

THE DEVIL'S GAVEL

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - EVENING

A single high school student stares at the double doors leading into the high school. A sign on the door reads, School Planning Board Meeting tonight, 7:30 to 8:30. Dark clouds form in the background. There is an ominous cold breeze.

ISABELLA "IZZIE" SANCHEZ (17), wearing short brown hair and a heavy, long coat, stands with her back to the door. She's happy to see AARON COHEN (17) approaching her. Aaron is a well-dressed, short teen with long black hair.

IZZIE

Aaron, what are you doing here?

AARON

Laila mentioned you might--

The two are interrupted when LAILA GUPTA (17), an Indian with green, thick-rimmed eyeglasses and long flowing hair, races up on an electric bike. She's dressed like an Eskimo with fur gloves, a thick winter coat, and a wool scull cap.

LAILA

Hey, Izzie. Sup, Aaron?

AARON

I want to see if Mr. Martinez keeps his job.

IZZIE

(whispers to Laila)

You know I didn't get into a university. I want to kick Marcia Bingham's ass.

Izzie turns to see heavysset MARCIA BINGHAM (30s) stomping to the doors, turning her head like she heard one of the students. Aaron keeps gazing and smiling at Izzie.

Laila starts laughing as DR. GUNTIER (60), the school counselor who looks like Sigmund Freud, and PRINCIPAL JACKIE EVANS (40), a proud, black businesswoman, walk to the door together.

DR. GUNTIER

(smiles)

It's good to see student involvement.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

(smirks)

As long as they're well-behaved.

MRS. CHANG (40), a shy Chinese-American woman, leads her wimpy husband, MR. CHANG, toward the door. Mr. Chang is a biology teacher who looks like tonight's sacrificial lamb.

The students file into the door following four Parents (a tall male, a hideously ugly short male, a tall female, and a short female) in winter coats.

LAILA

(winks at Izzie)

This should be fun.

The skies darken and the wind howls as they enter.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

The teens walk by and ignore a plaque with the Ten Commandments on it.

The stroll to the Teacher's Lounge," a brightly lit room with a curved table in the front with six comfortable chairs behind it. Each chair has a folded name card in front of it. The cards read, "Dr. Guntier," Principal Evans," "Marcia Bingham," "Mrs. Chang," and "Mr. Gupta." Mr. Gupta's seat is empty.

24 chairs fill the room in three rows. There is a table on the right side of the room with a microwave, coffee maker, three pitchers of water, tea bags, plastic cups, and cream and sugar dispensers. There are two plates of cookies.

Mr. Chang grabs a back-row seat on the far left side of the room.

The three teens sit together on the back-row right side.

The four Parents sit scattered in the second and third rows.

Once everyone is seated, Marcia pounds a wood gavel on a wood block three times (BAM, BAM, BAM) and glares at the empty seat for Mr. Gupta.

Marcia Bingham glares at Laila.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Miss Gupta, will your tardy father
be joining us?

Laila Gupta stands politely.

LAILA

I prefer Ms. Gupta, Ms. Bingham,
and to answer your question about
my absentee father, how the hell
should I know?

Laila smiles and sits down and the entire school board glares
at her.

MARCIA BINGHAM

(to Laila)

For the record, Laila Gupta, I'm
not a fan of our growing dependence
on pronouns. It's woke!

(to the crowd)

We'll close the doors precisely at
7:30.

(glances at Mrs. Chang)

Mrs. Chang, our school librarian,
will record the minutes until Mr.
Gupta finally arrives.

IZZIE

(mumbles)

So much for pronouns.

Marcia glares at Izzie.

MARCIA BINGHAM

If you have anything to say that
isn't woke, Miss Isabella Sanchez,
you can bring it up in new
business.

Izzie glares at Marcia.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

If we can move on. It's 7:30. This
is our last school board meeting
before Thanksgiving.

DR. GUNTIER

And we have a lot to cover.

MARCIA BINGHAM

(angry)

Will someone please shut the doors?
It's getting cold in here!

The tall male Parent jumps up to shut the door, which sounds
like a jail cell door being shut with a loud CLUNK.

Aaron turns to the locked door in a panic.

AARON
What was that?

PRINCIPAL EVANS
(warmly)
That's the "active shooter" lock,
the doors lock automatically now,
Aaron. You should know that as a
Senior.

AARON
Yes, Mrs. Evans.

PRINCIPAL EVANS
(correcting him)
That's Principal Evans.

AARON
Yes, Principal Evans.

Izzie and Laila chuckle under their breath.

MARCIA BINGHAM
We have four agenda items tonight.
The first is a motion to ban all
books mentioning slavery. Do I have
a second?

SILENCE.

Marcia glares at Mrs. Chang.

MRS. CHANG
(weakly)
I second it.

Mr. Chang hangs his head in shame.

MARCIA BINGHAM
I move to suspend the discussion.

Izzie stands and speaks loudly.

IZZIE
Point of order.

MARCIA BINGHAM
Sit down, Miss Isabella Sanchez!
You're out of order.

IZZIE
My name is Izzie or Ms. Sanchez,
Ms. Bingham, and as you know.
(MORE)

IZZIE (CONT'D)

The Bible contains many references to slavery, often condoning the practice, including sexual slavery. Isn't that right, Aaron?

AARON

(nervously)

There is a passage where Moses tells the Israelites to kill the male children and non-virgin females but take the young virgins for themselves as slaves.

The crowd is stunned.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Miss Izzie Sanchez, you're not suggesting we ban the Bible from our library. I should warn you that life is scarier when you don't know what to believe.

IZZIE

No, I'm suggesting we place all religious texts on a clearly marked shelf that reads, "Fiction and Fairytales."

The Parents, Marcia, and Principal Evans gasp as Dr. Guntier laughs.

Izzie turns to see the hideously ugly short male Parent glaring at her.

DR. GUNTIER

Surely, you don't believe--

IZZIE

(interrupts)

That's right! I don't! Not anymore! I performed poorly in the critical thinking and essay portions of my college entrance exam because, they said, I had difficulty distinguishing between fact and fiction and knew nothing of logical fallacies.

Izzie turns to Laila and Aaron, embarrassed.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

They said I was a candidate for
Community College or a Trade
school, not that there was anything
wrong with that.

Izzie pulls a pistol from the inside pocket of her coat and
turns to the Planning Team.

Everyone yells in a panic, including her friends.

Principal Evans grabs her phone.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

Nobody moves until they hear me
out! I want to know if my high
school failed me rather than the
other way around!

MARCIA BINGHAM

You're crazy and going to jail.

DR. GUNTIER

She's right, Izzie, drop the gun.

Aaron and Laila huddle in fear behind Izzie.

LAILA

(whispers)

Izzie, this is wrong!

AARON

Iz, don't do this!

Izzie steps forward waving the pistol and yells.

IZZIE

I'm proving a point.

(glares at the planning
board)

Congratulations, Planning Board!
It's easier to bring a gun into the
school than it is to get an
education from the school.

(turns to the crowd)

I didn't get into a university, and
college acceptance rates from this
school have dropped every year I
was here!

DR. GUNTIER

There are many socio-economic
causes--

IZZIE

Don't interrupt, Dr. Guntier. It's rude. You've been so busy banning books, forcing religion back in a public school, and your war on being WOKE -- which means to be compassionate and accepting of people, you've lost sight of your faculty and students!

(points to Mr. Chang)

You'll be voting tonight if Mr. Chang should be fired tonight as our science and biology teacher because he refuses to give equal time to Creationism, a fairy tale, instead of evolution, science, and facts! You people have gone fucking crazy, not me!

Someone POUNDS on the door.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Finally, Mr. Gupta?

The tall male Parent gets up to open it to find no one is there. He looks around the hallway, and a COLD burst of air blows in, bringing a Fedora hat with it.

LAILA

That's my dad's hat!

Laila leaps to pick up the hat and looks out the door.

She sees no one, but everyone in the room feels the cold burst of air and shivers.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

The heat is turned off in the rest of the building to save costs.

LAILA

But where's my dad?

MARCIA BINGHAM

Shut that damn door!

Laila shuts it and it LOCKS again.

The tall male Parent steps closer to Izzie, thinking about being heroic.

A deep, monstrous, Satanic voice (the DEVIL) laughs from the corner of the room close to the door.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Oh, I'm gonna like it here!

Everyone stands in horror and looks to the corner of the room. Seeing nothing, they break for the door.

Aaron is the first to the door and can't unlock or open it.

The once-heroic tall male Parent panics, races to the door, pushes Aaron away, and can't open the door.

Suddenly, a BOLT OF ELECTRICITY strikes the Parent in the back and electrocutes and burns him. He fries and shakes in a horrible death.

Everyone's eyes open wide.

The Devil's voice bellows now from the front corner of the room.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Take your seats or you'll be next.

PRINCIPAL EVANS
Who are you? What do you want?

This time, the voice comes from the ceiling.

DEVIL (V.O.)
(calmly)
You claim you have "open" meetings!
Sit down and carry on!
(yells)
Or you die the same horrible way!

Everyone looks up and around in horror.

The Principal's hands shake so much that her phone falls out of her hand and to the floor.

Now the Devil's voice is right in the Principal's face. Her hair stands on end, and her eyes open wide.

DEVIL (V.O.)
All your phones are useless
tonight, and there is no escape.

Now, the Devil's voice is back by the door.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Continue your speech, little girl!

Izzie's knees are weak, and her pistol drops to her side.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (sarcastic)
 Pretend I'm not here!

Now, the Devil's voice is right behind Izzie's head. The voice is deeper and more ominous.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 I said, continue your speech.

Izzie shakes and looks to her friends for comfort. They are hugging each other in sheer panic. Both sob.

Izzie's voice is soft and compassionate.

IZZIE
 Don't hurt us, whoever you are. I just wanted answers.

Now, the Devil's voice is right behind Marcia's head.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (calmly)
 Ask your questions. These fine adults are here to answer them.
 (threatening)
 At least, they'd better answer them.

Marcia SCREAMS and shakes. She looks down and sobs.

MARCIA BINGHAM
 I-- wet-- my-- pants.

Now, the Devil's voice comes from the dead man's mouth.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (laughs)
 Could have been much worse.

Izzie is more nervous than ever.

IZZIE
 Ms. Bingham, you took over the chair of the planning board when I was in 9th grade. The first thing you did was ban Huckleberry Finn and To Kill a Mockingbird.

Marcia looks around for the Devil.

MARCIA BINGHAM
 The Governor and other schools wanted--

IZZIE

And any book that mentioned sexual orientation.

The Principal hands her head.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Don't say gay. Entire school boards were flipped overnight.

IZZIE

How did you keep your--

DR. GUNTIER

(interrupts)
Dignity?

IZZIE

I was going to say, jobs.

The Planning board members stare at each other suspiciously.

MRS. CHANG

(sadly)

We went along with the program. I didn't want to lose my job as the librarian. We need both incomes.

IZZIE

By 10th grade, we had the plaque of the Ten Commandments posted outside the school library. You erased the boundary between Church and State.

LAILA

They didn't post shit from other religions.

MARCIA BINGHAM

(angry)

We've been a Christian nation for hundreds of years!

Izzie turns to Laila.

IZZIE

What kind of logical fallacy is that, Laila?

LAILA

That's called an Appeal to Tradition when you claim something is good or true because it's been assumed for a long time.

IZZIE

And we've had lots of immigrants since our nation was founded, and times have changed. Only 43% of adults today say religion is important in their lives, but only 23% of people our age feel that way.

Now, the Devil's voice is at the snack table.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Finally, some good news.

IZZIE

But students don't make the policies here! Right-wing religious nuts across the state are making the decisions, and our education has suffered!

Marcia and Principal Evans sit up tall and lean forward.

MARCIA BINGHAM

You'll have a lot to think about in jail for bringing a gun into school.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Don't blame us for your failures as a student.

Izzie paces and glares in the corners of the room. She waves to pistol to each corner.

IZZIE

Show yourself, whoever you are!
You're the Devil aren't you?

Aaron bravely jumps to Izzie's side.

AARON

There's no such thing as the Devil.
(weaker)
Is there? I mean, Satan occupies a huge role in Christian theology a minor role in Jewish texts.

The Devil's voice is directly in front of Aaron.

DEVIL (V.O.)

You'll have to change that!

Aaron's eyes open wide as he collapses to the floor and grabs Izzie's leg.

Standing a few feet behind Izzie and Aaron, Laila gazes at Izzie and waves her arms to draw attention from the Devil's voice.

LAILA

I'm not buying it. This is an evil
prank and nothing more.

Laila paces around the room, looking up, down, and around. She spots the CCTV camera high up in the corner of the room.

LAILA (CONT'D)

This is some kind of surround sound
trick. There's no such thing as a
Devil, Bigfoot, ghosts, or--
(glares at Marcia)
Or your version of God!

Marcia is too scared to speak.

Aaron and Izzie take their seats and relax for a moment.

LAILA (CONT'D)

(to the crowd)
How many of you believe in God and
the Satan?

Now one responds.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Come on, hands up if you're a
believer.

Hands slowly start to rise. The hideously ugly short male Parent raises his hand the highest.

Izzie stares at the hideous man.

Around the room, only six hands are not raised: the three students, Mr. and Mrs. Chang, and the short female Parent trying to make an emergency phone call.

Suddenly, from the front of the room, a BOLT OF ELECTRICITY flies across the room and strikes the short female Parent in the heart, right next to her crucifix necklace which glows bright red! The bolt knocks her and the chair back to the floor.

As she fries and shakes in a horrible death, she drops her phone which sizzles and pops in a mini-explosion.

All eyes are on the poor woman, but everyone freezes in shock.

The Devil's voice is right over the dead woman's body.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (warning them all)
 She tried to call for help. Look
 where it got her!

We see her crucifix glowing red.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (smug)
 She should have sent thoughts and
 prayers.

Laila edges her way back to her seat and sits down in absolute fear. Her father's hat is on the seat next to her.

Laila picks up her father's hat and gazes at the dead woman, before lowering her head.

LAILA
 What have you done to my father?

SILENCE

The Devil's voice comes from the seat with the sign for "Mr. Gupta."

DEVIL (V.O.)
 So sad.

All eyes turn to Mr. Gupta's seat.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Mr. Ravi Gupta was a good man, a
 quiet man. He occupied this seat
 many nights over the past four
 years, where he took the minutes of
 every meeting and posted them after
 they had been whitewashed by Ms.
 Marcia Bingham.

The Devil's voice comes from behind Marcia.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Ms. Bingham had to ensure every
 word was politically correct and
 subtle so as not to arouse
 suspicion and oversight. Isn't that
 right, Ms. Bingham?

Marcia's hands shake.

Everyone looks at Marcia in horror.

MARCIA BINGHAM

I had to maintain objectivity.

DEVIL (V.O.)

You had to maintain the perception
of objectivity.

Marcia shakes in her chair and we hear electric SHOCKS for a second.

DEVIL (V.O.)

You used Mr. Gupta and Mrs. Chang
to silently rubber-stamp your every
motion, rendering Principal Evans
and Dr. Guenter a powerless
minority in every vote!

Marcia survives the shocks but her hands remain trembling.

The Devil's voice comes from between Principal Evans and Dr. Guenter.

DEVIL (V.O.)

I'll get to you later.

Laila cries out.

LAILA

What did you do to my father?!

The Devil's voice comes from in front of Laila's face. Her hair stands on end, and her eyes open wide.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(calmly)

I'm getting to that.

The Devil's voice comes from Mr. Gupta's chair.

DEVIL (V.O.)

He rarely spoke, never spoke out,
and attempted to appear neutral.

(beat)

Students here aren't exposed to the
"Inferno" an imaginary voyage
through Hell by Dante Alighieri in
the year 1300. Anyway, one of John
F.

(MORE)

DEVIL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Kennedy's favorite quotations, was that "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of moral crisis preserve their neutrality."

Marcia involuntarily picks up the gavel and pounds it on the block. BAM!

MARCIA BINGHAM
 I-- didn't mean to do that.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Dante never wrote that, but he hinted at that. It's funny that modern-day Italians use similar phrases to avoid discussion of persons deemed unworthy of attention.

Laila cries out again.

LAILA
 What did you do to my father?!

The Devil's voice comes from in front of Laila's face. Her hair stands on end, and her eyes open wide.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 I sent him on a journey of self-discovery-- through the gates of Hell which has a sign that could replace those Ten Commandments in front of the Library.

DR. GUNTIER
 Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.

The Devil's voice comes from behind Dr. Guntier's head.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Very good, Mr. Guntier.

DR. GUNTIER
 It's Dr. Guntier. I hold a Ph.D. in-

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (interrupting)
 An online degree in Psychology and counseling. The best that money and very little time can afford. It worked for this school district.

Dr. Guntier's hands shake, and we hear SHOCK sounds from his chair.

DEVIL (V.O.)
But it won't for me, Mr. Guntier!

All eyes are on Dr. Guntier.

PRINCIPAL EVANS
See here! Dr. Guntier has been a model student counselor and teacher at this high school.

The Devil's voice comes from behind the Principal's head.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Save it. Principal. I'll get to you.

The Devil's voice comes from in front of Dr. Guntier's face. His hair stands on end, and his eyes open wide.

DEVIL (V.O.)
What does that poster in your office say?

DR. GUNTIER
School Counseling help for free. It's a cartoon of Lucy from Peanuts, Charles Schulz.

DEVIL (V.O.)
The students get what they pay for.

Dr. Guntier squirms in his seat as everyone hears his voice.

DR. GUNTIER (V.O.)
Dance like no one's watching, because they aren't.
(beat)
People start to heal the moment they are heard, herd like buffaloes that is.
(beat)
You don't have to be perfect like me, but it doesn't hurt.
(beat)
Small steps are also progress, even if they're in the wrong direction.

Dr. Guntier slumps in his chair and hangs his head.

DR. GUNTIER (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay.

He looks away.

The Devil's voice comes from behind the Principal's head.

DEVIL (V.O.)

And you hired him four years ago,
didn't you, Principal Evans?

She looks down.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

I promoted him to School counselor
after he showed me his degree.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Have there been many complaints of
sexual misconduct expressed against
Mr. Guntier?

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Not many. None that have been--

The Principal shakes her chair and we HEAR SHOCKS.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(aggravated)

Thoroughly investigated and
reported to the police as required
by law?

The Principal squirms in her chair as we hear her voice.

PRINCIPAL EVANS (V.O.)

I'm sure he didn't mean it like
that, Ms. Collins.

(beat)

But he never actually touched you,
did he, Mr. Greenly?

(beat)

That's just locker room talk, Ms.
Evangelista.

(beat)

But he stayed on his side of his
desk, right Mr. Willis?

(beat)

Providing a supportive lecture on
Creationism wouldn't kill your
husband, would it, Mrs. Chang?

All eyes turn to Mr. Chang in the back row.

The Devil's voice comes from in front of Mr. Chang's face.
His hair stands on end, and his eyes open wide.

Mr. Chang stands.

MR. CHANG

I am a man of science. I cannot and will not promote specific religious beliefs that cannot be verified by the scientific method.

SILENCE

The door mysteriously opens wide, and then SLAMS shut with a locking sound. CLUNK.

No one moves.

The tall female Parent RACES to the door and tries to open it. Her hands get frozen to the door bar, JOLTED by electricity, and she is tossed several feet onto her back, but she's alive.

Marcia is holding her phone.

MARCIA BINGHAM

My phone won't call out, even the emergency feature.

Aaron races to a fire alarm and reaches to pull it. The fire alarm turns bright red with SHOCK sounds that say, don't try it.

Aaron sulks back to his seat.

AARON

We're trapped.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

What do we do now?

Everyone looks around.

IZZIE

We continue the meeting as scheduled.

LAILA

(angry)
You can't be serious.

Marcia stands with a sudden burst of bravery.

MARCIA BINGHAM

This changes nothing, Izzie Sanchez! You brought a gun to school and you're going to jail!

Izzie gets angry.

IZZIE

You're right about one thing.
(waves the pistol)
I did bring a gun to school.

Izzie paces as she rants as Laila stands up and yells.

LAILA

You tell 'em, Izzie.

IZZIE

Tonight changes everything! We're
going to finish this stupid meeting
remembering every word of what's
been said.
(points to the CCTV
camera)
And it's all being recorded!

Aaron stands defiant.

AARON

She's right. I don't know what the
hell went on here tonight but I
know we're locked in and holding
the meeting will help me take my
mind off of that monster who was in
here with us.

Everyone looks at Aaron and nods, 'Yes.'

Izzie steps over and hugs Laila and kisses Aaron on the
cheek.

Aaron covers his cheek with his hand and takes a seat with a
smile.

Izzie puts the pistol back in the inside pocket of her coat
and marches up to Marcia and the other Planning Board
members.

IZZIE

You'll listen, because my dear
friend, Aaron Cohen, has a
photographic memory.

Everyone looks at Aaron who smiles weakly.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

And my best friend, Laila Gupta, is a highly skilled dramatic writer who can whip this story up for every social media platform in the world!

Everyone looks at Laila who puts her arm around Aaron and smiles big!

Laila whispers to Aaron as Izzie paces and rants.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

You use the word, 'woke,' a lot, Ms. Bingham. Can you define it for us?

Marcia glares at Izzie and speaks in a low voice.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Aware of social justice issues.

IZZIE

A little louder, please.

Marcia squirms in her seat.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Aware of social justice issues.

Izzie pats her hand.

IZZIE

That wasn't so hard. Why have you used the word woke as a derogatory, demeaning word, often without synonyms such as aware, conscious, evolved, and inclusive?

MARCIA BINGHAM

I don't know and I don't care.

IZZIE

Would you prefer students, faculty, and the community to be blissfully unaware, unconscious, poorly evolved, and intolerant?

MARCIA BINGHAM

I didn't say that!

IZZIE

But that's what people hear
whenever you try to slander us with
a word we equate with compassion
and intelligence.

AARON

(yells)

I'm woke and I'm proud.

Everyone turns to see Aaron getting a fist-bump from Laila.

Izzie turns to Dr. Guntier.

IZZIE

Dr. Guntier, the last time I was
waiting to see you, you had your
arm around our starting middle
linebacker as you walked him out of
the office.

DR. GUNTIER

He had a great game the--

IZZIE

(interrupting)

Whatever the reason, at the end of
my session, you said I wasn't
trying hard enough, and you pointed
to the door.

DR. GUNTIER

We're not here to coddle students.

IZZIE

Do you prefer to cuddle students?

DR. GUNTIER

(angry)

You aren't the cuddling type.
You're a disillusioned gun-wielding
psychopath!

(to the crowd)

I'm not on trial here.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

But you soon will be, Ms. Sanchez.
Uh-huh! Where did you go so wrong?

Izzie leans in to look Principal Evans in the eye.

IZZIE

I went wrong trusting my elders
instead of my heart.

(MORE)

IZZIE (CONT'D)

I said nothing as I watched your school blur the separation of Church and State little by little.

Principal Evans stands defiantly and points to the library.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

There is nothing in the Ten Commandments that threatens my school or your education.

The short ugly male extras applauds along with Marcia and Dr. Guntier.

Izzie, Aaron, Laila, Mrs. Chang, and Mr. Chang stare at them, perplexed.

IZZIE

A posting of common logical fallacies might be more instructive than 2,000-year-old suggestions to honor an imaginary friend, and the obvious others are not to kill, steal, or commit adultery.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Maybe we here on this Planning Board know what's best for our students.

Laila stands in the back.

LAILA

That's known as the logical fallacy of "Appealing to Authority." Just because you're in a position of authority doesn't make you an authority on the subject.

DR. GUNTIER

And just because you were accepted into college doesn't make you an authority on fallacies, you ungrateful Asian witch.

Mr. and Mrs. Chang glare at Dr. Guntier as Laila remains calm.

LAILA

That's called an Ad Hominem fallacy, where you directly attack the person instead of their argument.

(MORE)

LAILA (CONT'D)

(sadly)

Or it could be simple Asian Hate.

Dr. Guntier is frustrated as Izzie laughs.

Marcia points her two index fingers at Izzie and Laila.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Everything you two are saying is a lie.

Aaron stands calmly.

AARON

That was the logical fallacy called a Hasty Generalization, where a general conclusion is based on a few comments. Let's hear them out.

Marcia glares at Aaron, and he quickly takes his seat.

Izzie paces in front of the Planning Board.

IZZIE

My real reason for coming here tonight was to help save Mr. Chang's job.

(sadly to Mr. Chang)

His teacher ratings are through the roof. Everyone loves and respects him. Wouldn't you agree, Principal Evans?

Izzie glares at Principal Evans, who is reluctant to answer.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

Principal Evans, how strong are Mr. Chang's annual evaluations?

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Very strong.

IZZIE

The best among the faculty?

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Yes.

(glares at Mr. Chang)

But there is always room for improvement.

IZZIE

That's true of many of us. But didn't Mr. Chang win several district teaching awards as well?

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Yes, it's been noted in school newsletters and online.

IZZIE

Then why is his job on the line? Shouldn't many underperforming teachers get the ax before Mr. Chang?

Principal Evans stands and glares at Mr. Chang.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

He disobeyed a direct order to include concepts of Creationism in his lesson plans.

IZZIE

A direct order from whom? The state? The district? Or from you!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

From this Planning Board.

Marcia nods 'yes,' but Dr. Guntier looks away.

Laila glares at the "Mr. Gupta" sign on her dad's spot.

LAILA

Did my dad vote for this lynching?

Marcia smiles.

MARCIA BINGHAM

All I can tell you is the motion was carried by a democratic vote in the affirmative, three votes to two. Mr. Gupta is not here this evening to read the minutes of our last meeting.

Laila holds her stomach like she's going to be ill. She looks at Mr. Chang as she fights back tears.

Aaron places an arm around Laila as Izzie looks at her compassionately.

IZZIE

Laila, I had no idea.

Mrs. Chang leaves her seat to hug her husband.

MRS. CHANG

We should have told people.
(glares at the Planning
Board)

We should have called the
newspapers and the American Civil
Liberties Union. This isn't only
Asian hate; it's a crime against
humanity!

The Devil's voice laughs demonically from the front of the
room.

DEVIL (V.O.)

I've enjoyed your conversation
thinking that I wasn't here.

The group looks at each other in horror.

DEVIL (V.O.)

I'm leaving you for a while, but
(as Arnold Schwarzenegger)
I'll be back!

Suddenly, the door swings open, and cold burst of air makes
everyone shiver.

The door shuts and locks with a CLUNK.

The tall female Parent races to the door and tries to escape.
She gets a SHOCK that tosses her back through several chairs.
Her clothes SMOKE and her hands and legs shake like an
epileptic seizure.

Mr. Chang leaps and bends to check her pulse.

MARCIA BINGHAM

No phone service. Not even the
emergency feature.

MR. CHANG

She's alive! Barely. And her skin
is boiling.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

We're trapped!

Everyone looks around in fear.

Mr. Chang stands and looks around in panic.

MR. CHANG

I am a man of science and I have no
idea what the hell is going on
around here!

Mr. Chang stands proud and defiant. He yells at the ceiling
and each of the four walls.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

I don't know if you are still here
or not. I do not know what type of
entity you are, but I know you are
dangerous and deranged.

(looks to the students)

But my wife and friends will not be
intimidated! We will not go gently
into that good night!

The lights in the room go out.

MARCIA BINGHAM

We all know who did this.

Hysteria sweeps across the room.

MRS. CHANG

He, or it, was listening to us the
entire time!

IZZIE

(threatening)

Keep your inner-most thoughts to
yourselves.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Look who's talking! The only gun-
toting psycho!

DR. GUNTIER

(angry)

Will you all please be quiet?! He
could still be here!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

(panicking)

We have no way of knowing!

AARON

I want to go home!

Laila turns on the flashlight on her phone.

LAILA
 (compassionately)
 We all do! But first, we need to
 find some candles.

Izzie turns on her flashlight app.

IZZIE
 We need to check the victims again.
 Come on, let's look for a pulse.

Izzie races to the first male victim.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
 I found a pulse but he's burning
 up.

The victim's skin is steaming.

Izzie races to the female victim, whose skin is smoking and
 turning black.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
 We have a pulse here, too, but
 they're burning alive from the
 inside. Quick! Cool them down.

The Principal grabs glasses of water for the victims.

Izzie races back to the first victim whose skin is like burnt
 chicken.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
 More water.

The Principal pours water over the victim's bodies.

Everyone looks on in horror as they sizzle, shrivel up, and
 lay lifeless in a fetal position.

SILENCE

Izzie yells loud enough for the world to hear.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
 Our selfish motives trapped us! We
 forgot about the wellbeing of the
 injured.

We see Mr. and Mrs. Chang hugging.

MR. CHANG
 There was nothing we could do!
 (sadly)
 (MORE)

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

We will not go gently into that
good night!

Mr. Chang pulls the three teens aside and whispers to them.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Three candles burn in the center of the room. Everyone sits in chairs around a circle. The mood is tense as everyone fidgets with shaking knees and hands. They look around suspiciously.

Izzie sits on one side of Mr. Chang, while his wife sits on the other side.

The crowd gets angry and scared as they fidget.

DR. GUNTIER

What the hell is after us?

MARCIA BINGHAM

The Devil, that's who!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Or a demented ghost.

MR. CHANG

There's no such thing!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

(angrier)

Then, you explain it!

MR. CHANG

I can't... yet.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

What do you mean, yet?

MR. CHANG

There's a logical explanation, but
we don't know enough to explain it.

AARON

I was more hopeful when I thought
whatever it was wasn't a killer.
Now, I think we're doomed.

LAILA

(angry at Aaron)

Why do you say that?

AARON
Monsters, like serial killers,
don't leave witnesses.

IZZIE
I thought you didn't believe in the
Devil.

AARON
I don't. But I do believe in serial
killers.

MRS. CHANG
(sadly)
A serial killer we can hear but we
can't see.

IZZIE
This isn't helping. We need the
scientific method.

DR. GUNTIER
We need the police and the Army.

MR. CHANG
Izzie's right. The students and I
thought we might share our
observations as the first step in
the scientific method to understand
what we are up against.

MARCIA BINGHAM
Nonsense. That monster could be
listening in right now.

The Principal and Dr. Guntier nod, 'Yes.'

MR. CHANG
That's a risk we'll have to take.
Then, after we share our
observations, we'll develop a
hypothesis and test it.

MARCIA BINGHAM
(angry)
Do you fools think science can
solve anything?!

MR. CHANG
No. Science is an approach to
solving problems.

MARCIA BINGHAM
I'll send thoughts and prayers.

LAILA

Those haven't worked to curtail
school shootings. What makes you
think they'll work now?

Marcia leaps out of her seat to choke Laila.

It takes Mr. Chang, Izzie, and Aaron to restrain her.

DR. GUNTIER

(yells)

Settle down, everyone!

They return to their seats, but no one is settled down.

MR. CHANG

You're welcome to pray, of course.
(chuckles briefly)
Maybe we need all the help we can
get since we can't call the police
or the Army.

Mr. Chang takes off his leather belt and walks to the back door.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

Based on observations, my
hypothesis suggests the door will
cause a spark.

He holds the leather end and swings the belt buckle toward the door handle.

It SPARKS wildly.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

We don't know how or why the door
sparked, but we now know that the
door can be tested before anyone
else gets injured.

Mr. Chang calmly sits down.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

What other observations can we
make?

IZZIE

I'll start.

(beat)

The monster is mean and he's a
killer.

She glances at the electricuted victims.

LAILA

And he's invisible and fast.
There's no conceivable way to fight
back.

MR. CHANG

Yet.

Aaron looks around nervously.

AARON

And very deceptive! He tricked us
into thinking he wasn't here.

DR. GUNTIER

He could be here now!

Everyone looks around, worried.

MRS. CHANG

(in tears)

He's so powerful. Our phones can't
call out.

Marcia speaks with a quiver in her voice, almost sobbing.

MARCIA BINGHAM

No way to sound an alarm or call
for help. We're all going to die!

Everyone eyes Marcia who looks to be having a nervous
breakdown.

The Principal leans over to hug Marcia.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Mr. Chang is right. There's no
reason to suspect he wants to kill
all of us.

(points to the victims)

They tried to escape so he killed
them!

IZZIE

He. He. He. We don't know if it's a
man or a beast.

(beat)

He's quick, deceptive, and can
speak and toss those BOLTS OF
ELECTRICITY from anywhere in the
room.

LAILA

Izzie's right. Someone with that kind of power could also be disguising his or her voice.

Everyone nods, 'Yes,' with worried faces.

MR. CHANG

I think it's safe to assume the monster is male until we get more information. Males kill far more often than females.

Dr. Guntier glares at Mr. Chang.

DR. GUNTIER

So what do we do, smart guy?

Dr. Guntier walks to the door.

IZZIE

(yells)

Don't try to escape!

MR. CHANG

Stay calm, Izzie, please. Dr. Guntier is thinking maybe we can knock down the door and escape.

DR. GUNTIER

Exactly. Let's clear the refreshments table.

The teens work quickly to clear the table.

The metal folding legs under the table wobble. They look flimsy.

They clear a runway for the table to potentially slam into the door, and set the table several feet from the door.

DR. GUNTIER (CONT'D)

Who wants to help me push it?

Mr. Chang, Izzie, Laila, and Aaron offer to push from the back of the table.

The tall female Parent jumps in at the last second on the side of the table. She is not wearing winter gloves.

DR. GUNTIER (CONT'D)

On three.

(beat)

One.

(MORE)

DR. GUNTIER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Two.

(beat, yells)

Three!

They push the table with all their might toward the door, but Dr. Guntier SEES a tiny RED GLOW on the door handle, opens his arms, and holds almost everyone back.

DR. GUNTIER (CONT'D)

(yells)

Stop!

Everyone but the female Parent can stop before the table crashes into the door.

The table lights up in Red FLASH as it hits the door. The legs of the table SPARK like crazy, and the female Parent, the only one still holding on to the table as it hit the door, is flown to the floor several feet away.

The door SMOKES but is unharmed. The table top is shattered and the metal legs glow red as Dr. Guntier and the others race to the female Parent who lies cuddled in a fetal position.

DR. GUNTIER (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I saw a red glow from the door and panicked.

Mr. Chang checks for a pulse on the female victim.

MR. CHANG

She's got a pulse!

They finally see the victim's hands that are burnt off with smoldering stumps.

They watch in horror as the victim turns bright red, burning from within.

IZZIE

We all could have ended up...

They watch in horror as the victim lay lifeless in a fetal position.

Laila, Aaron, and Izzie hug and sob.

DR. GUNTIER

(head down, pathetic)

I had no idea.

Mr. Chang helps Dr. Guntier back to his seat.

Everyone is terrified.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

There is no escape.

She panics.

PRINCIPAL EVANS (CONT'D)

I need to write a will.

She looks in her purse for a pen and paper.

The door blows open with an ice-cold breeze.

Standing in the doorway, with hands on his hips -- proud, powerful, and defiant -- is everyone's personalized image of "the Devil." His tone is angry and demonic. Everyone can HEAR the Devil, and those who SEE the Devil, see him differently, as they pre-conceive him. The Devil's mouth never moves to speak.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Did you miss me?

Everyone stands in fear and faces the Devil's voice.

Marcia, Principal Evans, and the short ugly male Parent see a red devil as shown in Christian art with horns, cloven hooves, unusually hairy legs, and a tail, naked and holding a pitchfork.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Marcia's face. Her hair stands on end, and her eyes open wide. She shakes in fear.

MARCIA BINGHAM

It's the Devil. I knew it!

The other "believers" nod, "Yes."

Marcia faints and Dr. Guntier catches her.

Dr. Guntier SEES a modern Zoroastrian concept of a demon with good and bad qualities -- he looks like a well-dressed attorney with a golden briefcase. Mr. Guntier shakes in fear.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Mrs. Chong's face. Her hair stands on end, and her eyes open wide. She shakes in fear.

Mrs. Chong sees a vague outline of the Christian Devil, but it's far less detailed and clear. Her voice quivers.

MRS. CHANG

I see a blur, but hear him clear as
can be. Get out. Get out. Be gone
with you!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Maybe I'll come into focus for you
someday.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Izzie, Laila, Aaron,
and Mr. Chang who see nothing.

They turn their attention to the open door.

The door SLAMS shut and we HEAR it lock with a CLUNK.

Everyone in the room is scared to death. They all quiver in
fear but can't take their eyes off the sound of the Devil's
voice (and the Devil that they see or don't see).

The Devil strolls around confidently. He sees the shattered
table and the metal legs still glowing bright red.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Did you try to leave your meeting
early?

The Devil sees the lifeless body of the tall female Parent in
a fetal position.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Such a shame.

The Devil wanders to the side of the room where the first
victims lay.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Did they try to escape their
destiny, too?
(shrugs)
That's unfortunate.

Marcia regains consciousness and is frightened enough to
almost faint again as she eyes the Devil.

MARCIA BINGHAM

You're real! The horns, cloven
hooves, hairy legs, and a tail.
You're real.

Izzie, Laila, Aaron, and Mr. Chang stare at Marcia like she's
crazy. Marcia glares back and yells.

MARCIA BINGHAM (CONT'D)
 Don't tell me you can't see him!

PRINCIPAL EVANS
 I see him!

The remaining ugly male Parent nods, "Yes," which Izzie sees.

Izzie, Laila, Aaron, and Mr. Chang are afraid to shake their heads, "No." They simply look down and away.

The Devil sees this, and his Devil's voice is in each of their faces simultaneously. Their hair stands on end, and their eyes open wide.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Skeptics, I see!

A split-second later, the Devil pounds the gavel on the block. BAM!

They each see the Devil as they did before but as Dr. Guntier meekly approaches the table, the Devil shows himself as the well-dressed attorney with the gold briefcase.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 I can be seen in many forms, but I prefer the form I was first given.

Instantly, everyone but the skeptics (Izzie, Laila, Aaron, and Mr. Chang) SEES the Devil as the well-dressed attorney.

DR. GUNTIER
 From Zoroastrianism. Or perhaps from ancient Persia.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 We go back a long way.

DR. GUNTIER
 Three and a half thousand years. People loved their demons as well as their gods.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (bored)
 Yes, yes, yes.

DR. GUNTIER
 (turns to the crowd)
 The ancient Indo-Iranian religion shared by the ancestors of people in Iran and northern India.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Shall I explain it or shall you?

DR. GUNTIER
 I will if you promise not to kill
 us.

Dr. Guntier is thrown back into the wall with a loud CRASH.
 He collapses to the floor and is unconscious but breathing.

The Devil stands and glances over at Dr. Guntier.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 I hate know-it-alls.

Everyone looks with pity on Dr. Guntier.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 He'll be okay!
 (to the crowd)
 Are there any questions?

SILENCE

The crowd glances at the Devil and Dr. Guntier.

Izzie points to the dead bodies.

IZZIE
 Why did you kill them? For trying
 to escape?

DEVIL (V.O.)
 You're the little girl who was
 grilling the Planning Board.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Izzie's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Do you not fear me?

Izzie's hair stands on end, and her eyes open wide, but she
 doesn't shake in fear.

IZZIE
 I fear you, but I don't see you.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Izzie's left ear.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 You don't see me at all?

IZZIE
 No.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Izzie's right ear.

DEVIL (V.O.)
How about now?

IZZIE
No.

The Devil moves instantly to the back of Izzie's head.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Now?

IZZIE
No.

The Devil moves instantly back to the table, seated, and holding the gavel.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Can you hear this?

The Devil pounds the gavel on the block and it makes a THUNDEROUS BAM. The room shakes. Everyone but Izzie shakes in fear. Izzie is calm.

IZZIE
Yes, I heard that, and I hear you.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Good. I haven't lost my touch.

IZZIE
I still can't see you.

LAILA
Nor me.

AARON
Sorry, no.

MR. CHANG
I got nothing.

MRS. CHANG
Still very blurry.

Dr. Guntier regains consciousness but remains still and quiet.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Listen and learn. This will be on
the test.
(beat)
(MORE)

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

The ancients called me, Angra Mainyu. I had two sides, personalities if you will. One side is a destructive, evil spirit and the other side as the Spenta Mainyu, or the holy, creative spirit.

IZZIE

Why did we get the evil one?

DEVIL (V.O.)

How should I know? Maybe you summoned me.

LAILA

(looks around)

I don't think so.

AARON

I get it! Only people who firmly believe in the evil spirit can see him.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Don't be ridiculous. If he's powerful and evil enough to show himself to the rest of us, he's powerful enough to make you see him!

The Devil moves instantly in front of Marcia's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(yells)

Silence!

Marcia's hair stands on end and her eyes open wide, but she does not speak.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Aaron's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)

I can't believe your people didn't make a bigger deal out of me.

Aaron's eyes open wide.

The Devil moves instantly in front of Laila's face and yells.

DEVIL (V.O.)

And you were a pretend Hindi Muslim for your Sophomore year. I thought you would understand!

Laila's eyes open wide but she's not afraid. She shrugs.

LAILA

Religions didn't take with me.

Laila, Izzie, and Aaron have a side conversation as the Devil listens in from behind them. For a few moments, they forget he's there.

IZZIE

My Catholic family went overboard with the Devil and told me I was going to Hell if I was bad. I quit believing in that BS when I was twelve!

AARON

I was about 14. I didn't believe in Santa Claus, God, or Bigfoot anymore! They were stories. Fairytales. Fiction.

LAILA

I know, right? And religion is so drummed into kids when they're young, they have a tough time telling facts from fiction.

IZZIE

Their entire lives!

LAILA (CONT'D)

Their entire lives!

AARON

That's what I mean!

The teens smile until they turn towards the Devil's Voice across the room.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Fiction, huh?

The Devil sends SHOCKWAVES across the room.

The teens are thrown back a few feet and knocked on their asses.

The adults in the room panic and SCREAM.

MARCIA BINGHAM

We believe you.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Me too!

DR. GUNTIER
No question.

The short ugly male Parent nods his head, 'Yes.'

Mrs. Chang stares at the nebulous form of the Devil which becomes more focused into the form, color, and fearsomeness of the Christian Devil with horns and a tail.

She points in the Devil's direction and her voice quivers.

MRS. CHANG
Oh, no! I see him a little better
now.

Mr. Chang turns her face to his and panics. He pulls Mrs. Chang to a corner of the room. They can all hear him.

MR. CHANG
What do you mean, you can see him a
little better now?

MRS. CHANG
I can't explain it. But I can see
him a bit more in focus now.

MR. CHANG
And you couldn't before?

MRS. CHANG
No. Now I can see outlines of his
horns and tail. I'm scared.

Mr. Chang looks around for the Devil but can't see him.

MR. CHANG
I can't see him.

The Devil's voice is in Mr. Chang's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)
You're worried, aren't you Mr.
Science and Biology teacher? Your
wife is starting to see me like the
other Christians in the room. What
could this mean? What could this
mean?

Across the room, Izzie, Laila, and Aaron struggle to SEE the Devil. They shake their heads 'No' at each other.

MR. CHANG

This is very serious. I'm worried about you. This isn't like the normal you.

MRS. CHANG

(yells)

This hasn't been a normal night!

Mrs. Chang is furious while the Devil laughs in Mr. Chang's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Perhaps the biology teacher needs a gentle reminder!

The Devil sends a BOLT OF ELECTRICITY to Mr. Chang, who flies into the wall, bumps his head, and collapses to the floor.

Mrs. Chang races to comfort him. He's groggy but okay.

MRS. CHANG

I'm so sorry, Sweetie. I brought this on.

In another corner of the room, Marcia, Principal Evans, Dr. Guntier, and the ugly male Parent are huddled and whispering.

MARCIA BINGHAM

The sooner they all become true believers, the better if you ask me.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

I agree.

DR. GUNTIER

(glances at Mr. Chang)

I'm not sure it matters.

The Devil appears as the Zoroastrian demon (the attorney) behind Marcia and the Principal so only Dr. Guntier can see him.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Whether you believe or disbelieve, it does not matter to me!

The Devil laughs as he takes a seat at the table and SLAMS the gavel down on the block. BAM!

Mr. Chang whispers to Mrs. Chang.

MR. CHANG

No. Don't say that, dear. Don't let
him get under your skin!

The Devil laughs long and hard, and loud enough to shake the
room.

The teens' eyes open wide, but they and Mr. Chang still don't
see him.

The Devil returns instantly to the front table and pounds the
gavel on the block. BAM!

He reads the agenda for the night in a demonic voice.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Banned books! This should be
interesting. Madam Chairperson?

Marcia looks the other way in fright.

The Christian Devil is in her face.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Ms. Marcia Bingham. Read your
report.

Marcia stands. Her legs and hands shake as she trudges to the
table to grab a thick report.

She speaks in a timid and quivering voice.

MARCIA BINGHAM

There's not much to say here.

The Devil becomes the Devil's Advocate.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Not much to say about over 4,300
banned books in U.S. schools?

MARCIA BINGHAM

But only a few at a time.

DEVIL (V.O.)

One state banned over 1,500 in the
past three years.

MARCIA BINGHAM

(looks away)
I guess they add up.

The Devil looks to the teens who are standing but wobbly.

IZZIE

(angry)

Students don't want any books
banned.

DEVIL (V.O.)

What about "Don't say gay" books?

(louder)

"Don't say gay" books?

(louder still)

"Don't say gay" books?

LAILA

(angry)

Especially those books.

(looks away)

They deny they have gay students.

It's stupid!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Many of those books contained
sexually explicit material.

IZZIE

You mean, not-heterosexual
material.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Gay indoctrination material!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Let's ask the biology teacher.

Mr. Chang looks away.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Can reading a book make someone a
homosexual, Mr. Chang?

MR. CHANG

(weakly)

No.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(louder)

What was that?

MR. CHANG

(louder)

No.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(louder still)

What was that?

MR. CHANG

(yells)

No.

The Devil paces and rants.

DEVIL (V.O.)

School boards have seen fit to ban
"The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss because it
made logging look bad.

(sarcastic)

I see that!

They HEAR thunder outside.

DEVIL (V.O.)

They banned "Harriet the Spy," for
spying on others.

(sarcastic)

Oh, my!

They HEAR thunder outside.

DEVIL (V.O.)

They banned "The Diary of Anne
Frank" for being depressing.

(sarcastic)

I don't see how!

They HEAR thunder outside.

MARCIA BINGHAM

We're protecting our children!

IZZIE

You're discouraging freedom of
thought and not letting students
think for themselves.

LAILA

It's plain wrong!

AARON

Charlotte's Web was banned in a few
schools because the animals talked!

DEVIL (V.O.)

(angry)

Like they had never read Aesop's
Fables!

Izzie yells at the planning board.

IZZIE

Who gave anyone the right to ban
 "To Kill a Mockingbird,"
 "Adventures of Huck Finn," "Catch
 22," "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the
 rest of them?

The Devil gets in Izzie's face and laughs maniacally.

DEVIL (V.O.)

That was me! All me! 100% me!

Izzie looks away sadly.

AARON

And Anne Frank?

The Devil is in Aaron's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)

All me!

Aaron looks away sadly.

LAILA

"Gender Queer," "The Bluest Eye"
 and "All Boys Aren't Blue?"

The Devil is in Laila's face and yells.

DEVIL (V.O.)

All me! All me! All me!

Laila looks away sadly.

The Devil laughs more from the table while pounding the gavel
 on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Well, that was fun. One school
 banned the bible, and other schools
 banned many classics.

(smiles)

I have reached a decision. First,
 because there is something in every
 book that will displease someone,
all books will be banned.

Everyone gasps.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Second, all school libraries will be converted into study halls where smartphones will be allowed and encouraged, as will loud music and dancing! Lots of dancing!

IZZIE

That serves no one!

Mrs. Chang charges the Devil.

MRS. CHANG

No!

She gets a few steps from her husband when she receives a BOLT OF ELECTRICITY and gets thrown back to the wall next to Mr. Chang.

Mr. Changs cradles her as she collapses to the floor.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Maybe you can become a dance instructor, Mrs. Chang.

As Mrs. Chang's eyes begin to focus more, she sees the Christian Devil more clearly and turns away from her husband in shame.

DEVIL (V.O.)

What else is on the agenda?

He reads the agenda.

DEVIL (V.O.)

The termination of the Science and Biology Teacher, Mr. Chang!

The Devil pounds the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Let's get on with the Inquisition so we can get on with the torture, burning at the stake, or hanging!

(beat)

I'm flexible.

Marcia and the Principal step forward, trying to please the Devil.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

I politely asked Mr. Chang if he would include a few lectures on the Biblical theory of Creation.

DEVIL (V.O.)
What did he reply?

PRINCIPAL EVANS
He told me that Creationism isn't a theory, it's not supported by science, and that it has no place in public schools, or any school for that matter.

MARCIA BINGHAM
I thought his response was rude, and we only asked for equal time.

The Devil is in Mr. Chang's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)
Equal time sounds fair? Let the students decide for themselves! It's a free country.

MARCIA BINGHAM
That's exactly what I told him! How did you know?

The Devil is in Marcia's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)
I was there! Enjoying every minute of it! So, I think it's time for a gameshow debate for absolutely shocking prizes!

The Devil pushes Marcia to the right of the room and pushes Mr. Chang to the left of the room.

The Devil stands between them as a gameshow host.

DEVIL (V.O.)
I will ask the biology questions and the one whose answers best match those of the majority of American public will be given a point.

DR. GUNTIER
And the loser?

DEVIL (V.O.)
Will receive a mild shock.

Marcia and Mr. Chang look nervous.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Let's begin. It's the best three
 out of five. Winner take all!

The Devil glares at Mr. Chang and then smiles at Marcia.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Do more Americans believe in
 Creationism or Evolution?

Marcia raises her hand.

MARCIA BINGHAM
 Creationism.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Creationism is right, which makes
 Mr. Chang wrong.

The Devil points a finger and sends Mr. Chang a mild BOLT OF
 ELECTRICITY!

Mr. Chang shakes and glares at the Devil.

MR. CHANG
 That's not true. 62% of Americans
 believe in evolution and 40%
 believe in Creationism.

The Devil points a finger and sends Mr. Chang a stronger BOLT
 OF ELECTRICITY that makes him shake in pain.

The students are horrified.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 You can't trust the media.

The Devil smiles at Marcia who looks worriedly at Mr. Chang.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 True or False. Evolution is only a
 theory.

MARCIA BINGHAM
 True.

The Devil points a finger and sends Mr. Chang an even
 stronger BOLT OF ELECTRICITY that makes him shake in pain and
 collapse to the floor.

MRS. CHANG
 Stop it. I beg you. Stop it.

The students race to help him up. Mr. Chang struggles to speak as they help him up.

MR. CHANG

It's true, but a theory in science means "a scientifically accepted general principle to explain phenomena based on years of research, facts, fossils, and hypothesis testing.

IZZIE

Creationism cannot be tested.

LAILA

It's a belief.

AARON

This isn't fair.

The students step back and glare in the direction of the Devil's voice.

The Devil sends them all BOLTS OF ELECTRICITY that knock them to the floor.

They shake in pain.

MRS. CHANG

Stop it, Please.

Mrs. Chang glares at the Devil and can see the Christian version of the Devil better than ever.

She looks away, worried.

Mr. Chang and the teens slowly stand up.

Aaron stares toward the Devil's voice and freezes.

Izzie sees Aaron staring toward the Devil and whispers to him.

IZZIE

Aaron, are you okay?

Aaron whispers back, shaking in fear, as he sees a faint outline of the ancient Hebrew image of the Devil, a dragon with three heads.

AARON

I... I... I see his faint outline.
A three-headed dragon, I think.

Laila pulls Aaron back to the corner of the room and to her face. Izzie follows.

LAILA

Look at me. Forget about him.

Izzie hugs him.

IZZIE

Don't let him into your head.

The Devil is instantly in Aaron's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)

What do we have here? A convert perhaps?

Mr. Chang yells to distract the Devil.

MR. CHANG

I demand more questions from you. You said it was the best three out of five. Winner take all!

The Devil returns to center stage. Mrs. Chong and Aaron are afraid to look in the Devil's direction.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Question number three. Who hit 61 home runs in 1961?

Marcia shakes her head in disgust.

Mr. Chong can barely speak.

MR. CHANG

Roger Maris?

DEVIL (V.O.)

Roger Maris is correct.

The Devil points his finger at Marcia and sends her a very mild shock.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Next question. What percent of Americans believe in the Devil?

MARCIA BINGHAM

100%

MR. CHANG

56%

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Damn it. The Biologist is correct.

He points to Marcia and sends a stronger shock that stuns her for a few moments.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (yells)
 Even worse! It's going down all the time!

MR. CHANG
 (sarcastic)
 Not to worry! 79% of Americans believe in God or a higher power, 69% believe in angels, and 34% believe in astrology and reincarnation, so they're all crazy.

The Devil sends Mr. Chang an extremely strong jolt of electricity.

Mr. Chang shakes uncontrollably and collapses to the floor.

DR. GUNTIER
 You've proved your point, evil spirit. Let him alone.

The Devil doesn't turn around. He points a finger over his shoulder and zaps Dr. Guntier with a medium shock that pushes him back to the wall.

Principal Evans leaps to help him.

The students step slowly toward Mr. Chang to help him up, but they stop when the Devil points his finger in their direction.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 I have one last question for Mr. Chang.

Mr. Chang remains stunned, but he turns his head toward the sound of the Devil's voice.

MRS. CHANG
 Please stop. He'll die!

The Devil steps closer to Mrs. Chang and points his finger at her.

Mrs. Chang sees the Christian Devil very clearly and she shakes in fear.

Mr. Chang perks up to distract the Devil.

MR. CHANG

I'll answer your questions. Leave
my wife alone!

The Devil doesn't turn away from Mrs. Chang and his finger looks ready to strike.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Mr. Chang. Final question! Do you
have any intention of devoting
equal time in your science classes
to the teaching of Creationism?

SILENCE

Mrs. Chang looks sadly at her husband.

Mr. Chang returns a sad look at her.

MARCIA BINGHAM

We didn't mean to hurt anyone.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

I withdraw the request, Mr. Chang.

DR. GUNTIER

This entire night has gone wrong.
It should never have come to this.

Aaron whispers to Izzie and Laila.

AARON

The Devil's pointing directly at
Mrs. Chang.

There is terror in the teens' faces as they gather around Mrs. Chang for support.

Mrs. Chang looks at her husband and shakes her head 'No.'

The short ugly male Parent hides on the side of the room behind a few chairs and tries to take a photo of the Devil and the room.

He snaps a photo and ducks behind the chair.

ALL

No!

The Devil turns to his and sends a massive BOLT OF ELECTRICITY in his direction.

Sparks fly, and the chairs glow red. The ugly Parent flails and shakes. He SCREAMS for only a second before ducking behind the chairs.

The candles in the middle of the room flicker.

The door suddenly swings OPEN, and a cold breeze races in.

The door SLAMS shut and locks with a CLUNK.

MR. CHANG

(yells)

No! I'll never teach any religion
in my biology or science classes!

He limps to Mrs. Chang and hugs her long and hard.

AARON

I don't see him!

IZZIE

Anybody else?

Everyone looks around, but no one sees or hears the Devil.

LAILA

He might be gone.

MR. CHANG

Check the door. Without touching
it!

Mr. Chang takes off his belt and swings the buckle at the door knob.

It shocks him hard, but he's okay.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Phones are still out.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Mine too.

Dr. Guntier checks the lights and the room lights up.

PRINCIPAL EVANS (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Thank God for that!

Mr. Chang raises his hands.

MR. CHANG

Circle around, and keep your voices
down.

They form a circle around the candles.

The ugly male Parent lays in a fetal position on the floor behind the chairs. He MOANS intermittently to broadcast that he's still alive. The others glance at him from time to time with worried looks.

Mr. Chang whispers to Izzie, Laila, and Aaron who sit closest to him.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

How many of you think something strange and terrifying happened here tonight?

They all raise their hands.

Marcia paces and yells.

MARCIA BINGHAM

There is no other explanation for what happened. The Devil saw us taking God out of schools, eliminating prayer, and teaching woke principles to be gay and transgender.

(points to the dead people)

He's punishing all of us for what you left-leaning extremists believe!

Mr. Chang glances at the others.

MR. CHANG

How many of you believe with certainty that the Devil exists?

Principal Evans, and Dr. Guntier raise their hands.

Mrs. Chang raises her hand slowly and only half-way.

The ugly, short Parent raises his hand from behind the chairs.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

That's fine. You're not on trial for your beliefs.

Mrs. Chang raises her hand higher, and Aaron raises his hand halfway.

They slowly lower their hands.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

Two-thirds of Americans say they've had a paranormal encounter. 37% of Americans say they've felt a presence or unknown energy. 29% of Americans say they've heard the voice of someone who wasn't there and 19% of Americans say they've seen a spirit or ghost, and 10% report seeing a demon!

(beat)

So, you're in good company.

MARCIA BINGHAM

You didn't see strange things tonight, Mr. Chang?

MR. CHANG

Oh, I did. And I can't explain them.

IZZIE

That's how I feel. The storm outside. Thunder and lightning.

LAILA

That's what could have electrocuted people.

DR. GUNTIER

In world history classes before I became a counselor, I lectured on the strange beliefs in Mesopotamia. I think that's why my mind conjured up Angra Mainyu, the evil spirit who became Satan in later religions. I saw him as my mind wanted to see him, a well-dressed evil lawyer, but it was him, Angra Mainyu!

MARCIA BINGHAM

You're mistaken, you old fool. He was the Christian Devil with horns and hooves!

MR. CHANG

You each saw what you wanted to see.

MRS. CHANG

Why did I begin to see the Christian Devil?

MR. CHANG

It's the most commonly depicted image of Satan today.

AARON

And I started to see an ancient demon that looked like a dragon with three heads.

DR. GUNTIER

That would be Azi Dahaka, the personification of the Lie, a terrible dragon with three heads and six eyes. He predates Christianity as does your Jewish faith.

IZZIE

It begs the question, "why?" Why did you see him differently, why did he come here tonight, and why didn't we all see him?

Everyone leans in to hear Mr. Chang whisper.

DR. GUNTIER

Motive. He's keenly interested in the social issues at stake here, or I don't think he would have come.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

What's your point, Mr. Chang?

MR. CHANG

He encouraged Izzie to continue her little speech about her concerns.

LAILA

And he came down hard on those who opposed her.

MARCIA BINGHAM

We can assume he's woke.

IZZIE

I wouldn't use that word if I were you.

Marcia gets defensive.

MARCIA BINGHAM

I'll use whatever word I damn well please.

DR. GUNTIER

The Zoroastrians invented the concept of "free will" for everyone to choose between good and evil, knowing that most people would follow their supreme god, Ahura Mazda, the wise lord of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

MR. CHANG

The voice we all heard tonight was keenly aware of today's facts and issues related to social injustice. He knew about the banning of books, the posting of the Ten Commandments outside the library, and my potential firing for refusing to teach Creationism.

Mr. Chang stands and paces around the room.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)

All very modern issues! I hypothesize that surround-sound speakers were used to trick many of you into seeing what you wanted to see: A demon at play. We've been pranked!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Then, how do you explain the shocks and the dead bodies?

Mr. Chang stares at the dead bodies, and his head drops to his chin. He whispers.

MR. CHANG

I can't, yet.

Laila collapses in her seat.

LAILA

If Mr. Chang can't explain it, we're screwed. That monster will kill is all when he comes back.

Izzie hugs Laila.

IZZIE

We can't think that way. That's what the Devil would want! Fear! Unrelenting fear!

Izzie addresses the crowd.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

Do you know what I think?

(beat)

I think the Devil may have showed up to teach us a lesson. I think those who saw him manufactured a vision to coincide with the evil voice. I'm not sure where the voice came from, maybe the school's Public Address system, maybe prank speakers. We'll figure it out later.

Mr. Chang looks sadly at Izzie.

MR. CHANG

How do we defeat it?

IZZIE

Sit down. Form a circle, and hold hands.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Prayer! That's a great idea.

Principal Evans and Dr. Guntier quickly extend their arms.

Izzie glares at Marcia.

IZZIE

Not prayer. I was thinking of an affirmation denouncing the concept of a Devil or any evil spirit for that matter!

LAILA

You think he would lose his power if no one believed in him.

AARON

That might work.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

Why not believe in the power of prayer?

The teens glare at the Principal.

AARON

Thoughts and prayers didn't stop school shootings. Not one!

LAILA

It seems to me illogical to pray to a supposedly all-powerful God who created the Devil, to begin with!

Marcia is stunned and angry!

MARCIA BINGHAM

You're being blasphemous! I won't participate in your pagan ceremony!

MR. CHANG

People who believe in ghosts or Bigfoot are far more likely to report the...

PRINCIPAL EVANS

I've heard enough out of you too, Mr. Chang. You're fired!

The students and Mrs. Chang are stunned.

Mr. Chang looks away sadly and one hand covers his heart.

Mrs. Chang hugs her husband as he collapses in his chair.

Marcia forms a separate small circle of chairs for the Principal, Dr. Guntier, and herself, with an extra chair for the Parent in a fetal position behind the chairs.

They join hands, stare into two burning candles, and pray silently.

The teens and the Changs form a circle.

MR. CHANG

I like your affirmation idea, Izzie.

MRS. CHANG

(glaring at Marcia)
Me too.

AARON

It couldn't hurt.

LAILA

Let's do this.

Izzie stretches out her arms, and the others join in.

IZZIE

We renounce the concept of the
devil and every evil spirit that
ever existed.

They stare into one burning candle.

The door bursts open, and a cold wind encircles the room and
blows out the candles.

The door SLAMS shut with a loud CLUNK.

Mr. Chang relights the candles.

They can HEAR but cannot see the Devil.

DEVIL (V.O.)

What do we have here?

The Devil's voice comes from the center of the prayer circle.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(amused)

Sending thoughts and prayers? Whose
brilliant idea was this?

Marcia slowly raises her hand.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Ms. Goodie Two Shoes. Has that ever
worked to prevent famine or
plagues?

Marcia looks up, stunned.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Has it prevented 600,000 people
every year from dying from mosquito
bites? Or COVID? Or drug overdoses?

Marcia's head drops to her chin.

The Devil's voice is in Izzie's circle.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Our non-believer friends know that
thoughts and prayers will never
prevent school shootings.

Izzie stands in anger.

IZZIE

Then why are you here?

The Devil returns to the planning board's table and SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Good question.
 (angry)
 My polling numbers are down!
 They've tanked.

The Devil is in Mr. Chang's face.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 How many Americans no longer
 believe in me, Mr. Chang?

MR. CHANG
 Don't ask me. I was fired.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Tell me, Mr. Scientist, or I'll
 kill your wife.

Mrs. Chang clings to her husband's arm.

MR. CHANG
 Okay. Okay.
 (angry)
 In 2001, 68% of Americans believed
 in the Devil, now only 58% do.

The Devil is back in the prayer circle.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 That's pathetic! And atheism is on
 the rise around the world.
 (yells)
 It was time to shake things up! Get
 back to the good 'ol days!

The Devil's voice circles the larger room. He stops at each of the dead bodies and sends a BOLT OF ELECTRICITY into each of them. The bodies shake and smolder when they are zapped.

The Devil glares at the frightened last Parent in the fetal position behind the chairs but doesn't zap him.

The Devil returns to the planning board's table and SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)
 The inquisitive young woman asked,
 'Why was I here?' The answer should
 be obvious. However, you'll all
 have to see me for this.
 (MORE)

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

I'll have to plant an image in your
brains first.

The bright red, hooded robe of a Spanish Inquisition Official instantly appears in front of the Devil. He is invisible inside the robe, but the others see his arms wave as he speaks, and they can see red lights in the Devil's eyes.

He moves his arms for effect and he knows they can see his eyes.

The prayer group is particularly frightened.

The non-believers are slightly less frightened but they look high and low for strings or mechanisms that move the robe.

DEVIL (V.O.)

I know what you non-believers are
thinking.

The red robe falls to the floor.

Moments later, the robe stands up and waves its arms.

DEVIL (V.O.)

(arms wide)

Do you believe me now?

(arms down)

I don't give a damn.

(arms wide)

First up, Ms. Marcia Bingham. Stand
before me.

(loud, angry)

Now!

Marcia is frightened and angry as she stands before the Devil.

MARCIA BINGHAM

Why am I first?

DEVIL (V.O.)

You'll see.

The Devil's loud, angry voice makes the sides of the red hood flap.

DEVIL (V.O.)

You stand accused of being a
gullible, narrow-minded,
Evangelical zealot, pushing your
ideas of religion, intolerance, and
book burning in a public school.

MARCIA BINGHAM

I was only doing my job as
chairperson of the school planning
board.

(angry)

What book burning?

DEVIL (V.O.)

Book banning and book burning,
they're the same to me. You
railroaded your planning board to
please yourself. How do you plead?

MARCIA BINGHAM

Not...

The Devil interrupts her and SLAMS down the gavel on the
block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Guilty.

The red robe points to the right side of the room while
Marcia protests.

MARCIA BINGHAM

What? This is ridiculous!

Marcia trudges slowly to the right side of the room so the
Devil points to her butt and sends a BOLT OF ELECTRICITY to
move her along.

DEVIL (V.O.)

I don't like you. Nobody likes you!

The Devil interrupts her and SLAMS down the gavel on the
block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Next case.

MARCIA BINGHAM

What's going to happen to me?

The Devil rudely SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Next case. Principal Evans.

Principal Evans slowly moves before the court. She glances
sadly at Marcia.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 You stand accused of conspiring
 with other planning board members
 to fire the one learned and decent
 faculty member you have!

Principal Evans glances back at Mr. Chang.

PRINCIPAL EVANS
 That was wrong. I see that now. I'm
 sorry.

The Devil rudely SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Too late!
 (points at the Principal)
 You stood in silence while the Ten
 Commandments were placed in the
 hallway for all to see, diluting
 the separation of church and state
 in favor of one out of five major
 religions in the world.
 (angry)
 Can you even name them?

PRINCIPAL EVANS
 Christians... Jews...
 (beat)
 Muslims...

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (impatient)
 Buddhism, Hinduism, and a host of
 other local traditional religions
 from Zoroastrianism to Native
 Americans, island people...
 (glares at the students
 and Changs)
 and an unaffiliated category.

PRINCIPAL EVANS
 (sadly)
 I bowed to political correctness.
 That was wrong. I know that now.

The Devil rudely SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Too late! How do you plead?

PRINCIPAL EVANS
 Guilty.

The red robe points to the right side of the room as the Principal trudges over to Marcia.

MARCIA BINGHAM

This is insane.

The Principal sobs.

The Devil SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

Next case. Mr. Guntier.

Dr. Guntier trudges toward the red robe.

DR. GUNTIER

I'm familiar with the red robes of the Spanish Inquisition. The Holy Roman Church and the Spanish Monarchy demanded complete control over Jews and Muslims, often using brutal methods of torture that led to widespread death and suffering. It lasted from 1478 to 1834, much later than most people realize. That's only 166 years ago!

DEVIL (V.O.)

(dark tone)

Then you know why I'm here?

DR. GUNTIER

(looks back at the non-believers)

To use fear as a means to maintain control over the masses.

The Devil SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)

(calmly)

You stand accused of failing to learn from the past and remaining silent when you should have used your barely above-average intelligence to be the voice of reason, empathy, and compassion.

(angry)

And for being a perv!

Mrs Chang looks terrified.

Mr. Chang hugs her.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (angry)
 How do you plead?

DR. GUNTIER
 (sadly)
 Guilty.
 (glares at Marcia and the
 Principal)
 I was wrong to remain silent in the
 face of evil.

The robe points to the left side of the room, surprising everyone.

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Next case.

Dr. Guntier's eyes open wide as he gleefully steps to the left side of the room.

MARCIA BINGHAM
 That's unfair! He's no saint!

PRINCIPAL EVANS
 He most certainly is not!

The Devil points with the robe and sends a stronger jolt of electricity to Marcia and the Principal. They shake and smolder but remain standing.

Dr. Guntier snickers a bit too loudly.

The Devil points with the robe and sends a strong jolt of electricity to Dr. Guntier. He shakes and smolders but remains standing.

The Devil SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)
 Next case. Mrs. Chang.

Mrs. Chong continues to hug her husband.

The Devil SLAMS down the gavel on the block. BAM!

DEVIL (V.O.)
 (angry)
 Mrs. Chang!

Mrs. Chang stands with wobbly legs.

Mr. Chang stands to provide her support, but they both shake.

Mr Chang links his arm to his wife's arm and starts forward.

Izzie stands and supports Mrs. Chang's other arm.

Laila pulls Aaron up as she locks arms with Izzie.

The five non-believers approach the bench nervously.

DEVIL (V.O.)

What is the meaning of this?

Mr. Chang speaks eloquently.

MR. CHANG

It's quite simple. We don't believe
in you!

The Robe points in the direction of each defendant before
sending a strong BOLT OF ELECTRICITY to Mr. Chang!

The jolt makes Mr. Chang shake to a large degree, and the
others shake to a lesser degree down to Aaron.

IZZIE

We're in this together.

LAILA

And we know why you're so upset.

AARON

The number of your believers is
tanking.

MR. CHANG

You think that if you torture and
kill a few people, you'll regain
the control over people you once
had.

The Devil goes berserk. The Robe seems to stomp around the
room, sending BOLTS OF ELECTRICITY in all directions. The
Devil laughs demonically inside the Robe.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Never have I witnessed such
insolence!

The Devil stops at the Parent who lies in a fetal position
shaking in fear behind the chairs. The Devil laughs
demonically as he sends BOLTS OF ELECTRICITY all around him,
but not directly at him.

MR. CHANG

You'll never own us.

MRS. CHANG
We conquered you!

IZZIE
You're make-believe.

LAILA
You're fiction.

AARON
We no longer hear you.

The Devil laughs demonically as he sends BOLTS OF ELECTRICITY all around the room.

The non-believers look around the room, pretending they don't see the red Robe. The students smile, making the Devil angrier.

DEVIL (V.O.)
I command you to see me.

The believers nod their heads, "Yes."

The believers look terrified, but the non-believers appear calmer.

The Devil in the Robe laughs demonically as he sends BOLTS OF ELECTRICITY all around as he stomps around the room until it stops at Marcia and the Principal.

The Devil points to the Principal first and sends her a powerful BOLT OF ELECTRICITY. She shakes, flails her arms, her hair stands on end, and she collapses to the floor.

MARCIA BINGHAM
You double-crossing demon! I was on
your...

The Devil in the Robe laughs demonically as he points to Marcia and sends her a powerful BOLT OF ELECTRICITY. She shakes, flails her arms, her hair stands on end, and she collapses to the floor.

Dr. Guntier tries to hold back his snicker across the room but he can't. The Robe is instantly in front of him.

Dr. Guntier cowers and SCREAMS before the Devil in the Robe laughs demonically and sends a powerful BOLT OF ELECTRICITY into Dr. Guntier's body. He shakes, flails his arms, his hair stands on end, and he collapses to the floor.

MR. CHANG

(yells)

You'll need several survivors to
recount your glory tonight!

The Robe stops in Mr. Chang's face. He twitches like he sees the Robe move.

DEVIL (V.O.)

That won't be you, smart-ass!

The Devil laughs demonically and then hits Mr. Chang with a tremendous BOLT OF ELECTRICITY. It knocks him off his feet and back into the door. Mr. Chang hits the door so hard it breaks off its hinges and remains open with Mr. Chang's body on top of the door. His body smolders. He looks dead.

A cold burst of wind comes in and blows the candles out.

EERIE SILENCE

The survivors are tense and look around suspiciously as if something big happened. They don't see the Robe or hear the Devil.

They HEAR and wind and FEEL its welcomed chill. They are exhilarated by a feeling of hope of escaping.

IZZIE

(yells)

Let's get the hell out of here.

Mrs. Chang runs to help her husband.

Laila grabs her dad's hat while Izzie races to the microwave.

Laila and Aaron who RACE to help the last remaining Parent, as Marcia, the Principal, and Dr. Guntier regain consciousness and stare at the open door.

Izzie removes the pistol from her coat pocket and places it in the microwave. She presses five minutes and the start button.

Izzie sees Laila and Aaron standing over the last Parent whose face is turned away.

LAILA

He's dead!

AARON

Let's go!

Laila and Aaron race toward the open door.

Izzie turns the victim over and sees Parent's eyes glow like bright red lights.

Izzie freaks out and escapes.

Marcia, the Principal, and Dr. Guntier limp to the door and knock Mrs. Chang atop her husband as they escape.

Izzie, Laila, and Aaron RACE to help the Changs escape the building.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

The electric storm subsides, but it's dark and cold.

Izzie's phone lights up, and she calls 9-1-1. She sees Marcia, the Principal, and Dr. Guntier huddled together, comforting each other with worried looks.

MARCIA BINGHAM

What... What happened?

Principal Evans and Dr. Guntier shiver and shrug, stunned and in shock.

Mr. Chang stands with help from his wife, Laila, and Aaron.

After Izzie's call to the police, she hugs her friends and the Changs. Izzie whispers forceful instructions to them. They nod "Yes" and hold hands.

A fire engine and a police car arrive.

Two Firefighters (male and female, 30s) see the survivors are not seriously injured and they RACE into the school.

The POLICE OFFICER (female, 40s-50s) speaks to the group.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm glad you're okay, but no one leaves until I get your statement.

Marcia points to Izzie and yells like a madwoman.

MARCIA BINGHAM

She brought a gun to the meeting.
Arrest her. It's inside!

Izzie, Aaron, and Laila motion to the Police Officer that Marcia is crazy.

POLICE OFFICER
 (whispers to the students)
 They all saw the Devil in there
 too. Ha!

The Police Officer surveys the damage to the door and then enters the school.

AARON
 What do we tell the police?

IZZIE
 Let's wait and see what the
 Planning Board says.

MR. GUPTA (40) RACES in from the parking lot to hug his daughter, who is holding his hat. He's a fast-talking man with a sense of humor.

MR. GUPTA
 Laila, are you okay?

LAILA
 I thought you were--

MR. GUPTA
 (interrupts)
 Wimpy?

Mr. Gupta looks at the Planning Board members.

MR. GUPTA (CONT'D)
 I'm not sorry I missed the meeting.
 The wind knocked my hat off and I
 got turned around by the storm. But
 I always hated these meetings.

He turns to Izzie and Aaron.

MR. GUPTA (CONT'D)
 Are you kids okay? It looks like
 you've seen a ghost. That storm was
 something else, huh?

Laila hugs her dad and hand him his hat.

LAILA
 You didn't miss much.

MR. GUPTA
 I came to support Mr. Chang and
 resign from the Planning Board.
 (yells to Marcia)
 Did you hear that, Marcia.
 (MORE)

MR. GUPTA (CONT'D)

I'm resigning from your right-wing
Evangelical planning board!

Mr. Gupta hugs Mrs. Chang and Mr. Chang.

MR. GUPTA (CONT'D)

I would never let them dismiss you.
You teach critical thinking,
science, and biology, everything
they need.

The Police Officer exits the school and walks to Principal
Evans.

POLICE OFFICER

It looks like you took a direct
lightning strike, maybe two. They
found burn scars on the walls and
furniture, broken tables, and the
metal plaque of the Ten
Commandments was blown off the
wall, but no major structural
damage except for that front door.
Blew the hinges right off! The
firefighters said you were damn
lucky to survive. I called the
coroner. We found three dead bodies
inside.

MARCIA BINGHAM

(yells)

Did you find Izzie's pistol?

POLICE OFFICER

No, Ma'am. But we did find a melted
block of chocolate in the
microwave.

The students shrug and smile.

The Firefighters exit the building to check on the injuries
of survivors.

The Police Officer begins to interview Marcia as the
Firefighters examine Principal Evans and Dr. Guntier.

IZZIE

Three bodies?

Izzie leans into Laila and Aaron and whispers.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

Cover for me. I'll be right back.

Izzie sets her phone on video with the flashlight on, and walks slowly to the door of the school.

LAILA
No, Izzie.

AARON
Don't go.

IZZIE
I have to know.

Izzie sneaks into the building.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

The room is cold, dark, and eerie. She stops atop the door (on the floor) and enters the room slowly, filming from side to side.

One at a time, she sees the bodies of the Parent victims. She checks for a pulse at the first one.

IZZIE
No pulse.

She checks for a pulse at the second one.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
No pulse.

She checks for a pulse at the third one.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
No pulse.

She looks around.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
No Robe.

She walks slowly and cautiously to the spot where they last saw the hideously ugly short male Parent.

She moves the chairs away but there is no sign of the body.

Izzie pauses to think about her interactions with the ugly male Parent.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

-- Izzie speaks earlier in the night.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

No, I'm suggesting we place all religious texts on a clearly marked shelf that reads, "Fiction and Myths."

Three Parents, Marcia, and Principal Evans gasp as Dr. Guntier laughs.

Izzie turns to see the hideously ugly short male Parent glaring at her.

-- Laila is addressing the crowd.

LAILA

(to the crowd)

How many of you believe in God and the Satan?

Now one responds.

DEVIL (V.O.)

Come on, hands up if you're a believer.

Hands slowly start to rise. The hideously ugly short male Parent raises his hand the highest.

Izzie stares at the hideously ugly man.

-- Principal Evans stands defiantly and points to the library.

PRINCIPAL EVANS

There is nothing in the Ten Commandments that threatens my school or your education.

The short ugly male Parent applauds along with Marcia and Dr. Guntier.

Izzie, Aaron, Laila, Mrs. Chang, and Mr. Chang stare at them, perplexed.

-- Marcia regains consciousness and is frightened enough to almost faint again as she eyes the Devil.

MARCIA BINGHAM

You're real! The horns, cloven hooves, hairy legs, and a tail. You're real.

Izzie, Laila, Aaron, and Mr. Chang stare at Marcia like she's crazy. Marcia glares back and yells.

MARCIA BINGHAM (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you can't see him!

PRINCIPAL EVANS

I see him!

The remaining ugly male Parent nods, "Yes," which Izzie sees.

-- The short ugly male Parent hides on the side of the room behind a few chairs and tries to take a photo of the Devil and the room.

He snaps a photo and ducks behind the chair.

ALL

No!

The Devil turns to him and sends a massive BOLT OF ELECTRICITY in his direction.

Sparks fly, and the chairs glow red. The ugly Parent flails and shakes. He SCREAMS for only a second before ducking behind the chairs.

-- The ugly male Parent lays in a fetal position on the floor behind the chairs. He MOANS intermittently to broadcast that he's still alive. The others glance at him from time to time with worried looks.

END FLASHBACK

IZZIE

He was still alive!

Izzie looks around in fear.

She HEARS the quiet maniacal laugh of the Devil in her head.

She drops her phone and the flashlight turns off.

She HEARS the slightly louder maniacal laugh of the Devil in her head.

She covers her ears with both hands.

She HEARS a very loud maniacal laugh of the Devil in her head.

She PANICS, picks up her phone, and RACES outside.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Izzie returns to her friends with eyes open wide and hands shaking as the Coroner's van shows up.

Two Coroners walk into the school with body bags.

The Firefighters and the Police Officer finish interviewing Marcia, the Principal, and Dr. Guntier who still appear shaken.

Two Coroners exit the school with a body bag, load it into the van, and return to the school.

Marcia, Principal Evans, and Dr. Guntier get in their cars and drive away.

The Firefighters speak with the Changs.

Two Coroners exit the school with a second body bag, load it into the van, and return to the school.

The Police Officer sees Izzie is shaking.

POLICE OFFICER

Are you okay? What happened here tonight?

Laila steps in to protect Izzie.

LAILA

None of us saw a Devil. It was a lightning strike. That's what they told ya, right?

POLICE OFFICER

I'd like to hear from you. They were pretty shaken up and didn't remember anything after the electric shocks. The CCTV camera and lines were burnt to a crisp. So was the PA system. We may never know what went on in there.

IZZIE

We did not see a Devil.

MR. CHANG (O.C.)

The logical explanation is a lightning strike.

AARON
 (looks sadly at Izzie)
 Same here. We're still pretty
 shaken up and don't remember much.

LAILA
 We should get home and get some
 rest.

Two Coroners exit the school with a third body bag, load it
 into the van, and drive off.

Izzie is too stunned to speak.

POLICE OFFICER
 Are you sure you're okay?

IZZIE
 Yes. Rest would be nice.

POLICE OFFICER
 Fine. Let me get your contact
 information for my report.

The Firefighters check with everyone.

The Police Officer collects contact information.

The Changs hug the teens, get in their car, and drive away.

Mr. Gupta hugs his daughter before walking home.

The Firefighters and Police Officer drive away.

The three teens stare at the school.

AARON
 I'm still shaking on the inside.

Laila and Izzie move to hug Aaron.

LAILA
 You were very brave in there.
 (to Izzie)
 You were a hero. Never giving in.

Izzie looks away.

AARON
 I heard him though! And for a
 second, I saw a three-headed
 dragon. My mind was playing tricks
 on me, I guess.

Laila and Izzie reluctantly nod 'Yes.'

IZZIE

Look, guys, I'm trying my best to remember everything that went on and to look for logical, natural explanations for what we heard and saw.

Aaron has an epiphany.

AARON

Yes, we could have been hearing electric noises from the PA system during the lightning storm, except it was fried by lightning.

Laila lights up.

LAILA

And we could have imagined it was a horrible demon because of the spooky sounds of the storm outside.

Aaron and Laila gaze at Izzie, who is still stunned.

LAILA (CONT'D)

Izzie, what do you think?

Izzie looks them in the eyes.

IZZIE

The hideous-looking short, old man with the bright red lights in his eyes wasn't in there.

LAILA

He was dead. We saw him.

AARON

(shocked)

He didn't have red eyes.

LAILA

But he was dead.

IZZIE

Why didn't the firefighters, police officer, or coroners find him?

LAILA

I don't know but he was smoldering and dead.

AARON

And ugly. I remember him. That
coward hid behind some chairs.

IZZIE

I looked behind the chairs. He was
gone. And I counted! Only three
body bags come out!

Izzie stares at the door to the school.

LAILA

He was burnt to a crisp. He didn't
walk away.

Izzie turns away.

IZZIE

He had red lights for eyes. Like he
was possessed!

Aaron and Laila pull Izzie from the school toward home.

LAILA

Let's get you home.

AARON

We all had a long night.

A few steps away from the school, Izzie freezes.

IZZIE

I took a video when I went back
into the school.

Izzie pulls out her phone as Laila and Aaron look on.

INSERT VIDEO

We see Izzie sneaking up on the first body and she checks for
a pulse.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

No pulse.

She checks for a pulse on the second body.

AARON (V.O.)

Okay. This is creeping me out.

IZZIE

No pulse.

She checks for a pulse on the third body.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
 No pulse.

She looks around.

 IZZIE (CONT'D)
 No Robe.

 LAILA (V.O.)
 That's all I want to see!

 IZZIE (V.O.)
 Wait for it!

She walks slowly and cautiously to the spot where they last saw the hideously ugly short male Parent.

She moves the chairs away but there is no sign of the body.

 IZZIE (V.O.)
 (angry)
 Wait for it!

END VIDEO

Izzie's legs wobble.

 IZZIE
 I heard him!

 LAILA
 Come on. Let's get you home.

 AARON
 You need some rest. You don't believe in that nonsense.

 LAILA
 (laughs)
 You told me once that you were a born-again critical thinker! You taught me about the bandwagon fallacy: when something is said to be true just because many people believe it's true.

 AARON
 Like angels, or the Devil, or Bigfoot!

IZZIE

You're right! My biggest concern was that as long as even one person believes in the Devil, he'll always exist.

LAILA

(laughs)

Okay. That's ridiculous. Do you think it takes only one person to keep a fictional character alive?

AARON

(laughs)

And as long as there's one idiot in a crowd who wants to ban books, bring religion into public schools, or use the term, "woke."

IZZIE

(laughs)

Maybe you're right, too. The real devils aren't in robes. They walk among us.

Izzie looks away sadly.

IZZIE (CONT'D)

I thought his voice would be on the video.

AARON

Well, we didn't hear it, so it was your imagination playing tricks on you.

They start to walk away.

LAILA

You're overly tired from battling the book burners and right-wing extremists. I bet they learned a lesson they'll never forget.

The teens chuckle as they walk.

AARON

I like the way you stood for Mr. Chang to save his job.

LAILA

And the library will be back to normal in few days for Mrs. Chang.

IZZIE

And we'll all be graduated by the time next year's planning board meeting comes around.

Laila gets on her e-bike and pauses.

LAILA

How did you make a realistic looking pistol out of chocolate?

IZZIE

I don't know what you're talking about!

The students laugh as Laila rides off.

Izzie hooks arms with Aaron as they walk away smiling.

AARON

3-D printer?

IZZIE

Public library.

They laugh and walk on.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

SUPER: "One year later. Belief in the Devil has dropped to 46%"

It's a dark, cold night, with thunder booming in the distance. A sign on the double doors leading into the high school reads, School Planning Board Meeting tonight, 7:30 to 8:30.

A cold breeze pushes open the door.

We HEAR a meeting going on inside the school and the obnoxious voice of Marcia Bingham.

MARCIA BINGHAM (O.C.)

Okay, settle down. We have a lot to cover tonight.

We see a small hideously-looking man (the same Parent) wearing a heavy, long, black coat approach the school doors.

He turns to the side to reveal red lights in his eyes.

From inside the school, we HEAR the maniacal laugh of the Devil.

The hideously-looking man chuckles as he steps inside.

The door SLAMS shut and locks with a CLUNK!

FADE OUT.

THE END