Seeking Dry Places

Act 1

Scene 1

Exterior—Silver Heights Charter High School (An old brick building from the 1950s located in the heart of the city)—Afternoon

It's a greyish bluish day outside. The front of the school is devoid of any activity outdoors. It's quiet. Only pigeons roosting on the building.

Interior—Silver Heights Charter High School Hallways—Continuous

Lockers are stacked on top of each other lining the hallways. Each hallway is empty aside from lockers and doors leading to classrooms. One hallway has a bulletin board with various flyers including an advertisement for a bake sale. By the bulletin board is small table. On top is a paper with a QR code. The paper says, "If you see me, all the newsletters are gone. Scan QR code to read."

Next to the bulletin board with flyers on it is an empty bulletin board that can only be accessed via a key. VICE PRINCIPAL BROWN walks down the hall, the heels of his shoes clicking. He has a pieces of paper in hand with a list of names. He opens the empty bulletin board, tacks in the pieces of paper, re-locks it and promptly leaves.

After he disappears around a corner, a student, JESSICA, pokes out her head from a classroom. She pulls out the side of her tucked in shirt from her uniform skirt She reaches in underneath the shirt. She pulls out her phone held against her waist by the belt of her uniform skirt. She rapidly starts texting.

TEACHER (off panel): Jessica…

Jessica continues texting rapidly

TEACHER (off panel): I'm warning you…

Jessica satisfied sticks her phone into the top of her shirt (aka bra), tucks back in her shirt, and quietly returns into the classroom

5 minutes later

Interior—Silver Heights Charter High School—Classroom

The classroom is full of uniformed students sitting at their desks quietly typing at their laptops. DEX stops typing for a moment. He looks at his teacher at his desk clicking at the computer with a stack of papers next to him. Dex looks to the side and sees the sun coming through the window. Hs head turns to the classroom door. He hears something but can't make out what it is. He turns back to his computer. Before he can start typing again the door bursts open. Every stares at the student in the doorway

STUDENT 1: Test scores are up!

Everyone rushes out of the room and into the hallway including the teacher. In a frenzy everyone crowds around the pieces of paper tacked to the bulletin board by the vice principal. Dex is doing his best to see. He leans side to side. He stands on his tiptoes.

STUDENT 2 (off panel): Number one! My man!

Dex looks to the side. SAWYER is surrounded by his friends and fellow classmates congratulating him. Sawyer is all smiles. Dex's face tightens. He pushes the people in front of him out of the way and gets directly in front of the bulletin board. Dex's face tightens further. Indeed, Sawyer is number one and he is number two

CHARLIE (from behind Dex. She places her hand on his shoulder): Don't worry about it, Dex

Dex smooths out his face and hides his irritation. He turns to her

DEX: What do you mean?

CHARLIE: Second is just as good as first

DEX: What? You think I care about that?

CHARLIE: I'd say you were obsessed with it.

DEX (gives a cute smile): Lies

CHARLIE: Colleges look at many other things than just grades, scores, and rankings you know

DEX: Of course, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Even if you don't get Ivy League—

DEX: I will

CHARLIE: You can still—

DEX: I will and I'll get out of this dump. Me and my fami…

Dex turns away from her realizing he's said too much

CHARLIE: A dump? Is that how you feel? This city ain't so bad, right? Especially the people in it, right?

Dex says nothing.

CHARLIE: Life is more than just, just…like, life is like a happy cowboy. Riding the bumpety bump of life as the cattle come and go, right?

DEX: So I just gotta be a jolly rancher. Got it.

Charlie raises an eyebrow. Dex stares at her. A look of realization comes over Charlie's face. She frowns and places her hands on her hips not amused. Dex gives her a small mischievous smile. He nudges her with his elbow

DEX: Ey, Ey

CHARLIE: I'm just trying to help

Dex continues to nudge

DEX: Eeeeyyyy

Charlie laughs

CHARLIE: OK, Stooopuh! I'm trying to be serious. Just stoooopuh!

Dex brandishes his fingers as if he's going to tickle her

CHARLIE: No, no, no, nooooo

Dex relents. He relaxes his fingers

DEX: Wanna go to the library and study?

CHARLIE: Can't. But, I'm sure there will be others from school there.

DEX: Yepuh.

CHARLIE: We're all such nerds.

DEX and CHARLIE: Neerrrrdddsss!

A faculty member arrives clapping their hands

FACULTY MEMBER: Ok, that's enough. Everyone back to class

STUDENT 1: Just let us go. School ends in like 15 minutes

The student's voices tumble into indiscernible agreement

FACULTY MEMBER: Inside!

The students grumble as they each start going their own way back to class. The teachers among them quietly head back as well. Charlie exits, but Dex lingers. He stays staring at the list. He sees Sawyer's name and number one. His face tightens again

Act 1, Scene 2

Exterior—Outside the front of the city library (an older building with signage, “Lewis Latimer Library”), art deco architecture—Evening.

NIA in her postwoman’s uniform complete with hat is waiting outside the building. Dex, still in school uniform, exits the library carrying his messenger bag. He has two library books in arm. One is a textbook. He doesn’t notice Nia and passes by her

NIA: Pssshht!

Dex looks back

DEX (smiling): Nia

They hug each other

DEX: Whatcha doin’ here?

NIA: I know all your favorite haunts. This one’s not far from work. Got off a little late. Figured we could—

DEX: Walk home?

NIA: Read my mind

She tousles his hair. He waves her hand away

DEX: Cut it out. You’re messing it up.

NIA: It was styled?

DEX: Yes! I’m trying to train my hair. I want it to go with my mustache

Nia leans in and stares hard at Dex’s face. Dex puffs out his chest proud

NIA: What mustache?

DEX: Come on!

NIA: I mean I see a strand on your chain

Dex puffs out his chest again

DEX: Yep!

Nia pulls out the strand

DEX: Ow! Hey! My beard! My mustache!

NIA: A beard is not a strand

DEX: Oh no, I have plenty—