

ELLIOT

Imari's skipping again.

IMARI

(does the zip motion again)

The fuck, man. Is *this* not sacred to you?

MALACHI

Seriously?

IMARI

I'm not gonna get caught.

MALACHI

You wouldn't even have to try, Imari. All you'd have to do is study, and you'd be top of the class. I don't get it.

IMARI

All I gotta do is pass to play. That's all that matters to me.

START

IAN, 17, and NICOLE, 16, enter together.

Ian has his arm around Nicole. They take the last two empty seats.

NICOLE

Happy first day of school, guys!

IMARI

Oh look, mom and dad are back together. We don't have to have two Christmases this year!

IAN

Can it.

ELLIOT

You broke up again?

NICOLE

Just over the summer.

IAN

Hey Mal. How's the ankle?

MALACHI

Got cleared last week.

IAN

Just in time for tryouts. He's looking at us for captain.

MALACHI

Yep.

IAN

Don't sweat it. No one's expecting you to be 100% right away. There's always next year.

ELLIOT

You just need to relax, Mal.

MALACHI

I am relaxed.

ELLIOT

You've been nervous all week.

MALACHI

I have not.

IMARI

Stop bickering, you sound like my parents.

(to Ian and Nicole)

They're more like a couple than you two.

IAN

Oh yeah?

Ian turns Nicole's face to his and kisses her.

She clearly was not ready for it, nor willing to be involved in such a public display.

It's uncomfortable to watch. Malachi is disgusted. Elliot averts his eyes.

Ian pulls away. He looks pleased with himself. Nicole looks like she wants to disappear.

ELLIOT

You're gross.

IAN, *to Malachi*

Your turn.

MALACHI

I'm good // thanks

IMARI

// Nicole! Have you heard of any new drama yet? We all know you have eyes everywhere. Spill!

NICOLE

Did you hear about Mrs. Lucas' puke plant?

ELLIOT

I beg your pardon?

NICOLE

Oh my God, she was telling everyone in 1st period English. Apparently the morning after Wyatt Lucas' end of the year party, she went to water her plant and it was (*imitating her*) "hanging on for dear life." She was, like, crying, because the plant belonged to her mom. And her mom is, y'know... dead.

IAN

Gross. I don't like thinking about dead old ladies.

IMARI

Major party foul.

NICOLE

Right? It's just vomit. And it's been, like, months. You should be over it by now. Anyways, people have been saying Lori Suddon's the one who puked.

MALACHI

She was, I remember. Lindsay was dragging her upstairs and she had chunks falling out of her bra.

ELLIOT//IMARI

Gross//Awesome

IAN

Enough vomit-talk. What's the deal with Tyler?

IMARI

Tyler Rhodes? What about him?

NICOLE

Oh. Ohhh. No, that's not //

IAN

You didn't hear? He's... you know...

(Ian gives a limp-wrist gesture)

He's a fruit.

MALACHI

What are you talking about?

NICOLE

Ian, that's not funny.

(To Malachi)

Tyler did a homecoming proposal for Jonah. I'll show you.

Nicole pulls out her phone and searches for the video.

IMARI

Wait. *Our* Jonah? Jonah Garrett? #3?

MALACHI

What other Jonah do you know, idiot?

IAN, to Malachi and Imari

Aren't you guys on his side of the locker room?

You ever caught him trying to look?

MALACHI

What the fuck.

IMARI

If I saw him that'd mean I was looking at him, too.

IAN

Good point.

NICOLE

Found it! Come watch.

*The boys gather around Nicole's phone to watch the homecoming proposal.
Malachi and Elliot look at each other briefly as the rest of the group is focused in.*

IMARI

Principal Edison just made the announcement last week, right?

They moved pretty fast.

MALACHI

Who knows how long they've been together? People don't just start being gay whenever their school allows it.

IAN

People like that don't care about asking for permission.

Like Mr. James. My dad said he was running a cult out of his basement this summer.

IMARI

What the fuck?

IAN

No one had a clue until they started inviting kids to a "parade" in the park. Sounds like some pedophile type shit to me.

MALACHI

Shut up, Ian. It wasn't a fucking cult. A bunch of bigots spread that to try and get him fired. ~~and it didn't work~~. Don't tell people he's a pedophile. It's fucked up.

IAN

It's his own fault. If he didn't want this to happen he should have kept his fag parade in the basement where it belongs.

NICOLE, *warning*.

Ian.

IAN

I'm just saying what everyone's thinking.

Thick silence.

IMARI

Chaperones can bring dates, right?

ELLIOT

Mrs. Laurude brought her husband last year.

IMARI

Do you think he'll bring his... partner? If he has one. I mean, if they're allowing *gay students* //

IAN

If he's smart, he won't. Not unless he wants whatever Tyler and Jonah are in for.

MALACHI, *standing*

Shut the fuck up, Ian.

IAN

It's the truth. Don't be such a bitch, Mal.

The bell rings. Everyone lingers. Malachi and Ian are in a silent war.

IAN, *to Nicole*

C'mon Nic.

*Nicole stands. Ian wraps an arm around her and they exit.
Malachi's eyes are glued to Ian's back. Imari stands slowly.*

IMARI.

Alright. Gonna be brave. Gonna go to Spanish. See you later, Mal.

MAL.

See ya.

Imari and Malachi do their handshake.

ELLIOT.

Bye Imari.

Imari exits. Malachi and Elliot look at each other.

Blink.

Elliot and Malachi almost seem frozen.

Time has stopped just for them.

The sounds of the subway car cut into the cafeteria.

Elliot has a moment of recognition.

*Malachi reacts to the change in Elliot.
Elliot starts to reach for Malachi, but then:*

Blink.

END

Oak Street. Sherwood, Texas.

*Lights up on ELLIOT, 21 standing just off-right from the street sign.
He's still carrying his duffle bag. He looks down at MALACHI'S MEMORIAL.
Elliot kneels down and picks up the photo frame. He gently runs a finger across the glass. It is
caked with dirt. He stands. He reaches for the hem of his shirt and tries to scrape some of it off.*

NICOLE, 20 enters.

She is wearing a gas station clerk's uniform.

She doesn't notice Elliot at first.

She's focused on trying to light her cigarette. Her lighter isn't working.

As she makes her way to sit on the curb, she notices Elliot and jumps.

NICOLE

What the fuck.

[...]

Elliot?

ELLIOT

Nicole.

Nicole wraps Elliot in a tight hug.

NICOLE

Oh my God.

I feel like I'm seeing a ghost.