

sunset — what?

JEREMIAH. (*Quietly*) He lets her live. (*A beat.*)

GAVIN. What? (*The words come tumbling out.*)

JEREMIAH. I've been trying to tell you for weeks but you kept — (*Blurring out.*) The end of the second act doesn't work — the whole ... “My-son's-not-allowed-to-play-in-the-big-game” thing. It is so cliché — I've seen it a million times —

GAVIN. Let her “live her own life?” That what you're saying —

JEREMIAH. (*Sharply*) May I talk for once, please!? (*He takes a breath.*) We keep Jerry being injured before the big game, but it's not from soccer! He gets beat up again — badly — by the other kids —

GAVIN. But they're starting to like him now —

JEREMIAH. No, they don't like him. They don't care about any soccer game. They don't care about anything —

GAVIN. Yeah, but then they —

JEREMIAH. Let me finish! End of the second act — Jerry's in his room, goes to the window, crawls out on the ledge ... over to the neighbor's window. The one you want me to cut in the first act. He breaks in, and steals a bunch of guns. (*Eagerly*) You want a twist at the end of the second act, right?

GAVIN. (*Wary*) Yeah, that's a twist ...

JEREMIAH. The audience will be — wow! So the next day there's the big game, right? — and Jerry scores the winning goal. The team high-fives, jumping up and down, but they ignore him. Leave him standing there by himself. Tamarah's over here, looks really sad for him. The kids who beat him up — they're on the side laughing at him. So Jerry reaches into his bag ... and pulls out the guns, and he starts ... shooting! BLAM! BLAM! And we do a lot of — you know, Sam Peckinpah sort of slow motion stuff as they're trying to get away. He saves Mr. C. for last. Finally, when they're all dead, he turns to Tamarah. She's frozen there, all scared, but he just smiles at her, drops the gun ... (*Dramatically*) ... and walks away. (*Silence.*)

GAVIN. Sort of like ... John Wayne at the end of *The Searchers*.

JEREMIAH. Right! That's it! Exactly! (*Jeremiah wails eagerly for a response as Gavin finally forms one.*)

GAVIN. Are you fucking kidding?

JEREMIAH. It's a great ending —

GAVIN. You slaughtered a bunch of kids! A John Williams score couldn't make that work!

JEREMIAH. But they deserve it. The audience will —

GAVIN. What audience? This'll never get bought let alone made!

JEREMIAH. If it's done subtly —

GAVIN. Subtle Peckinpah — yeah, right —

JEREMIAH. He doesn't shoot Tamarah, so it has sort of a happy ending —

GAVIN. Oh, I forgot — just ignore all those dead bodies on the soccer field, folks —

JEREMIAH. Just a bunch of Kafirs ... who cares ...

GAVIN. Kafirs? Did you just — what're we in, the Boer War all the sudden?

JEREMIAH. They deserve it —

GAVIN. No they don't! (*Melanie steps in. Immediate silence as they both retreat.*)

MELANIE. So ... what's going on?

GAVIN. Creative differences.

MELANIE. Okay. (*She starts out.*)

JEREMIAH. Mrs. Miller? (*She stops as Jeremiah speaks to Gavin.*) Let's see what she thinks.

GAVIN. She'll think it's terrible —

JEREMIAH. (*To Melanie.*) What I want to do at the end is really ... surprise the audience —

GAVIN. He wants Jerry to pull out guns and do a Colombine on the other kids.

JEREMIAH. May I tell my version?

GAVIN. He wants to —

MELANIE. Gavin, let him talk. (*Silence. Gavin reluctantly backs off.*)

JEREMIAH. Jerry — tries. He tries all the time, but no matter what he does ... they hate him. They treat him like an animal. (*He sits next to her, as if Gavin is not even in the room.*) And he finally has to fight back. But — the one person who ... was kind to him he — he ... (*Groping for the words, he finally looks up at Melanie.*) He spares her. (*At Gavin.*) I know it's not a happy ending but it's the right one. (*Gavin forces himself to keep quiet as Jeremiah turns back to Melanie.*) So, what do you think Mrs. Miller?

MELANIE. (*Avoiding.*) It's your movie.

GAVIN. Our movie.

MELANIE. This is not my area of expertise.

GAVIN. Oh, he neglected to tell you the kids are all black. Sort of *To Sir with Love* meets *Taxi Driver*.

JEREMIAH. (*Blurring.*) Your ending sucks! (*To Melanie.*) Excuse me.