DRAMA HIGH

“Pilot”

Written by
Jason Katims

Inspired by a true story.
EXT. STANTON PENNSYLVANIA – DAY

BEAUTY SHOTS OVER MUSIC

LOU MAZZUCHELLI (early 40s), tightly combed back hair, oversized glasses, drives through the struggling but still picturesque town-- Diners, Churches, Clapboard Houses, American flags -- Americana.

We hear a piece of the local news over the car radio. “...another round of teacher layoffs are expected at Roosevelt High School signaling more bad news for the troubled district...” We see this weigh on Lou as he glances out at THE SHUT DOWN STEEL MILL he is passing, a symbol of tough days the town is experiencing.

--CLIMBING OUT OF A BEDROOM WINDOW -- MAASHOUS EVERS (16) long, unruly hair, blue doughy eyes, sneaks out as a TEENAGE GIRL giggles and throws him his flannel shirt and his bookbag.

--IN THE TOWN LUNCHEONETTE two breakfast specials are swooped up by LILETTE SUAREZ (16), half Puerto Rican, half Irish, long sexy legs and vulnerability under the surface. She looks at her mom, VANESSA (35) a hot mess, jockeying her way through the tight space and her boss ANTON (50s) old school and sort of gross, squeezes Vanessa’s ass as she passes. Lilette is disgusted. Comes to Vanessa--

LILETTE
Mom, you’re going to let him do that? Seriously? That is sexual assault.

VANESSA
If that’s sexual assault I need a new name for a lot of other stuff. Relax, honey, I’m a big girl, I can handle it.

She walks off and we hold on Lilette, annoyed.

--NURSING CARE FACILITY. ROBBIE THORNE (16) African American, a stud, and the closest thing this town has to a star, walks into a room where EVA (40s) African American, in late stages of a muscular disease. He brings a book and some flowers he picked on the way.

ROBBIE
How you doing Momma?
He leans over, kisses her cheek.

--INSIDE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. SIMON SAUNDERS (16) 5’2” thin, handsome, the theater’s leading man -- clearly gay, though he would deny it, prays next to his devout MOM and DAD and younger SISTER, who has CP and is wheelchair bound.

--IN A DRIVEWAY a man, COACH DOUG STRICKLAND (early 40s) gathers his suitcase and a cardboard box from his car and walks into his HOUSE. GWEN STRICKLAND (16) Roosevelt High’s Theater queen bee, make-up on, tears up as her father enters, she throws her arms around him.

GWEN
Daddy, I’m so glad you’re back home.

He holds her tight and we see DENISE STRICKLAND (early 40s) Gwen’s Mom, appear in the doorway-- gorgeous and put together on the outside, a wreck under the surface. He looks at her, contrite, but she’s still not fully ready to forgive.

EXT. ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

ROBBIE THORNE runs up and down the steps of the bleachers, with his football teammates, leading the pack. He stops as he watches LILETTE walking up to school with her unlikely friend, theater-geek Simon. She feels Robbie looking at her as she passes.

SIMON
I’m telling you should try out for Grease. You have a killer voice.

LILETTE
No offense? But I am not hanging with the theater nerds.

SIMON
My entire life is theater, so how could that possibly be offensive to me? QB1 is totally staring at you. Go talk to him.

LILETTE
I don’t date football.

As Lilette and Simon pass, we pick up Gwen and her best friend and lieutenant JOLENE. Gwen looks at Lilette with disdain.
JOLENE
She’s wearing those slutty shorts again.

GWEN
Like mother like daughter.

INT. LOU’S ENGLISH CLASSROOM – DAY
Lou holds up a copy of “The Grapes of Wrath” to a group of lifeless students. Dead to the world.

LOU
Who is the protagonist of this novel? Anyone. Anyone? Okay, here’s a hint -- we have been talking about him for the past three days! No one. Anyone?

Lou walks over to a student slumped over, asleep. Taps him on the shoulder. He lifts his head -- it’s Robbie Thorne.

LOU (CONT’D)
Mr. Thorne, join us, please.

Lou writes on the board.

LOU (CONT’D)
Tom Joad. The book is about Tom Joad making Tom Joad the protagonist.

The Bell rings and the class gets up and moves to the door before Lou even dismisses them. Lou calls out after them--

LOU (CONT’D)
In the assigned pages tonight pay special attention to Tom Joad’s scene with his Mom -- it is one of the greatest moments of American literature.

Lou hears a few of the students banter as they leave--

STUDENT
Does he realize his glasses don’t fit. The guy should get a life.

A few students laugh and we hold on Lou, just a day in the life of Lou Mazzuchelli.
INT. PRINCIPAL WARD’S OFFICE - DAY

Lou sits across from EVAN WARD (50s) African American, he just seems tired from years of all the bullshit.

LOU
...Long story short, with Ms. Cordoza gone I know you need a new head of the theater program and I want to throw my hat in the ring.

WARD
(he didn’t expect that)
You want to run theater?

LOU
I know I’m not your typical “charismatic theater guy.” I realize the kids don’t flock around me like Mr. Levitsky doing Pearl Jam songs in the chorus. But I love theater. I always have. And I can’t help but notice that theater has been suffering. Spirit is down. Attendance has been dwindling. I just think the theater is ready for a reboot. Maybe I need a little reboot myself.

WARD
Lou...

LOU
I know I don’t have experience and Ms. Wolfe’s been here for over a decade--

WARD
It’s yours.

LOU
I’m sorry?

WARD
Theater. It’s yours. Have at it.

LOU
What about Ms. Wolfe?

WARD
Ms. Wolfe was a pain in the ass when she was my student here in Tenth Grade History and she’s still a pain in the ass.

(MORE)
WARD (CONT'D)
You can have her stay on as assistant but that’s as far as it goes. I like this. Even keeled Lou Mazzu. I like it.

Lou is sort of excited but immediately has a little buyer’s remorse. Is this really that easy?

LOU
So that’s it? I don’t have to be approved?

WARD
I just approved you. Just keep it simple. Don’t rock the boat. Musicals. People love musicals. Good clean fun. And put some butts in the seats soon or the entire program’s getting shut down.

PUSHING IN on Lou -- elated and a little terrified.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Start on students doing We Go Together from Grease-

GREASE CAST

WE GO TOGETHER
LIKE RAMA LAMA LAMA KA DINGA DA DINGA DONG
REMEMBERED FOREVER

No costumes, stumbling through choreography. Gwen is a tour-de-over-acting force as Sandy; Simon is her 5’2” 90 pound Danny Zuko. They clearly lead as the ensemble tries to keep up behind them. This is straight ahead, no holds barred middle America high school theater, complete with mugging and winking. The director pacing in front of them is--

TRACEY WOLFE

(mid 30s) skin tight clothes, mouth like a sewer, just leaving her third marriage, she loves theater but hates theater bullshit.

GREASE CAST (CONT’D)

AS SHOO-BOP SHA WADDA WADDA YIPPITY BOOM DE BOOM
CHANG CHANG CHANGITTY CHANG SHA-BOP
THAT’S THE WAY IT SHOULD BE
WAH-OOOH, YEAH!

Lou enters from the back, unnoticed and watches. Nervous but excited about taking over. Tracey chimes in, stopping the rehearsal--
TRACEY
Okay, that’s enough of that.
People. How many times do I have to
tell you to pick up your yippity
boom de booms? For the love of God,
come in on the downbeat. Gwen,
honey, that little cute ass shake
thing you’re doing? Lose it. Simon —
— perfect. You’re my favorite.

Tracey turns and sees Lou. She is annoyed at the intrusion.

TRACEY (CONT’D)
Yes... May I help you?

LOU
Oh. Yes, I thought you’d be
expecting me.

TRACEY
Why would I be expecting you?

LOU
I’m... didn’t anyone... Huh...

TRACEY
What. Spit it out. Speak words.

LOU
I’m taking over the theater
department.

Silence.

TRACEY
Excuse me?

Gwen hears this and embraces her first instinct -- to emote.

GWEN
I’m sorry, what is happening right
now? Ms. Wolfe? Ms. Wolfe!

TRACEY
Idiots. Fucking idiots.

Beside herself, Tracey storms out. Lou starts after her but
locks eyes momentarily with Maashous who watches from the
projection room, the proverbial fly on the wall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lou runs, catching up to Tracey.
LOU
I’m sorry the way this is all happening but I’d like you to consider staying on as my assistant director--

TRACEY
Where did this come from? This information.

LOU
From Principal Ward.

Lou follows Tracey into--

INT. DRAMA CLASSROOM - DAY

Cinder Block walls. Couches. Theater posters. Tracey immediately starts sorting through her shit, packing her personals.

LOU
I have ideas. Change things up. Make this program feel special.

TRACEY
It is something special.

LOU
Even more special then. I was thinking what if we do Spring Awakening as our first production? Provocative, emotional--

TRACEY
--What have you directed?

LOU
Honestly, not that much--

TRACEY
You must have some great credits to steal the job from me. Please. Tell me.

LOU
TRACEY
Well, I could see how your work at Lake Shoot-My-Hammock trumps my 11 years of giving my blood, sweat and tears to this program. What’s Ward paying you?

LOU
I don’t think--

TRACEY
I’ll find out. I find out everything.

LOU
Two thousand for the year.

TRACEY
I was getting four. Now that explains a ton, doesn’t it? They just spent Forty G’s to put new turf on the football field, but they threw their theater program out the window to save a lousy two grand. That should give you some insight into how much they think of this program.

Tracey hands Lou her heavily marked up edition of Grease.

TRACEY (CONT’D)
I would strongly recommend you do Grease. Uno. Gwen and Simon are practically off book. Dos. There’s a movie so you’ll get a good turnout at auditions. If you don’t get a good turnout it’ll land you in a heap of trouble, especially with boys—boys are scarce at Roosevelt theater. My kingdom for a heterosexual boy. Tres. We have the costumes and props in storage from our last production which will save your ass since these motherfuckers keep ravaging our budget. That’s all the free advice you’re getting. I guess this is your classroom now. Break a leg, Mr. Mazzu.

Tracey exits slamming the door. OFF LOU, welcome to theater.

END OF TEASER
INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

START ON KAITLIN MAZZUCHELLI (15) who lip syncs and does a goofy/charming white-girl rap dance to “Alexander Hamilton” from Hamilton, which is playing on her iPhone.

GAIL MAZZUCHELLI (39) is making dinner, and helping SADIE (10) do her homework.

Lou comes in, holding a copy of Spring Awakening, kissing Kaitlin on the head as he passes.

LOU
Hey beautiful.

SADIE
Dad, I’m not sure if I need to do the last sheet but Mom said if I’m not sure I have to do it.

LOU
That’s because your mother is brilliant and wise.

Lou, excited to talk to Gail, gives her a real kiss.

GAIL
Well, hello.

LOU
Okay, so I have an announcement, everyone. I’m taking over the theater department at the school.

GAIL
What?

KAITLIN
Oh my God, that’s insane. That’s awesome. You could do Hamilton, or Spring--

LOU
--Awakening. Exactly what I was thinking.

GORDY (16) enters, a very different vibe from the rest of the family, passes through--

LOU (CONT’D)
Hey bud--
KAITLIN
Dad’s taking over the theater department at school.

GORDY
That’s embarrassing.

GAIL
Gordy, where are you going? I am making dinner--

GORDY
Save some for me. Thanks.

LOU
Gordy!

But he’s out the door. Tension over this. Lou turns to Gail who doesn’t look thrilled.

LOU (CONT’D)
So! What do yo think?

GAIL
(with a big smile)
Can we talk for a sec?

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

They stand outside.

LOU
I talked to Ward -- honestly, I didn’t think it would go anywhere, but he just said yes. He said yes.

GAIL
Uh huh.

LOU
You’re not happy.

GAIL
I know it’s your dream to do this, and I get how badly you could use something like this.

LOU
But...

GAIL
Let’s just talk through this. Figure this out.

(MORE)
GAIL (CONT'D)
Because it’s a lot of hours. It’s afternoon rehearsals and evening rehearsals. And probably weekends as you get closer to production. And you know I teach piano in the afternoons and evenings. And we need that money, Lou.

LOU
I’ve thought about it. The final bell rings. I pick up Sadie. I get her settled back here. Get dinner prepped. By that time Kaitlin gets home. Kaitlin keeps an eye on Sadie and pops the dinner in the oven.

GAIL
And what about Gordy?

LOU
Gordy, will do what he always does. Drive home after football practice.

GAIL
You know what I’m talking about Lou. Everything I’m reading about fighting alcohol abuse comes down to a strong home environment and a consistent parental presence.

LOU
He’s been doing better--

GAIL
For a week. What happens when he isn’t doing better?

LOU
Gail. You know that my first priority is this family. It always has been and it always will be. But I need this, Gail. I need something.

This speaks to her. She gets it. She’s still having trouble with the whole thing, but--

GAIL
Okay.

LOU
Okay?
GAIL
Okay. Yes. Do it. Take the job.

LOU
Good, because I already took it.

And we hear the song drift in from the kitchen, an excited Lou does his white-man rap moves as he sings along--

LOU (CONT’D)
“Alexander Hamilton. My name is Alexander Hamilton...”

Gail, smiles, charmed, but we hold on her feeling a little worried about what Lou’s new endeavor will do to the family.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lou walks in early in the morning. Stands in the empty theater, having his little hero moment. He speaks to a completely empty theater.

LOU
Thank you everyone. Why Spring Awakening? Why a show about sexually repressed teenagers coming of age in 19th Century Germany? Because it is provocative, smart, challenging...

He hears something scurrying up above. A rodent? What is that. He follows the sound up into--

THE PROJECTION ROOM

He is startled, seeing someone -- it’s Maashous.

LOU (CONT’D)
Who are you?

MAASHOUS
Maashous. Evers. Lights.

Lou feels obliged to explain about talking to himself.

LOU
I was just... I’m taking over the theater and honestly I guess I’m a little nervous.
MAASHOUS
It’s cool. 19th Century Germany.
It’s got smash hit written all over it.

LOU
It’s not like it sounds. It’s wonderful. And relevant to our school. Our town. I just think this program needs something to wake us up.

MAASHOUS
Why are you trying to convince me?
I’m just lights.

Lou sees evidence of a blanket and Maashous’ day pack. Was he sleeping there?

LOU
What’s the blanket for?

MAASHOUS
Well, Mr. Mazzu, I like this theater a whole lot, but sometimes it makes me need a little nap.

Lou smiles at Maashous. He just likes this kid.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tracey walks down the hallway and sees the sign-up sheets -- NOW CASTING FOR ROOSEVELT HIGH’S FALL PRODUCTION OF SPRING AWAKENING.

TRACEY
Son of a bitch.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

First day of auditions. A sad and sparse crowd, around ten students including Gwen and Simon, wait their turn. All girls other than Simon. Lou talks quietly to MR. BAER (40S) pianist, vocal coach, a man with an eternally dubious expression, who seems to have been put on this earth to dash the dreams of theater hopefuls with words like, “Your voice has just actually hurt me.” And, “Try shop, theater is not for you.”

LOU
Is this a normal turnout?
MR. BAER
This is an extremely disconcerting turnout, Mr. Mazzu. We are D.O.A.

Lilette tentatively walks in, last minute. Simon looks at her, nods, encouraging. Gwen gives her a cool look.

Lou looks at his people, tries to break the ice.

LOU
So happy to see everyone. Welcome.
I’m very excited to get started.

He looks at them, there’s not a lot of support yet.

GWEN
May I just ask what is wrong with Grease? It has seven Tony nominations, a blockbuster movie and a 2016 television revival. Is there a reason why that isn’t good enough for us?

LOU
That is a fair question. I guess I just like this show more. *

Gwen glares at him.

LOU (CONT’D)
Okay, first up... Harmony Garcia?

HARMONY GARCIA (16) nervous, braces, steps up to the stage. As she does, Tracey enters, and sits next to Lou and has a whisper conversation.

LOU (CONT’D)
Wonderful. You’re staying on.

TRACEY
Not for you. For the kids. I couldn’t leave them up shit’s creek with an amateur. Spring Awakening? Which part did you like best -- the abortion, the teen suicide or the rape?
(to a nervous Harmony)
Take a deep breath, honey. Breathe.

Harmony nods to Mr. Baer, who begins playing the first rhythmic chords of Adele’s Rolling In The Deep and Harmony begins, struggling to hit notes. Lou exchanges a look with Tracey. This could be rough.
HARMONY GARCIA
THERE’S A FIRE STARTING IN MY HEART

SMASH TO -- ANABELLE, overweight, who belts out *Come Together* by the Beatles. She has a good voice but she keeps randomly shifting octaves. Not good.

ANABELLE
HERE COME OLD FLAT TOP
HE COME GROOVIN UP SLOWLY...

SMASH TO -- SASHA, emo girl, who channels Patti Smith talk-singing her song like Patti Smith reciting a poem.

SASHA
THE BOY WAS IN THE HALLWAY
DRINKING A GLASS OF TEA
FROM THE OTHER END OF THE HALLWAY
A RHYTHM WAS GENERATING

SMASH TO -- Simon, wearing a fake beard, steps up to the mic.

SIMON
I will be performing “I Only Have to Know” in the role of the lord Jesus Christ.

He begins, his voice is money, but seeing this diminutive boy playing God in a fake beard is just very high school theater.

SIMON (CONT’D)
WHY I SHOULD DIE
WOULD I BE MORE NOTICED

SMASH TO -- JOLENE, doing an over-the-top conspicuously Caucasian *America* from West Side Story with an unfortunate Puerto Rican accent...

JOLENE
I LIKE TO BE IN AMERICA.
OKAY BY ME IN AMERICA

SMASH TO -- Gwen, who looks like she is taking the stage that she personally owns.

GWEN
Hello. Gwen Edith Strickland. I will be performing “Mama Who Bore..."

OVERLAPPING WITH...

With a visibly nervous Lilette--
LILETTE
...Mama Who Bore me From Spring...

GWEN
--From Spring Awakening.

WE SEE BOTH GWEN and LILETTE begin the song. Gwen starts boldly and confidently -- and Lilette starts simply. Her voice is so pure and stunning and arresting. Lou is taken by her. We CROSS CUT between -- the girls and it plays out like a feud--

GWEN AND LILETTE (CROSS CUTTING)

MAMMA, THE WEEPING
MAMMA, THE ANGELS
NO SLEEP IN HEAVEN
OR BETHLEHEM.

MORE RAPID CUTS as our auditioners reach their climaxes. A sea of imperfect humanity.

ANABELLE
(popping through octaves)
COME TOGETHER RIGHT NOW. OVER ME...

SASHA
(going right up to Lou at the table like she were in American Idol round one auditions)
HORSES HORSES. COMING ROUND FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. HORSES.

Gwen and Lilette (NOW DOING THE DOUBLE-TIME REPRISE VERSION)

GWEN AND LILETTE (CROSS CUT)
MAMMA WHO BORE ME. MAMMA WHO RAISED ME. NO SLEEP IN HEAVEN.
OR BETHLEHEM.

SIMON
I HAVE TO KNOW I HAVE TO KNOW MY LORD.
HAVE TO KNOW MY LORD. AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

Simon sings the climactic high note which he just holds just as... Everyone braces themselves as Harmony reaches for her climax of Rolling In The Deep.

HARMONY
I COULD HAVE HAD IT ALLLLLLLLLLL....

OFF Lou, that was sobering, we SMASH TO:
INT. GYMNASIUM - PEP RALLY - DAY

The pomp and circumstance of a pep rally. The gym is jam packed -- students, parents and faculty. The marching band plays. Cheerleaders kick. Tribal. Ward and Coach Doug Strickland (Gwen’s Dad) stand on the makeshift podium and greet the players as one by one they are introduced. Lou is with Kaitlin and Gail. Kaitlin sees Maashous hanging by himself and she makes an excuse.

KAITLIN
I’m getting popcorn. I’ll be right back.

SADIE
Can I come?

KAITLIN
No.

ANGLE ON LILETTE AND VANESSA

Vanessa is showing way too much skin, but damn she pulls it off. On the stage we notice Coach Strickland subtly checking her out. And when Lilette and Vanessa pass Gwen and Denise, Denise and Gwen look at them with icy stares.

IN THE BACK OF THE STANDS

Kaitlin has “just by coincidence” ended up near Maashous.

KAITLIN (CONT’D)
Barbaric.

MAASHOUS
What is?

KAITLIN

He smiles, and walks off. Kaitlin wants to kick herself for being such an idiot.

ANGLE ON Lilette holding some popcorn as Gwen finds her.

LILETTE
Hi.

GWEN
Would you drop the innocent girl routine.
LILETTE
What--

GWEN
My dad had to go live in a motel because your slutty mother threw herself at him.

LILETTE
I'm sorry.

GWEN
How can she show her face here at my dad's pep rally. That is disgusting. No wonder your greatest claim to fame is giving a blowie to Jordan Riggs behind the pizza place.

Gwen walks off, leaving Lilette stunned.

ANGLE ON LOU, GAIL AND SADIE
Rise as Gordy is announced.

WARD
Next up - Freshman corner back, Gordy Mazzuchelli!

Gordy comes out to mild applause -- Lou, Gail, and Sadie cheer insanely. Someone yells out, “How's the bench, Mazzu?” Scattered laughter. Gordy looks back at his parents, looking pained to be there. Lou feels for this kid.

WARD (CONT'D)
And now, the man with a plan, the man who is going to take down Vestal, QB1 -- Robbie Thorne.

As Robbie takes the stage, the entire gym erupts in cheers. A hip hop beat plays through the PA -- and everyone is up moving to the beat. Someone hands Robbie a mic. He takes it and what happens next is unprecedented. Robbie begins to freestyle. Telling his story pitting Roosevelt, the righteous underdogs, versus Vestal, the privileged devils. As he tells the story, we see Robbie, this stoic kid, come to life in a way we never could before see.

His Dad DETRELL (30s) slacks, sports jacket, watches as he stands next to YVONNE (late 20s) a trophy wife vibe. In his rap, Robbie outs his Dad as dating one of those hot devils from Vestal. Cracking everyone up.
Lou isn’t laughing. He watches very seriously. He has just found his star.

INT. DRAMA CLASSROOM - DAY

Lou and Mr. Baer watch Tracey tack Polaroids of the auditioners onto a bulletin board. She shuffles different people in different roles, but puts Gwen and Simon side by side on top as the male and female leads, below it other actresses (Lilette remains off the board) while the rest of the male cast after Simon remains empty. Satisfied, she looks to Mr. Baer and Lou for approval.

MR. BAER
Brilliant.
(to Lou)
We call Tracey the casting whisperer. She’s got the magic touch.

TRACEY
Clearly, we have some work to do, but we can get the girls cast and start working with them while we scour the hallways looking for dudes.

Lou studies the board and then walks up to it. Tracey watches incredulous, as he starts switching pictures around. He commits the ultimate sacrilege of taking Gwen’s picture down. He reaches for Lilette’s picture (who hasn’t even made Tracey’s cut in a supporting role) and puts her up on top.

TRACEY (CONT’D)
Lilette Suarez? You’re not serious.

LOU
Gwen is always lead. Let’s shake things up.

TRACEY
Gwen is always the lead because she is the best we have. And she and Simon have been in three shows together -- they have a shorthand.

LOU
That’s the other thing. Simon. I think Simon’s a Hanschen.

Tracey doesn’t even know how to respond to this.
TRACEY
You want to make Simon Saunders a fifth lead. The Simon Saunders? He may be the best tenor Roosevelt has ever had.

LOU
I like Simon. But his female leads are always a foot taller than him and look about five years older. Our Melchior and Wendla need to have real sexual tension.

TRACEY
Well, let’s see, who else will you cast? You have so many to choose from.

LOU
I actually had a thought.

Lou goes to the corner and picks up a copy of the school newspaper. He turns to the sports page and rips out the back page -- A big picture of Robbie Thorne in his practice jersey. He tacks it next to the picture of Lilette. Tracey looks at him. Lilette and Robbie side by side--

TRACEY
Robbie. Robbie Thorne?

LOU
You saw him at the pep rally. He’s got something special.

TRACEY
Yes. He does have something special. He can throw a football half a mile. Are you trying to poach Robbie Thorne during football season to be in a musical? You will get us all killed. Rule number one, Mr. Mazzu-- do not cast football. Football is off limits.

LOU
You’re probably right.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Start on an English test marked with red pen and a big red 47%. Lou sits across from Robbie, his dad Detrell, Principal Ward and Coach Strickland.
COACH STRICKLAND
I just want to say Detrell and I are absolutely outraged by the poor work Robbie has been doing in your class.

DETRELL
Outraged. We apologize.

Detrell looks at Robbie, who says his scripted apology:

ROBBIE
I lost sight of my priorities. I’m very sorry. I won’t let it happen again.

LOU
Unfortunately, we all know the Pennsylvania education board states that failing an academic test results in a mandatory one week suspension from athletics. So no need to have a meeting.

WARD
Let’s not pretend that we don’t all know we’ve got the Homecoming game against Vestal this Friday night. Most important game of the season. The town waits every year for that game. We need Robbie on the field if we have any shot in hell of winning that game.

LOU
I’m assuming you are not asking me to change a student’s grade.

Ward looks at Lou -- damn he could make this a little easier. Strickland has had enough.

WARD
I’m just asking you to let him re-take the test after we get through the game.

Lou looks at both of them, considering.

LOU
I want him to audition for the show.

They look at him like he’s crazy.
ROBBIE
What show?

LOU
*Spring Awakening.* Our fall production.
(to Robbie)
I don’t know if you heard. I’ve taken over theater.

ROBBIE
I don’t act.

COACH STRICKLAND
Are you kidding? He does not have time to act in some play.

LOU
Actually, musicals are typically referred to as shows, not plays--

COACH STRICKLAND
I don’t give a shit.

LOU
Doug, it’s just an audition. I need to drum up some enthusiasm. If people see that Robbie Thorne auditioned for the show, it’ll give it some heat.

Robbie exchanges looks all around. Coach Strickland finally reluctantly nods.

ROBBIE
‘Right.

Lou smiles, rips up Robbie’s test and tosses it in the trash.

LOU
Go Tigers.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF THEATER - DAY

Gwen stares at the newly posted cast list on the bulletin board. The starring role of Wendla -- Lilette Suarez. Gwen looks at this-- her life flashing in front of her eyes. As sadness evolves into cold, burning rage....

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

REHEARSAL. Lilette (Wendla) Gwen (Thea) Jolene (Martha) and Annabelle (Anna) sit around the table reading the lines. Lilette is tentative, so shy you can’t hear her speak. Gwen commanding.

LOU
Lillette, just a little more volume.

VOICE PRACTICE -- MR. BAER works with Lilette who struggles with getting the song down. Lou sings a phrase for Lillette trying to help her find it.

CHOREOGRAPHY - Tracey counts out as the four girls begin doing their blocking. Lilette flounders and accidentally trips Gwen-- they both hit the floor. Gwen lays on the floor an extra few seconds for dramatic affect.

LILETTE
I’m so sorry.

JOLENE
Are you okay?

Gwen smiles, and gets up. The eternal pro.

GWEN
No problem. I’m good.
(whispering to Lillette)
Dumb bitch.

LOU
Okay. Let’s try it again. Lillette.
Nice and relaxed...

Tracie looks at Lou -- this is not good.

INT. ENGLISH OFFICE - DAY

English teachers sit at metal desks grading papers, some playing computer solitaire. Lou looks up as Simon enters. There is a natural tension here-- Simon feels invaded by Lou and Lou knows it.

SIMON
May I show you something?
INT. MUSIC ROOM - CHORUS - DAY

Cool teacher MR. LEVITSKY (late 20s) skull cap, scarf, leads the chorus in a rehearsal of a beautiful harmonized version of “JUST BREATHE” by Pearl Jam. Simon and Lou stand watching from outside.

SIMON
Damn, Mr. Levitsky is insanely cool.
(salt in wound for Lou)
Anyway, second row, third from the right.

Lou’s eyes go to the second row, third from the right, where MARGARET HALLOWELL (16), while she is technically a girl, there is no denying she presents pretty masculine -- her beautiful voice booms above the others.

SIMON (CONT’D)
Her name is Margaret Hallowell, she has the best voice in the school and in 3 months she will be Michael Hallowell.
(off Lou’s curious look)
That’s right. She’s in transition.
I know we need guys for the show.
You’re welcome.

Simon starts to walk away. Then turns back--

SIMON (CONT’D)
You cast me as the fifth lead even though I played the starring role in our last three productions and I am literally the only guy who auditioned. A guy can take that personally.

LOU
Hanschen is a wonderful role.

SIMON
Let’s cut the shit. Melchior is the role and I know you asked Robbie Thorne to audition for it.

There’s a beat. Then Simon gets to the somewhat uncomfortable truth--

SIMON (CONT’D)
Hanschen is gay. He kisses another boy. I’m not gay.
LOU
I understand--

SIMON
I have taken a girl to every school dance since Freshman year. Attractive, lovely girls. I come from a devout catholic home. My sister has cerebral palsy. My parents have dealt with too much. The last thing I am going to do is have them hear rumors about their son at church functions.

LOU
(gently)
It sounds like you’re carrying a burden in your family. I’m sorry.

SIMON
It is not a burden. I love my family and I will not embarrass them. I’ll play any other role.

Lou considers for a beat, he should let it go. But he can see something is going on here with Simon and he has an instinct to dig deeper.

LOU
You know Simon, I’ve been a teacher here 17 years. Seen students come and go. I tried to teach them the best I could, but the truth is I’ve always felt really inconsequential to their lives. Terrible thing right? I’m a teacher and I feel like I’m really not doing anything. And now -- doing this show, it’s scary, but I feel like this is my chance to be who I am. Maybe it’s scary for you too. But I believe Hanschen is your role and that you’re going to be amazing.

Simon is swayed by this, by being spoken to so honestly and personally by a teacher. You can see it, but the notion of what Lou is asking him to do is still too big for him--

SIMON
Robbie Thorne is never going to do it. I would kill as Melchior. I would kill.

Simon walks away. OFF Lou.
There is a foldout table set up on the stage and several people await a production meeting including, Tracey, Mr. Baer, Mr. GARDNER (50s) the wood shop teacher and de facto set construction department, and Denise Strickland (Gwen’s mom), costume mom. Lou enters. Takes a seat at the head of the table.

TRACEY
You know Phil Gardner from shop --
he’s our fantastic construction
foreman. And this is Denise
Strickland, costume mom
extraordinaire. Gwen’s mom. And I
think you know everyone else.

LOU
Hello everyone.

TRACEY
I got everything prepared for
Grease in case you decide to pull
the trigger on that direction. We
have costumes and props and pieces
of the set that can be reclaimed.

All eyes are on Lou who feels a little ambushed. Then--

LOU
Thank you. But we will be doing
Spring Awakening.

There is a silence. Clearly this isn’t a popular decision.
Denise starts to gather her things--

DENISE
My daughter has worked for this
since she was five years old.
Acting, dance, voice, you name it.
Lilette Suarez has a lovely voice.
I’d give my left breast for her
soprano. But she is untrained,
unproven and her family is a
disaster. Roosevelt Theater is not
just about talent, Mr. Mazzu. It’s
about family. Okay, well. Good luck
everyone. Have fun trying to find
slenderizing knee socks for Lilette
Suarez.

She walks out. Lou exchanges a look with the omnipresent
Maashous who is on a ladder hanging lights. Everyone looks at
Lou.
SHALL WE TALK SETS THEN?

A chuckle of relief. Suddenly, there is a loud thud. Lou looks over and sees Maashous has collapsed on the floor, unconscious!

LOU (CONT’D)
Oh my God. Maashous!

INT. E.R. - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Lou and Tracey are waiting to get word on Maashous. They sit brooding. Finally Lou breaks the silence.

LOU
Please don’t do that again. That whole “Should we decide to go back to Grease thing.” It’s annoying and undermining and frankly demonstrates a weakness in your character.

TRACEY
A weakness in my character. Isn’t that a little personal?

LOU
Yes it is. I have a vision for this show. If you don’t share in that vision—

TRACEY
Oh, I don’t share in that vision. Not even close.

LOU
Then maybe you should leave.

TRACEY
I’m not going anywhere. You’re going to crash and burn, Mr. Mazzu. You won’t make it through the year. And when you go, I will be here to make sure the entire program doesn’t crash and burn with you. This isn’t Broadway. Half our shows aren’t even good. But that doesn’t mean you can come in and play with this program like some kind of toy. I grew up in this town. I went to Roosevelt.

(MORE)
I used to be a real pain in the ass until I discovered theater.

This is you *not* being a pain in the ass?

That theater saved my life. I am not going to stand by and watch you take it down.

A young ER DOC walks up. Lou and Tracey rush to him.

How is he?

How’s he doing?

It’s just low blood sugar. He’s okay. But the kid is kind of a mess. Ear infection, a bad rash on his feet. He needs to take better care of himself.

Lou processing this deepening mystery.

Lilette walks in on a mission, and sees Vanessa drinking and flirting with some middle aged guy with a pot belly at the bar.

(to the guy)
Give me a sec.

Lilette comes up to...

Did you have a... a thing with Mr. Strickland?

Who the hell said that?

Just tell me.

Vanessa sees her daughter start to tear up. It breaks her heart. She takes her aside.
VANESSA
That is a lie. That is what happens in this town. People make up lies just to keep from dying of boredom. It’s why we’re gonna get out of here one day.

LILETTE
Mom, you can’t lie to me. Okay.

VANESSA
I am not lying. I swear.

Lilette breathes, relieved.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
Come here baby. Come here.

Vanessa takes Lilette in her arms. She looks to the guy she was flirting with.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
Get the hell out of here. I’m gonna have dinner with my daughter.

OFF this...

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT
Lou comes in late. Gail is playing a song on the piano.

LOU
You only play that song when you’re pissed.

She turns and sees him. She can’t smile.

LOU (CONT’D)
I am so sorry. I know you had to cancel lessons and I missed Sadie’s pick up. There was a kid who had to be rushed to the E.R.

GAIL
Lou. Gordy... I found this in his room...

She holds up a pint bottle of whiskey with about a quarter of it gone. Then Lou sees the pain in Gail’s face. He feels the pain too. Lou walks to Gail, holds her.
INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

Lou knocks on Gordy’s door.

    LOU
    Gordy. Gordy.

    GORDY
    Please leave me alone.

Lou tries the door, it’s locked.

    LOU
    Open the door. Now.

The door opens a crack and Lou walks in.

Lou goes to Gordy’s desk, picks up his car keys and his wallet.

    GORDY
    What are you doing?

    LOU
    Until further notice -- no car, no money.

    GORDY
    Are you kidding?

    LOU
    I’m very serious.

    GORDY
    For how long?

    LOU
    Until you join the support group and show that you give a damn about your life you have no car privileges, no money. Go to school and come home and that’s it.

    GORDY
    I’m not an alcoholic. I’m not going to that lame group with a bunch of losers from Bennett Avenue.

    LOU
    You heard what you have to do. We are trying to help you but you have to meet us halfway.

OFF this...
INT. PRINCIPAL WARD’S OFFICE - DAY

Ward sits across from Gwen and Denise. Gwen is reading from Spring Awakening, emphasizing the violence and inappropriateness of the text.

GWEN
Wendla: I’ve never been beaten -- my entire life. I’ve never felt.
Melchior: You bitch. I’ll beat the hell out of you. “Melchior flings the switch aside and throws Wendla to the ground so violently that she begins sobbing.”
(closing the book)
There’s more. But you get the idea.

DENISE
This is not Roosevelt High theater. This is disgusting.
(dropping the script in front of him)
I’ve flagged all the objectionable sections in case you’re strapped for time. If you don’t do something about this I’m happy to take this up with the district, the local press, and tweet the shit out of this. Let’s go Honey.

Gwen and Denise walk out. OFF Ward, lifting the script and starting to read.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Tracey, Lou, Mr. Baer and Lilette sit around waiting. Lou looks up at the clock. 3:10. Finally, Robbie walks in, in his practice Jersey. Lilette and Robbie exchange a look.

LOU
Good to see you, Robbie. You’ll be reading with Lilette.

Robbie sees Lilette -- he didn’t know about that. He tries to play it cool.
ROBBIE
Hey, Middle Ages with Hendricks, right?

LILETTE
That’s right.

LOU
So, did you get a chance to read the script?

ROBBIE
I skimmed it.

Lou smiles at this reaction.

LOU
And?

ROBBIE
What was wrong with Grease? People come, they laugh, they clap, they get entertained. Why you want to do this dumbass shit for? This thing is going to piss people off.

Lilette smiles. We see a building spark between these two.

LOU
Because I read it and I got excited. And I got a little nervous. And I thought screw it -- let’s have a go at it. Shall we read?

ROBBIE
I guess.

Robbie and Lilette walk up on stage and they start to read. At first, Robbie is doing it by the numbers.

LILETTE (WENDLA)
Melchior, I’m sorry about... what happened. Truly, I am. I understand why you’d be angry at me. I don’t know what I was thinking--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
Don’t.

LILETTE (WENDLA)
But how can I not--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
Please. Please. Don’t. We were confused. We were both just--
LILETTE (WENDLA)
But it was my fault that--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
Don’t -- please -- no. It was me. All me. Something in me started, when I hit you.

Robbie is forcing it. Acting. Lou chimes in.

LOU

LILETTE (WENDLA)
But it was my fault that--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
(more grounded.)
Don’t -- please no. It was me. All me. Something in me started, when I hit you.

LILETTE (WENDLA)
Something in me, too.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
But I hurt you--

LILETTE (WENDLA)
Yes, but still--

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
No more. My God! No more. Just - please.

Lilette comes up to Robbie, very close, it’s so fucking sexy. Lou steals a look to Tracey -- holy shit.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR) (CONT’D)
Forgive me...

LILETTE (WENDLA)
It was me. All me.

And there’s no denying it. They are a leading man and leading lady. Not even Robbie could deny that something just happened.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

INT. FIELD HOUSE - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Lou, looking like a fish out of water, approaches Robbie, who is lifting weights. Lou hands him a printed out calendar.

LOU
I made a schedule. It works around most of your practices. Football would still be your first priority. You’d only miss one game for our Friday performance in December. It’s the Waterboro game-- and let’s be honest, they’re gonna shellack us anyway.

ROBBIE
I was just there to audition. That was the deal.

LOU
Yeah, but then you exceeded all expectations.
(then the hard sell)
When you sang at the pep rally. When you read yesterday. I saw you. I saw you come alive. I really think you can do something amazing. I think we can do something amazing together. Think about it.

Lou walks off. OFF Robbie...

INT. LILETTE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lilette is sitting home doing homework when she sees a text message come up on her Mother’s computer. She goes to look at it. She reads the text exchange: DOUG: WE NEED TO TALK. VANESSA: I TOLD YOU NO. DOUG: MEET ME AT THE MILL. I HAVE TO SEE YOU. VANESSA: UGH. FINE. GIVE ME TWENTY.

Lilette looks at this, her mood darkening.

EXT./INT. STEEL MILL/SIMON’S CAR - NIGHT

Simon and Lilette sit in his car. Lilette sees her Mom’s car pull to a stop. Vanessa gets out. She’s in her waitress uniform. In a moment we see another car pull up. Gwen’s Dad, Coach Strickland gets out of the car.
He walks up to her, they have an impassioned argument which leads to the two of them kissing. So fucked up. Lilette watches, tears fill her eyes. Simon reaches out and takes her hand.

LILETTE
Drive...

SIMON
Lilette.

LILETTE
Drive!

Simon drives away and as the car passes Vanessa looks up and sees Lilette through they window. They lock eyes.

EXT. FOSTER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lou stands at a doorway in a sketchy neighborhood. The door opens a bit and a WOMAN (40s) opens the door.

WOMAN
Can I help you?

LOU
Yeah, I’m Lou Mazzuchelli. I teach at Roosevelt High school. I wanted to talk to you about Maashous. I know this is his foster home.

WOMAN
Is he in trouble?

LOU
No. It’s just I tried you a few times and haven’t gotten a call back. I just want to make sure everything’s okay here.

WOMAN
Everything is fine. I’m a little busy.

LOU
Of course, I just--

WOMAN
Good night.

Lou peers into the house-- a few kids sitting staring at the TV, it looks more like a way station than a home. The door closes on him.
EXT. NURSING HOME GROUNDS - NIGHT

Robbie wheels his Mom along.

ROBBIE
So this dude, Melchior, he loves this Wendla chick. Like a lot. But they’re not allowed to see each other-- even talk. But eventually they get with each other. But then she gets pregnant and he loses her. And it’s like this tragedy in one way. But in this other way, all these characters they come to life.

They reach a little stream. He sits down next to her-- she takes his hand.

EVA
That sounds wonderful.

ROBBIE
Dad said I could be in a play down the road if I wanted. But I should focus on football. Shouldn’t spread myself thin.

EVA
And what do you say?

ROBBIE
I say I can’t stop thinking about this Melchior dude.

EVA
I think you have to put that into the equation. Life is short baby.

OFF Robbie, thinking about this.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Lou faces the troop.

LOU
Okay, we have two new cast members to welcome. Welcome back Jeremy who did a wonderful job in his freshman year in the Guys and Dolls chorus. Jeremy will be playing Ernst.

Everyone gives a round of applause.
LOU (CONT’D)
And also...

Lou looks at Margaret.

LOU (CONT’D)
What will we call you?

Margaret takes a long beat, then--

MARGARET
Michael.

LOU
Beautiful. Michael will be joining us in the role of Georg.

Everyone applauds. Margaret (now Michael) smiles, feeling acceptance.

And then Lilette looks up and we look to the back of the auditorium--

ROBBIE enters. Looks at Lou, nods. Lou smiles and we WE PRELAP LATIN WORDS, chanted RHYTHMICALLY.

THEATER - LATER

ROBBIE backed by Simon, Michael, and Jeremy sing an early rehearsal -- just standing around the piano...

THE BOYS
(chanting)
LAVINIAQUE VENITLITORA, MULTUM ILLE ET TERRIS IACTUATUS ET ALTO VI SUPEREM SAEVAE MEMOREM IUNONIS OB...

As the boys grow louder, the piano kicks in and Robbie sings.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR)
ALL THAT’S KNOWN
IN HISTORY, IN SCIENCE
OVERTHROWN
AT SCHOOL, AT HOME

Robbie continues -- there is a definite hip-hop influence to his take on this material -- making it fresh, exciting.

ROBBIE (MELCHIOR) (CONT’D)
BUT I KNOW THERE’S SO MUCH MORE TO FIND
JUST IN LOOKING THROUGH MYSELF, AND NOT AT THEM...

This brings us to A MONTAGE of the troop’s early rehearsals taking shape.
--Lilette stands at the piano working with Tracey singing *Mama Who Bore Me*. More powerful than ever. We HEAR LOU talk to his actors.

    LOU (V.O.)
    Why are we doing this? Are we doing
    this to entertain? Yes. Are we here
    because it gets you out of your

--Michael (Margaret) on stage playing a male role.

    LOU (V.O.)
    But we’re also doing this because
    we are artists.

--Simon does his emotional love scene with Jeremy. “Oh,
you’re Gonna be Wounded.” We feel the catharsis of this
moment for Simon.

    LOU (V.O.)
    It is our job and duty to reflect
    the world we live in.

--Maashous looking at Lou from the projection room. He gives
Lou a nod of approval. Somehow this means everything to Lou.

We REVEAL Lou has been passionately addressing the cast. This
is a man who has woken up. The cast is sweaty and spent after
a long, tough rehearsal.

    LOU
    The joy, the pain, the longing...
    We pick up each other’s lines. We
    have each other’s back.
    We are a troop. A sacred troop.
    Okay. Everyone. Good job today.
    Tomorrow, 3:30 sharp.

Everyone breaks up and now there are hugs as everyone breaks
apart. He comes up to Tracey who finds it hard to admit how
awesome it is going.

    LOU (CONT’D)
    What do you think?

    TRACEY
    Not bad.

Understatement of the century.

    CUT TO:
INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Lou is teaching the class again, but he is a different man now. He reads from “Grapes of Wrath”, energized, immersed. He is giving Henry Fonda a run for his money. The students are glued. Maybe he’s crazy, but they can’t help but watch.

LOU
“Wherever they’s a fight so hungry people can eat, I’ll be there. Wherever they’s a cop beatin’ up a guy, I’ll be there. I’ll be in the way guys yell when they’re mad an’ – I’ll be in the way kids laugh when they’re hungry an’ they know supper’s ready. An’ when our folks eat the stuff they raise an’ live in the houses they build – why, I’ll be there.”

The bell rings. This time no one moves a muscle.

LOU (CONT’D)
Now you can say what you want about me. But do not fuck with John Steinbeck. You guys? Don’t you get what’s happening? We’ve got a 44 percent dropout rate at Roosevelt. Statistically 14 of you will not graduate from this school. Don’t sleepwalk through this. Wake up. Wake. Up.

Long beat, then Robbie begins to slowly applaud. Everyone else joins in. OFF Lou...

INT. FIELD HOUSE - COACH STRICKLAND’S OFFICE - DAY

Coach Strickland is with his assistant coaches going over x’s and o’s and Lou walks in.

LOU
You wanted to see me?

Strickland excuses his coaches and nods for Lou to come in.

COACH STRICKLAND
I don’t like this, Lou.

LOU
Like what?
COACH STRICKLAND
Being the big, bad football coach. What do you consider yourself? An English teacher or a theater director?

LOU
Both I suppose.

COACH STRICKLAND
No. You’re an English teacher. That’s your job. That’s how you get paid. No matter what happens to your play -- you could flop, you could suck, you could fail -- but you’ll still get paid because you’re an English teacher. I get paid to win games, Lou. That’s how I support my wife and my daughter. It’s pretty simple. We lose. I’m out. Robbie Thorne is my one chance to win games.

Lou thinks for a second, and then says quietly.

LOU
Robbie is dedicated to his team but wants to do the show too. That’s his choice, Doug.

COACH STRICKLAND
I cannot have him split focus. He is our linchpin. You tricked me. You said it was just an audition. You think I don’t get what you did?

LOU
It is not our job to think about Ws. And unfortunately not really our job to think about our own job security. Our job is to do the best for those kids. And right now being in this show is important to that young man. I believe that in my soul and I won’t back down.

COACH STRICKLAND
I like you, Lou. I always have. But stay away from Robbie Thorne. Let’s not let this get ugly.

OFF this adrenaline pouring through Lou.

END OF ACT THREE
INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Lou leaves with the cast for the night.

LOU
Night everyone. Beautiful work. Michael you killed that speech. Excellent.

Everyone walks out, the door closes. In a moment, Lou walks back into the empty theater. He calls out.

LOU (CONT’D)
Maashous? You still here?

Lou finds Maashous in the projection room.

LOU (CONT’D)
Maashous, I want to help you. But you need to tell me what is going on, or I need to call child protective services.

MAASHOUS
Please don’t do that. You put me back in the system I’ll end up getting sent to some other district, some other school, some other house. I like it here. I have friends. I’m doing decent in my classes. I can manage until I’m 18.

Lou looks at Maashous, considering.

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - NIGHT

Gordy and Kaitlin are watching TV, Gail is working with Sadie on homework when Lou enters. With Maashous. Gail’s confused. Kaitlin tries to breathe seeing Maashous in her kitchen.

LOU
Maashous is going to be staying with us for a few days.

Lou looks at Gail who looks back at him, like what the fuck is going on. But he nods, and she gets whatever this is, is important.

GAIL
Let me get you something to eat.
MAASHOUS
Thank you, ma'am.

LOU
Gordy can you bring the sleeping bag into your room? And Kaitlin, can you bring some pillows from the linen closet.

KAITLIN
Uh huh. Hi Maashous.

MAASHOUS
Hey.

OFF this, we, CUT TO:

INT. LOU AND GAIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lou is getting ready for bed. Gail stares at him.

GAIL
Okay, so what’s the deal with doughy eyes in there?

LOU
He’s in foster care and he hasn’t been home for weeks. He’s been sleeping in the projection room.

GAIL
Wow. So now we’re foster parents?

LOU
Gail...

GAIL
Lou, I had to cancel three lessons this week. We need that money.

LOU
I know.

GAIL
Look, I’m glad that you’re living your dream but I’m worried. I’m worried about our son. We need you too. I need you.

LOU
Gail... Gail...
He sees how vulnerable she is. And beautiful. He goes to hold her and it leads to a kiss. It’s one of those kisses that comes out of an emotional place but is charged. He kisses her again -- more sexual. She responds. He pushes her up against the dresser. Aggressive. Uncharacteristic.

GAIL
Ooh, did doughy eyes teach you that move?

He laughs. She moves to lock the door. He knows what that means. They start making out.

GAIL (CONT’D)
Did you see how your daughter looked at him? That boy is dangerous, Lou. What part does he play?

LOU
Oh, he’s not an actor. He does the lights.

GAIL
Well, that’s a waste.

She moves in to kiss him. HOLD on Lou, an idea forming...

INT. SIMON’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Simon’s parents, ROBERT and CELIA are sitting in the living room when Simon comes in, holding a copy of the script.

SIMON
This is my role in the musical this year. It’s not Danny Zuko -- so the good news is you won’t have to pray for me playing a lothario sex symbol. The other news is that I’m playing a character who has a love scene -- with a boy. And I want your blessing. So here it is, the script. The role is Hanschen. The last thing I want to do is disappoint you. But I’ve thought about it. I prayed about it. And I decided that this is something I should bring to the world. I love you both.

Simon gently places a copy of the script in front of his parents and walks out.
INT. LILETTE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lilette walks in. Vanessa waits with takeout burgers, her dysfunctional way of apologizing.

VANESSA
I drove to Five Guys. Your favorite.

LILETTE
Not hungry.

Lilette starts to walk to her room.

VANESSA
Joanne’s out with the stomach flu. I told Anton you would work afternoons this week.

LILETTE
You know I have afternoon rehearsals.

VANESSA
Well, you can miss a couple of rehearsals.

LILETTE
Actually, I can’t.

She moves into her ROOM. Vanessa follows her into her inside--

VANESSA
Listen, whatever you thought you saw the other night--

LILETTE
I don’t want to talk about it.

VANESSA
--it is not worth blowing a good job that I stuck my neck out to get for you. Try working at the Quikmart, maybe you’ll stop taking it for granted.

LILETTE
I am in this play. I like it. It’s important to me. I’m not going to throw that away for a dumb waitressing gig.
VANESSA
Oh, so, now you're going to be a movie star? Is that it?

LILETTE
Why do you do this, Mom? Bring me down. Make me feel less than? I want more for myself. I want to go to college. I want to get out of this town and have a bigger life. And that's a huge mountain for me. I can't do it on my own. I need you to stop making every possible bad decision and help me. Be my mother.

That came out harsh. Vanessa is hurt.

VANESSA
I'll tell Anton you can't take the shift. Hope you don't lose your job— we need the money.

She walks out, half slamming the door. OFF Lilette, feeling both frustrated and now a little guilty for talking to her mom like that.

EXT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - DAY

Gail opens the front door and stops, seeing something.

GAIL
Lou?

Lou walks out and we see the house has been TP’d. Lou’s car is vandalized. The word “TRAITOR” spray painted across it.

GAIL (CONT’D)
What the hell?

LOU
I’ll clean it up.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lou comes in, energized. Approaches Tracey.

LOU
I figured it out. He’s been in front of our noses the entire time. Maashous. Maashous is our Moritz.

TRACEY
That’s... that’s not a good idea.
INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - LATER

Maashous stands on the stage looking so uncomfortable yet still somehow chill. The cast is sitting in the first couple of rows to support him. Maashous begins to sing. At first he’s basically more or less just talking the lyrics.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)
GOD, I DREAMED THERE WAS AN ANGEL
WHO COULD HEAR ME THROUGH THE WALL

Tracey leans into Lou, whispers:

TRACEY
Train wreck time.

Mr. Baer stops it for a second. Hits a lower cue note on the piano.

MR. BAER
Try bringing it down an octave.
That’s where you should live.

Maashous finds the right range -- and then continues.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)
AS I CRIED OUT LIKE IN LATIN,
"THIS IS SO NOT LIFE AT ALL"
HELP ME OUT, OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE
THEN I HEARD HER SILVER CALL
SHE SAID "JUST GIVE IT TIME, KID
I COME TO ONE AND ALL"

Maashous is now getting more comfortable and something crazy is happening. He’s good. There is simplicity to what he’s doing, he doesn’t push, but this guy just sort of owns the stage. The whole cast reacts. This is like this magical experience. Tracey looks at Lou, holy shit. This is working.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ) (CONT’D)
OH WE'LL WORK THAT SILVER MAGIC
THEN WE'LL AIM IT AT THE WALL"
SHE SAID “LOVE MAY MAKE YOU BLIND, KID
BUT I WOULDN'T MIND AT ALL”
IT'S THE BITCH OF LIVING BITCH

The cast jump in spontaneously with the background vocals--

CAST
Bitch, just the bitch.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)
WITH NOTHING BUT YOUR HAND
CAST
Bitch, just the bitch, yeah.

MAASHOUS (MORITZ)
Just the bitch of living
As someone you can’t stand

Maashous finishes his audition. The entire cast rises. Lou looks at Tracey. Tracey looks at Lou.

TRACEY
Like I said, the kid’s money.

Lou looks to Mr. Baer who just gives him a terrified smile.

LOU
Maashous, you just made our day.
Congratulations. You are Moritz.

On Maashous, and we can see even this emotionally shut down dude is feeling like something amazing just happened. As the cast rush the stage to welcome him, Lou just stands there taking this moment in. Reveling it. He looks up and he sees Principal Ward waiting to talk to him.

INT. PRINCIPAL WARD’S OFFICE - DAY

Ward takes a petition with a bunch of signatures and hands it to Tracey and Lou who sit across from him.

WARD
Denise Strickland’s got the entire PTA on this. I got Coach Strickland and the boosters up my ass.

Ward throws the script in front of him.

WARD (CONT’D)
I read this thing — suicide, teen pregnancy, abortion, teenage sex, obscenities. And what is this about Margaret Hallowell playing a boy?

LOU
Her name is Michael now.

WARD
Not as far as her parents are concerned. This is a shitstorm waiting to happen.

LOU
Evan, it’s going to be okay. The show will be amazing.

(MORE)
LOU (CONT'D)
Yes, it deals with some mature material, but once people see it.

WARD
People are not going to see it. They will never see it. Not at Roosevelt.

Lou looks at Ward, realizes he has made the decision.

WARD (CONT’D)
Lou, what part of don’t rock the boat didn’t you understand? I’m sorry. My hands are tied. Tracey, the program is yours. The musical is Grease. Robbie plays football.

LOU
You’re making a mistake.

WARD
Please, Lou. I have three goddamn teachers to fire this week. Don’t make yourself one of them.

OFF Lou no ammunition left. Ward turns to Tracey--

WARD (CONT’D)
Are we good?

Tracey feels terrible, doesn’t know what else to say.

TRACEY
Yeah. We’re good.

OFF Lou, fired and betrayed.

END OF ACT FOUR
ACT FIVE

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOUSE - DAY

Lou sits thoughtfully -- Gail comes up to him and comforts him.

GAIL
It’s not fair.

LOU
I went for it though, huh?

GAIL
You went for it.

INT. SIMON’S HOUSE - DAY

Simon comes out of his room and his parents are there waiting for him. The script stands before them.

ROBERT
We read this.

SIMON
And?

CELIA
Your school should not be doing this material. It is absolutely inappropriate.

ROBERT
We’d like you to step away from this.

There’s a beat -- Simon conjures his nerve, hears himself saying--

SIMON
I can’t do that. I’m part of a troop. I can’t let them down.

ROBERT
Son...

SIMON
I’m sorry. I really am.

Simon walks away knowing that he is now going to be at war with this family.
INT. LOU’S CAR – DAY

Lou drives to work/school. Kaitlin sits next to him. Sadie is in the back seat.

KAITLIN
It’s so unfair. They can’t take the theater away from you. Fascists.

SADIE
What’s a fascist?

LOU
The PTA and the Boosters, Sweetie.

KAITLIN
I believe in you, Dad.

Lou puts his hand on hers. Moved.

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM – DAY

Lou addresses the cast.

LOU
I’m sorry but effective immediately I will no longer be your director.

Everyone is aghast.

LOU (CONT’D)
Tracey is here and as you all know she is wonderful. Just wonderful. You are in such good hands. I... I had this vision that theater at Roosevelt high school could be different. Bold. Exciting. Challenging. And I believe it can be. I believe in all of you. But I needed to do it in baby steps. I needed to play nice. One step at time. And as you know -- I didn’t take it one step at a time. That was my mistake. Live and learn. But you have all brought me so much the last few weeks. I don’t think I’ll ever be the same. I really don’t. So -- the show will be Grease. Ms. Wolfe will be your esteemed director. And I will be in the front row at opening night cheering you all on. I love you all.

(then a joke...)

(MORE)
LOU (CONT’D)
Well, Gwen, you I like. I love everyone else.

That gets a pained laugh. As I Believe from “Spring Awakening” BEGINS -- Some of the students start to tear up. Lillette takes it really hard. And Simon. Robbie looks stoic. Maashous won’t cry, but you can tell how much this hurts him. Finally, Tracey looks at Lou... “I believe...”

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM – DAY

Lou teaches his classroom. Back to square one. He exchanges a look with Robbie, bittersweet. The song continues, “I believe, there is love in heaven...”

INT. LOU’S CAR – NIGHT

Lou drives home at night... The song continues, “All will be forgiven...”

INT. EMPTY THEATER/AUDITORIUM – NIGHT

While we continue to hear I Believe from “Spring Awakening”, what we see is that Grease is back. Tracey is directing, Maashous is back up in the booth and Gwen and Simon are center stage and Gwen is bossy. Tracey and Simon share a look. They both realize something in the moment. They both just know. “I believe, oh, I believe.”

INT. PRINCIPAL WARD’S CAR – NIGHT

Principal Ward rides home and he gets a call on the cell phone.

WARD
What? Where!? ... I’m on my way.

Ward pulls into a U-turn. The song continues...

INT. MAZZUCHELLI HOME – NIGHT

Lou walks into the house. Gail runs up to him urgently. She hugs him. Says something to him, and they both turn and head back out to the car. “All will be forgiven...”
EXT. ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL YARD - NIGHT

Start on flames. PULL BACK and we see a bonfire. Around it is the entire Roosevelt cast. They are singing and we realize this is the source of the music.

ENTIRE CAST

I BELIEVE I BELIEVE I BELIEVE. HARMONY AND WISDOM.

Lou walks onto the scene with Gail. He sees what is happening and is immediately moved.

We now see that one by one members are feeding the fire. As we get closer we realize they are pulling Grease costumes off the rack and burning them.

The Cast all beam, looking at Mr. Mazzu as they sing. He has never been more moved.

Gail takes in these kids banding together for her husband. She is moved. For the first time she truly gets the impact that Lou has had. She shares a look with her husband. This means everything to him.

Lou looks at Tracey, deeply moved. She smiles and sort of shrugs.

Principal Ward arrives. Takes a look at what is happening.

Coach Strickland has also been called, he arrives from the other parking lot.

Tracey addresses Ward.

TRACEY
Roosevelt theater has made a decision.

LILETTE
We want Mr. Mazzu to stay.

SIMON
We want Spring Awakening.

ROBBIE
(to Strickland)
And if I can’t be in the show, I don’t play football.

TRACEY
And we’re all ready to quit. By the way, these are the costumes from Grease in case you haven’t figured that out.
Tracey tosses one last Pink Ladies jacket in the fire as they join hands in solidarity and continue to sing.

Coach Strickland stares at Lou, and then storms off, livid. They haven’t seen the last of him.

Ward stalks away as well.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER/AUDITORIUM - DAY

We see, but don’t hear a rehearsal. Lou is on stage. Talking passionately to his actors. In his element. Alive. The song continues: “I believe. Oh, I believe...” We PULL BACK...