

Mixtape

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NIGHT SKY

The winter stars, impossibly big and bright, fill the sky. We gaze on these ancient beacons of hope and inspiration; the same stars that stood witness to the birth of kings, inspired poets, gave hope to the hopeless. Then we trace a silver string of starlight down through the too-huge universe, to where this inspirational, ancient and magical light comes to rest on...

Beer cans. Milwaukee's Best, to be specific.

The beer cans are frozen in a kiddie pool. Next to a broken trampoline. In a yard with a rusted pick-up truck. Surrounded by many other yards decorated in much the same manner and all of it covered in a layer of snow.

Welcome to winter in SPOKANE, WASHINGTON - a city comprised of churches and strip bars equally - who's chief export seems to be its endless supply of footage for the Cops TV series.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DISTANCE

A bottle rocket traces a green path across the star-filled sky and then--

POP! It explodes in a shower of green sparks. A chorus of barking dogs calls out--

INT. BEVERLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The muffled sound of dogs barking outside--

In the dark, a massive tangle of hair rises from the pillow. The light flicks on. Beside the lamp a little framed PICTURE OF A YOUNG COUPLE, we don't get a good look at it yet--

By the light of the lamp we can see the girl beneath the bed-head. BEVERLY MOODY (13), chubby, caught fully in those "awkward years". She reaches up and tries her best to regain some control over the mess she calls hair.

OUT THE FROSTED-OVER WINDOW

All we can see is the blurred glow of light spreading and then getting dimmer like some kind of mysterious magic as another bottle rocket explodes. Beverly climbs out of bed. Opens her window and sticks her head out.

BEVERLY'S POV:

From some far house, a red streak races up to the stars and POP! Explodes in a beautiful bloom of sparks reflected in the snow below so that the ground looks like a million red jewels dancing in the cruddy backyards.

INSIDE

Beverly pulls a chair to the window and watches another burst of color shower the dark houses below. Another chorus of dogs howl in the distance in some kind of mysterious dog applause...

MORNING

And Beverly's passed out in the same spot, head resting on the frame of the open window.

A KNOCK at the door--

Beverly jolts awake - CRACKS her head against the window--

BEVERLY

Crap!

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - MORNING

Beverly sits at the table, a perfect breakfast in front of her - eggs, bacon, pancakes, orange juice - the works. Standing over her is Beverly's grandmother, GAIL MOODY (55-65). She dabs at Beverly's head with rag while Beverly speaks with that pre-teen girl intensity:

BEVERLY

It was probably like the coolest thing I ever saw. Why doesn't everyone let off fireworks in the snow? We should move the fourth of July to winter and then we could always have fireworks in the snow.

Gail, while still pretty, has the look of a woman whose age is just beginning to catch up with her; not so much in wrinkles and gray hairs, but in mannerisms and style (or lack thereof). None of which is helped by her ill-fitting postal workers uniform that gives her a definite "warden" vibe.

GAIL

Eat.

Gail washes off the rag in the sink. Beverly shoves some pancake in her mouth and stares at her bacon thoughtfully--

BEVERLY

Do you think you could feed a pig bacon?

Gail puts the rest of Beverly's breakfast in one big roll of tin-foil.

GAIL

I think you're going to be late for school.

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - MORNING

The world's become a great gray-brown layer of snow slushy. Gail and Beverly move through it quickly - shivering beneath their bundles of hats, sweaters, coats and scarfs.

Gail's Postal Service van waits for them. Gail jumps in quickly and starts the engine. Beverly pauses before getting in, taking a dramatic drag from an imaginary cigarette like some awkward, chubby Audrey Hepburn and letting go of a puff of frosted breath.

At the same time she catches sight of--

DOWN THE STREET

A Fussy ASIAN MOTHER shuffling her kids into a gigantic SUV. An ASIAN girl, Beverly's age, puts her hand up in a kind of apathetic hello before being yelled at and shuffled inside the car.

GAIL

Move it, Beverly!

BEVERLY

(under her breath)

Okay. Geeze.

Beverly tosses her imaginary cigarette and hops in the postal van.

INT. POSTAL VAN - CONTINUOUS

Some monotone political radio show buzzes while Gail offers a grunt of approval - or, more likely, a snicker of derision.

We scan the back of the van for Beverly and, at first, we don't even notice she's there. She's just another overstuffed bag of hopes and dreams sitting immobile in the back-seat. The van goes over the bump and she's jostled around like all the other bags of letters and mail around her.

She looks to a bag on her left and sees something interesting. A piece of air mail with the distinctive red and blue border around it - the return address is somewhere in France.

One eye on Gail, Beverly stealthily pulls the letter out and slips it into her jacket.

GAIL
(re: the radio)
Cripes! This is what I pay taxes for?!

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

A sign in front that reads "James K. Polk Junior High" accompanied by a less than flattering caricature of the man himself with a full lion's mane of a mullet. Around the sign are swarms of cold-looking kids - coming and going and moving in every direction. It's a well-rehearsed school morning chaos.

Gail rolls up the back door of the postal van revealing a less than thrilled Beverly.

GAIL
Special delivery!

Beverly crawls out - looking like a condemned prisoner. This is not a kid that likes school.

BEVERLY
Bye.

Beverly watches Gail's van disappear into the maze of school traffic and then, like a brave little prisoner, heads toward the entrance.

MEAN KID (O.S.)
Hey blubberly!

Beverly turns - WHAM! A snow ball explodes against the side of her face. Beverly doesn't even flinch - this obviously isn't the first time she's caught a snowball with her face.

MEAN KID
Special delivery!

A group of kids LAUGHS. Beverly keeps walking - head down and fast, like the weakest prisoner in the prison yard, which, in a way she is...

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAYS

That odd mix of kids that only exists in the Northwest: REDNECKS with confederate flag shirts, PUNKS with combat boots, PREPPIES with messenger bags and HIPPIES with flower dresses.

Beverly, still keeping her head down, moves through the crowds managing to not-quite-fit-in with any group.

ABOVE THE MAIN ENTRANCE

A banner with a WILDCAT on one side and an OWL on the other and in between:

Vote for the School Mascot March 15th. You decide!!

A rather unfortunate looking GIRL hands out Owl buttons. She hands one to Beverly--

GIRL
Vote Owl for mascot!

BEVERLY'S LOCKER

Beverly opens her locker right as--

STEVEN, a-hole of the Junior High, rolls up in his wheelchair. At his side is the vice-president of a-holery DONNY, a kid that got an early start on acne. Both wear "Wildcat for Mascot" buttons.

STEVEN
She has an owl button.

DONNY
It's not surprising. The owl button is a magnet for losers. They can't resist its pull.

Beverly tries her best to ignore them.

STEVEN
Do you smell that?

DONNY

Ugh, gawd, yeah. What is it?

They both look around dramatically - then look at Beverly.

STEVEN

(to Beverly)

Do you by chance use Pert Plus?

Meekly--

BEVERLY

Yeah...

STEVEN

That's what it is. Jesus, it's disgusting. It smells like choad.

DONNY

-- and poor people.

STEVEN

Poor people's choad.

STEVEN

Let's get the f.o.h. before I puke.

A disgusted look on his face, Donny pushes Steven's wheelchair away. When they're far enough away Beverly smells her hair sheepishly...

CLASSROOM

The GYM TEACHER is subbing in English. A burly man (40's) with a full sweat-pant outfit, a gnarly mullet and a whistle finishes writing on the board--

Poetry ROCKS!!

Beverly rushes into the room - only two seats left.

One, the SAFE SEAT in the middle of the room. The other in the back corner next to the scariest girl in school - NICKY. Dressed in all black, busy drawing skulls in her notebook.

Beverly is about to sit down at the safe seat when another MEEK LOOKING GIRL practically dives into it--

MEEK GIRL
(motioning towards Nicky)
Please don't make me sit back there.

Beverly's about to say something when the Teacher spots her standing in the middle of the room.

TEACHER
You are...

BEVERLY
Beverly.

Looking down his list--

TEACHER
Beverly...

BEVERLY
Moody.

He makes a little mark in his notebook--

TEACHER
Ah, there we are. Well, Moody you look like a volunteer to me. Why don't you read us your assignment?

BEVERLY
Um. Okay.

Beverly digs through her papers, pulls out a notebook, flips through the pages and, hands-shaking and out of breath reads--

BEVERLY
There's a dog next door I feed bologna through the fence. A dog across the street whose owner forces him to wear sweaters in the summer - it doesn't make sense. There's a yellow lab that's blind and deaf named Nutter. And in an empty lot behind the Ben Franklin's there's a dog buried there who died from eating a whole tub of "I Can't Believe it's Not Butter".
(beat)
The end.

The TEACHER claps - he looks around the room and keeps clapping until others join in.

TEACHER

Great. Very, uh, Emily Dickinson-eque I think. Just great. Okay, whose next? Someone can volunteer or I can choose...

Beverly makes her way back to the dreaded seat--

NICKY

Finishing a drawing of a snake eating a skull eating a knife stabbing a snake in the eye. Beverly tries to look at it and Nicky gives her a dirty look and covers it up like Beverly's trying to cheat off her math test.

Beverly tries to nonchalantly smell her hair again - Nicky looks over just in time to catch her in the act, holding her hair over her noise, taking big whiffs. Nicky gives her a "what the hell are you doing?" look. Beverly drops her hair, embarrassed.

TEACHER

Excellent, a volunteer. And you are?

A SKIMPILY DRESSED GIRL stands up - well, not exactly a girl - more of a woman: a full figured woman. It's as if she exists simply to show how very much a child Beverly still is.

The boys' mouths open, books go to laps. The girls look on jealously. Without thinking Beverly's hands go to her own, not-yet-existent breasts.

Again, Nicky looks over just in time to catch her.

NICKY

Are you feeling yourself up?

Beverly's hands fly down to her desk--

BEVERLY

No--

NICKY

Yeah, you definitely were--

BEVERLY

No, I--

TEACHER

Okay, ladies. Enough with the chit and the chat. Time to open your ear-holes and be a good audience.

Nicky gives Beverly one last disgusted look--

NICKY
(whispering)
You have serious problems.

TEACHER
Please, begin.

MATURE GIRL
The throbbing night humped my soul--

TEACHER
Okay. Good. Very, very good.

MATURE GIRL
There's more.

TEACHER
Yes. I know. I'm sure it all rocked.
That's why I'm moving on.
(beat)
Okay, who's next? Someone can volunteer
or I can pick. Anybody...?

A classroom of KIDS immediately look down. Beverly lays her head down on her desk...

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

More chaos - this time the after-school variety.

Gail's postal van pulls to the front of the school and finds a spot among all the other waiting parents.

INT. POSTAL VAN

She takes a look at herself in the side mirror. Her eyes are red, as if she's been crying. She wipes them, takes a big breath and plants a big smile on her face as--

OUT THE WINDOW

Beverly makes her way toward the postal van. Head down, defeated. Beverly's almost there when - WHAM! Another snowball to the cranium. Beverly pauses, just for a second, just long enough to let it register, then climbs in.

INT. POSTAL VAN

Half a snowball still stuck to Beverly's head as she moves to the back of the van. Gail stops her - a slight look of concern on her face that quickly gets replaced by toughness. Gail peels the snowball off of Beverly's stocking cap--

GAIL

How was your day?

Beverly shrugs - heads back to the back of the van and lays down amongst the now empty bags, looking just as empty.

BEVERLY

Same as every day.

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - DAY

The front door flies open, then

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - THE BASEMENT

It's a musty room, orange-ish industrial carpeting, lined with piles and piles of boxes and lit by a single bulb dangling down from the ceiling.

A soda and potato chips at her side Beverly begins her after-school ritual - playing out the days events:

BEVERLY

(as Steven)

Only losers wear owl buttons.

Beverly throws a punch into the air - looks down at an imaginary opponent writhing on the ground.

BEVERLY

Oh, yeah? Who's the loser now, loser?

UPSTAIRS

Gail sits on the couch with the TV blaring. A LOUD THUD comes from the basement. Gail hits mute and listens to the mumblings and rumblings coming from her granddaughter downstairs.

She gets up, walks to the basement door like she has a hundred times before - and then puts her ear to the door. More ramblings from downstairs.

Gail goes to open the door, to go down there and talk to her granddaughter - just like she has probably everyday - but something in her just won't do it.

THE BASEMENT

Beverly continues the show--

BEVERLY

Excuse me? Did you just say I smell like choad? Did you? No, I know what you said. You said I smelled like choad. Okay, well, how does this smell!?

Beverly swings around and kicks - right into a stack of boxes, it falls into another stack and down they go, dominoes style--

All Beverly can do is sit there and watch as a wall of boxes goes crashing to the ground.

BEVERLY

SHITake mushrooms.

LATER

Beverly stuffs Christmas decorations back into a box. Tinsel and lights all tangled together, a reindeer with its head broke off.

She starts on the next box - mostly what looks like bills and then something else - something special--

A MIXTAPE CASE

The cover has a an anatomical skeleton cut out from a text-book with a heart drawn in red in its ribcage. Above it is written "New Beginnings" and below it is written "The Sarah loves Zach Mix".

Beverly opens up the tape case - the tape is still there.

She digs through the box - not finding what she wants she dumps it. And there it is - a Walkman held together with a rubber band. She hits the radio - the batteries still work.

Beverly puts the tape in the Walkman. She stops a second to absorb what's happening--

This is her wardrobe to Narnia, her invitation to Hogwarts. This is where the adventure begins and somewhere, deep down inside, Beverly can sense it--

She pushes play.

And waits. She strains her ears. Then that familiar hiss of a cassette tape beginning followed by one strum of a guitar before...

A HORRIBLE SCREECHING SOUND--

Beverly opens the Walkman. The tape hangs out like a corpse, hopelessly tangled and definitely destroyed.

BEVERLY

No...

But all is not lost - she turns the tape cover over revealing a list of songs. Exotic sounding bands and songs: "Carnival" by Bikini Kill and "Teacher's Pet" by The Quick. And then others that aren't songs at all - a listing that says, "The song that reminds me of that day in the park" and the last song, "The parental unit's happy song".

And around all of the songs are hand-drawn fireworks, swirling up and exploding--

BEVERLY

Fireworks...

Beverly stuffs the list in her pocket.

UPSTAIRS

Beverly races by the sofa, toward the upstairs--

GAIL

I heard something fall. What was it?

BEVERLY

Nothing.

Gail goes to say something, but Beverly's already racing loudly up the stairs--

BEVERLY'S ROOM

Beverly practically dives under her bed. While she's under there we get a better look at the picture beside her bed: a young punk couple, pierced, dyed hair, the boy holds a beer, the girl a cigarette. They're cool in that grunge way. We don't know it yet, but these are Bev's parents...

Beverly re-emerges from under the bed with a beaten-up converse shoebox. She opens it up, revealing the contents:

A couple of pictures - of that same couple as in the picture sitting by Beverly's bedside - a small notebook and lots and lots of unopened mail that Beverly's pilfered with addresses from all over the world.

Beverly deposits her newest letter - the piece of air mail from France. Then she pulls out one particular picture - a picture of that same hipster couple holding a little smiling baby while fireworks explode in the sky above them. She sets it beside the mixtape decorated with fireworks and opens the small notebook and writes--

Mixtape. New beginnings. Fireworks.

INT. FOOD LION - CONTINUOUS

We can hear Beverly and Gail before we see them--

The shopping cart's wheels - SCREECH SCREECH SCREECH. Gail steers past the bread aisle, past the frozen foods, past the canned foods, past the--

Beverly stops. Gail keeps going...

THE SHAMPOO AISLE

Bottles of shampoos of every variety. Beverly sniffs a bottle of Orange blossom.

BEVERLY

Mm-mmm.

A bottle of Tea-tree oil and lavender

BEVERLY

Ahhh.

A bottle of Jasmine and Melon Blossom. A picture of a beautiful woman flipping her hair on the bottle with the words - *Smell Gorgeous!*

BEVERLY
(reading)
Smell gorgeous.

REFRIGERATED SECTION

Beverly runs up to Gail, clutching her bottle of Jasmine and Melon Blossom shampoo--

GAIL
Pick out some Lunchables.

Beverly drops the shampoo in the cart. Gail immediately plucks it out--

GAIL
What's this?

BEVERLY
Shampoo.

Holds it out to Beverly--

GAIL
We already have shampoo.

BEVERLY
But this one smells really good.

GAIL
We can discuss it when we finish the shampoo we have.

BEVERLY
But we've had that bottle for like two years and it's still half full.

GAIL
I said no, Beverly. Now pick out some Lunchables and let's get home before "Deal or No Deal" comes on.

Gail puts the shampoo on the shelf among the hotdogs and lunch meat and squeaks away. Beverly picks up the shampoo and follows her.

REGISTER

The usual crowded line of impatient shoppers--

Gail is busy thumbing through her coupons. Beverly loads items onto the check-out counter - including the Jasmine and Melon Blossom shampoo.

The CHECKER scans milk. Five Lunchables. The bottle of shampoo.

GAIL

What is that?

CHECKER

Uh, shampoo.

Looks at Beverly--

GAIL

We don't want that.

Checker unscans it--

BEVERLY

Please!

Checker looks at Gail--

GAIL

No. And that's my final answer.

BEVERLY

But I don't want to use Pert Plus.

With finality--

GAIL

No.

(to the Checker)

We don't want it. We have plenty of shampoo at home.

BEVERLY

I don't want Pert Plus! It smells like choad!

Everyone in line stops what they're doing, stares at Beverly in shock. Gail's mouth is wide open--

CHECKER

It does smell kind of nasty.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gail - still fuming.

GAIL

Where did you hear a word like that?

Beverly doesn't answer--

GAIL

Answer me, Beverly Moody. Where did you hear that word?

BEVERLY

Nowhere.

GAIL

As far as I'm concerned you can use Pert Plus until you're eighteen.

Beverly steams the window with her breath and writes "CHOAD" against the glare of passing headlights...

INT. POSTAL VAN - MORNING

Gail grumbles at the radio. Beverly sits in the back looking like the queen of the sad sacks amongst the mail bags...

EXT. SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

The same TEACHER as in English class surveys the class.

Everyone doing laps. Beverly gets to the end of the track and just keeps running - off the track and past the school...

EXT. WAL-MART - DAY

Beverly marches along a busy street and into the store.

INT. WAL-MART - CONTINUOUS

A CLERK, looking just out of high school, pretends to work - scanning various things at random--

He walks by Beverly and scans her.

HIGH SCHOOL CLERK
7.99.

BEVERLY
What?

HIGH SCHOOL CLERK
The scanner says you're worth 7.99.

Beverly looks offended--

HIGH SCHOOL CLERK
No, that's good. I'm only worth 3.99.

A SECOND CLERK emerges - a humongous woman with a badge that reads, "Hello! I'm Ruth!"

RUTH
Will you please leave this girl alone and do some work?

HIGH SCHOOL CLERK
(to Beverly)
She's just mad 'cause she's only worth fifty cents.

Swatting at him with a huge hand--

RUTH
Lou, I'm not gonna tell you again...

High School Clerk continues his rounds - scanning things absently. Ruth turns to Beverly, as sweet as can be--

RUTH
I can't find anything by that artist...

Ruth hands the song list back to Beverly

RUTH
But I think we might have CD's by some of the other artists.

BEVERLY
It has to be the first one.

Off of Ruth's confused look.

BEVERLY
It has to be in order.

RUTH

Well, I'm sorry, sweetie. We don't carry that song.

BEVERLY

Do you know who would?

RUTH

You could try the Westside Wal-Mart. They tend to have a little bigger music selection.

EXT. WAL-MART - CONTINUOUS

Beverly walks out into the sea of minivans and SUV's, kids in shopping carts and frazzled moms.

CLERK (O.S.)

Hey! Girl! Hey, 7.99!

Beverly turns around, the Clerk jogs toward her--

CLERK

Let me see that list.

Beverly hesitates--

CLERK

If they don't have the songs here, it must be something good.

She hands him the list. He looks it over, smiles...

CLERK

This is really rad...I know where you can find the first song. Maybe all the songs.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A crummy record store on a crummy street. A train roars by behind it.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Beverly pushes the door open, setting off an extraordinarily loud bell. It's filled with CD's, records, posters of bands we've never heard of - a few we have...but no customers.

Beverly moves cautiously through the store - does a lap and returns to the counter to find a menacing but frumpy-looking guy behind it.

This is ANTI - 40's - aging hipster, rocker, and rebel. He looks like a mix between Henry Rollins and your creepy Uncle who's always asking your parents for money.

BEVERLY

I'm looking for a song.

ANTI

What an amazing, impossible coincidence.
I sell songs.

The sarcasm zips by Beverly. Confused, she simply holds out her song list. Anti takes it - a visible shift in his countenance, from harsh to, well, slightly less harsh.

ANTI

Not bad. Sequencing needs work. What's this, "The song that reminds me of that time in the park"?

BEVERLY

Um...I don't really know. I thought it was a song.

ANTI

Where'd you get this? You steal it off somebody?

BEVERLY

It's my parent's - the tape broke. Now I wanna get the songs.

ANTI

You're parents have some good taste. I have some of these.

(noting one of the songs)

Nobody has this one that I know of...

Anti starts making his way through the store, plucking records from their spots--

BEVERLY

I just need the first one for now.

ANTI

(reading the list)

"Carvinal - Bikini Kill"?

(MORE)

ANTI (CONT'D)
You want vinyl or CD? I'd go vinyl if
you have the stereo to handle it.

Anti pulls a record out--

BEVERLY
Do you have it on tape?

Off Anti's perplexed look--

BEVERLY
I only have a Walkman.

Anti looks out the window toward the street - looking for
something--

BEVERLY
What are you looking for?

ANTI
I was looking for your Delorean. The
flux capacitor acting up again? Can't
just pop back into 80's and pick the tape
up there?

Beverly looks at him blankly--

ANTI
Back to the Future? The car...?
Nevermind...how much money you got?

Beverly rummages nervously through her pockets. Pulls
out some sweaty bills and change - puts it in Anti's
hand. He sets the money down - disgusted.

BEVERLY
I'm sorry. I was sweating.

ANTI
Wonderful. Wait here.

Anti takes the record and disappears into a back room.

ANTI (O.S.)
And don't steal anything!

CUT TO:

RECORD STORE - LATER

Beverly looks through the album covers. Fantastic images
of fantastic people in all sorts of dangerous looking
poses. Anti emerges - tape in hand.

ANTI

I recorded the song for you on an old tape I had. The rest of it is from an AA talk. That's free of charge. Good stuff. If you ever want to get clean.

He hands her the tape. Beverly beams back at him. Anti scribbles on a piece of paper--

ANTI

We'll say a dollar for a used tape - a dollar for the song, labor...carry the four, Pythagorean theorem. With tax your total comes to...

He counts out the money.

ANTI

Five damp dollars and sixty-three sweaty cents. Exactly.

BEVERLY

Thank you.

ANTI

Okay. Now get outta here before I call the cops.

Beverly heads for the door--

BEVERLY

Wait, what's your name?

ANTI

Anti.

BEVERLY

Anti? Anti what?

ANTI

Anti pretty-much-everything.

BEVERLY

Oh. I'm Beverly Moody.

ANTI

That's great. Have a nice day, Moody.

Beverly can't tell if he's grinning or grimacing as she heads out the door.

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Beverly runs from the Postal Van into the house. Gail watches her go, totally perplexed...

BEVERLY'S ROOM

Beverly bursts into her room - grabs the ancient Walkman off of her desk and puts the tape in. She presses play and waits...

The drums kick in - the guitars rip through the earphones. Beverly looks a little shocked. Pushes stop and looks down at the Walkman.

BEVERLY

Holy crap.

She puts the headphones back on, hits play and the music blares.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Beverly stands in front of school like a gunfighter at noon. She pulls her Walkman out of her bag. Puts her head-phones around her neck. Checks the tape inside. Secure.

And walks inside--

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Jungle.

Kids scream, running through the halls. Pushing. Shoving. Name-calling. Papers flying.

Beverly puts the headphones over her ears. She presses play and as the music comes in--

Something magic happens...

Everyone moves in slow motion, as if in time to the music. The entire mood of the hallway changes from violent to welcoming. Students smile and wave; the pubescent chaos parts before Beverly as she walks down the hall...

BEVERLY'S LOCKER

Steven rolls up in his wheelchair with Donny in tow. Beverly looks over at them - the music blaring from her headphones, a huge smile on her face.

She speaks loud, over the sound in her headphones--

BEVERLY
HEY GUYS.

And walks away happy. Steven watches her go happily along her way--

STEVEN
What a goat scrotum.

EXT. SCHOOL TRACK - ANOTHER DAY

More laps. Again, Beverly hits the end of the track and keeps right on going--

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Beverly walks in - waves happily to Anti.

BEVERLY
Hi Anti!

Anti just looks at her. Beverly takes out the list - puts it on the counter.

BEVERLY
That was probably the best song I've ever heard in my entire life. I have to have the next one.

Anti stares at her blankly--

BEVERLY
I brought the tape and everything. And I've got like--
(pulls out some change)
--three dollars and--

ANTI
Listen, Moody. I'm not in the mix making business. I sell records and CD's. And, I'm sorry, but your lunch money isn't going to buy anything in this store.

BEVERLY

Maybe I could work for you. I could come here and like sweep, or organize stuff.

ANTI

Sorry, kid, but you scare the customers away. The last thing people want to see when they go to a cool record store such as this hip establishment is a pre-teen girl in junior high gym clothes.

BEVERLY

But you never even have customers.

ANTI

My point exactly.

BEVERLY

Please?

ANTI

Compelling argument, but no. This is your parents mix-tape, correct? So I suggest you pester them for the music.

An awkward beat. One very large tear forms in Beverly's eye.

ANTI

What? What's wrong with your eye? What are you doing?

BEVERLY

I can't ask my parents. They're gone.

Anti cringes--

ANTI

Gone like, to the store to get a gallon of milk?

Beverly doesn't answer. But that very large tear rolls down her cheek.

ANTI

I'm sorry. I-- don't cry. Jesus, okay, hold on--

He grabs the mixtape and disappears into the backroom. We can hear him mumbling to himself, but we can't quite make out what he's saying.

He re-emerges and gives her the tape.

ANTI

There you go, kid. "Linda, Linda, Linda"
by the Bluehearts.

She wipes her face and holds out her change--

ANTI

Naw, keep your buttons and bottle-caps
for a bagel pizza and green jello at the
cafeteria.

BEVERLY

Thanks, Anti.

ANTI

You're welcome, Moody. Now if you'll
excuse me I need to return some Christmas
presents to Whoville.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Lunchtime and, sure enough, Beverly is eating a bagel
pizza and green jello. Some things never change. She
takes out her Walkman, puts the tape in and listens...

VOICE

...you're traveling a road that's full of
pot-holes. Those pot-holes being the
heart-break, the disappointment and hurt
in your life. What so many of us try to
do is patch up this road with alcohol and
drugs - but what we should be doing is
paving a new road...

The voice cuts off - the tape begins to hiss--

The drums kick in. The guitars kick in. Then the singer
begins to sing - but it's not in English - it's Japanese.

ON BEVERLY

Looking thoroughly confused. She looks at the song
listing again: "Linda Linda Linda - The Blue Hearts".

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - MORNING

The first signs of spring. The snow is slowly retreating
to become muddy puddles. An arm falls off a melting, sad
looking snow-man--

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - MORNING

Blinds conceal the bright light of morning. Beverly snores lightly, the Walkman beside her on the bed.

Somewhere outside someone starts shouting--

BOY'S VOICE
It's Saturday everybody! It's Saturday!!

Beverly gets up - opens her curtains--

DOWN THE STREET

At the Asian house - the Boy is outside his window on the roof doing a dance and singing his song about Saturday in his Spider-man pajamas.

BOY
It's Saturday, for sheezy my neezies!
Anarchy! Attica!

And then he pulls down his drawers and moons the neighborhood. His Mom bursts out the front door and starts hollering at him. The Asian girl, her head out of the other upstairs window, laughs hysterically.

Finally, the DAD reaches out the Boy's window and yanks him back inside.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Gail's postal van cruises up to a line of mail-boxes.

INT. POSTAL VAN - DAY

Beverly grabs a gob of mail from a bag. She notices a letter, from India, and discreetly stuffs it in her pocket. The rest of the mail gets handed off to Gail who crams the junk-mail and bills unceremoniously into the boxes.

Then it's off to the next group of houses--

They turn past a yard with a cardboard sign with the message "Free Kittens to LOVING home," scrawled in awful, child-like handwriting.

Beside the sign is the advertised box-full-of-kittens. And sitting on a lawn-chair beside the box is a mom with a crying little girl in her lap, holding one of the kittens.

BEVERLY
Can I get a kitten?

GAIL
You're allergic.

BEVERLY
How do you know?

GAIL
Genetics.

Beverly thinks about it...

BEVERLY
Mom and dad were allergic to kittens?

Gail just nods her head and pulls up to the next mailbox.

INT. BEVERLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Beverly opens the converse box, drops in her newest letter and pulls out her notebook--

NOTEBOOK PAGE

Under a list of things like:

Drink beer, did not graduate high school, freckles, liked pizza, and MUSIC!

Beverly writes - *allergic to kittens*.

She looks

OUT THE WINDOW

The Asian girl and her family walk into the house. Beverly sets her notebook down and grabs her Walkmen.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Beverly, armed with her headphones, marches down the sidewalk towards--

THE ASIAN HOUSE

Beverly rings the doorbell. The Asian Boy appears in the window. He calmly flips her off with one hand and then the other. A double bird. Beverly's not sure what to do at first, finally she flips him off back - right as his Mom opens the door--

ASIAN MOTHER

Can I help you?

BEVERLY

Yeah, uh...is your daughter home?

ASIAN MOTHER

No, I'm sorry she's--

And then the Asian Girl appears by her side.

ASIAN GIRL

Hi.

BEVERLY

Hi. I'm Beverly I live down the street.

ELLEN

I'm Ellen. I live here.

The Asian Mom says something in Korean to her daughter, who says something in Korean back. Their tone says it all - Beverly cringes...

ELLEN

Wanna go outside?

As Ellen walks away her mother scolds her in Korean.

ELLEN

Fine, come on Justin.

Ellen's little brother runs out the door behind her.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Beverly and Ellen sit on the sidewalk. Justin busies himself mutilating a melting snowman in the background.

BEVERLY

I saw your brother on the roof yesterday.

ELLEN

Justin? Yeah, I triple dared him. He'll do anything if you triple dare him - even something he really doesn't want to do. It's kind of amazing. You wanna see?

BEVERLY

Sure.

ELLEN

(to her brother)
Justin, I dare you to eat that brown snow.

JUSTIN

No way!

ELLEN

(calmly)
I double dare you to do it.

He knows where this is going--

JUSTIN

Knock it off, Ellen! I don't wanna eat no brown snow.

Ellen, looking at Beverly like a magician about to perform her big trick--

ELLEN

I triple dog dare you.

JUSTIN

Stomps his feet angrily. Looks like he's about to cry - and then grabs a handful of brownish, slushy snow and stuffs it in his mouth--

JUSTIN

(mouth full)
I'm telling!

He runs into the house--

BEVERLY

That *is* amazing.

ELLEN

Yeah. We should probably go now...

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Beverly and Ellen walk slowly down the street.

ELLEN

You have any brothers or sisters?

BEVERLY

No. I don't have any uncles or aunts or cousins either. Just me and my Grandma.

ELLEN

Back in New Jersey I have like 2 million cousins.

BEVERLY

Why'd you move here?

ELLEN

'Cause of my dad. He didn't like his old job, so we had to come here. Now he doesn't like this job either. But my mom says we can't move all over the country like vagabonds. So we're staying.

BEVERLY

Anybody give you a tour of the neighborhood yet?

ELLEN

No. No one really talks to me.

BEVERLY

I could give you a tour. I've lived here my whole life. I know the names of all the dogs and which ones you can pet and which ones will bite you and everything.

ELLEN

Okay.

BEVERLY

But first you have to do something for me.

ELLEN

What?

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

The two sit on the front lawn of Beverly's house.
Beverly puts the headphones on Ellen--

BEVERLY

So you listen to this and tell me what it
says, 'kay?

ELLEN

'kay.

Beverly pushes play.

ELLEN

(overly loud)
It's just some guy talking about roads.

BEVERLY

It's after that.

Ellen listens - then squints hard in concentration.
Beverly watches her nervously. A few beats--

Ellen takes off the headphones.

ELLEN

This is Japanese.

Beverly - not getting it.

ELLEN

I'm Korean.

Hands the headphones back--

ELLEN

Can I still get the tour?

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Beverly pedals an old junky Huffy while Ellen rides on
the pegs.

They move past a cute little house with an immaculate
yard.

BEVERLY

That's where two men live - Les and Ray.
They dress their dog in sweaters even in
the summer.

(MORE)

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

I asked them once, "Why do ya dress your dog in sweaters even in the summer?" And Ray said, "Fashion before comfort, sweetie." My Grandma tries to tell me they're just friends, but I know they're gay. I think they're pretty fabulous.

A run-down house with dead grass--

BEVERLY

This is where the other Asians live. They're old and have a name I can't pronounce so I just call them Mr. and Mrs. One year a kid went trick-or-treating there and they gave him a chicken leg from KFC. So don't go trick-or-treating there unless you like KFC.

An ordinary looking corner--

BEVERLY

This corner is famous. It was in Cops one time where the police pulled this guy over and he was like, "I don't have no crack." And they were like, "Then what's that crack-pipe doing on your seat?" And he got out and ran and they caught him by his pony tail and arrested him right here. He just kept screaming, "Where's my old lady! I wanna see my old lady!" Over and over.

ELLEN

Why do you live with your Grandma?

Beverly shrugs.

BEVERLY

My parents are gone.

ELLEN

Where'd they go?

BEVERLY

They went to get a gallon of milk.

They can see the sun beginning to set down at the end of the road, where the street meets the horizon...

BEVERLY

You like breakfast for dinner?

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beverly munches on bacon. Gail holds out another waffle to Ellen--

GAIL

More waffles, honey?

ELLEN

Yes, please.

Gail puts the waffle down and pours more batter in the waffle maker.

Ellen leans over to Beverly--

ELLEN

(whispering)

Do all white people eat breakfast for dinner?

BEVERLY

Yeah, I think so.

INT. BEVERLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen sits on the bed looking at the framed picture of Beverly's parents. Beverly emerges from underneath the bed with her converse box.

ELLEN

They don't look like parents.

BEVERLY

My mom was only 15 when she had me. It's called "babies having babies". I saw it on Maury.

Beverly sets the box on the bed and opens it--

ELLEN

What's with all the letters?

Beverly carefully pulls out her pictures of her parents.

BEVERLY

When I was a little I always thought maybe my mom and dad would write me a letter from wherever they were, so I started stealing them. Now I just kind of like them.

(MORE)

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

I have one from every state. Pretty soon I'll have one from every country.

ELLEN

Cool...

Ellen digs through the letters. One from New York is obviously a love letter, hearts drawn all over it.

Beverly hands Ellen the picture of her as a baby with her parents, fireworks exploding in the background.

BEVERLY

This is me with my mom and dad.

ELLEN

How'd they die?

BEVERLY

Car wreck. I never really knew them.
(beat)

The other night I woke up and there were these amazing fireworks outside. It was pretty much the most beautiful thing that ever happened outside my window. And then I found this--

She hands her the mixtape next...

BEVERLY

I think it might be a sign--

ELLEN

--like a message! From beyond the grave!

BEVERLY

Yeah. But I'm not sure what they're trying to tell me.

Footsteps coming up the stairs. Beverly panics, grabs the pictures and letters and stuffs them in the box, then throws the box under the bed.

Beverly's door opens and Gail peaks her head in. Two highly guilty looking kids peer back.

GAIL

I think it's time you headed home, Ellen.
It's getting late.

ELLEN

Okay, Mrs. Moody.

Gail closes the door. Ellen looks at Beverly - what was that all about?

BEVERLY

My Grandma can't know. If I even mention my parents she'll cry for a week.

Ellen looks at the mixtape still in her hands--

ELLEN

I think I can help. Come over tomorrow.

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Headphones on...her parents' picture in her hand...her eyes begin to close...the picture begins to drop from her hand...until...she's asleep

DREAM

FANCY COCKTAIL LOUNGE

"Linda Linda Linda" is playing--

Beverly is standing on stage, mic in hand, dressed in an opulent kimono and mouthing the words to the song.

Ellen stands behind her playing bass, while Anti keeps time on drums.

OUT IN THE CROWD

We spot Beverly's parents. They're looking the same as they do in the picture, holding hands and holding beers. They beam proud smiles at Beverly who smiles back--

As the song reaches it's crescendo, fireworks burst from the back of the stage--

THE CROWD

Rises to its feet in jubilant appreciation. Rampant applause--

BEVERLY

Puts her arms up to the sky and belts out the song--

GAIL (O.S.)

Beverly!

The song stops.

The crowd looks around - confused--

Gail

Stands up in front of Beverly's Mom and Dad who recede into the shadows, disappearing--

GAIL
Beverly!

BEVERLY'S ROOM - MORNING

Gail stands over her--

GAIL
Beverly! You planning on sleeping all day?

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellen's little brother Justin is in the front yard throwing mud at his parents SUV over and over, covering it on one side.

Beverly walks up--

BEVERLY
Hi, Justin. Is Ellen home?

Justin stops throwing mud. Dramatically turns to Beverly and says, with poetic flair--

JUSTIN
Booger.

Then he turns around and keeps throwing mud at the car.

INT. ELLEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two huge posters - one of Tupac, the other of Notorious B.I.G. Ellen types on her computer--

ELLEN
I-tunes is the greatest invention ever.
All the songs are like free.

BEVERLY
Free?

ELLEN

Well, almost. You just have to get your parents to put their credit card information in - then the songs are free.

ON SCREEN

An instant message appears from Sergio:

Y NOT CHATING LATLY?

ELLEN

Just a sec. I have to break up with Sergio first.

BEVERLY

Sergio?

ELLEN

He's my Ukrainian boyfriend.

Ellen types:

ON SCREEN

Sry. Cant date sumbudy that uses caps ALL THE TIME.

BEVERLY

You have a Ukrainian boyfriend?

ELLEN

Yeah. I have a boyfriend in England too. And Canada, Korea, and India.

BEVERLY

God. I wanna computer so bad...

ELLEN

Wanna hear the next song on your tape?

CUT TO:

ELLEN AND BEVERLY

Facing the camera. Frozen in place.

The song starts to play and Beverly starts to mouth the words while Ellen remains frozen.

Then the music kicks in and Beverly and Ellen begin a choreographed dance in sync with the song.

From the looks of it they must have spent a couple of days practicing.

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - MORNING

CLOSE ON A CALENDAR

Picture of a man climbing a mountain with a strained look on his face, the sun setting behind him. Below is the inspirational phrase:

Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it.

Theodore Roosevelt (1858 - 1919)

Beverly flips the page to the next month

APRIL

A picture of a man with a gold medal around his neck and underneath:

Be bold! Go for the gold!

BEVERLY

Be bold. Go for the gold.

KITCHEN - MORNING

The same carefully choreographed routine Gail's been doing for years now. She finishes up Beverly's breakfast, sets her plate on the table, then looks at the ceiling and shouts to Beverly--

GAIL

Beverly Moody! You're going to be late!

BEVERLY

Standing in the kitchen doorway--

BEVERLY

Geez, Grandma. I'm right here.

GAIL

You're up already?

Beverly grabs some bacon, shoves it in her mouth--

BEVERLY

(mouth full)

Yeah, I'm getting a ride with Ellen today.

GAIL

With Ellen?

BEVERLY

Yeah, her mom's got the greatest car in the world. It has like enough seats for 25 people and has a TV and air conditioning and seat-belts and everything. We each get our own row to sit in. Ellen says it's like riding in a movie theater.

Beverly heads out of the kitchen.

GAIL

I'll pick you up then...

BEVERLY

That's okay, Ellen's mom's gonna pick us up too.

GAIL

What about your...

Beverly already has her headphones on, some song blaring and she's out the door--

GAIL

(to herself)

...breakfast.

INT. POSTAL VAN - DAY

Gail hops in the postal van, starts it up. The radio kicks on - that same, monotone voice doing practically the same political commentary as every other day.

Gail looks into the back - where Beverly usually sits among the full bags of mail. Then she looks forward. A flash of sadness that, just as quickly, is gone.

She turns off the radio. Puts the van in gear and starts her day.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - LUNCH

The school just before lunch - quiet and peaceful. And then the BELL RINGS and the commotion begins, carrying over to...

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Lunchables for Beverly. Rice and kimchi for Ellen.

The song list lies in front of them. The songs that they've already found are highlighted, up to:

Teacher's pet - the quick.

ELLEN

They only put out one album and it's like impossible to find. And this other one - "the song that reminds me of that time in the park". I don't even know what that is. I googled the crap out of it and nothing came up.

Beverly goes to take a drink of milk when - SLAM. Steven rams into her with his wheelchair. The ever present Donny snickers beside him--

STEVEN

(to Ellen)

Word to the wise, Madame Butterfly, unless you want to smell like warm butt-hole I'd stay away from this one.

Ellen just ignores him - hoping he'll go away.

STEVEN

I don't think she understands. Donny, could you translate please?

DONNY

Sure. Ching-chong, ching-ching warm butt-hole chong, ching.

STEVEN

Thanks so much.

DONNY

You're so welcome.

Steven rolls away, Donny in tow...

BEVERLY
You ever skip school?

ELLEN
No.

BEVERLY
You want to?

Ellen watches Steven and Donny continue their tour of the cafeteria, making everyone's lives miserable.

ELLEN
Yeah.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Anti - sound asleep in his chair. Beverly and Ellen stand on either side of him.

ELLEN
He doesn't look cool.

BEVERLY
Trust me, he is. He's like 10,000 times more cool when he's awake.

Ellen peers into his ears--

ELLEN
It looks like a furry little animal crawled into his ears.

ANTI

Opens his eyes sleepily, meeting the gaze of Ellen - only inches from his face--

ANTI
AAH!

He falls out of his chair. Then looks up to see the two girls looking down at him--

ANTI
What the...why would...how...

Picks himself off the floor.

BEVERLY
Did we scare you?

ANTI

No, I always try to wake up to the sight
of the village of the damned standing
over me.

He leans on the counter and feels his heart, catching his
breath--

BEVERLY

This is my friend, Ellen.

ANTI

Yeah, we met.

ELLEN

You have amazing ear hair.

ANTI

Thanks. I hoped someone would notice.

Beverly hands him the song list--

BEVERLY

I need the next song, please.

ANTI

(to Ellen)

I suppose I need to make a tape for you
too, huh?

ELLEN

No. I'm just helping her.

ANTI

Super.

Turns his attention to the list. He looks it over and
frowns--

ANTI

The Quick? Get in line, kid. That sh--,
um stuff has been out of print for years.

BEVERLY

Out of print?

ANTI

Old copy might turn up at a garage sale
if you're lucky, but it's a long shot.

EXT. RECORD STORE - CONTINUOUS

Ellen and Beverly begin the long walk back to school empty handed--

ELLEN

We could find the other ones first.

Unable to hide her disappointment--

BEVERLY

Yeah. Sure.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - DINNER

A perfectly set table. Ellen's Dad sits at the head in a shirt and tie. Ellen sits on one side while Beverly and her brother sit on the other.

Ellen's Mom comes in from the kitchen with a fish on a platter. She sits down and they all start to grab hand. Ellen's brother quickly licks his hand before they do--

BEVERLY

Ugh...

Beverly hesitates - but Ellen's Mom catches her and shoots her the evil eye--

Beverly grimaces and grabs the brother's hand.

They close their eyes and bow their heads while Dad begins the prayer--

Beverly lifts her head, opens her eyes a little and--

BEGINS TO DAYDREAM

At the head of the table is Beverly's dad - looking as young as in her picture of him, but now dressed in the same clothes as Ellen's dad.

And next to him, holding his hand, is Beverly's Mom, but wearing Ellen's Mom's clothes.

They finish praying and both of them look up at Beverly and smile. Beverly beams back at them...

A voice from somewhere far away...

ELLEN'S DAD
Would you like some fish? Beverly?

REALITY

Beverly stares off into space like an idiot--
Everyone stares at her. Ellen taps her on the shoulder.

ELLEN
Beverly?

Beverly snaps to, looks around her--

ELLEN'S DAD
Would you like some fish?

BEVERLY
Uh, yes please.

JUSTIN
Your friend's weird.

ELLEN
At least she isn't afraid of the toilet.

JUSTIN
So.

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - DAY

Beverly has her headphones on. The music is blasting so loud that even we can hear it.

She sings - badly - along.

Gail enters--

GAIL
Would you help me unpack groceries?

BEVERLY
(way too loud)
WHAT?

Gail motions for her to take off the headphones--

GAIL
You're going to ruin your hearing that way.

BEVERLY

What? I can't hear you.

GAIL

Funny. Come help me downstairs.

KITCHEN

Beverly and Gail unpack groceries. Gail hands Beverly an armload of Lunchables...

BEVERLY

If you were going to lose your hearing to one song, what would it be?

GAIL

I wouldn't give up the precious gift of hearing for anything. And definitely not for one song.

BEVERLY

Yeah, but pretend you had to - what song would you want it to be?

GAIL

I can't imagine a situation where I would HAVE to lose my hearing for a song.

BEVERLY

There's this song by this band Bikini Kill called "Carnival." That's the song I'd pick.

GAIL

Why does everything nowadays have to deal with murder? Kill this. Kill that.

BEVERLY

'Cause it's cool.

GAIL

Humph. Unpack that bag over on the counter, will you?

Beverly reaches into the bag--

BEVERLY

Grandma! You got it!

Beaming, she pulls out the bottle of Jasmine and Melon Blossom shampoo.

GAIL

I just thought...we have had that bottle
of Pert Plus for a long time.

Beverly wraps her arms around Gail and squeezes--

BEVERLY

Thankyouthankyouthankyouthankyou!

GAIL

Okay, okay. You're welcome.

BATHROOM

Post-shower. Beverly wipes steam from the mirror. She looks at herself and flips her hair glamorously. Then she smells her hair - AH! Wonderful!

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - MORNING

Beverly comes bounding down the stairs like she's walking on air. She flips her hair dramatically for Gail--

GAIL

Oooh, well don't you smell good.

BEVERLY

No, Grandma. I smell *gorgeous*.

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - LOCKERS

Beverly waits by her locker--

HERE THEY COME

Steven and Donny cruise up and look at Beverly with scorn. Beverly can't help but smile a little--

Trying to look casual, Beverly gives her hair a couple of flips - willing the sweet scent of jasmine and melon blossom to reach the guys--

Donny and Steven look at each other - wtf?

Steven drops one of his books beneath Beverly's locker--

STEVEN

Do you mind, Bev? I'd get it, but - as you might have notice - I no longer have the use of my legs.

Beverly bends over to pick it up - at the same time Donny makes a locker-shaking FART NOISE.

EVERYONE in the hallway turns and looks at Beverly, bent over with Steven's book in her hand.

STEVEN

Oh my GOD! Beverly farted!

DONNY

UGH! It stinks so bad it's burning my eyes.

Donny covers his eyes dramatically--

STEVEN

It's like mustard gas - I can't breath.
Someone save me!

Beverly drops the book. Stands up. And slowly walks away through the laughing crowd. As she walks away--

STEVEN

I think it's melting the plastic on my wheelchair!

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE

Beverly stops at her door, wiping the tears from her face. She takes a breath...

INSIDE

Gail's sitting on the sofa watching TV--

GAIL

Well, there she is. Doesn't you're hair look gorgeous.

Beverly looks like she might cry again, then bolts upstairs leaving Gail looking perplexed.

BATHROOM

Headphones on, angry song blasting - Beverly pours the entire bottle of Jasmine and Melon Blossom shampoo down the drain...

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAYS - DAY

Ellen walks down the hallway, sees Steven and Donny heading toward her and immediately turns backwards - right into two very important words--

THE QUICK

Written in tall silver letters. All Ellen can do is stare - not even noticing the person wearing the shirt on which these important silver letters are written--

NICKY looks down at her - pissed--

NICKY

You done looking at my tits yet?

Ellen looks up at her--

ELLEN

The Quick.

NICKY

Whatever.

Nicky walks away.

Ellen stares after her - speechless - and then breaks into a run the other way.

EXT. FRONT OF THE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Ellen drags Beverly behind her--

BUS LINE

They arrive just in time to see Nicky as she's about to get on the bus. Ellen points--

ELLEN

The Quick!

BEVERLY'S POV:

Nicky turns and through the crowd of people we see her shirt--

THE QUICK written in big silver letters--

And then the letters start to glow brighter and brighter from some mysterious inner light--

THE QUICK

Glowing brightly, shining until those two words are all we can see--

Just as quickly - the glow is gone--

Nicky gets on the bus--

ELLEN

We found it...

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

Nicky is in her permanent seat in the corner, in her permanent posture - head down, scribbling in a notebook.

Beverly heads toward the open desk next to her--

But ANOTHER STUDENT sits down right in front of her. Looking a little lost, she heads toward another seat--

TEACHER

Okay, class - who would like to read some poetry today?

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

School's out. People wander this way and that. Some wait for the bus. Some just wait.

ACROSS THE STREET

Nicky, dressed all in black, smoking by herself.

BEVERLY AND ELLEN

Sit in the grass making a daisy chain. They keep their eyes on Nicky.

ELLEN

You can't just go talk to her. She's like a wild animal. You have to start slow. Build trust first.

BEVERLY

I think she's just lonely. People hate her even more than they hate us.

ELLEN

Yeah, but she doesn't care. She hates them back.

Beverly puts on her daisy chain with authority. Ellen puts on hers too.

BEVERLY

Be bold. Go for the gold.

ELLEN

What?

BEVERLY

To get the gold, you have to be bold.
It's from my calendar.

(a big wave to Nicky)

Hi!

Nicky stops - looks at them. She takes a drag and crosses the street.

ELLEN

She's coming!

BEVERLY

I told you. Be cool.

They arrange their daisy chains. Nicky stops in front of them - a Queen before peasants--

NICKY

Cool daisy chains.

BEVERLY

Thanks. I can make you one if you want.
Once I made one that was like three feet long and--

NICKY

I was kidding. It doesn't look cool.
You look like a couple of chumps.

BEVERLY

Oh.

NICKY

If you two lesbos keep staring at me I'm gonna knock your heads off.

BEVERLY

Okay.

Nicky flicks her cigarette between the two girls - they dodge out of its way. Nicky takes one last moment to register disgust and turns to walk away--

When she's safely out of reach--

ELLEN

She's like a bear. You've just got to find the right bait.

Nicky reaches her smoking spot and lights up another. Beverly notices the shirt she's wearing today - CHEAP TRICK.

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAYS

Beverly sneaks down the empty hallway between classes. She reaches the door of a classroom and waits--

A beat.

The BELL RINGS--

And the class begins to empty. Beverly forces her way through the oncoming crowd and into the classroom--

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Enter Nicky--

An empty classroom - except for the corner, next to Nicky's seat, where Beverly sits and waits. Nicky goes over and sits down. Beverly starts to say something--

NICKY

If you talk to me I'll knock your head off.

LATER

The class is full. The Teacher reads off a list--

TEACHER

Lisa Moser, Michael Ottinger, Nicole Cruz. You are the lucky three who still need to share your poems with the class.

As each name is read - the corresponding student winces and puts their head a little further down.

Nicky stops drawing and tries to will herself invisible.

TEACHER

So which one of you would like to read something today?

A beat. Silence.

The Teacher looks at each of the three condemned students one by one - the weight of his gaze making them shrink down even more--

And then Nicky makes the fatal mistake - she looks up and makes eye contact--

TEACHER

Ni--

Beverly's hand shoots up--

BEVERLY

Is it okay if I read another poem?

TEACHER

Well, this is a first. Sure, Beverly, I don't see why not.

Beverly stands up - looks at Nicky pointedly--

BEVERLY

This poem is called "Surrender."

(looks at her paper)

Whatever happened to all this season's losers of the year? Every time I got to thinking, where'd they disappear? When I woke up, Mom and Dad are rolling on the couch. Rolling numbers, rock and rollin', got my Kiss records out. Mommy's alright, Daddy's alright, they just seem a little weird. Surrender, surrender, but don't give yourself away.

The Teacher gives a polite little clap--

TEACHER

That was very cool Beverly. Just, uh, really cool. And that poem was about...?

BEVERLY

Cheap Trick.

Nicky looks at her and for the first time and...smiles.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - SMOKERS CORNER - DAY

Nicky hands Beverly a cigarette.

ACROSS THE STREET

Ellen watches - but tries to look like she's not watching.

NICKY

Takes a drag. Hands the lighter to Beverly. Beverly looks nervous--

BEVERLY

I think I'll save mine for later.

NICKY

Later, like when?

BEVERLY

When I take a bath. I like to have a bubble bath and, uh, smoke and stuff and just relax.

Nicky laughs--

NICKY

You're really weird.

BEVERLY

Yeah, I know.

NICKY

I like it though. Usually I'm the weirdo.

She takes another drag.

NICKY

I can't believe you like Cheap Trick. They're so underrated. "Surrender" is like one of the greatest rock songs of all time.

BEVERLY

Yeah.

Motioning toward Ellen across the street--

NICKY

So why have you and your friend been,
like, stalking me?

BEVERLY

Well...we just thought you look like you
know a lot about music.

NICKY

Kind of. I guess.

BEVERLY

Have you heard of a band called The
Quick?

EXT. NICKY'S HOUSE - DAY

The white-trash part of town. A white-trash house. A
car in the yard. Beer cans decorating the shrubs.

A LOUD roar comes from inside the garage--

BEVERLY

Sounds like something is dying in your
garage.

NICKY

Kind of.

She lifts up the garage door--

FOUR SQUINTING HARDCORE KIDS blink at them like rats
exposed after lifting up a crate.

NICKY'S BROTHER

Whattya think you're doing, slut bag!?

NICKY

Showin' my friend what a crappy band
looks like!

NICKY'S BROTHER

You better shut your mouth or I'll knock
your head off, slut!

He slams the garage door back down--

NICKY

(into the garage door)
I'll knock YOUR head off, dildo breath.

Then calmly to Beverly--

NICKY

Come on, my records are inside.

INT. NICKY'S ROOM - DAY

Walls covered in Skull drawings - some with hearts for eyes, some with wings, one with horns, another with a halo...

Nicky digs through a crate of records.

From the garage the painful sound of Nicky's brother's band starts again--

BEVERLY

How can boys so cute make music so bad?

NICKY

You don't know much about music, do you?
Cute boys are responsible for the
majority of awful music in this world.

Gets to the end of her records--

NICKY

That asshole. He stole my goddamn
record.

She looks out her door like a spy going on some secret
mission - glances one way then the other--

NICKY

I have to go into my brother's room to
get the record. Keep a look-out okay?
If he comes in just yell or something.

Nicky sneaks into her brother's room, leaving Beverly
alone in the living room.

She looks over the spoon collection - spoons from all
fifty states. Next she surveys the snow-globe collection
- again, one from each state.

KYLE

Who the hell are you?

BEVERLY

Um...NICKY!

A rustling in Kyle's room. Nicky emerges with the record
in her hand--

KYLE
Whattya doin' in my room!

NICKY
Gettin' my record that you stole!

KYLE
That's my record!

He grabs her in a headlock and takes her down to the ground.

NICKY
Stop! You're gonna break the record!

Kyle lets her up. Nicky hands the record to Beverly, standing there in shock--

NICKY
Hold this while I kick his ass.

She turns and runs at him, tackling him to the ground. Kyle grabs her by the hair and pulls her off of him--

NICKY'S DAD (O.S.)
What the hell do you two think you're doing?

NICKY'S DAD - a burly construction worker stares down on the two kids. Kyle and Nicky look up guiltily - still locked in combat.

NICKY'S DAD
How many times I gotta tell you two?
This ain't a honky-tonk bar - if you're gonna fight there's gonna be rules. No hair pullin'. No bitin'. And no punchin' in the face. Now get up.

Kyle and Nicky get up. Dad acts as referee.

NICKY'S DAD
Okay...fight!

Nicky looks over Kyle's shoulder--

NICKY
Hey, Mom.

Kyle looks back--BAM! Nicky nails him with a swift knee to the groin. Down he goes in a groaning pile--

KYLE
(groaning)
She cheated.

NICKY'S DAD
Oh, christ, Kyle. She's your little
sister. Quit bein' a goddamn baby.
(to Nicky)
Get over here and give your old dad a hug
before I knock your head off.

Nicky gives her dad a hug and he kisses her on the head.
Beverly just stands there, still frozen with awe.

DINNER TABLE

NICKY'S MOM, still in her waitress outfit, drops a plate
of soggy fishsticks on the table. Beverly watches Nicky's
Mom as she lights up a cigarette.

Suddenly Nicky's Mom and Dad are replaced by Beverly's
Mom and Dad looking, for the most part, like they did in
the picture - but just a little trashier...

BEVERLY'S MOM
Christ, I'm tired.

BEVERLY'S DAD
Too tired to give your old man a little
sugar?

He puts a fish-stick in his mouth - sticking halfway out -
and leans toward Mom a la Lady and the Tramp.

BEVERLY'S MOM
Aw Christ. You're disgusting.

She turns away and he leans in closer. She smiles coyly--

BEVERLY'S DAD
Come on now, sugar. Give me a little
fish-stick kiss...

BEVERLY'S MOM
Geez-us. Fine.

She turns and takes a bite of the soggy fish-stick. He
bites until their lips meet and...

They kiss - obviously still very much in love.

NICKY (O.S.)

I'm sorry you have to see this - they're totally gross.

The spell breaks - Beverly's Mom and Dad are gone. Beverly snaps back to reality looking a little dazed, a little sad...

BEVERLY

I don't mind.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Ellen and Beverly meet by her locker--

ELLEN

So then what?

Beverly shrugs--

BEVERLY

She put the song on a tape for me.

ELLEN

Holy crap! I can't believe you're friends with like the most bad-ass girl in school. No one will mess with us now.

On cue--

Donny and Steven roll up. They all hold their noses as they approach the locker next to Beverly's. Beverly and Ellen instinctively drop their heads like puppies before the alpha male--

And then Nicky arrives--

NICKY

Hey.

Nicky looks at Beverly - looks at Donny and Steven - still holding their noses.

NICKY

Do I smell?

She smells her pits - makes a disgusted face.

NICKY

Oh my god, my B.O. smells like sausage.
I guess that's what happens when you
don't shower for like a week.

(to Beverly and Ellen)

You guys wanna come over after school?

INT. NICKY'S ROOM

The music blasting. Nicky puts the finishing touches on
Beverly - dark black eyeliner. The record ends--

NICKY

Don't move.

Nicky flips the record. The hum and scratch begins.
Ellen comes in dressed all in black - heavy make-up and
hair-sprayed hair.

The music kicks in again--

BEVERLY

Can I move yet?

NICKY

No!

Nicky goes back to Beverly's make-up.

NICKY

Don't blink.

BEVERLY

I have to.

Ellen touches her hair--

ELLEN

I can't move my hair.

NICKY

Okay, finished.

IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR - LATER

Beverly, Ellen and Nicky. All dressed in Nicky's clothes
and in Nicky's style. All black, dark make-up, wild
hair. On Beverly the clothes are a little too tight. On
Ellen a little too baggy.

ELLEN
We look so bad-ass

EXT. NICKY'S GARAGE - DAY

Ellen sits behind the drum kit with Beverly on guitar and Nicky on bass.

BEVERLY
Are you sure we won't get in trouble?

NICKY
Don't worry. My brother's at work. His band doesn't even practice today.

Nicky puts her finger on the boombox.

NICKY
You ready?

The other two nod. Nicky presses play--

Bikini Kill's "Carnival" blasts from the speakers. The girls pretend to play along...

INT. THE NORTHTOWN MALL - DAY

A Saturday at the mall. Crowded with kids, parents, eaters, shoppers, wanderers - the works.

Gail and Beverly make their way through the crowds towards--

SEARS

Gail holds up a yellow sweater - exactly like the blue one that Beverly has on and a perfect, though smaller, version of the red one Gail is wearing.

GAIL
This is nice.

BEVERLY
It's just like the one I have on.

GAIL
No, it's not. This one is yellow.

Beverly moves down the endless rows of clothes - looking totally uninterested. Gail picks out another shirt--

GAIL

This is pretty.

Beverly's not so sure...

INT. MALL - PRETZEL PALACE

Gail and Beverly are busy people watching while munching pretzels.

GAIL

We could try JC Penny's next.

BEVERLY

Do you think we could go to a new store instead?

HOT TOPIC

Gail follows Beverly into the land of black clothing and fishnets. The GOTHs, the MALL PUNKS and NEO-RAVERS barely manage a sneer of acknowledgement.

A stranger in a strange land.

She catches the eye of ANOTHER PARENTAL FIGURE and they share a quick desperate "How did we end up here?" look.

Beverly picks up a black shirt with a skull and crossbones on it. Gail grimaces.

Beverly picks up a dog collar with spikes on it - fastens it around her neck. Gail is about to say something - but Beverly quickly puts it down.

She stops in front of a row of shirts. All of them black. Beverly grabs a black shirt with a fish skeleton on it and writing that says, "Spawn 'til you Die'.

Beverly holds it up for Gail.

BEVERLY

Can I get this one?

GAIL

"Spawn 'til you die."

Gail's face says it all - absolutely not.

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door SLAMS. Beverly stomps through the living room. Gail walks behind her, carrying a JC Penny's bag.

BEVERLY

I can't do anything I want!

GAIL

You can do lots of things. But wearing a t-shirt about sex is not one of them.

Gail pulls out the yellow sweater, holds it up and admires it.

GAIL

I don't see what's so wrong with this sweater. It's nice.

BEVERLY

I don't wanna wear a stupid sweater. I wanna dress cool

GAIL

I think sweaters are very cool.

BEVERLY

I hate sweaters! I hate yellow!

Gail puts the sweater back in the bag - holds the bag out to Beverly.

GAIL

Well, as long as you are living in my house and I'm paying for your clothes, you'll wear yellow sweaters. You look very pretty in it.

Beverly takes the bag - still fuming--

BEVERLY

GAWD! It's like living in a prison.

GAIL

Tuna Helper or Sloppy Joes?

BEVERLY

It's not fair!

Grandma heads toward the kitchen.

GAIL
Tuna Helper it is.

KITCHEN

Grandma dumps a small box of Tuna Helper mix into a pot. Beverly bursts into the kitchen, still not ready to give up--

BEVERLY
Nicky's parents let her wear anything she wants.

GAIL
Hand me the tuna.

Beverly opens a cupboard - pulls out a can of tuna fish.

BEVERLY
She said in 3rd grade her parents let her wear her vampire costume from Halloween everyday for a year.

GAIL
If you'd like to wear your Hermione costume from a few years ago you can go right ahead. All of those Harry Potter characters wear very nice sweaters.

BEVERLY
It's not funny grandma!

GAIL
I'm sorry, Beverly, but I'm not letting my daughter dress like a vampire or a punk or a "gothic".

BEVERLY
I'm not your daughter.

For the first time Grandma looks up from her pot of tuna helper.

GAIL
What?

BEVERLY
I'm not your daughter. You called me your daughter.

Grandma looks back down.

GAIL

Well, you're acting just like her.

BEVERLY

I wouldn't know. You threw away all her stuff and anytime I try to ask about her you run out the room and cry.

Gail stops stirring - doesn't move for a long painful beat. Beverly's gone too far and she knows it.

BEVERLY

I'm sor--

GAIL

(quietly)

Set the table. We're almost ready to eat.

DINNER TABLE - LATER

Beverly sits at the table. Grandma scoops out a pile of tuna helper and drops it on her plate, then puts a scoop on her own plate and sits down.

Silence. Grandma stares down at her plate. Beverly takes a little bite.

BEVERLY

It's good.

Grandma stands up.

GAIL

Clean up when you're done.

And she heads up the stairs, the tears already coming. Beverly sits at the table looking miserable with her steaming heap of tuna helper in front of her.

INT. BEVERLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beverly sits wide-eyed in bed with the muted sounds of Grandma sobbing in another room...

ROOM - MORNING

THUD!

Beverly springs up from bed. Gail stands in the middle of her room with the box at her feet.

GAIL

You want to know about your parents?
Here you go. Everything they left is in this little box.

Gail goes to leave--

BEVERLY

Grandma?

GAIL

Hm?

BEVERLY

I'm sorry.

Gail closes the door without responding, leaving Beverly with a treasure trove of clues.

LATER

Nicky draws a tattoo heart on Ellen's arm. Ellen pulls a Nirvana shirt out of the box and Nicky grabs it from her.

NICKY

Your parents were so fucking cool! The only band T-shirt my dad has is Lynyrd Skynyrd

Ellen pulls out some pictures--

ELLEN

Your dad was so cute. And your mom was so pretty.

Beverly, wearing the infamous yellow sweater, flips through a journal full of pictures cut out from magazines, drawings, writings--

BEVERLY

I know. I don't know what happened to me.

Flips to a page with a pressed flower. Another page with a concert ticket.

Ellen pulls out a can of creamed corn--

ELLEN

Why would your parents have creamed corn?

Beverly shrugs--

BEVERLY

Creamed corn's good.

Ellen keeps digging through the box. Nicky keeps drawing the tattoo and Beverly--

BEVERLY

I found it!

ELLEN

What?

NICKY

Dude, you messed up my tattoo.

BEVERLY

The song. I know what the song is!

Beverly pulls out her song list--

BEVERLY

(reading)

"The song that always reminds me of our first date at Riverfront Park". It's in here! "April 17th - first date with Zach. Smoked out and listened to Itchycoo Park. We kissed and ran around like a couple of dorks. I know it's lame and I kind of hate myself for saying it, but I think I'm actually in love."

ELLEN

Itchycoo Park? What kind of song is that?

BEVERLY

Dunno. We'll find out when we listen to it.

NICKY

We can do more than that. You wanna know about your parents, right?

Nicky pulls a pair of hipster sunglasses out of the box--

NICKY

You have to live like they lived.

ELLEN
Eat the creamed corn?

NICKY
Yeah, eat the creamed corn. No, you guys! We get this song. We get some pot. And we go to the park. Just like Bev's parents did.

Beverly and Ellen look less than enthused--

BEVERLY
Where would we get pot?

NICKY
Easy. I grow it in my closet.

ELLEN
Are you serious?

NICKY
No, I'm kidding.
(beat)
My brother grows it in his closet. We just have to ask him.

SMOKER'S CORNER

Nicky, wearing Beverly's mom's Nirvana shirt, takes one last puff and throws her cigarette to the ground. Ellen puts Beverly's mom's sunglasses on--

Beverly walks up - a girl on a mission.

BEVERLY
Ready?

NICKY AND ELLEN
Ready.

INT. PIZZA COURT - DAY

The three girls walk in nervously. It's a generic take-out pizza place with one booth at the front.

ELLEN
It's like 110 degrees in here.

She wipes some sweat from her head--

NICKY

You guys got your money?

Ellen and Beverly hand over a wad of cash.

NICKY

Okay, I'll be right back.

Nicky disappears into the kitchen leaving a nervous Ellen and Beverly behind.

ELLEN

I feel like we're in a TV show.

A beat.

ELLEN

If this were Cops they'd be waiting just outside and then as soon as the money is exchanged they'd bust in 'cause that's when you're officially guilty. As soon as the money changes hands.

A beat. Ellen and Beverly look at each other. Then they both look out the window to see if anyone is standing outside.

Nobody.

NICKY (O.S.)

Why do you always have to be such an asshole? Screw you, Kyle!

Nicky comes marching out of the kitchen--

BEVERLY

Did you get it?

NICKY

No. He wants you to ask.

BEVERLY

Me?

Nicky hands her the money--

NICKY

It's fine. Just make sure you say, "No stems, no seeds."

She pushes Beverly towards the back room. She looks back at them like, "Please save me..."

NICKY
No stems, no seeds.

BACKROOM

A GROUP OF SWEATY BOYS sit on buckets in their pizza uniforms. "Straight out of Compton" is blasting from a stereo--

Beverly timidly steps into their midst--

KYLE
You want something?

BEVERLY
(barely audible)
I want to buy some pot.

KYLE
I'm sorry, I can't hear you. Can you speak up a little?

BEVERLY
I'd like some pot please.

KYLE
No problem. Tim, get this girl some pot.

Tim, a mohawked sycophant, grabs a pot out of the sink and hands it to Beverly. Everyone laughs like it's the funniest thing they've ever seen.

Beverly stands there with the pot for a second--

BEVERLY
Um...

KYLE
You need something else?

BEVERLY
Um, yeah. I'd like to buy some, um, marijuana.

KYLE
Oh! That's what you meant by pot!

All the guys snicker at each other.

KYLE
Well, what are you willing to give us for the marijuana?

Beverly holds out the wad of cash.

KYLE

I'm afraid that's the man's currency there. You're in Pizza Court land now - we don't accept the man's currency here.

Beverly thinks about it--

BEVERLY

What do you accept?

KYLE

How about you tell us one of your fantasies.

Beverly looks around at all the snickering faces-

BEVERLY

My fantasy?

KYLE

Yeah, tell us something really filthy and I might let you have some pot.

Beverly thinks, really thinks about it - and then she remembers.

BEVERLY

Sometimes when I see a big bowl of pudding I wanna put my face in it.

TIM

You too?! Do you ever wanna just take off your pants and sit in a cake? Sometimes when I see a big cake with lots of frosting I just wanna sit in it.

BEVERLY

Yeah! Totally! Once after Thanksgiving I took the old gravy out of the refrigerator and it was all jiggly and I wanted to put my feet in it so bad and I almost did, but then my Grandma came in and yelled at me and--

KYLE

Okay! Okay...what did I tell you Tim?

TIM

What?

KYLE

I told you can't make friends with everyone, man. These are the streets, dog. Geeze.

Tim shrugs--

KYLE

Where's your money?

Beverly holds up the wad of cash. Kyle goes and grabs the biggest bag of pot we've ever seen - a quarter of a pound at least.

BEVERLY

(barely audible)

No stems no seeds.

KYLE

What?

BEVERLY

No stems no seeds.

Kyle rips the money out of her hand.

KYLE

Just be happy I'm giving you anything.

Kyle turns and gives Tim a dirty look.

TIM

What? I'm sorry, man. I couldn't help it.

EXT. RIVERFRONT PARK - DAY

At the edge of the park a large rusted sign that reads:

"World Expo 1974: Spokane, Washington"

Around the park are the rusted Expo leftovers. An ancient looking merry-go-round. A huge pavilion. Gondola's gliding over the Spokane river. Huge metal sculpture butterflies.

And another leftover--

THE GIANT RED WAGON

The handle is a slide. Underneath are monkey bars. In the back is a ladder leading up into the wagon--

INSIDE

Ellen finishes rolling the biggest, messiest looking joint we've ever seen.

BEVERLY

How do you know how to do that?

ELLEN

Wikipedia.

She hands it out to Beverly--

BEVERLY

You rolled it. You should go first.

NICKY

Yeah, but this is for your parents. You should go first.

Ellen nods. Beverly takes the joint.

BEVERLY

What do I do?

Ellen takes out a paper from her backpack--

ELLEN

I printed out directions.

(reading)

"Light the joint. Inhale and hold. Then slowly exhale the marijuana smoke."

Beverly takes the joint and carefully obeys the instructions. She lights it. She sucks on it. She holds the smoke in--

Ellen and Nicky watch as Beverly holds it and holds it. And then Beverly lets it out - coughing, hacking, and gagging.

NICKY

How was it?

Still coughing - Beverly gives a "thumbs up."

CUT TO:

LATER

A finger presses play on the boom-box. "Itchycoo Park" starts to play. Beverly hands the joint to Nicky.

Nicky takes a drag and then passes it to Ellen. Ellen takes a drag--

BEVERLY
I like this song. It's happy.

The music carries over to--

DOWN THE SLIDE

Comes Beverly followed by Nicky and then Ellen.

CUT TO:

UNDERNEATH THE WAGON

All three girls hang from the monkey bars upside down, laughing and laughing and laughing--

As the music carries over to--

UPSIDE DOWN VIEW

Of Beverly's parents.

A blanket laid out. A boom-box next to them. The couple plays hacky-sack. Beverly's Mom is awful. Every time the hacky-sack comes to her she flails her leg awkwardly. She tries again, falls forward into Beverly's dad. He catches her in his arms and they look at each other shyly. She pulls away, picks up the hacky-sack--

BACK ON BEVERLY

Smiling, still hanging upside down...

INSIDE THE WAGON

The girls lay on their backs looking up at the sky--

BEVERLY'S POV: A cloud in the shape of a heart. She holds her parents picture up against the heart...

BEVERLY
Do you think my parents would have liked me?

ELLEN
All parents like their kids. They can't help it.

NICKY

Not mine.

BEVERLY

No. I mean if I wasn't their kid. If they just met me.

Nicky takes the picture and looks at it--

NICKY

Probably not. They look too cool for you.

BEVERLY

Do you think they can see me? I mean, from wherever they are?

NICKY

I saw this show where this dude talks to people's dead relatives. But only if their name starts with the right letter. What were your parents names?

BEVERLY

Zach and Erica.

NICKY

Hmm...he doesn't usually do Z and E. He does like M and A and stuff like that.

Another beat while they stare at the sky.

BEVERLY

(rambling in a stoned way)
It's weird because I never really knew them. But I feel like I know them. But not in any way I can explain, you know?

NICKY

Um, what?

BEVERLY

And then I feel so close to them. But they're not here. I mean they're dead. But maybe they're looking down at me right now, right? I mean, maybe they're protecting me and watching me.

NICKY

Like ghosts?

BEVERLY

No. Like...like...guardian angels or something.

Ellen's been laying there silently with her eyes closed the entire time. Suddenly they fly open--

ELLEN

The Fighting Mullets.

NICKY

What?

ELLEN

Our school mascot should be the Fighting Mullets.

A beat.

BEVERLY

That is freaking rad!

NICKY

That is way more bad-ass than a stupid spotted owl or wildcat.

ELLEN

We'll make buttons and posters.

NICKY

I could draw it.

BEVERLY

How did you even think of that?

ELLEN

I just closed my eyes and I pictured James Polk and his amazing Presidential mullet.

BEVERLY

That is so rad.

From below them--

VOICE (O.S.)

This is the police! Stay where you are!

The three girls sit up--

Then Kyle climbs up the slide and into the wagon--

NICKY

Why do you have to be such a dick all the time?

KYLE

Same reason you have to be ugly all the time - I was just born that way.

His Pizza buddies follow him into the wagon--

KYLE

So how was that weed we sold you guys?

NICKY

Fine, I guess. It was a little schwaggy though.

Kyle and the pizza crew laugh.

KYLE

Oh yeah? You guys get pretty high?

ELLEN

(best stoner voice)
Yeah. We got stoned out of our freakin' minds.

They all laugh again.

KYLE

Really?

He snatches the bag of pot from them. He opens it and smells it--

KYLE

That's really weird 'cause what I sold you wasn't pot. It was oregano.

Now the pizza crew is really laughing.

PIZZA GUY

You guys should really be careful. Oregano is a gateway drug. Next thing you know you'll be free-basing nutmeg.

NICKY

You're such a dick, Kyle!

KYLE

Yeah, but not dick enough to sell pot to my little sister.

The crew starts sliding back down the slide--

KYLE

Later, losers.

And he slides down the slide too, leaving the girls alone in the wagon.

EXT. PARK - SUNSET

The girls are walking out of the park as the sun goes down--

ELLEN

It really felt like we were high. Do you think you can get high from oregano?

NICKY

I don't think so.

ELLEN

I was definitely high.

NICKY

You're always high.

BEVERLY

I think we were just happy.

The girls keep walking as the sun slips down the hills behind them leaving an explosion of sunset colors...

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beverly opens the journal with the list of things about her parents - below "allergic to kittens" she writes--

Pot in the park

Then she thinks about it - scribbles it out and writes--

Happy in the park

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Empty. Silent.

Gail folds laundry.

THE STAIRS

UP with a basket of laundry to

BEVERLY'S ROOM

All of Beverly's parents' things are laid out and organized. Clothes in one pile. Band posters in another. Pictures in another pile. There's one pile that's just the empty pack of cigarettes and the can of creamed corn.

Gail picks up a shirt. A picture.

Then she sees the song list on Beverly's dresser. The songs Beverly's found are highlighted - well over half the songs now.

Gail passes over the next song to be found...

"Love is a Noose - Toboggan Accident"

She frowns. Then she notices the last song on the list.

GAIL
Parental unit's happy song.

DOWNSTAIRS

The door opens - voices--

Gail

Sets the laundry basket down, puts the list back on the dresser--

DOWNSTAIRS

Beverly, Nicky and Ellen - arms full of papers, boxes--

GAIL
What's all this?

The three girls look up at Gail guiltily - they're up to something.

BEVERLY
School project.

GAIL

Oh. Good.

BEVERLY

We're going to work on it in the basement.

GAIL

I'll make some snacks.

BEVERLY

No thanks, Grandma. We just ate at Ellen's.

The girls continue to the basement--

GAIL

Oh. Okay.

BASEMENT

Nicky puts the finishing touches on a poster - she holds it up--

NICKY

What do you guys think?

A picture of a mullet - with two fists raised like a boxer ready to spar with some invisible foe.

Above the drawing she has written "James K. Polk Junior High" and below "The Fighting Mullets."

BEVERLY

Rad.

ELLEN

Totally rad.

Ellen presses a button on a button maker.

ELLEN

Do you think 100 buttons are enough?

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAYS

Close on a Fighting Mullets button--

We PULL OUT--

Just about every student in sight has one of the buttons on--

BEVERLY, ELLEN AND NICKY

Walk down the hall - people say "Hi," complimenting them on the buttons--

NICKY

I think we're going to need more buttons.

They finally walk by a "Fighting Mullets" poster on the wall in between a "Spotted Owl" poster and a "Wildcat" poster.

INT. ELLEN'S ROOM - DAY

Ellen at her computer. Beverly sits behind her--

ELLEN

Found it. "Love is a Noose" by Toboggan Accident.

BEVERLY

Sweet!

She highlights the song on the song listing.

ON THE COMPUTER

A picture of the LEAD SINGER appears--

BEVERLY

I've seen that guy!

Beverly digs through her bag - pulls out her mom's journal. Flips through it until she gets to a picture of her mom and the Lead Singer. She holds it up against the computer. He's older, but it's definitely him.

ELLEN

He still has the same haircut.

BEVERLY

What else does it say about the band?

Ellen types--

ELLEN

Umm...they broke up. It's called "The Wes Kelly Band."

A beat.

ELLEN

They're actually playing in Olympia in like a week at some place called...The Voyeur.

BEVERLY

We have to go. I mean, he knew my mom. We have to go.

ELLEN

I don't think our parents are going to drive all the way to Olympia so we can see a punk band at a bar called The Voyeur.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

The three girls walk in--

ANTI

Wonderful. It's my best customer and she's brought another stray with her.

Beverly just walks right past him and the other girls follow--

BEVERLY

Hi, Anti.

ELLEN

Hi, Anti.

NICKY

Hi.

ANTI

Are you guys forming a street gang now?

He gives them a quick once-over.

ANTI

I suppose you've come with another esoteric music request that only I can fulfill. Should I carve it into stone for you - or have you finally entered the 20th century?

BEVERLY

I wanted to ask you something.

ANTI

Well, I'm your slave aren't I? Here to serve your every need. So go ahead, please. This should be great.

BEVERLY

Do you know the Wes Kelly Band?

ANTI

Maybe. Why?

BEVERLY

We need a ride to their show in Olympia on Saturday.

ANTI

Ha.

ELLEN

Please.

ANTI

Ha.

BEVERLY

Is that a yes?

ANTI

Ha.

NICKY

I don't think he's going to do it.

ANTI

I like your friend. She's very smart. Very quick.

The girls spread out.

ANTI

What? What are you doing? This is supposed to be the part where you go outside and cry.

They start going through the records - each in a different section.

ANTI

What is this? What are you doing?

BEVERLY

Just looking.

ANTI

Just looking? That's what we have windows for. When you come inside, the object is to buy something.

BEVERLY

Maybe I will.

Anti eyes them suspiciously.

A HIP CUSTOMER comes in. Beverly turns and looks at Anti. Their eyes narrow like two boxers going head to head...

Then Beverly turns and nods to Nicky. Nicky nods back--

NICKY

Oh my god! Here's that Britney Spears album! Oh my god!

Ellen and Beverly run to her side screaming. The Hip Customer freezes - grimaces - and then heads for the door.

The three girls look innocently at Anti.

ANTI

I don't even carry Britney Spears in this store.

NICKY

Oh, you're right. This is Slayer. My bad.

ANTI

You dare try to hustle me in my own store?

The girls spread out again--

BEVERLY

What do you mean?

ANTI

Out. All of you out before I call the police.

BEVERLY

For looking for a Britney Spears album?

NICKY

Gee, I wonder who's side they'll take when they get here?

ANOTHER HIPSTER enters--

The two gunfighters meet eyes - neither even blinks.

BEVERLY

Have you found it yet, Ellen?

ELLEN

Oh my god - here's that Jessica Simpson album!!

The three girls run over screaming--

NICKY

Oh my god, Jessica Simpson!

The HIPSTER just stares in shock--

BEVERLY

(to the Hipster)

We can't help it. We never got a chance to be exposed to any other kind of music.

The guy walks out--

ANTI

I thought teenage girls were supposed to be sweet.

The girls just stare back - as sweet as they can.

BEVERLY

It's important, Anti. Please?

Defeated.

ANTI

What time should I pick you ladies up?

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A window opens. A figure climbs out the window followed by another and then another. Three silhouettes run across the yard and down the street...

ANTI'S CAR

Parked under a street lamp. Anti leans against it in the coolest pose he can muster--

THE CAR

Looks like it's been pieced together from three other slightly less crappy cars.

ANTI
All teeny-boppers in the backseat.

INT. ANTI'S CAR - NIGHT

While the outside looks like recycled garbage - the inside, specifically the stereo, looks like something from a sci-fi movie. The stereo itself is probably worth 10 times the price of the car.

ELLEN
Are you aware that this middle seatbelt is broken?

Anti turns up his stereo - lights flicker, speakers pound.

NICKY
Are you aware that your car smells like mushrooms?

Anti turns up the stereo even more - drowning out the girls...

CUT TO:

CAR - LATER

The highway scenery zooms by. An album ends. Anti starts looking for a new song on his stereo.

NICKY
How about one of Bev's songs now?

ANTI
Sorry, children. This car does not come with a tape player.

ELLEN
I have some of them on my ipod.

Begrudgingly--

ANTI
Okay, what song?

ELLEN
Just play the album marked Bev.

A song begins: something melancholy and beautiful and it's like the entire world is moving to the beat of the song--

The street lights pass overhead to the beat of the drums--

Nicky moving her hand out the window against the wind seems to move to the sound of the guitars--

A couple in a car passing by seem to be singing the lyrics to one another--

As the song reaches its climax, Ellen yawns widely along with the roar of the song.

CUT TO:

LATER - STILL IN THE CAR

Now it's a fast paced song - something bursting with energy. Everyone sings along as loud and as happy as they can - even Anti...

And then Beverly IMAGINES:

It's her parents in the front seat singing along. They smile back at her. Mom plays air guitar while her Dad drums on the steering wheel.

Beverly returns to REALITY:

She's beaming and Nicky is screaming the lyrics at the top of her lungs, with Ellen convulsing with laughter and Anti cranking up the volume...

EXT. THE VOYEUR - NIGHT

The roar of guitar feedback inside--

The girls follow Anti through a smattering of hipsters and rockers smoking and talking outside the club.

BEVERLY

(nervously, to Nicky)

Is this your first concert?

NICKY

No.

BEVERLY

It's mine.

NICKY

Yeah, I know.

Anti walks up to the doorman--

ANTI

Tommmy!

TOMMY is an old-time rocker. He hasn't been sober since the nineties and his appearance reflects it--

TOMMY

Holy shit! Anti? I haven't seen you in, like, five years.

ANTI

Try fifteen.

TOMMY

What the fuck, man?

ANTI

Yeah. I've been out of the scene. Cleaned up, all that.

TOMMMY

Geeze, man. I'm sorry. That's too bad.
(looking at the girls)
Are those yours, dude?

ANTI

Yeah. These are my triplets. Keep an eye on them for me, will you?

TOMMY

Yeah, of course. Enjoy the show, man.

BEVERLY

Anti!

ANTI

Yes, dearest daughter.

BEVERLY

You can't just leave us here.

ANTI

You wanted a ride. So here you are. Now I'm going to go enjoy myself.

The first chords of some song begin and people start filing inside.

Cigarettes are flung, conversations dropped in mid-sentence - and within a minute the girls are the only ones still outside.

Tommy looks at the girls.

TOMMY

So you dudes are sisters?

NICKY

Uh, yeah, genius, us dudes are sisters.

LATER

The music blasts from the building. The walls thump, the windows shake. The three girls sit by the front door.

ELLEN

If you put your face against the wall and put your palms out like this--
(she demonstrates)
It's almost like you're inside.

Nicky rolls her eyes--

NICKY

Fuck this.
(to Tommy)
Don't be a drag, dude. Just let us in.

TOMMY

I can't...

NICKY

Come on, just for a second. We'll just stand inside the door.

He's giving in--

ALL THREE GIRLS

Pleeeeaaaaase?

TOMMY

Alright, fine. But just for a second.

Tommy takes a quick look around - the coast is clear. He opens the door and ushers the girls inside, shutting the door behind them.

He counts to three in his head and opens the door again.

TOMMY

Okay, second's up--

But the girls are no longer there.

INT. CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The girls navigate their way through the bodies to the front of the stage. The music blares on - a deafening onslaught of white noise. Finally they get close enough so they can actually see the band.

The band hammers on their instruments indiscriminately. The singer lurches across the stage, screaming into the mic. At one point it comes unplugged, but he just keeps screaming. He trips over a case of beer at the edge of the stage.

The girls glance at each other - Is this music?

Suddenly the band stops, but it's unclear if it's the end of the song or a mistake.

SINGER
(to audience)
Fuck you. Fuck you very much.

Then the noise starts up again. Nicky turns to Beverly.

NICKY
Is that the guy?

BEVERLY
I hope not.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The area is deserted except for the band's van. The girls stake out the back entrance, hoping to spot the singer.

The door opens revealing a couple of guys from the band carry an amp. Neither of them are the singer. The three girls approach them.

BEVERLY
Hey, uh, hey...

They start loading their stuff into the van - totally unaware of Beverly-

NICKY
Hey!

The band members both look up at once.

DRUMMER

Sorry girls. You're a little young for me.

NICKY

Wow. That was gross. Actually we're looking for the singer.

BASSIST

Yeah, they usually are.

Pounds on the side of the van. The Lead Singer's angry voice from inside--

WES (O.S.)

What!?

BASSIST

Some girls to see you.

The side door to the van slides open. Bassist motions inside--

BASSIST

Well, ladies - this is where the magic happens.

The three girls look at the open door warily.

INT. THE VAN - CONTINUOUS

The girls peak in--

One of those extra big vans with multiple rows of seats. Wes is in the very back--

WES

It's okay. Don't be shy. Party's back here, ladies. Come in, let me get a look at you.

The girls climb in.

WES

You. The Asian one. Come here.

Ellen looks at Nicky--

ELLEN

Um...

NICKY

Listen, dude. We're not here to bob your knob or anything. My friend has a picture of you she wants you to look at.

Beverly holds out the picture. Wes climbs over the middle seat, flips on the dome light and takes the picture.

BEVERLY

You were in that band, Toboggan Accident. I have one of your songs. It's really good.

He takes a drink from his bottle--

ON THE PICTURE

He's young, happy and he's got a beautiful girl by his side. The sudden wave of fragmentary memories is like a knife being driven into him--

He tosses the picture back to her.

WES

Great. You got a picture of me. Whoop-di-doo.

BEVERLY

The girl you're with. That's my mom.

WES

Whoa. I'm not your dad, if that's what you're saying.

BEVERLY

No, I was just wondering if you could tell me about her. She died.

WES

Whatever. She was cool. Blah. Blah Blah.

BEVERLY

What was she like?

WES

I said she was cool. I don't know. She was probably fine.

BEVERLY

Were you friends with her?

Wes just looks at her - all the bitterness suddenly coming up--

WES
You want the truth, kid?

BEVERLY
Um...yeah.

WES
I fucked her for a while. But so did everyone else. You even know who your dad is?

BEVERLY
Yes. Zach Huff.

Wes laughs - a bitter, angry, asshole laugh--

WES
Zach, fucking, Huff. Fucking figures. Little worthless punk trying to pretend he was a guitarist and whore junky whatever her name is. They were both losers so I guess they naturally ended up together. I gotta tell you, that is quite a pedigree you got there kid.

Beverly has started to cry silently--

WES
So you gonna buy our CD or what?

NICKY
You're a real butt-dick, you know that?

WES
A butt dick? Is that some new term, 'cuz I don't think I know that one.

OUTSIDE THE VAN--

The girls are climbing out. Wes calls after them--

WES
Okay, have a nice life, kids. You can thank me later. Don't forget to mention me in your blog.

ELLEN
(to band members)
Your band sucks.

BASSIST

Yeah? Well, so does yours.

INT. CAR

Anti sees them trudging toward the car - Beverly already crying.

CUT TO:

THE GIRLS GET IN THE CAR

Anti looks at them - Beverly is crying silently.

ANTI

(to Ellen)

What's wrong with her?

Ellen starts to say something - then she starts crying too--

ANTI

(to Nicky)

What are they crying about?

Nicky starts to cry too--

ANTI

Come on - it couldn't be that bad. I know rock stars can be dicks but--

NICKY

He called Beverly's mom a whore.

ANTI

He what?

BEVERLY

I just want to go home.

Anti looks out the window where the band is packing up.

ANTI

Yeah. Of course. But first, you three wait here for a minute.

They watch as, out the window, Anti walks over to the band.

BACK DOOR

WES

Best blow job I ever had was in Missoula.
I don't know what it is about that town.
It's like the women there don't do
anything except practice giving head.

Anti walks up--

WES

I told you we don't want any tamales,
man. We don't need anyone else in the
band, we don't wanna be on your label.

IN THE CAR

Nicky hears some commotion coming from the direction of the van and turns to see Anti taking on the entire band in a fist fight. And he's winning--

NICKY

Holy shit!!

Ellen and Beverly look over as Anti tosses one of the guys to the ground.

BACK DOOR

The DRUMMER comes back out with some of his gear. He looks at his bandmates lying on the ground. Then at Anti who raises his fists.

ANTI

What's it gonna be?

The Drummer drops his stuff and runs back inside.

AT THE CAR

Anti knocks on the window. Beverly rolls it down.

Standing before her, in a headlock, is Wes. Anti tightens his hold-

WES

(in pain)

I just wanted to say I'm sorry for what I said.

A beat.

Anti squeezes again--

WES

(rehearsed)

I have issues with my own mother. Who was a whore and also fat and ugly. And I also hate myself and I'm bitter and it was wrong for me to take it out on you and I apologize for that. I'm sorry.

He looks up at Anti like, "Good enough?" Anti drops him to the ground.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Anti starts up the car.

NICKY

Did you just beat up the entire band?

Anti puts the car in gear and steps on the gas.

ANTI

Nah, the drummer got away.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The girls get out of Anti's car--

ANTI

(to Beverly)

Hey, don't worry about that guy tonight. The stuff he said-- I mean there's nothing worse than an aging rockstar. They should all be put down at 27 or something - after that they're just used up and angry.

Beverly tries to smile--

BEVERLY

Thanks, Anti.

Beverly and Ellen walk toward the house, Nicky waits behind--

When Beverly and Ellen are out of hearing--

NICKY

That was pretty cool what you did.

ANTI

Well, tell that to my anger management class on Wednesday.

Nicky laughs, shyly--

NICKY

Alright, later.

ANTI

Sweet dreams, cupcake.

Nicky walks away and Anti, for the first time that night, sincerely and happily smiles.

ONE BY ONE

The girls make their way across the yard and hop back into Ellen's window.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen snores quietly. Nicky rolls over in her sleep. Only Beverly is awake. She pulls out the picture of her parents - she can barely see it by the moonlight. She stares at it - looking for any sign of who they were. Could they really be as awful as he said?

And then--

POP!

Red light spills through the window--

Beverly jumps up - looks out the window to see the falling red sparks of a bottle rocket. She opens the window.

Nicky wakes up:

NICKY

What's going on?

As if in answer--

POP!

Another shower of sparks float down to earth.

BEVERLY

It's a sign!

NICKY

A what?

BEVERLY

It's a sign - I have to find out where
it's coming from!

Beverly hops out the window.

OUTSIDE

Nicky hops down on the grass. Ellen pokes her head out
the window.

ELLEN

You guys - it's like four o'clock. We
should be asleep.

NICKY

Then go to sleep.

Beverly and Nicky cross the yard to the street. Ellen
struggles through the window - falling into the grass
with a thud.

ELLEN

(whispering)

Hey guys - wait up!

OVER A FENCE

And into someone's yard. The three girls, in their
pajamas, scamper through a silent swing-set and some
toddler toys, over the next fence and into--

THE NEXT YARD

Like a garden of Eden - a koi pond at the center and
around it trees and shrubs beautifully manicured--

ABOVE

Another POP! and a burst of color rains down--

NICKY

This way!

The girls run through the topiary--

ANOTHER YARD

A cocker-spaniel takes off after them--

ELLEN

Oh god, oh god...

The girls sprint for the fence and just barely make it over - leaving the dog barking wildly behind them--

YARD WITH A CAR ON BLOCKS

In the center. We can hear voices coming from the next yard over:

MAN'S VOICE

Ah, shut the hell up!

WOMAN'S VOICE

You wanna go to jail again? 'Cause that's exactly what's gonna happen. They warned you once - they ain't gonna warn you again.

MAN'S VOICE

I can do whatever the hell I want in my own goddamn backyard.

The girls creep up and put their faces against the cracks in the fence--

GIRLS' POV: A MAN in his boxers sets up another bottle rocket with beer in hand. A WOMAN stands in the doorway in her nightgown smoking a cigarette.

In Beverly's eyes they become her parents:

WOMAN

I ain't taking care of your cat when you go to jail.

The Man throws an empty beer can at the Woman.

WOMAN

Fuck you.

MAN

Well, fuck you too.

She slams the door closed. The Man opens another beer and lights a cigarette. He touches the cigarette to the bottle rocket fuse.

BEVERLY

Walks away from the fence...

ELLEN

Beverly? Are you okay?

BEVERLY

I thought it was a sign.

NICKY

Maybe it is.

Ellen shoots Nicky a "shut-up" look. POP! Another shower of sparks--

BEVERLY

There aren't any signs. My parents were druggies and now they're dead. That mixtape is stupid. It's just a bunch of stupid songs.

ELLEN

But--

BEVERLY

I'm going home.

Beverly starts climbing the fence--

NICKY

Beverly--

BEVERLY

Just leave me alone.

And she disappears over the fence while another bottle rocket EXPLODES in the sky above.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Rain coming down in buckets--

INSIDE

Beverly's gloomy look perfectly mirrors the weather as she trudges to class--

DOWN THE HALL

The PRINCIPAL has a STUDENT stopped. He looks at the student's button - it's one of the "Fighting Mullets" buttons. The Student turns and points at Beverly. The Principal looks at her with a disapproving glance.

PRINCIPAL

Ms. Moody, can I speak to you?

BEVERLY

(under her breath)

Shitake.

OUTSIDE THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Ellen sits nervously in between her Mom and Dad. Nicky sits alone, largely unconcerned.

INSIDE THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Beverly faces the principal, trying her best to look remorseful.

PRINCIPAL

It's an insult to one of our finest former Presidents. And it's an insult to the members of our faculty - our gym teacher, for example, who wear their hair in the style of the--

(airquotes)

--mullet I'm sure you wouldn't want people making fun of you for your hair style.

BEVERLY

We weren't making fun of James K. Polk. We think he's really rad.

PRINCIPAL

You know, Beverly, what saddens me most is you could be putting this energy to better use. Towards a future. Have you thought about what you want to do with your life?

BEVERLY

I want to be an animal photographer.

PRINCIPAL

Like National Geographic! Well, that's a worthy goal.

(MORE)

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

But it requires a lot of work. You need to know geography and camera techniques and--

BEVERLY

Not like National Geographic. Like the calendars where a little kitten gets dressed up in really cute pink dress and then a little puppy gets dressed up in a little tux and they go to baby animal prom together. And there's like a baby chick dating a baby bunny wearing sunglasses and stuff like that.

The Principal looks at her - stumped. Luckily he's saved by a knock on the door--

PRINCIPAL

Uh, come in.

Gail opens the door slowly.

PRINCIPAL

Oh, hello Mrs. Moody. Have a seat.
(to Beverly)
Would you mind waiting in the office while I have a talk with your grandmother?

INT. GAIL'S CAR - DAY

The silent drive home. Finally Beverly can't take it anymore.

BEVERLY

We weren't making fun of James Polk's mullet. We thought it was awesome.

Overly calm--

GAIL

I don't care, Beverly Jean Moody. You are not seeing those girls anymore. You were fine until you started hanging around those two. And you're going back to wearing sweaters too.

BEVERLY

Yeah, I was perfectly fine when I had no friends. I was perfectly happy and fine!

GAIL

I don't want you going down the same path as your mother. I lost her - but I'm not going to lose you!

BEVERLY

What path is that? Being a druggie and a whore!?

Gail pulls the car over - stops.

GAIL

What did you say?

Beverly doesn't answer.

GAIL

Why would you say that?

Nothing.

GAIL

If I ever hear you say something like that about your mother again...

Gail angrily puts the car in gear--

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Bacon on the table. The yellow sweater resting on the back of the chair. Beverly enters the kitchen--

GAIL

Grab your bacon. You can eat it in the car.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - MORNING

Beverly, in her yellow sweater, looks out the window as--

ELLEN'S SUV passes by--

Out the back window Ellen's little brother waves sadly. Beverly takes a bite of bacon and waves back--

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Beverly walks down the main hall. Above her is a sign that says, "Congratulations, James K. Polk Wildcats!!"

ENGLISH CLASS

The Teacher reads some too-sad poem while the rain pours down on the window. Beverly looks back to the corner of the room where Nicky used to sit - the seat is now empty.

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Garbage day tomorrow. Beverly drags the garbage can to the curb.

Ellen rides up on her Huffy--

ELLEN

Hey.

BEVERLY

Hey.

ELLEN

This is like the first time I've seen you out of the house in a while.

BEVERLY

Yeah. My Grandma barely even lets me come to school.

ELLEN

Yeah, my parents were mad too. But then I triple dog dared my brother to pee in the sink. It's hard for them to focus on being mad at me when he's around.

(beat)

Nicky called me. She says being suspended is pretty sweet. She watches People's Court like three times a day.

BEVERLY

Sounds pretty cool.

ELLEN

You should call her.

BEVERLY

Yeah.

A beat. Then Ellen remembers - she pulls out a CD--

ELLEN

I found the next song. There's only one left.

Beverly doesn't take it--

BEVERLY

You should keep it. I'm kind of done with that stuff.

ELLEN

But your parents...

Beverly notices Gail looking out the front window--

BEVERLY

I should go. I'm not supposed to hang out with you anymore.

ELLEN

My parents said I wasn't supposed to hang out with you either - but who cares?

Beverly starts toward the house--

BEVERLY

I should go...

Ellen watches her go--

INT. JAMES K. POLK JUNIOR HIGH - BEVERLY'S LOCKER

Beverly digs through her locker. Steven rolls up behind her and rams into her with his wheelchair.

STEVEN

Oh, sorry. Darn these breaks.

Steven and Donny keep going down the hall while Beverly rubs her sore leg.

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gail sits in front of the TV with a cup of tea.

Down below, in the basement, come the usual rumblings and mumblings of Beverly.

Gail gives a concerned sigh--

KITCHEN - LATER

Head down, shoulders hunched - a sad little girl.

GAIL

We're having waffles for dinner.

BEVERLY

I'm not hungry.

Beverly opens the fridge - takes out some bologna. She stuffs one slice in her mouth and takes a few more in her hand.

GAIL

It's supposed to clear up tomorrow. I thought maybe we could go for a drive.

BEVERLY

I don't really feel like it.

She goes to the door, puts her raincoat on and goes outside. Gail watches

OUT THE WINDOW

As Beverly walks through the rain to the fence. A DOG sticks his nose through the fence and Beverly feeds him the bologna as the rain comes pouring down...

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - MORNING

The rain has finally let up and the sun is peaking through the curtains.

Beverly is asleep in the bed.

JUSTIN (O.S.)

Beverly! Hey, Beverly!

Beverly stirs - goes to the window--

DOWN AT ELLEN'S

Justin is on the roof. Two speakers sit on the window sill--

JUSTIN

This is...

He looks back at Ellen, who is standing at the window. She mouths something--

JUSTIN

Lookin' for the magic. Dwight Twilley.

Ellen hits play...the music fills the morning air. There's something magical about the music filling the morning air. People come out of their houses to see what-the-hell's going on and can't help but smile...

Ellen smiles, waves at Beverly. Beverly smiles and waves back.

CLOSE ON THE SONG LIST

Beverly highlights the next song, leaving one more - the one marked only as "The Parental Unit's Song".

BEVERLY IN BED

Headphones on while the mixtape plays. She holds her parents picture above her - looking for some clue, something in the picture that will unravel the mystery of who they are...

Then she notices something she's never noticed before. A blurry number on the house behind her parents.

BEVERLY

Breaks out her junior science kit. Pulls out the magnifying glass and studies the picture--

The address is 1072.

CUT TO:

BEVERLY ON THE PHONE

BEVERLY

Hey Ellen. Do you think you could look up an address for me?

LIVING ROOM

BEVERLY

Hey, Grandma. Do you think I could do your mail route with you today.

Gail smiles - pleasantly surprised--

GAIL

Of course.

INT. POSTAL VAN - DAY

Song list in hand, Beverly squints to see the next address. Gail stops, fills a mailbox with mail.

She moves up to the next house. Beverly sees it - 1072. The same house, but now painted a kind of brown. She's probably drove by it hundreds of times without realizing.

BEVERLY

Stop!

Gail pulls over--

Beverly holds the picture up to the house for comparison. It's older and more run-down now, but it's definitely the same house.

She looks at Gail. Gail nods slightly, sadly - as if to say, "Go on..."

EXT. 1072 - DAY

Ding-dong.

Beverly waits nervously. Looks back at Gail in the car.

The door opens.

An OLD MAN towing an oxygen tank. It's obviously not his fault, but he's very frightening looking. Like death itself.

OLD MAN

What is it?

BEVERLY

I...uh...

All she can do is hold out the picture. He takes it--

Gail'S POV:

Beverly follows the OLD MAN inside.

INT. 1072 - DAY

Crucifixes and religious knickknacks everywhere.

Beverly sits down on a couch covered in plastic. The Old Man sits in the lazy-boy. He takes off his oxygen mask and lights a cigarette.

The Old Man sets the picture on the coffee table.

OLD MAN

That's my boy, there.

BEVERLY

That's my dad.

The Old Man takes a deep drag.

OLD MAN

Your grandmother put you up to this?

Beverly shakes her head, "No."

OLD MAN

I told your father and mother, and I told your grandmother and now I'll tell you - I want nothing to do with you.

He breaks into a violent coughing fit. Beverly looks afraid.

OLD MAN

I don't have any money, if that's what you want.

BEVERLY

No. I just saw your house in the picture and I thought, maybe...does this mean anything to you?

She hands him the song list. He looks at it--

BEVERLY

The one called "the Parental Unit's Happy Song"?

OLD MAN

Don't mean a thing to me. I'm sorry, I just want to be left alone.

GAIL'S POV:

Beverly walks quickly back to the car.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Beverly gets in - visibly shaken. She stares straight ahead. Gail reaches out and puts a hand on her shoulder. Beverly flinches slightly.

Sadly, Gail starts up the car.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

Beverly puts on her headphones. Pushes play. An angry song starts its first beats - as the guitars slam in, the sky unleashes a deluge on cue.

INT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAYS

The music blares in Beverly's headphones--

BEVERLY'S POV:

Everyone looks pissed off - unhappy and unfriendly.

LOCKERS

Headphones off, Beverly walks up to her locker. Steven and Donny are waiting - but, mercifully, they're already busy harassing someone else.

Beverly digs through her locker when the unthinkable happens.

Beverly FARTS. Not a quiet fluff - but a full-on locker-shaker of a fart. Donny and Steven immediately look at Beverly, as if these two needed ammunition to make her life hell--

STEVEN

Oh. My God.

Beverly's eyes meet Steven's. In an instant she sees what this means: years and years of teasing, never hearing the end of this day. Steven goes to say something when--

Bam!

Beverly punches him in the face, knocking him out of his wheelchair.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Beverly and Gail side by side in the Principal's office again.

Principal clears his throat uncomfortably--

PRINCIPAL

I want to say first, that passing gas is nothing to be embarrassed about. Everyone passes gas. I pass gas. Your grandmother passes gas. Even former President of the United States, James K. Polk, passed gas.

(beat)

Having said that, it is unacceptable to punch someone in the face, regardless of how embarrassed you might feel about something you shouldn't be embarrassed about. And certainly not handicapped people.

Beverly lets out a bitter little snort of dissent.

PRINCIPAL

Is there something you'd like to say, Beverly?

BEVERLY

I didn't punch him because I farted.

PRINCIPAL

I don't appreciate that language, but, okay. Why did you hit him then?

BEVERLY

I punched him because he's a big dick who gets away with everything because he's in a freakin' wheelchair.

EXT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Principal opens the door and walks Gail and Beverly out--

PRINCIPAL

I'm sorry Mrs. Moody. But Beverly really left me no choice. We'll meet again after her suspension.

GAIL

I understand. Thank you.

As Beverly walks out she notices Steven sitting with his Mom and Dad - two perfect, beautiful parents hanging over their dear delicate son. They both turn and scowl at Beverly...

INT. GAIL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

A silent ride home. Beverly sneaks a look at Gail. But Gail keeps her eyes glued to the road.

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Gail sets her purse on the couch and keeps walking into the kitchen. Beverly stands there - expecting, maybe even hoping, for Gail to say something.

KITCHEN

Gail is busy cooking. Beverly enters--

BEVERLY

What are you doing?

GAIL

Making dinner.

BEVERLY

Aren't you going to yell at me?

Gail shrugs.

BEVERLY

It's not fair. He makes fun of me all year and nobody cares. Now everybody feels bad for him. And I'm the one that gets suspended.

Gail keeps cutting vegetables.

BEVERLY

Aren't you going to say anything?

Without looking up--

GAIL

What do you want me to say? The world isn't fair, Beverly.

A beat. Beverly stares at her cutting vegetables calmly. Going silently about her routine like she's done for years now--

BEVERLY
(screaming)
The world is a shitball!!

Gail finally looks up.

GAIL
Excuse me?

BEVERLY
The world is a ball of shit and it's filled with crap and assholes and choad and mean grandpas and dicks in wheelchairs and stupid wildcat buttons and crappy bands with asshole singers and then more crap and...

Tears pour down Beverly's cheeks. Gail takes Beverly into her arms.

GAIL
Okay...okay.

BEVERLY
(through sobs)
I thought they were trying to tell me something. I thought they left the mixtape for me...

Gail lifts Beverly's face--

GAIL
I think it's time I showed you something.

INT. GAIL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gail opens the bottom drawer in her dresser--

GAIL
There's a box underneath my bed. I wanted to show you this earlier. But it's hard for me...your parents death...

Underneath the underwear, Gail pulls out a record. Beverly brings out the box. Gail opens it and pulls out a record player.

Gail plugs the record player in--

GAIL

This was your mom's favorite song when she was just a little girl. I would always play it for her and we'd dance. Later, when she thought she was too cool for it she just called it the "parental unit's song".

Gail starts the record and sits down on the bed next to Beverly. The record cracks and pops and hisses and finally the song starts--

It's "Happy Times are Here Again" performed by Guy Lombardo.

Gail takes Beverly's hand in hers as she begins crying. And then they hug each other and begin sobbing as the singer sings--

"Happy times are here again..."

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - BACK STEPS - NIGHT

Gail and Beverly watch the rain come down in the back yard and sip on mugs of hot chocolate.

GAIL

Your mother came home one day and told me, "Mom, I'm in love." I thought it was one of those things, you know. And then when I met your father, I could have died. He had piercings and tattoos and purple hair. I thought he looked like a Star Wars character.

Gail laughs at the thought of it--

GAIL

But he was good to your mother and they were in love. And then when they found out they were having you - well, everyone, including me, thought they were too young. But they wouldn't hear it. They were so excited. I remember your father somehow found a bunch of fireworks and he and your mother sat out here and let off fireworks and listened to music all night to celebrate. I thought they were crazy.

Gail stares off into the rain and smiles - as if she can actually see the fireworks arching off into the darkness, lighting up the sky...

GAIL

They wanted to be good parents to you.
They loved you more than anything in the world. You were everything to them.

Gail puts her arm around Beverly. Beverly puts her head on her grandmother's shoulder, both of them thinking about two people they love very much.

We follow their gaze, up to--

THE SKY

Where the rain has stopped and the clouds have started to part, revealing the bright, perfect stars glimmering from the other side of the too-huge universe.

EXT. JAMES K. POLK MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

The sun is out. One of those beautiful days where everything's sparkling and green from the night's rain.

Gail's postal van pulls up to the curb. Gail gets out, circles to the back of the van and slides the door open--

GAIL

Special del--
(stops herself)
We're here.

Beverly hops out, followed by Ellen.

BEVERLY

Thanks Grandma.

ELLEN

Thanks Mrs. Moody.

Ellen puts her hand up for a high-five. Gail looks confused. Then figures out what Ellen is doing and puts her hand up. Ellen gives her an enthusiastic high-five.

GAIL

Have a good day girls.

Gail goes back to the driver's side - but stops and watches as--

THE FRONT OF THE SCHOOL

Beverly and Ellen meet up with Nicky - and then the three of them meet up with THREE BOYS who look just as much like misfits as the girls.

A CHUBBY BOY and Beverly look at each other shyly. He gives Beverly a note as Nicky gives one of the other boys a piggy-back and they all go inside the school.

ON GAIL

Let's out a big sigh - knowing very well all the changes and challenges coming in the next few years. A look of worry and weariness on her face as she climbs--

INSIDE THE VAN

--and finds something waiting on her seat. A MIX CD.

The cover has a collage of pictures of Gail and Beverly along with the mix name - "Grandma's Mix". On the floor next to her seat is a little CD player boombox.

Gail puts the CD in. The disc spins as Gail starts the car and pulls away from the school. And then the song starts - the first chords of Cheap Trick's "Surrender".

Gail listens as the singer belts out the first lyrics. And then slowly, almost against her will, one of her fingers starts tapping.

If we didn't know better we might think she actually likes this song...

LATER

Gail's stopped at a red light. The climax of "Surrender" blasts out of the little boombox. She taps the beat on the steering wheel, bobs her head back and forth to the roar of the guitar. She's starting to get into this song. And then...

...she starts to SING ALONG to the chorus. Quietly at first - not even audible above the boombox. Then LOUDER and LOUDER as the song starts to pick up steam. And before long she's SHOUTING along to the chorus - letting everything she's been holding inside get out, truly feeling each word--

GAIL

Surrender! Surrender! But don't give
yourself awaaaaaaaaay! Awaaaaaaay!

She looks over to the car next to her. A MAN and his WIFE stare at her like she's crazy.

Gail let's out a LAUGH - a real from the belly laugh - for the first time in a long, long time. And we know right at that moment that no matter what happens, Gail and Beverly are going to be just fine.

The light turns green. Gail waves to the couple and drives away as the next song roars to life...

INT. BEVERLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Hands over Beverly's eyes--

Gail brings out a birthday cake with 13 candles lit. Nicky uncovers Beverly's eyes--

EVERYONE is there. Anti, Ellen, Nicky, both of their parents and siblings. The guy from Wal-Mart, Les and Ray and their dog in the sweater, Mr. and Mrs. Asian--

They all sing "Happy Birthday" and Beverly blows out the candles.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

A beautiful day.

Beverly, Ellen and Nicky set up their instruments while the audience, seated in lawn chairs, looks on.

Beverly tunes her guitar. Ellen taps on her drums. Nicky steps up to the mike.

NICKY

Thank you all for coming to Beverly's birthday party and the first gig for our band, "Us Dudes Are Sisters"

KYLE

Booooooooooooo!

NICKY

Shut up, Kyle.

She looks back at her band - they all nod at each other.

NICKY
One...two...three!

The band starts. They're awful but enthusiastic, and everybody is having a great time--

BACKYARD - NIGHT

A perfect clear night.

The parents are relaxing and talking from their lawn chairs. All the kids are gathered around Anti who is standing over a giant stash of fireworks.

ELLEN
Come on, Anti. Let us fire off some.

ANTI
Um, excuse me, but did you ever assist Bon Jovi's pyrotechnic team in setting up the fireworks for their Steel Horse tour?

ELLEN
No.

ANTI
Exactly. And that's why Mrs. Moody requested that I be in charge of the birthday fireworks. Now if you'll all give me some room, I can make the magic happen.

Beverly sits down next to Gail.

The first firework takes to the sky - a red streak rising up into the darkness and then--

POP!

EXT. PARK - FLASHBACK

Close-up on Beverly as a baby followed by the sizzle and pop of fireworks.

Music plays in the background.

Beverly's Dad bends over to light another bottle rocket. Mom stands at a distance, holding infant Beverly.

MOM
I think she likes the fireworks.

DAD

How do you know? Babies can't smile.

MOM

I just have the feeling she does. And she's not crying.

More fireworks are set off. Beverly almost seems to be following the fireworks with her eyes.

Dad pulls two cans from a case of Rainier and hands one to Mom.

DAD

Let's make a toast.

MOM

To what?

DAD

(looking at Beverly)
To new beginnings.

They toast with their cans. And as another firework bursts in mid-air--

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The sky is lit up by a colorful series of explosions. Everyone "Ooohs" and "Aaaahs" as the sparks float back down to earth.

Gail puts her arm around Beverly.

GAIL

Happy birthday, Beverly.

Beverly puts her arm around Gail.

BEVERLY

Thank you, Grandma.

As another bottle rocket explodes in the sky...