

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

By Rachel Lopez

(Excerpts may be used royalty free for auditions.)

AUDITION 1- 1 w

(AT RISE: A therapist's office; one year after the shooting. She speaks out to audience as if talking to a therapist.)

HEATHER: *How is everyone different? (Thinks about it.)* I don't know. I can only speak about myself. People tell me I'm nicer. But I never considered myself mean or a bully, I just thought I was being honest. I was bullied when I was in grade school and I hated it. Then in middle school I got prettier and suddenly I wasn't the class geek anymore. It felt great! I swore I'd never go back to nerd status, and I guess I thought if I kept other people down I would always stay on top. I don't know if that makes any sense but that's how I felt. Then, after the incident, I just sort of woke up and realized how I was actually being mean like the kids who bullied me, and I could finally hear how cruel I sounded. I'm not like some saint now or anything, but I try to be more aware of how I speak to people. All in all, I'd say I'm doing okay. It still doesn't seem real. There are days I wake up and it takes me a second to realize that it wasn't just a bad dream. I guess you could say... I'm just doing the best I can.

AUDITION 2- 1 m

JAKE: *(Slowly and struggling.)* I had to tell my dad about being benched for the homecoming game. So I went over it in my head all afternoon on how I would tell him, hoping he would go easy on me. Only problem was - he already knew. Turns out coach sent him an email letting him know about my ineligibility. I could tell by the way he called for me when he walked through the front door that he was drunk and he had no intention of taking it easy on me. He was extra livid

because it's the homecoming game and we had family coming in from all over to see me play. My dad's family lives and breathes football. He was the star quarterback in high school *and* in college and he NEVER missed a game! I told him that I tried to get help to make up the test but he wouldn't listen. He didn't care. I knew there was nothing I could say that would make any difference, so I said I was sorry for being such a failure...and that I knew I deserved what was coming to me. I told him to go ahead and take his best shot. (*Vulnerable and needing to finish.*) Yes, I do. He grabbed me by the collar and said, "You're not worth an ounce of my energy, loser," and he dragged me into my little brother's room. He threw me on the floor and yelled at Danny to kick me in the face. Danny didn't understand what was going on and he started crying really hard. My dad was so drunk he just kept yelling at him to do it. "Kick him in the face. Kick your loser brother in the face!" But Danny didn't want to and I was scared my dad would hurt him for not listening, so I whispered to Danny that it was okay and that it was just a game and I wouldn't be mad. So finally Danny kicked me. But he was so scared to hurt me that he barely touched me so my dad got angrier and yelled, "Harder, HARDER!" I didn't know what my dad would do next so I got Danny to look me in the eyes and I gave him a look, a look like, "Go ahead, it's okay," and he closed his eyes and kicked me as hard as he could! Then he ran to his bed screaming and sobbing. (*Beat.*) And my dad cheered like Danny had just scored the winning field goal.

(JAKE puts the glasses back on. A few beats of silence.)

AUDITION 3 – 4 m

JAKE: I've been benched. For homecoming game, I've been benched.

JOSH: No way!! Coach can't bench you. We'll lose without you!

JAKE: He can and he did. I'm out. I failed that World Geography test.

JOSH: I thought Stephanie was going to help you.

JAKE: Well, she didn't, okay. Just drop it!

JOSH: But that doesn't make sense. She was supposed to meet you—

JAKE: I said drop it!! *(Beat.)* Look, I might have called her a female Randy, okay!

JOSH: You did what?

JAKE: Heather was getting jealous so I called Stephanie a female Randy just to make Heather feel better, and Stephanie freaked out and left.

JOSH: Smooth move.

JAKE: I know. I don't know what I'm going to do. I am so dead.

JOSH: She can't be that mad at you.

JAKE: Not Stephanie, you idiot! My dad! I failed a test and got benched!

JOSH: It's just one test and one game. So what?

JAKE: You don't get it. My dad doesn't accept this kind of thing. He's counting on me. All of his hopes and dreams are riding on me! If I let him down I might as well be dead. He is going to lose it on me. *(Beat. Uncomfortable to ask but desperate.)* Do you think I could stay at your place tonight?

JOSH: *(Confused.)* What? No. I doubt it. C'mon, Jake, you're just being dramatic. Your dad won't be *that* mad. He's never lost it on you before. Has he?

JAKE: *(Realizing he's sounding weak.)* No, of course not. I'll be fine. Everything's cool.

(JAKE notices RANDY and needs a distraction. He approaches Randy and JOSH follows.)

JAKE: *(Cont'd.)* Well, what do we have here? So look who decided to come to school. Taking a break from your killing spree, psycho?

JOSH: Yeah, psycho.

RANDY: Back off, Jake. I'm not in the mood for you.

JAKE: Oh, did you hear that, Josh? He's not in the mood for me? *(Grabs RANDY by collar.)* Well, let's see if I can get you in the mood, freak!!!

(CHRIS steps in.)

CHRIS: Let him go, Jake.

JAKE: Butt out, Chris. This doesn't concern you.

CHRIS: *(Physically intervening.)* I said let him go!

JAKE: *(Pushing CHRIS away.)* What the hell is wrong with you, dude?

RANDY: *(To JAKE. Intensely.)* That was the last time you will ever mess with me. Ever.

JAKE: You think so? Think again. You better sign up for homeschool now, freak show, if you want to keep breathing!

RANDY: *(Dryly and calmly.)* Good. Keep threatening me. You'll be sorry...very sorry.

CHRIS: Randy, stop it! Just walk away.

RANDY: *(To CHRIS.)* I am walking away. But don't bother fighting my battles.

CHRIS: I'm not trying to fight your battles.

RANDY: Then next time *you* just walk away. *(Looks JAKE up and down pathetically.)* I got this. *(RANDY exits.)*

JAKE: *(Extremely irritated. Yelling after him.)* Oh yeah? You're lucky he didn't walk away or you'd be dead! You better hope someone is around to save you next time too!

CHRIS: *(Confronting JAKE.)* Stop it already!! That's enough!

JAKE: *(Pushing CHRIS.)* What the hell, dude! Get off me! How can you defend that loser?!!

CHRIS: I'm not defending him and he's not a loser! You're the loser! You've made his life miserable for years! Not to mention everyone else's! You and Josh need to back off and leave people alone!

JOSH: Me? What did I do?

JAKE: *(To CHRIS.)* You know what? I'm getting a little tired of you and your "I'm better than everyone" attitude! I'm sick of having to walk on eggshells around you just because you had a family member die! So what? We all have bad things happen to us. But for some reason we are supposed to feel sorry for you and your dead sister! Well, I don't. And if you'd wake up from your pathetic pity party you'd realize you should be angry at that psycho mutant and hold that "sicko" responsible for what he did!

CHRIS: How do you know what he did? You weren't there!
None of us were!

JAKE: He was. He said he was. He was the first one on the scene! *(With venom.)* He probably pushed her.

CHRIS: *(Disgusted. Trying to remain calm.)* Why would he do that?

JAKE: I don't know, because Satan told him to!

CHRIS: You must be high or just incredibly stupid or maybe both. *(CHRIS exits.)*

JAKE: *(Yelling after him.)* You're the stupid one for not seeing him for what he is. People like him aren't normal!!

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