

# the Prankster

An Original Screenplay

By

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EXT. SCHOOLYARD -- DAWN

Rosy-fingered dawn breaks over a deserted schoolyard. The SOUND of a motor precedes a battered Valiant convertible, which pulls up next to a building. Four shadowy figures emerge.

The figures dump magazines into a trash can, then scatter. Moments later, a Custodian wheels by his cleaning cart. He empties the trash, saves the magazines.

EXT. MAINTENANCE SHED -- DAWN

A door marked "Custodian" is partially open, the cleaning cart parked outside. Inside the Custodian peruses a girlie magazine. A shadowy figure darts by the cart, silently snatching a ring of keys in transit.

EXT. AUDITORIUM -- DAWN

Adept fingers hold up the key ring, single out one, insert it into the gym door. Presto, it opens.

INT. AUDITORIUM PRESS BOX -- DAWN

Working quickly by flashlight, one figure rewires a mixing board, another loads a video projector. The third pries the covers off a pair of speakers, the fourth rigs a furled banner.

EXT. MAINTENANCE SHED -- DAWN

The Custodian, still checking out his newfound treasure.

CUSTODIAN

Damn.

A figure steals up to his cart, rehangs the keys, darts off.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- DAY

Brightly lit, buzzing with an assembly. On stage, preppie BRAD BURRIS orates.

BRAD

As we enter Spring semester, I want  
to extend my heartiest  
congratulations to our own Dean  
Pecarino for making the prestigious  
Dean's List of Who's Who in  
American high schools.

Brad turns to salute the Dean behind him.

A quartet of BOYS seated in a corner react. One sticks a finger in his mouth; another shakes his fist in front of his crotch; a third forms an exaggerated pucker with his lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOURTH BOY

Kiss-ass!

BRAD

Thank you, thanks a lot. Now let's hear it for the Condors, winners of the North Coast Championship!

A quintet of CHEERLEADERS RISE UP up through floor on a moveable platform accompanied by MUSIC and smoke. A brace of Lettermen rise, pump their fists, emit animal noises. The Cheerleaders perform a sexy number, driving the boys wild.

CHEERLEADERS

Go Condors!

Brad smiles unctuously, signals for quiet.

BRAD

All right, now let's give it up for our all-league quarterback, headed for UCLA, Eric Hood!

CHEERLEADERS

Go Eric!

ERIC HOOD, a handsome brown-haired boy, stands up reluctantly, shyly acknowledges the cheers.

BRAD

Thanks, thanks again. It is now my pleasure to turn things over to our commander in chief, Dean Joe Pecarino. Dean, you da man!

Dean JOE PECARINO swaggers up to the microphone amid cheers and jeers, shaking Brad's hand vigorously on the way.

DEAN

Thanks Brad. This will be the last semester for many of you - namely you seniors.

APPLAUSE and SHOUTS of "Seniors rule!"

DEAN (CONT'D)

Okay, settle down.

(pauses)

One of the great traditions we have here at Tres Rios is the Outstanding Teenagers of America Scholarship, given annually to an outstanding senior.

Brad Burriss's ears perk up. The four boys in the corner pucker their lips, make KISSING sounds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEAN (CONT'D)

The deadline is just a week away.  
I encourage all interested parties  
to apply forthwith. I have one  
final announcement.

The Dean hitches up his pants, adopting a tough-guy stance.

DEAN (CONT'D)

For too long now some of you,  
identities unknown, have taken it  
upon yourself to instigate various  
incidents. A mockery has been made  
of teachers and traditions.

The Dean withdraws a scrap of paper from his shirt pocket.  
The assembly falls silent.

DEAN (CONT'D)

The perpetrators claim their  
actions do no harm, that their  
intention is to "awaken slumbering  
spirits through random acts of  
chaos." Well, whoever you are,  
listen closely. This is not a  
warning, but a fact.

One of the boys in the corner withdraws a remote control from  
his pocket, poises it behind the shoulders of the two boys in  
front of him.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Misbehavior and disorder will not  
be tolerated at Tres Rios. I will  
find out who you are and you will  
be punished, severely. You will  
learn -

The boys in front part shoulders. A CRACKLING sound is heard  
over the P.A.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(Donald Duck-like)  
- dat nobody makhes a foohl of  
dith adminithtwayshun- Hey, qwaiht  
a minuht-

The assembly bursts into laughter.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Dith ithn't funny. Sthop laffing.  
Sthop it now!

The Dean steps back from the microphone.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Can you hear me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The four boys in the corner, and others, yell back.

STUDENTS

Nooo!!

The Dean cautiously approaches the microphone, taps it.

DEAN

Can you hear me now?  
 (feedback - it's okay)  
 All right, settle down. Now where  
 was I? Oh yes. Nobody makes a  
 fool of this administration. I am  
 in full control of the situation.

Just then the Dean notices a red button by the lectern. A  
 handwritten notice is posted under: "DO NOT PUSH THIS  
 BUTTON!" The Dean pushes it, causing -

- the PA speakers blow off their covers, shooting sparks like  
 roman candles. Loud HIP HOP MUSIC blasts as the lights dim  
 and a sultry MUSIC VIDEO appears on the wall behind the Dean.  
 A huge vertical banner unfurls: "LET'S PARTY!"

The once lethargic assembly is suddenly energized - students  
 start dancing everywhere. The Dean regards this in horror.

DEAN (CONT'D)

We don't allow that kind of music  
 here. Stop this nonsense - stop it  
 now!

The students are oblivious. In desperation, the Dean turns,  
 spots a fire alarm switch, pulls it. The DRONE of the alarm  
 sends the students out the doors, dancing as they go. Alone  
 on the platform, The Dean does a slow burn.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(duck voice)  
 Pranksters...

EXT. POOL GRANDSTAND -- DAY

Four boys repose on a grandstand near the school pool: VISH,  
 short, dark, East Indian, engrossed in a chess game with OWL,  
 lanky, coke-bottle glasses, rasta 'do, badges & medals;  
 LARRY FASCO, athletic, baseball cap, flipping through a stack  
 of cards; and CHRIS KARAS, Mediterranean features, killer  
 eyes.

LARRY

Did you know the Giants have a guy  
 named Dick Hertz? Check it out.

Larry hands Chris a card. Just then A SPLASH. All eyes turn  
 toward the pool. Larry grabs Owl's mini-cam, zooms in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROVING ZOOM LENS POV of the girl's swim team, about to begin practice. A dozen young women saunter about in blue one-piece bathing suits, dive into the water.

One particularly lovely girl with flowing blonde hair and stunning full breasts reaches her hands over her head to stretch. Chris and Larry gaze hungrily from afar.

LARRY (CONT'D)  
Tiffany Fowler, a legend in her own mind.

CHRIS  
Those can't be real.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Wouldn't you to love know?

Startled, the boys turn, see SAGE RYAN, a bizarrely-dressed girl, a year or two younger than them.

CHRIS  
Excuse me?

SAGE  
Let's face it, Tiffany's got the hottest bod around. No wonder she's the most popular girl in school.

Chris and Larry stare at each other.

LARRY  
Who is this person?

OWL  
My cousin - step.

EXT. CAMPUS -- DAY

The Pranksters huddle together while Sage stands nearby, just out of earshot.

OWL  
Her name is Sage. Her family just moved here. They're staying at my house.

VISH  
She saw us working on the voice filter.

LARRY  
Owl, that's a breach of security!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OWL  
 Sorry. She won't rat. She thinks  
 what we do is cool. In fact, she  
 wants to be a Prankster.

LARRY  
 She wants to be a Prankster?

OWL  
 Yeah.

CHRIS  
 We've never had a girl before.

LARRY  
 Get serious. Last thing we need is  
 some amateur blowing our cover.

CHRIS  
 She already could blow it.

OWL  
 She used to go to some arts  
 academy. Maybe there's a way she  
 can, you know, help.

VISH  
 From the looks of her she is no  
 ordinary girl.

They peer at Sage. Vish is right.

EXT. QUAD -- DAY

Sage and the Pranksters stride across a grassy quad.

CHRIS  
 First thing you gotta realize is  
 that being a Prankster is not just  
 about pulling jokes.

OWL  
 It's a state of mind.

LARRY  
 A way of life.

SAGE  
 I can dig that.

LARRY  
 Any moron can pull a joke. The  
 dumbshit Lettermen do all the time -  
 you know, pantsing freshmen, giving  
 guys wedgies, swirlies-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAGE

That stuff is reptilian.

CHRIS

Precisely. It victimizes the innocent and, what's worse, lacks imagination. The whole point of being a Prankster is to nail someone who deserves it, and do it with panache. Gentlemen, our motto.

The Pranksters form a circle and chant.

PRANKSTERS

Death to boredom and oppression!  
Down with pretension and posers!  
Up with laughter and chaos.

LARRY

And never, ever, suck up.

PRANKSTERS

Amen.

The Pranksters reach hands into the circle as if to clasp, then withdraw them and thumb noses at each other.

SAGE

Tres cool.

LARRY

Let me ask you something. Why do you want to hang with us?

SAGE

Because you guys are the only people in this school who aren't brain-dead.

A bell RINGS.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Chris and Larry walking toward class.

LARRY

If you ask me, she's weird.

CHRIS

That's what people say about us.

LARRY

I know. But she's really weird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Who cares? We're going graduate soon.

LARRY

So?

CHRIS

Maybe it's time to pass the torch. I mean - we can't be pranksters forever.

LARRY

What else are we supposed to do?

CHRIS

I don't know. There's gotta be more to life. Ever think about what's next?

LARRY

You mean working like dogs and being miserable the rest of our lives?

CHRIS

Exactly.

LARRY

I try not to.

Just then the boys are passed by a phalanx of jocks and cheerleaders. They turn to look.

Eric Hood, the handsome quarterback, walks arm in arm with MARIAH RIVERA, a pretty brunette. Mariah shoots a glance back in Chris's direction. He looks after her longingly. Larry notices.

LARRY (CONT'D)

In your dreams, pal.

EXT. BURRIS MANOR -- DAY

Chris pulls up on a Vespa. He unstraps a bag, heads to the front door, rings the bell. Brad Burris answers.

CHRIS

Got your delivery.

BRAD

Dad, the burger guy is here.

A moment later DR. BURRIS appears, an older version of Brad, sporting a medical ID tag, smoking a pipe.

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CONTINUED:

DR. BURRIS  
Yes son, how much?

CHRIS  
Nineteen seventy-five, Dr .Burris.

Dr. Burris fishes a bill out of his wallet, hands it to Chris.

DR. BURRIS  
Here's a twenty. Keep the change.

CHRIS  
Thanks.

DR. BURRIS  
Say, aren't you in Bradley's class?

BRAD  
Yeah, Dad, this is Chris Karas.

DR. BURRIS  
Ah, the A student. Seems you're the only boy in school with grades as good as Bradley's.

CHRIS  
I study a lot.

DR. BURRIS  
Bradley's grades could be even better if he wasn't Student Body President. But you have to be more than a bookworm to get into Yale. Right Bradley?

BRAD  
Yes sir.

DR. BURRIS  
I remember my school days. Track Club, Thespians, Hamlet.  
(pompous)  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;  
And this above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst be false to any man.

CHRIS  
How well you say those lines, Dr. Burris.

DR. BURRIS  
Why thank you. I've always had a flair for drama.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHRIS

Gotta go. By the way, I have a favorite quote from Hamlet.

DR. BURRIS

Really? What's that, son?

CHRIS

O thou pernicious knave, how one may smile and smile, and be a villain.

Chris salutes, turns and moves off. HOLD on Brad and Dr. Burris, whose smile fades palpably.

EXT. BURGER CITY -- DAY

A drive-in, not just any drive-in, this is Burger City, an eclectic-eccentric eatery that is part restaurant and part Greek festival.

INT. BURGER CITY -- DAY

Streamers, Christmas tree lights and pinball machines complement whimsically mismatched tables and chairs. Posters of Greek icons - Melina Mercouri, Mike Dukakis, Anthony Quinn as Zorba - are prominently displayed.

Older gents play backgammon, sip espresso; hipsters with purple hair do the same. Cops on dinner break nosh luscious burgers; BAZOUKI MUSIC blares from a classic Wurlitzer.

Cleaning a table glumly is Chris. His UNCLE NICK sits nearby, inserting fortunes into cookies, laughing with customers, singing with the music. Nick has a weathered, mustachioed face that radiates warmth and wisdom. He notes Chris's mood.

NICK

No like-a the music? Change it, change it.

CHRIS

That's okay Uncle Nick.

Chris continues with his work. Nick goes to the jukebox, punches on a Motown classic, dances his way back to Chris.

NICK

What's the matter, boss? You don't look so good.

CHRIS

It's - nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICK

This nothing, she is a woman, yes?  
I can tell.

CHRIS

No, Uncle Nick. I wish.

NICK

Your cousin Dora can meet you some  
nice Greek girls-

CHRIS

No, please. I just, uh, can I ask  
you something?

NICK

Can you ask your uncle something?  
Anything. Everything. Come.

CHRIS

Did you ever get the feeling that  
something was missing in your life,  
but you couldn't figure out what?

NICK

This world is a life sentence.  
Zorba said that. You feel like  
Zorba now, yes?

Chris thinks it over, nods. Nick goes to the cash register,  
pulls out a twenty, hands it to Chris.

NICK (CONT'D)

Not so busy tonight. Go home,  
relax.

Chris is reluctant, but Nick claps him on the shoulder,  
steers him out with a flick of the jaw.

NICK (CONT'D)

Old Greek saying - keep your eyes  
on the stars. The clouds come and  
go, but the stars, they're always  
there.

Nick winks; Chris manages a half-smile.

EXT. KARAS HOUSE -- NIGHT

A typical middle class tract house. Chris parks his Vespa  
next to a large truck in the driveway with lettered doors:  
"Karas Paving & Concrete - Paradise Is a Parking Lot."

INT. KARAS HOUSE -- NIGHT

A spartan living room, with a faded portrait of a beautiful  
dark-haired woman on the wall.

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CONTINUED:

Sitting in a recliner reading the sports page is Chris's father, STAVROS. Balding, stubbly, his manner is serious, almost harsh.

Chris tries to pass through unnoticed. No luck.

STAVROS  
Hey, what are you doing home?

CHRIS  
Got off early.

STAVROS  
How you going to make money leaving early?

CHRIS  
Uncle Nick paid me.

STAVROS  
He paid you for not working? Hah, his head is in the stars, yes? What if he gets into trouble, who will help him then?

Chris nods - he's heard it before. He continues out of the room.

CHRIS  
(to self)  
And how was my day? Simply marvelous. Thanks for asking.

INT. CHRIS'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Chris descends stairs into his basement sanctuary, the walls adorned with posters: J-Lo, Robin Williams, Steve Nash, the temples of Angkor Wat.

He empties books, binder, and folders from his bulging backpack, sits at a desk. He deliberates, cracks open a novel - 45 Minutes to Nowhere. His desk clock reads "8:05."

DISSOLVE TO:

The clock, now at "11:47." Chris is hard at work, engrossed in a lengthy chemistry problem. He blinks his eyes to stay awake.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM -- DAY

The periodic table is seen as students file in, Chris, Vish, and Owl among them. Letterman Eric Hood looks around, takes a seat next to Chris.

ERIC  
Hey, what up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Not much.

ERIC

Did you figure out that homework  
last night?

Chris pulls a folded pair of papers from his book and hands them to Eric, who takes them, looks them over, begins to copy hurriedly. This has the look of a daily ritual.

Meanwhile, an oblivious teacher, MR. THOMAS, checks roll.

MR. THOMAS

I don't remember a Hugh Mungus in  
this class...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURTS -- DAY

Dressed in blue shorts and white tee-shirts, Chris, Larry, Vish, and Owl are off shooting hoops by themselves.

Larry takes the ball, dribbles down the lane, then backs off, launches a hook shot that swishes in.

LARRY

Bread and butter.

Just then Sage wanders over, garbed in super-baggy plaid shorts.

SAGE

Greetings, earthlings.

LARRY

You again?

CHRIS

Don't mind him.  
(tosses her the ball)  
Show us what you got.

Sage takes an awkward two-handed jump shot - nothing but air.

Chris retrieves the ball, dribbles intently as Larry guards him. Larry steals the ball, dribbles to the top of the key, pops a jumper - swish.

LARRY

And the crowd goes wild.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, you wankers want to play a  
game?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Pranksters turn to see a quartet of Lettermen, led by a hulking specimen named BLOTTO and his henchman, PIZZA FACE. Watching the proceedings is Dean Pecarino.

DEAN

Yeah Fasco, why don't you see what you can do against some real competition?

LARRY

(to self)

Our luck to have P.E. the one period the Dean teaches.

(to Letterman)

What are the teams, Blotto?

BLOTTO

Heroes versus zeros. First one to ten.

LARRY

You're on.

The Pranksters look at Larry aghast.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Come on, let's kick their butt.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - SERIES OF SHOTS

The Pranksters vs. the Letterman, watched by the Dean and Sage. The Pranksters are badly outmanned, but Chris deftly gets the ball to Larry who plays out of his mind - jumpers, hooks, reverse layups - they all go down. The Lettermen get pissed off.

PIZZA FACE

We're getting slammed.

BLOTTO

Time to steam roll these bozos.

Now the game turns rough, as the Letterman muscle the Pranksters. Owl hits the deck hard.

SAGE

Hey, that was a foul.

DEAN

He ran into a screen - just part of the game.

The Lettermen dominate through force - they can lay-ups, put back rebounds, hit jumpers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally, Owl grabs a rebound, passes to Larry, who drives the lane, feints, tosses up a prayer. It goes down, as does he, the recipient of a hard foul.

LARRY

9-9, our ball. Next basket wins.

Chris takes the ball, passes to Vish just before getting decked. Vish dishes to Larry, gets clobbered as well. Larry dribbles toward the lane, cuts behind a screen by Owl, launches his patented hook shot. It CLANKS off the back rim.

A Letterman skies for the rebound, passes it out to a teammate who shoots a long jumper - swish, it's over.

BLOTTO

10-9, we win, chumps.

PIZZA FACE

(in Larry's face)

And the crowd goes wild!

LARRY

Up yours, Pizza Face.

BLOTTO

Hey, what's your problem?

LARRY

I don't have a problem. What's your problem?

BLOTTO

Just because you lost you don't have to cry about it. You're such a woman, Fasco.

The two boys approach each other menacingly. Pecarino steps in.

DEAN

Okay, break it up.

(to Larry)

Fasco, if you took half that intensity and put it into learning the game, you might be a player. But you don't have it in you.

LARRY

What do you mean?

DEAN

I mean at first I was disappointed you didn't try out for the team, but now I'm glad. Why? Because the only way you do things is half-ass. You're a loser, Fasco.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Larry looks at the Dean, almost says something, thinks better of it and storms away. Chris goes after him.

CHRIS  
Larry, wait up.

Larry doesn't. Chris runs to catch him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Come on Larry, he's an asshole.

LARRY  
We had 'em in that game. All I had to do was hit my shot and I choked it. My bread and butter and I friggin' choked. We coulda won.

CHRIS  
So what? It doesn't matter.

LARRY  
It matters to me. Maybe Pecarino's right. Maybe I am a loser.

CHRIS  
Don't let him get to you, man. Remember what you always told me?

LARRY  
What?

CHRIS  
Don't get mad, wreak havoc.

INT. KARAS HOUSE -- EVENING

Chris passes through the kitchen on the way to his basement sanctuary. In transit he routinely checks mail on the counter, notices an envelope addressed to him.

CHRIS  
Western?

He eagerly starts to open it only to discover it has already been opened, its contents removed.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
What the...? Dad! What did you do with my letter?

Stavros, watching a baseball game in the living room, glances at Chris, registers the envelope.

STAVROS  
Stupid Giants. Inning ago they were up five, now only one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls himself away from the game, picks up a letter by his side, holds it up.

STAVROS (CONT'D)

Were you going to tell me you applied? I'm the last one to know. Well, they accept you. Now who do you think is going to pay for this - Western University?

CHRIS

You said if I got good grades-

STAVROS

I said if you got good grades you could go to junior college. That way you can live at home and work with me.

CHRIS

But the JC's...not that good.

STAVROS

The JC not good? Who do you think you are? I never went to college. I had to work.

Chris has heard this before too.

CHRIS

I'm not going to JC.

STAVROS

Fine. If you want to go to some fancy school when there's a perfectly good one that's free, right here, then you pay for it.

CHRIS

But Dad, how am I going to pay for Western by myself?

STAVROS

You should think of that when you apply. You are dreaming too much, like your uncle.

(pauses)

Okay, you want money, you can start by getting real job. I've got work this weekend and need extra man.

Stavros turns back to the TV as Chris looks on in dismay.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY

A maelstrom of activity - men and machines, dirt and lumber, but most of all noise - the SOUND of jackhammers, radios, concrete mixers, power saws and alarm bells as big trucks inch backward.

Chris assists a pot-bellied man with a wooden form. He grits his teeth as he pounds a nail, then lets out a yelp when he accidentally hits his thumb. Wincing, he puts his hand under his arm, tries not to show his pain.

He looks around to see Stavros jawing with a couple of hardhats, drinking coffee, laughing loudly. Stavros is in his element as much as Chris is out of his. Chris gathers himself, picks up his hammer, pounds away.

EXT. KARAS HOUSE -- MORNING

A wasted-looking Chris waits for Larry, who cruises up in his convertible. Chris enters the car creakily.

LARRY

How's the working class hero?

Chris stares at him blankly.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

CLOSE on MISS LA FLEUR, teacher of French, lecturing a class that includes Chris and Owl. Dressed in black complete with bolero chapeau, she looks like a Jeanne Moreau wannabe.

LA FLEUR

And so Monsieur Sartre wishes to say that we live in an absurd, meaningless cosmos; a time when there is no longer any certainty about what is right, or how to be. In the end we must conclude, as Garcin does in Huis Clos, that hell is - other people.

La Fleur halts dramatically, giving the class her best existentialist scowl.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Chris walks with Owl.

OWL

Always feel so good after French Class.

CHRIS

Me too. Think I'll kill myself.

INT. ANOTHER HALLWAY -- DAY

Chris at his locker - beaucoup books, photos of Woody Allen, Inspector Clouseau. He shuts it, walks down the hall past the school office, peruses a bulletin board. Something catches his eye.

A Norman Rockwell-like portrait of a boy and girl:  
"OUTSTANDING TEENAGERS OF AMERICA SCHOLARSHIP - APPLICATIONS BELOW."

Chris swallows hard. Looking both ways first, he quickly grabs a scholarship application, stuffs it in his backpack.

A moment later, Larry bursts out the office door.

LARRY  
Hey, what you doing?

CHRIS  
Uh, just checking out this B.S.

Chris indicates the bulletin board.

LARRY  
Outstanding Teenagers of America.  
You gotta be one primo suckup to go  
for that.

Just then Sage, accompanied by Owl and Vish, flounces onto the scene, dressed in a Hawaiian outfit.

SAGE  
Aloha!

LARRY  
Listen, if you want to be a  
Prankster, you've got to look  
inconspicuous.

SAGE  
Roger.  
(puts on shades)  
So what's up?

Larry gestures down the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

The Pranksters amble down the corridor.

LARRY  
All great heroes have a base of  
operations.

OWL  
Batman has the Batcave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VISH  
Superman has the Fortress of  
Solitude.

CHRIS  
And we have Kokopelli's Lair.

SAGE  
Kokopelli?

Vish pulls out a card stamped with the Prankster's logo: a humped back flute player.

CHRIS  
Kokopelli, Native American God of  
mischief, a.k.a. the Trickster.

LARRY  
Our beloved mascot and signature  
emblem.

SAGE  
Distinctive.

They continue on, stop in front of an unassuming doorway.

CHRIS  
I give you - The Lair.

Sage looks at the doorway.

SAGE  
Guys, this is the A.V. Department.

VISH  
Yes, audio visual - infamous  
bastion of the super-geek.

OWL  
And the last place any self-  
respecting prep, jock, or teacher  
would ever be caught.

SAGE  
Perfect.

INT. KOKOPELLI'S LAIR -- DAY

The Pranksters pass through an outer chamber filled with the usual stuff, enter a locked back room packed with high tech electronics, art supplies and tools of every ilk.

Larry waves at them from the outer chamber through what appears to be a window.

OWL  
Two-way mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAGE

Wow, you guys have enough stuff in here to rewire the space shuttle!

VISH

A prankster must be prepared for all occasions.

LARRY

(takes paper from folder)  
Check out what I snared from the office while the secretary was in the loo.

CHRIS

"From the desk of Joe Pecarino."  
Awesome.

LARRY

Not to mention the combination to the announcement board, and the access code for the P.A. system.

Owl slaps Larry a high five. BELL RINGS.

EXT. HALLWAY -- DAY

The Pranksters re-enter.

LARRY

Enough backdrop. Fearless leader, our agenda?

CHRIS

Time for Operation Payback. Uh-oh, be cool.

The others look up and see TIFFANY FOWLER - the blonde bombshell from the pool - walking toward them with Mariah.

Chris gazes at Mariah as Larry fumbles with his binder. A stack of baseball cards tumble at Tiffany's feet. She looks at them, incredulous.

TIFFANY

Baseball cards? How old are you Larry- eight and a half?

LARRY

Old enough to get you in trouble.

Tiffany ignores this, sniffing at Sage in disdain.

TIFFANY

Trade you Barry Bonds for a team.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tiffany laughs derisively, continues down the hallway with her chums.

MARIAH  
Do you know him?

TIFFANY  
Larry Fasco was my first boyfriend -  
in fifth grade. He was kinda cute  
then. Still is. Except he hangs  
out with a bunch of dorkos.

MARIAH  
They don't seem so bad.

TIFFANY  
Mariah - I didn't get to where I am  
by wasting my time on nobodies.

INT. DRIVER ED CLASSROOM -- DAY

A dark room filled with driving simulators, machines that look like sophisticated video games. Each is equipped with seat, steering wheel, speedometer, accelerator and brake.

Students file into the classroom, taking assigned seats. Most are diminutive sophomores with one noticeable exception - the hulking Blotto.

EXT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Chris, Larry, Vish, Owl and Sage lurk in the shrubbery outside, peeking through a louvered side-window. A bell RINGS.

Chris looks to Vish, who smiles as he opens a notebook to display a diagram.

VISH  
The simulators work on a simple  
principle. Reverse the polarity  
and every response will be read as  
its opposite.

CHRIS  
Good. Owl?

OWL  
An extra hard drive is already  
hooked up to the system.

CHRIS  
Excellent. How'd it turn out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OWL  
 (holding up a CD)  
 Lucky for us my Dad's a video editor. I used his programs to put in some awesome effects.

SAGE  
 Anyone want to tell me what this is about?

LARRY  
 Watch and learn.

CHRIS  
 (to Vish)  
 That the one you wired?

Their POV Of Blotto, who lifts a shrimpy freshman out of his favorite machine, jams his own body into it.

Vish nods.

SAGE  
 Isn't he a tad old for this?

LARRY  
 Blotto was clocked doing 70 on Mission - got his license taken away. Now he has to take Driver Ed again to get it back.

CHRIS  
 It just so happens he's taking his final today. Wonder if he'll pass?

Owl takes off. The rest peer through the louvers.

INT. DRIVER ED CLASSROOM -- DAY

A flat-topped instructor, MR. BOHR, drones instructions.

MR. BOHR  
 The test is comprised of situations you've practiced extensively. There are forty points altogether. You need to keep your mistakes to five or fewer to pass. Good luck.

Mr. Bohr walks toward the back of the class. The video screens come alive with a title - "Driving Well for Safety."

The students watch their screens intently. Blotto leans back in his simulator, scratches his balls.

A suburban street, as if from the POV of someone driving. Tract homes recede on either side. Ahead, a STOP sign.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Students step on their respective brakes. The simulators CLICK and CLACK.

The street begins to flash by again.

VOICE (V.O.)  
(mechanical)  
Proceed at twenty-five miles per  
hour.

The street tableau. Suddenly, a ball rolls into the street, followed by a CHILD darting after.

Students stomp on their brakes. Click-clack. Blotto yawns.

WIPE TO:

INT. DRIVER ED CLASSROOM -- LATER

Mr. Bohr looks over a printout, nods his head until he sees something odd.

MR. BOHR  
Looks like everyone did fine -  
except Mr. Wojnowski.

BLOTTO  
What?

MR. BOHR  
Your test result shows you missed  
39 out of a possible 40.

BLOTTO  
No way!

The class erupts into LAUGHTER, causing Blotto to glower at them menacingly.

BLOTTO (CONT'D)  
Shut up you little weenies!

They do.

MR. BOHR  
The rest of you are excused to take  
your street exam. Wojnowski, you  
stay.

EXT. DRIVER ED CLASSROOM -- DAY

Chris, Larry, Vish, and Sage look on in delight.

CHRIS  
Okay Owl, time to step up.

INT. DRIVER ED CLASSROOM -- DAY

MR. BOHR

I'm not surprised. From the beginning you've regarded this class as a joke.

BLOTTO

But I couldn't have missed that many, Mr. Bohr. There must be something wrong with the machine.

MR. BOHR

The simulator doesn't lie, although I must admit, 39 out of 40... Tell you what, I'll let you take the test again on another machine, but you have to make a perfect score.

BLOTTO

You're on.

Blotto seated at another simulator, concentrating intently. The screen comes up.

At the back of the room, in a darkened office, something stirs. It's Owl, crouching down, silently inserting a disc into a computer.

On screen, the street rolling by, the approaching STOP sign.

Owl slinks away.

Blotto, concentrating.

The street, ball rolling out, kid darting after. This time, however, instead of the imaginary car coming to a halt, it keeps right on rolling toward the kid.

A cut and now we see the kid in close-up screaming in horror at the camera. The camera CAREENS crazily right, then left.

Blotto, startled, turns left, then right.

On screen, the kid runs away from the camera, dodging and screaming, but the CAMERA finally catches up with him. Arms flailing, the kid suddenly drops from view as we hear a sickening CRUNCH.

BLOTTO (CONT'D)

What the hell?

Now the CAMERA continues on, smashing over a mailbox, back onto the street, speeds up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly the screen morphs into a primeval jungle. A huge Tyrannosaurus Rex stomps into the scene, pivots its enormous head, bellows, then makes like hell toward the CAMERA. Blotto turns frantically, stomps on the accelerator.

Suddenly, jungle morphs into HYPERSPACE, turning into a starry galaxy, spaceship perspective.

Blotto's eyes widen momentarily, but he hunkers down, continues resolutely.

On screen enemy spacecraft come into view, firing lasers. Blotto veers right, then left.

The spacecraft and stars dissolve. The visage of a sinister, chuckling alien comes into view. The alien looks squarely at camera, detonates a large red button.

The screen goes nuclear. A moment later, a title accompanied by the Kokopelli logo appears: "YOU SCREWED UP AGAIN BLOTTO! Cordially, The Pranksters."

Blotto gapes, mouth open.

EXT. SCHOOL QUAD -- DAY

The Pranksters lilt across the school lawn.

SAGE

Poetry in pranks. There's no other way to describe it. How do you top that?

Vish holds up a pair of envelopes, one lavender, one white.

CHRIS

There's still the Dean, not to mention Tiffany.

(to Sage)

How's your handwriting?

She opens a notebook, shows it to him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Perfect.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Dean Pecarino blocks the passage of a SHRIMPY RED-HAIRED KID who's staggering under the weight of an enormous science project, featuring an array of model airplanes.

DEAN

Got a hall pass?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shrimpy stops, strains to set down the project. It slips, comes to pieces as it hits the floor. The stunned Kid pulls a paper from his back pocket. The Dean looks it over.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Okay.

The Dean hands the pass back nonchalantly, leaving the Kid to deal with his mess.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

The Dean withdraws papers from his faculty mail slot, shuffles through them. He stops at a sealed lavender envelope. Turning his head, he sniffs the air, then the envelope. He looks around, puts the mail under his arm, heads off.

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE -- DAY

At his desk, Pecarino reads the lavender letter.

Close on letter. The handwriting is bold, flowery, feminine. FRENCH MUSIC and Miss La Fleur's VOICE.

LA FLEUR (V.O.)

Dear Dean, or may I be so bold as to call you Joseph? I wouldn't blame you if you burned this letter. That would be the prudent thing to do. I would not have thought it possible, but the power of "l'amour" has conquered my heart...

The Dean looks up from the letter to make sure no one is watching, keeps on reading.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Miss La Fleur sits alone at her desk, assaulting papers with a red pen. A KNOCK at the door.

LA FLEUR

Oui?

No response. La Fleur looks over. A white envelope under the door. She rises, opens the door, looks out. No one. She picks up the letter.

INT. STAFF BATHROOM -- DAY

Miss La Fleur, reading the letter, lovestruck. STRAINS of Tchaikovsky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN (V.O.)

Forgive me Madeline for what I am about to confess. I must say it, although if you dare to confront me with what I've written, I will be forced to disavow it as a childish prank. I adore you beyond all reason...

La Fleur clutches the letter to her breast, gazes questioningly at her reflection, unpins her hair, reads on.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

English Lit, taught by a sympathetic instructor, MRS. BELL.

MRS. BELL

We shall not cease from exploration, And the end of all our exploring shall be, To arrive at the place where we started, And to know it for the first time.

(pause)

T. S. Eliot. What do you suppose he meant by that? Tiffany?

TIFFANY

(contemplating her nails)  
Sounds like the guy should have never left home.

SNICKERING.

MRS. BELL

You're trying to be funny, but in a way you're right. Someone else. Chris?

Not comfortable with the spotlight, Chris shuffles papers before speaking.

CHRIS

I don't know, it seems like he means we try all this stuff to figure out who we are, but in the end, none of it matters. We just are.

The class is quiet. The look on Mariah Rivera's face, sitting a row over, indicates Chris's words have struck a chord.

INT. CLASSROOM -- LATER

A collage of posters, photos and newsprint covers the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE on a computer screen with a front page layout for the Tres Rios Current. A pair of hands deftly work the keyboard, altering an article with the headline: "Tiffany Fowler, Senior Superstar," to "Tiffany Fowler, Real or Store-Bought?"

The illicit editor is Chris. He leans back to admire his work, goes on.

EXT. CAFETERIA -- DAY

Mariah Rivera and Eric Hood, finishing lunch. Sitting nearby are Blotto and Tiffany.

TIFFANY

Who in the world is pulling these grotesque pranks?

BLOTTO

When I find out I'm gonna kick their ass from here to Uranus.

Blotto savagely gloms a cupcake.

MARIAH

(to Eric)

Omigod, I forgot to update the yearbook photo schedule in the paper. Meet you at the bleachers?

She rushes off.

INT. JOURNALISM CLASSROOM -- DAY

Chris carefully places a floppy disc into a drawer. He starts for the door, halts when he hears a key JIGGLING in the lock. He nimbly ducks behind the door as it opens.

Mariah enters, shuts the door without looking back, where Chris is plastered against the wall. She opens the disc drawer, pulls the top one out, loads it into a computer.

Chris remains motionless against the wall. Mariah checks the screen. She does a double take, examines page one closely.

MARIAH

I don't believe this.  
(reads)  
Tiffany's gonna die.

As Mariah laughs, Chris silently opens the door, nearly slithers out, but is betrayed by a SQUEAKY hinge. Mariah turns.

CHRIS

Oh Mariah, hi, I was just looking for Mrs. Bell. Is she here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariah gives him a long look, shakes her head.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh. Okay, uh, guess I'll try back later.

He starts to exit.

MARIAH

How did you get in?

CHRIS

Me? The door was unlocked.

MARIAH

No it wasn't. You were already here. I never would have suspected.

CHRIS

What?

MARIAH

This is great. But I would have ended it differently.

CHRIS

Really? I mean, what are you talking about?

MARIAH

Relax. The articles you've been sneaking in are the best thing about this stupid paper.

CHRIS

You think so?

MARIAH

Definitely. I don't understand - why didn't you just join the staff?

CHRIS

I guess I'm not much of a joiner.

MARIAH

We've been going to school together all these years and I hardly know anything about you - except you're a brain, a straight A student.

CHRIS

I study a lot.

MARIAH

It appears you do more than study.

(CONTINUED)