

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Open on a high school cafeteria lunch table. ALEX - 15, 90s grunge clothing - and a few of her friends are talking and laughing, but they are quietly eating their food and staring at a girl across the cafeteria.

FRIEND 1

(Following Alex's eyes)

Who is that?

ALEX

(panicked and looking down at their lap)

Oh... um... no one.

FRIEND 2

(teasing)

Ooh does Alex have a *crush*?

FRIEND 3

(looks where Alex was looking)

But... that's a girl.

Alex shifts, clearly uncomfortable.

FRIEND 2

(disgusted, homophobic asshole)

Are you... *gay*?

ALEX

(stammers)

I... no... um...

FRIEND 1

(disgusted, homophobic asshole)

You don't like *me*, do you?

ALEX

(shocked and panicked)

What! No! No, no I don't!

Friend 3 shifts away from Alex, clearly uncomfortable. Alex sees this, and stands up, visibly upset, and leaves the cafeteria.

INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM - DAY

We cut to Alex slamming a bathroom stall and leaning against the side, breathing deeply and holding their head.

ALEX (V. O.)

They can be such dicks sometimes.

They step out of the stall, stare at themselves in the mirror, adjusting their hair and clothes, take a deep breath, then walk out.

SIDE VIEW AS THEY WALK OUT, SO THE BATHROOM DOOR IS ON THE FAR RIGHT.

The bell rings, and Alex turns away from the camera, backpack slung on one shoulder, and walks down the middle of the hall, shrinking away from an incoming group of stereotypical popular athletes that make their presence known.

Cut to a classroom with a teacher at the front. Alex is in the middle of the room, hastily scribbling notes.

TEACHER

What is the definition of the word
"schadenfreude"? Niki?

SIDE PROFILE OF ALEX, GLANCING BETWEEN THEIR NOTEBOOK AND THE TEACHER.

One of the jocks they passed in the hallway is sitting nearby, clearly having a conversation with his friend behind him. Alex glances up at the two at the same time the jock points at her, and he laughs, his friend joining in. Alex adjusts her head so she can't see the boys, but they continue to laugh.

ECHOEY V. O.

They're laughing at you.

The voice isn't Alex's. Alex looks up, alarmed for a moment, then returns to their notes. It's Alex's anxiety talking.

ANXIETY (ECHOEY V. O.)

Everyone in this class is laughing at you. You look like an idiot right now. Push your hair back.

(Alex complies)

That's too much, now everyone will see your forehead acne.

(Alex pulls their hair forward.

Anxiety continues to taunt Alex
in an Echoey V. O.)

Alex sees a cute girl sitting a few seats away, the same one

from the cafeteria. NIKI - cuffed jeans, plaid shirt, outgoing - is raising her hand to answer a question.

NIKI
Schadenfreude is pleasure derived from
another person's misfortune

Alex stares at Niki, obviously attracted to her and zoning out.

Niki sees Alex staring at her, and smiles a little bit and waves. Alex freaks out, stiffens, and looks away, blushing.

ALEX (V. O.)
Oh no. She saw me. *Fuuuuuck*. She must
think I'm crazy.

ANXIETY (ECHOEY V. O.)
She probably only smiled at you out of
pity. Who would ever be nice to you?

Alex stiffly returns to their notes, glancing at Niki every few seconds.

ANXIETY (ECHOEY V. O.)
What are you going to do? Talk to her?
You could never do something like
that, you're too much of a coward.

ALEX (V. O.)
No, I can do this. I can and will talk
to her.

SIMP MONTAGE

A) The school bell rings, and the students walk out of class. Niki stands in the hallway with her friends, and Alex psyches themself up to talk to her. She walks over to her, she's about to open her mouth to say something when she turns around.

ALEX (V. O.)
I'll do it later, she's talking to
people right now.

B) The day after, before the bell rings to start the next class, Alex starts to approach Niki.

ALEX
 (Quietly as the bell starts to ring)
 Hey Niki

ALEX (V. O.)
 Oh my god, she probably didn't even hear.

ANXIETY (ECHOEY V. O.)
 Or maybe she's ignoring you.

C) After class, Alex walks up to Niki, who is standing with a group of her friends.

ALEX
 Hey Niki, what did you get for number 3 on the test? I got C, but I'm kinda unsure about it too.

NIKI
 Yeah I got C too.

ALEX
 Okay great! I wanted to ask a smart person so... thanks!

Alex walks away, freaking out at what they'd just done. Niki watches Alex walk away.

D) Two days later in the cafeteria, Alex is sitting and eating lunch alone. They look over to see Niki staring at them. Alex quickly looks down at their lap, blushing slightly. They look back up to see Niki walking over to them. Niki sits down next to Alex.

NIKI
 Hey Alex, how are you doing?

ALEX
 I... uh... hi.

NIKI
 (smirking)
 Hi yourself.

ALEX (V. O.)
 Is she flirting with me?

ANXIETY (ECHOEY V. O.)
 Of course not, dumbass. She just

pities you.

E) One week later, in the cafeteria, Niki and Alex are sitting next to each other eating lunch and casually talking.

NIKI

Hey I really like your outfit today,
it looks really good on you.

ALEX

Uh, thanks! I really like yours too!

NIKI

(nervous)

Do you um, wanna grab a coffee this
weekend?

ALEX

(smiling)

Oh... gosh... um... yes... yeah... I
uh... that... I'd love to.

EXT. LOCAL COFFEE SHOP - DAY

That weekend, we see Niki and Alex leaving the coffee shop holding hands while talking to each other and smiling.