

The Bittersweet Generation

Libretto and lyrics by James Landau

Music by Gordon Hunrick, James Landau, and John Hensle

Write James Landau at savegraduation@yahoo.com

Man is free at the moment he wishes to be.

–Voltaire

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE STARS

Melanie Hayworth

Bryce Schlitter

Paul Moreno

Alan Isaacs

Trina Evangelisti

Sarah Chiang

OTHER YOUTH

Meghan Conlan, Melanie's friend

Lindsay Bricker, Melanie's friend

Tom Mazzocco, member of Unfresh

Danny Sanguinetti, member of Unfresh

Chris Blehm, a square

Kate Kim, member of Unfresh

Tony Pham, prospective member of Unfresh

Rostam Zavvar, prospective member of Unfresh

Helias Christides, member of Unfresh

Nadia Kirschenbaum, a goth

Jake Cook, a jock

Brian Himmelfarb, a nerd

Jocelyn Poirier, an anti-angst angster

ADULTS

Gary Burdick, an English teacher

Judy Dahlgren, a math teacher

Carol Marciniak, a career counselor

Officer Bill Schurz

Officer Sheldon Malinowitz

Assistant-principal George H. Pittman

Principal Graham Forbes

Major Walter Gabelko, a JROTC recruiter

Raúl Moreno, Paul's father
Vice-principal Paulina Blumberg
Sanjay Ghosh
Scott Orozco, a biology teacher
Richard Haddad
Manager of Sellers'

WALK-ONS

Some coffeeshop employees
Some coffeeshop patrons
Some adult elevator passengers
A waitress
Tony Pham's mother
Members of Re-17
Shane Gerber's mother
Boy with baggy pants
Girl with revealing shirt
Boy with beer T-shirt
More students

MUSICAL SCORE

ACT I

Vague Resonations (all Dulcevida students)
Socially Unacceptable (Paul)
Benetton World (Sarah)
Maze of Wood (Alan, Melanie and Bryce)
We Can Date Too (Melanie and Bryce)
Climb (Trina)
One Planet (Bryce)

ACT II

16, 18, 21 (Melanie, Bryce, Paul, Alan, Trina, and Sarah)
The Teen-age Life (Melanie, Bryce, Paul, Alan, Trina, and Sarah)
Black Echoless Cry (Melanie)
Walls Fall Down (Alan and Paul)
Eden Republic (Melanie and Bryce)
Did It Ever Occur to You (Melanie and Bryce)
Everything Sucks (Alan and Trina)
Maze of Wood (reprise) (Alan)
People Like Us (Re-17)

ACT III

Zymurgy (Trina)
The Problem with Youth (Pittman, Orozco, Blumberg, Dahlgren, Paul, Alan, and

Meghan)
The Case for School Uniforms (Pittman)
Like (Melanie)
Disarray (Sarah)
Students of the World, Unite (all Dulcevida students sans Blehm)
A Thousand Miles Away (recording)

ACT I

ACT I, SCENE 1

[Scene is at MELANIE's swimming pool party, to which a giant class of students from Dulcevida High School have been invited. An inflatable swan floats atop the pool. The backyard is situated in the Sun Belt town of Armando, with palm trees and xeriscaped flora dotting the landscape. Armando is a suburban college town, not the size of a major city but too big for everybody to know everybody. The year is 2007.]

[*All teens sing*]

Vague resonations . . . resonating
In my brain, while meditating . . .

Grey air and facial hair, one part of day
Noncare spread everywhere, local café
Hair mousse below burnoose, go all the way
Dress loose just to seduce, what else to say?

Taiwanese factories, modern suburb
Disease and STD's, soft drinks of herb
Cellphones and pheromones, minds are acerb
Monotones for human clones, strongly disturbed

Latex, protected sex, maybe next year
Gen-NeXt and dialects, six-pack of beer
Hashish is bad, capisce? – that's all I hear
Empty niche for *nouveaux riches*, where to live near?

Vague resonations resonating
Reverber - a - ting . . .

Grey air and facial hair, one part of day
Noncare spread everywhere, local café
Hair mousse below burnoose, go all the way

Dress loose just to seduce, what else to say?

Taiwanese factories, modern suburb
Disease and STD's, soft drinks of herb
Cellphones and pheromones, minds are acerb
Monotones for human clones, strongly disturbed

Cassettes of Morissette's, that's all I know
Fishnets and spare barrettes, that's all she'll show
Futon and rock icon, I want to blow
Neon, hold it on, nowhere to go

Long walks in Birkenstocks, fight the mainstream
Clorox, progressive blocks, as deep as they seem
Thrift shop and halter top, music regime
Mindless pop, make it stop, let off the steam, now . . .

[Instrumental]

A dipstick with rhetoric, by any name
A flipped chick who's got to stick to aspartame
Your fake perms, that confirms who's really to blame
Oxy, derms, uncertain terms, and more of the same

Long walks in Birkenstocks, fight the mainstream
Clorox, progressive blocks, as deep as they seem
Thrift shop and halter top, music regime
Mindless pop, make it stop, let off the steam, now, yeah!
[Song ends]

[Teens scramble to various positions around the backyard. MELANIE HAYWORTH, a girl of 17 with a blonde ponytail and blue eyes wearing a black tank top, blue jeans, flip-flops and a bracelet, sits in a deckchair.]

MELANIE
Sarah!

[SARAH CHIANG, a 16-year-old Chinese-American girl dressed in preppy clothes, turns her head to Melanie.]

SARAH
Yes?

MELANIE
Could you get me my sunscreen?

SARAH

Do you want me to get your make-up too, or just your sunscreen?

MELANIE

Just my sunscreen. My make-up doesn't last long in the sun.

[SARAH picks up sunscreen tube and hands it to MELANIE.]

MELANIE

Thanks, Sarah. It is one scalding summer. Must be global warming.

[TRINA EVANGELISTI, a girl of 18 with brown hair and brown eyes, in black top, black pants, beige jacket, boots and ammonite necklace, turns her head to the conversation.]

TRINA

Must be! President Bush is going to have us all frying to our graves.

MELANIE

[Pouts.] But I want to live, Trina.

TRINA

That's what most people say.

[Melanie's two friends, LINDSAY BRICKER and MEGHAN CONLAN, walk up to her. LINDSAY has a blonde ponytail and freckles, MEGHAN a brown ponytail. They are dressed in clothes reminiscent of the eighties.]

MEGHAN

That sunscreen really gives you a glow, Melanie.

MELANIE

Thanks, Meghan.

LINDSAY

It makes you all moist and shiny. [Giggles.]

MEGHAN

Love that black tank top.

MELANIE

Awww, thanks.

LINDSAY

It's the Avril Lavigne look.

MELANIE

I wonder if all these partygoers are having fun and stuff. [Walks out of her chair.] Alan! Are you enjoying your sandwich?

[ALAN ISAACS, a 17-year-old boy with long brown hair, freckles and sunglasses, flips a sandwich into his mouth. He wears a turtleneck, khakis and black shoes.]

ALAN
I sure am.

MELANIE
Well, I hoped all you guys would enjoy this party; I was, like, almost worried I hadn't bought enough food.

ALAN (munching on sandwich)
I'd enjoy the party anyway. Just the vibrant teen-age spirit.

MELANIE
Well, we've got that! [Laughs.]

ALAN
You know, I bet I could make your parties really spectacular. What this party really needs is for my band to play.

MELANIE
That'd be so cool! We could have the drummer sitting over here . . . and the bassist over here . . . and you could be belting out those vocals with your guitar.

ALAN
I'd like that.

MELANIE
Who's in your band now?

ALAN
Tom Mazzocco and Danny Sanguinetti. We need a bassist; our last bassist flaked out on us.

MELANIE
Awww. You'll find a new one.

ALAN
Do you know anyone who plays bass?

MELANIE
There are lots of people coming to this party. Ask around. [Looks around.] All these people . . . I don't even know them all.

[CHRIS BLEHM, a boy of 16 in a solid polo shirt tucked into his khakis, a crew-cut, and glasses, turns around in surprise.]

BLEHM

You don't know all the people here?

MELANIE

Some of them crashed my party.

BLEHM

Then have them arrested for trespassing.

MELANIE

Like I'm really going to do that, Blehm!

BLEHM

Who's that?

[PAUL MORENO, a 16-year-old boy with unkempt brown hair, brown eyes and a goatee, skids by on his skateboard. He is dressed like a skater.]

MELANIE

I know him. That's Paul Moreno. Yay, you brought the skateboard along. Are you going to do tricks for us?

PAUL

Yeah. Here's the ollie. [Does an ollie.] Now, the nollie. [Performs ollie with nose rather than tail.]

[MELANIE and ALAN clap.]

ALAN

Go ahead!

PAUL

Want to see something real hovering?

MELANIE

I think he's got a party-stopper up his sleeve.

SARAH

We'll see.

[PAUL rides his skateboard over the swimming pool. The partygoers all watch, then cheer wildly. They twirl their fists in the air.]

PAUL

I just wanted to enjoy the freedom while I could. It sucks that school's starting soon.

SARAH

Don't say that. If it weren't for school, I'd grow up working at Grove Market!

PAUL

So you've got something against the place where I work?

SARAH

I'm not saying that.

PAUL

You see, school sucks because they have all these rules that are of absolutely no value. *[In mocking voice] Take your hat off in class. Hold the door for a lady.*

MEGHAN

Look at all those hot boys, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

Like Paul?

MEGHAN

Paul is not hot.

LINDSAY

Well, I could always go for a guy with a goatee.

MEGHAN

Paul, he's got the skater boy thing going on. I like Alan better. A rock star!

LINDSAY

Yeah, Alan would be really hot. If Paul's an 8, Alan is, like, a 10.

MEGHAN

I still like shorter hair on a boy though.

LINDSAY

Like Jeff?

MEGHAN

Totally hot!

LINDSAY

Do you like Blehm?

MEGHAN

No way. Blehm is so not hot. I mean, last year he turned in three students for not having their books covered.

LINDSAY

Well, I'll say I agree. I think maybe whether you're a cool person and all is more important than how you look in determining whether you're hot.

MEGHAN

Like, Alan, his nose and everything wouldn't look so great if he were a Chris Blehm type, but with his, like, that laid-back rock star attitude, he becomes majorly cool.

LINDSAY

Exactly!

MELANIE

Laid-back but intense.

[MEGHAN and LINDSAY walk over to where TRINA is standing.]

MEGHAN

Look, Trina, look at all those hot bodies.

TRINA

The human body . . . a combination of curves and protuberances. Source of inspiration and dread.

MEGHAN

Dread? What does that mean?

TRINA

In Western history, the human figure has been feared as much as it has been revered. On one hand, we have Michelangelo's David, the human form in its full exposition.

LINDSAY

And on the other hand?

TRINA

On the other hand, we had the Puritans and R ratings on movies with nudity. Do you know what Katherine Mansfield said about the human body as something people keep wrapped up like a rare, rare violin?

LINDSAY and MEGHAN

No.

TRINA

We're still at the age where we're free of puritanical influences. Stay young, Meghan, Lindsay.

[MELANIE gets up and waves at some teens in the swimming pool. Standing nearby is BRYCE SCHLITTER, a 17-year-old boy with unkempt brown hair, blue eyes, freckles and braces, wearing a striped polo, cargo shorts and flip-flops.]

MELANIE
Hi, Ming, Alyssa.

[MELANIE's bracelet falls off. MELANIE gasps. BRYCE dives in, fully clad, and retrieves the bracelet for her.]

MELANIE
Oh, you got it for me?

BRYCE
Sure.

MELANIE
You really jumped in there with your cargo shorts on just to get my bracelet?

BRYCE
Sure.

MELANIE
We haven't met yet. Do you go to Dulcevida?

BRYCE
I'll be going there this September. I just moved from Tegopa to Armando over the summer.

MELANIE
You're so sweet . . . and you're handsome too.

BRYCE
Thank you.

MELANIE
You want to be a model?

BRYCE
My goal in life is to make the world a better place.

[MELANIE squees. BRYCE starts to walk off. MELANIE taps BRYCE on the shoulder.]

MELANIE

By the way, my name's Melanie Hayworth.

BRYCE

Hi, I'm Bryce . . . Bryce Schlitter.

[MELANIE's cellphone rings. MELANIE waves good-bye to BRYCE, smiling. BRYCE smiles back. She walks inside her house.]

MELANIE

Hello? Brittany?

[Scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 2

[Inside a classroom at Dulcevida High School in Armando. The school is composed of skaters, preppies, trendies, hipsters, hip-hoppers, emo kids, geeks, strippers, hippies, and goths existing horizontally in contemporary fashion, a break from the jocks-on-top hierarchy of the 1950's. GARY BURDICK, an English teacher dressed in orange button-down shirt and corduroys, with red eyes, is speaking to his class. He has Iron Butterfly playing. In his class are MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, KATE, NADIA, ROSTAM, DANNY, TOM, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, JOCELYN, TONY, BLEHM, and others.]

BURDICK

Welcome to English 3. My name is Gary Burdick. [Points to chalkboard.] So, in this class I hope to teach you some of the history of human thought, so that you can think yourselves. [Pauses.] So, we'll go over the literature of many different cultures, and how that all relates to your life today. [Pauses.] To start with, in America today, we have many different ethnic groups. At first it was just English settlers displacing the Algonquians and other native peoples. The culture of the United States was essentially the same as the culture of England. Then came immigrants like the Scots, the Germans, the Dutch, the Swedes and the Danes. And when these people came over, they wanted to learn English and be like the English-Americans. Later we had other groups like the Jews or the Mexicans or the Japanese. And it used to be, that when these groups came over, they were subjected to what we call *assimilation*. [Writes "ASSIMILATION" on the chalkboard.] So, instead of wearing a sombrero, the Mexicans were going to wear a business suit and assimilate. Instead of eating sushi with chopsticks, the Japanese were going to eat steak with a knife and fork and assimilate. Instead of speaking Hebrew, the Jews were going to speak and write left-to-right in English and assimilate. However, then in the sixties came *multiculturalism*. [Writes "MULTICULTURALISM" on the chalkboard.] People decided, "Hey, we don't want to fit in". The Mexican-Americans would act like Mexicans, and the Jewish-Americans would act like Jews, and the Japanese-Americans would act like Japanese. Rather than one mainstream American culture, America would be a "salad bowl" of different cultures, all

living together. The faces we see in this classroom today come from a variety of different countries. Melanie Hayworth, that's an English name. Trina Evangelisti, that's an Italian name. Bryce Schlitter, that's German. Alan Isaacs, that's Jewish. Paul Moreno, something Hispanic. Are you Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican . . . ?

PAUL
Mexican.

BURDICK
Mexican. Kate Kim, that's Korean. Meghan Conlan, that's Irish. Tony Pham, that's Vietnamese. Rostam Zavvar, that's Persian. Have you read the *Shahnameh*?

[ROSTAM ZAVVAR, a boy with black hair wearing a plaid flannel shirt and shorts, looks up to BURDICK and answers self-consciously]

ROSTAM
You know, I get asked that question by teachers a lot. But I haven't.

BURDICK
So in today's global American society, our challenge is how people of all these different cultures can get along. Whether we'll need assimilation to stay united as one society . . . or whether we can have multiculturalism. [Pauses.] Now, sometimes differences in values get in the way. For Middle Eastern Americans, for instance, the dilemma is whether to fit in, and become mainstream Americans, or whether to stay Middle Easterners. In the Middle East, it's considered polite to burp after a meal – it shows you appreciated the meal. When these Middle Eastern families are eating dinner in the United States, they have to decide whether to hold onto the rule of etiquette of burping. Rostam, how have you and your family responded to this?

ROSTAM
Hold on to the burping.

BLEHM
They shouldn't burp any more. They have to follow the rules of our culture!

ALAN
They're both wrong! If you want to burp, sure, you should be allowed to burp, but no one should be forced to belch after a meal if their esophagus doesn't make them do it.

BURDICK
And Americans are arguing that question right now. Meanwhile, for South American teen-agers in the U.S., the dilemma might be whether to get married in their teens, or wait until their twenties or thirties. For Hmong immigrants, they have to decide whether they're still going to shoot guns in the air at parties, or whether this tradition should go. And so, I ask of you: Can we Americans ever come to agree on one set of values that will allow us to live in harmony?

TRINA

It's a pipe dream.

BURDICK

Good. If you believe that, tell us how you feel. Ooh, ooh, here's a really good part of the song. Listen to this display of virtuoso.

[BURDICK turns the Iron Butterfly song up.]

ACT I, SCENE 3

[Inside Mrs. Dahlgren's classroom. JUDY DAHLGREN, a conventionally dressed Baby Boomer math teacher, is at the chalkboard. Students include MELANIE, BRYCE, ALAN, PAUL, SARAH, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, BLEHM, JAKE, and NADIA.]

DAHLGREN

$y = mx + b$ equations are called the slope-intercept form. And in the $y = mx + b$ equation, what's the y-intercept?

[MEGHAN raises hand.]

DAHLGREN

Meghan?

MEGHAN

B.

DAHLGREN

Correct. This kind of equation is a linear equation. To solve for the y-intercept, you must . . .

[BRYCE raises hand.]

DAHLGREN

Bryce?

BRYCE

May I have a pass to go to the restroom?

DAHLGREN

Can't you hold it in?

BRYCE

I can't. I can't even concentrate.

DAHLGREN

Well, it's less than five minutes until this class is over.

BRYCE

See, if I go after class, I might be late for my fourth period class, ceramics. It's all the way over in the G building. If I just use the restroom in the A building right now, I'll be on time.

SARAH

Yeah, I hate the rush to be on time. I barely have any time to make it between classes and stuff! I mean . . .

PAUL

Dude! You don't want to use the A building. I just walked in there this morning, and there are these giant turds lying open by the urinals. Someone there must have taken a dump on the floor. It was crazy, man!

DAHLGREN

Paul, you can't talk like that in the classroom. Talking about bodily functions that come out of your lower body is socially unacceptable.

[PAUL begins to tear up, clearly hurt by the value judgment.]

ALAN

No, it's not!

DAHLGREN

Hey, who asked for your opinion?

BRYCE

So if it's just an opinion, why are you so militant and all about yours?

DAHLGREN

Like it or not, in this world we're all expected to obey the rules of society. We can't talk about inappropriate things, like what Paul was talking about. When you go out into the real world, you're going to have to abide by social conventions. If you become a business executive, you can't wear a tie-dye T-shirt. If you become an accountant, you can't spit in public.

ALAN

If you become a teacher, you can't come to your job with red eyes and play rock music in class?

DAHLGREN

[*Not picking up on the irony*] Exactly. Society makes the rules, not individuals, and as long as you are going to live in society and have a job in society – go to school – you have to respect social conventions.

PAUL

Hey, I never said I wanted to live in society. Society's rules are lame. No one ever asked me.

DAHLGREN

When you grow up, you can change that, but right now, your job is to stay in school.

PAUL

What's the purpose of teaching these rules when people aren't going to go to these repressive jobs when they grow up?

BRYCE

Exactly. It makes them unhappy . . . all that unhappiness, such a waste.

DAHLGREN

If you don't want to live in society, Paul, go live in a cave. *Every* job expects you to follow the rules of society. If you don't respect our norms like what you can and can't talk about, you get fired!

[*The bell rings.*]

DAHLGREN

Well, that's the end of that period. Your homework is page 15, problems 1-38.

BRYCE

I don't need to go to the bathroom anymore.

PAUL

[Walks off into the hall. The spotlight lands on PAUL as the rest dims. *Song begins.*]

Socially unacceptable – so is the label I heard.

Socially unacceptable – I've been lashed by those words.

They say that unlike sticks and stones, those words can't hurt me, I gotta disagree

I've been punched at, I've taken slack, I've gotten winded, been slapped on the knee

I feel so rotten inside, like I must be someone bad

When you learn that you're not doing right, it serves to make you sad

I feel so bad, so evil, like I'm unclean as the people in jail

Is what I did a crime? I feel a mouth that's dry and stale

An authority figure said it herself, and what she said is holding

I'm stuck being a boy of 16, subject to a math teacher's firm molding

A phrase that means I'm bad

A phrase that means I'm wrong

We're all one big society and I just don't belong

There's no way to escape

If you don't want to be labeled

But it's always the privileged, never the youth, who are socially enabled

Totally inexplicable – is her need to condemn
Totally inexplicable – is why I can't be like them
It seems that other people walk along in all the right directions, they're never taking heat
When it comes to development and conduct, there's something wrong with how I move
my feet
When I was growing up, the other children learned to play
But all the things they labeled me made me feel like I'm some sort of stray
What's wrong with me when I'm always the one not doing what I should
The fiber that I'm made of is a reject, just not good
When the other Americans march right ahead, they always catch me hopping
Instead of standing tall like a good citizen, I'm always unfit and flopping

A phrase that means I'm bad
A phrase that means I'm wrong
We're all one big society and I just don't belong
There's no way to escape
If you don't want to be labeled
But it's always the privileged, never the youth, who are socially enabled

Morally undesirable – in the present and the past
Morally undesirable – but I doubt that's going to last
They're going to change their minds on this, perhaps a century or two from now
If I did this in the year 2156, no one would raise an eyebrow
I can't escape a judgment, now I'm trapped in a force field
But in other places and in other times, these culture's rules will be repealed
They used to say that slavery's right, that women had to wear corsets
You couldn't wear shorts, or say "leg", even if you had Tourette's
How come I wasn't born in the future, as someday these rules will be archaic
Even the most shocking behavior right now will seem wholesome and prosaic

A phrase that means I'm bad
A phrase that means I'm wrong
We're all one big society and I just don't belong
There's no way to escape
If you don't want to be labeled
But it's always the privileged, never the youth, who are socially enabled

It's always the privileged, never the youth, who are socially enabled
[*Song ends*]

ACT I, SCENE 4

[Scene is in SARAH's bathroom. SARAH is looking around her cabinet. It is filled with pastel-colored hygienic products.]

SARAH

Shower gel . . . soap . . . lotion . . . just to finish doing my hair and it's off to my first day of homework. Sigh . . . this school year . . . hopefully it won't be as taxing as the last.

[Sings]

[Picks item up and reads label]

Spring Water Spa, Tri-coastal Design, East Hanover, NJ
Tube of lotion to spread in the skin of my hand

[Picks item up and reads label]

Removable hair dye, BodyFX, Moraga, CA
For some pinker hair than God originally planned

And the lotion and the airs that you are putting on
Are found in a little pink tube with a label of "Made in Taiwan"
When my lipstick is drawn
It's my space, it's my world

Hair shampoo, and even body shampoo, for shoulders and head
Will bring peace to the mind of a beautiful girl
Submerge your black hair like a dipstick in streaks of purple and red
Simply dip bits of hair in and give them a twirl

And the answer to the lost state of a rolling stone
Is found in a bottle of almond perfume and the matching cologne
I'm in my comfort zone
It's my space, it's my world

Hair conditioner, if a girl carefully applies
Can make me look young even when all the wrinkles show otherwise
And when I'm 57 and no longer in my prime
I'll be lapping foam on my skin to reverse the hands of time

Open the medicine cabinet and take a perfunctory glance
You'll see hair gel and lipstick, eyeliner, top shelf
Bottles of South Korean mouthwash, mascara from France
For a person who's caring too much for herself

And when you think that life's purpose has been used and spent
There's always the spray-on deodorant with a blue raspberry scent
And you'll find where life went
It's my space, it's my world

Down with the red, white and blue
Up with the black, blue and cream

[*Song ends*]

Well, now it's back to work. AP bio, AP Spanish, AP chem. At least with Mrs. Dahlgren's class I have it easy.

[SARAH's cellphone rings. SARAH picks up the cellphone.]

Hello?

[MELANIE is on the other side of the phone.]

MELANIE

Sarah, hi. It's Melanie.

SARAH

Oh, hi, Melanie.

MELANIE

Listen. I'm going on a trip to the mall with Meghan and Lindsay, and I wondered if you wanted to come along. It's on Thursday.

SARAH

Sorry, I can't.

MELANIE

Why not? Got a date with Ryan?

SARAH

No, I need to study.

MELANIE

Are we talking homework here, or do you mean you're going to sit down with a textbook and read it before a test?

SARAH

The sitting down with a textbook and reading it thing.

MELANIE

Well, you can still come with us. It's not like you're doing homework, where the assignment's due the next day.

SARAH

If I don't study, Melanie, then where am I going to go with my life? Working at McDonald's? I mean, I can do a homework assignment, but if I don't go over the lessons and fully assimilate them, I'm not going to be able to fool anyone when it comes time to actually take the tests. That's the bottom line.

MELANIE

But you can study another day, can't you?

SARAH

I can't think about not studying. And tomorrow I have practice with the girls' basketball team. And later that day I have choir.

MELANIE

Sarah, Sarah. You need a bit of balance. You can't spend every day working on that school stuff. Or with you, it seems like every hour.

SARAH

That's not true! I just spent the last hour rummaging through my cabinet and applying some hair products.

MELANIE

Then we can look for those at the mall. Please? If we spent all our time eating or all our time working or all our time sleeping or even all our time talking on the phone, it would make us pret-ty sick.

SARAH

I don't understand why you're interested in getting me to go to the mall with you, anyway. You shop from Delia*s catalogue and I shop from J. Crew. You want to drive around with boys when you grow up and I want to work in business and wear a suit. I focus in class and you pass around notes.

MELANIE

Well, um . . . it's . . . I have a secret I want to share with you.

SARAH

A secret?

MELANIE

But I want to tell it to you, Meghan and Lindsay all at the same time. I'm a bit nervous about saying this and I only want to have to say it once. This is something really –

SARAH

Oh, OK, I'll be there. Which mall is it?

MELANIE

Orange Valley Mall. Meet you Thursday at 4:30.

SARAH

At the front door?

MELANIE

At the front door. Deal?

SARAH
Deal. Bye-bye.

MELANIE
Bye-bye. [Sound of cellphone dropping.]

[SARAH presses the button on her cellphone that indicates she is done with a call.
Scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 5

[MELANIE is standing in the Orange Valley Mall with MEGHAN and LINDSAY.]

MELANIE
I still don't see Sarah.

LINDSAY
Do you think she, like, forgot to come?

MELANIE
No, Sarah makes good on her promises. She said she was going to come, she's coming.

MEGHAN
Well, I'm just burning to hear your secret now.

[Enter SARAH.]

MELANIE
Ooh, there she is!

LINDSAY
What's up, Sarah?

MEGHAN
Wassup?

SARAH
Hi, guys, I mean girls.

MELANIE
Oh good, you made it, Sarah. So where do we go?

MEGHAN

Where do you want to go, Lindsay?

LINDSAY

That depends on where Melanie wants to go.

MELANIE

How about Jamais Juice?

[LINDSAY, MEGHAN, and SARAH all nod.]

[MELANIE, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, and SARAH all walk by until they reach the elevator. They get in at the same time as some adults. The ADULT ELEVATOR PASSENGERS face the door of the elevator, while the teens face the adult passengers, which has the adult passengers frowning. MELANIE has a smirk on her face. The elevator stops. The teen-age girls walk out and go to the right.]

MELANIE

This is it – Jamais Juice.

LINDSAY

Totally fabulous!

SARAH

Anyone see a table for four?

MELANIE

Here's one!

[The girls all sit down. SARAH opens a menu. Shortly a waitress walks by.]

WAITRESS

Hi there! What can I get for you today?

MELANIE

I'll have a strawberry daiquiri . . .

LINDSAY

A strawberry daiquiri? Sounds good.

MEGHAN

Yeah, I'll get one too.

WAITRESS

OK. [To Sarah] And you over here?

SARAH

I think I'll have the "mango-in-a-blender". Whatever that is.

LINDSAY

Rebel.

WAITRESS

OK. Each one will be \$3.94. [Walks off.]

SARAH

So, you said to wanted to share a secret.

MEGHAN

We've been waiting like forever to hear your secret. Can't you tell us now, Melanie?

MELANIE

[Looks around.] Oh, all right. We're all together and we're all alone. It's worked out just the way I planned it. Now, how did I plan to break it to you?

SARAH

Just be spontaneous, Melanie.

LINDSAY

Yeah, Melanie, you always think too hard about what you're going to do. You have all this stuff in your head, and there's the second-guessing, and the thinking on Sunday of what you're going to do next Sunday. So ditch the canned speech and just let the words flow nat-ur-al-ly.

MELANIE

Well, OK. So you know how I haven't had a boyfriend since June?

LINDSAY and MEGHAN

Like, yeah.

MELANIE

OK. So I met this wonderful boy at my party. His name is Bryce Schlitter.

SARAH

Oh, I've met him.

MELANIE

He has brown hair and blue eyes and freckles and braces and he's the most wonderful thing in the world! [Squees.] Lindsay, he's amazing! He dove into the pool with his cargo shorts and striped polo on to retrieve my bracelet when it fell to the bottom of the pool.

MEGHAN

Wow, I'm not even sure Gavin would do that for me.

MELANIE

And catch this: he said he wanted to make the world a better place.

SARAH

Well, that's all fine when you're young, but I want a stable future.

MELANIE

Sarah, I didn't invite you so you could criticize my taste in boyfriends.

SARAH

Sorry.

[WAITRESS returns and gives the girls their drinks.]

MELANIE

So the thing is, I only need a way to tell him that I love him! How do I do it, with a heart-shaped box?

SARAH

Melanie, the hopeless romantic. You always want to give people flowers and set dates, but it never lasts.

MEGHAN

Yeah, think about it, Melanie. In June you broke up with Logan Caruso, and before that there was Ian Scott, and Abdul Narif, and Jim Comeau, and Josh Bessler, and JC Shimamura . . .

LINDSAY

Like, you'll hit on Bryce, and then it will last for, say, two months. Four months tops.

MELANIE

All my older boyfriends were different!

MEGHAN

Like Logan was different from Ian?

MELANIE

No, they're all different from Bryce in the same way. With the other boyfriends, I thought they were hot and that was it. I felt pretty much the same thing when I first met each of them, and I felt the same thing when I fell in love with each of them. But with, Bryce, this is – ooh, this is something I've never felt before. Bryce just needs some serious TLC.

LINDSAY

I don't do drugs.

SARAH

I believe you, Melanie.

LINDSAY

Yeah, we're going to be your support as you get your boyfriend.

MEGHAN

Right, Lindsay. With Bryce, Melanie might finally join the club!

MELANIE

What do you mean, finally?

LINDSAY

Aren't you a virgin, Melanie?

MELANIE

How did you . . . I mean no, of course not.

SARAH

I thought you were.

MELANIE

I just have to figure out how to reach Bryce, and I've got him in the bag!

SARAH

Hey, when we're done, do all of you want to come to my house for mooncakes?

[The others all say, "Yeah" as the scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 6

[PAUL, ALAN and TRINA are sitting on the grass on campus. A planted cactus is to their right.]

PAUL

So I bowled three strikes in a row.

ALAN

I've never been able to do that before, but . . . you know how you get extra rolls if you make a strike in your tenth frame? I got three strikes in my tenth frame once.

PAUL

Well, I'd like to roll a perfect game.

[BRYCE walks over.]

PAUL
Bryce! My man!

BRYCE
Uh . . . hi, guys.

TRINA
Hello, Bryce.

ALAN
Do you want to talk with us? We were discussing bowling.

BRYCE
Well . . . actually, I came here to ask you for advice. Listen closely, I've got a secret.

PAUL
OK.

ALAN
Fine.

TRINA
Sure.

BRYCE
I've found myself liking someone. You know what I'm saying? I like her, but telling her?

PAUL
Who is it?

BRYCE
It's Melanie.

ALAN
Melanie Lefebvre?

BRYCE
No, Melanie Hayworth. You all know her?

PAUL
I was at her party this summer.

BRYCE
Oh yeah, I saw you skateboarding over the pool there.

TRINA

I think we all know her.

PAUL

You love Melanie? How sweet.

TRINA

I wouldn't call it sweet. Except perhaps sickly, syrupy sweet. Really, Melanie Hayworth?

BRYCE

I just don't know how to tell her. I don't want to sound like the scary male who's preying on girls for his harem.

TRINA

In five generations, we've gone from girls not asking boys out except on Sadie Hawkins Day to boys who won't ask girls out. What is the world coming to?

BRYCE

So, anyway, I know Paul won't be of any help with tips on how to get a girl, but I think you might be able to help me, Alan.

ALAN

I've got it all in my hands.

BRYCE

I thought with your relationship with Trina, you might know some things about attracting girls.

ALAN

Oh, I'm not dating Trina.

BRYCE

But I see the two of you holding hands. Constantly. Why, Trina?

TRINA

Well, you know what they say about like attracting like . . .

BRYCE

Then why don't you date Alan if the two of you are, well, alike?

TRINA

I've never dated a boy before.

BRYCE

Well, from listening to you talk about Western views on sexuality, you don't seem the type who would wait until marriage to have sex.

TRINA

Oh, I'm not waiting until marriage.

BRYCE

Then I guess you just haven't found a guy who was your type, right?

TRINA

Well, that's not the problem.

BRYCE

You've never dated a boy. Are you asexual or something?

TRINA

No.

BRYCE

Well, if you're – hey, wait a minute, are you lesbian?

[There is silence. PAUL smiles. TRINA stares at BRYCE. ALAN nods his head.]

BRYCE

So you're lesbian.

TRINA

This life isn't easy, Bryce. I'm saying, you have 45% of the student body of Dulcevida open to you. I've never had a girlfriend. It gets frustrating when you don't have somebody to take out on a Saturday night. I get frustrated.

ALAN

You see, Bryce, since Paul is gay, and I'm bisexual, the three of us are friends. Just friends. Trina finds it easy to identify with us, I think Trina can verify that.

TRINA

Sure. And it means getting a lot of prejudice against you.

BRYCE

Well, I don't have any problem with people different from me. I'm sorry if I offended you by thinking you were straight.

TRINA

It's no fun when you get – when you get rejected by students, when they won't hang around you because of your sexual orientation. None of the students at Dulcevida . . . well, you know, accept me.

ALAN

That's not true. I mean look at me. No one here has ever given me a problem about

being bisexual, except the jocks and rednecks. But still, the MAJORITY of teens here are accepting.

TRINA

The majority of the students at this high school don't care about politics or anything. Here, it's all apathy. They won't stand up for someone if they see a jock calling her – or him – a fag.

ALAN

Now you're changing your claim. First you said –

PAUL

Dude, why do you even care about what the jocks say to you? How many students here who aren't jocks actually like the jocks? The cool kids, the skaters and homie G's and hipsters and all, hate the jocks because they're so right-wing, calling gay kids fags and saying, "Nuke this country", "Nuke that country", and the preppies, they hate the jocks because they're partying, with their beer and their weed, having sex all the time. Real life isn't like the TV shows, where the jocks are the cool boys, scripted by people who went to high school back when dinosaurs ruled the Earth!

[JAKE COOK, a jock dressed in football uniform, passes by and sees them.]

JAKE

Fag!

ALAN

Just look at Jake. No one likes him.

PAUL

He's Jake the Jock. Jake Jock. Jock Jake.

BRYCE

Uh, guys, can we talk about Melanie here?

TRINA

Sorry.

BRYCE

You see, ever since I met Melanie at that party during the summer and that blonde ponytail practically flew right in front of my eyes, I've wanted to have a long and loving relationship with her.

TRINA

Do you really want to date Melanie? She's all shopping for clothes at the mall and putting on make-up. I can't believe you're considering dating a trendy.

BRYCE

Melanie is more than a trendy! When I watched her at that party . . . oh, Melanie, did you see her? Blehm suggested she have me arrested for crashing her party, but she said no. It was so . . . so . . . conscientious.

TRINA

She asked you whether you wanted to be a model. Seems like shallow to me.

BRYCE

Think of all the people she invited. She was so open to everyone. But she especially liked me. Believe me, Trina, I could read her face, and when I saw her face I could tell there was something deep beyond being a trendy going on.

ALAN

Well, don't fret, Bryce. I've got a plan to get you and Melanie together.

BRYCE

Really?

ALAN

Sure. Be expecting a phone call from me one of these days.

BRYCE

You're the bomb, Alan.

[End of scene]

ACT I, SCENE 7

[In BURDICK's classroom. In his class are MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, KATE, NADIA, ROSTAM, DANNY, TOM, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, JOCELYN, TONY, BLEHM, and others. The Grateful Dead are playing. BURDICK is reading to the class.]

BURDICK

"Under a government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less despondent spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles." So Thoreau believed that when the laws are unjust, we must break the law. He also believed, however, in changing the laws. What do you think?

[TRINA raises her hand.]

BURDICK

Trina?

TRINA

It would be necessary to do both, because on one hand, if a law is wrong, then obeying it might require you to do something wrong, like turning in slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act. So you have to disobey. But on the other hand, if you don't work to get it changed, I don't think that someone else is going to do that work for you, and the law is going to just stay the same. Other people will get arrested for breaking it as well.

BURDICK

Good analysis, Trina. You see, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Carlyle, Margaret Fuller – they believed that, as Rousseau said, “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains”. Looking further into their time, we see that Thoreau was opposed to slavery, as well as the war in Mexico. He believed the laws of his time were unjust, so the obvious question is, why should today be any different? And so, I ask, what are some examples of such laws and government policies that we have at the turn of the millennium?

[DANNY's, MEGHAN's, TRINA's and ALAN's hands all go up.]

BURDICK

Alan?

ALAN

Marijuana.

[Some giggles in the classroom.]

BURDICK

Marijuana. We have people getting life in prison for smoking marijuana. People going to jail for growing industrial hemp. People getting arrested because of their medicine.

[TRINA raises her hand.]

BURDICK

Trina?

TRINA

How about the government making protesting a crime? I mean we're supposed to have freedom of speech, but they don't put this into practice.

BURDICK

Yes. During the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, they arrested hundreds of students for protesting on campus. Ooh, ooh! Listen to this! This is the Grateful Dead.

[BURDICK turns up the Grateful Dead song.]

ACT I, SCENE 8

[MELANIE sits in the career counselor's office. CAROL MARCINIAK, a career counselor from the Baby Boom Generation wearing a women's jacket, blouse and pantyhose, sits in her chair.]

MARCINIAK

Hi, Melanie, take a seat right here.

[MELANIE sits down.]

MARCINIAK

I'm Carol Marciniak, the career counselor at Dulcevida. I want to know if you've been giving any thought to pursuing a career.

MELANIE

A career? You mean a job?

MARCINIAK

More than just a job at Target. Are you interested in becoming a doctor, or a business executive, or a teacher . . . ?

MELANIE

I'm not into stuff like that. When I grow up, I want to chase boys around. And work as a waitress.

MARCINIAK

A waitress? Are you interested in cuisine or in restaurant management?

MELANIE

No. I'm interested in boys. One in particular. Would you tell if I told you who he was?

MARCINIAK

So you want to work as a waitress because you like boys?

MELANIE

Uh, well, sort of. That's my dream job. I've got it all planned out. During my job hours, I'm going to work as a waitress in a mid-scale restaurant. Not like a formal restaurant where everyone's dressed up and speaks quietly. Just a restaurant where you can order steak and rice pilaf. An offbeat restaurant in the city. I'll, like, make all my money from that job, and I'll use it to pay the rent and utility bills and buy my own food and gas. Then, when I'm off my job, I'm going to go to parties and drive around in a red convertible. I'll go to the beach, and hang out with Bry— let's just call this guy I like Bryson. Me and Bryson will live together, and we'll have parties with the other young people.

MARCINIAK

Melanie, being a waitress doesn't sound like something to aim for. It's fine when you're

in high school or college, but when you grow up you need a real career. Are you interested in science? In business? In urban design? I chose to be a career counselor because I enjoy helping people.

MELANIE

Well, what did you want to be when you were my age?

MARCINIAK

When I was your age, I didn't know what I wanted to do. But I already knew that I wanted something that I could center my life around, something that would pay lots of good money.

MELANIE

You see, I don't want to "center my life" [makes quotes in the air] around a job. I want to be able to focus on things like parties and my relationships. My relationship with Bry—with Bryson, my friendships with Meghan and Lindsay, calling my brother and sister, that kind of stuff. And you know, if I work so hard at a job I'm, like, worried I won't have enough energy left over to work on the party and relationship stuff. The really important stuff.

MARCINIAK

So parties are more important than your career?

MELANIE

Oh, yes, definitely.

MARCINIAK

You'll have to do some serious rethinking of your life priorities. Your job is who you are. Do you want your obituary to read that you were a waitress?

MELANIE

It's not all about my job! I want my obituary to read that I was a devoted girlfriend and a good friend and sister, and that I enjoyed life.

MARCINIAK

[Exasperated] Fine. Can I help you in any other way?

MELANIE

No. Mind if I leave?

MARCINIAK

Are you finished? I'm finished.

MELANIE

[Stands up] Good-bye, Mrs. Marciniak.

[Scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 9

[In ALAN's house. There is his drummer, TOM MAZZOCCO, in cargo shorts and a plaid flannel shirt with tongue ring; his keyboardist/synthist DANNY SANGUINETTI, in blue jeans, a black pocket tee and sunglasses; and bassist KATE KIM, a Korean-American girl in capris, black halter-top and sunglasses. MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, MEGHAN, and LINDSAY are standing in the room with the band.]

ALAN

So, Tom, Danny, I'd like you to meet Kate Kim. She's going to be playing the bass for us.

TOM

Hi, I'm Tom Mazzocco.

DANNY

Hi, I'm Danny Sanguinetti.

KATE

Hey, are all of you ready to *rock*? Seriously rock?

TOM

Dude, you going to stay with us?

KATE

I'll see, boy. I've never played in a band like Unfresh before. Only played with other chicks till now!

DANNY

And we've never had a girl in our band before.

KATE

Well, I can slam this loving bass harder than any boy!

TOM

Unfresh are the true thing. All the other bands around here are fake and just putting on a show. But Unfresh, I tell you, we are the genuine article.

MELANIE

Wasn't it, like, so nice of Alan to invite us to his jam session?

BRYCE

It sure was.

ALAN

Now, Kate, you're going to stay with this band, right? Our last bassist was Justin Marks; he didn't stay long.

DANNY

Now if I recall correctly, didn't Justin say he was having too many drug troubles to stay with a band?

ALAN

Yes. It looks as if everybody's got an excuse not to play with my band. [Swoops his guitar around in the air.] Everybody! People keep flaking out like they expect me to do all the work. A band is a collective effort. We're going to need to put the "and" back in "band". I have ways of dealing with this.

[Plugs in his amp.]

KATE

Now, I like to see that SPIRIT!

DANNY

Kate, did you get the chord sheet for "Maze of Wood"?

KATE

I sure did, Danny. Let me give it my best shot!

DANNY

Good, because "Maze of Wood" is our band's best song. Alan knew how to write some really chilling lyrics and riffs that give you a chance to reflect. Once you've listened, you'll never be the same again!

MEGHAN

I so want to hear the song!

MELANIE

So do I!

ALAN

All right, if it will keep Danny in the band, we'll do his favorite today. Here it is.

KATE

Let me *slap that bass!*

[Each member of the band – ALAN, DANNY, TOM and KATE – begins to play his or her instrument. ALAN is on guitar.]

ALAN

[Sings]

I walked alongside rocks upon a gravel trail
I was frozen, it was night and I was pale
I came across some doors and they were all pretend
Soon I struggled with myself to find the end

I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Left the area where once I stood
I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Straight surviving like I never could

I wished I had a fist that could untangle thorns
Hear the voices of the people no one mourns
I thought I heard the cemetery under me
Heard the pleas of others and they shared my plea

[Spoken]

Now, I want one boy and one girl from the audience to take the microphone and sing along with the song. You [*points to BRYCE*] and you [*points to MELANIE*]. You know the words.

ALAN, MELANIE and BRYCE

[Sing]

I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Left the area where once I stood
I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Straight surviving like I never could

I walked alongside rocks upon a gravel trail
I was frozen, it was night and I was pale
I came across some doors and they were all pretend
Soon I struggled with myself to find the end

I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Left the area where once I stood
I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Straight surviving like I never could

I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Left the area where once I stood
I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Straight surviving like I never could

[End of song]

[MELANIE and BRYCE embrace.]

TOM
Bravo!

MELANIE
I'm so glad we came!

BRYCE
[Smiling widely enough for his braces to show] So am I.

TOM
So what was your last band, Kate?

KATE
I played with Raw Milk.

TOM
You see, they're more of a ska-pop band. I'm more into ska-rap, or ska-reggae, or blues-ska, or ska-punk-fusion.

DANNY
How would you describe our band, Alan?

ALAN
[Adjusting sunglasses] We're ALTERNATIVE.

TOM
And that will get you signed.

DANNY
We need a contract soon, if we want the world to hear songs as good as "Maze of Wood", or "Don't Step".

TOM
How will a group of minors get a contract?

DANNY
Simple. To remind them that age is nothing but a number, we get a set of fake ID cards to show to the lawyer, then prove to the world how much we deserved the contract through the quality of our songs.

ALAN
How about this, we all pick up the release forms, and forge our parents' signatures.

TOM
Sure. I know my 'rents won't object if they find out.

LINDSAY

'Rents? I haven't heard that one in a while.

DANNY

OK, you get your parents' real signatures, and I'll forge my dad's, and then –

MELANIE

I, like, love to listen to local bands and all, but I'm also like into other ska groups. No Doubt rock.

TOM

No Doubt are sell-outs. If you want real ska, I suggest you go back into the 80's with the Specials. Or such local bands as the Vampire Bats, Jakarta, the Weed Monkeys or Kaleidoscope Tofu.

MELANIE

What kind of music do you like, Bryce?

BRYCE

I love Nirvana.

MELANIE

Nirvana?

BRYCE

Yes. I mean, Kurt Cobain created a scene for the youth of a nation to play on and all, making music from the heart . . . music that influenced almost every rock band around today. Even Unfresh.

MELANIE

Aw, were you sad when Kurt Cobain died?

BRYCE

Well, that was back in 1994. April 5, 1994. I was 3 years old.

MELANIE

True.

BRYCE

I got into them in high school. I sometimes miss Kurt, he provides a comfort to me. But someday, one day, Melanie, Kurt Cobain is going to return to the Earth for all the young people – and fortysomething Gen-Xers – who miss and need him so.

MELANIE

Aw, hearing that makes me want to hug you again.

BRYCE

Melanie, ever since I met you at that party I knew I loved you.

MELANIE

Same here, Bryce. It's like I had this feeling . . . I knew we were meant to be together.
[Pauses.] So does this mean we start dating?

BRYCE

A guy who likes Nirvana and volunteers at the animal shelter and a girl who holds parties and is regularly seen at the mall?

MELANIE

You volunteer at the animal shelter? The one on McCutcheon?

BRYCE

Yeah.

MELANIE

Oh, God, how d'you put up with the smell?

BRYCE

I'm anosmic.

MELANIE

What's "anosmic" mean?

BRYCE

It means I can't smell.

MELANIE

Whoa, really? You can't smell coffee?

BRYCE

I can't.

MELANIE

Everyone else at Dulcevida is dating and stuff. Just look around: there's Sarah and Ryan, Meghan and Gavin, Lindsay and Steve, Danny and Petra . . . or if you want to look at the stoners, Joey is going out with Farida. And there's Kate and Amy. And even Nadia has her Blake. It's what American teen-agers were meant to do.

BRYCE

[Sings]

When you step onto the campus
You see couples going out
And no matter how they stamp us

You'll be sure we're going to tout

MELANIE

Our affection for each other
On the streets, in the café
So just lean over and smother
Me with kisses, and then say:

"We can date too"

With passed out girlfriends, the jocks, they all date
Rasta youth with tight dreadlocks, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

Stoners with hash on their brains, they all date
Even skaters with those chains, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

Hipsters in coffeeshop rows, they all date
Till he spills on her crotch
Young pimps and hos, they all date
Get a move on, beeotch!

Some morbid goths, in black cloths, they all date
Grunge types who look eaten by the moths, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

BRYCE

Preppies, as soon as they're prepped, they all date
Nerds, though at love they're inept, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

Punks, when they're not too pissed off, they all date
Geeks, if just with Lara Croft, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

All sort of heroin chics, they all date
Think of Courtney and Kurt
Black trenchcoat freaks, they all date
Until someone gets hurt

In downsized cliques, hippie chicks, they all date
With their older sisters, even hicks, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

MELANIE

Ravers in pure unity, they all date
Mullets in L-O-umlaut-V-E, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

New-agers, mentally pure, they all date
Even valley girls, fer sure, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

Poor emo kids, with wrist cuts, they all date
Though they always split up
Voluptuous sluts, they all date
As he feels her E-cup

Surfers on foam, hitting home, they all date
Butch couples with no Y-chromosome, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

BRYCE

Young slackers, down on their pads, they all date
Aberzombies in the ads, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

Those seventies fashion plates, they all date
Beatniks in their funky states, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

Delia*s shoppers, you bet, they all date
With the boys who shop Droog
The prog-rock set, they all date
To the tune of their Moog

Gay guys who try for a guy, they all date
Skankers with some Reel Big Fish to fry, they all date
And we can be like them, we can go out
Yes, we can date too

MELANIE and BRYCE

Stripers with their collars popped and stripes, they all date

Posers all chafed up in their stovepipes, they all date

Boys and girls of all cliques and all types, they all date

And we can be like them, we can go out

Yes, we can date too

Yes, we can date

We can date

We can date too

[*Song ends*]

ACT I, SCENE 10

[MELANIE and BRYCE are together in Dream Valley, a center of Armando with many stores. BRYCE has a Grove Market shopping bag in his hand. It is late at night.]

MELANIE

Dream Valley's such a happening place, don't you think?

BRYCE

Sure. Everything from a Taco Bell to a TJ Maxx. Isn't this great?

MELANIE

Yes, because the backlot of Uncle Ling's is, like, the perfect place to make out.

BRYCE

Well, I'm going to put my Grove Market bag down so we can get closer together.

MELANIE

OK.

BRYCE

[*Puts down Grove Market bag.*] Now, for the girl I love. You're such a sweet girl. [Rubs MELANIE's hair.]

MELANIE

You're such a hot boy. Come hug my arms.

BRYCE

Melanie, I've never loved someone as seriously as I love you. I didn't know what it was, but at the party I could tell there was something about you. [Embraces MELANIE.]

MELANIE

[Rubs BRYCE's hair.] I think we're going to have a long relationship and all ahead of us, Bryce. One that will last for years. Even decades.

BRYCE

Or for eternity. You know . . . at the end of the world all the good people are going to be brought back to life and Heaven and Earth will be united. You, me, Paul, Alan, Trina, Sarah, Meghan, Lindsay . . .

MELANIE

Even Mrs. Dahlgren? [Continues rubbing.]

BRYCE

Naaah, not her. She's not making an effort to achieve eternal life. She doesn't have it in her and she's the only one who can do it. Self-power.

MELANIE

What's that? [Plays with BRYCE's ear.]

BRYCE

It's a Buddhist concept. You have to look in yourself and try very hard if you want to gain enlightenment.

MELANIE

So you're a Buddhist, Bryce?

BRYCE

No, I'm a lot of different things. Part Catholic and part Buddhist and part Islamic and part Kemetic –

MELANIE

What's Kemetic? [Nudges Bryce's chin with her chin.]

BRYCE

Ancient Egyptian religion. Anubis and Osiris . . .

MELANIE

Eeww, stuff like cutting people's eyes up and healing them? That mythology always gave me the creeps.

BRYCE

It's beautiful mythology. Beautiful like you, Melanie.

[OFFICER SHELDON MALINOWITZ and OFFICER BILL SCHURZ pop up. They speak to the teens.]

SCHURZ

Hey, are you kids 21?

MELANIE

We're –

BRYCE

We're 17. Both 17.

SCHURZ

Are you aware that you're out after 10 o'clock? Armando has a curfew, you know.

BRYCE

Sure. But the curfew is stupid.

SCHURZ

You may not like it, but it's the law, and I have to enforce it. We're going to arrest you two, both of you, and drop you off at John Perotta.

MELANIE

Not the county jail! Hey, it's our life to live, not yours.

BRYCE

Exactly. We're not trying – we're not trying to live your life for you, so, hey, you have no right to live our life for us.

SCHURZ

You're not adults. You need the law to make decisions for you that you are too immature to make. Teen-agers think they're immortal.

MELANIE

We're not that dumb!

BRYCE

Did *you* think you were immortal when you were our age?

SCHURZ

Well, I knew I wasn't immortal, but the other kids, most of them thought they were.

MALINOWITZ

[Nods.] Same here.

SCHURZ

And right now, you should both be home with your families, lying in your beddies.

MELANIE and BRYCE

No!

MELANIE

Talking down to us doesn't help make you look good!

SCHURZ

Well, we'll see who looks better after you're convicted of breaking curfew and I have your voices on tape to prove it!

MELANIE

Run!

[MELANIE and BRYCE make a run to the right. SCHURZ and MALINOWITZ chase them, and the teens turn into a store, then run out the backlot and into another store.]

MALINOWITZ

They went into Armando Al's pizza!

[SCHURZ follows MALINOWITZ in, as the teens make it out to the backlot and go two doors down. They run through the front door of another store, then hide behind a bush.]

MELANIE

Have we lost them?

BRYCE

[Breathing heavily] I think we can resume breathing now.

MELANIE

Why did you have to tell them our real ages?

BRYCE

I couldn't lie.

MELANIE

Why? You think it's, like, bad karma or something?

BRYCE

Well, yes. I mean, 17-year-olds have a right to be out at night and stuff. We shouldn't be afraid to tell them our real ages. I mean we, we don't need to apologize for being teens.

MELANIE

Well . . . that's true. You know, when I was little, I was afraid of the dark, and my dad – he told me there's nothing in the dark that isn't there in the light, right? But these people who write curfew laws, they seem to think that kids need to be protected from these scary monsters that come out at night. Vampires, werewolves, zombies! Hey, do you, like, remember what that cop said?

BRYCE

He said we're not adults.

MELANIE

Pretty dumb thing to say.

BRYCE

What does that mean? We're not a lot of things. We're not Martians. [Pauses.] We're not lumberjacks. [Pauses.] We're not pirates. That doesn't make a right thing wrong.

[*Scene fades.*]

ACT I, SCENE 11

[ALAN and SARAH are both in Grove Market, a specialty grocery store. The place has a bohemian air about it. PAUL is working there.]

ALAN

I've got the manicotti . . . the biscotti . . . now for some basmati.

[ALAN walks up to PAUL.]

ALAN

Hey, Paul!

PAUL

Hi, Alan, what's up?

ALAN

I can't find the basmati rice, my goateed friend. Where's the rice section?

PAUL

Aisle 8. The right side.

ALAN

Thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you so much for telling me! You saved my day! Now I'm going to show everyone where the basmati is.

[ALAN walks towards the rice.]

[SARAH walks up to PAUL.]

SARAH

Paul?

PAUL

What can I do for you?

SARAH

I don't know my way around Grove Market very well, and I was looking for the Chinese rice.

PAUL

I guess Alan hasn't shared it with you yet. The rice is on the right side of aisle 8.

SARAH

Thank you.

PAUL

You're welcome.

[SARAH walks off to the rice, where she meets ALAN.]

SARAH

Hi, Alan! You go here?

ALAN

[Waves at SARAH.] Yeah . . . I go here quite a lot. Anything to take my mind off the boring aspects of life. The ugly side of everything.

SARAH

What's been getting you down?

ALAN

School has been really taxing on me this year. You know how it's my junior year? . . . the SAT to study for? And before that there's the PSAT – that's just insane!

SARAH

Don't you appreciate the importance of education? I mean sure doing well in school is hard, but it's . . . necessary . . . you know?

ALAN

Give me one good reason why doing well is "necessary".

SARAH

You see, I want to get good grades, so I can get into a good college, so I can get a good job, so I can have enough money to support my family and have children when I grow up.

ALAN

You see, I don't want children. After all, people will assume I'm straight if they learn I have kids and I don't want people to mistake me for anything but bisexual. And as for the good college – how is that going to help me?

SARAH

Haven't you ever had a craving to go to a really prestigious college?

ALAN

Uh . . . no.

SARAH

Well, I do. I'm hoping to get into Harvard. I think if I only try hard enough, I can make it in! I can climb Mount Everest! And then get a good job in business.

ALAN

You want to major in business? You see, that's not my kind of goal. You know what my big aspiration in life is? For my band to have a hit single by the end of the decade.

SARAH

Really?

ALAN

Yes. That's what's important to *me*.

SARAH

It must be stressful when your goal has a deadline.

ALAN

You would know stressful! Living an organization man, er, organization woman life? Doesn't that seem sort of . . .

SARAH

Shallow?

ALAN

Shallow.

SARAH

True. And I gotta admit . . . sometimes I have to just get back to taking a shampoo and putting stuff in my hair to take a break from all the pressure and tension.

ALAN

The same reason I go to Grove Market?

SARAH

[Laughs.] I guess . . . well, sort of.

ALAN

I can't stand the demands of schoolwork and . . . and oh, my parents are constantly nagging my little brother every day at home. It just seems so quotidian.

SARAH

Quotidian? Well, I guess you're going to ace the vocab portion of the SAT.

ALAN

[*Laughs.*] I guess I will. It's been nice speaking to you, Sarah.

SARAH

You too.

ALAN

Now I'm going to get me some rice!

[*Scene fades.*]

ACT I, SCENE 12

[TRINA is working at her job as a barista in the coffeeshop with the other employees. They are chatting.]

CUSTOMER (to MALE EMPLOYEE)

Hello? May I please have a double latte with sugar?

[The MALE EMPLOYEE chats with the FEMALE EMPLOYEE.]

MALE EMPLOYEE

So this movie I saw, it had this guy breaking up with the girl, and then he wanted to date her again.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

But why would anyone do that?

MALE EMPLOYEE

Because he's a jerk. The guy played by Kevin Bacon, he was the biggest loser in that entire movie.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

The guy played by Kevin Bacon? What's his name?

MALE EMPLOYEE

I'm not good at remembering the characters' names. All I remember is that the character would always wear this sweater . . .

CUSTOMER

Excuse me?

TRINA

May I help you?

CUSTOMER

Yes. A double latte with sugar.

[TRINA starts grinding beans.]

TRINA

Would it be too much to ask you guys to help?

MALE EMPLOYEE

She should have broken up with him and married the blonde guy.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

But could you really see it getting to the point of marriage, with her settling down that fast? It was only a two-hour movie.

MALE EMPLOYEE

A two-and-a-half-hour movie.

TRINA (pouring in the water)

It *is* too much!

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

If I were writing the script, I'd end when he says he's going to be with her forever, and just let the story end there.

MALE EMPLOYEE

Well, they say it's not a happy ending unless you see the hero and the heroine getting married.

[TRINA pours in the milk.]

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

That would exclude all teen flicks from having a happy ending.

TRINA

[Pouring in sugar] Here you go.

CUSTOMER

Thank you so much.

TRINA

God, this is such a miserable job.

MALE EMPLOYEE

What about Clueless?

TRINA

[Sings]

I want to see you inside
Know you through all of your blood
And squeeze your arteries to feel things
Like have you got a pulse
And where's your actual riot?
Show me your two callused hands
I don't mind if you've marked them yourself
Or wanted to slice them with your knife
Several times over
At least that may be so in your past
But now you're looking up
To having me now absolve you
Let me touch your palms
And tell you about your life-lines
I suspect you know
About your own future
And wanting to grab yourself at the verge of suicide
Although now you may deny it
I want you to take a needle
Select just any one
And put it up your spine to see
If you can't tell real vibrating when you feel it
Didn't that feel good?
Now, build yourself up on the ground
And with your back numbed feeling so comfortably removed
Try to climb
By making your own tower
And building it on the foundations
Of self-spite and reluctance
And all that's right with self-righteousness
And destructiveness
And when you've climbed up
And made sure no one's looking
You can let all that hair loose
And think back to the time you were five years old
And already wanting coffee
Don't you just want to slap yourself for it
And as the pores burst
You smile nihilistically
Knowing now you want to sleep
More than twelve hours out of the day

Just so you can spend as little time as possible
Thinking about pool and tiramisu and old lovers
And if you picture them holding their cup up to yours
You know that was just a dream
So really it doesn't count
And suppose if God could see inside your dreams
With His or Her omnipotent zoom lens
Would God hold you in contempt for it
And would you be able to spit in your own bearing
And curtly climb back down
A new enlightened piece of pink humanity?
And after you've promptly descended
Will you go down in the basement another thirteen flights of stairs or so
And meditate on all the concerns you always said you'd get to later
With the music of a seasick conch shell
Faintly audible in the distance?
And I only want to climb less often now
Because each time I remember
What my nerves don't want me to hear
Namely forgotten sabotaging experiences
About how worse it always only makes it
To try and go up there even
Such a struggle in a day's life
Tracing the steps of a whole day's journey
Just to voluntarily reenact your own pain
And you feel happier not because you're holding a grudge against yourself
But because you've traveled
Into somebody else's body
For the time being
Voodoo form of revenge without them knowing
And you say
So many things to climb up for in a second
It's just a second
But to your proudly rebellious upstanding neck
An eternity
[Song ends]

[TRINA walks up to another customer at the counter.]

TRINA
Hello?

[Scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 13

[Inside Mrs. Dahlgren's classroom. MRS. DAHLGREN is about to begin her math lesson. Students include MELANIE, BRYCE, ALAN, PAUL, SARAH, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, BLEHM, JAKE, and NADIA. PAUL has a sideways baseball cap on his head.]

JAKE

[On cellphone] So what do you say we dump Brian Himmelfarb into a garbage can during lunchtime?

DAHLGREN

Jake, no talking on your cellphone during class, please.

JAKE

Sorry. Hof, I'll talk to you later. [Puts cellphone away.]

DAHLGREN

Today we will begin our lesson on congruent figures. Get out your books and open them to page 76. [Walks across room.] Paul, what's that on your head?

PAUL

That's a hat.

DAHLGREN

Please take it off. Our rule is no hats in class.

PAUL

What's wrong with a hat?

DAHLGREN

Society demands that you take your hat off when you enter a building.

PAUL

That's a lame reason to take it off.

DAHLGREN

No, it isn't. Life is all about abiding by the restrictions of society. Take it off, come on.

PAUL

Wait a minute. You think I'm about to take it off just so I can conform to some rule of some society I didn't ask to be a part of? Suuuuuure.

BLEHM

Those are the rules. Mrs. Dahlgren makes the rules, not you.

JAKE

Yeah! Who makes the rules, you or her, you fag?

ALAN

So you think we should blindly follow them? Whatever the written rules are?

BLEHM

Yes.

ALAN

Whatever happened to Rosa Parks? And Henry David Thoreau? If we all blindly followed the rules, who knows who could take over the country. We wouldn't go anywhere. We'd just be stuck in the same place for centuries and centuries . . . for . . . forever.

DAHLGREN

It's not your place as high school students to question the rules that our society holds dear. How much do teen-agers know?

PAUL

More than you do.

DAHLGREN

That was NOT respectful, Paul. Do you realize how immature and unformed your perspective on life is? Teen-agers think they're immortal.

PAUL

Really? You thought you're immortal and stuff when you were my age?

DAHLGREN

I knew I wasn't, but the other teen-agers did.

BRYCE

Does anyone here actually think they're immortal? Raise your hand if you think you're immortal.

[Everyone looks across the classroom as nobody raises his or her hand. MRS.

DAHLGREN looks noticeably shaken.]

DAHLGREN

[*Regaining her composure*] You have to obey the restrictions of society or you pay the consequences. One of our society's rules is that women don't go topless in public. If you're a girl and you go to the beach topless, you get arrested. Our society has decided that that's not OK.

SARAH

But what about the Middle East? There they're all convinced that it's wrong for a woman to not cover her hair. That's no different from the toplessness rule in America, isn't it?

DAHLGREN

They are 100 percent right. A woman –

ALAN

Huh! No!

DAHLGREN

Don't cut me off. A woman going with her hair exposed is right in the U.S. but wrong in the Middle East. All societies have –

ALAN

It's right in both places. The Arabs are only too bigoted to realize it.

JAKE

I like topless girls. Now, naked boys at the beach freak me out!

ALAN

Homophobe!

DAHLGREN

I know more than you do and I will call the necessity of taking one's hat off. Paul, I ask you to remove the hat. And Jake has a good point. Our society has decided that it's not appropriate for boys to kiss other boys.

PAUL

No way.

DAHLGREN

If you don't take it off, I shall send you to Assistant-principal Pittman's office.

JAKE

Take it off, and stop kissing other guys!

[PAUL's hat stays on.]

DAHLGREN

All right, I'm writing you a referral. [Writes a referral.] Go to Mr. Pittman's office – now!

[MRS. DAHLGREN hands the referral to PAUL. PAUL walks out of the room.]

ACT I, SCENE 14

[PAUL appears in a room with ASSISTANT-PRINCIPAL GEORGE H. PITTMAN, a Baby Boomer dressed in slacks, shirt and tie. MR. PITTMAN holds the referral up.]

PITTMAN

Hello.

PAUL
[Sad] Hi.

PITTMAN
Mrs. Dahlgren says you had your hat on in class?

PAUL
Did I ever! And then Jake Cook is all, “stop kissing other guys”.

PITTMAN
The rules of school need to be respected. There are many norms that you’re expected to obey when you’re in class. You don’t pull a girl’s hair, you don’t chew gum in class and you take your hat off. And our society also has a consensus that boys don’t kiss other boys and girls don’t kiss other girls.

PAUL
You compare keeping your hat on to pulling a girl’s hair?

PITTMAN
Really, there’s no difference.

PAUL
If I pull Meghan’s hair, that hurts her. She’ll be crying. But how the hell do I hurt anyone when I keep my hat on?

PITTMAN
Hey, watch your language. You see, in our society, we have rules that we’re expected to follow. When you subvert the rules, you’ve broken the contract with your society. Imagine if we didn’t have any rules! I mean, people would murder, people would rape, people would steal . . . there would be chaos. Now, you have these some people think they know better than the rest of society what’s right and what’s wrong – and they end up in jail. Just look at the Unabomber, do you want to end up like that? So . . . in order to keep the rules in place, we need authority figures. When you question authority, you’re showing your disrespect to the very society that keeps you alive. When people break the rules, bad things happen. They happen because of people who question the rules, who rock the boat. If someone questions the speed limit and breaks the speed limit because they think it’s arbitrary, they end up killing people, and then how do they explain themselves? These anarchists –

PAUL
Huh? You’re saying that there would be chaos and stuff if people wore their hats in class?

PITTMAN

It's that attitude, of "I know better than the authority figure", that endangers society. When you go to class, you are obliged to obey the rules. Obeying the rules –

PAUL

But school is mandatory! I'm forced to go to school under state law! I don't get any freedom in whether I get to wear my baseball cap! No one asked me whether I wanted to go to school! This is not America! This is a prison!

PITTMAN

Then why don't you change the rule by writing to your local lawmakers? The proper way to change a law is through legislation. Write a letter to your assemblyman about mandatory school and maybe he'll draft a bill to get it changed, but until then, conform. [Smirks.] Now, do we have a deal? Tell me we're buddies. You'll be my big strong man. Shake? [Extends his hand to PAUL.]

[PAUL turns down the handshake offer with a sour look on his face.]

PITTMAN

Fine, if you're going to be that way, I've got my way of taking care of you. [Presses a button on the office telephone.] Hello? Graham? Come in here, I've got Paul Moreno in here. OK. Good-bye. [Pauses.] Wait around here, I'm going to have Principal Forbes in here in just a minute. We'll see what he thinks.

[PRINCIPAL GRAHAM FORBES, a clean-cut man born circa 1960 in suit and conservative tie, walks in the door.]

FORBES

Hi, George.

PITTMAN

Well, Graham, it looks like Paul over here hasn't been following the school rules and deserves a suspension. I caught Paul doing graffiti in the boys' restroom in the B building.

PAUL

WHAT?

PITTMAN

Don't lie, I caught you red-handed. You know that graffiti there, that was Paul.

PAUL

Principal Forbes, Mr. Pittman is lying!

PITTMAN

Lying won't help your case, Paul.

PAUL
YOU'RE the liar!

PITTMAN
You see, Graham, Paul wrote the F-word, the SH-word, all of those words on the wall. He even did a menu with his phone number, but I washed it off already.

PAUL
No, Principal Forbes, Dahlgren sent me here because I wouldn't take off my hat in class. Mr. Pittman's just angry because I wouldn't shake his hand when he tried to talk to me about following rules like the no-hat rule.

FORBES
Paul, we have firm policies against graffiti at Dulcevida High School.

PAUL
But I didn't do it!

FORBES
Graffiti is vandalism. The school rules are very clear on this. We'll put this on your permanent record, and you'll receive one week's suspension.

PAUL
Suspension?! You're going to be sorry!

FORBES
Now I'm upping it to two weeks.

PAUL
This is shan!

FORBES
You should have thought of the consequences before you did the graffiti.

PAUL
But I didn't do the graffiti! That's the point I'm trying to make!

PITTMAN
I really believe sentences should be lengthened when students lie.

PAUL
My father's at home.

[Scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 15

[In BRYCE's bedroom. There is a Nirvana poster on the walls, and another poster reading "GLOBAL BEAST". MELANIE and BRYCE are together on BRYCE's bed.]

MELANIE
My favorite boy.

BRYCE
My favorite girl.

MELANIE
[Playing with Bryce's hair] And such a great room you've got. It really shows who you are. A Nirvana poster. There's Kurt Cobain.

[BRYCE nods.]

MELANIE
February 20, 1967 to April 5, 1994. Some short life.

BRYCE
Well, he's not done living it.

MELANIE
What's that poster about – "GLOBAL BEAST"?

BRYCE
That's an anti-globalization poster, Melanie. I'm against the World Trade Organization.

MELANIE
I don't know much about that stuff.

BRYCE
The world, as it is now, is controlled by McDonald's and other corporations. Global corporations. And we live in America.

MELANIE
And?

BRYCE
You know, corporations, they can cross borders without having to show passports. They can exploit people. They can legally destroy the environment. No littering fine for them! No arrests! They have all of the rights of people with none of the responsibilities!

MELANIE
But a corporation isn't a person.

BRYCE

Exactly. But they can hurt people. When you buy Nike, you're hurting a Nike employee working in North Korea.

MELANIE

The holy swoosh.

BRYCE

Yeah. Melanie, I'm going to get you into this anti-globalization thing. Over 180 countries . . . they've got to get along.

[Sings]

I can just feel the taste of a Mexican pizza
Chewing to the sound of ruchenitsa
And it didn't taste a thing like Taco Bell
But in New Jersey, Taco Bell's what's going to sell
Music that was originally Haiti's
Will be heard next year by the bank of the Euphrates
But they'll only sell it to make some more cash
While Iraqis' hard-earned dough goes into cigarette ash
A new generation of teens who are global
But all buy all their books from Barnes and Noble
All coming with laptops and cellphones attached
But is there the power to earn pesos to match?

One planet, lonely in the midst of space
Home to the struggle of the *sapiens* race
Connected by a cell, now to no nation loyal
Can we learn to be one and all share in the spoils?

You don't have to be Irish to listen to Enya
Masai buy *Watermark*, but what does Cork get from Kenya?
I wouldn't know culture from Vladivostok
In a restaurant there, they'll be seen drinking Coke
And now Orthodox Czechs have a chocolate egg Easter
Who recalls what fueled the Sandinistas?
When I went to Japan, I caught American cartoons
I met a girl my age, watching Sailor Moon
She was on her Nokia, which along the way dropped
She left, then sent to me her favorite K-pop
I went back with that and a Taiwanese comb
But does North Korea send the same things home?

One planet, lonely in the midst of space
Home to the struggle of the *sapiens* race
Connected by a cell, now to no nation loyal
Can we learn to be one and all share in the spoils?

Take a jet to Punjab, smell them burning incense
Where has Bollywood in God's name been since
They worked at Starbucks, grinding mocha beans
From Colombia, or perhaps from Benin
A Palestine kid wears a swoosh from Nike
And what's that to the Gazan worker's psyche?
A Paris boy I met inside the Louvre
Had his PS2, brand-new and improved
I could rent a movie about Costa Rica
But I think I'll look at stones in Ica
Move south, Argentines, like us, see UFO's
I can see the Greys spread Earth junk, with my eyes closed

One planet, lonely in the midst of space
Home to the struggle of the *sapiens* race
Connected by a cell, now to no nation loyal
Can we learn to be one and all share in the spoils?
[End of song]

MELANIE

Wow, Bryce, you seem so . . . downtrodden by big business.

BRYCE.

Yeah. Don't have all that much green. You know . . . my volunteer job at the animal shelter? I'm looking for a paid job.

MELANIE

Oh, that's cool! Why you looking for some more cash?

BRYCE

Oh, I'm, um, I'm hoping to get emancipated.

MELANIE

Really . . . why? Your dad's not like Paul's dad.

BRYCE

My dad and my mom have a custody battle with each other.

MELANIE

Oh, that's right, you told me they were divorced.

BRYCE

Yeah. Every month I get thrown from house to house like a volleyball. It'd be nice if I could live in my own house. And I'd still have money for CD's to upload onto my iPod.

MELANIE

Can't you just get a credit card?

BRYCE

Don't want one. I've got to be careful with my money, and credit cards – they just send people spiraling into debt. [Pauses.] If I had more money, I could replace my amalgam fillings with ones the same color as my teeth.

MELANIE

I think your mouth is hot.

BRYCE

Not as beautiful as yours. I don't see any metal when I look at your mouth.

MELANIE

Well, you've got braces. I got mine off last year. Look into my mouth, Bryce.

BRYCE

Look into my mouth.

[MELANIE and BRYCE kiss. The scene dims out.]

ACT I, SCENE 16

[In Dream Valley. MELANIE and BRYCE are walking by together, near a palm tree.]

MELANIE

Want to go to Grove Market today, Bryce?

BRYCE

We could . . .

[Enter PAUL and ALAN.]

MELANIE

Hey, there's someone we know! *Hey, Paul!*

[PAUL walks over, clearly unhappy about something.]

BRYCE

Grove Market is thataway.

[ALAN follows PAUL.]

PAUL

That's true.

MELANIE

Hey, what's wrong?

PAUL

Mandatory school. It sucks that someone my age can be forced to go to school. I mean, being a teen and all, you're essentially forced to go to a place that forces you to take your hat off. Isn't that unconstitutional?

[SARAH approaches Grove Market. She sees PAUL and the group, and walks towards them.]

MELANIE

Hi, Sarah!

SARAH

Hi, guys. I was going to go to Grove Market, when I noticed you standing out here. So Paul's not working at Grove today?

PAUL

I'm not.

BRYCE

Paul was just telling us about having to go to school.

SARAH

Oh, yeah. I heard Mr. Pittman framed you for graffitiing the walls because you wouldn't take your hat off.

BRYCE

Tell you what. I'll write a post all about the frame-up on the Dulcevida message forum. Folks from all over the school will see my message and they'll know what really happened.

PAUL

Yeah, they'll learn that Pittman's a jerk. [Starts to break down and cry.] How could they get away with doing these things to us?

BRYCE

It's because we're kids. I had to escape Schurz and what-was-the-other-guy's-name . . . we were hanging out here at night and they tried to arrest us because it was after curfew.

MELANIE

I know! I was so shaken by that! Sarah, they were running after us and at one point they were this far behind us. [Puts her arms about a foot apart.]

ALAN

Well, I have the same trouble . . . except it's with my band. I want to get a record deal, but you have to be 18 to sign a contract. How will I get Unfresh signed in time to see my dream come true . . .

SARAH

Having a hit single by the end of the decade.

ALAN

Right. I'm 17 now.

SARAH

Well, I can identify with what you guys are talking about because I have my own problem. My parents are strict. They want me to land a "respectable" job and marry a rich American boy in my twenties – right after I get out of college. They're not too keen on Ryan. And they don't want me listening to rock music. Classic Asian parents. They think just the way they thought in China. I wish there were some way I could become freed from them. I mean, don't get me wrong, I want to have a good job and a Harvard education and all that, but for now I'd like to live on my own.

PAUL

Drinking, driving, getting a credit card, having sex . . . it's like *anything* interesting you want to do has age restrictions on it!

[Everyone says "Yeah".]

PAUL

And get this. Mr. Pittman was all, "The proper way to change laws was through legislation". If we really did that –

BRYCE

Hey, I know what we can do! Let's all get together and write our congressman to change these laws! We're human beings and have just as much a right as any other group of people to be.

MELANIE

Will that work?

SARAH

It worked for women and African-Americans. And as for Chinese-Americans, America used to have the Chinese Exclusion Act. Don't have that anymore!

ALAN

This isn't going to work. Get real, people! No one's going to listen to us. No matter how many of us write a letter, or how good our arguments are, politicians are not going to listen to teens today.

MELANIE

I'd like a smoothie now.

[The stage becomes a split stage. MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, and SARAH each occupy one fourth of the stage among vertical bars. Each types a letter at his or her laptop.]

MELANIE

Dear Congressman Johnson,

BRYCE

Dear Congressman Johnson,

PAUL

Dear Congressman Johnson,

SARAH

Dear Congressman Johnson,

MELANIE

My name is Melanie Hayworth, and I am 17 years old.

BRYCE

There are many obstacles and injustices faced by youth in today's world.

PAUL

Everywhere you look, teens are in chains.

SARAH

There are people who care about giving opportunities for African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, women, the poor . . . but not teen-agers.

BRYCE

Everyone under 18 is forbidden to vote. If it's your eighteenth birthday on Election Day, you're expected to vote or else you're not a good American. But if you're 17 years and 364 days old on Election Day, you get arrested for voter fraud if you manage to sneak in and vote. No one commends you for doing your civic duty.

PAUL

What sick mind could make laws that make school compulsory? The state law forces you to go to a place that forces you to follow teachers' every rule. Schools are prisons!

MELANIE

Just look at drinking age laws. If you're 20 years old and want to hold a party, you can't. Doesn't everyone deserve the right to party?

SARAH

Your parents can legally stop you from dating anyone they want. What if they don't approve of you dating someone of a different race and ground you for going out with him for that reason? And then the police enforce that grounding? Doesn't that amount to the government enforcing racism? Sometimes I feel as if I can't breathe. Minors are the legal property of their parents. Isn't it called slavery when a human being is property?

MELANIE

But if you give us a chance,

BRYCE

And listen to what we have to say,

PAUL

Treat us as human beings instead of as animals,

SARAH

We can prove that we can be responsible!

MELANIE

So put an end to MIP's.

SARAH

Give students basic rights at school.

PAUL

Force cops to stop making skateboarding a crime and profiling kids because of their age.

BRYCE

Let teens work full hours, and let them keep their own money. Prevent the money from going to their parents.

MELANIE

End licensing restrictions on teen drivers.

SARAH

Stop parents from sending their kids off to boarding schools or gulag schools. Let everyone 16 or older move away from his or her parents and be allowed to make his or her own decisions.

PAUL

Lower the voting age.

BRYCE

Let everyone over 16 sign a contract. If we make you our partner in changing these

laws, we can make America, and eventually the world, a better place. Sincerely, Bryce Schlitter.

MELANIE
Melanie Hayworth.

PAUL
Paul Moreno.

SARAH
Sarah Chiang.

[Scene fades.]

ACT I, SCENE 17

[In BRYCE's room. BRYCE, MELANIE, ALAN, and TRINA are standing up. SARAH is in a chair, while PAUL is plopped down on Bryce's bed. BRYCE, MELANIE, SARAH, and PAUL are holding up letters.]

BRYCE
Well, they finally arrived. Our letters from Congressman Johnson.

MELANIE
Let's see what he says!

BRYCE
Imagine the excitement if he would invite us to a meeting of Congress to testify! We'd be the next super-teens!

TRINA
Idols for millions.

MELANIE
Tens of millions.

[All four letter-writers open their letters.]

BRYCE
[Reading the letter] Dear Bryce,

Thank you for writing to us about your concerns regarding the rights of youth. The legal rights of youth are firmly enumerated in both federal and state law.

I appreciate your taking the time to write to me and sharing your thoughts on these issues.

MELANIE

Do you hear that? He really appreciates us!

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] However,

TRINA

There's a "however". That can't be good.

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] Teen-agers lack the maturity and life experience that is needed to make their own decisions regarding their lives. With age comes wisdom, and without wisdom, it is impossible to make a good decision.

TRINA

A broken clock is right twice a day.

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] When I was 16, I thought I was mature, but I clearly wasn't. I would take my parents' car and drive to the malt shop when I was supposed to be studying. I would see how fast I could drive the car. Teen-agers think they're immortal.

PAUL

Mrs. Dahlgren, would you sleep with me?

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] I personally knew I wasn't immortal, but most other teen-agers thought they were when we were your age. As for wanting to disobey your parents, how could you possibly know more than your parents when they are three times older than you? That's thrice as much life experience as you have. If you want to go play with guns or hang out with a gang or do something Mom and Dad won't let you do, just wait a few years.

MELANIE

Huh? Where'd he get this stuff about guns and gangs?

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] You may want to lower the voting age, but 16-year-olds lack the maturity to cast an informed vote. Think of what would happen if a bunch of kids went around voting on issues they did not understand. The whole country would suffer because of the decisions of those uninformed minors!

TRINA

And the adults who voted Bush in made a sound, informed decision? So why have a higher standard of informedness for teens?

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] In addition, teen-agers will vote like their parents.

PAUL

Not me! My father is against me being gay, and he votes for anti-gay-rights candidates!

MELANIE

Well, my daddy never grounds me for grades and lets me hold big parties at my house.

[PAUL gives MELANIE a look.]

MELANIE

Hey, that's just my two cents!

TRINA

I find it illogical that a group of teens wanting to break free from their parents' rules would be so close to their parents' ideology that they'd vote like them.

BRYCE

[Reading the letter] And if we did not have rules in school, there would be chaos. Just think of the pandemonium there would be – kids screaming and running around everywhere! School is not the place for self-expression. If you didn't have to attend school, kids would drop out and they wouldn't have the skills they need to function in the corporate workplace.

Therefore, I will not enact any legislation to bring about youth rights in America.
Sincerely –

ALAN

I told you it wasn't going to work. As far as the law is concerned, we're not human beings. We're minors.

PAUL

Lice!

TRINA

Vermin!

SARAH

Slaves on the bank of the Nile!

BRYCE

I really thought this was going to work. He just throws together a bunch of clichés and stuff and uses that to answer our best arguments.

PAUL

I thought my letter might have been too angsty and stuff, but he wrote that in response to everyone's letter.

TRINA

No matter what kind of tone we used or what be the merits of our arguments, Congressman Johnson shot us all down.

BRYCE

[Breaking into tears] It sucks being shot down. What do we do now?

MELANIE

I need another smoothie. [Hugs BRYCE for comfort.]

[Scene fades.]

ACT II

ACT II, SCENE 1

[PAUL, ALAN and TRINA are on the quad. MELANIE is walking by with BRYCE, then the two greet each other.]

BRYCE

Hi, Paul!

PAUL

Bryce! Got Melanie with you?

BRYCE

Yep.

[SARAH walks up, unloads her heavy backpack from her shoulders, and breathes a sigh of relief.]

PAUL

Wassup, Sarah!

SARAH

Oh . . . nothing.

PAUL

Nada mucho?

SARAH

Sí . . . nada mucho hoy. Oh . . . I hope I'm not in trouble with Mrs. Sandoval this year. I hear last year she lost a student's Spanish test.

ALAN

That's just what she wants you to believe. I bet she disappeared the test.

SARAH

"Disappeared"?

ALAN

Disappeared. Like Jimmy Hoffa. Because she didn't like the student and wanted to fail him.

SARAH

Today's adults make life so hard for us.

BRYCE

I know. They don't show a glimmer of idealism, and if you do, they'll tell you you'll be just like their pathetic generation when you grow up.

[The others nod.]

ALAN

Yeah! And they categorize *everything* as appropriate or inappropriate.

[The others nod.]

PAUL

Well, you know what I don't like about adults? They're always saying society knows better than you do. One day Mrs. Dahlgren caught me stroking it in the back of the classroom, right? So then she gives me a lecture on how society knows better than me or her whether it's OK to masturbate in public.

MELANIE

Society and the government.

TRINA

Exactly. Does Mrs. Dahlgren have any trust in herself? Stephen Covey spoke of an internal moral compass. This math teacher has no moral compass.

[The others nod along and say "Sure".]

MELANIE

"Do as I say, not as I did". God, they're always talking like that! These were people who took acid and, well you know. They were fighting to lower the voting age from 21 during Vietnam and all that. Now they won't lower the voting age from 18 or let us do Ecstasy. They say you change when you grow up, but I don't know.

[The others nod.]

PAUL

Yeah! It seems it will be forever until I'm 18 and old enough to vote.

TRINA

But then you'll have to worry about being drafted. I'm 18 and I'm concerned they're going to start drafting girls if they call another oil war.

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH

[*Sing*] 16, 18, 21,

15, 11,

14, 27

When you first teethe, your first driver's license

When you settle down, when you're finally retired?

How much time must pass

How long must you last

Before you're allowed to live as desired?

It's a long, long struggle growing up and breaking

Life's full of scars, and they're yours for the taking

You must try to fly and fail before you can be free

Held down and stopped by the powers that be

16, 18, 21,

17, 20,

or 40, 70

When your sac breaks, when you're weaned from the bottle,

Menarche, your wedding, till you pass away?

How much must you see

How long must be you be

Before you're allowed to live your own way?

It's a long, long struggle growing up and breaking

Life's full of scars, and they're yours for the taking

You must try to fly and fail before you can be free

Held down and stopped by the powers that be

SARAH

I've been alive for 16 years and still going strong

PAUL

It's a one-way highway from conception to cremation

BRYCE

Life is so short, but the centuries are so long

MELANIE

How do you define a generation?

SARAH

By the time that they grew?

TRINA

By the wisdom they knew?

MELANIE

By the parties they threw?

BRYCE

By the flags that they flew?

PAUL

By the art that they drew?

ALAN

The conventions they blew?

SARAH

By the demons they slew? . . .

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH

16, 18, 21,

Maybe forever,

In other words never

When you turn twenty, or seventeen, nineteen

Your fifteenth, your fourteenth, your thirteenth, your twelfth?

What birthdays must dawn

What years undergone

Before you're allowed to just be yourself?

It's a long, long struggle growing up and breaking

Life's full of scars, and they're yours for the taking

You must try to fly and fail before you can be free

Held down and stopped by the powers that be

[*End of song*]

SARAH

I hope I come out of adolescence in one piece.

PAUL

Well, me, I'm, I'm . . . I'm already broken.

MELANIE

Dude! I read all about your getting framed by Mr. Pittman. Bryce showed me his message on the webpage. I'm sorry, Paul.

ALAN

There are these freaking conspiracies all around us. [*Starts to break down and cry.*]
There are! And we – and we have proof. Paul really did get framed.

SARAH

I heard Mr. Pittman planned this ahead of time with Mrs. Dahlgren.

TRINA

I heard that Principal Forbes really knows that Paul's innocent but wants to get rid of him. Just a rumor.

BRYCE

Well, I heard they caught a jock doing the graffiti and he blackmailed Mr. Pittman to frame someone else for the vandalism after Mr. Pittman was caught spitting in a school lunch, so the jock wouldn't lose his athletic scholarship.

MELANIE

There's so much corruption in this world . . . [*stroking BRYCE's hair*] oh if only everyone loved each other the way you and I love each other, Bryce, if only they did.

PAUL

We're gonda pit Bryce against Pittman.

TRINA

Good idea. And up for the Celebrity Death Match . . . He's a middle-aged ageist, and his lies are outrageous . . . George H. Pittman!

PAUL

[*Mocking Pittman*] Only people who were born before disco died have the right not to be punished when they don't do something wrong. Now you kids get in your high chairs!

TRINA

And now his opponent . . . he's the hip one, he's the trendy one . . . he's not even 21 . . . Bryce Schlitter!

BRYCE

Smells like teen spirit!

MELANIE

[*Giggles.*] And you're uz-nommic. Or whatever that word was.

TRINA

Anosmic.

MELANIE
Anosmic.

ALAN
I hope Mr. Pittman doesn't delete Bryce's message.

BRYCE
Then we can just start a Facebook page for it. Friends of Paul Moreno.

MELANIE
And all of us will friend Paul. That sound like a deal?

PAUL
Deal!

BRYCE
Paul, I have a job interview Wednesday, but we can go skateboarding with me on Thursday? We can discuss this further.

PAUL
Clanson Skatepark, 3:30?

BRYCE
Let's.

[End of scene]

ACT II, SCENE 2

[In the backlot. MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH are on the steps together. BLEHM is passing by. PAUL is smoking a joint.]

BRYCE
You look like you're having fun.

MELANIE
Is that, like, marijuana?

PAUL
Yep, this is some quality dank. Bought it from the corner in Benville.

BLEHM
Marijuana? Isn't it illegal?

ALAN
Blehm? What are you doing here in the backlot?

BLEHM

I had to go put something in my car.

PAUL

Sure, it's illegal, but that doesn't mean people won't do it. You're 16 like me, right?

[BLEHM nods.]

PAUL

And haven't you tried alcohol before?

BLEHM

Never.

TRINA

Not once?

BLEHM

You see, I'm not trying a drop of alcohol until I turn 21. I trust the lawmakers to know best what's right for me.

ALAN

Dude! What have you been smoking? The law is stupid, not to mention fascist. It used to be illegal for a woman to vote but legal for a White man to own a Black person. And does something magically become right when it used to be wrong the moment it's legalized?

MELANIE

No.

PAUL

You see, Melanie, my father doesn't give me enough freedom. He's all, *Don't be a fag, don't be a homo, don't be a queen*. And then Mrs. Dahlgren and ol' Pittman, they don't give me freedom either. And so I rebel by smoking the ganj.

BRYCE

And you know what news commentators and politicians say: "Teens do drugs because they have *too much* freedom!"

PAUL

What a load of manure! Blehm, what if you were gay and you had parents who didn't let you date guys?

BLEHM

Then I'd wait until I was in college.

PAUL

Baaaaa! Baaaaaaaaa! Baaaaaaaaa! [Starts bleating at BLEHM.]

BLEHM

Excuse me?

PAUL

I said: Baaaaa! Baaaaaaaaa! Baaaaaaaaa! [Continues bleating.] You're a sheep!

BLEHM

Parents are only doing what they think is best for you, Paul.

ALAN

There's a big difference between "think is best" and "is best". Ever heard the saying "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions"? I can't believe you support parents having the "right" [makes quotes in air] to say, "You can't be gay".

BLEHM

That's a parent's job.

ALAN [*angrily*]

So if the job of a parent is to dictate their child's sexual orientation, then WHY DON'T WE JUST ABOLISH PARENTHOOD? Sounds like a simple solution . . .

BLEHM

I'm just saying we need parents so they can feed and clothe their children and put a roof over their heads.

TRINA

Now you're making a motte-and-bailey argument.

BLEHM

A what and what-ley argument?

[JAKE passes by.]

ALAN

Hey Jake, you don't support the 21 drinking age, do you?

JAKE

Yeah, I do, because kids are too immature to drink!

TRINA

What about Tanner O'Dell's party last weekend? You were drinking your head off there!

ALAN

You know about Thoreau and Emerson?

TRINA

Sure. Burdick taught us that they promoted civil disobedience.

ALAN

Exactly. Life's too short to obey the law. Being good – I mean, teens can't sit around being good, waiting forever for pot to be legalized. You think they're going to legalize it in the next 5 years?

BLEHM

No.

ALAN

The next 10 years? Before you lose your teeth and need a set of dentures?

BLEHM

Uh . . .

ALAN

D'you think they're going to leg–

PAUL

Hey, anyone want some?

MELANIE

I'll try. But I'm a newcomer to grass.

TRINA

You have to try weed a few times before it gets you high.

[PAUL puts his joint down and rolls a joint for MELANIE.]

BLEHM

Even if it were legalized, wouldn't pot still be bad for you?

PAUL

Dude! You're just thinking what they want you to think. You see, the cops who come over for D.A.R.E. make weed out like it's the most evil thing on the planet. They're all, "Marijuana, also known as pot, weed, ganja, and cannabis, is a dangerous and pernicious drug. One toke can kill you". They think bomb will turn everyone into a slacker.

[PAUL gives the joint to MELANIE.]

PAUL

So Melanie, will you smoke a toast with me to civil disobedience?

MELANIE

Sure.

[MELANIE and PAUL both take a hit.]

ALAN

Why obey the law when being citizens just means we teens will be third-class citizens? We can aim for something better than being citizens of the United States. By living outside the law, instead of being part of the U.S. we can be part of our own nation. The nation of youth. We'll all vow not to vote, or join the military, or do anything else that's "for American citizens". Vow? Sound like a good idea?

Sarah? Trina? Melanie?

SARAH

You ready?

TRINA

Yeah.

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH

Vow!

MELANIE

[*Singing*] We won't live a lie

ALAN

At least it's not a felony
If you claim you don't apply

The whole adult world's making an
Injunction to obey the czar
Let's respond by partaking in
All the things that define who we are

Like . . .

Shopping around
Hopping around from McJob to McJob

MELANIE

Like the latest teen heartthrob

TRINA

Hating the latest teen heartthrob

PAUL

Like moshing, the GAP
Loitering, and crunk rap

BRYCE

Ocean Pacific

MELANIE

Jnco

SARAH

Like ginger, ginseng, ginkgo

BRYCE

And Seattle

TRINA

Constant battle with the world

ALAN

Like the synthesizer
Like Crystal Geysers

TRINA

Like Anne Rice

PAUL

The Spice Girls

MELANIE

Hanson

TRINA

And Marilyn Manson

BRYCE

Like neon

MELANIE

Évian

Like hot guys turning me on

TRINA

Like "Beavis and Butt-head"
And Daria

BRYCE
Dan Millman's "Peaceful Warrior"

MELANIE
Led Zep
Making the first step

PAUL
Fruitopia
Snapple
And Fiona Apple

TRINA
Like Ani and Jewel

PAUL
Maintaining a website about how much you hate your school

MELANIE
Seventeen, YM
Ankle bracelets, RATM

TRINA
The Catcher in the Rye

ALAN
Chinese food

SARAH
Italian

TRINA
Mexican

PAUL
Thai

BRYCE
Like any ethnic cuisine

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH
The teen-age life

MELANIE
My brain's not damaged, but it aches
From challenges I'd rather not meet

Beat up the system if that's what it takes
Tooouo get you tooouo be upbeat

MELANIE
Like getting body piercing at underground clinics

TRINA
Going around claiming to be cynics

PAUL
Like making yourself look sexier

MELANIE
Like anorexia

PAUL
Being goalless
Practically soulless
Like living your life to the wholest

ALAN
Conforming to the nonconformist

PAUL
Wearing baggy pants with shirts that look practically enormous

MELANIE
Girl power!

BRYCE
Buying CD's at Tower

MELANIE
Playganism
Veganism

BRYCE
Hoodies
Buying goodies from Grove Market

TRINA
Kohling your eyelid to dark it
Echinacea, ramen, cilantro, aloe vera

SARAH
Sarah MacLachlan

And Tori Amos, too

BRYCE
Green Day
Sugar Ray

MELANIE
Erykah Badu
Like Jeep Wranglers, like platform shoes

PAUL
Like nachos and Mountain Dew

TRINA
“Dawson’s Creek”

SARAH
The nouveau and chic

TRINA
Things like Ecstasy and
Like the rave,
Like Dave Matthews Band

BRYCE
Leis, hemp, recycling, anything that’s green

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH
The teen-age life

BRYCE
The very world we’re living in
Is people 14 thru 18
There’s no point but in giving in
When the whole outside world is the Scene

ALAN
All-knowing
Beard-growing
Navel-showing
Going psycho
Many other cool things, like, oh . . .

SARAH
Chatrooms
Funky perfumes imported from France

MELANIE

Like cargo pants

Cargo shorts

Extreme sports

BRYCE

Like hip-hop

Like flip-flops

PAUL

Like Myst and Doom and Quake

MELANIE

Fake fur, snowboarding and bleach

BRYCE

A beach where a girl relaxes

ALAN

Like never paying taxes

SARAH

Like the spa

ALAN

Like ska

MELANIE

Like the perfect tan

SARAH

Spazzing out

Being a devout music fan

MELANIE

Like manufactured bands consisting of hot guys 20 and under

PAUL

Like the Goo Goo Dolls

Like Harvey Danger

TRINA

They're just a one-hit wonder

PAUL

Are not

TRINA

Are too

It's true

Name one song they do

Besides "Flagpole Sitta"

PAUL

Umm . . .

MELANIE

Like Delia*s catalogue

SARAH

Like Urban Outfitters

You know what I mean

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH

The teen-age life

I pledge allegiance to the colors (black, blue, cream)

Of Alternative Nation

And to the trends of which it consists

One nation

Across the globe

With chapters everywhere

And liberty and meaning for youth

ALAN

Teen spirit

SARAH

A life that goes every day faster

BRYCE

Like plastering your walls with posters

PAUL

Not doing what you're s'posta

SARAH

Like the soulmate search

MELANIE

Making out in the pews of the local Catholic church

ALAN

Chico
Techno
Reggae, emo

SARAH
The Wallflowers, Bush, No Doubt

PAUL
Coming out
Not caring about your future career

SARAH
Jean Naté

TRINA
Living for today
No doubt
No fear

BRYCE
Like the human feeling

MELANIE
Like clothes that are revealing

SARAH
Like ayurvedic healing

PAUL
And breaking all the laws that already need repealing
It's for a good cause

ALAN
Alienation
Observation
Purgation
Disorientation
Self-degradation
Alternative Nation

TRINA
Vita brevis, ars longa

MELANIE
Like manga
Like anime

Whatever popular Americana may soon make the scene

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH
The teen-age life

ALAN

The Captain will be out-Von-Trapped
George Banks is gonda be out-Banksed
What's pressed has just about gone snap
So let's torture adults with our angst!

PAUL

PSP

"The O.C."

Buying a Sum 41 CD

TRINA

Napster and iPods

Bidis, Morpheus, even though they're outlawed

BRYCE

Like MySpace

Sideways baseball caps

MELANIE

Sexting

Texting friends all over the map

BRYCE

Talking loudly on cellphones in public

SARAH

Standing proudly

PAUL

Like bowling

Online trolling

JK Rowling

BRYCE

Telling the polling organizations

You hate corporations

ALAN

Growing pseudo-mullets

SARAH
And Naruto

TRINA
Like phreaking
Freak dancing

MELANIE
SpongeBob SquarePants 'n'

SARAH
My Chemical Romance

TRINA
Like Fallout Boy and rants
About oil

BRYCE
Not being brand-loyal

MELANIE
Like Bratz
White hats

ALAN
Guitar Hero

TRINA
Laura Nyro

SARAH
Like getting yourself full
Of Rockstar and Red Bull

TRINA
Keane's "Somewhere Only We Know"

SARAH
Frappuccinos
Jones Soda
Kurt Loder
Of a Revolution

BRYCE
Finding global warming solutions

PAUL
Mozilla
The Killers

TRINA
Incubus, Hinder, Puddle of Mudd and

BRYCE
Michelle
Branch and Chevelle
Franz Ferdinand

SARAH
Like Herbal Essence
Evanescence

PAUL
Grand Theft Auto
The far left

MELANIE
Stephenie Meyer

ALAN
Handing out flyers
About in-shop revolts

SARAH
Like Twitter

MELANIE
And glitter

ALAN
And Bolt

SARAH
Like Pink

ALAN
Like Blink-182

MELANIE
Adult Swim
The Sims 2

ALAN

Talking 'bout my generation, as was said by the Who

TRINA

Like Avril Lavigne

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH

The teen-age life

BRYCE

Will we have to end all of this fun

When we're all of 21?

MELANIE

Uh

ALAN

No

Make that 40

PAUL

When I'm 40, I'll be a Youth Nation deportee

TRINA

Or dead . . .

MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, and SARAH

The teen-age

(Or twentysomething)

Life!

[*End of song*]

ACT II, SCENE 3

[ALAN is in the career counselor's office with MRS. MARCINIAK.]

MARCINIAK

Hi, Alan, take a seat right here.

[ALAN sits down.]

MARCINIAK

You have a meeting scheduled with me today. Do you know what it's for?

ALAN

Yeah, I know what it's for. You're the career counselor.

MARCINIAK

That is correct, I am. I want to know if you've given any thought to your career?

ALAN

You see, my path is going to be my band. I'll write rock songs and record them and get a record deal and become the ultimate rock star of my generation. All I need is for our bassists to stop flaking out.

MARCINIAK

[Squinching her face up] Don't you have anything else you'd like to do?

ALAN

No, that's my dream. To play with my band. Unfresh are going to be the best band in the world. Make that the galaxy. My goal is to have a hit single by the end of the decade.

MARCINIAK

You got a 780 on your math SAT. Why don't you be an accountant?

ALAN

[Looks incredulous and offended] An ACCOUNTANT?

MARCINIAK

Given your skill with numbers . . .

ALAN

It's not just about whether I'm good with numbers. Honestly, can you picture me in a suit?

MARCINIAK

You've got to think about more than dress code when you find a career that's right for you.

ALAN

Well, I couldn't be happy with myself if I chose a job where people saw me in a suit every day, because that's not the kind of person I am.

MARCINIAK

Your band –

ALAN

And no, I'm not thinking about dress code when I'm choosing rock stardom as my job. I'm choosing it because writing songs is the only way I can tell society how I feel about the issues.

MARCINIAK

Your band may not be able to find a record deal or sell enough records to make enough money to live in a place like Armando. What if your band fails? Why don't you find a conventional job, and then keep your band as a sideline, just in case Unfresh becomes successful?

ALAN

If I work to get a career of the type you want me to get . . . well, if I did, then that would exhaust my energy. Energy comes and goes when you're on a bipolar cycle, and all that creative rush would be drained from me if I had to spend it on a "conventional job". It would keep me from focusing on making my songs good.

MARCINIAK

[Sighs] Today's teens just don't show the career-orientedness they're going to need. Why can't they be like my generation when we were young? You guys all think you're so special and the world is just there to be a couch for you to claw.

ALAN

So you're telling me I'm not special?

MARCINIAK

I'm- I'm-

ALAN

All through elementary school and junior high my teachers said every one of us was special. They had us do activities and write poems where we talked all about ourselves . . . and do acrostics with our names . . . that stuff. Are you saying that all the stuff we learned about us being special was lies?

MARCINIAK

[Flustered] Can I help you at all in choosing a career?

ALAN

No.

MARCINIAK

Good-bye, Alan.

ALAN

Good-bye, Mrs. Marciniak.

[*Scene fades*]

ACT II, SCENE 4

[MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, SARAH, and BRIAN are in the computer lab together with a few other students.]

SARAH

So what do you call a triangle with two sides equal in length and one side of a different length?

PAUL

An isosceles triangle.

SARAH

Correct.

[BRIAN HIMMELFARB, a boy with white tennis shoes, blue jeans, a white T-shirt, brown hair, and glasses, is at one of the computers playing AdventureQuest.]

BRIAN

Who do you think is going to win, a Level 30 or a Level 34?

TRINA

Chance says the Level 34, right?

BRIAN

But *I'm* the Level 30!

SARAH

The Level 30, then, OK? [She gives BRIAN a skeptical, confused look.]

BRIAN

Yeah! The Level 30! [Plays more.] I just beat him! Now I get to select a sword! Check it out! It's the Demon Slayer!

MELANIE

Wait, didn't you get the Demon Slayer last week?

BRIAN

That was the *Dragon* Slayer. This is the *Demon* Slayer! Look at it!

TRINA

Looking will strain my neck. Don't want to develop kyphosis in my elder years.

PAUL

Ky-what?

TRINA

That means I don't want to become a hunchback.

PAUL

Like in that Disney movie?

BRIAN

The Demon Slayer. Isn't it cool?

ALAN

Dude! That looks just like every other sword in your game!

MELANIE

[Rolling eyes] AdventureQuest is such a waste of time.

TRINA

An *insufferable* waste of time.

ALAN

Brian, how do you manage to play that game without putting yourself to sleep? Could I have some of your Nō-Dōz?

BRIAN

Who told you I take Nō-Dōz? All I'm on is Paxil.

TRINA

That was *sarcasm*.

[MAJOR WALTER GABELKO, a JROTC recruiter, walks into the room. He is dressed in military outfit and high-and-tight.]

GABELKO

Hi! I'm Major Walter Gabelko, from the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Can I interest any of you in joining the JROTC?

MELANIE

[Shakes her head] No.

BRYCE

We're not interested in serving the U.S. or its government.

BRIAN

I'm ineligible for military service. I have Asperger's.

GABELKO

You'll learn patriotism and discipline . . . and feel great about serving your country.

PAUL

When the U.S. is like this . . . who needs patriotism? The cops try to confiscate my skateboard.

MELANIE

Yeah . . . they tried to arrest me for breaking curfew.

GABELKO

Couldn't you young men and women be bothered to serve your country if we went to war?

[The teens all shake their heads.]

ALAN

And die for oil?

GABELKO

Don't you have any respect for our president at all? In times like these, we need to support –

ALAN

The president is a drunk driver who cuts down trees and executed innocent people. How is that deserving of respect?

GABELKO

I tried.

[Exit MAJ. GABELKO.]

BRYCE

How could we die for the U.S. in the shape that it's in?

PAUL

Yeah, after we die it will be the same old rotten place.

TRINA

And we'll be dead! It's a lose-lose situation. You know what the problem is, it's the politicians Americans have as choices to vote for.

SARAH

Like Clinton, for instance. He said he supported great schools. He wanted to make the economy strong.

BRYCE

Nothing radical.

SARAH

Yeah. You know what I'm saying. He wanted to protect a woman's right to choose, but abortion's already been legal for, what, 30 years? What about, say . . . gay marriage, or marijuana?

[The teens say “I know” and nod.]

PAUL

Politicians certainly don't have the guts to end Armando's curfew or take care of the way its cops behave. And they all say I'm going to vote like my parents!

TRINA

They don't stop global warming . . .

MELANIE

. . . Because they're too busy talking about keeping America on top of the world or something.

[Everyone says, “Yeah”.]

SARAH

There are species dying out in the rain-forests in Brazil . . . and do you see American politicians doing anything about it?

ALAN

You know, they have lots of tax money, and I don't see any of that being spent on the rain-forests.

SARAH

I guess they use it on pork.

PAUL

Speaking of pigs, every time you pay taxes it goes to supporting Armando's finest so they can arrest you! Arrest you for . . . for some bogus charge. Even the politicians who brag about how, like, they're going to lower taxes won't stop using it for the PD.

MELANIE

Or for war. It's like whenever there's a war, politicians are afraid to oppose it.

TRINA

There's that moral compass again. Not many of them speak about respecting the Constitution.

[Everyone says “Yeah”.]

PAUL

And then you have the ones who talk about gay people and how we're tearing apart this nation with a threat to its morals and stuff. [*Rolls eyes.*] They think the most important things to do are things like throwing men who have sex with each other in jail and making – making the teachers lead prayers in class and teach creationism in schools.

MELANIE

Yeah, those ones. And the other ones, they're the boring men in suits who talk about making the economy strong or something. The economy, sure it's . . . but . . . I don't know. They're afraid to try anything radical.

BRYCE

Yeah, they're all playing a game of who can come closest to the center whenever it's election season.

[Everyone says "Yeah".]

BRYCE

You know what I think the problem is? That they're all indebted to corporations. Just look at them. Just look at them! They're bursting with corporate greed! I mean, they have to take conservative positions and stuff or their favorite businesses won't pay them money. In Finland, you know, you can go to college for free. I don't have a lot of green, so I'm going to have to pay a lot of tuition to get into Oberlin. Doesn't that suck?

SARAH

If you're not rich, how 'bout . . . maybe . . . getting a student loan?

TRINA

Oh god, not a student loan! You'll be a slave to debt for decades to come! Plus if you're a boy, they make you register with the Selective Service!

ALAN

That's right, Bryce. (And Trina.) And with that corporate stuff . . . you know . . . you can forget about them developing solar cars or revealing the truth about UFO's. If only we had a president who didn't cover things up – he would release everything the government knows about aliens. We'd be able to visit the Greys!

BRYCE

Or what about the WTO?

[Everyone says "Yeah".]

SARAH

Another thing! I don't like the way they talk about stupid crap like whether their opponent served in the military, or – and then there's – whom the other candidate slept with. They don't focus enough on the issues when they do that.

[Everyone says "Yeah".]

TRINA

And speaking of whom they slept with, nothing disturbs me like seeing a candidate lie. When's the last time we had an Honest Abe? Or a George Washington telling the truth

about the cherry tree?

[Everyone says “Yeah”.]

ALAN

Politicians don't care about their constituents, especially people who are young and don't have it all going for them. I know most kids don't have it all going for them, but . . . most people who run for president or Congress just don't care about teens. In fact, they don't care about anybody who writes a letter to them.

MELANIE

Yeah, just look at Congressman Johnson.

SARAH

None of th – they won't go and break bread with the people they're supposed to represent. It's like most of them are too busy to talk to common people.

[Everyone says “Yeah”.]

BRYCE

Well, there's going to be a protest at St. Angela's College of Armando. St. Angela's won't let the students download MP3's from the school computers, so they're holding a protest there on the fifteenth. I'm going to be there. Melanie, will you accompany me?

MELANIE

Why, Bryce, I'd love to.

BRYCE

Oh Melanie, I heard it's going to be great. Slogans . . . signs . . . the works.

MELANIE

Count me in. On the fifteenth! Then we can see Lady Gaga in concert.

BRYCE

I heard she's touring with the Killers.

MELANIE

Coolness!

[BRYCE and MELANIE both raise their hands as if raising glasses.]

MELANIE

By the way, how'd your job interview go?

BRYCE

It went great. Ms. Steiner said she looooooves spirited young people.

TRINA

That's reassuring.

ALAN

How'd you do a job interview and all, Bryce? You don't own a suit.

BRYCE

I wore a striped polo to the interview.

TRINA

Green and blue . . . right?

BRYCE

Exactamundo.

MELANIE

Lucky Bryce. Another toast!

[BRYCE and MELANIE both raise their hands again. Scene fades.]

ACT II, SCENE 5

[In the kitchen at PAUL's house. His father, RAÚL MORENO, is there with him. MR. MORENO, in his forties, wears a solid polo shirt and jeans. PAUL has a backpack on his back, just having come home from school.]

MR. MORENO

Paul, I have to speak with you a minute.

PAUL

[Worried] What is it?

MR. MORENO

I received a call from Mr. Pittman. He says you were making out with another boy.

PAUL

That was Matt Kelly.

MR. MORENO

We don't do that, Paul. You can't grow up to be a homosexual.

PAUL

That's just who I am, OK?

MR. MORENO

I raised you to be a real man. You've got to be a man, Paul! Be a red-blooded American

male! Go work on a car! Talk about girls instead of boys! Get your testosterone going!

PAUL

Well, guess what, Dad? Matt is hot. You got a problem with that?

MR. MORENO

You're not an adult. As long as you're living in my house, I'm going to make the rules and you're going to follow them! If I say you can't touch boys, you can't touch boys.

PAUL

NO!

MR. MORENO

[Yelling] I didn't work 16 years to raise a fag! When you grow up, I want you married to a woman! And I better see some grandchildren! You are not going to disrespect my efforts at raising a man! Do you want to burn in Hell? Because that's where fags and gender-benders go!

PAUL

[Crying] Everyone says I'm so bad.

MR. MORENO

Stop that crying at once! Real males don't cry!

PAUL

You're just like every other adult who tells me I'm a bad person. You're not making me feel any better. Mr. Pittman . . . And you know? Pittman doesn't like the fact that I'm gay or that I – or that I won't say yes to him. Mrs. Dahlgren sent me to the office for wearing my hat in class and got on me for talking about turds.

MR. MORENO

Paul, that's not the kind of thing adults talk about. We're going through the same thing, over and over again. I get a call about inappropriate behavior at school. How many times is this going to go on before I can get through to you? Wake up! I want you to grow up to follow the straight and narrow path. Get a real job, find a wife, settle down.

PAUL

Guess what, I don't *want* a wife! I don't *want* to raise a family! I don't *want* to go to school or live in this stupid house. How come you never give me any choices!

MR. MORENO

Because I'm your parent – is that a good enough answer for you? I work my butt off every day to feed you, and clothe you, and shelter you . . . you don't treat me like this in return!

PAUL

You never asked whether I wanted to live with you! You never even gave me a choice about whether I wanted to be born! Besides, I have my own job!

MR. MORENO

Are you saying you don't need me?

PAUL

Yes!

MR. MORENO

Now, you are grounded!

PAUL

Why the *hell* are you grounding me just because I like people with penises?

MR. MORENO

I think you answered your own question, young man. I'm doing this to help you, so you can get on a straight path when you grow up. Now, there's going to be no hanging out with your friends, no working at Grove Market. I want you to help me around the house and eat dinner with your family. Is that a deal?

PAUL

NO! [Walks off.] I'm not going to be punished because of who I like, I'm going to go out and do something really productive! Work!

ACT II, SCENE 6

[MELANIE is in her room. She has a razor in her hand.]

MELANIE

I'm worthless! *It's* worthless! [Rubs razor against her wrist, as to cut it.] I can SCREAM all I want and nobody's going to hear me! [Cuts wrists.] I'm trash, I'm trash, I'm trash. Little turd to be flushed down the toilet and never seen again! Because that's my fate! [Continues to cut herself.] I'm just a prisoner. A PRISONER!

[BRYCE climbs in her open window. MELANIE continues to slit her wrists.]

MELANIE

I feel like I'm chained forever! I can't breathe!

BRYCE

Hi, Mel- *Melanie!*

[MELANIE drops her razor.]

BRYCE

Oh my living god! Did I see what I think I saw? [Looks at the razor.] Well, that's a razor.

MELANIE

Oh my god, you found out?

BRYCE

Is this just something you started to do, like last week?

MELANIE

[Crying] No. I cut myself. I've been doing this since I was 14. [Pauses.] I can't let this get out. If Meghan and Lindsay knew, if my father knew . . .

BRYCE

I promise I'll keep it a secret, Melanie.

MELANIE

You will? For me.

BRYCE

[Holding MELANIE's hand] Sure. I love you.

MELANIE

And this won't be the last time either. I'm probably going to cut myself again next week.

BRYCE

How are you feeling right now, Melanie?

MELANIE

I'm going to read you a poem I wrote. [Picks up a sheet of paper with lyrics to "Black Echoless Cry" written on it.]

[Sings]

Sullenly emitting
A black echoless cry
Across the vast wasteland
Where despair and defeat both lie
The shadows of my former self
Are just beyond your reach
As my stilted, stumbled, stunted speech
Falls into a black hole
And becomes chopped up into slices
Of my former, tortured soul
Vultures carve like vampires vivisectioning my veins
Of nullifying, sacred opiate content
Until only my charcoal heart remains
And a path can be traced

To that heart substitute from my wrist
Wet snakes plod through and
Toss my life before my eyes into the abyss
My small world quaked
By little didactic, unnecessary devils
Throw me against the wall
I fall down, my hair dishevelled
I call for someone to pick me up
But who will pick me up?
I eat my poise and my illusionment
And then Death gives me a drink right from his cup
This lifeless husk
Is attached genetically to these chains
That surround me like vines
How can I escape them growing into my brain?
I am an invisible alien
No place in this indifferent world
They think a solitary, nubile, fallen girl'd
Do best to sit there silently
And suck right up the vacuum you abhor
And pass it through my nether stomach
Where it remains forevermore
[End of song]

BRYCE

Oh, Melanie, this isn't going to change my love for you. You . . .you just need to get help for your depression.

MELANIE

I don't want to call the teen crisis hotline. My little brother sometimes picks up the phone while I'm making calls. And a psychologist – that's out of the question. If I start going to a shrink, my parents are going to find out I'm depressed. And that's only a short trip to finding out I do this. *[Turns her head.]* Know what I mean?

BRYCE

Well, you can always come to me when you're sad. Just for support. Because I'll always care and I – and I . . . And I won't tell anyone. The only ones who know will be you – and me. I don't know. Want a hug?

MELANIE

[Smiling.] Sure.

[BRYCE and MELANIE embrace.]

BRYCE

[Still hugging MELANIE] Melanie?

MELANIE

Huh?

BRYCE

I care about you. I find meaning in your existence. And I'd be very sad if I lost you.

MELANIE

You feel so real in my arms, Bryce.

BRYCE

And you feel so real in mine.

MELANIE

It will remind me that life is worth living, as long as I have you.

BRYCE

But you're still going to cut yourself next week, right? Probably?

MELANIE

Probably. Why you smiling?

BRYCE

Someone got a job at High Diamonds Eco Park.

[MELANIE smiles and pats Bryce on the back. End of scene.]

ACT II, SCENE 7

[In the school auditorium, at a rally. MR. PITTMAN introduces PAULINA BLUMBERG, the vice-principal of Dulcevida, a woman in her late sixties wearing sweatshirt, capris and tennis shoes. Students are attending.]

PITTMAN

And now, your vice-principal Ms. Blumberg will tell you about some upcoming events at Dulcevida.

BLUMBERG

Hi, everybody! Let's get that Dulcevida spirit worked up with this rally. Go Dobermans!

[Cheer from the audience.]

BLUMBERG

Starting on the sixth, we're going to have a canned food drive. Help the poor families of Tegopa and San Eduardo. All your contributions will go to local teens just like you and their families. So get those beans, soup and ramen in!

[Cheer from the audience.]

Then, our girls' basketball team will have a game against Villa Hermosa next Friday. The Dobermans are gonna stomp them!

[Cheer from the audience.]

Then let's not forget our annual toy drive. If you have a little sister who's recently outgrown her Barbie dolls or a little brother who's outgrown his G.I. Joes, encourage them to donate their toys to our toy drive. You're also encouraged to buy some stuffed animals or some coloring books at the store and deliver them directly to our drive.

TRINA

She wants us to help perpetuate the cycle of toys and other property: they are bought by parents from cheesy malls, then given to ungrateful rich suburban children who throw them out after two months in exchange for the latest, grossest fad.

PAUL

Well, I'm donating some ramen to the canned food drive instead.

BRYCE

Same here.

BLUMBERG

And then, juniors and seniors! You'll have the opportunity of taking a class trip to Europe for two weeks! Get those permission slips in and see Versailles, the Parthenon, the Leaning Tower of Pisa!

ALAN

Doesn't that sound great? I always wanted to see the coffeeshops of Paris where Julian Green hung out.

MELANIE

Like, yeah, exactly.

BRYCE

I knew you'd like that, Melanie.

ALAN

It's like . . . it's like we have a giant hole in our lives that's left open by not doing the things adults want us to do. All our parents have in store for us is a future with a career and marriage – to someone of the opposite gender, of course – and children and white picket fence, abiding by the laws of America . . . accepting its restrictions, you know?

SARAH

Yeah, I know. It's like that's what my parents expect me to be. I've never given thought

to anything else.

PAUL

Sounds like something Mrs. Dahlgren tells us to do.

TRINA

And then by not taking up that life path, we're left with a gap – an empty, alienated group of kids, kept happy by material things and the modern global market. So upbeat, but so downbeat. A bittersweet generation of youth floating ephemerally like butterflies through the void.

BRYCE

Word. I'd say this was a way to fill the emptiness in our lives. Europe – that's real.

[Everyone nods and says, "Yeah" or "I agree".]

TRINA

Just think, when we were children, everyone from teachers to purple dinosaurs told us we were special. And now, as adolescents, our star has faded.

PAUL

We're like those cute little alligators that grow too big to be someone's pet, and then – flush! – into the sewers.

MELANIE

We're going?

LINDSAY

I'm going.

MEGHAN

We're going.

[End of scene.]

ACT II, SCENE 8

[At Grove Market. PAUL is walking around, having left the house despite being grounded.]

PAUL

[Crying] Why can't my father love me? Why does being gay have to be so bad? Why? Well, I'm officially grounded and I'm officially here!

[Enter DANNY and TOM.]

DANNY
Hi, Paul!

PAUL
Hi, Danny! Hi, Tom.

TOM
Dude, I heard that your father grounded you for making out with Matt.

PAUL
Yep. That's true. And I'm here right now.

DANNY
That was a strong thing to do, Paul. You know what I'm saying? Because if you spend your week not going out of the house, that's one week you'll never get back after you become an adult. And just because you're gay.

PAUL
Yeah, but I'm not thinking of it that way. I don't really have anything good to do with my life. Well, I'm going to do some cashier work. Mr. D'Alessandri wants me working the cash register. [Walks up to cash register.]

[SANJAY GHOSH, a Hindu boy in his twenties with goatee, body piercing, sunglasses, tank top, blue jeans and flip-flops walks up to PAUL.]

SANJAY
Hey, how's life treating you? You look a little down. You don't like working here, is that it?

PAUL
Well . . . Working here's OK. I mean . . . it's when I grow up that I'm concerned about. My teacher Mrs. Dahlgren told me that I'll need to abide by social conventions in the work –

SANJAY
Wait, really? Abide by social conventions in the working world? She's wrong.

PAUL
What do you mean?

SANJAY
I don't. I mean, I just go around in casual clothes programming computer games all day. We have no rules at my workplace. That's work for me, and it pays.

PAUL
That's your job?

SANJAY

I'm not kidding you. We have lots of junk food and a few beautiful chicks around, even though it's mostly dudes.

PAUL

Well, I'm more interested in the dudes.

SANJAY

Oh, there are a lot of gay and bisexual people at my job. There's Nick, he's gay, there's Alberto, he's bisexual, we've got Jason and Glenn . . . so what are you interested in doing when you grow up?

PAUL

I'm not thinking about then. I don't really have a goal.

SANJAY

Oh, I see. So you're a drifter, sliding through the pages in the book of life.

PAUL

I guess you could say that. I'm just thinking about getting out of my teen-age years alive. I live every day and then that's a book in itself.

SANJAY

Up to the final book in the series?

PAUL

Yeah. I think so much about whether the things I do are OK that I don't even have time to think about what I'm going to do when I grow up.

SANJAY

What kind of things?

PAUL

Things like spitting in public. Or the time I was talking about turds in Mrs. Dahlgren's class.

SANJAY

Really? Oh, well, at my job the guys crack jokes about feces and urine a lot. This one guy, Wade, he can tell some mean fart jokes!

PAUL

You guys talk about gas?

SANJAY

Yeah, whenever one of us breaks wind we'll talk about it a little and laugh. [Passes ground beef up.]

PAUL
You're making hamburgers?

SANJAY
Sure. You want to come over to my house for some burgers?

PAUL
Uh . . . I'm a vegetarian.

SANJAY
That's cool. Why'd you become a vegetarian?

PAUL
Well, if you look at the past people decided it was wrong to hold witch hunts, or to arrest people for saying the Earth revolves around the Sun, or to keep women from voting, or to send Japanese-Americans to concentration camps. Right? So when we think about the people of those times, we think about how wrong we all know they were. Right? So I thought that in 200 years, people would realize it was wrong to kill animals. And I don't want to be looked at as someone who was unable to rise above his time. You know what I'm saying?

SANJAY
That's cool.

PAUL
It's been nice meeting you, uh . . . uh . . . [stumbling for name]

SANJAY
Sanjay.

PAUL
Sanjay. I'm Paul Moreno.

SANJAY
Later, Paul!

[PAUL sees MELANIE.]

PAUL
Melanie!

MELANIE
Hi, Paul!

PAUL

Whatchyou got there?

MELANIE

Some mangoes and papayas. I'm going to make smoothies.

PAUL

Your life must be happy.

MELANIE

Happy? Not . . . oh, uh, sure.

PAUL

My life is just being beaten by a club, one incident after another. Most recently I made out with Matt Kelly, and my father told me I'm grounded.

MELANIE

Grounded just for being gay? That's wrong.

[MELANIE's cellphone rings.]

MELANIE

Hello?

BRYCE

Hi, Melanie. It's Bryce.

MELANIE

[Excited] Oh, hi, Bryce!

BRYCE

Melanie, I'm sick. I think it's the flu. I won't be able to come to that protest at St. Angela's.

MELANIE

[Disappointed] Ohhhhhhhh! Well, I'll still be there!

BRYCE

Good, they need every protestor they can get. My spirit will be there, even if I won't!

MELANIE

OK, see ya Bryce!

BRYCE

See you.

[MELANIE hangs up.]

[Enter SCHURZ.]

MELANIE

Oh, no, it's Officer Schurz!

SCHURZ

[On walkie-talkie] It looks like we've found him, juvenile Hispanic male, brown hair, brown eyes. [To PAUL] Hey, what's your name?

PAUL

I'm Paul Moreno.

SCHURZ

[On walkie-talkie] Papa Alpha Union Lima . . . Mike Ocean Romeo Echo Nathan Ocean. [To PAUL] I heard you're running away from home. Your father tells me he grounded you.

PAUL

He grounded me because I'm gay!

SCHURZ

Well, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. And you're 16, right?

PAUL

Don't rub it in.

SCHURZ

Disobeying your parents –

PAUL

Don't give me the obedience spiel. What if your father tells you to steal something?

SCHURZ

Should we arrest the spic?

MALINOWITZ

Affirmative.

PAUL

Spic?!

SCHURZ

Since you're a runaway minor, I'm going to arrest you. [Gets handcuffs out.] You have the right to remain silent. [Handcuffs PAUL.] Everything you say can be used against you. [On walkie-talkie], I'm booking the spic faggot.

MELANIE
Paul!

SCHURZ
Hey, you, what's your name?

MELANIE
I –

SCHURZ
Your real name.

MELANIE
Melanie Hayworth.

SCHURZ
Why are you at this establishment?

MELANIE
I just came to buy some fruit. Is there a law against making smoothies?

SCHURZ
How long have you been at this establishment?

MELANIE
But I just came here to buy fruit.

SCHURZ
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT THIS ESTABLISHMENT?

MELANIE
About twenty minutes.

SCHURZ
Where were you before here?

MELANIE
I was at TJ Maxx.

SCHURZ
Who was that boy you were just talking with?

MELANIE
[*Rolling eyes*] He told you his name.

SCHURZ

What was his name?

MELANIE

[*Rolling eyes*] It's Paul Moreno.

SCHURZ

Were you discussing illegal activity with him?

MELANIE

Define discussing illegal activity.

SCHURZ

Anything you or he was doing that's against the law. Yes or no.

MELANIE

Well, actually, it's more comp—

SCHURZ

Yes or no.

MELANIE

[*Sighs.*] No.

SCHURZ

Were you at the mall after curfew last night?

MELANIE

This mango must be getting rotten by now.

[End of scene.]

ACT II, SCENE 9

[In ALAN's house. ALAN is making a telephone call to PAUL.]

PAUL

Hello?

ALAN

It's Alan. How'd your trip to Grove Market go?

PAUL

[*Crying*] It was horrible. I got arrested! Arrested!

ALAN

Really?

PAUL

Officer Schurz handcuffed me, then he drove me – he drove me off to the jail before sending me back to my father. My father yelled at me and stuff.

ALAN

That old fascist!

PAUL

Yeah. Now I have an arrest on my record.

ALAN

Ooh . . . if you ever apply for another job besides working at Grove, they're going to find out you've been arrested.

PAUL

I don't even think about my future. This guy at Grove Market, Sanjay, called me a drifter. But this, Alan, this is going to have repercussions.

ALAN

I know. What in particular are you so concerned about?

PAUL

My life with my father. He's going to really come down on me hard now. I wish I didn't have to live with him. But now I'll be unable to get emancipated because I've run away. You know what I'm saying?

ALAN

The world sucks right now. No one will listen to us. But even The World can't be like this forever.

[Sings]

The strongest walls fall down

The brightest fire burns out

The thickest blood breaks up

The farthest hours pass by

The tightest chains break loose

The fattest ropes wear thin

The darkest clouds grow white

The wettest tears run dry

Yeah, I'm sure

It's going to happen

Maybe not today

Maybe not tomorrow

Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Someday
I hope so . . .
Someday . . .
That's what they always tell me
That's what they say

PAUL

The saddest days will end
The cruelest times will pass
The meanest world will go
The greatest pain will die

The weakest hearts can heal
The deadest lives can rise
If you just watch the sun
And hold your hands up high

What may occur
I'll keep on flappin'
To shine one sun's ray
That will burst the sorrow

Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Someday
I hope so . . .
Someday . . .
That's what they always tell me
That's what they say

ALAN

You'll live to see all of these events
So remember when it's too much, and the pain gets too intense

Everything will be . . .

[Raps]

Everything's falling down, falling down, look at the world before us,
My life's going out with the bath water, drowned and drained, what's in store for us?
Many things and many changes, because when you hear the world around us collapse
There will soon be a new order, and it will be more to our liking, perhaps, just perhaps
When things fall it brings destruction and therefore changes come with creation
Seasons change, and with the seasons changing comes growth and innovation

They tell me this world is improving, but I'm just not seeing it yet
We ain't seen nothing yet
Are you ready, are you set?
We're going to see how bad it's going to get
And things will get worse
A phase they have to go through first
Before they can improve
Into something like you've
Never imagined, but that will be paradise
Very nice, a new roll of the dice, after blood and sacrifice and paying the price!
[End of rap]

ALAN and PAUL

Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Everything will be beautiful (someday)
Someday
I hope so . . .
Someday . . .
That's what they always tell me
That's what they say
[End of song]

PAUL

I don't know what I'm going to do now. Do you know what the sentence for running away is?

ALAN

Uh, no. But just hold on strong to the Teen-age Life.

[Sings]

Shopping around
Hopping around from McJob to McJob
Like the latest teen heartthrob,
Hating the latest teen heartthrob
Like moshing, the GAP
Loitering, and crunk rap
Ocean Pacific, Jnco
Like ginger, ginseng, ginkgo
And Seattle
Constant battle with the world
[Stops singing]

It's not your country that's arresting you, Paul. You're not a criminal. You're a free man.

PAUL

Later.

ALAN

Good-bye. [*Hangs up.*] Now, to get a bassist.

[ALAN sits down with a Dulcevida telephone directory and dials TONY's phone number.]

[TONY PHAM, a Vietnamese-American boy in Hawaiian shirt and cargo shorts answers the phone.]

TONY

Hello?

ALAN

Hello, this is Alan Isaacs, and I'm looking to see if you would be interested in joining my band, Unfresh. I heard you play bass.

TONY

Oh, I'm already in a band.

ALAN

That's OK. Do you know anyone who plays the bass who would be able to join my band?

TONY

Oh, try Rostam Zavvar. He plays stand-up bass. He'd be excellent at it.

ALAN

Thank you very much. Good-bye.

TONY

See you later.

[ALAN hangs up. He leafs through the directory and dials ROSTAM's number.]

ROSTAM

Hello?

ALAN

Hello, Rostam? This is Alan Isaacs, and I wonder if you'd be interested in joining my band, Unfresh. We need a bassist. Kate Kim left the band and all.

ROSTAM

Oh, I don't play the bass. I don't play any instrument.

ALAN

Tony Pham told me you play stand-up bass.

ROSTAM

Well, I don't know why, because I don't.

ALAN

OK, see you, Rostam.

ROSTAM

See you.

[Alan hangs up. He dials TONY's number again.]

TONY

Hello?

ALAN

Tony? I dialed Rostam Zavvar's number and he said he doesn't play bass.

TONY

Oh, he does. He's been playing that for years. He's just shy about admitting how great he is.

ALAN

Really?

TONY

Yes. Tell him you really want him in your band and that he doesn't have to be afraid, and he'll admit he plays it.

ALAN

OK, I will, Tony. Good-bye.

TONY

See you later.

[ALAN hangs up and calls ROSTAM again.]

ROSTAM

Hello?

ALAN

Stand-up bass?

ROSTAM

What about it?

ALAN

I know, you play stand-up bass, don't you?

ROSTAM

No.

ALAN

You don't have to be embarrassed about it, just admit it.

ROSTAM

I don't play stand-up bass.

ALAN

You're probably the best bassist in Armando, and why I'm inviting you to join Unfresh.

ROSTAM

Uh . . . I've never played the bass. The only instrument I ever played was, like, recorder in third grade.

ALAN

But Tony distinctly said that you played stand-up bass. He said you were just shy about admitting it.

ROSTAM

Sorry, but I don't.

ALAN

Are you telling me that Tony is lying?

ROSTAM

[Sheepishly] I guess.

ALAN

Let me call him. Good-bye, Rostam.

ROSTAM

See you.

[ALAN hangs up and calls TONY's house again. TONY's mother, MRS. PHAM, answers the telephone.]

MRS. PHAM

Hello?

ALAN
Hello, Tony?

MRS. PHAM
No, this is Tony's mother, may I please ask who's calling?

ALAN
This is Alan Isaacs. So I called your son for info on who plays the bass and he told me that Rostam Zavvar plays stand-up bass. He tried to get me to call him, but it turns out he's lying and Rostam never played stand-up bass, but Tony keeps trying to get me to call him. Could you stop your son from deceiving people like this?

MRS. PHAM
Well, Tony won't bother you anymore.

ALAN
[Sighing] Oh, good.

MRS. PHAM
If you call this house again, *I am going to call the police!*

ALAN
WHAT!?!?!?

MRS. PHAM
You heard me.

ALAN
[Yelling] How dare you call the pigs on me when it's your son who's out of line? You Nazi with your gestapo tactics! The only person who belongs behind bars is your own son! The police are there for murder, rape, theft, drugs and tearing that little tag off the mattress, not for this! You use the gestapo for everything, don't you? Don't you! NAZI! NAZI! NAZI!

[MRS. PHAM hangs up.]

ALAN
NOOO!

[Scene fades.]

ACT II, SCENE 10

[Split between MELANIE's and BRYCE's rooms. BRYCE is listening to headphones with his eyes closed. MELANIE calls BRYCE on her cellphone and BRYCE picks up his.]

BRYCE
Hello?

MELANIE
Hey.

BRYCE
Oh, hi, Melanie. I've been racking in – raking in – however the expression goes – those dollars. My emancipation hearing is Saturday, April 19.

MELANIE
That's awesome! Y'know, come to think of it, I'm really lucky I have the parents I do.

BRYCE
[Optimistically] How did the protest go?

MELANIE
Oh, Bryce, it was horrible! This man, Mr. Rhatigan, at the campus was all "Please leave", and we were all "We won't", and he was all "Please leave", and we were all "We won't", so he then decided to call the police to have us all arrested. And then when they came, this one guy who had a brown paper bag over his head – no one knew who he was – was hiding a gun. And then the gun came out, and he fired, and the cops fired, and oh! He shot both of the cops. There was blood everywhere. Everywhere, Bryce!

BRYCE
Oh, no!

MELANIE
Oh, people were shrieking in horror! And then we all sort of left campus. The protest ended and stuff.

BRYCE
Tell me you're all right, Melanie.

MELANIE
I'm fine, physically. Just a little shaken.

BRYCE
Well, it's Mr. Rhatigan's fault for trying to have the protestors arrested. Shame on him for causing all this bloodshed!

MELANIE
Well, the guy with the brown paper bag on his head brought a gun along. He had it all along.

BRYCE

Didn't the cops shoot too?

MELANIE

Yeah. Why does there have to be so many guns and so much violence in this world?

BRYCE

You'll be OK, Melanie. I'm glad I didn't come.

MELANIE

Are you still sick now?

BRYCE

Yeah. Just a virus.

MELANIE

Mangosteen is good for the flu. I read it on Wikipedia.

BRYCE

Thanks. [Pauses.] This world is so tight and violent.

MELANIE

There has to be somewhere in this world just for us, Bryce.

[Sings]

Somewhere there's an island out there in the tropics
Where butterflies peacefully fly by the palm
No tropic disease caused by bugs microscopic
Just bliss and perpetual bird songs and calm

BRYCE

Somewhere where someone of good heart can get away
And then throw all the times you got upset away
To reach that place, we'll find a way, you bet, a way
If there is a need
Eden Republic

MELANIE

There older folks don't fight with youth who are hipper
Take a ride with the dolphin and sail through the sea
Where the cabin boy dances all day with the skipper
You're at one with nature and people are free

BRYCE

A paradise of comfort and tranquility
No shouting matches, just two-way civility
Where everyone has warmth and likeability

It's their basic creed
Eden Republic

MELANIE
Someone, show me how
I can go there now
I can make an escape
We can reach the cape
And be on the island in no time
In no time

BRYCE
You squat on the ground and they won't even notice
You're right down with nature, no need for a chair
You can sit on your legs, with legs crossed, or in lotus
Wear your hat in the cabin, they won't even care

MELANIE
It's filled with smoothies made of fruit and warm there, too
No social rules, and no need to conform thereto
No pressure to be molded to their norm – they're too
Tight here, you'll concede
Eden Republic
[End of song]

BRYCE
Hey, Melanie?

MELANIE
Huh?

BRYCE
I still want to go see Lady Gaga and the Killers when they come to Armando.

MELANIE
You're doing it for me?

BRYCE
For both of us. And then go to the local high school bands concert at the Squirrel's Nest.

MELANIE
Awww. How sweet.

BRYCE
Good-bye, Melanie.

MELANIE

Good-bye, Bryce. [Hangs up.]

[End of scene]

ACT II, SCENE 11

[In a hotel room in Spain. BRYCE, MELANIE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, SARAH, LINDSAY, MEGHAN, TOM, DANNY, and others are hanging out, sprawled over the room.]

MELANIE

So Europe is awesome! Even better than I expected!

ALAN

Yeah, there's nothing like a Fanta and some pomegranate syrup.

SARAH

It was nice of Ms. Blumberg to rent this room for us.

LINDSAY

Sure was. Hey, does anybody remember that homeless man with tuberculosis?

BRYCE

Sure. And the man who hung from the ceiling on the metro? Dude! I've never seen anything like that at home.

PAUL

Daft Punk concerts! Dance clubs! Coffeeshops! We really lived out the Teen-age Life on this continent!

EVERYBODY

Yeah!

TRINA

It built my hope in humanity to see lesbian couples walking about in public without getting harassed. Too bad I can't find a girlfriend out here.

PAUL

I feel you, Trina, I mean, I'd like to find my European boyfriend and stuff.

MELANIE

Me and Bryce are going to do some making out in the hotel. Because Europe is more romantic than America.

TRINA

Romance is dead. Today's teens don't go by the old courtesies and gender roles that

kept romance alive. Instead of sipping wine together, they're sharing a beer and calling each other pimps and hos.

MELANIE

Well, I think if we had some music it could be romantic. Would you like it if I play my Colbie Caillat CD?

PAUL

Wanta borrow my Blink-182 CD?

BRYCE

How about some Nirvana?

TOM

Maybe something European? Depeche Mode? Kraftwerk?

MELANIE

The Cardigans! KT Tunstall!

ALAN

Muse!

SARAH

Well, this is going to make a great college admissions essay.

MELANIE

Yeah, I mean did you notice how many punks and beatniks there are in London and Paris?

TRINA

They're free-thinkers. It's par for the course in the big cities of Europe.

SARAH

Oh? Did you see how the women went topless in that Stockholm beach . . . and no one complained?

MELANIE

Yeah, I know, wasn't that awesome?

PAUL

And that weed in Amsterdam! People were smoking it right out there in front of you! Pure 420! I've never seen anything like it!

ALAN

The kids have the Teen-age Life here, just like us. Except here the adults seem to be living it too.

BRYCE

Yeah, it's like they never grew up.

PAUL

They say America's the free country. But you know, Europe's freer than America!

SARAH

I mean, look at it. Parents can't force their children to practice their religion if the kids don't want to.

[Everybody nods.]

DANNY

I know. And they're not always worshipping their flag. Americans are stick-a-flag-up-your-rectum patriotic.

BRYCE

I don't understand. Why does America always have to be the country that sucks?

TRINA

It's America's Puritan roots. The immigrants who bucked the trend in England set the pace in America, and the Sexual Revolution was not very successful at overturning it.

BRYCE (at the same time as Melanie)

I know, it seems like our parents abandoned the sixties.

MELANIE (at the same time as Bryce)

They abandoned the sixties.

PAUL

I know, just like Mrs. Dahlgren.

MELANIE

You know, I think Burdick would like this.

[End of scene.]

ACT II, SCENE 12

[It is night in the hotel room. BRYCE is wearing boxer shorts, while MELANIE has a camisole on. The two are alone.]

MELANIE

Ooh, I won't be cutting myself tonight!

BRYCE

Good, because I want your skin to be smooth when I hold you. But you did bring your Sylvia Plath book, right?

MELANIE

Right. Kept where Meghan and Lindsay can't see it. Does Ms. Blumberg know we're in your room together?

BRYCE

No.

MELANIE

Show me your mouth . . . ooh, I'm looking at your sexy amalgams!

BRYCE

They're sexy?

MELANIE

Yep. [Pauses.] Look outside that window, the dark sky. Isn't Spain pretty?

BRYCE

Yeeeeeeeah.

MELANIE

[Holding BRYCE's arm] Hey, Bryce?

BRYCE

Yeah?

MELANIE

Are you going to the prom with me?

BRYCE

I am soon to wear a tux. And I'm your favorite boy, right?

MELANIE

I've been alive 17 years, so that's gotta mean something. Hey Bryce, you know how the other day I mentioned my secret [turns head one direction]?

BRYCE

Sec- *that* secret? Yeah. The V-word.

[MELANIE nods.]

BRYCE

Well, so am I.

MELANIE

You? Really? But you're a hot straight guy. You're not a nerd, and you're not a goody-goody like Blehm . . . or a good Christian kid like Katy Featherstone and McDonough either.

BRYCE

I'm just Bryce Schittler.

MELANIE

Never would've imagined. All this time . . . it's like we've waited all our lives. Is the search over? [Pats down BRYCE's hair.] Close your eyes, boy.

[BRYCE closes his eyes. MELANIE then closes her eyes.]

[Sings]

Did it ever occur to you
That when the two of us are around,
Everything else looks like specks of dirt to you
Just passing by
The nighttime sky
And psychedelic ash falls to the ground?

BRYCE

The whole world can spin for a bit
You're here in my arms, your blue eyes are lit
We are being dipped in our wonder
Of the wave that we're taken under

MELANIE

Everything induces dizziness
Your head, like, totally turns to air
I'm feeling so happily vacant -- isn't this
The world's best way
To spend a stay
With rave-like glitter streaming through your hair?

BRYCE

I stopped short of hand holds at first
But now I'm all wet, we both are immersed
In this pool of blue where we're swimming
With seductive currents it's brimming

MELANIE

You're so fresh and boy-next-door
With your freckles and your braces, my sweet Bryce
Does this mean I'm going to enjoy sex more

When, at long last
The day will pass
When my virginity is sacrificed?

BRYCE

As deep as all oceans combined
You're the very girl I wanted to find
We can seek the ultimate pleasure
Floating, feeling fun beyond measure

You are the epitome
Of all the female world
And I of all the male

MELANIE

It means more than just a bit to me
The fact that we
Can really see

MELANIE and BRYCE

The way each other looks below the veil
[*Song ends. Lights dim out. The two kiss, eyes still closed.*]

ACT II, SCENE 13

[At ALAN's house. TRINA is over.]

ALAN

Well, I've got a new bandmate. His name is Helias Christides.

TRINA

Helias? I don't know a Dulcevida student by that name. I'm a senior, so I know everybody by now.

ALAN

You see, he's from St. Angela's. We met on the college campus one day, right? . . . then when I tried to call him up in his dorm I looked at his phone number on my scrap of paper and couldn't tell whether that was a 3 or an 8. I tried both, and neither worked. Right? So I called St. Angela's College. St. Angela's refuses to give out students' phone numbers unless another student needs them for a class project. They say it violates the students' privacy. THIS IS NOT WHAT PRIVACY IS ABOUT! I would be enraged, enraged, Trina, if I were a student there and they refused to give out my phone number. So anyway, the first time I called, I told the truth and I found that out the hard way. So then I tried a second time, with a different person answering the phone, so I lied and told her I was a student and needed Helias' number for a class project and stuff. Then they gave it to me.

TRINA

[Distraught] So you lied?

ALAN

I – I –.

TRINA

Oh, why did you have to lie, Alan? How could people believe that honesty is not the best policy?

ALAN

Well, if you want to get a St. Angela's student's number, it isn't.

TRINA

There's too much dishonesty in this world. Presidents lying, people lying about their age, men having affairs lying to their wives, you know what I'm saying? It doesn't help when you join other dishonest people in doing bad things.

ALAN

People lie because of the bad things in the world around them.

[Sings]

Help me out, I've fallen and I can't get up again
Bush breaks his "read my lips" pledge, it was just a question when
They arrest their mayor Barry, all he did was snort some crack
Kuwait has lots of oil, hankered after by Iraq

Hill lies, says that Thomas was harassing her and junk
Some dirty pigs beat Rodney King, he wasn't really drunk
War rages in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates
A recession ends the decadence we had back in the eighties

Perot's in the election, that man quits and then returns
Toddlers watching Barney, and their parents think they learn
The racial tempers in L.A. with riots come and rise
Clinton gets elected and he tells a lot of lies

MTV's Beavis and Butt-head make it fun to kill a frog
Lorena Bobbitt gets a knife to slice off a hot dog
Bill Clinton says "Don't ask", but he's not going to let you tell
The compound for Davidians breaks out in all sweet hell

TRINA

Everything sucks, everything is lame
Things change, things stay the same
Every year, each decade and then some

People are not rational, they bite
Feel fear, don't do what's right
Each century and each millennium
But if I could only stay with you
We just can make it through
Without giving up or going numb
Everything sucks!

ALAN

Newt Gingrich rises, brings the hope of progress to a halt
Then comes Tonya Harding and her Kerrigan assault
Clinton had Whitewater, and then killing his friend Vince
Courtney Love kills Kurt Cobain, and rock's been different since

World Trade Organization replaces the GATT pact
Kevin Mitnick was arrested, as they tried to claim he hacked
The news about the OJ Trial's on the tube all day
Then Oklahoma City bombs by Timothy McVeigh

Kaczynski gets handcuffed, his line no longer can he pitch
Beanie Babies, people think, are going to make them rich
Should we teach Ebonics, or teach White people's speech norms?
Bill Clinton calls for curfews . . . and school uniforms

Dolly has been born, next they'll be cloning you or me
The paparazzi kill off Princess Di inside Paris
Will Tony Blair move Britain left, or only to the right?
Hale-Bopp comes to pick up the soul of Marshall Applewhite

TRINA

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But if I could only stay with you
We just can make it through
Without giving up or going numb
Everything sucks!

ALAN

Monica Lewinsky's dress can make Slick Willy swoon
Teletubbies will not say "Bye-bye" any time soon
El Niño's getting Mexico and U.S. really hot
Jesse Camp becomes a VJ and says "Dude" a lot

People are convinced the world will end with Y2K
The field at Woodstock '99 is left in disarray
Harris and Klebold were teased by jocks and they lashed out
The protests in Seattle can't bring any change about

ILOVEYOU wipes computers dead despite its loving name
The Man wants to stop Napster, intellectual property claims
Nathaniel Brazill kills a teacher since he was suspended
Bush steals an election, SCOTUS has the recount ended

Condit just offed Levy, though they used to be in love
Your letter could have anthrax, so you better don your gloves
Andrea Yates goes to the tub to have her children drowned
Bush becomes a sacred cow when Twin Towers go down

TRINA

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Everything sucks!

ALAN

There's wrongdoing at Enron, and at WorldCom there's lots more
The Sniper hits the East Coast, we watch paranoia soar
Houston PD has a raid of teens inside K-mart
Wellstone had his plane shot down, the Bushies had a part

Shrub's lies of deadly weapons let him start an oil war
Fox shows those who booed, but not who cheered old Michael Moore
Atkins may be healthy, but he dies thanks to a fall
Schwarzenegger's governor by winning a recall

Because of Howard Dean's scream, stupid people turn against
Kerry flip-flops, where he once was hawkish on defense
Martha Stewart sentenced for her lies about her stocks
Janet Jackson's breasts show, and the prudes react with shock

They won't let Terri Schiavo die, although she's losing hope
Benedict XVI: there's a Hitler Youth as pope
Tom DeLay's indicted for conspiracy, he's out

Hurricane Katrina tossed Orleanians about

TRINA

Everything sucks, everything is lame
Things change, things stay the same
Every year, each decade and then some
People are not rational, they bite
Feel fear, don't do what's right
Each century and each millennium
But if I could only stay with you
We just can make it through
Without giving up or going numb
Everything sucks!

ALAN

George Allen says "Macaca" when he means a Hindu guy
Mel Gibson may be "Passionate", but has a DUI
A war in Lebanon, Hezbollah's fighting Israel
Saddam Hussein is executed, and he burns in Hell

Libby outed Plame, no fear, his sentence was commuted
Chimpy thinks more troops will help Iraq, he's just deluded
Bush sucks, but Pelosi says impeachment's off the table
Arresting monk protestors, say they're keeping Myanmar stable

TRINA

Everything sucks, everything is lame
Things change, things stay the same
Every year, each decade and then some
People are not rational, they bite
Feel fear, don't do what's right
Each century and each millennium
But if I could only stay with you
We just can make it through
Without giving up or going numb
Everything sucks!
Everything sucks!
Everything sucks!
[End of song]

So Alan, are you going to record our song?

ALAN

I could do that the next time we get together. Make a bit of money off this until we get sued by Billy Joel.

TRINA

Well, I've got to get to work on the Amy Tan paper I owe Burdick. I'll see you around.

ALAN

See ya.

[End of scene.]

ACT II, SCENE 14

[At The Squirrel's Nest. High school bands are playing, including ALAN's band Unfresh, with TOM, DANNY and HELIAS, and the band Re-17. MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, TRINA, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, KATE, and others are attending.]

TOM

Are you ready to rock, folks! Because Unfresh are up, and we're going to put on a show that will bang up our drums and wear out the strings on that guitar and bass. Scream for me!

[Audience screams.]

TOM

I can't hear you . . .

[Audience screams even louder.]

[HELIAS CHRISTIDES, a 19-year-old boy with long hair, a striped polo, torn jeans, Converse and multiple piercings, turns to the audience.]

HELIAS

Dudes! I'm Helias, the new bassist. I come from St. Angela's and I know how to rock down a Catholic school so that its brushes with temptation come out of the cracks like rats! I'll be slamming on this Fender until there's blood on my hangnails!

[Audience screams.]

HELIAS

And now, for our frontman, Alan Isaacs!

ALAN

Here it is, Unfresh, with "Maze of Wood"!

[Sings]

I walked alongside rocks upon a gravel trail
I was frozen, it was night and I was pale
I came across some doors and they were all pretend
Soon I struggled with myself to find the end

I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Left the area where once I stood
I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Straight surviving like I never could

I wished I had a fist that could untangle thorns
Hear the voices of the people no one mourns
I thought I heard the cemetery under me
Heard the pleas of others and they shared my plea

I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Left the area where once I stood
I've been into the maze, into the maze of wood
Straight surviving like I never could
[End of song]

HELIAS
SCREW BUSH!

[Audience goes wild.]

MELANIE
I so totally love to hear Alan sing.

LINDSAY
So do I.

MEGHAN
There's something about his voice that, like, sends chills down your spine.

TRINA
No, I think it's something in the songs. An Unfresh song consists of soul-searching and raw angst. The lyrics and melodies reflect this.

KATE
Well, don't know about you kids, but / came here for Kaleidoscope Tofu. ROCK OUT!

BRYCE
All these high school bands . . . in need of some inspiration. Inspiration by Kurt Cobain.

[BRYCE gets down on the dance floor in lotus position and closes his eyes.]

BRYCE
Kurt, give us power on the dance floor tonight. Help us out by making our music great and keeping our spirit alive.

TRINA

You actually rely on Kurt Cobain to make a concert worthwhile?

BRYCE

Yes. You see, Trina, I look to Kurt whenever I need help on what to do. The guy has an amazing conscience and stuff – he tried to tell homophobic people not to buy his music.

KATE

Bryce, it's totally awesome that you appreciate Kurt Cobain!

PAUL

You think Kurt has anything to do with these songs or something?

BRYCE

Yes, he's watching this concert right now. Without Kurt, bands like Re-17 or the Burgundy Onions wouldn't be writing the music they're writing today. We'd still be stuck in Madonnaland. You know Paul, Kurt's bisexual.

PAUL

Really?

BRYCE

Just like Alan. And the other kids at Kurt's high school, they'd call him gay.

PAUL

Dude, I wish I didn't have to be sad about being gay. But people like Mr. Pittman and my dad keep telling me it's wrong and stuff. There's got to be something to what they're saying, I mean, they're authority figures, right?

BRYCE

Sometimes we have to make progress by putting more trust in ourselves than we put in authority figures.

MELANIE

You know Paul, I've been keeping up with your gay stuff on your Facebook page. I'm glad we all friended each other after Bryce formed that group. [Turns head to BRYCE.]

BRYCE

Friends of Paul Moreno is the greatest group in Armando!

PAUL (at the same time as Melanie)

Yeah!

MELANIE (at the same time as Paul)

Yeah! I even friended people who I wouldn't normally friend.

TRINA

And I learned that you vomited on your bedsheets last week after grabbing some cheese sticks as a midnight snack and mixing them with Shasta.

MELANIE

Bryce, you feel like another date soon?

PAUL

What you need is a date with *booze!* And bomb!

TRINA

My parents are away on the weekend. The drinks are on my house.

BRYCE

On the house?

TRINA

On *my* house. Literally. As in, at my parents' house. You two lovebirds just come over the weekend of the eighth through the tenth.

BRYCE

So how we get back home if we'll be full of alcohol?

MEGHAN

Don't sweat. I can do the designated driver thing.

MELANIE

Really?

MEGHAN

Yeah.

MELANIE (at the same time as Bryce)

Thanks, Meghan.

BRYCE (at the same time as Melanie)

Thanks, Meghan.

HELIAS

OK, someone just gave me a glass that someone emptied their bladder in. Unless you give your utmost respect to the next band playing, Re-17, I am going to pour the contents of this glass all over the audience!

[Audience screams.]

HELIAS

And let's hear it for Re-17!

KATE

I've got glowsticks for all you boys and girls! ROCK! [Passes around glowsticks to PAUL, then MELANIE, then BRYCE, then MEGHAN, then LINDSAY, then TRINA, then others.]

LINDSAY

Glowsticks?

MEGHAN

We're supposed to, like, wave these in the air as the music plays or something.

LEAD SINGER OF RE-17

Here's our first song. It's called "People Like Us".

[Teens wave glowsticks around rhythmically as "People Like Us" plays.]

LEAD SINGER OF RE-17

[Sings]

'79, the eighties, the nineties, the tenties
Brought forth the generation we call us
As for the rest, they're obsessed
With keeping us repressed
They lock us up and say it's for our best interest
Teachers, cops or politicians, whatever their name
They're all the same
They are the one I declaim
They say there's one right way to speak
To think, to drink, to eat
They only live to give you heat
Don't like your jewelry, tell you you reek
It's just a difference of a few years that declares
If they're one of yours or one of theirs
They won't let you call your friends after ten
So let's stay girls and boys not grown women and men
Your average Baby Boomer
Is a non-producing consumer
Feeding on your freedoms and your money like a tumor
Don't hang around them
They're phlegm
Stick with people you can trust

People like us

People like us

People like us

Martial law states
Everything we do under adult scrutiny
What do they want to do to me?
They want to hold me down, throw my head on the floor
In the U.S. every day the young and old at war
They don't understand when they treat us like dirt
Just how bad we're hurt
We want to get up now and blurt
Everything we must say in their faces
Touch bases
With the fact you're mad cases
Your accusations of us lads and lasses are baseless
You worship some machine that's faceless
Why can't you go back forty years and all preach peace and love?
Or the modern equivalent thereof
Be like you used to, that's the mindset we're used to
Though we've never seen it before from too many of you induced to
Worship the state
And on our souls to grate
Can you be honest with yourselves about the motives for the hate?
It's high time we overthrew
People like you
I look upon you with disgust

People like us
People like us
People like us

Not people like you

People like us
People like us
People like us
[End of song]

KATE
Spectacular!

ACT III

ACT III, SCENE 1

[On the quad of Dulcevida. ALAN is asking around. LINDSAY and KATE are on the quad. ALAN walks up to LINDSAY.]

ALAN

Hey, Lindsay?

LINDSAY
Yeah, Alan?

ALAN
Basically, Helias left our band and I'm trying to find a bandmate to replace him. Do you know anyone who plays bass?

LINDSAY
No one who hasn't already been in your band or something.

ALAN
Oh, OK. I'll ask someone else.

[ALAN walks up to KATE.]

ALAN
Hey, Kate?

KATE
Yeah, Alan?

ALAN
Do you know anyone who plays bass? I need a replacement for Helias.

KATE
Tony Pham is a *ripping* bassist. Chills you!

ALAN
I already tried him. It was horrible. It was HORRIBLE!

KATE
I know he plays a lot of games. Well, don't sweat, Alan, Shane Gerber also plays the bass.

ALAN
Do you know where he is?

KATE
I don't know what class he – where you can find him, but he's in the Dulcevida directory.

ALAN
Thanks so much!

KATE

You're welcome, boy.

[ALAN runs to an on-campus pay phone where a school directory is supplied. He leafs through and finds Shane's number. ALAN puts a quarter in and dials Shane's number on the pay phone. BLEHM is standing nearby. The phone rings.]

SHANE'S MOTHER

Hello?

ALAN

Hello, is this the family of Shane Gerber?

SHANE'S MOTHER

It is. This is his mother speaking.

ALAN

Hi, I'm Alan Isaacs, from the band Unfresh . . .

SHANE'S MOTHER

Who?

ALAN

Unfresh. You've never heard of us?

SHANE'S MOTHER

Can't say I have.

ALAN

We do the songs "Maze of Wood" and "Room"?

SHANE'S MOTHER

Are you a high school band?

ALAN

Yes, although we had one member from St. Angela's who recently deserted us. Anyway, I was calling to see if Shane could play bass for our band.

SHANE'S MOTHER

Oh, Shane's a very busy boy. He doesn't get home until about nine.

ALAN

Well, you can leave him my phone number and tell him to call Alan, can't you?

SHANE'S MOTHER

Sure.

ALAN

My phone number is . . .

[Pay phone hangs up after 60 seconds.]

ALAN

[Yelling] The phone dropped! Damn it! Aaaaargh! Stupid phone! How could you hang up on me like that? Now I'm out of money and you cut me off! Just as I was about to give her my phone number!

BLEHM

Stop that yelling at the phone. That's inappropriate behavior.

ALAN

You don't talk like a teen. You talk just like an adult.

BLEHM

Well, it is inappropriate.

ALAN

It is not inappropriate! I have bipolar disorder!

BLEHM

Using your disability as an excuse! Too many people think they can get away with things because they're handicapped. People who . . . people who are *blind*, and think they can be rude to other people . . .

ALAN

There's still no harm in yelling at an inanimate object, is there? It's not like I'm being mean to anyone!

BLEHM

[Overwhelmed] I'm getting away from here.

[BLEHM walks off and scene ends.]

ACT III, SCENE 2

[At TRINA's house, TRINA's parents away. BRYCE and MELANIE are over, as is MEGHAN. There is a markerboard in the room]

TRINA

Now, Bryce, Melanie, we've got lots of beer in this fridge. Some Heineken, some of that ridiculously macho Foster's.

MEGHAN

Austrighlyan for bee-ah!

TRINA

And vino in the liquor cabinet.

BRYCE

Ummm . . . what do you want, Melanie?

MELANIE

I guess I'll just do Heineken.

TRINA

Heineken it is!

BRYCE

Here. [Points to himself and holds up glass.]

[Pours some beer into MELANIE's glass, then to BRYCE's glass. MELANIE and BRYCE skool their glasses. MELANIE and BRYCE drink for the duration of the song, and start to play with each other's hair after the second chorus is sung.]

TRINA

[Sings]

I'll pour some beer for Melanie, pour some beer for Bryce
At 20, Japanese kids could have a beer on ice
Or they could ferment a sake from saka mai rice
Steam that rice, baby

In Paris and across France, parents give their children wine
With their dinner of baguettes, starting when they're 8 or 9
And the kids, or most of them at least, turn out fine
Crush those grapes, baby

Fill your gastric holes up with tumblers or snifters
Fill your souls up with brewed-up spirit-lifters
A Mass for the masses, and wine for the clergy
Raise your glasses to oenology . . . and zymurgy

At Oxford, English students may ask for cakes and ale
They may have it during test time, and it doesn't make them fail
They can drink it in the uni, and they will not go to gaol
Kiln those hops, baby

Jewish boys get real wine as soon as they're 13
When they've gotten their bar mitzvahs, onto Seder wine they're weaned
It's as all-Israeli as challah bread and beans

Brew that yeast, baby

Fill your gastric holes up with tumblers or snifters
Fill your souls up with brewed-up spirit-lifters
A Mass for the masses, and wine for the clergy
Raise your glasses to oenology . . . and zymurgy

Dreamy Inca girls chewed corn so all those Inca boys
Could have the mash they spat out with a noise that annoys
If you think to spit's not ladylike, just see them, they weren't coy
Chew that maize, baby

Liesl Von Trapp tried to stay to taste her first champagne
Offered food and wine by eager young lads all in vain
In Austria, they drink at 16, suffrage has been gained
Let it fizz, baby

Fill your gastric holes up with tumblers or snifters
Fill your souls up with brewed-up spirit-lifters
A Mass for the masses, and wine for the clergy
Raise your glasses to oenology . . . and zymurgy

A Mass for the masses, and wine for the clergy
Raise your glasses to oenology . . . and zymurgy
[*End of song*]

BRYCE

Hey Melanie, are we gonda have, say, pistachios . . . with our beer?

MELANIE

Sounds good to me.

MEGHAN

I'd like some pistachios too! Pretty please?

TRINA

Some pistachios for our two friends stocked on beer, and virgin pistachios for our designated driver.

MEGHAN

I remember this party, right? – at Tanner O'Dell's house – and we had beer and pistachios together. It was the BOMB!

TRINA

Tanner O'Dell? I shudder at that name.

MEGHAN

But his parents do have the good beer.

TRINA

And there's the thread of commonality between trendies like you and Melanie . . . and jocks like Tanner.

MELANIE

That we know how to party?

TRINA

To use the TL;DR summary, yes. If you want the long answer . . . let me find a marker. [TRINA goes up to markerboard and pulls out marker.] High school subcultures can be graphed on a chart that looks like this . . . an Evangelisti Chart.

MEGHAN

Evangelisti Chart? Isn't that your last name or something?

TRINA

Precisely. [Begins drawing chart in the form of a rhombus. Makes X shape to divide it into four smaller rhombi. Makes an arrow on the outside, moving from the bottom square towards the right square.] If we make this axis . . . the axis of public political views . . . [writes label PUBLIC POLITICAL VIEWS next to the arrow] . . . what they believe about gay rights, women's rights, youth rights, drugs, the environment, patriotism, the draft, campaign finance reform, oil, racism, things like whether they trust in the police . . . we have the liberal kids on the left and bottom and the conservative kids on the top and right.

BRYCE

We'd be on the left of that axis, right?

TRINA

Right. And then if we make this axis . . . personal behavior . . . [makes another arrow on the outside, moving from the left square towards the bottom square; writes label PERSONAL BEHAVIOR outside of the arrow to the arrow] . . . and that axis is things like what you yourself do. The people at the left and top do things like drink, smoke weed, have sex, stay out late, grow their hair long, grow beards, get pierced or tattooed, wear revealing clothes, start garage bands, drink energy drinks, sext, mosh, go to raves, and so on. The people on the right and bottom avoid these things. Now have you all got that?

MELANIE, BRYCE and MEGHAN (in unison)

Yes.

TRINA

Good. So . . . on the right of the chart would be preppies . . . [writes PREPPIES in the

right of the chart] . . . the clean-cut kids who take AP classes . . . so they can get into a good college . . . so they can get a job in a suit . . . so they can have enough money to raise their family with their spouse – of the opposite gender, of course! – and 2.5 kids.

MELANIE

Hey, have you been listening to Sarah Chiang lately?

MEGHAN

Since, like, that's what she says.

TRINA

Sarah, Chris Blehm, Katy Featherstone, Brett Adams, Olivia Fahey, Dave Choi, Anselm Nakagawa . . . they all basically talk like that. They're reading from the same playbook. Conservative both in political views and in personal behavior. They're adapted to the way school is structured and they follow the script society wants them to follow. [Pauses. Writes YOUTH CULTURALISTS in the left of the chart.] Now, on the left would be Youth Culturalists.

MELANIE

What's a Youth Culturalist? Like youth culture?

TRINA

Well, yes. People like us, Paul Moreno, Alan Isaacs, Kate Kim, Danny and Tom from Alan's band, Nadia Kirschenbaum . . . trendies, hip-hoppers, stripers, skaters, hippies, goths, emo kids, hipsters . . . many different groups with their own clothes and their own music . . . but we're all essentially the same. We have liberal political views, like supporting the environment . . .

BRYCE

And hating Mr. Pittman!

TRINA

Exactly! And we have liberal personal behavior . . . like this beer we're drinking, or like Alan's band . . . or like . . . like . . .

MELANIE

Like the way me and Bryce broke curfew?

TRINA

Yes. So now, who are at the top square? [Writes JOCKS, REDNECKS at the top of the chart.] Jocks and rednecks. The jocks, like Jake Cook, Tanner, Alfonso Rojas . . . most of the other boys on the football team and the wrestling team . . . and the good old boys like Buxton Carmichael and Jeff McRae, and good old *girls*, too, such as Leann Zabriskie . . . they have a lot in common. Both jocks and rednecks have right-wing political views . . . views that the rest of us find hard to take seriously. They're both very macho. They both know how to party despite their rampant right-wingery.

BRYCE

You know, Trina, I never understood how Jake Cook could drink beer and smoke weed and all . . . and then proclaim [imitating Jake's voice] "I like George W. Bush because he wants to get tough on drugs!" He always sounded like such a hypocrite.

TRINA

Perhaps . . . the jocks think that since they have athletic scholarships and have won championships for the Dobermans in years past, that they're exempt from the proscription of alcohol and pot?

BRYCE

Maybe.

TRINA

And then opposite the jocks, are – surprise, surprise! – the nerds. [Writes NERDS in the bottom square.] These are the smart but square kids with very strong interests and zero social skills. You know, Brian Himmelfarb, Andrew Yee, Vijaya Ramachandran, Logan Vermeer. The ones who are utterly *oblivious* – to your signals that no, you don't want to hear them talk about their World of Warcraft game. Their views on social issues like homosexuality and drugs are liberal, but they're clean-cut in their everyday lifestyle.

MELANIE

That would make sense. Because Brian and Andrew are always obeying class rules.

TRINA

Yet they both signed up to be Democrats in our mock Congress in Mr. Fromm's class.

BRYCE

True. But . . . if those are nerds, where would geeks be? Like Marcus Exantus or Waverley Bowe. Geeks are cooler than nerds.

TRINA

Since geeks do things like grow ponytails and beards and live on energy drinks, they would be halfway between nerds and Youth Culturalists. Cooler than nerds, but not as cool as, say, a skater or a hip-hopper. [Writes GEEKS right where the left square intersects with the bottom square.]

MELANIE

And what about the preps? Not the *preppies*, but the preps – the Abercrombie & Fitch or American Eagle types, like they have at Villa Hermosa?

TRINA

Said shallow lemmings would fit halfway in between the Youth Culturalists and jocks. We all know they smoke weed, take their shirts off, throw apples inside the restrooms . . . but they're politically rather apathetic. So at the top left they go! [Writes PREPS right where the left square intersects with the top square. [Pauses.] Now, those are just the

insider groups. We all basically fit inside this diamond. The three outsider groups are off the chart. First there are the freaks, or outcasts. At Dulcevida, that'd be John Ziemann and Lani Silverstein. [Writes FREAKS/OUTCASTS outside of rhombus, to the left of YOUTH CULTURALISTS.] Then we have the loners. Sort of socially inept and introverted like nerds, but they don't fit into the academic-minded, Magic-the-Gathering-loving mold, so we can't call them nerds. They're . . . here. [Writes LONERS outside of rhombus, below NERDS.] And finally, the social drifters. Drifters go everywhere, they'll begin their day at the backlot with the skaters, then work on their AP physiology projects with the preppies, then eat lunch with the metalheads, then hang out after school playing basketball, sorry, "B-ball" with the hip-hoppers. They're an outsider group too. [Writes DRIFTERS far outside the rhombus.]

BRYCE

Thanks for sharing, Trina.

MEGHAN

I'll never look at high school the same way!

TRINA

You're welcome, Bryce. And it ties into Friends of Paul Moreno. You see, the better part of Dulcevida students are in the Youth Culturalist quadrant of the chart. If we reach all the trendies and skaters and goths and metalheads, we have enough to fill up your Facebook group.

[BRYCE gives a big smile, with his braces showing.]

TRINA

And then that can trickle down the Evangelisti Chart to nerds, and trickle up the Evangelisti Chart to jocks and rednecks. By then we should have a full three quarters of the school on our team.

BRYCE

And Sarah Chiang. She joined too.

TRINA

If we even have some preppies joining, there's hope for the world.

BRYCE

And we can raise a glass to that! [Raises glass of beer.]

MELANIE

Skoal!

BRYCE

Skoal!

[MELANIE and BRYCE kiss. The scene dims out.]

ACT III, SCENE 3

[In BURDICK's classroom. Students include MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, KATE, NADIA, ROSTAM, DANNY, TOM, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, JOCELYN, TONY, and BLEHM. Strawberry Alarm Clock are playing.]

BURDICK

So as I pass back your Gabriel García Márquez essays, let's reflect on the themes in "Don Quixote". For starters, recall the theme of idealism vs. pragmatism. How is this reflected in your daily lives?

[ALAN raises his hand.]

BURDICK

Alan?

ALAN

Well, idealists say it's always wrong to lie, but I'm in a band and was looking for a bassist and everything, and I recently found I had to lie and say I was a student working on a class project to get a St. Angela's faculty member to give me a student's phone number. And isn't that lying for another ideal – the ideal of openness instead of privacy?

BURDICK

All right. Any other insights?

[LINDSAY raises her hand.]

BURDICK

Lindsay?

LINDSAY

Well, sometimes, you, like, idealize the perfect guy, and people tell you you should show a more realistic acceptance of what he's like and stuff, but you have to have the idealism or you . . . you know, you lose sight of the kind of boyfriend you want.

BURDICK

OK. So, leading to a synthesis of ideas: how does this tie in to the other literature we've studied this year, for instance the Romantic writers? Say, their ideas about civil disobedience?

[TRINA raises her hand.]

BURDICK

Trina?

TRINA

Well, to practice civil disobedience, you have to have both idealism and pragmatism. You need to be an idealist to realize that the current laws are wrong, and that there's a higher answer to what's right and what's wrong – what should be. But you also have to be a pragmatist. Conservatives tell you that the proper way to change laws is through legislation, and yet do you see anyone changing laws because some teen-ager wrote them a letter? The people who tell you it's always wrong to break the law are idealists too, not pragmatists. You have to be a pragmatist to have the courage to break an unjust law.

BURDICK

Excellent, Trina! In conclusion, that wraps up our unit on Hispanic literature. What I'd like to do now is to pass out the copies of this book called Night, by Elie Wiesel. Wiesel was a Jewish teen-age boy – he was your age – living in Transylvania when Germany invaded Hungary during World War II, and he spent some time in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. At that time, Wiesel and his family were sent to Auschwitz, and then they were marched to Buchenwald. And you're going to find out what happened at Buchenwald. So, as we study our unit on the Holocaust, I'm going to assign an essay on Night. Precisely, I'm going to have you write about what allowed the Holocaust to occur and discuss how Elie Wiesel captures it in his work.

MELANIE

I hope this is easy.

[BURDICK turns up the Strawberry Alarm Clock, and the scene ends.]

ACT III, SCENE 4

[In MRS. DAHLGREN's classroom. MELANIE is busily working on an assignment at the back of the room. Other students include BRYCE, ALAN, PAUL, SARAH, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, BLEHM, JAKE and NADIA. MRS. DAHLGREN is lecturing at the chalkboard.]

DAHLGREN

The tangent is defined as the ratio of the opposite side divided by the adjacent side. Here the tangent of angle A is a over b. And that concludes our lecture on triangles. Next up, we have a drawing project, so please prepare for it.

[MELANIE continues writing things down.]

DAHLGREN

Melanie, stop doodling and get ready for the next assignment.

MELANIE

I wasn't doodling.

[MRS. DAHLGREN says nothing.]

MELANIE

(In louder voice) Mrs. Dahlgren, I wasn't doodling!

DAHLGREN

Don't you raise your voice at me!

MELANIE

The first time I told you I wasn't doodling, you didn't apologize, so I figured you must not have heard me – you're all the way across the room and all. So I said it louder so you could hear me!

DAHLGREN

I'm writing you a referral to Mr. Pittman's office. [Pauses.] That was unacceptable!

MELANIE

THAT WAS NOT!

DAHLGREN

Uh, and that was too.

MELANIE

IT WAS NOT, YOU FASCIST!

TRINA

When people are far across a room, you have to speak louder for them to hear you. That's a simple law of acoustics any 5-year-old could tell you.

DAHLGREN

Trina, you stay out of it. Do you realize that if we didn't have rules like not raising your voice, society would be in a shambles?

PAUL

Who needs society?

DAHLGREN

We all need society. We have a duty to obey our society's limits and boundaries on behavior, in exchange for getting things like protection by the police. Getting things like social security.

BRYCE

That's OK, I don't want any when I get older.

DAHLGREN

Oh, you'll change your mind when you grow up.

BRYCE

[Frustrated] Ooooh, I can't wait till I'm 30. Then I'll show you when I haven't changed my mind.

DAHLGREN

You will change your minds, because by then you'll understand why we have those rules.

BRYCE

Because of corporations that find it convenient to keep good worker-slaves in place? Corporations like Bush's oil corporation?

DAHLGREN

How dare you question Bush? After 9/11, it is our duty as American citizens to get behind President Bush, right or wrong.

ALAN

Bush is Hitler!

PAUL

Junior doesn't want me to be able to marry the boy I love!

ALAN

And he made John Walters drug czar!

PAUL

So I can't smoke pot!

DAHLGREN

Teens today – these teens we have today rebel against rules that they don't understand.

MELANIE

Like why not to yell loud enough that you can hear me telling you I wasn't doodling? Sorry, but I don't think I need to know that one.

DAHLGREN

Don't you realize the importance of rules? If we didn't have these parameters, people would be jumping xll xver the plxce!

MELANIE

[Puzzled] What's wrong with xll xver the plxce?

DAHLGREN

[Freaking out] What's wrong with all–? Ahhhhh! You kids are impossible! I don't know why I've put up with this job for so long! I feel like leaving right now! [Walks out of the

classroom.] My students have me up to my neck!

[SCOTT OROZCO, a fortyish teacher with a moustache, wearing button-down shirt and slacks, notices MRS. DAHLGREN's comment.]

OROZCO

I agree. These kids are lazy. They never turn in adequate work.

[MR. PITTMAN is within hearing distance and comments.]

PITTMAN

What's the problem with today's teens?

DAHLGREN

Everything's the problem with them.

[Students begin walking out of the classroom as the scene moves towards the outdoors.]

MELANIE (at the same time as Paul)

Hey, we're not that bad!

PAUL (at the same time as Melanie)

Everyone says we're bad.

PITTMAN

Oh, yes you are! You remember what you –

PAUL

You framed me! Remember?

PITTMAN

[Sings]

Why did I become asst-principal at DHS?

Though these kids think they know more and more, each year it's less and less

They think they're full of knowledge

They're holier-than-thou

Kids did this when I was in college

Kids are doing it in high school now

Convinced all of society

And well-respected faculty

Don't have it right

Pray tell, what in their 16 years

Just talking to their shallow peers

Gives them insight?

They're all honey and fruit, they're so nutty, they're nuts, like a pistachio or a macadamia
Out of touch with the real world, they're up in the clouds, like the worst of lab-coated professors from academia

They're acting like experts, of course self-professed
They're convinced that they best
Know the truth
And that's the problem with youth!

OROZCO

How could I decide that I would teach biology?
These poor teen-agers' attention spans were fried by MTV
When I teach AP Bio
Don't write essays themselves
They will turn in a copyvio
Plagiarized from the library's shelves
They text each other during class
They snack in class, and each one has
To wear headphones
And even when they cross the street
They're busy listening to beats
They're in the zone

They lie on the couch with their cellphone in hand, only get off to turn on the air conditioner
They just care about what's in their hair and not what's in their head, they spend hours applying their hair conditioner

Hard work or attention they'll never attempt
They're unfocused, unkempt
And uncouth
And that's the problem with youth!

PITTMAN

All teens today do is question, question, question
What's wrong with chewing gum, or marijuana ingestion?
We want them to be docile, but they come out so headstrong . . .

BLUMBERG

Can't we all just get along?

PITTMAN

Naaaaaah . . .

DAHLGREN

What was on my mind when I decided to teach math?
When I throw in teaching social norms, I face my students' wrath
Just giving them detention
Won't change their doubtful ways
They talk about things I won't mention
Inappropriate things that they say
Don't stand when I walk in the room
When I say "Just because", they'll fume
Sometimes they'll scream
When they grow up, they're gonna wear
Flip-flops to work, they never care
To be mainstream

They rebel against things that they don't understand, such as meat-eating, curfews or globalization
Growing outside the system instead of within it and around the president they show no mobilization

A bad generation that's poised to do wrong
To those who are long
In the tooth
And that's the problem with youth!

BLUMBERG

[Spoken] With the number of rules you're giving them, what are they going to do when they grow up? The way I see it, after they've legalized drugs, lowered the legal ages for everything and abolished indecent exposure laws and everything, they're going to repeal laws against counterfeiting, graffiti and murder!

PITTMAN

Put a sock in it, Paulina.

BLUMBERG

Oh, George!

PITTMAN, OROZCO and DAHLGREN (*singing at the same time as Paul, Alan and Meghan*)

Though these kids think they know more and more, each year it's less and less
They think they're full of knowledge
They're holier-than-thou
Kids did this when I was in college
Kids are doing it in high school now
Convinced all of society
And well-respected faculty
Don't have it right
Pray tell, what in their 16 years

Just talking to their shallow peers
Gives them insight?

PAUL, ALAN and MEGHAN (*singing at the same time as Pittman, Orozco and Dahlgren*)

The seventies, the eighties, the nineties
Brought forth the generation we call us
As for the rest, they're obsessed
With keeping us repressed
They lock us up and say it's for our best interest
Teachers, cops or politicians, whatever their name
They're all the same
They are the one I declaim
They say there's one right way to speak
To think, to drink, to eat
They only live to give you heat
Don't like your jewelry, tell you you reek
It's just a difference of a few years that declares
If they're one of yours or one of theirs

BLUMBERG

Don't try to bash or take a strike
Down inside, we're all alike!

PITTMAN, OROZCO and DAHLGREN (*singing at the same time as Paul, Alan and Meghan*)

They're acting like experts, of course self-professed
They're convinced that they best
Know the truth
And that's the problem
That's the problem
That's the problem with youth!

PAUL, ALAN and MEGHAN (*singing at the same time as Pittman, Orozco and Dahlgren*)

Don't hang around them
They're phlegm
Stick with people you can trust
People like us
People like us
People like us!
[End of songs]

ACT III, SCENE 5

[In the auditorium. ASSISTANT-PRINCIPAL PITTMAN is calling a special school

assembly. PAUL is drawing in the audience.]

FORBES

And now for your assistant-principal, Mr. Pittman!

PITTMAN

Welcome to our special school assembly. First of all, I would like to announce that our school computers will now block access to Facebook, MySpace, and all other social networking websites! Students will now interact with each other face-to-face, instead of on a computer screen!

PAUL

[Panicking] How the hell am I going to access Friends of Paul Moreno now?

MELANIE

[Incredulously] Don't you have an iPhone?

PAUL

You know my dad! He won't buy me a cellphone plan!

PITTMAN

Now, for the big announcement. Given the recent showdown on campus, I've got a new idea to announce that will solve all the conflict and strife at Dulcevida. [Smirks.] What this school needs are some good old-fashioned uniforms! For boys, we will now require white dress shirts with navy slacks and dress shoes. For girls, white blouses with navy skirts . . . and more dress shoes.

[MR. PITTMAN walks up to BOY WITH BAGGY PANTS.]

PITTMAN

[Sings]

Look at that kid with baggy, sagging pants on – what on Earth?

He looks just like a beltless prisoner at Leavenworth

He ought to go and change into slacks that are not slack

If you look you can see his crack . . . in back

We won't have this problem with a uniform adoption

With the boys all wearing slacks, I shall see that they can walk well

The too-cool hip-hop look will no more be an option

Our campus will be a panorama out of Rockwell

[MR. PITTMAN walks up to GIRL WITH REVEALING SHIRT.]

In this day and this age you often see our female teens

Who wear those baby tees like you see on magazines

The guys all turn their heads when their navels are exposed

Girls always strike a bimbo pose . . . in those

So cover the navels, give the girls all matching blouses
All so clean-cut and so full, you won't see somebody's midriff
We'll live on the same page, not in divided houses
With this bit of help in narrowing the adult/kid rift

No hemp, the kids won't be influenced to roll some
Nothing that's punky, and nothing diaphanous
With our new clothes on, we'll all look so wholesome
Life Magazine soon will be photographin' us!

[MR. PITTMAN walks up to BOY WITH BEER T-SHIRT.]

You sometimes see a T-shirt sporting Coor's or Miller Draft
He ought to be suspended for a month and a half
Or at the very least, made to turn it inside-out
If the dress code's what he's about . . . to flout

What's next – will their shirts promote the drinking of some Drano?
Our dress shirts will bear the name of no alcoholic beverage
The importance of teaching these young minds to just say no
Will give the argument for school uniforms some leverage

Everywhere you look you see clothes that are appalling
We've got a fire
And the attire
Throws on fuel
But . . .
It can be extinguished if we just try installing
Uniforms . . . at school!
[*End of song*]

And no facial hair will be allowed! No more piercing on boys, ears only on girls. The uniform policy will officially begin the day after spring break. So buy your uniforms in the stores nearby in the next few weeks to prepare. Sears has good uniform pants and skirts . . . and tops.

[In the audience, MELANIE points to PAUL's picture.]

MELANIE
You're drawing, Paul? Show me!

PAUL
Basically, yeah. Here's my picture.

MELANIE

Oh, I see. You have the Statue of Liberty with a skull for a face, and a tank driving down the side, and some flames, and here are some syringes, and there you've got the word "DEMOCRACY" in all caps.

PAUL

Yep. If I ever find a steady boyfriend, you know, I'm going to – going to give him one of my pictures as a special gift.

TRINA

I've been miserable because I can't find a girlfriend and all this time, you've been getting along fine without a steady boyfriend. I can stand on my own two feet without a girlfriend.

MELANIE

So is that picture your take on the uniform policy? I can't believe they're going to, like, suspend me if I wear my tank top to school!

LINDSAY

Oh my god, I won't be able to, like, wear my jellies and stuff.

MEGHAN

I hear the breath of Mr. Pittman on my back.

TRINA

Americans who would never support dictatorships abroad or Islamic fundamentalist countries that tell their citizens what to wear seem glad to blindly support mini-dictatorships called "schools" at home.

[JOCELYN POIRIER, another student, criticizes the anti-uniform teens.]

JOCELYN

You live in an affluent democracy with food and shelter and yet you bitch and whine because your school wants you to dress nicely. You ungrateful kids want middle-class teens to be able to smoke pot!

TRINA

Democracy?

ALAN

Straw-man, bub. We want ALL teens to be able to smoke pot. And to wear sunglasses.

TRINA

Since when is Armando middle-class? No BMW? No Rolex? Out of here . . .

BRYCE

We wrote letters to Congressman Johnson.

ALAN

Good, you learned your lesson.

MELANIE

This is enough to make me cry.

[Scene fades.]

ACT III, SCENE 6

[In MR. OROZCO's biology class. Among the students is SARAH.]

OROZCO

This biology quarter test will account for 25% of your grades. And you all better put good effort into the essay question, because that alone is worth fifty points.

SARAH

Fifty points?!

OROZCO

Yes, you heard me right. Not that you kids know anything about effort. You sit around, with your cellphones and your PlayStations, and let your electronic entertainment warp your brains. Believe me, it's no substitute for having to work hard in life! Now, let me pass out the tests. [Begins passing out tests.]

[Someone holds a sign up that reads "40 MINUTES LATER".]

SARAH

[Quietly] Meiosis . . . mitosis . . . this is frying my brain.

[The bell rings.]

OROZCO

Pass your assignments up front.

SARAH

Mr. Orozco?

OROZCO

Yes, Sarah.

SARAH

I'm still not done . . . with that little essay question? May I finish it up in the computer lab?

OROZCO

All right. Take that test into the lab and finish it up there. Now head out to lunch, I need to grade some papers!

[End of scene.]

ACT III, SCENE 7

[ALAN is in Sellers', a grocery store. MELANIE is also there. She has a depressed look on her face. The two meet.]

MELANIE

Hello, Alan.

ALAN

[Waves.] Melanie! You go here often?

MELANIE

Oh, this is where I usually shop.

ALAN

Me, I usually go to Grove Market, but today . . . today I decided I needed a change of pace.

MELANIE

My boyfriend Bryce goes there. But I don't . . . usually. I went there once, and you know Paul? They arrested him, Alan!

ALAN

You look down. What's wrong?

MELANIE

It's the school uniform thing. I am not going to be caught wearing a school uniform, Alan!

ALAN

Neither am I. I'm just not looking forward to getting suspended for not wearing the dress shirt . . . you know?

MELANIE

How are uniforms, like, supposed to make us learn better?

ALAN

They say you go to school to learn the three R's – reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. Instead going to school has been teaching us the three A's – angst, anarchy and alienation.

MELANIE

Well, I hope they beat the proposal at the panel. Did you hear about the open panel on uniforms at Dulcevida?

[ALAN shakes his head.]

MELANIE

They're going to have a panel, right? They'll get student council members to, like, debate with the faculty on the uniform proposal.

ALAN

Really?

MELANIE

Really. So which student council member you think would do a good job at facing Mr. Pittman and the principal?

ALAN

I dunno . . . none of them, really.

MELANIE

How about Bryce? He's principled and sincere . . . I know he'll stand up for us all.

ALAN

Bryce Schlitter? He believes that Kurt Cobain's coming back to Earth. Look! It's the zombie Kurt!

MELANIE

Well, his idealism will help convince people of the cause of . . . well, opposing uniforms.

ALAN

Dude, this isn't going to work. Activism won't achieve anything, and working within the system is going to achieve even less. Do you really think they're going to decide that the students have won the debate or something? It will fail, and before you know it it will be time for uniforms.

MELANIE

And another thing – I'm having trouble with Burdick's Holocaust assignment.

ALAN

What are you having trouble with?

MELANIE

I just don't know what to write. It's like there's this stuff that went on in the Holocaust and I have to come up with some Nobel-prize-winning explanation for how it could go on. It's, like, all racing through my head and I can't get anything down.

ALAN
I hear you.

MELANIE
And then you're supposed to, like, tie it in to how Elie Wiesel captures it in his book. I need more direction.

ALAN
Have you tried getting Bryce or Trina or someone to help you?

MELANIE
I've tried that before, and I always end up copying exactly whatever they tell me. I don't want to plagiarize. You know what I'm saying? And then another thing! I always have trouble writing in, you know, English-class-style English. It's like my conversation seeps in to the essays!

[Sings]
Like, totally, you know (y'know)
Pretty, basically, kinda
Or something, or something
Like, sure (sure)
And all, and stuff, and junk
Or something, or something
Like, whatever, you know what I mean?
You know what I'm saying?
And everything, or something, or something
Like, really, dude! (Dude!)
Soooooo, kewl, that sucks
As if, or something, or something
Like, majorly, tscha! (tscha!)
Like I say, it's like this
Well, or something, or something
Like, er, uh (uh)
I mean, just, ZOMG
Or something, or something, like, or something, like, or something . . .
[End of song]

ALAN
I don't have that problem. I just have a problem with writing essays on dopey handles. Like this Old Man and the Sea essay freshman year . . .

[RICHARD HADDAD, a man in denim jacket, button-down shirt and jeans, steps on an open cord that has been left in Sellers' by the janitorial crew.]

RICHARD
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

MELANIE

Oh my god, what happened?

ALAN

Do you see?

MELANIE

Oh, I saw, he stepped on the cord!

ALAN

When I trip over a cord at my house, I'm not in pain.

MELANIE

This was an open cord. I think it electrocuted him.

ALAN

Wow, watch as the staff at Sellers' tries to butter up to him to avoid bad publicity.

MELANIE

How could they leave it open like that?

[The MANAGER of Sellers', in Sellers' uniform, walks up to RICHARD.]

MANAGER

Sir?

RICHARD

Huh?

MANAGER

I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

RICHARD

Excuse me?

MANAGER

I'm going to have to ask you to leave. They heard you screaming, and we can't have that in the store.

RICHARD

I just stepped on this cord! The cord was open, and when it sent the jolt through my body, you bet I screamed!

MANAGER

Sir, we can't have you screaming in public like that. Now you can leave, or I can call the police.

ALAN
Hey! You're just a big hypocrite!

MANAGER
Excuse me?

ALAN
That's what you are – a hypocrite! You'd scream too if you were the one stepping on the cord!

[By now a crowd has gathered around RICHARD, ALAN, MELANIE and the MANAGER.]

MANAGER
Do I need to call the police?

ALAN
You don't need to; in fact you would be morally obligated not to.

MANAGER
So you're going to get smart with me?

ALAN
How did that thing behind you get there anyway?

MANAGER
The cord, you mean? Our janitorial crew was doing their job. They were making their way through here.

ALAN
Quick! There's a lid from an exploding can of dough heading towards your eyes!

MANAGER
Huh? [Ducks and backs up onto cord, accidentally stepping on it.]
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH . . . [Gives prolonged scream.]

ALAN
Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you your hypocrite.

[MANAGER is still on the cord screaming.]

MELANIE
Sellers' has got a lawsuit waiting to happen.

ALAN

I'm shopping at Grove Market from now on.

MELANIE

I'm not hungry. [Puts down her grocery basket.]

[End of scene]

ACT III, SCENE 8

[On the quad. PRINCIPAL FORBES and MS. BLUMBERG watch as MR. PITTMAN and BRYCE debate. MR. PITTMAN appears in dress shirt and slacks, while BRYCE is wearing a striped shirt again. Other students are in the audience.]

FORBES

Welcome all to the Dulcevida school uniform debate. We have several students against the uniform proposal here, led by Bryce Schlitter, and then here we have your assistant-principal, Mr. Pittman, who will be arguing for uniforms.

PITTMAN

Thank you, Graham. I'd like to start out by saying that uniforms will clean up the dress code violations and issues that we have at Dulcevida, as well as making our students better-behaved and more work-oriented. They'll focus on their classwork and not what the other kids are wearing. Uniforms will instill a sense of discipline in these youngsters.

BRYCE

Principal Forbes, it is the consensus of this student council that uniforms will send a message of blind obedience and conformity, and send the same message uniforms teach in Japan: that creativity is not important. More importantly, the uniform policy will punish students for nothing more than coming to school not wearing a dress shirt or blouse.

FORBES

Mr. Pittman, would you like to offer a response to Bryce's statement?

PITTMAN

Yes, I would. When you grow up, you can get fired for not going to work wearing a suit and tie, or a pantsuit. Shouldn't this school be preparing our students for the real world?

FORBES

Bryce, do you have a rebuttal?

BRYCE

Yes, I do. If you grow up to work at Grove Market, or to be a rock star, or to be a field linguist, you're not going to need to wear a suit or pantyhose. People have the freedom to choose what kind of job they take up. Teens don't have that same freedom to choose what school they're going to attend. So your statement about "preparing students for

the real world” only applies to the students who are going to work in a corporate office job, and they’re free to prepare for it by dressing formally to school.

FORBES

Bryce, do you have a response to Mr. Pittman’s original statement?

BRYCE

I do. He said that students would focus on classwork instead of clothes, but if I were in a uniform, all I’d be able to think about all day was how tacky and uncomfortable and stuff my uniform was.

FORBES

Mr. Pittman, do you have a rebuttal?

PITTMAN

Yes. I’m sure that all that thinking about your uniform would wear off in a couple of weeks once you get used to everyone wearing the same thing in class.

FORBES

Thank you, gentlemen. Now I’d like to run a free debate session, where the assistant-principal and student are free to exchange questions and answers back and forth. Would you like to start, Mr. Pittman?

PITTMAN

I sure would, Graham. I’d like to state that, contrary to what young Bryce said, we needn’t worry about the message we send with regards to creativity. You go to school to learn, not for self-expression.

BRYCE

So? You could also say, oh, you go to school to learn, not to eat, so let’s abolish school lunches! Or you go to school to learn, not to breathe, so let’s ban breathing at school!

[Audience chatters.]

BLUMBERG

Surely you two can get along.

BRYCE

Now, as it is, certain things, like beer T-shirts, are already against the school dress code, and yet we still see students coming to school wearing those things. What makes you think that if you have a school uniform, you won’t have students who just come to school not wearing the uniform?

BLUMBERG

That’s a good point. Don’t you see dress code violations already?

PITTMAN

Well, that's the beautiful thing. When someone wears a beer T-shirt to school, it's hard to see it from a distance, and faculty won't notice unless they're looking right at it. When you have uniforms, you can see instantly that a student's not wearing the uniform.

[Audience chatters.]

PITTMAN

Bryce, when the students are all wearing uniforms, they won't judge each other based on their clothes. They'll look inside and judge based on whether you're a truly good person.

BLUMBERG

That's always a good thing, isn't it, Bryce?

BRYCE

Well, the students will still have the hairstyles to go on, and they'll see how the other kids dress during the weekend when they're not wearing uniforms, so we'll still all know what clique someone belongs to.

BLUMBERG

Shouldn't we take that into consideration? Can we really enforce the uniform policy outside of school?

PITTMAN

Uniforms will bring order and stability. We'll have a more orderly campus!

BLUMBERG

Do you think stability is a good thing, Bryce?

BRYCE

Stability, who needs it? Plus . . . do we really want to send a message that dress shirts and slacks are better than tank tops or flip-flops?

BLUMBERG

True, isn't that a value judgment?

PITTMAN

Not better, just more appropriate for school.

BRYCE

Oh? Can we say that Chinese culture is more appropriate for school than Jamaican culture?

PITTMAN

The only culture that has a place in school is Mainstream American Culture.

[Audience reacts in shock.]

BLUMBERG

Shouldn't we be teaching cultural diversity and tolerance?

PITTMAN

If it were up to me, there'd *be* no appreciation of cultural diversity at Dulcevida!

BRYCE

Kurt Cobain is listening to all of this! If Kurt were here, he'd push for the victory of youth culture, not adult culture, on campus! Kurt Cobain believes in youth culture and nonconformity!

PITTMAN

Mr. Cobain's been dead for a hundred years. He can't hear us.

[The audience members talk.]

MELANIE

Wasn't Bryce great and all?

PAUL

Yeah.

MELANIE

And I'm not just saying that because he's my boyfriend.

TRINA

I agree, he refuted Mr. Pittman's ludicrous lines of thinking. I especially liked his juxtaposition of Chinese and Jamaican culture as analogous to the conflict between "mainstream" culture and youth culture.

ALAN

The Teen-age Life, in other words!

MELANIE

Jake, can I get you to, like, support free dress?

JAKE

I'm wearing a *uniform*! [Points to his football uniform.]

MELANIE

Jake, if you get behind the no-uniforms thing, you'll be able to wear your football uniform in class instead of a dress shirt. Can't we have your support!

JAKE

I'll only join if it's led by straight people. Not by people like that AC/DC Alan. You know?

MELANIE

Well, Bryce is big on this anti-uniform stuff, and he's dating me.

JAKE

Ha, ha. Yeah.

MELANIE

How about you, Brian? Can we get you to join our side? You'll be able to wear your T-shirt and jeans instead of a dress shirt and slacks.

BRIAN

Erp! No way! I'm not going to break a school rule!

DANNY

Bryce was the winner of the debate!

LINDSAY

There's something about that striped shirt.

MEGHAN

I think so too.

BLEHM

Naah, I think Mr. Pittman was the winner. I mean, he laid out the importance of order and stability.

FORBES

That concludes our panel on school uniforms. I hereby declare Mr. Pittman the winner!

PAUL

Dude! Bryce was the winner!

MELANIE

Epic fail!

FORBES

Uniforms *will* be implemented the day you come back from spring break.

MELANIE

What are we going to do?

ALAN

Nothing!

[Scene fades.]

ACT III, SCENE 9

[In the computer lab. SARAH is working on the biology test.]

SARAH

[Reading essay question] Describe the mitosis of the chromosomes of the fly *Drosophila melanogaster*, from prophase to telophase, and how the process passes on the recessive white eye gene over three generations.

[Someone holds a sign up that reads "15 MINUTES LATER".]

SARAH

[Writing] Then comes the next anaphase, when the chromatids separate, and with it, the w1 gene is carried. Oh, no, I'm getting wrinkles again. I hope I don't come out of here a prune. I also hope this test doesn't ruin my grades for junior year and stop me from getting into a good college.

[Someone holds a sign up that reads "14 MINUTES LATER".]

SARAH

[Writing] But the flies who carried the recessive gene from both parents will still be white-eyed. [Puts pen down.] I did it! I completed this test! My future is saved! I'll never be able to do that again! [Walks over to MR. OROZCO's room and knocks on door.] Mr. Orozco? [Tries to open door.] No one's there. I guess I'll slide it under his door then. [Slides test under MR. OROZCO's door and walks off.]

[End of scene.]

ACT III, SCENE 10

[In MELANIE's room. MELANIE has her laptop on, and her copy of Night in front of her.]

MELANIE

I owe Burdick an essay on Night and everything, but I don't know, like, how to answer his question. *What allowed the Holocaust to happen, and how does Wiesel reflect this in his work?* There's a lot Elie Wiesel writes about . . . the SS moving Jews to the ghettos . . . Elie being taken to Auschwitz . . . the little boy being hanged . . . the Death March . . . Elie's father dying . . . Burdick's going to ask me, "What does it all mean?" I wish I could tell him, but I can't . . . it's just random incidents of oppression, put together from real life, not from fiction like the year we read Romeo and Juliet. And that stuff is random because life is random! Like, he basically watches someone killed here and gets moved to the ghettos there . . . wow, it feels almost like being forced to wear uniforms. We had the showdown with the teachers after I yelled in class . . . we have Armando's curfew . . . and now school uniforms . . . just because people think teens are

OROZCO

Young lady, that was very disruptive! Please go to Assistant-principal Pittman's office!

SARAH

[Walks down the hall] What's happening? My world is falling down before me!

[Sings]

Once I thought I knew my real from fake
But this is simply more than I can take
Things come crashing down like a statue
Fate comes behind you to scratch you
On the part where failure stings the most
That hit home, or at least too close
Now I don't know where I'm going
It's more than just a test that you're throwing
Away, to the nether reaches of the Earth
Now self-doubt rides in to replace self-worth
Tearing through my sea like a tsunami
Knocking off my helmet to bomb me
Space of black and skies of grey
And my whole world comes crashing . . . into disarray

When I look back at my younger days
They were covered with a translucent haze
I knew I'd see the light someday
Where a good luck kitten could come stay
My life was happy like bubblegum pop
Even though it was full of work nonstop
The days at the beach looked so sunny
With a future with plenty of money
Now when I take my trips to the shore
I won't pull out my beach towel anymore
Now my manifest future all hinges
Around six-pack wraps and syringes
Take me way back to the day
And my whole world comes crashing . . . into disarray

I thought all I had to do was work hard
Now it seems I may have to discard
The outlook and all my ambitions
As my progress goes into remission
On a heroin rush so Kiedisesque
I had powerful thoughts of an office desk
Wearing a suit made of power
Working high in an ivory tower
There was no mountain I couldn't climb

Now I slip on rocks with an algal slime
And rappelling feels so uncertain
This was my life, close the curtain
All that I knew falls away
And my whole world comes crashing . . . into disarray
[End of song]

ACT III, SCENE 12

[In MRS. DAHLGREN's classroom. MELANIE behind BRYCE, ALAN, PAUL, SARAH, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, BLEHM, JAKE and NADIA are in the classroom. ALAN is sitting on the floor next to his desk rather than in his chair.]

DAHLGREN

Today we're going to learn about something in mathematics called functions. Open to page 320 of your books. *[Pauses.]* Alan, what are you doing sitting on the floor? Please get in your chair.

ALAN

There's nothing wrong with sitting on the floor.

DAHLGREN

Our society says there is.

ALAN

I'm sorry, but why should school teach social conventions?

DAHLGREN

Because you'll need to abide by social conventions as adults. If I don't conform, I don't eat! Come on, sit on the chair.

ALAN

You confronted me before for perching on my chair!

DAHLGREN

We can't – !

ALAN

And I'm not going to give in to another confrontation!

DAHLGREN

We can't – We can't allow students to do things that violate the norms of American culture.

ALAN

You're just like the man who told that person screaming at Sellers' to leave!

DAHLGREN

People should be allowed to ask others to leave their store if they want to. It's their business, it's their right. And this is my classroom. Plus, you're never going to be happy if you keep questioning everything.

ALAN

Well, guess what! I don't want to be happy if that means not recognizing the truth and stuff! And me . . . well, and me sitting on the floor doesn't hurt anybody.

DAHLGREN

You don't see any of the other students sitting on the floor.

[PAUL sits down on the floor next to his desk.]

DAHLGREN

Paul, get back in your chair!

[NADIA KIRSCHENBAUM, a gothic girl sitting in the back of the class, sits down on the floor.]

DAHLGREN

Nadia?

[BRYCE sits on the floor next to his desk.]

DAHLGREN

Bryce?

SARAH

Oh, what the heck, there's no light at the end of the tunnel! [Sits down on the floor.]

[Other students begin sitting on the floor, one by one, until everyone but BLEHM is on the floor.]

DAHLGREN

You win. Let's all sit together during the lesson. A function is represented by an italic f , and you use it to denote the relationship between two numbers . . . [Speech drones down as the play focuses on the students.]

MEGHAN

I've never seen Mrs. Dahlgren, like, admit defeat before.

LINDSAY

Neither have I.

BRYCE

But what about Mr. Pittman? You know, with the school uniforms?

MELANIE

Hey, I have a great idea. If we all come to school not wearing a uniform together on the first uniform day, the school won't be able to punish us all.

MEGHAN

That's brilliant, Melanie!

MELANIE

Sylvia Plath said, "I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart: I am, I am, I am". After spring break we'll be listening to the old brags of our hearts: we are, we are, we are.

MEGHAN

That was deep.

LINDSAY

Yeah, that sounds more like something Trina would quote than something you'd quote, Melanie.

MELANIE

Well . . . Burdick said he really loved that Night essay I wrote.

MEGHAN

Oh, that essay? I only got a C+.

LINDSAY

I got a B.

MELANIE

I got a 100. A+. And you know something? I realized, I don't have to hide my intelligence. I don't have to front and stuff. Being able to think is something to be proud of. You know what I'm saying? I think that essay and the feedback on it did wonders for my self-esteem.

PAUL

I'm going to wear my board shorts on school uniform day.

ALAN

And I'm going to wear my turtleneck and shades. Even though I'll prob'ly get suspended.

BRYCE

I bet we won't!

MELANIE

Should we, like, wear tank tops?

LINDSAY

Sounds good to me.

MEGHAN

Yep.

SARAH

You know, I think this rebellion will be something worth living for.

[Scene fades.]

ACT III, SCENE 13

[In the kitchen at PAUL's house. RAÚL MORENO is making dinner.]

MR. MORENO

Come and eat, Paul.

PAUL

Steak . . . again?

MR. MORENO

Yes, and if you don't eat it you're gonna starve. Since that's all I made for dinner tonight!

PAUL

Dad . . . did anyone ever tell you you were cruel?

MR. MORENO

What they tell me is neither here nor there. Now, I know you've been going through this vegetarian phase and all, but sooner or later you'll have to come to terms with the real world: *you need meat to grow into a big strong man.*

PAUL

NO!

MR. MORENO

How about "YES, DAD!"? I try and try to get you on the right path, but all you do is act like a snotty adolescent and behave like a fag! Now, I've got some great meat here! This one's from a freshly slaughtered cow! It's raw! You know, you can just see the red juices on this one! It'll give you a good fag-ectomy! [Starts eating.]

PAUL

All you are is a meat-eating Neanderthal! I don't go around all, "You stop eating meat!" So why you always go around all, "You must eat meat!"?

MR. MORENO

Because I'm a grown man and you're not even old enough to see an R-rated movie without me! Mmmmm . . . this is good. You go around smoking your grass all the time. With all that grass in you . . . are you a cow or something? Hey, I know! Maybe I should start eating you!

PAUL

Your diet is crap enough! Raw red meat, night after night! You know what, Dad? I'm GLAD I have this job at Grove Market because I'd starve to death if I counted on you to fix my meals. And you know what else? I bet you WOULDN'T EVEN MOURN ME!

MR. MORENO

I'd mourn that you went to Hell to frizzle up before I could get you on the right path! Ah! Ah! [Holds onto his heart.]

PAUL

What the –?

MR. MORENO

[Having heart attack.] Quick! Call 911!

PAUL

[Hesitates.]

MR. MORENO

CALL 911!

PAUL

[Cries.] It wouldn't make you stop hating me!

MR. MORENO

[Grasping his heart.] Ah-ah-ah!

PAUL

Dad?

[MR. MORENO dies and lies on the floor.]

PAUL

[Stands there and cries. Looks at his father.] Really? Whoa! [Realizes his father is now dead.] Woo-hoo! [Grabs a telephone and dials 911.] Hello? . . . My dad just died.

[End of scene.]

ACT III, SCENE 14

[On the quad. It is the first day after spring break. Thousands of students come to school not wearing the uniform. BLEHM, meanwhile, is left wearing the school uniform. MR. PITTMAN and PRINCIPAL FORBES stand on the campus. MS. BLUMBERG and MR. OROZCO are there too.]

MELANIE

Wasn't that a great spring break? I vacationed at Tahoe!

TRINA

Well, I spent it conducting an Easter egg hunt for the children at my Catholic church.

MELANIE

Hmmm, I don't go to church. I'm an agnostic. I see you've got your ammonite necklace on, Trina.

TRINA

Guilty as charged. And you're wearing your tank top?

MELANIE

Yep. I see Bryce has got his stripes on.

BRYCE

Yep.

TRINA

So you can be a zebra.

PAUL

Naah, he's going to be a tiger today. Tigers are more powerful. Zebras get eaten by lions.

MELANIE

Brian? You're not in the uniform? What changed your mind?

BRIAN

I didn't want to draw attention to myself by being the only student in a uniform.

BRYCE

Well, look, Blehm's got one on!

ALAN

And Nadia's dressed like a goth.

TRINA

Nadia always dresses like a goth.

ALAN

Just like Paul always dresses like a skater. Yeah, look at all these different clothes, these hairstyles, this facial hair, that piercing – it makes us proud to be us.

ALL STUDENTS NOT WEARING UNIFORM

[Chanting] You can't suspend us all! You can't suspend us all! You can't suspend us all!
You can't suspend us all! You can't suspend us all!

FORBES

Look at all those students.

PITTMAN

Yeah.

ALL STUDENTS NOT WEARING UNIFORM

[Sing]

Ooh . . . looks like this is our moment
Today we join and proudly stand
Walls may fall, and unrest may foment
We form a block, joined hand to hand
You can't stop us, you can't arrest us
Since you could never break our stride
You can't beat us, nor can you best us
When we are standing side-by-side
Now, clap your hands and show your pride
Since we're allied!

Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!

Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!

Looks like we'll achieve our objective
Some say we're bad, some say we're weird
But when we move in ways collective
We're a force to be viewed, not feared
Here we are, firm and self-reliant
We watch the old guard start to fall
Now we form a wall that is giant
Stare in awe at our mega-wall
We all are standing nice and tall
Now watch us all!

Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!

Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!

OROZCO

Stop your disruptive singing right now!

ALL STUDENTS NOT WEARING UNIFORM

It makes us feel brave and empowered
When all our clothing is unique
Different styles all in one tower
From trendy to hip-hop to freak
Let your colors show and be counted
Black and blue, cream, green and red
Any challenge can be surmounted
When change in this world is youth-led
Don't fear, but welcome us instead
We're head by head!

Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
Hey, hey-ey-ey-ey-ey, hey!
[End of song]

PITTMAN

A generation has made its statement.

FORBES

Suspend them?

PITTMAN

Uh, no.

BLEHM

Well, Mr. Pittman, at least / came wearing the uniform.

DANNY

So, Mr. Pittman, want to confess to anything now?

PITTMAN

What would I have to confess to?

PAUL

To framing me.

TOM

Come on, confess.

PITTMAN

Uh . . .

BRYCE

You know you did something very wrong. An innocent man is going to have a suspension on his record forever because you told a lie. You know it, the whole student body knows it, and the best thing you can do is admit it. You can lie to us, but you can't lie to yourself, and you haven't fooled anyone, so you might as well confess that you knew Paul Moreno was not vandalizing the restrooms. And we have the force of the whole student body behind Paul. These students have all joined his Facebook group.

PITTMAN

Uh . . . I did it! It's all true! Paul was being so intransigent I felt I had to make up a story about graffiti. Paul never drew graffiti. I did it – I framed him!

FORBES

To think that I could without question believe a liar over someone telling the truth . . . ooh, what I did is unforgivable. I should be ashamed of myself. Paul, I'm going to have to apologize . . .

PAUL

Well, don't expect me to accept the apology. You didn't even try to listen to me. [Spits in PRINCIPAL FORBES' face.]

PITTMAN

Suspend him for that?

FORBES

No, I brought it on myself. I deserved that. [Gets out microphone.] Attention all students at Dulcevida High School: the school uniform policy will be suspended for further analysis. As for now, please report to your first-period classes.

[The students cheer.]

TRINA

That was very brave of you, Bryce. You didn't summon Kurt or something?

BRYCE

I don't need Kurt Cobain or anybody else to be my crutch to win my battles for me. I can stand on my own two feet and win my own battles!

MELANIE

Epic win!

LINDSAY (at the same time as Bryce)

Like, yeah!

BRYCE (at the same time as Lindsay)
I knew it was worth a try.

ALAN

I couldn't be more stunned. Bryce, you were right about this. Suspended for further analysis? I mean, we finally stopped the machine, you know?

MELANIE

We can do better than stop a tank. We can retire it! This was like a psychedelic rainbow!

PAUL

Like something you'd see when you were on 'shrooms.

SARAH

Yeah, I mean even my preppy garb has more flavor than that blouse and skirt.

TRINA

Hey, aren't you glad that Mr. Pittman finally told the truth?

PAUL

Hell, yeah!

BRYCE

So your permanent record is going to make clear that you didn't actually do the graffiti. So the college you apply to will know that. Speaking of which, are you going to apply to a college, Paul? I know someone said you were a drifter . . .

PAUL

To tell you the truth, I don't know what to do with my future. I mean, we had Mrs. Dahlgren and her hat rule and stuff, we had my father . . . but now my dad's dead.

MELANIE, BRYCE, and SARAH

Dead?

BRYCE

How'd that happen?

PAUL

He loved to eat raw steak, right? So one day he gets this mega heart attack. That old homophobe. It's the best thing to ever happen to me. But the scars are going to be with me forever.

BRYCE

So who's going to take care of you now?

PAUL

Well, I don't get to get emancipated like Bryce did, but now I get to choose my own guardian. I'm going to go with my aunt Marta. She smokes buddha. Now, I just have to decide what to do with my future.

MELANIE

I know you have your drawings. Do you think you could be an artist, Paul?

ALAN

Or maybe a professional skateboarder! Like Tony Hawk!

TRINA

Or you could star in gay porn.

BRYCE

Or be happy working at Grove Market for the rest of your life.

PAUL

Hey, it's not like this is the kind of thing you can decide on in a day. I'll have to put some serious thought into this.

TRINA

Well, tell me what you decide, my friend.

MEGHAN

I'm so glad I, like, didn't come in the uniform today.

[MS. BLUMBERG smiles. Scene fades.]

ACT III, SCENE 15

[In the computer lab. The students are studying, except for BRIAN, who is playing AdventureQuest again. BLEHM, visibly shaken, is seated alongside TRINA, BRYCE and MELANIE.]

BRYCE

The scorpion belongs to the class –

MELANIE

Arachnida.

BRYCE

Right.

BRIAN

Crudmonkey!

MELANIE

[Looks up in shock] What happened?

BRIAN

I'm getting my butt handed to me by this guy! [Plays more] I keep dying!

MELANIE

Brian! Not now! We're trying to study for our test on the phyla and classes of animals.

TRINA

Really, Brian, do you have to distract these assiduous students with your running commentary on your game?

[MELANIE notices BLEHM.]

MELANIE

Blehm! You look so spazzed out. What's wrong?

TRINA

You didn't hear about it? He was hit by a drunk driver last night.

MELANIE

[Mouth in an O] Oh my god! I'm so sorry!

BLEHM

I thought it was weird that the car behind me was coming up so fast, so I just drove ahead, but then the guy crammed into me. Turned out he was drunk.

BRYCE

Wow . . .

BLEHM

I was in the hospital that night, but they finally released me . . . Melanie, I almost died.

TRINA

Everybody's mortal . . .

BLEHM

Since I came that close to death and all, I started thinking about the way life isn't certain. The way you could be dead tomorrow.

TRINA

Does that mean you're going to change your views on whether you should always obey the law?

BLEHM

What do you mean?

TRINA

You said earlier this year that you weren't going to try a drop of alcohol until you were 21. But if that drunk driver had killed you, you never would have gotten a chance to try alcohol.

BLEHM

Oh my god, you're right!

TRINA

Are you going to do some rethinking of the drinking age?

BLEHM

I don't know what to think . . . I mean, the law was meant to protect us, right? To stop teens from drinking and driving, basically.

TRINA

Well, how old was the guy who hit you yesterday?

BLEHM

30.

TRINA

The drinking age didn't stop him from hitting you, did it?

BLEHM

No. But it will prevent people under 21 from having a beer and then driving.

MELANIE

So? I'm 17, and I still drink and stuff.

TRINA

I'm 18 and I've been drinking since I was 14. Sometimes I'll go to Mass and have wine. You are aware that the drinking age makes criminals of kids who have wine at a Mass or a Seder, right?

BLEHM

Do you really think a cop would come into a dining room where there's a Seder going on and arrest someone, though?

MELANIE

There'd be nothing to stop them.

BLEHM

The drinking age keeps 16-year-old kids . . . or even 18-year-old kids . . . from having to

make decisions that we're too immature to make, Trina! Do you really think a teen-ager has the maturity to make that kind of decision?

TRINA

Don't you value freedom to choose at all?

BLEHM

Well, that's a good thing. America's a good country – we have freedom to choose. Freedom to choose cheddar or mozzarella, freedom to choose Presbyterianism or Buddhism. But I only support it for adults.

TRINA

If something doesn't hurt other people against their consent, there's nothing wrong with it, because it's a personal choice, ergo, it should not be illegal. Now imagine there's this teen-age girl named Becky. Becky chooses to get her navel pierced, right?

BLEHM

Mm-hmm.

TRINA

Becky goes to the clinic and gets it pierced. But misfortune arises as the navel ends up getting infected.

BLEHM

See, that's what happens when teens think they're smart enough to make their own decisions.

TRINA

But – say Becky says that getting her navel pierced was worth it. Say she just adores the hip way it looks and that the infection is only a minor inconvenience. She was happy with her decision. Was it still a bad decision?

BLEHM

Yes, because now her parents will be responsible for paying to get her infected navel treated!

TRINA

Blehm, it used to be that a married man was legally responsible for paying for the treatment if his wife came down with some illness. And the people like you would've said, "Oh, that woman shouldn't do anything that's likely to put her health at risk, because her husband is responsible". But history turned a page. Women – *straight* women – were emancipated from their husbands. Now, imagine if our generation gets its wishes of seeing the age of majority lowered. A parent no longer has to pay for it when their 16-year-old daughter gets an infected navel! Would you still say that that kid's right to make that decision shouldn't be respected?

BLEHM

Yes.

TRINA

You wouldn't agree that all decisions should be respected, even if they're not "good" ones? That Becky's choice should be respected, not because it's a "good" decision, but because it's *her* decision? As the philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin said, "Those who have ever valued liberty for its own sake believed that to be free to choose, and not to be chosen for, is an inalienable ingredient in what makes human beings human".

BLEHM

OK, I'll agree that decisions should be respected, even if they're not "good" ones. But with kids, some freedoms need to be restricted for our own good . . . since we don't have, have the mental capacity, the *maturity*, to make our own decisions.

TRINA

But if all decisions should be respected, even if they're not "good" ones, then how is whether someone has the mental capacity to make a "good" decision even relevant?

BLEHM

You got me there.

TRINA

So that's why the drinking age is wrong. And if you think your parents should have the power to make your choice between cheddar and mozzarella for you, you have some serious rethinking to do.

BLEHM

But did you hear what MADD said? They say raising the drinking age has saved lives!

TRINA

The silly propaganda from MADD can be disproven with simple logic. It's supposed to stop people who would break an uncontroversial law against drunk driving. Drunk driving is evil, as horrible as murder, rape, armed robbery or burglary. Right?

BLEHM

Uh-huh.

TRINA

And these people who drive drunk do so even though it's illegal. Right?

BLEHM

Right.

TRINA

The law against drinking before you're 21, however, is an unjust law, and people who

argue against 16-year-olds but not 21-year-olds having a beer only use the argument that it's wrong because it's against the law. Not like murder or armed robbery or blah, blah, blah. It inspires civil disobedience, just like the Fugitive Slave Act or the draft during Vietnam. So we're supposed to believe that a person who wouldn't *even* obey a law against drunk driving would stay away from a single can of beer until he's 21 just because "it's the law"?

BLEHM

True . . .

TRINA

So think of that the next time someone offers you some brandy.

BLEHM

All my life, I've been obeying authority without question. But now you know? Not everything is within my control! I don't know. I could be six feet under before I get my first taste of freedom!

TRINA

Something to think about.

BLEHM

Trina, I'm going to have to do some . . . some what you called "serious rethinking" and all. I still haven't figured out who I am after this accident.

TRINA

Well, I'll get back to studying German subjunctives. See you at lunch today.

[End of scene.]

ACT III, SCENE 16

[On the quad. ALAN, PAUL and TRINA are sitting together. A pyracantha bush is planted to their right.]

PAUL

The ants are crawling, and they're getting the food.

TRINA

I think they got somebody's bread stick.

PAUL

Those little Communist ants . . . creeping over the rocks on the quad to go back to their colony.

ALAN

No way, ants aren't Communist, they're fascist.

TRINA

Am I stuck with two boys who argue over the political leanings of insects?

ALAN

Ants can be political.

TRINA

Sure – they'll put up campaign signs. "Annie Ant for President."

ALAN

Crawling into the pyracantha bush.

PAUL

Those berries are like weed for the birds.

ALAN

Yeah, they'll eat some, and then they'll get completely drunk and fly into cars.

PAUL

Hey, what do you think of the new Gay/Straight Student Alliance at Dulcevida?

TRINA

I'm joining. All these comments you hear about "That's so gay" . . . maybe the club will help stop kids from talking like that.

ALAN

Maybe it will. You know, I've learned from the come-to-school-not-wearing-the-uniform day that activism can change things.

TRINA

Our generation is getting older. The oldest of us are in our late twenties in 2008. We should be having more of a voice.

ALAN

I'm sure in a few years they'll have gay marriage and legalize marijuana and lower the voting age.

PAUL

Know any straight people you can count on to join?

ALAN

Maybe Bryce Schlitter? Or Angie Chu? Or Stephanie Chisholm?

PAUL

Maybe it will get you a girlfriend, Trina. You know, we have Kate and Amy, or Sharon and Hanako, so maybe you can find yourself someone to love too.

ALAN

Or maybe you'll find a boyfriend.

PAUL

Alan, sit down with me.

[ALAN slants over, lying partially on PAUL's legs as PAUL embraces him.]

PAUL

[In a surrealistic, breathing voice] Just lie here . . . stay on my legs. [Pauses.] We can find comfort from being together. [Pauses.] When we're together we'll both feel like nothing can hurt us. [Pauses.] All the world around us is going to spin around and we'll stay still . . . like time has stopped for us. [Pauses.] This loving exercise is good for us. It refreshes both the body and the soul. [Pauses.] Because males don't love enough. There are a lot of crazy things going on at Dulcevida, but as long as we have each other we'll know it's all OK. [Pauses.] These are tight times we're living in, but in these tight times I'm glad to have you as my friend. [Holds ALAN for ten more seconds, before PAUL lets ALAN go.]

TRINA

So who's going to the alternative prom?

PAUL

Where're they holding it?

TRINA

It's at Max Carlson's house this year.

PAUL

Should we go to the school-sponsored prom?

ALAN

I don't think they let boys take other boys as their dates.

TRINA

It wasn't too long ago when there were proms at some schools that banned interracial couples. This is the modern equivalent.

ALAN

The alternative prom has the real brandy-snifters.

PAUL

Alan . . . will you be my date?

ALAN

Uh . . . sure, Paul.

TRINA

The prom sponsored by Dulcevida doesn't let girls wear revealing clothes anymore. They check everyone for alcohol and even pat down your pants.

ALAN

And they won't let you freak-dance.

TRINA

And lest we forget, no chapstick to the prom! It could be hiding drugs!

PAUL

Or gum. Let's not forget gum.

ALAN

Dude! There are so many restrictions at the prom now that no one's going to the prom. The alternative prom will be the place to be!

TRINA

If we stopped school uniforms, maybe we can stop the prom restrictions too.

PAUL

We didn't stop them . . . just suspended them. For "further analysis", remember?

TRINA

Didn't you hear? The school board decided we won't have to wear uniforms.

PAUL

It worked?

ALAN

Dude, you're out of the loop! It worked! It said so in the *Raconteur*.

PAUL

Eh, I don't read the school newspaper. But, you know what? I did hear about that ol' fascist Pittman resigning.

TRINA

And Principal Forbes. The superintendent made them resign.

PAUL

After one protest.

TRINA

Yeah . . . it all seems so surreal.

PAUL

Just like this past school year.

ALAN

Well, I can't wait for the dream-like atmosphere that's coming up!

TRINA

You mean the alternative prom, right?

ALAN

Right.

[Scene fades.]

ACT III, SCENE 17

[At the alternative prom. MELANIE, BRYCE, PAUL, ALAN, TRINA, SARAH, MEGHAN, LINDSAY, DANNY, TOM, NADIA, BLEHM, and some others are attending. ALAN has his guitar. Pizza is set out on the tables.]

MELANIE

You made it to the alternative prom, Trina?

TRINA

Well, you see me in front of you, don't you?

MELANIE

Yeah.

BRYCE (munching on pizza)

You still haven't found a girlfriend to come with you?

TRINA

You know something . . . I realized I don't need a girlfriend to be happy. Instead of searching for a perfect someone who may not exist, I should just be comfortable with my sexual orientation and with who I am.

BRYCE

Wise words.

TRINA

I'm not the only one who has wise words. I think it was superb the way you stood up to the assistant-principal like that.

BRYCE

Uh . . . thank you. You know something, Trina, I saw Kurt Cobain last night. He visited me in my new apartment and told me I had done a good job of stopping uniforms and getting Mr. Pittman to confess. We hugged for a few seconds. Then he said he had to go back to Heaven.

MELANIE

Wow!

TRINA

Good job, indeed. You did what needed to be done to clear Paul's name.

BRYCE

Speaking of which . . . where is Paul?

TRINA

He told me he was coming to the alternative prom . . . where is Paul?

[TRINA finds PAUL and ALAN together. She taps PAUL on the shoulder. He turns around.]

PAUL

Oh, hi, Trina?

ALAN

Trina! Paul's got some ganja!

PAUL

Want some bud, guys?

MELANIE

Sure.

LINDSAY

Like, yeah.

MEGHAN

If you two are getting some.

TRINA

Marijuana really isn't as evil as people make it out to be. You know, I bet Burdick smokes it.

MELANIE

Really?

TRINA

The room always smells, he's always burning incense in there, he listens to Iron Butterfly and the Doors and Strawberry Alarm Clock, and his eyes are always red in class.

BRYCE

His room smells?

TRINA

Yeah.

MELANIE

True . . . that never occurred to me.

PAUL

If only Burdick could see our prom!

MELANIE

If only! Hey, Bryce, you want to freak with me?

BRYCE

OK.

[MELANIE and BRYCE begin freak-dancing. PAUL begins spontaneously crying.]

MELANIE

Paul! What's wrong?

PAUL

It's something my father said to me.

MELANIE

Isn't he dead?

PAUL

It's gonda hurt forever. Forever!

[MELANIE continues freak-dancing with BRYCE.]

TRINA

Much better than the school-sponsored prom.

ALAN

Agree.

SARAH

[Walking up] Did I hear someone say much better?

MELANIE

Sarah? You made it here?

SARAH

Yes.

MELANIE

I didn't even see you at the high school band concert.

SARAH

Well, I'm rethinking my life. You see, I thought that if I just followed the straight and narrow path and did all my schoolwork, I could get into a good college and be affluent as an adult, right? But then I realized, the world is a . . . is a cold hurricane . . . that blows away everything in its path, regardless of what's there. I mean, life doesn't care that I spent over an hour on my biology test, or that I tried my hardest.

MELANIE

Well, you're not the only one I'm surprised to see here. There's Blehm!

[Many attendees turn their heads. BLEHM is standing at the party in a black T-shirt and cargo pants. He has let his hair grow.]

BLEHM

Hi, guys!

ALAN

You went to the alternative prom instead of the one done by the school?

BLEHM

Oh, sure, and I wouldn't mind trying some of that beer.

MELANIE

Then go ahead!

BLEHM

You know, no one's promised tomorrow and all that. So people shouldn't wait until they're older to do things. You guys were right, the Teen-age Life is more fulfilling than the life I've been living.

ALAN

[Picking up his guitar.] Yeah! The Teen-age Life!

BRYCE

Play it, Alan!

ALAN

More power to the Bittersweet Generation!

[PAUL hugs ALAN. MELANIE and BRYCE kiss. The scene segues into a song that plays from the speakers, as all the teens party.]

[*Song begins*]

I go for counterculture and the acupuncture and viticulture
And all the forms of drug culture, our monoculture
I'm "getting down" with youth culture, the dominant youth scene in this town
Not to say down with it, as it helps me pursue renown
You painted me in brown
You painted me in black, and then in blue and cream again
I'm at the brink of turning pink
I break my lip-sync as fast as you can blink
At that I think I stink
I'm beige, perhaps cerulean
I have the urge to flirt, but you stay strangely inert
Don't desert me because you're too pert, what you don't do can hurt you . . .
The old enemies all churn with concern, when will those hypocrites learn
They had their chance to burn, now you've got to have your turn
If you're afraid to repel
You're too afraid to rebel
Though I don't mean to sound curt, you've got to hit where it hurts
Don't hesitate to disconcert or you'll be left in the dirt

So tell me, what would you think
If your kid stood up and said:
"Hey, I want to drive off
And go back home from you?"
Would you mind at all
If I cried or if I bled
I'd be a thousand miles away when I was through

Tracy on the hill with crystals
Tracy on the hill with crystals
Tracy on the hill with crystals

Do they think twice when at your form of spice their hot blood curdles
Before they got lost behind the generation hurdle
They swallowed their strange pills, I'm amazed they stayed fertile
They fought oppression like in Yertle the Turtle
When your last refuge of all
Is a strip mall or Tylenol
You know you've got to bawl
Because the chance is small and slim

That we'll be returning from a world that's burning dim
We're on the brim, just the rim of the Negaverse
But hey what do I care about that deterioration there, it's not my generation
It could be worse
Like that dude from Sugar Ray
I want to fly, or fly away
Don't be afraid to assert
When thrown a curve stay alert
What if the turtlenecked fans at your concert fail to squirt?

So tell me, what would you think
If your kid stood up and said:
"Hey, I want to drive off
And go back home from you?"
Would you mind at all
If I cried or if I bled
I'd be a thousand miles away when I was through

I shot the acid
But I did not shoot the heroin
I shot the acid
But I did not shoot the heroin

Now has come the time for a new paradigm
A time wherein every Terran
Shows a semblance of remembrance
Of the primeval
It's not evil
To intuit a need to do it
We wondered, under the impressionable impression
That there was no blunder or indiscretion
When they fired Pee-wee Herman
Why they took his show off the air, we didn't know, could not determine
We felt angst and weltenschmerz and other words from German
We grew up on cartoons that turned soon to crap
We were so young among raves and rap
We LIVED inside, got on a play date ride
We got hair-dyed and tattooed,
Grew up on ethnic food
While our elders tried to tell us that sex was so crude
We were pissed, dismissed all of this
Our older siblings dissed the economy
While we prayed to our astronomy
We worshipped Gwen, Mark or Kurt, with his plaid flannel shirt
Spent that whole pubescent growth spurt whining we were hurt
Because really we were hurt and still we are

Reaganomics, Clintonomics can't undo the scar

So tell me, what would you think
If your kid stood up and said:
"Hey, I want to drive off
And go back home from you?"
Would you mind at all
If I cried or if I bled
I'd be a thousand miles away when I was through
[*End of song*]

THE END