

"CLOSE TO ME"

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY – AFTERNOON

The CAMERA SWEEPS through empty, quiet corridors. The doors to every classroom are closed. Total silence.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY – SAME

We SLOWLY MOVE down the hallway. As empty as the others. But something is different. A low BUZZ. The further we progress down the hall, the louder the buzz gets.

The classroom at the end of the hallway has its door open. The sound comes from there. We can make it out now. Laughter. Voices. Many voices. Talking over each other.

By time we get to the open door, it's almost deafening.

INT. RAMSEY'S CLASSROOM - SAME

The room is packed with STUDENTS. Every desk is occupied. Students sit on the windowsills. Others stand two deep against the back wall. Half of these students have their hands up. Serious note taking is going on.

RICHARD RAMSEY, 40, devilishly handsome with a magnetic smile, is the ringmaster of this educational circus.

In a Pearl Jam tee shirt and jeans, he leans confidently against the front of his desk, and directs traffic.

SHERM

But I don't get why we're talking about the Bible. This isn't a religion class.

The class roars and Ramsey holds up his hands for quiet.

RAMSEY

You don't think the Bible should be included in a study of the great works of literature?

Sherm shakes his head. Ramsey walks over and gently raps him on the back of the head with a Bible. The class hoots and hollers. Even Sherm has to laugh.

RAMSEY (CONT' D)

The Bible is a craftily produced piece of fiction most likely written by one writer using many pseudonyms such as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

LINDA

Like the way Stephen King uses different names?

RAMSEY

Precisely. Three hundred dollars for Linda and control of the board. Now don't you all run off to get me excommunicated. I'm not saying the Bible is full of lies. I'm saying that in some circumstances, it is a work of fiction and certainly worthy of inclusion in this class. So back to my original question: What is the moral of the story of Adam and Eve?

STUDENT #1

Never trust women.

STUDENT #2

Men will do anything a woman says especially if she's naked.

STUDENT #3

Apples are bad for you.

Ramsey smiles when a hand goes up in the back of the room.

RAMSEY

Are you volunteering, Miss O' Mara, or just working out a cramp?

All eyes turn to the back of the room. ROBIN O' MARA, 17, and drop dead gorgeous, sits in the last row.

ROBIN

The moral is that we should avoid temptation because it will only lead to our total destruction.

She smiles slyly and then, almost unconsciously, tugs at the hemline of her incredibly short skirt to reveal just a little bit more of her stunning legs.

RAMSEY

Correct.

Ramsey's eyes remain locked on Robin for just a moment. The bell rings. Students moan and begin to leave.

Students surround Ramsey at the front of the room. Nobody wants to leave. They love this guy and he gives them his complete attention. That is, until Robin passes by.

ROBIN

Hey, Mr. Ramsey.

Robin tosses him an apple and walks out the door.

Ramsey stares at the apple, chuckles at its significance to that day's lesson, and then goes back to his groupies.

INT. RAMSEY'S CLASSROOM – LATER

The room has finally emptied, and Ramsey corrects papers at his desk. PRINCIPAL WARREN MCKENNA, 45, gently knocks on the door and enters.

WARREN

You're here late.

Warren is a big man, but his smile gives away just how gentle this giant really is.

RAMSEY

Lori has forbidden me from being in my house until after 4:00. She says I need the hour to unwind so I don't bring school home with me.

WARREN

Smart girl.

RAMSEY

So, Warren, how is everyone's favorite principal? You never stop by anymore.

WARREN

I heard it was standing room only up here. Didn't think I'd fit.

RAMSEY

What would you have me do? Tell them I can't teach them because I don't have enough desks?

Warren shrugs and takes a look at the chalkboard.

WARREN

Mrs. Ott says you were showing a hockey game in here the other day.

RAMSEY

Not just any hockey game – the 1980 Winter Olympics. Team USA versus the Soviet Union. It was Social Studies, and we were learning about the fall of the Iron Curtain.

WARREN

(chuckles)

She's just jealous because her students keep trying to transfer into your class.

RAMSEY

I'm just trying to reach them.

WARREN

And since your students seem to be as passionate about the subject matter as you are, I don't come up here and tell them to go back to their regularly scheduled classes.

RAMSEY

So, why did you come up here?

WARREN

To give you this.

Warren smiles and holds out an envelope. Ramsey takes it and examines it carefully.

Ramsey looks at WARREN suspiciously, and tears it open.

RAMSEY

(reads aloud)

The State Board of Education is Delighted to announce that Beechum High School's Richard Ramsey has been named the state's Educator of the Year.

WARREN  
Congratulations, Richard. Susie  
would have been so proud.

The mention of the name seems to knock a little of the wind out of Ramsey's sails.

Ramsey picks up the only picture frame that graces his desk. SUSIE RAMSEY smiles at him from inside the pewter frame. She is extremely beautiful, and has the most reassuring smile.

RAMSEY  
Yeah. Susie would be very proud.

Ramsey stares at the photo, and his eyes begin to well up with tears.

WARREN  
Are you okay, Richard?

Ramsey nods, but his hands begin to shake.

INT. TEACHER'S BATHROOM - DAY

Ramsey rushes over to the sink. The sweat pours down his face, and his hands shake uncontrollably. He is so pale that he looks like he's dead.

Ramsey turns on the cold water, and splashes several handfuls onto his face. He looks at his pale, pasty reflection as he braces himself against the sink.

RAMSEY  
Why now?

Ramsey manages to get a trembling hand into his pocket and pull out a small bottle of prescription pills.

Despite the terribly shaky hands, he manages to open the bottle and pop two pills into his mouth.

After he swallows the pills, Ramsey slides down to the floor, and sits with his back and head braced against the wall.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

It begins to drizzle. Ramsey seems to have pulled himself together. He walks towards his car, but in that way you walk when your mind is completely on something else.

It's not until he is at his car, that he notices that Robin leans on the driver's door. She's miraculously found a way to make that skirt look shorter.

RAMSEY

Hello, Robin. Did I forget a tutoring session?

Robin wipes an imaginary something off of her knee, and draws Ramsey's attention to her amazing legs.

ROBIN

Actually, I had a favor to ask.

RAMSEY

Ask away. You did get the big question right in class today.

ROBIN

I missed my bus and Lori already left. Is there any chance I could get a ride with you?

Ramsey seems to have doubts. Then Robin hits him with an innocent smile and pouting eyes.

RAMSEY

Get in. What would my daughter say if I left her best friend shivering out in the rain?

Robin smiles. She always gets what she wants.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The rain pounds down much harder. Ramsey's car moves cautiously over the dark, slick, winding roads.

INT. RAMSEY'S CAR - DAY

Robin slips off her seat belt as Ramsey concentrates on the road. She slowly moves closer to him

ROBIN

I'm going to kill Lori. She's probably with Mike, engaged in another of their marathon conversations that the rest of the world just wouldn't understand.

(MORE)

ROBIN (cont' d)  
It's like they're Siamese twins  
joined at the mind.

Ramsey chuckles.

RAMSEY  
And this bothers you?

ROBIN  
Of course. They should save that  
sort of behavior for college when  
they're expected to wear black  
turtlenecks, grab their smokes and  
some Salinger, and spend all day  
in a café haughtily debating life's  
little intricacies.

RAMSEY  
So they need to act their age?

ROBIN  
Age is only important when it comes  
to figuring out how many candles  
to put on a birthday cake.

RAMSEY  
Let them talk. I'm all for freedom  
of expression.

Robin tickles Ramsey's ear lobe with her tongue. He turns to  
her in surprise.

RAMSEY (CONT' D)  
Christ, Robin!

Ramsey's eyes go back to the road, but he is now keenly aware  
of the sexual being seated mere inches from him.

ROBIN  
I thought you were all for freedom  
of expression?

RAMSEY  
You're my daughter's best friend.  
I'm your teacher.

ROBIN  
"Man is free at the moment he  
wishes to be."

Ramsey looks at her. Mystified. Impressed.

RAMSEY  
That's Voltaire.

Robin nods and comes extremely close. Too close.

ROBIN

To argue with Voltaire would be  
akin to slander.

She touches his face. He fights to keep his eyes on the road. She pulls his face towards her. Ramsey fights her. She continues to pull. Then he gives in.

He lips move towards hers. Total surrender.

Suddenly, the car is filled with white light. Headlights! A car. Man in a black mask? It comes right at them.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Ramsey's car has drifted into the wrong lane. It suddenly swerves to avoid an oncoming car. The car slides, slides.

A ditch near the side of the road. Ramsey's car moves towards it. Too quickly.

INT. RAMSEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Ramsey slowly opens his eyes. His head rests against the deployed air bag. It takes a moment to get his bearings.

He turns to Robin. The passenger's seat is empty.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

It's night. Time has passed. Pouring rain. Ramsey's car is in the ditch, but not damaged.

Ramsey gets out of the car. A little woozy. Goes to the passenger's side. No sign of Robin.

RAMSEY

Robin! Robin, can you hear me?

The woods provide no answer to his call.