
INT. SCHOOL/AUDITORIUM - DAY

A college counselor, MR. MACMADEN, is on the podium, making a heated and argumentative speech to an audience of 150 students.

The students are all dressed in school uniforms. It is clear by the atmosphere that this is an exclusive prep school.

MR. MACMADEN
(Punching chest)
Heart.

He looks around at his audience with a firm expression.

MR. MACMADEN (CONT'D)
I don't know how many times I have to repeat this. The be all and end all is not a 4.0 G.P.A. or perfect SAT scores. Sure, high statistics help, but if you're aiming for the top, the very best, that's only a beginning. Grades are prerequisites. Extracurricular activities, internships, awards and honors- great appendices. But the key, secret ingredient is in the heart of the matter, which is just that.
(Again punching chest)
Heart.

Mr. MacMaden surveys his audience once more with a look of disapproval.

Most students are impervious to this passionate speech. They are either dozing or absorbed in their world of rumor and gossip.

A girl is sitting alone in the very front row, avidly listening and note-taking. This is GRETCHEN MCRAE, more or less your typical teenage geek with unkempt hair and unattractive glasses.

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However, she carries an atmosphere of reservedness, mystery and solitude similar to that of an Egyptian priestess. There is a certain expertise about the way she situates herself in the front row of the auditorium which attests to years of practice. Her first impression is one of inaccessibility and usually wears the expression 'ready to kill for college admission.' There is no trace of joy or laughter in her pale, white face.

GRETCHEN (V. O.)

That's me, in the front row.

MR. MACMADEN

By that I mean passion. Passion for what you love. That ineffable quality in your personal statement that can tell those admissions officers that you are a passionate person who can make a difference. Success, is made of passion. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, is made of passion.

Mr. MacMaden continues, ignoring the unresponsive audience.

MR. MACMADEN (CONT' D)

Riding the spirit, I want every one of you to write and submit your personal statements by Thursday. That's the two page essay about yourself that can be found in the last page of the common application.

The BELL RINGS. Students get fidgety in their seats. Some get up to leave.

MR. MACMADEN (CONT' D)

(Hurriedly)

Last words to you children-don't forget that this is your last semester! Score-wise, an impressive final semester could save your appalling GPA while a shockingly low one could botch three years of bone-cutting endeavor.

Most of the auditorium has emptied out. Gretchen remains in her seat, organizing her notes.

DAYDREAM - GRETCHEN GETS ALL THE ATTENTION

Gretchen is sitting in the middle of the auditorium when somebody shouts out.

SOMEBODY

Hey everybody. Gretchen has gotten
into Harvard!

A group of students flock to Gretchen. Gretchen is blushing with a ridiculously smug expression.

SOMEBODY (CONT' D)

What was the secret of your
success?

Gretchen looks up at somebody like those actresses in thirties movies look up to their lovers in dramatic situations.

GRETCHEN

(Punching her chest)

It was heart.

A wad of paper approaches her head from out of nowhere and successfully strikes its mark.

END OF DAYDREAM

Gretchen looks up to see Mr. MacMaden looking down at her with a funny look on his face. He takes a good look at her and walks away.

MR. MACMADEN

(Leaving the
auditorium)

Wake up, McRae!

As she watches Mr. MacMaden leave, Gretchen straightens herself up and finishes her notes.

GRETCHEN (V. O.)

I am the epitome, embodiment,
essence, ideal, model,
quintessence, representation, of
rationality.

INT. SCHOOL/CLASSROOM - DAY

It is English Literature class. The teacher, MR. WILLIAMS, is discussing T.S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

MR. WILLIAMS
(Engrossed in his
reading)
"Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which
a minute will reverse."

Gretchen is staring off into the distance, almost as if in a trance.

MR. WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Gretchen?

Gretchen checks back to reality.

GRETCHEN
Yes?

MR. WILLIAMS
What do you suppose these lines
mean?

Gretchen immerses herself in thought. Then, as if she has received some divine revelation, she blurts out.

GRETCHEN
Those immortal lines of Eliot
signify that nothing we humans, or
particularly, intellectuals, do
will have any consequence upon the
order of the universe. In other
words, nothing matters.

A look of slight annoyance passes Mr. Williams' face as if he was robbed of his words.

MR. WILLIAMS
Exactly. That was what I was going
to say. Thank you for that lengthy
explanation.

Gretchen looks around the classroom. No one seems to be listening. A boy next to her is drawing obscene figures on his poetry book.

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A girl in front of her, MASCARA GIRL is most carefully applying her mascara. Gretchen looks down in disgust.

DAYDREAM - DISTURBING THE UNIVERSE

Gretchen jumps out of her seat indignantly. She takes the boy's obscene drawings away from him and rips it up. She also takes away the girl's mascara and throws it on the ground.

GRETCHEN

Listen, people! Listen to the poem. Listen to truth. Without truth, we are nothing.

Gretchen is standing with an expression of victory.

Just then, the mascara girl retorts.

MASCARA GIRL

(Sneering)

You don't dare disturb the universe.

END OF DAYDREAM

The boy has finished his first and started on a second picture. Mascara girl has finished her job and now looks like the Bride of Chucky.

GRETCHEN (V. O.)

It is infuriating how these revolutionary realizations of truth can dare to come...

Gretchen looks around her.

GRETCHEN (V. O.) (CONT' D)

... seated between psycho-perv and drag queen.

Starts drawing a lewd object on her own book.

GRETCHEN (V. O.) (CONT' D)

Makes one wonder... does it ever matter?

INT. DORMITORY/ROOM - NIGHT

Gretchen is hunched up in front of the computer. She is reading the online version of the "New York Times".

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Her roommates are incessantly chatting. First roommate is RACHEL CORRIGAN. She has an anchorwoman feel about her. She looks mature for her age, but her appearance belies her empty inner world. Overall, long and thin.

Second roommate is KATHY STEINBERG. looks somewhat Spanish. She is short and stocky and literally loud. However, her idiosyncratic outer appearance belies her impressive inner world.

Their subject is school life in general, favorite subject, boys. However, neither of these girls are as thoughtless as they appear. Both are aiming at getting into a top college, and thus are cautious of each other.

Rachel enters the room after having taken a phone call.

RACHEL

(storming in)

Can you believe the nerve of that bastard?

KATHY

(uninterested)

Why? What ever happened to our Rachel today?

RACHEL

He called me again.

KATHY

So?

RACHEL

So? You kidding me? Do I have to remind you just how over we were?

KATHY

He can still call you, can't he?

RACHEL

Oh my god. Where have you been for the last like million years of break-up etiquette?

KATHY

Here, listening to you.

RACHEL

(ignoring her)

I mean, since when has it been okay to call your ex and whine about your crummy day? Why do I meet all the wrong men?

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
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