

(Outside ALISON's house. JEREMY is dressed as a devil, in a pretty fantastic homemade costume – a red hoodie, with red horns attached to the hood, which is currently down, and flames painted on his jeans. He has fat black lines drawn on his face with make-up – maybe they radiate out from his eyes – and they make him look sad and scary. He paces. ALISON comes out as a weird princess. She looks pretty great, but she's not transformed like JEREMY is.)

ALISON
Wow!

JEREMY
You too.

ALISON
Put your hood up. *(he obliges)* That is a really cool costume.

JEREMY
Thanks. Yours, too.

ALISON
This is dumb. I mean, I look pretty good? But the costume's kind of obvious. Yours is awesome.

JEREMY
Had to do something while I wasn't writing that paper.

ALISON
What'd your dad say about that? Did he – You want to walk? *(JEREMY nods; she yells back into her house)* MOM, JEREMY AND I ARE LEAVING, I'LL BE HOME BY 11:30, WE'RE AT CONSTANCE YARROW'S HOUSE ON OAKDALE. *(she returns)* Okay. So what'd he say?

JEREMY
He hasn't said anything.

ALISON
You didn't tell him? *(JEREMY shakes his head no)* I thought you had to write it before you could come tonight. *(JEREMY is silent)* Oh, my GOD, you told him you wrote it when you didn't?!

JEREMY
Yes.

ALISON
Jeremy! That is... *(she shakes her head as they walk)* Didn't Mrs. Reardon call him or anything?

JEREMY
I don't know. I don't think they call your parents if you get a bad grade in middle school.

ALISON
You didn't get a bad grade, Jeremy, you got a zero.

JEREMY
Right, thanks, I forgot...

ALISON
Wow. (*a breath*) Let's just have fun at a party. They have a huge house.

JEREMY
Yeah, I know.

ALISON
What, have you been there?

JEREMY
No, I just know where she lives, take a pill.

ALISON
You take a pill.

JEREMY
No, thank you.

ALISON
Fine. No pills for us. Ha-rumph.

JEREMY
You're crazy.

ALISON
Yep! Batshit Bonkers from Crazytown, that's me! The little lady who used to set the ends of her own hair on fire before yanking it out!

JEREMY
Those were good times.

ALISON
They were. We were so innocent then. (*they just walk for a bit*) I like the fire paint you did on your jeans. You must've spent a lot of allowance on paint.

JEREMY
Actually, we had this stuff left over from last year, so.

ALISON
Firepants. And red horns. (*she laughs to herself*) I told you my jeans story, right? From last year? (*JEREMY shakes his head no*) OH!!! Oh, my God, so, okay, so my mom, last year, we were shopping for clothes, and I'm trying on jeans. And this one pair of jeans looked really good. And I come out of the dressing room, and my Mom and I are in total agreement, and they're not too expensive, and we're all set to buy these jeans when I get my period. Like, my first period. Ever. Of my life.

JEREMY
Got it.

ALISON

And it's horrible, but, ya know, at least we were going to buy the jeans! And it's gross, and I'm crying, like, really snotty crying, because – this will never happen to you, but just so you know? Getting your period in the dressing room at Kohl's is about the most humiliating thing that can happen to a person.

JEREMY

Okay.

ALISON

And my mom, my MOM, starts CLAPPING AND LAUGHING, Jeremy!

JEREMY

No way.

ALISON

She does! And then she starts asking around for a maxi pad, just, you know, ASKING TOTAL STRANGERS. She asks literally every woman within earshot for a MAXI PAD for her LITTLE GIRL WHO IS RIGHT NOW GETTING HER FIRST PERIOD IN DRESSING ROOM SIX!

JEREMY

Oh, my God.

ALISON

At Kohl's!! I don't think I've ever cried that much in my life. And she didn't understand why I was furious, which just – Oh! And then when she was telling my father about it, I was up in my room, so angry, and from my room I actually heard her say, "She's going through a phase, that's all." A PHASE?! You broadcast my menstruation to the entire population of a discount department store, you BITCH!

(They both laaaaaaaaugh!)

JEREMY

Oh, my God. That SUCKS. It's totally gross but it sucks.

ALISON

Like, there has never been a suckier moment in my life so far than that one.

JEREMY

Yeah.

(They walk, laugh, settle into not laughing anymore.)

ALISON

I guess it's...I mean, it's not on the same level or anything, as what your –

JEREMY

(stopping short) Don't.

ALISON

I'm sorry.

JEREMY

Don't try to...relate, or whatever! Okay? God!

ALISON

I thought we were, ya know...on the same page for half a second!

JEREMY

We were until you tried to get all inside my head about it! Don't fucking do that!

ALISON

Okay! *(she starts to walk, stops, turns back to him)* I don't like this, you know. I don't like that you get to decide when we get to be funny and when we have to be serious and what we can and can't talk about. It's really crappy for me.

JEREMY

It's really crappy for YOU?!

ALISON

It's really crappy for me, TOO! Is what I meant! Your thing affects people!

JEREMY

I'm sorry!

ALISON

Don't say you're sorry! Just...God, just let me know when I'm allowed to breathe around you again, I look forward to the day, is all. Jeez.

(they stand there, not looking at each other, a princess and a devil)

JEREMY

You still want to go?

ALISON

No. But I'm gonna. Because I have to see people see you in that costume.

JEREMY

Okay. Thanks.

ALISON

(still mad) You're welcome.

JEREMY

That's nice of you.

ALISON

(still mad) You're welcome. Come on.

(Underwater. BONITA and a SHARK. The SHARK speaks like velvet and never stops circling BONITA, examining her from every angle.)

SHARK

You do, though.

BONITA

I do?

SHARK

Oh, yes. What are you called, anyway?

BONITA

Bonita.

SHARK

I have never heard of you before, I haven't encountered your...kind. What is a Bonita?

BONITA

No, no, Bonita is my name, not what I am. It's who I am. Like, what does your...school call you? Do sharks swim in schools?

SHARK

We have no need to self-identify. We merely are.

BONITA

Well, that must come in handy. That kind of confidence.

SHARK

I suppose.

BONITA

Anyway, like you are a shark, I am a human being. A person? (*SHARK has increased interest, though it does not know why*) Have you tried the plankton? It's super delicious.

SHARK

I've had plankton in my day. It does not quite satisfy me. Not enough bite in the bite to make me feel like I'm really eating, know what I mean...Bonita?

BONITA

I, um, okay, yes, I can kind of, um, take your meaning. I guess you feel the same way about krill?

SHARK

I do.

BONITA

Oh, well.

SHARK

I don't mind. Plenty of fish in the sea.

BONITA

Boy, are there. I didn't know just how many until I came here.

SHARK

And how do you find it, Bonita?

BONITA

Interesting, really interesting. It's so...I don't know. Maybe I was thinking it would be simple, somehow? Like, no offense or anything, but there are limited parameters of thought going on, I figured. Swim. Lay eggs, protect them. Eat. (*SHARK smiles at that one, whether or not BONITA notices*) You know: Simple, straightforward. Because where I come from, there were a lot of things to think about, there was a lot of, "Dinner tonight, I'll make the halibut, I'm good with the halibut – Hey, maybe I could teach a cooking class or something, at the Community Center or wherever, teach a cooking class, Christ, who am I kidding?, I didn't even finish college, who's going to hire me to – I don't know how to teach anyway, I can't do that, how would I do that? Didn't I have promise at some point? Some kind of – Oh, God, book club, I have to finish that goddamn book, so I can go there and smile and drink a glass of wine, three glasses, four, looking around at all the smilers, plastic Grace with her perfect hair and her phony eyes, all of us smiling, who knows what we're thinking, what's behind our eyes through the glasses of Chardonnay, I hate them so much, smug phonies, I hate being there, it just shows who I am, it exposes me, a housewife, no job, just a bunch of incomplete credits, why do they put up with me?, but it gets me out of the house. No, focus: Jeremy, Christmas, he wants a skateboard, can we afford a skateboard?, I'll ask Henry, he'll know, Henry knows everything. Good thing he can't cook or he wouldn't need me at all, he's so kind, what the hell is he doing with me, am I ever going to mop this floor? I'm worthless, I can't even keep the house clean, but every time I get the mop, take the bucket to the tub, water rushing into it, pouring, rushing in like surf, and I can't, I get dizzy from it, because it's so unhappy and enticing and delicious, somehow, I don't want to like it, the water, the water pouring in, I like it so much but I can't, I can't, it's nauseating and I want it, I CAN'T WANT IT, STOP IT, I JUST WANT TO WANT TO LOVE MY HUSBAND AND MY SON AND MY LIFE, WHY WOULD I THINK TEACHING A FUCKING CLASS WOULD HELP? Jesus, how can it only be 11am?"

(A big breath for BONITA; does she cry? Maybe, maybe not. SHARK is fascinated by her.)

BONITA (cont.)

So there's not so much of that kind of thing. Down here. Right?

SHARK

You are really something, aren't you?

BONITA

I don't know. I don't know what I –

(Swiftly and suddenly, the SHARK bites off her arm, the one not clutching the map. Blood trails, swirls in the water. BONITA, too shocked to scream, stares at the SHARK as it swims away.)

SHARK

(calling back) Delicious, Bonita. You are...

(School. HENRY and MRS. REARDON)

HENRY

He didn't tell me what the paper had to be about. I would have put a stop to it.

MRS. REARDON

He failed one assignment. That's all.

HENRY

That's what you have to say to me?

MRS. REARDON

I don't know what you want to hear, he was assigned work along with the rest of the class, he failed to complete it, he got a zero for it. He will live. But he's still responsible for the grade.

HENRY

I – Are you kidding? The boy's mother drowned herself in the ocean, jumped off a pier in front of him, and you wonder why he might have some trouble writing a paper about the tides?

MRS. REARDON

I am trying to do my job, as I see it.

HENRY

With a, a, a stupid assignment like that one?! You have to be out of your fucking mind, lady!

MRS. REARDON

I think we're done here if you're going to use language like that. You're welcome to talk with his counselor if you like.

HENRY

Who do you think told me about the paper? *(stopping her from leaving)* What is the matter with you?!

MRS. REARDON

Don't touch me. *(he releases her)* Good-bye. *(she leaves)*

HENRY

(calling after her) What is the matter with you?!

(Therapy.)

JEREMY

I said I'm sorry.

HENRY

You lied to me! I don't know why you think "I'm sorry" would cut it!

DOCTOR LAING

Look, Mrs. Reardon is right. A zero on a seventh grade paper? Under these circumstances? You guys have bigger things to deal with. *(pause; HENRY and JEREMY look at each other)* You know you get it, Henry. And you know you screwed up, big time, right, Jeremy?

JEREMY

...Yeah.

DOCTOR LAING

So. Maybe this teacher's good for you. It can't all be softhearted sympathy, even if it should be.

(they nod; she writes)

JEREMY

What are you writing?

DOCTOR LAING

Stuff. *(she finishes getting her notes in order; then)* So, guys, let's try this one on for size. How would you say you're different now? Since what happened.

(pause; HENRY and JEREMY look at each other)

HENRY

Um...I'm trying to learn how to play chess. And I'd like Jeremy to play, but it's okay that he doesn't want to. *(looking at JEREMY)* I'll keep asking until you say yes. When you want to.

JEREMY

Are you serious?

HENRY

Yeah.

JEREMY

I told you I don't want to play.

HENRY

I know.

JEREMY

Why can't you hear me?

HENRY

I know what you said. Maybe you'll change your mind.

JEREMY
I'M NOT GOING TO CHANGE MY MIND! LISTEN TO ME!

HENRY
Be quiet.

JEREMY
I'LL BE QUIET WHEN YOU STOP BUGGING ME! I TOLD YOU I WON'T PLAY!

HENRY
I said be quiet.

JEREMY
NO! WHY DOESN'T ANYONE LISTEN TO ME? IT'S NOT A PHASE!

HENRY
JEREMY.

DOCTOR LAING
Why is it important to you, Henry? Why do you play?

JEREMY
To remember her, so her death won't be in vain, because she bought the chess set and he misses her and wants to hold onto her. OF COURSE. Stop acting like it's so fucking mysterious!

HENRY
Jeremy –

JEREMY
He misses her! We both miss her! What else do you want to hear?

DOCTOR LAING
What else do you want to tell me?

JEREMY
Nothing! We're sad, we're so fucking sad, all the time, and it doesn't feel like we're ever not going to be sad again! That's it!

DOCTOR LAING
Henry? Is that it for you?

(The smallest nod from HENRY. DOCTOR LAING takes off her glasses. Pours herself a glass of water and drinks as the room begins to breathe again.)

DOCTOR LAING
Okay. Thank you. Thank you both.

(DOCTOR LAING sips.)