

ALDER

Derek.

CJ

(pause)

Why did he pick me?

Alder takes a moment, then puts his book away, standing to leave. CJ looks down, disappointed as Alder starts to walk away. But Alder stalls, looking back at CJ.

ALDER

Keep your head down. Eventually  
he'll move on.

CJ

What would that say about me?

ALDER

(beat)

It won't matter if it's what keeps  
you alive.

Alder leaves. CJ watches him, confused and a bit scared.

5 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

5

The room is quiet. Everyone is working on an assignment. The teacher stands with a group of students answering their questions.

Alder sits in the back corner of the class with earbuds in. He reads his book, the completed in-class assignment sitting in front of him.

The classroom starts to stir. Noticing the movement in his peripheral, Alder looks up and sees that almost all the boys in class are getting out of their desks and heading to the window.

Alder takes out his earbuds. He hears the boys call out in cheers or shock. Alder goes to the window. When he sees what the commotion is about, he sighs.

6 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

6

In the center of a circle of boys is CJ, curled into a ball on the ground, getting stomped on by Derek. Evan and James stand guard keeping anyone from entering the circle. Evan still plays with his lighter.

OPEN. CLICK. SHUT.

DEREK  
Had enough?

STOMP!

DEREK (CONT'D)  
Admit it and I'll stop.

KICK! STOMP!

As Alder reaches the crowd, people move out of the way for him. He heads toward Derek and CJ. When Evan and James notice Alder, they step in his way. Alder looks at them.

ALDER  
Move.

Evan and James scoff, looking at each other then back at him.

OPEN. CLICK. SHUT.

Derek notices the three of them and stops beating on CJ, standing up straight.

DEREK  
You got a problem, Aldy?

ALDER  
What're you doing, Derek?

Stepping over CJ, Derek saunters toward Alder.

DEREK  
(sarcastic)  
Just... stretching my legs.

Alder looks down at the bloodied, unmoving CJ.

ALDER  
Looks to me like you've done enough  
stretching for today.

Derek nods his head at Evan and James for them to move so that he and Alder are face to face. He crosses his arms.

DEREK  
You protect queers now?

ALDER  
(pause)  
You don't want to do this.

Derek takes a step closer to Alder.

DEREK

You think you're better than me,  
now that you're Mr. High and  
Mighty?

ALDER

I'm trying to save you from  
yourself.

Just then a teacher comes out to break up the crowd.

TEACHER

Everyone! Back to class! Derek,  
with me. Alder, help the boy.

The crowd departs. Derek watches Alder over his shoulder for  
a moment.

As everyone leaves, Alder helps CJ up and over to a table to  
sit down. He grabs a t-shirt out of his backpack, handing it  
to CJ to use to dab his bleeding nose.

ALDER

I told you to--

CJ

I know what you told me.

ALDER

Then why didn't you do it?

They sit in silence for a moment. Then CJ starts to laugh,  
tears forming in his eyes. Alder watches him, confused.

ALDER (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

CJ

You're blaming me?

CJ continues laughing out of frustration and anger.

CJ (CONT'D)

I get my face beaten in by a toxic  
alpha-male...and it's my fault?

ALDER

You have to admit, you could be  
less...

CJ

What? Gay?!

Alder doesn't say anything.

CJ (CONT'D)  
 What is it to you? A disease?  
 (beat)  
 What is it to him?

ALDER  
 So you are.

CJ looks into Alder's eyes.

CJ  
 I won't apologize for it. Ever.  
 (beat)  
 So don't pretend like you're  
 protecting me when you tell me to  
 'keep my head down' and hide who I  
 am.

ALDER  
 I didn't say--

CJ  
 I know what you said. And I know  
 what you wanted to say.

CJ stands and grabs his backpack off the ground and makes his way back to the school.

7 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

7

Alder is heading back to class. The halls are empty. But he hears an echo of voices coming from around the corner. As he moves closer the voices become recognizable: Derek, Evan, and James. Alder stops, craning to listen.

JAMES  
 --you're just gonna let him get  
 away with that?

DEREK  
 No.

JAMES  
 He needs to be punished.

DEREK  
 That traitor will get whats coming  
 to him.

EVAN  
 What about the kid?