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THE FIVE-WAY CIRCLE

Episode #1

"PILOT"

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{insert release date}

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FADE IN.

INT. CINDY'S OLD ROOM - AFTERNOON

CINDY is drawing in her notebook on the floor. She erases frantically before cleaning the paper and smiling.

CINDY

There! It's finally looking like something!
That'll show them Cindy Louis doesn't make
"puffy" things.

The audience sees that CINDY was drawing an intricate and detailed dress on the drawing of a model. CINDY flips through the pages of her notebook, showing more drawings of intricate dresses on models.

CINDY

This is definitely my best one yet. Maybe
Mom will want to see it...

MRS. LOUIS

Cindy! It's time to go!

CINDY sighs.

CINDY

Or maybe not.

CINDY closes her notebook. She gets off her bed and opens her closet. She pulls out a suitcase and closes the closet door. She drags the suitcase behind her and leaves the room. She goes down the stairs and out of the house.

EXT. CINDY'S OLD HOUSE FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

CINDY closes the front door behind. She drags her suitcase and stands beside her mother. CINDY looks in front of her and sees the moving truck with workers on it. She sees her car behind it, MR. LOUIS in it.

CINDY

They've already finished filling up the truck?

MRS. LOUIS

I know, they work so fast! I was surprised too. You ready to go?

CINDY

Sure.

MRS. LOUIS

Come on Cindy, I know when you're lying. Why don't you want to move?

CINDY sighs.

CINDY

We're always moving! I can never fit in at any school because I'm always "the new kid" and that makes me a freak.

MRS. LOUIS

Sweetie, that is so not true-

CINDY

Mom, please. You say that every single time we move somewhere, you're always wrong. I just want to fit in somewhere and make some real friends.

MRS. LOUIS places a hand on CINDY's shoulder.

MRS. LOUIS

That's because of positive thinking. It's like I always say: Positive thoughts bring positive results. You've been thinking like that every single time so, you're getting bad results. It's time to change your perspective. Give it a try.

CINDY

I guess I'll give it a try. What have I got to lose anyway?

MRS. LOUIS

That's the spirit!

MR. LOUIS (O.S.)

Alright, ladies. Let's get going.

MRS. LOUIS

Well, I guess we're off. Ontario awaits!

CINDY smiles. CINDY and MRS. LOUIS walk over to their car and enter it. CINDY looks out the window.

CINDY

Goodbye Montreal. Hello Ontario...

INT. ABADI HOME FOYER - SUNSET

MR. ABADI opens the door and enters the house.

MR. ABADI

I'm home!

MRS. ABADI enters the foyer.

MR. ABADI

The sales were crazy today! And this one guy spit out his-

MRS. ABADI

Settle down, you can tell me at dinner.

MR. ABADI

Ah yes, nutrition first.

MR. ABADI wags a finger in front of MRS. ABADI. MRS. ABADI rolls her eyes and smiles.

MRS. ABADI

I'll call Hanna.

MR. ABADI nods and leaves to the kitchen. MRS. ABADI and goes to the staircase.

MRS. ABADI

Hanna! Come downstairs, it's time for dinner!

HANNA (V.O.)

I'm coming!

INT. HANNA'S BEDROOM

HANNA puts the final piece of tape on her dressing table mirror.

HANNA

There.

HANNA opens a drawer on her dressing table and puts the roll of tape in it.

HANNA

I wish there was an easier way for me to keep this from my parents. I can't keep removing it if they come in. Then again, they can't come in if they're not even home.

HANNA goes to her bed and falls onto it. She pulls her hood over her head tighter and covers her face.

HANNA

Dear Diary, I am once again putting tape on all my mirrors because I can't stand the sight of me. I'm just... I'm just like what everyone says in school. Especially Irene. They say I'm nothing but an ugly bookworm who's even more boring than those Planet Earth documentaries. And this year, it's gonna get so much worse.

HANNA touches the glasses on her face.

HANNA

I got glasses. They make me look even uglier than I already am and I didn't even know that was possible. I just know Irene is gonna say something about them. I wanna ask my parents if I could switch schools or homeschool but, I just can't bring myself to do it. What if they get mad at me? I haven't even asked them for a diary yet because they might think I'm deranged or something.

HANNA sighs.

HANNA

Sometimes I wish I didn't even have to go to school. The kids are cruel and it's not like I can make friends or anything. Friendship doesn't exist in the real world and I've learnt that the hard way.

MRS. ABADI

Hanna! Are you coming?

HANNA

Coming, coming!

HANNA stands up from her bed and rushes to the door, opening it and exiting downstairs.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - EVENING

JACK holds the soccer ball in his hands.

JACK

Alright Jack, you can do it.

JACK throws the soccer ball in the air, and then bounces it off his knee. JACK did this without any mistake, grinning.

JACK

Yes!

MRS. WHITMORE

Jack?

JACK gasps and looks over at the door. He loses his balance and falls backward, the soccer ball flying and hitting his bookshelf, dropping its contents.

JACK

Uh oh...

MRS. WHITMORE enters the room and gasps, placing her hands on her hips.

MRS. WHITMORE

Jack! How many times have I told you not to play inside the house?

JACK

Don't be so dramatic, Mom. The only thing I dropped is a bookshelf and I was planning to get rid of it anyways. I don't like reading.

MRS. WHITMORE

That bookshelf isn't only for reading, it's for your studies too. 10th grade is gonna start in three days, so you need to be prepared.

JACK

I guess... but I'm gonna be way more focused on other things than my studies.

MRS. WHITMORE

Like what exactly? Soccer?

JACK

Exactly! This year is gonna be epic! I remember that Principal Wilgens said last year there isn't gonna be a coach this year.

MRS. WHITMORE

Oh no, why not? Wasn't your coach that nice college student who gave you extra breaks? He seemed very sweet.

JACK laughs.

JACK

Yeah... except when Matthew hit him square in the nose with a ball and he was down for a whole month before quitting!

MRS. WHITMORE

Jack! That is not funny!

JACK

Oh yeah, it wasn't. It sounds a lot funnier than it looked... but anyways, after that, we all took turns being team captain and Principal Wilgens realized that we weren't really in need of a new coach.

MRS. WHITMORE

So, is that why you tried to practice soccer everywhere during the summer? And I mean, *everywhere*.

JACK

Okay, now you're being dramatic..

MRS. WHITMORE raises an eyebrow.

JACK

Okay, so I did practice a lot. But, I had a good reason!

MRS. WHITMORE walks over to JACK's bed and sits down.

MRS. WHITMORE

And what reason was that?

JACK sits down next to MRS. WHITMORE.

JACK

Principal Wilgens kept me as team captain for the entire last month of school last year.

MRS. WHITMORE

That sounds wonderful. Why would you need to practice this much then?

JACK

I heard from some kids that he was planning on giving team captain tryouts for next year instead of keeping me, so I need to make sure I stay team captain. Otherwise, it could go to Trevor.

MRS. WHITMORE

Well, I'm glad you found something to be passionate about. But, if you're gonna be passionate about it, please do it outside.

JACK laughs.

JACK

Will do, Mom.

MRS. WHITMORE ruffles JACK's hair.

MRS. WHITMORE

That's my team captain. Now, you can take 15 minutes outside for practice before coming in for dinner.

JACK nods.

JACK

You got it, Mom.

MRS. WHITMORE smiles. She stands up from the bed and leaves the room. JACK picks up his soccer ball and races out his door.

INT. JORDAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

JORDAN is writing in his room. He smiles.

JORDAN

Another idea for a story! Maybe I should actually get started on writing one of these. I'll ask Mom and Dad which I should do first.

JORDAN hears something crash downstairs. He gasps.

JORDAN

What was that?

JORDAN leaps off of his bed and runs out of his bedroom.

INT. JORDAN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

MRS. WATERSTON looks down in horror at the smashes plate down below. MR. WATERSTON and JORDAN rush into the kitchen.

MR. WATERSTON

What happened?

MRS. WATERSTON

I just dropped a plate! Damn it!

JORDAN

It's okay, Mom.

MR. WATERSTON

No, it's not. Don't you have any idea how much that plate cost?

MRS. WATERSTON

I know, I'm sorry. My hands were wet, I was washing the dishes and, I guess I lost my grip-

JORDAN

It's okay, Mom.

MR. WATERSTON

Jordan, stop saying that. This is a big deal and shouldn't be taken so lightly. Barbara, you've got to be more careful.

MRS. WATERSTON wipes her hands on her apron.

MRS. WATERSTON

Honey, I told you I'm sorry. We can always buy some more. It's just one plate.

MR. WATERSTON

This isn't about the plate! You know how hard things have been.

MR. WATERSTON enters the kitchen, running his hands through his hair.

MR. WATERSTON

I lost my job, you don't have one and Jordan isn't ever doing anything.

JORDAN shuffles his feet, leaning against the doorway.

MRS. WATERSTON

Honey, he's right-

MR. WATERSTON

Can't you see what's happening? We aren't going to be able to live off my savings for very long, especially because you've never worked a day in your life!

MRS. WATERSTON

Right, and who's fault is that? I wanted to get a job and proper education but, you had me taking care of Johnny and Jordan 24/7! I had no time for any of that!

MR. WATERSTON

Well at least our first son went to MIT and is on his way to becoming a full time programmer. Unlike Jordan who does nothing but write in that stupid notebook of his.

JORDAN looks down, disappointed.

MRS. WATERSTON

Sending Johnny to MIT is one of the reasons we're so low on money right now! I told you to send him to a university closer to home that's cheaper but no, always the fancy stuff!

MR. WATERSTON

Well at least he's doing something! You put too much faith in Jordan when he's good for nothing!

MRS. WATERSTON

The more faith you put in a person, the more likely they'll become a success. That's what I like to believe.

MR. WATERSTON

Look how well it's working now! He's wasted away the entire summer and nothing's changed!

MRS. WATERSTON

Things take time!

MR. WATERSTON

That's exactly what we don't have!

JORDAN backs up and runs up the stairs.

INT. JORDAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

JORDAN runs into his room, slamming the door behind him. He flops onto his bed, burying his face into his pillow, crying.

JORDAN

Why am I such a disappointment?

JORDAN looks up from his pillow, wiping his tears. He looks at his journal on his side table. He picks it up and looks at the front cover: "Jordan's Stories".

JORDAN

Another time.

JORDAN puts his journal back on the side table. He gets off the bed and goes over his desk and sits on his chair. He opens the laptop on it and types: "Jobs For High Schoolers."

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - EVENING

AIDAN and MRS. TOMES wait in the waiting room. MRS. TOMES places a hand on AIDAN's shoulder.

MRS. TOMES

Aidan, you feeling okay? You vomited quite a lot.

AIDAN

Yeah, I'm fine. Please don't remind me.

MRS. TOMES

I don't see the big problem. Vomiting is a very common thing to do.

AIDAN

Not when you do it in front of the whole school.

MRS. TOMES

Aidan, that was last year, on the last week of school. Everyone's surely forgotten about it by now.

AIDAN

Things like that stick with people. How am I supposed to make friends when that memory is stuck in people's heads?

MRS. TOMES

Aidan, you're overthinking this. Besides, you shouldn't worry too much about making friends. The real people will love and appreciate you for who you are.

AIDAN

Maybe but, it's high school. Anything's possible.

MRS. TOMES laughs. RECEPTIONIST beckons for MRS. TOMES to come to the desk. MRS. TOMES nods and walks over to the desk. AIDAN watches the two talk, squinting as he watches. MRS. TOMES turns around and motions for AIDAN to come. AIDAN nods and runs over to the desk.

AIDAN

What happened?

MRS. TOMES

The doctor's ready to see you.

AIDAN inhaled deeply and nodded. AIDAN and MRS. TOMES follow RECEPTIONIST into the hallway of rooms.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

DOCTOR finishes checking AIDAN's heartbeat before taking his stethoscope out of his ears.

DOCTOR

Tell me Aidan, why did you suddenly start vomiting again?

AIDAN

I don't know, maybe I ate something bad? All I know is that I vomited once in the last week of school and rested before it stopped. And now, it's back.

DOCTOR

Hmmmm... I see. Have you been feeling headaches, difficulty in moving, or drowsiness?

AIDAN

Well, I am getting headaches more often now. Not so much the other things.

DOCTOR nods, picking up his checklist, writing down notes.

MRS. TOMES

Is it serious?

DOCTOR

So far, it's hard to say. I'm gonna consult with some other doctors I know and then come back to you. For now, I'd suggest you buy sumatriptan tablets from any pharmacy to treat the headaches.

AIDAN

Sounds good. Thanks.

DOCTOR

Any time. You take care, Aidan.

AIDAN

You too, Doc. Bye!

DOCTOR waves. AIDAN steps off the patient bed. MRS. TOMES and him exit the door. DOCTOR sighs and looks down at his checklist.

DOCTOR

Let's hope it's not what I think it is.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - EVENING

AIDAN and MRS. TOMES begin walking to the waiting room.

AIDAN

As long as it's not too serious, I can make friends.

MRS. TOMES

Aidan, you shouldn't worry so much about making friends and getting people to like you.

AIDAN

It's like I said, Mom: *High School*.

MRS. TOMES gives AIDAN a tight smile. She ruffles his hair and they leave to the door.

INT. CINDY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CINDY's alarm on her phone rings. She shuts it off before waking up, her hair a visible mess. She rubs her eyes before looking at the time on her phone. She gasps.

CINDY

Only 40 minutes till school starts?! I gotta get ready!

CINDY gets out of her bed. She opens her closet and takes out a plaid dress. She steps into the closet and closes the door. MRS. LOUIS enters the room.

MRS. LOUIS

Cindy? Are you up already? I heard some noise and figured it was you.

CINDY (V.O.)

Yeah, I'm changing Mom!

MRS. LOUIS

Already? It's only 7:30! Doesn't your school start at 8:10?

CINDY (V.O.)

Yeah but, I don't want to risk being late on my first day.

CINDY opens her closet door and steps out. She is wearing a pink T-shirt with a peach cardigan over.

CINDY

I'm ready!

MRS. LOUIS

Yeah but, I don't think your father is.

INT. CINDY'S PARENTS BEDROOM - MORNING

MR. LOUIS is sleeping on his bed, snoring loudly. CINDY and MRS. LOUIS peer in through the door. They gasp. CINDY looks at MRS. LOUIS.

CINDY

On second thought, maybe I can find something else to do.

MRS. LOUIS

Maybe?

MR. LOUIS snores louder. CINDY grimaces.

CINDY

Definitely.

MRS. LOUIS laughs.

MRS. LOUIS
Guess you've really got to get busy.

CINDY
Busy! That's it!

CINDY runs off to her room. MRS. LOUIS gasps.

MRS. LOUIS
Cindy?

INT. CINDY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CINDY runs to her night stand. She picks up her notebook. MRS. LOUIS enters the room.

MRS. LOUIS
Cindy, is everything okay?

CINDY
Yeah, I just wanted to show you something.
Look!

CINDY opens up her notebook. MRS. LOUIS looks at the drawing in it.

MRS. LOUIS
Oh, who drew that?

CINDY
Me, duh! Thoughts...?

MRS. LOUIS
Oh honey, it looks... nice. What happened to the one you showed me a week before? That one was so lovely.

CINDY lowers the notebook.

CINDY

You mean the one with the puffy sleeves that made the figure look more muscly than Dwayne Johnson?

MRS. LOUIS

What are you talking about, I loved it! And you seemed so into it and very excited to show the kids at school.

CINDY

Yeah well, I got rid of it.

MRS. LOUIS

Why would you? It was-

CINDY

It was horrific! Like I said. The words "muscly" and "dress" can *never* go together. It's unorthodox.

MRS. LOUIS opened her mouth to respond before shutting it and crossing her arms.

MRS. LOUIS

It was that girl in your Art class, wasn't it? What was her name, Louisa?

CINDY

Louisa? What, no! Why would you even think that?

MRS. LOUIS

Cindy, you always came home from school angry and I heard you muttering about her. Did she comment on the dress?

CINDY

No-

MRS. LOUIS

Nuh-uh, don't lie to me. I'm your mother, I can tell when you're doing it.

CINDY looks into MRS. LOUIS' eyes. MRS. LOUIS glares and CINDY sighs.

CINDY

Okay, okay, it was! I... I accidentally dropped my notebook and she saw the drawing and... she said it looked puffy and-

MRS. LOUIS

... like a more muscly Dwayne Johnson?

CINDY

Yeah...

MRS. LOUIS sighs. She sits down on CINDY's bed.

MRS. LOUIS

Cindy, we've talked about this. You cannot keep basing your opinions and actions off of others. You are your own person.

CINDY

Mom, you don't get it!

CINDY sits on her bed beside MRS. LOUIS.

CINDY

If I do something everyone around me doesn't like then, I won't fit in. People will think I'm a freak and no one will want to hang out with me or be my friend.

MRS. LOUIS takes CINDY's hand.

MRS. LOUIS

You know, I'd rather live in a world with no friends than with friends who try to make me

change everything about myself. It's a lot more clear on who really cares about you that way.

CINDY

Whatever you say, Mom. It's hard to survive high school without friends. I can tell, I've had experience.

MRS. LOUIS places a hand on CINDY's face.

MRS. LOUIS

I understand all this moving around is starting to affect your school life but, please honey, don't let it dictate who you are.

CINDY looks at MRS. LOUIS and sighs.

CINDY

I'll try.

MRS. LOUIS smiles.

MRS. LOUIS

Good girl.

MRS. LOUIS stands up from CINDY's bed.

MRS. LOUIS

Now, I'm gonna get started on breakfast and we'll wake your father up soon. Make sure you have everything for the big day.

CINDY

Alright.

MRS. LOUIS smiles and leaves the room. CINDY flops onto her bed, sighing.

CINDY

Mom's just overreacting, it's what Moms do!
I need friends or, it'll be Brooke High all
over again...

INT. ALTON HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

JORDAN enters the school and looks around. He sees many students walking around and inhales deeply.

JORDAN

Okay, I just got to get to Principal
Wilgens' office.

EXT. ALTON HIGH SCHOOL FRONTYARD - MORNING

HANNA walks with her head down, peering side to side. She turns around and gasps.

HANNA

Oh no, she's here.

HANNA runs into the school.

INT. ALTON HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

JORDAN looks around awkwardly. HANNA rushes in, spinning JORDAN around. JORDAN gasps and adjusts his backpack.

JORDAN

Huh? What happened?

HANNA

Oh my gosh, she's here.

JORDAN

Who's she? Oh wait-

JORDAN gasps and looks around. He looks through the front door window. He gasps upon seeing them. HANNA quickly rushes off to her lockers. JORDAN looks around frantically before running down the hallway. MRS. LESBIT sees HANNA and JORDAN running.

MRS. LESBIT
No running in the halls!

HANNA
So sorry!

JORDAN
Sorry, I'm in a rush!

MRS. LESBIT rolls her eyes.

MRS. LESBIT
First day fears.

MRS. LESBIT walks away. JORDAN rushes to PRINCIPAL WILGEN'S office and opens the door.

INT. PRINCIPAL WILGEN'S OFFICE - MORNING

JORDAN rushes inside and shuts the door behind him, pushing his back onto it. PRINCIPAL WILGENS looks up from his desk.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS
Jordan Waterston? What are you doing here?
And why did you slam the door? The doorknobs
are really iffy so, please don't do that.

JORDAN
I'm sorry, Sir! I just... really wanted to ask
you something.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS
Okay. Take a seat.

JORDAN holds his backpack straps. He walks over to the chair in front of PRINCIPAL WILGENS desk and sits on it. He plays with his fingers.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS
Now, what did you want to discuss with me?

JORDAN takes a deep breath.

JORDAN

The thing is Principal Wilgens... my family is struggling with money. My dad just lost his job and... they've been fighting a lot about it... and I feel like I've got to do something... to make them proud... to not be a disappointment.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS leans forward.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS

I'm so sorry to hear that. You should not feel like you're a disappointment though. You must've come here for a reason, yeah?

JORDAN

Yeah, about that. I thought if I could get a job here at the school since it's just starting, would you pay me? Then, I can make some money to help my family.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS nods.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS

Well, I would pay you but the only problem is that I have no job for you. We've got almost four lunch ladies, enough teachers - not that you could be one anyways - and that's just about it.

JORDAN

Oh. I kinda thought as much.

JORDAN looks down sadly.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS

But... we did need a new janitor. Our old one is going to officially retire this Thursday so you could replace him and be paid.

JORDAN looks up with joy.

JORDAN

Really? Thank you!

PRINCIPAL WILGENS

No problem. After all, you're kinda helping me more than the other way around. You wouldn't believe how piggish kids can get. No offense or anything.

JORDAN laughs.

JORDAN

None taken. But, I should be heading off. Class is gonna start soon.

PRINCIPAL WILGENS

See you around then, Jordan.

JORDAN gets off the chair and leaves the office.

INT. ALTON HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

JORDAN closes the door behind him. He covers his face with his hands.

JORDAN

The school janitor? They're really that packed. Oh well, I guess I'll just have to hope Irene doesn't see me when I start working.

JORDAN inhales deeply and walks down the hall.

AIDAN enters through the back door and over to his locker. He notices HANNA panting heavily beside him.

AIDAN

Hey!

HANNA

Hi.

AIDAN

Um, you look like you had a run.

HANNA

I kinda did.

AIDAN

How come?

HANNA

Had to get away from *her*.

AIDAN

Her? Who is-oh no...

AIDAN and HANNA look at the front door. They fly open and four girls enter dramatically. IRENE flips her hair before placing her hands on her hips and looking around the hallway. She smirks and her group begin walking down the hallway. She waves and smiles at everyone as she walks past them.

AIDAN

She seems nice.

HANNA

Too bad she isn't.

AIDAN

Maybe she's changed.

IRENE and her group - HAILEY, NINA and LUCY - walk over to AIDAN and HANNA.

IRENE

Well, will you look at that? Ms. Ugly Duckling and Barf Boy are having a fling. Guess that'll do them some good since no one else wants them.

NINA and HAILEY giggle while LUCY crossed her arms.

LUCY

Irene, don't call them that!

IRENE

Oh, shut up Lucy!

AIDAN

Leave us alone Irene, we're just friends.

HANNA

No, we're not. I don't even know him.

AIDAN

Well, not yet.

IRENE

You're trying too hard to make friends, barf boy. Then again, it's like I said, no one else wants you two so, you might as well have each other.

AIDAN looks down, sad. HANNA looks at her locker and doesn't respond. IRENE laughs and peers over to see HANNA's face.

IRENE

Hey, something looks different with your face. Looks like you have something on.

AIDAN

Leave her alone, Irene.

IRENE

Stay out of this, barfy!

HAILEY

Yeah, you do know we got something off of you.

AIDAN

What's that supposed to mean?

IRENE smirks and beckons to NINA.

IRENE

Hit it, Nora.

NINA

It's actually Nina-

IRENE

And I don't care!

NINA rolls her eyes. She takes out her phone and types. She shows the phone to AIDAN and AIDAN gasps. There was a video of him barfing in the school cafeteria in front of everyone.

LUCY

You took a video!?

NINA

Yeah, she's a lot smarter than she looks.

IRENE

Shut up, Nina!

AIDAN

How did you manage to get this?

IRENE

I didn't take a video. I had help.

IRENE looks around. Everyone looks over at the front door. The door dramatically opens again. TREVOR enters, hair blowing and his hands in his pockets, looking around. He begins walking down the hall, nodding over to IRENE.

HANNA

Trevor. Your brother.

IRENE

He managed to bribe the guys at security cameras to give us this footage. They got fired but that isn't our problem. This is already on my TikTok so, I guess you won't be making any friends this year.

IRENE, HAILEY and NINA laugh. AIDAN looks down, grumbling. The bells rings.

LUCY

Can we leave now?

IRENE

Yeah, I can't be late to class. I'm guessing you two can't either, Barf Boy and Miss Ugly Duckling?

IRENE, HAILEY and NINA laugh. LUCY sighs and turns and leaves. AIDAN looks at them before leaving after LUCY. HANNA holds her books to her chest and prepares to leave. IRENE puts her foot in front of HANNA and she trips and falls to the ground. She looks up. IRENE, HAILEY and NINA gasp.

NINA

You got glasses!

HAILEY

I swear she couldn't get any uglier.

IRENE

Now you're like a hybrid mix of Ugly Betty *and* the Ugly Duckling!

The three girls laugh. HANNA snuffles and IRENE gives her a pitiful look.

IRENE

What's the matter? Can't stand up for yourself without your boyfriend?

HANNA

He's not my boyfriend. I don't even know him.

NINA

Oh, it speaks.

IRENE

No boyfriend, no friends, isn't that ironic? Guess no one wants to hang around a four eyed creep.

HANNA

Friends aren't good for anything.

IRENE

Whatever, loser. We're going to class. Have fun being a geeky weirdo.

IRENE and her friends laugh before leaving the hallway. HANNA picks up her books, wiping the tears on her face before running in another direction of the hall.

EXT. ALTON HIGH SCHOOL FRONTYARD - MORNING

CINDY's car parks up right in front of the school and CINDY frantically grabs her backpack, throwing it over her shoulder.

CINDY

I can't believe you thought it was a good idea to eat out, Dad!

MR. LOUIS

It's your first day of school! We should celebrate a bit.

CINDY

We could've done that *after* school! Now I'm gonna be late!

MRS. LOUIS

Calm down, Cindy. It's only one minute past time.

CINDY

One minute? I thought we managed to come on time! Oh great, now I'm really late!

CINDY opens her door and exits the car, running over to the school.

MRS. LOUIS

We love you, honey!

CINDY turns around and blows a kiss.

CINDY

Love you too, guys!

MR. LOUIS and MRS. LOUIS laugh and shake their heads. CINDY runs to the school and pulls on the front door. She gasps.

CINDY

Locked?! Oh crap-

CINDY looks around, frantically thinking.

CINDY

Let me try the back! They usually take a while to lock that one up.

CINDY quickly runs around the school and over to the back. She pulls on the door and it opens.

CINDY

Oh, thank goodness.

INT. ALTON HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

CINDY runs inside, running faster and faster down the hall until she bumps into someone, falling backward onto the ground.

CINDY

Oh my gosh, I am so sorry! It's my first day and I was running so fast and I didn't see where I was going and-

CINDY looks up and gasps. A handsome boy with black hair, bangs dangling over his face, stares down at her. TREVOR smirks.

TREVOR

It's cool. I remember coming late my first day and freaking out so bad. *This* is an understatement from what I did.

CINDY laughs awkwardly. TREVOR holds out a hand to her. CINDY smiles and takes it, getting onto her feet.

CINDY

So, not your first day?

TREVOR

Deifinitely not. Got here last year, so this is pretty much my only high school. But you... you said you're new. Explains why I haven't seen you around before.

CINDY

Oh yeah, that makes sense. I'm Cindy, if you wanted to know.

TREVOR holds out a hand.

TREVOR

Trevor. Nice to meet you.

CINDY looks at him wide eyed before taking his hand, shaking it. She quickly lets go and TREVOR grins.

TREVOR

Your palms are sweaty. You must be really worried.

CINDY grimaces, shoulders tightening.

CINDY

I'm a bit of a worry wart.

TREVOR laughs.

TREVOR

Maybe, but I think it's something more. I usually get freaked out when I see someone I like in front of me.

CINDY blinks and TREVOR winks at her, making her blush. He turns around and walks down the hallway, turning to look back at her.

TREVOR

Catch you around, *Cindy*.

TREVOR then walks away. CINDY sighs dreamily before shaking her head and looking down at her watch.

CINDY

Still late! Maybe I can still make it.

CINDY rushes down the left hallway. JACK enters through the back door and walks over to his locker, looking down at his watch.

JACK

Late. Oh well, not that it matters. All the boring stuff happens first, so I should be good.

JACK walks over to his locker and opens it, putting his backpack inside. He closes it and gasps to see TREVOR on his left.

JACK

Jeez Trevor, you almost gave me a heart attack.

TREVOR

Hey, Jack. How've you been?

JACK looks at him, confused.

JACK

I'm fine. But why are you asking? Or better yet, why would you care?

TREVOR quickly grips JACK's shirt and forcefully pushes JACK against his locker.

TREVOR

Of course I don't care how you're doing, you dimwit! I just hope it's really bad!

JACK rolls his eyes.

JACK

Welcome back, Trevor. What's your deal anyway?

TREVOR

Don't you get it? Look around, Jack.

JACK glances around, taking in the sight of the billboard adorned with numerous papers and kids quickly bustling to their classrooms.

JACK

Yeah... I don't get it.

TREVOR

Of course, you don't. On the billboard, look at the paper on the top.

JACK looks and sees a paper that says: "TEAM CAPTAIN TRYOUTS: STARTING NEXT WEEK"

JACK

Team Captain Tryouts? That can't be possible!

TREVOR

Just the brutal truth, no-hoper. You may be team captain right now but, don't for one second think that it's gonna stay that way.

JACK growls. He kicks Trevor in the thigh, causing him to release his grip JACK. TREVOR yelps in pain. JACK grins.

JACK

We'll just have to see about that.

TREVOR laughs.

TREVOR

You really think smashing and bashing your way through every problem is gonna get you there? You do know how our coach last year got injured, right? You lost your temper and-

JACK

It wasn't my fault! You were just-

TREVOR

You're lucky none of the teachers saw what really happened or you could have been expelled. You're not really big competition for me so far and, for your own good, you should keep it that way.

JACK

What's that even supposed to mean?

TREVOR

It means *dunderhead* that *I'm* the only one who saw what *really* happened so, if you're

even a little bit of competition for me,
I'll tell them what I saw.

JACK balls his hands into fists and growls. TREVOR grins and looks down at his watch. He looks back up at JACK.

TREVOR

I've got to get to class. See you on the field, Angry Bird.

TREVOR laughs and walks away. JACK grumbles before slamming his locker door shut and rushing over to his classroom. He looks up at the door.

JACK

Huh? No label? They usually have a label for the teacher who teaches here. Well, last year English was here so, let's hope it's the same this year.

JACK enters the classroom and takes an empty seat. CINDY runs in shortly after.

CINDY

Sorry, I'm totally lost. I can't seem to find the English classroom and most of the teachers aren't around.

AIDAN

We all think this is it. There's no label but it was here last year.

CINDY sighs.

CINDY

Alright, thanks.

CINDY closes the door behind her. She walks over to an empty chair and takes a seat. She looks to her right and sees HANNA - a girl with purple glasses and a hijab.

CINDY

Hey.

HANNA looks at her.

CINDY

Did you take this class last year?

HANNA

I mean, English is mandatory every year so yeah, I didn't really have a choice.

CINDY flushes.

CINDY

Oh yeah, totally! That... that makes sense.

HANNA smiles.

HANNA

Are you new?

CINDY

Yeah! I actually am. Came here all the way from Montreal.

HANNA

Sweet. I heard there's some great tourist areas there.

CINDY

Oh yeah, tons! I can tell you about it, if you like.

HANNA

I'd like that.

CINDY smiles. IRENE groans.

IRENE

Oh my gosh, where is the teacher!? Some people came late and he's still not here.

AIDAN

I heard they got some new teachers, so maybe he's one of them. Would explain why there's no label on this door.

HAILEY

No one asked you, barf boy!

LUCY

Hailey, not in front of people!

IRENE

Um, who cares? What difference does it make?

LUCY

It'll make him feel-

NINA

Since when did we care about how people *feel*?

IRENE

Sounds like something Jordan would say.

The girls laugh. JORDAN sinks in his seat.

JACK

I don't know who that is but, leave him out of this!

JORDAN

I'm right here...

MATTHEW

Jack, I think he's in this class.

ALEX

Yeah, he's the kid over there.

JORDAN slumps into his seat.

JORDAN

Oh god...

JACK

Oh, you're in this class. Um, that makes this awkward-

LUCY

See? You probably hurt his feelings. Sorry Jordan.

JORDAN

It's okay.

IRENE

Don't say sorry! He's such a loser. Hey weirdo, what happened to that book you said you were gonna write? Has it flopped yet?

JORDAN

No!

The Gorgeous Gals jeer and snicker. LUCY rolls her eyes.

LUCY

Irene, please-

IRENE

Jordan, summer lasts two months and you've still got nothing done? What exactly do you plan to do with your life?

JORDAN

I just got distracted, that's all.

IRENE

And I don't even care, that's all!

LUCY

Irene!

The door creaks.

CINDY

Oh my gosh, it must be the teacher!

JACK

What if he's really strict or something?

ALEX

Or super muscular?

HANNA

Or tall. Tall people are scary.

KAITLYN

It might be a girl.

HANNA

A tall girl... I can't tell if that's worse or not...

MATTHEW

Or a muscular girl...

Everyone looks at him, confused. The doorknob shakes more and everyone gasps. The door swings open and a man with gray hair enters, holding a briefcase. MR. BARNES looks at the students.

MR. BARNES

Apologies for the commotion at the door. I've been warned that the doors at this school are tight.

MR. BARNES begins writing his name on the board.

MR. BARNES

Also, I'd like to clarify that I'm not particularly strict, nor am I super muscular

or towering. And as for being a girl, well, people don't particularly see me as such. I'm sure you all can agree, now can you?

MR. BARNES looks around at us. Everyone gasps and mutters to one another.

MR. BARNES

I'd think it best if you all didn't gossip, that clear?

Everyone nods. IRENE stands up from her seat.

IRENE

Excuse me?

MR. BARNES

Yes, Miss Shacklin?

IRENE

I've never seen or heard of you before. And... how do you know my name?

MR. BARNES

Well, that makes sense. I am new here. I was hired just a week ago. Fun fact: I used to live in Quebec.

AIDAN

Quebec? Isn't that where they speak French?

MR. BARNES

Oui. Bonjour la classe ou mon ami. Le weather est très bien et je suis aussi.

The students exchanged murmurs.

MR. BARNES

Also, to answer your previous question Miss Shacklin, I read the class list so I know who everyone is by looks and name.

IRENE

Looks?

MR. BARNES

They include pictures.

MR. BARNES looks at CINDY.

MR. BARNES

However, your picture wasn't on the list.
Who might you be?

CINDY

Oh, I'm Cindy. Cindy Louis.

MR. BARNES

Hmm, you must be new. Just like me. Well,
don't fret too much. Today is just an
introduction.

MR. BARNES looks at CINDY.

MR. BARNES

So, Miss Louis, would you like to introduce
yourself? Seeing that you're new and all?

CINDY

Oh, uh, sure.

CINDY stands up.

CINDY

Hi, I'm Cindy Louis! I moved here from
Montreal with my Mom and my Dad. I really
like hanging out with others - hopefully my
friends - and I hope to become a fashion
designer one day.

IRENE looks up, eyes wide. MR. BARNES nods.

MR. BARNES

Very nice, Cindy. I hope one day you will reach your dreams.

CINDY smiles and sits down. IRENE gapes and leans over to HAILEY.

IRENE

Did you hear that? The new girl likes fashion.

HAILEY

So?

IRENE

So, we could do that thing I've been wanting to do.

HAILEY scrunches her brows before IRENE gives her a threatening look. HAILEY's eyes go wide.

HAILEY

Ohhh, that thing! Cool stuff! You gonna do it now?

IRENE

Well, of course not. Just keep an eye on her. I've got plans...

MR. BARNES scans the class. He points at JORDAN.

MR. BARNES

You. Is it... Jordan Waterston?

JORDAN nods. MR. BARNES smile.

MR. BARNES

Care to introduce yourself next?

JORDAN nods again. He stands up, hands in his pockets, shoulders sagging.

JORDAN

Hi... everybody. I'm... I'm Jordan. But you all probably know that. I'm... uh... a single child who... uh... loves to write. I dream of becoming an author-

IRENE

He dreams of failing!

Some of the kids laugh. LUCY nudges IRENE in the arm.

LUCY

Irene! That was so mean!

MR. BARNES

Miss Monroe is right. That kind of talk is not going to be allowed in this classroom.

IRENE rolls her eyes. MR. BARNES looks at JORDAN.

MR. BARNES

My apologies, Mr. Waterston. I don't think you're comfortable sharing in front of the class like this, right?

JORDAN nods.

JORDAN

Not really...

MR. BARNES

That's alright. I too dislike public speaking.. if not speaking at all.

JORDAN sits back down.

MR. BARNES

However, Miss Shacklin, your comment has reminded me of something. My goal for you all through this course. You see, high

school is a rather... interesting experience. And this is most of your second year, I assume. I call high school interesting because it's where we learn new and fascinating things about ourselves but, it's also where we are met with the harshest expectations, bullying being the greatest form of this-

MR. BARNES eyes IRENE and she crossed her arms, pouting.

MR. BARNES

So, my goal for you throughout this course is...

MR. BARNES writes "Building Character" under his previous writing.

MR. BARNES

Building Character. I want to teach you independence, the ability to think for yourself and not worry about others opinions-

MR. BARNES looks at CINDY and she gasps, quickly looking down.

MR. BARNES

... I want you to learn the value of friendship and trusting others-

MR. BARNES looks at HANNA. She gapes before looking away.

MR. BARNES

... I want you to understand that having flaws is normal and overcoming them is possible no matter how big-

MR. BARNES looks at JACK and he blinks in confusion.

MR. BARNES

... Or how small they may seem.

MR. BARNES looks at JORDAN and he glares curiously at MR. BARNES.

MR. BARNES

Because one thing I know is that spending your time too much on other people will only make your life suffer further.

MR. BARNES looks at AIDAN and bites his lip. MR. BARNES then smiles.

MR. BARNES

Of course, these aren't the only things you need to learn. You will have lots of lessons throughout your life and I want to teach you all how important it is to hear those lessons and learn from them.

CINDY, HANNA, AIDAN, JACK and JORDAN all narrow their eyes at MR. BARNES. He smiles and puts down his chalk, placing his hands on his desk.

MR. BARNES

The beginning of a new school year is the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. And I'll be teaching you how to get your happy ending.

THE END.