

CRASH & BURN

"Pilot"

Written by

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TEASER

INT. ND ROOM - DAY - (AUGUST 1999)

CLOSE ON: A CURSOR blinking on a blank computer screen, an iMac circa 1998.

CHYRON: "August, 1999: After."

An UNSEEN person (Typist) begins to write. As the keystrokes start, Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake plays, building in volume...

ON SCREEN

To most of you it was just another school shooting. Or attempted school shooting.

THE MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS ALONG WITH THE TYPING. It has a slyly comical effect, like Typist has lost the flow.

The above text is selected and deleted. As the following words appear the music begins once again...

ON SCREEN (CONT'D)

I'm grateful I was able to stop it.
I shudder to think how many people would have died that day if I hadn't seen--

SILENCE again. The last three words are deleted. Music over--

ON SCREEN (CONT'D)

If *she* hadn't seen--

SILENCE again. Nothing but the blinking cursor. Then -- RETURN RETURN. Typist skips a few lines as the music starts again, building in volume over--

ON SCREEN (CONT'D)

What did she see?????

As the question marks appear one after another and the music builds in volume and intensity louder than before, we're--

INT. ND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING - DAY - (MAY 1999)

The film is treated to indicate we're in a different time.

TIGHT ON: the back of a TEENAGE GIRL's head as she dances ballet to the Tchaikovsky music. She wears a PONYTAIL with a distinctive BEADED, PINK RUBBER BAND.

CHYRON: "3 Months Earlier: The Day Of"

The Girl's dancing is effortless, fluid, accomplished.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - INTERCUT

SWISH SWISH. We're CLOSE ON a KEY CHAIN reading: "Like what you see? Call 1-900-YOU-WISH." It swings back and forth, as if suspended in mid-air, making the SWISH SWISH sound.

INT. ND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING - INTERCUT - DAY

Back to Tchaikovsky. The Girl, whose face we still don't see, does a pirouette then...

DRIP. A drop of blood hits the floor--

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - INTERCUT - DAY

SWISH SWISH. We're back on the KEY CHAIN. Only now we see it's attached to-- a BLUE BACKPACK WITH ORANGE TRIM. We're following the BACKPACK WEARER, too tight to see a face. The backpack is taken off the shoulder, then unzipped. Inside-- a COMPACT SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLE.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - INTERCUT - DAY

Frantic energy as we're TIGHT ON-- A 17-YEAR-OLD BOY whose face we don't see, bolting down the hallway.

SCREAMS can be heard in the b.g. Back to--

INT. ND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING - INTERCUT - DAY

Tchaikovsky. The Girl does another pirouette, then... shlump! She drops to the floor, dead weight.

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - INTERCUT - DAY

MORE SCREAMS, this time some phrases: "Get down!" and "He's got a gun!" REVEAL-- THE GUNMAN, standing in the entrance to the cafeteria. BUT WE STILL DON'T SEE HIS FACE.

We FEEL and HEAR but don't get a good look at the high school kids in the room SCREAMING because we're suddenly--

CHAOTIC, HANDHELD, and CLOSE ON-- BULLETS spraying into the wall and ceiling--

INT. ND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING - INTERCUT - DAY

BANG BANG BANG. Someone's outside the room KNOCKING hard on the door, trying the knob but it's locked--

*MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Help! We need help in here!*

We move low to the floor, following a trail of blood to--

The Girl's face and HER EYES, staring right at us. Almost through us. Though the Girl is only 19 years old, these eyes have a depth and world-weariness beyond their years. As her eyelids flutter we--

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES.

END TEASER

ACT ONE**INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - DAY - (AUGUST 1999)**

CLOSE ON-- A PAIR OF EYES which slowly open.

DEBBIE NEWMAN (O.S.)

Steve?

REVEAL-- STEVE NEWMAN (17, average build, good-looking), lying in bed. He smiles.

STEVE

(a la Ferris Bueller)

Hi, Mommy.

REVERSE TO REVEAL-- his mother, DEBBIE NEWMAN (40's, put-together, wears a WHITE TENNIS SKIRT and SHIRT.)

DEBBIE NEWMAN

(rolls her eyes)

Oh, Steve. Your father's here.

Steve pulls himself up.

STEVE

What? What time is it?

DEBBIE NEWMAN

Almost eleven. Steve, you weren't drinking alcohol last night, were you?

STEVE

Why, mother. I would never.

DEBBIE NEWMAN

(shakes her head)

Better not keep him waiting.

She kisses him on the forehead, leaves. Steve fishes a bottle of RITALIN from his bedside table.

STEVE

Good morning, friends.

As he pops a pill--

PRE-LAP DIALOGUE:

NURSE (O.S.)

Time for therapy.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - LIBRARY - MORNING

JAVIER RODRIGO LOPEZ (a.k.a JR, 17). Broad-shouldered and though once well-built, his muscles are starting to atrophy. He sits at a desk in front of a computer, looks up at--

A NURSE (Argentinian, thick accent, sense of humor but no bullshit, 50's) holding a paper cup.

JR
(bright smile)
Good morning!

NURSE
(suspicious)
Mm. And what are you doing this fine morning, Mr. Lopez?

JR
I'm working on a website that dispenses talk therapy. You just talk at the screen and every two minutes it says, "Mm-hm."

NURSE
(smiles)
Great. All you have to do is make it dispense meds and I can retire.

She rattles the paper cup.

EXT. KOVACIC HOUSE - DAY

A beautiful, green backyard skirted by trees. DEVON KOVACIC (17, small but wiry, wearing loose pajamas) engages in some karate moves with the air. He's focused, intense but not very good. Every movement is labored.

INT. KOVACIC HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Devon sits in front of a BOWL OF CEREAL and a NEWSPAPER on the table. He's holding a GUITAR, plays a quick riff. He's good. He puts down the guitar, picks up a PLASTIC NAMETAG that says, "Devon," and pins it to his button-down shirt.

He takes a bite of cereal as he notices a HEADLINE:

"High School Hero In Negotiations for Book Deal." A PHOTO of Steve Newman from his high school yearbook is next to the headline.

Devon stops mid-bite, stunned. He puts down his spoon, quickly scans the article.

We see key words: "attempted shooting at Groton High... May 19, 1999... Rumors persisted... additional boy... Devon Kovacic... but he was released..."

Off Devon, looking up, shaken--

JR (O.S.)
Morning.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Nurse leads JR down the hall. They walk past other patients, doctors, nurses. JR, chipper, says hello to all of them.

JR
Morning. Morning, good morning.

One hollow-eyes patient glares at JR, who smiles back at him.

JR (CONT'D)
Howdie, Henry.

NURSE
I'll say this for you, Mr. Lopez.
Most people spend years getting
used to this place. You seem to
actually like it here.

JR
Beats the real world.

NURSE
You've perhaps explained what I've
been doing here for the past 22
years.
(laughs, abruptly stops)
That's depressing.

JR heads into an office.

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - RECEPTION - DAY

Steve and JACOB NEWMAN (40's, clean cut, business suit) walk up to a receptionist's desk. Behind the desk is a LOGO for fictional book publisher: AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING.

JACOB NEWMAN
Amy Singh, please.

Receptionist nods then types. Jacob burns off nervous energy--

JACOB NEWMAN (CONT'D)
(to Receptionist)
You know my son here is going to
write a book. He's still in high
school.

Receptionist just smiles.

STEVE
(re: Jacob)
And he just acts like he is.

Jacob laughs. But maybe Steve meant it to have some edge.

AMY SINGH (O.S.)
Well, if it isn't the Newman men.

They turn to see AMY SINGH (28, Indian-American, slight
accent, whip-smart, no-nonsense.) She shakes hands with Jacob
and Steve.

JACOB
(effusive)
A pleasure to see you again, Ms.
Singh. I know Steve's very excited.
He's got lots of ideas to talk
about. Right Steve?

STEVE
So many.

JACOB
Right. Your office, again?

AMY SINGH
Mr. Newman, would you mind if I
talked to Steve alone for a little
while this time?

Jacob's slightly taken aback--

JACOB
No. Of course. Please. Go ahead.

Amy gives Jacob a tight smile. He glances briefly at Steve
before moving off, reluctant to leave him alone with her.

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - AMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Steve looks out the window at a view of Manhattan, twenty
stories up. Amy enters, closes the door. He turns to her.

STEVE

You're not gonna molest me, are you?

He smiles at her, thinking he's being funny. She glares at him, suppressing anger, opens the door again.

AMY SINGH

Get out.

STEVE

What? Oh, no, it was just a joke--

She gets in his face, a frightening but thrilling intensity in her eyes. Though she's a good bit shorter than him it makes him back up a little, toward the WINDOW, a precipitous view of the street below.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Uh--

AMY SINGH

Who do you think I am? Hm? Some silly high school girl you can manipulate with whatever charm you suppose you possess? Let me enlighten you: I am your paycheck. So either show me some respect or you can go back out there and tell Daddy you screwed this up before it even began. Is that clear?

Steve swallows his pride, for now.

STEVE

Yeah. Sorry. My bad.

AMY SINGH

Alright.

(softening)

Sometimes I forget how young you are. You've probably never had a job in your entire life, have you?

STEVE

I delivered pizzas for a while last year.

AMY SINGH

Take a seat.

He does. Amy sits on the edge of her desk.

AMY SINGH (CONT'D)
I asked to speak to you alone
because if you're going to write
this book with me, I need to know
you and I can communicate.

STEVE
Sure. Yeah. I can do that.

Amy pulls a DOCUMENT off her desk.

AMY SINGH
These first ten pages you sent me.
Frankly, they're crap.

STEVE
(taken aback)
Well, that's a little rude.

AMY SINGH
No. It's true. And accepting the
truth about your work is a big part
of what it means to be a
professional, which is what I need
to know you can be.

STEVE
(nods)
I can do that. I can be a
professional. Yeah.

AMY SINGH
Those stories you wrote for school
were very honest. They made me feel
like I was in the head of a teenage
boy. That's why I believed you
could write this book.
(holds pages)
These felt like what you thought I
wanted to hear. Do you know what I
mean?

Steve considers that, his mind turning.

AMY SINGH (CONT'D)
What?

STEVE
Look. Since we're being honest,
there's something I wanted to say.
About our first meeting.

AMY SINGH
Go ahead.

STEVE

Well. You said this book should be about, you know... these kids who tried to shoot up a school, from the point of view of like, their friend, the one who stopped it. Me.

AMY SINGH

That's right. Do you disagree?

STEVE

No. Not about the book. I mean, it's just... I wasn't friends with him. With them.

AMY SINGH

(confused)

You weren't?

STEVE

No. I wanna clear that up right now. I mean, we were friends. Sort of. At one time. But I only hung out with JR 'cause of... It was like, without Devon, I never would've... it's complicated.

She examines him a beat, smiles--

AMY SINGH

See that?

(off Steve)

Now we're communicating.

Steve is a little unsure.

AMY SINGH (CONT'D)

So. Why don't we forget about these...

She tosses the pages in the wastepaper basket.

AMY SINGH (CONT'D)

And start over. I wanna know how you became friends -- or started to hang out with -- these boys. Start from the beginning. Do you think you could do that?

Off Steve--

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

JR sits looking at -- his therapist, TODD (40's, 5 feet tall, with a giant bottom. He is clearly handicapped in some way.)

TODD
I said hello.

Todd sits on special chair that fits him. JR observes all of this, as it is as weird and interesting to him as it is to us. Todd's demeanor is gentle but tough.

JR
I'm sorry, I was thinking about this website I'm working on. The top layer user interface is lacking, the whole thing's bottom heavy.

He's clearly referring to Todd's physique. Todd smiles.

TODD
Are you ready to talk about May 19th?

JR
(shrugs)
What's to say that wasn't in the papers?

TODD
Steve Newman might have a few things to add.

JR's confused. Todd grabs a NEWSPAPER off his desk, hands it to JR. JR reads the headline about Steve we saw earlier. He's clearly shaken by it. As JR looks up, PRE-LAP dialogue:

STEVE (V.O.)
Welcome to Westchester County, New York.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY - (1994)

NOTE: The film will have a slightly different look from both the "After" and "Day Of" timelines.

CHYRON: Before Shit Got Fucked.

AERIAL shots of the town-- a small, pretty business district. Perfect-looking shops along a stretch of town. An OLD PUBLIC LIBRARY built in the 1800's. A quaint train station.

A SERIES of BLACK TOWN CARS are lined up, idling by the platform to the tracks.

STEVE (V.O.)

My town is only 25 miles from New York City. But if you were an alien, and all you knew about Earth was from watching the local New York City news station, and your spaceship touched down in Groton, you'd think you landed on the wrong planet.

A TRAIN WHISTLE sounds. The back passenger-side door of all black cars open and out step-- IDENTICAL-LOOKING MOSTLY MEN IN BUSINESS SUITS.

STEVE (V.O.)

We're a commuter town, mostly bankers and lawyers and stuff, which means the adults stay home or go into the City to work all day.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING

A TRAIN comes to a stop. The doors open and the identical-looking men all in business suits hurry inside.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - EVENING

Another TRAIN comes to a stop.

STEVE (V.O.)

Then they come all the way back to Groton at night to get as far away from their dream jobs as they can. Or on the weekends, sometimes they're home by 2PM.

The doors open and the identical-looking mostly men in business suits all pile out onto the platform.

They all get in their identical town cars and pick up their 1994-STYLE CAR PHONES.

STEVE (V.O.)

They catch up on work calls, spend twenty minutes with their families, and wake up at 6:30AM to do it all over again.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS - EVENING

Idyllic, tree-lined streets.

STEVE (V.O.)

All so they can have this.

THE IDENTICAL BLACK TOWN CARS all stop, and the mostly men in business suits, exhausted-looking, get out to head for their houses. As one of these men gets out and heads to his house, a BMX bike ZOOMS by in the b.g. We follow the bike--

And now we're CLOSE ON STEVE (12, wiry), riding the bike.

STEVE (V.O.)

Which is great for the adults, I guess.

Steve's expression is intense, peddling as hard as he can.

STEVE (V.O.)

But if you're a kid, unless you're partying or hooking up or vandalizing the shit out of something, it's so friggin' boring here you wanna blow your head off.

Steve rides his BMX bike as fast as he can. He swerves between kids playing stickball on the street, yelling, having a great time.

STEVE (V.O.)

At least there were kids on the street to play with in our old neighborhood.

He stops his bike short. Looks back behind him. All the kids are gone. The street is quiet, lonely.

STEVE (V.O.)

But we'd just moved to the rich part of town. And even though it was still summer, I guess all the kids around here were at sleep-away camp or something because there was no one around but squirrels and Mexicans.

A MEXICAN GARDENER with a LEAF BLOWER waves to Steve. Steve smiles, waves back. We hear CLASSICAL MUSIC coming from a house down the street. Curious, Steve rides toward it.

STEVE (V.O.)

Well, almost no one.

EXT. LOPEZ HOUSE - FENCE - DAY

MUSIC NOW LOUDER, Steve hops off his bike, jogs up the lawn to a crack in the fence. Finding none, he peers over the fence just enough to see--

ROXANNE LOPEZ (the girl from the TEASER, now only 14) dancing beautifully on a SURFACE made from cut open cardboard boxes on her lawn. A BOOMBOX playing the music.

Intrigued, entranced, Steve's feeling a pubescent hormonal stir rising up in him when--

Roxanne suddenly stops dancing, shuts off the music. She speaks in perfect, unaccented English.

ROXANNE

What?

Panicked, Steve ducks below the fence.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

I saw you, idiot. What the *fuck* are you looking at?

STEVE

(to himself)

Shit.

(stands)

I-- I wasn't. Sorry.

He starts to go--

ROXANNE

Stop. Stay.

She walks to the gate in the fence, opens it.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

You're the new neighbor, right? The old Hill house at the corner of Hillcrest? How old are you? Eleven?

STEVE

Twelve.

ROXANNE

You like video games?

STEVE

Yeah?

She scrutinizes him.

ROXANNE

Good enough. Come with me.
(he hesitates, confused)
Come on!

INT. LOPEZ HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Roxanne and Steve enter to see--

JR LOPEZ (12), sitting Indian-style on the rug, three feet away from a GIANT TV SCREEN. JR is pudgy, with curly black hair. He's playing MORTAL KOMBAT II on a Sega Genesis.

JR's posture and concentration suggest a zen master.

ROXANNE

(to JR)

You've been sitting in front of
this stupid thing all morning. Did
you even brush your teeth, yet?
(then, in Spanish)
And what are you doing?

A few feet behind JR sits NELSON LOPEZ (9), Roxanne and JR's kid brother, sits Indian-style, like JR's mini-me, silently watching JR play. SMACK! Roxanne shuts the TV off.

JR

What the hell?! I was about to get
a high score!

ROXANNE

I found you a friend. Finally. Now
go outside and play.

She turns and walks away.

STEVE

Wait, what? Where are you going?

ROXANNE

Dance class.

She exits. Steve watches her go--

AMY SINGH (O.S)

That was Roxanne?

BACK TO:

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - AMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Steve, lost in the memory, looks up at Amy--

AMY SINGH
JR's sister?

STEVE
Yeah. I mean, I guess in a way it
all started and ended with her.

AMY SINGH
And JR? What were your first
impressions of him?

STEVE
Right. He was ok. At first.

BACK TO:

EXT. LOPEZ BACK YARD - DAY - (1994)

Steve and JR awkwardly sit on a couple of logs.

JR
So where did you move from?

STEVE
Groton.

JR
Groton? What do you mean, we're in
Groton?

STEVE
I know, like North Groton. Near
town. Dad wanted a bigger place.
Not that it's that much bigger.
More land I guess. But it's on a
hill. Which is okay for sledding
but sucks for football. Whatever.

Steve stares at the ground.

JR
We moved, too. From Colombia.

STEVE
(confused)
The college?

JR

What? No, the country. It's in South America. At first it really sucked. I hated leaving my home. But now I love it here.

This reels Steve in a bit--

STEVE

Really? Why?

JR

It's a capitalist country. Way more freedom here. Taxes are lower. And the music's way better, too. Take Mariah.

Steve barely contains his disdain--

STEVE

Mariah Carey?

JR

(shrugs)

She has a really positive message for young people. I met her once. She was pretty cool. Way better looking in person.

Steve is skeptical.

JR (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

STEVE

What?

JR

Do you like my sister?

STEVE

(embarrassed)

What? No!

JR

That's okay. She can be a bitch sometimes but she's pretty cool.

Steve realizes he misinterpreted what JR meant--

STEVE

Oh. Yeah. She seems cool.

Another awkward beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)
I have a sister, too.

JR
Yeah?

STEVE
Her name's Erin. She's on an outdoor program in New Hampshire now, but she's coming home next week. She's gonna take a year off before college and live at home.

JR looks at him intensely. It makes Steve self-conscious.

STEVE (CONT'D)
So, yeah.

JR
You like fireworks?

EXT. LOPEZ HOUSE - WOODS - DAY

BOOM! An explosion blows a crater into the dirt in a back corner of the yard behind a WOOD PILE. Green ARMY MEN go flying. JR and Steve laugh, exhilarated. Ice broken.

STEVE
Holy fuck!

JR
That was a good one!

Steve picks up an army man. It's half melted.

STEVE
Check it out! Its head is melted to its ass!

As Steve continues to look for pieces of army men--

JR
That's nothing. You ever see a pineapple?

STEVE
No, what's that?

JR
It's bigger than an M80, equivalent to an eighth a stick of dynamite. I lit one off once. Broke a water pipe three feet under the ground.

STEVE
(scared/skeptical)
Jesus. Isn't that dangerous?

JR
Not if you know what you're doing.

Steve lets it go, examines a FIRECRACKER he holds.

STEVE
That's so cool. My sister's friend,
Tom, got me some bottle rockets
once but nothing like this. Where
do you get this stuff?

JR
My Dad. He brings it back from
Colombia cause it's legal there.
But it doesn't matter anyway cause
he's got diplomatic immunity.

STEVE
Yeah? What's that?

JR
Means he can't get arrested for
committing a crime. U.S. Laws have
no sway over him. I can't really
talk about it, but he's a spy.

STEVE
What? Come on, your Dad is not a
spy!

JR gives him a reptilian stare. But Steve doesn't notice, as
he's looking at the firecracker he's holding.

JR
I wouldn't say that to his face.

STEVE
What?
(distracted, joshing)
Oh, why's that? Does he have a
license to kill? Does he have a
girlfriend named Octopussy? Does he
have an enemy named Jaws--

JR lunges at Steve.

JR
Shut up!

He knocks Steve onto the ground. Steve is passive for a moment, and then he suddenly and violently THROWS JR OFF him onto the ground. Steve jumps on him, about to throw a punch--

JR (CONT'D)
No! Stop! Please!

Steve, eyes wide, seemingly out of control of his body for a moment, sees the pathetic look on JR's face, and this snaps Steve out of it. Steve gets off of JR, starts walking away.

JR (CONT'D)
And don't come back!

STEVE
I won't!

Steve walks past-- a WHITE CADILLAC in the driveway.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. LOPEZ HOUSE - DAY - (MAY 1999)

CHYRON: The Day Shit Went Down

The WHITE CADILLAC. The passenger-side door opens. The BLUE BACKPACK FROM THE TEASER is tossed inside.

NELSON (O.S.)
What are you doing?

REVEAL-- It's JR who's just put the backpack in back of the car. He looks at-- Nelson (now 14), standing nearby.

JR
I'm tired of the shit people say
about us. I'm gonna make them wish
we never came here.

NELSON
Where are you going?

JR
Go back inside. Go!

Nelson rushes back inside the house. As JR gets in the car--

CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**EXT. VITO'S PIZZERIA - EVENING - (1994)**

Devon (now 12, still small, wiry; talks tough but wouldn't hurt a fly) emerges from the pizzeria, stands on the sidewalk eating a slice on a PAPER PLATE. He's wearing a WHITE KARATE GI and a backpack. We know this is Devon because he's got a sticker on his chest with his name written in black marker. He looks at--

The DANCE STUDIO across the street. Class has ended. Groups of teenagers (mostly girls) in workout clothes exit the small building. He notices a girl walking towards him, looking at him looking at her. It's Roxanne. Suddenly self-conscious, he turns away.

ROXANNE (O.S.)

You got a light?

Devon looks up at Roxanne, who's holding a cigarette. He checks his backpack.

DEVON

Hold on, lemme check.

ROXANNE

I was kidding. Don't worry about it, they got 'em inside.

While he fishes around in his pack he notices-- a key chain hanging from Roxanne's SHOULDER BAG. The one from the Teaser: "Like what you see? Call 1-900-YOU-WISH."

DEVON

Nice key chain. What happens if I call the number?

ROXANNE

I don't know, I guess you officially become a moron.

Devon laughs, fishes a ZIPPO LIGHTER from his backpack.

DEVON

Here you go, let me light that for ya.

ROXANNE

You smoke? What are you, ten?

DEVON

I'm twelve. But no, I don't smoke.
I'm just always prepared. Like a
boy scout.

He lights her cigarette as he laughs nervously. This is a trait of his. She's amused.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I'm Devon, by the way. Devon
Kovacic.

As he puts out his hand to shake hers, oddly formal--

ROXANNE

Are you fuckin' serious? Do you
have a handkerchief too in case I
have to step over a puddle?

DEVON

Oh, right. Like in the cartoons.
You know I never got the
handkerchief thing. Who'd wanna
keep a dirty snot rag in their
pocket? It's like carryin' around a
used condom or somethin'.

He laughs. She's amused by his odd combination of tough-guy talk and gentlemanly behavior.

ROXANNE

You know a kid named Steve Newman?

DEVON

Steve? Yeah, I went to Midvale
Elementary with him. He's pretty
cool. Why?

ROXANNE

Just moved into my neighborhood. I
met him yesterday. He seems
alright.

A SHY GIRL in dance workout clothes comes up to Roxanne.

SHY GIRL

Excuse me, Roxanne? I just wanna
say I think you're amazing. I love
the way you incorporate a Latin
feel in your dancing.

Roxanne looks up to see-- LAUGHTER coming from a group of girls (all white) outside the dance studio. Some of them are staring at Roxanne.

One of the girls does an exaggerated, overly sexualized hip-moving dance move, obviously mocking Roxanne.

ROXANNE

Fuck off.

Shy Girl is stunned, hurries off. Devon's confused.

DEVON

Jeez, I don't think she meant nothin' by it.

Roxanne sizes him up, then--

ROXANNE

Wanna come over to my house sometime?

DEVON

What? Really? Sure!

BEEP BEEP! A CAR ROARS to a stop at the curb right in front of them. But not just any car. It's--

A YELLOW LAMBORGHINI DIABLO VT. The window rolls down. Devon's brother, MAX (18), is in the driver's seat. He takes a look at Roxanne.

MAX

(to Roxanne)

Hello there.

DEVON

That's my ride.

Roxanne looks at the car, stunned.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Where do you live? When can I come over?

But Roxanne looks at Max, seems spooked by him.

ROXANNE

I'll see you around.

DEVON

Wait!

But she walks away.

MAX

Let's go.

EXT. STREET/INT. LAMBORGHINI - EVENING - (1994)

The passenger-side door opens. It's a scissor door that rotates up vertically. Devon hops in.

MAX

Who's the lady?

DEVON

No one. I'd like to lick her puss, though. She's pretty good-lookin'.

(laughs)

Nice ride. Where'd you get this one?

MAX

You know I can't tell you that.

DEVON

I know, I know. Mr. Secretive.

MAX

Meant to tell you. Today's the day. I'm moving out.

DEVON

What? It was supposed to be next month. You can't leave me alone with Mom for the rest of the summer!

MAX

You're not gonna fuckin' cry on me, are you?

DEVON

Fuck you, cocksucker.

MAX

(adjusts his mirror)

I think she likes you. She's looking this way. You should go for it.

Max puts the car in drive. As they SCREECH away, Devon turns back, watches Roxanne through the window.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - (MAY 1999)

CHYRON: The Day Shit Went Down

Roxanne sits on a hospital bed. Devon sits nearby. Eyes wet with tears.

DEVON

Just tell me you didn't sleep with him.

ROXANNE

You should go.

Devon gets up. Turns to go, then turns back--

DEVON

He was only using you, you know. Just like the others.

ROXANNE

*(turning cold)
Don't forget your bag.*

Devon picks up-- the BLUE BACKPACK WITH ORANGE TRIM, same as from the TEASER.

BACK TO:

EXT. NEWMAN HOUSE - LATER - (1994)

Establishing--

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A RINGING PHONE. It's an old yellow push button phone with a long cord, fixed to the wall by the corner of the stairs.

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - STEVE'S BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON-- a TV screen. Static and squiggly lines.

STEVE (O.S.)

Come on.

REVEAL-- Steve, anxious, staring at the TV. SEX SOUNDS emanate from the TV. And then-- through the squiggles, you can just barely make out a naked woman.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Yes, come on.

KNOCK KNOCK.

DEBBIE NEWMAN

Steve?

Steve quickly shuts off the TV and sits on his bed as his mother enters.

DEBBIE NEWMAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

STEVE

Nothing.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Phone for you.

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Steve, excited, runs and grabs the PHONE RECEIVER that's sitting on the counter.

STEVE (ON PHONE)

Erin?

ERIN (ON PHONE)

Hey, lil Stevie.

Steve tries to hide his elation at talking to his big sis. For privacy, he takes the phone up the stairs and into--

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

STEVE (ON PHONE)

Hey.

ERIN (ON PHONE)

I'm on the phone!

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY:

INT. BAR - PAYPHONE - DAY

Steve's sister, ERIN (18, attractive) stands at the payphone. Her friends are drinking and getting rowdy in the b.g.

ERIN (ON PHONE)

So how's the new house?

STEVE (ON PHONE)

I liked the old house.

ERIN
(snaps)
I didn't.

Steve reacts, taken aback.

STEVE
What do you mean?

Erin doesn't want to get into it, whatever it is.

ERIN
Nothing. It's just, it's been nice
to be away from there, from
Westchester. You'll see.

She takes a swig of her drink.

STEVE
Well, there's nothing here but
trees. And the kids are freaks.
There're some decent tennis courts
nearby at least. Maybe we can play
when you come home next week?

A GIRL tries to pull Erin away.

GIRL (O.S.)
Jello shots!

ERIN
(to Girl)
Just give me a second! Jeez!

ERIN (CONT'D)
(to Steve, sympathetic)
So listen, my schedule changed
around a bit. It looks like I'm
gonna stay up here an extra few
months.

STEVE
What? Why?

ERIN
It's just until Thanksgiving. I'll
see you then for sure. Maybe it'll
still be warm enough to play
tennis?

Steve is devastated.

ERIN (CONT'D)
Steve?

STEVE

Yeah. Sure.

ERIN

I'm sorry, kid. I really wanted to see you before then.

But Steve's eyes are welling with tears. More CALLS from the other kids in the b.g.

STEVE

I should go.

ERIN

Okay. I'll talk to you soon, kid, alright? Hang in there.

Steve just sits there, presses the hang up button the phone. Suddenly-- RING RING. Startled, he wipes his tears, answers.

STEVE (ON PHONE)

Hello?

DEVON (ON PHONE)

Hey, Man. It's Devon Kovacic. From Midvale? I ran into someone who knows you yesterday, made me think of you. How's your summer been?

The conversation is stilted, awkward, like Devon's asking him out on a first date. Steve's just confused by it.

STEVE

(beat)

Okay.

DEVON

Listen, you wanna come over to my house later?

STEVE

(beat)

Um. Why?

DEVON

I don't know. Just to hang out. I gotta pool. We could go swimming. Or you know, put on some boxing gloves and beat the crap out of each other.

Devon laughs nervously. Steve doesn't really know how to react.

STEVE

Where do you live?

DEVON

On Walpole St. Near Halstead.

STEVE

(beat)

That's kinda far. I live in Fairhaven now.

DEVON

Oh. Well, can't you get a ride or something?

STEVE

(beat)

Um. Hold on.

(yells)

Mom?

DEBBIE

(beat)

Yes, honey?

STEVE

(yells)

Could you give me a ride to Devon's house?

DEBBIE

(beat)

Where is it?

STEVE

(yells)

Near town?

DEBBIE

(beat)

What time?

STEVE

(to Devon)

What time?

DEVON

I don't know. Like two?

STEVE

(beat, yells)

Like two?

DEBBIE NEWMAN

(beat)

I have my exercise class at 1.

STEVE

(beat, still to Debbie)

Maybe I'll ride my bike?

DEBBIE NEWMAN

(beat)

What are you gonna do there?

STEVE

(beat)

He's got a pool.

DEBBIE NEWMAN

(beat)

Okay.

STEVE

(to Devon)

Um. I think I can do it.

DEVON

Cool. So, I'll see ya then?

STEVE

(beat)

I guess.

DEVON

Cool. See ya.

STEVE

(beat)

See ya.

Steve hangs up.

EXT. NEWMAN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Steve hops on his bike, starts down the driveway.

EXT. STREET - STEVE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Steve rides his bike down the street when he hears--
CLASSICAL MUSIC coming from the Lopez house again. Thinking
he might get another glimpse of Roxanne, he stops.

He rides closer to the yard. Suddenly-- Roxanne pops out in
front of him.

STEVE

Shit!

ROXANNE

Looking for me?

Steve loses his nerve--

STEVE

No.

ROXANNE

Come over. JR got a new video game.

STEVE

What? I don't wanna see him!

Roxanne sizes him up.

ROXANNE

Okay, look, I don't what happened with you two the other day but he's not a bad kid. Just give him another chance.

Steve is skeptical.

STEVE

Is your Dad a spy?

ROXANNE

What? No! Where did you--?
(realizing)
Nevermind, just come over.

STEVE

I can't.

Roxanne tries a different tack. She moves close to him, runs two fingers along his handlebars...

ROXANNE

If you come, maybe you and I could spend some time alone.

Steve watches her fingers move along the handlebars, then down the crossbar of his bike...

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

Maybe I could show you something...

It's clear the truth is that Steve is nervous as shit. As Roxanne's fingers approach the crotch of his pants--

STEVE

I have to go see my friend.

Steve rides away. She yells after him--

ROXANNE

Pussy!

Steve rides away, but after a dozen yards or so stops when he hears a SCREAM. He turns back to see--

Roxanne kneeling down next to Nelson, who's skinned his elbow and is crying. Neither Roxanne nor Nelson see Steve watching them.

Roxanne lovingly kisses Nelson's elbow, gives him a hug, and soothes him as he stops crying. Off Steve, watching this tender interaction--

TRANSITION TO:

INT. ND ROOM - DAY - (MAY 1999)

CLOSE ON-- STEVE'S FACE.

CHYRON: The Day Shit Went Down

A pained look in his wet, pleading eyes. He's hugging Roxanne. They're sitting together on a bed somewhere.

He kisses Roxanne's neck.

ROXANNE

Steve.

He keeps kissing her. She wears an expression of ecstasy or pain, hard to tell which.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

If he ever finds out...

He keeps kissing her, with increased passion.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

Ow, get off me!

She pushes him away. Off Steve, a wild look in his eye, like he's afraid of himself--

CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - AMY'S OFFICE - DAY - (1999)

On Steve, still lost in the memory of Roxanne.

AMY SINGH (O.S.)
Steve? Steve?

He looks up at her.

STEVE
Sorry, I was thinking of something
I had to do.

AMY SINGH
I said this is good. A bit stilted
in places, but it's feeling a lot
more honest than the pages you sent
me. Do you understand the
difference?

STEVE
Sure. Be myself, right? Tell the
truth.

AMY SINGH
Right. Shall we continue then?

STEVE
Can I use the bathroom?

AMY SINGH
Down the hall to the left.

Steve grabs a pad of paper.

STEVE
In case I get any ideas.

AMY SINGH
Do you need this, too?

She hold up a pen.

STEVE
Oh. Yeah.

He grabs the pen.

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - BATHROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON-- the BOTTLE of RITALIN. A pill sits on the pad of paper atop the toilet. Steve SMASHES up the pill with the corner of his cell phone. His phone RINGS--

STEVE

Shit.

Steve's caught between answering the phone and using it to crush the Ritalin. Caller ID says: KAREN.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Sorry, gotta call you back, Karen.

Steve finishes crushing the pill then... sniff! Snorts it.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DAY

JR finishes eating. CARA (15, spunky) sits down next to him with her meal. A MALE TECH (30's) is watching her, waiting for her to eat.

JR

What's with him?

CARA

He follows me before and after every meal to make sure I eat and don't puke it up. Asshole.

She makes a big show of eating a carrot to the Tech.

The Tech gives her some space, leaves the room.

JR

Really? Would you puke it up if he wasn't watching?

CARA

Oh, hell, yeah.

She smiles. He's amused.

JR

Fair enough.

CARA

So now you know my issues. Some of them, anyway. What're you in here for?

JR

I can't.

CARA

Oh, come on. Don't be a douche.
This is a place for truth and
healing, remember?

JR

(sizes her up)
You really wanna know?

CARA

Yeah.

JR hesitates, then leans in close to her--

JR

(straight)
I tried to assassinate the
President.

He holds her stare a beat. She wonders if he's serious. Then he breaks into a smile. She laughs.

CARA

You are a douche.

INT. J. CREW STORE - DAY

Devon at his job. He wears khakis and a NAME TAG, folds shirts VERY CAREFULLY. A co-worker ROBIN (19, a bit goth, blue streak in her hair) comes up behind him.

ROBIN (O.S.)

You're doing it all wrong!

Devon turns, feeling caught.

DEVON

I am? Oh, you're messing with me.
Ha ha.

ROBIN

Dude, I know I've only been here
for a week but I can tell you have
got to relax.

DEVON

Well, you shouldn't sneak up on
people like that. It's creepy.

He laughs.

ROBIN

So, I heard this rumor about you.

Devon's immediately defensive.

DEVON

What rumor?

Robin draws it out dramatically, looking around the room conspiratorially--

ROBIN

I heard... that you... are into music.

DEVON

(relieved)

Yeah, I guess so.

He goes back to folding.

ROBIN

Wow. You're a really great conversationalist.

DEVON

What? Sorry, I'm just tryin' to get these done.

ROBIN

So, I got these tickets to see this band tonight at a club in New Rochelle. Wanna come?

DEVON

Really? I don't know, I'm not too into the crowded bar scene. Too many people to avoid talking to.

Devon laughs.

ROBIN

Totally, people pretty much suck. You know what I do? Stare at them. Like this.

(gives a scary stare)

Usually they walk away.

Devon smiles. He likes her.

DEVON

Screw it. It'll probably be too loud to talk to anyone anyway, right?

ROBIN

Great. We can head there after work together.

She turns to go--

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Ugh, customers are always leaving their shit behind.

Robin picks up an empty paper COFFEE CUP with the name NANCY.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You suck, Nancy.

Robin notices a NEWSPAPER under the table near Devon. She points to it.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Toss that out for me?

Devon reaches down, picks up the newspaper and looks at it. The story of Steve's book deal on the top. Off DEVON--

TRANSITION TO:

INT. ND BASEMENT - DAY - (MAY, 1999)

CHYRON: The Day Shit Went Down

JR, intense, slowly pacing. He's talking to somebody but we don't see who it is.

JR

What people don't understand is where we're all headed. Do you have any idea where computers will be in fifty years? We'll be able to create our own simulations, entire artificial worlds, just like the one we're in now.

(then)

None of this is real. Death, murder, suicide. It's no different than a video game.

(then)

So. Are you with me?

PRE-LAP DIALOGUE:

DEVON (O.S.)
Glad you made it alive.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. KOVACIC HOUSE - DAY - (1994)

Devon and Steve, sweaty from riding his bike, enter the mud room, Devon closes the door. They're mid conversation as they take off their shoes--

STEVE
Guess I didn't realize how far a ride it was. My nuts are all sweaty.

DEVON
Well, now you can relax. We'll go downstairs and have a beer.

Devon laughs. Steve's not sure if he's serious. Devon glances around.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Good. I don't think she's up, yet.

STEVE
Your Mom? It's 2 PM.

DEVON
Yeah, she's got issues.

Devon laughs. He leads Steve down a hallway towards the basement door.

MRS. KOVACIC (O.S.)
Dev? Is that you?

DEVON
Fuck.

Steve steps into her eyeline to look at MRS. KOVACIC (40's), who's sitting in the kitchen wearing a ROBE.

DEVON (CONT'D)
No, don't do that!

But it's too late. She can see him.

MRS. KOVACIC
Who's that?

Devon talks to her as if to a child. But it's all a kind of game between them. We get the sense that the dynamic between them is loving. Devon steps into her eyeline.

DEVON

(weary)

This is Steve, Mom.

MRS. KOVACIC

(smiles, warm)

Steve Newman.

STEVE

Yeah.

MRS. KOVACIC

Your sister was in my son, Max's, class, right? Erin? She's a smart kid. A little neurotic but that's okay, it's a sign of emotional intelligence.

Steve breaks into a smile. He's not used to being talked to by an adult like this. He likes it.

STEVE

Yeah, I guess.

MRS. KOVACIC

She must be going off to college soon.

STEVE

She's taking a year off. But then Dartmouth.

MRS. KOVACIC

Dartmouth! And I thought she was a smart kid!

Steve smiles, getting the joke.

DEVON

Okay, that's enough. Gotta go now, Mom.

Devon opens the door to the basement.

MRS. KOVACIC

Why? I'm just getting to know him! What's so great about the basement, anyway? All you're gonna do is smoke and look at porno mags, am I right?

She knows she's being funny. Steve is shocked and amused by her honesty, though. He laughs.

MRS. KOVACIC (CONT'D)

You seem like a bright kid. Don't you think there's more to life than that, Steve?

DEVON

Okay, Mom. Don't be a cunt.

Devon laughs. Steve is shocked he used that word. Mrs. Kovacic is nonplussed.

MRS. KOVACIC

See what I have to put up with?

Off Steve, amused--

INT. BASEMENT STAIRS/INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The boys come down the stairs, enter.

DEVON

Welcome to the basement.

As Steve looks around we now get a better view of what's in here. And what's in here is an adolescent boy's wet dream. If you ignore all the clothes strewn everywhere. There's a large screen TV. A mini-fridge. Weapons of various sorts lying around and pinned up on walls, mostly of the martial arts variety: NUNCHUCKS, Chinese throwing stars, police batons, knives, etc.

Devon picks up the nunchucks and casually swings them around.

STEVE

What are those?

DEVON

Nunchucks. It's a traditional Japanese martial arts weapon. Here.

Devon does a demonstration that is practiced but labored. It's unintentionally funny.

STEVE

Cool.

DEVON

Wanna try?

STEVE

That's okay.

Steve notices-- a BOTTLE OF JAMESON.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What's this?

(reads label)

Whiskey, huh?

DEVON

It's my brother's. You party?

STEVE

Party?

DEVON

Drink?

STEVE

Yeah, I party a little.

DEVON

Yeah? What have you tried?

STEVE

You know, I like beer, wine, wine coolers, Scotch-whiskey, pretty much all cocktails and libations.

Devon nods. Steve sees-- A BB GUN PISTOL on a table.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Is that real?

DEVON

Real? It's a real BB Gun. Go ahead, pick it up.

Steve picks it up, entranced by it. Feeling the weight of it.

DEVON (CONT'D)

We've got two others, we play war with 'em. It's really fun. But you need three people. I've played with Max and his friend, Sal. But now Max moved to his own place. So that kinda sucks. You miss your sister?

STEVE

What? I dunno. I guess.

Devon picks up a VIDEOCASSETTE.

DEVON
(matter of fact)
Hey, you ever seen a porno?

Steve, feeling uncomfortable, puts down the gun.

STEVE
Can I use your bathroom?

DEVON
Through the door, to the left. You
want lotion?

STEVE
(confused)
For what?

DEVON
(confused)
I don't know.

INT. KOVACIC HOUSE - BASEMENT BATHROOM - DAY

The bathroom is a total mess. It's kind of disgusting, in sharp contrast to the neat cleanliness of the house upstairs. A look of disgust as Steve lifts the toilet seat with his foot.

On Steve's face, thinking as he pees, uncomfortable there.

STEVE (V.O.)
To be honest, this kid was kinda
freakin' me out. I mean his Mom was
pretty cool and everything, but I
mean, who watches a porno with his
friends? Not that I'd ever seen one
before. But still. On the other
hand, he did have those awesome BB
guns. They felt so *real*.

OFF STEVE, his eyes growing wide with an idea--

EXT. LOPEZ HOUSE - DAY

The front door opens, revealing-- JR. Steve and Devon stand outside. Tension between Steve and JR.

STEVE
Hey.

JR
Hey.

Steve holds up a BB gun.

STEVE
Wanna play war?

EXT. LOPEZ BACKYARD - DAY

Steve, JR and Devon all in a line. They are dressed in LONG SWEATSHIRTS and PANTS, knee pads on the outside. Ski goggles. Steve in a BLACK SKI MASK. They look ridiculous.

JR
Do we really need all this shit? I
feel like a friggin' idiot.

DEVON
And I'm exhausted from ridin' all
the way over here. But you don't
see me complainin', do you?
(laughs)
You can take those off, by the way.
Fully pumped these things go
through most light clothes and can
still break the skin.

STEVE
Wait, what?

NELSON
Can I play?

Nelson has appeared out of nowhere.

JR
No. We only have three guns. Go
back inside.

Nelson dutifully turns and goes.

STEVE
Where did he come from?

JR
Yeah, he does that.

DEVON
Ready, war!

STEVE
What?

Devon suddenly runs for cover, laughing. Steve runs away in another direction. JR stands frozen.

JR
(panicky)
Wait, hold on! Don't shoot! I have
to find cover!

STEVE
(yelling back)
So go, dickface!

JR realizes he's got a clear shot at Steve, running away. He aims and fires. WITH STEVE, as he gets shot in the back.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Ow! Shit! Motherfucker!

JR laughs. Steve turns around and aims at JR.

JR
Oh, shit.

JR drops to the ground, starts crawling away. Steve, now hiding behind a WOOD PILE, aims and fires a few times but can't get a clear shot off. JR manages to crawl behind a WHEELBARROW, which he knocks over and uses as a shield.

JR (CONT'D)
Ha! Missed me!
(laughs, then--)
Ow! Fuck!

He's shot in the side by Devon, on his flank. Devon laughs.

JR (CONT'D)
Bastard!

MONTAGE TO MUSIC

The boys are having a blast. We see them get shot and laugh, shoot the others and laugh, it doesn't matter. Getting shot is just as fun as shooting, even if it sometimes hurts a little. SLO-MO, CLOSE UPS of the EXPRESSIONS OF TOTAL JOY, ABANDON, THRILL.

END MONTAGE

Silence. We're with Steve, doing a military crawl on the edge of the yard, along a fence. He's sneaking up on JR, who's hiding behind a tree but doesn't see Steve.

STEVE
(to himself)
I got you, you sonofabitch.

Steve takes aim, has JR in his sights, is just about to fire when-- RUFF RUFF RUFF! The neighbor's TERRIER, on the other side of the fence, barks its head off, scaring the shit out of Steve, making him run away from the fence.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What the fuck?!

JR sees this and starts laughing his ass off. As does Devon.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What's wrong with that thing?!

The dog keeps barking.

DEVON

It's gonna bring the neighbors out.
We better call it. I think Steve
won but next time I won't go easy
on yous.

JR

I got a better idea.

JR aims the gun at the barking dog.

DEVON

Whoa!

STEVE

Jesus! What are you doing?!

JR

Putting it out of its misery. The
thing's like a hundred years old.
All it does is bark.

JR shoots. The BB lands near the dog. He purposely missed.

STEVE

What the fuck?!

DEVON

Okay, JR, ha ha. You'd never shoot
a dog. Just give me the gun.

JR

(ignoring him)

That was only two pumps. It
wouldn't even penetrate the fur.

JR smiles, starts pumping the gun several times.

JR (CONT'D)

On the other hand. If you pump it to the max, say, nine or ten times... I mean, don't tell me you're not curious.

JR takes aim.

STEVE

Jesus, put the fucking gun down you psycho!

JR

You want me to put the gun down?

STEVE

Yes!

JR

You, too?

DEVON

Yes!

JR

(still aiming)

Okay. I'll put it down. If he apologizes.

STEVE

Apologizes? For what?!

JR

For attacking me the other day.

STEVE

What?! You attacked me!

DEVON

Wait, what are you talking about?

JR

(calm)

He knows. I'll count to three then I'll shoot. One...

STEVE

Are you kidding me?!

DEVON

Okay, let's calm down. Let's just talk about this. Okay? What happened? What did Steve do?

JR
He talked shit about my Dad.

STEVE
That's bullshit! Your Dad's not a
spy! Your sister told me!

JR
Two...

DEVON
Steve, just friggin' apologize!

STEVE
Jesus, okay! Okay! I'm sorry!

But JR doesn't put the gun down.

JR
For what?

STEVE
For saying your Dad wasn't a spy!

JR
And for calling me a liar.

Steve hesitates, having difficulty swallowing his pride.

JR (CONT'D)
Two and a half...

DEVON
Just do it!

STEVE
Okay! Sorry for calling you a liar!

One more beat of tension, then puts the gun down.

JR
I accept your apology.

Relief. But Steve can't resist--

STEVE
Even if you are one.

JR picks up the gun, aims at the dog. Steve rushes at him, tackling him to the ground. JR smiles at Steve, points the gun in the air, pulls the trigger. Nothing. It wasn't loaded.

STEVE (CONT'D)

There is something seriously wrong with you.

DEVON

C'mon, man, he was just fuckin' around. I told you he wasn't really gonna shoot the thing.

Steve gives JR one last look. JR just smiles at him.

FLASH TO:

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - (MAY, 1999)

Boom! Double doors get thrown open revealing-- a cafeteria full of students. We're in someone's POV, scanning the room, watching everyone eat, talk and laugh, blissfully unaware of any danger. NOTE: from here to the end of the pilot these flashes will be briefer, more impressionistic than before.

AMY SINGH (V.O.)

Then what? Steve?

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - AMY'S OFFICE - DAY - (1999)

Steve and Amy. He looks up at her.

STEVE

I never thought I'd see either of them again. Especially JR. I thought he was a freak.

AMY SINGH

(confused)

Except you did see them again.

STEVE

Well, yeah.

(antsy)

Look, I'm tired. We've been here for a while. Do you think we could, like, continue this another time?

AMY SINGH

We could. But I feel like we're kind of on a roll, here. If mean, if you're worried about your father out there, I can--

STEVE

Why would I be worried about him?

Clearly she's touched a nerve.

AMY SINGH

No reason.

STEVE

Okay, look. Honestly, I don't know if I can do this.

AMY SINGH

This?

STEVE

This. Everything. The book.

AMY SINGH

(leans in)

Steve. You don't really want to walk away from this, do you? We're potentially talking about a substantial sum of money. You're doing great.

STEVE

This is just talk. But writing it down? I mean, I can't be honest about everything.

AMY SINGH

Why not?

STEVE

All the shit I've done the last five years? My father would turn me over to the cops and send me to juvie!

AMY SINGH

(a realization)

So this is about him.

(Steve reacts)

I can't make you do something you don't wanna do. You have a choice.

STEVE

Yeah.

Steve gets up and exits. Amy glances up at his back, feeling she may never see him again.

CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. AIDEN GREEN PUBLISHING - WAITING AREA - DAY - (1999)

Steve enters in a bit of a daze, not sure how he's gonna handle this. Jacob sits working on a laptop.

JACOB

(upbeat)

Hey, how'd it go? Do we have a deal?

STEVE

(lies)

She, um, wants to talk more before she decides. Said we should call back tomorrow to set up another meeting.

JACOB

(skeptical)

What? That's what she said?

STEVE

Yeah. Ask her if you want.

Steve walks away, Jacob looks at Amy, through the window of her door. She's on the phone, gives a quick nod and smile to Jacob, then turns away to her phone call. Everything seems normal. Jacob doesn't call his bluff.

JACOB

Alright, let's go.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - COMMON AREA - EVENING

JR sits alone, writing in a journal. Cara appears.

CARA

Plotting your next assassination?

JR

(polite smile)

Maybe.

CARA

Oh, come on, why are you like that?

JR

Like what?

CARA

Seriously? We have this little like, jokey banter going on when we're around other people. But then I see you alone and you're like, "I do very serious things like write down my profound thoughts so don't bother me."

JR

That's not true.

She holds his eye contact a beat: "Seriously?" Then she notices a TECH coming up to her.

CARA

Ugh, I gotta go take my meds.

She starts to walk away.

JR

Fine.

CARA

What?

JR

Wanna sit with me at dinner?

CARA

(pretends to consider)
Okay, but you have to bring me flowers.

Off JR--

FLASH TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - (MAY, 1999)

A bunch of kids hang out by their lockers, looking nervous. One BOY (17) notices-- a SECURITY GUARD. The guard gets a call on his walkie, holds it to his ear.

SECURITY GUARD

Yeah...?

(to kids)

Okay, we can go now. Everyone through the east doors.

As the guard herds them, the boy notices-- the Guard's hand is shaking.

INT. JACOB'S CAR/EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jacob drives, Steve rides shotgun. It's raining.

STEVE

You need new wiper blades. You can't see anything.

JACOB

(smiles)

It's a little blurry but I like the challenge. Keeps me alert.

STEVE

Really? Even though it puts everyone who rides in this car in danger? That's nice.

JACOB

(irked)

Relax, no one's in danger.

Steve rolls his eyes. Jacob switches gears--

JACOB (CONT'D)

So you're not gonna give me any more details about the meeting?

STEVE

Sure. She didn't like your pages.

JACOB

What?

(smug smile)

No!

Jacob looks at Steve.

STEVE

That's what she said. Thought they were pretty boring, actually.

JACOB

(chortles)

Okay, first of all, they weren't my pages. I just gave you some suggestions.

STEVE

You told me exactly what to write!

JACOB

(annoyed)

No, I guided you.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)
Because I have experience. I've
written dozens of scientific
papers. I know good writing.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Okay, Jacob.
(Jacob glares)
I mean, Dad.

A beat. Jacob seethes.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Anyway, if she hated the pages so
much what were you talking about?
You were in there over an hour.

STEVE
I told her my version. She liked
that.

Jacob looks over at Steve, confused.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Watch out!

HOOONK! A car in front swerves to avoid them.

JACOB
Jesus, relax!

STEVE
You almost hit him!

JACOB
No, I did not! I was totally under
control-- you know what?

Jacob pulls over to the shoulder, turns to Steve.

JACOB (CONT'D)
You have got to calm down with that
temper of yours. I'm just trying to
figure out how the meeting went.
I'm trying to help you!

STEVE
(getting angry)
You're trying to help me?

JACOB
Yes! You know that with your grades
this can be your ticket to get you
into a decent college.

Steve looks at his Dad.

STEVE

You don't want me to write this book, Dad.

JACOB

What? Why not?

STEVE

Because she told me I have to be honest. About everything.

JACOB

(confused)

So?

Steve looks at him a beat, then turns away, confused.

STEVE

I don't know. Just, like, everything. Like, even before we moved.

Jacob looks at him, apparently softening. It's as if they're both referring to something specific. Or not. Hard to tell--

JACOB

You can write about before we moved. I don't think it's relevant at all to the book, but if you think it's helpful...

Something about this doesn't feel right to Steve. He is growing increasingly angry and confused.

STEVE

No. Actually. It doesn't matter. Cause I've decided. I'm not writing it.

JACOB

(growing angry)

Okay, you know what? No. You're not allowed. You're writing this whether you like it or not!

On an impulse, Steve grabs the door handle, can't argue anymore--

STEVE

I'm gonna go.

JACOB

What? We're on the side of a
goddamn highway! Steve!

Steve opens the door, starts to get out.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Steve, what are you doing? Steve!

Slam! Steve slams the door behind him. He walks away, pissed.
Kicks a telephone pole. It hurts.

STEVE

Fuck!

FLASH TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - (MAY 1999)

CLOSE ON-- shoes, walking down the hall. Squeak, squeak. One of the shoes is untied and the walker kneels down to tie her shoe. We don't recognize her. As she ties her shoe, someone walks past her in the hallway. She looks up to see-- whoever passed her is wearing the BLUE BACKPACK and KEY CHAIN from the teaser.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - EVENING

DING! Dripping wet, Steve dashes for the open doors of the train, barely making it inside--

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

In the train, Steve sits, soaking, amped up. He's just about the only one in the car. He pops a Ritalin, takes out his phone. Listens to VOICEMAILS--

DIFFERENT VOICES (V.O.)

Hey, Dude. How's it--

(delete)

Steve, it's Karen. Just wanted to
check in, see how the editor
meeting--

(delete)

Hellooo, it's me, Kim. What are you
doing tonight?

Steve smiles, that's what he was looking for. He texts on his PHONE to KIM: "Come over 2nite. My Mom's out." He quickly takes out his RITALIN BOTTLE. But before he can take a pill he notices--

A FAMILY enter the car. Parents and a TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY.

BEGIN INTERCUT SEQUENCE.

Musically, a steady, unsettling beat underscores the following scene and carries us through, nearly to the end of the pilot...

Off Steve, looking at the family--

INT. J. CREW STORE - DAY - INTERCUT

Devon finishes folding some clothes as quickly as he can. He looks up, sees--

On the wall are hooks holding BLUE BACKPACKS WITH ORANGE TRIM, identical to the one that held the gun in the Teaser.

It gives him pause. Then he notices-- Robin, folding clothes nearby. He goes to her--

DEVON

Hey, Robin, I'm almost done. So do you wanna drive, or would you like a ride in my awesome '93 Sentra?

He laughs. Robin seems bothered by something.

ROBIN

Can I ask you something?
(then)

Is it true that you're the one who got the guns?

DEVON

(gut punched, dark)
Who told you that?

She starts to speak when the Manager calls from the register--

MANAGER

Robin, could you help me out here?

DEVON

(intense)
You don't know what you're talking about.

Robin doesn't know what to say.

MANAGER

Robin!

She moves off. Off Devon, devastated--

FLASH TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY - (MAY 1999)

POV-- staring at the WINDOW in the door that says, "Principal" backwards. Heavy, anxious breathing. REVERSE-- on the PRINCIPAL (50's, male). He slowly walks to the door, reaches for the doorknob. Turns the doorknob, as TENSE MUSIC crescendoes, we're--

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - EVENING - INTERCUT

JR and Cara sit together eating, talking.

JR

See, eating's not that bad, right?

CARA

Ugh. Food is disgusting.

She takes a bite of a mini carrot. He smiles.

JR

Wish I had your problem. I was always the fat kid.

CARA

Really? No.

JR

Yeah.

JR (CONT'D)

I was a sick kid. Leukemia. Almost died when I was five.

CARA

Shit, really?

JR

(looking down, eating)

I spent a lot of time in hospitals. Then when I got out I ate everything. You ever spend a month on fluids then eat a french fry? It makes you high.

He looks up. Cara's frozen.

JR (CONT'D)
Cara? Cara?!

She's choking.

JR (CONT'D)
Jesus, hello? Hello, Tech?! A
little help?!

But there's no one in sight. She's getting blue.

JR (CONT'D)
Shit, fuck!

FLASH TO:

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - (MAY 1999)

From behind, we see-- a girl standing in the hallway, wearing a PINK, BEADED rubber band in her ponytail. It's Roxanne. She looks up at-- a sign that says, "Cafeteria." Then another that says, "Auditorium." She heads towards the auditorium.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

ON STEVE, looking at the family, he remembers--

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - DINNER TABLE - NIGHT - INTERCUT (1994)

Steve, Jacob and Debbie eat dinner. Steve's head is down in his plate. Jacob is tense. Steve and Debbie are on eggshells.

JACOB
So I heard you hung out with some
kids today. Some boy from
elementary school and a kid down
the street?

DEBBIE
The Lopez's. You know the mother
was a famous singer back in
Colombia. Isn't that interesting?

They both look at her. Then--

JACOB
Well?

STEVE
(shrugs)
Not really.

Something about Steve's tone puts Jacob over the edge--
CLANK! Jacob drops his knife on his plate.

JACOB

Enough! You live here now. You need
to accept that and make some
goddamn friends!

Steve looks at Jacob, incredulous.

STEVE

What the hell?!

Jacob glares at Steve. Frightened, Steve looks down at his
food. Debbie's a bit shaken.

DEBBIE NEWMAN

You want some more potatoes,
sweetie?

STEVE

No.

Steve has lost his appetite. ON STEVE--

JACOB

So, did you talk to the contractor
about the bathroom today?

INT. J. CREW STORE - BACK ROOM - EVENING - INTERCUT (1999)

Devon, alone now, gathering his things to go. He stares at
the NEWSPAPER article about Steve, anger rising...

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - EVENING - INTERCUT

JR with a choking Cara. Still no Techs available.

JR

Help!

He looks down-- Cara's really blue now.

JR (CONT'D)

Fuck.

JR has to do this himself. He grabs Cara from behind. Does
the heimlich. Nothing. Building tension. He does it again.
And again. Finally-- the carrot comes flying out. She's fine.
He saved her. She looks at him, spent. Smiles a little.

CARA

Holy shit.

He smiles, relieved.

CARA (CONT'D)

Now will you tell me?

The honesty and vulnerability in her eyes makes him feel comfortable enough to reveal something of himself.

JR

I shouldn't even be here. I'm only here because someone lied about what I did.

(then)

Steve Newman is the biggest liar I've ever met.

FLASH TO:

*INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY - (MAY 1999)**A BOY (15), terrified, tries desperately to stuff himself into his locker.**INT. J. CREW STORE - BACK ROOM - DAY - INTERCUT*

Devon puts jackets on hangers as quickly as he can, trying to finish his work. His phone rings.

DEVON (INTO PHONE)

Hello?

FEMALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

Is this Devon Kovacic?

DEVON

Yeah, who's this?

FEMALE VOICE

I'm a reporter. I'm calling from the Associated Press. I was wondering if you saw the article in today's paper about--

DEVON

Yeah, I saw it and it's bullshit!

FEMALE VOICE

Sorry? What's bullshit? Would you care to comment further?

Devon's suddenly nervous--

DEVON

Don't print that! And never call me again!

He punches a stack of shirts. He looks up, noticing -- an EMPLOYEE staring him. Embarrassed, he goes back to work.

FLASH TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY - (MAY 1999)

An ASSISTANT, nervous, anxiously grabs her bag to go. HER PHONE RINGS. Then two other lines right up. She stares at the phone. Should she answer? She rushes out.

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - DINNER TABLE - NIGHT - INTERCUT (1994)

Steve, Jacob and Debbie. Steve's silent, not eating.

JACOB

...and not one of the executives says a word. Can you believe that?

DEBBIE

So annoying.

STEVE

May I be excused?

Debbie looks at Jacob, who nods reluctantly.

DEBBIE

Of course, Dear.

Steve gets up, his hands visibly SHAKING with anger. He heads to the sink, but his hands are shaking so much he drops his plate on the tile floor. SMASH!

It's enough to make Jacob snap. He bolts out of his seat--

JACOB

Enough!

Jacob comes at Steve like a bull.

STEVE

It was an accident!

JACOB

You and your accidents!
Why the hell do you think we
moved?!

DEBBIE NEWMAN

Jacob, don't!

STEVE

(confused)
What?

Jacob grabs Steve's shirt roughly.

JACOB

Because of your goddamn anger!

Steve looks at his father, scared, shocked. Jacob catches himself, surprised by his own anger. He lets go of Steve.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Go to your room!

Steve, terrified, bolts up the stairs.

EXT. J. CREW PARKING LOT - EVENING - (1999)

Devon tosses a backpack in the car.

ROBIN

Devon! Wait!

She runs up to him.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Hold on, I'm sorry, you're right. I
don't know what I'm talking about.
I don't even know you. I just heard
this rumor and... sometimes I just
can't keep my mouth shut.

DEVON

Don't worry about it, it's my
fault.

ROBIN

What? No, it's not.

DEVON

Yeah, cause it doesn't matter what
people say. It's in the past. And
it's up to me to keep it there. See
ya tomorrow.

He gives her a smile, gets in his car.

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - STEVE'S BEDROOM - INTERCUT (1994)

Steve frantically opens drawers, throws clothes into a backpack. He's going to run away. He opens a WINDOW, climbs out onto his roof.

EXT. NEWMAN HOUSE - STEVE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Steve hops down off the roof.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MINUTES LATER

Steve walks down the street with his backpack on his shoulders. As he passes the Lopez yard--

DEVON (O.S.)

Steve.

Steve sees Devon, holding a bottle of WHISKEY.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Check out what my brother scored me. Only cost me two nights of chores. Ha ha. Wanna join us?

JR comes out of the shadows. Steve looks at JR. A beat of consideration, then--

STEVE

Hell yeah.

Steve follows the boys into the yard. He looks up, sees--

Roxanne, in her bedroom window. She looks down at him. Seems to hold eye contact with him a moment. But it's unclear if she actually sees him.

FLASH TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - (MAY 1999)

A COP, nervous, alone, speaking into his WALKIE.

UNSEEN COP (THROUGH WALKIE)

Are there others?

COP

I have no idea.

Suddenly, a figure runs across his path, behind him. He spins around, taking out his gun.

COP (CONT'D)

Hey!

INT. TRAIN - EVENING - INTERCUT (1999)

Steve comes out of his memory. He looks at the Ritalin bottle in his hand. PHONE in the other hand. After a beat of thought, he chooses-- the PHONE. He makes a call.

STEVE (INTO PHONE)

Amy, it's Steve Newman. Listen, I thought about it a lot and I decided... I definitely wanna do this book... yeah, talk to you tomorrow.

Steve hangs up. A smile spreads across his face. A release. He's actually stood up to his father.

THE DRIVING MUSIC ENDS with--

EXT. NEWMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER - INTERCUT

DING DONG! Source 90's grunge-pop music plays.

STEVE

Be right there, Kim!

Steve finishes making a couple of SCREWDRIVERS. He suddenly remembers something--

STEVE (CONT'D)

Shit.

He takes out his wallet and finds a CONDOM. Satisfied, he puts it back, grabs a drink, and walks to the door. ON STEVE as he opens the door, holding out the drink--

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hello--

But excitement gives way to fear. Because it's not Kim.

It's Devon. And he's holding a gun to Steve's head.

DEVON

I'm not gonna let you tell lies.
You need to face what you did.

OFF STEVE--

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY - INTERCUT (MAY 1999)

[NOTE: As we saw before.]

FRANTIC ENERGY AS WE'RE TIGHT ON-- A 17-YEAR-OLD BOY whose face we don't see, bolting down the hallway.

[NOTE: The following we haven't seen before.]

A COP appears at the end of the hallway, ten yards behind the runner. The cop spots the runner, holds up his gun--

COP

Hey! Stop!

*But the runner does not stop. He only briefly looks back, REVEALING-- it's Steve. As he disappears around a corner, the first chords of Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* play.*

BACK TO:

INT. NEWMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - INTERCUT (AUGUST 1999)

On Steve, gun to his head--

STEVE (V.O.)

My name is Steve Newman. And I'm a hero.

As the HARD-CRASHING DRUM BEATS KICK IN AT 2X VOLUME--

CUT TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS OVER SONG.

END OF PILOT