

FLIPPED

by  
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Based on the book by Wendelin Van Draanen

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EXT. A SYCAMORE TREE - DAY - FIVE YEARS AGO

A beautiful huge sycamore tree at the top of a hill somewhere outside Seattle, in one of the computer suburbs near Redmond.

A moving truck is coming up the hill, followed by an SUV.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - STREET - DAY

The moving truck pulls up in front of a very pleasant house with a neat, manicured front lawn and some pretty flowers. It's one of the larger houses on the street.

BRYCE LOSKI, 8, gets out of the passenger side of the moving van. He's already handsome for good. His father RICK gets out of the driver's side. Bryce and his father dress similarly.

The SUV pulls into the driveway and Rick's wife PATSY LOSKI and their daughter LYNETTA, 12, get out. Patsy is trim, blond, cheerful, pert, the kind of woman who is always a little too pulled-together.

POV: LOSKI HOUSE - FROM THE UPPER FLOOR OF THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET

The four Loskis walk up the front walkway to their new house and stand there staring at it. Then Bryce turns to look at the house across the street and we hear:

JULI (V.O.)  
The first day I met Bryce Loski, I  
flipped.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

In the upper window we see JULI BAKER, 8, looking out the window across the street. She's a tomboy, freckled, adorable.

JULI (V.O., CONT)  
Honestly, one look at him and I  
became a lunatic.

She throws open the window and shouts across the street.

JULI  
Hi!

The Loski family turns to look at the Baker house across the street.

It's one of the smaller houses on the street, and it's as eccentric a house as the Loski house is conventional. It's not exactly ramshackle, but the lawn needs cutting, there's a Santa Claus on the roof, there are several whirligigs in the front yard and an old Toyota in the driveway. The climbing rose needs pruning. A dog is sitting on the front porch and he wakes up and barks in a kind of half-assed way as Julie throws open the window.

JULI  
(shouting)  
Hey, hi. I'm Juli Baker!

PATSY  
Bryce, how nice. I think she's exactly your age.

LYNETTA  
(up to Juli, re: Bryce)  
I'm Lynetta. This is my brother Bryce. Say hi, peabrain.

BRYCE  
Lynetta, zip it.

JULI  
Welcome to the neighborhood! It's a great neighborhood! You'll love it!

On Bryce:

BRYCE  
(voice over)  
All I ever wanted was for Juli Baker to leave me alone.

JULI  
I'll be right down!

Juli slams the window shut.

Rick Loski is looking at the Baker house, at the Christmas decorations on the roof.

RICK  
What are we going to do about those Christmas decorations?

PATSY  
I thought you liked the Christmas decorations.

RICK

When we bought the house it was  
Christmas. I had no idea they kept  
them up all year.

Rick starts toward the moving van.

RICK

How are we ever going to sell this  
house if the house across the  
street has Christmas decorations  
all year?

PATSY

We're not selling this house. We  
just bought it.

INT. MOVING VAN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Bryce and his father are in the moving van, unloading boxes.

Juli pops up. She's carrying her soccer ball.

JULI

Here I am. I love moving.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Who loves moving?

JULI

I'm great at moving.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I found out later she's great at  
everything. Absolutely everything.

She climbs in, agile as a monkey and begins moving boxes.

RICK LOSKI

Hey, those are valuable.

EXT. TRUCK - A SECOND LATER

Rick deposits Juli out of the truck and onto the ground.

RICK LOSKI

Your mom's probably wondering where  
you are.

JULI

She knows where I am.

She picks up her soccer ball, kicks it elaborately in the air, drops it on the back of her foot, flips it back up into the air and catches it.

JULI

(to Bryce)

I have two older brothers, Matt and Mike, who look like twins. They have no interest in kids our age. If they seem like they're interested in you, they're not, they just want to torture you. Some day you'll be grateful to me for this tip.

BRYCE (V.O.)

How was I going to get rid of this girl?

RICK LOSKI

(to Bryce)

Bryce, isn't it time for you to help your mother?

BRYCE

Sure thing.

Bryce jumps off the truck.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I couldn't believe it. Dad to the rescue. He didn't like her either. I mean, what a show-off. And my own dad was putting the ditch play in motion.

Bryce starts toward the front door of his house. But Juli follows.

JULI (V.O.)

It was weird. I started to follow him --

BRYCE (V.O.)

I heard her coming after me but I couldn't believe it --

Bryce looks over his shoulder, sees Juli just behind him.

JULI (V.O.)

I guess you'd have to say I was chasing him up the walkway --

BRYCE (V.O.)

Maybe it just sounded like she was chasing me, I mean, she couldn't be chasing me, could she? Why would she be chasing me?

JULI (V.O.)

I was just trying to stop him so maybe we could play a little before he got trapped inside --

BRYCE (V.O.)

-- and she blasted right past me grabbing my arm --

Juli passes Bryce, grabs his arm and stops him.

JULI (V.O.)

-- and the next thing I know he's holding my hand, looking right into my eyes --

Hold on them.

On Bryce, looking at Juli.

On Juli, looking at Bryce.

JULI (V.O.)

My heart stopped. It just stopped beating. I mean, his eyes.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I tried to shake her off, but she just clamped on tight.

JULI (V.O.)

They were gorgeous. And they were staring straight at me.

BRYCE (V.O.)

She looked so sappy I couldn't believe it.

JULI (V.O.)

I almost got my first kiss that day, I was sure of it.

BRYCE (V.O.)

If my mother hadn't come out of the door at that moment --

JULI (V.O.)

If his mother hadn't come out  
there's just no telling what might  
have happened --

Bryce's mother comes out the front door and looks at the two  
of them.

PATSY

Well, I see you've met my son.

Bryce untangles himself and shoots straight into the house.

ROLL CREDITS

END CREDITS

EXT. SAME STREET

FOUR YEARS LATER

Bryce is now 12 years old. He's mowing the lawn, sitting on  
the very latest version of an electric lawn mower.

BRYCE (V.O.)

It's four years later, and guess  
what? Nothing's changed. The only  
real difference is that Grandma  
died, mom's mom, so Grandpa moved  
in.

We see the front porch of the Loski house. Sitting on it is  
CHET DUNCAN, Patsy Loski's father, a man in his early  
seventies. On the table next to him is a Tom Clancy book and  
a copy of the newspaper, but Chet isn't reading, he's just  
sitting there.

We see the Baker house. It's slightly shabbier than it was,  
and there are more Christmas decorations. The grass is  
longer than ever.

BRYCE (V.O.)

And meanwhile I've still got my own  
personal stalker --

Up in the Baker window we see Juli, who's now 12 too. She  
looks out the window at Bryce, who's mowing the lawn.

JULI

Hey, Bryce! Good work!

Bryce goes on mowing.

Juli's father ROBERT BAKER pulls his battered pick-up truck into the driveway. A painted sign on the side of the truck says Robert Baker, general contractor. MATT and MIKE, Juli's older brothers, who are both 16 but not twins, get out of the truck with their father and start into the house.

BRYCE (V.O.)

My dad had this idea that if we did a really great job on our front lawn it might inspire the Bakers to clean up their yard, but guess what, it didn't.

PATSY

Dinner everybody!

Bryce turns off the mower and starts into the house, past his grandfather.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - DUSK

The Loski family is at the dinner table. Food is being passed. Lynetta, now 16, lots of eye makeup, takes a tiny portion. Bryce helps himself. Rick is eating spaghetti. No Grandpa.

PATSY

Is that all you're eating, Lynetta?

LYNETTA

Could be.

She breaks up a tiny piece of a pasta strand and puts it into her mouth, chews it slowly.

PATSY

(calling to her  
grandfather who's still  
outside)

Dad? Dinner?

BRYCE

I think he heard you.

LYNETTA

Maybe he's not hungry.

Rick and Patsy exchange a look.

PATSY

Don't say it, Rick.

BRYCE  
Don't say what?

Patsy goes to the front door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

PATSY  
Dad? Come on. You gotta eat.

Her father shakes his head no.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Bryce in bed. Lights are out.

On Bryce, listening through the wall to a barely-audible fight between his parents.

PATSY  
Look, he's heartbroken.

RICK  
He should be living with people in  
the same situation --

PATSY  
I am not sending him to a home --

RICK  
He hates me.

PATSY  
He doesn't hate you.

Hold on Bryce, listening.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - MORNING

As Bryce comes out the door.

His grandfather is sitting in the chair, rocking.

BRYCE  
Morning, grandpa.

His grandfather doesn't answer.

Bryce starts down the block.

EXT. SYCAMORE TREE - DAY

The huge sycamore tree at the top of the hill.

About EIGHT KIDS are standing under it, waiting for the school bus. Bryce joins them. A beat. Four of the kids are girls, including SHELLY STALLS, another seventh grader who is hanging around with her friends. They're all in tank tops and jeans, and lots of accessories. Most of them are wearing I-Pods.

SHELLY

Hi Bryce.

BRYCE

Hi Shelly.

ALL THE OTHER GIRLS

Hi Bryce.

JULI (SHOUTING)

The bus is three blocks away!

Everyone looks up. Juli is sitting about halfway up the sycamore tree. She can see the road.

JULI

Two and a half!

Everyone stares at each other and shrugs. Typical Juli.

Juli starts to shimmy down the tree. There's a spiral slide halfway down and Juli puts her arms out into the air as if she's flying. She lands on the ground just as the bus is a block away.

JULI

(to the group)

Here's the thing about sycamore trees, you almost never find them all bunched up together. They are individual. They do not need company.

The bus stops and everyone starts to get into it.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Bryce sits down in the bus with his friend GARRETT.

Juli sits right in front of him, with her friend DARLA.

DARLA  
Hey, Jules --

JULI  
Hey, Darla. Bryce, do you realize that tree could be a hundred years old easily? Which means it could practically be the oldest thing in this entire town.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Here's the deal. I always tried to ignore Juli, but she always ended up sucking me in.

JULI  
It could be two hundred years old.

BRYCE  
I seriously doubt that.

JULI  
Well it could.

On Bryce, determined to ignore Juli.

JULI  
(continued)  
It could.

BRYCE  
That tree is an ugly mutant tangle of gnarly branches.

DARLA  
Bryce Loski, how can you say that about a tree?

JULI  
He can't help it. He's visually challenged.  
(she pulls a sycamore leaf out of her notebook)  
A lot of people confuse the sycamore leaf with a maple but it's not.

She hands the leaf to Bryce.

JULI  
Keep it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

In front of the class is the teacher, MISS BRUBECK.

MISS BRUBECK  
The science fair is in six weeks --

Juli is sitting behind Bryce.

Every so often Juli leans forward and takes a sniff of Bryce's hair.

MISS BRUBECK  
-- and good science projects take  
time.

Shelly Smalls looks over at Juli leaning forward to sniff Bryce.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Here's something I forgot to  
mention. On top of everything  
else, she liked to sniff me --

JULI (V.O.)  
His hair smelled like watermelon --

BRYCE (V.O.)  
And she thought I didn't know she  
was doing it --

JULI (V.O.)  
So I would just lean over very  
subtly, and I swear to God he never  
even knew I was taking a whiff --

Juli notices that Shelly Smalls is staring at her. She stops sniffing Bryce's hair. Shelly smirks at her and rolls her eyes at her friend MIRANDA.

MISS BRUBECK  
Shelly, do you have some problem  
with the science project?

SHELLY  
No, Miss Brubeck.

MISS BRUBECK  
So please have your projects in  
mind by next Monday.

The bells ring.

Shelly looks back at Juli.

SHELLY

You know what you should do your  
project on? Obsession.

She stands up to leave.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER CLASS

Everyone is filing out of the room. Juli is gathering up her  
things.

MISS BRUBECK

Do you have a science project,  
Juli?

JULI

No. But I will.

MISS BRUBECK

Of course you will.

JULI

Although I wish I knew what it was.

MISS BRUBECK

I have a friend who has chickens.  
I could get you fertilized eggs,  
and you could hatch them --

JULI

What if they die?

MISS BRUBECK

Well if you document it, you'll  
still get an A, if that's what you  
care about.

JULI

I don't care about getting an A.

Miss Brubeck looks at her.

JULI

Okay I do.

Miss Brubeck smiles at her.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Juli's mother TRINA is cooking dinner. She's tall and pretty, wearing jeans and a pullover sweater. Juli is making a salad, which she puts on the table.

As Mike, Matt and Robert come into the kitchen:

JULI

I might hatch chickens for the science project. Miss Brubeck can get me eggs --

TRINA

Why don't you just grow beans?

JULI

That's like a third-grade thing.

MIKE

Make a volcano.

MATT

Volcano, dude.

JULI

Volcanos are so lame. They are so "boy".

ROBERT

I could help you make an incubator.

JULI

You could?

TRINA

Something smells funny in here. Do you smell something funny?

MATT

Nope.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Dinner. Rick, Patsy, Lynetta, Bryce and Patsy's father Chet. Chet is not saying anything.

BRYCE

Whatever I do I am not doing the volcano thing.

LYNETTA  
Why don't you do plants?

BRYCE  
Plants?

LYNETTA  
You plant two sets of plants and one of them you talk to and the other one you don't talk to and then you see which one grows more.

BRYCE  
Oh sure. Me talking to plants.

RICK  
What's wrong with the volcano thing?

LYNETTA  
It is so lame.

INT. BAKER BASEMENT - NIGHT

There are six eggs in a hygrometer, labeled Abby, Bonnie, Clyde, Dexter, Eunice and Florence.

Juli is watching her father paint a landscape. The basement is filled with painter's supplies.

ROBERT  
A painting is all about light. Of course, it's also about composition, and about whatever you're painting, but it's the light that makes a painting more than the sum of its parts --

On Robert, painting. His brush dips into the oil paints and onto the canvas, dappling light into the landscape.

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - MORNING

Lynetta is getting ready to go to school, Rick is pouring coffee, Patsy reading the paper, Bryce eating breakfast.

LYNETTA  
Okay. Here's another idea. You put celery in red ink.

BRYCE  
Which proves what?

LYNETTA  
(as to an idiot)  
The ink turns the celery red,  
proving that a plant sucks up  
moisture. It's like putting a  
flower in water.

BRYCE  
So why not just put a flower in  
water?

LYNETTA  
Why I bother helping you I will  
never know. I know, build a  
computer.

PATSY  
What's the Baker girl doing?

BRYCE  
She is hatching eggs.

RICK  
That girl loves to grandstand.

INT. BAKER BASEMENT - NIGHT

Juli's father holds one of Juli's eggs up to a cardboard tube  
and aims a flashlight at it.

ROBERT  
People used to use candles to do  
this. Look. You can see the  
embryo.

Juli looks. We can see the embryo.

ROBERT  
See the dark spot in the middle?  
With all the veins leading to it?

We see it. It's pulsing.

JULI  
Oh my God!  
(shouting upstairs)  
Everybody! Wait till you see this!

INT. BAKER BASEMENT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

All the Bakers are looking at the eggs.

JULI  
Bonnie's heart is beating.

TRINA  
Congratulations. You're a mother.

Trina starts up the stairs, followed by Matt and Mike.

TRINA  
I still smell that smell.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

As Trina, Matt and Mike come into the living room. Their dog, CHAMP, is peeing on the end table leg.

TRINA  
Champ, what are you doing? I knew it. I just knew it. The Mystery Smell comes from the Mystery Pisser. Did you see that?

Robert and Juli come up the stairs. Robert goes over to look.

ROBERT  
It's barely a drop.

TRINA  
Exactly. Which is why I've never been able to find anything. That dog stays outside from now on.

MATT  
Mystery Pisser.

MIKE  
Cool name.

They high-five each other.

EXT. SKY - DAY

A beautiful blue kite is flying in the sky.

Juli and Darla walk home from school. They're kicking a soccer ball down the block. When they get to Darla's house, Darla peels off, with the soccer ball.

Julie continues on, and looks up to see the kite.

It crashes into the top of the sycamore tree.

On Juli, looking up at the tree.

JULI (V.O.)

I always knew the sycamore tree was the greatest tree ever. It had a built-in slide, almost a complete spiral, and it was great to ride it down. But I'd never been to the top until the day the kite got caught up there.

Juli starts to climb the tree.

Inside the tree, as she gets higher and higher.

She looks up and there's the kite, flashing through the branches.

She looks down and realizes she's way up in the tree.

Now she looks out and sees Bryce. He's looking up at the tree.

JULI (V.O.)

And then it turned out to be Bryce's kite.

BRYCE

Hey, you don't have to get that --

JULI (V.O.)

I can get it --

BRYCE

It's too high, you'll fall --

JULI

I can get it --

She shinnies up higher. She looks around. Higher than she's ever been.

BRYCE

Hey, it's okay, I can get another kite. Juli, you're making me nervous.

Juli gulps.

JULI

No problem.

She reaches out for the kite. But the string is tangled. She untangles it. For a moment she almost loses her balance.

BRYCE

Break the string!

Juli reaches out to break the string and grabs the kite.

And suddenly she's on top of the tree, looking out.

Juli'S POV: The view is heart-stopping. A gorgeous sky in blues and violets, fluffy clouds she could float away on, sunlight dappling the tree-tops and roofs.

ON JULIANA, on top of the tree turning her head to see the world from every angle. The light changes every which way she looks.

WIDE SHOT: A young girl at the top of a giant sycamore tree.

CLOSE ON Juli: elated.

BRYCE (O.S.)

Are you okay?

Juli awakens from her reverie, and starts down the tree.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

As Juli lands on the earth, holding the kite. She hands it to Bryce.

BRYCE

Thanks.

JULI

I was on top of the world. You should have seen it. You should have seen the light.

She turns and starts home, with Champ.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DUSK

Juli dances around her father as he gets out of the truck and heads into the house.

JULI  
I was up so high and I wasn't  
afraid. I felt like I was flying.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The Baker family is making dinner.

JULI  
Everything sparkled, like it had  
just been washed. And I could  
smell the breeze, it smelled like  
sunshine --

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

As her father paints and Juli works on her egg chart.

JULI  
I totally understood what you meant  
about the sum of the parts. Dad,  
you've got to do it, you've got to  
climb the tree.

ROBERT  
I think my tree-climbing days are  
over.

There's a noise. A little noise.

Juli looks into the incubator.

One of the eggs is starting to hatch.

JULI  
Yow! Look at this! Can you  
believe this!!! Everyone!!!!

BRYCE (V.O.)  
My friend, there is not a lot to  
incubating eggs. You've got your  
light, you've got your container,  
you've got some shredded newspaper,  
and that's it.

(continued)

INT. AUDITORIUM - SCIENCE FAIR - NIGHT

As Bryce, with his parents, walks in carrying a large cardboard tray with a mound of sand piled onto it. This is a volcano.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
But not Juli. It's a miracle she  
didn't turn up at the science fair  
in a chicken suit.

At least six other boys have also made volcanos. One of the boys lights a match. The top of his volcano starts to sputter. Imitation lava flows down the side.

No one is looking at that volcano or at Bryce.

Nor are they looking at Shelly Stalls' science project, which is a study of how long lipstick stays on your mouth, in comparison to lip gloss. There are fifteen large photographs of Shelly's lips. Shelly stands there.

SHELLY  
Hi, Bryce.

She puckers her lips at him.

But Bryce is looking over at a crowd of people.

They're looking at Juli and her incubator. Tiny fuzzy chicks and two little eggs cracking open ...

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Listen to this, she actually  
managed to time it so the last two  
eggs hatched during the fair.

A baby chick emerges from the shell.

THE ENTIRE GROUP OF SPECTATORS: AWWWWWWW.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
How does a person do that?

INT. SAME SCENE - LATER

Juli stands on stage in front of a row of judges. She has her incubator and a huge bulletin board with photos and diagrams. She has a laser pointer.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
(with disdain)  
And yes that is a laser pointer.  
To light this diagram or that part  
of the incubator or this section of  
the chart and talk about how  
unbelievably exciting --

Bryce, eyes narrowed, watches...

JULI  
(to the judges)  
It was unbelievably exciting --

BRYCE (V.O.)  
-- it was to watch eggs grow for  
twenty-one days.

ON THE AUDIENCE, watching. Juli's parents and Matt and Mike,  
so proud. Juli's friend Darla watching too.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
And guess what?

The audience bursts into applause.

INT. SCIENCE FAIR - AN HOUR LATER

As Mrs. Brubeck pins a blue ribbon on Juli.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
That's right. She won first prize.

JULI  
And I want to thank mom who is such  
a great supporter, my amazing Dad,  
who helped me build the incubator,  
and my brothers who did nothing --

The audience laughs.

On Bryce, not laughing.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Bryce is carrying his volcano out of the school. Shelly  
comes up to him.

SHELLY  
Your lava was great, Bryce --

Bryce tosses the volcano into a dumpster.

EXT. SAME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

Juli comes outside. Darla is helping her carry the incubator. Everyone congratulates Juli. Her parents and brothers are waiting.

TRINA

But those go back to Mrs. Brubeck, right?

JULI

Are you kidding me?

TRINA

They're coming home?

JULI

Where else would they go?

TRINA

Darla could take them.

DARLA

My mom would kill me.

DARLA'S MOM appears.

DARLA'S MOM

I would. I would kill her.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

As they get out of the van and walk into the house.

TRINA

But where are we going to raise chickens?

ROBERT

In the yard. They're very low maintenance. They eat bugs.

The family goes into the house.

JULI (V.O.)

So that's how we wound up with chickens.

(continued)

HOLD ON THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

EXT. BAKER YARD - DAY - A MONTH LATER

Six chickens in the front yard.

JULI (V.O., CONT.)

But what none of us thought of was that six chickens scratching for bugs not only gets rid of bugs, it also tears up grass. So pretty soon there was nothing whatsoever left of our yard.

(continued)

We see there's almost no grass left in the yard.

Across the street, we see Bryce, mowing the perfect Loski lawn.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

And I'm sorry to say this, but chicken feed attracts mice.

(continued)

We see Matt and Mike, setting out some very simple mousetraps.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

So my brothers decided, as long as we've got mice, might as well get a snake. Snakes love mice.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

As Trina Baker goes up the stairs. Hold on the stairs as we hear her open the door to Matt and Mike's room. She screams.

TRINA (O.C.)

What is a snake doing in this house? Were you planning to tell me about this?

EXT. BAKER GARAGE - DAY

The snake is now living in a large aquarium in the garage. Matt, Mike and Robert are showing it to Trina.

ROBERT  
Trina, it will be fine. Boa  
constrictors are really no trouble  
at all.

INT. BAKER DEN - DAY

Trina is working at her computer as Juli comes into the room.

JULI  
Mom, guess what?

She holds out her palms. Eggs.

TRINA  
No. Honey, no. No more chickens,  
please I can't take this.

JULI  
Not chickens, eggs. Just eggs.

TRINA  
Eggs.

CUT TO:

AN EGG, CRACKING INTO A BOWL.

Cracking into a bowl.

A PLATE OF SCRAMBLED EGGS ...

It's passed around the table, everyone oohing and ahing  
about how great they taste.

ROBERT  
There is nothing in the world like  
a fresh egg.

A PLATE OF DEVILLED EGGS

Robert pops one into his mouth.

ROBERT  
These are as good as my mother's  
devilled eggs.

A BOWL OF EGG SALAD

As Robert heaps egg salad onto his plate.

ROBERT  
Love egg salad. Love it.

TRINA  
Good thing you do.

AN EGG IN SOMEONE'S HAND ...

INT. SKYLER BROWN'S GARAGE - ANOTHER DAY

There's a lot of rock and roll stuff -- guitars, drums, amplifiers and an upright piano.

Lynetta stands in the garage with an egg in her hand. On a table is the boa constrictor. Next to her is her boyfriend SKYLER BROWNE. A group of friends, including Juli's brothers Matt and Mike watch.

Skyler steps up next to Lynetta.

SKYLER  
To the riddle of which comes first,  
we have an answer. The egg comes  
first.

Lynetta waves the egg theatrically in the air.

Bryce comes into the garage, looking for Lynetta. Matt spots him.

MATT  
Bryce, my man, just in time for the  
Skyler and Lynetta Show.

BRYCE  
(to Lynetta)  
Mom wants you.

MATT  
Give the baby bro a front row seat.  
Come on, don't be shy, step right  
up ...

ON BRYCE, shoved into the front. Bryce's mouth gapes open when he sees the snake.

SKYLER

Lynetta, the egg please.

Lynetta holds up the egg as if she's the magician's helper, displays it this way and that, locks lips with Skyler and then hands the egg over to him. Skyler hands the egg to Mike.

MIKE

Here's where I come in.  
(to the snake)  
Ready?

ON BRYCE WATCHING as ...

Mike gives the egg to the snake, which opens its mouth wide and ingests the egg whole. WE CAN SEE THE EGG IN THE BOA'S NECK.

ON BRYCE, FREAKED.

AND THEN THE BOA SWALLOWS A SECOND EGG.

AND THEN A THIRD EGG.

On Bryce, completely disgusted.

MIKE

So Brycie boy, how is he going to digest this? He needs a tree or a leg.  
(leaning in close)  
Want to volunteer yours?

Everyone laughs.

Mike releases the snake to the floor.

MIKE

Aww, too bad. He's got another idea. He's going to use the piano instead.

The snake slithers over and wraps itself around the piano leg.

MATT

Shhh, everyone, here goes.

Everyone watches.

The snake stops moving, then flexes. THE SOUND of the egg crunching inside.

MIKE  
(theatrically)  
Dinner is served.

CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Bryce and Lynetta walking home.

BRYCE  
So sick.

LYNETTA  
So cool --

BRYCE  
I'm never eating an egg again.

THE SOUND OF A DOORBELL RINGING.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - A WEEK LATER - DAY

As Bryce opens the door. Juli is standing there with a half-carton of eggs.

JULI  
You know my chickens? From the  
science fair?

BRYCE  
(how could I forget them)  
Yeah.

JULI  
So these are for you and your  
family.

She hands him the eggs.

BRYCE  
Oh. Thanks.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - KITCHEN

The half-carton of eggs is on the table. Everyone is having a kind of informal breakfast -- Bryce, Lynetta (whose makeup from the night before is sort of running from her eyes), Patsy, Rick and Chet. Chet is reading the newspaper.

PATSY  
Scrambled? Fried?

BRYCE  
I'm having cereal.

PATSY  
More coffee dad?

Chet barely responds. Patsy pours more coffee in his cup.

PATSY  
(back to Bryce and the  
eggs)  
What about soft-boiled?

LYNETTA  
Bryce is never eating another egg.  
Because of the snake --

PATSY  
What snake?

LYNETTA  
(as if it's common  
knowledge)  
There's a snake living across the  
street at the Bakers', a boa  
constrictor --

PATSY  
Across the street? Living across  
the street?

LYNETTA  
-- he's kind of the mascot for the  
guys' band. Mystery Pisser.

PATSY  
That's the name of the snake?

BRYCE  
That's the name of the band.

PATSY  
What kind of parents would let  
their children name a band  
something like that? It's vile.

RICK

Their house is worth more because  
they're across the street from us  
and our house is worth less because  
we're across the street from them.

They all look at the carton of eggs. Patsy picks one up,  
turns it around.

PATSY

What if you cracked it open and  
there was a chick in it?

LYNETTA

Ewww.

She puts it back into the carton.

BRYCE

I'm having cereal.

RICK

To be perfectly honest, I've never  
been entirely sure how an egg gets  
fertilized.

(he laughs)

I know I should know. I know  
roosters have to be involved.  
Birds do it, bees do it, but how do  
they do it?

PATSY

Do they have sex with the hens?

RICK

Well they must.

He shrugs.

A pause at the table.

PATSY

They must.

A beat.

Chet looks up from his newspaper.

CHET

As with all birds, there has to be  
mating for fertilization to occur.  
(continued)

Chet is speaking. Everyone is riveted.

CHET (CONT'D)

Although it's not particularly romantic. The rooster picks a hen, usually on the basis of proximity, grabs her by the back of the head, climbs on her back, and you can pretty much figure out the rest. The whole thing takes about 15 seconds give or take, and as far as anyone can tell, the only satisfying thing about the encounter as far as the hen is concerned is that afterwards she fluffs up her feathers.

(beat)

In any case, there are no roosters at the Bakers, I will swear to it. If there were roosters, we would know. You can hear roosters.

LYNETTA

Cock a doodle doo.

CHET

Exactly.

PATSY

(so pleased that he's  
finally said something)  
Grandpa!

Chet goes back to his newspaper.

BRYCE

I'm having seconds on cereal.

BRYCE

Well it's easy to find out if there are roosters. Just ask Lynetta to ask Juli's brothers.

PATSY

What are their names again?

BRYCE

Matt and Mike. Or get Lynetta to get Skyler to ask them.

LYNETTA

Shut up, Bryce.

BRYCE  
What did I do now?

LYNETTA  
Haven't you noticed I haven't been  
going down there, jerk?

BRYCE  
Since when?

LYNETTA  
Since yesterday.

Lynetta burst into tears.

PATSY  
Did something happen with you and  
Skyler?

LYNETTA  
Like you care.

She leaves the room.

RICK  
Oh boy.

EXT. LOSKI BACK YARD - NIGHT

Rick and Bryce are putting golf balls. Chet is on the back porch.

RICK  
Why don't you just ask Juli Baker?

BRYCE  
I'm not asking her anything.

CHET  
(from the porch)  
They have no rooster.

RICK  
Just ask her.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND BAKER HOUSE - DAY

As Bryce and his friend GARRETT come down the back alley to the fence behind the Baker house.

They look over it.

A mess. Much worse than the front yard. There's a makeshift chicken coop and a few old pieces of lawn furniture. Champ the dog is asleep.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Juli opens the back door and comes out of the house. She's carrying a basket to gather eggs.

Garrett and Bryce duck down behind the fence.

As Juli gets down on her hands and knees and dives into the chicken coop.

The hens fly out of it.

BRYCE

No rooster.

GARRETT

Correctomundo.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Back at the dinner table.

BRYCE

Anyway, you guys can eat the eggs, but there's no way I'm going to touch them, so don't even ask.

RICK

Why's that?

BRYCE

There's poop all over the place.

LYNETTA

Gross.

BRYCE

Chicken turds everywhere.

Lynetta stands up and leaves the table.

LYNETTA

You expect me to eat after this?

PATSY

Lynetta. You have to eat something.

LYNETTA

No I don't!

She leaves the room and sticks her head back in.

LYNETTA

Does the word salmonella mean anything to you?

She splits again.

PATSY

Do you think the eggs could have salmonella?

BRYCE

They're probably packed with it.  
One bite --  
(he grabs his neck and  
pretends to gag to death)

RICK

I can't believe you didn't just ask her. You are afraid of that girl.

BRYCE

She just bugs me. She bugs you too.

RICK

Just take back the eggs and tell them we don't eat eggs. Tell her we're allergic to them, or something.

PATSY

Well that would be a lie. You want him to lie?

RICK

That's not the point. The point is, he spies on someone's yard instead of asking a simple question.

On Chet, looking at Rick. Clearly he thinks Rick is bullying Bryce.

RICK

(to Chet)  
What is it?

CHET

Nothing.

Chet looks back down at his plate.

RICK

(back to Bryce)

Just tell her, no eggs. I expect  
you to look that girl square in the  
eye.

DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

BRYCE (V.O.)

So this is me, looking her square  
in the eye.

Bryce opens the door for Juli.

She hands him some eggs. He can hardly look at her.

BRYCE (V.O.)

And this is me, telling her "No  
Eggs."

BRYCE

Thanks, Juli.

He closes the door.

On Bryce. Mortified. He turns around and we hold on him  
with his back to the door, holding the eggs. Now what?

We hear his parents' door open upstairs.

RICK

(O.C.)

I'll be back about six.

As his father starts downstairs, Bryce quickly goes into:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He opens the door to the trash below the sink, stuffs the  
eggs into it.

JULI (V.O.)

See there were so many eggs that I  
had to give them away.

(MORE)

JULI (V.O.) (cont'd)  
To the Loskis, and to our our next  
door neighbor Mrs. Stueby --

EXT. STUEBY HOUSE - DAY

As Juli brings her some eggs.

JULI (V.O., CONT.)  
Who started paying me for them.  
Two dollars a dozen.

MRS. STUEBY  
Nothing like free-range eggs.

JULI (V.O.)  
And then Mrs. Stueby told Mrs.  
Helms --

EXT. HELMS HOUSE - DAY

As Juli drops eggs off to MRS. HELMS, who also pays her.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

As Juli crosses the street.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)  
And when I brought the eggs to the  
Loskis, it was so great --

As Bryce throws open the door again.

JULI (V.O.)  
Because it was like Bryce was  
looking forward to me coming.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I dreaded it --

JULI (V.O.)  
And he always said, "Thanks, Juli" -  
-

BRYCE  
Thanks, Juli.

JULI (V.O.)  
-- Like he really really meant it --

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I sounded so fake I couldn't  
believe it --

JULI (V.O.)  
The best, shiniest eggs went  
straight to the Loskis, and in  
return I got a few moments alone  
with the world's most dazzling  
eyes.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I could hardly even look at her.

INT. KITCHEN WASTEBASKET - DAY

More eggs being stuffed into the wastebasket.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - MORNING

Juli, wearing her school backpack, comes out of her house  
with some eggs.

JULI (V.O.)  
And then something happened that  
changed everything and it had  
nothing to do with eggs.  
(continued)

EXT. STREET - DAY

A gorgeous day. Juli walks toward the sycamore tree and the  
bus stop, where several kids are waiting for the bus.

JULI (V.O.)  
And it happened on the most  
beautiful day, which just goes to  
show you that terrible things can  
happen when you least expect them --

She drops her backpack, jumps onto the lowest branch and  
climbs up.

EXT. TOP OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

As Juli climbs through the highest branches to her perch at  
the very top.

JULI'S VIEW - GLORIOUS.

On Juli, savoring the morning, the sunlight, the breeze.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

Darla's at the base of the tree, as well as Shelly Stalls. There's a slightly dorky boy, JON TRULOCK.

JULI (UP IN THE TREE)  
What a morning!

EXT. STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Bryce and Garrett and a couple of other kids walk down the street to the bus stop.

JULI  
The sun is sending streaks of fire  
from one end of the world to  
another!

Bryce and the other kids look at each other. Typical Juli.

Suddenly two big trucks pull into the bus stop, and FOUR WORKMEN get out.

ONE OF THE KIDS  
You can't park there, that's the  
bus stop --

WORKMAN #1  
Sure we can.

JULI (FROM UP IN THE TREE)  
Hey, that's the bus stop --

The workmen look up at the tree.

WORKMAN #1  
Is someone up there?

WORKMAN #2  
Who's up there?

JON TRULOCK  
Juli Baker.

JULI  
(shouting down)  
-- So move your truck.

WORKMAN #1  
Is she crazy?

JON TRULOCK  
No.

SHELLY  
Yes, actually she is.

WORKMAN #2  
Well, this tree's coming down, so  
she's got to get out of it.

BRYCE  
The tree's coming down? What do  
you mean the tree's coming down?

FOREMAN  
I mean the tree's coming down.  
(calling up to Juli)  
Hey, girl. You gotta come down  
from there.

WORKMAN #1  
How did she get up there?

BRYCE  
She climbed.

DARLA  
Juli, they're tearing down the  
tree!

JON TRULOCK  
They're serious!

Two workmen take chain saws out of the truck.

ON Juli, on top of the tree ...

JULI  
(shock)  
This tree? The sycamore tree?

WORKMAN #2  
Yeah, whatever, it's going. Come  
on down.

BRYCE  
They have chain saws.

DARLA  
Huge ones.

JULI  
(shouting down)  
Who said you could? Who gave you  
permission?

WORKMAN  
(shouting back)  
The owner, that's who.

DARLA  
(also shouting up)  
The owner.

JULI  
(shouting down)  
He has no right!

WORKMAN  
(shouting up)  
He's building himself a house and  
he can't very well do it with this  
tree in the way. Now, come down  
from there, we got work to do.

DARLA  
(shouting up)  
The owner's the owner.

In the distance, the school bus is coming.

SHELLY  
Bus is coming.

DARLA  
Juli, the bus is coming.

JULI  
No. No, I won't. You can't cut it  
down, you just can't! This tree is  
a historical landmark!

On the workmen, looking at each other, what is going on?

BRYCE  
She loves the tree.

WORKMAN #1  
Spare me.

SHELLY  
She's bananas.

WORKMAN #2  
(calling)  
Come down from there.

JULI  
No!

BRYCE  
(to the workman)  
Can I speak to you privately?

WORKMAN #1  
No.

BRYCE  
(quietly)  
If you cut down the tree, it'll be  
like cutting out her heart. That  
tree is, like, 200 years old.

WORKMAN  
Your girlfriend's a nut.

BRYCE  
She's not my girlfriend --

WORKMAN  
(shouting up to Juli)  
I'll call the police. Do you want  
me to call the police?

JULI  
(shouting back)  
I don't care!

WORKMAN  
I'm calling them. We've got papers  
here --  
(he waves them)

DARLA  
(shouting to Juli)  
They have papers. They're going to  
arrest you. It's going to go on  
your college application.

JULI  
I'm not coming down from this tree!  
I'm never coming down!

ON BRYCE, as the school bus arrives.

JULI  
You're going to have to cut me  
down!

All the kids waving at her to come down: Juli, come down,  
Juli, please, you're going to get in trouble.

BRYCE  
Juli, they mean it. Come down.

JULI  
(calling to her friends)  
No, you come up! All of you!  
Darla, everybody! If we're all up  
here they can't cut it down!

ON THE KIDS, looking up at her. Jon Trulock is clearly torn.

JON  
Juli, I can't climb that tree --

DARLA  
Me either.

JULI  
(pleading)  
You don't have to climb this high.  
Just a little ways. Haven't you  
ever heard of civil disobedience?

The BUS DRIVER gets out of the school bus.

BUS DRIVER  
Are we going to school or what?

A couple of the kids start toward the bus.

Darla is stricken.

Bryce is torn.

JULI  
Please. Please. Oh man --

One by one, the kids get on the bus. Bryce is last.

JULI  
Bryce, please, if you just come up  
here, we can save it --

Bryce gets on the bus.

The bus takes off.

Juli, on top of the tree, watches the bus pull away.  
Workman #1 takes out a cell phone to call the police.

EXT. LOSKI PORCH - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Chet Duncan is sitting on the front porch, reading the paper.  
We hear the sound of a siren.

Chet looks up.

As he does, two police cars pass, then a fire engine.

Chet stands.

A LOCAL NEWS TRUCK passes.

Chet walks out to the street and starts walking.

As he walks, Trina hurries past him.

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - A LITTLE LATER

Chet among a crowd of neighbors, firemen, newsmen, news trucks, the workmen.

Trina is on her cellphone, trying to reach her husband.

TRINA

(to Rob's message)

I can't believe you're not  
answering. Call me when you get  
this message.

EXT. LUMBERYARD - SAME TIME

Robert Baker is supervising as raw wood is being loaded into his pickup. The sound of a buzz saw cutting planks drowns out the sound of his cell phone.

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - A LITTLE LATER

Some workmen and firemen are attempting to reason with Trina.

TRINA

It's something that my daughter  
feels very strongly about.

JULI  
(shouting down)  
I'm not coming down, Mom!

TRINA  
(shouting back)  
That's what I told them.

ON JULI, in the tree.

SUN GRADUALLY SHINES EVEN MORE BRIGHTLY as we head toward noon.

NEWSCASTER  
It's been three hours, and Juli Baker is still up in that tree, refusing to come down.

EXT. SAME SCENE - LATER

A truck pulls up, delivering pizza. The crowd is bigger. Chet is still there, as is Trina.

A florid man in an expensive suit -- the OWNER of the property -- gets out and begins conferring with police.

LONG SHOT OF JULI, fierce and brave and defiant, at the top of the sycamore.

Trina, once again on the cellphone.

TRINA  
Where are you?

EXT. REDMOND HOUSE - DAY

Rob, having unloaded the lumber, is talking to a mason at the construction job he's supervising. There's a small cement mixer that drowns out the ring of the cellphone.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Rob drives the pickup truck on a two-lane highway. He turns on the radio.

MATT'S VOICE (ON RADIO)  
Our sister's impossible.

MIKE'S VOICE (ON RADIO)  
Stubborn.

MATT'S VOICE (ON RADIO)  
A nightmare.

MIKE'S VOICE (ON RADIO)  
But we back her a thousand per  
cent!

On Robert. What?

RADIO BROADCASTER  
As of now, Juli Baker has been at  
the top of the sycamore tree for  
six hours --

On Robert, floored.

He makes a U-turn.

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - CONTINUOUS

The crowd is larger. Matt and Mike continue to give  
interviews to anyone who's interested. Maybe Mike mentions  
their band, Mystery Pisser. There's a ice cream truck. Chet  
is eating an Eskimo pie.

EXT. TROP OF TREE - CONTINUOUS

Juli sits defiantly on top of the tree. She's adjusted her  
position so she's very comfortable, straddling a large  
branch, leaning back against the trunk.

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - CONTINUOUS

Robert Baker pulls up in his pickup truck.

He looks up at the tree. There's Juli. She sees him.

On Juli, in the tree. She looks down. She sees him.

JULI  
Dad! They want to tear down the  
tree!

ROBERT  
(calling up to her)  
So I hear.

Several newscasters attempt to waylay him, but Robert ignores  
them. He puts his arm around his wife and they begin  
conferring with the Police Chief.

JULI  
If they're taking this tree,  
they're taking me with it!

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - A LITTLE LATER

There's a huge cherry picker next to the tree and the cherry picker-operator is guiding the top of the vehicle.

EXT. TOP OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

Robert Baker is up in the cherry picker, talking to Juli, who's eating a sandwich he's apparently brought up with him.

Chet watches from below.

ROBERT  
It's not your tree, honey --

JULI  
It's everyone's tree.

ROBERT  
Well unfortunately it's not. It's that guy's tree. The one with the red face, who's jumping up and down like Rumpelstilskin --

Looking down at the crowd looking up into the tree, we see the owner, who looks furious.

ROBERT  
And judging from my recent introduction to him, the environment is not at the top of his list of priorities --

JULI  
Look at this view. No one's ever going to see this view if he cuts down the tree --

Robert nods. A beat.

ROBERT  
I know. I'm in complete agreement with you.

A beat.

JULI

But what?

ROBERT

But what if you're still up here in the middle of the night, and you fell asleep and fell out of the tree?

Juli and her father looking at one another.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

No view is worth my little girl's safety.

Another beat.

The sun is starting to set.

And then Juli suddenly vanishes.

She slides down the tree for the last time.

She comes down the spiral slide and holds out her arms as if she's flying.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE SYCAMORE TREE - CONTINUOUS

She lands.

ON JULI, A FEW MINUTES LATER,

speaking to a television news reporter with a cameraman.

JULI

I just believe that the tree belongs to all of us. When something is that old and that beautiful and everyone respects it and expects to wake up in the morning and see it every single day, then it's not just one person's tree, it's everyone's tree.

ON Chet, watching her.

EXT. SAME SCENE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Juli gets into the truck with her father.

They drive away.

INT. TRUCK - A MINUTE LATER

We hear the first chain saw start to buzz.

Juli bursts into tears.

ROBERT

Hey, hey.

He pulls over.

He tucks his hand under her chin so she looks at him. Tears stream down her face.

ROBERT

I'm so proud of you.

She buries herself in her father's arms and sobs her heart out.

CUT TO:

THE BASE OF THE SYCAMORE TREE - LATER IN THE DAY

The tree is mostly gone.

Bryce and some friends walk past on the way home from school.

The whole landscape has changed.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - LATER

The entire family is watching the local news.

JULI ON TV

Just because you own something  
doesn't mean it's not part of what  
makes a neighborhood a neighborhood

--

As we hear a newsman say: Juli Baker, a young woman who takes a stand for what she believes in ...

RICK

I'm glad you didn't get involved in  
that, Bryce.

Bryce feels awful that he didn't.

RICK  
They're attention-getters. That  
whole family.

Chet stands up and leaves.

RICK  
(to Patsy)  
Your father hates me.

PATSY  
He doesn't hate you, he loves you.

EXT. LOSKI PORCH - NIGHT

As Chet sits in his rocker, reading the newspaper.

Bryce comes outside, sits down next to his grandfather.

The two of them sit there.

CHET  
Did you read this?

We see now a picture of Juli on the front page of the newspaper, with a huge picture of the sycamore tree and a headline: A LOCAL GIRL'S FIGHT FOR A SYCAMORE TREE.

BRYCE  
I don't have to read it. I was  
there.

CHET  
A girl like that doesn't live  
across the street from everyone.

BRYCE  
A girl like that is a big mixture  
of things --

CHET  
Most people are mixtures of things.  
(he hands him the  
newspaper)  
Read this. Without prejudice.

Bryce takes the newspaper. He's irritated. He stands up and goes into the house.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Bryce comes into his bedroom carrying the newspaper. He stuffs it into the bottom drawer of his desk.

Throws himself on the bed.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

On Juli's window. The curtains are drawn.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She's on the bed, weeping.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The two houses opposite each other. A sad, lonely night.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - A RAINY MORNING

A big hole where the sycamore was. Kids wait for the bus. Juli's not there.

The bus pulls up, they get on.

BRYCE (V.O.)

From then on, she refused to ride  
the bus.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Juli mopes through the halls. She passes Jon Trulock.

JON TRULOCK

I'm really sorry about the tree,  
Juli.

Juli nods.

Bryce at a locker, watches.

BRYCE (V.O.)

She stopped charging around,  
stopped lecturing kids on throwing  
their trash in the garbage.

A kid drops garbage in front of her. She steps over it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Juli stares out the window.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
No more slicing the air with her  
hand, dying to be called on.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Juli eating with Darla. Bryce comes toward her with his tray.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I kept thinking I'd say something,  
like, Man, sorry about your  
sycamore, but nothing came out.

He walks on by.

INT. BUS - STREET

Bryce on the bus. Looking out the window, he sees Juli, in a rain slicker, pedalling her beat-up bicycle.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Even in the rain, she wouldn't ride  
the bus.

GARRETT  
Weird, huh.

BRYCE  
Juli's weird.

EXT. JULI'S HOUSE - DAY

Bryce, outside, mowing the lawn He keeps sneaking looks at Juli's window

BRYCE  
She even stopped watching my every  
move. Which was a total relief.

CAMERA TRAVELS THOUGH JULI'S WINDOW...

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM

She's lying on the bed.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - BACK YARD

As Juli comes out the back door with a basket to collect eggs.

Champ is lying on the back porch.

Juli leans down to give him a nuzzle.

Champ is dead.

EXT. BACK YARD - ANOTHER DAY

Champ is being buried. Robert, Trina, Matt, Mike, Juli and some of their friends. There's a tombstone that says: "Here lies Champ, the Mystery Pisser."

Matt and Mike and Skyler are singing a heavy metal song about Champ, a dog that inspired a great music group.

The last spades of dirt are shoveled over the grave.

Juli is blowing her nose into a handkerchief.

The song ends.

Wide shot on:

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DUSK

As Robert pulls up in his truck, gets out.

A puppy jumps out of the truck, barking.

Trina opens the front door.

TRINA

Oh, Robert.

ROBERT

Don't even bother saying no --

They look at each other. No real difference of opinion.

ROBERT

Juli, honey, come on down here,  
I've got a surprise --

Hold on a wide shot of the house. The front door is open as we see Juli come down the stairs.

The puppy leaps into Juli's arms and starts to lick her face.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

Juli, carrying a half-carton of eggs, comes up the walkway with her new dog LUCY.

Bryce whips the door open before she rings the bell.

JULI

Hi.

BRYCE

Cute dog.

JULI

Her name's Lucy. I know it's very  
common but I couldn't help it.

She hands him the eggs.

BRYCE

Thanks. Are you going to start  
riding the bus again?

Juli shrugs.

An awkward moment. A beat.

BRYCE

You don't have to give us these.

JULI

I know.

BRYCE

Well. Thanks.

He closes the door. Juli sort of stands there.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

Bryce walks with the eggs to:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The trash can is absolutely full.

He tries stuffing the eggs into it. They barely fit. He rummages around and tries to poke them down into it.

He pulls out the whole trash bag.

Then he walks toward the front door, carrying the trash.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

As Bryce comes out the door carrying the trash.

We can hear the garbage truck coming up the block.

Suddenly Bryce sees Juli. She's still on the porch, refastening Lucy's leash.

BRYCE

Hey --

JULI

Hey --

He starts down to the street. The trash bag is heavy.

He gets to the curb, Juli following.

He stuffs the trash bag into the garbage container that's out on the street for the garbage truck pickup.

The egg carton pokes out.

Juli can see the eggs through the holes in the carton.

JULI

Why are you throwing the eggs away?  
Did you break them?

BRYCE

Yeah and I'm really sorry about  
that.

She opens the carton. All the eggs are there, intact.

JULI

Why are you throwing them away?

BRYCE  
Does the word salmonella mean  
anything to you?

JULI  
Salmonella?

BRYCE  
My mom doesn't think it's worth the  
risk.

The garbage truck arrives in front of the house and empties  
the trash bags into the back of the truck.

Juli is just standing there, stunned, as the noise of the  
garbage truck makes conversation temporarily impossible.

The truck pulls away.

BRYCE  
So that's basically it.

Bryce starts back toward his house. Juli follows him.

JULI  
Salmonella?

BRYCE  
Your backyard is like, covered in  
turds. I mean, look at your place  
Juli. Just look at it. It's a  
complete mess.

JULI  
It is not.

BRYCE  
Oh come on, Juli. Look at it.

She looks over at the house. It happens to look particularly  
funky.

JULI  
Have you always thrown the eggs  
away?

BRYCE  
Look, we didn't want to hurt your  
feelings.

JULI

My feelings? People pay me for these eggs. They pay me two dollars a dozen --

BRYCE

They do?

JULI

Why didn't you just give them back to me? Why didn't you just come up with a polite excuse like, we don't want your stupid eggs. I was just being ... neighborly.

BRYCE

Yeah, well if you really want to be neighborly look at your yard. It's a freak. People on this block have lawns. Every single house. And you know what? It's May. Who has Christmas lights all year long?

JULI

You don't like our twinkle lights? Are you nuts? Twinkle lights make you happy. There's no law that says you have to take them down in January. Downtown Seattle is full of twinkle lights.

BRYCE

(sarcastically)

And Santa Clauses, everybody's got Santa Clauses all year long.

(throwing her line back at her)

I mean, just because you own something doesn't mean it's not part of the neighborhood. You said that yourself, Juli, on TV.

JULI

I hate you, Bryce Loski, I absolutely hate you.

She turns around walks back over to her house. Lucy the dog follows.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Through the window, we see Chet watching the two of them. He's obviously overheard the conversation.

As Bryce starts back to the house, he sees Chet watching. Chet vanishes from the window.

JULI (V.O.)  
I couldn't believe it. I wasted  
like four years of my life on Bryce  
Loski and he turned out to be the  
worst human being on the planet.  
(continued)

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Juli walks into it and the door closes. Hold on the front of the house.

It is a mess, no question.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)  
What made me the craziest was that  
I could sort of see what he was  
talking about. I mean, not  
everything. But I could see that  
someone looking at our house might  
think it looked sort of shabby ...

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Juli is sitting at the table, lost in thought. Everyone else is passing food around.

TRINA  
Your Uncle David is coming again  
this summer.

MIKE  
How's Uncle David?

ROBERT  
The same. Exactly the same.

MATT  
Top of the Space Needle --

MIKE

Man, I never saw anyone made so  
happy by a Space Needle.

Juli comes out of her reverie.

JULI

Do you think a person can be less  
than the sum of their parts?

TRINA

I don't think that's a kind way to  
talk about Uncle David, Juli.

JULI

I wasn't talking about Uncle David.

TRINA

We were talking about Uncle David's  
annual visit.

JULI

Are we taking him to the Space  
Needle?

The Bakers exchange looks -- where has she been?

ROBERT

Of course we're taking him to the  
Space Needle.

Juli stands up and walks over to the front window, looks out  
at the lawn.

JULI

Do we have, like, clippers?

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Juli is going down the aisle pushing a basket with her  
mother.

JULI

I was thinking that it wouldn't be  
hard to fix up the front yard. It  
could be, you know, a project. A  
summer project.

TRINA

That's a huge undertaking. Once I decided to alphabetize the books in my parents' house and I didn't even get through the B's.

JULI

But it looks so bad.

TRINA

It does?

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Juli is in bed, reading a book on landscaping.

There's a knock on the door. Trina and Robert open it.

ROBERT

Juli, did something happen? This revelation about our house --

JULI

Nothing, Daddy.

Both parents sit on the bed.

ROBERT

Something happened.

A beat.

JULI

The Loskis have been throwing my eggs away because our yard is so filthy they think they'll get salmonella if they eat them --

ROBERT

That is ridiculous --

TRINA

Did Patsy say that?

ROBERT

They are such snobs.

JULI

Do you realize we're the only people on this entire block who don't have grass?

TRINA

Well, we used to have grass --

ROBERT

But then we had chickens --

JULI

So it's my fault we don't have grass?

She bursts into tears.

TRINA

Of course it's not your fault, honey. Even when we had grass our yard was ...

ROBERT

Eccentric. We are eccentric.

JULI

I know, I know.

Juli still weeping.

TRINA

Oh, honey --

ROBERT

That silly woman with her DKNY purse.

Trina looks over at him.

TRINA

She's not so bad. She helped me jump-start the car once --

ROBERT

Whatever.

TRINA

Since when do you know about DKNY purses?

He shrugs.

ROBERT

I keep up.

TRINA

Not to mention that uptight father in those idiotic alligator shirts.

They both start to laugh. Even Juli is cheering up.

ROBERT

You really want to clean up the yard?

JULI

I do. It'll still be eccentric, I promise.

(beat)

They hate the Santa and the twinkles too.

TRINA

They hate twinkle lights? Oh, they are really sick.

BRYCE (V.O.)

So a couple of weeks later, summer vacation begins --

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

As Bryce and Garrett come bicycling down the street together.

BRYCE (V.O., CONTINUED)

And I'm coming home from buying a hundred pairs of socks for camp, and there she is --

Juli, dressed in jeans and an old shirt, is hacking away at the shrubs in her yard.

Bryce turns into his driveway and Garrett bikes on.

JULI (V.O.)

(talking to the shrubs as she hacks away)

Out of there ... yes! ... you are coming off whether you like it or not ...

BRYCE (V.O.)

She's cleaning up the yard. Like I didn't feel bad enough for what I said but now she's shoving my face in it ...

Bryce walks into his house, passing his grandfather on the front porch.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

He's sitting at his computer, but he can hear her whacking and ranting.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
And does she do it like anyone  
else, like a normal person? No,  
she's talking to the shrubs --

He slams the window shut.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

He's lying on his bed, reading a magazine. He can still hear Juli through the window.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
So then I find myself thinking,  
should I help her? Probably. I  
mean she's all alone, it's a pretty  
big job --  
(continued)

He gets up and walks over to the window ...

BRYCE (V.O., CONTINUED)  
So I thought maybe I'd go out  
there, maybe I'd make it up to her  
by helping her cut back some  
bushes. Period. End of story. If  
she still wanted to be mad at me  
after that, fine. Her problem.  
(continued)

INT/EXT. VIEW OUT BRYCE'S WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

His grandfather is crossing the street to talk to Juli. He's carrying some garden tools.

BRYCE (V.O., CONTINUED)  
But I never got the chance.

ON BRYCE AMAZED.

INT/EXT VIEW OUT BRYCE'S WINDOW ...

Julie and Chet. Chet takes garden gloves out of his back pocket, puts them on and together they tackle the hedges.

BRYCE

There's my grandpa doing my good deed. My grandpa. Who'd been parked on our front porch in a pair of bedroom slippers for six months, and now, thanks to Juli Baker, he's in work boots. He's walking. He's talking. Had I ever seen him smile? The guy's smiling.

A series of shots:

CHET AND JULI CUTTING BRANCHES.

CHET AND JULI WRAPPING BRANCHES IN PLASTIC SO THEY CAN BE CARTED AWAY.

JULI TELLING CHET SOMETHING. CHET LAUGHS.

BRYCE (V.O.)

All week long it went on.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bryce at his computer. The sound of whack, whack, whack.

EXT. JULI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Juli hammers nails into the fence, with Chet next to her.

EXT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

As Bryce goes to the window and looks out at the two of them.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Chet sees Bryce in the window, looking out at them. Chet waves at Bryce.

CHET

Hey, there --

Juli looks up, just in time to see:

EXT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

As Bryce disappears out of sight, mortified.

EXT. BRYCE'S HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

A taxi pulls up. Bryce's father RICK gets out with a suitcase and his golf clubs. He notices Chet and Juli working across the street. Walks into the house.

BRYCE (V.O.)

So now it's my last night before camp, and my dad's just gotten home from some conference about computer interfaces --

INT. LOSKI DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinner time. Rick, Patsy, Lynetta, Bryce and Chet. Chet is eating heartily.

CHET

Patsy, this is delicious.

PATSY

Bryce's favorite dinner.  
(to Bryce)  
Because you are not going to get food like this at camp.

RICK

You all packed?

BRYCE

Almost, almost.

RICK

So they basically broke us up into buzz groups but they kept changing the mix, so just when you thought you knew where you were, you weren't --

PATSY

How fascinating.

LYNETTA

Boring.

PATSY

That's rude, Lynetta.

Chet helps himself to another serving.

RICK

(to Chet)

So, Chet, I had no idea you were in the mood for a home improvement project.

A beat. Bryce notices that Chet is pointedly ignoring his father.

CHET

Pass the salt, will you Patsy?

BRYCE (V.O.)

That was the first time I wondered, maybe grandpa isn't too crazy about Dad --

RICK

So why's the girl the one who's finally doing something about their place?

ON CHET, salting his potato, taking his time about it. He looks up at Bryce.

BRYCE (V.O.)

The big stare. Man oh man that freaked me out. Was Grandpa going to tell Dad about how I ragged Juli about the yard?

ON CHET looking at Bryce, who's now sweating. Then he looks at Rick.

CHET

She wants to, is all.

Chet again looks over at Bryce and then goes back to eating.

Bryce, relieved, wipes his face with a napkin.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

In the bedroom is his camp trunk, about half-packed.

His grandfather comes into the room.

Bryce comes out of the closet, with some tee shirts to pack.

CHET

Hey.

BRYCE  
(surprised)  
Hey.

Chet sits down on Bryce's bed.

BRYCE  
Look, I know I messed up. I should  
have told her the truth about the  
eggs, and then she caught me  
tossing them out and I just lost  
it.  
(beat)  
Thanks for not saying anything at  
dinner. I owe you big time.

His grandfather gets up, walks to the window, and looks out  
across the street.

CHET  
She reminds me of your grandmother.

BRYCE  
Juli?

Bryce waits. Finally Chet turns around.

CHET  
Your character is set at an early  
age, Bryce. The choices you make  
now will affect you for the rest of  
your life.

BRYCE  
Yes, sir.

CHET  
Don't yes-sir me.

BRYCE  
Sorry.

CHET  
Here. Everyone needs a little  
money to get through camp.

He hands Bryce some money.

Bryce is stunned, looks at the money.

BRYCE  
Thanks.

CHET

The next time you're faced with a choice, do the right thing. It hurts everyone less in the long run.

He leaves.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Bryce and his dad carry his trunk out to their SUV. They put it into the back of the car.

Bryce looks up at Juli's window. She's not there.

EXT. SYCAMORE TREE LOT - DAY

Robert drives his truck past the place where the sycamore tree used to be. There's a man in the front seat of the truck with him -- his brother DAVID, 41, who has Asberger's syndrome. We see David look over at the house going up on the property.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Juli is seeding the lawn in front of the house as Robert pulls into the driveway and he and Uncle David get out.

UNCLE DAVID

Hi Juli --

JULI

Uncle David --

UNCLE DAVID

Your tree's gone. You were sad.

Uncle David gives her a sweet, awkward hug.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - BACK PORCH

The Baker family eats a barbecue dinner outdoors with Uncle David. Uncle David is counting his baked beans.

EXT. SPACE NEEDLE - DAY

The Baker family, including Uncle David, going up in the Space Needle elevator. Uncle David is compulsively counting floors.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Juli and Chet are planting tulip bulbs in the garden. David counts them. Mrs. Stueby turns up from next door with a tray of lemonade for everyone and a big smile for Chet.

INT. BAKER TRUCK - DAY

Robert, Juli and David approaching the corner where the sycamore tree used to be.

JULI  
Don't drive past where the tree  
was.

EXT. BAKER TRUCK - DAY

As the truck makes a left turn to avoid going past the intersection.

EXT. GREENHAVEN SANITORIUM - DAY

Juli and Robert drop Uncle David back at the sanitorium where he lives. Everyone gives him hugs goodbye.

UNCLE DAVID  
Too bad about your tree, Juli.

JULI  
Thanks, Uncle David.

EXT. NIGHT SKY - A BEAUTIFUL HARVEST MOON

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DUSK

We see Juli through her window.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Juli in bed, reading. A knock on her door. Her father peeks in ...

ROBERT

Hi.

JULI

Hi, Dad.

He sits on the edge of her bed.

ROBERT

I always liked that tree of yours,  
even before you told me about it.

JULI

Dad, it's okay, I'll get over it.

ROBERT

No, it's not okay, and you don't  
have to get over it. Listen to me,  
just listen --

(beat)

I want the spirit of that tree to  
be with you always. I want you to  
remember how you felt when you were  
up there and the whole world  
sparkled.

(beat)

My brave daughter looking out at  
the world from the very top --

JULI

It was so beautiful, and now it's  
as if it wasn't even there --

ROBERT

I know.

Robert goes back to the door, and brings a canvas in from the hall.

ROBERT

That's why I made this for you.

ON JULI'S FACE as she sees: A wonderful painting of the sycamore tree. And way up in the top, a young girl looking out into the distance.

JULI  
My tree. My sycamore tree.

ON JULI, overwhelmed with feeling. She throws her arms around her dad.

JULI  
Oh, Daddy, thank you. Thank you.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

She's asleep. The sun starts to come up outside.

Juli opens her eyes.

Across from the bed is the painting, with a shaft of morning light illuminating it.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Juli comes out the front door.

JULI  
Oh my god!

There's just the tiniest fringe of grass starting to sprout on the lawn.

JULI  
We have a lawn!

EXT. LAWN - DAY

As Trina and Juli, both with their faces pressed to the ground, look through the grass.

JULI  
My lawn!

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - BACK PORCH - DUSK

A barbecue. Matt, Mike, Juli, Trina and Robert.

There's a tray of devilled eggs, which only Robert is eating.

JULI  
I just think we should talk about it.

(MORE)

JULI (cont'd)

I mean, it's all very well for me to be making unilateral decisions where the appearance of our house is concerned --

MATT

(making fun of her big word)

Oh, unilateral --

JULI

But we are a family.

TRINA

She's right. We should talk about it. There are basically two separate --

ROBERT

And yet linked --

TRINA

-- questions.

ROBERT

Well I'm not taking the Santa Claus down.

TRINA

Okay. So much for Question Number One.

MIKE

So Question Number Two is --

JULI

The twinkle lights.

TRINA

Yes.

MATT

Well I personally have strong feelings about the twinkle lights --

MIKE

Moi aussi.

JULI

(good-natured)

Oh shut up.

MATT

I'm not kidding. I do.

MIKE

So do I.

ROBERT

So that probably makes five of us  
with very strong feelings about the  
twinks.

He flips the hamburgers.

TRINA

I was thinking ...

Robert leans over and gives her a kiss.

ROBERT

What were you thinking, love of my  
life?

TRINA

I was thinking the problem with the  
twinks --

Everyone leans forward ...

TRINA

Is we need more.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

All five Bakers, at work on the front of the house. They're  
hanging twinkle lights.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As the Loski SUV drives into the Loski driveway.

Bryce gets out. He's suntanned, and it looks as if he's  
grown three inches.

He looks over at the Baker house. His father gets out of the  
car. They start to unload Bryce's trunk.

BRYCE

It looks amazing.

RICK

Except that damned Santa Claus is  
still up on the roof.

INT. BAKER HOUSE -- SAME TIME

Matt is looking out the window.

MATT  
The asshole is back.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

The curtains are drawn. Juli, Matt and Mike are in the living room. Mike is looking through binoculars, out the window.

VIEW THROUGH BINOCULARS:

Through the Loskis' bay window across the street: We can see the dining room, with the table set for dinner. Patsy brings a big salad to the table and the family starts to come in to sit down.

MATT (O.S.)  
They're coming in to dinner.

MIKE (O.S.)  
One second, bro.

MATT  
They're sitting down. You ready?

MIKE  
Yep.

MATT  
Hit it.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside, a boom box blasts Bruce Springsteen's "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" at ear-splitting levels toward the Loski house.

INT. LOSKI DINING ROOM - SAME TIME

Everyone freezes as they hear the music. They turn to the window.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

On Juli, flipping a switch.

INT. LOSKI DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Loskis get up from the table to look out.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rick, Patsy, Bryce, Lynetta and Chet stare out the window.

Their POV:

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

The whole place is lit up. The front lawn, bushes, fence, doors, windows -- twinkle lights galore, wrapped around everything.

ON THE LOSKIS, STARING.

On Chet starting to smile.

LYNETTA

How cool is that.

On Bryce:

BRYCE (V.O.)

I'm not going to tell you that I spent the whole time at camp wondering if Juli was still going to be mad when I got back, but it did cross my mind. And then I get back and I realize she's not just mad, we're at war.

RICK

What's this supposed to mean?

CHET

I think it's just a big welcome home for Bryce.

Chet and Bryce look at each other.

INT. SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY

All the kids going to class, hanging out. Everyone looks more grown-up.

JULI (V.O.)  
Everything changed in eighth grade.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Everything changed in eighth grade.

Juli and Darla walking down the hall, looking at boys.

JULI (V.O.)  
Boys.

Bryce and Garrett walking down the hall, looking at girls.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Girls.

Shelly Smalls, who has continued to triumph over adolescence, bats her eyes at Bryce.

SHELLY  
Hi, Bryce.

BRYCE  
Hi, Shelly.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I kept hoping Juli would soften up  
a little, but she just cut me dead -  
-

Juli and some friends walk past Bryce, who looks after her as she walks down the hall.

JULI (V.O.)  
It was a big relief not to be  
thinking about Bryce, 'cause it  
gave me a lot of extra time to  
focus on the important things, like  
school --

We see the eighth grade homeroom teacher, MISS SIMMONS.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
We had a new teacher. Miss  
Simmons.

JULI (V.O.)  
New teacher. Really great.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Really tough.

JULI (V.O.)  
Very stylish.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Kind of weird-looking.

MISS SIMMONS  
All right, everyone, clear your  
desks of everything but a pen or  
pencil.

The class is shocked. Is it a pop quiz? What's going on?

Miss Simmons picks a stack of yellow papers off her desk,  
fans herself and says.

MISS SIMMONS  
It's time to vote for basket boys!

She starts passing out the papers.

GARRETT  
(sarcastically)  
Who wants to be a basket boy?

MISS SIMMONS  
You do, Garrett. It's an honor to  
be a basket boy. We're electing  
twenty boys from the class --

GARRETT  
I do not want to be one of them --

MISS SIMMONS  
Well, you should. Basket boys are  
a tradition that has helped support  
this school since it was founded,  
in 1983. It's why we have flower  
beds. It's why we have shade trees  
and apple trees. Visit another  
school sometime and you'll begin to  
realize what a little oasis our  
campus is.

BRYCE  
All this from the sweat and blood  
of basket boys --

MISS SIMMONS  
What did you say, Bryce?

BRYCE  
Nothing, Miss Simmons.

SHELLY  
(loud whisper)  
I'm voting for you, Bryce.

MISS SIMMONS  
Bryce, some day when your children  
go to school here, you'll  
understand.

Bryce rolls his eyes at Garrett.

He looks at the ballot.

He looks over at Juli.

She's ignoring him and looking straight at her ballot.

JULI (V.O.)  
I read down the list. There were  
158 names, and twenty of them were  
going to be basket boys and  
auctioned off like sides of beef to  
pay for some flowers. But I  
realized that to me, there had only  
ever been Bryce. But I certainly  
wasn't going to vote for him. I  
just couldn't. What if I didn't  
choose anybody? What if I just  
turned it in blank?

MISS SIMMONS  
And don't even think about not  
voting or you will get detention.

JULI (V.O.)  
So I voted for the boys who weren't  
jerks or clowns, but were just  
nice. Like Jon Trulock, who was  
really sweet --

We see Jon Trulock again.

INT. CLASSROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

As the class files out, handing in their ballots.

JULI

And then I handed in my ballot and  
pretty much forgot about it.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Dinner. Rick, Patsy, Lynetta, Bryce and Chet.

BRYCE

You should have seen all the girls  
looking at these ballots like it  
was so important they were voting  
for president of the United States.

PATSY

I will make a lovely basket lunch  
for the lucky girl who buys you.

RICK

It's for a good cause, Bryce.

BRYCE

Someone's going to buy me!

He bangs his head down on the table.

LYNETTA

Only if you win.

BRYCE

I'm not being conceited here when I  
tell you I'm probably going to win -  
- I'm being realistic.

Patsy starts to clear the plates and Bryce and Lynetta bring  
theirs into:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lynetta is following Bryce around, making kissing sounds.

LYNETTA

There will be a bidding war. Blood  
will be shed over this boy, mark my  
words.

Chet and Rick come in, clearing their plates. There's a cake  
on the table in the kitchen and Rick hovers around it.

RICK  
Just hope that Juli Baker doesn't  
buy you.

CHET  
Worse things have happened.

RICK  
You've developed quite a soft spot  
for that girl, haven't you, Chet?  
Why on earth?

CHET  
I have, haven't I? She reminds me  
of Renee.

LYNETTA  
Grandma?

RICK  
(disbelief)  
She reminds you of your Renee?

CHET  
Her spirit reminds me of Renee.

RICK  
(contemptuously)  
Her spirit. I don't see that.

An awkward moment. Everyone knows Rick is hellbent on a  
fight with Chet.

PATSY  
Now who wants cake?

BRYCE  
Me.

LYNETTA  
Me.

PATSY  
Lynetta? I'm shocked. You're  
eating dessert?

LYNETTA  
Forget it, I changed my mind.

RICK

(to Chet)

What I don't understand is why you have the energy to befriend a complete stranger when you've never done so much as toss a baseball around with your own grandson ...

BRYCE

Take it easy, Dad.

RICK

(to Chet)

Have you ever talked to Bryce? Been to his room? Have you ever sat on your own grandson's bed and had a conversation with him?

BRYCE

He has --

RICK

When?

BRYCE

The night before I went to camp.

RICK

So once.

Patsy takes a pint of vanilla ice cream out of the freezer.

PATSY

Who wants a la mode?

LYNETTA

I do.

Chet walks out of the kitchen.

PATSY

Don't you want cake, Grandpa?

There's a beat.

Chet walks back into the kitchen.

CHET

You know why the Bakers haven't fixed up the yard until now?

RICK

Why? Sure. They're trash.  
They've got a beat up house, two  
beat-up cars and a beat-up yard.  
They have absolutely no pride in  
how they present themselves to the  
rest of the world.

CHET

Juli's father has a retarded  
brother.

RICK

What?

CHET

David. At Greenhaven.

RICK

And?

CHET

And it's very expensive to keep him  
there --

RICK

Well that certainly explains  
everything --

PATSY

Rick --

RICK

That's the reason they never kept  
the yard up? They've got two  
perfectly healthy boys over there  
who could have mowed the lawn all  
these years. Just because there's  
a retarded relative someplace ....

Rick stops, suddenly aware that everyone is looking at him  
horrified.

RICK

(exploding)

I'm not going to feel guilty for  
saying this. I'm not.

Chet walks out of the kitchen.

Everyone looks at each other.

Suddenly we hear the front door slam.

Lynetta dumps her ice cream in the trash. Walks out. We hear her bedroom door slam.

Patsy puts her cake down and walks out. A beat. Her bedroom door slams.

On Bryce and his dad.

RICK

Well, at least one member of the family is on my side.

Bryce couldn't be more miserable.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bryce is lying on his bed, staring into space.

A pebble hits his window.

He goes to the window, looks out and sees Chet in the front yard.

He opens the window.

CHET

Want to take a walk?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As Chet and Bryce walk down the street. A beautiful fall night.

We hear the sound of an owl.

CHET

That is the Western screech owl.

Chet imitates the sound.

The Western screech owl makes its cry again.

BRYCE

Wow.

CHET

No big deal. I learned it all when I was a kid. Your mother knows all the bird sounds.

BRYCE

She does?

CHET

Well she used to, anyway. No  
telling what she knows now.

They pass the house under construction where the sycamore  
tree used to be.

They stop and Chet looks up into the night.

CHET

Must have been a spectacular view.

They look up at the starry night sky.

BRYCE

You probably know all the  
constellations too.

CHET

Yep. I do. You probably know the  
Big Dipper. End of story.

BRYCE

Nailed.

(beat)

Did you ever see her up in the  
tree?

CHET

The day they took the tree down.  
It scared me she was up so high.  
But after I read the article I  
understood why she did it. The  
tree's gone, but she's still got  
the spark it gave her. Know what I  
mean?

They start on.

EXT. LONG SHOT - NIGHT

As we see Chet and Bryce walking together.

CHET

I was engaged to be married to someone named Geraldine McCarthy, oh yes, they'd sent out the invitations and they even had one of those bridal showers deals, I remember someone gave us a big plate from Marshall Field with asparagus painted on it, that was the idea, you used the plate just for asparagus. God forbid you should put a string bean on it. Geraldine got so angry at me when I broke off the engagement and she had to return all the presents including the asparagus plate, but I couldn't help myself because I'd met Renee and I couldn't very well get married to anyone else once I did. Of course then I had to prove to Renee I was worthy of her because I'd wasted all that time with Miss Asparagus Plate.

BRYCE

How did you do that?

CHET

A grand gesture. I made a grand gesture.

They come to a stop.

CHET

Renee would have sat up in that tree all night long.

(beat)

Well. This is where I get off.

Bryce looks around.

BRYCE

Where?

CHET

I promised Susannah I'd drop by for some coffee.

BRYCE

Mrs. Stueby?

CHET

Don't wait up.

Chet starts toward Mrs. Stueby's, leaving Bryce. Bryce is floored.

Chet rings the doorbell at Mrs. Stueby's and Bryce starts home.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

On Bryce, coming up the stairs to the front porch. He's silhouetted against the Christmas lights on the Baker house.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce comes into his room. His room is in semi-darkness, lit only by the Baker twinkle lights.

He opens the bottom desk drawer and takes out the creased and scrunched newspaper.

He turns on his desk lamp, illuminating the article and picture of Juli. The rest of his room stays in semi-darkness.

BRYCE (V.O.)

So finally I read the article.  
They called her "a strong voice in  
the urban wilderness," "a radiant  
beacon, shedding light on the need  
to curtail overdevelopment." I  
couldn't help thinking about my  
part in the whole business -- not  
that you could call it a part  
exactly --

FLASHBACK:

THE SYCAMORE TREE

Bryce at the school bus, with Juli in the tree, begging him to help her.

JULI

Bryce, please, if you just come up  
here, we can save it.

Bryce gets on the bus. END FLASHBACK.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BRYCE, on the bed, reads on...

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Juli said, "To be held above the  
earth and brushed by the wind.  
It's like your heart has been  
kissed by beauty." Who talks like  
this?

Bryce looks at the photo of Juli in the newspaper.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I kept looking at the photo of  
Juli.

On the photo of Juli in the newspaper: It's a close up of  
her at the top of the tree, taken with a telephoto lens.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
She's looking off in the distance  
and the wind is blowing her hair  
back like she's at the helm of a  
ship or something, sailing into the  
sun.

ON BRYCE, staring at the photo.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I'd spent so much time avoiding  
Juli Baker that I'd never really  
looked at her, and now all of a  
sudden, I couldn't stop.

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - DAY

Patsy makes coffee.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE STAIRWELL - DAY

As Bryce comes downstairs.

He looks into:

INT. LOSKI LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rick is asleep on the couch, under a quilt.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Bryce comes in and reaches for a box of corn flakes.

PATSY

I have come up with a solution for our situation. We're going to invite the Bakers over for dinner.

BRYCE

We are? Does Dad know?

PATSY

Yes. And the Baker kids too, of course. Juli and the boys. What are their names?

BRYCE

Matt and Mike. Does Grandpa know?

PATSY

I can't seem to find your grandfather this morning. He must have been up early.

Lynetta comes into the kitchen. She's wearing a mini-skirt, platform heels, and eyes made up like raccoons.

PATSY

I thought you and your friends were going to church this morning.

LYNETTA

We are.

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - DAY

Trina is talking to Robert.

ROBERT

Friday night?

TRINA

All of us.

A beat.

ROBERT

Oh man. You think they think we're all going to be pals now that we cleaned up the yard?

TRINA

I have no idea, but she was insistent.

(MORE)

TRINA (cont'd)

She was practically in tears,  
saying how sorry she was she'd  
never invited us before and how  
she'd really like to know us  
better.

Juli comes into the kitchen.

ROBERT

The Bakers have invited us all to  
dinner.

JULI

No way.

ROBERT

Way.

JULI

Bryce Loski is my mortal enemy.

They all laugh.

JULI

I'm not kidding. He's disgusting,  
shallow, immature, revolting --

TRINA

I couldn't really say no. She once  
helped me jump-start my car. And  
after all that help Chet's been to  
you --

JULI

They're just asking us over so  
we'll take down the twinkle lights.  
That's probably the whole purpose.

TRINA

It sounded more like a let's-be-  
friends deal.

ROBERT

Let's not be friends.

JULI

(relieved)

Oh, Daddy, thank you. Thank you,  
thank you, thank you.

TRINA

We are going. I said yes.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- ANOTHER DAY

Bryce is walking down the hall, Juli is coming toward him. She pretends he doesn't exist. As he turns to watch her, he crashes right into Mrs. Brubeck.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the teacher talks about something like the Civil War, Bryce goes into a reverie, staring at Juli.

ON DARLA, looking at Bryce looking at Juli.

INT. GYM - DAY

At one end of the basketball court, Juli and a group of girls shoot baskets.

At the other end Bryce is shooting with some boys.

He looks over and Juli dribbles toward the basket and leaps into the air.

Juli's hair flows backward, as if it's windblown, she looks exactly as she did in the newspaper, as if she's on top of the tree.

INT. LIBRARY - ANOTHER DAY

Bryce leans on his elbow and pretends to read but manages to contort himself practically into a pretzel to watch Juli as she moves around the library.

FROM THE STACKS ...

DARLA  
(a whisper)  
Psst. Juli.

Juli doesn't hear. Darla tosses a lipstick at her.

Juli goes over and huddles in the stacks with Darla.

DARLA  
Bryce is bonkers over you.

JULI  
(horrified)  
Bryce Loski?

DARLA

Like there's another Bryce --  
The boy is positively lost in  
Loveland. Look at him.

JULI

Look at him? Shoot me first.

Darla literally turns her that direction.

Bryce has his hands over his eyes with his fingers slightly  
separated so he can stare at Juli. Quickly he closes his  
fingers and looks down at his book.

Darla cracks up.

JULI

I have to go dinner there tonight.

DARLA

I bet you're the dessert, girl.  
Mmmm mmmm.

JULI

(laughing but horrified)  
Stop it.

She looks at Bryce, who's still watching her, now from  
underneath his book.

Panic: They both look away. Bryce pretends he's really  
stretching.

JULI

I'll just tell my mom, I can't go.  
It's just completely out of the  
question.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - LATER

Juli comes home from school. She sees fresh pies on the  
kitchen counter.

JULI (V.O.)

But I couldn't refuse to go, I just  
couldn't because you know what, my  
mom was just so happy.

She walks by her mother's room ...

INT. TRINA & ROBERT'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Trina deciding which blouse to wear. Juli looks in.

TRINA  
Which one?

JULI  
Both great.  
(as she goes toward her  
room)  
I'm not dressing up.

TRINA  
Patsy and I agreed on dress up.  
She's making risotto.

JULI  
Oh, whoa, risotto.

INT. JULI'S ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

All her clothes are out on the bed. She's finishing getting dressed. She's unexpectedly stylish -- a big sweater over a little T-shirt with a long scarf wound around her neck. She looks at herself in the mirror.

Then she picks up an eyelash curler and curls her eyelashes.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Trina, Robert and Juli in the kitchen. There are two pies on the kitchen table.

ROBERT  
Two pies?

TRINA  
Not everybody likes pecan.

Matt and Mike turn up in the kitchen. They're both wearing jeans and T-shirts. Both T-shirts have the name of the band on it, "Mystery Pisser."

TRINA  
Absolutely out of the question.

They pivot sharply and leave the kitchen to go upstairs to change their T-shirts.

EXT. BRYCE'S POV: THE BAKER FAMILY CROSSES THE STREET.

The doorbell rings.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Chet opens the front door.

Bryce is scrambling downstairs, still buttoning his shirt.  
Patsy is behind him.

Matt and Mike walk in the door. High-fives.

MATT AND MIKE

(to Bryce)

Hey, baby brother, how's it going?

Lynetta appears, looking like a nocturnal rodent.

MATT AND MIKE

Hey, Lyn. Lookin' good.

Lots of shaking of hands and introducing.

Lynetta, Matt and Mike disappear upstairs to Lynetta's room,  
as Rick Loski appears and shakes hands with everyone.

Bryce and Juli suddenly together.

RICK

Drinks everyone?

JULI

(to Bryce)

I'm here because my mom really  
wants to be here, but don't get any  
ideas that we're friends. We are  
not friends.

She walks away.

INT. LOSKI LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

ON BRYCE, by himself.

Robert and Chet are talking about perpetual motion machines.  
Juli is listening. Rick comes in with a tray of drinks,  
offers them around.

RICK

That yard of yours has come along.  
I told Chet here we ought to hire  
him out.

Is this a joke? Everyone smiles uncomfortably as Rick picks  
up the tray of canapes.

RICK

Now who's for hors d'oeuvres?

On Bryce, watching his father be a total phony.

INT. DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Everyone's at the table. The food is being passed around.  
Bryce is sitting across from Juli.

RICK

So guys, you're seniors this year.

MATT AND MIKE

Amen.

RICK

Amen? In like you're glad school's  
almost over?

MIKE

The regurgitation gets to you after  
while.

RICK

Isn't that funny? High school was  
probably the best time of my life.

MIKE

Seriously, Dude. It's so bad.

Trina shoots Mike and Matt a look.

MATT

Well it is, Mom. It's that whole  
robotron attitude of education --  
confine, confute, conform.

(re the food: lets the  
word roll off his tongue)

So this is risotto. No wonder it's  
famous.

RICK  
(to Matt and Mike)  
So you're not thinking of college?

ON BRYCE, his father is really embarrassing him. He looks over at Juli. Juli looks up from her plate, sees Bryce looking at her, looks quickly back down again.

MIKE  
I'm applying early admission to  
Brown and Mark's hoping for U Dub --

RICK  
Really?

MIKE  
But we'll probably give the music  
thing a shot first.

RICK  
Oh, the music thing.

LYNETTA  
Dad, your sarcasm is not  
appreciated.

RICK  
(to Robert)  
How do you feel about that, Robert?

ROBERT  
I learned a long time ago that I  
have very little power over my  
children. So if they want to try  
the music thing, they try the music  
thing --

BRYCE  
The band's really good, Dad.

RICK  
I'm sure they are.

BRYCE  
No they are. Sometimes they remind  
me of Husker Du, sort of indie rock  
but you can't really put them in a  
category --

On Mike and Matt, pleased.

On Juli. She can't help liking Bryce a little.

BRYCE  
(to Lynetta)  
Where's the CD?

He stands.

INT. SAME SCENE - A MINUTE LATER

Bryce sticks a CD in Rick's elaborate stereo system, hits play and cranks up the volume.

BLASTING INTO THE ROOM: Matt and Mike's music. Lynetta starts dancing and singing along to a Mystery Pisser song.

Everyone listens to the song, and Lynetta goes wild, dancing. The song ends. Lynetta grins at everyone and punches the CD out of the stereo.

MIKE  
It's okay if you don't like it but  
it's what we do.

LYNETTA  
I could listen to it again and  
again and again. It's great.

CHET  
You must write down the lyrics for  
me.

RICK  
Just one song?

MATT  
We've written a ton of songs,  
there's just three on the demo.

RICK  
You have a demo? Demos are  
expensive. Studio time's  
expensive. I know ...

PATSY  
When Rick and I met, he was playing  
in a band --

Lynetta chokes on her water and has to be patted on the back.

LYNETTA  
Dad? You were in a band? What'd  
you play? Clarinet?

She cracks herself up.

PATSY

No, honey, your father played guitar.

LYNETTA

Get out of here.

RICK

Country.

MATT AND MIKE

Dude! Total respect, man.

RICK

And when our band tried to get a demo made, it was astronomically expensive. So how'd you afford it?

MATT

We found this guy on the Internet --

MIKE

He was blowing out his old analog gear for digital.

CHET

Digital is weak, don't you think? You lose too much of the waveform.

Everyone stares at Chet.

MIKE

Right.

TRINA

They've been saving pennies since they were twelve.

MIKE

(to Rick)

You still play? We could lay down some of your tunes if you want?

RICK

No thanks. That's not me anymore.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE

The Bakers are leaving. Matt and Mike are carrying home the left-over pie plates with some left-over pie. Lots of good-byes and hugs and thanks.

Juli says goodbye to everyone. Chet gives her a big hug and then she's faced with Bryce. They stare at each other.

BRYCE & JULI  
(at the same time)  
I'm sorry.

They're embarrassed.

JULI  
I shouldn't have said that about not being friends. Your mom made such a nice dinner.

BRYCE  
I shouldn't have said anything about your house, I mean, it's your house, it was really rude, and I didn't realize why it was such a mess.

Juli looks at him, puzzled.

BRYCE (CONT'D)  
I mean, your Uncle.

JULI  
My Uncle?

BRYCE  
Because you know, it costs so much where he's staying and you couldn't afford to keep the yard up.

JULI  
What?

BRYCE  
Because of Greenhaven and everything.

JULI  
Oh man, oh man, that is so completely --

She's almost inarticulate --

BRYCE

What did I do now?

JULI

That's not the reason we didn't keep the yard up. We don't believe in things being ... all perfect and manicured ...

BRYCE

Hey, I didn't mean anything. I can't believe it, we're right back where we were, doesn't matter what I say --

JULI

You just don't get it. You are never going to get it.

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Robert, Trina, Matt, Mike and Juli finishing the pies.

MIKE

Intrinsically limited genes.

MATT

Nothing much you can do about it.

JULI

Complete jerk.

MIKE

He was really grilling us.

JULI

I'm not talking about Mr. Loski.  
I'm talking about Bryce.  
(trying to figure it out)  
Chet must have said something about Uncle David being here. And then Bryce figured out this stupid explanation...

ROBERT

Maybe Chet got confused.

JULI

Not possible. Chet would never ever come up with anything like that. It's Bryce. Aaaaaaah.

MATT  
Hey, he compared us to Husker Du.

MIKE  
Yeah.

TRINA  
Aren't you being a little hard on  
him?

JULI  
No.

A look among family members.

JULI  
What?

MATT  
You used to like him.

JULI  
I was wrong, okay? But now I'm  
right.

TRINA  
I feel sorry for Bryce. Having a  
father like that.

JULI  
Bryce is exactly like his dad.

ROBERT  
You sure of that?

MATT  
Of course she is.

MIKE  
She's sure of everything.

JULI  
I am. What's wrong with that?

ROBERT  
Nothing. Just checking.

MIKE  
(looking at his own dad)  
Not everyone's lucky like us. In  
the Dad area.

Tears well in Robert's eyes.

TRINA  
Who wants milk?

MATT  
Just thinking that.

Juli goes over to hug her father. Matt and Mike come in for a four-way hug as Trina gets the milk.

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - SAME TIME

As the Loskis clean up from dinner.

CHEET  
That was a delicious dinner, Patsy.

PATSY  
Thanks, Dad. It was fun, wasn't it? Those boys were nothing like what I expected. Matt and ...

LYNETTA  
Mike.

Rick comes into the kitchen with some coffee cups.

RICK  
They're probably drug dealers --

LYNETTA  
What?

RICK  
No other way they could afford that recording gear. "Saving pennies" -- Trina and Robert are out to lunch if they buy that story --

LYNETTA  
They don't take drugs.

BRYCE  
They don't, Dad.

RICK  
I know musicians.

LYNETTA  
You don't know anything, Dad, but you never shut up. You're an asshole.

A silence.

Rick slaps her, across the cheek.

Lynetta is stunned.

LYNETTA

You hit me? You hit me?

She runs from the room upstairs.

LYNETTA

I don't believe it.

Her door slams upstairs.

PATSY

Rick, how could you?

RICK

Did you hear what she said to me?  
My own daughter. My own daughter  
called me an asshole.

On Chet. He moves out of the room.

PATSY

Well I don't blame her. What right  
do you have to judge people like  
that?

RICK

Bryce, go on up to your room --

PATSY

He doesn't have go anywhere.

She walks out of the kitchen and starts upstairs.

PATSY

(shouting from the stairs)  
Just because you couldn't afford to  
record a song 200 years ago, you  
think anyone who can is a drug  
dealer? I just knew you'd manage  
to ruin everything tonight.

She slams her bedroom door.

Rick looks at Bryce. Together again.

RICK

Your mother and her dinner parties.

BRYCE  
They're not drug dealers.

RICK  
Fine.

BRYCE  
And I don't get that you hit  
Lynetta. I don't get that.

RICK  
Well I was mad.

Bryce walks out of the kitchen, leaving Rick.

A beat.

Bryce walks back into the kitchen.

BRYCE  
You want everyone to be just like  
you. You can't stand it when  
people aren't just like you.  
Everybody isn't just like you.

RICK  
Exactly. Which is why this whole  
evening was such a stupid idea.

Rick is furious. He picks up a platter from the counter and  
hurls it at the wall.

It shatters. Shards on the floor, food everywhere.

BRYCE  
Big mess, Dad.

Bryce walks out of the kitchen, passing Patsy, who's coming  
back.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Bryce closes the door to his bedroom.

Lynetta is crying in the room next door.

His parents are shouting downstairs.

He sits down.

Hold on Bryce.

BRYCE (V.O.)

And now for some good news. It will probably not surprise you to hear that I was elected basket boy.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

As Bryce comes up the steps to the school, he passes a gaggle of girls. "Congratulations, Bryce." "Congratulations."

INT. SCHOOL - DAY - BULLETIN BOARD

The names of the twenty basket boys are posted on a bulletin board.

There's Bryce's name. Darla is standing there reading it with two friends, LIZ and MACY as Juli comes up.

DARLA

Juli, Bryce is on the list --

Juli looks at the list.

JULI

Like I care.

MACY

Shelly is holding a bake sale to raise money to bid for him --

JULI

Is that true?

DARLA

No, it's just a joke.

LIZ

Jon Turlock? How did he get on this list? Who do you suppose voted for him?

JULI

I did. He's nice.

MACY

Well I guess you better bid for him --

JULI

I'm not bidding on anyone.

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - DAY

Patsy mixes mayo into chicken salad as Bryce sits there.

PATSY

Do you think I should prepare this chicken salad as a sandwich or just as a salad?

(answering her own question)

Sandwich. Lettuce and tomatoes? Yes or no, Bryce?

BRYCE

No.

PATSY

Yes.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Mom was so into it.

PATSY

Pickles. Potato chips. Cole slaw.

BRYCE (V.O.)

She was just so thrilled that maybe her son was going to get auctioned off to the highest bidder.

There's a carrot cake.

PATSY

And of course my famous carrot cake.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Which wasn't famous.

Patsy starts to pack the lunch into a straw basket.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I didn't want to break the news to my mom, but no one cares what's in the lunch. It wasn't like girls were bidding on the basket. When you got right down to it, this was a meat market.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce comes out of his house, carrying his basket. He's with Patsy. They get into the van.

As the van pulls away, Juli comes out of her house on her bicycle.

She starts down the block.

MRS. STUEBY  
(waving)  
Juli --

She hurries to stop Juli. Juli stops.

JULI  
Hi, Mrs. Stueby.

In Mrs. Stueby's house, Juli sees Chet at the breakfast table. He waves at her. She's a little startled, but she waves back.

Mrs. Stueby hands her a wad of bills.

MRS. STUEBY  
Here, dear. Take this. I'm so sorry it's taken me this long to get it to you. I keep missing you in the mornings. Eighteen dollars exactly.

JULI  
That's okay, you don't have to pay me for the eggs.

She stuffs the cash into Juli's pocket.

MRS. STUEBY  
No arguments. I owe you for weeks. Take the money and go get yourself a rooster.

JULI  
A rooster?

MRS. STUEBY  
You need a rooster. The chickens aren't laying enough.

She goes back to her house.

JULI  
But I don't want a rooster --

MRS. STUEBY  
Everyone should have a rooster.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Bryce, mortified, is carrying his basket down the hall.

GARRETT  
Don't you look cute?

BRYCE  
You're bitter, admit it.

GARRETT  
Shelly and Miranda are fighting  
over you. They're having a knock  
down drag out. The two hottest  
girls in the class --

Shelly Stalls comes around the corner with Miranda. They  
both screech with excitement when they see him.

SHELLY  
Money, honey. Yes!

MIRANDA  
You're all mine, baby.

BRYCE  
I'm not worth it, I'm really not.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

All the basket boys are seated on stage. Everyone in the  
audience is whistling and hooting.

There's a banner over the stage that says something like:  
Redmond Booster Club.

In the audience we see Juli sitting with Darla.

MRS. MCCLURE, head of the Booster club, is at the podium.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Welcome to the twenty-fifth annual  
Basket Boy Auction! Let me just  
remind you -- this is a civilized  
proceeding.

(MORE)

MRS. MCCLURE (cont'd)  
No whistling, catcalls or other  
degrading behavior will be  
tolerated --

There's another immediate outbreak of whistling and catcalls  
but Mrs. McClure takes it all in good humor.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Minimum bid is ten dollars, and of  
course the sky's the limit. As you  
know, the winners and their basket  
boys have the rest of the school  
day off. All right then! Our  
first basket has been brought by  
Jeffrey Bishop.

JEFFREY BISHOP stands up.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Step right up, Jeffrey. Don't be  
shy.

(reading from an index  
card)

Jeffrey has brought a scrumptious  
lunch consisting of tuna salad  
sandwiches, oriental noodles, baby  
grapes, iced tea and fortune  
cookies. All right then. Do I  
hear ten?

The bidding begins.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I was Basket Boy number nine.  
Which meant I had to wait on stage  
while nearly half the guys got  
auctioned off. Minimum bid, ten  
bucks. And if nobody bid, a  
teacher was secretly assigned to  
bid on you. Yes, friends, the  
possibilities for mortification  
were endless.

As TIM PELLO is being auctioned off.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Tim Pello was basket boy number  
five, and his mom actually bid on  
him.

We see MRS. PELLO jumping up and down in the audience.

MRS. PELLO  
Twenty! I'll give you twenty!

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Although luckily Tim was saved from  
everlasting humiliation by Kelly  
Ann Trott, who bid twenty-two fifty  
for his gourmet lunch of cold Big  
Macs.

A montage of two or three more Basket boys being auctioned  
off, with girls in the audience shouting bids that range from  
about fifteen to twenty-five dollars.

Jon Trulock gets up to be auctioned off. Mrs. McClure is  
reading the contents of his basket lunch.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Jon Trulock was all that stood  
between me and the auction block.

MRS. MCCLURE  
(reading from the index  
card)  
-- Do I hear ten?

BRYCE (V.O.)  
-- and it took me a second to  
realize no one was bidding on him --

On Juli and Darla.

JULI  
What's happening?

DARLA  
No one's bidding.

MRS. MCCLURE  
This lunch is delicious. There are  
strawberry tarts in it.

JULI  
Poor Jon. This is all my fault. I  
voted for him.

DARLA  
You can't be the only one who did --

JULI  
But I feel terrible. He's so nice.

Juli takes her money out of her pocket and counts it. Her  
hand shoots into the air.

JULI  
Ten.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Ten! Did I hear ten!

JULI  
(to Darla)  
Say twelve!

DARLA  
What?

JULI  
Don't worry. I'll outbid you.

DARLA  
Twelve!

JULI  
Fifteen.

DARLA  
Sixteen!

JULI  
I've only got fifteen.

DARLA  
Is that true?

JULI  
No.  
(raising her hand to bid  
again)  
Eighteen.  
(to Darla)  
But that's really all I've got.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Eighteen going once, going twice.  
Sold! For eighteen dollars.

On Bryce. Stunned.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I couldn't believe it.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Step right up, Bryce Loski. Don't  
be shy!

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I felt like I'd been slugged. Did  
Juli like Jon?

He steps up. The bidding begins immediately -- before Mrs. McClure even begins to list what's in Bryce's basket.

SHELLY  
Ten!

MRS. MCCLURE  
Whoa! You don't even know what's  
in this basket.

SHELLY  
I don't care!

On Miranda Humes.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
Everything started to go crazy, but  
I wasn't even there. I just  
couldn't believe it. Juli bid on  
Jon. How was it possible?

MIRANDA  
Twenty.

SHELLY  
Thirty.

Everyone in the audience reacting.

MIRANDA  
Forty-five.

SHELLY  
Fifty!

MRS. MCCLURE  
Wow! This is certainly impressive.  
Bryce, this is really something --

BRYCE (V.O.)  
It was really something. It was  
awful. It was even more  
embarrassing than selling for  
twelve dollars.

The kids are now going "Bryce, Bryce, Bryce, Bryce" as the bidding continues up. Sixty. Seventy-five.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
And then suddenly, when I thought  
it couldn't get any worse, it did.  
Jenny Atkinson put in a bid.

JENNY ATKINSON, a very tall girl in a basketball jersey  
stands up.

JENNY  
One hundred dollars!

On Juli and Darla, amazed.

DARLA  
Good thing you weren't interested  
in bidding on Bryce.

JULI  
I know. God.

MRS. MCCLURE  
Well! This is an all-time record.  
And such a generous donation to the  
Boosters.

On Bryce, ready to die.

GARRETT  
Bryce! You rule!

On Shelly and Miranda, now standing together.

SHELLY  
One twenty-two fifty --

MIRANDA  
We'll give one twenty-two fifty --

SHELLY  
The two of us --

MRS. MCCLURE  
You're pooling your resources?

SHELLY  
Yes.

Everyone looks over at Jenny.

She's out of the bidding.

MRS. MCCLURE

Well! Amazing! Sold to these two beautiful young ladies for an all-time record of one hundred twenty two dollars and fifty cents.

A huge cheer goes up from the audience.

INT. MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM - LATER - DAY

The basket couples parade into the Multi-Purpose room and find tables. Juli and Jon walk to a table, sit down and start talking.

JULI (V.O.)

It was a little strange meeting up with Jon and walking to the Multi-Purpose room for lunch, but I think he was grateful I'd bid, so by the time we got situated at the table, I wasn't feeling awkward or silly. It was just lunch.

Bryce enters escorted by Shelly and Miranda, one on each side.

BRYCE (V.O.)

The whole thing was demented.

Shelly and Miranda are jumping around, waving at everyone.

BRYCE (V.O.)

-- Shelly and Miranda were acting like they'd won the lottery.

Shelly and Miranda escort Bryce to a table, dive into Bryce's basket, divide things up, fight over them, yak at Bryce.

JULI (V.O.)

It would have been easier if I hadn't been seated in direct view of Bryce and his little harem.

(beat)

But I did my best to ignore them.

She turns her focus more intensely on Jon, smiles at him.

Bryce looks across the cafeteria --

BRYCE (V.O.)

Then I saw Juli. She was looking at Jon, her eyes all sparkly and laughing. What was she laughing at?

ON JULI, listening to Jon.

JULI (V.O.)

Jon told me a really funny story about building a radio-controlled airplane from scratch and practically setting his basement on fire --

Back to Bryce:

BRYCE (V.O.)

And meanwhile Shelly and Miranda are talking about suntans and how important it is to tan evenly.

Juli laughs at something Jon says.

Bryce looks back over at her.

BRYCE (V.O.)

How could she sit there and look so beautiful?

Shelly and Miranda notice that Bryce isn't paying attention.

BRYCE (V.O.)

And so happy?

Shelly grabs Bryce's arm.

SHELLY

Bryce, are you all right? You look like you're possessed or something.

MIRANDA

What are you staring at?

BRYCE

(staring at Juli)  
Nothing.

Miranda twists around to see what Bryce is looking at --

CLOSE ON JULI -- looking at Jon.

Bryce, almost in a daze, gets up from the table. And heads toward Juli.

SHELLY

Bryce?

MIRANDA

Where are you going?

Shelly and Miranda stare.

JULI (V.O.)

Suddenly I realize Bryce was heading toward me.

BRYCE (V.O.)

It was like an invisible force was pulling me toward her --

JULI (V.O.)

And he grabbed my hand --

Bryce grabs Juli's hand and drags her away.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I grabbed her hand --

JULI

(to Bryce, confused)

Hey --

JULI

What is it? What are you doing?

On Juli and Bryce, together, in the middle of the cafeteria.

BRYCE

(quietly)

Do you like him?

JULI

Who?

BRYCE

Jon.

JULI

Of course I like him --

BRYCE

(intense)

I mean "like" him?

Bryce takes her other hand.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I took her other hand.

JULI (V.O.)  
He took my other hand.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
It was like a compulsion or  
something --

JULI (V.O.)  
I just let him. I felt completely  
helpless.

JULI  
(to Bryce re: Jon)  
Well, no, I like him, but not like  
that --

BRYCE (V.O.)  
No. She said, No!  
(beat)  
My heart was pounding.

On Bryce looking into Juli's eyes.

JULI (V.O.)  
He was looking into my eyes --

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I was looking straight at her --

He pulls her toward him.

JULI (V.O.)  
...and then he was pulling me  
toward him ...

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I pulled her toward me ...

And leans in to kiss her.

JULI  
He was going to kiss me ...

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I had to kiss her. I didn't care  
who saw.

JULI (V.O.)  
I couldn't believe it. He was  
going to kiss me. I'd been waiting  
for this kiss most of my life and  
he was going to do it in front of  
everyone in the Multi-Purpose room?  
I panicked. I just panicked.

Everyone is looking at them.

Juli breaks away and runs out of the cafeteria.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
She ran away from me.

JULI (V.O.)  
I ran.

He watches her go. All eyes on him.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
She ran away like I was  
contaminated. And everyone was  
looking at me like I'd blown my  
entire circuit board.

ON EVERYONE, staring at Bryce.

SHELLY  
I want my money back, Bryce Loski.

MIRANDA  
Have you flipped?

BRYCE  
Yes. I have. I've flipped.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Juli races home on her bicycle.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce runs home.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
I completely flipped. There was  
only one thing in my head and that  
was Juli Baker. How she just  
glowed.

(MORE)

BRYCE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
How different she was from  
everybody else, but in a good way.  
She made them all seem ordinary.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Juli pulls in front of her bike and leaps off.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Trina is in the den, at her computer, as the front door slams shut and Juli runs upstairs. Her bedroom door shuts with a bang.

Trina gets up.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - DAY

As Trina opens the door.

Juli is lying face down on her bed.

JULI  
He tried to kiss me.

TRINA  
Who did?

JULI  
Bryce.

TRINA  
Oh. Bryce.

Trina sits on the edge of the bed.

JULI  
It was totally humiliating. In  
front of everyone. And he'd just  
been sold at auction for \$122.50 --

TRINA  
Not to you, I hope. That's much  
too much to pay for a man --

JULI  
To Shelly and Miranda and I was  
having lunch with Jon Trulock, who  
I bid on because I felt so bad for  
him, and then Bryce came over to me  
and tried to kiss me.

The doorbell rings.

JULI

Oh my god! That's probably him.  
Don't get it! Whatever you do!

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Bryce is ringing the doorbell.

No answer.

He bangs on the door.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trina peeks out the window.

TRINA'S POV

As Bryce leaves to cross the street to his house.

TRINA

He's leaving.

He passes Juli's bike, looks back at the Baker house.

TRINA

It's not going to be easy to  
pretend you don't live here.

JULI

I know, I know!

TRINA

We're not moving, okay?

JULI

What am I going to do?

TRINA

I don't know. You used to like  
him.

JULI

Yes but I don't like him any more.  
And last Friday night was the  
clincher.

TRINA

Absolutely. What about tea?

JULI  
Tea. Okay.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

As Trina puts the kettle on, Juli paces back and forth.

JULI  
I mean, I was over him. Totally  
over him.

TRINA  
I know.

The phone rings.

TRINA  
It's probably your dad.  
(answering)  
Hello. Hello, Bryce.

On Juli, frantically shaking her head no.

TRINA  
She is ... not available. I'm  
sorry. I will absolutely tell her  
you called.

She hangs up.

JULI  
Calling me? Now he's calling me?  
I've lived across the street from  
him for five years and he's never  
once called me.

Trina starts to smile.

JULI  
This is not funny. I could end up  
like Mrs. Loski.

TRINA  
I don't think so.

JULI  
Why not?

TRINA

Because Bryce is not his father.  
And by the way, Patsy's having a  
very hard time -- she's been over a  
couple of times this week to talk  
things over. I'm giving you  
peppermint.

She hands Juli a cup of tea.

TRINA (CONT'D)

My advice to you is, don't speak to  
Bryce ever again --

JULI

I'm not going to. Ever.

TRINA

Good. Because you might turn out  
to be wrong about him. And then  
you might have to marry him.

JULI

Mom! I'm only thirteen.

TRINA

That's my point, honey. This is  
not about marrying the boy. Why  
don't you listen to what he has to  
say? Don't be so sure about him.  
People change. Especially when  
they're young.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - SAME TIME

Bryce, worked up into a frenzy, is pacing in front of his  
grandfather, who is waiting patiently. Bryce stops pacing.

BRYCE

I can't tell you.

CHET

Fine. Don't tell me.

BRYCE

I tried to kiss her at that stupid  
Basket Boy lunch. I tried to kiss  
her.

His grandfather starts to smile.

CHET

You did?

BRYCE

I was like possessed. But she ran away. She won't talk to me.

CHET

Maybe she thinks it's all a little sudden.

BRYCE

But it's not.

CHET

It's not?

BRYCE

No. I mean ... it all started with that dumb newspaper article which I finally read and ... I don't know, I've been crazy ever since. She doesn't look the same, she doesn't sound the same, she's just ... different.

CHET

Maybe you're the one who's different.

BRYCE

But she doesn't know I'm different! How's she going to know? She'll never know.

CHET

Big problem.

BRYCE

I need a grand gesture. That's what I need. A grand gesture. What was yours, you know, with Grandma? What'd you do?

CHET

I gave her a key chain that said "I love Chet" on it.

BRYCE

You're kidding.

CHET

I am kidding. I did give her a key chain that said "I love Chet," but that wasn't the grand gesture. I made her a bookshelf. Renee loved books. She was a book-a-night girl. When you talked to her and she was reading, she didn't hear a thing you said. And all her books were just stacked up everywhere, or on terrible shelves made of raw planks and bricks. So I took a class, and I learned all about dowels --

BRYCE

Dowels --

CHET

And I made her a bookshelf with not one nail in it. It was pine. I knew what I had to do. The idea popped into my head in a second and I couldn't believe it took even a second, it was so obvious.

On Bryce. He knows what he has to do.

EXT. JULI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bryce shows up in Juli's front yard with a shovel and starts digging.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I had to ask Juli's dad for permission. I mean you can't just dig a giant hole in someone's front yard without getting permission.

A LITTLE LATER

The hole is dug. Bryce is dirty and sweating. There's a big pile of dirt and a bag of fertilizer.

BRYCE (V.O.)

And thank god for the twinkle lights or I wouldn't have been able to see a thing.

LATER: Bryce pushes a wheelbarrow, carrying a baby sycamore tree, its roots all wrapped in burlap, from his backyard over to Juli's.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
It took me half the night and I was  
worried the whole time that Juli  
would wake up --

LATER:

The tree is in the hole. Bryce is shoveling dirt around the  
roots...

BRYCE  
But luck was on my side.

CUT TO:

THE SUN STARTING TO RISE ...

INT. BAKER HOUSE - MORNING

Juli comes downstairs.

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Mike and Juli's parents are in the kitchen. Matt  
and Mike look at each other in a really goofy way. Trina  
covers her mouth to keep from smiling. Robert buries his  
face in the newspaper.

JULI  
What's going on?

Everyone shrugs.

JULI  
What is it?

They all look at each other.

ROBERT  
You might want to take a look out  
front --

Matt and Mike nod. Trina is bursting.

MATT  
Out front.

MIKE  
Front yard.

MATT

Where to be.

Juli starts out of the room.

The family all stands to watch her.

INT. BAKER HOUSE ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Julie walks to the front door.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

As Juli comes out the front door.

In the yard is the sycamore tree Bryce planted. Hanging on it, by a ribbon, is a card.

JULI (V.O.)

I knew the minute I saw it, from the shape of the leaves, from the texture of the trunk, that it was a sycamore tree.

(continued)

As Juli looks at the card and we see Bryce's handwriting: "For Juli from Bryce."

On Juli as she starts to tear up for moment, wipes her eyes.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

I guess there are times in your life when you realize that you've been absolutely wrong about someone, and it makes you so happy that you were wrong, so blissfully and amazingly happy you can't even believe it --

(continued)

She looks over at Bryce's house.

He's in the window. He waves.

She waves back.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

I mean, look at that tree. Some day it is going to be the most amazing, magnificent tree.

(continued)

Juli starts to walk toward Bryce's house.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)  
A hundred years from now, it'll be  
miles in the air.  
(continued)

Bryce comes out the front door of his house and walks toward Juli.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)  
And some day I bet that some kid  
will climb it, and it will change  
her life, the way it changed mine.

Bryce and Juli meet in the middle of the street.

They lean toward each other to kiss.

Just before they actually kiss, crane up to the light.

THE LIGHT FILLS THE FRAME

HOLD ON THE LIGHT

And then, magically:

Branches grow up into the frame from the bottom, spindly at first, getting stronger and leafier and more bountiful until the branches of the sycamore tree fills the frame.

PULL BACK ...

MANY YEARS IN THE FUTURE ...

The sycamore is now fully grown. A YOUNG GIRL begins to climb the tree. We see flashes of her as she climbs to the top, and sunshine streaks through the branches ...

FADE OUT.