.

CARLA

Uh-huh. Have a seat. I was just relating a few impressions, stressing the importance of students working on their own accord...

She hands Tom's father a leaflet.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Here's information on the class trip. I also wrote an email.

FATHER OF TOM

Thanks.

MOTHER OF JIEUN

Jieun said the math test didn't go well.

CARLA

That's sadly true.

MOTHER OF JIEUN

Maybe it's not only the kids' failure.

CARLA

I wouldn't make that judgment. Failure is too harsh a word.

FATHER OF TOM

To be honest, the tasks were all Greek to me. It's like a black box. Those questions aren't meant for twelve-year-olds, are they?

CARLA

It's seventh-grade material, I stick with the curriculum.

JENNY'S MOTHER (42), a woman who would make a good union representative, speaks up from her seat.

MOTHER OF JENNY

Ms. Nowak, I'd like to raise another issue.

CARLA

Sure.

MOTHER OF JENNY

Jenny said there was an interrogation and she was coerced into divulging information on her classmates. I don't know if everyone knows. We, the parents, chatted about this on WhatsApp. Could you tell us a bit more about it?

CARLA

Nobody was coerced. We asked the class representatives to help us.

MOTHER OF JENNY

It sounded like coercion to me, inciting them to denounce others.

CARLA

Ms. Haubrichs, again, your choice of words is fairly harsh. We requested the kids' help.

MOTHER OF JENNY

By inciting them to rat on their classmates and stay hush about it. That's immense psychological pressure you're exerting on them.

CARLA

This discretion was meant to allow the kids to talk freely, to offer them a safe space. We can talk in private about this issue after our meeting.

MOTHER OF JENNY

But it concerns all of us. I don't understand.

There's a knock at the door.

CARLA

Come in.

Friederike Kuhn enters, completely soaked.

Carla's heart skips, she searches for the right words.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Ms. Kuhn.

Ms. Kuhn closes the door behind her.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

Carry on.

CARLA

Okay, um... Where were we?

MOTHER OF JIEUN

What happened to Ali? I haven't heard.

Carla takes a deep breath, while watching Ms. Kuhn out the corner of her eye.

CARLA

There was a course of action I didn't approve of, but I can assure you that we have a handle on these problems.

MOTHER OF ALI

How do you mean, "a handle?"

CARLA

As I said, let's discuss it privately.

Silence.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

(to Carla)

Why don't you tell the rest of the story?

MOTHER OF ALI

The rest?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

The parents have a right to know what really happened.

CARLA

This isn't the right time.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN

The parents have a right to know their kids' teacher will be in court.

A murmur goes through the room.

CARLA
Ms. Kuhn, this is highly
inappropriate.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Enough!
(to the other parents)
Want to know what happened?

MOTHER OF JENNY
Of course we all want to know.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
This woman made secret video
recordings at school!

A PARENT
What? Of whom?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN
Of faculty members. Just imagine!
Spying! Denunciation! Slander!
Character assassination! You name
it! Entire lives are being ruined
because of her presumptions. I
wouldn't believe a word she says.

Carla looks aghast.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (CONT'D)
Shame on you! Yes, shame on you!

Ms. Kuhn exits.

FEMALE PARENT
Ms. Nowak, what's going on here?

Carla is white as a sheet - some parents are, too.

Carla hurries out of the room.

36 INT. TOILET - NIGHT

36

Carla rushes into the toilet, hyperventilating.

She takes a bag from a trash can and empties it into the
sink. She repeatedly breathes into the bag, which inflates
and deflates rhythmically.

Her breath grows calmer.

VERA (O.S.)

It was considered a bad omen, a sign that divine retribution was coming. But along came Thales of Miletus. Thales was a mathematician. He knew that a solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between Sun and Earth. There.

A beamer projects a representation of various solar eclipses onto the wall.

Two students are standing up front and giving this presentation. Carla stands and watches.

LUISE

These are partial, annular, and full solar eclipses. By way of mathematical calculations, Thales could predict exactly when the next solar eclipse would occur. The unpredictable became predictable. Thank you. Over and out.

Carla and the students applaud.

CARLA

Thank you, you may sit down.

The children sit down.

CARLA (CONT'D)

How do you think that affected people, the unpredictable becoming predictable?

Carla looks at Oskar. He doesn't raise his hands. Jieun raises her hand.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Jieun?

JIEUN

So people stopped believing in God?

Carla notices that Lukas is distracted by his phone. She goes over and takes it.

CARLA

Thanks, Lukas. You'll get your phone back later.

She moves away.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Stopped believing in God. You have a point. With a new critical spirit, Thales heralded the start of modern astronomy. Does astronomy ring a bell?

LUISE

You mean zodiac signs?

CARLA

You're thinking of astrology, which is different. Who knows what astronomy means?

HATICE

Some kind of star science?

CARLA

Exactly. Astronomy is the science of celestial bodies. People stopped explaining the world's phenomena with God or some higher power, instead searching for universally verifiable truths, which is the basis of modern science.

Lukas holds up a hand.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Yes, Lukas?

LUKAS

Could you please put my cell in your bag so no one can steal it?

CARLA

Don't worry, Lukas. Your phone is safe in class.

LUKAS

(glancing at Oskar)
I wouldn't be so sure.

CARLA

Can you explain what you mean?

ALI

He means me, but I didn't do it.

CARLA

Correct. Ali was cleared in our conversation.

LUKAS

I don't mean Ali. We learned in biology that traits are hereditary.

Some of the girls call out for him to shut up.

CARLA
Okay, I don't get it. Could you explain?

LUKAS
For example: like mother, like son.
If the mother is fat, her child
will be fat, too.

Lukas grins. Some of the students again call for him to shut it.

CARLA
(to Lukas)
Lukas, it isn't that... easy. But you're alluding to something else. So can you explain who inherited what from whom?

Oskar looks at Carla.

LUKAS
It doesn't matter anymore, right?

CARLA
So you don't care to elaborate?

LUKAS
No, we were discussing another matter.

FEMALE STUDENT
Coward! Now he's shutting up.

CARLA
That was a bold hypothesis, Lukas.
Next time, think before you speak.

Students mutter in agreement or voice their contempt. Oskar looks down in shame.

38 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

38

Carla is sitting at a table and has dialed a number. It rings.

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)
Hello?

CARLA
Hello, am I speaking with Ms. Wizorek?

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)
Yes?

CARLA

This is Carla Nowak, Lukas' teacher. Do you have a minute?

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)

I'm on my break, but it's good that you call. Can you explain what happened last night?

CARLA

(hesitating)

Sorry you couldn't make it.

Oskar enters.

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)

The parents' chat says you're not in control. You don't want to know what else they wrote.

CARLA

I'm actually calling to talk about Lukas.

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)

Maybe you already know, but we parents will talk to school management.

CARLA

I see. We should use the occasion to talk about Lukas' behavior in class.

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)

What about his behavior?

Carla sees Oskar looking at her seriously.

CARLA

(to Lukas' mother)

One second.

She puts a hand over the phone.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Oskar, you're not allowed to be here.

He remains motionless.

MOTHER OF LUKAS (O.S.)

Hello, Ms. Nowak?

An empty classroom. Carla has brought in Milosz Dudek.

CARLA
(to Oskar)
You can sit here.

They sit down opposite each other. Dudek remains standing.

OSKAR
Why is everybody so sure?

CARLA
Nobody's sure, Oskar. It's all
being looked into.

OSKAR
So why doesn't Mama return to work?

MILOSZ DUDEK
She's officially on vacation.

OSKAR
Do you have proof?

MILOSZ DUDEK
Of what?

OSKAR
For your allegations.

MILOSZ DUDEK
There are credible clues we can't
tell you about, Oskar.

OSKAR
What kind of clues?

CARLA
We can't tell you, Oskar.

OSKAR
(to Milosz Dudek)
Could I talk to Ms. Nowak
privately?

MILOSZ DUDEK
Why?

With a glance, Carla signifies to Milosz Dudek: It's alright.
Dudek leaves the room.

MILOSZ DUDEK (CONT'D)
I'll wait outside.

The two are left alone. Oskar takes a bag out of his pocket
and empties money onto the table, a lot of coins.

CARLA
What's this?

OSKAR
Sixty-three euros and forty-five cents. My savings. You can have it.

CARLA
Did your mama tell you to give me that?

Oskar shakes his head.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Oskar, it's not the money.

OSKAR
Then what is it?

CARLA
Theft is the issue. It doesn't matter if it's one cent or 100 euros. It's about honesty.

Oskar stares at her.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Come on, take your money.

But Oskar ignores her. Carla starts to put the coins back into his bag.

OSKAR
Mama didn't do it.

CARLA
Alright, I understand.

OSKAR
It's one thing to understand, but you need to say it.

CARLA
To say what?

OSKAR
I want you to say it.

CARLA
What?

OSKAR
That she's innocent.

CARLA
Your mama is innocent, Oskar. Satisfied?

OSKAR
Publicly! I want you to apologize
to her publicly and set it right
again.

CARLA
Sorry, but I won't.

OSKAR
Yes, you will, or else...

CARLA
Or else what?

OSKAR
You'll regret it.

CARLA
Are you threatening me?

OSKAR
Maybe.

CARLA
Okay, I'll ignore your remark.

OSKAR
You'll apologize to her! You'll
apologize in public or you'll
suffer the consequences!

Oskar gets up and leaves the room, throwing a chair as he
leaves.

40 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

40

Carla is standing behind a window, looking down at the
playground where Oskar exits the building and joins Jenny and
Hatice, their discussion inaudible. The three of them walk
on, joining Jieun and Vera.

VANESSA KÖNIG
(abruptly)
Carla, hi. Want some cake?

CARLA
What's the occasion?

VANESSA KÖNIG
My birthday.

CARLA
Happy birthday. Having a party?

Carla takes a piece of the cake, but doesn't bite into it.

VANESSA KÖNIG

No, I can't keep up. I need to copy handouts and prepare the room for the parent representatives.

CARLA

Can I be of any help?

VANESSA KÖNIG

No worries, it'll be alright. Say, the other day was quite a spectacle, wasn't it?

CARLA

What was?

VANESSA KÖNIG

Parents' evening.

CARLA

I don't wanna talk about it.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Alright, but you can confide in me.

Liebenwerda has approached. He takes a crumb of cake while singing a birthday song.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

You were saying?

VANESSA KÖNIG

Ms. Kuhn.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Apropos Ms. Kuhn. I've decided to take legal steps against her.

Carla turns to her cake, then halts.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

And I heard there's a video?

CARLA

Wait, just because she stole from me doesn't mean she stole from you. Someone else could've done that.

VANESSA KÖNIG

True.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Did you take a video or not?

Carla fails to answer.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

Can we see it?

CARLA

Not for now.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Stupid question, but: Why not?

CARLA

It's for the police. I can't show it around.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

"Show it around?" I'm a victim. My money was stolen, too - several times - and you're refusing to help me.

CARLA

They were distinct events.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Carla, I feel uncomfortable knowing we were secretly filmed. Who else is in the video?

CARLA

You have my word: You're not in it, Vanessa.

VANESSA KÖNIG

Well, I don't approve one way or the other.

CARLA

Got it.

Dudek joins them.

MIŁOSZ DUDEK

Any cake left?

VANESSA KÖNIG

Sure, have at it.

Vanessa gives him a piece. Dudek leaves.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

I can understand this is a bit much for you, Ms. Nowak. Maybe you're overwhelmed.

CARLA

(interrupts)

I'm not. It's all good.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

But maybe we should proceed against Ms. Kuhn together.

CARLA

The poor woman is already losing her job.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

"The poor woman?" Seriously?

CARLA

It's no laughing matter.

VANESSA KÖNIG

While you feel for Ms. Kuhn, you're also responsible for us.

CARLA

Exactly. Which is why I can't help you right now. Sorry.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Unbelievable.

CARLA

May I remind you, Mr. Liebenwerda, it was you who wanted to hire a private detective.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

That was a joke, jeez.

VANESSA KÖNIG

And there's a difference, Carla. We would've known about the detective. What you did was behind our backs.

Beat.

MARIAM

Sorry to interrupt, but students are outside for you.

Carla makes a face à la gotta go, smiles and walks past the two of them.

41 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

41

Markus and Hatice are waiting outside the teachers' lounge when Carla joins them.

MARKUS

Hello, Ms. Nowak.

HATICE

Hello, Ms. Nowak.

CARLA

Hi, guys. What can I do for you?

MARKUS

You said we could interview you for our school newspaper.

CARLA

Our appointment was next Tuesday.

HATICE

We have to print earlier. Our room isn't available next week.

MARKUS

Exactly.

Carla looks into the lounge. König and Liebenwerda are still standing there. Carla notices she's still holding the piece of birthday cake in her hand.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

It'll only take 15 minutes.

CARLA

You want some cake?

The children nod and Carla hands it to them.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Let's go.

42

INT. CLASSROOM/CLUB ROOM - DAY

42

Carla follows the children into a room where other staff members of the "SCHULPOSTILLE" school newspaper await them, all of them from the upper grades. Posters of past projects and the latest issues of the newspaper are on the walls.

HATICE

Here's Paul, Daniel, Bine, Krissi, Mitra, Flo, and don't worry about the rest.

Carla nods to the group. They are all older than Hatice and Markus. PAUL is holding a warm cup of tea. Carla recognizes KRISSE and MITRA: They were in the admin office to get help from Ms. Kuhn.

KRISSI

Hi.

CARLA

Hello!

KRISSI

Thanks for participating.

CARLA

Of course.

You can tell by the look on Carla's face: She had expected the group to be smaller.

PAUL
Please have a seat.

Carla takes a seat with the children opposite her. Some of them have pieces of paper with questions.

CARLA
Okay, shoot, what do you want to know?

PAUL
Do you mind if we record the conversation? That'll make it easier for us.

He puts his cell phone on the table.

CARLA
Sure, okay.

He presses RECORD and nods for Hatice to begin.

HATICE
Ms. Nowak, you've been at our school since the start of the semester. How do you like it here?

CARLA
I feel at ease. All the students are really nice. The faculty are great, too, despite a few differences in opinion. I was warmly welcomed at this school.

HATICE
What are those differences in opinion?

CARLA
What happens in the teachers' lounge stays in the teachers' lounge.

MARKUS
Next question. Isn't Nowak a Polish name?

CARLA
Yes, but I was born in Westphalia. My parents came to Germany in the late 80s from a town near Danzig.

HATICE
Do you speak Polish?

CARLA
Ciekawość zabiła kota. (Curiosity
killed the cat.)

HATICE
What does that mean?

CARLA
Research it.

MARKUS
Do you have tattoos? And if so,
where?

CARLA
I always wanted tattoos, but never
dared. Luckily.

The students grin. Carla notices Krissi whispering to Mitra.

HATICE
What advice would you give your
younger self?

CARLA
Jeez, how should I put this without
sounding precocious. To feel
insecure as a young person is
normal, everyone feels that way. I
wish someone back then would've
told me it'd all be fine and I can
trust my gut.

Now the older students step in.

KRISSI
I need to butt in. At the
beginning, you said you feel at
ease here. My gut feeling begs to
differ. I think there's currently a
bad vibe at our school.

CARLA
How do you mean?

MITRA
It isn't a secret that somebody's
stealing.

Carla looks back and forth between the students.

PAUL
Can you tell us why we students
were suspected? The allegations
were false.

CARLA

You're right, it wasn't right, but something had to be done, also to protect those who had nothing to do with it. I'm sorry the wrong people were suspected.

PAUL

That doesn't answer my question. Again: Why were we suspected?

CARLA

There were inconclusive leads. It wasn't ideal.

KRISSI

Is it true that Ms. Kuhn can't return to the job she did for 14 years?

MITRA

Wasn't it 15?

KRISSI

No, 14.

CARLA

That's the school admin's decision.

MITRA

So, Ms. Kuhn was suspended for theft?

Carla looks at the cell phone, which is still in the middle of the table and continues to record.

CARLA

I'm not in a position to comment.

PAUL

Was there secret video surveillance?

CARLA

No comment.

PAUL

Don't you know or don't you want to comment?

KRISSI

You're not allowed to?

CARLA

I'd be allowed, but wouldn't think it right for all concerned.

MITRA
Doesn't it concern us, too?

CARLA
Of course. It sure does.

Carla sees the younger students shift restlessly in their chairs.

CARLA (CONT'D)
If there are no more questions...

KRISSI
Is Oskar Kuhn going to change schools?

CARLA
Where did you hear that? Seriously, who said that?

KRISSI
The grapevine.

PAUL
Surely, you'll understand we need to protect our sources.

CARLA
Your sources? Guys, stop spreading rumors. That sows distrust.

MITRA
We want to know what's going on at our school.

KRISSI
Well, that'd be all.

She addresses the younger students.

KRISSI (CONT'D)
Any more questions?

They shake their heads.

PAUL
Thanks, Ms. Nowak.

HATICE & MARKUS
Thank you, Ms. Nowak.

CARLA
(to Krissi)
And you'll send me the article before it's printed?

It's not a question, more a demand.

KRISSI

Sure.

CARLA

When?

KRISSI

Once we've written it.

Carla examines Krissi.

CARLA

Good.

PAUL

Oh, wait, I need a picture. Can I take one?

Paul holds up the phone. Carla is aware: She's got to get through this.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Thank you.

43 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

43

Carla comes out into the hallway. A student passes wearing a light blouse with yellow stars - the same blouse from the evidence video.

The student turns the corner - it was definitely the same blouse!

Carla turns to follow her, turns the corner.

Other students walk past - they, too, are wearing the blouse.

Tinnitus growing louder and louder.

Carla looks down the hallway in disbelief; it's the end of recess and both students and teachers are rushing into classrooms: every single one of them wearing the same bright blouse with a yellow star pattern.

Carla is surrounded by more and more people, borne away by a flowing mass of of yellow stars.

The bell starts ringing, throbbing away in Carla's ears.

44 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

44

Carla enters and readies herself for the greeting ritual.

CARLA
 (clapping, clicking
 fingers and tapping)
 Good mor-ning.

The welcome ritual falls flat: The class doesn't react.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Well, then. At least it's quiet.
 Let's check your homework. Who
 wants to begin?

Carla looks around, but no one answers. Ali makes to raise his arm, but his seat-neighbor prevents him.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Ali, you wanted to say something?

ALI
 Not anymore.

Carla looks around; some of the students meet her gaze, but most avoid it.

CARLA
 If no one volunteers, I'll have to
 ask you one by one. Jieun, did you
 do your homework?

Jieun silently ignores the question.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Hatice, how about you?

Hatice also remains silent, looking blankly at Carla.

Beat.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Then I'll sit down and we'll ignore
 each other.

She does so, examining the students one by one. It's so quiet, so peaceful that one can hear birds chirping outside. But beneath this lies a tension that even Carla can hardly bear.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Jeez, what's going on!

JENNY
 Do you want to expel Oskar?

CARLA
 Jenny, I don't know where you heard
 that, but surely Oskar is the one
 to ask. Would you like to comment,
 Oskar?

She looks at Oskar. No reaction.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Apparently not. Let's proceed with homework, then.

JENNY

We won't proceed until you tell us what did and will happen.

CARLA

If you want to discuss an issue, class council is the place for it. Now I'm teaching.

JENNY

We have a right to know what's going on.

Students second her.

ALI

No one apologized to me yet.

Some of the children giggle. It seems that for some of them, this is all just fun.

CARLA

That's not true, Ali. I apologized and so did Dr. Böhm. In her office, remember?

ALI

What about the video?

CARLA

There is no video, my God!

The students talk over one another: Yes, there is! The whole school knows it! Don't lie to us!

CARLA (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Now be quiet and hand me your homework.

Oskar scribbles something in his notebook. Carla goes down the rows and gathers the homework books. Some children hold the notebooks out to her, others require prompting.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Give it to me.

Lukas reluctantly hands her his notebook. Carla takes a look inside.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Where's your homework?

She shakes her head and continues walking. Tom gives Oskar an evil look.

LUKAS
All because of him!

OSKAR
Just do your homework.

CARLA
I said quiet!

Oskar has placed his notebook on the edge of the table. Carla takes it without a word. She puts the notebooks on her desk.

CARLA (CONT'D)
So, who will solve the task at the board?

Various voices retort that no one will.

Tom holds up a hand.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Tom. Very good.

The students express their outrage as Tom moves up front.

JIEUN
Traitor.

CARLA
Who was that? Who said "traitor?"

JIEUN
I did.

CARLA
That's not okay, Jieun.

JIEUN
We should practice solidarity.

General assent.

TOM
Your grades permit you to. If I don't do this, I'll flunk.

JIEUN
You're a traitor.

CARLA
Jieun, use that word again and you're leaving the room.

TOM
All this crap is just because of
him.

Tom points at Oskar, who gives him the finger, which Tom returns.

CARLA
Leave Oskar alone and continue with
the task.

TOM
Because of his criminal mama.

CARLA
What was that?

TOM
Because of his criminal mama.

CARLA
Leave!

She nods at the door. Tom looks incredulous.

TOM
Huh? I'm the only one
participating.

CARLA
Now!

Tom chucks his notebook on the floor and leaves. The class is silent.

MARKUS
By the way, Ms. Nowak, we do that
dumb-ass welcoming procedure only
for you.

STUDENTS
Exactly. That's right. It's stupid,
it should be for first-graders. Do
you know how embarrassing it is?

45 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

45

A short time later, Carla is sitting looking through the students' homework books. She pauses as she gets to Oskar's book. In it there stands only today's date and:

"MAMA IS NO THIEF, BUT MS. NOWAK IS A LIAR."

The children of 7B have pulled gym mats into the center of the hall and are sitting in a circle. Lore Semnik is standing in the background, observing the circle. The mood is subdued.

CARLA

Okay, guys, I already told you: The past days and weeks were unacceptable. Something has to change. Do any of you understand what I mean?

A child holds up his hand, clicking his fingers.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Jonas?

JONAS

Aren't we doing anything today?

CARLA

We'll do something once we've discussed some issues.

Dissenting voices call out that class council is the place for issues.

CARLA (CONT'D)

We need to change the way we treat each other. To which end we'll do some exercises today. I need six volunteers for the first exercise. Who's up for it?

Some children raise their hand.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Great. Stand up, please.

Jenny, Jieun, Ali, Vera, Luise and Lukas come to the center.

CARLA (CONT'D)

For the first exercise, you all step on this box. No one can fall. Give it a try.

The children climb up on the wooden box, which offers little room for six. They balance for a few seconds, then fall repeatedly.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Okay, those still seated: Do you have any suggestions on how to do it better? Thai?

THAI
Maybe hold onto each other's
shoulders.

CARLA
Try it.

Now the children climb back onto the wooden box holding on to each other by the shoulders. This works better, but again they fall after some few seconds. The children accept this with humor.

JENNY
It won't work!

CARLA
Is there maybe another solution?
Oskar, I'm sure you have an idea.

Oskar shrugs.

OSKAR
We need to take each other by the
hand.

CARLA
Would you show us how to go about
it? Switch places with Lukas.
Thanks, Lukas.

LUKAS
Have fun, nerd.

Oskar goes to the center across from Tom. He stretches out his arms and bids Tom do the same. They get onto the box with each leaning back away from it.

CARLA
Looks promising. Now the other four
as well. Crisscross.

The other children follow suit so that soon all six have been able to take their places on the box.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Great, you found the solution.

Oskar gives Tom a shove, who falls back hard. The children cry out.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Oskar, hey!

Tom gets up, runs at Oskar and pushes him off the box.

Carla and Lore Semnik intervene and tear the two apart, but Oskar refuses to be assuaged.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Let go of each other!

The affray continues.

LORE SEMNIK
Tom! Stop it! Calm down!

OSKAR
Come on, prick!

CARLA
Outside, Oskar!

OSKAR
(to Tom)
C'mon!

CARLA
Come back when you've calmed down.

Carla takes a deep breath.

CARLA (CONT'D)
That's just what I was referring
to.

Oskar goes out into the offscreen gym hallway. There's a fire extinguisher in front of the teachers' locker room. He grabs it.

47 INT. GYM HALLWAY/CHANGING ROOM - DAY

47

Carla and the children hear a crash. The glass door to the teachers' locker room has been smashed. Carla sees Oskar through the doorway. He has taken her laptop from her bag. Carla walks determinedly towards him.

CARLA
Are you crazy?

Oskar rushes her, striking her in the head with the laptop as she confronts him. He runs off, and once Carla has recovered her senses, she runs after him.

48 EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF GYM - DAY

48

Carla exits the gym, the sunlight blinding her. She runs after Oskar.

CARLA
(shouting as she runs)
Oskar, stop!

They run across the street to a bridge.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Stop!

Oskar does so, the laptop in his hand. He looks at Carla.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Give me the laptop!

She takes a step toward him, but Oskar throws the laptop over the bridge and runs away.

Carla watches as the laptop vanishes into the depths.

LORE SEMNIK (PRE-LAP)

(reading from an
evaluation)

"The events surrounding Oskar's mother have caused significant psychological pressure. Even if he is supported by part of his class, others harass him. This leads to turmoil in class and their refusal to work."

49

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

49

A committee has assembled: two parent representatives, four of Oskar's teachers, including Stahlmann, Liebenwerda and König, and class representatives Jenny and Lukas, along with the principal and her deputy, Milosz Dudek, who's taking minutes.

Carla, whose face still bears traces from her confrontation with Oskar, listens attentively to her colleague, Lore Semnik.

LORE SEMNIK

(reading from an
evaluation)

"This student's frustration has vented in a propensity for violence, which manifests itself physically. My recommendations for now would be a change of classes. In case the situation doesn't improve for the student, a change of schools might be appropriate. A change that the mother would have to agree to."

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Thank you. Ms. Nowak, as their teacher, the floor is yours.

CARLA

A change of schools would be a total failure. Surely we can find another solution.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Fine, but a change of class will leave us with someone who firstly incites subordination, secondly beat up classmates, and thirdly smashes windows to steal laptops.

CARLA

He didn't want to steal it.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

But rather?

CARLA

He wanted to protect his mother.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

If you say so, but that doesn't undo everything. You know we have a zero...

CARLA

... tolerance policy. But this is between Oskar and me. He obviously holds me responsible for his mother's work ban. It would be a grave mistake to socially isolate this student. We'd be punishing him for his mother's possible misstep.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Just to be clear for everyone: This is about Oskar's behavior, not his mother's.

CARLA

Yeah, but we're only taking one point of view: What can we do with the student to solve the problem?

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Yeah?

CARLA

Meaning that the consequences are borne out by others. That can't be.

JENNY

(quietly, almost to herself)

I agree.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Sorry?

JENNY

(louder)

I agree that the consequences are borne out by others, mostly by us students.

Dr. Böhm turns to Carla again.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

So what do you recommend?

CARLA

Because I'm also responsible, it shouldn't be Oskar who has to go, but...

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

But?

CARLA

But me.

Derisive snorting.

PARENT REPRESENTATIVE

Ms. Nowak, we're already understaffed. We have too many substitutes.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Then we may as well shut down the school.

Carla looks around. No one approves of her suggestion.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Out of the question. So we've heard Ms. Semnik's evaluation and Ms. Nowak's...

CARLA

We're talking over the student's head and diverting the problem.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Firstly: we're not diverting it. We're looking for a democratic solution. Secondly: Oskar and his mother are totally unrepentant regarding their misconduct. They had the chance to speak here, but instead refused each and every communication. If there are no further questions, let's vote.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 Sorry, I do have another question.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
 Go ahead.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 Ms. Nowak, what happened to your
 eye?

CARLA
 I already said I fell.

VANESSA KÖNIG
 Pardon?

CARLA
 I fell.

LORE SEMNIK
 It's not that hard to understand,
 is it?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 (to Carla)
 It's admirable how you protect the
 boy.

LORE SEMNIK
 Thomas, is this relevant? Could we
 please...

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
 I just want to make sure that the
 boy doesn't hit teachers.

CARLA
 Mr. Liebenwerda, Oskar won't hit
 anybody.

Liebenwerda gazes at her.

MIŁOSZ DUDEK
 I suggest we vote, okay?

General assent.

MIŁOSZ DUDEK (CONT'D)
 Any objections to an open vote?

VANESSA KÖNIG
 I'd prefer anonymous.

Carla looks around. Dudek hands out pieces of paper and pens.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM
 Fine, Ms. König prefers anonymity.
 Then we'll vote on a suspension for
 Oskar Kuhn for ten days and if he
 can go on the school trip to
 England.

The rustling of notes and pens. Carla is handed the slips,
 takes one and passes them on.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 If the situation doesn't improve
 after our vote, we'll need to
 convene again and consider tougher
 measures, possibly a change of
 schools.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 Please hand me your votes.

49B EXT. FOYER - DAY

49B

An isolated Carla is standing outside the foyer and watching
 her colleagues exit the school and wish each other a pleasant
 evening. As she walks along, she sees a school newspaper
 billboard in a window inviting all to READ ALL ABOUT WHAT'S
 REALLY HAPPENING. Concerned, she starts walking faster.

50 INT. FOYER - DAY

50

Paul is hanging up a school newspaper sign, moving it left
 and right as instructed by his coeval, YAW, as Ms. Nowak
 strides into the room.

YAW
 Look, there's Ms. Nowak.

Carla approaches the group.

CARLA
 Selling already?

PAUL
 No, on Monday. But we're preparing
 for it.

MARKUS
 Would you like a copy? Two euros.

CARLA
 Two euros? Isn't that a lot for a
 school newspaper?

YAW

Well, we have expenses: printing, research, equipment... Milk and coffee aren't free, either.

CARLA

Weren't you going to send me the article?

Paul and Yaw look at each other: confusion.

PAUL

Didn't Krissi?

CARLA

I didn't received anything.

YAW

Hm. Well, then here's a pre-release issue for free.

He holds a newspaper out to her. Carla takes it.

Paul and Yaw watch as Carla skims the lines.

CARLA

Are you serious?

PAUL

Why? We only wrote what...

Carla sees the large cardboard box on the table. She places it under her arm and, to the children's dismayed cries, walks into the...

51

INT. CLUB ROOM - DAY

51

Carla enters the editorial/newspaper club room, placing the box on Krissi and Mitra's table as she speaks:

CARLA

Take out those pages.

KRISSI

Why?

CARLA

You twisted and decontextualized things. It's a matter between Ms. Kuhn and me.

The other students have stopped work and are listening.

MITRA

We see that differently.

KRISSI
It's called journalism.

CARLA
It's not journalism. You promised I could check it.

KRISSI
We won't be censored for you to save face.

CARLA
We had a deal, it's not about face-saving.

MITRA
No?

CARLA
Censorship isn't the issue, facts are.

KRISSI
Which you withheld. We shed light on the flip side.

CARLA
You talked to Ms. Kuhn?

KRISSI
We sure did.

Carla takes a deep breath.

CARLA
Guys, you overshot the mark. The text is dubious. If you only knew the damage you're doing.

KRISSI
We serve truth.

MITRA
If you can't take it, that's your problem.

KRISSI
See that?

Krissi points to a sign hanging behind Carla:

VERITAS OMNIA VINCULA VINCIT! (Truth overcomes all bounds.)

MITRA
Everything else is PR.

52 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 52

Carla is standing in the vacant lounge.

LORE SEMNIK (O.S.)
(entering)
You wanna talk?

CARLA
Just give me a hug.

Lore Semnik moves over towards her. The two hug for some time.

53 INT. FOYER - DAY 53

Students stream into the school. Carla does, too. A small crowd has formed in front of the stand: Everyone wants the newspaper!

YAW
Hello, Ms. Nowak! School newspaper
while supplies last...!

54 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 54

Carla enters unnoticed - several colleagues are already engrossed in the paper.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Why didn't she come to us for help?

VANESSA KÖNIG
Where's her team spirit?

All look at Carla as she goes over to her pigeonhole, her head held high.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
Good morning, Ms. Nowak, I
sometimes wonder what you're
thinking.

Liebenwerda reads from the newspaper.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)
Here: "Ideally, school is a
protected space for students. Not
so at our school. Following a
series of thefts, we students were
faced with measures otherwise found
in rogue regimes. Fellow student
Ali Yilmaz was taken from class in
a raid-style operation and wrongly
accused.

(MORE)

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

The teachers were Milosz Dudek and Thomas Liebenwerda." My humble self.

CARLA

No need to read it aloud, but thanks anyway.

VANESSA KÖNIG

I'd like to hear it.

Carla notices her colleagues are now listening in to the confrontation.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

(ignoring her)

"To suspect a child of migrant parents without proof in that manner exposes the structural racism our school, like many others, can't escape. But that's not all. With neither concrete evidence, nor need, the school's kind soul, Friederike Kuhn, got suspended from work. The method isn't for the faint hearted: a hidden camera." So there it is.

Liebenwerda looks Carla in the face. She smiles mildly: What do you want from me?

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

"Because Ms. Nowak couldn't rebut our suspicion of secret video surveillance at school, we spoke to the victim. Ms. Kuhn confirmed the method..." And so on. How is it possible that you keep refusing to cooperate with us faculty, but discuss the video with attention-seeking pubescents?

CARLA

You know, Mr. Liebenwerda, I prefer discussing issues to staying silent. If you've read the text attentively, you'll know I didn't discuss the video.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

You didn't rebut their suspicions, either. I know how to read. Unbelievable. You're something.

LORE SEMNIK

Enough. We can read it ourselves. We get it. Leave it be.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

You want to win over students at any cost no matter the consequences for us. You know how many parents are contacting us? Vanessa received 25 e-mails.

By now, confusion reigns as all the teachers are speaking over one another.

Milosz Dudek and Dr. Bettina Böhm enter. Carla turns around. Dudek and Böhm each hold a copy of the newspaper.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

(addressing everyone)

May I have your attention? Come over here. Quiet, please. You too, Mr. Liebenwerda. You'll all be aware that the school newspaper contains an unfortunate article. I've spoken with Mr. Dudek and the school's legal department. We're left with no other option but to ban the sale of this issue on campus.

The colleagues cast critical glances at each other.

MILOSZ DUDEK

Dr. Böhm and I will close down their stand and ask you to prevent distribution in class.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

What about the online version?

MILOSZ DUDEK

IT took it down from the school's website.

Dr. Böhm nods at him.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Peace at our school is massively under fire, which is why I ban you all from discussing this issue any further. Mum's the word - for everybody.

She looks around, then turns to Carla.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM (CONT'D)

We'll talk to you later with staff council.

Carla is stoic. Böhm leaves.

The remaining group of some 15 teachers look at each other in bemusement. In the background, a teacher walks by, wearing a star blouse identical to that of Ms. Kuhn. No one notices.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
So we're forbidden to speak?

LORE SEMNIK
Stop it. Is it so hard to grasp?
It's a framework we can work with.

More and more voices are being raised until Dudek shouts them down:

MILOSZ DUDEK
People, hey! We're only briefly asking you to keep still. We need a united front, even if we disagree at times.

Lore and Thomas look at each other.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
I won't let anyone call me a racist. And neither should you.

MILOSZ DUDEK
(checking the time)
Let's take care of our students and carry out our work.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA
(leaving in annoyance)
Alright, back to work. Let's give them passing grades no matter how much they act up.

LORE SEMNIK
Cut the shit with your cynicism!

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA.
Lore, I won't be called a racist.

LORE SEMNIK
Got it. You'd better leave.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA.
Ignoring problems won't make them disappear.

VANESSA KÖNIG
Take a deep breath, everyone. Well done, Carla. Just saying.

She leaves.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 (softly, in Polish)
 You should've said something.

CARLA
 (in German)
 What?

MILOSZ DUDEK
 (in German)
 What do I mean? The interview.

CARLA
 It was Oskar.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 Forget about the boy.

CARLA
 That's a great attitude for our
 job. Thanks for the advice.

She leaves.

MILOSZ DUDEK
 (calling out after her)
 You're responsible for the other
 students, too!

Carla slams the door.

56

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

56

Carla enters. Oskar's seat is empty.

CARLA
 Okay, everyone, sorry for the
 delay. May I ask you all to rise?

The students stand up. Questioning looks.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 I want... Get up! I want us all to
 scream as loud as we can. Ready,
 steady, go!

AAAAARGHH! But only half of the children join in. Some just
 open their mouths without actually hollering.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Again. Don't hold back, everyone,
 go! Keep going!

AAAAARGHH! The whole class screams at the top of their lungs.
 This is loud. Silence falls. Carla has shut her eyes. She
 opens them again and looks around the room.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Thanks. Before we start, a few clarifying words: All of you know what happened in the gym the other day. Oskar will be suspended for ten days. He can't go on our school trip, either. Furthermore, the school newspaper caused displeasure among faculty. School management thus banned its circulation on campus.

JENNY

That's censorship!

CARLA

Jenny, I agree it's a shocking measure.

JENNY

Well, I surely won't hide my copy.

CARLA

In principle, I admire how you all organize the newspaper and declare your solidarity, though I find the text highly dubious.

Hatice holds up a hand.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Yes?

HATICE

Sorry. It wasn't intended against you.

CARLA

Thanks, Hatice. So put the newspapers away.

Oskar enters and goes over to his seat without a word. He's wearing a dark hoodie hanging down over his eyes to make him seem menacing.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Oskar! What are you doing here?

He says nothing.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Your mother received a letter.

LUISE

What letter?

CARLA

I just told you.

Lukas gets up and wanders around.

LUKAS
 (a hat down over his face,
 his fingers a pistol)
 I'm Oskar on a killing spree.

CARLA
 Lukas, sit down!

A voice calls out for applause and the children sarcastically applaud Oskar. Chaos ensues.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Hey!

Carla goes over to Oskar's desk.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 (to Oscar)
 Let's step outside. Come on, Oskar.
 It's not allowed. You can't be
 here.

STUDENT
 Go home!

CARLA
 (to Vera)
 Look after Oskar.

57 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 57

Carla strides down to the lounge.

58 INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY 58

Milosz Dudek is speaking to Thomas Liebenwerda, apparently trying to persuade him to come to terms with Carla. As Liebenwerda gruffly agrees, Dudek exits - now Thomas Liebenwerda is the only teacher, in front of him his Tupperware box of sandwiches. Carla swallows her pride.

CARLA
 Mr. Liebenwerda, may I ask for your
 help?

He sighs his assent. She gestures to the door.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Thank you.

59 INT. HALLWAY - DAY 59

Liebenwerda and Carla walk down the hallway together.

60 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

60

Carla and Thomas Liebenwerda enter the classroom, where Oskar is still seated.

CARLA

Hey, everyone, pack your stuff.
We're going next door and Mr.
Liebenwerda will stay here.

TOM

Why do we have to move?

CARLA

No back-talk, let's go.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA.

Come on, no back-talk. Do as Ms.
Nowak says.

The children pack their things and leave the classroom. Carla glances back at Liebenwerda, who indicates she's not to worry.

Carla exits with the students.

Mr. Liebenwerda takes a seat.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA. (CONT'D)

Hey, Oskar.

61 INT. ADJACENT CLASSROOM - DAY

61

The students are in the adjacent classroom. Carla flips through her math book.

CARLA

Please turn to... page... 46. And
do exercise 13, sections A to F.
I'll be right back.

Carla hastily writes the math assignment on the board, grabs her cell phone from her bag and exits.

62 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

62

Carla paces restlessly, her phone to her ear.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

Kuhn speaking.

CARLA

Hello, Ms. Kuhn. It's Carla Nowak.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

You have some nerve calling me.

CARLA

It's about Oskar. Did you not get the letter?

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

I did. You think you can do that to us?

CARLA

No, but there's no point misusing him for a matter between us two.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

Who's misusing whom? Expelling Oskar solves the problem?

CARLA

(adamant)

I intervened on his behalf.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

Congratulations, that worked like a charm.

CARLA

You didn't even attend.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

So now it's my fault?

CARLA

That's beside the point.

The door of the adjoining class opens: Jieun and Luise come out, looking with interest in Carla's direction.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

Yes, it is.

CARLA

(to the students)

Back to class, please.

LUISE

But we need to pee.

CARLA

Then hurry.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

Face the fact that you're responsible. How about an apology?

CARLA (CONT'D)

Please come pick up your son.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

If Oskar wants to come home, he can.

CARLA

We told him to leave but he won't listen.

FRIEDERIKE KUHN (O.S.)

You're so incompetent. Your failure as a teacher isn't my problem, Ms. Nowak.

Carla sees Dr. Böhm and Milosz Dudek heading towards the classroom where Oskar and Liebenwerda are. Carla starts to move.

CARLA

This is about your son, Ms. Kuhn. If we fail, it affects us both.

Carla hangs up, visibly charged as she heads for the classroom.

63

INT. HALLWAY/CLASSROOM - DAY

63

Carla gets back to the classroom and glances inside. Oskar is still sitting in his seat. Dr. Böhm and Milosz Dudek are talking to him. Liebenwerda meets her at the door.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

I can't get through to him. No reaction. Did you reach his mother?

Carla nods.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA (CONT'D)

And?

Carla throws her arms up in the air.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA.

He's been expelled. We could have him removed.

CARLA

I'll talk to him again.

THOMAS LIEBENWERDA

Try it.

Carla enters. Dr. Böhm is in the middle of a monologue.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

Pack your bag and go home. Don't make us call the police.

MILOSZ DUDEK

You understand, Oskar?

Oskar ignores them. Carla approaches, clearing her throat before sitting down opposite the boy.

CARLA

Oskar, will you look at me?

He looks Carla in the face.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I wish it had all turned out differently. I'm honestly sorry for what happened. But if you don't go home now, you'll make things worse.

Oskar starts to cry.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

(to Carla and Dudek)

Colleagues, can we step outside?

Böhm and Dudek move off, Carla follows them to the door. Dudek begins to talk.

MIŁOSZ DUDEK

I don't know...

Carla shuts the door behind them, remaining inside herself.

Through the pane in the door, Dr. Böhm sees Carla lock it.

DR. BETTINA BÖHM

(through the glass)

Ms. Nowak? What are you doing?

Carla raises her hand and gestures to Böhm: I've got this! She turns back to Oskar - now they're alone. Perplexity reigns outside the door.

64

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

64

Carla pulls up a chair and sits down next to Oskar.

She takes some notebooks from her bag and starts working.

Carla glances back through the door-pane where Böhm, Dudek, and Liebenwerda discuss. Carla nods to them again and they abandon the situation. Carla gets to marking homework. Oskar's gaze wanders over to her. When Carla looks over at him, he looks away again, trying to conceal his interest.

The sound of an approaching thunderstorm.

65 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

65

Carla stands at the window and looks out into the rain: It's the end of the school day and her other students leave the school premises. Carla turns to Oskar, who has his elbows and head on the desk.

Ms. Kuhn arrives by bike, looking for her son. She and Carla stare at each other long and hard until Ms. Kuhn bicycles away.

Carla sits down again by Oskar.

A telephone rings, its sound coming from Oskar's backpack, but he doesn't move.

CARLA

Won't you answer that, Oskar?

But Oskar just remains there, his head on the desk. The ringing stops.

66 INT. CLASSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

66

The sun has nearly set. Carla fills a glass of water at the faucet and places it in front of Oskar, pushing it lightly towards him. He doesn't touch it, but stares pointedly at Carla. Finally, he takes something from his bag: the Rubik's Cube. He clicks and completes it with swift movements before placing it on the table and pushing it lightly towards her. Their eyes connect.

FADE TO BLACK.

67 CREDITS

67

The empty school building: deserted classrooms, hallways, conference rooms, the teachers' lounge - all silent.

Music sets in: an uplifting classical composition.

Oskar's upper body enters shot. He seems to be floating down the corridor. We see two policemen - carrying him in his chair on their shoulders - out of the confines of school rooms through the large doors and out into the light.

FADE OUT.