

# MILLION DOLLAR HIGH

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FADE IN:

EXT. DARK ROAD - NIGHT

A black sedan slices through fog, taillights glowing.

Another sedan barrels after it.

INT. FIRST SEDAN - NIGHT

A MAN (30s), slick with sweat, grips the wheel. Eyes dart to the suitcase on the seat.

Headlights glare in the mirror.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD - NIGHT

A battered sign flashes past:

WELCOME TO NORTHMEAD.

The chase car closes in.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The first sedan jerks to a stop.

The Man stumbles out, grabs the suitcase --

SCREECH. Engines howl closer.

He bolts.

EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The chase sedan skids in.

Two CHASE MEN (30s) leap out. One peers inside the abandoned car. The other draws a pistol.

CHASE MAN 1  
Fan out. He's on foot.

Chase Man 2 nods, hops back in.

The car whips into reverse --

EXT. BRIDGE IN TOWN - NIGHT

The Man sprints onto the bridge. No way out.

HEADLIGHTS loom behind him.

He heaves the suitcase over the rail --

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

SPLASH. The suitcase vanishes into the current.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The Man turns -- Chase Man 1 stands there, gun raised.

CHASE MAN 1

Hey!

BANG! The Man drops.

HEADLIGHTS flood the bridge.

The Chase Men stride over.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

The current churns. The suitcase -- gone.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

They stare at the water below.

CHASE MAN 2

Boss ain't gonna like this.

CHASE MAN 1

I'll throw you a Jackson if you  
break the news.

A beat.

CHASE MAN 2

Double it.

They exchange a look and head toward the car.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A brick-and-glass fortress of education.

The marquee sign out front reads:

"HOME OF THE FALCONS -- FLY HIGH!"

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

BAM! The bell RINGS -- a stampede erupts.

Backpacks swing. Lockers slam and someone's yelling about pizza Friday.

Through the chaos -- ZACHARY HOLLIS (14), and NOAH THOMAS (14), push through the chaos.

Zachary's awkwardly handsome in a "please don't notice me" way. Oversized glasses, buttoned-up shirt that screams "my mom bought this."

Noah? A walking thrift store explosion. Ripped jeans, shaggy hair, vintage leather jacket -- he oozes forced nonchalance.

TWO JOCKS barrel through, shoulder-checking them. Standard hallway dominance.

ZACHARY

You working after school?

NOAH

Yeah, till six. You?

ZACHARY

Same.

They reach their lockers.

Zachary's is neat -- Periodic Table taped inside.

Noah's? A shrine to muscle cars.

They swap books.

NOAH

How much you got saved for the car?

ZACHARY

Fifty bucks.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

At this rate, you'll be driving it  
to your retirement party.

ZACHARY

I know, I know.

NOAH

Me? I'm getting something way  
cooler.

ZACHARY

With what money?

NOAH

Uh... I got nine.

ZACHARY

Nine hundred?

NOAH

Nine dollars.

ZACHARY

Noah.

NOAH

Look, I get stressed, okay? When  
I'm stressed, I buy video games.

ZACHARY

You better get un-stressed and  
start saving.

SLAM! They shut their lockers.

NOAH

Wouldn't be caught dead in your  
clunker anyway.

ZACHARY

At this rate, you won't be caught  
dead driving anything.

(Noah turns to him)

You'll be stuck in Northmead  
forever if you don't pull it  
together.

NOAH

Eh, I've got time.

They disappear into the flow of students.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

BAM! The final bell RINGS -- cue the flood.

At the bike rack, Zachary and Noah unlock their bikes.

NOAH

What do you mean I'm "stuck in  
Northmead forever?"

ZACHARY

I'm just saying -- I can totally  
picture it. You, like, forty, still  
dishing out soft serve at Whippy  
Twirl.

NOAH

Hey, maybe I'll be manager by then.

ZACHARY

Wow. Dream big.

They push off, pedaling through the students.

NOAH

Didn't realize your part-time job  
made you a life coach.

ZACHARY

It's not about me, Noah. I just  
think you're capable of more.

NOAH

Like NASA? Chicks dig astronauts.

ZACHARY

I'm serious.

NOAH

So am I. Space helmet.

Zachary shakes his head, but smirks.

ZACHARY

Fine. Just don't be fifty and still  
explaining waffle cones.

NOAH

Waffle cones are for legends. Sugar  
cones? For cowards.

ZACHARY

You really don't want more than  
this?

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Northmead's fine. Cheap rent, good  
pizza, no traffic.

ZACHARY  
Wow. Northmead -- where dreams go  
to take a nap.

NOAH  
It's all about perspective, my  
dude.

Zachary side-eyes him, but Noah just shrugs and speeds up.

EXT. STUDENT PARKING AREA - DAY

Zachary and Noah weave through parked cars for the exit --

SCREEECH!

A CONVERTIBLE swings out, cutting Zachary and Noah off.

Behind the wheel: SCOTT WAYNE (17), sunglasses, dressed in  
all-black, desperate to be intimidating.

Riding shotgun: ALEXIS LEIGH (17), effortlessly pretty, poor  
taste in company.

SCOTT  
Well, look who it is -- Pizza Boy  
and Whippy Head.

NOAH  
It's Whippy Twirl.

SCOTT  
Whatever.

Zachary nudges Noah. Let's just go.

They inch forward - Scott steps out.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Whoa, did I say you could leave?

He zeroes in on Noah.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Where's my money?

NOAH  
What money?

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT  
The "deal?" Twenty percent of  
whatever you make? Ring a bell?

ZACHARY  
Wait -- you agreed to pay him?

NOAH  
No! He just made that up!

SCOTT  
Maybe you had tutti frutti in your  
ears, Whippy Boy.

NOAH  
No, I didn't! And we don't even  
sell that flavor!

Scott yanks Noah's collar.

SCOTT  
You owe me twenty percent. Or  
forty, if you keep running your  
mouth.

NOAH  
I seriously have no idea what he's  
talking about!

SCOTT  
Do I need to push your nose inside  
your face to make you remember?

NOAH  
No, I kinda need it on the outside!

ALEXIS  
Scott, come on. Let him go.

Scott holds Noah for a beat... then shoves him back.

SCOTT  
Don't forget.

He turns to Zachary.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
You're next, Pizza Boy. Our "deal"  
is coming.

Scott hops in his car, kisses Alexis, peels out.

Noah lets out a shaky breath.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Is that why you're always broke?

NOAH

No! He just—makes this stuff up!

A long beat. Zachary shakes his head, pedals off.

Noah hesitates—then scrambles to catch up.

EXT. PETEY POPPYINGERS PIZZA - DAY

The neon sign flickers proudly: PETEY POPPYINGERS PIZZA. Customers shuffle in and out, clutching greasy boxes.

INT. PETEY POPPYINGERS PIZZA - DAY

A huge, ridiculous promo sign behind the counter reads: The Big Petey -- Our Famous 24 Slice!

Also behind the counter: Zachary, trapped in a white shirt, bow tie, and a cap embroidered with ASK ME ABOUT MY BIG PETEY. His face reads: Please don't talk to me.

RING! The phone SHRIEKS. Zachary sighs and picks up.

ZACHARY

Petey Poppyingers Pizza Palace!  
Home of the legendary Poppyingers  
Pepperoni Pineapple Pizza Pie.  
Delivery or pick-up?

A pause. His brow furrows.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

A garden salad?

He stares at the receiver, as if it personally insulted him.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Bold choice! Name, please?

EXT. WHIPPY TWIST ICE CREAM STAND - DAY

A bright pink and white ice cream stand with a line of CUSTOMERS. Whippy Twist is thriving.

At the order window, Noah leans out, sporting a blue polo, an apron, and the ultimate humiliation: a hat shaped like an oversized ice cream cone.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Welcome to Whippy Twist! What'll it  
be?

A FEISTY YOUNG GIRL (8) steps up, eyes sharp with confidence.

YOUNG GIRL  
I want a banana split... but  
without the bananas.

NOAH  
So... three scoops of ice cream  
with pineapple and hot fudge?

YOUNG GIRL  
I hate bananas.

NOAH  
Got it.

YOUNG GIRL  
And no pineapple gunk either. Or  
hot fudge. Gross.

Noah leans out of the window and scans the area.

NOAH  
Am I being pranked?

YOUNG GIRL  
Can you make it or not?

Noah exhales hard as he piles ice cream into a boat carton  
with a dish of three scoops: chocolate, strawberry, vanilla.

She slaps down a few crumpled bills.

NOAH  
This is three bucks. A split is  
six.

YOUNG GIRL  
This isn't a banana split. It's  
just three scoops --one dollar  
each.  
(beat)  
Oh, and my brother says work hard.  
He needs the cash.

NOAH  
Wait... your brother?

She points toward the parking lot.

(CONTINUED)

Noah squints -- Scott lounges on the hood of his car, grinning, mouthing: Twenty percent.

Beside him, Alexis offers a small, almost apologetic wave.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I'm so done with today.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Zachary and Noah, still in their work uniforms and ridiculous hats, pedal past the gas station.

The pursuit car is gone. No sign of its mysterious owner.

Near the pumps, a scrappy GROUP OF TEENS loiter on their bikes -- bad haircuts, worse attitudes.

ZACHARY  
Scott Wayne has a little sister?

NOAH  
Just as mean as he is.

Too late.

Noah locks eyes with the GANG LEADER -- a wiry kid with a permanent sneer.

GANG LEADER  
Yo, look! It's the dweeb squad!

The gang springs into action, hopping onto their bikes.

NOAH  
Go, go, go!

ZACHARY  
This is bad! This is so bad!

Zachary and Noah take off, pedaling like their lives depend on it.

EXT. OLD TOWN ROAD - DAY

The boys tear down a crumbling road, hitting every pothole.

The gang gains on them--faster, louder, relentless.

ZACHARY  
Quick! Over here!

(CONTINUED)

He veers onto an overgrown path, nearly hidden, leading into the woods. Noah follows.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They plunge down a steep, bumpy slope.

Branches whip past. Tires skid over roots.

No time to slow down.

EXT. OLD TOWN ROAD - DAY

The gang barrels past the hidden path, too focused on the chase to notice.

GANG LEADER

Where'd they go!? Scatter!

They scatter in all directions, yelling, cursing, tripping over themselves.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Zachary and Noah stumble to a halt at the riverbank.

They climb off their bikes, gasping for air.

NOAH

Those guys don't even go to our school -- how did they know we're dweebs!?

Something catches Zachary's eye near the water's edge.

A suitcase.

ZACHARY

What the...?

He walks over, hesitates, and picks it up.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Whoa... it's heavy.

NOAH

You think it's full of cash?

Zachary doesn't answer. Just stares at it.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

A neat suburban house, white picket fence, porch light glowing as the sky deepens to night.

NOAH (V.O.)  
Come on, it's gotta open!

ZACHARY (V.O.)  
Yeah, well, the case isn't exactly cooperating.

INT. ZACHARY'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Neat. Organized. Books line the shelves, old sailing ship models stand at attention.

Zachary and Noah huddle over the suitcase.

Zachary knocks on it -- TAP TAP TAP.

ZACHARY  
Sounds like there's some kind of metal lining inside.

NOAH  
Uh... that normal?

ZACHARY  
Not on my dad's suitcase.

A thought sparks in Zachary's brain.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
Maybe it's shielding something... radioactive.

Noah groans, flopping back.

NOAH  
Great. Just what I need, another radio. I've already got two.

ZACHARY  
Not radio radiation. Energy waves. Can travel through stuff. Also -- can kill you.

Noah blinks, unbothered.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
Basically... super dangerous.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Cool. So how do we open it?

ZACHARY  
Did you miss the part about dying?

NOAH  
Yeah, but -- c'mon, we gotta know!

Zachary studies the suitcase lock--numeric keypad, glowing red buttons. He heads to his desk, rummages, then returns holding a pen-sized electric laser saw.

Zachary brings the saw to the lock. A tiny square falls away, revealing the mechanism.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
We're in!

ZACHARY  
Paper clip. Now.

Noah scrambles to grab one from the desk. Zachary straightens it, slides it into the lock

CLICK!

NOAH  
No way!

Zachary presses on the lock. With another CLICK, the lid pops open slightly.

They exchange a 'this-might-change-our-lives' look.

ZACHARY  
Here goes nothing.

He lifts the lid.

INSIDE: STACKS OF BANDED HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILLS.

Zachary SLAMS it shut. They sit there. Motionless. Brains short-circuiting.

Then Zachary opens it again.

NOAH  
This... this can't be real, right?

ZACHARY  
It doesn't *look* fake.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Dude, I've never even seen a  
hundred-dollar bill up close.

ZACHARY  
This is way more than a hundred  
bucks.

Zachary picks up a stack. Hands shaking. Starts counting.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
One hundred... two... five...

Noah inches closer, hypnotized.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
Two thousand... four... six... ten...

NOAH  
How much do you think is in here?

Zachary's eyes stay locked on the bills.

ZACHARY  
I... I don't know.

They keep counting.

The sun sinks lower. Shadows stretch across the walls.

Zachary, hunched over the suitcase, keeps stacking money.  
Noah paces. Peers out the window. Sits. Stands. Sits again.

The desk lamp clicks on. Harsh glow. A contrast to the  
dimming outside world.

Zachary places the last stack onto the pile. Sits back.  
Stunned.

Noah freezes.

NOAH  
What? How much is it?

Zachary swallows.

ZACHARY  
Four... F-F-...

NOAH  
Four thousand!?

ZACHARY  
Four...mmm...million.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

What?!

ZACHARY

Four point five million dollars.

Noah collapses onto the floor with a dramatic WHUMP.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Noah!

Zachary scrambles over, shakes him. Gentle slaps to the face.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Dude! Wake up!

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)

Zachary! What was that noise?

Zachary's eyes go wide.

He lets Noah's head drop with a dull THUMP and rushes to his bedroom door.

ZACHARY

Uh, yeah, Mom?

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)

What was that noise?!

ZACHARY

Oh! Uh, Noah was showing me his...  
bowling moves!

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)

Bowling moves make noise?

ZACHARY

Noah's do! It's, uh... very  
aggressive.

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)

Alright... just don't break  
anything.

ZACHARY

We won't!

Door closes.

Noah sits up. Eyes darting between Zachary and the suitcase.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

You good?

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
This can't be real life.

ZACHARY  
Oh, it's real. And now, we take a  
good look -- then we go.

NOAH  
Go where?

ZACHARY  
The police.

NOAH  
Why!?

ZACHARY  
Because someone lost this! This  
could be their entire life savings!

Noah grabs Zachary by the shoulders, forcing him to sit.

NOAH  
Dude. Last week? I served two cops  
at Whippy Twist. They talked about  
some busted party and how they  
"confiscated" two cases of beer...  
then split it up after their shift.

ZACHARY  
What's that have to do with this?

NOAH  
If you hand this over, those  
cops'll confiscate it straight into  
their pockets.

Zachary hesitates.

ZACHARY  
But... cops are supposed to be  
honest.

NOAH  
C'mon, man. Four. Point. Five.  
Million.

ZACHARY  
But cops are supposed to be honest!

NOAH  
Four. Point. Five. Million.

Zachary stares at the cash. Thinking.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Fine. We wait. Check the news. See if anyone reports it missing.

NOAH

How long?

ZACHARY

One day. Who waits longer to claim four and a half million?

NOAH

Alright. One day.

Zachary starts neatly stacking the cash.

Noah just stares at it.

DREAM TRANSITION

The scene morphs -- golden light floods the room.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

A MASSIVE MANSION perched on a hill.

Inside--Noah lounges on a ridiculous leather sofa. A glass of red juice in his hand.

Alexis, in designer maid attire, enters as she twirls a feather duster.

ALEXIS

Yes, Mr. Thomas? What can I do for you?

Noah holds out his glass.

NOAH

More Fruity Kaboom.

She pours from a crystal pitcher.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Wait -- is that Kablamo-Kiwi?

ALEXIS

Fruity Kaboom.

He nods. Acceptable.

A sleek RING interrupts. Noah presses a glowing button.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
 Noah Thomas, teenage billionaire.  
 Who's calling?

ZACHARY (V.O.)  
 Noah, it's me. Just pulled up in my  
 new Rolls.

NOAH  
 Not another one.

ZACHARY (V.O.)  
 It's pouring, genius. Send your  
 butler with an umbrella.

NOAH  
 Half a tick --  
 (calls out)  
 Scotty!? Oh, Scotty!?  
 (into phone)  
 On his way, mind the raindrops, old  
 boy.

ZACHARY (V.O.)  
 Will do.

Scott Wayne enters in a cheap tuxedo. Miserable.

SCOTT  
 Sir?

NOAH  
 Fetch Zachary. And this time? Maybe  
 an umbrella.

SCOTT  
 Right away, sir.

Scott grumbles off.

Noah takes a dramatic sip.

NOAH  
 Ahhh, finest vintage -- September.

TRANSITION BACK TO REALITY

INT. ZACHARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The warm glow of a desk lamp washes over neatly stacked cash.

Noah blinks, snapping out of the dream.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Ten thousand.

He slides the last bills into the suitcase -- pauses.  
Something metallic glints in the corner.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Wait...

Noah leans in.

NOAH

What is it?

Zachary pulls out a small silver chip.

ZACHARY

Pretty sure it's a tracker.

NOAH

Tracker?! Like... it's tracking us?

ZACHARY

Yup. Whoever owns this probably  
knows exactly where it is.

NOAH

What?! That's so messed up! Toss  
it!

ZACHARY

I'm not just chucking it.

NOAH

Then what's the plan?

ZACHARY

Same plan. If no one claims it by  
Wednesday, we keep it. We'll watch  
the news -- noon and six.

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)

Zachary! Dinner's ready! Is Noah  
staying?

Zachary calls toward the door, hiding the panic in his voice.

ZACHARY

Coming! And no, he's not!

NOAH

What if you're having something  
good?

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Then I'll describe it to you later.

Zachary tucks the tracker back into the case and closes it, his face suddenly serious.

INT. HOLLIS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Hollis family sits around the dinner table, forks clinking, the hum of a TV in the background.

MRS. HOLLIS (37), always put-together, color-coordinated, mildly overbearing, dishes out mashed potatoes with the precision of a surgeon.

MR. HOLLIS (40), work shirt still on, tie loosened, looks like his dreams clocked out before he did, half-heartedly pushes green beans around his plate.

Zachary picks at his food, deep in thought.

MRS. HOLLIS

So, Zachary, how was work today?

ZACHARY

Same as always. Toss dough, make change, contemplate my life choices.

MR. HOLLIS

Yeah, well... get used to it. That's adulthood.

A beat. Then --

ZACHARY

Actually, Dad... quick question.

Mr. Hollis looks up, surprised.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

If I, say, hypothetically... had a decent chunk of cash to invest -- like a lot of cash -- would mutual funds be smart? Or should I diversify? Maybe ETFs, bonds, a few blue-chip stocks?

Mr. Hollis freezes, fork mid-air.

MR. HOLLIS

Exactly how much does that pizza place pay you?

(CONTINUED)

Zachary shrugs, reaching for his water like that was a totally normal teenage question.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Wait. What kind of "chunk" are we talking about?

ZACHARY  
Oh, you know. Just... future planning. Long-term goals.

MRS. HOLLIS  
I don't like that answer.

Mr. Hollis is intrigued.

MR. HOLLIS  
Are you in some kind of pyramid scheme?

ZACHARY  
Dad.

MR. HOLLIS  
A crypto thing?

ZACHARY  
Oh my God, no.

MR. HOLLIS  
You're not dealing, are you?

ZACHARY  
Dad. It's pizza. Not meth.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Well, I don't know, Zachary, you suddenly sound like a junior stockbroker.

ZACHARY  
I just think it's smart to learn this stuff now! Like... compounding interest, building assets --

MR. HOLLIS  
(flat)  
Who are you?

A long beat.

Zachary just takes a bite of celery like nothing weird just happened. Across the table, his parents exchange a look.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A long, deserted stretch of road cuts through endless farmland. Wind ripples through the tall crops.

A BLACK SEDAN with tinted windows rockets past, sending dust swirling as it blows by a weathered road sign:

PRAIRIE WILLOW - 100 MILES

NORTHMEAD - 350 MILES

INT. BLACK SEDAN - DAY

The dashboard GPS glows, a red pulsing dot locked over Northmead, unmoving.

Gloved hands grip the wheel. The DRIVER flicks on the radio.

A STATIC CRACKLE -- then, from the speakers:

RADIO JINGLE CHORUS (V.O.)

(sings)

PETEY POPPYPINGERS PIZZA PALACE!  
HOME OF THE POPPYPINGERS PIZZA PIE!  
PEPPERONI, PINEAPPLE, EXTRA  
CHEESE! ONE BIG BITE'LL MAKE YA SAY  
"OH JEEZ!"

The driver's fingers tighten around the wheel.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(way too peppy for this  
moment)

You heard it, Prairie Willow! Stop  
by your Petey Poppyingers Pizza  
Palace, right off Highway 6, just  
one of our many locations, for a  
fresh, hot Poppyingers Pepperoni  
Pineapple Pizza Pie -- now just  
nine-ninety-nine! And remember...  
if it ain't Poppyingers, it ain't  
pizza!"

The driver slams a button on the console - STATIC.

The sedan ACCELERATES.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The school sign stands clear in the foreground.

(CONTINUED)

MR. DEARSON (V.O.)  
 S'il vous plaît prendre vos  
 devoirs. Please take out your  
 homework assignments.

INT. FRENCH CLASS - DAY

A CLOCK TICKS toward 12:00 PM.

MR. DEARSON (40s), bald, glasses, sweater vest, the human  
 equivalent of a disappointed sigh, stands at the front.

Students dig through their bags.

At a shared desk, Zachary and Noah sit side by side.

MR. DEARSON  
 Dépêche-toi, finissons-en  
 aujourd'hui.

Noah leans in to Zachary.

NOAH  
 What'd he just say!?

ZACHARY  
 Something like, "Hurry up; let's  
 get this over with."

NOAH  
 Wow. Mood.

Mr. Dearson looks up.

MR. DEARSON  
 Care to share, Monsieur Thomas?

NOAH  
 Yeah, just... not in French.

MR. DEARSON  
 And what might you be saying in  
 English?

NOAH  
 Uh... I said, "We don't deserve as  
 great a teacher as you, Mr.  
 Dearson."

The class chuckles.

Mr. Dearson just stares. Then, dry as dust:

(CONTINUED)

MR. DEARSON

Ah, pour le bon vieux temps, quand  
je pourrais te frapper, stupide  
garçon!

SUPER: "Ah, for the old days, when I could give you a smack,  
you stupid boy!"

Noah frowns, processing.

NOAH

Did he just call me a stupid  
frappé?

MR. DEARSON

No! I said "stupide." That's French  
for... "cool."

Noah brightens, buying it completely.

NOAH

Oh. Nice.

The class LAUGHS harder.

MR. DEARSON

Moving on. About last night's  
homework...

Students slide their assignments on their desks.

MR. DEARSON (CONT'D)

Before we dive into the correct  
answers, let's enjoy some... not-so-  
correct answers...

He scans the room, slow grin forming.

MR. DEARSON (CONT'D)

Monsieur Thomas.

Noah grimaces.

MR. DEARSON (CONT'D)

Please stand and read for the  
class.

Noah glances at his paper, clearly lost.

MR. DEARSON (CONT'D)

Monsieur Thomas? If you would be so  
kind?

(CONTINUED)

Noah rises, reluctant, holding his homework as if it were a live grenade.

Noah glances at his paper -- clearly lost.

MR. DEARSON (CONT'D)  
Start with the English sentence,  
then give us the "French"  
translation.

NOAH  
Uh, sure.  
(deep breath, reading off  
the page)  
"A little café in Paris is where we  
planned our rendezvous."

MR. DEARSON  
Very nice. And now, class, this is  
how not to say it in French.  
Proceed, Monsieur Thomas.

NOAH  
Frère Jacques... Frère Jacques...  
Port, fenêtre, porte. I like tacos.

The class erupts in LAUGHTER.

MR. DEARSON  
Fascinating. An unexpected blend of  
nursery rhyme, furniture, and  
Mexican cuisine.

NOAH  
Wait... I did?

MR. DEARSON  
Monsieur Thomas, if you ever end up  
in France, how do you expect to get  
by?

NOAH  
Easy. If I have enough money to get  
there, I'll have enough to hire  
an... entrepreneur.

MR. DEARSON  
You mean an interpreter.

NOAH  
Yeah, that.

MR. DEARSON  
And if you can't afford one?

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Then I'll just hire one who speaks  
French.

The class LOSES IT.

Mr. Dearson just points to the door.

MR. DEARSON  
Office. Now.

Noah grabs his bag as Zachary whispers to him.

ZACHARY  
Try and watch the news in the  
office.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Noah slouches in a chair outside the PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.

Across from him, MRS. PHELPS (50s), the school secretary,  
types with slow determination.

A small TV is mounted on the wall, playing LOCAL NEWS.

On screen, two NEWS ANCHORS—a polished DALE BIRCHWOOD and the  
ever-smiling JANE GORDON chat at their desk, overly chipper.

NEWS ANCHORWOMAN JANE  
The bear had escaped from the  
"Clown Around Circus" and made  
itself right at home before its  
trainer arrived to collect him.

NEWS ANCHOR DALE  
I wonder -- did he prefer his eggs  
sunny-side up or scrambled?

Noah lets out a single "HA!"— just enough to earn a side-eye  
from Mrs. Phelps.

NEWS ANCHORWOMAN JANE  
Can you imagine? Breakfast with a  
bear!

Noah shakes his head, amused.

NOAH  
Man, even that bear had a better  
morning than me.

(CONTINUED)

The office door suddenly CREEEAKS OPEN, and PRINCIPAL KELLEY (50s), built like an old linebacker, steps out, stone-faced.

PRINCIPAL KELLEY  
Mister Thomas.

Noah stands and heads inside.

EXT. A QUIET STREET - DAY

Zachary and Noah coast down the street on their bikes.

ZACHARY  
You coming over later?

NOAH  
Can't. Whippy Twirl, six to nine.  
Gotta keep the dream alive.

ZACHARY  
Right, the dream of minimum wage  
and melted ice cream.

NOAH  
Alright, cool it with the workplace  
slander.

ZACHARY  
Anyway, we need to move the  
suitcase. My mom's getting  
suspicious.

NOAH  
Suspicious how?

ZACHARY  
She's due for one of her "random  
searches." Thinks I'm hiding some  
forbidden magazine.

NOAH  
Wait -- you actually have those!?

ZACHARY  
No! But she checks anyway. Doesn't  
get that the internet exists.

NOAH  
So what's she hunting for? Smuggled  
editions of Sports Illustrated?

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Not just that. Last month, she raided my room looking for energy drinks. Thinks I'm one sip away from a caffeine-fueled crime spree.

NOAH

Dude. Does she even trust you?

ZACHARY

Apparently, hitting high school means I'm officially a "junk-food-snacking, media-brainwashed zombie."

NOAH

Alright, I'll take the suitcase. My mom doesn't check for anything.

Zachary nods, relieved. Noah pops a wheelie, just because.

INT. ZACHARY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Zachary drags the suitcase out from under his bed and hoists it onto the mattress.

Noah flips it open, inspecting the stacks of cash like a detective examining evidence.

ZACHARY

Dude, do you not trust me?

NOAH

I do. But, like... money does things to people. Just making sure you didn't suddenly develop expensive taste.

ZACHARY

Oh yeah, totally. Bought myself a yacht. It's parked out back next to the trampoline.

Noah nods, satisfied, then closes the suitcase.

NOAH

Alright, I'll take it and -- wait, how am I supposed to walk out of here with a suitcase?

ZACHARY

Exactly. My parents are downstairs.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

So? I'll just say I had gym today.

ZACHARY

Oh, brilliant. Because everyone carries their sweaty gym shorts around in a suitcase. Real subtle.

NOAH

Hey, you got a better idea?

Zachary glances at the window. Smirks.

ZACHARY

Yeah. Go stand under my window. I'll drop it down to you.

Noah eyes him suspiciously, then shrugs.

NOAH

Alright, genius. But if it lands on my face, I'm keeping extra money for medical bills.

He heads for the door as Zachary grins, already proud of his own plan.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - DAY

Noah stands directly beneath Zachary's second-story window, arms outstretched..

Above, Zachary leans out, suitcase in hand.

NOAH

Alright, just lower it down slow and --

ZACHARY

Yeah, yeah, I got it. Three... two... one.

Zachary lets go. The suitcase plummets.

Noah realizes -- too late -- that Zachary didn't lower it.

NOAH

DUDE --

THWUMP! The suitcase slams into Noah's chest, sending him staggering backward into a bush.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I said *lower* it!

Zachary leans out, wincing.

ZACHARY  
I didn't hear that part.

Noah untangles himself, groaning.

NOAH  
Yeah? Well, did you hear this part?  
-- You're an idiot.

He dusts himself off, grabs the suitcase, and books it toward his bike.

ZACHARY  
Try not to make it too obvious  
you're carrying a suspicious amount  
of cash.

NOAH  
Oh yeah, I'll just tell people it's  
my lunchbox. Nobody will suspect a  
thing.

Zachary rolls his eyes as Noah mounts his bike.

ZACHARY  
Just get it out of here before my  
mom --

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)  
Zachary? Who are you talking to?

Zachary spins around, heart stopping.

Noah kicks off, pedaling furiously down the street with the suitcase awkwardly wedged between his knees.

ZACHARY  
Uh -- just... myself!

MRS. HOLLIS (O.S.)  
Okay, well, come help with the  
groceries!

Zachary exhales, then glances out the window one last time.

Noah wobbles around a corner, barely staying upright.

INT. THE HOLLIS HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Zachary bounds down the stairs, two at a time, still catching his breath. He stops short when he sees Mr. Hollis standing by the landline, phone to his ear, frowning.

MR. HOLLIS  
(into phone)  
Who?... Bonanno Bertolino?

Zachary freezes on the last step.

MR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)  
Never heard of him. What? "Da Boss"? Yeah, not ringing any bells... Chicago? Look, pal, the only thing I know about Chicago is the Cubs  
(pauses, listens, confused)  
What do you mean I've got something that belongs to you?

Zachary grips the banister. His face drains of color.

MR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)  
Buddy, the only thing I got in the mail today was a water bill and a 15% off coupon for socks. You want those?  
(listens, shakes his head)  
Well, if I stole four and a half million dollars, I sure as hell wouldn't still be paying the water bill.

Zachary inhales sharply. His fingers drum anxiously against the wood railing.

MR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)  
Look, pal, I don't have time for weird phone calls. Goodbye.

He hangs up.

MR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)  
People are nuts.

Zachary cautiously steps forward, forcing casual.

ZACHARY  
Who was that?

(CONTINUED)

MR. HOLLIS  
Some weirdo. Kept calling himself  
"Da Boss" or something.

ZACHARY  
Huh. Weird. What'd he want?

MR. HOLLIS  
Something about me having his  
property. Crank call.

Zachary lets out a forced laugh.

ZACHARY  
Yeah... totally that.

He nods, backing away toward the stairs, moving just a little too fast.

EXT. NOAH'S HOME - DAY

A small, worn-down house with a patchy lawn and a porch that's seen better days.

Noah, suitcase in hand, trudges up the steps.

INT. NOAH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MRS. THOMAS (40s) lounges in a saggy armchair, hair in curlers, wrapped in a faded bathrobe. She files her nails with laser focus as dramatic SOAP OPERA MUSIC swells from the TV.

SOAP ACTOR (V.O.)  
You can't marry John, Marissa. He's dangerous. All his wives have met... untimely ends. Isn't that suspicious?

SOAP ACTRESS (V.O.)  
But I love him! And he loves me, not my inheritance.

The room is dim. Every shade is drawn.

Noah steps in, standing between the TV and his mom.

NOAH  
Hey, Mom...

(CONTINUED)

SOAP ACTOR (V.O.)  
You're walking right into his trap,  
Marissa!

NOAH  
Thanks for asking... my day was  
amazing...

NOAH (CONT'D)  
You?...

SOAP ACTOR (V.O.)  
He'll ruin you, just like the  
others.

NOAH  
Oh, cool, glad to hear it...

SOAP ACTRESS (V.O.)  
No one understands our love!

NOAH  
Nice catch-up!

He walks off as SOAP MUSIC SWELLS.

MRS. THOMAS  
That's nice, honey.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Noah's room is tidier than the rest of the house -- still  
dim, shades drawn.

Dressed in his Whippy Twirl uniform, he adjusts his cap, then  
pops open the suitcase.

A tiny tracking chip gleams in the corner. Noah plucks it  
out, twirls it between his fingers.

NOAH  
Can't track what's not there.

He slips the chip into his pocket, hides the suitcase in his  
closet, and heads for the door.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - NIGHT

Warm light spills from the windows. Crickets chirp..

INT. ZACHARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

At his desk, Zachary scrolls on his computer. Then, he stops.

Onscreen: A mugshot of a heavysset man in a dark suit.

BONANNO BERTOLINO.

Below it: "SUSPECTED CHICAGO MOB BOSS."

ZACHARY

I. Am. Dead.

He grabs his phone, dials fast.

NOAH (V.O.)

Hey! Hi! What's up!?

ZACHARY

Noah! Listen, this is serious! I just --

NOAH

(suddenly slow motion)  
Aaaand... Iiiii'm...  
nooooooot... heeeeere...  
riiiiiight... noooooow...

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Why do I always fall for this every time!?

NOAH (V.O.)

(normal speed)

So leave a message and I'll get back to you. Beep.

Zachary yells into the phone, exasperated.

ZACHARY

Noah, call me back! And change that stupid message!

He slams his cell down onto the desk.

EXT. NOAH'S HOME - DAY

Zachary marches up the walkway.

Noah leans out his bedroom window.

NOAH

Hey! Took you long enough! Get up here!

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY  
Why didn't you answer your phone  
last night?!

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Noah and Zachary sit on the floor, stuffing stacks of cash  
into backpacks.

Noah's grinning. Zachary's tense.

NOAH  
Dude. We're sitting on a fortune.

ZACHARY  
And if we're not careful, we'll be  
buried under it.

NOAH  
Oh, come on, we're rich! What's the  
big deal?

ZACHARY  
The big deal is that money like  
this comes with problems. Like  
tracking devices.

NOAH  
Pfft, don't worry. I handled that.

ZACHARY  
Handled it how?

NOAH  
Dropped it in my Mister Whippy  
uniform pocket.

ZACHARY  
(stares, horrified)  
So instead of leading them to the  
money, you made it lead straight to  
you?

Beat. Noah freezes.

NOAH  
I didn't think of that.

ZACHARY  
That's not even the worst part.  
Last night, my dad got a call.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
So?

ZACHARY  
From a guy named Bonanno Bertolino.  
In Chicago.

Noah's smirk fades

NOAH  
Bonanno? That sounds like -- wait.  
You're not saying --

ZACHARY  
(grim)  
Mob.

Noah's face drops.

NOAH  
Are you serious?

ZACHARY  
I looked him up. Full-on crime  
boss.

Noah slowly zips his backpack

NOAH  
That's... actually bad.

ZACHARY  
Yeah. And when he called my dad, he  
said he wanted something that  
"belonged to him."

NOAH  
(nervous laugh)  
Maybe he misplaced his cement  
shoes?

Zachary doesn't blink.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Or, maybe he meant the money.

ZACHARY  
Now listen. We lay low. No big  
spending. No drawing attention. If  
Bonanno's sniffing around, we  
pretend we don't know a thing.

Noah nods, deep breath.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Okay. Cool. No spending. Keep it  
chill. Act normal."

Beat. Then:

NOAH (CONT'D)  
What if "acting normal" doesn't  
work.

ZACHARY  
Then we run.

Noah clutches his backpack tighter.

EXT. HIGHWAY TO NORTHMEAD - DAY

The black sedan blurs by a weathered road sign:

NORTHMEAD, 20 MILES.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

A GPS screen glows on the dashboard.

The RED TRACKING DOT shifts.

BIG FRANK (O.S.)  
It's moving.

The DRIVER'S foot slams the gas pedal.

VROOOOM!

The engine ROARS. Tires SCREAM. The sedan fishtails, then  
launches down the road.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Zachary and Noah, trays in hand, scan the packed room.

SYDNEY GRIFFIN (14) sits alone—ponytail, smart blouse, the  
unshakable confidence of someone who couldn't care less about  
high school hierarchy.

SYDNEY  
You guys can sit here if you want.

ZACHARY  
Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

They plop down across from her.

NOAH  
You're in my history class, right?

SYDNEY  
Oh, you actually noticed?

NOAH  
Totally! I mean, it's not like I'm napping in there or anything.

SYDNEY  
Alright, then. What's my name?

NOAH  
Uh... yeah! Your name! I totally know it...

SYDNEY  
Sydney.

NOAH  
Yep, Sydney! Knew it. All along.

ZACHARY  
What's her last name?

NOAH  
She's got one, alright. Solid name. Just, uh... slipping my mind.

ZACHARY  
Griffin.

NOAH  
Griffin! Obviously. Locked in my brain the whole time.

Sydney smirks, turning to Zachary

SYDNEY  
Are you auditioning for the play?

ZACHARY  
Nah, acting's not really my thing. Are you?

SYDNEY  
Of course. It's kind of my dream.

ZACHARY  
The school play's your dream?

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

More like Broadway's my dream, but you gotta start somewhere. You should audition.

ZACHARY

Me? No way.

SYDNEY

Come on, it'll be fun! Maybe we'll get cast as the romantic leads. Romeo and Juliet.

NOAH

Hear that, Zach? She's practically begging.

Just then -- Scott and Alexis approach.

SCOTT

Sydney, really? You can do better than these two nerds.

ALEXIS

Scott, seriously? That's rude.

Zachary's eyes lock onto Alexis.

ZACHARY

Thanks, Alexis.

ALEXIS

You're sweet.

She turns to Scott.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

And you're a bully.

SCOTT

Hey, I'm tight end!

ALEXIS

Yeah, that's fitting.

She walks off. Zachary is mesmerized. Noah snaps his fingers in front of his face.

NOAH

Testing, testing, Earth to Zachary?

ZACHARY

Huh? Oh. I'm here.

(CONTINUED)

Sydney stands, grabbing her tray.

SYDNEY  
Gotta hit the library before class.  
See you guys at auditions?

ZACHARY  
Uh... yeah, sure.

She grins and walks off.

NOAH  
Dude, you know she's a junior,  
right?

ZACHARY  
Sydney? No, she's not.

NOAH  
Not Sydney. Alexis. The one you  
were basically drooling over.

ZACHARY  
That's an exaggeration.

NOAH  
Right. Just remember... (points  
toward the door Alexis exited)  
Junior. (points to Zachary)  
Freshman.

ZACHARY  
Yeah, but I'm a rich freshman.

NOAH  
Remember that old song? "Money  
can't buy you love"?

ZACHARY  
Wanna bet?

NOAH  
Sure... but when Scott finds out,  
he's gonna buy you a one-way ticket  
to Eternal Rest Cemetery.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The final bell RINGS. Students pour out of the building like  
freed prisoners.

(CONTINUED)

MISS LARKSPUR (V.O.)  
 Alright, Thespians! Gather for  
 auditions! Prepare to unleash...  
 your art! This will be the greatest  
 high school production of The Sound  
 of Music ever staged!

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

About twenty students sit with scripts, including Zachary,  
 Noah, and Sydney.

At a table in front, MISS LARKSPUR (30s), the overly  
 theatrical drama teacher, perches with a clipboard, exuding  
 unearned confidence.

MISS LARKSPUR  
 First up -- Zachary Hollis and  
 Sydney Griffin!

Zachary stiffens. Sydney raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

MISS LARKSPUR (CONT'D)  
 Zachary, you'll be Christopher  
 Plummer. Sydney, you're Julie  
 Andrews.

SYDNEY  
 You mean Maria?

MISS LARKSPUR  
 Hm?

SYDNEY  
 Julie Andrews played Maria.

MISS LARKSPUR  
 Yes, yes, I know that. But let's  
 call her Julie Andrews so the  
 audience is absolutely clear.

Zachary and Sydney exchange a look. Oh boy.

MISS LARKSPUR (CONT'D)  
 Now! Feel the moment, embrace the  
 scene, and -- Go!

SYDNEY  
 (reading)  
 "Captain von Trapp, have you seen  
 the children?"

(CONTINUED)

MISS LARKSPUR

Stop! Sydney, darling, it's Captain Plummer -- let's keep it simple for the audience.

SYDNEY

Wait, what?

MISS LARKSPUR

When people think of The Sound of Music, they picture Christopher Plummer. So, he's Captain Plummer. Keeps things nice and clear.

SYDNEY

Huh?

ZACHARY

Can we just get this over with?

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Zachary and Noah step out of a side door, dazed. They plop onto a bench.

NOAH

I don't know about this play, man. Miss Larkspur doesn't have a clue. And I know nothing about theater, which somehow makes me more qualified.

ZACHARY

Tell me about it. I'm playing Captain von Trapp -- no, wait, Captain von Plummer.

Sydney exits the side door, spots the boys, and heads over.

NOAH

Oh, look, here comes Julie "Not Maria" Andrews.

SYDNEY

Zachary, I'm so sorry. I had no idea Miss Larkspur was this bad. This play's gonna be a train wreck.

ZACHARY

I thought the play was Romeo and Juliet?

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

It was, but she switched it to The Sound of Music because the Northmead Floodlighters are already doing Romeo and Juliet.

ZACHARY

Oh, that makes... zero sense.

SYDNEY

But we're still using the Romeo and Juliet costumes for The Sound of Music... to save money.

NOAH

Ah, that explains why she said I'd be the "random guard with a spear."

The football team approaches the side door when Scott spots Zachary and Noah by the bench.

SCOTT

Well, well. What do we have here? How are the little ladies doing today?

ZACHARY

Not now, Scott. Really not in the mood.

SCOTT

Aw, did I hurt your feelings? What are you two dweebs doing here?

NOAH

It's our school too, Einstein.

SYDNEY

If you must know, they're in the school play -- with me.

The team erupts into laughter.

SCOTT

Wait, wait -- you two are gonna be on stage?

ZACHARY

You don't even get what it takes to do a play, Scott. Memorizing lines, making them sound real, remembering where to stand... Bet your tiny brain couldn't handle it.

(CONTINUED)

The team shifts -- laughter cooling into glares.

SCOTT  
Careful, Zach.

NOAH  
Oh, yeah? Zach's not the one  
wearing tight leggings and shoulder  
pads and smacking butts every time  
someone scores. Who's the "lady"  
now?

ZACHARY  
What do they call you? A tight end?

NOAH  
Oh yeah! Real butch, Scott.

The team stiffens.

Scott CRACKS his knuckles. His teammates start surrounding  
the bench.

SYDNEY  
Aaand I'm gonna go inside...

She bolts.

Noah and Zachary glance at each other.

NOAH  
We had a good run.

The football team POUNCES.

DUST. EVERYWHERE.

Sydney returns with COACH SCANLON in tow.

COACH SCANLON  
Alright! Break it up!

He peels players off Zachary and Noah one by one.

When the dust settles --

- Their shirts are torn.

- Noah's missing a shoe.

- Zachary's entire backpack is hanging off his arm like a  
purse.

They wobble to their feet.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Did we win?

NOAH

Oh yeah. Huge victory.

They limp away, leaning on each other.

The football team watches, grinning.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - DAY

Zachary, clothes ripped, fresh black eye blooming, limps up the front walkway.

Across the street, a BLACK SEDAN sits parked. Silent. Unmoving. Ominous.

Its tinted windows reflect the quiet suburban street -- watching -- as Zachary disappears inside.

EXT. A RESIDENTIAL ROAD - DAY

The morning sun beams down as Zachary coasts along the street, wind in his face, feeling almost carefree --

Until he hears the distinct whir of wheels behind him.

He glances back.

DODGA (35), big, bald, built like a wrecking ball in a sleek suit -- is gaining on him.

On a too-small bicycle.

A ridiculously tiny backpack is strapped to his broad shoulders, looking comically out of place.

DODGA

I usually travel in a car.

ZACHARY

Yeah, well, I don't get my learner's permit for another two years!

DODGA

And why am I wearing this dumb backpack?

ZACHARY

Makes you look --y'know -- casual.

(CONTINUED)

Dodga adjusts the tiny straps, unamused.

DODGA  
You got a real loose definition of casual.

He pedals harder to keep up, scowling.

DODGA (CONT'D)  
And why did I have to meet you at Petey's Pizza?

ZACHARY  
Because I need time to explain why I suddenly have a bodyguard, Dodga. Last night was chaos. Just roll with it.

DODGA  
Kid, you're lucky your money's green.

Dodga groans, spotting a steep incline ahead

DODGA (CONT'D)  
Aw, hell. Another hill?

Zachary grins and picks up speed.

ZACHARY  
Come on, Dodga. Less complaining, more guarding!

Dodga huffs, pumping the pedals.

DODGA  
Next time, I'm charging extra for hills.

EXT. SCOTT WAYNE'S HOME - DAY

Scott's car backs out of the driveway.

His mother, MRS. WAYNE (30s), perky, prim, and painfully supportive, stands at the door, waves with the enthusiasm of a cheerleader.

MRS. WAYNE  
Bye, Scotty! Have a great day!  
Don't forget to be a shining star,  
honey bunny!

Scott rolls his eyes and floors it.

(CONTINUED)

Down the street, a BLACK SEDAN parked by the curb rumbles softly to life.

Mrs. Wayne keeps waving, completely oblivious as the sedan eases into traffic, tailing Scott.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A few stragglng students dash into the building as the final bell RINGS.

MRS. BELL (V.O.)  
 Good morning, class. Today, we will  
 tackle the grand finale of A Tale  
 of Two Cities.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

Students slump at their desks, half-awake. At the front, MRS. BELL (50s) -- strict posture, glasses on a chain, the human embodiment of a final exam -- taps a well-worn copy of A Tale of Two Cities against her palm.

MRS. BELL  
 Good morning, class. Today, we  
 tackle the grand finale of A Tale  
 of Two Cities.

A collective groan ripples through the room.

MRS. BELL (CONT'D)  
 Oh, don't act like I'm sentencing  
 you to the guillotine. That was  
 Sydney Carton.

NOAH  
 Spoilers, Mrs. Bell.

Mrs. Bell arches a brow -- Noah's on thin ice.

Across the room, Zachary flips through his book, pretending to care. But under his desk, his phone screen glows, a silent news article open:

"Chicago Crime Boss Linked to Missing \$4.5 Million"

Zachary swallows hard.

MRS. BELL  
 Since some of us clearly need a  
 refresher -- Noah, why don't you  
 sum up how the novel ends?

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

Uh... sure. So, uh, there's this  
guy, Charles Dickens --

The class LAUGHS. Mrs. Bell pinches the bridge of her nose.

MRS BELL

Just... open your book, Mr. Thomas.

The class snickers as the door creaks open, and in strolls  
DODGA, still rocking his designer sunglasses and looking like  
he just wandered onto the wrong movie set.

The class falls silent, jaws dropping.

MRS. BELL

And you are...?

DODGA

Sorry I'm late. Had to explain to  
the principal why this was a good  
idea.

MRS. BELL

What was a good idea?

DODGA

Me, bein' in this class.

Some girls stifle gasps, while others stare, intrigued.

MRS. BELL

My class? Do you have a Hall pass?

Dodga hands her a hall pass, with a casual nod.

MRS. BELL (CONT'D)

"Dodga"? That's... your name?

DODGA

Yeah.

MRS BELL

Is that your first or last name?

DODGA

Both.

MRS BELL

Dodga Dodga?

DODGA

No. Just Dodga once. Dodga.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BELL

Right. Take a seat... in the back.

Dodga makes a beeline for the seat behind Zachary, occupied by TOUGH BOY, and glares at him.

TOUGH BOY

Bite me.

DODGA

I don't bite, but I'll rearrange your face if you'd like.

Tough Boy blinks, then nods and slides to the back, out of the danger zone.

MRS. BELL

Alright, Mister Dodga, have you read A Tale of Two Cities?

DODGA

Yeah. The drunk lawyer swaps places with the other dude 'cause he's got a crush on the guy's girl. She's not into him, but he still goes, "Guess I'll just get my head chopped off like an idiot."

The class stares, half in awe, half horrified.

MRS. BELL

And why, Mister Dodga, would that make him an "idiot" instead of a hero?

DODGA

Because no girl is worth a close shave with a guillotine, ma'am. That's the kinda haircut you don't walk away from.

The entire class, and Mrs. Bell, just gape as Dodga pulls out his book and leans forward to Zachary.

DODGA (CONT'D)

What page we on, kid?

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Scott's car screeches into the parking lot, Alexis in the passenger seat, looking thoroughly unimpressed.

(CONTINUED)

Behind them, the black sedan creeps along, its windows dark and foreboding.

ALEXIS

Seriously, Scott! You're late every single day. Tomorrow, I'm taking the bus.

SCOTT

The bus? With all those peasants? You can't be serious.

Scott parks, and they hop out, still bickering under their breath as they head for the front doors.

Behind them, the black sedan revs up and veers down a side street and slips out of sight.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway bustles with students between classes.

Zachary and Noah weave through the crowd, trying to keep a low profile with Dodga behind them.

NOAH

Does he have to look like he's here to collect "protection fees"?

ZACHARY

Hey, he's your bodyguard now too. Just deal with it.

A group of Football Players in jerseys spot Dodga and the boys, nudging each other and snickering as they watch the trio pass.

Dodga notices and gives them a stare that could melt steel.

CHAD, one of the players, steps forward, grinning.

CHAD

Hey, you guys hired some... muscle now?

DODGA

Careful, kid. I'm allergic to unnecessary comments.

Chad's smirk falters, but he powers through

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
 (murmurs to Zachary,  
 uneasy)  
 This guy... kinda intense, don't  
 you think?

ZACHARY  
 Hey, he's keeping us safe. Let's  
 just roll with it.

CHAD  
 Whatever, man. We'll see how tough  
 you look on game day.

DODGA  
 Kid, you're talkin' real brave for  
 someone with fragile-looking  
 kneecaps.

The Football Players exchange glances, not entirely sure if  
 Dodga's joking.

They walk away, trying to look unbothered but quicken their  
 pace just the same.

ZACHARY  
 He's like our own... personal  
 insurance plan.

They continue down the hallway as Dodga scans the crowd.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Zachary exits the building, headed for the bike rack as Noah  
 veers off in the opposite direction.

NOAH  
 See ya later!

ZACHARY  
 Wait, where're you going?

Dodga follows, eyes scanning like a hawk

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

As Zachary unlocks his bike, he catches sight of a black  
 sedan blocking Scott's car in its parking space.

Scott is in a heated argument with MUMBO (40s), and BIG FRANK  
 (40s), -- two guys in black suits who look like they'd win an  
 arm-wrestling match with a vending machine.

(CONTINUED)

Zachary nudges Dodga and points.

MUMBO

Kid, you ever have your face  
"adjusted"?

SCOTT

Adjusted?!

MUMBO

'Cause that's what's gonna happen  
if ya don't fork over the suitcase.

SCOTT

Look, pal --

MUMBO

I ain't your pal!

SCOTT

I don't even know what you're  
talking about! I don't have a  
suitcase!

BIG FRANK

Yeah, ya do. The one with 4.5  
million bucks in it sittin' right  
in your car.

SCOTT

You're outta your minds!

MUMBO

Alright, don't make me tear this  
car apart. 'Cause if I tear this  
car apart, the next thing I'm  
tearin'... is you.

At that moment, Noah pulls up in a flashy Corvette Stingray,  
grinning from ear to ear.

Scott, Mumbo, and Big Frank stare as Noah leans casually out  
the window.

NOAH

Scotty! Long time, no see. How's it  
hangin'?

SCOTT

Thomas?! Where did you even get  
that thing?!

BIG FRANK

Nice ride, kid!

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Why, thank you!

Zachary and Dodga arrive. Zachary is barely able to keep his jaw from dropping.

SCOTT  
Seriously, where'd you get a Corvette?!

NOAH  
Does it matter? Enjoy your day!

With a cheeky wave, Noah revs the engine and peels out of the parking lot.

ZACHARY  
Come on! We gotta catch him!

DODGA  
Catch him!? Did you see what he's driving!?

ZACHARY  
He doesn't know how to shift and I think he's in third!

Zachary and Dodga hop on their bikes and pedal furiously after the Corvette, which is already a speck in the distance.

Big Frank continues to slap Scott around for answers as Mumbo patiently watches.

MUMBO  
Feelin' chatty yet, tough guy?  
C'mon, spill it, kid!

Just then, the Football Team arrives, led by the hulking QUARTERBACK. Scott spots them with a sly grin.

SCOTT  
Oh, you two are in for it now.

Mumbo and Frank turn to see the entire team bearing down on them.

QUARTERBACK  
Need backup, Scott?

SCOTT  
What do you think?!

The team drops into a charging stance.

(CONTINUED)

QUARTERBACK  
Green 80, Green 80, hut-hut!

The football team surges forward in a full-on stampede.

MUMBO  
Oh, you gotta be --

WHAM! The football squad *flattens* them.

EXT. MAPLE STREET - DAY

Noah jerks the Corvette onto the curb, nearly taking out a mailbox. He throws it in park, cackling as Zachary and Dodga skid to a stop on their bikes -- out of breath.

NOAH  
Did you see Scott's face?! He looked like he was gonna pass out! Or cry! Maybe both!

ZACHARY  
Lying low, remember? As in not drawing attention to ourselves?

NOAH  
What? It was a steal -- only fifty grand!

ZACHARY  
Oh, only fifty grand. Great deal... for a fourteen-year-old!

Noah finally notices Dodga.

NOAH  
Uh... and who's this?

DODGA  
Dodga.

NOAH  
Dodga what?

DODGA  
Just Dodga.

NOAH  
Is that your first name?

DODGA  
No first name, no last name. Just Dodga

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Cool, so... what grade you in?

ZACHARY  
He's a bodyguard.

NOAH  
Oh, so I'm the one drawing  
attention, but you hired the  
Terminator?

Dodga ignores them, eyes scanning the street.

DODGA  
You see those two clowns in black  
suits roughing up that kid?

NOAH  
You mean the guys with the "break-  
your-kneecaps" energy?

ZACHARY  
Of course he meant them!

NOAH  
Fine, fine! No need to go full  
Sherlock! You're the one with a  
bodyguard!

ZACHARY  
And you're the one with a sixty-  
thousand-dollar car! And no  
license!

NOAH  
I got it for fifty!

DODGA  
Wait—how'd you even buy this thing  
with no license?

NOAH  
Slipped the salesman five grand to  
"look the other way" on the  
paperwork.

ZACHARY  
You're insane! What's your plan  
when a cop pulls you over?!

NOAH  
Easy. Flash a big smile. Maybe act  
lost.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

That's not a plan. That's a bad rom-com.

NOAH

Hey, at least my plan doesn't involve walking around with a real-life bodyguard!

Before Noah can argue, Zachary spots the black sedan turning onto their street.

ZACHARY

Uh-oh... it's them! Hide the car!  
We'll stall 'em!

Noah scrambles to start the Corvette. The gear shift grinds—he fumbles, panicking.

DODGA

Kid, do you even know how to drive?

NOAH

Not officially!

The Corvette lurches forward, fishtailing wildly.

DODGA

Oh, we're so dead.

Behind them, the black sedan revs up—closing in.

ZACHARY

Go! Go!

THE SEDAN

Big Frank leans out the passenger window -- AIMING A GUN.

ZACHARY AND DODGA

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Pedal faster!

BAM! A gunshot rings out.

Dodga whips a pistol from his coat.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

His shots shatter the sedan's windshield. The car swerves, tires SCREECHING.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Split up!

Zachary veers left, cutting through a yard.

Dodga disappears behind some hedges.

The sedan straightens out—gunning straight for Noah.

EXT. PINE STREET - DAY

Zachary rockets out of a backyard, dodging a hedge and whipping down a driveway.

He slams into trash cans -- WHAM!

BAGS BURST -- garbage explodes into the street.

He wobbles, steadies himself, and kicks off, pedaling faster than ever.

EXT. MORSE STREET - DAY

The black sedan BLOWS through a stop sign, skidding into a four-way intersection.

Zachary streaks by -- just in time.

The sedan SCREECHES to a stop, tires BILLOWING smoke.

WHOOMPH! It spins a one-eighty, tires screaming, then slams into gear—locking onto Zachary's path.

EXT. BIRCH STREET - DAY

Dodga cuts through a yard, trying to lose the sedan.

A split second later -- CRASH!

A wild FLUTTERING -- like a sail SNAPPING in the wind.

Dodga bursts out the other side -- completely entangled in a laundry line.

Sheets billow like ghostly parachutes.

Socks, shirts, a stray bra flap behind him, turning him into a ridiculous human kite.

Dodga fights the fabric, still running.

(CONTINUED)

DODGA  
Gonna charge extra for this!

EXT. NOAH'S HOME - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Noah tears down the street, his grip white-knuckled on the wheel as he makes a sharp turn into his driveway.

The Corvette screeches into the garage and comes to an abrupt halt inches from the back wall.

Noah leaps out, slams the garage door button, and dives behind the garage.

He crouches low and holds his breath.

A beat later, the black sedan zooms down the street showing no signs of slowing down.

Noah peeks out from his hiding spot and exhales in relief.

Zachary and Dodga skid into the driveway.

They hop off their bikes, gasping for breath.

ZACHARY  
Where's the car?

NOAH  
(gestures to the garage)  
Right here! Safe and sound.

ZACHARY  
Bring it back.

NOAH  
Why? I bought it!

ZACHARY  
It's a target, Noah. Keeping it's like painting a big, red "X" on your front door.

NOAH  
Alright, alright... compromise: I'll only drive it on weekends. And holidays. And, like, really boring Tuesdays.

ZACHARY  
Just return it!

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

Fine! But what was that all about anyway? Why did they chase us?

ZACHARY

Forget the chase -- why were they shooting at us!? With real bullets, Noah!

NOAH

Wait...  
(turns to Dodga)  
How much does he know?

ZACHARY

Everything.

NOAH

In that case, I think they might've been looking for... the suitcase.

ZACHARY

But if they were tracking it, how'd they end up at Scott's car?

NOAH

Because...

FLASHBACK

EXT. SCOTT'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Noah, wearing his Mr. Whippy uniform, sneaks up on Scott's car, glancing around like he's in a low-budget spy movie.

NOAH (V.O.)

I decided to get rid of it and also fix Scott once and for all.

He kneels next to Scott's car, carefully sticking the tiny tracking chip up under the inside wheel arch.

Once it's secure, he takes one last look around.

NOAH

Enjoy your new fan club, Scott.

Noah stands, tries to stealthily back away, and accidentally steps on a garden gnome, nearly tripping over it.

NOAH (CONT'D)

(whispers to the gnome)  
Sorry, buddy.

(CONTINUED)

He quickly regains his balance and tiptoes off, doing his best attempt at "stealth mode."

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO SCENE

ZACHARY

Oh, genius. That won't backfire at all.

Zachary turns to Dodga.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Can you say something here?  
Anything to talk some sense into him?

DODGA

Bulletproof vests ain't cheap, kid.  
I'm gonna need hazard pay.

ZACHARY

We have a deal!

DODGA

Yeah, and it doesn't include shooting!

ZACHARY

It's literally *your* pistol!

DODGA

You hired me for schoolyard brawls,  
not 'The Godfather: Freshman Year.'

INT. HOLLIS DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Zachary and his parents sit at dinner. Mrs. Hollis is barely containing a secret she's desperate to spill.

MRS. HOLLIS

So, dear... Zachary, anything exciting happen at school today?

ZACHARY

Nope.

MRS. HOLLIS

How about after school?

ZACHARY

Not really.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HOLLIS  
Oh, come on! Nothing like...  
joining a new club?

MR. HOLLIS  
What club?

ZACHARY  
I didn't join any club!

MRS. HOLLIS  
Are you absolutely sure about that?  
I met Francis Griffin at the  
grocery store and she told me her  
daughter Sydney --

ZACHARY  
Okay, I got hijacked into the  
musical!

MRS. HOLLIS  
Wait... Romeo and Juliet is a  
musical now?

ZACHARY  
They switched it! We're doing The  
Sound of Music instead.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Oh, I love that show! Tell me  
you're playing Christopher Plummer!

Zachary groans. Mr. Hollis stifles a smirk.

Mrs. Hollis just beams, clearly excited.

MRS. HOLLIS (CONT'D)  
Dear, we have to record opening  
night!

MR. HOLLIS  
Oh, yeah. The blackmail footage  
will be priceless.

INT. NOAH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV flickers with the closing credits of a soap opera.  
Mrs. Thomas lounges in her recliner. Her eyes half-lidded,  
barely awake.

NOAH kneels beside her, holding up a pearl necklace like he  
just won the lottery.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
See, Ma? I got these for you!

MRS. THOMAS  
Oh? How much were they?

NOAH  
Ten grand.

MRS. THOMAS  
How'd you pay for 'em?

NOAH  
Mr. Whippy gave me a... significant  
raise.

She gives a little approving grunt, eyes already shut again.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
(mimicking her)  
"That's nice, dear."

He stands, his smirk fading as he watches her for a beat.

A flicker of something in his eyes.

With a sigh, he turns for the stairs, the pearls dangling  
loosely in his hand.

EXT. NORTHMEAD DINER - NIGHT

A classic silver train-car-style diner glows in neon against  
the dark.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

A low hum of conversation. Dodga sits alone in a booth, back  
to the door, tense and trying to look casual.

The WAITRESS sets down a plate.

WAITRESS  
Steak and eggs, enjoy.

DODGA  
Thanks.

She walks off just as BIG FRANK and MUMBO enter -- bruised,  
bandaged, and looking like they've been run over by a  
football team.

(CONTINUED)

They limp to the booth directly behind Dodga. Mumbo's back nearly presses against his.

WAITRESS  
Sit anywhere.

MUMBO  
T'anks.

Dodga's fork hovers midair as he hears Mumbo's voice.

He hunches lower, eating close to the table, shrinking into his collar.

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
Them kids got the cash. You know what that means.

BIG FRANK  
We, uh... we gotta... get rid of the kids?

MUMBO  
Bingo. Nice and clean -- two behind the ear, won't even know what hit 'em.

Dodga sets his fork down carefully, fingers curling into a fist against his thigh.

BIG FRANK  
I dunno... they're just kids.

MUMBO  
Kids who know way too much. They've seen us. And that big gorilla they got with 'em... Who is he, anyway?

BIG FRANK  
Maybe some kid's older brother. High schoolers can get real big these days.

MUMBO  
Big, sure -- but high school kids don't carry Magnums. We take care of him first.

Dodga doesn't move. Doesn't blink. Just listens.

INT. ZACHARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Zachary, fast asleep, stirs as he hears a soft TAP... TAP... on the window. One eye opens, and he listens. TAP!

He leaps out of bed and opens the window, seeing Dodga below on the lawn.

ZACHARY  
Dodga? What is it?

DODGA  
It's not good!

EXT. HOLLIS HOME - SIDE DOOR - NIGHT

Dodga paces in the cold night air as Zachary slips outside with a coat over his pajamas.

ZACHARY  
What happened?

DODGA  
Those guys who shot at us? They were in the diner. They didn't see me, but I overheard 'em -- they're gonna "take care" of you and Noah.

ZACHARY  
Take care? Does that mean what I think it does?

DODGA  
A one-way swim.

ZACHARY  
Isn't this what I hired you for?

DODGA  
Kid, I'm a bodyguard, not a miracle worker. Protecting a couple of teenagers from the mob wasn't in the job description.

ZACHARY  
Well, are you sticking around?

Dodga glances away, silent.

DODGA  
I'm thinkin' about it.

Zachary shakes his head, sighing, then heads back inside.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - DAY

Just after sunrise. The singing of morning birds floods the neighborhood.

INT. THE HOLLIS KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Hollis enters the kitchen to see a strange man, EDWARDS (60s), the BUTLER, cooking breakfast.

He is dressed in a formal shirt and collar with black tie and a vest - his jacket with tails hanging on a coat rack by the door.

With gray hair, his English chin in the air, he is the classic, stereotypical butler.

Mrs. Hollis GASPS!

EDWARDS

Ah. Good morning, ma'am. I trust you slept well? Excuse me...

He puts his jacket on.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)

I wasn't expecting a kitchen visit. My informality won't happen again.

MRS. HOLLIS

Who are you?

EDWARDS

Edwards, Ma'am. Your new butler. I also perform breakfast, luncheon and dinner.

MRS. HOLLIS

Where did you come from?

EDWARDS

Come from? The agency, ma'am. I was told to report here this morning. At the moment I am making hash-browns to go with the breakfast of your choice.

Mr. Hollis enters the kitchen as his walk changes into a dazed stagger at the sight.

MR. HOLLIS

Who is...

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HOLLIS  
It's Edwards, dear. The butler.

MR. HOLLIS  
Butler!? What's he doing here?

MRS. HOLLIS  
Making breakfast.

MR. HOLLIS  
I can see that...

Zachary charges into the room and heads for the toaster. As soon as he gets there, the toast pops up!

EDWARDS  
Ah! Timing is everything. I'm glad  
I judged correctly.

Zachary butters the toast.

ZACHARY  
Good morning, Edwards!

EDWARDS  
Good morning, Master Hollis.

MR. HOLLIS  
Zachary! What is going on?

ZACHARY  
Sorry! I was gonna tell you last  
night but I forgot. I hired  
Edwards.

MR. HOLLIS  
You hired a butler!?

ZACHARY  
I think it might impress Alexis.

A beat.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
Also, a butler goes great with my  
bodyguard.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Bodyguard!?

ZACHARY  
But he quit.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HOLLIS  
Who's Alexis?

ZACHARY  
Scott's girlfriend. But she's too good for him.

MR. HOLLIS  
Zachary, we can't afford a butler!

ZACHARY  
I can! He's just sixty-one thousand, nine hundred and forty a year.

MR. HOLLIS  
Is this some kind of joke!?

Zachary heads for the door, toast in hand.

ZACHARY  
I'll tell you all about it after school! I'm runnin' late! Bye!

And he's gone, leaving his parents in a fog.

EDWARDS  
What can I make you?

MRS. HOLLIS  
Eggs Benedict?

EDWARDS  
Yes, ma'am.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - DAY

Zachary hurries to his bike as Big Frank steps out from behind the garage and grabs his arm.

BIG FRANK  
Don't try to run, kid. Bad idea.

He drags Zachary to the street where the black sedan is parked. The tinted passenger window slides down as a smiling Mumbo greets him.

MUMBO  
Hey. Join us.

ZACHARY  
I kinda gotta get to school.

(CONTINUED)

Big Frank opens the back door, shoves Zachary inside where he discovers Noah, hands tied and gagged.

MUMBO

School days are over, kid. This is gonna be a very, very, bad day for you.

Big Frank gets behind the wheel, and the car drives away.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Rusting metal, shattered windows, and vines creeping through the cracks. The place is barely standing.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Zachary and Noah sit tied to chairs, hands bound behind their backs. Big Frank is rummaging through their backpacks, tossing out homework and random papers like confetti.

ZACHARY

Hey! That's my history project! Due tomorrow!

BIG FRANK

Tell your teacher I'm real sorry.

ZACHARY

Oh yeah, "A mobster ate my homework." That'll get me an A+.

BIG FRANK

Listen, kid. You're the real little crook here, not me.

ZACHARY

Me? Are you serious? I paid for my butler and my bodyguard, fair and square!

NOAH

Wait, wait -- you hired a butler?

ZACHARY

Yeah, last night. I thought it'd impress Alexis.

NOAH

And you didn't think to mention this?

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Didn't wanna rub it in about your car.

NOAH

Alright, how much is this "butler" costing you?

ZACHARY

Does that really matter right now?

NOAH

Yes! Considering you keep calling me reckless with money!

ZACHARY

Totally different. I'm paying weekly installments. Very under the radar. Classy.

Big Frank sighs, rolling his eyes, and turns to Noah.

BIG FRANK

And you? Where's your bag?

NOAH

Me? Bag? Nah, I don't need one. I'm, uh... a genesis.

Zachary gives him a deadpan look.

ZACHARY

He means "genius."

BIG FRANK

Oh.

Suddenly, Zachary's phone BUZZES in his shirt pocket.

Mumbo pulls the phone from Zachary's pocket.

ZACHARY

Who is it?

MUMBO

It's your mom.

ZACHARY

Tell her I'm... a little tied up right now.

MUMBO

Frank, gag 'em.

(CONTINUED)

Big Frank shoves rags in their mouths.

Mumbo answers, adopting a terribly fake, cheerful voice.

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
 Uh, hello? This is, uh, Northmead  
 High! How can I, uh, help you's?

INT. THE HOLLIS HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Hollis sits in her favorite chair, phone to her ear, looking thoroughly puzzled.

MRS. HOLLIS  
 Who is this? Zachary!?

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Mumbo does his best to sound "professional."

MUMBO  
 Ah, yes, hello, this is... uh... Mister  
 Rozelli.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. THE HOLLIS HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Hollis raises an eyebrow, clearly baffled.

MRS. HOLLIS  
 Mister... Rozelli? From the school?

MUMBO  
 Yes, Ma'am. Assistant Principal...  
 Rozelli. We had to, uh, confiscate  
 young Zachary's phone here.

MRS. HOLLIS  
 What for?

MUMBO  
 He was, uh... being disruptive.  
 Very... very loud... uh,  
 extracurricular enthusiasm.

MRS. HOLLIS  
 Enthusiasm? Zachary hates  
 enthusiasm.

(CONTINUED)

MUMBO

Ah, but he found some! Big dose of it!

MRS. HOLLIS

And how exactly was he "enthusiastic"?

MUMBO

Uh... well, he was lookin' at, you know... very sophisticated magazines... of the educational sort.

MRS. HOLLIS

Educational? Zachary doesn't read educational magazines!

MUMBO

Yeah, ma'am, but he was just really, really... into it.

Mrs. Hollis -- horrified and baffled.

MRS. HOLLIS

What magazine?

MUMBO

Popular Mechanics.

MRS. HOLLIS

Oh, dear, he's more confused than I thought!

MUMBO

Well, don't you worry, ma'am. We're takin' good care of him.

MRS. HOLLIS

Just make sure he gets home in one piece, Mr. Rozelli.

MUMBO

We'll try to keep it to a minimum.

Mumbo hangs up, looking at Big Frank and shaking his head.

MUMBO (CONT'D)

(to Zachary)

Your mother's a pill.

ZACHARY

Mmm-mm-mmmm-mmm...

(CONTINUED)

MUMBO  
Take dem gags out.

Big Frank removes the gags.

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
Now, what did you say?

ZACHARY  
I never read Popular Mechanics!

MUMBO  
You should. You might learn  
somethin'.

He gestures to Big Frank, and they step away, out of earshot from Zachary and Noah who whisper to each other.

ZACHARY  
Now, listen to me, we don't have  
much time. Those two are gonna kill  
us.

NOAH  
Think so?

ZACHARY  
We have to get out of here.

NOAH  
How?

ZACHARY  
I don't know yet. Where's the  
money?

NOAH  
Shhh - here they come.

The thugs return.

MUMBO  
(to Big Frank)  
You stay with them. I'll be right  
back.

Mumbo walks off.

NOAH  
(to Zachary)  
He must have to use the little  
gangsters room.

Noah struggles against the ropes.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Can we talk for a sec? Frankie...  
 can I call you Frankie?

BIG FRANK  
 No.

NOAH  
 Right, right, respect. You ever  
 look at someone and think, "Wow,  
 this kid reminds me of someone I  
 love dearly?"

BIG FRANK  
 Got a nephew 'bout your age.

NOAH  
 Boom! There it is! Your nephew.  
 That means, deep down, you already  
 like me!

Big Frank squints, considering.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Now, Frankie -- Frank -- Franklin --  
 may I call you Franklin?

BIG FRANK  
 No.

NOAH  
 Isn't that your name?

BIG FRANK  
 No. My name is Clarence. And if you  
 laugh, I'll rip your lungs out.

NOAH  
 Not laughing! Not laughing...  
 but... where did Frank come from?

BIG FRANK  
 It's my professional name.

NOAH  
 Look, you're a businessman, right?  
 You gotta appreciate a good deal.  
 (beat)  
 What if, instead of us disappearing  
 into a lake, I slide you, say...  
 twenty grand?

ZACHARY  
 Oh my god.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

Maybe buy that nephew of yours a  
sweet gaming setup, treat yourself  
to a nice steak dinner --

Big Frank scratches his chin. He is considering it.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Everybody walks away happy. No  
harm, no cement shoes... sound  
good?

MUMBO (O.S.)

Hey!

He enters.

MUMBO (CONT'D)

You were actually thinkin' about  
it, meatball?

BIG FRANK

He reminds me of my nephew.

MUMBO

Your nephew is in juvie!

Mumbo turns to the boys.

MUMBO (CONT'D)

Okay, here's what's gonna happen.  
Our organization will write off the  
four point five mil. Den we erase  
all witnesses.

NOAH

All? How many you got?

MUMBO

I'm lookin' at 'em.

ZACHARY

So... what happens next?

MUMBO

Cement shoes.

NOAH

That sounds uncomfortable.

MUMBO

You step into a bucket of cement.  
It hardens.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
Big Frank and me takes ya's out  
onto the lake, and dumps ya's in.

NOAH  
But I can't swim!

Zachary turns to Noah with a smirk.

ZACHARY  
Genesis.

Mumbo gags them.

MUMBO  
Now, we's gonna go get da cement.

BIG FRANK  
What about da kids?

MUMBO  
Ain't like they're goin' anywhere..  
Come on.

They head for the doors.

BIG FRANK  
Shame you two didn't pick up  
snorkels with all that cash.  
HAHAHAHA!

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Scott and Alexis sit across from Principal Kelley.

PRINCIPAL KELLEY  
Care to explain those two men you  
were loitering with in the parking  
lot?

SCOTT  
They were threatening to break my  
kneecaps!

ALEXIS  
If they don't, I might.

SCOTT  
They thought I stole their money!

KELLEY  
What money?

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT  
Their money.

KELLEY  
You've been caught lifting lunch  
money before, Mister Wayne.

SCOTT  
This was more than lunch money.

KELLEY  
How much more?

SCOTT  
Four-point-five million dollars.

Kelley's eyes light up with sudden interest.

KELLEY  
Where are you keeping it?

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Zachary furiously wiggles his hands, working at the knots.  
The ropes loosen, bit by bit.

Finally, with one last twist—SNAP! His hands pull free. He  
yanks off his gag and rips Noah's loose.

NOAH  
How did you get free?!

ZACHARY  
Old magician's trick, my friend.  
When they tied me up, I arched my  
wrists just a little, so when I  
relaxed, the ropes --

NOAH  
Dude, I don't care! Just get me out  
before they turn us into a mob  
family recipe!

Zachary reaches for the ropes binding Noah's wrists—tightens  
his grip—and yanks. Nothing.

ZACHARY  
uh-oh.

NOAH  
What "uh-oh"? No "uh-ohs."

EXT. A ROAD OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DAY

The black sedan speeds down the road.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - DAY

Mumbo drives, eyes on the road. Big Frank is squinting at a crumpled receipt, looking personally offended.

BIG FRANK

Five bucks for an eighty-pound bag  
of cement! That's ten bucks for  
two!

MUMBO

Inflation's hittin' everybody,  
Frank, even us.

BIG FRANK

Back in the day, we "took care" of  
Harry da Weasel for, what? A buck-  
fifty, tops.

MUMBO

The good old days.

BIG FRANK

We're gonna need a loan just to "do  
business."

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Zachary twists the knot, but it won't budge.

ZACHARY

Okay, so they tied yours tighter.  
Give me a sec.

NOAH

We don't have a sec!

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

The black sedan is pulled over. A HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER  
(30s), leans against their car, writing a ticket.

Mumbo grips the wheel, fuming. Big Frank slouches beside him,  
arms crossed.

The OFFICER eyes the bullet-riddled windshield.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER  
So... you wanna explain the  
windshield?

MUMBO  
Hail. Bad hailstorm.

The Officer looks up at the clear, sunny sky, and with a smile, looks down to Mumbo.

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
Well, it didn't happen today... I  
got an appointment to get it  
replaced.

OFFICER  
Where?

MUMBO  
Some little place in town -- I  
don't remember the name. I'm from  
Chicago. Passing through.

The Officer rips the ticket from the notepad and hands it to Mumbo, who glares at it.

OFFICER  
Have a nice day.

The Officer walks back to his car.

BIG FRANK  
How much?

MUMBO  
Three hundred bucks. I can't wait  
to get outta this town.

BIG FRANK  
It's an expensive town.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Noah has found a small pen knife and saws through the rope -- a slow process.

NOAH  
It's just rope!

ZACHARY  
Rope covered in old oil! It's fused  
together -- I'm getting there --

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

Oh my God. This is it. This is how I go. "Found at the bottom of the lake, tied to his best friend like an idiot." At least they won't find me in my Mr. Whippy hat.

ZACHARY

Would you quit narrating your obituary and let me focus!?

Zachary finally breaks through -- SNAP!

The knot slips free. Noah jumps up, shaking his arms wildly as if he just got out of a straitjacket.

NOAH

Thank you, thank you, thank you, let's get outta here!

They hear the sedan approach outside.

ZACHARY

They're back! Come on -- this way!

They run in the opposite direction.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Mumbo and Big Frank exit the car as the trunk pops open.

MUMBO

Bring the cement.

BIG FRANK

Why don't you carry a bag!?

MUMBO

Cause I'm the guy what's in charge! Bring 'em!

EXT. OLD MILL ROAD - DAY

Zachary and Noah appear from the trees, climb over the guardrail and step onto a two-lane highway.

ZACHARY

I know where we are, and it's not good.

NOAH

Isn't this...

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Yep. Old Mill Road. We're ten miles from town.

Zachary pulls out his phone and starts texting.

NOAH

So who are you texting?

ZACHARY

Share-A-Ride.

EXT. A STREET IN NORTHMEAD - DAY

Scott and Alexis cruise down the street in Scott's convertible. Scott is deep in thought.

SCOTT

Now I know how Noah got the cash for that Corvette. And who were those guys in the parking lot?

ALEXIS

Zachary and Noah probably stole money from the Mob, and now the Mob's hunting them down.

Scott's eyes light up with a sneaky grin.

SCOTT

Hear me out -- grab something they care about, ransom it, the cops show, the mob panics, and bam -- those dweebs are off to reform school, and we score the jackpot.

ALEXIS

So, your plan is... steal from the people already being chased by the mob?

SCOTT

Works for me!

EXT. OLD MILL ROAD - DAY

Zachary and Noah trudge onward.

ZACHARY

It's all my fault. I put my family in danger.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
Yeah... kinda is.

ZACHARY  
Not helping, dude! You were part of  
it too!

NOAH  
Hey, I did my part.

ZACHARY  
Which reminds me -- where exactly  
did you stash the cash?

NOAH  
Half of it -- trunk of the  
Corvette.

ZACHARY  
And the other half?

NOAH  
Uh... Dodga's backpack.

ZACHARY  
So, the bodyguard we don't have  
anymore... is 2 million bucks  
richer?

NOAH  
Technically, yeah. We're generous  
like that.

Before Zachary can explode, Noah's eyes widen.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Incoming! Black sedan!

They both turn to see the black sedan a distance away.

ZACHARY  
Get off the road!

They dive over the guardrail, straight into --  
SPLAT!

A ditch full of questionable muck.

The black sedan roars past, oblivious.

A long, gross beat.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
(on the verge of tears)  
When's Share-A-Ride getting here?

NOAH  
Hopefully before this *soaks in*.

EXT. THOMAS' GARAGE - DAY

Scott and Alexis stand at the closed garage door.

ALEXIS  
Are you absolutely sure Noah's mom  
won't hear us?

SCOTT  
Keep your fingers crossed.

INT. NOAH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Thomas is passed out on the couch as the TV blares  
dramatic SOAP OPERA music.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
And now... Passions of the Heart!

EXT. THOMAS GARAGE - DAY

The garage door creaks up to reveal Noah's gleaming Corvette.

SCOTT  
Key fob's right on the seat. It's  
like this car wants us to take it.

MOMENTS LATER

Scott revs the engine as they roll out of the driveway.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - DAY

Mumbo and Frank stare at the two empty chairs.

BIG FRANK  
Looks like da kids Houdini-ed on  
us.

A cell phone RINGS.

Mumbo digs into his pocket -- pulls out his gun by mistake --  
and holds it to his ear.

(CONTINUED)

He opens his mouth to speak, but realizes what he has done.

Mumbo swaps the gun for his cell phone.

MUMBO

(into phone)

Mumbo Rozelli speaking... Yeah,  
boss... Uh-huh... Yep... they ain't here...  
Yeah, we had 'em, but, y'know... Yep...  
uh-huh... right... okay.

He hangs up, grim.

MUMBO (CONT'D)

He said if we don't get the money,  
we're the ones getting cement  
shoes.

BIG FRANK

We already bought the cement! You  
shoulda told him!

Mumbo gives Big Frank an icy glare.

EXT. OLD MILL ROAD - DAY

A compact car putters along at a tortoise pace, barely  
hitting twenty. Zachary and Noah sit in the back seat.

INT. COMPACT CAR - DAY

The driver, MINNIE JONES (85), is the definition of a sweet  
old grandma—round glasses, floral dress, white gloves.

MINNIE

Soccer, eh? I didn't know you could  
get so dirty playing soccer.

NOAH

We're... uh... not that good. We  
fall down a lot

MINNIE

Maybe you boys should take up  
bridge.

Zachary glances at the speedometer—barely 20 MPH.

ZACHARY

Could we... maybe go a bit faster,  
Minnie?

(CONTINUED)

MINNIE

Oh, heavens no! I'm already pushin' twenty -- that's almost lickety-split territory, young man!

From the rear window, the black sedan looms, gaining fast.

NOAH

They're catching up.

Zachary and Noah duck low, sinking out of sight.

ZACHARY

Please, don't give us away! These guys are dangerous!

The black sedan pulls up beside Minnie's car.

MUMBO rolls down his window, eyes scanning.

MUMBO

You seen two kids around here?

MINNIE

Oh, yes... I just gave 'em a lift to Milltown... dropped them off at the library.

MUMBO

Where's dat?

MINNIE

Fifteen miles back the way you just came.

The black sedan screeches to a halt, does a frantic U-turn, and speeds off in the opposite direction.

Zachary and Noah sit back up, exchanging relieved glances.

ZACHARY

Thank you, Minnie.

NOAH

That was close. Hey, Minnie, why're you drivin' for Share A Ride, anyway?

MINNIE

Well, it was either this or bingo night with the same gossip I've heard for forty years..

(CONTINUED)

NOAH  
That makes sense.

EXT. THE HOLLIS HOME - DAY

Cheerful and sunny. A lady walks her dog on the sidewalk...

A GONG rings out.

EDWARDS (V.O.)  
Luncheon is served.

INT. THE HOLLIS DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Hollis sits primly at the table, a tiny GONG is at the ready, next to her.

Mr. Hollis enters, mildly perplexed, and takes his seat.

Edwards, ever-dignified, sweeps in, silver platter in hand.

From the living room, the NEWS THEME plays on the TV.

MR. HOLLIS  
Alright, what's for lunch?

With a flourish, Edwards removes the lid—revealing an extravagant sushi boat with tiny edible sailboats.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Oh, how lovely!

From the living room, a REPORTER'S VOICE cuts in --

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
And now, the mid-day news with Chet  
Ellis.

CHEET ELLIS (V.O.)  
Good day, I'm Chet Ellis. Police  
are on the lookout for two local  
teenagers last seen being chased by  
a black sedan.

Mrs. Hollis freezes, turning toward the TV, horror creeping onto her face.

On TV, FOOTAGE ROLLS -- Zachary and Dodga, fleeing the ominous black sedan.

(CONTINUED)

MR. HOLLIS

Edwards! Do you know anything about this?

EDWARDS

No, sir. I am a butler. Not a gunslinger.

EXT. THOMAS GARAGE - DAY

Zachary and Noah hop out of Minnie's car -- Zachary pulls some bills from his pocket.

ZACHARY

Sorry they're kinda muddy.

MINNIE

Money is money.

NOAH

Bye, Minnie! Thanks for the lift!

MINNIE

You boys behave! Toodles!

Minnie drives off.

ZACHARY

What a legend.

Noah pulls out a remote, presses the button--the garage door begins to rise.

Both boys freeze.

Inside?

Empty space.

NOAH

My car! It's gone!

ZACHARY

And Dodga's got the rest of our cash somewhere.

NOAH

We're toast -- cement shoes!

DODGA (O.S.)

You guys are lucky I'm honest.

(CONTINUED)

The boys jump as DODGA emerges from the shadows, the backpack in his hand.

ZACHARY

Dodga! You came back!

DODGA

Yeah, good thing I took a peek inside this backpack. Nearly tossed it. Only half the money's here.

NOAH

Other half's in my Corvette.

DODGA

And where's that?

NOAH

Stolen!

DODGA

So... let's go get it back.

Noah's phone BUZZES.

He checks it -- his eyes widen.

NOAH

School email... it's from Scott.

ZACHARY

What's it say?

NOAH

"Let's make a deal."

DODGA

Where's he at?

ZACHARY

Home Ec.

INT. HOME EC CLASS - DAY

Scott, in an oversized apron and floppy chef's hat, cracks an egg -- shell and all -- into a bowl.

Then he dumps an entire stick of butter in like he's performing surgery.

HOME EC TEACHER (O.S.)

We're aiming for a light, fluffy cake. Gentle, careful stirs.

(CONTINUED)

Scott grins, grabs a whole box of yeast, and dumps it all in.

SCOTT  
Extra yeast equals extra fluffy,  
right?

A fizzing noise bubbles from the bowl.

The Home Ec teacher peers over.

HOME EC TEACHER  
Scott... did you just... put in a  
whole box of yeast?

SCOTT  
Oh yeah, Ms. Palmer. Super-sizing  
it.

A low rumble comes from the bowl.

INT. HOLLIS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Hollis paces, landline to his ear, concerned.

MR. HOLLIS  
Right... yes... thank you.

He hangs up and turns to Mrs. Hollis, on the sofa.

MR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)  
He didn't show up to homeroom. Not  
at school at all.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Oh, dear.

EXT. A ROAD IN NORTHMEAD - DAY

An upscale car cruises down a quiet street.

INT. UPSCALE CAR - DAY

Dodga drives, annoyed.

Next to him, Zachary gives directions.

Noah fidgets in the back, clutching a spare Corvette key.

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

Alright, so here's the plan: I drive the Corvette somewhere secret, stash it -- I got the spare key -- easy peasy.

DODGA

The plan is: we get the money out of the car, then take the whole stash to the police... like you should've done before this turned into a Fast & Furious sequel.

ZACHARY

What if Mumbo and Big Frank find us first? Not really looking to get "cement shoes."

DODGA

Step one -- you return that Corvette to the dealer.  
Step two -- you give back anything with a price tag that says "mob money."

NOAH

Dodga, buddy, it's back to the unemployment line for you.

EXT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Dodga pulls up next to the Corvette.

They leap out, make a beeline for the car, pop the trunk, and -- the backpack is still there.

NOAH

Yes! It's still here!

Zachary unzips it, peeks inside.

ZACHARY

Even better--it's stuffed.

Dodga holds out his hand.

DODGA

Keys. I'll return it to the dealer.

NOAH

Shouldn't it be me? I mean, he doesn't even know you.

(CONTINUED)

DODGA

The second I mention he sold a  
Corvette to a 14-year-old, he'll be  
very accommodating.

Noah shrugs and hands him the keys.

ZACHARY

Hurry back, Dodga. We might need  
some muscle.

Dodga slides into the driver's seat, starts the car.

Noah taps on the window.

NOAH

Bet you never had a car this cool,  
huh?

DODGA

Kid, I got two of these in my  
garage.

Dodga revs the engine and peels out.

Noah turns to Zachary.

NOAH

There's a lot of money in being a  
bodyguard. Now what?

ZACHARY

Yeah, well-heads up.

He spots the black sedan creeping into the lot.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Uh... okay, waiting's over.  
(low urgency)  
Inside. Now.

Zachary fast-walks toward the school doors.

Noah hurries after him.

NOAH

Why are we running?

ZACHARY

Because Mumbo and Big Frank just  
decided to make a cameo.

NOAH

Oh!

(CONTINUED)

They break into a full sprint.

INT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

The hallway is eerily quiet.

The sound of HURRIED FOOTSTEPS—

Zachary and Noah BURST THROUGH the doors, SLAMMING them shut behind them.

They duck out of sight.

NOAH

Lockers? We could hide in the lockers!

ZACHARY

Yeah, genius, because nothing says "hiding" like cramming into a metal box and being unable to close the door.

NOAH

Fine! Then where, Einstein?

Zachary scans the hallway.

Then -- his eyes light up.

ZACHARY

Got it! Follow me!

He takes off running.

Noah scrambles after.

NOAH

If we get caught, you owe me big.  
Like, lifetime of servitude big.

ZACHARY

Deal! As long as we survive long enough for me to complain about it!

They disappear down a hall.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Zachary and Noah tear around a corner.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Keep moving! They're right behind us!

They pick up the pace, sprinting down the hallway.

Noah glances back, his eyes wide.

They race past closed classroom doors, ducking low, nearly crawling to avoid being seen.

One door creaks open, and Mrs. Bell, their English teacher, steps out.

MRS. BELL

Excuse me, boys -- why aren't you in class?

Zachary flashes a quick, panicked grin as he whips by her.

ZACHARY

Uh, restroom emergency!

NOAH

And I'm late for detention!

They sprint away.

Zachary and Noah turn another corner and skid to a stop in front of the janitor's closet.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Here! No one ever checks the janitor's closet.

They yank the door open, shove each other inside, and close it just as they hear FOOTSTEPS ECHOING down the hallway.

The sounds get closer, then slowly fade away.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Now what?

INT. SCHOOL BOILER ROOM - DAY

Dimly lit. Cluttered.

Zachary and Noah sneak in, dodging around boilers and pipes.

ZACHARY

Alright. They're probably checking lockers. We're safe. For now.

(CONTINUED)

Zachary grabs a screwdriver, drags a creaky chair under an air vent, and hops on.

NOAH

You sure about this? Hiding four million dollars in a school vent?

ZACHARY

Better than leaving it in the hallway with a "Free Money" sign. We'll get it back as soon as they leave!

(beat)

Hand me the backpack.

Noah reluctantly hands it over.

Zachary crams stacks of cash into the vent.

NOAH

For all we know, this vent's gonna lead straight to Mr. Kelley's office.

ZACHARY

Relax. These haven't been used since the school switched to AC.

(grins)

Prime hiding real estate... pass me your bag too.

INT. NORTHMEAD HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

Mumbo and Big Frank stroll into the lobby, each holding a suspiciously worn violin case.

They stop short when they see Principal Kelley blocking their path, clipboard in hand, looking very unimpressed.

KELLEY

Can I help you?

Mumbo and Big Frank break into identical smiles.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal Kelley is tied up in his chair, with a gag across his mouth.

His eyes dart between Mumbo and Big Frank as they rummage through a folder on his desk.

(CONTINUED)

MUMBO  
 (reading from the folder)  
 Zachary Hollis. Fifth period.  
 Music. Room one hundred.

Mumbo slaps the folder shut with a smug grin.

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
 Thanks for the info, Mr. Kelley.  
 Just remember... you make so much  
 as a peep, and you're gettin' a one-  
 way ticket to "Silenceville."  
 Capisce?

Big Frank cracks his knuckles for added emphasis.

They grab their violin cases and swagger out the door. As soon as it shuts, Mr. Kelley tries to mumble through the gag:

MR. KELLEY  
 (muffled, desperate)  
 Heelllphh... anyone...?

INT. MUSIC CLASS - DAY

Zachary and Noah sit in their seats, staring ahead as MR. ROSA (50s), a meek, worn-down teacher in a suit older than most of the students, taps on the blackboard.

Mr. Rosa notices how dirty the two are.

MR. ROSA  
 Are the showers in the gym not  
 working?

NOAH  
 We didn't have gym today.

Mr. Rosa clears his throat and moves on.

MR. ROSA  
 Class, today, we dive into Mozart's  
 final opera, that swingin'  
 classic... La Clemenza di Tito.

The class lets out a groan.

MR. ROSA (CONT'D)  
 But it's thrilling! Forty composers  
 tried to write it before Mozart.  
 However --

The door swings open.

(CONTINUED)

Mumbo and Big Frank saunter in.

MR. ROSA (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, I'm teaching.

MUMBO  
Not anymore, Teach. Beat it.

Big Frank hauls Mr. Rosa by his collar and belt, hurls him out the door.

A loud CRASH echoes from the hallway.

Zachary and Noah freeze, wide-eyed.

MUMBO (CONT'D)  
Today's lesson... is a little different.

He places his violin case on the desk.

Zachary jumps up, pointing in panic.

ZACHARY  
Those aren't violins! Those are machine guns!

NOAH  
They wanna take us "fishing" -- and guess who's the bait!?

Mumbo smirks and pulls out an actual violin.

Zachary and Noah are puzzled.

Mumbo plays HANDEL'S FUNERAL MARCH beautifully.

The class stares, stunned.

Big Frank rests a hand and taps on the second case.

MUMBO  
You got till I finish this piece.  
When Frankie opens his case... the song gets real... percussive.

Zachary and Noah gulp, faces frozen in fear.

THE THERMOSTAT ON THE CLASSROOM WALL

It clicks from 71 to 72 degrees.

INT. SCHOOL BOILER ROOM - DAY

The faint whir of fans starts up, echoing ominously through the vent system.

INT. THE AIR VENT - DAY

Dust particles swirl as a deep WHIRRRR fills the vent.

Behind the mesh, stacks of cash begin to tremble and slide.

Bills ruffle like leaves in a storm, shifting inch by inch, faster with each pulse of the fan.

FWOOOSH!

The entire pile lurches and tumbles through the vent system, scattering bills everywhere, like green bullets rocketing down the metal tunnel.

INT. HOME EC CLASS - DAY

Scott stands in front of his stove, completely oblivious to the chaos brewing.

KA-BOOOM!

The oven door BLASTS open with smoke and a tidal wave of cake batter, plastering Scott and half the class in sticky, gooey mess. Scott, a walking blob of batter, blinks in confusion.

The HOME EC TEACHER (30s), in her pristine white chef's uniform, hurries over, wide-eyed.

HOME EC TEACHER

Where will we get the money to  
replace the stove you ruined!?  
That's it! I'm adding "hazard pay"  
to my contract!

RATTLE - SCRAPE - CLANG - BUH-BOOOM!

The air vent EXPLODES open and showers the room in a whirlwind of green bills.

Money rains down like confetti, sticking to the batter-coated students, turning Scott into a cake-battered cash magnet.

The teacher grabs as many of the flying bills as she can.

INT. MUSIC CLASS - DAY

Mumbo plays the last haunting note on his violin, and the room falls dead silent.

Every student is frozen, puzzled, trying to understand what just happened.

RATTLE-RATTLE-RATTLE... KA-BAM!

The air vent blasts open with a roar!

Wads of cash shoot out and pour into the room like a chaotic jackpot.

Students stare for a split second...

All pandemonium breaks loose.

STUDENTS

It's money! It's real money!

The class explodes into action as students dive, jump, and scramble to grab as much as they can.

Fists are flying, backpacks are unzipping, and textbooks are tossed aside in the frenzy.

Mumbo and Big Frank look at each other, wide-eyed.

They leap into the crowd, frantically scooping up cash. Mumbo snatches a wad from a TEEN BOY, who's clinging to it for dear life.

TEEN BOY

Oh, no you don't!

He swings his fist -- SMACK -- he nails Mumbo square in the nose! Mumbo stumbles back, clutching his face.

MUMBO

Hey! This ain't lunch money, kid!  
This is high-level criminal  
finance!

Big Frank tries to grab a stack from a GIRL, who stomps on his foot, sending him hopping backward.

Students scream, laugh, and wrestle as the money whirlwind continues.

(CONTINUED)

Zachary and Noah duck under desks, trying to avoid the mayhem, watching in awe as their "rainy day fund" becomes the ultimate free-for-all.

INT. GYM - DAY

The CHEERLEADERS have completed their perfect pyramid, the final cheer still echoes through the gym.

BAM-CLANG-BOOM!

The air vent bursts open as a storm of cash blasts out, scattering green bills everywhere. The pyramid collapses in an instant as pom-poms fly, and cheerleaders dive, squeal, and wrestle each other to snag as much cash as they can.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Hollis run to the front doors.

MRS. HOLLIS  
Why are we here!?

MR. HOLLIS  
I want to see if the school knows anything!

MRS. HOLLIS  
Why don't you call the police?

MR. HOLLIS  
Because then it will be in the newspaper!

Mr. Hollis opens the main door.

WHOOSH! A tidal wave of cash erupts, nearly sweeping them off their feet.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal. KELLEY, tied and gagged to his chair, eyes bulging as dollar bills float down like confetti around him.

He wriggles in his seat, muffled shouts of pure joy escaping as he wiggles his fingers, trying to snag as many bills as he can.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

On stage, Sydney, dressed in an elaborate renaissance gown, rehearses a scene with a GIRL dressed as Juliet's Nurse, trying to act with serious conviction."

SYDNEY

Oh, Reverend Mother! I pledged a  
vow of poverty, and Captain Plummer  
has so much money -- for me to  
marry him would be --

WHOOSH! A wave of cash erupts from the stage vent, blanketing them in green bills. Sydney breaks character immediately.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Forget the vow! We're rich!

REVEREND MOTHER/NURSE

Amen, sister!

They stuff bills into their costumes as the rain of cash falls around them.

INT. THE MAIN HALL - DAY

Money flies through the air, creating a swirling chaos with Zachary and Noah right in the thick of it.

ZACHARY

Hands off! This is ours! We're  
taking it to the police!

NOAH

Yeah! Let it... oh, forget it!

Noah dives in, shoving bills into his pockets.

Across the hall, Mumbo spots the football quarterback hoarding an armload of cash.

He storms over and yanks it from him.

MUMBO

This ain't a charity, Einstein.  
That's my cash!

The quarterback, not having it, narrows his eyes and squares up.

QUARTERBACK

Green 80! Green 80! Hut-HUT!

(CONTINUED)

With a war cry, the entire football team barrels down the hall toward Mumbo, ready to tackle for their "share."

MUMBO

NO!

BIG FRANK

MUM-MA!

In seconds, they BLITZ right into Mumbo and Big Frank, who disappear under a wall of shoulder pads and cleats.

INT. THE MAIN HALL - DAY

Zachary and Noah stand in the eye of the storm as students dive and scramble for bills raining down.

Mr. and Mrs. Hollis appear beside them, mouths agape.

MRS. HOLLIS

Is this the money you mentioned?

ZACHARY

Yeah. Kind of hard to miss now.

She turns to Mr. Hollis with a sigh.

MRS. HOLLIS

Well, I guess there goes keeping Edwards.

Mr. Hollis shrugs, clearly unbothered.

MRS. HOLLIS (CONT'D)

What a shame.

Suddenly, Dodga bursts through the front doors.

He weaves through the mob, a bag held tight to his chest.

ZACHARY

Dodga! Over here!

Dodga stumbles over, still in shock.

NOAH

Did you sell it back?

DODGA

Yeah. Sixty grand, right here in this bag.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HOLLIS  
Sixty thousand!?

Zachary reaches in, pulling out a fat stack of cash just as Alexis rushes up, eyes wide.

ALEXIS  
Zachary, is this all yours?

ZACHARY  
Half of it, at least.

She squeals and wraps her arms around him, planting a huge kiss on his lips.

Zachary grins, his inner movie star moment kicking in. He flings the cash into the air, carefree.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)  
Who needs money, right!? It can't buy you love!

Alexis' face twists, horrified.

ALEXIS  
Are you kidding? Money totally buys love! Loser.

She storms off back into the crowd scooping up cash.

ZACHARY  
Wait!

He frantically starts grabbing what the can and stuffs it into his pockets.

Mrs. Hollis, ecstatic, turns to Mr. Hollis, eagerly clutching the money bag.

MRS. HOLLIS  
I have enough so can keep Edwards!  
Isn't it just perfect?

Without hesitation, Mr. Hollis grabs the bag and flings the cash straight into the main hall. Students dive for it.

Mrs. Hollis frantically scrambles to scoop up bills, while Zachary and Noah stuffing cash in their pockets, coats, pants, inside their shirts...

NOAH  
So -- she ditched you.

(CONTINUED)

ZACHARY

Yeah.

NOAH

And I'm gonna miss my car.

ZACHARY

I'm gonna miss Dodga.

They turn and see Dodga frantically collecting as much money as he can.

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

Well -- I gotta go home and take a shower. Gotta work tonight.

NOAH

Me too. It's gonna be murder.

ZACHARY

Why?

NOAH

We've got a special on Banana Splits.

Zachary and Noah head toward the front doors as money and frantic people swirls all around them.

Noah slaps him on the back as they exit into the sunlight...

...and money rains down from the roof.

FADE OUT.