

KINDLING

By Lily Rosen

Cast of Characters

FRANKIE. Grade 11. Insolent and short-tempered. Went to fill up their water bottle.

HOLLAND. Grade 9. Sensitive and anxious. Left class early for a family emergency.

RILEY. Grade 12. Uptight goody-two-shoes. Went to the office to deliver attendance.

MARLOWE. Grade 10. Naive and blindly loyal. Went to meet up with their friend.

JUDE. Grade 10. Nosy and jealous. Went to meet up with their friend.

SAWYER. Grade 12. Sarcastic smartass. Left class early to go to a dentist's appointment.

HALL-WALKERS 1, 2, 3, 4. Numbers are flexible. 2-16 parts.

OFFSTAGE VOICE.

All characters are gender-neutral. Only they/them pronouns are used in the script which may be replaced with the actor's pronouns once cast. Surnames may also be changed to fit the actor.

(Setting: The hallway outside the principal's office at suburban Great Oak Secondary. Chairs are split between two sides as if against parallel walls. On the left side, HOLLAND, MARLOWE & JUDE are seated. On the right, FRANKIE, RILEY & SAWYER.)

SCENE 1. THE SUSPECTS.

FRANKIE: “What were you doing at 2:14 PM on Tuesday, September 22nd?” Like we were checking the time every five seconds.

JUDE: It was only half an hour ago. Can you not remember that far back?

MARLOWE: I still can't believe there were only 6 of us not in class. 6 out of a thousand.

SAWYER: We're 0.6% of the student body.

FRANKIE: No one asked.

RILEY: And 0.1% of us are guilty.

JUDE: *(leaning forward to look at HOLLAND)* Hey, who are you?

HOLLAND: Um, I'm Holland. I'm in grade 9.

JUDE: Cool. Hi.

HOLLAND: Hi.

RILEY: *(to HOLLAND)* Stuff like this doesn't usually happen here. Or, I guess I should say it never happens because it never has.

MARLOWE: Imagine if this wasn't the first time.

SAWYER: It's not.

HOLLAND: What?

SAWYER: When Great Oak Secondary was being built, there was a terrible tragedy when a construction worker dropped a lit cigarette into the early skeleton of the girl's washroom. 1 died, 5 were injured.

RILEY: Not funny, Sawyer. *(to HOLLAND)* They're lying.

JUDE: Besides, no one died today. No one even got hurt.

FRANKIE: And it wasn't a cigarette, it was a lighter and gasoline.

A HALL-WALKER enters in front of the chairs with a phone to their ear.

HALL-WALKER 1: *(talking on the phone)* Right? Whoever set that fire is totally screwed.

MARLOWE: What?

HALL-WALKER 1: I wasn't talking to you.

MARLOWE: Why are they screwed?

HALL-WALKER 1: They set school property on fire. During a school day. While people were inside.

SAWYER: And?

HALL-WALKER 1: They won't just be expelled. My dad's a lawyer and he said you can go to prison for like, 14 years for first-degree arson.

JUDE: 14 years?!

HALL-WALKER 1: Maybe more, maybe less, I dunno.

HOLLAND: (*clutching the religious symbol on their necklace*) Oh, god.

HALL-WALKER 1: (*laughs into the phone*) Yeah, they're fucked.

The HALL-WALKER exits. Light shift.

SCENE 2. SAWYER.

RILEY: I didn't do it.

FRANKIE: Neither did I.

HOLLAND: I'm innocent.

MARLOWE: I didn't, and it couldn't have been Jude. We were meeting each other in the hallway when the fire alarm went off.

JUDE: Yeah, it wasn't me, so it can't be Marlowe either.

SAWYER: Whoever it is isn't going to just admit it.

MARLOWE: How do you know?

SAWYER: We wouldn't all be here if they were gonna confess. They would've done it by now.

JUDE: This is bad. Like *really* bad. Remember that time someone sold weed during lunch? Principal Becker expelled the wrong person for it. I heard some asshole laughing about how they got off scot-free a couple days later.

RILEY: But Principal Becker is only doing "preliminary questioning".

JUDE: Becker gets to talk to the police *and* our parents before we do. If he's already made up his mind when they get here in 30 minutes, whoever he picked is done for.

Uncomfortable silence; everyone realizes the gravity of their situation.

FRANKIE: (*to SAWYER*) You didn't say that you didn't do it.

SAWYER: What?

FRANKIE: The fire. We all said we didn't start it, except for you.

MARLOWE: Hey, we shouldn't start turning on each other.

SAWYER: I'm not a fucking arsonist!

JUDE: But it has to be one of us.

HOLLAND: What if it was a teacher?

They all turn to stare at HOLLAND.

RILEY: Teachers were teaching.

HOLLAND: Or a janitor, or a lunch lady or something.

JUDE: Why would they set the girls' washroom on fire?

HOLLAND: I don't know, why would any of us set the girls' washroom on fire?

MARLOWE: Pyromania?

RILEY: Maybe they needed a release.

JUDE: They might've wanted to blame someone.

SAWYER: Or to prove that they could.

FRANKIE: Maybe they were just angry.

HOLLAND: Angry about what?

FRANKIE ignores HOLLAND.

FRANKIE: (to SAWYER) Why weren't you in class?

SAWYER: I had to leave early for a dentist's appointment.

FRANKIE: Likely story.

SAWYER: Shut up! I was supposed to get my annual checkup but then the fire happened so I missed it. The dentist's office keeps a record so-

FRANKIE: You could've set it on the way there!

MARLOWE: We don't need to fight. Everything's fine.

JUDE: No, everything is *not* fine! One of us is going to jail for 14 years and I don't want it to be me!

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Sawyer Grant? Principal Becker would like to see you now.

SAWYER stands. A few HALL-WALKERS enter. SAWYER and the other suspects freeze.

Light shift.

HALL-WALKER 2: Can you believe it?

HALL-WALKER 3: Sawyer Grant is-

HALL-WALKER 4: -an arsonist, definitely

HALL-WALKER 2: Maybe

HALL-WALKER 3: Would they really be so-

HALL-WALKER 4: Crazy

HALL-WALKER 3: -stupid?

HALL-WALKER 4: I don't know

HALL-WALKER 2: They act like they know everything

HALL-WALKER 3: Like how to get away with setting the girl's washroom on fire?

HALL-WALKER 4: Yeah

HALL-WALKER 2: Probably

HALL-WALKER 4: They'd think they knew, at least

HALL-WALKER 2: Smart Sawyer

HALL-WALKER 4: Smug Sawyer

HALL-WALKER 3: Stupid Sawyer

The HALL-WALKERS exit. The suspects unfreeze and SAWYER exits. Light shift.

SCENE 3. JUDE.

FRANKIE: Well, now we can talk behind their back.

MARLOWE: Frankie! Stop being such a jerk.

FRANKIE: What? None of us want to go to jail, we should try to figure out who did it. It could be Sawyer.

HOLLAND: Shouldn't we leave that to the adults?

JUDE: We can't trust them, Principal Becker doesn't know what the hell he's doing! Frankie's right, maybe it was Sawyer.

MARLOWE: (*hurt*) Why are you taking their side instead of mine?

JUDE doesn't answer.

RILEY: Sawyer had physics with me, I don't think it was them.

FRANKIE: Why, 'cause you suffered through Mr. O'Donnell together?

RILEY: No, they left the class after me.

HOLLAND: You must be friends.

MARLOWE & JUDE: Yes.

RILEY: No.

HOLLAND: (*to MARLOWE & JUDE*) I was asking-

MARLOWE: (*to JUDE*) Oh, so we are friends. Good to know.

RILEY: Sawyer and I aren't really friends. We're just in the same class.

JUDE: Marlowe, what are you talking about?

MARLOWE: Friends are supposed to back each other up, which you don't do.

FRANKIE: *(as if excited for a fight)* Oh shit!

JUDE: Oh my god, not this again.

HOLLAND: I'm sorry, I didn't meant to-

MARLOWE: "Not this again." Huh. Do you actually care about me at all?

JUDE: Marlowe-

MARLOWE: I've always been such a good friend to you. I... let you copy my homework, text you first, always remember your birthday, what do you do for me? Did you forget that friendship is two-sided?

JUDE: *(suddenly angry)* It's not like you make it easy! Your expectations for people are completely insane. You need *so much* attention. Does your boy/girlfriend not give you enough?

MARLOWE: Is that what this is about? Somehow it's my fault that you're insecure?

FRANKIE: Alright, can we skip to the end where you blame each other for the fire?

MARLOWE: It's not Jude.

MARLOWE looks at JUDE who says nothing.

MARLOWE: Do you seriously think it's me now?

JUDE: You came from French, you would've passed the washrooms. I'm not ruling it out.

MARLOWE: You have to be joking. I defended you without a second of hesitation and you actually think I did this.

HOLLAND: What class did Jude come from?

JUDE: History.

MARLOWE: Right next to the washroom.

SAWYER returns and sits.

FRANKIE: That was fast.

RILEY: What did Becker even ask you?

SAWYER: What class I was in, where I went after leaving the class, you know, stuff like that. He told me that our bags will be searched when the cops get here. Then he asked what I thought about all of you.

HOLLAND: *(nervously)* Really?

SAWYER: Don't worry, I didn't have much to say about you.

FRANKIE: Who did you talk about, then?

SAWYER: You, mostly. You targeted me for no reason. It's pretty suspicious to cast blame randomly.

FRANKIE: It's not random, people lie about having appointments all the time to get out of school. Or maybe to commit arson.

SAWYER: But I wasn't lying! The dentist's office has-

JUDE: We've been over this.

FRANKIE: Okay, so we'll move on to blaming you, who was probably trying to blame the fire on Marlowe. Is that better?

JUDE: I'm not blaming them! It could be any of us!

SAWYER: Including you.

RILEY: Yeah, implicating Marlowe sorta implicates yourself.

JUDE: How?!

MARLOWE: You aren't even loyal to your best friend.

JUDE: You are SUCH a hypocrite!

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Jude Ferguson, Principal Becker is ready for you.

JUDE stands. Two HALL-WALKERS enter. JUDE and the other suspects freeze. Light shift.

HALL-WALKER 1: What has Jude gotten himself into this time?

HALL-WALKER 2: Always poking around in other people's business

HALL-WALKER 1: I heard they keep track of people's secrets in a notebook

HALL-WALKER 2: Really?

HALL-WALKER 1: Really

HALL-WALKER 2: Ever since their best friend Marlowe got a boy/girlfriend-

HALL-WALKER 1: They took it so personally, like they were being replaced

HALL-WALKER 2: They've known each other since preschool

HALL-WALKER 1: Maybe they're framing Marlowe out of jealousy

HALL-WALKER 2: That's dumb

HALL-WALKER 1: I know

HALL-WALKER 2: Ruining their closest friendship

HALL-WALKER 1: They're a-

HALL-WALKER 2: Masochist

HALL-WALKER 1: -dumb bitch

The HALL-WALKERS exit. The suspects unfreeze and JUDE exits. Light shift.

SCENE 4. MARLOWE.

SAWYER: Damn, I missed the crumble of a decade-long friendship.

MARLOWE: You think you're so funny.

HOLLAND: I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything.

RILEY: It's not your fault.

MARLOWE: It's Jude's fault.

SAWYER: What if 0.2% of the school was guilty?

HOLLAND: Do you mean-

RILEY: Two of us.

SAWYER: Yeah.

FRANKIE: No way. You think it was Jude *and* Marlowe.

SAWYER: Maybe.

They all look to MARLOWE who is silent.

FRANKIE: Not gonna defend yourself, huh?

MARLOWE: Fuck you.

RILEY: Frankie, this isn't helpful.

SAWYER: I think Jude could've convinced Marlowe to help them start the fire.

RILEY: (*exasperated*) Why?

SAWYER: We don't know why they left class to "talk". Plus, Marlowe seems to follow Jude's lead.

RILEY: No, why would they want to set the girls' washroom on fire?

FRANKIE: We already discussed that.

MARLOWE: Our friendship is none of your business.

SAWYER: Then you shouldn't have fought right next to us, idiot.

HOLLAND: (*to MARLOWE*) I don't think it was you.

MARLOWE: Thanks.

FRANKIE: What *do* you think, Holland?

HOLLAND: What?

FRANKIE: Who did it?

HOLLAND says nothing. Long pause.

FRANKIE: Use your fucking words!

HOLLAND: *(struggling for words)* It- I think- I don't-

SAWYER: Jesus, spit it out.

RILEY: Clearly they don't know.

FRANKIE: Then they shouldn't be clearing anyone of suspicion. They don't know any of us.

HOLLAND: *(on the verge of tears)* I'm sorry.

MARLOWE: They were just trying to be nice.

FRANKIE: "Nice" isn't going to stop one of us from going to prison for the next 14 years.

JUDE returns and sits.

SAWYER: How was it?

JUDE: Fine. Whatever. I didn't talk much.

FRANKIE: Probably just ratted on Marlowe then.

MARLOWE: Not much to tell, Jude was closer to the washrooms than I was.

RILEY: But they don't have a history with arson.

SAWYER: None of us do.

RILEY: Not true.

FRANKIE: What are you talking about?

RILEY: *(to MARLOWE)* Look, I didn't want to say anything, but I don't think I can keep this information from the group. *(to the group)* I was neighbours with Marlowe from when I was about 9 to 12 years old and... a fire truck came to their house 5 times while I lived next door.

MARLOWE: *(seething)* You little-

RILEY: I'm sorry. I can't keep a secret like that when we're being investigated.

HOLLAND: What caught on fire?

RILEY: Curtains, from a candle. Their bedroom every single time.

MARLOWE: How do you even know that?!

RILEY: ...My mom has good relations with the fire department.

JUDE: Wow. I remember you had candles all over your room. I just never thought to ask.

SAWYER: So you're a pyromaniac.

MARLOWE: Those were accidents!

FRANKIE: The same “accident” five times is more than coincidence.

MARLOWE: I am NOT an-

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Marlowe Abel, Principal Becker can see you now.

MARLOWE: I’m not an arsonist! I didn’t set the washroom on fire!

RILEY: The candles-

MARLOWE: I JUST LIKE CANDLES! THAT DOESN’T MEAN-

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Marlowe Abel, please enter the office. We’re waiting for you.

MARLOWE slowly stands, glaring daggers at RILEY and JUDE. Two HALL-WALKERS enter. MARLOWE and the other suspects freeze. Light shift.

HALL-WALKER 3: Did you hear that?

HALL-WALKER 4: Marlowe is literally-

HALL-WALKER 3: Losing it

HALL-WALKER 4: Literally

HALL-WALKER 3: Their blind trust is their downfall

HALL-WALKER 4: It’s sad, really

HALL-WALKER 3: It’s like they don’t know that friends can lie, too

HALL-WALKER 4: Or tell their secrets

HALL-WALKER 3: Like this one

HALL-WALKER 4: Marlowe, a pyro

HALL-WALKER 3: Who would’ve thought?

HALL-WALKER 4: I guess fire will never turn from you

HALL-WALKER 3: Fire doesn’t leave you

HALL-WALKER 4: It only grows

The HALL-WALKERS exit. The suspects unfreeze and MARLOWE exits. Light shift.

SCENE 5. RILEY.

RILEY: I didn’t mean to make them- I feel really bad.

HOLLAND: So why did you do it?

RILEY: Holland...

SAWYER: It’s a valid question. You could’ve just told Becker. Why wait for so long knowing it and then decide to tell us?

RILEY: I don't know, I felt obligated to. Morally. Like, we were all discussing who might be guilty and I was keeping a piece of the puzzle to myself.

JUDE: But you feel bad about it.

RILEY: (*embarrassed*) Of course I do, I made them upset.

FRANKIE: But it was "morally correct".

RILEY: Yes?

FRANKIE: You don't sound certain.

HOLLAND: Why is this becoming an interrogation?

JUDE: We want to figure out who did this.

HOLLAND: Do you? Or do you just want someone to blame?

Coming from HOLLAND, this halts JUDE in their tracks.

JUDE: ...What else can we do?

HOLLAND: We can stop finding excuses to blame each other. Maybe we can be nice instead.

SAWYER: Aww, how sweet, let's all make flower crowns and sing a song together while we're at it.

HOLLAND: Not like that...

FRANKIE: I think it's impossible for Sawyer to be nice to someone.

SAWYER: Like you're any better.

JUDE: (*to RILEY*) What did you mean by "release" earlier?

RILEY: What?

JUDE: You said that someone might've set the fire because "they needed a release".

RILEY: Yeah, like, um, someone who bottles up their feelings.

FRANKIE: Sounds like you.

RILEY: You don't even know me.

FRANKIE: I can tell you don't let anything slip. What is it, parents?

HOLLAND: This is turning into an interrogation again.

SAWYER: Shut up, Holland.

HOLLAND flinches. SAWYER notices but says nothing.

JUDE: Parents are the root of everyone's problems.

RILEY: My parents are fine.

SAWYER: Fine? No one who really loves their parents just calls them "fine".

RILEY: Stop it, I do love them.

JUDE: They're strict, aren't they?

FRANKIE: Only get the attention you need when you do something wrong. Arson would catch their eye, huh?

HOLLAND: Please just leave them alone.

SAWYER: Why'd you leave physics before me, Riley?

RILEY: I - I had to deliver the attendance for our substitute.

FRANKIE: At 2:14 pm? 20 minutes before the end of school?

RILEY: *(bitterly)* I did just as she asked. I always do *exactly* as I'm-

MARLOWE returns and sits.

MARLOWE: Someone had dirt on Riley?

JUDE: Sort of.

MARLOWE: Good. It's only fair that we're all blamed at some point.

RILEY: Seriously?

MARLOWE: Yeah, seriously. It's your turn to play suspect.

SAWYER: Riley, what were you saying?

RILEY starts to explain but stops themselves, collects their thoughts.

RILEY: Why should I say anything when it's just going to be used against me?

JUDE: Because... we all have.

HOLLAND: That doesn't make it fair. That doesn't make it nice.

SAWYER: Oh, boo-hoo. How could you expect any of this to be "nice"?

HOLLAND: I don't know...

RILEY: I don't deserve to be put to shame. Unlike the rest of you, I've been kind. I've been fair.

FRANKIE: Are you really that delusional?

RILEY: No, I defended Sawyer, I comforted Holland.

MARLOWE: And you condemned me for liking candles.

JUDE: You think you're so much better than us, but you're not. You wanna be told you're in the right and the rest of us are wrong but guess what? We're all in the wrong. None of us are "good".

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Riley Montgomery, Principal Becker is ready to see you now.

RILEY stands. A few HALL-WALKERS enter. RILEY and the other suspects freeze. Light shift.

HALL-WALKER 2: Never thought I'd see Riley Montgomery here

HALL-WALKER 4: Awaiting expulsion

HALL-WALKER 1: And a jail sentence!

HALL-WALKER 2: If it's them

HALL-WALKER 4: I mean, it makes like-

HALL-WALKER 1: No sense

HALL-WALKER 4: -and total sense at the same time, you know?

HALL-WALKER 2: Such a goody-two-shoes

HALL-WALKER 4: They were bound to crack at some point

HALL-WALKER 1: Can't suppress yourself forever

HALL-WALKER 2: From arson?

HALL-WALKER 1: Maybe

HALL-WALKER 4: From their mom

HALL-WALKER 1: She's all no-nonsense, you can't do anything right by her

HALL-WALKER 2: Like mother, like daughter/son

The HALL-WALKERS exit. The suspects unfreeze and RILEY exits. Light shift. There is an uncomfortable silence in the wake of JUDE's damnation.

SCENE 6. HOLLAND.

HOLLAND: ...Is that really true? Are none of us good?

JUDE: Maybe. Maybe you are. Or maybe you're just nice, which isn't the same.

MARLOWE: I don't think I'm good.

SAWYER: Me neither.

FRANKIE: Does it matter if we're good, if we're right?

JUDE: *(sheepishly)* I don't know, I was just talking out of my ass...

HOLLAND: *(clutching the religious symbol on their necklace)* Maybe there isn't good. Maybe there isn't right.

SAWYER: *(sarcastically)* Yeah, no one can compare to God in virtue.

HOLLAND: That's not what I meant.

SAWYER: Sorry, I should stop making jokes.

HOLLAND: I mean, you're right, but it's more like... If there is an all-knowing God, that means he knows whether we will be good or bad, it's already decided for us. Destined. And free

will doesn't exist. And if no one chooses anything, if it's all part of a divine plan, can anyone really be responsible for their actions? Is the arsonist really guilty?

FRANKIE: If everything is inevitable, heaven and hell don't make any sense. God predetermines the course of your life and then you're rewarded or punished for it?

Pause.

FRANKIE: *(to HOLLAND)* Do you believe in God?

Even longer pause; it's clear this is a loaded question for HOLLAND.

HOLLAND: ...I don't know.

FRANKIE: That's okay.

HOLLAND: *(immeasurably relieved)* Yeah. It *is* okay. I don't know.

MARLOWE: If everything is inevitable, there's no point in blaming someone. One of us did it, and one of us will be convicted regardless.

JUDE: It could be any of us.

FRANKIE: All of us and none of us.

SAWYER: Maybe no one is responsible unless someone confesses. Whoever is guilty is whoever admits to it.

HOLLAND: Until then, no one did it.

JUDE: Yeah.

MARLOWE: Yeah.

FRANKIE: You know who I think is God? The person who decides. The person controlling our next 14 years, our lives, our stupid, useless fates. Right now, Principal Becker is God.

RILEY returns and sits.

RILEY: What happened here? It feels... different.

MARLOWE: We talked, Riley. We actually talked.

HOLLAND: I feel like I've gotten to know all of you better than I've known anyone in my entire life.

SAWYER: Is that a good thing?

FRANKIE & JUDE: Yes.

MARLOWE & RILEY: No.

HOLLAND: See? I knew that Frankie and Jude would say yes and that Marlowe and Riley would say no. I *knew* that.

JUDE: Don't you know your family well?

HOLLAND: No. I don't think I do, or want to.

RILEY: I get that.

MARLOWE: Friends?

HOLLAND says nothing.

FRANKIE: I would offer to be your friend, but I don't think I'd be a good one.

SAWYER: None of us would.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Holland Koning, please enter Principal Becker's office.

HOLLAND: Wish me luck.

ALL: Good luck.

HOLLAND stands. A HALL-WALKER enters. HOLLAND and the other suspects freeze.

Light shift.

HALL-WALKER 3: Who even is that? Some random freshman? Man, that's gotta suck. Three weeks into high school and they're being accused of arson just because they weren't in class. Unless they did it, obviously. And sure, it could be them, but why? What could a ninth-grader have against the school when they can barely remember where their locker is? Even if someone was mean to them or they didn't like their classes or teachers, it's still hard to believe they might sneak gasoline to school and take their wrath out on a washroom stall. At least Frankie is angry and Riley is tightly wound - they might have reasons. But no one knows anything about the new kid.

The HALL-WALKER exits. The suspects unfreeze and HOLLAND exits. Light shift.

SCENE 7. FRANKIE.

JUDE: So... what do we do now?

MARLOWE: I don't know.

FRANKIE: I feel like Holland was holding us together somehow.

RILEY: (*scoffing*) Please, you barely know them.

FRANKIE: I know them better than you.

RILEY: You literally said that they don't know any of us after snapping at them to "use their words". But I *did* miss your cute little heart to heart.

FRANKIE: Fuck. You.

SAWYER: You almost made them cry if my memory serves.

JUDE: You didn't help, Sawyer.

FRANKIE: Don't try to make me the bad guy, Mister/Miss Dentist's Appointment.

SAWYER: I can call the dentist's office *right now* to prove it-

FRANKIE: An appointment doesn't mean anything!

RILEY: I'm pretty sure that you're the bad guy out of everyone.

MARLOWE: At least Frankie didn't guilt me for a candle collection.

JUDE: I just want to know how you didn't learn to keep candles away from your window after the first time. It was an accident, right?

MARLOWE: You don't care about ANYONE except yourself!

SAWYER: Would an innocent person throw their best friend under the bus? Seems unlikely.

JUDE: I could never care about you enough for you to be satisfied.

RILEY: Hey Frankie, why weren't you in class?

FRANKIE: Getting water, dipshit. I dare you to tell me that's more suspicious than Sawyer's fake appointment.

MARLOWE: Or your late attendance sheet.

SAWYER: A water bottle would be the perfect vehicle for gasoline. No one would suspect a thing.

JUDE: Of course *you* would think of that, probably because you did it.

MARLOWE: No one here has any fucking loyalty! Jude and Riley turn against me, Frankie's gone from bully to best buddies with Holland, *pick a side!*

FRANKIE: I didn't bully them.

JUDE: *(to MARLOWE)* You turned away from me WAY before I did from you!

SAWYER: You're just jealous that Marlowe is dating someone other than you.

RILEY: *(to FRANKIE)* Wow, you really don't think you're a bully. No self-awareness.

JUDE: *(to RILEY)* Hypocrite!

FRANKIE: I'm not a bully!

MARLOWE: Shut up, Sawyer, you don't know anything.

SAWYER: Don't tell me to shut up! Jude wants you! They totally want you!

JUDE: I do NOT!

RILEY: *(to FRANKIE)* Must've gotten it from your dad, the wife-beater. I wonder if he did the same to his kids? Maybe that's why you're a-

FRANKIE: I'M NOT A BULLY! I'M NOT LIKE MY DAD! I'M NOT, I'M NOT, I'M NOT!

FRANKIE screams and lifts their chair to throw it. The other suspects' ad-lib fearful responses, telling them to stop, hiding behind their chairs, etc. HOLLAND returns before FRANKIE can throw it, crying.

SCENE 8. GUILT.

HOLLAND: *(in tears)* What's going on?

HOLLAND takes in the scene. FRANKIE drops their chair.

ALL: It was their fault.

Everyone points to each other: RILEY at FRANKIE, FRANKIE at SAWYER, SAWYER at JUDE, JUDE at MARLOWE, and MARLOWE at RILEY.

HOLLAND: Please, don't fight...

HOLLAND sinks into their chair, sobbing.

FRANKIE: ...I'm sorry.

RILEY: I'm sorry.

MARLOWE: I'm sorry.

JUDE: I'm sorry.

SAWYER: I'm sorry.

HOLLAND: It doesn't even matter, they've decided on me, I *know* they have.

MARLOWE: Why?

HOLLAND: I wouldn't tell them about my... my "family emergency".

JUDE: Is that why you left class early?

HOLLAND wipes their tears and nods.

SAWYER: But... Why wouldn't you tell them? In a matter like this, facing prison time...

HOLLAND: I just couldn't. It's the first time I've met the principal and I have to tell him about- oh, god. I didn't want to cry in there and I did anyway. How guilty does that look?! He didn't even ask me about the rest of you. He's going to say it was me, I don't know what to do.

RILEY: You don't know that yet, okay? Breathe with me.

HOLLAND: They're going to take me away.

RILEY: Holland. Breathe.

HOLLAND: And I thought I'd be out of here fast. I thought that they'd ask a few questions, feel bad for me and I could go to Erik...

JUDE: You don't have to tell us.

HOLLAND: I can't visit my brother in the hospital if they take me away. His accident - I think he wanted it to... The rest of my family isn't going to understand. They're not like him. You have to tell him- tell him-

RILEY: You're gonna be okay, you're gonna get to tell him yourself.

SAWYER: No one has confessed, so no one did it. Right? That's what we decided.

HOLLAND: The principal doesn't know that! If no one takes the blame, he's gonna pick the guiltiest; me.

MARLOWE: Maybe someone will take the blame.

There is a long silence. All the suspects look at each other, feeling the shared weight of accountability, guilt, and shame.

FRANKIE: I'll do it.

HOLLAND: What?

FRANKIE: I'll say it was me.

HOLLAND: Frankie, no, I didn't mean-

RILEY: Frankie, let - let me take the blame. I'll say it's my fault and-

FRANKIE: I'm the only one left. It has to be me.

JUDE: Did you really do it?

FRANKIE: Does it matter?

HOLLAND: Of course it does, you can't do it if you're innocent.

FRANKIE stands.

FRANKIE: I'm not innocent. I'm admitting to the crime.

SAWYER: It was a dumb idea, just sit down and-

FRANKIE: It's okay. They'll believe me. I know what people say about me.

Four HALL-WALKERS enter, 1 and 4 on the left of FRANKIE, 2 and 3 on the right. Light shift.

HALL-WALKER 1: Frankie Corwin has the worst-

HALL-WALKER 4: Temper

HALL-WALKER 1: -father

HALL-WALKER 4: I'd almost feel bad for them

HALL-WALKER 1: If it weren't for the fact they were a total asshole

FRANKIE: They don't understand. I don't blame them.

HALL-WALKER 2: Remember that time Frankie Corwin beat someone up in the changeroom?

HALL-WALKER 3: That was so weird

HALL-WALKER 2: Frankie kept screaming-

HALL-WALKER 2 & 3: Stop! Stop!

HALL-WALKER 2: -with every punch

HALL-WALKER 3: Arson doesn't seem like too big of a leap

FRANKIE: If I were them, I wouldn't care about me.

HALL-WALKER 4: Frankie's the one

HALL-WALKER 2: Frankie's guilty

HALL-WALKER 1: Frankie would

HALL-WALKER 3: Frankie did it

The HALL-WALKERS exit. Light shift.

FRANKIE: I probably would, so I probably did.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Frankie Corwin, Principal Becker is ready to see you.

RILEY: Frankie, don't-

MARLOWE: Please-

JUDE: Wait-

SAWYER: It's not-

HOLLAND: Frankie...

FRANKIE exits. The suspects rise from their seats and form a line at the front of the stage.

JUDE: It could've been any of us.

SAWYER: All of us.

RILEY: None of us.

MARLOWE: It could've been.

HOLLAND: Until it wasn't.

Each suspect takes out a lighter and flicks it into life, staring at the little flame, the root of their problems. They look up and stare at the audience; an accusation. Blackout.