

SPEECHLESS

Written by

Scott Silveri

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. DIMEO HOME - MORNING

Morning in middle-class Yonkers, New York. A woman sprints to the van in her driveway, simultaneously toweling her hair dry and applying makeup. This is MAYA DIMEO (33).

I./E. FAMILY VAN - CONTINUOUS

Maya's husband, JIMMY (34, an impish glint in his eye), sits in the passenger seat. Maya jumps in the driver's side and checks her rearview mirror. A beat.

MAYA

Lemme have it, Ray. Spit it out.
Unleash your wrath, oh, mighty one!

In the way-back, anxious RAY (12) looks up, innocent. He turns to brother ETHAN (13), who wears head-to-toe running gear. Ethan looks straight ahead, not getting involved.

Maya waits, Ray shakes his head. Then they both launch in:

RAY

Fine! You wanted to be somewhere at ten -- I don't know where -- so we wait here forever and now we have to rush. Why must it always be this way? Why?

MAYA (CONT'D)

I get it. You are the adult. I am a child. Please, please forgive me for this most recent and egregious pooppy diaper I have made.

A beat.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You can relax, Ray. We're fine. I found a shortcut.

RAY

(face falls)

No. Please. No shortcuts.

Too late. Maya guns the engine, throws the van into reverse and hits the stereo. Ozzy's "Flying High Again" blasts.

RAY (CONT'D)

We can be late. I want to be late!

The van flies backwards out of the driveway, then peels out and launches down the street. Ray screams in terror.

JIMMY
Construction. Evade.

She bangs a LEFT into an alley marked "ONE WAY DO NOT ENTER."

RAY
Turn it down! I don't want to die
listening to this!

Jimmy sips from a mug of coffee. Not a travel mug. Just a full fucking mug. He hands one to Maya. She takes a sip.

MAYA
(super casual)
Mmm. Hazelnut?

JIMMY
Nice, right?

MAYA
Delicious.

OUT THE WINDSHIELD: a STOPPED BUS, just feet away. On it is an AD in SPANISH: A LAWYER with the words "¿ACCIDENTES?"

RAY
Yes, lawyer! Accidentes!

Maya STOPS SHORT, then jerks the wheel right, skipping the line of STOPPED CARS, speeding up the crazy bumpy shoulder.

RAY (CONT'D)
(shaky, bumpy voice)
Not-a-lane-not-a-lane-not-a-lane.

We stop. Ray lands next to a driver who CURSES AT THE VAN.

RAY (CONT'D)
What are you saying that you think
I haven't said a million times?!

They take off like a bat out of hell. Faster, faster.

Outside, we pass a SIGN: SPEED LIMIT 25.

TIGHT ON: The SPEEDOMETER. The needle flirts with 60.

INT. PARKED COP CAR - SAME TIME

A YOUNG OFFICER checks his radar gun, then flips on the siren. His OLDER PARTNER kills it.

OLDER COP
Not her. Life's too short.

I./E. FAMILY VAN - SAME TIME

They hit a HUGE POTHOLE. Unfazed, Maya and Jimmy expertly raise their mugs high in the air. Not a drop is spilled.

RAY
Yellow. Yellow. Red!

The van blows through a red light. Then it banks hard, wheels screeching, into a PARKING LOT. Maya careens into the only free spot, a HANDICAPPED SPACE up front. A NEW MERCEDES pulls up behind. A FANCY WOMAN (70) rolls down her window.

FANCY WOMAN
Excuse me! There's no handicapped placard on your car! Do you expect me to walk from all the way over --

The van's SIDE DOORS SWING OPEN and a WHEELCHAIR LIFT flops down. Out rolls a BOY in an ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR. This is JJ (14). Mischievous JJ smiles wide, relishing the drama of his reveal. Maya joins him on the lift, riding it down.

MAYA
Aww, does the nice wady have to take a wittle walk? I'm so sowwy. Should we move?
(to JJ)
You want to walk, honey? You do?
(calling)
Ma'am, can he borrow your legs?

The Fancy Woman pulls away. Maya appears in Ray's window.

MAYA (CONT'D)
C'mon, sugar. We're gonna be late.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

We start TIGHT ON a board displaying letters, words and phrases. A red laser dot points to different selections. As it does, we hear the corresponding letters.

RAY (O.S.)
U... C... K...

WIDEN OUT. We are standing in an...

INT. EMPTY HOUSE

The board rests on JJ's wheelchair. He uses a laser pointer attached to his cap to pick out letters, and Ray reads them.

RAY
(off board)
"Sucks." "This sucks."

MAYA (O.C.)
Give it a chance, Ray! Yeesh, you haven't even seen it yet!

Ray turns to see Maya and Jimmy entering.

RAY
No, I didn't -- He said --

Ray looks to JJ, who laughs.

MAYA
Now, you're probably wondering why we're here. Except for Ray, who is not interested and has already decided he's against it because it's my idea.

Ray shakes his head. He cannot win.

MAYA (CONT'D)
As a result of a great deal of work on my part -- I'm not going to bore you with the details, but it involved a meeting with the state. Then the district. State, district, state. School board...
(blows through super fast)
Calling a lawyer, threatening a suit, calling a congressman, another meeting with the state.
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
(deep breath)
We... are moving!

Ethan magically appears behind Ray, panting, excited.

ETHAN
To here? Bronxville High just laid
down a two-million-dollar track!

RAY
(startled)
Where did you come from?

JIMMY
(dry)
From far away, and in very little
time. The boy is fast, son.

RAY
I'm sorry, moving? Changing
schools again? We've been to six
schools in the last two years.
Where's the logic in --?

CLOSE ON: JJ's board as he makes selections: "C, 3..."

RAY (CONT'D)
(off board, to JJ)
I do not sound like C-3PO!

JJ presses a button, producing a SPOT-ON "R2-D2" SOUND EFFECT. Then he spins his electric wheelchair in a most R2 fashion next to his C-3PO, Ray, who is not amused.

MAYA
We're moving because I've finally
found the perfect situation for
your brother. For the first time
ever, a plain old class. With his
own full-time aide. A voice.

JJ reacts, awestruck and emotional. This is big stuff.

ON JJ'S BOARD: The laser hits "NO." "WAY."

MAYA (CONT'D)
That's right. No more special ed.
He's smart.
(scoffs)
Tenth grade and they're trying to
teach him what color the sky is?
(reads off JJ's board)
"Red?" What?
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
(smacks JJ's head)
Wise-ass.

RAY
But we can't afford Bronxville.
Houses here are crazy expensive.

JIMMY
(wry smile)
Most of them are.

Jimmy opens a door. IT FALLS OFF THE HINGES.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Let's take the tour.

EXT. EMPTY HOUSE (BACKYARD) - MOMENTS LATER

They take in a small backyard that ends in a HUGE RETAINING WALL. The traffic noise is VERY LOUD.

RAY
It's right next to the highway.

JIMMY
Nah, it's close to the highway.

A COMMUTER TRAIN ROARS THROUGH. Jimmy yells over the din:

JIMMY (CONT'D)
It's right next to the train!

INT. EMPTY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy opens another door leading outside.

JIMMY
The deck...

EXT. EMPTY HOUSE (SIDE OF HOUSE) - CONTINUOUS

Except there is no deck.

JIMMY
...was located here.

Just a door opening onto nothing on the side of the house. Jimmy catches Ray before he falls into oblivion.

RAY
You know I'm afraid of heights!

EXT. EMPTY HOUSE (SIDE YARD) - MOMENTS LATER

They stand by a TREMENDOUS TREE, admiring it.

MAYA

Knock on it.

Ray does. It makes a hollow metal "gong" sound.

RAY

Is this a cell tower??

EXT. EMPTY HOUSE (FRONT YARD) - MOMENTS LATER

They stand on the lawn, taking in the neighborhood.

ETHAN

Check out those hills. To there
and back has got to be exactly 5K!

JIMMY

We were all thinking it, son.

MAYA

Let's go home and pack. JJ gets
his voice tomorrow morning, then we
head straight to school.

JJ smiles. She picks up his hand for him and gives herself a
high five with it. Ethan runs (literally) for the hills.
Maya, JJ, and Jimmy head back to the house. Not Ray.

Ray hangs back, worry written across his face. He kicks the
ground absentmindedly, looks down and notices RAISED STONES.

RAY

It was a cemetery, too?!

INT. DIMEO HOME (BOYS' ROOM) - LATER THAT NIGHT

JJ and Ethan share a late-night talk. Ray stares at the
ceiling, unable to sleep. JJ now uses another board to
communicate. This one, poster-sized, hangs on the wall.

ETHAN

(reads board)

"R-L-S" Girls? Yeah an aide will
totally help with girls.

Ray heads for the door. JJ types. Ethan reads.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Ha! Good idea.

(calls after)

Ray, we're gonna see if we can get
you an aide too.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The place is a disaster. Jimmy watches TV, surrounded by empty boxes and a sea of crap. Ray appears in the door.

RAY

I thought you were packing.

JIMMY

I thought you had a firm three a.m.
bed time.

(off Ray's look)

Let's take a ride.

INT. FAMILY VAN/EXT. INTERSECTION - MOMENTS LATER

On quiet road, a steep hill dips down then back up. At the bottom of the dip, Jimmy backs the car onto the shoulder, facing the intersection. Then he kills the engine.

RAY

I can't take it. I can't watch Mom
and him believe and get
disappointed again. It hurts.

JIMMY

But the school seems good.

RAY

Not perfect. It's not going to fix
everything. Nothing does.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: We see why this is Jimmy's special spot. A car speeds down the steep hill, hits the huge dip at the intersection, screeches and **BOTTOMS OUT, FUCKING HARD**.

JIMMY/RAY

Nice one! / Aww! Awesome!

Then back to the talk...

RAY

Or let's say it is perfect. It
won't be for long. Someone will
call him a name. Or someone will
call her a name.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Or someone, will quote, "rip off her hairstyle--" Then boom, we're on to the next "perfect" place.

(sighs)

Let's just stay here. It's fine.

JIMMY

You're a smart kid, Ray.

(thinks)

Of course, you don't have to be that smart to see most of our choices are crazy wrong.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: another car eats it.

JIMMY/RAY

Oh, yeah! / Holy crap!

RAY

So you know that. Then why don't you say anything?

JIMMY

Because your mom believes. And I love her for it. I'm not going to take that from her.

(then)

I get it. You're doing great in school here, you made your friend next door -- he sucks by the way.

(off Ray's look)

Hard. The kid sucks hard.

(then)

Just you try to believe, too.

RAY

But... when does it end?

Jimmy doesn't answer. He doesn't know, and he's no bull-shitter. They sit in silence.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: a van EATS IT. An epic bottom-out.

JIMMY/RAY

No way! / Saw sparks on that one!

EXT. DIMEO HOME - THE NEXT MORNING

Maya loads up the car with overnight bags.

MAYA

Just enough for the next few
nights, boys. Daddy's coming back
to pack up the rest.

In the neighbor's driveway, Ray talks to his friend, gangly
CARTER (12).

CARTER

Gonna miss you, bro. We're leaving
a lot of ass on the table.

RAY

I'm gonna miss having a friend
who's into astronomy, too. And
your sick telescope. Remember when
we made out those clouds on Venus?

CARTER

But, dude, you're my wingman. If
you're not talking me up, I'm not
sure I get with that Sophia at that
party last week.

(off Ray, defensive)

I did! We were all...

He makes a sex face and humping motions.

ANGLE ON: Jimmy in the van, flashing Ray a big "THUMBS DOWN."
Ray nods at him and heads back to the car.

EXT. REGIONAL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy helps JJ off the van's wheelchair lift.

MAYA

Okay, you go buy packing stuff. I
take JJ in, meet his voice, do the
paperwork, then we head to school
where they're expecting us for you
kids' first day! Yay!

RAY

And they're expecting us at school
at what time?

MAYA

In three minutes.
(notices)

Ooh, Starbucks! Yes, please!

She shoots off.

INT. REGIONAL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

A facility serving kids with different disabilities and their aides. KIDS, some in wheelchairs, and their CAREGIVERS pass. Maya and JJ are escorted by an ADMINISTRATOR.

MAYA

JJ is so excited. He's never had an aide speak for him. Just Mom.

(to JJ)

Well, you are fourteen... I guess it's time your voice changed!

She guffaws at her joke. JJ groans and rolls his eyes.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(to Administrator)

That means he's laughing.

INT. FAMILY VAN/EXT. FAST FOOD TAKEOUT WINDOW - SAME TIME

Jimmy collects a bag of takeout and pulls away. He hands a sandwich to Ray.

RAY

That's not packing supplies.

JIMMY

Can't sneak anything past you.

(digs into sandwich)

I've been thinking: I really want this new place to work. But let's say it goes south, fast. It'd be a shame to pack everything up then have to do it all again and move to God knows where right away.

RAY

Yeah. A big shame.

JIMMY

So here's the plan: instead of boxes and tape, I buy beer. Maybe a Playboy -- I'm old fashioned that way, I don't need the weird stuff I find in your browser history.

He pauses to stare at Ray, messing with him. Ray stares back, blank-faced. We ain't talking about this.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Then I hang out. If after a week,
the new place works, I bring the
stuff. If it doesn't, we go home.

Ray's eyes light up. A way out!

INT. REGIONAL CENTER - SAME TIME

The Administrator leads JJ and Maya to his office.

MAYA

(reads JJ's board)
Is... the guy... cool?

ADMINISTRATOR

Well, it's a she. And if qualified
speech pathology is cool, then this
gal is a regular 50 Cent.

The Administrator opens a door and ushers Maya and JJ in.

MAYA

Here we go! Your new voice...

INT. REGIONAL CENTER (OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

They enter to see JENNIFER, a DOWDY WOMAN of 50. Not cool.

JENNIFER

(baby voice)
JJ! Hello, angel.

ON THE BOARD: "NOPE."

MAYA

(sotto)
Oh, come on!

JENNIFER

It is just so swell to meet you.
We're going to have a heck of a lot
of fun, n-kay? Yeah. N-kay.

ON THE BOARD: "KILL ME."

MAYA

I don't think we've decided yet.
(to Administrator)
I mean, it is our choice, right?

JENNIFER

You must be Momma DiMeo. I have so much respect for what you do. No matter how great a team surrounds a special-needs child, it's mommy who shoulders the greatest load. I admire you, Maya. I applaud you. Heck, I worship you.

Maya beams. JJ looks concerned. Where is this going?

INT. FAMILY VAN - SAME TIME

Ray can't believe his good fortune.

RAY

Let me get this straight: something goes wrong and things blow up, we just... move right back? Well, then I know just what I have to do.

JIMMY

What?

RAY

(smiles)
Absolutely nothing.

INT. REGIONAL CENTER (OFFICE) - SAME TIME

They're as we left them.

MAYA

(blurts)
We'll take her!

JJ's eyes go wide. He immediately starts pointing out words.

ON JJ'S BOARD: (PIXELATED) "FUCK" and "THIS."

Maya shushes him. And we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (ENTRANCE) - A LITTLE LATER

Students file into the school. The family and JJ's aide, Jennifer, make their way to the entrance. JJ types.

JENNIFER
(off JJ's board)
I don't like... this lady's voice.

JIMMY
Yeah, son, it's not great.

MAYA
Jimmy! JJ! Be nice to the nice,
free lady!

The school's principal, DR. WEEKS, comes down the stairs.

DR. WEEKS
Mrs. DiMeo. We are so glad you're
here.
(to kids)
You must be JJ. Your class is so
excited to meet you. And Ethan, we
cannot wait to show you our track
facility!
(to Ray, at a loss)
And... you! Number Three! Well,
tonight is our school fair. Games,
rides. Big fun for... forrrr...

RAY
Ray.

DR. WEEKS (CONT'D)
Ray! I said it first!

JIMMY
(to Ray, sotto)
The place does look pretty nice.

MAYA
(looks around)
Okay, let's go to school! Where's
the wheelchair ramp?

DR. WEEKS
Right. About that...

Ray and Jimmy share a look. Uh-oh.

EXT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (BACK OF SCHOOL) - MOMENTS LATER

In a section of the grounds that could double for Mogadishu is a busted ramp, surrounded by dumpsters. The boys and JJ's new aide head up and into the school. Once they're gone:

MAYA

A garbage ramp?!

DR. WEEKS

It's not just a garbage ramp.

MAYA

No, it's a garbage-and-my-son ramp.

DR. WEEKS

According to the district, it is acceptable alternative access...

The GROUNDSKEEPER, KENNETH (40's, African-American, in possession of a finely-tuned bullshit meter), wheels a BIN of gardening equipment down the ramp.

MAYA

Oh, look, someone's using the "acceptable alternate access" now! What disabled luminary is currently being escorted to the dumpster?
(looks in bin)
Why, it's space-genius, Stephen Hawking! Enchanted, Professor.

KENNETH

What is this? Is this a play?

DR. WEEKS

Kenneth, Mrs. DiMeo's son uses a wheelchair. Can you assure her this is our normal disabled egress?

KENNETH

Sure it is. For a ballgame last week, I pushed a nice crippled grandma --

MAYA

Crippled?! Did he say "crippled?"
(to Dr. Weeks)
You see that? Outdated, ignorant language that reduces my son to less than a person. He says it, your ramp shouts it! Listen to it:
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
(low-voice, as ramp)
Crip-ple... Crip-ple...

INT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (HALLWAY) - SAME TIME

Ray watches through a window. He smiles, satisfied with where this is going, and heads off. A KID approaches.

KID
Hey, you're new. I'm Matt.

He offers his hand, Ray politely declines.

RAY
(smiles)
Thanks, I'm just here for the day.

Ray walks past, a spring in his step.

EXT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (BACK OF SCHOOL) - SAME TIME

Maya concludes her rant, still "in character."

MAYA
(deep voice, as ramp)
... so he can roll on me with the rest of the trash and we can use the Constitution for toilet paper!

KENNETH
Look, lady. I enjoy your "Blind Side" energy. And speaking as the black man in Bronxville, a person who gets pulled over twice before he pulls out of the parking lot --
(off her look)
-- Yeah, I can talk, too --
(then)
-- the irony of being called "intolerant" is not lost on me. This has been fun, but if you don't mind, I need to get on with my day.

DR. WEEKS
(to Maya)
Why don't you come back later today? We can discuss a solution.

MAYA
Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate the polite response.

She scowls at Kenneth. She and Jimmy cross off. As they go:

KENNETH

Nice to meet you, Blind Side!

INT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (CLASSROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

It's homeroom. Kids chat. JJ and Jennifer enter. Teacher MR. POWERS (30) spots them and alerts the class. Powers is youthful, well-intentioned and wrong.

MR. POWERS

He's here! He's here!

The students erupt into applause. JJ is confused.

MR. POWERS (CONT'D)

More! Everybody stand!

The kids give JJ a STANDING O. Then Mr. Powers goes white.

MR. POWERS (CONT'D)

Wait, he can't stand! The ovation is insensitive! Everybody down!

They take their seats. Mr. Powers approaches JJ.

MR. POWERS (CONT'D)

Sorry. We're excited. We've never had a student who has... who is...

(indicates JJ, smiles)

... this.

(then)

So, your classmates have something to share. Zachary?

ZACHARY approaches, carrying a poster.

MR. POWERS (CONT'D)

(big smile)

Zachary has a cousin with Down Syndrome, so...

JJ's eyes narrow: "THIS RELATES TO ME HOW?? Zachary flips the poster. It reads "JJ FOR PRESIDENT." JJ is confused.

JENNIFER

(reads off JJ's board)

Why? You don't... know me.

MR. POWERS

We don't have to. You're an inspiration. The whole school is on board. What do you say?

JENNIFER

He says...

TIGHT ON: JJ's board. "EAT." "A." "BAG." "OF."...

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

(blushes, quickly)

He says he's flattered and he'll think about it.

Betrayed, JJ stares at Jennifer. But the crowd eats it up.

STUDENTS

JJ for president! JJ for president! JJ for president!

EXT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (TRACK) - LATER

Ethan sprints past the finish line. The track COACH hits a stopwatch and checks the result. He can't believe his eyes.

COACH

3:56? Are you kidding me? Ethan! That's amazing!

ETHAN

Thank you, Coach!

COACH

You can call me "Barry."

ETHAN

No, thank you, Coach!

COACH

No one's ever broken four minutes here. Welcome to the team!

ANOTHER BOY runs past. Coach checks the watch.

COACH (CONT'D)

Danny! 4:28? Oh, my God! That's amazing. I can't believe it!

He gives the kid a high-five. The kid crosses off.

ETHAN

(confused)

Um, Coach? 4:28? That's not amazing.

COACH

Sure it is. Danny hadn't broken
4:30 until then. Look, you clearly
have a gift, but what we value in
this program is trying. Doing your
best, whatever that happens to be.

Ethan looks at the man like he's got five heads.

COACH (CONT'D)

Danny's never going to break a
four, but what he just did there?
In my book? Every bit as
impressive as what you did.

A CHUBBY KID runs past. Coach checks his watch and gasps.

COACH (CONT'D)

5:25?! Andy, that's amazing!

Coach turns back. Ethan's gone, sprinting, already far off.

EXT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (ENTRANCE) - LATER

Students come and go. Maya stands by a sign that reads "RAMP
= JUSTICE." She hands fliers to passersby.

KENNETH

Aw, come on. What's this now?

MAYA

I am raising awareness.

KENNETH

Of the fact you're nuts? Word's
out. Awareness is high.

(then)

I just planted the pretty blue
flowers you're standing on.

Maya stares at him, defiant, then stomps on the flowers.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

You're not going to win. They saw
you coming. We even had a big
meeting about how to handle you.

MAYA

(pulled up)

Handle me? What are you talking
about?

KENNETH

Yeah. They talked to some other school you went off on.

MAYA

No way. What school? P.S. 32?

KENNETH

No.

MAYA

29?

KENNETH (CONT'D)

No.

MAYA

Walt Whitman?

KENNETH (CONT'D)

No.

MAYA

Tuckahoe? Hawthorne?

KENNETH

Does the fact this is taking so long tell you anything about your patterns?

MAYA

Handle me? We'll see about that.

INT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (HALLWAY) - MOMENTS LATER

Maya and Ray wait outside Dr. Weeks' office. Maya is fuming. Ray is calm. He knows this is just about over.

RAY

Hey, it seemed like a great place. Who could have seen this coming?

Ray pats her and crosses away.

INT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (HALLWAY) - MOMENTS LATER

Ray drinks from a water fountain. As he looks up, something catches his eye.

RAY'S POV: Double doors lead to a room marked "PLANETARIUM."

Ray's jaw drops. This place has a planetarium? A sign on the door reads, "ASTRONOMY CLUB FRI. 3 PM." Ray walks in.

INT. BRONXVILLE HIGH (PLANETARIUM) - CONTINUOUS

Ray enters and takes in the sky above. It's beautiful.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.C.)
Can I help you?

Ray looks around in the dark, and finally finds a GREAT-LOOKING GIRL of his age, on the floor.

RAY
Sorry. I was... just looking for
the astronomy club?

GIRL
You found her.
(beat)
Sit.

She pats the ground next to her. Ray sits. A beautiful girl? Who likes stars? Who'll talk to him?

GIRL (CONT'D)
(extends hand)
Jillian.

RAY
(in love)
Okay.

They lie back and look at the stars.

INT. RENTAL HOUSE (KITCHEN) - THAT EVENING

The family plus Jennifer dig into pizzas. Ray is very tense. Maya's been filling the others in on the news of the day.

JIMMY
P.S. 5? No. MAYA

ETHAN
Roosevelt? No. MAYA

JIMMY
St. Anne's? No. MAYA (CONT'D)

As the list goes on, Jennifer more freaked. Who are these people?

MAYA
Franklin.

JIMMY
Franklin? You weren't even that bad there!

MAYA

I know!

(then)

So I told that principal I don't
wanna be anywhere I'm not welcome.

JENNIFER

(gets up, hopeful)

Does that mean we're done here?

MAYA

Nothing's official yet,
Jennifer.

JIMMY

We have you until six,
check the contract.

MAYA

(to Jimmy)

Do we move back? Or there's a
school in Jersey I heard about --

Finally, Ray can't take any more. He blurts:

RAY

No! We should stay -- JJ gets a
voice! I mean, we'd have to find
someone better to talk for him --

(to Jennifer)

-- no offense --

JENNIFER

No, I agree! May I go? There's an
excitement level in this family,
and my tummy just gets --

MAYA

(ignores her)

Forget it, Ray. It's a bust.

ETHAN

(off JJ's board)

Yeah, JJ hates it. He says they
want to make him class president.

MAYA

Sure, so they can feel good about
how accepting they are. He should
run track, too.

ETHAN

He wouldn't be the slowest one.

(scoffs)

4:28.

RAY

Fine, it's not for him. I want it. For me. Let's give it another shot. Give the kids a chance. Please. They have this planetarium and it's cool.

(beat, reluctant)

And there's a girl there. And I like her, too.

JJ and Ethan stare at him, blank, unmoved.

MAYA

Sorry, Ray, that can't be how we decide. But you like it, see? I begged you to give it a chance, but "you knew better"...

RAY

(head about to explode)

I'm sorry... are you making the argument for the school that you're forcing me to leave? Seriously?

JENNIFER

(re: stomach)

Hoo boy. What do The Sopranos call it? "Agita?"

MAYA

(testy)

All I'm saying, Ray, is that you're not always right.

RAY

Yeah, I'm wrong! Like everyone else. These people want to handle you and you're surprised? Wherever we go, there's a fight waiting. Everywhere! Is it a coincidence?

(to JJ)

And JJ, it's not my turn? You don't want to suck it up for me this one time? I just want to stay someplace. Be normal. For once.

MAYA

Hey, I find fights, but they start them. I won't apologize for doing my job. He got the right mom.

RAY

Yep. He did.

This stings Maya. Ray gets up and grabs a jacket.

MAYA

Where do you think you're going?

RAY

The school fair. It's tonight.

MAYA

Not after that, you're not.

She points upstairs.

RAY

No. Please. She asked me.

Maya just points up the stairs. Ray throws his jacket down and runs up. Jennifer, woozy, heads for the back door.

JENNIFER

I need air.

She opens the door. As before, it FALLS OFF THE HINGES.

JIMMY

You're gonna pay for that door!

INT. RENTAL HOUSE (MAYA AND JIMMY'S BATHROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

Maya throws open the shower door, catching Jimmy mid-shower.

JIMMY

(arms out, "sexy")

Okay, but let's make it quick.

MAYA

I'm right. Right? He's wrong.

JIMMY

I don't question how you handle the kids.

A beat. She gets in the shower with him, in his face.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You fight and fight to make sure JJ has a normal life. Maybe he's not the only one who deserves that.

Maya shakes her head, frustrated, and exits, grabbing a towel as she goes. Jimmy goes to get out, then:

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Maya speeds down the road in the family's beat-up other car, a determined look in her eye. Her phone rings. She answers.

MAYA

What?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. RENTAL HOUSE - SAME TIME

Jimmy's on the other end of the line.

JIMMY

Where are you? Did you leave?

MAYA

I'm teaching your son a lesson.

JIMMY

Ray? Where'd he go? The fair?

Jimmy grabs his keys and mouths to the kids: "WE'RE GOING!"

MAYA

To the un-fair. Unfair school,
unfair fair. It's an un-fair!

Maya hangs up. Jimmy rushes the kids out the door.

I./E. PARKED COP CAR - SAME TIME

Maya flies by the same cops who let her pass in the teaser. The younger one checks his radar gun, gets ready to pursue.

OLDER COP

Nah, that's her again.
(points)
Look.

TIGHT ON: Maya's license plate. It reads "CRZY WMN."

OLDER COP (V.O.)

They say it's not a vanity plate.
Lady at DMV just gave it to her.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR - SAME TIME

Jillian is there, looking up at the sky. Ray walks up behind her and points out attractions.

RAY
Polaris... Cassiopeia... fried
dough...

JILLIAN
(surprised)
Ray. I thought you couldn't come.
Should you be here?

RAY
Not at all. Let's go.

They head deeper into the fair.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR - MOMENTS LATER

Jillian and Ray approach a high "TOWER OF TERROR"-type ride.

JILLIAN
This looks fun.

RAY'S POV: The top of the ride, which looks to be MILES UP.

I./E. VAN/EXT. BRONXVILLE HIGH - SAME TIME

The van drives through the sea of cars, looking for a spot.

JIMMY
She probably couldn't find a space.

They find Maya's car, up on the curb in Kenneth's flower bed. They park behind it. Jimmy and Ethan jump out.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(to JJ and Ethan)
One of you should run and stop her,
one should stay with the car. What
might be a good division of labor?

JJ looks at him. Hardee har har.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (TOWER OF TERROR RIDE - BOTTOM) - SAME TIME

Jillian and a petrified Ray are strapped into the ride.

JILLIAN
You're really nervous.

RAY
I'm not a big "heights" guy.

JILLIAN
I'll keep you safe.

Feeling the moment, Ray takes a big swing. What the hell -- he leans in to kiss Jillian. She pulls way back.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)
I kinda thought we were... friends.

RAY
(dying)
Do friends not do that at this school?

Jillian unfastens herself to exit the ride.

ANGLE ON: A HUGE GUY IN A VARSITY JACKET.

With two similarly beefy friends. They saw the whole thing.

ZANE
Jill?

JILLIAN
Zane.

RAY
(that's a name?)
Zane?

JILLIAN
It's not what it looks like.
(steps off ride)
He's my friend. Don't be mean.

Zane nods, "Of course." Then the second Jillian crosses off, he turns back to Ray, menacing. Ray turns to the ATTENDANT.

RAY
(frozen smile)
Up, please.

Ray is shot up into the air, screaming.

INT. FAMILY VAN - SAME TIME

JJ waits in the van. He hears someone approaching.

KENNETH (O.S.)

What gives? This isn't a parking space. Aww, my last blue flower!

JJ's ears perk up. He's not seen or heard Kenneth to this point. WHO IS THE MAN WITH THIS MELLIFLUOUS VOICE JJ WOULD SO LIKE TO HAVE AS HIS OWN? Kenneth appears in the door in a COLORFUL SHIRT, holding swag from the fair.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

I am at a fair! I've got to deal with this while holding a balloon?

(sees JJ)

Oh, no. I know whose kid you are.

JJ picks out words on his board. Kenneth is drawn in. He reads along, instinctively and comfortably.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

(reads board)

You. Sound. Cool.

(then)

"Sound?" That's what you notice?

I've got my carnival shirt on.

(off JJ's board)

"A job?" Are you hiring, Blind Side Junior?

JJ smiles at Kenneth. Son of a bitch, he's found his voice.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (TOWER OF TERROR RIDE) - SAME TIME

Ray drops for what seems like weeks.

RAY

(hating it)

Aaaaaaaaagh!

He lands and sees Zane, NOW WITH TEN MORE FOOTBALL PLAYERS.

RAY (CONT'D)

(to Attendant)

Fun. Again, please.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (TOWER OF TERROR RIDE) - ONE MINUTE LATER

Ray reaches the top, panting. He rifles off a text and hits "SEND." Then he sees something off-screen.

RAY

Oh, no.

RAY'S POV: The top of the FERRIS WHEEL next to his ride.
Arriving at the top and resting is Maya.

MAYA

Hello, dear.

Ray's ride plunges again. He screams.

INT. FAMILY VAN - SAME TIME

JJ "tests" out phrases on Kenneth. He types, Kenneth reads.

KENNETH

(off board)

No! I don't... want applesauce!

(to JJ)

Don't care for it myself.

(off board)

Stop... leaning on. My wheelchair.

(thinks)

What if it's more of a... Back
off, jackass! Do I look like a
mailbox to you?!

ON BOARD: JJ's red dot points to "YES." "BETTER."

Jimmy's cell beeps. Kenneth grabs it and shows it to JJ.

TIGHT ON: The screen. It reads: "FROM RAY. HELP. FAIR.
RIDE. FOOTBALL TEAM TRYING TO KILL."

KENNETH (CONT'D)

(off text)

This guy's in your family too? You
people are interesting!

JJ gets a concerned look. What can he do from here?

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (TOWER OF TERROR RIDE - TOP) - SAME TIME

Ray comes back to the top. Maya is there to meet him.

RAY

What are you going to do?

MAYA

Not sure yet. But it's me. It'll
probably be pret-ty embarrassing.

She shrugs, "Oh, well. What can you do?"

MAYA (CONT'D)

You know what's funny? I was coming to apologize for giving up on this place too fast.

RAY

No, I should apologize. For sneaking out, for all that nasty stuff I said... I don't know how you do it. You fight so hard, and you're right. You're my hero, Mom.

MAYA

(softens)

Well, that's nice. I feel like I used to be. But if I'm your hero, why do you question me constantly?

RAY

Because I also disagree with almost everything you do.

Maya laughs.

MAYA

Know what? I get that. And it's not because of how you think I am, or because of your brother. It's just plain-old, "twelve-year-old boy and his mommy" stuff.

(smiles)

It's normal.

Ray smiles. It's a nice moment between them. Then

His fucking ride PLUNGES again.

RAY

Aaaaaaagh! Who enjoys this?!!!

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (TOWER OF TERROR RIDE - BOTTOM) - SECONDS LATER

FIFTEEN GUYS now wait for Ray.

ZANE

Last time, kid!

Maya's ferris wheel seat, now on the move, passes by. She takes in the scene with the threatening football players.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (TOWER OF TERROR RIDE - TOP) - SECONDS LATER

Ray summits. Maya approaches on her ride without stopping.

MAYA
(spoiling for a fight)
What was that?

RAY
Nothing. This kid, I kissed his
girlfriend.

MAYA
And if you did I am sure you had a
perfectly good reason! Tough guy's
going to threaten my son?!
(shakes restraint bar)
Let me off of this thing!

She passes and heads down.

RAY
No, Mom, please! That's worse than
getting beaten up! Don't defend...
(hears self, loses steam)
Your child. Sure. That'll work.

KENNETH (OVER P.A.)
Your attention, please. I need all
students to please report to the
stage. Immediately.

Ray reacts. What's happening? This could fix everything.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (BOTTOM OF TOWER OF TERROR RIDE) - SAME TIME

Zane and his friends continue to stare up at Ray.

KENNETH (OVER P.A.)
Now, dammit! Get your asses over
here! Think I'm playing with you?

The group breaks up and heads for the stage.

EXT. SCHOOL FAIR (STAGE) - SAME TIME

JJ and Kenneth are on stage. JJ picks items off his board.
Kenneth reads as he does.

KENNETH
Is everybody here? Check, check!
The kid would like your attention.
(reads off board)
(MORE)

KENNETH (CONT'D)

I would like to introduce myself.
My name is JJ DiMeo... Student...
inspiration...
(inventing, gets into it)
The Wheeled Avenger! All right!
Butt-high lady-candy!

ON JJ'S BOARD: The red dot points to "LESS."

KENNETH (CONT'D)

Right, right.
(off board)
I am all those things. And also,
as of this moment, candidate for
your student council president!

The crowd goes bananas, unable to contain their glee at how open-minded and wonderful they are.

CROWD

J-J! J-J! J-J!

JJ shakes his head. These people...

KENNETH

Tell me about it.

ANGLE ON: Ray, in the crowd.

He smiles at JJ, grateful, then weaves his way through the sea of excited students. He passes Jillian, who stands a few feet behind Zane, who bro-s out with his football friends.

Ray taps Jillian on the shoulder. She turns. He kisses her. She smiles. He rushes off.

ANGLE ON: Maya, Jimmy and Ethan in the crowd. Dr. Weeks approaches. She shakes Maya's hand. Maya smiles. Beat.

MAYA

None of these rides have ramps.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. REGIONAL CENTER - THE NEXT DAY

The same facility where we met JJ's first aide, Jennifer. The DiMeos and Kenneth sit on couches in the waiting room. Ray has taken the last available seat, a WHEELCHAIR ACROSS THE ROOM. He's asleep with a textbook in his lap.

MAYA

They said we could hire who we want. So when we go in, sign the papers and don't talk too much.

Kenneth zips his lips.

JIMMY

And we should probably call this a "trial period." Just because you don't have any qualifications.

(re: Maya)

And she, you know, hates you.

An ATTENDANT enters and crosses to sleeping Ray.

ATTENDANT

It's lunchtime...

Out cold, Ray does not respond. The Attendant hesitates, unsure of what to do.

KENNETH

Well, what are you waiting for?
Feed the kid!

The Attendant nods and wheels Ray off.

INT. REGIONAL CENTER (DINING ROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

Still asleep, Ray is WHEELED IN and to a table where he's surrounded by twenty KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS and their AIDES.

RAY

(wakes, disoriented)

Uhh...

He STANDS from the WHEELCHAIR.

KID IN WHEELCHAIR

Look. That guy just stood up!

The residents and workers react, SHOCKED.

THE OTHERS	RAY
My God! / What just happened? / It's a miracle!	No, I'm not -- I was just --

As a mortified Ray tries to explain, Kenneth and the DiMeos, all enjoying watching Ray spin, look on from the hall.

MAYA
(to Kenneth, impressed)
Huh. Okay.

And we...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW