

INT. SADDLESPRINGS HIGH- DAY

Jackson hears a locker slam behind him and turns around. Axel is standing close to him, fists clenched, fire in his eyes.

AXEL

Hey. You.

JACKSON

Oh. Hey, Axel. How's it going, buddy?

AXEL

This is for you.

He lifts up a plastic bag containing one mildly confused tropical fish. He places it into Jackson's unresisting hands.

JACKSON

What- is this a fish?

AXEL

It's a Black Ghost Knife Fish. It's the scariest fish we have. Semi-aggressive tropical.

Jackson looks at him, confused.

AXEL (CONT'D)

It's a threat. Stay away from Acie.

JACKSON

I wish people would stop saying that.

AXEL

I'm serious. Watch it. Or *you're* going to end up...

He taps the fish bag, to the fish's annoyance.

AXEL (CONT'D)

A Black. Ghost.

Beat.

AXEL (CONT'D)

Knife. Fish.

JACKSON

What?

AXEL

You heard me.

He turns and stomps away, leaving a bewildered Jackson holding an equally bewildered fish.

JACKSON
So... do I just keep this now?

He looks at the fish and sighs.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Threat fish.

CUT TO:

INT. JAY'S PIZZA AND SKATES - LATER

The fish now swims in a bowl, a bit happier. Jay and Jackson watch it.

JAY
Threat fish? I *told* you not to be getting involved with the Prestons.

Jackson swirls his finger around in the bowl.

JACKSON
Like it's even that much of a threat- OW

The fish has bitten him.

JAY
What do you think "semi-aggressive" means, Jackson?

JACKSON
What are the Prestons into, anyway?

Jay makes shifty eyes.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Like that. Why do people do that shifty eye thing every time I ask them about it?

JAY
The Prestons are just into some dangerous things, okay?

JACKSON
Dangerous? Do you think Acie could be in danger?

Jay makes a face.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

What?

JAY

I'm guessing Acie's only in the exact amount of trouble she wants to be in.

JACKSON

I should probably help her though, right? So we can make out?

JAY

I wish just one time you would even act like you hear the words I say.

JACKSON

(obviously not listening)
Yeah, me too. But what can I do?

Jay stares at Jackson, literally not saying anything.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

You're so right! I should get a job, at Acie's pet store! So I can stay close to her and figure out what's going on!

JAY

You already have a job.

JACKSON

Ptch.