SCENE 1: THE PAUSE

- **JAY** – steady on the outside, vibrating underneath
- **MORGAN** – precise, risk-aware
- **LUIS** – fast, funny, afraid of silence
- **TESS** – grounded, brave, emotionally direct
- **ROWAN** – optional fifth; may double as passerby

Setting:
A school hallway or courtyard between classes. Lockers or benches.

(Lights up. A busy hallway in motion. STUDENTS pass, talk, laugh. Our group is pressed slightly to the side. Silent inside noise. ROWAN enters)

ROWAN
Did any of you take notes last period? I was– well. Nevermind. Did you?

(They all shrug. ROWAN walks off. Silence.)

LUIS
You're doing the thing.

JAY
What thing?

LUIS
The face thing. The thing that says "I've already decided but I want witnesses."

TESS
Lower your voice.

(ROWAN passes by, staring.)

ROWAN
You guys okay?

LUIS
Thriving.

(ROWAN moves on.)

MORGAN
We don't have much time.

JAY
I know.

MORGAN
Then why are we still standing here?

(Silence.)

TESS
Because once they start, there's no pause button.

LUIS
I would like a pause button.

JAY
I need you here.

MORGAN
To do what?

JAY
To not leave.

(Beat.)

LUIS
That feels manipulative.

MORGAN
Is this going to follow you?

JAY
Maybe.

TESS
Forever?

JAY
Probably.

(Silence.)

LUIS
Okay but—
–you're just going to be "that person"

JAY
I can live with "that person."

TESS
So can we. Right?

(Silence.)

MORGAN
What exactly are you saying exactly?

JAY
I'm saying what happened.

MORGAN
All of it?

JAY
Enough of it.

(Silence.)

TESS
This helps people.

JAY
Well...

TESS
And it hurts you.

JAY
Probably.

(Beat.)

LUIS
That feels unfair.

JAY
Most helpful things are.

(Silence. ROWAN appears calling at someone unseen down the hallway)

ROWAN
I got it! I HAVE—

YOU GUYS I HAVE IT! Are you listen— Hold on.

(ROWAN rushes by them.)

Sorry.

(ROWAN exits.)

TESS
Look at me.

(JAY does.)

TESS
You're not wrong.

(Silence.)

MORGAN
You're also not safe.

JAY
I don't need safe.
I need truth.

(Beat.)

LUIS
You sound like you're in a movie.

(ROWAN enters)

ROWAN
Bell's about to ring.

(ROWAN clocks the tension.)

ROWAN
Oh.
This is kind of a thing.

TESS
Go.

ROWAN
Yeah.
Just—
(to JAY)
People are saying you're gonna—

LUIS
Ro...

(ROWAN exits. The hallway gets busy as students rush by)

MORGAN
Once you step forward—

JAY
—I don't step back.

LUIS
You're really doing this.

TESS
Whatever happens—
(beat)
I dunno. I'm here.

(Silence.)

LUIS
Text us when your life explodes.

MORGAN
It's good.

JAY
It just is.

(JAY exits.)

(Silence.)

TESS
They're going to change things.

LUIS
Or get wrecked.

MORGAN
Probably both...

(They walk off)

END