

FADE IN

INT. MIDWESTERN SCHOOL - EIGHTH GRADE SCIENCE CLASS -- DAY

The lab is crammed with desks, lab tables, and a mixture of chemistry equipment, embalmed parts, and electronics that would make MIT proud.

In the corner, covered with a sheet so that only the feet are visible, is a mechanical cow. It is four feet high and five feet long.

DUSTY (13), short and stocky, sits on a stool in front of the teacher's desk. He looks bored and tired.

TODD (TOADY) FROST (13), smart AND cool, shoves a microphone in Dusty's face. Determined, he'll stay until Dusty gets it right.

TOADY

Again.

DUSTY

Moo.

ROBIN HUNTINGTON (13), pigtails, brains, and a tomboy, enters and hops up on a desk.

ROBIN

That cow sounds like she swallowed her cud.

DUSTY

Think you can do better?

ELLEN (13), tall and ladylike, enters and slowly lifts the cover off the object. The body of the tinker-toy type cow is visible.

ELLEN

Cows are female. You shouldn't be mooing.

Toady rushes over and pulls down the sheet.

ROBIN

Like anyone is going to notice with Dusty's squeaky little voice.

HALLWAY/CLASSROOM

Toady peaks out the door. He looks both ways down the hall.

KIPPER (13), a miniature science professor, leans against the wall. Gives a wave to Toady.

CLASSROOM

Toady closes the door, barricading it with his body.

Dusty jumps off the stool and drums the seat.

DUSTY
Hop up here, ladies.

Ellen hops up on the seat and does a feminine rendition of a moo.

ELLEN
Moooooo.

ROBIN
My turn.

Robin takes Ellen's place on the stool. She does a barnyard of animal sounds.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Cluck, oink, growl, woof, meow.

TOADY
We need a simple cow.

Dusty lifts the cover and surveys the cow.

DUSTY
You got simple.

Toady rushes over and pulls the cover back down.

TOADY
Kipper's out there.

ELLEN
It's your science project, Toady,
why aren't you mooing?

DUSTY
Ever hear a whoopee cushion?

MR. KABACHECK, science teacher, unkempt, greasy hair, poorly-dressed, a teen's worst nightmare for a stepdad, enters juggling a stack of notebooks and a vase of wildflowers.

MR. KABACHECK
I can give you kids a ride home.

DUSTY
No thanks Mr. Kabacheck. My dad's giving us a ride.

Ellen and Dusty scurry out the door.

Mr. Kabacheck examines the flowers, proud of himself. He tries to hand the flowers to Toady. Toady doesn't take them.

MR. KABACHECK
These flowers are for your mother.

Toady scowls.

TOADY
She's not picking me up.

Mr. Kabacheck is disappointed.

TOADY (CONT'D)
Her malaria's getting worse.

A scowl from Robin.

MR. KABACHECK
Women like flowers.

TOADY
My mother's deathly allergic to flowers. She gets these wart things all over her. They ooze and smell.

Robin rolls her eyes.

Mr. Kabacheck throws the flowers in the garbage.

MR. KABACHECK
Is she allergic to Italian food?
There's a great new restaurant I'd like to take her to.

Toady is mortified.

TOADY
Like on a date?

HALLWAY

Dusty and Ellen peer around the corner. Kipper sneaks up behind them.

ELLEN
Maybe he tied them up.

DUSTY
Cabbage isn't that weird.

Dusty and Ellen realize they are being watched. They turn around to confront Kipper.

KIPPER
How's the project coming along?

DUSTY
What project?

KIPPER
Your science project.

Innocent looks between Dusty and Ellen.

DUSTY
I didn't enter. How about you,
Ellen?

ELLEN
I didn't enter, either.

KIPPER
Toady and Robin entered. How's
their, um, oh, what is that thing
called?

DUSTY
Science Project.

Kipper's not getting anywhere. He leaves.

Dusty and Ellen watch him go.

ELLEN
He isn't Dick Tracy.

CLASSROOM

Mr. Kabacheck pumps Toady for information.

MR. KABACHECK

I want to ask your mom out, but something keeps coming up. Malaria. Then her knee. Then the appearance of dead Aunt Sue.

TOADY

It's a shame.

MR. KABACHECK

I'll bring over pizza.

Toady thinks fast.

TOADY

We'll need fifteen extra large.

MR. KABACHECK

Your brother a big eater?

TOADY

Brothers and sisters. There's thirty of us.

Another scowl from Robin.

MR. KABACHECK

They don't go to school here.

TOADY

They don't go to school. They're kind of strange.

MR. KABACHECK

Strange?

TOADY

You'd be strange too, if you were locked in the basement.

HALLWAY

Robin and Toady rush out of the classroom, wheeling the covered object.

Ellen and Dusty come out from hiding behind the corner.

The kids walk to their lockers.

ELLEN
Why did you stay in there so long?

TOADY
Cabbage wants to date my mother.

Dusty's horrified.

DUSTY
Did you get your mother out of
that one?

Toady nods.

TOADY
I made her sound less desirable.

ELLEN
Your mother owes you big time.

ROBIN
If she doesn't die from the shock
or end up in jail.

DUSTY
What did you tell him?

ROBIN
You have to stop lying. Your mother
Is going to kill you when she finds
out.

TOADY
You think Cabbage is going to say,
"Here's your son's report card.
He seems so well-adjusted
considering his mother has thirty
children hidden in the basement."

DUSTY
Your mom has thirty children?

ELLEN
I need to comb my hair.

DUSTY
Your hair looks fine.

ELLEN
You can be so clueless.

Ellen leaves.

ROBIN
(sarcastically)
Cabbage would make a great dad.

She holds her hand over her mouth, making gagging sounds.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Ugh, puke, gag, gag.

DUSTY
You'd get straight A's.

The kids remove books from their lockers.

TOADY
I get straight A's, now.

DUSTY
You wouldn't even have to go to
class.

TOADY
I'd be too embarrassed to go to
class.

ROBIN
Your mom will date some day.
Suppose he's worse than cabbage?

TOADY
My mom is never going to date.
Your dad's not dating. You could
get a future mother who makes
Dracula look good.

ROBIN
My dad's job keeps him too busy.

BATHROOM

Ellen washes her hands. She pulls a paper towel out of the dispenser. A brown glob falls out of the paper towel. It's a toad that hops away.

Ellen freaks out.

HALLWAY

Ellen runs, angry and screaming, from the bathroom.

Toady, Robin, and Dusty ignore her. Ellen is enraged.

ELLEN

Are you ever going to get those
frog things out of here?

Toady grabs two nets out of his locker and hands one to Robin.
They trudge off to the bathroom.

ROBIN

Six years times two dozen original
toads.

TOADY

Four dozen.

ROBIN

Our grandchildren will still be
hunting toads.

EXT. BANK -- DAY

Small town bank.

A sign proclaims "Science Project Supporter."

The BANK GUARD stands at the door, opening it for the PATRONS.

INT. BANK - MR. GRAYSTONE'S OFFICE -- DAY

In front of the desk are two chairs and a small table with
magazines.

Toady sits in front of Mr. Graystone's desk. He holds a
large dog collar and his laptop.

Robin holds a collar and has wires and electrodes taped to
her arms and legs.

MR. GRAYSTONE taps a check on the desk.

MR. GRAYSTONE

Are you on schedule?

TOADY

Yes, sir.

Toady reaches for the check. Mr. Graystone sets it aside.

ROBIN
Actually, we're ahead of schedule.

Toady flashes Robin a look.

Mr. Graystone writes out an appointment card.

MR. GRAYSTONE
Your next appointment.

Mr. Graystone hands the card to Toady.

MR. GRAYSTONE (CONT'D)
Before I give you the next
installment, I'll need to see what
you've actually done.

EXT. BANK -- DAY

Toady and Robin exit carrying bags with their equipment. An anxious Toady turns on Robin.

TOADY
Ahead of schedule? We're not even
close.

ROBIN
We're ahead by four hours.

TOADY
Not by my calculations.

ROBIN
Then I guess you better stop fishing
around and get off your feet.

TOADY
Get off my feet?

CAFETERIA

Crowded with STUDENTS.

Robin, Dusty, and Ellen are at a long table with their lunch.

Ellen removes baggies filled with salad fixings, broccoli, carrots with the tops still on, and various other healthy food items from her lunchbox.

Dusty and Robin have a tray with school food including mashed carrots and mashed potatoes.

ROBIN
What is this orange, um, spinach?

DUSTY
Spinach is green.

Toady sets his tray down on the table and sits. He isn't happy.

ELLEN
Something wrong?

ROBIN
We're in deep dollar bills.

DUSTY
Dollar bills is a bad thing?

TOADY
We have to get a moo before Monday.

DUSTY
I'm working at the petting zoo this weekend. I can get a moo, if you come help.

TOADY
Will the cow moo on command? We don't have much time.

DUSTY
Not on command. But close enough.

ROBIN
What's close enough?

ELLEN
Don't ask.

DUSTY
She sneezed once.

ELLEN
Too late.

DUSTY

I couldn't let the little kids pet her with those yellow boogers, but my napkin was covered with the mayonnaise I took off my sandwich, so I used broccoli.

ROBIN

I hate broccoli.

DUSTY

So does some famous actor.

ELLEN

President.

TOADY

Ex-president.

DUSTY

I wonder if his mother ran out of tissues one day.

TOADY

Maybe you'll grow up to be a president.

ROBIN

Swearing's my thing, not lying. Maybe you.

TOADY

Can't I just give you the recorder and some broccoli?

DUSTY

You want my sound effects you'll have to work.

ROBIN

They're not your sound effects. They belong to the cow with broccoli in its nose.

DUSTY

You don't put the broccoli in its nose, you rub it gently, like a tissue.

TOADY
 Maybe the broccoli will make you
 moo better.

Toady grabs a piece of broccoli from Ellen and rubs it across
 Dusty's nose.

TOADY (CONT'D)
 Moo, Dusty.

Dusty grabs a carrot and swishes the leafy top across Toady's
 face.

DUSTY
 Go away, you pervert.

Toady rubs a carrot top across Robin's nose.

TOADY
 Moo, Robin.

ROBIN
 You're an astronaut.

Dusty's confused.

DUSTY
 That's bad?

Robin plays with the mashed potatoes.

ROBIN
 The potatoes are lumpy. And they
 taste like pudding.

Dusty scoops up a giant spoonful of potatoes and shovels
 them in his mouth. He promptly spits out the mouthful.

DUSTY
 This tastes like pudding to you?

ROBIN
 I promised my dad I'd give up
 swearing.

Dusty rubs his mouth, vigorously, with the napkin.

DUSTY
 You giving up bad words is going
 to kill me.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Robin and Toady enter.

ROBIN

Hold on.

Robin stops at the bulletin board that lists services from an assortment of professionals.

A flyer for Glen Huntington is prominently displayed along with numerous business cards. The flyer states that he is a reasonably-priced, competent, attorney.

Robin carefully straightens the flyer and adds more business cards.

The male LIBRARIAN (30's), enters carrying an armful of books.

LIBRARIAN

Toady. Those books your mom wanted came in. I'll drop them by your house. When will your mom be home?

Toady studies the Librarian. He knows where this is heading.

TOADY

Thanks, but I'm not going to have time to read them to her.

LIBRARIAN

Is she ill?

TOADY

You didn't know my mother can't read?

Taken aback.

LIBRARIAN

There are programs.

TOADY

My mom hates books. That's how we heat the house in winter.

A shocked Librarian retreats to the bookshelves.

ROBIN

You are so dead.

EXT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Robin and Toady shuffle down the front steps carrying an armful of books.

ROBIN
If it was a choice between a Librarian and Mr. Kabacheck who would you pick?

TOADY
Poison oak. Poison ivy. Broken leg. Broken arm. That's a tough one.

ROBIN
If you had to choose.

TOADY
My mom's not even interested in dating. She's busy with Brat and me, and working.

ROBIN
But if you had to.

TOADY
I don't have to. So, drop it.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- DAY

Small stores and a church on the corner.

Toady and Robin continue down the street carrying the books. Coming from the opposite direction is PRINCIPAL JONES.

ROBIN
Another one with the hots for your mother. I'd die if my dad were a principal.

TOADY
Isn't going to happen.

ROBIN
If she'll go out with Cabbage, she'll go out with anyone.

PRINCIPAL JONES
Good afternoon, children.

TOADY
 Good afternoon, Principal Jones.

PRINCIPAL JONES
 I have opera tickets for Saturday.
 Maybe you and your mom would like
 to join me.

ROBIN
 (sarcastically)
 Toady loves opera.

A look.

TOADY
 We can't. My mom has a date on
 Saturday.

A group of NUNS and a PRIEST exit the church and continue
 down the sidewalk.

PRINCIPAL JONES
 Then perhaps Friday evening. Or
 maybe a picnic on Sunday.

Toady watches the group.

TOADY
 She can't do anything on Sunday.
 She's dating a priest.

PRINCIPAL JONES
 I haven't seen your mother with
 any men.

TOADY
 He's a nun. Studying for the
 priesthood.

Principal Jones is shocked. Robin grabs Toady's arm.

ROBIN
 We need to leave. I hear your mom
 screaming.

Toady and Robin rush off.

INT. GLEN'S OFFICE -- DAY

One lawyer office. A waiting room for the Secretary and an
 interior office for Glen.

WAITING ROOM

The waiting room is small with a few comfortable chairs and a secretary's desk. It's standing room only as an assortment of young, attractive WOMEN receive applications from the secretary, MRS. THATCHER (80's).

Toady survey's the room.

Robin is dismayed. As Mrs. Thatcher hands out the applications, Robin grabs them before the women can take them.

ROBIN
What's happening?

MRS. THATCHER
I'm retiring, honey. Your dad needs a new secretary.

ROBIN
You can't retire. My dad needs you.

Some of the women hand in completed applications. Robin grabs these before Mrs. Thatcher can get them.

MRS. THATCHER
I'm eighty-five. I want to sit on a beach while I can still drink pina coladas through a straw and not a tube.

Robin looks around at the pretty women.

ROBIN
He needs someone older with lots and lots of experience.

MRS. THATCHER
He needs someone younger with lots and lots of energy.

GLEN'S OFFICE

Simple office. Desk, bookcases, a couple of chairs.

GLEN HUNTINGTON (30's), works furiously at his computer.

Robin enters, perturbed.

Toady shuffles in behind her.

ROBIN
You can't let Mrs. Thatcher go.

GLEN
She worked for Lincoln. She
deserves some time for fun.

ROBIN
You need someone who can type, not
eye candy.

GLEN
Eye candy?

ROBIN
Those fluffy things out there. I
bet none of them have ever even
seen a typewriter.

TOADY
There might be an antique collector
or two in the group.

Looks from Robin.

TOADY (CONT'D)
Or maybe not.

GLEN
The new Secretary can use the
computer.

Toady scurries out of the room.

ROBIN
How did you advertise?

GLEN
Mrs. Thatcher's taking care of it.

ROBIN
That explains it. A bad secretary
will make you remember her.

GLEN
Mrs. Thatcher has always done a
wonderful job. She'll find an
excellent replacement.

Robin storms out.

WAITING ROOM

Robin is furious as she looks around the room.

Toady has a devilish grin.

TOADY
If you had to choose.

Robin smacks him.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Robin stomps down the street.

Toady sticks his arm in a mail box, banging it on the sides.

TOADY
The evil stepmom has me. Save
yourself.

Robin ignores him, continuing down the street.

A WOMAN arrives with a handful of envelopes.

Toady sheepishly removes his arm.

TOADY (CONT'D)
Don't get too close. It's really
hungry.

INT. GROCERY STORE -- DAY

Toady and Robin examine the bulletin board. A poster of Glen is hidden behind several other flyers. Robin removes the other flyers, leaving Glen's poster the center of attention. She adds more business cards.

Robin scribbles in her notebook, rips out the page and adds it to the bulletin board. The flyer states "very old man wanted as secretary for law office."

TOADY
Isn't that illegal or something?

ROBIN
You have to balance it with points.
I specified man but I balanced it
with old.

Toady looks confused.

TOADY
Never heard that one.

ROBIN
Stick with me. You'll hear lots
of new stuff.

SODA AISLE

Toady and Robin pick out drinks.

ROBIN
We need a name.

TOADY
We have names.

ROBIN
For the cow. We can't just keep
calling it Science Project or "the
cow thing."

TOADY
How about Spot?

ROBIN
Too common.

A GROCER (30's), wheels boxes to stack.

GROCER
Doing the shopping for your mom?

TOADY
We were just getting drinks.

GROCER
How is she?

TOADY
Not too well. Her foot fungus is
now up to her knee. Can I get a
discount on a case of bandages to
cover the green oozing mess?

Toady and Robin scurry down the aisle leaving a nauseous
Grocer.

ROBIN
You are worse than dead.

TOADY
Yeah, yeah.

INT. ALYCIA FROST'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

An eat-in kitchen with a large table and a swinging door leading into the living room.

ALYCIA FROST, thirties, examines the newspaper, looking concerned.

Toady and Robin enter. Toady carries a milk jug.

ALYCIA
Did you get the milk?

Toady shakes it under her nose.

TOADY
Aw, gee. Must have forgot.

Alycia gently brushes the milk aside as she circles an item in the paper.

ROBIN
Good reading? Who got whacked
this week?

Alycia looks up, startled at Robin's comment. Robin grins. Alycia smiles.

TOADY
We're going to work on the cow.

Alycia dials a phone number.

ALYCIA
(into phone)
Hello. I'm calling about the ad
in the paper.

Toady and Robin stop in their tracks and watch Alycia.

ALYCIA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Eight? I'll be there. Thank you.

She hangs up.

TOADY
What are you doing?

ALYCIA
The store announced that they're
closing in two months. I've got
to find another job.

Alycia dials another number.

ALYCIA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Mr. Kabacheck, please.

Toady's about to pass out.

ALYCIA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Would you tell him Alycia Frost
called?

Toady pushes Robin through the kitchen door.

LIVING ROOM

The living room is simply furnished.

TOADY
What would you think of my mom
working for your dad?

KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM

Robin pushes the door and peeks in at Alycia.

LIVING ROOM

ROBIN
She's young and pretty.

TOADY
It would be like working with
family.

ROBIN
Maybe.

TOADY
It comes down to choices. You
want one of those floozies or my
mom?

ROBIN
 You're just afraid she'll pick Mr.
 Kabacheck.

Toady wipes the sweat off his face with his sleeve.

Robin heads upstairs, taunting Toady.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
 Toady Kabacheck. Toady Kabacheck.
 Has a nice ring.

INT. GLEN'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM -- DAY

A young, attractive, SECRETARY, outfit more appropriate for evening than office, sits at Mrs. Thatcher's desk.

Robin stares at the secretary.

Toady snickers.

SECRETARY
 Can I help you?

Robin is less than polite.

ROBIN
 I don't know. Can you?

SECRETARY
 What kind of legal difficulties
 are you in?

ROBIN
 I'm thirteen, in a town the size
 of a postage stamp you mush --

Toady cups his hand over Robin's mouth as she becomes louder and increasingly agitated. He drags her, voice muffled, into Glen's office.

GLEN'S OFFICE

ROBIN
 I was going to say "mushroom."

The office is empty.

Robin sticks her head into the waiting area and addresses the secretary.

GLEN'S OFFICE/WAITING ROOM

ROBIN

Bowl of soup. Where's my dad?

Toady covers her mouth.

The secretary just looks at them.

TOADY

She means, "excuse me, could you please tell me where Mr. Huntington is."

SECRETARY

He's in court.

TOADY

Thank you.

Toady drags a furious Robin, his hand over her mouth, through the waiting area.

EXT. GLEN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Robin straighten's her clothes. Toady grins.

TOADY

That is one fine looking potential stepmother in there.

ROBIN

Toady Kabacheck.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Glen talks to an attractive female LAWYER. They're too pleasant for it to be just business.

Toady and Robin enter and stop in their tracks.

Robin fumes.

Toady grabs her arm and swings her back toward the entrance.

TOADY

Forget it. Too many witnesses.

INT. ALYCIA FROST'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

Alycia frantically stirs a large pot of stew. She quickly grabs pot holders and removes a tray of cookies from the oven.

Toady, Robin, Ellen, Dusty, and Glen, enter.

 TOADY
 The science class is here.

 ELLEN
 Hi, Ms. Frost.

Alycia kicks the oven door closed and puts the cookies on the counter.

 DUSTY
 What's that weird smell?

Ellen looks in the stew pot.

 ELLEN
 Vegetables.

 TOADY
 The rest of the kids couldn't make
 it. You know Robin and her dad.

Alycia takes off the potholders and shakes hands with Glen.

 GLEN
 What time should I pick up Robin?

 TOADY
 Why don't you stay for supper?
 And eat a lot. My mom has plenty.

 GLEN
 That's for your mom to decide.

 ALYCIA
 Please stay. I was expecting
 Toady's science class.

Toady grabs Robin.

 TOADY
 Come with me. I need to show you,
 uh, something.

Toady heads through the swinging door with the other children.

LIVING ROOM

Toady and Robin listen at the door.

Dusty and Ellen turn on the television and sit on the couch.

Toady pushes the door open slightly.

Robin peeks over his shoulder.

ROBIN

Genius couldn't come up with
anything better than "something?"

TOADY

Shhh. I can't hear.

ROBIN

We shouldn't be eavesdropping.

TOADY

This is our future.

ROBIN

Suppose they don't like each other?

TOADY

They'll like each other.

ROBIN

If they really like each other
they could get married, and we'll
be siblings.

TOADY

I'd rather you were my sister than
some other weirdo.

ROBIN

Then we'll hate each other.

TOADY

Says who?

ROBIN

You gave Brat that awful nickname.