

UNKNOWN VARIABLES

"Lesson 1-4: Calculate Slope to Adjust to Change."

By

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"Lesson 1-4: Calculate Slope
to Adjust to Change."

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. WESTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The school is dead until a bell sounds. Students pour out of every door and race for buses and the parking lot.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Change. For some people, it's a
slow thing. An evolution.

INT. THE LINK - DAY

Adrian walks near the windows with his backpack over his shoulders. His outfit is the usual: skinny jeans and a black t-shirt, but he also wears a dark gray Hollister hoodie which gives the whole outfit a preppy vibe. He looks up to catch a glimpse of himself in the windows and cringes.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Or, de-evolution, as the case may
be.

Dalton sidles up beside him.

DALTON
I give that hoodie two thumbs up.

Adrian rolls his eyes.

DALTON
Anyway, see you after practice.

Adrian nods. Dalton pats his shoulder and walks away.

Adrian pauses and turns to face the windows. He stares at his reflection. He takes off his backpack, unzips the hoodie then pulls it off and shoves it into the bag.

INT. CASEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Casey leads Mel into the room. She points to the bed.

CASEY
 Sit down. Right there. Don't move.
 I'll be back in a flash.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
 For others, the change is so fast,
 you barely notice it.

The picture moves in fast forward as Mel sits on the edge of the bed, Casey exits into her bathroom, and Mel fidgets and looks around the room.

The picture slows to normal speed as Casey exits the bathroom dressed as Cassandra: a long, flowy skirt, tank top, and the long, blonde wig.

CASEY
 Ta da...

Mel's jaw drops.

MEL
 Whoa...

Casey blushes and stands there posing.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
 Whether change is a good thing or a
 bad thing usually depends on who's
 affected and how.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Dalton stands with a group of boys, already sweaty and dirty in their practice uniforms. A coach yells about effort.

Dalton looks across the field to a group of cheerleaders.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Maddie stands with Abby as a few girls practice tumbling.

ABBY
 Dalton James keeps looking over
 here. Are you sure you don't--

MADDIE
Dalton James is a loser.

Abby shakes her head and sighs.

ABBY
But he's so cute.

MADDIE
Aren't you going out with Jeff?

ABBY
Have you ever really looked into Dalton's eyes? They're just so--

MADDIE
Manipulative? Calculating?

ABBY
Blue...

Maddie groans and steps away, throwing a furtive glance toward the football team.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

COACH
James, get your head in the game!

Dalton snaps his head back to the coach, but his eyes quickly wander back in Maddie's direction.

COACH
Maybe a couple of sets of bleacher runs will help me get your attention, James. Go. Now!

Dalton sighs, but reluctantly jogs toward the bleachers.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Maddie has rejoined the team as they practice a cheer. In the background, Dalton runs up and down the bleachers.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
It's virtually impossible to live a life without change and those of us who do are probably ignoring the need for an adjustment.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - JONES HOUSE - DAY

Dylan leans deep under the hood of the van. He pulls himself out then squats down in front of the truck. He pulls a beer can out from behind the tire and takes a long sip.

ADRIAN(V.O.)

Some change you can predict, some
you can't. But there is nothing you
can do to stop it.

Dylan sets the can down behind the tire and goes back to work on the van.

ADRIAN(V.O.)

Change happens.

FADE TO BLACK.

END TEASER

ACT I

FADE IN:

INT. CASEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mel sits on Casey's bed. Casey has her desk chair pulled up to the bed with her legs crossed and propped up near Mel.

MEL

This is so weird. Honestly, I'm a little star struck.

CASEY

I'm flattered, but--

MEL

And, your voice. It's amazing how different you make Casey sound.

CASEY

That was hard to nail down.

Mel nods and stares at her. A beat.

MEL

So... this is for a role?

Casey nods.

CASEY

I have an audition next month.

Mel raises her eyebrows.

CASEY

Someone convinced Baz Luhrmann to redo Shakespeare's Twelfth Night.

Mel shakes her head; she doesn't know the play.

CASEY

The main character, Viola...

MEL

Pretends to be a guy?

Casey nods and laughs. Mel's look is skeptical.

CASEY

Let's talk about something else.

Mel looks down, inspecting her nails.

MEL
What about Grant?

CASEY
What about him?

MEL
Are you going to tell him?

CASEY
No.

MEL
You should.

CASEY
Are you going to tell him that
you're into him?

MEL
What? No. I mean, I...

CASEY
You should.

Mel folds her arms.

CASEY
After all, you did kiss him.

MEL
He told you that?

CASEY
The trampoline and an amazing
August sunset...

Mel clenches her jaw and looks away.

MEL
Well, the ball's in his court now.

Casey tilts her head.

CASEY
Are you operating under the
assumption that he realizes that?

Mel looks down.

MEL
I'm operating under the assumption
that there's someone else he'd
(MORE)

MEL (cont'd)
rather be with. Someone who's so
much closer than he realizes.

CASEY
That's the thing, Mel. He's never
going to know that; he can't. And,
you know, even if he did...

Casey looks down for a split second, but when she glances
up, her face cool and controlled.

CASEY
I would never date a boy like
Grant. An obsessive super-fan? I
mean, please. How ridiculous.

Mel narrows her eyes.

CASEY
So, if he asks you out, make his
day--his life--and say yes.

A beat as Mel stands.

MEL
I have to get home before I go
tutor Adrian, but it really was
cool to see you like this.

Casey stands up.

CASEY
Thanks, Mel. For keeping it quiet
and... for the girl talk.

Mel smiles as she exits. Casey walks to the mirror and
examines herself. She smiles sadly.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - DAY

The office sits adjacent to The Link and has a wall of
windows that shows off a view of the football field.

A table and set of chairs is pushed up against the windows
to provide a waiting area. Facing this area, two
secretaries' desks block the way into the maze of
administrative offices and a row of ten filing cabinets.

Adrian and Dalton sit at the table by the window with books
and notebooks strewn about before them.

Chanice and Russell stand in front of the filing cabinets. Folders are pulled and stacked all around them.

RUSSELL

So, he wants their health forms and guidance files combined with their permanent records?

CHANICE

Uh huh. Then re-alphabetized... by grade level.

She puts her hands on her hips as she surveys the mess in front of her. Russell lets out a discouraged whistle.

CHANICE

You don't have to stay.

Russell shrugs.

RUSSELL

Lexi is already with the sitter, the boys are occupied with homework, and I'm perfectly content to... provide moral support.

She chuckles, picks up a stack of folders and shoves them into Russell's arms. He grins.

The main office door opens and police officer GARY PETTIT, 38, enters. The handsome officer wears a uniform and gun.

OFFICER PETTIT

You'll be here late, Dr. B?

Chanice scowls for a moment. Russell glances at her then back at Officer Pettit.

RUSSELL

Yeah. She has to file... a lot.

OFFICER PETTIT

I'll tell the patrolman.

A beat.

OFFICER PETTIT

How have you been doing, Mr. Hurst?

Russell smiles, though it shows only on his lips.

RUSSELL

The kids and I are doing better.

OFFICER PETTIT

Mrs. Hurst was a great lady. I've been a school resource officer for a long time and I've never worked with a principal quite like her.

Chanice rolls her eyes, but Russell forces a smile.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

(beat)

And thank you for the part you played in locking up Dylan Jones that night. As the arresting officer, I'm sure your testimony will be valuable at the trial.

CHANICE

Too bad you weren't able to get him to take the breathalyzer. That sure would have made things easier.

Officer Pettit narrows his eyes for a split-second, but recovers into an apologetic smile.

OFFICER PETTIT

I'm sure you've worked with Dylan Jones enough to know there is no making him do anything.

CHANICE

I don't know. Amy was starting to get through to him, I thought.

OFFICER PETTIT

That's because Amy--Principal Hurst, I mean--was a saint.

Chanice stares at Officer Pettit while Russell looks back and forth between them. Officer Pettit looks at Russell.

OFFICER PETTIT

I have to be going.

RUSSELL

Goodnight.

Officer Pettit smiles charmingly then leaves. Russell arches an eyebrow to Chanice. She shrugs.

RUSSELL
Not a fan of the law?

CHANICE
Oh, I don't have a problem with the law. It's just Gary Pettit.

RUSSELL
He's always seemed like a nice enough guy. Good at his job.

Chanice shrugs. Russell eyes her suspiciously for a moment, but then opens up a file drawer and runs his finger across the file tops. Chanice opens another drawer.

INT. TABLE IN OFFICE - DAY

Adrian works out of a Latin textbook while Dalton fills out a Spanish vocabulary sheet. Adrian's cell phone vibrates from his pocket. He pulls it out to check it.

DALTON
Who's texting you?

ADRIAN
Mel.

Dalton narrows his eyes.

DALTON
You guys text?

Adrian looks at him suspiciously.

ADRIAN
I texted her to cancel tutoring. Her reply was "okay."

DALTON
Oh.

Adrian's phone vibrates again.

DALTON
What now?

Adrian reads the message. He smiles.

ADRIAN
Hm. She wants to know if I want her to come here instead.

DALTON

I have some advice. If you have any romantic inclination toward Mel--

ADRIAN

Which I don't--

DALTON

You should probably act now before some other guy does.

Adrian stares at him for a split second then shakes his head and looks back into his Latin book.

EXT. FORRESTER BACKYARD - DAY

Casey and Grant jump on the trampoline which causes their conversation to be loud. Both are out of breath.

CASEY

I think you should ask her out.

GRANT

We've already been through this--

CASEY

I know, but if you don't try--

GRANT

If she liked me, why would she forbid me to talk about the kiss?

CASEY

If she didn't like you, why would she kiss you in the first place?

MADDIE(O.S.)

Who kissed you?

Grant and Casey look at each other and stop jumping. Maddie climbs up on the trampoline and plops down. Casey and Grant sink into sitting positions.

GRANT

Mind your own business, Madison.

CASEY

Maybe you should tell her.

Grant looks at Casey in mock horror. He shakes his head.

MADDIE

I swear to remain calm.

Grant glances at her, takes a deep breath then smirks.

GRANT

Fine. Mel kissed me. This summer.
While you were at cheer camp.

MADDIE

What?! Are you freaking kidding me?

Grant looks sideways at Casey. Maddie takes several deep breaths and closes her eyes. Grant shakes his head.

MADDIE

Sorry. Involuntary reaction.

She smiles at Grant.

MADDIE

So, you guys kissed and then what?

Grant shrugs casually, but blushes deeply.

CASEY

She wouldn't talk to him about it.

MADDIE

Sounds like Mel.

CASEY

He's afraid to ask her out because
he thinks she'll turn him down.

GRANT

(embarrassed)

Hey, Casey, come on...

Maddie smiles warmly at Grant.

MADDIE

It's honestly hard to tell what
Mel's really thinking. She keeps
everything inside and you sometimes
have to drag it out of her.

CASEY

Yeah, really...

Grant and Maddie look at her.

CASEY

I mean, I could see that about her.

Maddie looks back at Grant.

MADDIE

Okay. I'm gonna go do my French homework and think this over. Then I'll tell you what to do. Okay?

Grant rolls his eyes, but chuckles. He glances at Casey to smiles encouragingly.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - JONES HOUSE - DAY

Dylan sits in the driver seat of the van with his legs kicked out onto the driveway. His head is bent down as he tinkers with a small car part in his lap.

MEL (O.S.)

Dinner's in the oven. Take it out at five. And be sure to turn the oven off when you do.

DYLAN

Tell Jake.

Mel walks up to Dylan. She has a backpack thrown over one shoulder. She narrows her eyes.

MEL

Jacob is nine. He can't use the oven. You have to do it.

DYLAN

Where are you even going? To that Hurst kid's house so he can whine to you about how I ruined his life?

MEL

Dylan--

DYLAN

Because whether he knows it or not, his life was almost there anyway.

Mel tilts her head, but doesn't respond. Dylan smirks.

DYLAN

I'm just sayin', you shouldn't date someone with so many issues.

MEL

You know I'm not dating Adrian.

Dylan shrugs and goes back to work.

MEL

Oven. One hour. Got it?

Dylan nods, but doesn't look up. Mel stomps away.

EXT. FORRESTER BACKYARD - DAY

Casey leans against the trampoline and watches something on Grant's camera. Grant is sprawled out on the trampoline.

MADDIE(O.S.)

I think you should ask her out.

Grant sighs as Maddie walks up to Casey and the trampoline.

MADDIE

Me and Casey could go with you guys. Like a double date.

Casey starts to speak, but chokes and coughs.

CASEY

Um, I...

Casey blushes and looks to Grant. He shrugs.

MADDIE

Gosh, don't worry. It'll be strictly for moral support.

Casey nods and takes a deep breath.

CASEY

Yeah. Okay. For moral support.

Maddie smiles encouragingly at Grant then glances at Casey.

MADDIE

Oh, but I do have one request.

CASEY

No, you can't give me a makeover.

Maddie's face lights with pleasant surprise as she surveys Casey's sloppy, baggy outfit.

MADDIE

Ooh, I didn't even think of that...

CASEY

Well, don't... ever... think of it.

MADDIE

What I was going to say is that I would like to ask you out officially. In algebra. Okay?

Casey and Grant trade a meaningful glance.

CASEY

Yeah, fine. Whatever.

Maddie beams.

A beat as Grant stands up on the trampoline. Casey and Maddie join him as the three of them begin to jump.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

Mel and Adrian sit at the table with their math stuff out.

In the background Dalton helps Chanice and Russell file.

ADRIAN

This homework is easy.

MEL

Yeah, just some mixed review. How do you think you did on the test?

Adrian smiles and shrugs nonchalantly.

ADRIAN

Okay, I think. My dad won't be grading the tests tonight, I guess.

Mel glances over her shoulder at Russell and company. She turns back to Adrian. A beat passes.

ADRIAN

How's everything at home?

Mel rocks her head from side to side in consideration.

MEL

Normal.

(beat)

Dylan thinks we're secretly dating.

Adrian scowls.

MEL

Don't worry. I keep telling him we're not.

ADRIAN

Is he giving you a hard time?

MEL

Not really. Don't worry about it.

Adrian watches her for a moment.

ADRIAN

How's your mom holding up?

MEL

Dylan convinced her that a jury trial is actually a good thing. I don't get it, but...

ADRIAN

The prosecutor thinks his lawyer is up to something. A surprise defense that a jury might bite on.

MEL

Well, he said he wasn't drinking at all that night. That's a surprise.

ADRIAN

Really? But he refused the breathalyzer. I don't get that.

Mel shrugs.

ADRIAN

Hmm...

(he glances at Mel)

Do you think we should be talking about this stuff?

MEL

It doesn't bother me.

(she tilts her head)

Or did you mean legally?

ADRIAN

I meant legally, but you'd tell me if something bothered you, right?

MEL
I'm not the best at that...

ADRIAN
What? Honesty?

Mel looks down. She sighs.

MEL
Sharing.

Adrian chuckles. Mel glares up at him.

ADRIAN
It's just... I wish I had that problem. I've been trying to fake it since my mom died, which is dumb because she's the one who taught me how important it is to express your feelings. I do it naturally because of her, even when I don't want to.

MEL
You do it well.

He elbows her arm ever so gently.

ADRIAN
You do, too, though.

MEL
You bring it out in me.

Adrian smiles and glances back at his math book.

ADRIAN
And you bring out the math genius in me. That's a good trade.

Mel smiles as Adrian begins working on another problem.

INT. MR. HURST'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Adrian and Mel sit in their usual spots in the back.

Maddie and Casey shove Grant into the classroom. He stumbles as he walks to his desk and sets his stuff down. Casey and Maddie grin at each other and shake their heads.

Grant walks tentatively to the back of the room. He stands at Mel's desk. Adrian looks up at him, but then opens his notebook and pretends to shuffle through some papers.

MEL

Hey, Grant. What's up?

The color drains from his face. He takes a deep breath.

GRANT

Mel... I was wondering if...

He takes another breath and glances at Adrian who is intently studying a blank piece of notebook paper.

Grant looks back at Mel. She looks up at him with raised eyebrows. Grant puts a hand on her desk and leans forward.

GRANT

You want to see a movie with me tomorrow night?

Mel's smile is surprised.

GRANT

Maybe we could even grab some dinner before. I'll buy.

Mel tilts her head, her look is confused, but not put off. Adrian glances over then looks back at his paper.

GRANT

And Maddie and Casey said they would double with us if--

MEL

Double? Like a double date?

Mel glances toward the front of the room.

MEL'S P.O.V.

Casey and Maddie watch from the front of the room. They turn to each other and pretend to have a conversation.

BACK TO SCENE

Mel chews on her lip, but can't hide a smile.

GRANT

Not like "a date," like all serious and formal. Just...

He laughs.

GRANT

Okay, yeah. A date.

He grabs a chair from the nearest desk and slides it over next to Mel then takes a seat. His smile is relaxed.

GRANT

Melanie, would you like to go on a date with me?

He smiles coolly, though his cheeks are flushed.

MEL

Sure.

Grant's smile turns sheepish.

GRANT

Cool. Okay. Cool...

He smiles at her a moment more then stands up and pushes the chair back under the nearby desk.

GRANT

I'll call you tonight.

Mel nods and offers him another encouraging smile. Grant walks back to the front of the room with a smile of his own.

ADRIAN

Wow. That was...

Mel chuckles lightly.

MEL

Be nice.

ADRIAN

I was going to say "impressive."

MEL

Yeah...

She smiles toward the front of the room.

MEL

The whole thing with Grant totally confuses me. Sometimes it seems all wrong, but sometimes...

ADRIAN

It makes perfect sense.

She turns to him with a smile.

MEL

Yeah.

A beat as Russell enters the room. Everyone settles in.

RUSSELL

(singing)

Ch-ch-ch-changes...

Everyone takes a seat and looks at him with an array of looks from amusement to annoyance.

RUSSELL

What? No David Bowie fans in the house today?

Russell chuckles to himself.

FADE TO BLACK.

END ACT II

ACT III

FADE IN:

INT. MR. HURST'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A few students sleep, but most take notes as Russell speaks. There are notes and graphs all over the board.

RUSSELL
So, that gives us a rate of...

MADDIE
Thirty-five cents per minute.

RUSSELL
Right. Good.

MADDIE
When it comes to cell phone bills,
I'm pretty much an expert.

A few people laugh, including Dalton. He looks over and smiles at Maddie, but her looks is snide as she faces ahead.

RUSSELL
So, that's all the real world
stuff--i.e., the useful stuff.

A few people laugh.

RUSSELL
Now, the fun stuff. If I toss up a
couple of points...

Russell draws a quick coordinate plane on the board and graphs points at $(-2, 1)$ and $(3, 4)$.

RUSSELL
And I want to talk about the rate
of change between the points... how
could I even describe it?

DALTON
You want a rate, so it would have
to be something per something. Like
 x units per y units.

RUSSELL
Interesting.

MADDIE
Wouldn't it be y per x ?

Russell looks at her with an amused smile.

RUSSELL
Why?

MADDIE
Taking it back to my area of expertise, cell phones, the answer was in cents per minute. Y was money and x was time so it would have to be y units per x units.

Maddie looks at the board and puts out her finger to count the units up and across:

MADDIE
Three units up per five units over?

RUSSELL
Awesome, Maddie. Very good.

Maddie smiles proudly.

RUSSELL
Units up and units over. Anyone ever hear that called something else?

CASEY
Rise and run.

MEL
Rise over run. Oh. This is slope.

RUSSELL
Yes. Slope is another word for rate. The slope or the rate of the line passing between two points can be found by taking the ratio of rise to run. In this case...

DALTON
Five-thirds.

MADDIE
Three-fifths. Rise over Run.

Maddie smirks. Next to her, Grant chuckles.

LATER

The bell rings and students start exiting the classroom. Grant and Casey talk as Grant slowly packs his stuff. Dalton also takes his time. Maddie glances at him briefly.

MADDIE
So, hey, Casey?

Casey turns around to face her.

CASEY
Huh?

MADDIE
I was thinking, since Grant and Mel
are doing the whole date thing
tomorrow night...

Dalton glances back in Mel's direction. She and Adrian talk at the back of the room.

CASEY
Yes?

MADDIE
Maybe we could go along. You know,
as a double date or something.

Casey glances at Grant.

GRANT
Yeah, that's cool with me.

CASEY
(to Maddie)
Are you asking me out?

Maddie glances back at Dalton who is staring at her. He pulls his eyes back down to his stuff and starts to get up.

MADDIE
Uh huh. What do you say?

She smiles flirtatiously at Casey.

DALTON
(loud)
Adrian, dude, let's go.

DALTON'S P.O.V.

Adrian looks up with a confused and annoyed expression that turns to concern. He gives Mel a quick glance and she nods. Adrian walks toward Dalton.

BACK TO SCENE

CASEY

Oh, uh, sure, Maddie. I'd love to.

As soon as Adrian reaches him, Dalton storms out of the classroom. Adrian hurries to keep up.

Mel walks up to the front of the room to join the others.

MADDIE

OMG, that was hilarious. Did you see the look on his face?

GRANT

You're a terrible actress, by the way. Totally over the top.

Maddie rolls her eyes then grabs Mel by the arm.

MADDIE

Come on, best friend, you got some 'splainin' to do.

Maddie grabs Mel by the elbow and pulls her from the room. She glances over her shoulder at Grant with a smile before she and Maddie are gone.

Grant sighs. A beat passes as he turns to Casey.

GRANT

You, on the other hand... you were very natural. Maybe we should scrap the documentary and work on a short film. You wanna be a star?

CASEY

Me? Act? I don't know...

GRANT

Whatever. I'll convince you later. Let's go to lunch.

Casey and Grant exit the room together.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mel and Maddie stop in front of Maddie's locker.

MADDIE
(matter-of-fact)
You kissed my brother.

Mel blushes.

MEL
I was going to tell you--

MADDIE
When? On your wedding day?

Mel sighs, but Maddie smiles then opens her locker to inspect her makeup in the mirror.

MADDIE
I think correcting Dalton in algebra was even more fun than asking Casey out right in front of him like that.

MEL
Speaking of asking Casey out--

MADDIE
Oh, it's totally a cover.

Mel laughs.

MEL
I assumed. I was just going to say that you guys don't have to go and babysit us.

MADDIE
We were thinking of it more as moral support.

MEL
I think Grant and I will be fine. We are friends, after all.

MADDIE
No. Friends is over, Mel. Once the cat was out of the bag, the boy could not stop talking about you.

Mel rolls her eyes.

MADDIE

I'm telling you, it was worse than when he first started talking about Cassandra Cook. Way, way worse.

Maddie turns back to her locker. Mel tilts her head.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Adrian and Dalton carry their trays to Jeff's table where he sits very close to Abby. Dalton slams his tray down and sinks into a chair.

JEFF

(to Adrian)

What's with him?

Adrian opens his mouth to speak.

DALTON

Not a word.

Adrian just shrugs, picks up a spork and digs into a Styrofoam cup of mashed potatoes. Jeff looks at Abby, but she shrugs.

Casey and Grant walk by carrying their trays. Dalton looks up, staring at Casey and seething.

INT. CAFETERIA TABLE - DAY

Casey looks over her shoulder as she and Grant sit down at an unoccupied table. They eat and talk.

CASEY

Does Dalton still look like he wants to stab me with his spork?

Grant chuckles and glances back surreptitiously.

GRANT

That's a yes.

Grant looks back at Casey.

GRANT

Sorry about Maddie.

Casey smiles and shrugs. A beat.

GRANT
And thanks for Mel.

Casey laughs.

CASEY
It's not like I wrapped her up in a
big red bow...

Grant chuckles.

GRANT
You know what I mean.

Grant offers up a smile before he takes a sip of milk.

CASEY
And if you'd rather fly solo
tomorrow night--

GRANT
No way. I mean, Maddie's going to
want the play by play anyway. And I
need you there in case I freak out.

Casey laughs.

CASEY
What am I going to do if you do?

GRANT
Pull me aside and say, "Grant--"

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

CASEY
Stop freaking out.

Casey and Grant stand on a sidewalk outside a restaurant.

Casey has on baggy cargo pants and a polo shirt over a white long-sleeved shirt. Her hair is purposefully messy.

Grant wears dark-wash jeans and a short-sleeved button up over a graphic t-shirt. His hair is styled into a faux-hawk.

GRANT
I'm not freaking out.

Casey cocks an eyebrow.

GRANT

I'm just trying to figure out what I should do in the movie. Do I just sit there? Do I put my arm around her? Do I try and hold her hand?

Casey shakes her head and stares at him.

CASEY

Stop trying to script it.

GRANT

I'm not...
(he sighs and smiles)
Wow. You're right.

Casey shrugs.

GRANT

See, that's exactly why I wanted you here. Thank you.

Casey smiles at him as Mel and Maddie exit the restaurant.

MADDIE

That bathroom was gross. Let's go.

Casey gives Grant another encouraging smile as Mel walks over to him. Grant turns his attention to Mel as the four of them walk away along the sidewalk.

Casey and Maddie walk together, but keep a safe distance. Mel and Grant, on the other hand, are just inches from each other, their hands nearly touch.

Grant touches Mel's hand with the back of his knuckles. Without looking over, she casually takes his hand. Grant blushes, but smiles. The group continues down the sidewalk.

INT. LIVING ROOM - HURST HOUSE - NIGHT

A large stack of board games sits on the coffee table. Alexis kneels in front of them, sorting them into two piles.

ALEXIS

(loud)
Dad, when is Chanice getting here?

RUSSELL(O.S.)

Seven-thirty.

ALEXIS

(loud)

Is she your girlfriend?

Russell walks into the room, flipping a dish towel over his shoulder. He walks toward the couch as he speaks.

RUSSELL

She's just a friend.

ALEXIS

Do you want her to be your girlfriend? You've been spending a lot of time with her.

Russell smiles and gets down on the floor with Alexis.

RUSSELL

What are we doing here?

Alexis points to one stack.

ALEXIS

Games you need four people for.
(she points to the other)
Games you can play with just three.

Russell picks up a game and studies the back.

RUSSELL

Chanice and I have been spending a lot of time together because we both cared a lot about Mom, and if one of us feels sad, we can talk about it. Like you and I do.

ALEXIS

But she's a lady.

Russell chuckles.

RUSSELL

Are you saying that you think boys and girls can't be friends?

ALEXIS

Kids can. But not grown-ups.

Russell puts his game into the four or more pile. He tousles Alexis' hair. She looks up at him.

RUSSELL
The only lady for me was your
mother. Chanice is a friend.

ALEXIS
Okay.

Alexis' smile is touched by sadness. She leans into Russell
and gives him a quick hug before going back to work.

ALEXIS
I wish Adrian would've stayed home.

RUSSELL
It's good for him to get out.

ALEXIS
I know, but I've been wishing we
could play Cranium for a long time.
We haven't had four since...

RUSSELL
I know, Sweetie.

Russell kisses the top of her head. The doorbell rings.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Dalton and Adrian stand in front of the arcade game Time
Crisis. They shoot the screen with light guns. Buzzes and
dings underscore their conversation.

ADRIAN
So, what movie are we going to see?

DALTON
I haven't decided yet.

ADRIAN
Do I get a say?

DALTON
You can pick next time.

Adrian puts his gun down and stares over to the door.

ADRIAN'S P.O.V.

Casey, Mel, Grant and Maddie walk through the doors. Casey and Maddie walk on either side of Grant and Mel who still hold hands. Grant whispers something into Mel's ear. She blushes and looks at him with a grin.

BACK TO SCENE

ADRIAN

You're not serious.

Dalton looks toward the door, dropping his light gun. He looks back at Adrian with feigned innocence.

DALTON

What a coincidence. Should we go say hi?

ADRIAN

No. No...

Adrian shakes his head and turns his back to the door. He puts his hand over his face as he turns Dalton away, too.

ADRIAN

You're such an idiot.

Dalton chuckles.

DALTON

Come on. People go to the movies all the time. It's no big deal.

ADRIAN

You're spying on Maddie now?

DALTON

I was just curious. I didn't really think she'd go for a guy like Casey and it's obvious they're not together.

Adrian glances briefly over his shoulder.

ADRIAN'S P.O.V.

Casey and Maddie still occupy opposite sides of the hand-holding Grant and Mel. The group approaches the concessions stand.

BACK TO SCENE

Dalton takes a quick peek.

DALTON
Glad I'm over the whole Mel thing,
though. She's super-glued to Grant.

ADRIAN
As soon as they go in, we're gone.

Dalton looks back over his shoulder. He turns around fast.

DALTON
Crap. Maddie's looking.

INT. CONCESSION STAND - NIGHT

Maddie's jaw hangs open. She closes it and growls.

MADDIE
What's he doing here?

Everyone else glances over not-so-subtly.

MADDIE
I'm gonna go punch him.

Casey steps in front of her.

CASEY
Wait, wait. Hang on. Try this...

Casey takes a deep breath then puts her arm around Maddie.
Grant looks past Mel to cock an eyebrow at Casey.

CASEY
(to Maddie)
Remember not to be over the top.

Maddie nods then grins.

MADDIE
Casey, you're the best date ever.

Everyone chuckles as Maddie lays her head on Casey's
shoulder.

EXT. JONES HOUSE - NIGHT

Dylan stands in front of the van as he chugs a beer.

OFFICER PETTIT(O.S.)
Aren't you in some kind of rehab
program or something?

Dylan nearly chokes on his beer as he struggles to shove it under the front bumper of the van. He looks up as Officer Pettit approaches.

DYLAN
Oh, it's just you.

OFFICER PETTIT
What are you thinking, Dylan?

DYLAN
I'm thinkin' my mom's at work, my
brother's with a babysitter, my
sister's on a date and my hands
shake when I don't drink. It's hard
to work on an engine when you can't
even hold a wrench.

Dylan grabs a wrench and purposely shakes it in his hand, letting it fall at Officer Pettit's feet. Dylan smirks.

DYLAN
Get it?

Officer Pettit narrows his eyes and tilts his head.

OFFICER PETTIT
Alcoholism is a disease. Maybe you
should get some help.

Dylan bursts out laughing. He covers his mouth and clears his throat though he can't quite wipe away the smile.

DYLAN
What are you doin' here?

Officer Pettit hesitates.

OFFICER PETTIT
(hesitant)
I was thinking maybe I shouldn't
testify. Lying under oath--

DYLAN
You listen to me.

Dylan bends down to pick up the wrench then stands to wave it threateningly in front of Officer Pettit's face.

DYLAN
You are going to testify. And
you're gonna make me sound like a
sobbin', sober mess. Understand?

Dylan brings the wrench to rest on the officer's chest.

OFFICER PETTIT
It's not those things I'm worried
about. You were upset. I don't know
if you were drinking or not--

DYLAN
I wasn't.

OFFICER PETTIT
It's the part of the story we're
leaving out. Lying by omission.

Dylan laughs again.

DYLAN
Sleeping with another man's wife,
you're okay with? Just not lying
about it?

OFFICER PETTIT
Amy and I weren't--

DYLAN
But you wanted to, right?

Officer Pettit snatches Dylan's wrench and tosses it on the ground. He grabs Dylan by the collar and pulls him close.

OFFICER PETTIT
Listen, you little punk, you think
you've got something to hold over
my head? Huh? I'll tell Russell
Hurst the whole story--

DYLAN
Go ahead.
(he smirks)
But don't leave out the part where
you paid me to kill his wife
because she wouldn't leave him.

Officer Pettit releases Dylan and stares at him, dumbfounded. He balls his hands into fists.

DYLAN

Or, I can tell him if you--

OFFICER PETTIT

You wouldn't.

Dylan laughs.

DYLAN

To stay out of jail? I sure would,
Officer. I sure would...

They stare each other down.

FADE TO BLACK.

END ACT III

ACT IV

FADE IN:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

In the darkened theater an action movie plays on the screen. The sound of periodic gunfire blasts through the large room.

Maddie, Casey, Mel and Grant sit together near the front. Casey has an accommodating arm stretched across the back of Maddie's chair. She uses her other hand to sip periodically from a large soft drink.

Mel and Grant sit close enough for their shoulders to touch. She snuggles a little closer, wrapping her arm under and around his. He looks over at her and smiles.

Further back, Dalton and Adrian sit a seat apart. Dalton stares at Maddie and Casey. Adrian glances over at him then back at the screen. Adrian sighs and shakes his head.

Casey stands up and walks through the aisle toward the exit. Mel whispers something in Grant's ear then disentangles her arm from him. She follows Casey out.

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Casey steps out of the theater and heads for the restrooms. She pauses to look around. Mel exits behind her.

MEL

Casey?

Casey spins around.

CASEY

Oh, Mel. Thank God. Public restrooms can be a little tricky--

Mel puts her hands on her hips.

MEL

What do you think you're doing?

CASEY

Trying to pee safely?

MEL

No, I meant... you obviously put the idea of asking me out into Grant's head. Why?

Casey tilts her head.

CASEY
Aren't you having a good time?

Mel softens.

MEL
Of course. Grant... he's awesome.

Casey smiles.

CASEY
So, what's the problem?

Mel sighs and crosses her arms.

CASEY
Look, I really need to go.

She glances at the restrooms.

MEL
So, go.

CASEY
I'm going to use a stall in the
guys' room so if a guy comes up,
stop him from coming in.

MEL
Okay. Wait, how?

CASEY
I don't know. Distract him.

MEL
But...

Casey hurries into the restroom. Mel sighs and sits down on
a nearby low bench.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Dalton sits on the edge of his seat.

DALTON
Maybe I should just go say hi
really quick while Casey's gone.

ADRIAN

No.

DALTON

Dude, why not?

Adrian shakes his head, his lip curled up.

ADRIAN

You know, do whatever. I'm going to the bathroom.

Adrian gets up and walks out quickly. Dalton stares at him then slumps back into his seat with his arms folded and his face in a semi-pout.

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Mel sits on the bench, looking around. Adrian steps out of the theater and pauses when he sees Mel sitting there. He takes a deep breath and walks past her toward the restroom.

Mel notices him just before he steps inside.

MEL

Adrian?

Adrian turns around.

ADRIAN

Oh, hey, Mel. I didn't see you there.

Mel smiles and tucks her hair behind her ear.

MEL

So, um, are you enjoying the show?

Adrian laughs.

ADRIAN

Which one?

Mel tilts her head.

ADRIAN

Because if you're referring to the movie, I haven't seen much of it. I've been too busy trying to keep Dalton away from Maddie.

Mel smiles.

MEL
He really likes her, huh?

Adrian shrugs, but nods.

ADRIAN
Better her than you, though, right?

Mel grins then nods. She bites her lip. A comfortably awkward beat passes between them before the theater door opens. Grant walks out, pausing just a second.

GRANT
There you are.

He ignores Adrian as he walks over to Mel.

GRANT
What's taking so long?

Mel casts an apologetic glance in Adrian's direction.

MEL
I was just waiting on Casey.

GRANT
Oh.

Grant smiles sweetly at her.

ADRIAN
I'll tell him to hurry up.

Mel's eyes widen as Adrian approaches the bathroom. Just before he gets to the door, Casey exits. She nods nonchalantly to Adrian then walks up to Mel and Grant.

She trades a brief look with Mel to give her a quick, but grateful smile. Mel nods and smiles back.

GRANT
You guys ready to head back inside?

Casey nods and walks ahead of them. Mel reaches down and takes Grant's hand as they walk back into the theater.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Maddie sits alone and stares up at the screen as the hero shouts and shoots someone. She glances over her shoulder, cringing back in brief surprise.

MADDIE
What do you want, Dalton?

Dalton walks up and takes a quick seat next to her.

DALTON
I just wanted to say hi.

MADDIE
Go away.

DALTON
Aw, come on, Maddie. I know you're not really here with that Casey kid. That whole thing's just for my benefit, right?

Maddie scoffs.

MADDIE
I didn't even know you were going to be here. You're so arrogant.

Dalton looks down. Maddie studies him a moment, toying with her hair. Dalton looks up to meet her gaze.

DALTON
What?

Maddie hesitates. She averts her eyes.

MADDIE
Why'd you have to like my best friend?

DALTON
Why'd you have to kiss me like that?

They stare at each other. Maddie sighs and leans back against her seat, refolding her arms.

MADDIE
I'm here with Casey. Go away.

Dalton looks at her, but glances up at the sound of chairs squeaking. Mel, Grant and Casey make their way back down the aisle. Dalton exits in the opposite direction.

Mel gives Maddie an inquisitive look, but Maddie shakes it off. Everyone slides back down into their seats.

INT. KITCHEN - HURST HOME - NIGHT

Russell, Chanice and Alexis stand amidst the remnants of cookie making. Russell spoons batter onto a cookie sheet. Chanice washes a bowl. Alexis, covered in flour, licks some stray dough off her fingers.

RUSSELL

Okay, Lex, why don't you go hop in the bathtub and get cleaned up. These cookies should be done when you get out.

Alexis grins at him and licks her last finger. She exits.

Chanice finishes with the bowl. She turns to Russell and leans on the counter.

CHANICE

This was fun. Messy...
(she glances around)
But fun.

RUSSELL

As life should be.

Chanice smiles. A beat as Russell puts the cookies into the oven. He turns to Chanice.

RUSSELL

Before you got here, Lexi asked if you were my girlfriend.

Chanice raises her eyebrows.

CHANICE

I suppose we have spent a lot of time together recently. It's only natural that she would think of it that way.

RUSSELL

Right, and I explained that we're friends, but the whole thing got me thinking.

Chanice frowns.

RUSSELL

Was there something going on between you and Officer Pettit? Is that why you were so rude to him?

Chanice's frown turns to a look of disgust.

CHANICE
It's not a good idea for us to talk
about Gary Pettit.

RUSSELL
Because it makes you angry?
Chanice folds her arms and turns away.

CHANICE
Because it'll make you angry.
Russell stares off, the wheels turning.

RUSSELL
(quiet)
Amy wouldn't have...

CHANICE
Of course not, but that doesn't
mean he didn't try to convince her.
Russell's face flushes, his jaw set.

RUSSELL
(angry, rushes)
How so? Why didn't she tell me? Why
didn't she report him?

CHANICE
Because, for a reason that eludes
me, she genuinely liked the guy.
She thought he worked well with the
kids and... the kids were always
her priority, you know that.
Russell holds onto the counter. He grinds his teeth.

RUSSELL
You're sure she never--

CHANICE
Don't go there, Russ. You know Amy
wouldn't even consider having an
affair. She loved you too much.
Russell looks up, less angry, more controlled.

CHANICE
And this thing with Gary had just
started at the end of last school
year. I think she was hoping it
would... go away over the summer.

Russell shakes his head. A few seconds tick by.

RUSSELL
He was there the night she died.

CHANICE
I know.

RUSSELL
He was the one who arrested Dylan.

CHANICE
I know...

RUSSELL
He's the one testifying against
Dylan.

CHANICE
I know.

RUSSELL
But Amy trusted him, right?

Chanice's nod is reluctant.

RUSSELL
Then I trust her judgment.

Chanice forces a smile.

ALEXIS(O.S.)
Are the cookies done yet?

Chanice and Russell trade another look before plastering on smiles to greet Alexis when she enters the room.

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Casey and Maddie walk near each other, but with space between them. Grant and Mel walk ahead, holding hands.

CASEY
(to Maddie)
You cool?

MADDIE
Hm?

Maddie looks up.

MADDIE

Oh, yeah. I'm fine.

(she smiles)

Thanks for being so nice to me tonight. I mean, I know you think I'm just Grant's dumb sister, but--

CASEY

Are you kidding? And here I was thinking you were the one judging me as Grant's loser friend.

MADDIE

I've always thought you were cool, Casey. Granted, it's more like a Daniel Radcliffe cool than a Joe Jonas cool, but it works for you.

Casey grins and shakes her head.

The group reaches an area of seating in the theater. Casey and Maddie take one bench, Grant and Mel take another. Grant and Mel don't talk much or look at anyone but each other.

CASEY

That's funny. I'm actually a closet Harry Potter fan.

Maddie sneaks a sly glance at Casey.

MADDIE

Who isn't? Although, really, I've always had the hots for Ron.

CASEY

(girly)

Yeah, Ron's awkwardness definitely has a certain... charm.

Maddie smiles to herself and nods. Casey shakes her head, covering part of her face with her hand.

Across the theater, Adrian and Dalton are again playing Time Crisis. Adrian is focused on the game, but Dalton glances up to catch Maddie's eye.

MADDIE

Ugh. He's so annoying.

CASEY

Dalton?

Casey glances over in Dalton's direction.

MADDIE

Yeah.

CASEY

But you really like him, right?

MADDIE

(unconvincing)

No...

Casey sighs.

CASEY

Here...

She puts out her hand to Maddie. Maddie chuckles, but takes Casey's hand. Maddie smiles gratefully at Casey.

Grant and Mel do take notice of this. They look at one another then both look at Casey. Casey rolls her eyes.

DALTON (O.S.)

This is ridiculous. You two are not together. The jig is up. Just stop.

Dalton walks up to Casey and Maddie.

CASEY

Back off, dude.

Dalton smirks.

DALTON

Guess what? She's not really on a date with you, dude. She's just using you. She doesn't like you.

Casey frowns back a smile, but Maddie drops Casey's hand and stands up in Dalton's face.

MADDIE

How many times do I have to tell you to leave me alone?

Casey stands now.

DALTON

How many times do I have to apologize to you?

MADDIE

You haven't actually apologized at all. To me. Or to Mel.

Grant and Mel stand up, taking a few steps up.

DALTON
Well, I'm sorry.

He glances at Mel. Grant stares him down.

DALTON
And, I'm sorry.

Adrian walks up to the group. Mel looks at him and nods from Dalton to the door. Adrian nods.

ADRIAN
Come on, D. Let's go.

Dalton looks at him.

DALTON
Just a second.

He turns to Maddie.

DALTON
Just tell me the truth. Are you on
a date with Casey or not?

CASEY
That's really none of your
business.

Dalton scowls.

DALTON
It's not your business to tell me
if it's my business. It's hers.

He nods toward Maddie.

CASEY
(annoyed)
You didn't listen to her when she
told you to get lost. Why would you
listen to her now?

Dalton laughs for a split second then shoves Casey and sends her reeling back onto the bench.

In a blur, Grant glides up to Dalton and catches him off guard with a punch to the eye. Dalton spins back and falls on the ground. Grant moves at him again, but Adrian is there to help Mel hold him back.

Maddie runs over to Dalton.

MADDIE

Oh my gosh, Dalton? Dalton, are you okay? I'm so sorry. Are you okay?

Dalton sits on the floor, looking dazed. He smiles at her.

DALTON

Better...

MADDIE

Ugh.

She rolls her eyes and shoves him back against the floor.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The group of six hurriedly walks out the theater. A MANAGER follows behind.

MANAGER

And don't cause any trouble out here, or I'm calling the cops.

They polarize: Grant, Mel, Casey and Maddie to one side, Adrian and Dalton to the other. Mel and Casey still work to restrain Grant. Maddie glances between him and Dalton.

Eventually, Adrian manages to pull Dalton far away.

MADDIE

(to Grant)

When did you get so freaking violent? I've never seen you actually hit someone before. What's your deal lately? Calm down.

MEL

Maddie, maybe you should--

GRANT

The guy shoves my best friend down... is practically stalking my sister... after he tried using her to get to my--to Mel...

Mel smiles, running a soothing hand up and down his arm.

GRANT

And you want me to calm down?

MADDIE

I appreciate your frustration, but you don't have to fight for me.

MEL

Or me.

CASEY

Or me, by the way. I totally had that under control.

Grant meets Casey's eye and they both chuckle. Grant relaxes enough for Mel and Casey to release their grip. He sighs.

GRANT

Sorry, guys.

They all stand around, the air awkward.

Across the parking lot, Adrian drags Dalton away.

DALTON

Let me go, Adrian. I'm going to kill that kid. Let me go.

ADRIAN

You can't blame him for trying to defend his sister.

DALTON

Whatever. Let me go!

Adrian tightens his grip for a moment then shoves Dalton. Adrian's look is fierce as he steps up to his friend.

ADRIAN

Listen to me, Dalton. Maddie doesn't like you. You had a shot with her, you wasted it. Whether she's moved on or not, Casey's right, it's none of your business.

DALTON

But--

ADRIAN

I said listen. You're embarrassing me and yourself. So just let it go. You're going to have to let it go.

DALTON

But we're so right for each other.

ADRIAN
Let it go.

DALTON
You saw how she came over to--

ADRIAN
Let it go.

DALTON
I think--

ADRIAN
Let it go.

DALTON
God! Okay. Okay, fine. I'm letting
it go. It's gone! Are you happy?

Adrian nods.

ADRIAN
Yes.

Dalton fumes. Adrian looks him over.

ADRIAN
How's your eye?

DALTON
It hurts.

Dalton puts his hand up to his face as he sits down on a nearby curb.

Across the lot, a van stops to pick up Maddie, Mel, Grant and Casey.

Dalton stares at it, wincing as he touches his face. Adrian watches Dalton carefully, shaking his head.

FADE TO BLACK.

END ACT IV

ACT V

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - HURST HOUSE - NIGHT

Alexis, Russell and Chanice sit on the floor around the coffee table. They pack the game Clue into its box. The front door opens and Adrian enters, looking haggard.

ALEXIS
Adrian! You're back!

Adrian smiles curiously at her then nods hello to Chanice.

RUSSELL
How was the movie?

Adrian shakes his head.

ADRIAN
Don't ask.

Russell looks at him curiously, but Alexis gets up and runs to Adrian.

ALEXIS
Will you play Cranium with us?

ADRIAN
I'm going to bed. Sorry, Lexi.

Alexis nods and turns away with disappointment on her face.

RUSSELL
Come on. Just one game?

Russell nods discreetly in Alexis' direction. Adrian smiles and nods. Chanice smiles at the interaction.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Familiarity is not overrated.

ADRIAN
Okay, fine. One game. Want to be on my team, Lex?

Alexis grins at him.

ALEXIS
Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

She runs back to him and throws her arms around him.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Rituals bring us comfort.

LATER

Russell stands up, acting out something in a charades-type activity. Chanice throws out guesses.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Some alterations to our everyday
lives happen at a slow enough rate
that we don't even notice.

Alexis can't stop laughing. Adrian chuckles along with her.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Grant and Mel walk down the hallway together in pleasant silence. They glance at each other and smile.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
But other changes happen,
seemingly, overnight.

Casey stands in front of her locker, staring inside.

DALTON(O.S.)
Hey, Casey?

Casey turns around and takes a step back.

DALTON
Whoa, chill. I wanted to apologize.

CASEY
Hey, don't worry about it.

Casey closes her locker and turns to walk away.

DALTON
And, if you and Maddie are--

CASEY
We're not, so--

DALTON
Well, either way, it's not my
business. I know that now.

Casey smiles.

CASEY
Well, we're not, so...

Dalton's smile is small, but satisfied. A beat.

DALTON
I'll see you later.

He nods and takes off. Casey turns in the other direction and almost runs into Grant.

GRANT
Why were you talking to him?

CASEY
He was apologizing.

GRANT
(caught off guard)
Oh.

CASEY
Where's Mel?

GRANT
At her locker.

Grant tries to fight back a smile, but loses.

GRANT
You were so right about Mel.

CASEY
And now you have that girlfriend
you were whining about not having.

Grant blushes.

GRANT
She's not my girlfriend.

Casey's lifted eyebrows show skepticism.

GRANT
We haven't even kissed.

CASEY
Um, yes you have.

GRANT
The trampoline kiss definitely
doesn't count. That was before.

CASEY
Before what?

GRANT
(stumped)
Before...

CASEY
...She was your girlfriend.

Grant groans, but smiles.

GRANT
You don't get it, okay? She didn't
even hold my hand this morning.

CASEY
Did you try to hold her hand?

GRANT
No, but--

Casey's laugh cuts him off.

CASEY
You're ridiculous.

Grant shakes his head and looks off.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Maddie waits as Mel carefully pulls books and folders out of her locker. Maddie watches her with a grin. Mel looks over.

MEL
What?

MADDIE
You're my brother's girlfriend.

MEL
I'm not his... did he say that?

Mel raises her eyebrows hopefully. Maddie frowns.

MADDIE
No, but I assumed that's what you
both wanted.

MEL
I don't know, Maddie. It just feels
like I'm not his first choice.

MADDIE
OMG, Melanie. Who do you think is
his first choice?

Mel shuts her locker. A beat.

MEL
Speaking of choices. You and Casey?

Maddie masks a scoff with a laugh.

MADDIE
Me and Casey? Are you serious?

MEL
I just wanted to make sure you
weren't getting one of your crazy
crushes, that's all.

Maddie chuckles.

MADDIE
That'd be a little pointless,
wouldn't it?

Mel narrows her eyes.

MEL
What do you mean?

MADDIE
Oh, come on. You haven't noticed?

MEL
(casual)
Noticed what?

Maddie sobers.

MADDIE
I think Casey likes Grant.

Mel stares at her friend.

MADDIE
(babbling, rushed)
I mean, I could be wrong and I
would never share that theory with
Grant, but it just seems kind of
obvious to me. Maybe Casey doesn't
really know it yet, but he is from
L.A. and so you'd think--but maybe
he does know and--I mean, this is
(MORE)

MADDIE (cont'd)
 Indiana so it wouldn't really be
 smart to tell people--

MEL
 You think Casey likes Grant?

MADDIE
 But you have nothing to worry
 about. I can personally vouch for
 the fact that Grant is strictly
 into girls. Accidentally hitting
 control-H in the web browser can be
 a very scary thing. Just so you
 know.

Mel's face flushes and she tucks her hair behind her ear.

MADDIE
 Sh-sh-shhh.

Casey and Grant walk up. Grant takes a place at Mel's side.

GRANT
 (to Mel)
 Ready for biology?

Mel smiles and nods. She and Grant both glance at Maddie and Casey before they turn to walk away together. Maddie shifts her weight from one foot to the other. Casey looks around.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The door of a small office labeled "Liaison Officer" is half-way open. Russell walks up slowly. He pauses another second before knocking on the door.

OFFICER PETTIT(O.S.)
 Come on in.

INT. OFFICER PETTIT'S OFFICE - DAY

Officer Pettit is looking through a folder. He glances up.

OFFICER PETTIT
 Mr. Hurst. How can I help you?

Russell's smile is forced.

RUSSELL

I just wanted to say, in regard to
my wife...

Officer Pettit closes the folder and sits up straight.

RUSSELL

She had many admirers.

Officer Pettit's scowl is brief.

RUSSELL

It was impossible not to fall in
love with her. I understand that.

Officer Pettit contorts his face into an innocent
expression.

OFFICER PETTIT

I'm not sure what you're--

RUSSELL

But I would hate--and I know Amy
would, too--I would hate for your
feelings to taint your testimony
against Dylan Jones.

The surprise on Officer Pettit's face is genuine.

OFFICER PETTIT

What?

RUSSELL

My family wants to see justice
served more than anyone, but Dylan
deserves a fair trial. Right?

Officer Pettit chuckles good-naturedly.

OFFICER PETTIT

Oh, of course. Mr. Hurst, I can
assure you that my testimony will
not be biased against Dylan.

Russell breathes a sigh of relief.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

Officer Pettit nods tentatively. Russell nods once then
exits leaving Officer Pettit looking bewildered.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Grant and Mel walk side-by-side, their hands inches apart. Grant takes a deep breath then reaches toward Mel's hand. Mel quickly pulls her hand away and sticks it in her pocket.

Grant hangs his head as the pair walk by Mr. Emmanuel.

MEL

(whispered)

Emmanuel's not really a fan of PDA.

Grant looks up at Mel as they round a corner. She smiles and takes her hand out of her pocket so she can grab his hand. She turns her head to give him a quick peck on the cheek.

Grant's cheeks flush and he smiles as they continue.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

Adrian stands with Dalton.

DALTON

So Casey was cool.

Adrian nods as he glances up. Dalton follows his gaze.

BOYS' P.O.V.

Grant and Mel stop in front of Mel's biology class. She keeps hold of his hand as they talk intimately.

BACK TO SCENE

DALTON

Not that I would ever say I told you so, but I called that, right?

Adrian shrugs and averts his eyes.

ADRIAN

Do I have to just accept this harassment as part of your personality now or is there some way I can convince you that I have absolutely no romantic interest in Melanie Jones?

DALTON
The first one.

Dalton grins and pushes Adrian's shoulder as he walks off. He is quickly replaced by Dylan Jones.

DYLAN
Sweet, isn't it?

Adrian turns to look at him, taking a step away.

ADRIAN
Actually, it is.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Change can also be a reality check.

Dylan looks at him sideways then chuckles to himself as he walks in Mel and Grant's direction.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mel bites her lip as Grant shows her something in his notebook. His smile is wide and pleased.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
A really confusing reality check.

GRANT
I don't really write so that might be a problem, but once I...

Grant pauses as Dylan walks up.

DYLAN
Hi.

Grant looks at him with narrowed eyes. Mel's stare is blank.

MEL
Goodbye.

DYLAN
I just wanted to give you two my blessing, that's all.

MEL
We don't need your--

DYLAN
See you later.

His smile is cheesy as he walks away.

GRANT
That was weird.

MEL
Ignore him.

GRANT
Was he being sarcastic?

MEL
No. He likes you a lot.

Grant looks off down the hall.

GRANT
Hope that's not the kiss of death
for our relationship.

Mel smiles.

MEL
Even though that was a negative
statement, you just used two very
appealing words.

GRANT
Hmmm... death?

Melanie laughs.

MEL
No...

GRANT
Hope?

MEL
Okay, make that three.

GRANT
Hope...

MEL
Relationship...

GRANT
And?

MEL
Kiss.

Grant smiles. Mel leans toward him to give him a soft kiss.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Adrian watches another moment then shakes his head and turns to walk away down the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Dylan walks by Officer Pettit in the hallway and exchanges a pointed look with him. The officer nods.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MR. HURST'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Casey and Dalton are already seated at the front of the room. Maddie walks in and waves to Casey without even a look in Dalton's direction. She takes her seat.

Adrian sits at the back of the room, writing in a notebook.

Grant and Mel enter together. They smile at each other briefly then head to their assigned seats.

Mel slides into place next to Adrian. She glances over at him. He smiles, but continues to write.

MEL

Have a good weekend?

Adrian chuckles and continues to write. He finishes with an emphatic period and looks up at Mel.

ADRIAN

Sorry Dalton ruined your date.

Mel smiles, but shrugs.

MEL

He didn't.

ADRIAN

With this new aspect to your social calendar, will you still have time to keep me afloat in algebra?

MEL

Absolutely. Why? Are you having trouble with this slope stuff?

ADRIAN

Nope. I'm an expert on change.

Adrian smiles to himself again. Then slides a piece of paper between he and Mel. He draws a steep line that increases from left to right.

ADRIAN

Quickly increasing, positive rate of change.

He looks up at Mel.

ADRIAN

You and Grant.

Mel rolls her eyes, but smiles. Adrian draws a downhill, steep line.

ADRIAN

Quickly decreasing, negative slope.

He laughs and erases the line.

ADRIAN

Actually...

He draws a vertical line.

ADRIAN

All fall, no forward progress. Undefined slope. That'd be--

MEL

Maddie and Dalton.

Adrian grins and nods. Mel takes his pencil and draws a horizontal line.

MEL

And this one is us.

ADRIAN

Us?

MEL

No increase, but no decrease either. Slope of zero. Perfectly stable, comfortable and... safe.

Adrian looks down at the paper for a long beat.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Yeah, change is pretty much
inevitable.

He nods to Mel and pulls out his algebra book.

ADRIAN(V.O.)
Acceptance is always optional.

Mel and Adrian each busy themselves with arranging materials on their respective desks while always glancing at one another.

FADE OUT

END OF EPISODE