

The Wave by Todd Strasser

Adapted by Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith

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Cast:

Ben Ross Teacher, his wife Christie, students Robert, Laurie, David, Eric, Deutsch

A middle class, comfortable suburban community. The characters are well dressed and affluent white middle class.

SET – made up of units that look and can be used as school desks, or pushed together to form a dinner table or placed one on top of another to make football lockers in a football).

Opening vamp An American High School. The characters all have or have access to “fake” transistor radios – they sing or click for recorded sound as if it comes from those radios. Play football and then all race off except Laurie and Eric).

Laurie: Isn't it football practice?

Eric: Like it matters? (Checking he is out of view of any teachers, he takes out a cigarette.)

Eric: How much training do I need to sit on a Bench? Coach Schiller never plays me...

Laurie: But you're part of the team.

Eric: Am I, Laurie, am I? We lose every match and it's the same bull... no one cares...

Laurie: David cares.

Eric: Sure. David's a good guy. Cut to the chase, Laurie, I can see from that pen that you're not here to talk football...

Laurie: Eric, you promised me... you said the review would be done for this week.

Eric: O, yeah... er... I know, I said. Hey, what about fashion? Didn't Amy come through, she was gonna write you something?

Laurie: I'm chasing Amy like I'm chasing you – weren't you going to review that ... 'Midnight...?

Eric: Cowboy'. Yeh. There were no cowboys in it! Sorry, Laurie. I better go... (Picking up his football helmet) ...how can you review a film that's such a drag? The review would be as dull as the movie... right?

Laurie: Something, Eric, please!

Eric: (He takes the pen from Laurie's mouth.) Sure. Quit worrying, Laurie – you're getting like your mother. (He puts the pen back in her mouth.) Next week. I promise. (He throws down his cigarette, stamps on it and – after looking around – he runs off. Laurie shakes her head. He's gone.)

Laurie: (Shouting, but knowing that she is not heard.) I am NOT like my mother! (She dances off.)

Q1 Air Guitar

(Laurie exits as the sheet covering the units is pulled away and the picket fence removed to reveal what appears to be a set of desks, slightly higgledy-piggledy, facing the audience and at the back in the middle a raised podium on which sits a movie projector. Ben Ross, a teacher, dressed in neat slacks and white open-collared shirt, enters carrying a leather bag and a spool of film which is spilling film.)

Ben: Damn! (As he tries to catch the film he drops the spool and it escapes him across the stage, Ben chasing after it.) Ah!! Machines, machines! I hate them! They know in their little metal hearts that I'm scared of them! (He picks up the spool and tries to wind the film on, but, juggling his bag as well, it escapes him again and rolls across the ground.) Darn it!

(David enters, carrying his helmet, school books, and now in school clothes. He traps the spool with his foot.)

David: Hey, Mister Ross, are you having trouble with that projector again? Here. Let me do it. (David puts his things down on his desk and threads the film into the projector.)

Ben: Thanks, David. Ridiculous, I know. Machines drive me crazy. They've put in a self-service pump at the gas station – I can't work it! I'm gonna have to walk to school!

David: Don't worry, Mister Ross, I love this stuff. What are we watching?

Ben: Germany, World War Two.

David: O. OK. Sounds heavy. But you know how to make the dull stuff interesting,

Ben: Like when we did the Monkey Trial...

Ben: The Scopes Trial, yes...

David: Yeh, the Monkey Trial! How you got us to be the jury and the prosecutor and everyone – that was a great class, Mister Ross. There. That's fixed – you just need to turn it on. You don't need me to...?

Ben: No. No! (laughing) I think I can handle it from here, David. Thank you. You may take your seat. (applause from class) Thank you, appreciate that.

David: I won't tell.

Ben: (Laughs.) Good man. (Ben fusses with his bag, retrieving some assignment papers. Eric and Laurie enter and take their seats. David turns to see Laurie and they exchange warm looks. Eric raises his eyes. Ben registers the new arrival.)

Ben: Ah. Good afternoon, class. Good to see you all again. We're a little late (he checks his watch) so let's get right down to business. Though, before we do, I have a few homework papers to return – Laurie, that's an A – good work. (Passes her the paper.) David – (he changes the mark) - you scraped a B, not bad, some real effort, you're asking questions, keep it up. Eric, a C? I ought to give you an F for lack of effort, but I think you'd like that... there's no shame in success, Eric; if you ever completed one of these assignments properly, you'd beat everybody.

Eric: It's been a busy week, Mister Ross... movies and football...

Ben: Read my notes, would you? (Hands Eric who looks at the remarks, and shakes his head.) Homework is not optional, you guys! You can't put your social life first! Get your work done and then enjoy yourselves... if you committed to your homework you'd enjoy it – am I right? (David looks unsure, but Eric nods.) You see, but you never grab the chance! OK, one left... Robert? (Robert is slumped at desk ignoring class & teacher)

David: That boy is a waste of...

Ben: Alright, Mister Collins, let me... Mister Robert Billings! That's a D for you, Robert, I'm afraid. I don't know what to say that I haven't said before.

David: His social life is getting in the way of his work, Mister Ross. (Laurie and Eric laugh. Robert doesn't react.)

Ben: OK, OK. (Robert sees the projector.)

Ben: That's enough. (Exchanges a guilty glance with David.) Generally speaking, your papers were good, but sloppy. Nice ideas, but a mess. A good essay has to be planned... some of these are just plain messy! Who doodles on a homework paper and then submits it?

David: Who did that? (Looking round.)

Ben: None of your business, Mister Collins. Is it, Eric? (Eric is a little crestfallen, and shocked at being exposed.) Now, come on, guys, I'm going to have to start lowering grades for sloppy papers – if you have corrections, then write it out again. Anybody listening? (Laurie and Eric nod, but David is staring out Robert. Ben claps his hands.) Right – new subject, Laurie, can you get the lights, please?

Laurie: Yes, Mister Ross. (David mouths “Yes, Mister Ross” to Laurie as she stands and goes to the light switch, joshing Laurie for her enthusiasm.)

Ben: Thank you, Laurie. OK. Our new subject: World War Two, Germany. To get us started we're going to have a look at a short film. (He nods to Laurie. Laurie turns off the lights. Eric and David ironically cheer as if it were the lights going down in a cinema.)

Eric : “where's the popcorn?”

(Ben turns on the projector and a flickering blueish light is projected above the heads of the audience. Laurie, David and Eric watch the imaginary screen above the audience's head, but Robert is already distracted eventually laying his head on his desk and falling asleep. There are no images visible from the projector.)

Q2 Projector & film music

Ben: What you are about to watch took place in Germany between 1934 and 1945. It was the work of a man named Adolf Hitler. Originally this man – Hitler - was a menial labourer, a corporal in the army - a small time ordinary guy who got turned on to politics after fighting in World War One. He was on the losing side and he was angry about that. After the defeat Germany was a mess: its people were demoralised and disappointed, its leaders were discredited, there was terrible inflation – people were going to the mall – well, to the shops, - and they had to take their banknotes in wheelbarrows, that's how bad the inflation was – they printed a banknote in the morning and in the afternoon they had to add a few zeros to it! Thousands of ordinary people were made homeless, some starved, plenty of folk lost their jobs. But to Adolf Hitler, that suffering was an opportunity – he formed a political party, the Nazi party. He preached a theory that the Jews were to blame for Germany's problems, that the Jews were destroyers of civilisation and that the Germans were a superior race. Now, today, of course, everybody knows that Hitler was a psychopath, literally a madman. But, by 1934 he

and the Nazi party were in power. Ah. Yes. What you are going to see... (pauses for the picture to change, Laurie gasps) ... now... are some of the consequences of that control.

(Eric shakes his head and looks away and then looks back through his fingers. David stares blankly at the screen. Robert is asleep.)

Eric: Good God...

David: Wow...

Laurie: Are those.... are those... people?

Ben: Yes. Yes, they are, Laurie. Hard to believe? People reduced to walking skeletons – and there... there... they are being forced to pile up the corpses of their fellow prisoners ... these here are gas chambers used to kill many of them, others died from overwork and starvation. (Ben shakes his head.) Then they were burned in industrial ovens. Just be glad you only have to see, you don't have to smell the film...

Ben: These are the walls of the camp, the guard towers... and these are some of allied troops who liberated the camps... And... that's it. Lights, please, Laurie.

(Laurie is lost in her thoughts.)

Ben: Laurie?

Laurie: Uh, what...

Ben: Lights, please.

Laurie: O, sure, Mister Ross. (Laurie turns on the lights.)

Ben: I am sorry if that has upset one or two of you. That's nothing to be ashamed about. But I didn't show you the film to upset you. I want to see if it can make you think. Are there any questions that you should be asking about this place and time in history? (Laurie raises her hand immediately.)

Ben: Laurie?

Laurie: Were they all Nazis? The Germans, I mean.

Ben: (Shaking his head.) No, no, not at all. I doubt if one in ten of the population were members of the Nazi party. The vast majority were not Nazis.

Eric: So how come no one stopped them?

Ben: Well. I'm not sure I can exactly answer that... I guess many people were scared. The Nazis were violent killers after all. The majority of the population had just been through a terrible economic depression, they probably weren't ready for another fight – maybe some of them hoped that the Nazis would look after them. After World War Two, most Germans said they had no idea that the atrocities you saw were going on.

Eric: That's crazy. Totally. How could you slaughter... how many...

Ben: Approximately ten million...

Eric: Ten million!!! And nobody noticed? Get out of here!

David: Yeh. That can't be true. (Laurie puts up her hand.)

Ben: Yes, Laurie?

Laurie: Eric's right. The Germans just sat back and let the Nazis slaughter ten million people! How could they do that? To other human beings!

Ben: (Shrugs.) All I can tell you are the facts; the Nazis were organised and feared. The behaviour of the rest of the population is... well, it's a mystery to most people. Frankly, I'm not going to pretend to you that I know. Why didn't they try to stop all this? (He shrugs.) How could they say or even think that they didn't know? (He shrugs again.) We just don't have proper answers to these questions...

Eric: (Putting his hand up. Ben nods for him to speak.) I would never ... you know, bottom line, I would never let anything like that happen to people... you can't let a minority of maniacs rule the majority.

David: Yeh. You gotta stop those kinda people. I wouldn't let a couple of Nazis scare me into pretending I didn't see something I did. (Laurie and Eric raise their hands. The bell rings loudly for end of class.) Bell – remotely triggered

Laurie: (Disappointed.) O! (But Eric and David are already up on their feet grabbing their school books and kit.)

David: Nice one, Mister Ross. Great lesson. (To Laurie.) Come on, baby. You know how quick that cafeteria queue grows!

Laurie: I'll catch you in a minute...

David: It's your funeral. Cold post roast... yew! (He exits. He hits the sleeping Robert Billings on the top of the head as he exits. Robert stirs.)

Robert: Uh.

Laurie: Gee, Mister Ross, I can't believe that even the ones that were Nazis could have been that cruel! No one can be, can they? Not decent people?

Ben: Well, after the war many tried to excuse themselves, they said that they were having to follow orders. That they were scared of ending up in those death camps.

Laurie: That's just excuses. Why couldn't they have run away if they didn't agree with things? Could they think for themselves? No one just 'follows' an order - you have to be able to understand it to obey it, don't you?

Ben: Yes. Yes. Good point, Laurie. That's... you see, Laurie... er... look; I'm sorry, I don't have any easy answers. I'm telling you what people did. I don't know why they did it...

Laurie: A bunch of sickos. Totally sickos. (Ben nods and grimaces. Picking up her school things.) Sorry, Mister Ross... it makes me mad. (Laurie exits. Robert meanwhile is trying to sneak out unnoticed.)

Ben: (With his back to Robert, without turning.) Robert. (Robert freezes.) Wait a minute, would you? (Robert waits, looks at the floor.)

Ben: Are you getting enough sleep? (Robert nods without looking up.)

Ben: (Sighs.) If you don't start participating you're going to make me fail you, Robert. At this rate you'll never graduate. You don't want that? Don't you have anything to say?

Robert: (Shrugs.) I don't care. Is that what you want to hear?

Ben: No, it is not. What do you mean – “don't care”? Of course you care... (Robert tries to inch towards the door.)

Ben: Robert? Is this about your big brother? Nobody expects you to be the baseball star who gets straight A's! Students like your brother come along once in a generation. No one is expecting you to be another Jeff Billings, but at least try to be a decent version of Robert Billings? Eh? Please? For you own sake?

Robert: Can I go now?

Ben: Get out of here. (Robert exiting.)

Ben: (shouting after Robert) I don't care about your brother! (Pauses. Then, throws his hands up in frustration at himself. Ironically:) That went well.

Auntie Skinner's Chicken Dinner Creation of Canteen (The units are arranged into two canteen tables. David enters carrying a tray piled with food. He begins to tuck in. A few moments later Laurie enters with her tray)

Laurie: You didn't need to rush off like that.

David: I said I liked the class.

Laurie: Yes, but... o, anyway. (She puts down her tray and looks at the food, loses interest.)

David: What's up with you?

Laurie: That film.

David: Uhuh.

Laurie: Doesn't it bother you?

David. Yeh. Sure. It bothers me. As something horrible that happened once. It bothers me like that. But it's not something that's going to stop me getting lunch. It was a long time ago,

Laurie. History. We can't change that anymore. You don't have to forget it quite so quickly! (Laurie tries to bite into her food, but gives up and puts it down.)

David: Well, you can't go around bummed out about it for the rest of your life. (Robert enters with tray. David and Laurie watch him.)

David: Here comes the Great Billings; Gordon High's own private Untouchable. (Robert sits down at the different table and takes out his Spider-Man comic.)

Laurie: Do you think there's something really wrong with him?

David: It's pretty weird that he's related to his brother.

Laurie: My mom knows his mom...

David: Yeh? She ever talk about him?

Laurie: My mom? No. Except she said that they tested him once – and he got a really normal mark for his IQ.

David: They should have tested him for weirdness – he'd get a straight A for that. Are you not eating that? (David helps himself to Laurie's food.)

Laurie: No. (Sarcastically.) Help yourself. O. You already did. (David ignores Laurie's barbed comment. Eric enters with tray and joins David and Laurie.)

Eric: Hi, guys. (David shakes his head and Laurie looks down at her tray. Eric/David exchange looks). Wow, did another Kennedy die?

Laurie: Don't...

David: She's upset.

Eric: About that movie?

Laurie: (looking around) Why don't you get the Principal to announce it over the tannoy?

Eric: I know someone who isn't upset? (He looks round at Robert, David and Laurie turn and look.) Did you see him sleep the whole way through Ben Ross's film?

Laurie: That is sick. Almost as sick as Mr Football Captain here... (to Eric) weren't you... affected?

Eric: Sure. Like, I knew about that stuff... but it's different when you see it, yeh?

David: Hey, you two, I didn't say I wasn't bothered. I just said I was hungry. Look, all I said was: it's finished. It happened once and the world moved on. It won't happen again.

Laurie: I hope not. Come on, Eric. (Eric rising from his seat.)

David: Where you going?

Laurie: To work on the newsletter. With Eric.

David: O, don't let me hold you two intellectuals back. Not much coverage of the football team in The Grapevine recently.

Laurie: Try winning. Just once. That would be a story.

David: (Pointing at her.) You take things too seriously.

Laurie: (Pointing back.) Yeh, and you don't take them seriously enough. (David rises and exits, hitting Robert on the back as he exits so that Robert spills his coke on his Spider-man comic. He does not react.)

Eric: Wow. You two were having a fight. I never saw that before.

Laurie: He's such a jock sometimes.

Eric: Yeh, but he's a smart jock. Did you ever see the computer he built from a kit?

Laurie: (Sarcastically.) No, I completely missed that. It was only about the same size as a Cadillac!

Eric: Sorry, girl. David's a nice guy. He's better than regular. He doesn't even look at other girls.

Laurie: He better not.

Eric: No, I mean he doesn't even look. Hey, when was the last time the Grapevine did anything on true love romance? You could write it.

Laurie: Yeh, I suppose .. do you s... hey! Stop changing the subject.

Eric: What subject?

Laurie: Your movie review. Where is it?

Eric: Yeh, um... I gotta run, Coach Schiller says he's gonna throw anyone off the team who doesn't make practice. (Looks around the canteen.) He ain't gonna have a team for Saturday! This place is a dump... why don't you write about that.

(Laurie shakes her head, looking hard at Eric. Eric is walking off backwards as he speaks to Laurie, as he turns Robert is crossing his path and Eric dodges neatly around him. He doesn't touch or push him, but scowls.)

Eric: Hey, man! (Eric exits, Robert exits.)

Laurie: Boys! (She slams her hands on the canteen table.) Aaagh!

Q3, Laurie's Theme

(The units are moved around to make a kitchen table, with books scattered across it. Ben enters – he is holding a book, skimming through the index.)

Ben: "Hierarchy." "Ideology." "Parades." "Party." "Terror." Come on, where are you? "Uniform." "War." (Puts it down.) There's go to be something on... what will be under? "Personal Responsibility"? (He looks again. Reads.) "Parades. Party. Patriotism. Penalties. Prisons ..." – nothing. (Picks up another book and flicks through the index.) Not a one of them. (Has an idea.) "Obedience"! (Flicks through index.) "O, O... yes... Oath. Odessa. Orchestra..."... it's hopeless... (Picks up another, flicks through.) No. (Addresses the books.) Can't just one of you tell me something about why they didn't speak out? Guys? Please, do your jobs... What's the mystery? Why did they obey? Did you have to be there?

(Christy Ross has entered. She stops and sees her husband quizzing the books.)

Christy: Is history behaving badly again, darling?

Ben: In a way...

Christy: Give it a detention.

Ben: I can't. I need it in the classroom. Christy... why did the Germans go along with the Nazi's?

Christy: Don't ask me. (Taps her chest.) Music. Second graders don't get to do much Wagner. (She wipes some crumbs from the top of a book.) Hey – you didn't even try the new meat-loaf!

Q4, Radio Beethoven

(Opens one of the books.) O my. Wanna hear about some other kind of history?

Ben: (Not listening, he has picked up another book. Mousing: "Obedience.") Uh... other...

Christy: I made some history today, Ben...

Ben: (To himself.) Obedience...

Christy: I beat Betty Lewis... how many times has that happened?

Ben: (Utterly absorbed in a book.) O, I, er...

Christy: I said: I beat Betty Lewis...

Ben: (Looks up at Christy.) What? Sorry.

Christy: O, you're impossible when you're like this! Is this going to be like your enthusiasm for Red Indians? Please, tell me you're not going to bring any Nazis home to dinner? Like you did with those guys from the reservation?

Ben: They were fine.

Christy: They were fine, yes. It was you that was the embarrassment. Wearing moccasins? (She shudders.) Thank god it never got to war paint.

Ben: I was studying their culture.

Christy: No you weren't, Ben. You were taking over their culture and diving head first into it. You can never just study something, can you? You have to get right into it. You don't have normal barriers. (Ben, takes her by the waist.)

Ben: That's why you love me.

Christy: Well, as a matter of fact it is, but - (She removes his hands.) No Nazis for dinner, OK? What class are you teaching them, anyway? Advanced dictatorship?

Ben: You wouldn't be kidding if you saw the film we watched this afternoon.

Christy: (She sees his seriousness.) No. Maybe not. You OK, mister?

Ben: One of my students asked me a question I couldn't answer?

Christy: "What are you doing here?" (He doesn't respond.) "Why bother?" (Nothing.) OK, OK... you've convinced me, you've convinced me, Ben; I give in! You're not going to be joked out of this... we're stuck with it, yeh? So why don't you tell me right now what this is really all about?

Ben: That's the problem, Christy, I can't tell you – because the answer to the question isn't written down anywhere. I think maybe it's something you would only know if you experienced it.

Christy: O. Great. How are you going to experience... (she picks up a book from the table) ... the Third Reich?

Ben: That's what I'm trying to work out...

Christy: OK. (She starts to exits, then stops.) Well try not to wake me when... if you come to bed. I can see it's going to be one of those nights. Just you remember you've got classes in the morning...

Ben: Yeh, yeh... (Christy exits. Ben turns back to the books, opens one and begins to pace up and down. To himself.) Orders, obedience, obligation, motivation...

Q6 Classroom 1, drums

David: Keep it up, Robert – pride in the school, man, pride in the school. (Robert looks puzzled. Eric takes a glimpse at Robert's back and almost collapses in hysterical laughter.)

Robert: What is it? (He turns to Eric revealing to the audience that David has stuck a sign on his back that reads "TOUCH MY ASS". David who can now see the sign is equally stricken with hysterics. Laurie enters.)

Laurie: What's happening? (Sees the sign on Robert's back.) O, you guys! You'll go too far! (She goes to take the sign of Robert's back, but decides against it and backs off when Robert turns towards her. She sees the banner. Stops.)

Laurie: Hey! (The others turn and look.)

David: What's that supposed to mean? (Ben commands the class, as though he is just entering the classroom.)

Ben: Ah, you've seen our new class banner?

David: What's it about, Mister Ross?

Ben: I'll tell you just as soon as you're seated. (They scramble to their desks. Eric pushes a dawdling Robert.)

Eric: (to Robert) Come on, man, don't you wanna know? (They sit. Pause.)

Ben: Thank you. Good morning. (They mumble "good morning" in response.) Today I am going to teach you about discipline. (A collective groan of disappointment.)

Ben: Hold it, hold it, hold it... you guys all find discipline exciting. You do! You just don't call it discipline!

Eric: Exciting?

Ben: Sure. We're talking about power here. (He makes a fist.) (Eric makes a black power salute, head down, like the black Olympic sprinters. He laughs.) Yes. See. I'm talking about people who use discipline to get success. To make a mark, to make a difference. You know anyone who doesn't want to make a difference?

Eric: Er, Robert?

Ben: OK, OK, smart guy. Even Robert. David, come on, you play football...

Eric: You call it that... (David points a mock warning finger at Eric, but there is some threat there.)

Ben: You need discipline to win, right?

Laurie: Which is probably why they haven't ... for..

David: Hey, we know how long we haven't won for. How long since the last Grapevine?

Ben: You still taking ballet classes, Laurie?

Laurie: Sure, Mister Ross.

Ben: Doesn't it take ballet dancers long hours of hard work to learn their art?

Laurie: Sure thing!

Ben: Same with every art. Painting, writing, music – years of hard work, discipline, control.

Eric: Where's this going? I mean... (shrugs).. so what? We're kids, we're not geniuses... Laurie's great but she isn't going to work at the Bolshoi, David's never going to play in the Super Bowl...

David: Hey!

Ben: "So what?" Listen to yourself. "Not" this, "not" that... what about something positive? What about you serving in Congress, Eric? Suppose I could show you how to create power and success from discipline? Not tell you. Show you. Right here in this classroom. I could give – you – power. What would you say to that?

Eric: Wow. (He's interested.) I mean "if" (Ben looks round the class waiting for a wisecrack, but it doesn't come. Even Robert is now engaged.)

Ben: OK! Laurie. Come up here a minute.

David: Teacher's pet.

Ben: Power begins with posture. (He draws one of the units into the middle of the stage.. Eric waves his hand to David to be quiet. David taken aback by this.)

Ben: Sit. (Laurie sits on the unit.) Now place your hands flat across the small of your back and force your spine straight up. There! Now, can't you breathe more easily?

Laurie: (slightly surprised.) Yes! That's... yes, that's OK....

Ben: Now, look straight ahead, and focus on the middle distance – breath in, 2, 3 4, – and out, 2, 3, 4. (breathing noises) (Eric copies the action and David, trying not to be noticed does too. Robert straightens a little.)

Ben: Come on, David, give it a try!

David: (surprised) I was. (He doubles his effort, Eric copies. Robert straightens fully now.) Hey! Is this history, or did I come to gym by mistake!

Ben: Concentrate. We know you can be a wise guy, can you do this? (Ben walks up and down between the desks, manipulating Eric and Laurie's posture slightly.) Good. Good. Straiten up a little more... that's it. Eyes forward, eyes forward - Good. Robert, excellent!

(The other turn in surprise to look at Robert who is sitting fully straight and staring ahead, not making eye contact. Robert smiles briefly and then returns to a his blank face, but his posture remains straight.)

Ben: (claps his hands) All right. Relax. Now, on my command, I want you all to get up and walk around the room. Then, when I say so, you will return to your seats as quickly as is safely possible and resume the correct sitting posture. Everyone... go!

(Loud scraping of chairs. Eric, Laurie and Robert immediately jump up and begin walking around. David pauses for a moment, but then joins in. Once four of them are up they bump into each other, laugh.)

Ben: Take your seats!! (They return to their seats. Scraping of chairs. David forgets his posture.)

Ben: David?

David: O. (He looks around and sits straight.)

Ben: That was the most disorganized mess I've ever had the misfortune to witness. This isn't 'duck, duck, goose' in kindergarten! This is an experiment in movement and posture! Now stay right where you are. Now I want you to TRY to be as chaotic as you can be. Think of the hippest, crazy, Haight-Ashbury, most drop-out flower power kid kid you could be, yeh. And then you follow me. We're gonna shift gear: boy scouts, cheer leaders West Point cadets, marching bands... Are ready? I said class, Are you ready?

Calss: Yes Sir:

Ben: Freak out!!... Snap to it... (They mess around, stumbling into each, laughing, making peace signs and so on.) And freeze! Right and on my command, again and this time look out for each other and respect yourself, stay controlled and keep your backs straight. And... again!!! (This time there is more control.) Keep going, this is much better! Much better! Freak-out – Give Peace a Chance – "Hi-Ho" – Battle Hymn of the Republic sequence. (Movement sequence: "Freak-out", individual with noises, to "Give Peace a Chance" & claps, then clapping & follow the leader "Hi-Ho", to bass drum, to Battle Hymn, to drumming. Ben stops, others stop one by one, until only David is left. All seated.)

Ben: That is outstanding, class. Give yourself a whole crate of cheers for that one! And, a special round now for the student who sat back smartly in his place, first. Who was disciplined, first. Robert Billings. (The kids stand in their seats and clap and cheer.)

Ben: There are three more rules. You obey these rules. One: everyone must have pencils and notepaper for making notes. Two: when asking or answering a question, you must stand straight

by the side of your desk. And three: when asking or answering a question, your first words are "Mr Ross". Understood? (The kids all nod.)

Ben: (quickly) David, who was the British Prime Minister before Winston Churchill?

David: Er, it was... er... yeh, I know this..

Ben: Wrong! Wrong. You already forgot the rules, David. (He looks round the class, and sees Robert, eager. Throughout this lesson the kids are not cold, expressionless robots performing these actions and giving the answers; they are nice middle class kids who have discovered a way for the lessons to be fun. So, not behaving immediately like the Gestapo, but like boy scouts and girl guides, with plenty of smiles.) Robert? Can you show David the correct procedure? (Robert gets smartly to his feet, stands by his desk at attention.)

Robert: Mr Ross!

Ben: Thank you, Robert. Absolutely correct.

David: Aw, com' on, we have to do that every time?

Eric: Just because you messed up...

Ben: David? Who was the British Prime Minister before Winston Churchill? (David stands by his desk.)

David: Mr Ross. It was... uh...

Ben: Too slow. Everyone, make your answers short and sweet. Spit them out. David, try again.

David: Mr Ross. Chamberlain.

Ben: You see. Everyone? That's the way to answer a question. (David is pleased.) Disciplined. And it helped you get it right, David. Confidence, ladies and gentlemen, is the first step to knowledge. Be seated, thank you. (David sits – slouches then corrects himself, Ben sees and smiles at David who smiles back.) Laurie, what country did Hitler invade in the September of 1939?

Laurie: (stands) Mr Ross. I don't know. (She sits.)

Ben: That's still a good response! Eric?

Eric: (Standing) Mr Ross. Poland.

Ben: Excellent. Robert, what was the name of Hitler's political party?

Robert: (standing) Mr Ross, the Nazis.

Ben: Excellent, Robert. Quick and accurate. Anyone give me the official name of the party? (Laurie jumps up.)

Laurie: (Brightly, pleased with herself.) The National Socialist.

Ben: No!!!! (Bangs his ruler down on Laurie's desk. Speaks very quietly, but not unkindly.) Now. Do it again. (Laurie sits slowly, confused.)

David: (whispers to Laurie) "Mr Ross"...

Laurie: (nods, thanking David, stands.) Mr Ross. The National Socialist German Workers' Party.

Ben: Correct. Excellent. (She sits.) David, who proposed the Lend-Lease act?

David: Mr Ross, Roosevelt.

Ben: Eric, who died in the death camps?

Eric: Mr Ross. The Jews.

Ben: Anyone else, Laurie?

Laurie: Mr Ross, gypsies, homosexuals and insane people.

Ben: Good, Laurie, good. (She sits.) And why were they murdered, Robert?

Robert: Mr Ross, they weren't part of the superior race.

Ben: Correct. David, who ran the death camps?

David: Mr Ross, the SS!

Ben: Excellent! Excellent, excellent, all round! Now, see how things can be in a classroom! Eh?

Bell – remotely cued (The bell rings. No one moves. Ben looks at the kids and sees they have not moved. He turns his back on the class and smiles to himself. Then gathers himself and turns to them.)

Ben: Tonight, you will complete your reading of chapters seven and eight of 'Hitler's Youth'. Class... (Holds the moment.) ...dismissed! (Ben picks up his case and almost marches out of the room. The kids slowly rise from their seats.)

David: Wow, that was weird, man! What a rush!

Eric: (Going to David) Man, I've never felt anything like that before!

Laurie: I guess beats taking notes.

Eric: Yeh! (Laughs.)

David: Don't knock this, Laurie. Don't knock it, babe. That was really, really different. That was like – when we all acted together? We were more than just a class of kids for once. We were a single unit. Remember what the man said about power? Didn't you feel it?

Laurie: It was a little bit spooky...

Eric: Come on, you two! You're taking it too seriously...

Laurie: I'm not. I'm just saying...

David: Let's take it seriously if we want to... O? We just felt something in here that I can't explain.

Eric: What's to explain? We stood by our desks. We did what we were told.

David: I don't know, Eric, friend... I think it was bigger than that. Suppose if the football team had that feeling? Yeh? Suppose Ben Ross coached us like that instead of Coach Schiller? (Mimics a dumb accent.) "You gotta take em' down, you gotta take 'em down..." (He turns to exit.)

Eric: Where you going?

David: The john. (Exiting.)

Eric: David. (David stops and turns.) When you're in there. Remember. Sit up straight. (Laurie and Eric laugh. David doesn't respond to the joke. Turns and exits. Eric and Laurie exchange a look.)

Eric: Come on, it's chemistry.

Laurie: Uh. (They turn to exit, bumping into David, re-entering, at the door.)

David: Forgot my kit. I'll catch you up. (Eric and Laurie exit, David picks up his kit, then notices Robert who all this time has been standing by his desk staring ahead. David watches as Robert – unaware he is being watched – straightens his hair. Then snaps to attention. He sits and then stands straight, sits

and then stands straight, sits and then stands straight.)

Q 6, Laurie's theme to shower – Units switched to the Ross bathroom. Ben in shower, Christy at sink doing her face.)

Christy: They thought it was sport! Kids don't take anything seriously at that age! They were competing with each other not to be the dumb-looking one...

Ben: No, no... (Christy reacts) Well, I'm sure that was part of it, but they took to it like they'd been waiting for something like this for the whole of their lives! It was weird.

Christy: You're being weird. It happens all the time. To them, it's a game.

Ben: Even in a game you can choose to play or not. They chose to play. Big time they chose. And the longer we went on and the harder I got with them, the more they chose. They desired to be disciplined! When the bell rang... listen to this - they didn't move. (Christy stops short.)

Ben: Yes. More than a game, Christy, more – than – a – game.

Christy: Hey, you're messing me up for my class. I'm late as it is. Do you think you'll go on with it today?

Ben: I'm not sure... we've got to get onto Japan. Hand me the towel honey.

Christy: I'll be back about nine. No kiss? Did you mean they... they stayed after the bell had rung?

Ben: Hmm... yeh, yeh, after the bell.

Christy: Ben, my sweet. (He turns to her.) You've created a monster! (She laughs & exits.)

Ben: (shaving, nicks himself) Ouch!

SCHOOL ROOM

Q7 Classroom 2, congas Military rhythmic setting up of the boxes.

Ben: What's going on here? Robert?

Robert: Mr Ross. Discipline.

Ben: I see. OK... I was... er... going move on to Japan, this morning... (He takes out his Japan notes, he senses a frisson of disappointment as the kids sit down) ... but, er... is it really just discipline? Is that all? (Before they can answer.) I was thinking about this last night. (He mimes writing on blackboard, in big letters: COMMUNITY. Turns to the class.)

Community is the bond between people who work and struggle together for a common goal. It's like building a barn with your neighbours. It's the feeling you get when you're part of something more important than you. You're a movement, a team, a cause! You're committed... (he waits for the joke, but it doesn't come) ... to something good. But just like discipline, community has to be experienced; you have to participate in it to 'get it'. From now on our two mottos will be: Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community. Everyone, repeat the mottos.

(All the kids stand and recite the mottos. First Eric and Robert straight to their feet, David, a little uncertain but joins after a moment, feeling he needs to be part of the team spirit. Laurie is worried. She is the last to join in, but finally stands and shouts the mottos.)

All: Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community! Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community! Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community!

Ben: What we need now is a symbol of our new community. Thirty seconds in your notebooks. First idea you get, draw! (They all hunch over their notebooks. David can't think of anything.)

Ben: 15 seconds left. (Pause.) Five, four, three, two, one! OK, hold them up! (They hold up the images, Laurie is a simple single wave in a circle.)

Ben: Laurie! Wonderful! Here's our symbol! A wave – a symbol of change. A symbol that has movement, direction and impact. A wave can smash into a cliff or caress a small boat. From now on... well done, Laurie... from now on our movement will be called The Wave. (The kids all stand by their desks and shout.)

All: The Wave! The Wave!

Ben: OK. What about a salute?

David: Mr Ross. (He makes a fist.)

Ben: Eric? (He holds up two hands.)

David: That looks... (He stands.) Mr Ross. That looks like surrender... (Eric and David sit. Robert stands.)

Robert: Mr Ross. (Robert makes a rather graceful salute – cupping his right hand in the shape of a wave, tapping it on his left shoulder and then holding it upright.)

Ben: Class! Give the salute! (All rise and give the salute – almost getting right. Robert is beaming with pride.)

Ben: Again! And again! And again! (Now they all get it right.) All right. Sit down, please. That is our salute and ours only. Whenever you see a Wave member you will salute. (He salutes.) Robert, please; salute and give our mottos.

Robert: Mr Ross. Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community!

Ben: Very good. Eric, David, Laurie! Join Robert. (The three stand and salute and all four shout the mottos.)

All: Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community!

Ben: And again! All together!! (The chanting reverts to percussive sound as locker room created.)

Q8 Locker Room, stadium sounds of American football commentary, so the kids "play" at football with underlying realism)

SCENE TITLE: LOCKER ROOM 1

(Eric and David are changing into their football kit.)

Eric: It's a game in a history class, man – that Ben Ross is some clever guy, but in the end it's just a teacher's trick to keep us interested...

David: That doesn't mean it wouldn't work for the team? No! It's gotta be more than a trick...

Eric: You gotta convince Coach Schiller then! I'm not telling him!

David: What are you scared of? You think Mister Ross is going to punish me if I tell a couple of the guys?

Eric: No, man, it's the guys who'll punish you! They'll laugh at you! (Deutsch enters in full football gear with helmet, played by the Robert actor. He's already been training. There is mud on his kit. He limps in.)

David: Hey, Deutsch! You heard about The Wave yet?

Deutsch: That crazy thing you've got going in Ross's class? Sure.

Eric: David thinks we should spread it to the team. What do you think, Deutsch? (Deutsch groans, and stretches his shoulder as if might be injured.)

Deutsch: Well, if you think it can stop that two hundred twenty pound line-backer we're lined up against next Saturday then I'll join your Wave, I'll eat my Wheaties, I'll do my prep, anything to stop that beast, man!

Eric: I hear what you're saying, man; you're afraid of that team. I'll take your place, man, you just say the word.

Deutsch: The day they let you in the game we've got no chance. I know you smoke, you degenerate. The drop out who drops the ball.

Eric: The only reason you're quarterback ahead of me is that you're...

Deutsch: What? Say it.

Eric: ...dating the Coach's tramp daughter...

Deutsch: Why, you dirty ... (he lunges at Eric)

David: Hey! (David gets up between the two to stop them fighting.)

Eric: Guys like me don't ever get to quarterback no matter how strong their arms are! (Shaking his fist in Deutsch's face.)

David: Hey, hey, hey!! This is just what I'm talking about! You guys should be supporting each other, but you think this is just about yourselves!! How are we going to win if we're not a team?

Deutsch: What are you talking about, man? (Tugs at his shirt.) We wear the shirt...

David: I'm not talking about a shirt, I'm talking about what should be in the shirt – unity, discipline. And a heart that says “the team, the team, nothing but the team”, and that means if Eric has to be left out, or if Deutsch has to be left out, it doesn't matter as long as the team is better for it. Your job – the two of you – is not to steal each other's position! Your job is to do whatever – whatever! – it takes to help this team win!

Eric: I could help this team win if I got to play...

David: You don't get it, Eric! We've got 25 one-man teams out there! You wanna be first string quarterback in a team that never wins? Either of you? Or do you want to be part of a winning team?

Deutsch: We're tired of losin'... (Murmurs of agreement.)

David: Well then, Deutsch?

Deutsch: Ok. You're so clever. What's your plan? (David looks around him.)

Eric: Tell 'em about The Wave. (They make the Wave salute)

David: Now listen up – all of you losers in the locker room: The Wave... (They make the Wave salute)

America The Beautiful

SAUNDERS HOME SCENE

(The Saunders's dining room. Mr Saunders enters carrying and waving a golf putter.)

Mr S: Honey, honey! What a triumph! This beats everything! Honey! Honey? Honey, I'm home!! Honey? (Laurie enters.)

Mr S: Hi, Laurie, where's your Mom?

Laurie: O Dad, she's out at another of her League of Women Voters things – she told you this morning.

Mr S: Did she? I wasn't listening. Did she say anything about dinner?

Laurie: It's there for you in the kitchen – it's meat loaf.

Mr S: Again?

Laurie: Dad!

Mr S: (Holding his hands up in surrender.) I'm kidding!

Laurie: Yes, but Mom doesn't always know that.

Mr S: O Laurie, if only you could have been there today, my sweet child! Hold that. (Hands Laurie his putter.) Don't drop it. Your father was the talk of the clubhouse! (He gets his dinner. He shouts to Laurie from offstage. Laurie shakes her head, but she's amused rather than angry.) It was the finest game ever played on that course ... wait there, wait there!!!! I'll show you, I'll show you! Help me out, here, Laurie! Let's make this the 18th green and I'll show you... (He throws the tablecloth over the dining table units and Laurie helps him to straighten it. He takes the apple from Laurie and carefully places it on the table cloth and climbs on a chair so he can strike the apple with his putter.) Now, everyone said what a terrible lie I had... right on the edge of the green, bunkers on two sides, the hole at the top of a slope with that darned water at the bottom. Everything and anything can go wrong – how was Bernie Saunders going to get out of this one, eh? Hold the fruit bowl ready, dear. (Laurie picks up the fruit bowl and absent-mindedly holds it at one end of the table, at the far end from her father, as if it were the hole in the green.) I addressed the ball. I checked the green again. It's the final hole. This for the match. Vicious slope. Deep breath. Settle the putter in the palms. Gentle, but firm. By now the entire clubhouse has emptied and is standing around the green. I can hear the ice in their bourbons rattling. They settle. I visualise the ball's trajectory in my head; the whole thing is nothing more than an engineering problem... Laurie, ready with the bowl! Laurie? Laurie!

Laurie: What? O. Sorry. (Laurie has become preoccupied with her own thoughts.)

Mr S: (Dropping his play acting.) Laurie?

Laurie: Dad?

Mr S: (getting down from the chair) Hey, what's up, special daughter?

Laurie: O nothing, sorry, Dad, I was just thinking.

Mr S: O that's more than thinking, I can see when something's eating folk.

Laurie: Dad! It's nothing...

Mrs S: Can I remind you, special daughter, that your old Pop is a junior Manager at a plant with a workforce of 4,786 men – And women! If I don't know the difference between something and nothing, nobody does!

Laurie: OK, OK... there is something!

Mr S: I knew it. Tell me while I'm eating. Go on. Pop's all ears!

Q9 Saunders' Home, stadium sounds The Wave salute in rhythm, without words. (Mr S sits down around the table. Lighting change. Laurie is talking, but we do not hear her words. Instead we hear the sound of high school kids chanting the Wave mottos. We see Laurie demonstrate the Wave salute. Her Dad is eating, but all the time he is watching Laurie carefully.)

Mr S: I don't think I like it, Laurie. It sounds too militaristic to me. I don't think your Mom would like it much either.

Laurie: O, Dad, you've taken it the wrong way! That's why I didn't want to tell you! You never listen properly. There's a lot of positive energy around The Wave. Even the bad kids are into it. You know Robert Billings, the class creep? Even he's part of the group. And he doesn't get pushed around now. Because we've got community. Tell me that isn't positive?

Mr S: OK, I can't tell you that it's bad specifically...

Laurie: What wrong with belonging to a group?

Mr S: Nothing. Not in itself. This country was built by groups. We could do with a bit more group thinking down at the plant... But the individuals in the group still have to think for themselves, Laurie.

Laurie: We are thinking for ourselves. Nobody's forcing us.

Mr S: OK. Well, just as long, eh? Some of those teachers can be very persuasive. The Pilgrims Fathers came to this country because they weren't afraid to think for themselves. But that didn't stop other people trying to shut them up...

Laurie: Dad! I know! We're still doing our history; we haven't had our brains emptied! Mr Ross has just found a way of getting everybody to understand rather than just the top kids.

Mr S: We raised you to be an individual, Laurie. What suits everybody else isn't necessarily what's right - you understand that, right?

Laurie: Dad! Either you're being stubborn or you are just not listening! (Exits)

Mr S: (Shouts after her.) It was you raised it!

Laurie: (Off.) O, you twister!

Mr S: Hey? Where's David tonight? Isn't he coming over?

Laurie: (Putting her head back in the room) You and my David! You just want him here so you can bore him with the engineering magazines! Folks will think David is dating you, not me!

Mr S: (Not thrown by this.) Well, where is he?

Laurie: He's home studying – it's a history assignment for tomorrow.

Mr S: (His meal finished he picks up his dish and clears the tablecloth.) David? Studying? Now you have got me worried!

Laurie: O, Dad! (Laurie exits.)

Mr S: Hey, I haven't finished my putting story!!! (He finally does the put, then exits, carrying his dinner things.)

GRAPEVINE SCENE

Q10 Classroom 3, congas – (Lights up on the big Wave symbol. The units arranged into classroom formation. David and Laurie enter. Laurie is writing in a notebook.)

David: (As if answering a question from Laurie.) Hit 'em hard and hit 'em low. Get to their quarterback before he gets to work the pocket. Listen to the coach. Work as one machine. It's as simple as that, Laurie... hey? What is this for?

Laurie: I've decided there's going to be a new issue of The Grapevine.

David: Good for you. Things are happening. (Gestures to the Wave symbol.) This is just what our team needs.

Laurie: And a quarterback who can pass...

David: Don't you dare write that. The Grapevine has gotta be part of the team.

Laurie: Sure...

David: I'm serious.

Laurie: David... Mom says we're being brainwashed...

David: See! Right there! You've gotta use the Grapevine to stop people saying things like that.

(Ben Ross enters. He is dressed in a suit and his usual white shirt is buttoned to the neck and he wears a blue tie. Eric and Robert follow him in and go straight to their seats. Laurie and David quickly get to their seats. Ben takes out some yellow cards and hands them out.)

David: (To Laurie) It's not the week for report cards?

Laurie: (studying the card) It's a membership card...

Ben: No talking. You all have your own membership cards now. In your own name. If you turn them over you will see that some of you have a red X. That means you are a monitor. Monitors will report to me the name of any member of The Wave who does not obey the rules.

(Robert turns his card over and smiles. Laurie, Eric and David turn their cards over – Laurie and David grimace. Eric does not react. Laurie raises her hand.)

Ben: Yes, Laurie?

Laurie: What's the point of this, sir? We know we're members?

Ben: (Long pause.) Aren't you forgetting something?

Laurie: O, shoot... (Stands.) Mister Ross. What's the point of the cards?

Ben: And, Robert. Weren't you forgetting something? (Robert looks around, lost for a moment. Then it dawns on him and he stands, snapping to attention.)

Robert: Mister Ross. Laurie did not use the correct procedure.

Ben: Thank you. You may both sit down. (They sit.) I think that answers the question. (Laurie is shocked.) Today's word is ... (he holds up a

placard that reads ACTION.) You may know about discipline and community, but they are ultimately worthless without action. Discipline gives you the right to act, but only action will realise your goals. You must act! Class, do you believe in the Wave? (A moment of hesitation, not from doubt, but not quite understanding. Then Eric, Robert and David stand.)

Eric, Robert, David: Mister Ross, yes! (Laurie is just behind them.)

Laurie: Mister Ross, yes!

Ben: Then, take action! Never be afraid to act on what you believe. Listen to your hearts. Always. Look to the most important thing inside you. Don't deny it. Put that important thing to work for The Wave. The Wave can only work if you make that important thing part of our movement. But only if you work together and obey the rules; there are no prizes for being the best Wave member – instead make The Wave best!

(Eric, Robert and David seem to be buying this, but Laurie looks troubled, though she continues to stand straight by her desk.)

Ben: Be seated. We are beginning a new phase. You're next action is to recruit. The Wave requires more members. (David makes a thumbs up sign to Eric.) So, what are you waiting for? Class dismissed.

Robert: (quickly, standing) Mister Ross?

Ben: (Turning back, everyone else sliding back into their seats.) Yes, Robert?

Robert: (hesitantly) Mister Ross. For the first time in my life, I feel like I'm part of something. Something actually worth fighting for... (All stare at him, he begins to slide back into his seat, but Eric stands.)

Eric: Mister Ross. I reckon I feel the same. I think the Wave gives you a sense of self worth. Is that right? (He sits down. David leans over and slaps him on the back.)

David: Mister R... O... (Stands.) Mister Ross. I'm proud to be part of The Wave. (They all look at Laurie. She stands, uneasily.)

Laurie: Mister Ross. Yes.... Me too... (She sits quickly, unhappily.)

Ben: Our salute! (All stand and salute.)

All: Strength through Discipline! Strength through Community! Strength through Action!

Ben: The game is over. (A moment of shock and disappointment, the kids look at each other.) The struggle has begun. Get out there and recruit! (Ben marches out of the classroom. Eric, Robert and David burst into applause and follow him out. Laurie is left alone. Silence. She stands, distraught. Eric returns.)

Eric: Laurie? You OK?

Laurie: Sure, sure... I just feel a little weird, you know?

Eric: Tell me about it.

Laurie: You feel it too?

Eric: Sure. It's like there's no in-crowd anymore. Man, those cliques! It feels like it's a school, not a popularity contest? We're all equals; all part of the same thing?

Laurie: Does everyone think that, Eric?

Eric: Do you know anyone who doesn't?

Laurie: Yes. Yes, I do. (David and Robert appear in the door. David has his hand on Robert's shoulder. Eric sees them.)

Eric: Guys. Laurie says she knows someone who's... unsure about The Wave. (seriously) Who, Laurie?

Robert: Come on, gimme the name, gimme the name!

Laurie: (Takes a deep breath.) Look. It's me. I'm not sure about all this...

Eric: (Blankly.) Tut tut, Laurie! (Eric takes out his membership card.) You know what Ben Ross said. (He turns the card and shows the red X. A moment of shock and seriousness, and then Eric laughs.) Got yah! (Robert and David laugh.)

David: He really got you, Laurie!!!

Robert: Good one, Eric. (Laurie is upset.)

David: Hey, babe! Eric is not going to report you!

Robert: Only if you were really against The Wave.

David: That's right, babe! You're not against The Wave!

Robert: How can anybody be? It's just about us all being a part of the same thing. Supporting each other.

David: Yeh. I'm glad I finally got to know you, man! That's The Wave! (David pats him on the back.)

Robert: (to Eric; a hint of worry) Did he stick anything on my back?

Eric: Man, you are paranoid! (Eric pats Robert on the back, reassuringly.) Now, did I stick anything in your back? (The boys laugh.)

David: Come on, Laurie!

Q11 Laurie's tune, into hallway

(A brief pause and then Ben enters the classroom at speed. He immediately hides behind the door and then waits a moment and then jumps out in the corridor, still in view to the audience.)

Q12 Tannoy: Mister Ross, please report to Principal Owen's office. Mister Ross. Please report to Principle Owens's office.

Q13 Principal scene

Principal: Come in! (gives a look, then:) Should I be worried, Ben?

Ben: What about, sir?

Principal: Nice suit, Ross. I think you know what I mean.

Ben: The Wave?

Principal: You have the school in a tizzy.

Ben: A good tizzy, I hope, sir.

Principal: Well... from what I've been told... yes, it is. A very, very good tizzy. Have you heard differently?

Ben: No, no, sir...

Principal: And you are sure that the students are not falling behind with their... conventional work?

Ben: They're ahead with it.

Principal: And it doesn't worry you that you've involved students from outside your class?

Ben: In fact, my wife Christy was just saying that her music students are much more... focussed on their work.

Principal: And the banners? The salutes? Should I be concerned about them?

Ben: No Sir; They're all part of the game. And, why, even Coach Schiller...

Principal: Yes, yes. I have had Norm Schiller in my office all this morning – he seems to think that he's finally got a football team and it's all thanks to you.

Ben: Wow.

Principal: But that's not my priority, Mr Ross. My priority is the students. I don't want a parade of parents to my office telling me we have an indoctrination programme at this school, run by you.

Ben: The Wave is just a project...

Principal: 'Wave'? It sounds ... open-ended. Where's it going, Ben?

Ben: Good question Sir; please understand this. (He's fighting for his project.) This experiment cannot go any further than I let it go. The Wave is the idea of a group willing to follow their leader. As long as I'm involved in this, it cannot get out of hand. You have my assurance.

Principal: OK. But, just remember who this movement of yours is made up of. Yes? Kids. Young, impressionable minds. With a tendency to go from apathy to frenzy in one gear change. Have you got me?

Ben: Got you, sir.

Principal: Good. Keep it that way. OK Ben, that'll be all

Ben: Thank you, sir

Principal: ah, Mister Ross.

Ben: Yes Sir (Ben turns back to him.)

Principal: Don't turn my kids into a bunch commies!

Ben: Sir – with the war in Vietnam, that's the last thing I'd want to do.

Principal: Caught you! O. (He looks up and down the corridor. No one is there. Ben re-enters.) I could have sworn I was being ... calm down, Ross, calm down. You're the leader.

(Ben starts taking down the banners in haste. Checks his watch. He mumbles to himself. Robert appears at the door, he steps quietly inside the door and stands to attention.)

Ben: (To himself.) Come on. Come on. (As if reporting to Principal Owens.) "There's been a marked improvement in class work assignments, sir, even Coach Schiller says football practice has never been so ... active..." No... er... "so committed... and for their classes they now prepare correc..." ah!!! (Ben has caught sight of Robert unexpectedly and it has made him jump.)

Ben: What the...! Robert? What are you doing here?

Robert: I have to be here, Mr Ross. I'm your bodyguard.

Ben: My what?

Robert: You're the leader, Mr Ross. I can't let anything happen to you.

Ben: What could possibly happen?

Robert: I can do it. Nobody makes jokes about me now.

Ben: I'm sure they don't... and... quite right... but,... (checks watch) ... OK, OK, but not here, right now. OK?

Robert: Sure, Mister Ross. (Robert is delighted. Give a big smile, which he immediately suppresses, gives a huge Wave salute, which Ben returns casually – a little too like Hitler's casual flicked salute. Exits) We've Never been defeated in the U.S.A.

(The scene changes to the lawn outside the Saunders' house and the abutting sidewalk. Eric and Laurie are walking back from school together; they carry their school books. Eric has a kit bag). Underneath this scene, the barbershop harmonies slowly harden to something more like the distant chants of a pep rally.)

Laurie: OK, come on, come Eric, what's the news – there's got to be something worth writing about?

Eric: Well... A kid put his hand through a window...

Laurie: How come?

Eric: See if he could do it without cutting himself.

Laurie: Could he?

Eric: Twelve stitches.

Laurie: I'm not going to write about that!

Eric: It's funny! (She stares him out.) Then that leaves The Wave. It's the only story in town.

Laurie: I don't know how to write it! Without being disloyal.

Eric: To The Wave?

Laurie: To The Grapevine. It ought to be objective.

Eric: Since when is The Grapevine objective about the football team? The Grapevine never says it wants Clarkstown or any of those other bums to beat Gordon High?

Laurie: That's a game.

Eric: So is The Wave.

Laurie: Not what Mr Ross said.

Eric: O, he's just saying that for effect. This is a good story for the Grapevine, Laurie – people might actually read it. The kids want to know what the Wave really is. They're gonna read The Grapevine if they think it will tell them. Just describe it. Objectively.

Laurie: OK, but I just feel we have to be careful... (Mr Saunders appears as if from her house.)

Mr S: Eric! Hello!

Eric: O good lord... he's going to challenge me to golf again! Hi, Mr Saunders! (to Laurie) Got to go. (Starting to exit off up the street.)

Laurie: What about your movie review?

Eric: O, the movie was too good!

Laurie: Too good?

Eric: What the fun in reviewing something you can't tear to pieces? Be seeing yah! (Exits.)

Mr S: (Joining Laurie.) Nice fellow – Eric.

Laurie: Sure...

Mr S: Is he one of your Wave people?

Laurie: We're all Wave people.

Mr S: Laurie... your Mom spoke to Elaine Billings at the mall today. She says something strange has happened to Robert. That he's "a completely new person"...

Laurie: Was Mrs Billings worried?

Mr S: No. She was completely delighted. It was your Mom that was worried.

Laurie: Mom's always worried.

Mr S: Yes, I know, but there's always a lot to be worried about. Your Mom knows what makes them tick. She says the Billings have had a lot of problems with Robert... up until now...

Laurie: So, isn't that good?

Mr S: It's not the change, Laurie, it's the speed of it... where's this thing going?

Laurie: O, not much further. It'll fizzle out soon - like flower power! (She laughs.) I'm not as crazy about it as I was a couple of days ago...

Mr S: Yes, but you're one of the sensible ones. What about the rest? Mrs Billings told Mom that they're having a Wave rally! Rallies, Laurie?

Laurie: It's the rally for the football game, Dad! They always have one – they're just calling it the Wave rally this time

Mr S: At which 200 new members just happen to be initiated? And you're not disturbed by that?

Laurie: I'm just disturbed that everyone is taking this so seriously! I mean I guess I understand David being into it, because of the team, but Eric... he's so serious about it... he even gave up smoking...

Mr S: So you are worried?

Laurie: No! Why is worrying the only way we're allowed to be! God, you're as bad as Mom!

Mr S: Okay. Well, just so long you're not involved in any rallies. And come on inside... (Shivers.)

Laurie: I'll be in right away.

Mr S: I think there's a storm coming. Oh this letter arrived for you. From your nice boyfriend eh? David's a swell guy.

Laurie: I think so too – gotta rush – I'll open this later in case you wonder...

(Mr S returns to the house. Sound of wind rising as distant chanting grows. Laurie stands for a moment in thought, then, almost unconsciously, as the chanting rises and the stage darkens, she takes out a Bic pen and begins to chew on it.)

Q14 Storm Crash of thunder, rain – against the real storm, Wave chant + box percussion.

Edge of Stadium (stadium is not built yet) (note in this scene Deutsch is played by Ben actor in helmet etc as before – he is fighting Eric maybe also in Helmet and gear so that this is a weird extension of a US football match – Robert enjoying the violence but clearly backing Eric).

Deutsch: You can take your Wave, and shove it where the sun don't shine!

Eric: What'd you say?

Deutsch: Your Wave sucks! (Eric runs slow-mo to fight Deutsch) "Ooooooh – slap/oof!!

Laurie: Stop it! David, stop them!

David: Just let me handle this, Laurie. Hey you guys, cut it out!

Eric: Strength through discipline, strength through community! Don't you care about The Wave?

Coach Schiller (through megaphone): Hey there! You boys – Eric, Deutsch! You stop that right now, or I'll pull BOTH y'all from the game tomorrow!!

Laurie: (to David) What's happening to us?

David: Yeh, that was bad

Laurie: Why were they fighting? And why was Eric shouting about The Wave?

David: O he's really into it, that's all. All the team is.

Laurie: So why are you fighting each other.

David: Aw, well, Deutsch doesn't wanna join, does he? He's driving the rest of the team crazy! If he was in The Wave he'd see that it would be best for the team to give up quarterback to the better player. That guy's pulling the team down. Coach Schiller should throw him off the team.

Laurie: Because he isn't in The Wave?

David: Yeah. Partly. Why not? If he really wanted the best for the team he'd join the rest of us. He's a one-man team, Laurie. You know who he's dating? Gabi Schiller! The coach's daughter! Come on! That's favouritism, that's not community! Let's go now, we don't want to miss the rally.

Laurie: You go ahead. I'm...

David: What?

Laurie: I'm going to give it a miss, OK?

David: What! You can't. Why?

Laurie: I don't want to. It's not against the law, is it?

David: Look... Laurie... a lot of the kids... they look up to you. What will they think if you're not there?

Laurie: Well, they'll have to make up their own minds won't they?

David: I don't understand you.

Laurie: The Wave is taking over everything! I don't like it!

David: But, it's great! The Wave actually works: everyone on the same team. Everybody equal.

Laurie: O great! – do we all get to play quarterback? (David steps back looking at Laurie as if she were a strange animal. Points at her.)

David: Y'know, you're just against this thing because you're not special anymore. Now everyone's equal, you're not the best and most popular girl anymore...

Laurie: What are you talking about?

David: Yeh. I've finally got your number, Laurie Saunders! Well, now you know how the rest of us feel when we have to listen to you give all the right answers. And you don't like it either. Well, this is how it's going to stay. So get used to feeling equal.

Laurie: (losing it.) You are totally stupid!!

David: OK. Fine. Why not get yourself a smart Commie boyfriend? (David marches off.)

Laurie: (shouts after him.) You are smart! Show yourself some respect (Sniffs.) This isn't helping anyone... how did that happen? And why did you write me a letter when you could talk to me?! Where's your letter, David? (Reads the front – it is addressed to her. She opens the envelope, takes out a letter and begins to read, skimming the letter quickly, her lips moving, then she begins to read a passage aloud)

Laurie: It's not from David – it's from ... No one. No one signed it: "They keep asking me why I don't join and when I say I don't feel like it, they get mad. They say pretty soon people in The Wave won't be friends with people who aren't in The Wave... Today three of my friends joined. They told me that if I didn't join soon it might be too late. Too late for what? I want to ask you to help me – but I'm too frightened to tell you who I am" OK. The Grapevine has to speak out.

Q15 Typewriter Music

Laurie: Done!

THE STADIUM . Battle Hymn of the Republic, words changed to The Wave chant.

Eric: (offstage) Hey! You! Stop there! (Laurie stops. Eric enters.)

Laurie: Eric!

Eric: O, hi, Laurie – sorry, I didn't see it was you. The floodlights out there blind you once get out of them. (Eric gives The Wave salute. Laurie does not return it.)

Laurie: Whatever.

Eric: Come on, Laurie. Just give me the salute and you can go in.

Laurie: What are you talking about?

Eric: Just give the salute.

Laurie: Eh? You don't really mean that I can't go and see the game unless I salute?

Eric: (Looks down.) That's what they decided.

Laurie: Who's they?

Eric: The Wave.

Laurie: I thought we were The Wave?

Eric: (shrugs) Please, Laurie. Don't give me hassle! Just give me the salute.

Laurie: Everyone else in the stadium gave the salute?

Eric: This is the Wave stand; they did here.

Laurie: Well, I want to go up into the Wave stand and I don't want to give the Wave salute.

Eric: Well you can't.

Laurie: No one tells me when I can or can't go in an American football stadium.

Eric: (Looks about, worried.) Just do the stupid salute, can't you!

Laurie: This is ridiculous. Even you know it is.

Eric: (Looking about.) OK, just go in. No one's looking.

Laurie: Are you scared, Eric? You weren't afraid of that tough Deutsch kid; how come you are so jumpy here?

Eric: I'm not scared of anyone and you better shut your mouth, you understand, you don't talk to me like that...

Laurie: Eric...

Eric: A lot of important people noticed you were not at the rally. (Laurie gives him a hard stare.) I'm just saying.

Laurie: I don't care, Eric. (Shakes her head.) What's the score?

Eric: 26 to 32 – they lead.

Laurie: Wow, but that's close!

Eric: Yeh. We need another touchdown from this drive... we still have a chance.

Laurie: And still they don't play you... you could throw that touchdown.

Eric: It's not about my place – it's about sacrificing for the team.

Laurie: Is that what they're calling it now? Here. The new issue of Grapevine. You might find it... educational. (Eric takes the copy.)

Eric: Go on in. It's probably the last play... (Laurie exits into the stadium. Eric opens the magazine, following Laurie, reading as he goes.)

THE MATCH

Q16 The Ball Game Electric jazz rock sequence, plus sound collage of American football match.

David: What happened there...

Deutsch: (suddenly explodes.) What a crock your Wave turned out to be! O, sure, you psyched everybody up, made 'em think they could win. And sure – a couple of wide receivers finally got themselves into positions!!! But where was the Wave when the pressure was on? How come nobody executed the play? Goddammit! I've got Running Backs on their ass, I've got Tackles tripping over each other... man! If you're gonna brainwash kids then next time brainwash some plays into 'em. Yeh? Your Mister Ross is a chump! (He exits.)

David: (Shouting after Deutsch) You dropped the football! (Laurie enters.)

Laurie: I'm so sorry, David! I really hoped it would work out for the team.

David: What do you mean? It is working out. We lost but we almost won – when has that ever happened before? I never said it would all change straight away.

Laurie: Sure. These things take time. I'm just sorry for you that we didn't win.

David: (Shrugs.) It's only a game.

Laurie: Really?

David: No. (Shakes his head. He laughs. Laurie laughs.)

Laurie: Wanna take in a movie, later? Dad says its fine for me to go. It's that new zombie horror.

David: Yeh. Yeh, why not! I'm sorry about the other day – it was the build up. To nothing as it turns out. But I shouldn't have bawled you out like that. There's no excuse.

Laurie: I forgive you. I'll see you at eight, outside the movie theatre? Take your mind off of losing again. (She kisses him on the cheek.)

David: Yeh. (He looks around.) But we're getting there. (Eric enters, carrying the copy of Grapevine.)

Eric : Laurie, what have you done? (Robert enters, with another copy of the Grapevine.)

Robert: These are all lies! (Pointing at Laurie.) She can't be allowed to say these things!

David: Hey!

Eric: David, it says in here that kids have been badly beaten for not joining The Wave...

David: That's not true. Laurie? I never heard that.

Robert: She's made it up. Anybody reading this is going to get the wrong idea... look, there's a letter about how we've been saying no one inside The Wave will be friends with anyone outside... but the letter's anonymous...

David: Laurie? Is that even legal? I've never heard of any of this stuff.

Laurie: You've got to stop. It's become an obsession with you all. You're not thinking for yourselves anymore!

Eric: O come on, you're just upset – you let your fight with David get to you!

Laurie: What! You think this is that trivial?

David: Hey...

Laurie: You are hurting people. And they are going along with it. They're like zombies!!!

Robert: No. They're just not like you anymore, 'princess'.

David: OK, just relax, everybody. There's no law says people have to believe in what we're trying to do.

Eric: David, she's going to ruin it. People were reading this in the stands; just now, after the game. I heard a whole group of parents say they were going straight down to Principal Owens' office in the morning.

David: Really?

David: (to Laurie) Laurie? Is that what you want? To stop The Wave? (She nods.)

Robert: She's a threat

Laurie: I'm going now. I'm finding you guys a little too spooky for my taste right at this moment. If you fancy some less mindless company, David, I'll see you at the living dead movie tonight. (She exits.) (David is distraught.)

David: What's the matter with everyone today? (Robert comes over to him and pats him on the back. The roles are reversed. David is shocked.)

Robert: She's got to be stopped.

David: Hold on....

Eric: (Intervening.) Don't worry, Robert. David and I can take care of Laurie, right? Come on, David, get a shower and we'll go and get Laurie to see sense.

David: (looking back to Robert) I don't like his attitude. Do we have to wipe out anyone who resists us? (Robert looks back at David, cold as ice.)

Eric: Hey, calm down. You catch her after the movie – just talk to her man.

David: I guess.

Eric: Hey pal, you just gotta put a little bit of pressure on. (They exeunt. Robert remains on stage briefly) "Grapevine, Grapevine, New Issue" (with mouth music train/trucking)

Q17 Zombie to whispers

Laurie: (in phone booth) Dad – has David called?.. No. Oh - I think he's dumped me. Yea – he was a great guy; until all this. Oh Dad, please.. what?..what? ...Who was beaten up? No Dad, that was Eric, he had a fight with the quarter back, that's all. You mean a different kid – beaten up – what, because he was Jewish? (drops the phone)

Mr S: Laurie, Laurie – are you there honey..

Laurie: The whole point of this was to show us how Nazi Germany could happen.

Mr S: Laurie, Laurie – for God's sake pick the phone up!

Laurie: Not to make us ALL into little Nazis! Dad, No! don't pick me up. I'm gonna walk! (hangs up) (whispers continue, crescendo to cut off. 30" approx) You stop following me, you sicko! (runs away, into David) Oh, David!

David: Laurie?

Laurie: David, is that you?

David: Sure, sure. (Emerging from the shadows.) What are you shouting about shooting for?

Laurie: O, I don't know... you people have got me so frightened...

David: Me? (Laurie looks around nervously.) It's OK, there's no one else coming. Eric cleared off. (Laughs)

Laurie: It's not funny from where I'm standing. Where are the rest of your troops?

David: Laurie, will you listen to me for one minute?

Laurie: I think we've said everything we need to say to each other, David. Just leave me alone.

David: (Irritated.) Just listen. For once! All right? You've gotta stop writing that stuff against The Wave. You're causing all kinds of troubles!

Laurie: The Wave is causing the troubles.

David: It is not and you know it. Please, we want you with us, not against us, but...

Laurie: But what?

David: See, there you go! You're so prejudiced! You don't give anyone a chance. Don't you see how good the Wave could be? It could be a new system.

Laurie: I don't want to be in any system. (Taking her by the arms; this mirrors the moment at the start of the play when he steals a kiss; but this is aggressive.)

David: But we need you! Why are you trying to destroy us!

Laurie: Let go of me!

David: You gotta stop!

Laurie: Let go of my arm! (They are struggling now.)

David: Just shut up a minute! And stop writing those articles! You're ruining everything!

Laurie: I will write, I will write, & write, & write!

David: I want you to stop!

Laurie: I hate you! I hate The Wave! (She is shouting not just at David, but at the whole town.) I hate you all! I hate you all!

David: Be quiet, you crazy bitch! (He hits her and she falls.)

Q18 Crazy Bitch (inside the head smashing up sound - David throws her down on the ground. She lies still. David recoils in horror, taking a step or two back, almost as if he is about to run away. But he runs forward instead, throwing himself to his knees beside Laurie.)

David: O, god, o god, what have I become! I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, Laurie. I love you so much, I love you, I love you.

Q19 Reconciliation (David cradles Laurie's body, she puts her arms around him.) What's happened to me, Laurie? How could I become this thing? What's happened to us? (He holds her so he can see her.) Are you OK?

Laurie: Yeh. (She nods. She feels her shoulder, but she isn't hurt badly.)

David: We've all gone crazy. (He helps Laurie to her feet.)

Laurie: Are you OK?

David: I don't think I am. Not yet. I feel like I've been hypnotised and I'm just coming out of it. I was just shouting at you back then not to destroy us, and ... look what I did... everything is twisted... are you ever going to forgive me?

Laurie: I don't know yet. But will you do something for me, even if I do never forgive you?

David: Yes, of course. Whatever you decide. It's the least I should do...

Laurie: Do you trust me? (David nods. Laurie puts her hand on David's shoulder and they walk off, Laurie limping.)

Q20 Ben's Doom

Scene change to classroom.

David: Gee, Laurie, Mr Ross looks down. You're his favourite, I reckon you speak first. I'm right behind you.

Laurie: No David, you were right behind the Wave so you have to be right in front of me.

David: OK. Doll, shucks it's not gonna be easy.

Laurie: Doing what's right never is.

David: (pushed forward by Laurie who stands behind him) Mr Ross? (Ben looks up).

Ben: HI David? I'm busy can you see me later? (David goes to his desk then stands up to attention in Wave fashion)

David: Mr Ross Sir no sir. I need to speak to you now.

Laurie: (Misunderstanding) Oh David, no...

Ben: Well make it quick I got see Principal Owens and I'm not gonna like what he has to say.

David: Mr Ross Sir. The Wave.

Ben: Yes the Wave, they don't understand. The principal doesn't understand and neither do half the parents. The dull half. They got it wrong.

Laurie: No Mr Ross. They got it right. I'm just a kid but they got it right.

Ben: Laurie, I've seen the Grapevine. (Shakes his head). I hope David has ..I don't know what I hope – maybe I hope I can keep my job.

Laurie: David!

David: Mr Ross Sir. (Wave position). The Wave has to stop.

Ben: What?

David: (Drops pose) We gotta stop it – its turning us into...

Laurie: A Jewish boy was beaten up.

Ben: Oh my...my oh my.

David: It got to me too – I took it out on Laurie as if she betrayed us.

Laurie: Oh David (hugs him).

Q21 TANNON: Mr Ross to Principal Owens' office immediately.

Ben: OK OK. You're good kids. The best. And I got it, I got a way to ...trust me.

Laurie: What do you mean, Mr Ross?

Ben: I am the leader of the Wave, yes?

David: Yes Sir.

Ben: So I have to lead now. And I will. And I will not let you down.

Laurie: What shall we do, what shall we say?

Ben: When the time comes be yourselves, just be yourselves. Trust me. OK? (They nod)

Q22 TANNON: Mr Ross to Principal Owens office.

Ben: Now your leader has to go and crawl on a carpet to save his job. Trust me.

THE BIG RALLY – scene change.

Q23 The Wave Tannoy “This is a special announcement. This is a special announcement concerning The Wave. At twelve o'clock today there will be a special rally in the auditorium – for Wave members only. Attendance is compulsory for all Wave members. That is the end of the announcement.”

(The cast lead rhythmic clapping, control it to applause. Ben enters, exchanging salutes & chant with the class. Quells the applause. He stands between the two TVs. He carries a microphone. For a moment he savours swelling chants of the mottos).

Q24 Applause

Ben: Lock the doors. The Wave is not just a classroom experiment! Some of you, I suspect, have already guessed this. Well, let me tell you now, my friends, that it is so much, much more than any of you suspect! O, so much more. Unknown to you followers, all across the United States, for many days now, teachers, like me, have been recruiting and training brigades of youth just like you; in readiness to show this country just how to achieve a better kind of society. Morale is low across these Dis-United States of America – unemployment, crime, inflation, disrespect for our leaders, riots, protests, an unpopular war, decadent culture – these diseases are rampant! Unless someone does something to wipe them out, this country is finished!

But together we can stop that rot. See what we have achieved in this school in just a few days! And if we can change it here, we can change it everywhere - in factories, in newspapers, in hospitals, in film studios, in universities – in all institutions...

David: Mister Ross!

Ben: Silence!

David: But, this isn't...

Ben: I said silence! You sit down, young man. Don't you interrupt me.

Ben: Now listen carefully. Not just David, but every last one of you. In a few moments the great founder and leader of the National Wave will appear by cable channel on these screens to announce the launch of the National Wave Youth Movement, with six – million – members!

David: No, no, no... this isn't good...

Laurie: Can't any of you think for yourselves?

Ben: (smiling, he seems almost deranged, and yet in control) The time has come. For the great illumination. Robert. Eric.

Robert and Eric: (Robert just ahead): Mister Ross, yes!

Ben: Come to the podium. You are selected. You are true members of the Wave.

Robert and Eric: Mister Ross, yes!

Laurie: Mister Ross! I am just a student, I know, just a kid but this has to stop!

Ben: Restrain her. (Eric and Robert runs over to Laurie. David steps in front of Laurie.)

David: All right. All right. We won't interrupt.

Ben: It is not true to say that you – you – you – you – have no leader. That is a lie. You do have a leader – you have called that leader forth, you have summoned that leader! He will speak to us now, he will appear!

Eric: Who is it, Mister Ross?

Robert: Is it John Wayne, Mister Ross?

Ben: No! Your leader is not a film-star; your leader is not a super-hero. Your leader is here. Here, here is your leader!

Q25 Hitler (Ben yells “Projector!!!” and the image of Hitler is projected onto a screen made up of the white shirts of David, Laurie, Eric and Robert.)

Eric: (horrified.) No, no, no!

Laurie: Turn it off, please!

Ben: Why should I turn it off? Why could none of you turn it off? Why did not none of you guess whose lead you were following these past days? None of you are stupid – you knew what we were studying? Why didn't you ask the obvious question? Did you think you were above history? Immune from it? You know how this stuff ends!!! And yet still you carried on! Did you tell yourself how much better than everyone else outside the Wave you were? You traded your freedom for a false equality! You accepted the group's will over your own beliefs! And you were starting to think that maybe hurting others because the group said so was just about fine with you. O, some of you were just along for the ride, and some of you had your misgivings. But you didn't walk away, did you? Well, not many of you, anyway.

(Ben walks over to Laurie and shakes her hand. Laurie embraces Ben in relief. Eric looks shattered. Robert has not moved, still at attention by the side of the TV.)

Ben: The rest of you would have made good Nazis. You would have put on the uniform, turned your head when the secret police came

for your neighbours, betrayed your friends, even your sweethearts. (David looks down in shame.) Fascism isn't something that other people once did; it is a threat right here, right now, whenever and wherever people fail to learn from the past, wherever and whenever people blindly follow a leader, whenever and wherever people forget to protect and value the weakest, the different and the just plain infuriating! Now you listen to me... look at me... because I am more at fault than any one of you. Because I am supposed to be your teacher; and I meant The Wave to be a big lesson for you guys, huh, but I... er... I 'succeeded' just a little too well in my part, eh? I became more of a leader than I ever intended to be. I hope you will believe me when I say that this has been as painful a lesson for me as it is now for you. (He looks down, suddenly overcome. Hardly able to speak.) I hope... this is a lesson... we'll share... for the rest of our lives... I'm sorry...

(David and Laurie cross the stage and hug Ben. Then they each take one of his hands and raise his arms to the audience. There are no chants, but just applause.)

Ben: Thank you, thank you...

Laurie: Now what, Mister Ross?

Ben: (He looks at them, then:) Post-war Western Europe; reconstruction and reconciliation... ten minutes in my classroom?

David: Yes, Mister Ross.

Ben: (To Laurie.) Yes?

Laurie: Yes, Mister Ross.

Ben: You're good kids. You can hold up your heads. (Laurie and David walk off, holding hands. Ben sighs deeply and his head drops.)

Eric: What can I say, guys? I was a stupid punk! What a freak out!

David: Well, it's all over now, man. Let's try and forget it... well, not forget it... but let's remember and forget it at the same time. (He looks at Laurie, unsure.)

Laurie: Yeh.

Eric: Yeh. (The three move upstage arm in arm. Robert still hasn't changed his stance, but he is weeping. Ben starts to pull himself together, goes over to him, pats him on back.)

Ben: You know, Robert, young man, you look good when you're tidy. I suggest you... consider keeping the look.

Robert: Really? Thanks, Mister Ross.

Ben: You still reading those Spider-Man comics?

Robert: No, I... I gave them up for The Wave...

Ben: I think it might be time to get back to Peter Parker... did you see the 'Campus. In Crisis' issue, where he defuses that bomb?

Robert: Yeh... yeh, that was.. interesting.. but-

Ben: No buts Robert. You're a fine kid.

Q26 Final Freak

(Robert, unseen by Ben, mimes a gun and “fires” the kids and Ben fall – fantasy or reality?)

THE END

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