CHUY

A future.

ASHLEY

What are you talking about? You have a future too!

CHUY

I had a future.

ASHLEY

Look. I know we haven’t talked very much but from what I can tell, you have a bright future. It doesn’t matter what you did in the past. What matters is now. (beat) You write these killer articles that have the whole school buzzing. You’re smart. You hold on to everything you got, and fight for what you believe in. You have everything it takes. You’ll be more than fine. Chuy, you totally have a future.

CHUY

My family thinks so too. Chuy Vasquez. The first one who has a chance at college. (beat) They’re gonna be crushed when they find out about the fire.

ASHLEY

But you didn’t do it.

CHUY

Yeah. But it’s my word against the school’s. They’re not going to believe me.

ASHLEY

Why not? You have an alibi, and they know you usually confess to your crimes anyway—

CHUY

Arson and murder are like basically the two crimes I haven’t committed. As for the alibi—God, I really wish I had gone out to party that night. At least people could confirm I was elsewhere.

ASHLEY

They can’t punish someone who’s innocent—
CHUY
Ashley, you don’t get it. You don’t understand what it’s like to be seen as the bad student, to be treated like trash. Nobody gives you a chance. I don’t get the benefit of the doubt... and let’s face it, I don’t really deserve it. I’ve done some pretty bad stuff.

ASHLEY
You’re not the only one. I’ve done bad stuff before—

CHUY
Yeah, like eat junk food in health class. Or chew gum in chemistry. Or “accidentally” slice the pig’s heart open during dissection. Have you ever flipped off the principal? Have you ever stolen a test? Have you ever gotten high on campus? Fucked on campus? Ever bring a knife to school? I don’t think so, Ashley.

ASHLEY
You’ve brought a knife to school?!

CHUY
Good God, I’m not a psychopath. I just... The knife was for me. To take my mind off of other things.

ASHLEY
Chuy, you’re not alone in this. A lot of people feel this way.

CHUY
I try not to. Anymore. All that stuff, I mean. Old habits die hard, I guess. But I really, really didn’t set the fire.

ASHLEY
I believe you. And your family will too. The truth—the truth always prevails.

CHUY
(smiling)
Is that a quote or something? (beat) See, you know exactly what to say. You just have it all.

ASHLEY
Define all.

FIRE HAZARD