

SUDDENLY SOMEONE

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Robb “Robbo” Zelonky

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SUDDENLY SOMEONE

A Full Length Musical

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Robb “Robbo” Zelonky

SYNOPSIS: Trying to find one’s place in the world, while also navigating the challenges of middle school life, can be daunting, to say the least. Due to his vocal talents – and the power of social media – beleaguered and bullied Michael Hope suddenly finds himself living an unexpected life of celebrity. In the end, he realizes the heights of stardom mean very little, when compared to the love of his family and friends.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 females, 8 males, 3 either, 10-40 ensemble)

MICHAEL HOPE (m)	Michael has a kind and caring nature, but the bullying he faces in school, and the pain of his feelings about his verbally abusive and estranged father, make it a daily struggle for him to feel his blessings. <i>(232 lines)</i>
PETER HOWELL (m).....	Michael and Joanna’s quick-witted, loyal, and encouraging best friend. <i>(76 lines)</i>
JOANNA BAYLESS (f).....	Michael and Peter’s gentle, empathetic, and protective best friend. <i>(56 lines)</i>
ASHTON WILKINS (m).....	A talented athlete who is popular, charismatic, and thought to be good looking. He joyfully torments those who are unpopular, particularly Michael. <i>(74 lines)</i>
CASSIE POMARO (f).....	A talented cheerleader with an icy exterior that covers her own emotional pain, she is dating Ashton Wilkins. <i>(38 lines)</i>

- DAVID MURDOFF (m)..... Possessing low self-esteem and a high level of duplicity, he is desperate for approval from the popular kids. *(43 lines)*
- TINA HOPE (f)..... Sixth grade. Michael's cheerful sister who cares more for Michael than she does about anyone else in the world. *(23 lines)*
- LANDON MCGHEE (m)..... Possessed of an utterly magnetic personality, this gifted athlete is accepting of everyone. Due to his kindness and popularity, in Michael's imagination, Landon literally moves in slow motion. *(15 lines)*
- DIANA HOPKINS (f) Committed and loving toward her two kids. Five years divorced from Michael and Tina Hope's father. *(26 lines)*
- MS. KAMPROS (f)..... A middle school teacher who lacks a warm heart. She is often vindictive toward the students who struggle to fit in, clearly favoring the popular kids in school. *(34 lines)*
- MR. ALLEN (m)..... A passionate middle school teacher and caring role model who is supportive and inspiring to his students. *(22 lines)*
- RICHARD HOPE (m) Michael's father, a selfish and bullying narcissist. *(33 lines)*
- KAITLYN SLADE (f)..... An internationally renowned teen singing superstar who is mature, highly intelligent and exceptionally kind. *(10 lines)*

- ERIN CANTRELL (f) She has a lovely, strong spirit,
and a physical disability.
(7 lines)
- BLAKE HARRIS (m)..... Not bright or caring, he blindly
follows Ashton’s lead and
torments his more vulnerable
classmates. (10 lines)
- KATHERINE COSTELLO (f) Student council president and
exceptionally enthusiastic about
every moment in her life.
(5 lines)
- LOUDSPEAKER KID (m/f)..... A Neptune student, this
animated wordsmith is the
energetic ‘school announcer’.
(7 lines)
- TERRY MOORE (m/f)..... A spirited rock ‘n’ roll guitarist,
Terry feigns playing an electric
guitar for the talent show.
(2 lines)
- DR. ALEX NILSSON (m/f) School superintendent. (3 lines)

ENSEMBLE: The many students of Neptune Junior High.

- CHEERLEADER (f) (1 line)
- FAN ONE (m/f)..... (2 lines)
- FAN TWO (m/f)..... (3 lines)
- STUDENT ONE (m/f)..... (1 line)
- STUDENT TWO (m/f)..... (1 line)
- STUDENT THREE (m/f)..... (1 line)
- STUDENT FOUR (m/f) (1 line)
- STUDENTS (m/f)..... Any Number. Students,
Cheerleaders, Athletes. (Non-
Speaking)

EXTRAS:

YOUNG MICHAEL (m)..... 5-7; Appears only in the flashback scene during the song *Everybody Has a Story*. (Non-Speaking)

YOUNG CASSIE (f)..... 5-7; Appears only in the flashback scene during the song *Everybody Has a Story*. (Non-Speaking)

NOTE: All of the students with speaking parts, except for Tina, are in the eighth grade in Act I, and in the ninth grade in Act II.

DURATION: 90 minutes

SETTING: Neptune Junior High in Worthy, Illinois

TIME: Present

MUSICAL SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: Early May, a few weeks away from the end of the school year.

SCENE 1: SCHOOL BUS STOP

SONG #1: WHEN YOU'RE A KID

JOANNA, DAVID, MICHAEL, ASHTON, CASSIE, PETER, LANDON, STUDENT ENSEMBLE

SCENE 2: HALLWAY

SONG #2: SLOW MOTION BOY THEME

INSTRUMENTAL

SCENE 3: MS. KAMPROS' CLASSROOM

SONG #3: DOWN BELOW

ASHTON, BLAKE, STUDENT ENSEMBLE

SCENE 4: HALLWAY

SONG #4: EVERYBODY HAS A STORY

CASSIE

SCENE 5: MICHAEL'S BEDROOM**SONG #5: ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY***PETER, MICHAEL, ENSEMBLE***SCENE 6: HALLWAY****SONG #6: SLOW MOTION BOY***STUDENT ENSEMBLE***SONG #7: SLOW MOTION BOY (REPRISE)***MICHAEL, LONDON, ASHTON, STUDENT ENSEMBLE***SCENE 7: CAFETORIUM****SONG #8: SUDDENLY SOMEONE***MICHAEL***SCENE 8: MICHAEL'S BEDROOM****SONG #9: HOPE IS EVERYTHING***TINA, PETER, JOANNA, MICHAEL, MR. ALLEN, ASHTON, DAVID,
LONDON, CASSIE, ENSEMBLE***ACT TWO:** Six months later, in November.**SCENE 1: LOS ANGELES STREET****SONG #10: YOU'RE AT THE TOP***ENSEMBLE***SCENE 2: LA HOTEL ROOM & JOANNA'S BEDROOM****SCENE 3: CAFETORIUM****SONG #11: THE HERO OF NEPTUNE JR. HIGH***JOANNA, PETER, MICHAEL, STUDENT ENSEMBLE***SONG #12: SAME SCARED BOY***MICHAEL, STUDENT ENSEMBLE***SCENE 4: CAFETORIUM****SONG #13: FIGHT ME***MICHAEL, DIANA, TINA, PETER, ASHTON, JOANNA, CASSIE, DAVID,
LONDON, KAITLYN***SONG #14: SUDDENLY SOMEONE (REPRISE)***KAITLYN, MICHAEL, ENSEMBLE*

SOUND CUES

A list of SOUND CUES are available at the end of the script.

SET

The base set can be of the Neptune Junior High hallway. With simple additions to simulate all other scenes.

SCHOOL BUS STOP: A single sign with "BUS STOP". Can be played in front of curtain or with tight spotlight.

HALLWAY and CAFETORIUM: Interior of a school. 'Lockers' painted on the flats upstage right and upstage left, 'Lockers' on the back wall with room above for signage. If you have a large ensemble, the back wall is a great place to put choral risers or platforms for levels.

MS. KAMPROS' CLASSROOM: Add 8 desk/chairs (or just chairs) to the Hallway scene.

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM: A bed, bedroom items, and two trunks. The bed and bedroom items can be painted on rolling flats.

LOS ANGELES STREET: Palm trees, spotlights, and Hollywood sign can be painted on rolling flats.

LOS ANGELES HOTEL ROOM: Can be played in front of curtain or with tight spotlight. Optional: hotel room items to suggest location.

JOANNA'S BEDROOM: Can be played in front of curtain or with tight spotlight. Optional: bedroom items to suggest location.

COSTUMES

STUDENTS – Should wear what typical middle school kids wear. In Act One, warm or summer clothing: namely sneakers, all types of short sleeved shirts, jeans and/or shorts. In Act Two, cold weather or fall clothing: long sleeved shirts and jeans. Neptune sports teams are known as the 'Seahorses.' The seahorse logo can be incorporated into the daily clothing choices of some students. Also, as the play takes place in a Chicago suburb, a few of the ensemble kids should wear Chicago Cubs, Bears, Bulls, White Sox or Blackhawks shirts or jerseys.

CHEERLEADERS – Neptune cheerleader uniforms. Uniforms should possess chiefly blue material to underscore the school name, Neptune (the god of the sea). A Seahorse mascot logo may be incorporated into the uniform.

ATHLETES and BLAKE – Student Athletes should wear Neptune sport tees (like a ‘baseball tee’, with a ‘three quarter length’ sleeve). The sport tees should include Neptune blue color on the sleeves, with the character’s last names and team numbers on the back.

MICHAEL – The quality of Michael’s clothing improves between the acts, going from well-worn jeans and a t-shirt in Act One (though for the talent show, he can wear a nicer shirt), to expensive designer wear in Act Two.

JOANNA – could wear a Spiderman shirt early on. She can change into another type of unique shirt (*i.e.*, *Harry Potter*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Avengers*, *etc.*) for the talent show in Act One. In Act Two, she should wear something more stylish.

PETER – Wears *only* Cubs shirts/player jerseys throughout the play. Needs a Cubs baseball cap.

CASSIE – Act One: cheerleader uniform. Act Two: Contemporary, highly fashionable clothing.

ASHTON – In Act One, wear Student Athlete clothing. In Act Two, Ashton wears a long-sleeved flannel shirt.

LANDON – In Act One, wear Student Athlete clothing. In Act Two, Landon wears a long-sleeved flannel shirt.

DAVID – wears only shirts/jerseys representing the Chicago White Sox.

KAITLYN – Cutting edge, trendy, stylish clothing.

YOUNG CASSIE – A red dress with a white flower pattern on the hem. Red shoes, white socks. Hair in two braids with red ribbons on each one.

YOUNG MICHAEL – Jeans, sneakers, and a polo type shirt.

TEACHERS and PARENTS – Everyday professionally appropriate attire.

PROPS

- School backpack (Cast)
- Digital Tablet (Cast)
- Heavily bejeweled rapper style necklace (Cast)
- Sunglasses (Cast)
- Caps, colorful (Ensemble)
- One bottle of English Leather Cologne (Michael)
- Cell Phone (Cassie, Richard, Landon, Peter, David, Kaitlyn, Diana, Michael)
- Football (Ashton)
- Eight chair/desks
- One dollhouse
- Two trunks
- Twinkie (Peter)
- Electric guitar with guitar strap (Terry Moore)
- Gold Mylar Star Balloon, on a string, attached to a small, weighted gift bag (Katherine Costello)
- 4 to 6 sizable posters, saying things like: 'HOPE RETURNS!' / 'WE LOVE YOU, MICHAEL!' / 'HOPE IS IN THE HOUSE!' / 'WE GOT HOPE!' (Ensemble)
- Crutches (Ashton)
- Heavy knee brace (Ashton)
- Sizable gift-wrapped box with bow (Michael)
- Clipboard with pen and legal document (Richard)
- Large cup of coffee/ travelers mug (Richard)
- Small purse (Kaitlyn)

DEDICATION

Suddenly Someone is dedicated to my mom, Arlene, for pushing me into my first play in eighth grade. It is also dedicated to John Jr. for being the best and most supportive friend this former kid ever had, and to John Sr. for showing me what a father could be. Also, to Dave Landis, Michael Gravois, and Amy Hanford for patiently helping me shape the show from its original, unwieldy state. As well, to the teachers and directors who were so passionate, and had the greatest influence on me: Russ Bergard, Karen Smith, Norm Nilsson, Kathy Zoran, Jay Smith, Jim Allen, Elaine Steele, Linda McEachran, Kate Costello and Dennis Zacek. A special thank you to Michelle Bardos for her steadfast belief in this story when it was first presented to her in 2011, and to the exceptionally talented Kenny Long and Mark Creamer, for their unwavering dedication to the music in this play, and of course to every kid from Appling Middle School in Bartlett, TN, who brought this story to life prior to its publication, including the golden voiced Jeremy Beloate, our first Michael. My sincerest gratitude to Rena Goldstein for her invaluable support, and Brooklyn Publisher's David Burton and Stephanie Michalicek, for their kindness, patience, wisdom, and belief in the messages of *Suddenly Someone*. Also, thanks to Ross Levin, for his insight and guidance. Finally, my deepest love and gratitude to Zoe, Elijah and Jacob for making their old dad the luckiest 'someone' he could ever have hoped to have been.

In loving memory of Jeremy Williams,
our brilliant, first Slow Motion Boy. He was the bomb-diggedy.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1
SCHOOL BUS STOP

*As curtain speech ends, **SOUND CUE 1: Transition Music (Suddenly Someone)***

AT START: *MICHAEL enters with a backpack slung over his shoulder. Looking over his shoulder, he furtively pulls a bottle of English Leather cologne from the backpack and splashes it onto his face. ASHTON and CASSIE enter. CASSIE is latching onto ASHTON'S arm; she texts with her free hand. Upon seeing MICHAEL, ASHTON stops walking. MICHAEL quickly puts the cologne back into his backpack.*

ASHTON: Aww dang, why do I gotta see your face first thing every morning, Hopeless?

MICHAEL: *(Beseechingly.)* Hope! I'm Michael Hope, Ashton. Not Hopeless. Just Hope.

ASHTON pulls away from CASSIE and grabs the back of MICHAEL'S neck, digging his fingers in deeply, forcing MICHAEL to bend forward. CASSIE doesn't look up from her phone.

ASHTON: *(Sneeringly.)* I don't know. I think 'hopeless' fits, don't you?

MICHAEL: Ow, ow, ow, stop! Ouch! Ouch! *(Slight pause.)* Cassie?

ASHTON: *(Jerking his neck and squeezing tighter, disdainfully.)* Don't talk to her, Hopeless.

MICHAEL: Ow! She knows me! I can talk to her! *(Asking for CASSIE'S help.)* Cassie!

CASSIE: *(Looks away from her phone, to him, quizzically.)* Who are you, now?

ASHTON: *(Roughly releases MICHAEL'S neck.)* Ha ha! *(Mocking MICHAEL.)* "She knows me!" *(Holds his hand out for CASSIE, who takes it.)* You're a joke, Hopeless.

ASHTON and CASSIE exit.

TINA: *(Enters.)* Brother! You're gonna miss the bus!

MICHAEL: *(Rubbing his neck.)* Ohhh... is that a promise?

TINA: (*Crosses to MICHAEL, looking to where ASHTON and CASSIE exited, concerned.*) Did something happen?

MICHAEL: (*Emphatically.*) No, no. Slept wrong.

TINA: (*Catches a whiff of the cologne, moves toward MICHAEL.*) What's that—? (*Sniffs MICHAEL.*) Is that— (*Moves inches from MICHAEL'S cheek, sniffs again.*) —is that Dad's cologne?

MICHAEL: (*Exhales, mortified.*) Tina.

TINA: Oh, Michael. (*Hugging MICHAEL.*) I'm sorry you miss him. But he wasn't worth it. (*Kindly.*) You have to count your blessings, Michael. (*Heads away from him, toward the bus stop.*)

MICHAEL: Name one.

TINA: (*Stops and feigns offense.*) Ah – I'm your sister!

MICHAEL: (*Smiles.*) Name two.

TINA: Peter and Joanna!

MICHAEL: (*TINA'S winning.*) Mmm. I need a third blessing.

TINA: (*Tapping her wrist.*) School in twenty-one minutes! (*Exits.*)

MICHAEL: (*Calling after TINA.*) Ha! I win! (*To audience.*) School is not a blessing.

ALL STUDENTS enter from different areas of the stage and audience.

SONG #1: WHEN YOU'RE A KID

JOANNA, DAVID, MICHAEL, ASHTON, CASSIE, PETER, LANDON, STUDENT ENSEMBLE

SOUND CUE 2

STUDENT ENSEMBLE:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID THEY SAY YOU'VE GOT IT MADE,
THEY SAY YOU HAVE TO BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR CHANCE TO GET AN EDUCATION.
DO THEY THINK WE'RE ON A SPRING VACATION?
DO THEY RECALL WHAT IT WAS LIKE IN SCHOOL?
A PLACE WHERE EV'RYBODY CHANGED THE GOLDEN RULE.
DO UNTO OTHERS FIRST, AND DO IT MEANER AND DO IT WORSE.

JOANNA:

AND I JUST WANT TO BE CONSIDERED SPECIAL OR MAYBE PRETTY.

DAVID:

AND I WOULD GIVE UP MY SOUL, TO FIN'LLY HAVE SOME POPULARITY.

MICHAEL: (*Indicating ASHTON.*)

AND SOME KIDS ARE BORN TO STAND TALL

MICHAEL and ASHTON:

BECAUSE OF THINGS THEY/WE CAN DO WITH A BALL

ASHTON throws football into the wings.

STUDENT ENSEMBLE:

AND IT DOESN'T HURT TO LOOK LIKE YOU'RE A STAR.

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID THEY SAY YOU'VE GOT IT MADE

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

DON'T HAVE TO PAY A SINGLE BILL,
DON'T HAVE TO CHECK THE TIRE PRESSURE GAUGE,
OR FILE TAXES, OR DEAL WITH AGE.

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID THEY SAY IT'S HAPPY TIME,

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID,

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

THEY SAY THAT BEING IN THE DUMPS IS QUITE THE CRIME.
KEEP YOUR CHIN UP AND DON'T COMPLAIN.
ARREST ME NOW, 'CUZ THAT'S INSANE!

CASSIE:

AND IT'S SO HARD TO MAINTAIN,
MY POSITION AT THE TOP OF THE CHAIN.

PETER:

AND BEING FUNNY ISN'T A SIN,
IF IT'S THE ONLY WAY A PERSON CAN WIN.

LONDON:

AND I'M ONE INJURY AWAY, FROM BEING AVERAGE,
I GUESS THAT'S O.K.

STUDENT ENSEMBLE:

AND IT DOESN'T HURT TO LOOK LIKE YOU'RE A STAR.

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID THEY SAY YOU'VE GOT IT MADE,

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID THEY SAY YOU'VE GOT IT MADE,

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID THEY SAY YOU'VE GOT IT MADE,

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

YOU'VE GOT IT MADE

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE B:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE A:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

STUDENT ENSEMBLE:

WHEN YOU'RE A KID

SOUND CUE 3: *School bell***ACT ONE, SCENE 2****HALLWAY**

AT START: *MICHAEL, JOANNA, PETER and DAVID cross together to their lockers. ASHTON and BLAKE cross together to their lockers. At the same time, a mass of students quickly enter and exit from all locations, saying things like: "No running in the hallways!" "Oh yeah? Let 'em catch me!" "Madeline, did you see my book?" "It's in the science lab!" Perhaps a student or two approach MICHAEL belligerently, causing PETER and JOANNA to yell: "Teacher!"—making them run off. MICHAEL, PETER, and JOANNA head away from lockers. CASSIE enters, looking for ASHTON.*

CASSIE: *Ashton. (Stops, suddenly spotting ASHTON.) Ashton!*

ASHTON turns and crosses, kissing her. Holding hands, they move to their adjoining lockers. LANDON enters.

SONG #2: SLOW MOTION BOY THEME

INSTRUMENTAL

SOUND CUE 4

In MICHAEL'S imagination, LANDON moves in slow motion. Through the entirety of the song LANDON slowly crosses. The people in his vicinity move in slow motion too, patting his back, giving him hugs, high fives, fist bumps, etc. MICHAEL, standing next to PETER and JOANNA, watches LANDON glide across the stage, in awe. LANDON exits as SLOW MOTION BOY THEME ends; time returns to normal speed.

MICHAEL: Did you see that?

JOANNA and PETER: See what?

Most students have exited, except for MICHAEL, PETER, JOANNA, ASHTON, CASSIE, BLAKE, DAVID and two or three extra students.

ASHTON: Hey, Hopeless!

JOANNA: (*Imploringly.*) Don't start, Ashton.

ASHTON: Shut up, Squish. (*To MICHAEL.*) Had another question from our meeting this morning, Hopeless. (*Beat.*) Do you wear your sister's clothes?

MICHAEL: (*Confused.*) What?

ASHTON: 'Cuz you stink like perfume, princess. (*Smells MICHAEL, reacting badly to the scent.*) Whoo-hoo! (*'Fake punches' MICHAEL, causing him to flinch, and laughs.*) Use less. (*Nastily.*) The boys'll like you better.

ERIN enters and struggles with her backpack.

BLAKE: (*From near his locker, points at ERIN.*) Ash!

ASHTON leaves MICHAEL. As ERIN crosses, ASHTON viciously rips the backpack from her shoulder and drops it down to the floor, near MICHAEL and his friends. ASHTON imitates her disability while laughing mightily. ASHTON grabs CASSIE'S hand as they exit.

MICHAEL: (*Retrieving backpack from the floor.*) Want me to take these to class for you, Erin?

ERIN: Sure, Michael – thanks.

MICHAEL: (*To JOANNA and PETER.*) I'll be a minute late.

PETER: (*Simultaneously with JOANNA.*) Cool, bro.

JOANNA: (*Simultaneously with PETER.*) Want me to take 'em?

MICHAEL: No, I got it. Come on, Erin.

*MICHAEL and ERIN exit. **SOUND CUE 5:** School bell. Remaining ENSEMBLE exits in various directions. Blackout. **SOUND CUE 6:** Transition Music (When You're A Kid).*

ACT ONE, SCENE 3
MS. KAMPROS'S CLASSROOM

AT START: *Lights up when the stage and cast are set. Facing the audience and in the form of a small semi-circle, sit four chair/desks, in this order: MICHAEL'S empty chair, and then PETER, DAVID and JOANNA. On a different part of the stage, in the form of a small semi-circle, sit ASHTON, BLAKE, CHEERLEADER and another popular STUDENT. The ENSEMBLE sit upstage of the speaking cast. ALL STUDENTS talk amongst themselves and conversations continue softly under the following dialogue.*

JOANNA: Where's Ms. Kampros?

PETER: She's working on the talent show – again.

JOANNA: Can't she get in trouble for leaving us unsupervised?

DAVID: Teachers don't get in trouble.

STUDENT chatter grows ever louder. MICHAEL enters, taking his seat. PETER greets him with a fist bump.

JOANNA: Quiet down, everyone.

STUDENT conversations reach a crescendo.

JOANNA: *(Standing.)* Please be quiet!

EVERYONE is silent.

JOANNA: *(Sits, embarrassed by her outburst.)* I – I'm sorry. I just don't want us to get I.S.S.

ASHTON: We're not getting I.S.S. 'cuz I'm in this class and Kampros loves me. How stupid are you, Squish?

MICHAEL: Please don't call her that.

ASHTON: Whatever, freak. Weirdo loves bugs. Bugs go 'squish.'

PETER: *(Trying to deflect the teasing away from JOANNA.)* Actually, that's a common misconception. May I, Jo?

JOANNA indicates 'go ahead'.

PETER: *(To audience, as if giving a school report.)* Many bugs are possessed of exceptionally tough exoskeletons and aren't easily squished at all. They're much more resilient than one would expect.

Beware them, for—*(Turning to ASHTON, points at him.)* some kill.

ASHTON: *(Rising, keeping his smug humor.)* That a threat, Pooper?

DAVID: Ha! Pooper! It's so funny when you call him that!

PETER: Uh – newsflash, David. You're *our* friend. *(Speaking 'Pig-Latin'.)* Oo-yay ould-shay e-bay acking-bay e-may up!

DAVID: Did anybody understand that?

MICHAEL: He said you should be backing him up -- and he's ight-ray!

ASHTON: Awesome, Hopeless! Leave it to you to speak fluent *pig*. So 'squish' – *(Moves to JOANNA.)* your little girlfriends don't like me talking to you. Isn't that sweet?

JOANNA: *(Lying.)* He doesn't bother me.

ASHTON: It'll bother you when no one marries you.

ALL STUDENTS: Oooohh!

ASHTON crosses to BLAKE, who remains in his chair, and 'high fives' him.

ASHTON: *(Laughing.)* You four give the word 'loser' a whole new meaning.

DAVID: *(Desperately, moving toward ASHTON.)* You don't think I'm a loser, right Ashton? I'm not even really, you know – *(Gestures toward MICHAEL, PETER and JOANNA.)*

JOANNA: What? You're not with us anymore?

DAVID: *(Hopefully, to ASHTON.)* You know, we sit on the bus! I'm friends with everybody!

BLAKE: *(Mockingly.)* You sit on the bus! Good for you, man!

DAVID: A-And we talk sometimes.

ASHTON: *(Indicating MICHAEL.)* Yeah, you give me inside information about geek boy 'cuz you want *(Talking like a baby, gently slapping DAVID'S face.)* to be my fwiend.

MICHAEL: Inside information? About me? What do you tell him?

DAVID: *(Anxious.)* He's kidding!

ASHTON: Whatever.

SONG #3: DOWN BELOW*ASHTON, BLAKE, STUDENT ENSEMBLE***SOUND CUE 7**

ASHTON: (*Grabs DAVID'S arm.*) You losers just better know your place. (*Hurls DAVID to the 'unpopular' side of the classroom.*) And stay there!

ASHTON:

DOWN BELOW, UNDER MY THUMB, DOWN BELOW, AT ONE WITH THE CRUMBS
DOWN BELOW, FOREVER YOU'LL ROAM, DOWN BELOW
MAKE YOURSELVES RIGHT AT HOME.

ASHTON and BLAKE: (*Tangoing.*)

SOME OF US WILL ALWAYS SOAR, OUR HEARTS POSSESS THE LION'S ROAR
UNLIKE YOU WHO MUST LIVE, UNLIKE YOU WHO MUST LIVE, DOWN BELOW

STUDENT ENSEMBLE: (*Except for MICHAEL, PETER, JOANNA and DAVID.*)

ATHLETIC PRAISE IS SO UNIQUELY AMERICANA.
WE LIVE OUR DAYS, IN PLEASURE BEING THE TOP BANANA.
YOU WILL NEVER, EVER, EVER, EVER KNOW THESE HEADY HEIGHTS,
IT'S QUITE THE VIEW.
OUR LIVES AGLow, LIKE DYNAMITE.
IT MUST BE SAD, IT'S VERY SAD, JUST BEING YOU.

TANGO BREAK. *Students dance together, then, one on one with their own BACKPACKS.*

STUDENT ENSEMBLE: (*Except for MICHAEL, PETER, JOANNA and DAVID.*)

DOWN BELOW, OH WHAT A DEAD END,
DOWN BELOW, YOU'LL NEVER ASCEND,
DOWN BELOW, WHERE LIFE IS A BORE,
DOWN BELOW, CAN YOU TAKE ANYMORE?

THIS IS HOW YOUR STORY ENDS,
A LONELY LIFE WITH LOSER FRIENDS.
YOU CAN MARK IT CHAPTER AND VERSE,
YOU ARE STUCK I GUESS IT'S YOUR CURSE.
POOR BABIES, ALL OF YOU ARE WANNABES,
YOU'RE STUNG AND WOUNDED ON YOUR KNEES,
AND HONEY, YOU KNOW WHERE THAT IS
YEAH HONEY, YOU KNOW WHERE THAT IS, DOWN BELOW!

MS. KAMPROS: (*Enters.*) What is going on in here?

STUDENTS race back to their seats.

MS. KAMPROS: In school suspensions on Friday – for everyone!

STUDENTS groan.

ASHTON: *(Confidently.)* Hey, Ms. K.!

MS. KAMPROS: *(Crossing.)* Hi, Ashton. *(Remembering that ASHTON, her favorite student, is in this class.)* Oh! This is first period! Right. Great game on Friday, Ashton! Okay, no I.S.S. Just – pull it together! Is that clear?

ASHTON fist bumps BLAKE. STUDENTS improvise ‘You got it, Ms. K.’ ‘For sure!’ Etc.

MS. KAMPROS: The reason I was late – and you know this – is this talent show is killing me! I’m losing performers left and right. Ashton, Blake - how ‘bout you do a funny skit? Maybe you can get Landon McGhee to join you?

BLAKE: Oh – um – wrestling and uh—

MS. KAMPROS: What? You’re all above this sort of thing?

JOANNA: Well, Landon McGhee is.

CHEERLEADER: *(Derisively.)* Look who has a crush on Landon McGhee!

Many STUDENTS improvise ‘He’s so hot!’ ‘Such a babe!’ ‘Those abs!’ ‘I want him.’ Etc.

BLAKE: *(Immediately after the improvised dialogue. Stands, spoken loudly.)* Who doesn’t?

STUDENTS lean toward BLAKE.

BLAKE: I just mean – everyone loves him... he’s so popular! He... *(Embarrassed at sounding love struck.)* Shut up! *(Sits.)*

STUDENTS lean back from BLAKE.

DAVID: What's the big deal about Landon McGhee?

MICHAEL: *(Without thinking, from his seat.)* He's the slow motion boy.

STUDENTS mockingly, improvised: 'What does that mean?' 'The slow motion boy?' Etc.

MICHAEL: *(Struggling to explain.)* I mean, h-he's a superstar, right? And he's nice to *everyone*. I mean... time slows down for people like him, don't you think?

Awkward pause. The whole class finds the explanation strange – but PETER and JOANNA remain highly supportive.

MICHAEL: I sound like an idiot, don't I?

ASHTON: Aw, sweet! Gay boy's in love with Landon McGhee!

MICHAEL: *(Rising quickly.)* Shut your frakking mouth, Ashton!

MS. KAMPROS: Mr. Hope! I.S.S, tomorrow!

MICHAEL: I didn't swear!

MS. KAMPROS: I didn't like your tone.

PETER: *(Rising.)* His tone—? *(Fiercely, crossing to MS. KAMPROS.)* He just called him 'gay boy'!

MS. KAMPROS: Would you like to join your friend, Mr. Howell?

PETER: Is there room in Azkaban?

MICHAEL: *(Protecting PETER, steps between them.)* You're right. Sorry, Ms. K.

MS. KAMPROS: Not 'Ms. K' – Ms. Kampros, Mr. Hope.

MICHAEL: *(Indicating ASHTON.)* But he calls you Ms. K. all the – forget it.

ASHTON shares a laugh with BLAKE as MICHAEL heads back to his seat and sits.

MS. KAMPROS: Back on subject people! Does anybody have a talent? *(Slight pause.)* Anybody?

JOANNA: *(After an awkward silence, she blurts out.)* Michael can sing.

MICHAEL: *(Aghast.)* No I can't!

JOANNA: You're amazing.

PETER: You actually are.

MICHAEL: Stop talking!

MS. KAMPROS: Mr. Hope. I'm desperate for performers! If you do it
– no ISS!

MICHAEL: You're bribing me?

ASHTON: Oh man up, Hopeless! It'll make being forced to go to that
ridiculous talent—

MS. KAMPROS shoots ASHTON a 'death look'.

ASHTON: —to that *amazing* talent show worthwhile. Just to see you
fall on your fat—

MS. KAMPROS: Can you have a song ready by tomorrow?

MICHAEL: I mean, I-I have a karaoke of a Kaitlyn Slade song.

*STUDENTS laugh and improvise 'Kaitlyn Slade?' 'Give me a break!'
Etc.*

ASHTON: Kaitlyn Slade! Loved by teenage girls across the world!
Perfect for you, Hopeless!

*STUDENTS laugh more and improvise 'So perfect for him!' 'Loser!'
Etc.*

MICHAEL: No, it's my sister's karaoke!

STUDENTS laugh more and improvise 'Sure!' 'Whatever!'

MICHAEL: No really! I—it's my sister's! (*Crossing to MS. KAMPROS.*)
I'm begging you – please don't force me.

MS. KAMPROS: (*Tempting him.*) No in school suspension. No phone
call home. Doesn't that sound wonderful?

MICHAEL: (*Upset.*) Okay! (*Starts toward his seat.*)

MS. KAMPROS: Great!

SOUND CUE 8: *School bell. STUDENTS move.*

MS. KAMPROS: Freeze!

STUDENTS stop.

MS. KAMPROS: I need more performers, people! Find me some!

Slight pause as STUDENTS look to each other.

MS. KAMPROS: Go!

SOUND CUE 9: *Transition Music (Down Below). STUDENTS exit dispersing in many directions to their next classes. The lights dim.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 4
HALLWAY

AT START: *Lights up as MICHAEL, JOANNA and PETER enter. They improvise a conversation about the unfairness of MS. KAMPROS pushing MICHAEL into the talent show. DAVID trails them.*

DAVID: Hey, Michael.

MICHAEL turns to face DAVID.

DAVID: What's it like being stupid?

JOANNA: *(Simultaneously with MICHAEL.)* David!

MICHAEL: *(Simultaneously with JOANNA.)* I don't know! Why don't you tell me?

DAVID: Why didn't you man up and take the I.S.S.?

JOANNA: Leave him alone!

DAVID: *(To JOANNA.)* He's gonna make a fool of himself. And it's gonna be your fault.

PETER: You're the fool who's talking to Ashton about Mikey, you traitor.

DAVID: Shut up, Peter!

DAVID explodes, grabbing PETER'S shirt and throat, forcing him away.

DAVID: Or I'll make you shut up!

PETER: (*Simultaneously with MICHAEL and JOANNA.*) Stop it! Ow, Ow! You're choking me!

MICHAEL: (*Simultaneously with PETER.*) Cut it out! Let him go!

JOANNA: (*Simultaneously with PETER.*) Stop it, David! You're hurting him!

MICHAEL and JOANNA pull PETER out of DAVID'S grasp, DAVID ends up away from the group.

MICHAEL: You okay?

PETER nods, but he's obviously hurting.

MICHAEL: (*Turning to DAVID.*) Why are you acting like them? They treat you like dirt.

DAVID: You don't know anything! They're just – they're just joking around. (*Starts to exit.*)

MICHAEL: Wait!

DAVID stops.

MICHAEL: What did you tell Ashton about me?

DAVID exits nervously.

MICHAEL: (*Worried.*) What could he have told him?

PETER: (*Rubbing his neck.*) Who knows? He hates us now.

JOANNA: Do you think it's my fault?

MICHAEL: Jo, no! He's a jerk. You're awesome.

JOANNA: (*Truly touched.*) Oh. I love you. (*Hugs MICHAEL.*)

MICHAEL: I love you, too.

PETER: (*Crossing to them.*) Yo, 'funny and adorable' – standing by himself!

MICHAEL and JOANNA reach out and pull him into the group hug.

PETER: Ah, better.

CASSIE enters, then stops, disgusted upon seeing these 'lesser people' in her vicinity

CASSIE: Ugh. Get a room, weirdoes.

PETER: It's Cassie Pomaro! The head cheerleader! (*Done as a 'cheer'.*) Ready girls? Hit it! She's gorgeous, she's pretty, her attitude is shi—

MICHAEL: (*To PETER, cutting him off, crossing to him.*) Don't!

CASSIE: Are you all retarded?

JOANNA: (*Hotly.*) Do you know how offensive that word is?

CASSIE: Do you know how offensive *you* are?

PETER: Wow. You really are a – oh, what's the word? Rhymes with 'witch', rhymes with—

MICHAEL: Stop!

CASSIE threateningly, crosses toward PETER, who backs away.

CASSIE: No, finish your sentence, 'mouth'.

PETER: (*Terrified.*) No thank you.

JOANNA: (*Disgusted, to MICHAEL.*) She was really your best friend?

CASSIE: (*Repulsed, indicating MICHAEL.*) His best friend? Right.

MICHAEL: Yes, right! For two and a half years!

CASSIE: Ichh, whatever! I barely remember you.

MICHAEL: Really? I remember *everything* about you. First day of kindergarten, you wore a red dress with a white flower pattern – ah – pattern – 'patternie' thing on the bottom. It went all along the (*To JOANNA.*)—what do you call it?

JOANNA: I don't know.

PETER: The hem.

MICHAEL: Yeah (*Looks quickly at PETER, then back to CASSIE.*)—the hem. You wore red shoes, white socks and you had perfect braids, with red ribbons on each one. And you hid behind your mom. You were crying.

CASSIE: (*Agitated, remembering ghosts from her past.*) That's not true. You creeper. (*Moves toward MICHAEL aggressively.*) You'd better shut up!

MICHAEL: (*Putting his palms up.*) It is true. I took your hand – and I walked you to that giant dollhouse. Remember that dollhouse?

PETER: You held her hand? (*Offers a high five.*) Bro!

MICHAEL: (*Ignoring him.*) And we played with that dollhouse all the time. We used to—

CASSIE: (*Remembering, deeply moved.*) I loved that dollhouse.

MICHAEL: You did! We were best friends, Cassie. Until you stopped talking to me.

SONG #4: EVERYBODY HAS A STORY

CASSIE

SOUND CUE 10

MICHAEL: (*Achingly.*) Why did you stop talking to me?

CASSIE:

I'M DONE WITH YOU, PLEASE JUST GO AWAY.

MAYBE I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER, KEEPING MY OLD FEELINGS AT BAY.

I WISH YOU WELL, DON'T SAY ANOTHER WORD TO ME AGAIN.

I WISH YOU NEVER MENTIONED THAT DOLLHOUSE,

I WISH I DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE FRIENDS.

PLEASE JUST GO AWAY.

PETER: (*Spoken.*) Come on, Michael.

MICHAEL: (*Spoken.*) I'm sorry, Cassie. I didn't mean to – I'm sorry.

JOANNA and PETER exit with their arms around MICHAEL. Lights fade. Spotlight on CASSIE.

CASSIE:

I STAND SO TALL, PEOPLE LOOK AT ME AS SOMEONE TO FEAR.

MAYBE THAT'S A TRICK I DEPEND ON, A WAY FOR ME TO JUST DISAPPEAR.

I KNOW I'M CRUEL -- DID I USED TO BE A SWEET LITTLE GIRL?

I WISH I COULD GO BACK TO THAT DOLLHOUSE.

I WISH I COULD CONTROL MY WHOLE WORLD.

CASSIE:

EV'RYBODY HAS A STORY.
 SOME ARE FILLED WITH RAINBOWS AND LIGHT.
 NOT EV'RYBODY HAS THE SAME STORY.
 SOME WOULD FILL YOUR NIGHTMARES AT NIGHT,
 SOME WOULD FILL YOUR NIGHTMARES AT NIGHT.

During the instrumental, a spotlight comes up on YOUNG MICHAEL and YOUNG CASSIE. They play sweetly with the dollhouse as CASSIE looks on at the memory. As CASSIE begins singing the next line, YOUNG MICHAEL and YOUNG CASSIE rise, hug tightly and EXIT, holding hands, skipping. The dollhouse remains. CASSIE crosses toward the memory and the dollhouse.

CASSIE:

EV'RYBODY HAS A STORY.
 SOME ARE FILLED WITH RAINBOWS AND LIGHT.
 NOT EV'RYBODY HAS THE SAME STORY.
 SOME WOULD FILL YOUR NIGHTMARES AT NIGHT,
 SOME WOULD FILL YOUR NIGHTMARES AT NIGHT.

EV'RYBODY HAS A STORY.
 WHAT I WOULDN'T DO TO REWRITE THE END.
 'CUZ IF I COULD JUST REWRITE MY STORY.
 I WOULD HAVE BEEN A MUCH BETTER FRIEND,
 I WOULD HAVE BEEN A MUCH BETTER FRIEND.

CASSIE goes to her knees and reaches out to the dollhouse, as the song ends and the lights come up.

ASHTON: *(Entering.)* Hey, Cass.

CASSIE: *(Startled, stands.)* Hey.

ASHTON: Were you just talking to Hopeless?

CASSIE: Hopeless? Th-that's so mean, Ashton.

ASHTON: Never bothered you before. *(Kisses CASSIE.)* See ya, baby. *(Exits.)*

SOUND CUE 11: *Transition Music (Everybody Has A Story). CASSIE remains, emotionally experiencing the memory of the dollhouse. The lights fade to black.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 5
MICHAEL'S BEDROOM

AT START: *Lights up. MICHAEL is sitting on a trunk reviewing the talent show song lyrics on his laptop. PETER, wearing a Chicago Cubs cap, sits on a second trunk. PETER plays a game on his iPad.*

PETER: *(Losing badly.)* Curse you, Candy Crush! Curse you! [Or insert current popular game.]

MICHAEL looks at PETER in bemusement.

PETER: Uh – I'm mad at Candy Crush. *(Beat.)* You memorize the song?

MICHAEL: Yeah, I think so.

PETER: Good! You feel better 'bout tomorrow?

MICHAEL: If by 'better' you mean 'worse', then yes. Yes!

PETER: Uh – that's not what I meant.

DIANA enters and crosses to MICHAEL, with her cell phone.

DIANA: Michael. Your father is on the phone.

MICHAEL: *(Astounded, rising.)* What?

DIANA: I'm as surprised as you.

DIANA hands MICHAEL the phone. He moves away from her.

MICHAEL: *(Eagerly.)* Hi Dad!

Spotlight on RICHARD, entering, on his cell phone.

RICHARD: Don't give me that innocent tone! Your sister left me a dozen messages about "what a disappointment" you all find me to be. *(Imitating TINA.)* "Make an effort! What kind of dad are you?" You know what? I don't need this grief.

MICHAEL: But I never – I didn't tell her to – I didn't know she—

RICHARD: Say what you mean, Michael! For once, man up and say what you mean!

MICHAEL: (*Meekly.*) I just – I just want to see you, sometimes.

RICHARD: Listen to me. And let it sink in. It's been five years. I'm done. Do you get it? You, your sister, your mother -- are you hearing me? You're my past!

MICHAEL: (*Devastated.*) Why, Dad?

RICHARD: Because the check I send your mother every month is all I'm willing to give! Tell your sister to stop harassing me!

RICHARD disconnects; spotlight out.

MICHAEL: Dad?

DIANA: (*Gently takes the phone.*) I'm sorry honey. He wasn't always like that.

MICHAEL: (*Deeply wounded, angry.*) Good, Mom. Great.

DIANA: (*Hesitatingly.*) Can I – I'm sorry. Can I make your day worse for a second?

MICHAEL: (*Disbelieving.*) Now? No!

DIANA: Did you get I.S.S. today? For arguing with that Ashton Wilkins kid?

MICHAEL: How did you find out about—?

DIANA: I'm new at the bank, honey. If you get I.S.S. and I get called into the school they will not be happy with me.

PETER: Everyone got threatened with it, Ms. Hopkins. No one got one.

DIANA: Well, if he says something to you, just – just ignore him.

MICHAEL: Ignore him? (*Moving away from DIANA.*) Good advice, Mom. Thanks.

DIANA: Sweetheart, I need you to listen to me.

MICHAEL: (*Turning to DIANA.*) No, I need you to listen to *me*, Mom! He never stops! He calls me Freak. Hopeless. Gay boy. He even makes fun of me for living in an apartment! I can't take it anymore. Three people told me to 'man up' today -- including David Murdoff! (*Starts crumbling into tears.*) You say ignore it and I don't know how! I don't know how! I don't know—

MICHAEL breaks down, DIANA embraces him.

DIANA: Okay honey, okay – I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

PETER: (*Touching MICHAEL'S shoulder.*) It's all right, buddy.

DIANA: Michael.

Short pause as MICHAEL struggles to gather himself.

DIANA: Honey, look at me.

MICHAEL looks at DIANA.

DIANA: I'm calling the school tomorrow.

MICHAEL: (*Panicked.*) No, no Mom, listen. I know it doesn't seem like it, but things are actually getting better. For real. Peter knows.

MICHAEL looks to PETER. MICHAEL wants him to agree. PETER reluctantly nods.

MICHAEL: If you call, things'll go backwards. Trust me. Things are getting better. Dad just got me upset. Okay? (*Slight pause, DIANA'S unsure.*) Trust me.

DIANA: All right. I won't call. Yet. It's just – (*Crosses away from them.*) it's just so ironic that he makes fun of you for living in an apartment when the bank is foreclosing his house. (*Alarmed at her breach, she turns to them quickly.*) Keep that confidential!

MICHAEL: He'd kill me if I said anything.

DIANA: And – you might want to give David a break, too. He was your good friend, once. He's ... in a similar situation ... to Ashton.

MICHAEL: (*Hotly.*) I don't care about David! He's a back stabbing –

DIANA: Okay, Okay! I get it. Hey! This'll cheer you up. I'm going to see your talent show!

MICHAEL: (*Alarmed.*) Oh no, Mom! I'm – I'm under so much pressure. Please, just—

DIANA: All right. All right. I won't go. I'm just – I'm proud of you for trying something new. (*Kisses MICHAEL'S head.*) Peter, you should go.

PETER: I am! I can't wait!

DIANA: For what?

PETER: The talent show. I wouldn't miss it for anything!

DIANA: No, Peter – you should be going *home*. It's a school night.

PETER: Oh, duh! (*Sits on trunk, oblivious to DIANA'S request.*) Okay.

DIANA exits, mildly exasperated.

PETER: Ashton's getting kicked out of his house! That's awesome!

Next time he goes after you, use it against him!

MICHAEL: Ah – not a good idea, Pete.

PETER: Why? He deserves it! (*Slight pause.*) Sorry about your dad, buddy.

MICHAEL: Yeah, me too. (*Sits on his trunk, demoralized.*) I feel so stupid for crying in front of you.

PETER: (*Rises. Steps to MICHAEL and touches his shoulder.*) Dude, stop. How many times have I cried in front of you?

MICHAEL: (*Smiling.*) Okay. (*Puts his hand on PETER'S arm.*) Thanks, Pete.

PETER: You gotta focus on better things, Mikey. You got good stuff in your life, you know?

MICHAEL: Tina says that too.

PETER: She's right. You're kind of... addicted to being miserable.

MICHAEL: That's ridiculous.

PETER: Mmm. You gotta ask yourself – what would Snoop Dogg do?

MICHAEL: (*Not understanding the question.*) What would Snoop Dogg do?

PETER: Glad you asked! He would rap that addiction to your misery right out of your soul. (*Flips his Chicago Cub's cap sideways.*) Right – out – of – your – soul! YAY-YAH!

SONG #5: ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY

PETER, MICHAEL, ENSEMBLE

SOUND CUE 12

PETER moves behind the trunk and puts on his 'bling' and sunglasses.

PETER:

IN YOUR LIFE YOU'VE FACED A LOT OF DRAMA,
 YOU'VE HAD YOUR SHARE OF TRAUMA
 FROM YOUR DADDY AND YOUR MOMMA.
 YOU'RE A MAN OF PEACE, YOU'RE A REGULAR DALAI LAMA
 SO YOU GOTTA TAKE A BREAK, TAKE A PAUSE, HERE'S A COMMA
 YEAH, YOU GOTTA TAKE A BREAK, TAKE A PAUSE, HERE'S A COMMA.
 WHEW WHOOSH WHEW WHOOSH

PETER:

PEOPLE TRY TO TAKE YOU AND THEN THEY TRY TO BREAK YOU,
 THEY THINK THAT YOU'RE A CHICKEN AND THEY TRY TO SHAKE AND BAKE YOU.
 YOU FEEL YOU WANNA CRY, DIE, HIT THE GROUND, AND SIGH, GUY,
 ON YOUR KNEES YOU ASK WHY, FEELING LIKE A BULLS-EYE.

ARROWS FLYING HIGH AND WIDE, HIT YOU IN YOUR BACKSIDE,
 HURT YOU ON THE INSIDE, TAKE AWAY A MAN'S PRIDE.
 SUCH PAIN, INSANE, INHUMANE, DON'T COMPLAIN,
 YOU ARE YOUNG, NEVER SLAIN, DO NOT FLUSH IT DOWN THE DRAIN.

ENSEMBLE enters wearing 'bling', caps, and sunglasses. As the chorus unfolds, PETER and MICHAEL push their trunks together, SC, and climb on top.

ENSEMBLE:

YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY,
 THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU KNOW TO BE.

PETER and ENSEMBLE:

REJECTION IS YOUR COMPANY,
 YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY.

YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY,
 THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU KNOW TO BE.
 REJECTION IS YOUR COMPANY,
 YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY.

PETER and ENSEMBLE:

(PETER.) GOTTA LEARN TO *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* LET GO!
(PETER.) BE THE STAR OF *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* YOUR SHOW!
(PETER.) NOBODY CAN *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* BESTOW!
(PETER.) ALL THE THINGS YOU *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* OUGHTA KNOW!
(PETER.) GOTTA LEARN TO *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* LET GO!
(PETER.) BE THE STAR OF *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* YOUR SHOW!
(PETER.) NOBODY CAN *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* BESTOW!
(PETER.) ALL THE THINGS YOU *(Add ENSEMBLE.)* OUGHTA KNOW!

PETER and ENSEMBLE:

(PETER.) IT'S YOUR SONG (Add ENSEMBLE.) BE STRONG!

(PETER.) EVERYBODY (Add ENSEMBLE.) SING ALONG!

(PETER.) DON'T BE A DING-DONG, HO-HO!

ENSEMBLE:

YOU BELONG!

PETER and ENSEMBLE:

(PETER.) IT'S YOUR SONG (Add ENSEMBLE.) BE STRONG!

(PETER.) EVERYBODY (Add ENSEMBLE.) SING ALONG!

(PETER.) DON'T BE A DING-DONG, TWINKIE... (Throws wrapped Twinkie into audience.)

ENSEMBLE:

YOU BELONG!

ENSEMBLE exits while still singing the below chorus.

ENSEMBLE:

YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY,
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU KNOW TO BE.

PETER and ENSEMBLE:

REJECTION IS YOUR COMPANY,
YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY.

YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY,
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU KNOW TO BE.
REJECTION IS YOUR COMPANY,
YOU'RE ADDICTED TO YOUR MISERY.

MICHAEL: (Singing, jumping off the trunk.)

I'M ADDICTED TO MY, 'DICTED TO...

MICHAEL: (Spoken.) Wh—where did all the people go?**PETER:** (Spoken.) Dude – what people?

ENSEMBLE enters, MICHAEL again ascends the trunk.

PETER and ENSEMBLE:

YOU'RE ADDICTED TO (repeat 11x.)
YOUR MISERY!

Blackout on applause.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6*HALLWAY*

AT START: *A spotlight up on the LOUDSPEAKER KID and MS. KAMPROS.*

LOUDSPEAKER KID: Attention Neptune Seahorses! As today's talent show has the *infuriated* and *irritated* Ms. Kampros working feverishly hard to pre—

MS. KAMPROS: Oh, for goodness sake! Don't announce my stress to the entire school!

LOUDSPEAKER KID: Sorry! Re-phrasing! Seahorses, as today's talent show has the *easygoing* and *even-tempered* Ms. Kampros working feverishly hard to present all that she has promoted, the upcoming fourth period classes, for the entire 8th grade, are now cancelled! Yeah, buddy! So after third period, 8th grade Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Gamma sections – head over to your assigned school quadrants!

Partial ENSEMBLE enters. JOANNA and ASHTON enter at different areas of the stage.

LOUDSPEAKER KID: And, in case you've forgotten, the talent show is less than an hour away, so all of you petrified performers have just enough time to escape the strangulating confines of this oppressive edifice and receive your well-earned suspensions! If you are so inclined to delinquency and possible jail time!

MS. KAMPROS looks at LOUDSPEAKER KID, stunned. LOUDSPEAKER KID shrugs. MS. KAMPROS and LOUDSPEAKER KID exit opposite each other. Full stage lights come up; ENSEMBLE improvises silent conversation amongst their respective groups. ERIN enters with her book bag. Again, ASHTON quickly crosses to ERIN, grabs the bag and throws it to the floor, laughing and mocking her disability as he exits.

JOANNA: *(Crossing to and picking up the bag.)* I've got it, Erin.

ERIN: Thanks. *(Taking the backpack from JOANNA.)* I'll take it.

JOANNA: He's the worst.

ERIN: I'm used to it.

JOANNA: I wish I was.

MICHAEL and PETER enter and cross to ERIN and JOANNA.

MICHAEL: *(Simultaneously with PETER.)* Hey Erin, hey Jo.

PETER: *(Simultaneously with MICHAEL.)* Hiya ladies!

ERIN: Good luck today, Michael.

MICHAEL: Thanks. *(Good naturedly.)* Don't laugh at me.

ERIN: *(Starts moving toward exit.)* If you mess up, I will.

MICHAEL: *(Calling after her.)* You're hilarious!

ERIN: I know.

MICHAEL laughs as ERIN exits.

JOANNA: *(To MICHAEL.)* Hey, is Ashton really getting evicted?

MICHAEL: *(Exasperated.)* Peter!

PETER: *(Indicating JOANNA.)* She's our best friend!

MICHAEL: I know, but – *(To JOANNA.)* Just – please keep it on the D.L. [Or insert current slang term for "down low".] My mom could lose her job.

DAVID enters, moving with the intention of avoiding MICHAEL.

PETER: *(Crossing to DAVID.)* What up, Murdoff? *(Sarcastic.)* We're really missing the glow of your sparkling personality!

DAVID ignores PETER and slips around him, alone, continuing to his locker.

SONG #6: SLOW MOTION BOY

STUDENT ENSEMBLE

SOUND CUE 13

JOANNA: *(Swooning, notices LANDON, who is offstage.)* Oooh. He is so – totally – gorgeous.

ENSEMBLE becomes a chorus of admirers on stage. At various points in the song, different groups of STUDENTS surround LANDON with varying degrees of affection – from hugs, to embracing his leg, to sniffing his hair, etc. Without drawing attention, DAVID doesn't participate with the admirers, and instead eyes LANDON jealously. LANDON enters in slow motion, moving across the stage.

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S LANDON MCGHEE, HE'S THE SLOW MOTION BOY,
A GIFT TO OUR WORLD, NOW SIT BACK AND ENJOY.
NOT A FAKE PERSON, A TRUE REAL MCCOY,
HE'S LANDON MCGHEE, HE'S THE SLOW MOTION BOY.

JOANNA: *(Spoken in real time.)* Hi Landon.

LANDON: *(Friendly, in slow motion.)* How you doing, Joanna? *(Gently taps JOANNA'S nose.)*

ENSEMBLE sighs. A few admirers faint and sing from the floor. LANDON shrugs to the audience and continues onward, toward more similar displays of affection.

ENSEMBLE:

THERE GOES LANDON MCGHEE, HE'S THE SLOW MOTION BOY,
A GIFT TO OUR WORLD, PLEASE COME BACK, REDEPLOY.
AND STAND NEXT TO ME, FOR IT FILLS ME WITH JOY,
HE'S LANDON MCGHEE, YES HE'S LANDON MCGHEE.
THERE'S SO MUCH OF LANDON FOR YOU AND FOR ME.
DID HE RISE FROM A METEOR'S BURNING DEBRIS?

DAVID: *(Spoken. Crossing to LANDON, with envy.)* Probably not. I think he's human.

ENSEMBLE: *(Shouted.)* Shut up, David!

Startled, DAVID fearfully crosses back.

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S LANDON MCGHEE, HE'S THE SLOW MOTION BOY.

LANDON exits, carried off like royalty.

MICHAEL: Did you see that?

JOANNA and PETER: See what?

ASHTON and CASSIE enter away from main action, near their adjoining lockers. BLAKE enters and spots ASHTON from across the stage.

BLAKE: *(Loudly.)* Yo! What up, Ash?

ASHTON: Blakester!

ASHTON runs to BLAKE and they fake a 'football' helmet smash against each other's heads on each 'HUNH!'.

BLAKE and ASHTON: Hunh! Hunh! Hunh! Hunh! *(THEY run in place.)* HUUUUUNNNH! *(Chest bump.)* HUNH!

MR. ALLEN enters quickly and crosses.

MR. ALLEN: Hey! Keep it down, boys.

ASHTON and BLAKE: Sorry, Mr. Allen.

MR. ALLEN: Oh, Michael! I was pleasantly surprised to see your name on the talent show list. Have you done this type of thing before?

MICHAEL: No sir, not in front of actual humans.

MR. ALLEN: *(Laughs.)* Well, way to give it a go, kiddo. Break a leg!

MICHAEL: Thanks, Mr. Allen.

MR. ALLEN exits. MICHAEL starts moving toward JOANNA.

CASSIE: Michael – wait up! *(Crosses to MICHAEL from her locker.)*
Good luck today.

MICHAEL: *(Can't believe CASSIE is speaking to him.)* What?

CASSIE: Do it for the memory of— *(Offers her hand.)* forgotten friendship.

MICHAEL: *(Taking CASSIE'S hand.)* Uh—

JOANNA: Say 'thank you', Michael.

MICHAEL: Thank you, Michael.

CASSIE: Sure. *(Crosses to JOANNA.)* And hey, what's your real name? It's not 'squish', right?

JOANNA: *(Laughing.)* No, it's Joanna. Jo.

CASSIE: *(Warmly, touching her shoulder.)* Jo. *(Slight pause, embarrassed, turning to them all.)* Uh, hey – that name I called you all yesterday... it was wrong. I'm really sorry.

JOANNA: Thanks, Cassie.

ASHTON: *(Noticing CASSIE.)* Cass! *(Crosses, grabs CASSIE'S hand and starts to exit.)* Don't talk to those viruses.

MICHAEL: *(Embarrassed.)* Ashton!

ASHTON stops, turns back to MICHAEL.

MICHAEL: What's wrong with you?

PETER: *(Trying to rescue MICHAEL.)* Who's hungry?

JOANNA: *(Touching MICHAEL'S shoulder.)* Come on.

MICHAEL: No, I'm sick of it, Jo! I'm sick of him. *(To ASHTON.)* You're not better than me.

ASHTON: Uh, yeah I am, Hopeless. One – *(Crossing to MICHAEL, he points to his own face.)* girls like *this* and you'll never have it, you ugly bag of puke. And two, I actually like waking up in the morning. Do you like waking up in the morning, freak? *(Beat.)* Do you, freak? *(Pushes MICHAEL.)*

PETER: *(Simultaneously with JOANNA and CASSIE.)* Dude!

JOANNA: *(Simultaneously with PETER and CASSIE.)* Don't!

CASSIE: *(Simultaneously with JOANNA and PETER.)* Ashton!

MICHAEL fights back tears.

ASHTON: Aw, you gonna cry? Let it out, princess!

BLAKE: Let it out, princess!

JOANNA: *(Storms toward BLAKE.)* What are you, Blake, a parrot?

BLAKE: *(Mocking JOANNA, flapping his elbows.)* What are you, Blake, a parrot?

MICHAEL: I hate you.

ASHTON: Oh no! A person who never showers hates me!

CASSIE: Ash, stop it! Let's go.

ASHTON turns to go and starts walking toward CASSIE, but smiling maliciously, he stops and turns to face MICHAEL.

ASHTON: Hey, Hopeless. How's your dad?

MICHAEL is stunned.

ASHTON: Oh yeah (*Indicating DAVID, by his locker.*) —your little girlfriend there told me all about him.

DAVID: (*Shaking head for him to stop, pleadingly.*) Ashton...

PETER: (*Angrily moves towards DAVID. Simultaneously with JOANNA.*) You're a jerk, Murdoff!

JOANNA: (*Simultaneously with PETER.*) What's wrong with you, David?

MICHAEL: (*To DAVID, crestfallen.*) Why would you tell him about my dad?

ASHTON: (*Wickedly.*) I see my dad all the time. Do you see yours, Hopeless? Or no, 'cuz he hates you, right? But you put on his toilet water 'cuz you're crazy. (*To DAVID.*) Did I get that right, Murdoff? Is that why Hopeless smells like an outhouse?

CASSIE: Ashton!

JOANNA: You're evil.

MICHAEL: (*Burning.*) You think you're smart? I know some things, too.

JOANNA: Michael, don't.

PETER: Mikey, do!

CASSIE: (*Trying to avert catastrophe, to ASHTON.*) Babe, let's go!

ASHTON: (*Laughing.*) What can you possibly know, Hopeless?

MICHAEL: I know someone who works at the bank.

ASHTON'S eyes light up with fear.

MICHAEL: Yeah. How's *your* life going?

JOANNA: Michael, let's just get—

ASHTON: (*Menacingly, crossing to MICHAEL, grabbing his shirt with both hands, pushing him, hissing.*) Someone telling you secrets, Hopeless? Why don't you tell me what you think you know, little girl? I dare you.

MICHAEL, frightened, still wrestles with revealing everything. PETER, furiously nodding, urges MICHAEL to 'say it'.

MICHAEL: *(After several seconds.)* I-I'm sorry. I was kidding around.

ASHTON: *(Dead serious.)* Yeah, you were. Come on, Cass.

ASHTON starts toward CASSIE, his back turned to MICHAEL.

PETER: *(Crossing next to MICHAEL, yells to ASHTON!)* You're gonna be homeless!

ASHTON: *(Shocked, slowly turns to PETER.)* What'd you say, Pooper?

MICHAEL: *(Protecting PETER, steps between them.)* I said it!

PETER: No you didn't!

MICHAEL: *(Turning to PETER.)* Be quiet for once!

ASHTON: Wait! Which one of you said that to me?

CASSIE: Is that true, Ashton?

ASHTON: *(Furious.)* Which one of you said that to me?!

MICHAEL and PETER: *(To ASHTON.)* I did! *(To each other.)* Shut up!

ASHTON: *(Crossing to CASSIE.)* Baby, who said it?

CASSIE: *(Knowing it was PETER.)* Just leave them alone!

ASHTON: Murdoff! *(Quickly moving to and violently grabbing DAVID by his shirt.)* Who said it?

DAVID: *(Terrified.)* I don't know! I don't know! I think it was Peter!

MICHAEL: Shut up, David!

ASHTON throws DAVID to the ground and rushes toward PETER, seizing him with malicious intent. He whirls him around and pushes him, past CASSIE.

CASSIE: Don't!

JOANNA: Mr. Allen! *(Quickly exits.)*

STUDENTS: Fight, fight, fight, fight, fight!

MICHAEL: *(To the kids, overlapping.)* Stop it! Shut up, everybody! Stop it, please!

STUDENTS stop chanting. MICHAEL moves to ASHTON.

MICHAEL: It was me, Ashton!

ASHTON pulls his fist back, readying to strike PETER.

MICHAEL: Please don't hit him! I said it! Your family's broke! Your dad's a loser!

ASHTON releases PETER and turns to face MICHAEL, who is petrified.

MICHAEL: C-can we be even now?

ASHTON grabs MICHAEL by the shirt and spins him. Tightly gripping MICHAEL'S shirt with one hand, he raises his other into a fist.

ASHTON: You're done.

SONG #7: SLOW MOTION BOY (REPRISE)

MICHAEL, LANDON, ASHTON, STUDENT ENSEMBLE

SOUND CUE 14: SLOW MOTION BOY (REPRISE), Part 1

LANDON enters, moving in slow motion toward ASHTON and MICHAEL. Once again, the ensemble becomes a 'chorus of admirers.'

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S LANDON MCGHEE, HE'S THE SLOW MOTION BOY,

MICHAEL: *(Spoken, still being held by ASHTON.)* C'mon, Landon! Speed it up!

LANDON: *(Speaking in slow motion.)* Let him go, Ashton!

SOUND CUE 15: SLOW MOTION BOY (REPRISE.), Part 2

ENSEMBLE:

A GIFT TO OUR WORLD, NOW SIT BACK AND ENJOY.

MICHAEL: *(Spoken.)* Nobody understood you, slow motion boy! You move like molasses!

LANDON: *(Speaking in slow motion.)* I'm serious!

*LANDON smiles and points to the audience. **SOUND CUE 16:** Ding*

MICHAEL: *(Spoken.)* Who are you smiling at? Come on, Grandma! I wanna keep my face!

SOUND CUE 17: *SLOW MOTION BOY (REPRISE), Part 3*

ENSEMBLE:

NOT A FAKE PERSON, A TRUE REAL McCOY,

ASHTON: *(Spoken.)* Say goodnight, loser!

LANDON, in slow motion, draws ever closer to where ASHTON'S punch is bearing down on MICHAEL'S face.

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S LANDON MCGHEE, HE'S THE SLOW MOTION BOY.

ASHTON'S fist continues on its slow motion path. Now inches away from impact, LANDON finally arrives and grabs ASHTON'S wrist, stopping the blow from occurring. Time returns to normal speed.

LANDON: Easy, Ash.

ASHTON: Landon! I didn't see you.

LANDON: I'm a pretty fast guy.

MICHAEL: You're not! You're really not!

MR. ALLEN and JOANNA enter, urgently.

MR. ALLEN: Mr. Wilkins! Was a two week suspension a part of your plan today?

ASHTON: *(Still smoldering.)* No. Sorry, Mr. A.

MR. ALLEN: *(Firmly, indicating MICHAEL.)* Sorry to him.

ASHTON: *(Offers his hand.)* Sorry, Mikey boy.

MICHAEL takes ASHTON'S hand. ASHTON squeezes hard, hurting MICHAEL.

ASHTON: Can't wait to hear your little song today, buddy! (*Starts to exit but stops and turns to CASSIE. Extends his hand, still burning mad.*) Cassie.

CASSIE is frozen in place.

ASHTON: (*Hand still extended, yells.*) CASSIE!

CASSIE crosses quickly to him, her hand literally an inch away from joining with his. She pulls it away at the last possible moment and crosses away from him, exiting.

STUDENTS: Ooooooh.

ASHTON exits in CASSIE's direction, confused.

PETER: (*Punching his fist into his hand, crossing to MICHAEL.*) I could'a taken him.

MICHAEL: What were you thinking?

PETER: Sorry.

MICHAEL: Landon! Thanks, man.

MICHAEL and LANDON shake hands.

LANDON: No problem, buddy.

MR. ALLEN: (*Putting his hand on MICHAEL'S shoulder, to STUDENTS.*) Okay, everyone! Break time over. Next period. Go, go.

STUDENTS exit, PETER crosses to MR. ALLEN.

PETER: It wasn't his fault, Mr. Allen.

MR. ALLEN: It's okay, Peter. Go on.

PETER exits.

MICHAEL: Am I getting I.S.S.?

MR. ALLEN: (*Finding the idea absurd.*) You? No, of course not. Tell me: Is Ashton bullying you?

MICHAEL considers speaking up.

MR. ALLEN: You deserve to feel safe in school.

MICHAEL: (*Angrily.*) Do I? You think Ms. Kampros feels that way? She acts like she's best friends with all those ... forget it. (*Starts to exit.*)

MR. ALLEN: Wait!

MICHAEL stops.

MR. ALLEN: Tell me what's going on.

LOUDSPEAKER KID enters.

LOUDSPEAKER KID: Attention talent-show performers! Get into the cafetorium, A-S-A-P! Show time is fast approaching!

MICHAEL: Nothing's going on.

MR. ALLEN: I want to help.

LOUDSPEAKER KID: (*Crossing in-between them.*) I said A-S-A-P!

MICHAEL: I'm fine, Mr. A.

MR. ALLEN is about to speak.

MICHAEL: I'm fine! (*Exits.*)

LOUDSPEAKER KID looks at MR. ALLEN and makes a hand gesture that says: "Shoo, shoo!". MR. ALLEN exits, throwing up his hands.

LOUDSPEAKER KID: Now that's the fast approaching I was talking about! Yowza! Head on over to the cafetorium people, 'cuz the annual Neptune Junior High Talent Show is about to begin!

SOUND CUE 18: *Talent Show Guitar Solo. TERRY enters, playing the guitar solo on his electric guitar for the scene transition.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 7
CAFETORIUM

AT START: *ENSEMBLE STUDENTS enter behind TERRY as the solo continues. They take their positions as audience members. Behind where MICHAEL will sing, sits CASSIE, ASHTON, BLAKE, and CHEERLEADER (Cassie's friend). TINA, PETER, and JOANNA enter and sit in the front row. DAVID sits apart from them. TERRY'S Talent Show Guitar Solo ends, and the STUDENTS applaud politely.*

TERRY: *(Jumping about the stage.)* Rock n' roll! Rock n' roll!

MS. KAMPROS: *(Enters, meeting TERRY.)* Thank you, Terry Moore, for that spirited performance of Deward Jolly's *Requiem for a Goldfish*.

TERRY: *(Begins to exit, but returns with abandon.)* Rock n' roll! Rock n' roll!

MS. KAMPROS: *(Nudging TERRY offstage.)* Yes, yes, rock n' roll, rock n' roll. *(Finally shoving TERRY off.)* Terrific! I think we've had a very successful time today people, don't you? *(Light applause.)* Twelve acts completed and one to go!

Lights to blackout, spotlight up on MICHAEL and TINA who are downstage, away from the other students.

TINA: You're next, brother! I'm so excited! *(Turns to cross to PETER and JOANNA.)*

MICHAEL: *(Frantic.)* No—wait!

TINA crosses back to MICHAEL.

MICHAEL: What was I thinking? I should've taken the I.S.S.!

TINA: You can do this. Just be like any famous singer in the world and ... fake like it's fun!

MICHAEL: Uh-huh. *(Nods but he's not focusing on TINA.)*

TINA: *(Taking MICHAEL'S face in her hands.)* Michael. Listen to me. *(With great warmth.)* If you fake like it's fun, people will think you're having fun.

MICHAEL: *(Exhaling.)* Fake like it's fun. Okay. I will. Thanks, T.

TINA: We're all proud of you! (*Kisses MICHAEL'S cheek and crosses to PETER and JOANNA.*)

MICHAEL exits. Lights up on full stage as TINA sits with PETER and JOANNA.

MS. KAMPROS: For our final act, we have a singer from the eighth grade Gamma section.

STUDENT ONE: Hopeless, Hopeless!

A smattering of laughter from some STUDENTS. TINA rises to do battle, JOANNA pulls her down.

MS. KAMPROS: Michael Hope was a last minute addition to our talent show today, and we thank him for enthusiastically volunteering to perform for us. And now, singing pop teen queen Kaitlyn Slade's hit song *Suddenly Someone*, let's give a warm round of applause – to Michael Hope!

SONG #8: SUDDENLY SOMEONE

MICHAEL

SOUND CUE 19

MICHAEL enters, apprehensively. There is barely any applause, but TINA, PETER and JOANNA cheer and whoop wildly for him. CASSIE is also energetic in her support.

As the song unfolds, CASSIE'S jaw must literally drop as MICHAEL sings the lyric "I want to run back into your arms." She and her friend trade impressed glances throughout. STUDENT ENSEMBLE is totally focused on MICHAEL, reacting with amazement at his talent.

MICHAEL:

ONCE AGAIN YOU SAY YOU NEVER LOVED ME
 AND YOU PUT ME DOWN AND SAY YOU'RE HIGH ABOVE ME
 LIKE I ALWAYS DO, I WANT TO RUN BACK INTO YOUR ARMS.
 THE CHILD WITHIN, WOULD DIE FOR YOU TO LOVE ME
 AND THE CHILD WITHIN, WOULD DIE FOR YOU TO HUG ME.
 YEAH, THIS EMPTY BOY KNOWS ONLY YOU CAN KEEP HIM FROM HARM.

On the lyric "is suddenly corrected" ASHTON must dig his finger deeply into his nose and pick like crazy. He is trying to get CASSIE to laugh, but she is angry with him and too mesmerized by MICHAEL. ASHTON tries to get BLAKE to acknowledge and laugh, but BLAKE too, is captivated.

MICHAEL:

BUT SOMETHING IS SUDDENLY CORRECTED
IT'S SOMEWHAT UNEXPECTED
I'M NOT FALLING TO MY KNEES.
WHAT'S BROKEN, HAS FINALLY BEEN CONNECTED,
DEMANDS TO BE RESPECTED
CAN YOU HANDLE WHAT YOU SEE?

ASHTON finally gives up his wild nose picking. STUDENTS cheer, MICHAEL can't believe it. ASHTON is disgusted. DAVID is dumbfounded and envious.

SUDDENLY SOMEONE HAS FOUND HIS OWN WAY,
SUDDENLY SOMEONE WILL STAND UP TODAY,
SUDDENLY SOMEONE CAN TAKE YOUR GOOD-BYE,
SUDDENLY SOMEONE IS NOT CRYING OUT, "WHY?"

SUDDENLY SOMEONE HAS PUT YOU ON THE SHELF,
SUDDENLY SOMEONE LIVES HIS LIFE FOR HIMSELF,
SUDDENLY SOMEONE CAN LOOK IN THE MIRROR,
SUDDENLY SOMEONE HAS GOT NOTHING TO FEAR.

STUDENTS wildly cheer, startling MICHAEL.

A MIRACLE IS WHAT IT TOOK TO CHANGE ME
MAYBE GOD ABOVE BUT FIN'LLY SOMETHING SAVED ME.
NOW I LOOK AT YOU AND WONDER WHY I WAITED SO LONG.

PERHAPS I'M CRUEL BUT MY EYES HAVE FIN'LLY OPENED.
ONCE I WAS A FOOL, BUT NOW THIS FOOL IS COPIN'.
YEAH, YOU SEEM SO SMALL AND SUDDENLY BABY I'M FEELING STRONG,
YEAH, I'M FEELIN' SO STRONG!

STUDENTS cheer. MICHAEL is enjoying himself.

MICHAEL:

SUDDENLY SOMEONE SAYS THAT I DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE,
 SUDDENLY SOMEONE SAYS I'M FINISHED AND I WON'T COMPROMISE,
 SUDDENLY SOMEONE HAS CHANGED ALL HIS DREAMS,
 SUDDENLY SOMEONE WON'T GO TO EXTREMES, YEAH.

SUDDENLY SOMEONE CAN STAND ON HIS OWN,
 SUDDENLY SOMEONE IS NOT WAITING FOR YOUR CALL ON THE PHONE.
 SUDDENLY SOMEONE, SUDDENLY SOMEONE,
 SUDDENLY, SUDDENLY, SUDDENLY, SUDDENLY SOMEONE, YAY-EE-YEAH

SUDDENLY SOMEONE, OH YEAH, OH!
 I'M SUDDENLY SOMEONE, I'M SUDDENLY SOMEONE
 I'M SUDDENLY, SUDDENLY, SUDDENLY, SUDDENLY SOMEONE, OH YEAH!

STUDENTS rises in raucous applause except for ASHTON and DAVID.

STUDENTS: *(Chanting.)* Michael, Michael, Michael!

JOANNA and PETER mob and hug MICHAEL.

MS. KAMPROS: What a performance! What a performance! *(Moves toward MICHAEL.)*

CASSIE rushes to MICHAEL, unthinkingly shoving MS. KAMPROS back.

CASSIE: *(Overlapping.)* That was amazing! *(Kisses MICHAEL on cheek.)*

MICHAEL: *(Overlapping.)* Really?

PETER: *(Overlapping.)* Dude, dude, dude, dude! What was that? Dude!

MICHAEL: *(Overlapping.)* I don't know! I don't know! Thanks!

JOANNA: *(Overlapping, crushing him.)* I told you! I told you! I told you!

PETER: *(Overlapping.)* Dude, dude, dude, dude, dude!

TINA comes toward MICHAEL, stopping, beaming.

MICHAEL: Wait, guys. (*Crossing to TINA, warmly.*) I faked like it was fun. And it actually was!

TINA nods, crying.

MICHAEL: (*Hugging TINA.*) I love you, T.

TINA: (*Through happy tears.*) I love you, brother.

DAVID: (*Enthusiastically, running to MICHAEL, patting his back.*)

Wow, buddy! I knew you'd be great!

PETER: (*Pulling DAVID and flinging him away.*) Get lost, you phony!

DAVID slinks off and sits alone. LANDON and MR. ALLEN cross to either side of MICHAEL.

LANDON: Hey, man! That was the bomb-diggedy!

MR. ALLEN: What a talent you have, young man! Remarkable!

MICHAEL: Thanks, Landon! Thanks, Mr. A!

MS. KAMPROS: (*Moving to MICHAEL.*) Everyone – take a seat!

Most STUDENTS sit, several STUDENTS pop up, pat MICHAEL'S back, rub MICHAEL'S head, etc.

MS. KAMPROS: Stop! Let him breathe!

Everybody settles in, MICHAEL starts to leave.

MS. KAMPROS: Michael, stay!

MICHAEL crosses back to MS. KAMPROS.

MS. KAMPROS: No surprises today, Seahorses! Today's talent show winner is Michael Hope!

KATHERINE enters holding a gold star balloon tied to a gift bag. She moves between MS. KAMPROS and MICHAEL.

KATHERINE: (*Overflowing with happiness.*) Hello, Seahorses! I'm student council President, Katherine Costello. On behalf of the Neptune PTA, it is my pleasure to present this one hundred dollar gift card to Michael Hope! (*Hands MICHAEL the gift bag.*)

MICHAEL: (*Stunned.*) You're kidding me. (*Looking to TINA.*) Uh – Tina.

TINA crosses to MICHAEL. MICHAEL attempts to give the bag to her.

TINA: (*Moved.*) No, no—it's yours, Michael.

MICHAEL: (*Warmly.*) Please, T.

TINA takes the gift bag.

KATHERINE: (*Overly enthusiastic.*) Soooo sweeeeet! (*To audience.*) He's giving it to his girlfriend!

MICHAEL: (*Aghast.*) My sister! She's my sister!

KATHERINE: Whatever! (*To audience.*) LOL!

MS. KAMPROS: (*Moving back to MICHAEL, her hand on his shoulder.*) Seahorses, we're posting the talent show in the next day or two! Be sure to check it out!

ALL STUDENTS: (*Exit while chanting.*) Michael, Michael, Michael!

SOUND CUE 20: *Transition Music (Suddenly Someone). Several STUDENTS rush MICHAEL, patting his back and his head again, shaking his hand, etc. while exiting. MICHAEL crosses to exit, but ASHTON moves to purposely bump hard into MICHAEL'S shoulder. Blackout.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 8

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM

AT START: *Lights up. MICHAEL holds the English Leather cologne and begins to remove the cap, but abruptly stops. He laughs to himself.*

MICHAEL: (*Quietly.*) Give it a break, Michael. It's been a good week. (*Returns the cologne to his backpack.*)

TINA: (*Offstage, a blood curdling scream.*) AHHHHHH!

Startled, MICHAEL scurries downstage. TINA, JOANNA and PETER (holding an iPad) enter, bursting into MICHAEL'S room. They surround MICHAEL.

MICHAEL: (*Terrified.*) What is it? Is Mom dead?

TINA: (*Reaching past MICHAEL and grabbing PETER'S iPad.*) Mikey!
It's the video of you in the talent show! You're up to, you're up to,
you're up to—

JOANNA: (*Taking the iPad.*) You're up to 12 million views!

MICHAEL: WHAT?

SONG #9: HOPE IS EVERYTHING

*TINA, PETER, JOANNA, MICHAEL, MR. ALLEN, ASHTON, DAVID,
LANDON, CASSIE, ENSEMBLE*

SOUND CUE 21: *HOPE IS EVERYTHING, Part 1*

TINA: (*Taking the iPad again and moving away.*)

THE WORLD'S TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, (*Looking to PETER.*)
CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

PETER: (*Crossing to her and taking back the iPad, moving away.*)

IT LOOKS LIKE THE TALENT SHOW
HAS MADE YOUR BROTHER FAMOUS.

JOANNA: (*Again taking PETER'S iPad.*)

MY GOD, MICHAEL, YOU'VE GONE VIRAL,
(*Moves away, looking at iPad.*) YOU ARE ON AN UPWARD SPIRAL.
TRENDING NUMBER ONE RIGHT NOW.

PETER: (*Quickly crosses to her and takes back the iPad.*)

JUST LOOK AT YOUTUBE, HOLY COW!

JOANNA: (*Rushes MICHAEL and excitedly pushes him toward their own space.*)

I TOLD YOU, I TOLD YOU, YOU COULD SING!

TINA crosses to PETER.

PETER and TINA:

THIS IS CRAZY, THIS IS AWESOME.
HIT REFRESH, THE NUMBERS BLOSSOM.

MICHAEL:

I WAS NO ONE YESTERDAY,

PETER, MICHAEL, JOANNA, and TINA:

BUT NOW A MILLION COMMENTS SAY THAT –

ENSEMBLE enters with iPads.

ENSEMBLE:

HOPE IS, HOPE IS EV'RYTHING!

ALL COMMENTATORS with their iPads, surround MICHAEL.

COMMENTER 1:

HE'S BLOWING UP MY SCREEN!

COMMENTER 2:

THAT KID'S GOT GAME.

COMMENTER 3:

KAITLYN SLADE MUST BE SO PLEASED,

COMMENTER 4:

I LOVE HIS LAST NAME.

MICHAEL:

EV'RYBODY'S RAVING ABOUT ME,
IS THIS A DREAM?

PETER crosses to MICHAEL, the COMENTATORS step back.

PETER:

YOUR MISERY IS OVER, EMBRACE IT YOU'VE WON, SON.

PETER, JOANNA, TINA and ENSEMBLE:

THE WORLD ALL HEARD YOUR VOICE,
NOW YOU'RE SUDDENLY SOMEONE!

MR. ALLEN, ASHTON, DAVID, LANDON, and CASSIE enter rapidly looking at their iPads and land on different parts of the stage.

MR. ALLEN:

WELL DONE, MICHAEL!

ASHTON:

HOW PATHETIC.

DAVID:

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

LANDON:

THIS IS EPIC! (*Slides in on his knees.*)

CASSIE:

WE WERE FRIENDS THROUGH SECOND GRADE
WE HAD A DOLLHOUSE, HE LOVED MY BRAIDS.

ENSEMBLE:

OH, MICHAEL HOPE YOU ARE EV'RYTHING
EV'RYTHING, EV'RYTHING, EV'RYTHING,
EV'RYTHING, EV'RYTHING, AHH!

ASHTON: (*Crossing near MICHAEL.*)

THEY'RE TREATING HOPELESS LIKE A HERO,
CAN'T THEY TELL HE'S LESS THAN ZERO?

PETER: (*Crossing to ASHTON.*)

TOO BAD, SO SAD, IT'S OVER, BRO.
YOUR BOY'S NO LONGER DOWN BELOW, YEAH!

ALL: (*Except MICHAEL.*)

HOPE IS, HOPE IS EV'RY
HOPE IS, HOPE IS EV'RY
HOPE IS, HOPE IS EV'RYTHING
MICHAEL HOPE IS EV'RY

Music stops. Ensemble kneels, heads down. DIANA enters.

DIANA: Honey?

MICHAEL: Hi, Mom. YouTube's gone bananas.

DIANA: Uh... we have a visitor. (*Looks offstage to the doorway and, with her hand, beckons the unknown visitor to 'please come in.'*)

KAITLYN enters and crosses to MICHAEL. Everyone stares at her, thunderstruck.

KAITLYN: Hello, Michael. What you did with my song ... (*Shaking his hand.*) You were wonderful.

TINA: (*Crossing behind KAITLYN, tapping her shoulder.*) Hi! I'm your biggest fan! I'm his brother!

KAITLYN: Oh! Thank you, sweetie.

PETER: *(In a trance.)* I'm single.

KAITLYN: *(With humor.)* Rockin'.

MICHAEL: Uh. C-Can we help you, Miss Slade?

KAITLYN: Kaitlyn. And, no. But if you'll let me, I'd like to help you.

SOUND CUE 22: *Cell Phone Ring. Remaining cast kneels, heads down. Simultaneously, the stage goes dark as a spotlight comes up on RICHARD.*

RICHARD: You see what's going on with my kid? *(Listening.)* Yeah, I know how much it could be worth. *(Slight pause as he crosses.)* Oh, believe me – I'm gonna get everything I can. *(Looks directly at the audience.)* Everything.

SOUND CUE 23: HOPE IS EVERYTHING, Part 2. *As it begins, a spotlight hits TERRY. TERRY crosses toward RICHARD, looking at him, as he plays madly. RICHARD glowers at TERRY. On the final chord, TERRY, now next to RICHARD, throws his guitar playing hand up in the air with a flourish. Blackout.* **SOUND CUE 24:** *Transition Music (Suddenly Someone).*

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