

Leviathan  
an original screenplay by  
Kevin Stuart Brodie

Kevin Stuart Brodie  
26 Maple Avenue  
Old Saybrook, CT 06475  
860-849-3825  
ksbrodie67@yahoo.com

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY - 1978

SUPER: 1978

DUNCAN, 12, sits in bed, the sheet draped over him.

He has a flashlight propped up on a pillow illuminating a drawing--he's using colored pencils to draw "Spider-Man."

MOTHER (O.S.)

Come on, lazy bones. School's not gonna come here.

Duncan sighs, emerges from his "tent." He shuts the flashlight off, and carefully adds his drawing to a manilla folder.

INSERT - THE MANILLA FOLDER

It's filled with superhero drawings...

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan looks up at his CAT, stretched out on the bed.

Duncan scratches the head of the cat a moment, climbs out of bed.

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now!

DUNCAN

Okay, okay.

Duncan pulls open his closet door. He grabs a pair of jeans balled up on the floor.

A Boy Scout uniform hangs in the closet.

He reaches into the pocket, pulls out some loose change.

He puts the change in a SPIDER-MAN BANK.

INSERT - THE BANK

The coins clang as he drops them in. There's a lot of coin in there already.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Now dressed, Duncan sits at the table eating his sausage and eggs.

MOTHER (early 40s) sits opposite, slurping coffee as she buries herself in the newspaper.

She looks tired and haggard--like someone resentful of her life, and has given up any hope that it will change.

DUNCAN

Mom?

MOTHER

Hmmm?

DUNCAN

Can I see the sports page?

MOTHER

Not done with it yet.

DUNCAN

You don't read the sports page.

MOTHER

You know the rules. When I am done with the paper, you can have it.

DUNCAN

But I don't want the part you're reading--

MOTHER

When I am done. Do you understand?

Duncan recoils, stares down at his food.

In a huff, Mother throws the paper down, rises and crosses to the counter. She pours herself another cup of coffee and spikes it with rum.

Duncan leans over the table, sneaks a look at the sports page.

He lets out a gentle gasp. Mother whirls back to him.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

DUNCAN

They won last night! They beat the Dodgers!

MOTHER

What did I just say?

DUNCAN

I didn't touch it.

Mother grabs the entirety of the paper, and leaves the room.  
She returns a moment later without it.

MOTHER  
Okay, you're done. Go grab your  
stuff.

DUNCAN  
I haven't finished my toast.

Mother yanks the plate away from him.

MOTHER  
Yes, you have. Go.

EXT. SAN DIEGO NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Duncan, backpack on his shoulder, marches through the  
neighborhood on his way to school.

The sound of an airplane passes over.

Duncan comes across MRS. HOWARD (70s), hanging up her laundry  
on a clothesline.

He pauses outside her fence.

DUNCAN  
Hi, Mrs. Howard.

MRS. HOWARD  
Well, look who it is! Did you listen  
to the game last night?

DUNCAN  
Not all of it. I had to go to bed.  
I saw that the Padres won.

MRS. HOWARD  
They did! Rallied in the bottom of  
the ninth. Tony Castillo got the  
winning hit.

DUNCAN  
Castillo?

MRS. HOWARD  
Hitting a buck fifty seven, but  
doubles off the wall to drive in  
Winfield. Off Bob Welch, if you can  
believe that.

DUNCAN  
Oh. Wow.

MRS. HOWARD

Gonna go see them? Season's almost over.

DUNCAN

Oh, um...My Dad says he might take me this Saturday.

MRS. HOWARD

Well, that should be fun! You know I'll be listening.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Duncan walks through a gate passing a sign that reads JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY.

He crosses the blacktop, heads to the basketball court.

GUY and MIKE (both 12) pal around at the court, shooting a basketball at the hoop. They never get a ball into the net, but not for a lack of trying.

Duncan approaches Guy and Mike, while dozens of other kids mill about, chatting, laughing...

A group of GIRLS plays hopscotch...

GUY

Hey, man. What's up?

DUNCAN

You listen to the game last night?

MIKE

No, man. It's football season.

DUNCAN

We still have baseball until Sunday. Then the playoffs and the world series.

MIKE

Y'know, you shouldn't be bothering us with this.

GUY

Yeah, you should just talk to your girlfriend.

DUNCAN

My girlfriend?

MIKE

Yeah, Mrs. Howard!

DUNCAN

She's not--

GUY

You two are gonna be very sad when the Dodgers win the series.

MIKE

Gonna beat the shit out of the Yankees. You watch.

DUNCAN

It might be the Red Sox--

GUY

The Red Sox are cursed.

DUNCAN

Curses aren't real.

MIKE

Tell that to the people in Boston.

The bell rings and all the students cross the blacktop and begin lining up behind numbers painted on the ground.

Guy and Mike make their way to ELEVEN and Duncan makes his way to TWELVE. They are still within close earshot.

GUY

Red Sox are never gonna win it. Just like the Padres.

DUNCAN

Not this year, but they got Winfield, Fingers, and Gaylord Perry's gonna win the Cy Young. And they got Ozzie Smith--

Duncan stops mid sentence when he sees SANDRA (also 12) line up behind him. She is with two other GIRLS, chatting and giggling.

Duncan gazes at Sandra, his mouth open, clearly smitten. Sandra doesn't seem to notice him at all.

Guy and Mike shake their heads in disbelief. They turn away from Duncan, continue their own conversation.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

In one corner of the chalkboard is written "MR. MIKHOLAN. GRADE 6. SEPTEMBER 30, 1978."

There are about twenty STUDENTS in the class. They are at shared desks, carefully listening to MR. MIKHOLAN (60s).

He is balding, slightly rotund--he would remind the students a bit of Alfred Hitchcock, if any of them knew who that was.

Mr. Mikholan talks through division problems, many of which are sketched on the chalkboard behind him.

MR. MIKHOLAN

So we are going to start with single digits. For number one, you've got six hundred sixteen divided by four. Go ahead and do the problem on your work sheets.

Most of the students begin working--a couple stare out the window or play with their pencils.

Duncan shares a desk with Sandra. He works diligently on the problem.

When Duncan finishes, Sandra glances up at Mr. Mikholan.

The teacher writes more problems on the board with his back to the class.

She steals a glance at Duncan's work sheet, then writes down her answer. Duncan doesn't notice.

A sheet of paper falls from Sandra's desk on to the floor.

Duncan sees it, reaches down to grab it for her.

INSERT - THE PAPER

It's a homemade birthday card, and reads "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SANDRA! FROM YANIRA AND LORI!"

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan puts the paper on Sandra's desk.

DUNCAN

(whispering)  
Your dropped this.

Sandra's surprised to see it.

SANDRA

(whispering)  
Oh. Thanks.

DUNCAN  
(whispering)  
Happy Birthday! I didn't know.

MR. MIKHOLAN  
Quiet!

O.S. is the sound of an airplane passing, but this one is loud--as if it was much closer than usual.

The students and Mr. Mikholan pause their work as they look around the room--the sound grows louder as the windows rattle.

As the volume rises, the anxiety in the room rises with it...

Then, a thunderous BOOM that shakes the entire school.

The sound strikes the building with such force, a STUDENT actually falls out of his chair.

Most of the students climb underneath their desks and cover their heads with their arms--the earthquake safety protocol.

Sandra doesn't move from her chair. She is frozen in panic.

Duncan tugs at her shirt.

DUNCAN  
Come on.

This seems to yank Sandra back into the room. She looks around in fear, then at Duncan.

She nods, and they both climb underneath the desk.

A look of fear crosses Mr. Mikholan's face--he immediately chases it away.

MR. MIKHOLAN  
It's okay. It's not an earthquake.  
Come on out.

The Students begin to emerge from the floor, climb back into their chairs.

SANDRA  
What was that?

MR. MIKHOLAN  
Nothing you have to worry about.  
Someone upstairs just dropped their pencil.

There is a bit of nervous laughter, but Mr. Mikholan's cool demeanor begins to have a calming effect on his class.



MR. MIKHOLAN (CONT'D)

Is everyone okay?

MRS. DUNN (30s) wanders into the room, white as a sheet, her eyes red and wet. She is in shock.

MRS. DUNN

Art...

MR. MIKHOLAN

Barbara, what's the matter?

MRS. DUNN

I just saw...I just saw...a plane...

The kids exchange confused and anxious looks, while Mr. Mikholan races out of the room.

The students rise and follow him across the hall to

MRS. DUNN'S ROOM

Mrs. Dunn's students (including Mike and Guy) sit in a stunned silence as they stare out the window.

The window is the entire length of the classroom, but the only thing visible is a thick pillar of black smoke.

Sirens in the distance grow closer and closer.

Duncan stares at the window for a few moments, trembles...

MR. MIKHOLAN'S ROOM - DAY

Duncan and a few Students wander back in, slump back into their seats.

Duncan notices Sandra staring out the window.

He approaches her and follows where she looks--there are chunks of debris in the road.

NEIGHBORS meander around in a daze, looking over the debris and pointing at the sky.

Duncan looks back at Sandra. Her eyes have welled up with tears.

He moves his hand slightly towards hers, before having second thoughts and pulling it back.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The STUDENTS, escorted by their TEACHERS, exit the building.

They try not to look at the pillar of smoke, still visible behind the school.

Several cars line the street as the Students pile into the vehicles.

Duncan looks around for Sandra--he spots her waiting. He takes a step towards her then stops when a car pulls up beside her.

Sandra's PARENTS climb out of the car, quickly guide her inside.

Duncan glances over at Guy, who's inside a car with his DAD. They speed off.

Duncan catches Mike's eye as he opens the door to another car.

MIKE

Hey, man. If you get bored, come on by. We'll grab Guy and play double plays.

Duncan nods at Mike, who climbs into the car with his MOM. The car disappears down the street.

Duncan looks back to Sandra, she too is gone...

The exodus continues for a few moments, until the street is empty, leaving only Duncan and Mr. Mikholan outside.

MR. MIKHOLAN

Your Mom or Dad coming?

DUNCAN

I don't think so.

MR. MIKHOLAN

Let's go back to the office. Mrs. Wagner can try them again.

DUNCAN

It's okay. I'm just gonna walk home.

MR. MIKHOLAN

Are you sure?

Duncan puts his backpack on.

DUNCAN

I walk home every day.

Duncan heads down the street, as Mr. Mikholan watches him go.

As he marches

THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Duncan notices other damage--a piece of plane fuselage embedded onto the hood of a parked car, random shards of plastic and metal in the street.

He turns a corner and stops dead in his tracks.

He seems something that overwhelms him with fear and horror.

MOMENTS LATER

Duncan races as fast as he can down the street, as if being chased by a monster.

He runs up to his front door.

He stops and pulls out a key, while looking over his shoulder.

He unlocks the door, heads

INSIDE THE HOUSE

He stops and locks the door behind him, even puts the chain in place.

He passes through a hallway into

THE LIVING ROOM

It's decorated with a simple, slightly ratty sofa, a vinyl recliner, and a television.

A dial phone, an address book and a phone book rest on an end table.

Cheap reproductions of Van Gogh and Monet line the walls.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Mom?

There is no response.

Duncan wanders through the house.

THE KITCHEN

Looks very much like how it was left: the dishes are on the counter, the coffee maker half full--although the rum bottle is conspicuously missing.

The newspaper sits abandoned on the kitchen table.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)  
 Are you here, Mom? They let us out  
 early.

He heads down a hallway into

MOTHER'S BEDROOM

He pushes open the door...

DUNCAN (CONT'D)  
 Mom?

The unmade bed is empty.

IN DUNCAN'S BEDROOM

The cat stretches, having just emerged from its nap.

Duncan crosses the room to the bed, pets and strokes the  
 Cat. He picks it up and holds it close. The feline purrs  
 in response.

Duncan looks outside the window.

He sees a patio with chairs, a table, and a storage shed.  
 No sign of Mom.

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

He puts down the cat, and crosses to the phone. He pulls  
 out the address book and finds a number.

He dials the number. The phone rings a few times, until it  
 is answered by ELSIE (40s) on the other end.

ELSIE (O.S.)  
 (on the phone)  
 Hello?

DUNCAN  
 Hi. Is my Mom there?

ELSIE (O.S.)  
 (on the phone)  
 Yeah, hold on.

Duncan waits a moment, as the cat rubs up against his legs.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
 (on the phone)  
 Hello?

INT. ELSIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Mother holds a wall phone, adjacent to French doors.

An outdoor swimming pool is visible through the glass...

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - MOTHER AND DUNCAN

DUNCAN

Hi. I'm home now.

Mother is drinking a glass of vermouth. Her speech is just slightly slurred...

MOTHER

You home already?

DUNCAN

They let us out early.

MOTHER

Why'd they do that?

DUNCAN

Um...I think because of the plane crash.

MOTHER

Oh, gosh, that was so awful, wasn't it? That's why I had Elsie come pick me up. I just couldn't deal.

DUNCAN

Are you coming home?

MOTHER

Well, I don't think either of us should be driving right now. We're a little tired...

Elsie can be heard cackling in the b.g...

ELSIE (O.S.)

From the vermouth!

Mother holds her finger up to her mouth: "Quiet!"

MOTHER

We're uh...a little too upset. But I'll come back later when we're feeling...y'know, better.

DUNCAN

Well, there's no one here.

MOTHER

I know, but you're okay, right?

Duncan struggles to answer...

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You're always okay. I'll...uh.  
I'll call you later and let you know  
when we're coming back.

DUNCAN

Can...can you come and get me?

MOTHER

I told you, we can't drive right  
now. But you'll be all right. Talk  
to you later, okay?

She hangs up.

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Duncan returns the phone to the receiver.

He picks up the address book again, opens it up.

INSERT - THE ADDRESS BOOK

A listing that reads "DAD" followed by a phone number.

BACK TO SCENE

He picks up the phone, dials the number.

It rings several times, until...

VOICE (O.S.)

(on the phone)

The number you have reached is no  
longer in service.

Duncan sighs in frustration, returns the phone to its  
receiver.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

Duncan pulls open the refrigerator door.

INSERT - THE FRIDGE

It contains a twelve pack of cheap beer, a half of loaf of  
wonder bread, and some butter.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan pulls out the bread and butter, closes the door.

The Cat continues to rub up against his legs.

MOMENTS LATER

Duncan dumps dry cat food into the cat's bowl. The cat dives in...

He crosses to the counter and makes himself a butter and sugar sandwich.

IN THE BEDROOM

Duncan pulls a box of comic books out from under his bed. He chooses a handful of books, climbs up on to the bed.

He reads through one of the books as he munches on his sandwich. The Cat jumps up to join him.

MEMORY FLASHES

--The pillar of black smoke...

--Sandra crying at the window...

--Duncan's reaction to the horrible site on the way home...

BACK TO SCENE

A KNOCK on the door O.S.

The sound jerks Duncan awake.

An open comic rests in his lap, and the half finished sandwich on a plate near his head.

The Cat, curled up beside him, begins to stir.

Another KNOCK O.S.

Duncan jumps out of bed...

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Duncan pulls open the door to find Mike with his baseball glove.

MIKE

You ready?

DUNCAN

Um...I don't know. I'm...uh...waiting  
for my Dad to call.

MIKE

Oh. Okay. You know where to find  
us.

LATER - INSIDE THE LIVING ROOM

Duncan sits on the sofa, staring at the phone, the cat curled  
up next to him.

After a moment, he rises and crosses to the phone. He picks  
it up and listens for a dial tone. It's there.

He replaces the phone, looks around the room, unsure what  
else to do...

INSIDE THE BEDROOM

Duncan grabs his baseball glove.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike waits outside, throwing a tennis ball up and catching  
it with his glove.

Duncan approaches, baseball glove in hand.

MIKE

Oh, there you are. Come on. Let's  
go up and see Guy.

They head up the sidewalk. They glance up at the pillar of  
smoke, which is finally starting to lose its strength...

MIKE (CONT'D)

Do you smell that?

DUNCAN

Yeah. What is it?

MIKE

Metal, plastic probably. And...um...

He exchanges a look with Duncan--he doesn't need to finish  
the sentence.

Mike tosses the ball to Duncan. It bounces out of his glove,  
and Duncan chases after it.

A city Bus screeches to a halt just a few feet away from  
Duncan.



Duncan freezes as the ball dribbles away...

MIKE (CONT'D)

Hey!

RODERICK, the driver (40s), climbs out of the bus. He approaches Duncan.

RODERICK

You all right, young man?

MIKE

What the hell, man? This your first time driving a bus?

Mike folds his arms, trying to look intimidating, as Roderick glares at him.

RODERICK

(to Duncan)

You need some help?

Duncan shakes his head. He crosses over to Mike, tries to emulate his tough stance.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

You know, you have a whole park down the street you can play in.

MIKE

So, what? If we drop a ball on the way, we should get run over by a bus?

RODERICK

Your mom ever tell you you're a smart ass?

MIKE

Your mom ever tell you you're a dumb ass?

DRIVER

You need to learn some manners, young man.

MIKE

I got manners. I just ain't using them right now.

Roderick gives Mike another intense stare. Mike tries to pretend it doesn't unnerve him, without success.

RODERICK

Well, that's a shame. It's one thing to not be taught any manners. But to know them, and then choose not to use them? Y'know, there's gonna come a time in your life where you're gonna want someone to listen to you. To take you seriously like a man. And they won't. Worse part is, you'll think it's their fault, not yours.

Mike is clearly uncomfortable. This observation hits close to home.

MIKE

All right. Enough of this guy.

He turns and marches off up the street.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(to Duncan)

You coming?

Duncan nods, and takes a step toward Mike...

RODERICK

Hey.

Duncan pauses, turns back to Roderick.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

You sure you're okay?

Duncan nods, as Roderick tosses him the tennis ball.

This time, Duncan catches it cleanly.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

All right. You boys live careful now, okay?

Roderick turns, reenters the bus. It heads off down the road...

Mike and Duncan watch it go, before continuing their trek...

MIKE

One hundred fifty.

DUNCAN

Huh?

MIKE

One hundred fifty. That's how many they said were on board.

The stop in front of a house, as GUY, wearing his own glove crosses the yard toward them.

GUY  
It was a Cessna.

DUNCAN  
What's that?

GUY  
Real small plane. Crashed into the  
big one.

MIKE  
Holy shit!

GUY  
Quiet, man!  
(He points to his  
front door.)  
My Dad's right in there!  
(to Duncan)  
Your Dad at the drive in?

DUNCAN  
Yeah. He's the manager. He has a  
gold pass. Can get us into any movie  
theater in San Diego.

GUY  
That's kinda cool.

DUNCAN  
He's coming over tonight. Gonna  
leave work early.

Guy glances over at Mike.

MIKE  
And we ain't talking about my Dad.  
Come on.

Mike strolls to the end of the yard, turns to face Duncan and Guy.

In response, Duncan and Guy spread apart, eye Mike carefully. They're ready.

Mike takes the ball and bounces a grounder to Guy. Guy flips it to Duncan, who leaps over an imaginary runner and throws it back to Mike.

GUY  
Smooth.

MIKE

Just like your hero, Ozzie Smith.

DUNCAN

What's wrong with Ozzie?

GUY

Can't hit his own weight.

MIKE

And he ain't that big.

Mike and Guy snicker, as Duncan glares at them.

Mike is about to throw the ball, but he pauses when a car pulls up next to them.

A MAN (early sixties) leans his head out the window.

MAN

Hey boys! How are you all doing?

Duncan, Mike, and Guy cease playing, but don't answer. They all just exchange confused looks: "Who the hell is this?"

MAN (CONT'D)

You gonna hurt your arm playing with a tennis ball.

MIKE

Yeah, well, actual baseballs tend to go through windows and dent cars.

GUY

We get yelled at a lot less using a tennis ball.

MAN

Huh.

MIKE

Was that it? Or you got some more medical advice?

MAN

Um, no. I imagine you boys heard about the plane crash today?

MEMORY FLASH

The horror Duncan sees in his neighborhood...

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan closes his eyes a moment, shakes his head, as if trying to shake the memory away.

GUY

Oh, yeah. I think someone mentioned that.

(to Duncan)

Didn't you say something about that, Dunc?

DUNCAN

What?

Distracted, he's not picking up Guy's lead...

MIKE

I think it was on the news.

GUY

You know something? I think that might have been the loud explosion we heard at school today.

MIKE

Dude, I bet your right! We just thought it was Mrs. Dunn's gas. But a plane crash...man, makes so much more sense!

MAN

So it came down near here?

The boys exchange looks of incredulity.

Finally, Mike gestures toward the pillar of smoke.

The Man climbs out of the car, a camera around his neck. He gazes in that direction of the smoke.

MAN (CONT'D)

Oh.

Embarrassed, the man nods at the Boys, climbs back into his car, heads off toward the pillar.

GUY

Shoulda given him fake directions.

DUNCAN

Sent him to the zoo.

MIKE  
 This isn't their neighborhood. This is ours. What right do they have to come in here and...? I mean, it ain't Disneyland.

A pall of melancholy and anger hangs over the boys for a moment...

Guy decides to change the subject.

GUY  
 You know what I heard, Mike?

MIKE  
 What did you hear, Guy?

GUY  
 Well. Rumor has it that Sandra Van Den Akker has a birthday party this weekend.

MIKE  
 Does she? That is so interesting.

They both turn to Duncan.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
 Were you invited?

DUNCAN  
 Yeah. I was like, the first person she invited.

GUY  
 The first person.

DUNCAN  
 Yeah.

MIKE  
 Of course. Definitely before Yanira or Lori.

GUY  
 So, what are you gonna get her?

DUNCAN  
 Um...I don't know. My Dad's taking me shopping. On Friday.

MIKE  
 Gotta make it good.

GUY  
It's your big chance.

MIKE  
That's right. Next year in junior high, you gotta compete with all those ninth grade boys. Gotta make sure she notices you now.

DUNCAN  
I know.

GUY  
You should steal your Dad's gold pass.

MIKE  
Yeah, take her to the movies. Tell her she can see anything she wants!

GUY  
That will impress.

MIKE  
Oh, yeah.

GUY'S FATHER (40s) appears. He looks melancholy and stressed.

GUY'S FATHER  
Guy. Dinner's about ready. You need to come in. I don't think you should be out here breathing this air, anyway.

Guy tosses the ball to Mike, heads toward his Father.

GUY  
See ya, guys.

MIKE  
See ya.  
(to Duncan)  
Probably same for me. I'll see ya tomorrow.

Mike turns to leave, but Duncan doesn't move.

Guy pauses when he gets to his father. They both turn to Duncan.

GUY'S FATHER  
You should head home too, Dunc.

Guy and his Father turn and head inside.

Guy waves at Duncan just before closing the door.

Duncan is left alone in the front yard.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Duncan walks back home...

MEMORY FLASH

Again, he sees some horror from his walk home...

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan pauses, looks around the neighborhood. He picks up his walking pace...

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Duncan enters the house, and is greeted by the Cat.

He pets the Cat a few moments, and then picks up the phone.

He dials a number. It rings several times until...

VOICE

(on the phone)

The number you have reached is no longer in service.

His body slumps as he hangs up.

The sound of the front door opens O.S.

Duncan turns to find his sister MADDIE, 18, enter the house.

Maddie is dressed nicely with her face made up--she seems to be heading out on a date.

MADDIE

Duncan-do! What's going on?

DUNCAN

Nothing.

She notices his mood, changes her tone.

MADDIE

You okay?

He nods, not totally convinced.

She crosses to him.



MADDIE (CONT'D)

Tough day, huh?

She gently touches him on his head a moment.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Is Mom around?

DUNCAN

She's at Elsie's.

Maddie nods gravely. She knows what that means.

MADDIE

Well, Tom and I are going to a concert. I was going to borrow one of Mom's necklaces.

DUNCAN

What concert?

MADDIE

We're going to see Yes. You remember I used to play them on my stereo? You used to like that song "Roundabout."

DUNCAN

Yeah, I remember.

Maddie smiles.

MADDIE

I'm gonna go grab the necklace.

She exits into

MOTHER'S BEDROOM

and crosses to the dresser.

Duncan follows her.

She pulls open a drawer and begins looking through Mother's jewelry.

INSERT - THE DRAWER

Most of the jewelry is cheap and gaudy--one necklace appears to be gold-plated butterfly, another a glass brooch designed to look like rose petals, and then Maddie finally locates what she seeks--a simple, tasteful necklace with a gold heart pendant.

BACK TO SCENE

Maddie removes the necklace from the drawer.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

There you are.

She puts the necklace on.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Been trying to get Mom to give this to me. I don't know why she still keeps it.

She checks herself out in the mirror.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

There. I think Jon Anderson will be able to see this from the front row.  
(turning back to Duncan)  
You heard from Dad?

Duncan shakes his head.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Give him a call.

DUNCAN

His number's not working.

MADDIE

Yeah, he got evicted from his apartment. He's living at the drive in. Gotta cot in the back of the office. So call him there.

DUNCAN

What's the name of the theater?

MADDIE

He didn't tell you?

Duncan shakes his head.

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Maddie pulls out the phone book out from under the phone, flips through the yellow pages.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

There you go. Big Sky drive in.

TOM, (22) irritable and smug, appears in the doorway.

TOM

Maddie, come on! How long does it take to put on a necklace?

DUNCAN

(to Maddie)

Do you think maybe...you could drop me off at Elsie's?

MADDIE

No. I...I don't think that's a very good idea. Elsie gets a little...well, she doesn't like kids.

DUNCAN

Oh. Well, could you take me to the drive in?

MADDIE

Oh. Um...

She turns to Tom.

TOM

No way.

MADDIE

Tom, it's just in Chula Vista. It's not that far.

TOM

It's in the opposite direction.

MADDIE

We have plenty of time--

TOM

We got dinner, and the show starts at seven--

MADDIE

They'll be an opening act--

TOM

It's Donovan! I'm not going to miss it.

Tom turns to leave.

MADDIE

I'm sorry, Dunc. But give Dad a call. Maybe he can get out early. Here.

She reaches into her handbag, hands Duncan a five dollar bill.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Go up to Picnic'n Chicken and get some dinner. That's better for you than one of your famous butter and sugar sandwiches.

She smiles, and he takes the money.

DUNCAN

Thank you.

MADDIE

You bet.

She grabs him by the shoulders and gives him a squeeze.

She turns to exit, closes the door behind her.

Duncan is alone except for the Cat, now curled up on the sofa.

Duncan crosses to the phone, gazes carefully at the phone book, dials the number.

After two rings, BETH (30s) answers.

BETH (O.S.)

(on the phone)

Big Sky drive in. This is Beth.

DUNCAN

Hi. Is my Da--uh, is Hamish there?

INT. BOX OFFICE - DAY

Beth holds the phone to her ear in a cramped box office, about the size of an outhouse.

She sells tickets to customers as she talks to Duncan.

BETH

(on phone)

Yeah, hold on a second...Yeah, one car? That will be two bucks...Who's calling?

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - DUNCAN AND BETH

DUNCAN

His son.

BETH  
Okay, hold on.

The phone is silent a moment, as Duncan's anticipation builds.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Yeah, he can't come to the phone  
right now. Can he call you back?

DUNCAN  
Yeah.

BETH  
You at home?

DUNCAN  
Uh-huh.

BETH  
Okay, I'll tell him.  
(to a CUSTOMER)  
How many?

The phone clicks off.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan lays on his bed, tosses the tennis ball in the air,  
catches it.

The Cat jumps up and curls up next to him. He gives the Cat  
some chin scratches.

He tosses the glove aside, grabs one of his comics, flips  
through the pages.

INSERT - THE COMIC BOOK PAGE

It's a PANEL of an airplane in a rapid descent, about to  
crash into a building...

And another PANEL of terrified passengers inside the plane...

MEMORY FLASH

The horror he saw in the neighborhood...

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan tosses the comic aside, races out of the bedroom.

Confused, the Cat trots after him...

IN THE LIVING ROOM - LATER

Duncan turns on the television.

INSERT - THE TELEVISION

A NEWSCASTER (30s, handsome, perfectly coifed) appears, speaking to the camera...

NEWCASTER

...and our coverage of Western Air Flight 111 continues. For those of you tuning in for the Padres-Dodgers game, News Eight will be preempting its game broadcast for continuing coverage of the plane crash in North Park this morning. Here is what we know so far...

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan stares at the television. The Newscaster's voice fades...

INSERT - THE TELEVISION

Images of a burning fuselage, the pillar of smoke, fire trucks and the school building.

A WITNESS (40s) is interviewed...

WITNESS

I saw it come down. This...this leviathan falling from the sky. Thought the world was ending.

BACK TO SCENE

That's enough. Duncan turns off the television.

The phone rings...

Duncan races to pick it up.

DUNCAN

Hello?

INT. THEATER MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is decorated with wood paneling as FATHER sits, looking small behind a massive yellow oak desk.

He is 42, with curly unkempt hair and silver on his temples.

He looks harried, and the sounds of a chaotic snack bar service can be heard behind his closed door.

FATHER

Duncan, I am so sorry. It's been so crazy here.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - FATHER AND DUNCAN

DUNCAN

That's okay.

FATHER

I didn't think anyone would be coming to the movies. Who'd want to be on the road, going to a drive-in tonight? A lot of people, as it turns out. I guess everyone decided they didn't want to be at home.

DUNCAN

I tried calling you at your apartment.

FATHER

Yeah, I didn't get a chance to tell you...

DUNCAN

Maddie told me. You live at the theater now.

FATHER

Just temporarily. Until I can find my own place. Gonna try to get a place not far from you and Mom. Is your mother home?

DUNCAN

No. She's at Elsie's.

FATHER

Oh.

He, too, seems to know what that means.

FATHER (CONT'D)

So, is Maddie there?

DUNCAN

No, she and Tom went out.

FATHER

So, you're all by yourself?

DUNCAN

Yeah.

FATHER

Oh, Duncan. I am so sorry.

DUNCAN

Do you think you can come get me?

FATHER

I really wish I could. But it's so busy, and I sent Jose home. He needed to be at home with his family--

Father suddenly realizes how that sounded...

FATHER (CONT'D)

Uh...he's got little ones, you know. You met them! Anyway, I didn't think it would be a problem. I thought we'd be closing up early.

DUNCAN

I could take the bus.

FATHER

Absolutely not. I don't want you riding the bus. You need to stay at home. Tell you what I'll do. I'll call your mother at Elsie's and have her come home.

DUNCAN

She says she can't come. She's tired from the Vermouth. Is that a medication?

FATHER

Um...sort of.

DUNCAN

Oh. What does she take it for?

FATHER

Just, you know, to feel better.

DUNCAN

Are you gonna come get me?

Father sighs in frustration.

FATHER

I am going to try.

Duncan sinks again...



FATHER (CONT'D)  
 I can't leave right now. But  
 hopefully things will quiet down and  
 I can leave Beth here and come get  
 you.

Duncan says nothing; he's fighting back tears.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
 You still there?

DUNCAN  
 Yeah. How long will that be?

FATHER  
 As soon as I can. I promise.

DUNCAN  
 Okay.

FATHER  
 Okay. You got food to eat?

DUNCAN  
 I'm not hungry.

OUTSIDE FATHER'S OFFICE

A theater PATRON screams in anger...

PATRON (O.S.)  
 Are you deaf, dumb and blind? I  
 said my god damn speaker doesn't  
 work!

FATHER  
 Um...I think there's some sort of...  
 Fight going on. I gotta go.

DUNCAN  
 I love--

The phone hangs up.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)  
 You, Dad.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As the dusk creeps in, Duncan marches up the street, wearing  
 his backpack.

He notices that no one is outside--but the distinct blue  
 glow of televisions can be seen through each window.

EXT. MR. WALTERS' HOUSE - DAY

Duncan races up the front steps and knocks on the door.

MR. WALTERS, 45, answers the door, opening it just enough for Duncan to see him and nothing else.

Mr. Walters wears a bathrobe. His hair is disheveled, and he appears impatient. He clearly did not want to be interrupted.

MR. WALTERS

Duncan?

DUNCAN

Hi, Mr. Walters.

MR. WALTERS

Hi. Um...what are you doing here?  
We don't have a meeting this week.  
Next Monday. Scout meetings are  
always Monday, remember?

DUNCAN

I know. I'm just...

Mr. Walters reads Duncan's distress. He softens a bit.

MR. WALTERS

I know. Crazy day, huh?

Duncan nods.

An awkward silent moment, until...

DUNCAN

I'm really sorry to bother you, but  
I was just wondering...my Dad's at  
work and he can't leave.

MR. WALTERS

Uh-huh.

DUNCAN

He's in Chula Vista. Which I guess  
isn't far? Do you think you could  
drive me down there?

MR. WALTERS

Oh, um. Well...I'd love to, but...my  
car...it's, uh. In the shop. Won't  
be getting it back until tomorrow.

DUNCAN

Oh.

Duncan notices a car parked on the street--an orange CHEVY VEGA.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Isn't that your car?

MR. WALTERS

Oh. Yes. Yes, it is. It's...it's not running well right now. I'm taking it in tomorrow. Into the shop. Tomorrow. But I can't really drive it right now. I mean, they're coming to tow it tomorrow. That's...that's how bad it is.

DUNCAN

Oh.

Another awkward moment, as Mr. Walters glances inside the house a moment.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Do you think maybe I could come in for a little while?

MR. WALTERS

Isn't your mom at home?

Duncan shakes his head.

MR. WALTERS (CONT'D)

Oh. Um...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Jack? Jack where are you?

Mr. Walters turns and looks back inside the house.

MR. WALTERS

I'll be right there, hon.

He turns back to Duncan.

MR. WALTERS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Duncan. It's not the best time. It's her birthday, you see. I promised her.

DUNCAN

Okay.

MR. WALTERS

Look, next week's meeting, we're going to plan our camping trip to  
(MORE)

MR. WALTERS (CONT'D)  
 the desert. It'll be fun! So, I'll  
 see you on Monday.

Duncan nods.

DUNCAN  
 I'll see you Monday.

Duncan turns to leave as Mr. Walters watches him go.

The guilt is written all over his face as he slowly closes  
 the door.

INT. SEVEN ELEVEN STORE - NIGHT

Duncan, backpack on his shoulder, approaches the register  
 holding a comic book.

A CASHIER (mid-thirties) looks at Duncan, sighs with contempt.  
 Wherever he wanted to be at this point in his life, 7-11  
 cashier was not it.

CASHIER  
 Thirty five cents.

Duncan puts down the five dollar bill.

CASHIER (CONT'D)  
 Christ. You got anything smaller?

Duncan shakes his head.

The Cashier grabs the five dollar bill, begins to ring out  
 the transaction.

DUNCAN  
 Can I also get a slurpee?

The Cashier is incredulous. He could not imagine a greater  
 crime against him than this.

CASHIER  
 A slurpee? You didn't think it  
 important to tell me that first?  
 Christ. What kind?

DUNCAN  
 Cherry?

CASHIER  
 Size? Or am I going to have to guess?

DUNCAN  
 Small.

CASHIER

Christ.

The Cashier crosses to the Slurpee Machine, begins to make Duncan's drink.

OUTSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Duncan, slurpee in hand, crosses the parking lot when he spots a bus sitting at a stop. He notices the destination sign:

INSERT - THE BUS DESTINATION SIGN

It reads "CHULA VISTA."

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan gasps, stares at the bus a moment, as its doors shut and it slowly rolls forward.

Duncan takes off after it.

He reaches the door of the bus and pounds on it, but the bus pulls away.

He stumbles, and his slurpee crashes to the ground.

He watches the bus disappear down the street, before turning to his dead slurpee. He sighs heavily.

He turns and heads over to the bus stop.

He checks out the pole with a BUS STOP sign. He studies a timetable posted below it.

DUNCAN

A half an hour.

He looks at the bench at the bus stop, and down the street towards home.

Finally, he decides. He sits himself down to wait.

THE BUS STOP - LATER

The sky has darkened.

Duncan curls himself up into a ball on the bus stop bench, rests his head on his backpack.

A CHULA VISTA bus pulls up to the curb, and the door pops open.

Duncan approaches the bus, as Roderick eyes him with curiosity.

RODERICK  
Your rude friend with you?

Duncan doesn't make the connection as quickly...

DUNCAN  
My what...?

He recognizes Roderick.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)  
Oh. No, no...he's not here. Just me.

RODERICK  
In that case, come on up.

DUNCAN  
Do you go to the Big Sky drive in?

RODERICK  
The Big Sky? I don't go right there, but I get close.

That's good enough. Duncan climbs the steps, pulls out a dollar bill from his pocket.

He tries to hand the dollar to Roderick.

RODERICK (CONT'D)  
In there.

Roderick points to the fare collection machine.

Duncan waves the dollar about the machine, unsure where to enter it.

RODERICK (CONT'D)  
Put it through the top.

Duncan understands, and smiles as the dollar bill drops into the machine.

RODERICK (CONT'D)  
Your first time on a bus?

Duncan nods. He wanders through the aisle, trying to figure out where to sit.

There are only three other people on the bus: a MAN sleeping on the last row; a mid fifties HUSBAND and WIFE staring straight ahead, as if shell shocked...

Duncan moves to take a seat in front of the HUSBAND and WIFE.

HUSBAND

Not here.

DUNCAN

What?

WIFE

Don't sit in front of us.

The Husband and Wife glare at Duncan. He doesn't know how to react, so he just stands there, staring at the couple.

HUSBAND

Move somewhere else.

Roderick watches this exchange from his mirror.

RODERICK

(to Duncan)

Hey Buddy? Have a seat right there.

Roderick points to the first seat on the bus--the one closest to the driver..

Duncan crosses to it and sits down. The bus pulls away from the stop.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

Don't worry about them. They're not gonna hurt you. Some people...just don't deal well with stress.

Duncan nods, not really sure he understands.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

So...you know you can't just walk into a drive in, right? You need a car to see a movie there.

DUNCAN

I'm not going to see a movie. I'm going to see my Dad.

RODERICK

Your Dad?

DUNCAN

He manages the Big Sky.

RODERICK

No kidding.

DUNCAN

Yeah. He has a gold pass that gets him into any movie theater in San Diego. For free.

RODERICK

That's a good Dad to have.

DUNCAN

Yeah.

At a stoplight, Roderick turns and takes another look at Duncan. He observes Duncan's mood...

RODERICK

You all right, Buddy?

Duncan nods, not very convincingly...

RODERICK (CONT'D)

Yeah. Me, neither. Everyone's either in a daze or they're trying to kill each other.

Roderick pulls the bus up to a stop.

An ANXIOUS MAN (early twenties) climbs onto the bus, holding out a twenty dollar bill.

ANXIOUS MAN

Can you break a twenty?

Roderick points to a sign on the collection machine...

INSERT - THE SIGN

It reads "EXACT CHANGE ONLY"

BACK TO SCENE

RODERICK

You know I don't keep any change.

The Anxious Man looks down at the machine.

ANXIOUS MAN

There's at least fifteen dollars in there. You could pull it out and give me change.

RODERICK

You think my hand's gonna fit in there?



ANXIOUS MAN

It has a lock on it. You have a key.

RODERICK

No, I don't.

ANXIOUS MAN

Come on. My boss made me work late so I couldn't get a pass.

RODERICK

Try the Seven Eleven. It's just a couple blocks up the street. They can break your twenty.

ANXIOUS MAN

But then I have to wait for the next bus.

RODERICK

Run every thirty minutes.

ANXIOUS MAN

That's if you're on time.

RODERICK

Yep.

ANXIOUS MAN

I can't go into a 7-11. Those fluorescent lights and the smells. It'll give me a seizure.

RODERICK

I'm sorry.

Incredulous, Anxious Man drops his arms down, turns and heads back down the steps...

ANXIOUS MAN

Never fails. Never. It's always something.

Roderick lets out a heavy sigh, turns back to Duncan...

RODERICK

See what I mean? I actually had to break up three fights today. No one ever fights on my bus.

DUNCAN

Did you have to call the cops?

LUIS (25) climbs aboard the bus, flashes a pass to Roderick.

He's in mechanics blues, a sown on name tag above his heart.

RODERICK

Nah. It takes them too long to get here. I threw them off myself.

LUIS

You threw someone off the bus?

RODERICK

Of course I did. You know I don't put up with any nonsense.

Luis finds a seat next to Duncan, a plastic bag of books in his lap.

LUIS

Were they midgets? 'Cause I don't see you throwing nobody off whose more an four feet tall and heavier than fifty pounds.

RODERICK

Hey, I was a linebacker!

LUIS

You mean you were like, in the back of the line when they handed out muscles?

RODERICK

I played six years for the Atlanta Falcons. I tackled Lance Alworth. I even intercepted Joe Namath.

LUIS

No shit?

RODERICK

Hey. Watch your language in front of the kid.

LUIS

Come on, Roderick. You think he's never heard that word before?

(to Duncan)

How old are you, Little Man?

DUNCAN

Twelve.

LUIS

(to the Roderick)

He's twelve. He probably hears that word twenty times a day at school.

RODERICK

I don't care. Not on my bus.

Roderick pulls the bus back onto the road.

LUIS

You gonna throw me off?

RODERICK

Yep. It shouldn't be hard, given  
you ain't much bigger than a midget.

Luis and Roderick laugh heartily at this quip.

Duncan can't help but laugh as well.

DUNCAN

(to Roderick)

Did you really used to play for the  
Falcons?

RODERICK

Hell, yeah.

LUIS

Hey, no bad language on Roderick's  
bus. He'll throw your ass off it.

More laughing.

RODERICK

Yeah, all right. You got me, Luis.

LUIS

(to Duncan)

I got him!

DUNCAN

What was the NFL like?

RODERICK

I gotta tell you. It was the greatest  
time of my life.

LUIS

The greatest? The Falcons lost eleven  
games in sixty six.

RODERICK

Yeah, but we won three!

(to Duncan)

You a Chargers fan?

DUNCAN

Not really.

LUIS

Who'd be a Chargers fan? Those guys stink.

RODERICK

That Dan Fouts is gonna be something, though. You watch. They're gonna be really good in a couple years.

DUNCAN

I like baseball.

RODERICK

Padres fan?

Duncan nods.

LUIS

Who'd be a Padres fan? Those guys stink.

RODERICK

They ain't bad this year. Won more than they lost.

DUNCAN

And they've got Ozzie Smith.

RODERICK

Hell, yeah. He's gonna be a great one, that Ozzie.

Duncan smiles at Roderick--finally, someone who gets it!

The bus stops and the sullen Husband and Wife depart.

Roderick eyes them carefully as they leave.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

Have a good night, folks.

No response.

Roderick shrugs.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

Ah, well.

He pulls the bus forward...

LUIS

(muttering)

Jesus. Surrounded by sad-ass Chargers and Padres fans. Everywhere I go in this city.

Luis opens up his plastic bag of books.

INSERT - THE BAG

It's a collection of Dr. Seuss volumes.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan glances down at the books, and Luis notices.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Hey, Little Man, you read these?

Duncan nods.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Which ones?

DUNCAN  
All of them. My sister got me the whole set for Christmas. When I was little.

LUIS  
No, shit?

Roderick gives Luis the side-eye, but says nothing.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
I got these for my daughter. I want to read one to her tonight before she falls asleep. Which one should I do?

He holds them out in front of Duncan.

Duncan leans over and points to one.

DUNCAN  
That one. That's the best.

INSERT - THE BOOK

Luis pulls the book out of the pile. It's GO, DOG. GO!

BACK TO SCENE

LUIS  
This one?

Duncan nods.

Luis begins to flip through it. He laughs out loud.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Look at all the dogs in the cars,  
man! Ha! He hates her hat!

INSERT - THE BOOK

It's exactly as Luis describes...

BACK TO SCENE

DUNCAN  
I like the page where the dogs are  
all asleep.

LUIS  
Show me.

Duncan flips to the page.

Luis bursts out laughing.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Look at them all! That ones staring  
right at us.

INSERT - THE BOOK

Sure enough, a whole lot of dogs are asleep, looking  
adorable...

BACK TO SCENE

DUNCAN  
That's not even the best part.

LUIS  
What's the best part?

DUNCAN  
The dogs all have a huge party on a  
tree.

Duncan flips to the page...

INSERT - THE BOOK

Sure enough, it's a dog party on the tree...

BACK TO SCENE

LUIS  
No way! That shit's bad! I  
mean...that means it's really good.

DUNCAN

I know what that means.

LUIS

See, Roderick? What did I tell you?  
This kid is cool.

Roderick nods as Duncan beams.

DUNCAN

(to Luis)

They're all really good. But that  
one's the best.

LUIS

Then that's the one I want to read  
her tonight. What'cha got there?

Luis points at Duncan's comic book.

Duncan wipes off some cat hair from the cover.

DUNCAN

Sorry. Cat hair. It's a team up.  
Spider-Man and Shang Chi.

LUIS

Shang Chi is so bad! He's like the  
Bruce Lee of comics. You know who  
Bruce Lee is?

Duncan shakes his head.

LUIS (CONT'D)

You never seen a Bruce Lee movie?  
Oh, you gotta know who Bruce Lee is!

The sleeping Man begins to snore loudly. It interrupts Luis'  
riff.

LUIS (CONT'D)

I ride this bus every day, and I  
ain't never seen that guy awake.

RODERICK

Quoc works a long day, just like  
you. I've seen you nod off once or  
twice yourself.

LUIS

Yeah, but...how can he...I mean, how  
can anyone...How can anyone sleep  
today?

RODERICK

He lost all of his family at Hue,  
had to flee his country. My guess  
is it takes more than one plane  
falling from the sky to rattle his  
cage.

EXT. CHULA VISTA - NIGHT

The bus pulls up to an empty stop, and the doors pop open.

BACK INSIDE THE BUS

Duncan heads towards the door.

RODERICK

This is as close as I can get you.  
You'll have to walk for a bit. You  
all right with that?

DUNCAN

I walk a lot.

RODERICK

You can see the screen there. It's  
a little over a mile.

Through the door, Duncan gazes

OUTSIDE THE BUS

And sees the drive in screen down a darkly lit, two lane  
road.

BACK INSIDE THE BUS

RODERICK (CONT'D)

You going to be okay?

Duncan nods.

He turns back to Luis, who's entranced with the Dr. Seuss  
books.

DUNCAN

Bye, Luis.

LUIS

Oh. Bye, Little Man.

Duncan climbs off the bus and heads up the road.

Luis notices where he's headed. He rises and crosses to the  
door.



He watches Duncan for a moment, exchanges a look with Roderick.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Duncan marches down the road with determination.

He pauses a moment when he realizes he can no longer see the theater screen.

Duncan walks a bit further, but the screen is no longer in view.

He gazes to the left and appears to see the screen through the trees.

He leaves the road, climbs through the bushes. A few of the thorns scratch his hands and cheeks.

Duncan climbs up a ridge and can see the screen again--but it appears to be on the other side of a canyon.

He glances back at the road--it seems like it will take him in the opposite direction from the theater.

Duncan pushes his way through the shrubbery of the canyon.

He hits his head against tree branches and brush.

He trips over a rock, falls down.

After a moment, he rises back up.

He's disoriented, but slogs on.

Finally, he finds himself at the bottom of the canyon. He can no longer see the movie screen.

He looks in every direction, but can't see which way to go.

The sound of crickets seems to grow louder, as small animals rustle in the bushes.

Duncan begins to panic--he takes a step in one direction, then stops and changes his mind.

He takes a few steps in another direction, then stops.

He tries to see if he can see the road--he can't. He's lost.

Duncan fights back his tears.

He wipes his nose with his hand, looks up and picks a hill. He begins to climb.

He reaches the top. He's no longer in the canyon, but can't see the theater anywhere.

LUIS (O.S.)  
Hey, Little Man!

Duncan whirls and finds Luis a few feet in front of him. He carries his bag of books.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
You okay?

DUNCAN  
I can't find the drive-in.

Duncan is desperately trying not to cry.

LUIS  
It's okay man, you're all right. I got ya. Come on, it's this way.

Duncan follows Luis, who takes them back through the canyon. Luis walks confidently--he clearly knows where he's going.

DUNCAN  
You know where we are?

LUIS  
I grew up around here. I used to play in these canyons when I was a kid. Got lost in here a couple of times. Had to learn to find my way out.

DUNCAN  
This was your stop, too?

LUIS  
Um...I usually get off at the next one, but...I dunno...I felt like walking tonight.

DUNCAN  
What about your daughter?

LUIS  
She's home with her Mom. She'll be good until I get there.

DUNCAN  
My Mom's over at her friend Elsie's.

LUIS  
Oh, yeah?

DUNCAN  
They're having vermouth.

LUIS  
Oh.

DUNCAN  
My Dad couldn't get off work.

LUIS  
Well, sometimes Dad's can't.

DUNCAN  
Yeah. I know.

LUIS  
I would have given anything to be  
with her today, and not have to work.  
But life don't always cooperate, you  
know?

Duncan nods.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
So, I'm gonna try to remember to be  
grateful. Sometimes that's all we  
can do. And hey, if hadn't been on  
the bus, I wouldn't have met you!  
And I'd have no idea what to read  
her tonight.

Luis stops.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Here ya go.

Duncan stops. The drive in is right in front of them.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Hey, look at that!

INSERT - THE MARQUEE

It advertises a double feature: ENTER THE DRAGON and RETURN  
OF THE DRAGON

BACK TO SCENE

LUIS (CONT'D)  
Your Dad's playing two Bruce Lee  
movies! Even he knows how bad Bruce  
Lee is!

MOMENTS LATER

Duncan and Luis arrive at the box office.

Beth sees them approach. Curious, she rises to greet them.

BETH  
Can I help you?

DUNCAN  
I'm Duncan. I'm here to see my Dad.

BETH  
You're Duncan?

DUNCAN  
Is he still here?

BETH  
He is, yes. Where did you come from?

DUNCAN  
I took the bus.

BETH  
Oh. I didn't even know you could  
take a bus here.

LUIS  
(to Duncan)  
Hey, Little Man. I gotta run.  
(to Beth)  
You got him?

BETH  
Yeah, I got him.  
(to Duncan)  
Come on, I'll take you to your Dad.

LUIS  
All right, Little Man.

Luis extends his hand.

Duncan puts his out to meet Luis', but Luis surprises him by  
"slipping him some skin."

Duncan giggles--it's clearly a first for him.

LUIS (CONT'D)  
You be safe.

Luis turns to leave.

DUNCAN  
I hope your daughter likes the book.

LUIS  
Oh, she will. I got an expert  
recommendation!

Luis heads off into the darkness.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Beth and Duncan enter.

She points to a green leather sofa against the wall.

BETH  
Have a seat there. You want something  
to eat or drink?

DUNCAN  
No, thanks.

BETH  
Okay. I'm gonna go get your Dad.  
(she notices the cuts  
on his face and hands)  
Oh, geez. What happened to you?

DUNCAN  
I...uh, fell down.

BETH  
I'll bring the first aid kit.

She exits, leaving the door open.

BETH (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You know where Hamish is?

Several loud bangs O.S.--as if someone is pounding on a metal  
surface.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)  
I want Twizzlers!

EMPLOYEE (O.S.)  
Beth, can you help, please? Sir,  
I've told you, we are all out--

Duncan rises, begins to follow the sound of the commotion.

He heads down a

HALLWAY

Painted yellow

CUSTOMER (O.S.)  
How can you be out of Twizzlers?  
When I got here this afternoon, you  
had tons of them!

Duncan enters

THE SNACK BAR

And sees the CUSTOMER, heavy set and enraged (40s).

The Customer is opposite Beth and the EMPLOYEE (female, 16).

The Customer bangs on the counter again.

BETH  
They are very popular. And we are  
busy tonight. So we sold out.

CUSTOMER  
My kids want Twizzlers! What am I  
supposed to do now?

Beth glances at the offerings in the candy display.

BETH  
How about Flicks?

CUSTOMER  
I don't want Flicks! I want--

BETH  
Twizzlers, I know. But we're all  
out. So, as a replacement, would  
you like Flicks?

CUSTOMER  
They're just big chocolate chips.

BETH  
And why wouldn't your kids like that?

The Customer gives this some thought.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Tell you what.

She grabs two containers of Flicks.

BETH (CONT'D)

If you take the Flicks, I won't charge you. They're on the house.

This certainly gives the Customer pause.

CUSTOMER

Well...I got three kids.

She grabs a third container.

BETH

Three, then. Deal?

CUSTOMER

Deal.

She hands the candy over. The Customer grabs it and exits.

EMPLOYEE

Thank you. I was afraid he was going to destroy the snack bar.

BETH

Jesus. We need to have a shrink on staff tonight. Do you know where Hamish is?

EMPLOYEE

Oh, he went home.

Duncan reacts to this with shock and disappointment.

BETH

What?

EMPLOYEE

Yeah, he said he had to go do something. He didn't tell you?

BETH

No, he didn't. Shit!

EMPLOYEE

What's wrong?

BETH

His son is here--

She gestures towards the office then notices Duncan.

BETH (CONT'D)

Right here, actually.

(to Duncan)

Did you hear that?

Duncan nods.

BETH (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Duncan.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Duncan sits on the sofa, He has band aids on his face and hands.

Beth holds the phone up to her ear.

It rings several times before she hangs up.

BETH  
No one's picking up. I'll keep trying. Maybe we'll get lucky.

DUNCAN  
Why was that guy so mad?

BETH  
We didn't have his favorite flavor of licorice. It's that kinda night.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Beth flicks on the light.

Several shelves snake through the room--most of them boxes of candy, popcorn, drive in speakers, etc.

At the back of the storeroom is a unmade cot with a couple of blankets and pillows.

Several shirts, pants and a blazer are hanging from one of the shelves. A few suitcases rest against a nearby wall.

BETH  
He, uh...says it's pretty comfortable.

She crosses to the cot, take a moment to remake it.

BETH (CONT'D)  
There.

She turns back to Duncan.

BETH (CONT'D)  
So why don't you try and get some sleep? I promise you he will be here soon.

She turns to exit, pauses at the door.



BETH (CONT'D)  
The light switch is right here.

She exits, shuts the door behind her.

Duncan pauses a moment to take in his surroundings, then crosses to the bed.

He sits down, bounces a little on the cot.

He puts his comic book down, crosses to the light.

He switches it off, but the room is bathed in an intense darkness.

Duncan immediately switches the light back on, returns to the cot.

He curls up on to the cot. A picture taped to the wall catches his attention.

INSERT - THE PHOTO

It's a picture of Duncan and his Father enjoying hot dogs in the stands at a baseball game.

BACK TO SCENE

A faint smile crosses his lips...

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Beth snoozes away on the couch as Duncan enters.

DUNCAN  
Um...Beth?

Beth begins to stir.

BETH  
Oh...hey. You okay?

DUNCAN  
Has my father come back?

BETH  
Um...I don't know. Hopefully.

She pulls herself up from the sofa, crosses out to

THE HALLWAY

BETH (CONT'D)  
Hamish? Hamish?

No response.

BETH (CONT'D)  
I...guess not. Not sleeping?

Duncan shakes his head.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Yeah, it's a little creepy in there.

She reaches onto the desk and grabs her handbag.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Come on.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Beth pulls her car up to the curb, with Duncan in the passenger's seat.

BETH  
This the one?

DUNCAN  
Yeah.

She shuts off the engine, climbs out of the car. Duncan follows, holding his backpack..

BETH  
Would your Dad park out front, or would her park in the alley around back?

DUNCAN  
Landlord parks in the back. He lives next door.

They approach the door. Duncan withdraws his keys, enters.

BETH  
Think your mom's home?

DUNCAN  
Oh, yeah. She'd be home by now.

BETH  
All right. Oh, here. I almost forgot.

She reaches into her handbag, pulls out a box of Twizzlers. She hands it to Duncan.

BETH (CONT'D)  
We weren't completely out.

She smiles, turns to leave.

Duncan watches her climb back into her car. She waves and he waves back before she starts the engine, pulls the car away.

The Cat approaches Duncan, begins rubbing against his legs.

DUNCAN  
Hey, girl. You hungry again?

He closes the door, works his way through the living room, and looks into his

MOTHER'S ROOM

In the darkness, her bed appears to be empty...

He takes a breath, flicks on the light...

The bed is empty.

He wanders through the rest of the house, turning on lights.

In the

KITCHEN

Nothing has changes since breakfast--all the same dishes are out.

There's no sign of Mom anywhere.

INT. DUNCAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Duncan, now clad in his pajamas, climbs into bed.

The cat jumps up to join him.

He slowly begins to weep...

IN THE MORNING

Duncan wakes up to find his Father at his bedside.

DUNCAN  
Dad?

FATHER  
Hey, Duncan.

DUNCAN  
Where were you?

FATHER

I was at work. I told you, I sleep there now.

DUNCAN

But I was at the drive in last night. You weren't there.

FATHER

You were at the drive in?

Duncan nods.

FATHER (CONT'D)

How did you get there?

DUNCAN

I took the bus.

FATHER

Did your mother tell you to--

DUNCAN

No. I went on my own. Maddie gave me some--

FATHER

I need to have a talk with your sister. She shouldn't be putting you on the bus--

DUNCAN

She didn't put me on the bus! I went on my own.

He holds back a sob...

FATHER

Hey, it's okay. You didn't do anything wrong.

He takes his son's hand.

Father notices the scratches on him.

FATHER (CONT'D)

What happened to you? You get into a fight?

DUNCAN

With manzanita and iceplant.

Dad's confused.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

I got lost in the canyon trying to find the drive in. I fell down.

FATHER

All the more reason why you should have stayed here. Now promise me you won't do something like that again.

Duncan nods.

DUNCAN

I was afraid you'd forget.

FATHER

Forget? You think I would ever forget you?

DUNCAN

You have before.

FATHER

Oh, um...no. No, I, uh, I've never forgotten you. I just...well, I get stuck at work. I, uh, can't get away. Just like last night.

Duncan doesn't say anything. He looks away.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I wish I could have been here yesterday. Did you...see what happened?

DUNCAN

Just the smoke. It like...took up the whole window.

Father nods, gravely.

FATHER

Well, I imagine you heard it. Probably felt it.

DUNCAN

Yeah. Mr. Mikholan made a dumb joke about it. He wasn't scared at all.

FATHER

He had two purple hearts in the war, you know.

DUNCAN

What's a purple heart?

FATHER

Means he was wounded. And that he's the guy you want when there's a crisis. I'm glad he's your teacher.

DUNCAN

Mrs. Dunn came in to our room to find Mr. Mikholan. She was the first one to see it. She looked really scared.

Duncan sits in silence, staring straight ahead. His body begins to tremble.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

It smelled weird.

FATHER

What did?

DUNCAN

Walking home.

FATHER

Did you walk home with Mike and Guy?

DUNCAN

No, their parents came and picked them up.

Father, feelings slightly ashamed, shifts his weight.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

I went to Mike and Guy's later, though. We played double plays for a while.

FATHER

Oh. Oh, good.

DUNCAN

They like to make fun of me about Ozzie Smith.

FATHER

I'm sure they don't mean anything by it.

Duncan nods, not really convinced.

Father studies him a moment. He rises, starts to pace around the room as they talk.

DUNCAN

I was sitting next to Sandra.

FATHER

Sandra?

DUNCAN

When it happened.

FATHER

I...I thought your mom was going to get you. That was...it was our fault, not yours.

DUNCAN

I was hoping maybe I could walk Sandra home. Maybe she wouldn't be so scared.

FATHER

That's very gentlemanly of you.

DUNCAN

But I couldn't find her. It's her birthday Saturday..

FATHER

That's nice. You...Want to go get her a present?

DUNCAN

I guess.

FATHER

Okay. Well, maybe we can go on Friday. After school. If you don't tell your mother, I'll take you to get a frosty.

DUNCAN

Can you drive me to school?

FATHER

Well, I...

Father's voice trails off...

DUNCAN

It's okay. Never mind.

Duncan rolls over, away from Father.

Father glances at the door, then back at Duncan.

FATHER

Maybe you can just stay home. I can write a note for you.

DUNCAN

No.

FATHER

It'll be fine. You can stay here with Mom.

DUNCAN

Mom'll just leave.

Father stares down at the floor a moment, then looks up and catches a glimpse of the comic book.

Father picks up the book.

FATHER

So, what's happening with Spider-Man?

DUNCAN

He's having a hard time. He, Black Widow, Shang Chi, and Nick Fury are trying to stop Viper from assassinating the president. It's not going well.

Father studies the book's cover...

FATHER

Isn't that...Madame Hydra?

DUNCAN

She used to be. Now she's Viper. Hydra fired her because she went crazy.

FATHER

That's not going to look good on a resume. No wonder she's getting desperate. Did they stop her?

DUNCAN

I don't know. I got to wait until next issue.

FATHER

Well, fear not. She doesn't stand a chance against those four.

Another awkward silence.

DUNCAN

Where were you?



FATHER

I told you, I was at work--

DUNCAN

But you weren't--

FATHER

But then I left. To come find you.  
And you weren't home. I didn't know  
where you were. No one was answering  
the phone at Elsie's. So I was going  
to wait, but...if your Mom came home,  
I didn't want to get into a fight.  
So, I left.

DUNCAN

I was waiting for you.

Father sits down on the bed.

FATHER

I know. I went to a...friend's house.

DUNCAN

A friend? Which friend?

FATHER

You've never met them.

DUNCAN

Is it Beth?

FATHER

Beth? Good lord, no. She's...she's  
not much older than Maddie. This  
is...a different friend. I don't  
work with them.

Duncan nods, not really understanding. He's about to speak  
until...

FATHER (CONT'D)

So, I was going to wait at my friend's  
house a while...and then check back.  
But I fell asleep. Came as soon as  
I woke up. I'm sorry, Duncan. I'm  
really sorry.

Dad rises, turns to leave.

DUNCAN

You sure you can't take me to school?

FATHER

Not today. I've, uh...got to be somewhere. But I'll come by on Friday. We'll go get your friend a present, okay? I promise.

INT. MOTHER'S ROOM - DAY

Duncan, completely dressed, peers inside the door.

He finds MOTHER, still fully clothed on top of the bed, sleeping deeply.

IN THE KITCHEN

Duncan pulls out some bread and butter.

He reaches into the cabinet, and grabs the sugar.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan, wearing his backpack, crosses the street and continues on. He walks cautiously, anxious.

He comes to an intersection and pauses.

He turns around and looks back at his house a moment, then proceeds forward. He crosses the intersection, then turns again.

He glances at the sky--the pillar of smoke is gone.

He marches up an incline. As he does so, Mrs. Howard's house at the top of the incline slowly comes into view.

There is a fire truck and two police cars parked around the house.

There is commotion in the back yard--two fire fighters are carrying what appears to be an upholstered seat.

Duncan stops in his tracks. He watches for a few more seconds, then turns and runs in the other direction...

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Duncan spots Mike and Guy at the basketball hoop. He approaches them.

MIKE

You guys hear about Mrs. Howard?

Duncan immediately tenses, stares at the ground.

GUY

Yeah. She was nice.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I hope that asshole driving around didn't stop to take her picture.

GUY

You okay, Dunc?

Duncan looks back up.

DUNCAN

Yeah, I'm all right.

Duncan catches a glimpse of Sandy gossiping with her Friends.

Mike and Guy follow his gaze.

MIKE

And...he's gone.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Mikholan is at the front of the room, teaching more long division.

Problems cover the chalk board behind him.

Duncan raises his hand.

MR. MIKHOLAN

Yes, Duncan?

IN THE HALLWAY

Duncan, bathroom pass in hand, exits his classroom.

He glances across the hall at Mrs. Dunn's room. Her door is open, and he can see her room long window.

The smoke is gone--the outside looks normal.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan enters, finds his MOTHER watching TV, sipping vermouth.

MOTHER

You home already?

DUNCAN

Already?

MOTHER

They let you out early again?

DUNCAN

This is the usual time I get home.

MOTHER

Oh. Are you sure?

DUNCAN

Yeah.

Mother laughs at what she's watching on T.V.

INSERT - THE T.V.

It's an episode of *Match Game*.

BACK TO SCENE

MOTHER

Gene Rayburn cracks me up every time.

Duncan doesn't respond--he's not even sure she's speaking to him.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I am...I wish...I thought your Dad was coming to get you. I didn't mean for you to be alone all day.

Duncan nods.

After a moment, he exits the living room, and Mother returns to her show.

INSIDE THE BEDROOM

Duncan sits on the bed, Cat curled in his lap. He can hear his Mother laughing at her show O.S.

A thought suddenly occurs.

MEMORY FLASHES

--Sandra looking at her birthday card.

--Mike in front of Guy's house...

GUY

Rumor has it that Sandra Van Den Akker has a birthday party this weekend.

Mr. Walters in his doorway...

MR. WALTERS

It's her birthday, you see. I  
promised her.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan, with a renewed sense of purpose, pulls colored pencils  
and paper out of drawer.

LATER - ON THE FLOOR

Duncan creates a birthday card, as the cat watches in  
fascination.

INSERT - THE CARD

It reads "HAPPY BIRTHDAY SANDRA."

Below the writing, Duncan sketches a picture of Wonder Woman,  
with a close approximation of Sandra's face.

LATER

The card is done. It's bright and colorful--with Sandra/Diana  
Prince looking powerful with her hands on her hips.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan sits outside with the card, waiting.

After a moment, he rises, gazes down the street.

Several cars pass, but none he recognizes.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan picks up the phone. The phone book is open nearby.

INT. MOVIE THEATER OFFICE - DAY

The phone rings and Beth picks it up.

BETH

Big Sky drive in.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - DUNCAN AND BETH

DUNCAN

Hi. Is Hamish there?

BETH

Is this Duncan?

DUNCAN

Yes.

BETH  
Hey, how are you?

DUNCAN  
I'm okay. Is my Dad there?

Beth puts her hand over the receiver, holds it away from her...

BETH  
Shit!

She brings it back to her ear...

BETH (CONT'D)  
He...Doesn't seem to be.

DUNCAN  
He was supposed to come pick me up.

BETH  
Oh. Well, hopefully he's on his way. Tell you what. If I hear from him, I'll tell him you called. Okay?

DUNCAN  
Okay.

BETH  
Bye, Duncan.

DUNCAN  
Bye.

She hangs up the phone.

BETH  
Jesus, Hamish. What the hell?

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

He hangs up the phone.

He gazes thoughtfully at Sandra's card.

EXT. SANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan approaches the house with trepidation.

He pauses to notice that a large tree adjacent to the house has a simple tree house built into it--planks of plywood and a two by fours designed as steps.

The sun is beginning to set in the sky behind the tree.

He crosses the yard and knocks on the front door.

The door opens, revealing SANDRA'S MOM (30s)

SANDRA'S MOM

Who are you?

DUNCAN

I'm Duncan.

SANDRA'S MOM

I remember you. You stopped by a few weeks ago to sell Scout Fair tickets.

DUNCAN

You remember that?

SANDRA'S MOM

I do. And then a few months before you came by to sell Little League chocolate.

DUNCAN

Oh. Yeah.

SANDRA'S MOM

And I think before that was magazine subscriptions. For a school trip, right?

Duncan nods, a bit embarrassed.

SANDRA'S MOM (CONT'D)

You never seem to miss us when there's a fund raiser.

DUNCAN

I guess not.

SANDRA'S MOM

So, what is it this time? I imagine it's not Girl Scout cookies.

DUNCAN

No. No, I...no, not cookies. Is, uh...Sandra here?

SANDRA'S MOM

Yes, she is.

DUNCAN

I have something for her. For her birthday.

SANDRA'S MOM

Well, that's very nice, Duncan. But I'm afraid she's upstairs. Asleep. Things have been...tiring. More than usual.

Duncan nods. He gets that.

DUNCAN

Oh, okay.

He glances around, unsure of his next move.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Do you mind giving it to her when she wakes up?

SANDRA'S MOM

Of course not.

Duncan hands her the card.

She takes a look at it, and a smirk crosses her face.

SANDRA'S MOM (CONT'D)

I'll be sure she gets it. You should probably get home. It's going to be dark soon.

DUNCAN

Okay. Thank you, Mrs. Van Den Akker.

She nods, shuts the front door.

Duncan lingers on the step a moment, then turns to leave.

As he heads down the street, he glances up at a window. He pauses for a moment, hoping to catch a glimpse of Sandra.

No luck. He gives up, starts to head home...

SANDRA (O.S.)

Duncan!

He stops. He turns to the sound of her voice, but he can't figure out where she is.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Over here.

Duncan crosses under the tree and sees Sandra through an open window.

She climbs out on to the tree house.



SANDRA (CONT'D)

Come on up.

He scales the trunk up to the plywood platform, where Sandra waits for him.

She is holding the birthday card.

DUNCAN

I thought you were asleep.

SANDRA

She keeps sending me to bed early.  
Ever since...I don't think she...knows  
what else to do.

She holds up the card.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

I can't believe you made this for  
me.

DUNCAN

Well, it's your birthday.

SANDRA

Not till tomorrow.

DUNCAN

Yeah, but I don't see you on  
Saturdays.

She looks again at the card, smiles.

SANDRA

How did you know I like Wonder Woman?

DUNCAN

I didn't. She just...she uh, she  
looks like you. Or, you look like  
her.

SANDRA

I look like Wonder Woman?

Duncan nods, as Sandra snickers at the thought.

DUNCAN

Do you like comics?

SANDRA

I've never read the comics. I watch  
the t.v. show. Do you watch that?

DUNCAN

It's on right before "The Incredible Hulk." Friday's the best night for television.

SANDRA

I think Lynda Carter's beautiful. Don't you?

Duncan nods, blushes. He clearly agrees.

For a moment, they don't know what else to say to each other.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

So...can you believe Mr. Mikholan? "Someone just dropped their pencil."

DUNCAN

You know Mr. Mikholan. Any excuse to make a dumb joke.

SANDRA

Yeah.

They become quiet again, as melancholy weighs them down...

DUNCAN

I guess it was a Cessna.

SANDRA

What was?

DUNCAN

It's a small plane. It crashed into the big one.

SANDRA

Oh.

DUNCAN

That's what Mike said.

SANDRA

It seems like...this thing happened and no one... do you know that expression? My Dad uses it. The elephant in the room?

DUNCAN

Yeah. I don't know what it means.

SANDRA

My Dad says it's the thing no one talks about but everyone knows they should.

DUNCAN

Then how come no one does?

SANDRA

I don't know.

DUNCAN

Well, if there was an elephant in the room, why wouldn't you talk about it?

SANDRA

I know! I wouldn't want to talk about anything else. Elephants are the best!

They share a commiserating laugh a moment.

DUNCAN

Your tree house is cool.

SANDRA

My Dad built it for me. I don't think he realized I could get to it from the window. But I've never told him!

DUNCAN

You gonna have your birthday party up here?

SANDRA

Oh, no. The girls don't like it up here. Yanira complains about the sap she gets on her hands, and Lori doesn't like heights.

DUNCAN

I like being up here.

SANDRA

Boys usually don't mind.

They're both quiet a moment.

Duncan opens his mouth to speak...

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Thanks for the help with math.

DUNCAN

With math?

SANDRA

Yeah. I'm not good at it.

DUNCAN

Oh. I...I don't...when did I help you?

SANDRA

Well...you always get the answers quickly. So I just...y'know...see what your answer is.

DUNCAN

You copy me?

SANDRA

Yeah. Is that okay?

DUNCAN

Um...yeah. That's okay. I can...write bigger if that helps.

SANDRA

I don't want you to get in trouble.

DUNCAN

Mr. Mikholan will probably send us to see Doctor Six.

SANDRA

Is that his real name?

DUNCAN

I think so.

SANDRA

Or do they just number the principals?

DUNCAN

It sounds like a bad comic book villain name. Like prime number man's arch enemy.

She smiles warmly at him. He blushes again.

A car pulls into the driveway beneath the tree...

SANDRA

That's my Dad. I've gotta go.

DUNCAN

Okay. I'll climb back down.

SANDRA

Wait until he goes into the house. I'm not supposed to be up here with boys.

Sandra scrambles back into the window.

SANDRA (CONT'D)  
Thank you again for my card, Duncan.  
I really love it!

She smiles and waves, closes the window.

Duncan watches from the tree house as Sandy's DAD crosses from his car into the house. He doesn't once look up.

After the coast is clear, Duncan scrambles back down the tree trunk, heads off up the street.

He turns and looks back at the house. He eyes Sandra's window. The light is on, but no one appears in the window.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan approaches the house to find Maddie unlocking the door.

MADDIE  
Oh, hey!

She holds up the Mother's necklace.

MADDIE (CONT'D)  
Bringing this back. How are you doing?

Duncan shrugs.

Maddie nods with sympathy.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Maddie enters, with Duncan right behind her.

They find the television on--an episode of *MASH* plays.

Mother is fast asleep on the sofa.

MADDIE (CONT'D)  
I'll be right back.

She exits a moment, as Duncan crosses to the T.V., shuts it off.

The Cat greets Duncan, as Maddie returns.

MADDIE (CONT'D)  
You hear from Dad?

DUNCAN

He was supposed to come by today.  
We were going to go the mall. He  
must have forgotten.

MADDIE

Oh, Dunc. I'm sorry.

DUNCAN

Probably busy at work.

Maddie gazes at him a moment, takes a deep breath.

MADDIE

He got fired.

DUNCAN

What?

MADDIE

Guess the bosses found out about the  
cot.

INT. DUNCAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan sorts his comic collection.

He pauses when he gets an idea.

He rises, crossed to this Spider Man bank.

Duncan opens up the bank, dumps all of the coins--and some  
cash--onto the floor.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Duncan pushes a cart filled with large bags of cat food.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Duncan crams all of the bags of food into the cabinet.

The door doesn't close all the way, but it will have to do.

He turns and sees the Cat eyeing him...

DUNCAN

I didn't forget about you. You're  
gonna be fine.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan shoves some of his clothes into his backpack.

He reaches into a drawer and collects the manilla folder containing his superhero drawings.

He gathers all of his money into a ziploc bag.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Duncan, wearing his stuffed backpack, waits for the bus.

It pulls up and he climbs aboard

INSIDE THE BUS

Roderick is driving...

RODERICK

Hey! Going to see Dad again?

Duncan drops his dollar in the money collector.

DUNCAN

No. I'm going to New York.

Duncan sits down across from Roderick.

RODERICK

New York? Well, I hate to break it to you, but this bus doesn't go that far.

DUNCAN

But you go by the Greyhound station. I looked it up on the map. It's on National street.

RODERICK

Okay, then. Let's go.

Roderick closes the door, and the bus pulls away.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

Why New York?

DUNCAN

I'm gonna go work for Marvel.

Roderick considers this a moment...

RODERICK

The comic company?

DUNCAN

That's right. They're in New York city. 575 Madison Avenue.

RODERICK

Aren't you a little young to work there?

DUNCAN

Their editor in chief. Jim Shooter. He started writing comics when he was thirteen. That's just a little older than me. He supported his family that way.

RODERICK

You gotta support your family?

DUNCAN

Yeah. My Dad got fired. My Mom...

Roderick pulls up to the intersection, turns the bus right...

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

You don't usually turn here. You go down Park.

RODERICK

Used to. Got a new route now. So, where you gonna live?

DUNCAN

I dunno. I'll find something. I'll show Mr. Shooter my drawings, and he'll hire me. Maybe he can help me find someplace to live.

RODERICK

It's expensive, New York. You're gonna have to pay for your own place and support your family. That's a lot of drawing.

Duncan doesn't respond. He clearly hadn't thought of that.

DUNCAN

Gerry Conway started writing Superman when he was sixteen.

RODERICK

And what do you think he and Mr. Shooter are going to say to you if you meet them? Draw me some comics or finish up school?

DUNCAN

I...I don't know...



RODERICK

You look up to those guys?

DUNCAN

Yeah. They're the best.

RODERICK

You think they might be the type of guys who see you and think "he should have something better than we did?"

Duncan doesn't respond. He pulls out his drawings, starts flipping through it...

DUNCAN

Mr. Shooter will like my Spider-Man.

RODERICK

What about your buddies? Aren't they gonna miss you? They're gonna be one short.

DUNCAN

They just make fun of me.

RODERICK

About what?

DUNCAN

Ozzie Smith. And...

RODERICK

What else?

DUNCAN

Nothing.

RODERICK

Clearly not nothing.

DUNCAN

They tease me about...

Roderick notices Duncan blushing...

RODERICK

A girl?

Duncan nods.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

You got a girlfriend?

DUNCAN  
No. She's just...she was scared  
after the crash...

RODERICK  
You try and help her?

DUNCAN  
I made her a card.

RODERICK  
Hmmm. What about that cat of yours?

DUNCAN  
He'll be fine. He's got a bunch a  
food. My Mom will feed him.

RODERICK  
Does she know that?

Roderick turns right again at another intersection.

RODERICK (CONT'D)  
Is it your cat, or hers, do you think?

Duncan doesn't respond.

RODERICK (CONT'D)  
And didn't you mention a sister?

Duncan's eyes start to well up, but he fights it.

DUNCAN  
I have to do something.

RODERICK  
Yes, you do. You gotta take care of  
yourself. And it sounds like your  
friends, this girl, your  
family...well, sounds like they all  
need you around.

DUNCAN  
But...I can't help if I stay.

RODERICK  
Yes, you can. You can't get your  
Dad a job. But you can be a good  
friend. You can be a good student.  
And a good brother.

DUNCAN  
But what if my Dad can't get a job?  
What is my mom gonna...?

Roderick pulls the bus up to the curb.

RODERICK

That first year with the Falcons, remember? We lost eleven times, only won three. Lotta the guys gave up, just started going through the motions. Many of 'em walked away at the end of the season, decided the NFL was not their scene. It made me really mad to play on a team like that, but I couldn't control what anyone else was doing, only what I could do. I wanted to get better. So I worked my ass off, and I got better.

Roderick opens the bus door, and Duncan realizes he has brought the bus back to his stop.

RODERICK (CONT'D)

You're a smart kid, Duncan. But you don't belong on a Greyhound for four days. You don't belong in New York, trying to get someone to buy your drawings. You belong here on Texas Street. That's where you're needed.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Maddie approaches the house, but walks past to the next door neighbor's.

She pulls out an envelope, and slides it through the letter box.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

The letter drops to the floor.

It reads "RENT."

BACK TO SCENE

Maddie looks up to see Duncan, wearing his overstuffed backpack, eyeing her with curiosity.

MADDIE

Hey, Duncan-do. Is Mom home?

DUNCAN

I don't know.

She notices the stuffed backpack.

MADDIE  
You got a lot of homework?

DUNCAN  
What? Oh...no, it's just...nothing...

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Maddie and Duncan enter, as the closing theme for MASH plays  
O.S...

MADDIE  
Mom? You home?

NEWCASTER (O.S.)  
Welcome to the news at five. The  
FAA has released the black box  
recording from Western Air Flight  
111.

Maddie and Duncan stop and turn to the T.V.

ON THE TV

The Newscaster speaks directly into the camera...

NEWCASTER (CONT'D)  
After a midair collision with a Cessna  
that had wandered out of its flight  
path, Flight 111 crashed in North  
Park.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan slumps into his seat, as if he were trying to hide.

NEWCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
One hundred and fifty people lost  
their lives on the plane and on the  
ground that day.

ON THE TV

A photo of the plane engulfed in flames while inverted, along  
with footage of the pillar of smoke, fires on the ground,  
and debris scattered through the neighborhood as the  
Newscaster speaks...

NEWCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
The FAA recovered the black box a  
few days after the plane crashed,  
and having concluded their  
investigation, Channel Eight has  
obtained an exclusive copy of the  
(MORE)

NEWCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 recording. A confidential source  
 leaked the recording to our news  
 team.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan and Maddie are frozen--they can do nothing but watch  
 and listen.

Maddie sits down next to Duncan...

NEWCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 We will be playing a number of  
 excerpts from the black box recording  
 over the next half hour. You are  
 about to hear the voice of pilot  
 Robert Oliver. Before playing this,  
 we want to warn our viewers that  
 this may be disturbing to hear.

Captain Oliver's voice is scratchy, and slightly distorted,  
 but it can easily be understood.

His voice and demeanor is calm and poised. There is no trace  
 of anxiety in it...

OLIVER (V.O.)  
 Lindbergh, I am short one engine...no,  
 two engines. I am inverted...a safe  
 emergency landing has ceased to be  
 an option. I will attempt to reach  
 a low impact zone...Donato, can you  
 confirm that structure is a school?

The COPILOT's voice is less clear, and considerably less  
 calm...

COPILOT (V.O.)  
 It-it-it-is, it is, y-y-yes.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
 It's a school?...Lindbergh, my best  
 low impact option is the interstate  
 highway. I will attempt to reach  
 the highway.

COPILOT (V.O.)  
 I love you, Mom.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
 I'll be damned if I'm letting this  
 thing come down on a school.

Maddie crosses to the T.V. shuts it off.

She pauses a moment to collect herself.

Maddie turns back to Duncan.

MADDIE  
You know what we need?

Duncan shakes his head.

MADDIE (CONT'D)  
Tacos.

INT. TACO SHOP - DAY

Maddie tears into her tacos, while Duncan picks at his.

He looks down at the table, rarely making eye contact with Maddie.

MADDIE  
You don't need to be scared. It's  
not likely to happen again. In fact,  
I think the planes are still grounded.

Duncan considers this a moment, then looks up at Maddie.

DUNCAN  
Because of the seats?

MADDIE  
The seats?

DUNCAN  
Yeah.

MADDIE  
No. Why...why would you think the  
seats?

DUNCAN begins to weep.

Maddie pauses her eating, moves her seat closer to Duncan's.

MEMORY FLASH

The horror at Mrs. Howard's house...

BACK TO SCENE

DUNCAN  
I didn't mean to see it.

MADDIE  
You didn't mean to see what?

DUNCAN

To see it. I just wanted to get home.

MADDIE

Whatever happened, Duncan. It's not your fault.

DUNCAN

I don't usually go that way. I was just...I thought it'd be faster.

MADDIE

Whatever you saw--

MEMORY FLASH

The horror at Mrs. Howard's...

Duncan's eyes follow a line of plane debris leading into Mrs. Howard's backyard...

DUNCAN (V.O.)

I think it was a seat.

His eyes settle on what appears to be the remains of an airplane seat laying on the ground in Mrs. Howard's backyard...

BACK TO SCENE

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

In Mrs. Howard's yard.

MADDIE

Oh, Duncan. I'm so sorry. That must have been so... uh, tell you what? We'll stop in and see Mrs. Howard on the way home. We can see how she's doing.

DUNCAN's weeping grows deeper and louder. His entire body trembles.

MEMORY FLASH

Duncan's eyes follow a line of plane debris leading into Mrs. Howard's backyard...

His eyes settle on what appears to be the remains of an airplane seat laying on the ground in Mrs. Howard's backyard...

He focuses on the seat--it contains the remains of a passenger still buckled into seat.

And notices Mrs. Howard's mangled corpse beneath the seat...

BACK TO SCENE

DUNCAN

She was hanging up clothes.

Maddie finally realizes what Duncan means. She closes her eyes, sighs heavily.

MADDIE

Oh my God.

MEMORY FLASH

Duncan vomits onto the sidewalk, and then runs away as fast as he can...

BACK TO SCENE

DUNCAN

I just ran. I didn't tell anyone.  
I just ran home!

MADDIE

There's nothing wrong with that---

DUNCAN

I shoulda told someone.

MADDIE

It's all right--

DUNCAN

What if she was still alive? Someone could have helped her.

MADDIE

You didn't do anything wrong.

DUNCAN

But I should have said something. I see someone who needs help, tell an adult right away. That's what Mr. Walters told me. And I didn't!

MADDIE

Duncan--

DUNCAN

And I ran!

A few people turn and stare at Duncan.



Maddie eyes a few of them and gives them a "What the hell?" Gesture.

She pulls her chair closer to Duncan.

MADDIE

Look...None of us know what to do when something like this happens. Certainly not grown ups.

DUNCAN

But I could have helped her.

MADDIE

Mrs. Howard has a lot of neighbors that know her. They would have checked on her. And they...would have helped.

DUNCAN

Are you sure?

MADDIE

I'm sure. You didn't have any control over what happened.

Duncan gives this some thought--that's the second time today he's heard that.

DUNCAN

I didn't do anything wrong?

MADDIE

Duncan...sometimes it's really hard to know what to do when we're scared. And the truth is, you did tell someone. You told me.

DUNCAN

Oh. Yeah.

MADDIE

And I'm really glad you told me. It took a lot of courage to tell me what happened.

DUNCAN

You think I'm brave?

MADDIE

Duncan, you might be the bravest person I know.

He lets that sink in...

DUNCAN

Tom doesn't like me very much, does he?

MADDIE

Well...Tom doesn't really like anyone who isn't Tom.

Maddie grins, as Duncan let's out a small snicker.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

It's good to see you laugh.

They sit in quiet a moment...

DUNCAN

Do you think Mrs. Howard would have been mad at me?

MADDIE

No. She would have been glad you were safe.

EXT. MRS. HOWARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A few dozen neighbors stand in front of Mrs. Howard's house holding candles.

Flower bouquets line the sidewalk in front of her house.

Duncan places a bouquet up against her fence.

Mike and Guy place their flowers next to Duncan's.

Maddie hands Duncan, Guy, and Mike candles. She pulls out a lighter and lights all three.

Duncan turns and lights Sandra's candle.

They stand with their neighbors in silence.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Maddie buys two hot cocoas from a kiosk, turns around and hands one to Duncan.

Duncan has a shopping bag in his hand. He holds it open for Maddie.

Maddie inspects the contents of the bag. She gives it her nod of approval.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mother snoozes, snoring cloudy on the sofa as Duncan enters.

He tries to rouse her from her slumber.

DUNCAN

Mom? Mom?

Her breathing pattern shifts for a moment, before the snoring returns.

Duncan notices the rum bottle tipped over on the coffee table.

He stands it back up, next to a pool of rum that has stained the table.

MOMENTS LATER

Duncan places a towel on top of the stain.

He watches his mother a few moments, then turns to exit.

The shopping bag is in his hands.

INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

Sandra and her Girlfriends sit on the bed in her room. They chat and laugh while trying on make up.

Sandra notices something outside her window. She rises, crosses to the window and opens it.

OUTSIDE IN THE TREE HOUSE

Is a stack of Wonder Woman comic books...and a plush toy elephant.

Sandra climbs out on to the tree house to get a closer look.

She inspects the gift, delighted with its appearance.

Her Friends exchange confused looks.

Sandra looks around for any sign of Duncan--he is nowhere in sight.

Duncan gazes at Sandra from down the street. He smiles, turns and leaves.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duncan, backpack slung over his shoulder, heads outside.

A car rolls up beside Duncan, he turns and sees his Father behind the wheel.

Father parks the car and leaps out.

FATHER

Duncan!

Father crosses over to his son...

DUNCAN

Hey, Dad.

FATHER

I'm glad I caught you. You want a ride to school?

DUNCAN

No, thanks. I'll walk.

Duncan takes a step forward, but Father positions himself in front of Duncan.

FATHER

Wouldn't you rather not have to walk for once?

DUNCAN

I walk all the time.

FATHER

Come on, let me drive you. It'll be nice. And you know what else? I'll pick you up after school. We can go get your friend her present.

DUNCAN

I already got it. Maddie took me.

FATHER

She did! Oh, well that's good.

Duncan tries to step around his Father. Father puts his hand on Duncan's shoulder.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I didn't come that day. There was a lot going on, I couldn't get to a phone...oh, and I, uh quit..quit working at the drive in. Got tired, you know, of...those bosses walking all over me. Buncha jerks. But I got a new job. Downtown. I manage a parking garage. You know what? I'll pick you up after school and I'll show it to you. We can take the elevator up to the top floor. Has a nice view of the harbor.

(MORE)

FATHER (CONT'D)

Oh, and there's a frosty place right across the street. Just...uh, y'know-- don't tell your mom.

DUNCAN

I can't today. I got plans.

Father relinquishes his hand.

FATHER

Oh, okay. Well, we'll do it another time. All right? I'll give you a call.

Duncan nods.

FATHER (CONT'D)

You know what? I could introduce you to my friend. I'm staying with... them. For now. Does that sound good?

DUNCAN

Sure.

Duncan turns, continues his march to school. He doesn't look back at his Father, who stands and watches Duncan go.

FATHER

Bye!

There is no response. Father sighs heavily, turns and heads back to the car.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Mike, Guy and Duncan are lined up to start the day.

Duncan notices Sandra at the back of the line. She smiles and waves to him. He waves back, a goofy smile on his face.

Mike and Guy exchange a look.

MIKE

You know what, Guy?

GUY

What's that, Mike?

MIKE

There might be a chance Sandra Van Den Akker is actually aware of Duncan's existence.

GUY

I think you might actually be right.

MIKE

Certainly, the chances are better  
than Ozzie Smith reaching the Hall  
of Fame.

GUY

Or the Padres winning a world series.

MIKE

Must have been that movie pass.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sandra and Duncan work on math, side by side at their desk.

Sandra gets stuck, glances over at Duncan's paper.

He notices, moves it closer to her line of sight.

Sandra subtly pushes a card off of the table.

Duncan notices it, reaches down to pick it up.

He glances at the card...

INSERT - THE CARD

It's an Ozzie Smith baseball card.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan's mouth falls open, he glances at Sandra. She glances  
at Duncan, a big grin on her face.

Mr. Mikholan clears his throat.

Duncan looks up and sees Mr. Mikholan giving him the stink-  
eye.

Duncan drops his hand to put the card in his desk as Sandra  
stifles a laugh.

After Duncan deposits the card, he and Sandra's hands gently  
collide.

They take a sideways glance at each other and hold hands...

FADE OUT