

Walt Disney's

PROM

by

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IN SOFT FOCUS:

The ruffle of a gown. The petals of a corsage. An archway of colorful BALLOONS reaching overhead.

NOVA (V.O.)

Prom. It's a magic word. Put it in front of any other word, and it changes it. Something ordinary becomes something unforgettable. A dress is just something you wear, but a prom dress is something you *dream* about. You can go on a lot of dates, but you'll always remember your prom date.

A mirrored disco ball spins, and we PUSH IN until it becomes a blur of light and motion...

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And there are hundreds of nights in high school. But there's only one prom night.

The blur of spinning motion sharpens into a large metallic drum, spitting out glossy, multicolored SHEETS.

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One word, and everything changes. It all starts with Prom.

INT. PRINT SHOP -- DAY

We realize we've been seeing a PRINTER, and the glossy sheets, POSTERS. Heaps of them. We glimpse details: LAKE CANYON HIGH... SENIOR PROM... TICKETS ON SALE NOW.

TILT UP from one poster to the face of **NOVA PRESCOTT**, 17. You know Nova. Pretty, straight A's, friends with everybody? And if you need any help, with like, ANYTHING...

She examines the poster carefully. Finally:

NOVA

They're perfect.

As she ROLLS up the poster with a flourish...

TITLE CARD: WALT DISNEY'S PROM

EXT. LAKE CANYON HIGH SCHOOL, ESTABLISHING -- DAY

Nova pulls into the sprawling parking lot. KIDS loiter by their cars, preparing for another day of high school.

As she gathers up her rolls of POSTERS, A CLUNKY OLD SEDAN trundles by blasting MUSIC. We go with it --

INT. THE CAR YOUR MOM DROVE -- SAME TIME

TIGHT on the faces of two SOPHOMORES. The first is **PHILIP QUOVADIS, 15**. This kid just cleared the puberty hurdle like 15 minutes ago, but give him a year or two and he'll be major crush material. Meanwhile --

GARY, 15, Philip's geekier cohort is SUPER PUMPED to be driving right now. He's rocking out, YELLS over the music.

GARY
This is the turning point.

PHILIP
You really think so?

GARY
Dude. We can drive. Anywhere we want!

Suddenly the MUSIC STOPS.

GARY'S MOM (O.S.)
As long as it's during daylight hours
and with supervision.

Reveal **GARY'S MOM, 40**, hand on the dial. Philip's in the back. Okay, so Gary only has his permit.

GARY
(subdued)
Eleven months and twenty nine days
until total freedom.

ACROSS THE PARKING LOT

We HEAR it before we see it -- A DUCATI MONSTER SR2 pulls into a NO PARKING zone. It's an older bike, but it's been lovingly rebuilt, and is actually pretty mean-looking. The Driver yanks off his helmet and we meet --

RICK LINSEY, 18. Leather jacket, shaggy hair. The dangerous boy that good girls try (and usually fail) to ignore.

ACROSS THE PARKING LOT

A world weary man in a rumpled jacket and tie watches Rick dismount his illegally parked bike with narrowed eyes... This can only be **PRINCIPAL PIPER** (40s). He may not have had a lot of control of what happened when he was in high school, but by God, he's in charge NOW...

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH -- DAY

Back with Nova, walking into school. Waiting with tape dispenser at the ready is **BRANDON**, 17 -- the guy your mom wants you to marry.

BRANDON
(re: the posters)
You got them!

He takes some posters from her, unfurls one against a wall.

NOVA (V.O.)
At prom, every couple has a story.

BRANDON
Wow, these look great.

NOVA
I know, right?

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And though each one is different, they
all start the same way. Somebody has
to ask you. And you have to say yes.

As they smile at each other, it's quite clear who Nova hopes will be asking her to prom...

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
After that... well, pretty much
anything can happen.

Suddenly Nova TURNS and sees A CHUBBY, DISHEVELED GIRL frowning at the poster. A hopeless look in her eye. Nova pauses, goes over to her. Straightens her collar, gives her an encouraging, infectious smile.

NOVA (CONT'D)
It's gonna be a great night.

The DISHEVELED GIRL smiles back, hope restored. She looks back at the PROM POSTER as we go to --

ANOTHER HALLWAY

SLAP. Nova puts this one right next to RICK'S locker. He glances up, annoyed. Clocking this, she adds one more piece of tape for good measure. Spins on her heel.

A CROWD OF KIDS gathers around the poster. Rick works his combination lock, trying to ignore them. No luck.

GIRLS (VARIOUS)
 Ohmigosh isn't it romantic/I wonder if
 Steve's gonna ask me/Saw the cutest
 dress the other day/etc.

Rick GROANS. Finally resorts to grabbing the poster and
 MOVING it across the hall. The crowd moves with it.

Rick returns to his locker, relieved to be at peace.

ANOTHER HALLWAY

Another poster. We need **LLOYD**, 17. Lloyd is that kid you see
 at graduation and realize you never talked to. He regards
 the poster with his scrawny Freshman kid sister, **TESS**, 14.

LLOYD
 Ugh. Prom.

TESS
 You know, you could go.

LLOYD
 What, and jeopardize my status as a
 social leper?

TESS
 How do we have the same parents?
 C'mon, prom was invented for guys like
 you. It's your chance to change
 things.

LLOYD
 Oh, sure. Let me just pick a
 cheerleader from my speed dial.

TESS
I have several available friends...

Tess nods encouragingly toward a clutch of FRESHMAN GIRLS --
 tragically gangly and acne-afflicted. Lloyd winces.

LLOYD
 I'm not going with a Freshman.

TESS
 Fine, then ask somebody else. But do
 it soon. And be creative. This is
 your last chance, Lloyd.

As SOMEONE raises their PHONE and SNAPS A PICTURE of the
 poster, we go OFF Lloyd, pondering the possibilities...

YET ANOTHER HALLWAY

Slap. Nova tacks up yet another poster right where The COOL KIDS congregate: VARSITY JACKETS and fist bumps all around as we meet **TOMMY BARSO**, 17, the Mayor of Lake Canyon High.

He's flanked by his ever-present buddies, **JIMBO** and **MAX** (17).

TOMMY

Nova. Posters look good.

NOVA

Better get your tickets soon, Tommy.
Even the King has to buy one.

Nova grins as **MONICA**, 17, (head cheerleader and don't-you-forget-it) STEAMS toward Tommy.

TOMMY

(to Monica)

And there's my queen!

MONICA

We need to talk.

MONICA YANKS him into--

ANOTHER HALLWAY

And holds up a PINK LIP GLOSS like a murder weapon.

MONICA

What is this?

TOMMY

A lip gloss?

MONICA

Very good. Why was it in your car?

TOMMY

I drove half the girl's soccer team to
Papa Gino's last week...

MONICA

Try again.

TOMMY

No, really. I had six of 'em in my
back seat, it was like a clown car.

MONICA

Who is she?

TOMMY

There's no one but you, I promise.

MONICA

I deserve better than this, Tommy.
I've given you the best years of my
life. Prom is our moment. My moment.
I've earned that crown, and I plan on
wearing it. So don't screw it up.

TOMMY

Babe, don't worry. We're going to
prom.

MONICA

Oh, are we? Because you haven't
asked.

TOMMY

Wait, you just said -- I thought it
was implied!

MONICA

Nothing is implied. You need to ask
me. And it better be good.

She DROPS the lip gloss at his feet and walks away.

A POSTER OUTSIDE HOMEROOM -- SAME

Around this poster is a gaggle of wistful SOPHOMORE GIRLS.

SOPHOMORE GIRL

I heard last year three sophomore
girls got asked by seniors.

ANOTHER SOPHOMORE GIRL

I'd give anything to go to prom.

SOPHOMORE GIRL

Me too. Wouldn't you, Simone?
Simone?

Their friend is the striking, raven-haired **SIMONE PEREZ**, 15.
She possesses a sweetness and a realness that shines through
as much as her natural beauty. She's been quiet, conflicted
even -- something else is going on with her...

SIMONE

Huh? Oh. It... would be something.

WITH PHILIP and GARY

Approaching Simone and friends. Philip eyes Simone longingly as she regards the poster. Then, she turns --

SIMONE (CONT'D)
Hi, Philip.

PHILIP
(flustered)
Simone! Heylo! Hilo! I mean... hi.

Gary shakes his head in disgust.

SIMONE
Thanks for your help on the gravity experiment.

PHILIP
Oh. You're welcome.

SIMONE
I need a serious cram session for the elements test. I don't even know the atomic weight of carbon.

GARY
(can't help himself)
Twelve.

PHILIP
Thanks, Gary.

GARY
Excluding isotopes.

PHILIP
Thank you.

SIMONE
See you in there.

Simone heads into HOMEROOM, leaving Gary and Philip in front of THE POSTER. Gary's practically JUMPING out of his skin.

GARY
Dude. She wants you.

PHILIP
Give me a break.

GARY
I'm serious. You're so in. You gotta make a move.

PHILIP

A move?

GARY

Now is your chance to go from the land of "Just Friends" to the next social stratosphere. You're golden.

PHILIP

She doesn't wanna go out with me, she wants -- THAT.

He points at the POSTER.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I have nothing to offer her. No car, no cool parties, no prom. What am I gonna do, invite her to join our Stick Hippo Fan club?

GARY

She listens to Stick Hippo?!

PHILIP

No one listens to Stick Hippo. Except us. That's the point.

GARY

Our fansite had one hit last week.

ANOTHER HALLWAY -- SAME

SLAP. Nova puts up a poster with the help of her sassy friend **SAEYOUNG**, 17, who sports a Michigan SWEATSHIRT.

Then **JUSTIN**, 17, walks up wearing a Michigan HAT.

JUSTIN

Nice sweatshirt. You going to U of M?

SAEYOUNG

Yeah. I hear the guys there are really cute.

Even Nova has to ROLL her eyes as they KISS hello -- a REAL kiss. Nova heads off, on her mission as Saeyoung jumps on Justin's back, piggyback style. They're in their own world.

JUSTIN

(re: poster)

Prom. Huh. I gotta find somebody to ask to that...

She swats him playfully as he SPINS her around. Young love.

INT. PRINCIPAL PIPER'S OFFICE, WAITING AREA -- DAY

RICK camped out, balancing a pen on his face while RHODA (40s), Piper's career secretary, tries to ignore him.

RICK
Hey Rhoda, I turned 18 last week.

RHODA
Happy birthday.

RICK
You know what that means, right?

RHODA
They can try you as an adult.

RICK
Rhoda, you break my heart. It means
we can finally run away together.

She tries really hard not to smile.

RICK (CONT'D)
We'll get away from it all. Piper
doesn't appreciate you like I do.

PRINCIPAL PIPER (O.S.)
Linsey! Let's go.

Piper ushers Rick into --

INT. PRINCIPAL PIPER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Rick settles into a stance he's clearly occupied often during his high school career. Piper holds up an ATTENDANCE RECORD.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
According to my records, you have cut
last period every Tuesday for 4 weeks.
You know what that is?

RICK
A new record?

PRINCIPAL PIPER
It's flagrant truancy. And in the
end, you're only cheating yourself.

RICK
You know, I had a talk with myself
about that? Turns out, I'm okay with
it.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
Do I look like I'm joking?

RICK
You couldn't have been serious when
you put on that tie.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
You have been nothing but trouble
since you got here - disregard for
rules, bad attitude, hostile to other
students.

RICK
Have you met the other students?

PRINCIPAL PIPER
Listen, you've got two months until
you're out of here. Your chances for
graduation are already shaky, and with
no diploma, your prospects will only
get dimmer. So do us both a favor and
try to control your delinquent
tendencies?

RICK
We're done here, right?

Rick shoves his chair back and heads out.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
And move that junk heap out of the red
zone before I have it towed.

Rick stops. Closes his eyes. Probably counting to ten...

RICK
You know something, Piper? That tie's
growing on me. Really makes your eyes
pop.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Simone heads down a hallway alone... when suddenly SOMEONE
GRABS HER, pulls her into --

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET -- SAME TIME

She yelps as we adjust our eyes in the dark space.

SIMONE
What are you doing?

VOICE

Shhhh.

SIMONE

We're in big trouble. People KNOW.

REVEAL who she's talking to: It's Tommy.

TOMMY

Don't worry. It's under control.

SIMONE

She found my lip gloss. You call that under control?

TOMMY

I handled it. It's all good now.

SIMONE

Why didn't you tell me about Monica?

TOMMY

I assumed you knew.

SIMONE

Well, I didn't! I never would've gone out with you if I knew you had a girlfriend.

TOMMY

Look, I'm sorry I didn't tell you. But the truth is, it's been over between me and Monica for a long time.

SIMONE

So you're not asking her to prom?

TOMMY

I -- well, yeah I am... but what am I supposed to do? I can't just dump her right before prom, it would be devastating. It would totally humiliate her.

He looks genuinely torn. Simone takes him in, weighing her instincts against his conflicted, pleading expression.

SIMONE

What does this have to do with me?

TOMMY

Everything. It wasn't until I met you that I realized how unhappy I was.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)
You changed my life, Simone. This
just feels so right.

SIMONE
This feels right? This is a closet.

TOMMY
Please try to understand. I want to
be with you, but I'm trying to do the
right thing.

SIMONE
So am I, Tommy.

She OPENS the door to the janitor closet and walks out.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELDS -- DAY

Lacrosse players warm up, cheerleaders practice, and kids
MILL about in the spring sunshine.

Beyond the fields, in its own corner, we land at --

EXT. STORAGE SHED, SCHOOL PROPERTY -- DAY

Where Nova's addressing her PROM COMMITTEE: Brandon and
Saeyoung (who we've met,) **GABBY**, 17, a second-grade teacher
in the making, and **ROLO**, 17, who, yes, is eating Rolos.

NOVA
Thanks to you and all your hard work,
in three weeks, Lake Canyon High will
host the most spectacular prom in its
history. So as your planning
committee chairperson, I want you to
take a moment to appreciate all that
you've done.
(beat)
Welcome to the Jungle.

MUSIC as she THROWS open the double doors to --

INT. PROM STORAGE SHED -- DAY

PALM TREES, LIFE-SIZE JUNGLE CREATURES, LEAFY BACKDROPS.
Decorations reach from floor to ceiling. It's impressive.

NOVA
The sustainably-grown wood we special
ordered for the backdrops was
Saeyoung's idea. And Gabby got that
leopard print fabric for half-off.
And Rolo personally papier mached 14
palm trees.

ROLO

I did?

NOVA

Which is why, as a token of my appreciation, you each get these. Two tickets to prom.

She hands out the TICKETS to her committee. They pull them out of the envelopes, examine them.

NOVA (CONT'D)

These tickets retail at 20 bucks a piece to civilians, but for the committee, they're on me. Thanks, you guys.

Gabby looks over at Rolo as he pockets his tickets.

GABBY

Who're you gonna take Rolo? Your "girlfriend"?

ROLO

My girlfriend is real, yo.

GABBY

Uh-huh. What's her name again?

His eyes wander, almost as though he's searching for ideas.

ROLO

It's -- Athena.

GABBY

Athena.

ROLO

She's Greek.

GABBY

Uh-huh. And where does she live?

ROLO

Canada.

SAEYOUNG

(to Gabby)

She's Greek-Canadian.

GABBY

Sure.

ROLO

She is. There's a very vibrant Greek culture in Canada.

A large GORILLA HAND lands on Saeyoung's shoulder, she SHRIEKS. Reveal JUSTIN, waving the hand.

SAEYOUNG

What're you doing in here?

JUSTIN

Come with me. I've got a very important question I need to ask you.

Saeyoung lights up, SNEAKS out as Nova carries on unaware...

NOVA

Take a good look. Because the next time you see these decorations, it'll be the big night. Posters are up, tickets are selling.

(with a triumphant sigh)

We're ready.

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, LOCKERS -- DAY

CLOSE ON: Cut out MAGAZINE LETTERS on a locker:

*Alice - I've BEEN watching You
Would You Go To Prom with ME ???*

Reveal Lloyd, admiring his date-fetching artwork. Totally unaware of how creepy it looks. He ducks around a corner as the unsuspecting **ALICE** (16) approaches with a FRIEND.

ALICE

(stopping short)

What is that?

FRIEND

Oh, my god...

ALICE

Who did this?

WITH LLOYD

As he puffs out his chest, SWINGS around the corner with a winning smile, about to reveal himself, when he sees --

Alice is crying. Her friend comforts her.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I mean, what kind of sick twist would
put creepy, serial killer letters on a
person's locker?

LLOYD

Oh.

The girls TURN, traumatized and suspicious. He rushes --

AROUND THE CORNER

Where Tess eagerly waits.

TESS

How'd it go?

He just shakes his head, POWER WALKS away. She follows.

INT. SCHOOL THEATER -- AFTER SCHOOL

Justin leads Saeyoung into the dark theater. Sits her down.

SAEYOUNG

What are we doing in here?

JUSTIN

One second...

He disappears from sight as we STAY on Saeyoung. Suddenly --

ON STAGE

A SPOTLIGHT turns on, illuminating a LIFE SIZE CUT-OUT
PICTURE of JUSTIN, age 12. Saeyoung shrieks from her seat.

JUSTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

When we met, I was a scrawny brace
face with a paralyzing crush on a
beautiful girl in my math class. Her
name was Saeyoung.

That cut-out's spotlight goes dark, and ANOTHER one lights up
nearby -- This one of him at age 14.

JUSTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But it wasn't until Freshman year that
I finally had the courage to ask her
out. Oh, the anxiety...

It goes dark, and ANOTHER SPOT reveals a CUT-OUT OF BOTH OF
THEM, laughing together.

JUSTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
But it was worth it. From that
fateful first date until now, we've
been inseparable. And this is just
the beginning...

ANOTHER cut-out lights up. This one of them in their "M"
sweatshirts. Saeyoung laughs, delighted.

JUSTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
But I'm getting ahead of myself.
Because before graduation, and college,
and the rest of our lives together,
there's something I need to know.

The STAGE falls dark. Then: The FINAL SPOT lights up -- .
The *actual* Justin. Holding a single rose.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Will you go to prom with me?

Saeyoung RUSHES up to him... and answers him with a kiss...

EXT. STORAGE SHED -- DAY

Nova gets ready to close up as Brandon LINGERS conspicuously
behind her. She grins, knows what's coming.

BRANDON
Looks like it's just us...

NOVA
Looks like it.

BRANDON
Do you have a minute? I was hoping to
talk to you alone.

NOVA
Me? Sure. Let me just do one quick
thing. Be right back.

Nova ducks --

INTO THE SHED

Now hidden from view, she WHIPS out a lip gloss. Applies it.
FLUFFS her hair. SLAPS herself a few times. Okay. Ready.

OUTSIDE THE SHED

She reappears. All smiles.

NOVA

Okay. Sorry about that. What'd you want to talk about?

BRANDON

It's about Prom.

NOVA

(badly feigned surprise)

Oh?

BRANDON

It's right around the corner, as you know...

IN THE BACKGROUND

Cheerleaders (led by MONICA) arrange themselves in a complex, three-tiered formation. A CHEER-A-MID, if you will.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

And, we've been working together on the prom committee for several months.

NOVA

That's true.

BRANDON

Which has led to what I would describe as a very cooperative acquaintance.

NOVA

(underwhelmed)

Uh-huh.

IN THE BACKGROUND

A BOY leads an UNSUSPECTING GIRL out toward the Cheer-A-Mid. She's blindfolded, laughing, holding his hand...

BRANDON

And, since we're on the committee, I think it's a good idea for us to arrive a little early on Prom night. Make sure everything's copacetic.

NOVA

I suppose that makes sense.

BRANDON

So driving-wise, we should go together.

NOVA
You want to...

BRANDON
Carpool.

NOVA
Right.

BRANDON
People get so carried away with the
Prom date thing. I say, why not be
practical about it. You know?

NOVA
Yeah. Practical...

IN THE BACKGROUND

NOVA POV: The Cheerleaders now hold GIANT PLACARDS with
LETTERS that read: **SALLY - PROM?**

The girl sees this -- SQUEALS and RUNS into the boys's arms.
He spins her around, The Cheer-A-Mid waves their pom-pons.
It looks really fun. Nova tunes back into Brandon...

BRANDON
Exactly, no drama. An arrangement
that's 100% mutually beneficial. So
that's a yes?

Her face is frozen into a stunned half-smile. She realizes
it's her turn to talk, struggles to snap out of her daze...

NOVA
Um. Well, Brandon, I...
(clears her throat)
I'd be honored.

BRANDON
Great.

NOVA
(getting on board)
Yeah, it is. It's really great.

BRANDON
So you wanna take your car or mine?

Off Nova, fighting like a champ to keep smiling...

EXT. ANOTHER FIELD -- LATER

Not the tidy, bustling school fields. More like a place you'd meet somebody for a fight. We HEAR the MOTORCYCLE engine as Rick pulls in. ARC around to reveal:

EXT. DAY CARE FACILITY -- SAME

A group of SEVEN YEAR-OLDS plays baseball out front.

RICK
Let's go, Pauly!

PAULY (7) looks up from under his baseball cap. He waves.

EXT. RICK'S HOUSE -- DAY

Pauly wears Rick's motorcycle helmet, Rick walks his bike.

PAULY
But could I be a professional baseball player AND a jet pilot?

RICK
Sure, just not at the same time.

They walk up the driveway to a SMALL HOUSE that could use a new coat of paint and some landscaping. Their MOM - **SANDRA** (40s) - in a WAITRESS UNIFORM, passes them on her way out.

RICK (CONT'D)
You look tired.

SANDRA
I am tired. I left you guys some mac and cheese.

RICK
You gotta get back on days, Mom.

SANDRA
Tips are better at night, sweetie.

She pecks his cheek, heads to her car. Rick watches her go.

INT. AUTO GARAGE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Nova weaves her way through a noisy GARAGE. As she passes a BEETLE ON A LIFT, a MECHANIC working on it looks up --

BEETLE MECHANIC
Hey Nova! How'd it go with AP Chem?

NOVA
Had a little trouble with the lab, but
I aced the written.

BEETLE MECHANIC
Thatta girl.

Another GUY on a crawler slides out from under a Toyota.

TOTOTA MECHANIC
Finished with the prom decorations?

NOVA
All done, Zeke.

ANOTHER MECHANIC looks up from under the hood of a FORD.

FORD MECHANIC
Now all you need is a date.

NOVA
Got one of those too, Bob.

A FINAL MECHANIC in a blue work shirt turns -- A kind face,
if a little grease-smudged.

FINAL MECHANIC
Yeah? Your old man gonna approve?

NOVA
Hi, Dad.

We realize this is **FRANK**, 45, Nova's dad. His workspace is
WALLPAPERED in Nova paraphernalia -- report cards, photos,
faded RIBBONS that may have been there since Kindergarten.

FRANK
So who's the lucky guy? It's Brandon,
right?
(louder, for all)
Brandon. The one who applied pre-med
to Princeton.

The Mechanics all NOD, impressed.

NOVA
Yeah, it's Brandon, but it's not
exactly --

FRANK
What?

Despite her doubts about her prom date situation, Nova
smiles. Doesn't want to disappoint him.

NOVA
Nothing. It's gonna be great.

FRANK
That's my Nova.

Off Nova, hiding her reservations as her Dad closes up shop.

INT. TOMMY'S ROOM -- DAY

Still in his practice gear, Tommy sits in front of an OPEN LAPTOP, lacing new strings into a lacrosse stick.

VOICE (O.S.)
So she caught you with a sophomore?

ARC AROUND to reveal, on screen in an IChat window: **MASON**, 20. Tommy's big brother. He wears a Syracuse Lacrosse sweatshirt, and is ALSO lacing up a lacrosse stick.

TOMMY
Sort of... not exactly.

MASON
Have I taught you nothing? You gotta be smart if you're gonna play the field. Can't get sloppy.

TOMMY
It's not really like that. This girl's pretty special --

MASON
Yeah, yeah yeah. They're all special. But you gotta make it right with Monica.

TOMMY
But it's so much simpler with Simone --

MASON
Tommy. It's okay to have your fun with a Sophomore, but you don't take her to Prom. The Barso Boys take the Prom Queen to prom.

OFF Tommy's look..

EXT. OUTSIDE PROM STORAGE SHED -- NIGHT

Tommy stands beside Monica, who's wrapped in a blanket.

TOMMY

I thought about what you said. You do
deserve an awesome prom. So why wait?

He OPENS the doors to reveal: A PATHWAY of PILLAR CANDLES.
She follows them inside --

INT. CANDLELIT SHED -- NIGHT

Still a shed crammed with Prom supplies, but with Tommy's
special touches, it's totally enchanting, somehow.

CANDLES illuminate every nook and cranny. Iridescent
Shimmera fabrics catch the light as they drape over assorted
Giraffe and Zebra standees. Glittery Palm trees sparkle from
the corners. A few feathery PARROTS perch overhead.

TOMMY

Like it?

MONICA

Are you kidding me?

White twinkle-lights frame a leafy ARCHWAY surrounded by
candles. She spreads the blanket under the archway.

TOMMY

And what's Prom without a romantic
dinner?

He opens his jacket, reveals two paper-wrapped BURRITOS.

MONICA

(delighted)

You got Taco King?

TOMMY

Vegetarian Burrito, extra guac.

MONICA

You're the best.

TOMMY

So does that mean you'll go with me?
To prom.

She looks at her burrito, hesitates for a beat...

MONICA

Yes. But Tommy, I want prom night to
be amazing. No drama. So if you're
gonna be with me, then be with me.
Nobody else.

He looks shocked, gestures to the glowing, romantic shed.

TOMMY

Come on. You think I'd do this for
anyone but you?

She softens. Looks like big brother's advice pays off. As
he LEANS in for a kiss --

INT. NOVA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Finally alone, from her back pack, Nova pulls out THE LAST
PROM POSTER. Pins it up on her wall. She regards it,
clearly wiped out from her day.

Then, Nova's mom, the even-tempered **KITTY** (40s), pops in.

KITTY

Hey. That looks great.

NOVA

Thanks.

KITTY

You've had quite a day.

Nova looks to a STACK of books and homework on her desk.

NOVA

It's not over yet...

KITTY

Nova. You did a great job. Enjoy it
for a minute, huh?

Kitty closes the door and Nova slumps into her desk chair.
Her head DROPS onto the desk. Then -- head still down, she
lifts her arm to her nearby ipod. Clicks her "ROCK OUT"
playlist. MUSIC as she taps her foot.

The MUSIC picks up, and so does Nova's enthusiasm. She
STANDS UP, SPINS, reenergized and in her own world.

QUICK SHOTS of Nova as she JUMPS ON HER BED, sings in front
of her mirror, stands on her desk chair, letting loose...

We notice one thing -- as she sings along to the music, she
knows almost NONE OF THE WORDS. But it doesn't stop her --
she hums, grunts, makes up nonsense words, rocking out...

EXT. STORAGE SHED, SCHOOL PROPERTY -- NIGHT

The figures of Tommy and Monica can just be seen creeping
away, snuggling under the blanket. HOLD on the shed doors.

Then PUSH THROUGH THEM into our shed, which is now dark -- except for-- could it be? A faint FLICKERING is perceptible.

DOLLY through the darkness, past the standing animal figures, past the sparkling palm trees...

... To ONE LONE CANDLE, still burning in a corner. Just a teensy bit too close to those dangling crepe streamers...

INT. NOVA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Nova dead asleep on her bed. Prom poster in a place of honor overhead. Blissfully unaware...

SMASH CUT TO:

A RAGING INFERNO -- NIGHT

The shed and its contents are mere tinder for this EPIC FIRE. FLAMES lick the darkness, smoke columns overwhelm the sky.

FLARE TO WHITE.

FADE BACK IN ON:

NOVA'S FACE. Catatonic. Stricken. PULL BACK TO REVEAL she's standing among --

EXT. THE REMAINS OF THE SHED -- DAY

A few piles of ash still smolder as the HEAVY BOOTS of the fire crew stomp by her, extinguishing the last of the fire.

Brandon, Saeyoung, Gabby and Rolo plod toward Nova.

BRANDON

There she is.

SAEYOUNG

She doesn't look good.

ROLO

Whoa. It's like, Apocalypse Prom.

EXT. LAKE CANYON HIGH -- DAY

FIRE TRUCKS and POLICE CRUISERS surround the site. Students flock to the scene, abuzz over the spectacle.

EXT. THE REMAINS OF THE SHED -- DAY

We FIND TOMMY AND MONICA, who exchange a look. She points to the ruins, and then to them, like, "did we do that?"

PHILIP and GARY amble up.

GARY
This debris is definitely gonna
trigger my asthma. Carcinogens...

PRINCIPAL PIPER

Walks around the perimeter of the burn area. Talks with a
FIRE MARSHALL (50's), who gestures and explains his findings.
Piper listens attentively, until he catches a glimpse of --

RICK

On the side of the burn area. His enjoyment of the
destruction is evident on his smiling -- even laughing --
expression. Piper zeroes in on Rick...

BACK WITH TOMMY

Noting Piper's narrowed eyes, his fixation on Rick. Tommy
takes Monica's hand.

TOMMY
Come on. Let's go.

BACK WITH NOVA

Surveying the destruction like a field general after a
battle. The Prom Committee approaches her, tentative.

SAEYOUNG
(cautiously)
Hey there...

BRANDON
(scared of answer)
How you... doing, Nova?

She picks up the remains of a COLORFUL PARROT. She tilts her
head, hopeful. It disintegrates into a million ashy pieces.

NOVA
The eco-friendly wood. The leopard
print fabric.

GABBY
You know, I never liked that fabric.

SAEYOUNG
She's right.

GABBY
It was tacky.

SAEYOUNG
We're better off without it.

GABBY
Way better. Nova?

SAEYOUNG
Don't pass out, don't pass out.
Breathe...

They brace the glazed over Nova as FIREFIGHTERS strut by.

ROLO
So is prom like, canceled?

SAEYOUNG
We could postpone it 'til after
graduation.

GABBY
Or just do it without decorations?

Nova suddenly snaps awake.

NOVA
(sharply)
No. No, and no.
(beat)
We must rebuild.

They look like she just suggested they all fly to Mars.

NOVA (CONT'D)
Guys. We can't let this setback ruin
our Prom. We are the Prom Committee.
If we give up, if we turn back now --

ROLO
The terrorists have won?

NOVA
(ignores him)
People are counting on us. Do you
want to tell the Senior Class to
return their dresses, cancel their
dates, and forget the whole thing
because we abandoned them when they
needed us most? We can do this. We
just need some determination and a
little elbow grease. Who's with me?

SAEYOUNG
Nova, prom's three weeks away.

NOVA

Then we work overtime. Before school,
after school, whatever it takes.

ROLO

I don't know man. This was already my
hardest class this semester.

GABBY

I really wanna help, Nova, but I got
the lead in the Spring musical.

Nova turns to her last hope...

NOVA

Brandon?

BRANDON

It's just I'm behind in some of my AP
classes, and now I've got all these
exams to study for...

We leave her and find PIPER surveying the scene. He sees:

MOTORCYCLE TRACKS running through the grass *alongside* the
burn area. He looks again at Rick, clutching his HELMET and
enjoying the scene. Piper stomps over.

PRINCIPAL PIPER

You think this is funny?

RICK

No. It's tragic. I mean, we missed a
serious weenie roast opportunity.

Piper seethes at Rick, eyes narrowed. Then:

PRINCIPAL PIPER

You did this.

RICK

What?

PRINCIPAL PIPER

Where were you last night?

RICK

At home.

PRINCIPAL PIPER

Can you prove that?

RICK

You gotta be kidding me.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
Can you explain these motorcycle tracks?

RICK
I cut through here on my way home.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
Or after fleeing the scene of the crime.

RICK
Oooh. Impressive, Detective Piper.
How long you been on the force?

PRINCIPAL PIPER
(fuming)
I warned you, Rick. This time you've gone too far. And you will be held accountable.

RICK
You can't prove anything.

Piper mulls this for a beat. Maybe he can't. But then...

PRINCIPAL PIPER
I don't have to. This is my school.
And you're under my authority.

RICK
They're just some dumb prom decorations.

This brings a perverse smile to Piper's face.

PRINCIPAL PIPER
Oh yeah? Come with me.

Piper marches Rick over to Nova and the committee.

PRINCIPAL PIPER (CONT'D)
Nova.

NOVA
Yes?

PRINCIPAL PIPER
This is the person who burned down your decorations.

NOVA
What?

Rick's face is impossible to read.

PRINCIPAL PIPER

And this is the person who's gonna
rebuild them.

RICK

What?

Nova looks at Rick with complete disdain.

NOVA

Mr. Piper, really, I have it covered--

PRINCIPAL PIPER

Oh no. He's doing it. I want him to
see the impact of his very, very poor
judgement. So from now until Prom, he
will spend every waking hour
developing an appreciation for just
how much work went into this project.
Before he destroyed it, that is.

Nova's eyes narrow as she zeroes in on him: The Enemy. The
line between her and Rick is clearly drawn. It's on.

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, HALLWAY -- DAY

Life (and class) goes on despite the fire. A BELL RINGS and
SIMONE filters out into the hall to see Philip and Gary. Who
happen to be wearing LACROSSE HELMETS.

A few Seniors pass by, TAPPING on their helmets as they pass.

SIMONE

Hi, guys.

Gary and Philip turn in opposite directions, KNOCK helmets.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

What's with the helmets?

PHILIP

Varsity players make the JV wear them
on game days.

GARY

It's... humiliating.

SIMONE

I think it's cute.

PHILIP
Yeah, well. Wait 'til lunch. You'll
change your mind if you see us try to
eat pasta with them on.

She laughs. Philip grins from behind his helmet.

DOWN THE HALL

Tommy looks up from grab-assing with his pals to see SIMONE
with Philip, laughing warmly. He watches, wheels spinning.

BACK WITH PHILIP AND SIMONE

SIMONE
I'll see you later, alright?

PHILIP
Sure.

He backs up, trying to be cool, BANGS into his locker door --

SIMONE
Watch out!

-- and a huge CHEMISTRY BOOK falls out onto his head.

SIMONE (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

PHILIP
Yeah, I'm fine. Hey, good thing I had
the helmet, huh?

She laughs again, waves affectionately as she leaves. This
exchange is NOT LOST on Tommy, still observing down the hall.

EXT. LACROSSE FIELD -- LATER

WHISTLES as the lacrosse players gear up for the game.

ON THE SIDELINES

Philip and Gary sport lacrosse pads and jerseys. We THINK
they're lifting weights - they're grunting and struggling --

GARY
So did you ask her out, or what?

PHILIP
No. It wasn't a good time. I'm
waiting for the right moment.

PULL BACK to reveal they're trying to lift the GATORADE container onto the bench. It's too heavy for them.

Tommy JOGS over, easily lifts the Gatorade container.

TOMMY
There you go, fellas.

GARY
(softly)
We totally had that.

TOMMY
Hey, Philip. You're looking good out there, bro.

PHILIP
Really?

GARY
He is?

TOMMY
You've got real varsity potential.

GARY
He DOES?

Philip shoots Gary a look and he scuttles away, muttering.

PHILIP
Wow, thanks, Tommy. I don't know what to say.

TOMMY
I'm having a team barbecue on Friday. You should swing by.

PHILIP
Really?

TOMMY
Totally casual. Bring a friend if you want.

PHILIP
Gary?

TOMMY
I was thinking more like a girl, Philip.

PHILIP
Oh. Right.

TOMMY

You know some of those, don't you?

As Philip's wheel's spin, the **COACH** blows a WHISTLE, Tommy heads over, offering an encouraging wink as he leaves.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

See you there, bro.

INT. HOMEROOM -- DAY

Philip looks toward the door, eagerly awaiting Simone.

GARY

Tommy Barso's barbecue. It doesn't get any more exclusive than that.

PHILIP

What can I say? I've got Varsity potential.

Simone walks in with her friends. Gary snaps to attention.

GARY

There she is. Your moment for glory has arrived. Go. Make me proud.

Philip gets up, Gary suddenly freaks--

GARY (CONT'D)

Wait! Fly check.
(Philip checks his fly)
Pit check.
(and his underarms)
Now, breathe on me.

PHILIP

What? Why?

GARY

Breath check. The most crucial of all. You want to ask her out with Death Breath? Come on, hit me.

Reluctantly, Philip LEANS over, and EXHALES into Gary's face.

GARY (CONT'D)

I didn't get anything. Hit me again.

PHILIP

Gary --

GARY

I just had a cough drop, my olfactory
nerves are compromised.

Gary leans in, inhales strenuously, as --

SIMONE (O.S.)

What are you guys doing?

Gary and Philip jerk apart, embarrassed. Okay, mortified.

GARY

Molecular experiment! Condensation!
I gotta go...

He scuttles away. Philip tries to recover...

PHILIP

I was looking for you.

SIMONE

You were?

PHILIP

Well, I was about to. Before I --

SIMONE

Started breathing in Gary's face?

PHILIP

There's a lacrosse team barbecue on
Friday. I was wondering if you wanted
to go with me? I mean, unless you're
busy. You're probably busy...

She thinks it over for a second, then smiles warmly.
Philip's open, eager face is JUST the antidote she needs for
her cramped-closet conversation from earlier.

SIMONE

That sounds like fun.

PHILIP

Really?

SIMONE

Sure. I love barbecues.

She leaves with a smile, as Philip watches her go.

PHILIP

She loves barbecues. She loves
barbecues!

He yells it out in triumph. A few students stare.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- AFTER SCHOOL

Nova -- sleeves rolled up, ponytail secure -- directs DELIVERY GUYS carrying FERNS and FICUS PLANTS.

NOVA
(to a delivery person)
Excuse me, that's for the Junglescape,
it goes over here...

Saeyoung, Gabby and Rolo open a shipment of palm fronds.

GABBY
I'm deciding between Donny Honda and
Vinny LeClair.

SAEYOUNG
You need to choose. Soon.

GABBY
It's not that easy. We're not all the
perfect couple with our lives planned
out for the next ten years.

NOVA
Um, guys? Do you mind? We have
bigger things to worry about than our
dates right now. Like the pile of two-
by-fours outside --

She spins around to discover -- RICK at the entrance. He carries in a HUGE LOAD of plywood, looking very manly. Nova's expression immediately darkens.

NOVA (CONT'D)
Oh, look. It's Mister helpful.

RICK
Where do you want this?

NOVA
Right there's fine.

He sets it down. It's hard not to notice his sizeable arm muscles. Nova, despite herself, checks him out. Then catches herself. Saeyoung and Gabby are less principled.

GABBY
Welcome to the jungle, Tarzan.

Nova scowls. *Traitors*. He wipes his hair out of his eyes.

RICK

Now what?

She eyes a HUGE PILE of BOXES on one side of the gym.

NOVA

Tell you what. Why don't you move all
of those boxes over there, to --
(re: the opposite wall)
There. Think you can handle that?

He just starts moving them, ignoring her.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Saeyoung, Gabby. Let's sort the palm
fronds. Rolo can get started on the
birds of paradise display.

Rolo looks up from examining the business end of a DRILL.

ROLO

I can't.

NOVA

What?

ROLO

I got a chat-date with my lady.
(off Gabby's SNORT)
Who is REAL.

He holds up his phone as proof. Gabby inspects it.

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE: Can't wait 2 chat W U. Xoxo - A.

GABBY

A text. Nice proof. Anyone could've
sent that.

ROLO

Whatever. I'm out. No time to build
fake parrots, yo.

He heads out. Nova shakes her head, turns to Gabby.

GABBY

I have to go, too. Rehearsal.

Nova nods, accepting her fate. Gabby heads out, sheepish.

GABBY (CONT'D)

Good luck with the parrots.

NOVA
 (feebly)
 They're Toucans.

In the BG, Rick REMOVES HIS SHIRT, keeps lifting boxes.

NOVA (CONT'D)
 Okay, Saeyoung. That leaves us.

SAEYOUNG
 Actually...

Saeyoung nods toward the DOOR of the gym, where JUSTIN'S FACE has materialized. He BLOWS her kisses, gestures "come on!"

NOVA
 (resigned)
 Go ahead.

Saeyoung leaves. Rick and Nova are now ALONE. TURNING, she finally clocks his BARE CHEST. And STUMBLES into the PLANTS.

NOVA (CONT'D)
 Oh.

RICK
 Problem?

NOVA
 No. Nothing. I'm just... arranging
 this foliage.

She PICKS up a plant. It's a lot heavier than she thought.

RICK
 You want help with that?

NOVA
 From you? No, thanks.

As she struggles, spilling dirt...

RICK
 You sure you don't want help? Because
 this --
 (gestures to boxes)
 Seems kind of pointless and stupid.

NOVA
 I think pointless and stupid suits you
 just fine.

Defiant, she picks the plant up again. And immediately TRIPS. The PLANT goes flying. She has dirt on her face. She springs up, disregards his obvious enjoyment of this.

As she lifts the plant again, he RUSHES OVER--

RICK

Wait. Nova, wait. Hold on. I just want to say one thing.

Thinking he's going to apologize, she pauses, righteous, and waits for it. He walks up to her and stands close. Really close, looks at her intensely. Confidingly, he whispers --

RICK (CONT'D)

Lift from the legs.

Nova glares at him, FUMING...

NOVA (PRE-LAP)

He's a menace.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Nova sets the table, rants to Frank and Kitty.

NOVA

A rude, arrogant menace with no sense of personal space. And he was late today.

FRANK

This reprobate burns your prom down and you have to work with him?

NOVA

Mr. Piper's forcing me. I think he thinks it's some kind of character building exercise or something.

KITTY

Is there any chance he might actually help you?

Nova and Frank look at Kitty.

FRANK

Kitty, he's a punk.

KITTY

I'm just saying, it seems like you could use the help, Nova. Three weeks is not a lot of time.

NOVA
Help, sure. But he's a vandal, he's --

FRANK
The enemy.

NOVA
Right! Thank you.

Kitty shakes her head. Knows better than to interfere with Nova and Frank's close bond.

NOVA (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Walking around with his shirt off.
And of course he drives a motorcycle.

ON KITTY: The corners of her lips curl up slightly, clocking the passion with which Nova discusses her new companion.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

KITTY
I'll get that.

NOVA
You should see this guy, Dad. It's like he enjoys watching me suffer.

FRANK
If this kid gives you any more problems, you come to me. Nobody sabotages my little girl's prom.

She grins. What would she do without her Dad?

KITTY (O.S.)
Nova. It's for you!

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE, FOYER -- NIGHT

Nova is surprised to find BRANDON waiting for her, looking like he's about to burst.

NOVA
Hi, Brandon. What are you --

BRANDON
I got into Princeton!

NOVA
That's great! Congratulations!

IN THE DINING ROOM

Frank nods approval as he sets the table. Brandon and Nova can be clearly heard in here. Kitty gives him a look.

BACK WITH NOVA AND BRANDON

BRANDON

That's not all. I'm a finalist for the Dean's Scholarship.

NOVA

Brandon, that's amazing!

She gives him a hug, genuinely thrilled for him.

BRANDON

Thanks. I knew you'd understand.

NOVA

Understand?

BRANDON

The interview for the scholarship is the same weekend as prom.

NOVA

Oh.

BRANDON

I hate to leave you hanging...

NOVA

No, I completely get it.

BRANDON

Really?

NOVA

Really. Don't give it another thought. I mean, Princeton. Go, Tigers!

BRANDON

You're the greatest. Good old Nova.

NOVA

That's me.

She tries for a smile...

EXT. SAEYOUNG'S PRIUS -- DAY

Saeyoung drives, looking distracted. Justin prattles on.

JUSTIN

Prom's gonna be so awesome. Mark and I booked the limo. He's taking Izzy, of course. Now, about the tux, are you thinking traditional black, or --

SAEYOUNG

Mark and Isabelle?

JUSTIN

Yeah. Is that okay?

SAEYOUNG

Not really, Justin. I mean, they're your friends.

JUSTIN

They're your friends, too. It'll be fun.

SAEYOUNG

What, you don't think it'll be fun to just be with me? You have to have your friends there?

JUSTIN

Of course not...

SAEYOUNG

Because if that's the case maybe we should rethink this whole thing.

JUSTIN

I had no idea you felt this way.

SAEYOUNG

Yeah. Because you didn't ask.

She scowls. They keep driving in tense silence, underneath --

EXT. FREEWAY OVERPASS -- DAY

Where we find LLOYD, executing his latest scheme. He UNFURLS A GIANT SHEET over the road that reads:

**JEN -- PROM? LUV, Lloyd
(P.S. I'm in your homeroom!)**

He lights up at the approach of ANOTHER CAR. Except --

LLOYD

(panicking)

Oh, no. No, look up. Jen! Look up!

IN THE CAR

Find **JEN**, 17, chatting on her phone, passing by, oblivious.

BACK ON THE BRIDGE

Lloyd RUNS from one side of the overpass bridge to the other, WAVING his arms and screaming. Jen drives on, clueless...

INT. THE CAR YOUR MOM DROVE -- DUSK

Gary drives his Mom's sedan. IN THE BACK: Philip and Simone. IN THE FRONT: Gary's Mom.

PHILIP
It should be this next block.

SIMONE
Thanks for driving, Gary.

GARY
Sure thing.

GARY'S MOM
Don't tailgate, honey.

GARY
What is that sound? I could swear it's my mom nagging me, but that's impossible since she promised to be quiet during this car ride.

GARY'S MOM
I am the only licensed driver in this car. Use your signal.

Gary PULLS UP to a house. As Philip climbs out.

SIMONE
Aren't you coming, Gary?

GARY'S MOM
Oh, he's not invited.

GARY
Silence!

SIMONE
But it's a team barbecue.

PHILIP
Oh, yeah, it is, but it's...

At that moment, the door to the HOUSE opens -- TOMMY steps out, ushers in a couple of KIDS. Simone puts it together.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Varsity.

SIMONE
(trying to play it cool)
Oh. That explains it. Um, guess we should go in. Thanks again, Gary.

GARY
No problem. You kids have fun... without me...

HOLD on Gary.. the faintest shade of envy in his eyes as we GO WITH SIMONE AND PHILIP up to --

EXT. TOMMY'S FRONT PORCH -- DUSK

TOMMY
Hey, Philip! You made it!

PHILIP
Hey, Tommy. This is Simone.

SIMONE
We've met.

PHILIP
Oh, really?

SIMONE
Doesn't everybody know Tommy Barso?

Awk-ward. Tommy continues leading them into --

EXT. TOMMY'S BACKYARD -- DUSK

DRIFT through the casual backyard gathering. These are SENIORS -- 6 months from the freedom of college, and counting the minutes. Philip and Simone do not blend.

A bevy of SENIOR GIRLS (who look like they're about 28,) turn at their approach. Simone immediately locks eyes on MONICA.

Instinctively, she backs away, as Monica sizes Philip up.

SIMONE
Um, I'll be right back, okay?

TOMMY
Hey guys, this is Philip. He's on the team.

MONICA
You don't look like a senior.

PHILIP
Neither do you.

Miraculously, the seniors LAUGH at this, surprising no one more than Philip. What do you know -- he's funny!

ACROSS THE PATIO

As Philip is absorbed into the Senior Throng, Simone finds a soda and cracks it. Tommy appears behind her.

TOMMY
Hi.

SIMONE
Don't talk to me.

TOMMY
Why not? We're not doing anything wrong.
(off her silence)
Look if you're not speaking to me then why'd you come?

SIMONE
I had no idea this was your party.

TOMMY
You sure about that? You sure there wasn't a teeny tiny part of you that wanted to see me, too?

OVER BY THE GRILL

Philip serves up a burger to a SENIOR GIRL.

SENIOR GIRL
You're the grill-master.

PHILIP
Actually I've never grilled anything before. Except maybe ants. On the sidewalk.

They laugh AGAIN. It's miraculous. Philip is in! Simone approaches him, spinning a soccer ball. She smiles.

EXT. BACKYARD -- SUNSET

Simone kicks off her shoes. Philip dribbles a SOCCER BALL toward her. Tries to pass her -- she SNAKES it from him. She laughs and dribbles away. He SPRINTS to catch up.

PHILIP

Whoa! You're a ringer.

SIMONE

I'm Argentine. We live for soccer.

PHILIP

I don't know about dating a girl who's more athletic than I am.

Whoops. That just sorta slipped out.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Not that we're dating. You could have a boyfriend, for all I know. Who's gonna kill me and throw me in a pit.

SIMONE

(grinning)

I don't have a boyfriend. I went out with one guy this year who I liked a lot. But that's over.

PHILIP

What happened?

SIMONE

He wasn't exactly... available. So I broke it off. I'm not into guys with girlfriends. No matter how charming or cute or fun they are.

PHILIP

Sounds like you still like him.

SIMONE

I guess you can't really choose who you fall for.

PHILIP

(you said it)

No, I guess you can't.

SIMONE

It's in the past. Head's up!

She races up to him and steals the ball, taking off.

BACK WITH MONICA

On the patio, watching Simone very carefully...

EXT. SAEYOUNG'S HOUSE -- DAY

Justin rings the bell, waits anxiously. Saeyoung answers.

SAEYOUNG

What're you --

That's when she notices

THE DRIVEWAY

Where a STRETCH LIMOUSINE idles in front of her house.

SAEYOUNG (CONT'D)

What did you do?

He simply holds out his hand, leads her into --

INT. LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

She climbs in, bewildered. He joins her.

SAEYOUNG

Okay. Seriously. What is this?

JUSTIN

It's our limo. I thought we should test it out. 'Cause this is how it's gonna be on prom night. Just you and me.

SAEYOUNG

What about Mark and Isabelle?

JUSTIN

They'll get their own ride. Saeyoung, you're my whole world. Nobody matters to me as much as you.

Saeyoung breaks into a huge smile

SAEYOUNG

You are amazing. And this --
(sinking into the cushion)
I could get used to.

JUSTIN

Actually, I have to get it back in 15 minutes or I lose my deposit.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- DAY

Nova works alone. Surrounded by an OVERWHELMING amount of work to be done. A GIANT CLOCK reads 3:15.

Then -- Rick saunters in. She turns to him, displeased.

NOVA
We start every day at three sharp.

RICK
It's only 3:15.

NOVA
Which means you're late.

RICK
There was traffic. Go with the flow a little, dude.

NOVA
I am not a dude. And only dead fish go with the flow.

RICK
What is that? You have that on a poster in your locker?

NOVA
(lying)
No. We start at three.

RICK
You know, in case you hadn't noticed, I'm the only one here. Would you rather me be here late, or not at all?

NOVA
I'd rather not be in this situation in the first place. Since you asked.

Rick watches her go to a rickety, raw wood FRAME with HOSES and PUMPS inside of it. A few stray leaves glued to it.

RICK
You've got it all figured out, huh? Take my word for it, you know less than you think you do.

NOVA
About what?

RICK
A lot of things. Including that
little bird bath you're building.

NOVA
It's an enchanted fountain.

RICK
Well, it's gonna leak all over the
enchanted floor if you don't find a
diverter that fits the intake valve.

NOVA
(lying)
I know that.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Nova assembles an ARCHWAY with a puny little HAMMER. She keeps BENDING nails, messing up. Rick walks over with a MUCH BIGGER hammer, DRIVES a nail in with one whack. Walks away.

-- They each work on different parts of a BACKDROP, back to back -- then TURN toward the toolbox at the same time -- BUMP HEADS. No one wants to admit it, but it's kinda funny.

-- She drapes fabric, he staples leaves. They BOTH wear headphones. He puts down the staple gun, she picks it up in a fluid, intuitive motion -- an unspoken rhythm has formed between them, even if they don't realize it...

INT. GYMNASIUM -- ANOTHER DAY

Nova (alone) prepares to run a test on the FOUNTAIN. She fumbles with a switch. It TURNS ON, and for a moment -- victory! Then, a horrible GRINDING sound.

NOVA
Oh, no. Please don't do this...

And water leaks everywhere. REVEAL RICK in the doorway.

RICK
What do you know? It's leaking.

NOVA
Yes, yes it is. You happy?

He just unplugs the fountain, looks over the motor unit.

NOVA (CONT'D)
You know, you used to be nice. I
remember in third grade when Heddy the
Hamster died, you cried!

RICK

Well, that hamster didn't constantly annoy me.

(concentrating)

These motors can be tricky.

NOVA

This is a disaster.

He's already removed the casing from the motor. We see the mechanic in him take over, he works effortlessly, focused.

RICK

A hurricane is a disaster. Smallpox, Locusts, those are disasters. This is just a fountain. And it's just prom.

NOVA

Just prom. JUST prom?

RICK

Yeah. Lame band, balloons. Not worth getting that worked up over.

NOVA

I think the 200 people I've sold tickets to would disagree with you.

RICK

The guys wouldn't. You gotta buy the dinner, you gotta get the little flower thing, and then there's the tuxedo.

NOVA

People like to get dressed up.

RICK

In the ultimate symbol of conformity that a bunch of other guys have already worn. Sound like fun to you?

NOVA

Prom is a noble tradition.

RICK

It's a cheesy costume party.

NOVA

It's a celebration of four years --

RICK

-- Of boring classes and teachers and people you'll never see again.

NOVA
So, what? Might as well just burn it
down, then?

For the first time, he really sees how much this means to
her. And how alone she is. As she walks out...

RICK
I didn't say that.

EXT. LAKE CANYON PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

Nova walks to her car, upset. He comes out after her.

RICK
Sorry I insulted your prom. It's
obviously really important to you, I
just don't get it, all this for one
night.

NOVA
Yeah. It's just one night, just a
dance. But it's the last night. The
last dance. And for that one night,
there's nothing behind us and nothing
ahead, just all of us in this one
perfect moment, forever. (Beat) And I
want to be a part of that.

She gets into her car. Rick watches her go.

INT. COMPUTER SCIENCE CLASSROOM -- DAY

Gabby peers around her computer monitor toward Rolo.

GABBY
Hey, Rolo. Can I see her profile?

ROLO
She doesn't have one.

GABBY
Come on, Rolo, you said you met
online!

ROLO
I did. But she had to take her page
down because she got grounded.

GABBY
What for?

ROLO
She was out clubbing 'til late.

This newest fabrication DELIGHTS Gabby.

GABBY
Clubbing. Athena likes to get up in
the club, huh?

ROLO
Yeah. She does.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HOMEROOM -- DAY

Philip and Gary at their lockers. Gary looks rather displeased as Philip blathers excitedly.

PHILIP
She basically told me flat out that
she's available.

GARY
Philip.

PHILIP
I mean, it's just like you said, I'm
golden. Which is why I'm going to ask
her to study as soon as I see her.

GARY
Philip. Have you forgotten what day
it is?

Philip looks confused.

PHILIP
Wednesday?

GARY
Wednesday. Yes. Which we've
established and designated as Stick
Hippo T-shirt day. Where's yours?

Reveal Gary's SHIRT: A stick-figure drawing of a four-legged animal with a round, hippopotamus head.

PHILIP
I... guess I forgot.

GARY
I have an extra. For emergencies --

As Gary ducks into his locker, Philip sees...

PHILIP

Tommy!
(waving wildly)
Great party, bro!

Down the hall, Tommy looks up with a nod.

TOMMY

You're the man, Phil!

Philip puffs up, overjoyed. Gary mouths, "Phil?" as Philip struts into --

INT. HOMEROOM -- CONTINUOUS

-- on a mission, moving confidently toward Simone.

PHILIP

Hey, Simone. Listen, if you want to study for the Chemistry test after school...

SIMONE

I'd love to. I really need it!

PHILIP

How about we meet in the library?

SIMONE

Perfect. I'll be there.

Philip turns, offers a triumphant nod to a confused Gary.

GARY

I thought we were gonna study.

PHILIP

Dude. I'm sealing the deal.

GARY

You're right. No, you're totally right. I'll be fine.

Philip doesn't seem particularly concerned about whether Gary will be fine, as he watches Simone from across the room...

INT. BY THE LOCKERS -- DAY

A CUTE GIRL, **KRISTEN** (17), stands at her locker alone.

REVEAL LLOYD observing her. Beside him, the helpful TESS.

TESS

She's alone. Go for it.

LLOYD
What do I say?

TESS
Just pretend you're a normal person.

Tess disappears from sight. Lloyd approaches Kristen.

LLOYD
Hi, Kristen.
(off her confused look)
It's Lloyd. I'm in your Life Sciences
class.

KRISTEN
Really?

LLOYD
You lent me a pencil.

KRISTEN
Oh.

LLOYD
This might seem out of the blue... It
is out of the blue, actually, but
Prom's coming up and I'm looking for a
date and I wondered if you maybe
wanted to go with me?

KRISTEN
Are you serious?

LLOYD
I know it's a little last minute. But
I'm really fun, I swear. I have
references.

KRISTEN
No, it's not that. I have a
boyfriend. Didn't you know that?

LLOYD
Oh. No, I guess not. Is it a new
thing, or...?

KRISTEN
Sorry, this is just so weird. I
thought everyone knew about us.
(off his blank stare)
I'm Kristen. He's Anton. We're
Kranton?

She FLINGS open her LOCKER as further proof: Giant, glittery letters spell: **KRANTON!** The inside is WALLPAPERED with pictures of them, hearts, puffy paint... Lloyd takes it in.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

How can you not know about us? You'd have to live in a cave. I mean, we're always together. This five minutes I'm talking to you is the longest we've been apart in months.

LLOYD

I had no idea.

Just then, she closes her locker to reveal -- yep, **ANTON**, 17.

KRISTEN

You're back.

ANTON

I missed you.

As they proceed to MAKE OUT --

LLOYD

Alrighty, then. Talk to you around.
Kranton.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- DAY

Nova walks into the gym and is quickly swallowed by DARKNESS.

NOVA

(in the dark)

Hello? Why aren't these lights on?
Rolo, did you fall asleep in the
treasure chest again?

THEN: A SWITCH is flipped. An ethereal glow from the center of the gym. The sound of flowing WATER. Then she sees it.

THE FOUNTAIN

A towering, tropical waterfall made of rocks and leaves and real flowers. The water cascades into a sparkling pool lit from beneath. Nova is ecstatic. It's heavenly.

Reveal RICK, his hand on the switch.

NOVA (CONT'D)

It's finished! How did you -- you
must've worked all night.

RICK
You like it?

NOVA
It's the most beautiful thing I've
ever seen. I had no idea you were so
talented.

RICK
Thanks a lot.

NOVA
I didn't mean it like that. This is
amazing. You're an artist.

This means more to Rick than Nova could possibly know. She
admires the fountain... realizes he's staring at her.

NOVA (CONT'D)
What?

RICK
I have a kid brother. He's seven.
And because of my mom's work schedule,
I have to pick him up from day care.

NOVA
Why are you telling me this?

RICK
It's why I'm late. It's why I cut
class and I'm late getting here. I
just want you to know I'm not blowing
it off 'cause I'm a slacker.

NOVA
I'm sorry I assumed that.

RICK
It's okay. Everybody does.

They hold each other's gaze... a nice moment.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY -- DAY

Philip finds an empty table. He sits down, then looks up.

PHILIP
(to an imaginary Simone)
Simone! Hey! I didn't see you there.
What am I saying, of course I saw her.

A NERDY KID shoots him a weird look from across the room.

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, LOCKERS -- SAME

TOMMY matches step with Simone, on her way to the library.

TOMMY
Hey, Simone.

SIMONE
What do you want, Tommy?

TOMMY
Can I give you a ride home?

SIMONE
I have plans.

He SWINGS around in front of her. Turns the charm WAY up.

TOMMY
Come for a ride. Please? Just a
quick ride. I promise.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY -- DAY

Philip taps his pencil on the table. Looks around for Simone. Only spots the Nerdy Kid, who shrugs at him.

INT. TOMMY'S CAR -- LATE AFTERNOON

Tommy's parked along a neighborhood street. Simone struggles to stay strong, stares straight ahead.

TOMMY
Why won't you answer my texts?

SIMONE
You know why.

TOMMY
I'm trapped, don't you see? My hands
are tied. Please don't ice me out
like this. I miss you. I miss that
little dimple you get when you smile.
Lemme see it, just once.

SIMONE
No...

TOMMY
Ahhh, there it is. There's a smile.
Don't fight it, come on.

She softens -- melting slightly as he leans in close.

INT. MONICA'S CAR -- SAME TIME

REVEAL MONICA, in her car, half a block down the road. She peers at Tommy and Simone through the windshield, seething.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY -- EVEN LATER

The Nerdy kid packs up to go home. Philip watches him go.

EXT. GYMNASIUM -- DAY

Late in the day. Rick staples twinkle lights onto a backdrop while Nova talks into her PHONE, increasingly disturbed.

NOVA

Those tiki torches were supposed to be here yesterday. What do you mean you delivered them? To what address?

(turning white)

What? WHAT?

Rick turns, perplexed, as she sinks down onto the bleachers.

NOVA (CONT'D)

I understand the confusion. I'll figure something out. Thank you.

She looks up at Rick. Devastated.

RICK

What was that all about?

NOVA

Cranbrook's prom theme is Welcome to the Jungle.

RICK

So?

NOVA

So they're our biggest rival. And they totally copied us.

RICK

Can't there be two jungle proms?

NOVA

I don't know, Rick. Can there be two presidents of the United States? Two winners of the Superbowl? There's no tie for number one.

(beat)

What else can go wrong?

RICK
C'mon, I'm sure your prom's better.

NOVA
But how do I know for sure? I have no
idea what they're planning.

RICK
There's one way to find out.

She cocks her head as a gleam shines in his eye.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

Rick on his bike, Nova stands beside him shaking her head.

RICK
You want my help or not?

NOVA
On this thing?

RICK
You can do it Nova, I know you can.

NOVA
Do what?

RICK
(handing her a helmet)
Trust me.

EXT. CRANBROOK HIGH SCHOOL -- NIGHT

Another school, silent in the darkness. Rick and Nova creep
up to a DOOR on the building's side, whispering --

NOVA
How are you gonna get us in there?

RICK
I'm gonna fire my grappling hook gun,
scale the side of this wall, and crash
in through the skylights.

NOVA
Really?

He KICKS the door to the gym and it simply opens.

INT. CRANBROOK'S GYM -- NIGHT

They creep into the dark gym. Nova swaggers through like a detective at a crime scene, increasingly pleased at what she sees. She picks up a cheap looking PLASTIC PLANT.

NOVA

Hmm. Fake. I would expect more from these guys.

He smirks.

NOVA (CONT'D)

What?

RICK

You're so cocky right now.

NOVA

I am not, it's the truth. They don't even have a fog machine.

RICK

Amateurs.

He sticks his head into a headless Gorilla STAND UP FIGURE.

RICK (CONT'D)

(behind Gorilla body)

Your prom's definitely better.

She looks at him, awash in gratitude. It occurs to her --

NOVA

Why are you doing this?

RICK

Eh. I hadn't broken in anywhere for a while...

NOVA

I'm serious. You don't care about this. Why help me?

RICK

It's nice to be around someone who believes in something so much.

They're both a little surprised by his simple honesty. In fact, it leaves her rather flustered and elated.

NOVA

(with a grand gesture)

I do care. And my prom is better!

And her enthusiastic gesture then knocks over a giant pile of FAKE ROCKS. They CRACK UP, scramble to stop the avalanche -- and wind up practically in each other's arms. A beat.

He looks at her. She looks at him. It's a kiss moment. And she's about to go with it... When she suddenly draws back.

NOVA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

RICK

What do you mean?

NOVA

You were gonna kiss me!

RICK

No, I wasn't!

NOVA

Why not?

RICK

What? Nova, if I'm about to kiss you, you'll know it.

Then -- A COMMOTION from the hallway. Nova JUMPS five feet.

NOVA

What was that??

A SECURITY GUARD, keys jangling, approaches.

SECURITY GUARD

Somebody there?

RICK

We gotta go.

He GRABS her hand as the Guard rounds the corner. His FLASHLIGHT BEAM bounces around the room. Rick and Nova are gone. But THEN -- he hears a DOOR close on the other side of the gym and begins to CHASE THEM -- here we go...

A SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Nova and Rick run down a hallway and around a corner, out of breath and exhilarated, the guard hot on their tails.

-- CAFETERIA KITCHEN: They blast through the kitchen. Nova looks at a giant vat of oil. Ew.

-- AUTO SHOP GARAGE: They duck into one side of a half-built car and out the other as the guard gives chase.

-- ANOTHER HALLWAY: Nova stops at a Cranbrook PROM POSTER.

NOVA
Black and white?

RICK
C'mon!

Rick grabs her hand and pulls her away.

-- LOCKER ROOM SHOWERS: The guard creeps through the tiled shower area.

REVEAL RICK AND NOVA, crouched close together in a little stall. Rick looks up, sees --

AN OPEN WINDOW

Nova shakes her head. Rick nods. She shakes again. He nods again. Then THE GUARD'S FLASHLIGHT is visible against the tile. She leaps up and climbs onto his shoulders, practically stepping on his head, to get out the window.

He shoves her (okay, on the butt,) out the window and then pulls himself up with those impressive arm muscles we mentioned earlier...

JUST as the flashlight lands on the window, Rick's SHOE disappears from view.

EXT. CRANBROOK HIGH SCHOOL -- NIGHT

Nova LEAPS onto the back of the motorcycle and OFF THEY GO as the guard lumbers out the doors, shouting.

They tear away, roaring through the streets. Nova YELLS with abandon and exhilaration -- they made it!

NOVA
We did it!

And in that triumphant moment -- CHERRY LIGHTS start to whirl behind them. Rick pulls over as Nova deflates. Caught.

INT. POLICE STATION, BENCHES -- NIGHT

Nova and Rick sit on a BENCH in the administrative area.

NOVA
Jail. This is jail.

RICK
This is not jail. It's a bench.

NOVA
I'm a convict! Do you know how JAIL
looks on a resume?

RICK
Maybe we can get matching prison tats.

FRANK (O.S.)
So this is funny to you.

Frank and Kitty appear. Frank is SEETHING, doesn't even SEE
Nova through his fury at Rick.

NOVA
You guys got here quick.

FRANK
(spits it out)
Rick Linsey.

RICK
Nice to meet you, sir.

FRANK
Don't "sir" me. I'm not buying it.

NOVA
Wait a minute, Dad. This is not his
fault.

FRANK
Riding her around on that death
machine. Breaking and entering.

NOVA
He was trying to help me.

FRANK
Like he helped burn your prom down?

Nova reacts to his sharp tone. Meanwhile Rick recoils,
sinking into a familiar defensive slouch. Nova presses on --

NOVA
Dad, please listen. I deserve the
blame. Rick, tell them.

But Rick just slumps against the bench, silent.

FRANK
I should've intervened on day one.
Before he dragged her down to his
level.

Nova keeps trying to catch Rick's eyes, it's not happening.

NOVA

Rick?

He avoids her eyes as Frank leads her away...

INT. HOMEROOM -- DAY

Philip and Gary at their lockers as Simone approaches.

SIMONE

Hi.

PHILIP

Oh, hey, Simone. Didn't see you there.

OF COURSE he saw her there.

SIMONE

I'm really sorry I didn't make it to the library to study with you.

GARY'S EYES bulge at this news. Philip takes a beat. Then:

PHILIP

We were supposed to study! Wow. You know, I totally forgot.

SIMONE

You did?

PHILIP

Yeah. That's crazy. I was out with the team that night.

SIMONE

The... team?

PHILIP

Yeah, Tommy wanted to show me some moves. Varsity stuff. I'm looking good for next year, so.

SIMONE

Tommy showed you.

PHILIP

Yeah. We must've lost track of time, I forgot all about our plans.

SIMONE

Well, I'm still sorry. I would've hated to be waiting all afternoon for someone to show up.

PHILIP

Yeah. That would've sucked.

He smiles. Simone watches him, her heart breaking. Gary ALSO watches, feels his buddy's pain...

EXT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, PARKING LOT -- DAY

Nova stands in the NO PARKING ZONE. Waiting.

Here comes RICK, pulling in on his bike. As he dismounts --

NOVA

I don't know whether to apologize to you or throw this book at your head.

RICK

Oh, no, she's showing signs of violence. Does my bad influence have no end?

NOVA

Why didn't you fight? Why didn't you tell the truth?

RICK

Because it doesn't matter.

NOVA

You don't know my dad, he's a reasonable man, he would've listened --

RICK

Your Dad took one look at me and decided I was the bad guy, end of story. I could've started reciting Shakespeare, it wouldn't have made a difference.

NOVA

Why do you think that?

RICK

Let's just say I've seen that look before. Never ends well for me.

NOVA

(suddenly)

You didn't set that fire.

There it is, at long last. Rick sighs.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Piper assumed you were to blame, and you didn't fight that, either. I'm right aren't I? You're innocent.

RICK

It. Doesn't. Matter.

NOVA

Yes, it does. It absolutely does!

RICK

Then how come it took you this long to ask?

She has no answer. He gets back on his bike.

RICK (CONT'D)

You were willing to believe it was me, just like everybody else. So thanks for the sudden vote of confidence, but it's coming just a little on the late side. I'm outta here.

And he starts up his engine, leaves her there alone.

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, LOCKERS -- END OF THE DAY

Gary shakes his head as he walks to Philip's locker with him.

GARY

This is all my fault. I never should've told you to ask her out.

PHILIP

Gary, it's fine.

GARY

It's not fine. You've been dissed, trampled, humiliated!

An ENVELOPE is taped to Philip's locker.

GARY (CONT'D)

What is that?

The envelope: Blank. Philip spots SIMONE at her locker.

PHILIP

Hey, Simone. You didn't happen to see anybody tape this envelope onto my locker, did you?

SIMONE
Why, what is it?

PHILIP
(opening it)
Tickets. To see Stick Hippo.

He gestures to a POSTER of the band in his locker.

SIMONE
They're good. I checked out their
fansite online. Pretty cool.

Gary and Philip look at each other in disbelief... and then,
to Simone, in even more disbelief.

GARY
You're the one hit. She's the one hit!

SIMONE
I bet they're great live.

She smiles. Philip smiles back.

GARY
Are you kidding, they're the best!
Where are our seats?

Philip holds only TWO tickets. Simone looks uncomfortable.
Gary suddenly realizes what's happening.

GARY (CONT'D)
This is like a "you guys" thing, huh?
(a beat)
That's cool. Just uh, get me a T-
shirt or something.

Gary shuts his locker as Philip smiles at Simone.

EXT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, MONICA'S LOCKER -- DAY

Tommy weaves through the crowd toward Monica, unsuspecting.
Monica's friends see him coming and SCATTER.

TOMMY
Hey, babe.

She turns to him with a face of stone.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Uh-oh. What'd I do now?

MONICA
It's over, Tommy.

TOMMY

What is?

MONICA

I know about Simone.

TOMMY

I gave her a ride home. What are you upset about?

MONICA

I'm not upset. I'm over it.

She's not taking the bait. He calls an audible...

TOMMY

You don't mean that, prom's right around the corner. What happened to "Prom is our moment?"

MONICA

This isn't gonna ruin my prom, trust me. I can get another date much faster than you can talk your way out of this.

TOMMY

Another date? Who?

MONICA

You think over the years guys haven't hit on me? Haven't asked me out?

TOMMY

Nobody at Lake Canyon'll take you to Prom. Not while I'm around.

MONICA

Well, Lake Canyon isn't the only school in town.

The possibility of Monica with somebody else has literally never occurred to Tommy. She sees that on his face.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Despite what you think, Tommy, you are replaceable.

TOMMY

Okay, you're right. I'm a jerk. I'm sorry. You know me, I just --

MONICA

I do know you. Which is why I can't believe it's taken me this long to do this. Goodbye.

And off she goes. Tommy Barso stands there - for the first time ever maybe - alone.

EXT. SAEYOUNG'S FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Saeyoung and Justin walk home from school.

JUSTIN

So my parents will come over around 4 for pictures.

SAEYOUNG

What? No. I don't want your parents butting in on everything we do. I mean who's prom is it?

JUSTIN

Everyone's parents do this, it's part of the deal.

SAEYOUNG

I don't care. I don't want to do it.

JUSTIN

Saeyoung, that's gonna kill my mom.

SAEYOUNG

Then go with her if it's so important to you.

JUSTIN

Okay, take it easy. They're just pictures, we'll figure it out.

A tense beat. Then, his eyes go to a LARGE PACKAGE on her porch. He brightens.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Uh-oh, what's this? Could it be... Someone's prom dress has arrived?

She looks at the box, less excited than you'd think she'd be.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

You have to try it on. Come on.

EXT. DAY CARE FACILITY -- DAY

Rick pulls up to the lot we saw Pauly playing in earlier.
Except this time, something's different --

NOVA is standing with Pauly, chatting like old friends.

PAULY

I have a 2005 Bowman Chrome Justin
Verlander that's worth like 25 bucks,
and a mint 2001 Fleer Focus Albert
Pujols that'd go for 60 at least.

NOVA

You must have some allowance, kid.

PAULY

They were my Dad's.

That lands on Nova, as another piece of the Rick puzzle drops
in. And speaking of Rick...

RICK

(approaching)

What're you doing here?

NOVA

I came to apologize.

PAULY

You guys know each other? Are you like
his peer-counselor or something?

NOVA

No.

PAULY

Parole officer?

RICK

Pauly.

Pauly zips it. Rick takes in the incongruous sight of her,
here on his turf.

NOVA

I was wrong. And I'm sorry.

RICK

You came all the way here to tell me
that?

NOVA

Yes. I thought I knew you, Rick. And I don't.

(then)

But I'd like to. If you'd let me.

Rick and Nova look at each other for a beat. Then --

PAULY

Think fast!

He THROWS a softball at her...

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD -- SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Nova pitches to Pauly. Pauly actually hits one that sends her running. Rick and Pauly fist-bump.

-- Nova at bat. Rick sends in the pitch and she doesn't swing. Pauly calls a strike. She turns and starts an argument. Pauly threatens to throw her out. Rick smirks.

-- Rick RUNS around third as Nova fields his hit and readies to throw to Pauly at third base. But as Rick rounds third he PICKS PAULY UP and carries him with him over home plate.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY -- DAY (AFTER SCHOOL)

Simone in the library stacks. She pulls out a book to reveal -- TOMMY'S FACE on the other side. She YELPS.

The same Nerdy Kid from before looks up, disturbed.

NERDY KID

Shhh!

SIMONE

(whispering)

What are you doing here?

TOMMY

I've been looking for you everywhere.
I wanted you to hear it from me first.
It's over with Monica. I ended it.

SIMONE

Tommy...

TOMMY

I mean it. For real. Ask anybody.

SIMONE

But what about prom, and your hands being tied...

He holds up his hands, wide apart.

TOMMY
Untied! Simone... Will you go to
prom with me?

She looks at him, conflicted, but already getting lost in his
compelling gaze...

INT. SAEYOUNG'S ROOM -- DAY

Justin stands in the HALLWAY outside Saeyoung's room. Her
door is closed. Closed and locked.

SAEYOUNG (O.S.)
(behind door)
I look like a manatee.

JUSTIN
Can I at least just see it on you?

SAEYOUNG (O.S.)
(behind door)
No.

JUSTIN
Please?

SAEYOUNG (O.S.)
(behind door)
Absolutely not.

JUSTIN
Then how can I be sure it's as awful
as you say? It might look great!

The door FLIES open and Saeyoung storms out, carrying A PROM
DRESS over her arm.

SAEYOUNG
It does not look great. It looks
hideous. The color is wrong, the cut
is wrong, the fabric is wrong.
There's only one place this dress is
going. And it's not to prom.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAEYOUNG'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

She storms to the TRASH BIN, dramatically throws off the lid
and STUFFS the dress inside. Slams the lid angrily.

SAEYOUNG
(to the dress)
I hate you. Hate, hate, hate.
Goodbye!

JUSTIN
Don't do that. Now what are you going
to wear?

SAEYOUNG
Nothing.

JUSTIN
What, you're gonna just not wear a
dress to prom?

SAEYOUNG
No, I'm gonna just not go to prom.

He takes a deep breath as she fumes. Finally:

JUSTIN
Look, if you don't want to go, you can
just tell me. We can skip this whole
Promzilla routine.

SAEYOUNG
What are you talking about?

JUSTIN
First it was the limo, then the
pictures, now the dress. You're
obviously looking for excuses not to go.

SAEYOUNG
I never said that.

JUSTIN
You don't have to. I know when I'm
being blown off. You don't want to
go, fine. Prom's off, problem solved.

He leaves her there, beside the trash bin.

INT. THE FAMILY BUGGY DINER -- DAY

Nova, Rick and Pauly at the COUNTER of this popular hang out.

SANDRA, Rick's Mom, serves up milkshakes with a look at Rick.

SANDRA
You say you two have been working
together at school?

RICK
Something like that.

Rick grins at Nova. It's infectious, Sandra smiles too.
Pauly looks at everybody grinning and rolls his eyes.

PAULY
Oh, brother. Can I get a refill
before I barf, please?

Suddenly LAUGHTER erupts from a booth a few tables away.

AT THE BOOTH

A group of **COLLEGE KIDS** laugh as they construct a TOWER OF
FOOD -- sandwiches and pizza and chocolate cake and syrup...

SANDRA
My favorite kind of customers.

... and it topples. Food spills everywhere. The kids laugh.

COLLEGE KID
Oh, waitress!

COLLEGE KID 2
Cleanup on aisle five!

Rick's Mom picks up a RAG, resigned. Rick turns toward the
College Kids, readying for confrontation.

RICK
You gonna clean that up?

COLLEGE KID
Excuse me?

RICK
You heard me.

Nova reaches for Rick.

NOVA
Why don't we get out of here?

SANDRA
That's a good idea, Nova. I'll keep
Pauly here, you two should go.

But Rick's heading over to the kids, ready to pummel them.

COLLEGE KID
What're you gonna do, not take my
coupons at the Grocery Mart?

COLLEGE KID 2

Yeah, mind your own business, kid.
I'm sure somebody somewhere needs you
to serve them a side of fries.

They CRACK UP as NOVA RUSHES up and spins Rick around.

NOVA

I want you to come with me.

RICK

Get out of the way.

NOVA

No. Listen. You can do this, Rick, I
know you can.

RICK

Do what?

NOVA

Trust me.

Hearing his own words gives him pause long enough for her to
TAKE HIS HAND and lead him out. Sandra strolls over to the
messy table as the Customers prepare to leave.

SANDRA

Boys not happy with your meal?

COLLEGE KID

It was great. Little messy though.

SANDRA

Hey Pauly, what is it they say about
people who play with their food?

PAULY spins on his bar stool to chime in --

PAULY

It's an indicator of below-average
intelligence.

Customers SMIRK at the College kids. Sandra winks at Pauly.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Rick and Nova stand by his motorcycle.

RICK

I've never walked away from a fight in
my life.

NOVA
How's it feel?

RICK
Like I need to go back there and crack
some skulls.

NOVA
Would that really make you feel
better?

RICK
Yeah, it would. Guys like that do
whatever they want, and get away with
it.

NOVA
No, they don't. Stuff balances out.
If you're not a good person, at some
point, it catches up with you.

RICK
Of course you think that.

NOVA
What does that mean?

RICK
That it's easy to be optimistic when
everything always goes your way.

NOVA
Everything doesn't always go my way!
I simply choose to look on the bright
side. Sure, my prom date ditched me,
and my decorations were incinerated.
But, I met you. And got arrested.
Which was very educational.

That gets a laugh out of him.

RICK
Thanks. But I haven't had a lot of
reasons to look on the bright side in
my life.

NOVA
Well, maybe that's changing.

RICK
Maybe it is.

They share a long look.

RICK (CONT'D)
I still think I shoulda laid those
guys out.

NOVA
You need to blow off some steam with a
healthy, constructive activity. And I
have just the thing.

RICK
Why do I think I'm not gonna like
this?

NOVA
I've been putting off getting a prom
dress --

RICK
No.

NOVA
I could really use a second opinion.

RICK
Prom dresses? I can't. Sorry.

INT. GIRLY BOUTIQUE -- DAY

RICK sits on a pink divan, surrounded by SHOE BOXES and
DRESSES. MUSIC for Nova's *Pretty Woman* montage:

-- A PINK FRILLY number. Rick gives thumbs down.

-- A POLKA DOT nightmare. Rick shields his eyes.

-- A FLOWERY MUU-MUU situation. Rick laughs. Nova looks at
her reflection, retreats into the dressing room.

-- Rick takes matters into his own hands. He slips a SLINKY
BLACK NUMBER through the dressing room curtain.

-- The BLACK SLINKY is immediately thrust OUT of the curtain.

Rick takes the dress back, leans against the wall as she
changes behind the CURTAIN.

RICK
So how come you don't have a date?

NOVA
(behind curtain)
I told you. He bailed on me.

RICK
Yeah, but there must be somebody else
you could go with. Like, the class
president or something?

She STICKS her head out from behind the curtain.

NOVA
I'm the class president.

She ducks back behind the curtain.

RICK
How 'bout the VP? Treasurer? Come
on. There must be some straight-A
shirt tucker out there who --

-- His jaw drops as she steps out in a KILLER DRESS - The one
that was made for her to wear. He DRINKS her in...

RICK (CONT'D)
That's it. That's the one.

NOVA
Really?

SALESGIRL
(chiming in)
That looks amazing with our amethyst
pendant necklace!

NOVA
Necklace? Please. With the price of
this dress, the only necklace I can
afford'll be made of candy.

She prattles on, oblivious to the way he's looking at her.

RICK
That guy who ditched you made a big
mistake.

Nova turns, suddenly very aware of his eyes on her.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

A girl, **BETSY**, 17, SIGHS at a list of BOOK TITLES she's
holding. LLOYD walks by her as she GROANS.

BETSY
Do all assigned books have to be
torturously boring?

Lloyd pauses, looks around. She doesn't seem to be addressing anyone in particular... He picks up the ball.

LLOYD
(leans in, reading)
Ugh. This is rough. Ethan Frome?

BETSY
The worst! Guy falls in love with his wife's cousin, goes sledding with her, she winds up paralyzed. Snore.

LLOYD
That's an incredibly accurate plot summary.

They laugh as the BELL RINGS. Lloyd watches her gather up her books, hope dawning anew.

LLOYD (CONT'D)
Listen, you don't happen to have a date to prom, do you?

BETSY
(shyly)
Me?

LLOYD
Yeah. I mean, I know it's a crazy--

BETSY
No, it's really sweet. I don't think we've ever talked before... Have we?

LLOYD
Maybe not. I'm Lloyd.

BETSY
Betsy.

LLOYD
Short for Elizabeth?

BETSY
That's right.

LLOYD
Pretty.

BETSY
Thanks.

LLOYD
So what do you think, Betsy? Prom?

BETSY

That could be fun. You seem nice.

Lloyd practically floats off the ground -- this is it!

BETSY (CONT'D)

But I have a date already. I mean it's just a friend, we're going as friends... But prom's Saturday, I can't cancel now.

LLOYD

No, I understand.

BETSY

It's too bad. Maybe if we'd met sooner, you know?

Her words hit Lloyd like bullets. Once again, he's too late.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Isn't that funny, how you can go to school with somebody for so long and not even meet them 'til now?

LLOYD

Yeah. Funny.

Off Lloyd, feeling as bleak as an Edith Wharton novel...

EXT. CRANBROOK HIGH SCHOOL, ESTABLISHING -- DAY

Another high school -- markedly similar to Lake Canyon, but clearly not the same place. A school bell RINGS, and KIDS begin to spill from the building.

In the parking lot, we find...

MONICA

Sitting in her car. She flips down her visor mirror, touches up her lipstick. Checks her cleavage. Visor up. Go time.

MONICA

Watch this, Tommy.

She gets out of her car and scans the STUDENTS until she finds some CUTE SENIOR GUYS hanging by their cars.

Monica takes a few steps toward them, then stops in her tracks. Looking closer, she sees...

Three guys, one of them clearly the leader -- white teeth, chiseled jawline, perfectly tousled hair.

And as we zero in on his BUDDIES, the parallels between this trio and Tommy's own cadre of pals are striking.

She watches, rapt, as our Tommy-doppelganger doles out a few fist bumps, then walks over to...

SOME CHEERLEADERS

Standing by a car in their uniforms, we can immediately tell which one's the ALPHA GIRL. She's pretty and confident, and she's the one that the Tommy-doppelganger walks up to.

He puts his arm around her in a way that says loud and clear, she belongs to him.

WITH MONICA

She stares, frozen. She's watching herself. It's the wake up call of a lifetime. And in a moment, she's seen enough.

She gets back in her car, and drives away.

EXT. RANDAZZO TUXEDO SHOP -- DAY

Gabby walks past the tux shop, through the window, glimpses --

INT. TUXEDO SHOP -- CONTINUOUS

FIND ROLO, examining a VELVETY TUX JACKET. Gabby approaches.

ROLO

Tactile.

GABBY

Hey, Rolo. Looking for a tux?

ROLO

How do I know which one to pick?

GABBY

Hmm. Well, what's Athena wearing?

ROLO

This.

He hands over a MAGAZINE PICTURE of a model in a VEERY grown up dress. Gabby examines it.

GABBY

Nice try.

ROLO

What do you mean?

GABBY

First of all, this dress is satin.
Which everyone knows is the most
unforgiving fabric there is. Heidi
Klum would have to cut back on the
carbs to pull this off.

ROLO

That's what she's wearing.

GABBY

No, it's what every guy fantasizes his
girlfriend would wear. Where'd you
get this, anyway?

ROLO

She sent it to me.

GABBY

Rolo, you clearly ripped this out of
some magazine somewhere. I mean, for
real, you've gone from like, wishful
thinking to Notify the Authorities.

ROLO

She's real.

GABBY

Alright, you know what? I tried.
Some people can't be helped.

She walks off, disgusted.

INT. GAS STATION CONVENIENCE STORE -- DAY

RICK walks in and drops some cash on the counter. Nods
toward the pump where his bike is parked.

Then he spots -- CANDY NECKLACES on display. He grins.

RICK

One of these, too.

The CLERK gives him a funny look. Rick stares him down.

ACROSS THE STORE

We find TOMMY, with Jimbo and Max, dispensing sodas. Tommy
approaches the register. He and Rick nod to each other.

TOMMY

What's up, man. How's Pauly?

RICK
He's in little league.

TOMMY
No way. I remember when that kid was
in diapers.

...Ah, so these two used to be friends. Jimbo and Max
WRESTLE, knock into stuff. Tommy pays and heads for the door
when suddenly, on a whim, he turns back...

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Hey, I never thanked you for taking
the bullet on that whole accidental
inferno thing.

Rick TURNS, practically in slow motion, as the words sink in.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
That's what I get for trying to
impress a girl with a candlelight
dinner, right?

JIMBO
Yo, Tommy, let's go!

TOMMY
I'm out. Thanks again, bro.

RICK
Don't thank me, Tommy.

Tommy stops, looks genuinely confused at Rick's sharp tone.

TOMMY
Why not?

RICK
I didn't take a bullet for you.

TOMMY
You didn't?

RICK
No. Why would I do that?

TOMMY
'Cause what do you have to lose? I
just figured you were taking one for
the team.

RICK
What team? We haven't been on the
same team for years.

TOMMY

Look, I'm sorry, bro, but you didn't get blamed 'cause of me. You got blamed 'cause you're you.

RICK

How do you figure?

TOMMY

Piper has it out for you so bad, even if I did confess, it wouldn't make a difference. That's just how it works.

Rick absorbs the truth of this. As it weighs on him, Tommy looks out at his friends, HONKING in the parking lot.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I gotta jet.

INT. NOVA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Nova shows her DRESS to Saeyoung and Gabby. They "ooh" and "ahh" accordingly. Nova looks at Saeyoung.

NOVA

Have you decided what shoes you're wearing?

SAEYOUNG

Why?

NOVA

I was hoping to borrow those platform sandals of yours? But ONLY if you're 100% sure you're not wearing them.

Saeyoung is taken aback, still tender and uncertain after her fight with Justin.

SAEYOUNG

I'm not 100% sure about anything Prom related right now.

GABBY

Are you and Justin okay?

SAEYOUNG

(no)

Yeah, of course.

GABBY

Are you sure? You need to talk...?

SAEYOUNG
 (overcompensating)
 Why are we talking about me, you guys?
 This is Nova's night! And yes, you
 can totally borrow my sandals, they
 will look amazing with that.

Saeyoung smiles through the pain, draws the attention back to Nova, who's holding her dress in front of herself.

NOVA
 I wonder if they'll be too high. I
 don't want to be taller than him.

GABBY
 Than... WHO?

Nova turns, her eyes sparkling. Saeyoung and Gabby gawk.

SAEYOUNG
 You got a prom date and this is the
 first we're hearing about it?

NOVA
 He hasn't asked me yet. But
 tomorrow's our last day working
 together. And I think he's going to.

SAEYOUNG
 Is she talking about Rick Linsey? Are
 you talking about Rick Linsey?

GABBY
 It's either him or Rolo. Please say
 it's not Rolo.

NOVA
 I'm talking about Rick.

SAEYOUNG
 Nova likes bad boys. Who knew?

NOVA
 It's more than that. It's real. I
 mean, I've never felt anything like
 this before.

GABBY
 Nova's in love!

Her friends SHRIEK as she jumps onto the bed with them.

OUTSIDE NOVA'S ROOM

Frank approaches, again in his work shirt, about to knock when he hears the SQUEALING girls, thinks better of it. He turns to leave, but can't help hearing...

GABBY (CONT'D)

Wow. You and Rick Linsey. I don't believe it.

SAEYOUNG

No one will.

NOVA

(defensive)

Why not?

SAEYOUNG

Um, because you're you. And he's...

GABBY

... not exactly college bound.

NOVA

Well, maybe that stuff isn't as important as I thought it was. Maybe there's more to a person than being valedictorian, or class president.

OUTSIDE NOVA'S ROOM

Frank closes his eyes at what he's hearing. His worst fear. He moves off down the hall with a purpose...

INT. SANDRA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Rick flips on the light. Takes in the feminine flourishes, the achingly few masculine effects; A men's valet tray still on the dresser. A couple pens, maybe a money clip in it.

On one side, the night stand is littered with women's magazines, reading glasses, an old teacup. The other side is empty, save for a small wedding photo. A widow's bedroom.

INT. SANDRA'S CLOSET -- NIGHT

Again, mostly his Mom's clothes. Rick pushes them aside, makes his way to the back where a single GARMENT BAG hangs. He pauses for a beat, then UNZIPS the bag to reveal --

A TUXEDO. Rick negotiates it out of the bag so it hangs freely in front of him. The closest you can get to standing in front of your father, when he's gone.

PAULY (O.S.)

What are you doing?

Rick spins, sees Pauly in the doorway. With a sad smile...

RICK
I was asking Dad if it's okay to
borrow this.

PAULY
What'd he say?

RICK
Something about how you're supposed to
be getting ready for bed, that's what.

Pauly giggles and heads off to bed as... THE DOORBELL RINGS.

INT./EXT. RICK'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Rick heads down the stairs, pulls open the door to reveal...

FRANK
Hello, Rick.

RICK
Hi...

FRANK
I'm here about Nova.

Rick steps out onto the front porch.

RICK
She alright?

FRANK
She's fine, Rick. In fact, she's
better than fine. She's at the top of
her class, colleges are falling over
themselves to have her. Scholarships,
even.

RICK
That's great.

FRANK
Maybe you don't understand how much
work she's done to get to where she
is. And she's in the home stretch
now. That's where you came in. Right
at the end.

Rick's starting to see where this is heading.

RICK
If Nova has a problem with me --

FRANK

Nova's always falling for charity cases. She's a sucker for a lost cause.

RICK

You don't even know me.

FRANK

I do know you. I was just like you. Struggling to get by, angry at the world, no plan for the future. You might even figure it out, but it's not fair to drag Nova down while you do.

His words hit Rick hard.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I know you think you can be part of her world right now. Guys like us always do. But believe me when I tell you the best thing we can do for her is just stay out of her way.

Rick can't seem to muster his old defenses against Frank's words. And maybe, just maybe, Rick agrees with them.

FRANK (CONT'D)

If you care about her as much as I think you do, you won't be the thing that holds her back.

Frank walks off the porch, leaving Rick there. Knocked down.

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, HALLWAYS -- DAY

Philip and Gary walk out of class, Gary prattling on --

GARY

So I said there already is an iphone app for that and he said not a free one, but there is, you found it, remember? It's called like, mega... mega something?

Philip looks ahead, down the hall, distracted.

PHILIP

Oh, there's Simone. I gotta talk to her about Saturday. Catch you later!

Philip leaves Gary there, mid-discussion.

WITH SIMONE

PHILIP (CONT'D)
(catching up with her)
Hey there!

SIMONE
Hey, Philip...

PHILIP
I can't wait for Saturday. What do
you say? Pick you up at six?

SIMONE
Actually, I've been looking for you...
I needed to talk to you about that.
Because, well, Saturday's prom.

Philip blanches. Simone hastens to explain --

SIMONE (CONT'D)
And... remember that guy I told you
about? Who wasn't available?

PHILIP
Yeah...

SIMONE
He's available now. And we're going.

PHILIP
Oh. Well. He's a lucky guy.

Philip looks like his smile is made of wax. Simone sees
TOMMY down the hall, can't tell Philip it's him.

SIMONE
I didn't mean to mess up your plans,
it all happened really fast.

PHILIP
Say no more. I'm happy for you.

Simone walks away from him, looking rather miserable for a
girl who supposedly just got what she wanted.

As the seniors make their way down the hall toward Philip,
Simone vanishes around the corner. Philip turns toward
Tommy, seeking solace in his newfound friendship...

JIMBO
Let's roll, dude, I'm starving.

TOMMY
I'll drive.

PHILIP

You guys going for pizza? I could use a slice.

MAX

Watch it.

Max ELBOWS Philip against the lockers. The seniors push past, leaving him behind. Tommy looks back quickly, catches Philip's eye. With a decidedly non-committal nod --

TOMMY

You're the man, Phil.

That's it. Tommy leaves, taking any illusion of friendship Philip thought they had along with him.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- DAY

Nova pulls the DISCO BALL from its packing crate. A TALL LADDER waits in the middle of the dance floor.

Faintly, we hear the sound of RICK'S MOTORCYCLE outside. She turns at the sound -- heart aflutter.

Quickly, she CHECKS her reflection in the disco ball. Which doesn't go so well, but no matter --

Because THERE HE IS. RICK stands in the doorway.

NOVA

Hey.

RICK

We the only ones here?

NOVA

Just us.

He walks toward her, and her eyes light up in anticipation. He's impossible to read. She twirls the sparkly disco ball.

NOVA (CONT'D)

The crown jewel!

He just takes it from her and starts climbing the ladder.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Do you think it should be in the middle?

RICK

What?

NOVA

Well, I'm just wondering if it's a little predictable, disco ball in the middle of the dance floor. What about maybe putting it in the corner, and then lighting it from an angle --

RICK

Nova, just tell me where you want it.

NOVA

You don't have an opinion?

RICK

My opinion is I want to hang this thing and be done with it.

NOVA

Okay. I guess the center's fine. Why reinvent the wheel, right?

He resumes climbing. Nova takes in the gym, in its final stages of preparation. She marvels at it.

NOVA (CONT'D)

I can't wait 'til you turn that fountain on underneath these lights.

RICK

Me? How would I turn it on?

NOVA

With... the switch?

He doesn't have the tools he needs to fasten the disco ball up. He climbs down the ladder, rifles through a tool box.

RICK

I won't be there.

A beat. Nova teeters on the gossamer thread between optimism and despair...

RICK (CONT'D)

You didn't think I was actually gonna go to this thing, did you?

NOVA

I thought it might be a possibility.

He just sifts through the tools, distant.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Is something wrong?

(off his silence)

You want to talk about it?

RICK

What I want is to get out of here.

NOVA

Okay, then let's go. Disco ball's not going anywhere. I could use a break myself.

RICK

Not a break. I'm done. I've wasted enough of my time in this stupid gym.

He SLAMS the tool box shut. She takes a beat, then, softly--

NOVA

I don't think it was a waste of time.

RICK

Well, I guess I wouldn't either if my biggest problem in life was where to put a disco ball. But some of us have real problems, Nova, that can't be solved by hanging up twinkly lights.

NOVA

I know that. What I mean is... it hasn't been a waste of time for us.

RICK

What "us?" You think because I built your little fountain anything changed? Nothing changed. I'm me, you're you, the job's done.

Nova blinks, disbelieving. Once again, he avoids her eyes.

NOVA

I guess I thought we were building more than just a fountain.

RICK

That's very poetic. Will you write it in my yearbook?

NOVA

You really expect me to believe that this hasn't meant anything to you? That nothing's changed? Everything changed. The way I feel changed!

RICK

So what? You think that's gonna make a difference? How you feel?

NOVA

I think...

RICK

I'll spare you the suspense -- It won't. Your world may be all peace and justice and happy endings, but that's not where I live. Where I live, I'm a bad guy who burned your prom down, and that's the only reason I'm here.

NOVA

That's the only reason, huh? And what if I tell you that if I'd known how that fire would bring you into my life, I would've set it myself? What world do I belong in then, Rick?

This is crushing him. He's got to end it before he breaks. But she's on fire, unapologetic and unafraid -- she stands before him, forces him to look at her.

NOVA (CONT'D)

This isn't about prom, or what anybody else thinks, or even about how it's gonna end. I don't care about that, I care about you. We can deal with everything else, as long as you feel about me the way I feel about you.

RICK

I don't.

And there it is -- the blow she can't get up from. He walks away, can't even look back. STAY ON NOVA as his words fall on her like an anvil.

OFF the sound of his MOTORCYCLE ENGINE roaring to life...

EXT. OUTSIDE PAPA GINO'S -- DAY

The after-school crowd are all here. Philip walks up when suddenly he spies SIMONE heading in. He stops.

Philip SINKS down on the CURB, alone and forlorn.

Nearby, a CLUSTER of GIRLS enjoys the spring weather. LLOYD appears, with much less confidence... As he approaches --

The girls spot him and SCATTER. His face falls. He turns toward ANOTHER PAIR of GIRLS, who get up and leave.

LLOYD
That does it. I've officially been
rejected by every girl at Lake Canyon.

PHILIP
I know the feeling.

He plops down next to Philip, grateful for some conversation.

LLOYD
What's her name?

PHILIP
Simone.

LLOYD
Simone. What happened?

PHILIP
She wants to go to prom.

Lloyd reacts with an empathic sigh.

LLOYD
I should've known. Prom is
responsible for more pain, suffering,
and humiliation than any other stupid
social ritual in all of high school.
We'd all be better off without it.

PHILIP
Yeah, well, she's going. And now
she'll never know how I feel.

Lloyd studies Philip. Then --

LLOYD
You gotta tell her.

PHILIP
You don't even know me.

LLOYD
Oh, but I do. I WAS you. Shy, nice
guy, always waiting for the right time
to make his move... and the right time
never comes? Before you know it,
you're a senior, couple weeks from
graduating, and... well, you saw.

He nods toward the girls who scattered at his approach.

PHILIP

There's nothing I can do about it.

LLOYD

Not true. You can change the future.
But you have to act. You can't keep
waiting for the right moment to
happen. MAKE it happen. You
understand me? Look, what do you have
to lose?

INT. PAPA GINO'S -- DAY

At the Senior Table, Max and Jimbo polish off their slices
and head over to the Arcade games. Tommy gulps a soda and
goes after them. Reveal SIMONE, sitting quietly beside him.

TOMMY

Hey Max, I play winner!
(to Simone)
You cool?

She nods, he walks away. And then A WALL OF SENIOR GIRLS
appears in front of her. They PART, revealing Monica.

MONICA

So you're the lip gloss.

SIMONE

Monica. I swear I didn't know Tommy
had a girlfriend when we went out,
please, you have to believe me --

MONICA

I do.

SIMONE

I -- You do? Really?

MONICA

Tommy can be very convincing. It's
part of his charm. It's part of why I
was with him for so long. Plus life's
a lot easier when you're Tommy Barso's
girlfriend. But you know that.

SIMONE

I wouldn't say I'm his girlfriend.

MONICA

It doesn't matter what you say. Or
who you are, or what you want. You're
That Girl now.

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

You don't even have to think. In fact, it's probably better if you don't.

SIMONE

Look, I'm really sorry...

MONICA

Sorry? You did me a favor. Because right now, I'm walking out of here. And you're tethered to that table like a Labradoodle. I should thank you.

But she doesn't quite go that far. She just leaves.

EXT. THE FAMILY BUGGY DINER -- NIGHT

Rick pulls up on his motorcycle and sees

THE COLLEGE KIDS

Hanging out by their cars. Rick stops, looks at them. And we know what he's going to do almost before he does --

RICK

Hey, buddy. I got your side of fries.

And he SWINGS. As a FIGHT breaks out, Rick is outnumbered.

Rick's MOM runs out as Rick gets a punch RIGHT IN HIS GUT. He's not gonna win this fight. But he's not gonna go down, either. Sandra gets into the fray, pulls the boys apart.

Rick doubles over, SPITS onto the cement, catching his breath. Amidst the action, we find PAULY, looking scared. He spies THE CANDY NECKLACE, abandoned on the cement.

As the adrenaline subsides, Rick looks up and locks eyes with Pauly. Pauly's confusion and fear is too much for Rick to handle... He looks away as Sandra leads him into the diner.

INT. NOVA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Nova walks into her room, drops her backpack. Gutted.

HER DRESS hangs like an apparition over the armoire. Before she can even process that, her eyes fall on --

THE PROM POSTER on the wall over her bed.

She RIPS IT off the wall, a SOB rising in her throat that she can't suppress. She THROWS herself onto her bed, the ripped pieces of the poster falling around her as she sobs...

GO TO BLACK.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS -- DAY

The sun rises. Sprinklers sputter to life. Newspapers land on porches. It's here. The Big Day.

QUICK CUTS: A DRESS is pulled from its plastic wrapping. Shoes are shined. An elaborate UP-DO is sculpted on a teenage head. PROM TICKETS are set on a table by a door.

From an OVERHEAD SHOT, we follow a FLEET OF LIMOS down a suburban street, each peeling off into a separate driveway.

INT. NOVA'S ROOM -- DAY

Nova stands before her mirror. She wears her prom dress, make up, the whole nine. She's beautiful. And miserable.

INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Justin opens the door to the REFRIGERATOR, pulls out a pretty CORSAGE in a clear plastic box. DUMPS it in the garbage.

INT. SIMONE'S ROOM -- DAY

Simone puts on a final dab of lip gloss, trying not to look as freaked out as she feels.

INT. MONICA'S ROOM -- DAY

And here's Monica. She eyes a PICTURE of her and TOMMY stuck to her mirror. RIPS Tommy's head out of it, leaving just herself. She smiles, satisfied. Alone and proud.

INT. LLOYD'S HOUSE -- DAY

Lloyd adjusts his tie. He is going to Prom. But with whom?

WIDEN to reveal TESS, beside him. Dressed for prom, primping in the SAME mirror. He extends his arm, she takes it.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Nova stands, alone, as Kitty poses her in the obligatory picture-by-the-mantle pose. Frank watches proudly.

NOVA

Do we really have to do the picture-by-the-fireplace thing?

KITTY

You'll want these memories one day.

NOVA

I highly doubt that.

FRANK

C'mon, it's gonna be great.

NOVA

Why? Because the balloons are right?
And the tablecloths match the napkins?
Is that what prom is about?

FRANK

Lots of people go to prom without dates.

Kitty strokes Nova's hair, tuned in to her heartbreak.

KITTY

I think this is about someone in
particular. Isn't it?

NOVA

I was so stupid. How could I think a
guy like Rick could be happy with me?
I have nothing to offer him.

FRANK

I think you've got that backwards,
honey.

NOVA

That's because you don't know him.

FRANK

I know enough.

Kitty and Nova both look Frank's way, growing tense.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I wasn't gonna stand by and watch you
waste your potential with some screw up.

NOVA

(blanching)
What did you do?

KITTY

Frank?

FRANK

I had a talk with him.

NOVA/KITTY

WHAT?!

FRANK

That boy would've let you down sooner
or later, Nova, and --

NOVA

He would've let me down? What about
you?

FRANK

Nova, I --

NOVA

Rick said you wouldn't give him a
chance, but you know what I said? I
said "you don't know my dad." But I
was wrong. Turns out I don't know my
dad. And maybe you don't know me
either.

This one hits Frank hard.

FRANK

All I've ever wanted is what's best --

NOVA

Best for who? What do I have to do,
Dad? How many A's do I have to get to
get you to trust me to make my own
choices?

Nova takes a breath, spent. Frank turns to Kitty.

KITTY

(softly)

She's right, Frank.

And that's it. Not only is he outnumbered, he's outfought.
He looks back to his daughter, wheels spinning.

FRANK

I can fix it. I'll go and --

NOVA

(flatly)

You've done enough.

And with that, she heads out to her car. Frank watches her
go, heartbroken. He turns to Kitty.

FRANK

It's not too late, if I just --

KITTY

Frank, she's gonna be okay.

She puts her arm around him as a new understanding of his daughter descends on Frank.

EXT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Justin opens the front door to see -- to his shock -- Saeyoung. Hair in a ponytail, wearing jeans.

SAEYOUNG

You're right that I don't want to go to prom. But not because of you.

(beat)

It's because this is gonna end.

JUSTIN

What is?

SAEYOUNG

You and me. I don't know when, or how. But I know it will. Sooner or later, it'll all just fall apart.

JUSTIN

How can you say that? Don't you know how I feel about you?

SAEYOUNG

It doesn't matter.

She turns and SITS on the porch step, the most fragile we've ever seen her. Finally, the words she hasn't said yet.

SAEYOUNG (CONT'D)

They're getting a divorce.

JUSTIN

Who?

SAEYOUNG

My parents.

Everything between them -- the confusion, the anger -- vanishes, and he moves toward her, concerned.

JUSTIN

Why didn't you tell me?

SAEYOUNG

I guess I thought if I didn't say anything, it wouldn't be real. It didn't work.

JUSTIN
I can't believe it. Your parents,
they're...

SAEYOUNG
The perfect couple. High school
sweethearts. See what I'm saying?

JUSTIN
Wait a minute, so you think this means
we're doomed, too? This is why you
won't go to prom?

SAEYOUNG
Going with you is like saying I think
everything's gonna work out. But I
don't know if I believe that now.

He puts his arm around her. What can you say? A beat.

JUSTIN
You know, nobody knows the future.
But I do know how I feel about you.

SAEYOUNG
What if that's not enough?

JUSTIN
Look at me. Even if tonight is all we
ever have? It's enough.

She looks at him, softening. A safe harbor from the storm.

SAEYOUNG
(finally)
Do you think...

JUSTIN
(concerned)
What?

SAEYOUNG
... Anyone would notice if I wore my
homecoming dress?

He smiles.

INT. RICK'S HOUSE -- DAY

Rick enters the kitchen, surprised to find Sandra there.

RICK
Don't you need to leave for work?

SANDRA
I called in sick.

RICK
What?

SANDRA
Sit down. How's your hand?

ON HIS HAND: It's banged up from the fight. Rick sighs.

SANDRA (CONT'D)
You know the first time I met your
father he had just been in a fight.

RICK
Over what?

SANDRA
Me, I think. He was like a freight
train. Never hesitated, never cared
what anybody thought.

RICK
That was probably a good thing.

SANDRA
There were people who didn't think
much of him. Just like there are
probably people who don't think much
of you.

Rick doesn't say anything.

SANDRA (CONT'D)
But I see you every day, taking Pauly
to school, keeping this place from
falling apart. Doing things at 17
that your father never could've done.

RICK
Where you going with this?

SANDRA
It doesn't matter what anybody else
thinks of you, Ricky. It matters what
YOU think of you.

RICK
Yeah, well. I'm not Dad.

SANDRA
That's what I'm trying to tell you --
you don't need to be.

(MORE)

SANDRA (CONT'D)
Let me worry about the grown up stuff
around here. You just worry about
being a kid. And if you need any help
with that...

Reveal Pauly in the doorway. He holds up the candy necklace.

PAULY
It's a little broken but I bet it
still tastes good.

INT. SIMONE'S ROOM -- DAY

Simone hears a TAPPING at her window. She turns as -- A ROCK
FLIES THROUGH THE WINDOW, shattering glass.

SIMONE
Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

PHILIP (O.S.)
Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

REVEAL PHILIP in the TREE across from her window.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Sorry!

SIMONE
What are you doing???

PHILIP
I thought it was double-paned!

SIMONE
Why are you in the tree?

PHILIP
Look, I realize this is like, the
worst possible timing, but I have to
tell you something.

SIMONE
Philip, my date is gonna be here --

PHILIP
Don't go to prom.

He is dead serious. She stops in her tracks.

SIMONE
You're not really asking me that.

PHILIP

I love you, Simone. As more than a friend.

SIMONE

Love implies more than a friend.

PHILIP

(pressing on)

Yes, yes it does. And I've missed every chance to tell you until now because I was stupid and scared, but now I'm in this tree and you are so beautiful, and if you walk out that door I might as well stay up here forever, even though I hate heights and I'm pretty sure I ripped my pants. I love you, Simone. Don't go.

She doesn't say anything for a long beat. FINALLY:

SIMONE

Philip.

PHILIP

Simone...

Just then, the LIMO pulls up into her driveway.

PHILIP'S POV: The Limo Driver opens the door, revealing --

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Tommy? You're going to prom with Tommy?

SIMONE

I didn't know how to tell you.

He watches Tommy cruise up to the front door and ring the bell, smoothing his hair, not a care in the world.

SIMONE'S MOM (O.S.)

Simone? Honey?

SIMONE

(calling)

I'll be right there!

(then)

I'm sorry, Philip. I wish things were different.

PHILIP

I understand.

SIMONE

You do?

PHILIP

It feels good to be bumped up to
Varsity. Even just for one night.

This hits her hard. She falters, then rushes out. He hangs there in the tree, totally unsure how to get down.

INT. LAKE CANYON HIGH, GYMNASIUM -- PROM NIGHT

Where the Enchanted Jungle is complete.

PHOTOGRAPHERS snap shots of couples at the entrance next to an ACTUAL PARROT on a perch. Nearby is a booth with a SIGN: **VOTE FOR YOUR PROM KING AND QUEEN!** And then, heads turn as --

SIMONE and TOMMY enter, the Brangelina of high school. Tommy gets absorbed into the throng of his buddies. Simone is pushed against a JUNGLE BACKDROP, basically camouflaged.

BACK AT THE ENTRANCE

The Queen arrives. Heads turn as MONICA walks in -- beautiful, proud, and most of all, HAPPY to be there alone.

Some FACES looking at her at the entrance are clearly perplexed. We even hear the muted speculation:

VARIOUS VOICES

Where's her date?/She didn't come
alone, did she?

Monica just lifts her chin and strides into the dance.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GYM -- SAME

Standing under the banner, Nova takes a deep breath --

INT. GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

-- and walks in amidst flashbulbs and squawking parrots. Scans her glittery surroundings. The JUNGLESCAPE is awesome.

GABBY

You did it, Nova. It's perfect.

Reveal Gabby at her side. She smiles gently. Nova nods.

NOVA

I guess it is.

Suddenly SAEYOUNG emerges from the wilderness -- looking pretty good for the last minute wardrobe change. Urgently:

SAEYOUNG
Seriously, how could you not tell us?

NOVA
Tell you what?

SAEYOUNG
That HE would be here.

NOVA
Who?

SAEYOUNG
Your prom date!

NOVA
My what...?

FROM BEHIND A LARGE FERN

Two shiny, polished shoes step out. TILT UP from the snazzy shoes to neatly pressed tuxedo pants, a perfectly tied bow tie... to the sweet, smiling face of --

BRANDON
Hi, Nova.

NOVA
Brandon! What are you doing here?

BRANDON
My interview was this morning. I was able to get back in time!

She just blinks at him, overwhelmed and disoriented. He doesn't really seem to notice, just prattles on...

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Isn't this great? I mean, everything worked out! You're here, I'm here...

NOVA
It's 100% mutually beneficial.

BRANDON
This place looks great. You did it.

NOVA
Yeah. I guess I did.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE -- PROM NIGHT

Gary opens the door to a ragged-looking, contrite PHILIP.

PHILIP

The first mistake I made was thinking
Tommy was my friend.

GARY

You hung out with him...

PHILIP

I got invited to a barbecue. One
barbecue. What's that mean? That all
of a sudden I'm not Philip anymore?
Suddenly I'm Tommy Barso's best
friend? I was kidding myself. And my
second mistake was believing Simone
liked me.

GARY

She was into you.

PHILIP

She wanted to study with me. Because
that's who I am, the guy you study
with. Tommy's the guy you go out
with. Which is why we're here, and
they're at Prom. But the biggest
mistake...

He holds up the two STICK HIPPO tickets. This is about the
time we realize he's also wearing HIS Stick Hippo T-shirt.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Was getting so caught up in everything
I wanted to be, that I forgot who I
actually am. I'm sorry, Gary.

GARY

One second.

Gary DISAPPEARS in a flash. A beat. Another beat. Then:

GARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(from inside)

Mom! Let's GO!

Gary reemerges -- Wearing a GIANT HIPPO HEAD. He smiles at
Philip from behind the large, strange fan gear.

GARY (CONT'D)

(re: the hippo head)

Think I can get 'em to autograph it?

Off Gary and Philip, grinning...

INT. GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

Find Lloyd, standing with Tess, who bursts with excitement.

TESS
This. Is. Awesome.

LLOYD
(nods toward dance floor)
Go. Have fun.

TESS
Really? You sure?

LLOYD
Yes. Go. Enjoy your youth.

She beelines for --

THE DANCE FLOOR

-- Saeyoung and Justin. He lifts her, spins her around.

-- KRANTON do their own conga.

-- Nova dancing with Brandon, a million miles away.

WITH GABBY and HER DATE

Gabby notices Rolo, standing by himself in his tuxedo. Gabby suddenly looks sad. She leans over to her DATE.

GABBY
(to her date)
I'll be right back. I have to make a
charitable donation.

She walks up to Rolo, holds out her hand.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Okay, Rolo. Let's go.

ROLO
Where?

GABBY
Dance floor. You and me. Come on.

ROLO
Athena's just running late.

GABBY

I'm sure she is. In the meantime,
what do you say? One dance.

ROLO

She's gonna be here any minute.

He walks away, leaving Gabby there, incredulous.

NEAR THE PUNCH BOWL

Simone stands alone as two SENIOR GIRLS stand nearby,
watching the dateless Monica dance with friends.

SENIOR GIRL

I can't believe she dumped Tommy and
came alone.

SENIOR GIRL 2

I know... It's awesome.

They move off while Simone processes this. Tommy rushes up.

TOMMY

Where've you been? They're about to
announce King and Queen.

SIMONE

You didn't break up with Monica to be
with me, did you? She dumped you.

TOMMY

Well, yeah, technically.

SIMONE

So it has nothing to do with me.

TOMMY

Of course it does. I mean, I'm free!
Finally, after all these years, I'm
free to do whatever I want! I wanted
to get out so badly --

SIMONE

You'd even use a sophomore to do it.

He halts, blinking, as she levels this accusation.

UP ON THE STAGE

Saeyoung takes the microphone, flanked by Nova and Gabby.

SAEYOUNG

Ladies and Gentlemen, your attention please? We have tallied the votes and are proud to announce Lake Canyon's new PROM KING... TOMMY BARSO!

CHEERS -- Tommy weaves his way through the high-fives and back-slaps toward the stage. As he takes his crown --

SAEYOUNG (CONT'D)

And what's a king without a queen? In a landslide win... MONICA LOWRY!

Monica hugs her friends, triumphant. Walks up to the stage and, without so much as a glance to Tommy, accepts her crown.

SAEYOUNG (CONT'D)

Please make room for the Queen and King's official dance. One sec...

Monica speaks hastily into Saeyoung's ear.

SAEYOUNG (CONT'D)

Okay. Um, at the request of the queen, she will be sitting this dance out. So it'll just be the King's dance. By order of the Queen!

A SPOTLIGHT finds Tommy, who shrugs, makes his way to the dance floor, and SIMONE, who lingers at the spotlight's edge.

TOMMY

Madame?

Tommy reaches his hand out, crown glittering. Faltering, Simone blinks at him, and then STEPS BACK.

SIMONE

I can't.

TOMMY

What? Sure you can. Come on.

SIMONE

Sorry, Tommy. It was fun being your escape hatch, but I don't belong here.

To the shock of all, Simone walks away, leaving Tommy alone. The DJ looks at Saeyoung like "What do I do?"

TOMMY

(trying to play it cool)
Alright, cool. Call ya later, then.
(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 (to the stunned crowd)
 Who wants to dance with the King?!

Yeah. No one. Tommy turns to Monica.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 Monica. What do you say? You're
 here... I'm here.
 (pointedly)
 Everyone's watching?

MONICA
 Please.

She walks away from him. Finally the DJ starts up some music, people begin to fill in the cleared area.

Tommy is sort of SQUEEZED off to the side. He stands there, crown glittering, and totally irrelevant.

MONICA walks away from the dance floor, and almost RUNS DIRECTLY INTO --

LLOYD. They lock eyes. TIME SLOWS DOWN. MUSIC SWELLS. Could it be...?

A PAUSE as the possibility sinks in for each of them. Then:

LLOYD
 Meh.

He shrugs, moves off. She's not his type.

As kids fill in the dance floor and the party resumes, Gabby's eyes drift toward FLASHBULBS going off for --

GABBY
 Oh. My. God.

AT THE ENTRANCE

Rolo. And on his arm, ladies and gentlemen -- **ATHENA** (17). In the dress Heidi Klum couldn't pull off. She's flawless, a supreme being of beauty. The hottest Greek Canadian you've ever laid eyes on...

As she and Rolo BLOW BY Gabby in SLOW MOTION --

GABBY (CONT'D)
 Nice dress.

BACK ON STAGE

Nova and Saeyoung gather up the ballot box. Suddenly, Nova HALTS. Tilts her head at the sound -- ever so faint -- of a MOTORCYCLE ENGINE. It gets LOUDER. Nova's heart races.

NOVA
Do you hear that?

SAEYOUNG
What?

NOVA
Nothing, never mind. Listen, would you mind handling things from here?

SAEYOUNG
Are you okay?

NOVA
I just... I think I'm Prommed out.

Nova heads off the stage. Walks past COUPLE AFTER COUPLE, dreams coming true all around her. Gabby CUTS her off.

GABBY
You can't go now.

NOVA
Why not?

GABBY
The fountain. It just stopped working.

Nova turns -- sure enough, there it sits, silent.

NOVA
I don't care. You guys can figure it out. Or, just leave it off.

Leaving Gabby stunned, she heads to the ENTRANCE, where she looks out at --

THE PARKING LOT

Where a limo pulls away. As it does, it reveals the NO PARKING ZONE. And the Ducati parked there.

Nova STOPS dead. STAY on her face, as

BEHIND HER

The fountain comes to life. HEAR the water begin to cascade, the lights glittering up through the water, the dry ice fog curling around the dance floor... Nova spins around to see

RICK

Step out from behind the fountain. In the tuxedo, gorgeous. Bad boy meets dream boat -- and staring right at Nova.

RICK

Told you these motors were tricky.

*

NOVA

What are you doing here?

RICK

You're right. It is just one night. And I can't let another minute of it go by without you.

NOVA

You sure?

RICK

Dance with me.

Brandon elbows his way through the crowd.

BRANDON

Wait just a minute, here. Nova, is this guy bothering you?

Rick turns to Brandon. He takes one look at Rick, and one look at Nova, and scrams. A beat. Finally:

NOVA

Nice tux.

RICK

You like it?

NOVA

I thought you'd never wear that sweaty symbol of conformity?

RICK

I thought about that. But then I realized; I kind of rock this look.

He SPINS her onto the floor as she laughs, lighting up. As we CIRCLE them in their moment together....

EXT. PARKING LOT -- PROM NIGHT

PHILIP AND GARY burst out of the club where the concert was, elated, overjoyed. Looks like Gary even got his autograph!

GARY
Amazing. That version of Star
Craving?

PHILIP
The best!

They head toward the car, when suddenly Philip looks

ACROSS THE PARKING LOT

And sees SIMONE. In her prom dress, looking beautiful... The
girl of Philip's dreams. She waves. He smiles. Big time.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

By the waterfall, Rick takes something out of his pocket.

NOVA (V.O.)
At prom, every couple has a story.

The Candy Necklace. Puts it on Nova.

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And the thing is, you don't know how
it's gonna end until you actually get
there.

FIND ROLO and ATHENA, having their picture taken.

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Okay, some you might be able to guess.

Find SAEYOUNG AND JUSTIN. Dancing close. Okay for tonight.

NOVA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But most of them are mysteries.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Simone and Philip sway to MUSIC. DOLLY OVER to the source --

GARY'S CAR

Where Gary looks on with a grin, hippo head in his lap.
Continue DOLLYING to -- of course...

GARY'S MOM
So romantic.

Gary looks over at her. What can he say? It is.

NOVA (V.O.)
Surprises.

INT. GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

FIND MONICA, single and loving it with her FRIENDS. Among them: Tess. Having the night of her life. She catches Lloyd's eye at the side of the dance floor. Waves.

Lloyd waves back. He plops down next to a familiar face...

NOVA (V.O.)

That's part of the magic, I think.

It's our Disheveled Girl from the opening! She cleans up nice... and she's watched his exchange with Tess.

DISHEVELED GIRL

You brought your sister to prom?

LLOYD

Yeah... it's... I can explain --

DISHEVELED GIRL

I think that is so... sweet.

A smile slowly spreads across Lloyd's face.

NOVA (V.O.)

And of all those stories, the most magical one... is mine.

BACK WITH RICK AND NOVA

On the dance floor. The whole gym fades away as they lock eyes, their lips just inches apart...

NOVA (CONT'D)

You're about to kiss me.

RICK

Yup.

And he does. And it's perfect.

As the metallic flecks of the disco ball encircle the gym, we drift away, awash in the magic...

FADE OUT.