PRODIGY/BULLY

"Pilot"

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Story by
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Based on the series of shorts written by
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“All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.” Aristotle.

EXT. DILAPIDATED SCHOOL - LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

VARIOUS CHILDREN play “King of the Hill” on a pile of dirt in a school parking lot.

Close-up on the laughing, happy face of AUDIE MURPHY, 11.

Strong, wiry and unkempt, Audie stands atop the hill, taking on all comers. Dispensing with his neighborhood friends and classmates via kicks, shoves, and outright violence. With each boy Audie flings off the pile, it becomes clear that if Audie were on that island in “Lord Of the Flies,” he would have killed and roasted Piggy on the first day.

An unseen ENGLISH MAN, dripping with the same Anti-American pomposity that incited a revolution 240 years ago, narrates:

NARRATOR
America’s education system is, in two words: A shambles.

ANGLE ON: Audie entering a bleak, foreboding, public school. Graffiti covers the walls, iron bars brace the windows.

NARRATOR (CONT’D)
Children are more akin to inmates than students.

Audie and his classmates pass through a metal detector.

NARRATOR (CONT’D)
Thankfully, there are pockets of hope known as “Schools for theGifted.” Oases of instruction that expand and develop the minds of the brightest. By invitation only.

EXT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - CAMPUS - DAY

Majestic marble pillars frame the entrance to an auditorium. Bunting drapes between the pillars, along with a sign:

“Kaltschmidt School Matriculation Day”
INT. MURPHY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Audie eats a bowl of Froot Loops and addresses the camera.

AUDIE
I didn’t even know this special smart kid school existed til they told me I got a scholarship. I guess they have some cool stuff. Laboratories. An indoor pool. But I don’t know, my Dad’s not so into it.

EXT. MURPHY HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Audie’s father, TOMMY, 40, blunt, half-muscle/half-fat, lowers a new engine block into his ’83 Camaro. Audie’s mother, CELESTE, 38, thin, intense, buxom, scans through a Kaltschmidt admissions brochure.

CELESTE
They have a huge cafeteria.

TOMMY
I’m not letting some uppity rich kid school torpedo the foundation I already laid. He’s fine where he is.

CELESTE
A ton of scientists went there.

TOMMY
Name one.

CELESTE
I don’t have to name one, I just have to read one off this list. “Yusef Galahad” from Saudi Arabia. Class of ‘82.

She shows him the photo of a nerdy ARABIC MAN in his 40s.

TOMMY
The privileged son of some oil warlord and one of his hundred whore-wives. Probably bribed his way in.

CELESTE
However he got in, he learned a lot while he was there.
TOMMY
Says them.

CELESTE
Says the Nobel prize he won. Why
don’t we just let him try it out?

TOMMY
Because the second he starts
hanging around a bunch of noobs
he’s gonna start forgetting
everything he needs to know for
when the North Koreans launch their
nukes. Like how to gut a fish or
bayonet someone.

INT. MURPHY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Back to Audie and his Froot Loops, addressing the camera.

AUDIE
Mom and Dad went upstairs, had some
“alone time”, and Dad gave in. So I
guess I’m going...
(shrugs)
Still, I’m gonna miss my friends.

QUICK GLIMPSE: A jam-packed public school cafeteria. Audie
crawls on the floor with his pal BRIAN DOHERTY, 11, a chunky,
sleep-deprived orthodontist’s dream. Audie takes out a Zippo
and ignites four roman candles. Colorful sparks fly.
Students cover their food, scream, keep their heads down.

Back to Audie’s direct address.

AUDIE (CONT’D)
I’m kinda looking forward to going
to a school where you actually get
taught stuff...

INT. PAUL TSONGAS ELEMENTARY GYMNASIUM - DAY

A doughy, wrung-out, sixty-year-old “science” and PE teacher,
MR. DOUGLAS, addresses the camera. Behind him, four kids are
wrestling each other on a big trampoline.

MR. DOUGLAS
Audie, doesn’t belong here at Paul
Tsongas Middle. We can’t help him.
He’s asking me about black holes
and string theory.
(MORE)
MR. DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Last year he did a science fair project on photosynthesis in a class where half the kids don’t understand that “ph” makes the “Eff” sound. I started in security. Then they needed a gym teacher. A year and a half later I’m teaching science. So. You know, I’m happy for the job, all you gotta do to teach 4th grade science is know how to read. But Audie drove me to drink with his questions. I was 11 years sober prior to him. My advice to the new school? Keep him away from mylar and helium.

EXT. GARBAGE STREWN VACANT LOT - DAY

Audie and Brian hold ropes tethered to a silver mylar balloon, ten feet long and three feet wide, hovering a couple feet above the ground. MATTY, a neighborhood dunce with crusted snot in one nostril and food stuck in his braces holds on desperately to the lawn chair they’ve rigged up to the balloon. Matty looks terrified.

AUDIE
You should land by The Church of the Good Shepard in about twenty-two minutes. Use the Ziplock bags to collect ozone samples every thousand feet.

Audie nods to Brian and they let go. The balloon rockets up into the air like Titan missile. Matty SCREAMING the whole way. Back to Audie’s direct address --

AUDIE (CONT’D)
I’m kinda looking forward to going to a school where you don’t have to bring your own toilet paper.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

ANGLE ON: Various well-dressed families take their seats.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

LAWRENCE MCCARTHY, 50, headmaster of the Kaltschmidt School walks to a podium. Cordial, amiable, he’s best described as someone nobody else wants to see naked. He addresses a packed audience of students sitting with their families.
MCCARTHY
We welcome you new students to the oldest, most respected, gifted school in the nation, the Kaltschmidt School! We relish this opportunity to locate and nurture the Einstein, the Da Vinci, the Michelangelo in YOU.

ANGLE ON: The Murphy family, bored out of their minds.

Audie’s sister, MOLLY, 12, all sugar and spice, wears a cute yellow dress, is the only one properly attired. Tommy is wearing a Tommy Bahama shirt with a huge Marlin on the back. Celeste is wearing a sweater, jeans and Nikes. Audie is wearing a sleeveless “Under Armour” shirt and nylon sweatpants. Audie’s sister JACKIE, a fifteen-year-old girl with no interest in school and biceps bigger than her breasts, wears cargo fatigue shorts and a t-shirt that reads “I am not a man.” She’s more Hope Solo than Mia Hamm.

Celeste looks at the other families dressed to the nines. Embarrassed, she whispers to Tommy.

CELESTE
I’m so under-dressed.

TOMMY
You go commando too? Nice.

CELESTE
I’m menstruating

TOMMY
Good, we can’t afford another kid.

He kisses her. Celeste smiles. She loves her Tommy.

EXT. THE KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - CAMPUS GARDENS - DAY

QUICK GLIMPSES: The beautiful Oxford-inspired campus.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STREETS OF LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

Audie and Brian walk through a tough working class neighborhood on their way home from school. They pass an auto body shop, an already busy bar and three Dunkin' Donuts.
AUDIE (V.O.)
They made me take some special test
during detention. I thought it was
busy work. I was just happy to get
a break from cleaning up vomit in
the bathrooms.

INT. THE KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – HEADMASTER’S OFFICE – DAY

Headmaster McCarthy directly addresses the camera.

MCCARTHY
We started an outreach program in
an attempt to find a few diamonds
in the rough to add to our student
body. Our goal: Discover some
exceptional minds in communities
where intelligence has little
currency.

EXT. VACANT COURTYARD – SOMEWHERE IN LOWELL – DAY

In the courtyard of a condemned public housing complex, Audie stands opposite Brian. Audie holds a baseball bat. Brian pitches him a Miller Genuine Draft beer bottle. Audie swings and shatters the bottle into pieces while Brian shields his eyes and laughs.

NARRATOR
What was unknown when we set out,
was that one boy would present
himself as the inarguable focal
point of our story.

EXT. BUSY STREET – LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS – DAY

Audie and his friends Brian and Matty load balloons filled with paint into a wrist rocket. Launch their ammo at a passing school bus. Paint splatters on the side of the bus.

NARRATOR
An intelligent boy who was
unfamiliar with the world of
private tutors, chinos, and public
decorum.
EXT. BUSY INTERSECTION - LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS - NIGHT

Audie, Brian and Matty skateboard up to a Dodge van, and grab onto the back bumper. They scream like Comanches, laughing, until Matty goes flying off into a parked beer truck. Ouch.

NARRATOR
An unrefined boy who suddenly found himself thrust into a delicate, civilized institution.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Beneath a banner that reads “Welcome New Students,” Audie punches someone just out of the camera’s frame. Hard. He watches his opponent fall like a bag of hammers.

NARRATOR
The boy’s name is Audie Murphy.

Off Audie's viciously victorious face we CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES.

As main titles end, we go immediately into --

ACT ONE

INT. COLLINS HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A Doris Day-ish WOMAN sits with a Mitt Romney-ish MAN.

DORIS DAY MOM
I can’t fathom how that Audie Murphy kid was invited to such a distinguished school.

MITT ROMNEY MAN
Bribery or blackmail, I’m sure.

DORIS DAY MOM
He’s a bad seed. A bully.

INT. MURPHY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TOMMY AND CELESTE address the camera.

TOMMY
My son’s not a bully. He got in a fight. When did fighting become bullying?
CELESTE
I’ve never seen a school with so many trees.

TOMMY
When someone mouths off, and won’t stop, you punch him. That’s not called bullying, that’s called following through on a promise. That’s how we do it in Lowell.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – HEADMASTER’S OFFICE – DAY

McCarthy addresses the camera.

MCCARTHY
Audie grew up in an Irish-Franco-Canadian home in Lowell, Massachusetts.

START MONTAGE: KEN BURNS EFFECT SLIDE-SHOW...

SNAPSHOTS: Old black and white photos of unhappy mill workers, unhappy boxers, half-happy drunkards in dirty taverns, unhappy and dirty German, Irish, French-Canadian and Polish children of the unhappy immigrant people who settled there.

MCCARTHY (VO) (CONT’D)
Once a community of solidly middle class manufacturing workers...

SNAPSHOT: A DRUNKARD being bum-rushed out of a bar.

MCCARTHY (VO) (CONT’D)
The outsourcing of textile jobs to the Indian sub-continent have destroyed the comfortable life once lived by Lowellers.

SNAPSHOT: An ELDERLY COUPLE sitting on lawn chairs on the sidewalk in front of their triple decker home.

MCCARTHY (VO) (CONT’D)
Audie’s unique. He was not raised in a typical “gifted” child’s family.

START MURPHY FAMILY MONTAGE – DAY

Quick Glimpses of Audie’s family:
* A bloody Tommy Murphy in his grass-stained softball uniform and handcuffs, outside of a bar, winding up to spit in a cop’s face.

Subtitle reads: “Dad” Freeze on Tommy’s face.

Cut to Tommy’s direct address:

TOMMY
I was a lot angrier before I cut my drinking back to just beer. Nowadays I only drink shots if other people buy. And Bloody Marys Sunday mornings when the Patriots play. But that’s it. Moderation, you know? Works.

* Celeste Murphy is at the supermarket screaming at a checkout girl, who has not scanned a coupon correctly.

CELESTE
Scan it again. Your thumb covered the barcode. It’s a manager’s double coupon! Stop cheating me! Scan. It. Again!

Subtitle reads: “Mom” Freeze on Celeste’s face.

* Jackie Murphy, sits on the couch. She clears the phlegm from the back of her throat, forms it into a spit-able hunk, tilts her head back, spits the loogie five feet into the air and then catches it back in her mouth.

Subtitle reads: “Big Sister” Freeze on Jackie’s face.

Jackie addresses the camera:

JACKIE
You want me to repeat the question? Did I know my little brother was smart? That’s the question? Where do I look? There? Like into the camera or over there at you?

* Molly Murphy in her bedroom with more stuffed animals than a children’s hospital ward. Molly seems naïve and out of place, because she’s both. She’s singing into her computer cam so she can upload it to YouTube.

MOLLY
La la, love is love. Love is just love. Love is love. Love! Love!

Subtitle reads: “Sister” Freeze on Molly’s face.
Molly addresses the camera:

MOLLY (CONT’D)
I think the world just needs more
love. Love everywhere. Just love.
Love, love, love.

She is incredibly sincere and endearing. And dense.

Title Card: “Six minutes later”

Jackie addresses the camera:

JACKIE
I knew Audie was smart. But more
like smart-retarded. Always
watching “Jeopardy” and reading.
(Laughs) I’m glad he’s gonna hang
out with other “Draters.” That’s
retard spelled backwards. It’s not
nice to call people retards any
more. So I call them “Draters.”
Retards backwards.

Celeste and Tommy address the camera:

CELESTE
I always knew Audie was smart.

TOMMY
Yeah, a smart ass.

CELESTE
Ever since he was four, he liked
taking things apart to see how they
worked. It was kinda cute.

TOMMY
Try managing a fantasy football
team when you got Bill Gates Junior
ripping up your laptop.

CELESTE
He was always interested in how
things work.

CUT TO A QUICK GLIMPSE: A four year-old Audie on home video
sits on the kitchen floor of the Murphy home with a
disassembled lawn mower spread around him. Off Camera we
hear Celeste, who is working the camera, and half-laughing.

CELESTE (O.C) (CONT’D)
Uh-oh Audie. What are you doing to
Daddy’s lawn mower?
FOUR YEAR OLD AUDIE
Fixing it.

Back to Tommy and Celeste Direct address:

TOMMY
Then he went all goofy learning the languages.

CELESTE
Audie watched Sesame Street on the Spanish Channel and the Portuguese Channel.

TOMMY
Only Lowell, which has become "Brazil North" would have a cable company that forces you to pay for a damn Portugee channel as part of the basic cable package.

CELESTE
He became this odd little dude who spoke a bunch of languages.

QUICK GLIMPSE: Audie in the hallway of his decrepit elementary school saying hello to various other immigrant children in their native tongues.

CELESTE (CONT’D)
But his smartness scared me. Let’s be honest. Most smart people are a little off. And totally stuck up.

TOMMY
Yeah, like Jenny Hinkle.

CELESTE
So conceited.

TOMMY
This girl Jenny Hinkle we grew up with memorized all the state birds in second grade and got some certificate and forever after thought she was God’s gift, Miss Missy Smart.

CELESTE
Not smart enough to use a diaphragm in tenth grade.

They both snicker at the memory of Jenny Hinkle’s pregnancy.
INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - HEADMASTER’S OFFICE - DAY

Headmaster McCarthy addresses the camera.

      MCCARTHY
Audie has a diamond inside of him.
But Audie himself, is the rough.
We were all a little apprehensive
as he met his classmates for the
first time.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM

Families and their kids sit and listen.

      MCCARTHY
Returning students of our fifth
grade class! Please stand, and
introduce yourselves to Audie and
the Murphy family.

CUT TO STUDENTS INTRODUCING THEMSELVES:

TEDDY GRESZIK, a blonde, flat-topped farm boy from Presque
Isle, Maine touches his mouth with his fingers and shuffles
from side to side before speaking:

      TEDDY GRESZIK
Hi, my name is Teddy. Teddy
Greszik. I’m from--I am from
Presque Isle, Maine. I like apples
and science. I want to turn Maine
Red potatoes into the fuel of the
22nd century.

SNAPSHOTS: Teddy in Presque Isle, Maine, on his family’s
farm: Harvesting potatoes. Delivering a calf. Rebuilding
a combine’s engine block. At a 4H fair with a blue ribbon
and a big smile.

EXT. TEDDY’S FAMILY BARN - DAY

TEDDY’S DAD, 40, looks like a former football player.
TEDDY’S MOM, 39, has bangs and wears a teddy bear sweater
that reads “Honey Pot.” They are understated and answer the
questions truthfully and directly to camera.

      TEDDY’S MOM
Teddy was always different.

      TEDDY’S DAD
Thinks too much.
TEDDY’S MOM
Thinking’s not so good for farm life.

TEDDY’S DAD
Teddy was driving a tractor and started trying to figure out how to breed minks and rabbits. Big market for minks that could fornicate like rabbits.

TEDDY’S MOM
Got distracted. Harvested the family cat.

TEDDY’S DAD
Lotta people say cats are smart. Not that cat.

TEDDY’S MOM
A smart cat hears a tractor and sees a kid driving, they steer clear.

BACK IN THE AUDITORIUM:

BOB GHANDI, a squat, furrow-browed Indian kid, stands:

BOB GHANDI
My name is Bob Ghandi. I was born in Calcutta. I no longer live there and I am grateful for the opportunity to make something of my life for my family, who are relying on me to flourish so they will not succumb to the hatred, racism, and poverty inherent in capitalistic societies.

The Crimson-Turbaned Sikh man smiles.

QUICK GLIMPSE: Bob responding to his father’s 14-digit math flashcards with computer-esque efficiency.

BOB

The Sikh, AKA BOB GHANDI’S DAD, addresses the camera.

BOB GHANDI’S DAD
Bob will succeed or our family will perish.
ANGEL ON:  MALCOLM MERRIWEATHER, standing.  Pint-size.

MALCOLM
My name is Malcolm Merriweather and
I love science.  My love of science
began when I read a biography about
George Washington Carver.  My
life’s goal is to become the first
black scientist famous for
something other than turning
peanuts into a sandwich spread.

HUGO KIM a confused, soft, Korean Boy, stands.

HUGO
Hugo Kim.

Hugo sits.

ANGEL ON:  Jackie, sitting next to Audie, smirks and says:

JACKIE
Holy Super Draters.  Audie, for the
first time in my life I feel bad
for you.  This is like the Drater
National Zoo.

QUICK GLIMPSE:  HUGO’S WHITE AND CHROME LIVING ROOM – DAY

TIGER MOM JINNY, Hugo’s Mom, addresses the camera with Hugo
sitting next to her.

TIGER MOM JINNY
We are proud of Hugo’s work at the
Kaltschmidt school.  I am certain
he will finish number one again in
all areas.  Won't you, Hugo?

A terrified Hugo tries to smile.

TIGER MOM JINNY (CONT’D)
People call me a “Tiger Mom.”  This
is a made-up Chinese term.  I am
Korean.  People like to make fun of
Korean focus.  People will soon see
that Koreans will be having most of
the last laugh.  Haha...Yes, laugh.

BACK IN THE AUDITORIUM:  COLBY COLLINS, 12, a clean-cut and
confident cross between JFK and Mickey Mantle.

COLBY COLLINS
Audie Murphy!  Greetings.  My name
is Colby Collins.

(MORE)
I look forward to beginning the extraordinary journey we’ll take together at this fine institution. May we meet no obstacle that cannot be overcome!

QUICK SNAPSHOT: Colby planting a flag as the youngest kid ever to summit Mt. Everest.

INT. COLBY’S LIVING ROOM - DAY

COLBY’S MOM, 39, the Doris Day look-alike and COLBY’S DAD, 50, the Mitt Romney clone, sit on a couch. The wall behind them is covered with Colby’s youth soccer jerseys, framed.

COLBY’S MOM
There’s nothing, it seems, that Colby can’t do.

COLBY’S DAD
Well, except fail.

They both grin the grin of believers.

BACK IN THE AUDITORIUM:

HEATHER KWITKOWSKI-WELCH stands. Pretty, cheerful, poised. And clearly Hispanic. This is the girl every parent wishes they were raising.

The moment he sees her, Audie is hooked. His heart races. The rest of the world falls away and all he can feel is an intense overwhelming need to be next to her. The camera slowly pushes toward her as Audie stares with slack-jawed admiration.

HEATHER
Welcome Audie, I’m sure you’re gonna love it here. My name is Heather Kwitkowski-Welch. I’m super excited to be here at the Kaltschmidt school, and super thrilled to keep up with the great traditions of this totally cool school and super appreciative of the two people who encouraged me most--my two amazing moms.

ANGLE ON: MARY WELCH, 51 and her wife, BONNIE KWITKOWSKI, 48.

QUICK GLIMPSE: Heather, a cellist, plays side by side with a teacher who we realize is YO YO MA. Heather stops, and very politely says:
HEATHER (CONT’D)
Yo Yo, I’m so sorry to interrupt.
But I think your A might be flat.

Yo Yo listens, realizes she's right.

INT. HEATHER’S VERY SIMPLE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Heather sits next to Mary and Bonnie, the ex-nuns who adopted her. They resemble Penn and Teller, in appearance and behavior. Mary addresses the camera.

MARY
Heather is just phenomenal. We just watch from the sidelines, make sure she’s fed, and root her on. Right, Bonnie?

Bonnie just nods and smiles.

BACK IN THE AUDITORIUM: Audie stands.

AUDIE
Audie Murphy. I’m from right here in Lowell!

Tommy, Celeste, Jackie and Molly hoot, holler and applaud.

The rest of the school is more baffled than bothered.

AUDIE (CONT’D)
Lowell, Massachusetts! Lo-well! Lo-well! Lo-well!

As the Murphy family chants, Colby turns to his parents.

COLBY COLLINS
I’m guessing enrollment standards have fallen this year, eh?

ANGLE ON: Audie, laughing and high-fiving his family.

ANGLE ON: Heather, observing Audie. Audie catches her eye and she smiles at him, gives him a small wave.

MCCARTHY (VO)
5th grade students at the K School are immersed in a wide-ranging curriculum immediately. Physics. 20th Century English Literature. Ancient Civilizations. Latin...
INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - LATIN CLASSROOM - DAY

An ANCIENT LATIN TEACHER is at the whiteboard conjugating verbs. Audie’s head spins.

ANCIENT TEACHER
To love, to be fond of...anyone?

Colby is showing off.

COLBY COLLINS
Amo, amare, amavi, amatus.

ANCIENT TEACHER
Impressive, young man.

COLBY COLLINS
Gratias tibi ago, sir.

Colby smiles his blindingly perfect smile at Heather. Heather blushes. Audie notices Heather’s blush.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

MCCARTHY (VO)
Calculus...

Bob Ghandi is at the chalkboard solving some massive algebraic formula, as the teacher watches, amazed. As Bob walks back to his seat...

COLBY COLLINS
Bob, you’re on my team for “Mathletes.” We will dominate.

Audie is wondering if he’s in over his head.

MCCARTHY
And of course, philosophy...

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - PHILOSOPHY CLASS - DAY

A severe 50-year-old DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER lectures.

DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER
Kierkegaard said: "Science and scholarship want to teach that becoming objective is the way. Christianity teaches that the way is to become subjective, to become a subject.” But we will not be subjects to anything but the truth!
TEDDY GRESZIK
Will we cover the Gospels?

DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER
Only when discussing where Jesus plagiarized Eastern philosophical traditions and parables and passed them off as his own.

TEDDY GRESZIK
(Meekly)
How could Jesus, who is God, steal?

The Philosophy teacher smiles while taunting Teddy.

DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER
How could you, a boy with the mind of a giant, ask a question with so little insight?

Snickers from Colby. He looks to Bob and Malcolm who also snicker. He looks over to Heather but she disapproves of the teacher and the situation.

Teddy looks dumbfounded, and blushes bright red.

AUDIE
Leave him alone.

The teacher checks his seating chart for a name.

DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER
Mr... Murphy. What on earth happened to your shirt sleeves?

AUDIE
Does that make you feel big? Humiliating kids?

Heather takes note of Audie sticking up for Teddy.

The students can’t believe Audie is taking on a teacher.

DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER
Well, I can see this is going to be a scrappy class. I like scrappy classes. With scrappy boys full of their scrappy selves. So, let’s get right to it. I want a thirty-five page paper by Monday on the history of religion in Europe, courtesy of Mr. Murphy.

(MORE)
And Mr. Murphy, don’t ever come to my class in a shirt that exposes your armpits again.

The kids are shocked. And pissed at Audie.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Outside the classroom, Audie's classmates are stunned.

COLBY COLLINS
Thanks for the homework.

AUDIE
Write yours in Latin. Maybe you’ll get extra credit.

Audie walks off. Colby calls after him:

COLBY COLLINS
Hey Murphy! Everyone has to write a paper because you and your potato farmer couldn’t keep your mouths shut. You queer or something?

Audie stops. Turns.

AUDIE
What did you say?

COLBY COLLINS
I was just wondering if you and Eddie are queer.

TEDDY GRESZIK
It’s Teddy.

Audie takes a step toward Colby.

AUDIE
You gotta be queer to talk back to a teacher?

COLBY COLLINS
Teachers teach. We learn. Eddie was just being taught.

TEDDY GRESZIK
It’s Teddy. Not Eddie.

COLBY COLLINS
But I get it if it’s because you’re queer.
AUDIE
Watch your mouth.

HUGO (SOTTO)
What does queer mean?

MALCOLM (SOTTO)
Good at philosophy, I think.

COLBY COLLINS
It’s nothing to be embarrassed about, being queer.

AUDIE
Shut your mouth or I’ll shut it for you.

COLBY COLLINS
A lot of smart dudes were queer. Alan Turing. Da Vinci. Elton John played at my father’s birthday party. He’s queer like you. And lemme tell ya something: that queer’s got some pipes.

Colby doesn't even see the punch coming. He goes down like a bag of hammers. Audie stands over him. The image from earlier.

AUDIE
Get up and I’ll do it again.

Audie stands over Colby, fists cocked.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT./EXT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – DAY

Pandemonium. There’s incredible disarray with the fact that violence has come to the Kaltschmidt School.

The reaction is not commensurate with the situation.

Rather, it’s as if a school shooting has occurred.

Kids are running. Teachers are yelling. Kids hide under desks, crawl into their lockers.

MCCARTHY (VO)
We've never had a problem with physical bullying. Intellectual bullying? Sure...

Tiger Mom Jinny carries Hugo out of the school, cradling him like a baby. She’s surprisingly strong--and fast.

TWO PARAMEDICS load Colby onto an ambulance for a trip to the ER as a precautionary step.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – HEADMASTER’S OFFICE – DAY

MCCARTHY, in his office, addresses the camera.

MCCARTHY
Debate and intimidation come with the territory of a competitive academic environment. But fisticuffs? I don’t think we’ve ever had a student before who knew how to clench a fist.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – TEACHERS LOUNGE – DAY

TWENTY TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS are crammed into the Teachers Lounge debating how the punch should be dealt with.

Rather than a calm discussion, it is heated. Teachers shout and overlap one another. It has the air of a raucous Parliamentary session in a newly formed country.

MCCARTHY (CONT’D)
We must have order! Quiet!

They quiet, at least momentarily.
DANISH PHILOSOPHY TEACHER
What is official school policy?

SANDRA BOUCHER, 62, Humanities Teacher and devoted hater of all things male, speaks up.

MISS BOUCHER
Expulsion!

OLD MALE TEACHER
The school honor code does not say that.

MISS BOUCHER
There is nothing honorable about bullying! Testosterone is a scourge!

YOUNG FEMALE TEACHER
We allow assaults?

MISS BOUCHER
Castration!

MCCARTHY
He claims he was provoked.

MISS BOUCHER
Provocation is no excuse for physical violence. Neither are testicles.

OLD MALE TEACHER
Stop attacking testicles.

A TINY MALE TEACHER with a distractingly high voice, 39, pipes up.

TINY TEACHER
We must protect the Queers!

MISS BOUCHER
This isn’t about gender preference! It is about male rage. Rage caused by adolescent testosterone!

OLD MALE TEACHER
Girls cry, boys fight. Live, learn, deal.

MISS BOUCHER
Will you please hurry up and die?
He fakes falling over and dying. More shouting and ad-libbed disrespect.

**ANGLE ON:** ANGELA WEST WASHINGTON, 46. Commanding, regal.

    ANGELA
    Why don’t we all take a deep breath
    and remember why we’re here?
    (and)
    I gotta be honest.

    MCCARTHY
    When have you not been, Angela?

Chuckles from the teachers. They all like her.

    ANGELA
    I’m from Philadelphia. And I’m
    happy to finally see someone smack
    someone else in the face.

Gasps.

**INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - ANGELA’S OFFICE - DAY**

Direct address by Angela West:

    ANGELA
    Look, in academia, if someone
    bullies you, you either sue them
    for sexual harassment or you start
    a whispering campaign that destroys
    their character. But in life,
    throughout humanity’s evolution,
    when people said stupid stuff,
    people got punched in the mouth.

**INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - DINING HALL - DAY**

As before. Angela is wrapping up the same argument:

    ANGELA
    The mouth can be mightier than the
    sword. And the mouth can really
    hurt people. That might be as
    important a lesson to teach here as
    the obvious “No more punching”
    lesson. I say let the lesson sink
    in to everyone, have the puncher
    apologize, and move on.

Off the teachers, and McCarthy, considering her suggestion.
INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - HEADMASTER’S OFFICE - DAY

McCarthy direct address:

MCCARTHY
We're unaccustomed to violence. Sure, we always have the random suicide or two every year— but, again, the nature of suicide is self-inflicted violence. Relational aggression? Between teachers, sure. But not student on student.

INT. MURPHY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy and Celeste address the camera.

TOMMY
I raised my kids to know how to throw a punch. Proud they all can.

CELESTE
That school puts out an everyday cafeteria buffet that blows away Sunday brunch at the Sheraton.

TOMMY
Celeste, enough with the buffet.

CELESTE
My point is: He should fill his backpack and bring stuff home for dinner.

TOMMY
My point is: Fighting’s fighting. Bullying’s bullying. That’s why they have two different words. They’re two different things.

INT. VARIOUS LIVING ROOMS - DAY

Direct address reactions to the punch from parents.

Tiger Mom Jinny:

TIGER MOM JINNY
I thought I escaped this kind of brutality when I left Seoul. My grandmother was forced to comfort Japanese soldiers in World War Two.

(MORE)
And when I say forced to comfort, I mean “forced to service sexually.” It starts with punching, it leads to war, and then, can state-sanctioned prostitution be far behind? Cut the snake off at the head, now.

Colby’s parents:

COLBY’S MOM
Colby’s always been drawn to the plight of gay people. He was a big fan of Mr. Rogers when he was younger.

Teddy’s parents:

TEDDY’S DAD
I thought gays only lived where they did musicals. Does this school do musicals?

TEDDY’S MOM
I always loved “Godspell.” When they crucify the Hippie Jesus, it just gets me. Every time. Even though you know that’s the way he has to go, it’s always surprising.

INT. HOSPITAL – EMERGENCY ROOM – DAY

Colby, with fat lip, milks his injury for all it's worth.

COLBY COLLINS
I was just trying to tell Audie that it’s nothing to be ashamed of...being gay. And if Audie and Teddy really indeed love one another, then that is a love I will celebrate, encourage, and if I am lucky to be in a position of power in school government, I pledge to pass legislation supporting gay rights at Kaltschmidt and call it the “Audie Murphy has no shame in being gay law.” It would be an honor on behalf of my homosexual classmates to do so.
INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - HEADMASTER’S OFFICE - DAY

Audie, Tommy and Celeste sit across from McCarthy. Behind McCarthy is a giant aquarium.

CELESTE
I love your aquarium.

MCCARTHY
‘Tis our ancestors, I feel a kinship.

TOMMY
You one of those freaks who think Adam and Eve were dolphins?

CELESTE
Scuba diving must be so scary.

MCCARTHY
Audie needs to apologize. He assaulted another student.

TOMMY
He just punched him. If he’d assaulted him, kid wouldn’t have got up.

Celeste walks over to the aquarium.

CELESTE
How do you keep the bigger fish from eating the smaller ones?

TOMMY
My son is not apologizing for hitting someone who called him queer.

MCCARTHY
Numerous witnesses say Colby simply inquired about Audie’s romantic gender preference.

TOMMY
That kid knew what he was doing! It’s an old taunt. I mastered the “homo” thing by the time I was four.

MCCARTHY
This is an elite school and we demand elite behavior from our students.
CELESTE
Mr. McCarthy, can’t we just chalk this one up to nerves, and kids, and you know, boys being boys, and snails and puppy tails, and lords and flies and you know, just, I’m not saying “look the other way” exactly, I mean, we can look that way--I am looking that way, and we’ve looked and now that we’ve looked we can--we can reflect, and we--we you know, we... move on. I think we should just, just move on. It’d be good for everyone. Keep on keeping on, ya know?

MCCARTHY
In order to make this right, Audie needs to apologize in front of the entire school tomorrow.

Audie finally speaks up.

AUDIE
Why would I say sorry if I meant it? He knows I meant it. I know I meant it. He knows what he did to make me do what I did. Seems kinda stupid to say sorry after the fact, ya know?

MCCARTHY
A public apology or expulsion. I’ll give you the evening to reconsider.

Off Audie, wishing he hadn’t punched Colby.

INT. MURPHY HOME - KITCHEN - TWILIGHT

The family discusses the situation. Tommy is pissed.

AUDIE
Maybe I just say it.

TOMMY
You know the family motto, Audie! No regrets! Never regret pounding someone who calls you a name.

AUDIE
It’s a...pretty cool place.
TOMMY
You’re not apologizing.

CELESTE
Well, I want to go on record as saying it’s not because we have a problem with queers.

TOMMY
Course it ain’t! Queers is good people. My cousin Mark is queer.

CUT TO: MARK, 35, TOMMY’S COUSIN.

Mark, by appearance and manner, seems as stereotypically hetero as Bruce Springsteen or Brett Favre.

Cousin Mark
My cousin Tommy and his family have always supported my efforts with Queer Nation. They march with me every year in the Gay Tolerance Parade in Provincetown.

CUT TO: EXT. GAY PARADE IN PROVINCETOWN – DAY

Tommy, Mark, Audie, Celeste, Jackie and Molly all march and hold signs in a sea of tanned, tank-topped men.

CUT BACK TO: TOMMY AND CELESTE

Tommy addresses the camera.

TOMMY
Lemme tell you something I learned from hanging out with my cousin. Any guy who’s over 40 and in shape? Gay.

INT. MURPHY HOME – UPSTAIRS HALLWAY – NIGHT

Jackie has pinned Audie down by his shoulders. She sits atop Audie and gets inches away from his face.

JACKIE
If you apologize, we look like a family of pussies. Do you think I’m a pussy?

AUDIE
No.
JACKIE
What was that? Did you just call me a pussy?

AUDIE
Jackie, I’m inches away from your ears. You heard me.

She cocks her fist like she’s gonna punch him. Molly walks in the room. She’s wearing a candy necklace

MOLLY
Jackie, I got you a candy necklace at Amber’s house.

JACKIE
Made outta Smarties or Spree?

MOLLY
Smarties.

Jackie gets off Audie and starts eating the necklace. She exits, but not before turning back to Audie:

JACKIE
You’re dead meat if you apologize.

MOLLY
Sorry to hear you got kicked outta school. It was so big and clean and Harry Potterish.

AUDIE
Yeah.

MOLLY
Do they play Quidditch there?

AUDIE
I don’t--No, Molly, they don’t.

Audie is uncharacteristically emotional.

MOLLY
Are you sad I didn’t bring you a candy necklace? Sorry, Jackie told me she’d cut my ponytail off if I got you one too.

AUDIE
It’s fine.
MOLLY
You’ll get to go back to Paul Tsongas Middle School with me!
Remember? I got held back last summer! We’ll be in the same grade this year! We can totally be science fair buddies.

Audie looks over at Molly, his beloved sister, the one soft spot in his life and smiles, slightly.

MOLLY (CONT’D)
You don’t wanna go back to Paul Tsongas, do you? You like that K school better?

AUDIE
I liked that I didn’t have to pretend to not be smart.

A beat. She lets this sink in. Leans her head on his shoulder.

EXT. DOHERTY HOUSE - WALKWAY - TWILIGHT

Audie skateboards up to a three decker house that should be demolished. This is the Doherty Household.

His friend Brian stands on the grass-less lawn, and breaks bricks in half with a small sledgehammer. He throws a brick to his older brother, DONNIE DOHERTY, 21. Donnie holds a mason’s trowel with cement on it. Donnie, shirtless, is muscular in an Iggy Pop-ish way, and tatted up with shamrocks, Irish Claddagh symbols and a huge bloody crucifixion scene on his back. He looks like who he is--an ex-convict always on the verge of recidivism. But he’s the friendliest, calmest guy ever.

DONNIE
Audie.

AUDIE
Donnie. Brian.

BRIAN
Audie.

DONNIE
How was your first day at the smart school?

AUDIE
Punched a smart ass, got kicked out.
BRIAN

Nice!

Brian high-fives him.

DONNIE

Zero tolerance policies are gonna ruin this country. Watch.

AUDIE

Well, if I go back and apologize for punching the smart ass, I can stay. But I’m not sorry so, I’m not saying I am.

DONNIE

So there isn’t a zero tolerance policy? It’s a “Say Sorry” policy?

AUDIE

Yup.

DONNIE

So, you’re basically giving up the scholarship to the smart school because you don’t want to say you’re sorry?

AUDIE

The kid deserved it.

DONNIE

Hey, little man, if that were the way the world went, I wouldn’t have done two years for smacking that cop with a brick. For a smart kid you’re kinda stupid.

(Lays another brick)

Sometimes you have to do what the man asks you to do—or you end up in solitary with only a thin blanket and a bucket to crap in. Try to look at the school as a game where they’re slowly telling you the rules. Learn the rules. Play the game. Win.

Off Audie, considering this.

EXT. MURPHY HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Heather knocks on the Murphy’s front door. Her two mothers wait at the curb in their Honda Odyssey. Anxiously.
Jackie answers the door. Sees Heather. Yells to her Mom.

JACKIE
Mom! Mexican food’s here! (To Heather) My mom will pay you.

Jackie turns away.

HEATHER
Excuse me, is Audie home?

Jackie turns back.

JACKIE
Audie ordered the food?

HEATHER
No, I’m not--I go to school with him.

JACKIE
Not anymore you don’t.

Jackie yells up the stairs.

JACKIE (CONT’D)
Audie, some barrio girl from your drater school is here!

Audie comes downstairs. Can’t believe Heather is there.

AUDIE
What are you doing here?

HEATHER
Other than making my two Moms mad that I’m neglecting cello practice?

Audie spies Heather’s two Moms, in the car, engine running.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
I thought it was really cool how you stuck up for Teddy today.

AUDIE
I didn’t stick up for anyone.

HEATHER
Yes, you did.
AUDIE
No, usually when I tell someone to shut their mouth they know what that means. I painted myself into a corner.

HEATHER
I’ve been going to “gifted” schools since pre-school and I’ve never seen anyone stick up for another kid like that. I don’t want you to quit.

Audie’s heart swells just a bit.

AUDIE
I can’t apologize for something I don’t regret doing.

HEATHER
Are you familiar with the Incan Myth of Manco Capac?

Audie shakes his head no...

HEATHER (CONT’D)
Manco Capac was someone who so many things came easily to...

As she talks, her voice drops out, and the camera pushes in on Audie falling head over heels in love with her.

QUICK CUT TO AUDIE DIRECT ADDRESS:

AUDIE
What was I thinking? I'm thinking - -I'm not listening to a word she's saying, I'm thinking she has the whitest teeth I've ever seen, and they're so even. My sister Molly's got a tooth that's going sideways.

* SNAPSHOT: Molly wearing headgear.

BACK TO HEATHER AND AUDIE ON THE PORCH:

HEATHER
So, Manco Capac used his courage to harvest the coca plants so the Incan people would live in harmony. (she pauses for effect) I know you have your reasons for not apologizing. But I hope you do.
She smiles, leans in and kisses him on the cheek. She walks back down the stairs, and gets in the car. Waves.

Audie watches her drive off. Smitten.

Celeste walks out to see Heather driving off with her moms.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – HEADMASTER’S OFFICE – DAY

McCarthy addresses the camera.

MCCARTHY
Heather Kwitkowski-Welch is a real gift to this school, she stirred something in Audie that he’d never felt before.

QUICK CUT TO DIRECT ADDRESS BY CELESTE:

CELESTE
Something stirring’s alright.
Something called sperm.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL – AUDITORIUM – DAY

Audie walks to a podium on the stage.

NARRATOR
With his mother’s backing and a stirring in his nascent loins, Audie promised his father that his apology would be insincere and purely a hollow gesture. After some time with Celeste alone in their bedroom to calm Tommy down, the Murphys allowed Audie to proceed with his public shaming.

The entire school awaits Audie’s apology.

ANGLE ON: Colby, mouthing the word “Queer” from the audience.

Audie is incensed. But then he sees Heather, in the crowd, smiling at him.

AUDIE
I--I just--I just wanted to apologize to Colby for punching him in the face.

Colby, self-satisfied and smirking.
AUDIE (CONT'D)

I didn't think that it would only take one punch to knock down such an obviously strong and tough kid. But one punch did a ton of damage to him. And for that I apologize.

The entire crowd slowly stands and applauds.

Except for Colby, already plotting his revenge.

Audie walks off the stage to handshakes and pats on the back.

MCCARTHY

Well done, young man. Well done!

He can't believe that his lack of sincerity wasn't a factor. He's learning about the world of academia quickly.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - DINING HALL - DAY

Audie sits with Teddy and Heather. He looks over to Colby who sits with Bob Ghandi and the rest of the gang.

INT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - DAY

McCarthy sips a Diet Dr. Pepper. Addresses the camera.

MCCARTHY

The author Malcolm Gladwell wrote a book called "Outliers" that would have people believe that practice is what makes people great. Well, this might be the case in things like ping-pong and bowling. But genius is something bestowed upon the "few". Not something that the "many" can manufacture through repetition.

EXT. KALTSCHMIDT SCHOOL - EQUESTRIAN CENTER - DAY

Colby walks out of the impressive K School stables wearing riding pants and a full English riding outfit. He gets on his huge black stallion and goes out to ride.

ANGLE ON: Audie camouflaged in the nearby woods. His face is painted with Special Forces war paint.

He counts out fifteen pennies. Puts them in the cut-off foot of a pair of panty hose. Wraps a rubber band tightly around it. He loads the ammunition into a wrist rocket slingshot.
MCCARTHY (V.O.)
Genius, once discovered, must be nurtured.

ANGLE ON: Colby, as the magnificent stallion approaches a jump, leaps up--and then BOOM, Colby is hit square in the chest and knocked off his horse.

MCCARTHY
This is why the K School exists.
To lift our gifted up, and give them the resources necessary to move humanity forward.

Audie crawls out of the woods with a satisfied grin.

INT. MURPHY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

NARRATOR
Audie was asked the most important thing he learned about his first few days at the K school.

Audie, still clad in camouflage and war paint, eating another bowl of Froot Loops.

AUDIE
Sometimes you have to say you’re sorry, even if you don’t mean it, just so people won’t take away the things you want. Like Heather.

Off Audie’s grin...

FADE TO BLACK.