

Under 'S' for Sucker

by

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Inspired by a True Story

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FADE IN:

EXT. DRIVEWAY/INT. CAR - DAY

Late 1970's - Autumn, residential neighborhood in a small Midwest town.

TIM REESE (14), average height, muscular with dark hair, black t-shirt, jeans, and BALL CAP, heaves a stuffed green GARBAGE BAG into the back of an older SEDAN (stick shift) with Children Services logo on the doors.

Tim gets in the passenger side and slams the door. The driver, MR. HAMILTON (30's) wearing a suit and a Children Services ID BADGE, starts the car and backs out of the driveway. Tim slouches in the seat. Neither speak.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY (SAME TIME)

Rural High School

MICKEY MCALLISTER (14), short blonde hair, average build, walks with small group of football players leaving the practice field. Mickey is the center of attention.

CURT (14), taller, heavier, listens to Mickey as he tells his story. Mickey enjoys their attention and sympathy.

MICKEY

This one foster kid stole our car.

CURT

Stole your car?

MICKEY

With a bunch of our Christmas presents in it. He was only 15 and didn't even have a license. And then the last kid set our shed on fire.

Teammates listen, some shocked, some apathetic.

MICKEY (CONT)

So now we're getting some new kid.

CURT

Are your parents nuts?

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Mr. Hamilton drives outside the city limits. He glances back

and forth between Tim and the road. Tim, obviously angry, pulls his ball cap down over his face.

TIM
It's not fair. I'm sick of it.

Tim kicks the dashboard.

MR. HAMILTON
Take it easy.

Tim sits up, slowly starts rocking back and forth.

TIM
I don't see why I gotta move again.

MR. HAMILTON
You might consider your part in it.

TIM
I didn't do nothin'.

MR. HAMILTON
I'm not blaming you completely, but people don't like their own kids beat up by their foster kids.

TIM
But they start it, and I just defend myself. And then I get all the blame and get kicked out.

MR. HAMILTON
You think they're going to move their own kid out?

INT. VAN - DAY - TRAVELING

Mickey rides in the front of an old FORD VAN while brother, RYAN (17) well-built, short brown hair, dressed in football jersey, drives alongside CORN FIELDS.

MICKEY
I can't believe Mom and Dad. They promised. No more foster kids.

Mickey kicks the dashboard.

RYAN
(also upset but resigned)
She said it's just an emergency

placement. They had no other home for him. A few days, 30 at the most.

MICKEY

Yeah, Mom to the rescue.

RYAN

Don't you know? Children's Services has her name filed under "S."

MICKEY

Under "S"?

RYAN

Under "S" for Sucker!

They laugh a resigned kind of laugh.

MICKEY

It still stinks.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

An anxious Tim continues to rock. Mr. Hamilton glances at him and drums his fingers on the steering wheel.

TIM

I don't want another home. I wanna live with my mom.

MR. HAMILTON

I'm sorry, but you're old enough to understand. She can't take care of herself, let alone you.

TIM

She can do better than you guys.

MR. HAMILTON

The court doesn't think so.

TIM

So, I get shipped around like a recycled piece of junk.

MR. HAMILTON

The Monroe's wanted you out, now! We're lucky the McAllister's said yes.

TIM

I don't feel lucky.

EXT. FARMHOUSE DRIVEWAY AND PORCH - DAY

Mr. Hamilton pulls into the long lane of a nice house surrounded by farmland. He gets out and opens Tim's door. Tim gets out slowly. Mr. Hamilton drags the garbage bag out of the back seat of the car and hands it to Tim.

Tim steps onto the porch, trips but doesn't fall. A big GOLDEN RETRIEVER/DINK bounds out the kitchen door and jumps on Tim. The foster mother, LINDA MCALLISTER, late-30's, steps onto the porch.

LINDA
Dink! Stop it. Down!

She tries to grab the dog, but he jumps all over Tim.

LINDA
Mickey, come get the dog.

Mickey steps outside, grabs Dink by his collar and holds him back while Mr. Hamilton and Linda go into the house. Tim, head down, follows with his garbage bag. Neither boy looks directly at the other. Dink follows.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tim hangs by the kitchen door while Mr. Hamilton, Linda, Mickey, Ryan, BILL MCALLISTER, late 30's, BILLY, age 10, and AMY, age 8, gather around the large kitchen table.

MR. HAMILTON
Hi, everyone. I want you to meet Tim.
Tim, the McAllister's.

LINDA
Hi, Tim. Glad to meet you.

Tim, holding his garbage bag, looks down at his feet. Mickey eyeballs Ryan who shows no expression.

LINDA (CONT)
(Warm, understanding)
Tim, you can call me Linda. And this
is my husband, Bill.

They shake hands. Tim makes slight eye contact. Bill reaches for Tim's garbage bag, but Tim hangs on to it.

BILL
Hi, Tim. Good to meet you. Here, let

me help you with that.

Tim gives up his garbage bag, and Bill sets it on the floor at his own feet. Dink visits with everyone.

LINDA

And working our way down - Ryan, he's 17, a senior. Mickey, 14, is a freshman like you. And Billy, 10, is in fifth grade. And Amy, is 8 and in the third grade.

Kids all say hi and Tim mumbles hi back.

AMY

Do you have a sister?

TIM

No.

Amy struts a little, conscious of being the only girl.

BILLY

You're lucky.

People shift uneasily, not sure what to say.

BILL

Why don't you kids go outside and get acquainted? Shoot some hoops.

LINDA

Yes, that's a good idea. We've got some business to take care of.

Ryan and Mickey lead the way outside with Billy, Amy, and Dink close behind. Tim looks at his bag as if wanting to pick it up and bring with him. He leaves it on the floor.

BILL

(to Mr. Hamilton)

Here, have a seat.

The three pull up chairs to the kitchen table. Mr. Hamilton pulls out some paperwork.

MR. HAMILTON

If Tim causes any trouble, any fighting, then I will move him out. Right away. Your boys, especially Mickey, have put up with enough from

some of our previous placements.

LINDA

The last straw was Denny setting the shed on fire. Ryan and Mickey threatened to go to a foster home if we took any more kids in.

All three laugh.

MR. HAMILTON

You all put up with a lot, and we appreciate your patience. And your willingness to help us out here.

They all nod in agreement.

EXT. BASKETBALL AREA BY GARAGE - DAY (SAME TIME)

Ryan and Mickey shoot. Billy and Amy watch from the sideline of the makeshift basketball court on the driveway in front of the barn. Tim stands by, watching.

RYAN

Hey, Tim, you play?

Tim shrugs. Ryan pitches the basketball to Tim who hesitates but then joins them on the court. They take turns shooting and rebounding, playing easy.

Ryan goes in for a layup. Mickey and Tim stand aside. Ryan gets his own rebound and continues shooting.

MICKEY

You gonna go to Shawnee?

TIM

Where else?

Ryan sinks a three-pointer. He again gets his own rebound.

MICKEY

My mom said it'll just be a few days.

TIM

Still gotta go to school, don't I?

Ryan makes a layup. Mickey gets the loose ball. Mickey shoots but misses. Tim grabs the ball and dribbles while Ryan covers him. Billy and Amy sit in the grass.

BILLY
Amy, you want to look for frogs?

AMY
Not now.

Billy wanders off while Amy cheers everyone on. Mickey and Tim quit playing while Ryan practices layups.

MICKEY
You play football?

TIM
Yeah.

Tim fakes long passes with an imaginary football.

Ryan slams the basketball at Mickey, hard to his stomach. Tim grabs the loose ball, makes a layup. Boys all play hard until Mr. Hamilton waves Tim over to his car.

MR. HAMILTON
You're all set. See you in a week.

Mr. Hamilton gets in the car. Tim leans in the open window.

TIM
Do they know about me playing
football?

MR. HAMILTON
They're fine with it and so's the
coach. No worries.

The car backs down the lane, and Tim slowly returns to the court. Mickey keeps dribbling the ball.

MICKEY
Where did you play?

TIM
Jefferson.

MICKEY
Never heard of it.

TIM
You should've. We won all our games
and went to district.

Tim aggressively goes after the ball as Mickey dribbles. The

three boys play tough, especially Mickey and Tim.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Everyone's at dinner. Three large PIZZAS, a SALAD, and BREAD STICKS are on the table. Tim watches to see how things work in this house.

Bill waits for everyone to settle in and leads them in grace. Tim bows his head slightly.

BILL

Bless us, Lord. Thanks for this food to nourish our bodies. Thank you for all our many blessings. And thank you for bringing Tim to us.

Everyone except Mickey says Amen.

LINDA

Tim, I hope you like pizza. I figure everyone likes it.

Tim nods.

LINDA (CONT)

Well, help yourself and have some salad too, and bread sticks.

Tim piles the food on his plate.

BILL

I understand you'll be playing football while you're here.

TIM

(defensive)

Mr. Hamilton said it'd be okay.

BILL

Sure, and you'll be on the freshman team, with Mickey.

RYAN

(sarcastically, to Mickey)

How lucky.

Bill overhears and shoots both boys "the look" as Mickey smiles a huge fake smile.

BILL
What position do you play?

TIM
Running back.

BILL
Oh.

Mickey and Ryan exchange grimaces.

TIM
We won all our games except for the one when I got hurt and was out.

MICKEY
(speaking with his mouth full)
You said you won 'em all.

TIM
No, I didn't.

MICKEY
You did too.

BILL
(ignoring Mickey's comment)
What happened?

TIM
Got tackled. Almost broke my leg. Was out two games, and we lost them both.

Mickey shakes his head in disbelief.

BILL
You must be good. Team'll be glad to have you. Right, Mick?

Mickey chokes on his food. Ryan smirks. Everyone continues eating, dropping the subject.

INT. BARN - DAY

Ryan works on a mini-bike with parts strewn over the barn floor. Mickey sits on an old BALE of straw and watches.

RYAN
I still can't believe you crashed it into a tree.

MICKEY

It was an accident.

RYAN

I didn't think you did it on purpose.

Ryan picks up some parts but seems to be lost as what to do with them, where they go.

RYAN (CONT)

I hate to think of you ever driving.

MICKEY

If you'd give me a chance, I could probably fix it.

RYAN

I don't want you touching it. Never!

Mickey gets up and paces around the littered parts.

MICKEY

Maybe Tim's some kind of mechanic.

RYAN

I don't want him touching it either.

MICKEY

Do you think he's any good?

RYAN

At fixing mini-bikes?

MICKEY

No. Football.

Mickey picks up some parts and scrutinizes them but has no clue as to what they are and throws them back down.

RYAN

You better hope not. Hate to see you lose your spot.

MICKEY

No way. Anyways he was lying.

RYAN

He'll be gone in 30 days. Maybe sooner. If they find a home

MICKEY

But what if they don't find one?

RYAN

Face it. It's out of your control.

MICKEY

Maybe. Maybe not.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Billy and Amy lead Tim into Billy's FORT in the far end of the attic. Light passes through the cracks of the warped PLYWOOD PANELING Billy used for the fort's outside walls.

The sloping attic rafters force them to crawl in order to maneuver their way to the door of the fort. Dink follows.

BILLY

This is my fort. I never let Ryan or Mickey in.

AMY

They think it's stupid.

TIM

Looks pretty cool to me.

As they crawl along toward the fort, Tim's hand pushes through a hole in the floor.

TIM

What the?

BILLY

Oops, I forgot to warn you.

AMY

You okay?

TIM

Just a broken arm.

Inside the fort, they're able to stand. Tim admires Billy's drawings of dragons and space ships decorating the rafters and the walls. Tim flops on a lumpy old MATTRESS with Dink. Amy and Billy sit on an old rug on the floor.

AMY

How come you don't live with your own family?

BILLY
Amy! Don't be so nosey.

TIM
It's okay.

Tim pets Dink. Tim doesn't look up at Amy.

TIM (CONT)
My mom's real sick so she can't take
care of me.

AMY
Will she die?

BILLY
Amy!

TIM
We don't know. She could.

AMY
What's wrong with her?

TIM
Umm. She's got (beat) Metamusilitis.

AMY
What's that?

TIM
I don't know. It's real rare. No one's
ever heard of it.

Amy shakes her head sympathetically.

TIM (CONT)
I could get it too.

AMY
Is it catching?

Billy shoves Amy toward the door.

BILLY
Get outta here!

Amy looks back at Tim.

TIM
No one knows.

Amy leaves. Tim lies down on the mattress while Billy pitches wads of paper through a basketball hoop he had rigged up over a cardboard box. Tim closes his eyes.

BILLY

Watch this!

TIM

(shakes off his melancholy)

I'll take you on. I'll even give you a handicap.

BILLY

I'm not handicapped.

TIM

No, I give you an advantage because I'm older and bigger. You can stand closer to the basket.

BILLY

My brothers never do that.

Billy looks puzzled yet pleased at Tim who shows him where to shoot from. They play and have a great time.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tim, Billy, and Linda are in Mickey and Billy's upstairs bedroom with BUNK BEDS, a TWIN BED, and TWO DRESSERS. Billy reads a COMIC BOOK in the bottom bunk. Dink rotates jumping on bottom bunk and then the twin bed.

LINDA

(solicitous, to Tim)

You can use the top three drawers in this dresser. By the way, there's only one bathroom so everyone takes their shower in the evening. Makes it easier in the morning for school.

Tim drops his garbage bag of belongings next to his bed.

TIM

Okay.

LINDA

Another thing. There'll be days when Ryan can drive but mostly you'll be taking the school bus. It all depends on my schedule at work. Did I tell you

I work part time at the hospital? I can't remember.

TIM

Um, I think so. What time does the bus come?

LINDA

You older boys catch it at 7:05. Billy and Amy get it at 8:30.

Mickey enters after taking his shower. He ignores Tim wrestling with Dink on Tim's bed.

LINDA

Mickey, you be sure Tim gets whatever he needs.

MICKEY

(with attitude)

Sure, Mom.

LINDA

Tim, just ask Mickey if you need anything.

Tim digs a SMALL PLASTIC BAG and FRAMED PICTURE out of his garbage bag. Billy watches. Mickey does homework in his bottom bunk bed. Dink looks for attention from everyone.

BILLY

How come you don't have a suitcase?

TIM

No one ever gave me one.

Tim sets a candid PHOTO of his mother on the dresser. Her picture shows a thin woman with long brown hair.

BILLY

Is that your mom?

Mickey pretends to be reading but is listening.

TIM

Yeah.

BILLY

She looks nice.

TIM
 (looks wistfully at photo)
 Yeah.

BILLY
 What about your dad?

TIM
 I don't have one.

BILLY
 Is that why you're in foster care?

TIM
 Partly.

Tim takes a TOOTHBRUSH & DEODORANT out of the plastic bag.

TIM (CONT)
 Is it okay to take my shower now?

MICKEY
 Better check with Ryan.

Tim leaves.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

After his shower, Tim, wearing the same clothes as before, gets in bed. Billy climbs up into his bunk. The three boys settle down to sleep. Tim stares at the photo of his mother and listens nervously to the CRY of a COYOTE.

TIM
 (whispers, pats his bed)
 Dink, come here, boy.

Dink climbs in next to Tim who hugs him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Normal chaos with Ryan and Mickey eating breakfast, gathering books and gear. Linda packs lunches in brown lunch bags. Tim wears the same clothes. They notice he hasn't changed his clothes, but no one says anything.

LINDA
 Tim, you'll get used to us and this chaos. Want some cereal?

TIM

That's okay. I'm not hungry.

Tim, obviously nervous, fusses over the dog while the boys eat. Tim brushes dog hair off his black t-shirt.

TIM (CONT)

(embarrassed)

I had to leave so fast yesterday, I don't have any clean clothes.

LINDA

You look fine and when you get home, we'll do some laundry.

Mickey overhears. Ryan watches out window for the bus.

MICKEY

(whispers to Ryan)

Why did he have to leave his other home so fast?

RYAN

(ignoring question, yelling)

Bus is coming!

INT./EXT. KITCHEN/DRIVEWAY

Ryan and Mickey storm out the door and sprint down the lane. Tim follows slowly. Inside the kitchen, Dink scratches at the door. SCHOOL BUS stops for boys.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Ryan boards the bus and walks to the far back to sit with friends. Mickey starts to sit next to someone, but then slumps into an empty seat and motions to Tim to join him.

When the bus stops for more students, some say hi to Mickey and acknowledge Tim - as a new kid. Tim stares out the window at the acres of yellowing corn lined up in straight rows. Mickey ignores Tim.

TIM

How long's the ride?

MICKEY

Too long.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Mickey catches up with Curt, his best friend. Students mill around. Mickey and Curt walk to their classroom.

CURT

Did he come? Your new brother?

MICKEY

(adamantly)
Foster brother.

CURT

I don't get it. How come you get these kids?

MICKEY

I don't get 'em. My parents do. Mainly my mom.

CURT

But why?

MICKEY

Something about giving a home to the homeless.

CURT

Like they say in church?

MICKEY

Yeah, and when Children Services calls, she says okay. Every time.

Mickey shakes his head and closes his eyes in dismay.

MICKEY (CONT)

After that last kid set the shed on fire, we told her we'd go to a foster home if they took in any more kids.

CURT

(Shocked, Curt stops walking.)
Honest? You'd go to a foster home?

Mickey laughs at Curt's stupidity. They continue walking.

MICKEY

Foster care doesn't work like that. But we were making a statement. Ryan and me are sick of it.

CURT

Glad it's you and not me.

MICKEY

They promised it's an emergency placement. No more than 30 days.

CURT

Sounds like a prison sentence.

MICKEY

It feels like one.

They make their way around other students in the hall.

CURT

Where is he now?

MICKEY

In the office. Peterson's probably lecturing him on all the advantages here, and all the stupid rules.

CURT

What's what's-his-name like?

MICKEY

Tim? I don't know. I don't trust him. And, get this, he's gonna be on our - yours and my football team!

CURT

Can he play? Like we could use someone good.

MICKEY

Can't believe anything he says. He claims he's good, but who knows? Didn't even have to try out.

Both boys moan and laugh. Then Curt spots an announcement on a BULLETIN BOARD in the hall near the gymnasium and drags Mickey to it. Also on the bulletin board is a POSTER about the upcoming Homecoming Dance.

CURT

Basketball cheerleaders are posted.

The two boys examine the listing.

CURT
Know any of them?

MICKEY
Nah.

CURT
Me either. I don't know any cheerleaders.

MICKEY
Probably never will.

Curt shoves Mickey who still studies the list.

MICKEY (CONT)
I thought I might kinda know one, but guess she didn't make it.

CURT
Oh, yeah? Like who?

MICKEY
Colleen Shay. Outta my league. But really nice.

CURT
Too bad you don't get girls.

Mickey looks confused.

CURT (CONT)
Foster sisters.

Mickey playfully slugs Curt, and they walk into class.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

After class, Mickey and Curt worm their way through the crowded hall. Mickey spots Tim at the DRINKING FOUNTAIN. A Homecoming Dance poster is above the drinking fountain.

MICKEY
There he is. Tim.

CURT
Where?

MICKEY
Over there. By the water fountain.

CURT
In the black t-shirt?

MICKEY
Yeah. The one he came in.

Tim gets a drink and a girl stands near him. It becomes obvious they're together. When she turns in Mickey's direction, he sees it's COLLEEN SHAY, cute and smiling.

MICKEY (CONT)
I don't believe it.

Mickey ducks behind Curt as if to hide.

CURT
What? What?

MICKEY
The girl. The one with him.

CURT
Yeah, can't miss her.

MICKEY
That's Colleen.

CURT
The not-a-cheerleader one?

MICKEY
What's he doing with her?

Mickey grabs Curt and ducks around a corner before Tim or Colleen see him. Tim and Colleen walk away seeming to have a good time. Curt's on and off girlfriend, TRACY, serious with horn-rimmed glasses, bumps into Curt and Mickey.

TRACY
You two look like you're hiding from something. Or someone

CURT
Nah. Just late for class. See you at lunch.

INT. FOOTBALL FIELD HOUSE - DAY

COACH HUPP (50's) greets Tim and hands him a uniform.

COACH HUPP

I understand you may be leaving soon,
but I'm glad to give you a chance
while you're here. From what Mr.
Hamilton said, you're pretty good. And
we need all the help we can get.

TIM

(shyly)

Thanks.

Mickey and Curt in FOOTBALL UNIFORMS, sit on the bench and
put on their CLEATS. Other players mill around. Tim gets into
his uniform and sits next to Curt, away from Mickey.

CURT

So, you're Mick's new foster brother?

Curt nods toward Mickey who's examining his cleats. Teammates
mess around with equipment and each other. Tim glances at
Mickey and nods hello. Mickey nods back.

TIM

He told you about me?

CURT

Not much. Just that you're going to be
on our team.

TIM

Any objections?

CURT

Who me? No. I'm okay. What do you
play?

TIM

Running back. Some quarterback.

CURT

Running back? Same as Mick.

TIM

Gees.

Mickey gets up, stomps his feet, stretches.

MICKEY

Let's go.

Tim stays behind while Mickey and Curt leave. Tim's the last

one on the practice field, but he's fast and elusive.

INT. VAN - DAY - TRAVELING

Linda drives the boys home. Ryan in front, Tim and Mickey in the middle seat of the old van. Amy and Billy in the back. Lite rock MUSIC plays on the radio.

LINDA

(glances back at Tim)

How was your first day at school? Must be tough starting new.

TIM

I'm used to it. But they gave me a student guide. Never had one at any of the other schools.

Mickey quietly hits his head against the window.

AMY

What's a student guide?

TIM

Someone the office gives new kids so they don't get lost or mess up.

MICKEY

And you get Colleen.

TIM

How did you know? You know her?

Mickey shakes his head no and stares out the window. Amy takes it all in from her perch in the back seat.

LINDA

When's your next game, Mickey? (beat)
I mean you and Tim.

MICKEY

Tuesday, at home.

LINDA

I'll try to get off early.

LINDA

So, how was practice?

TIM

Good. I might start.

Ryan purposely turns the radio louder, but Linda turns it back down. No one talks until Ryan breaks the silence.

RYAN

I got a ride back for the game tonight
so I don't need the car.

MICKEY

You starting?

Ryan nods. Linda pulls into their driveway, Dink races alongside them and nearing the house, he cuts in front of the car. Linda hits the breaks and blows the horn.

LINDA

Darn that dog!

She pulls up near the front door while the dog barks his greeting. Everyone piles out of the van, pats the dog and goes into the house. Tim follows with Dink at his side.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

After a quick supper, McAllister family, except Ryan, gather their jackets for the home varsity football game.

BILL

(to Tim as they leave)
It'll be a tough game tonight.

Tim shrugs.

EXT. VARSITY FOOTBALL GAME - FRIDAY NIGHT

Mickey rushes to the top of the grandstand to sit with Curt and their friends. Tim stays with Linda, Bill, Billy, and Amy in the middle of the grandstand.

LINDA

(whispering to Bill)
I wish Mickey would have taken Tim
with him. He knows better.

BILL

Be grateful Mickey's civil to him at
all. We did promise we wouldn't take
any more kids.

LINDA

I know. I don't blame them but there's
such a need. After listening to Mr.

Hamilton, how could I say no? He's working double time to find another home for him.

BILL
And if he doesn't?

LINDA
How could we ever make him leave? He needs us. (beat) I'm sure Mickey and Ryan will adjust. Even be friends.

Linda looks over at Tim, sitting between Amy and Billy.

TIM
(looking uncomfortable)
I think I'll go look around.

LINDA
Maybe you can find Mickey.

Tim wanders around and when the game starts, he returns to sit with the family. At half time, the game is 0-0.

BILL
Ryan's doing pretty good.

LINDA
I'd enjoy it more if I didn't get so nervous for him.

AMY
Mom, can I get something to eat?

BILLY
Me too.

LINDA
Tim, how about taking them down to the concession stand? Would you mind?

TIM
Sure.

Bill pulls out his wallet and hands Tim some money.

BILL
Get me popcorn and a Dr. Pepper too.

LINDA
And something for yourself. Amy and

Billy can get what they want. Within reason.

AMY

Aw, Mom.

Tim, Billy, and Amy leave.

LINDA

I am worried about Mickey and how he's handling things with Tim.

BILL

He'll be alright.

LINDA

Probably. But it seems that every kid we get ends up as a problem for him.

BILL

(thoughtful, hesitant)

Maybe if we had taken younger kids.

LINDA

But they're desperate for homes for teenagers, especially boys.

BILL

Teenage boys--

LINDA

(interrupting)

Are a challenge. And Mickey makes a good target for their frustrations.

BILL

With Ryan older and stronger. And Billy and Amy so young.

LINDA

I feel for him but we're doing the right thing. It'll work out.

Tim, Billy, and Amy return with the SNACKS. The game starts back up. Tim stands and looks around.

TIM

I think I'll walk around.

BILL

Ah, Tim? My change?

TIM
Oh, yeah. Sorry.

Tim gives Bill the change. Tim starts down the steps and hears someone call him. Colleen and ELLIE, a cute redhead, sit across the aisle but up a few rows.

COLLEEN
Tim, Tim!

He looks up and sees Colleen and her friend. He steps up and scrunches down next to Colleen who's on the aisle.

COLLEEN (CONT)
Hi, Tim.

TIM
Hi.

Tim looks past Colleen and smiles at her friend.

COLLEEN
Tim, this is my friend, Ellie.

ELLIE
(flirtatious)
Hi, Tim.

A huge roar from the crowd interrupts them. The fans jump to their feet in a frenzy. The two girls cheer wildly as Shawnee scores the first touchdown of the game.

Tim watches Ellie from his crouched position on the steps. He wants to stay but chickens out. He leaves them and looks up into the grandstand. He sees Curt waving to him. He climbs to the top and joins Curt and Mickey.

EXT. GRANDSTAND - NIGHT

MICKEY
(to Curt)
What did you do that for?

CURT
Why not? He doesn't know anybody.
Except Colleen.

Curt laughs. Tim sits next to Curt, away from Mickey.

CURT
 (to Tim)
 Did you see? Ryan scored, right up the middle.

Curt slaps Mickey on the back.

CURT (CONT)
 Way to go, McAllister's!

Shawnee scores the extra point. Neither team scores again and Shawnee wins 7 to 0. Tim watches Mickey and friends celebrate, but he doesn't join them.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE WOODS NEAR CREEK - DAY

Saturday Tim and Mickey carry BROWN PAPER BAGS full of GROCERIES down their road to a wooded area. Dink follows.

TIM
 How come you bring him his groceries?

MICKEY
 He's old and blind and all the neighbors look after him.

TIM
 Why doesn't your mom just drop them off to him?

MICKEY
 There's no bridge over his creek and it's too long to drive around the other way. Anyways, I don't think she wants to go near his house.

TIM
 Why not?

MICKEY
 You'll see.

They climb over an old wooden fence. Dink burrows under a loose bottom board. Juggling their bags, they cross a shallow creek with stepping stones. Mickey crosses easily but Tim's foot slips into the water. Dink splashes around.

TIM
 (whining, complaining)
 Why doesn't he build a bridge?

Tim hops to shore, inspects his soggy shoe and walks on.

MICKEY

If you think this is bad, wait 'til
you see his house. And him.

TIM

What's wrong with him?

MICKEY

Weird. (beat) Carries a shotgun with
him all the time.

TIM

I thought you said he was blind.

MICKEY

He is.

As they walk through the field, sheep scatter and Dink playfully chases one. Mickey grins, aware of Tim's nervousness and the sound of Tim's SWISHING SHOE.

MICKEY (CONT)

He's got this bull. Biggest, meanest
thing anyone's ever seen. It almost
killed his brother. Gored him right in
the side.

TIM

Did he die?

MICKEY

Almost.

Tim scans the field and horizon.

TIM

Where is it now?

MICKEY

Up in the barn, or his pen.

EXT. OLD FARM HOUSE - DAY

They follow a rough path up the wooded hill. The two-story farm house is hidden behind overgrown bushes. Shutters dangle from the windows; wood siding is bare.

Mickey stumbles across the rotting wooden porch. An uncomfortable Tim stands at the broken gate. Mickey knocks on

the dirty, paint-chipped front door and waits.

MICKEY

Mr. Bollick! It's me, Mickey.

Mickey glances at Tim who clutches his bag of groceries. A dog barks loudly inside the house. Mickey peeks into a filthy window and knocks again.

MICKEY (CONT)

I can't believe he doesn't fall through these rotten boards.

TIM

Can't we just leave the stuff?

MICKEY

No way. He's always here. Why don't you look for him around back?

TIM

You crazy?

Mr. Bollick (70's), tall and heavy set with grey-matted hair and beard, wearing stained, worn overalls, opens the door. Tim gasps at the man half-raising a shotgun.

MICKEY

Mr. Bollick, it's me. Mickey. And Tim's with me. Tim, say hi.

TIM

Hi.

Mr. Bollick lowers his gun.

MR. BOLLICK

Got my groceries, huh? Good boys. Bring 'em on in.

A couple CHICKENS scramble out the kitchen door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mickey pushes DIRTY POTS aside on the kitchen table to make room for the groceries. Mr. Bollick taps his shotgun like a cane along the dirty aged linoleum floor.

MR. BOLLICK

I got some canning jars around here somewhere. Tell your mother I'll let

her have 'em for a dollar.

Mr. Bollick points to a corner. Mickey rummages and finds a few MASON JARS covered with dirt in an old box.

MICKEY

I'll tell her, but I think she has plenty.

Tim points to a partial loaf of moldy bread.

MICKEY (CONT)

Mr. Bollick, this bread's pretty green. Want me to pitch it?

Mr. Bollick nods yes as he drops into a broken-down recliner in the kitchen. Mickey throws the bread out, puts the milk in the dirty refrigerator and puts groceries away. Tim doesn't help but looks creeped out.

MR. BOLLICK

Before you boys go, stop by the barn and shut the water off for me. Okay?

MICKEY

Sure.

MR. BOLLICK

Thank you, boys. Good boys you are.

Mickey and Tim back out of the kitchen and let the door slam behind them. The chickens scratch to get back in.

EXT. FARM - DAY

The two boys trudge up a small hill to the old barn. A few sheep and cows graze on the side of the hill.

TIM

I've never been on a farm before.

MICKEY

Are you kidding?

INT. BARN - DAY

The TROUGHS are overflowing, turning the floor into a swamp of old manure and mud. Mickey turns the water off. Tim holds his nose and stands at the barn door.

MICKEY

I wonder how long this water's been running. He shouldn't be living here alone. (beat) I feel sorry for him.

TIM

Yeah, but he's lucky he has people to watch out for him.

Tim looks around the beat-up barn.

TIM (CONT)

It stinks in here. Where's that bull you were talking about?

MICKEY

Outside in its pen, I guess. Come on, let's get out of here. You can see it some other time.

TIM

I don't wanna see it.

EXT. FARM COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Tim straggles behind Mickey and Dink who lead the way back down the hill and through the field.

Tim cautiously sidesteps COW PIES. Something moves by a clump of BUSHES, the leaves RUSTLE. A BLACK ANGUS COW peers through the bush. Tim sees it and takes off on a dead run. Dink barks excitedly.

Mickey turns around and sees Tim running scared.

TIM

(screaming)

Help! Mickey! Help!

Mickey sees the cow.

MICKEY

Look out behind you!

Panting, Tim glances back to see if the bull is gaining on him and his right foot slides in a fresh pile of cow dung. He lands in the manure. Afraid he's about to be gored, he looks up to see the cow. Dink sniffs Tim.

TIM
 (very angry)
 Why didn't you tell me it was a stupid
 cow? You did that on purpose!

Tim flicks cow dung off his jeans. Laughing, Mickey staggers over to Tim.

MICKEY
 (Innocently)
 What did I do?

TIM
 You know damn well. I ought to shove
 your face in this.

Tim starts to get up. He winces in pain.

TIM
 My ankle. I think I broke it.

MICKEY
 Is it swollen?

Tim takes his shoe and sock off, and rubs his ankle.

TIM
 A lot you'd care.

Tim looks pained as he presses around his ankle.

TIM (CONT)
 Sure it's swollen. Look.

Mickey squats down and looks at Tim's ankle.

MICKEY
 It looks okay to me.

Tim shoves Mickey away, knocking him on his backside. Mickey gets up, ready to shove Tim but holds back.

Tim stands up slowly, putting as little pressure as he can on the ankle and hobbles away, mumbling angrily.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Family room has T.V., SOFA, SEVERAL UPHOLSTERED CHAIRS, mostly worn. Mickey watches college football on the T.V. Amy plops down next to Mickey on the couch.

AMY

Tim wants to know if we have any crutches.

MICKEY

Crutches? Heck, no. Amy, he doesn't need any crutches.

AMY

How do you know?

MICKEY

I know.

Amy bounces out of the room and yells to Tim upstairs.

AMY

Tim! We don't have crutches. And Mickey says you don't need them.

MICKEY

Aw, Amy.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The WALL PHONE, with a 10 FOOT EXTENSION CORD in the kitchen, rings. Mickey answers.

MICKEY

Curt! It's about time. Ryan said he'd drive, but we gotta bring Tim with us or my mom won't let us have the car.

Mickey looks around to see if anyone is listening.

MICKEY (CONT)

Did you get the stuff? Okay, we'll pick you up around 8:30.

EXT./INT. CAR IN DRIVEWAY/TRAVELING - NIGHT

Ryan parks his parent's 1970's SEDAN in Curt's driveway. Mickey is in the front passenger seat, Tim in the back.

RYAN

Did you tell Mom what we're doing?

MICKEY

Not exactly. I said Curt wanted us to help him with something.

RYAN
 Didn't she ask what?

MICKEY
 I think she had an idea, but didn't
 want to know.

TIM
 What are we doing?

RYAN
 Have you ever TP'd?

Tim looks confused.

RYAN (CONT)
 Toilet papering?

TIM
 Oh.

Curt carries a bunch of rolls of TOILET PAPER and 3 ROLLS of PLASTIC WRAP. He puts it in the trunk, slams it, and slides in the back seat with Tim. Ryan drives off.

RYAN
 Who's the victim?

MICKEY
 Curt wants to do Tracy's house.

RYAN
 Any reason?

MICKEY
 He's had a crush on her since third
 grade. But she broke up with him.
 Again.

CURT
 Fourth grade.

RYAN
 (sarcastic)
 This'll make her want you back.

CURT
 Maybe we should go to Colleen's?

Mickey shoots him a don't-let-Tim-hear-you look. Ryan turns the radio on loud. He and Mickey exaggerate rocking to the

glaring 70's music.

CURT

Slow down. It's just past this curve.

Ryan slows as he approaches Tracy's house at the end of a lane. Lights are on, and a car is in the drive.

CURT

They're home.

MICKEY

Maybe we should forget it.

RYAN

No way. It's more of a challenge when they're home.

Ryan turns off the headlights and pulls to the side of the road. Warm, fall night, no wind, crickets chirp.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

The boys slip out of the car. Ryan hands out the toilet paper. Curt takes the plastic wrap. The boys creep forward onto the front lawn dotted with several large trees.

Tim looks uneasy but follows along behind Ryan.

TIM

Can we get arrested for this?

RYAN

Only if we get caught.

RYAN (CONT)

(to Mickey and Curt)

You guys get these trees. We'll do the ones by the driveway.

At first, they're nervous; but then they relax, throwing the rolls high into the trees. They laugh quietly. When they finish draping the trees, they regroup.

TIM

Let's do the cars. With that plastic stuff.

CURT

How about the porch?

MICKEY

Are you crazy? They'll hear us.

CURT

Good. Then I'll see Tracy.

MICKEY

And her parents.

The four boys wind the plastic wrap around the car.

RYAN

Go over the top and across the doors.

CURT

I'd love to see her dad when he comes
out in the morning.

Just as they finish, they hear the SQUEAKY NOISE of a door
opening on the porch. The boys freeze.

MICKEY

Sh! Listen.

A MAN'S VOICE resonates from inside the front porch door. The
boys hide in some BUSHES. A CAT races off the porch.

RYAN

He just threw the cat out.

CURT

I thought we'd had it.

TIM

Let's do the porch too!

MICKEY

You nuts? What if they got another
cat?

All four boys move away from the bushes.

RYAN

How much toilet paper left?

MICKEY

Where is it?

TIM

By their car.

RYAN
Get it and let's go home.

Tim scoops up the last two rolls but starts toward the porch. Curt, Ryan, and Mickey look at each alarmed.

MICKEY
(In a loud whisper)
Don't! You'll get us caught!

Tim ignores him. Mickey follows Tim onto the porch and grabs the rolls from him. Mickey rushes off the porch.

TIM
Hey, give 'em back!

RYAN
Shh, they'll hear you.

TIM
I wanna do the porch. It'll be great.
They open the door and walk right into
a toilet paper web.

RYAN
Forget it. Let's go.

Tim jumps over the porch rail and tries to grab the toilet paper back from Mickey.

MICKEY
Cut it out!

Curt watches the porch door, to see if anyone comes.

TIM
Let me have it. I had it first.

Tim tries to wrestle the paper from Mickey. Mickey turns sideways to protect the rolls in his possession.

TIM (CONT)
I'm doing the porch!

Tim grabs Mickey's arm, and he drops the rolls. Mickey shoves Tim off, and Tim falls backwards onto the car.

TIM (CONT)
You can't push me around!

Tim dives at Mickey. They fall to the ground with Mickey on

the bottom. Tim punches Mickey in the stomach and is about to swing at his face, but Mickey blocks the blow.

RYAN

Hey, you guys, cut it out! They're going to hear you.

Tim glances up at Ryan. Mickey takes advantage of the distraction, pushes Tim over and straddles him against the ground. They glare eye to eye.

Slowly Mickey gets up and backs off.

TIM

Chicken.

Mickey starts back at Tim, but Ryan grabs him.

RYAN

Don't. He's not worth it.

Mickey breaks away from Ryan. Tim gets up, ready to fight but Mickey stalks off with Curt, who carries the toilet paper, to the car.

CURT

How come you didn't punch him?

MICKEY

Like Ryan said, he's not worth it.

Mickey looks over his shoulder, past Ryan, at Tim who's now limping as he heads across the lawn to the car.

MICKEY (CONT)

So now he's limping. Again.

CURT

He wasn't limping before.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ryan and Mickey fix breakfast cereal. Mom's at the table with the Sunday paper. Tim's at the table too.

LINDA

What did you all do last night?

RYAN

Just hung out.

Tim dramatically rubs his ankle. Linda notices.

LINDA
Tim, your ankle still hurt?

TIM
Yeah. I guess I didn't give it enough
time to heal.

LINDA
Take off your shoe and sock and let me
look at it.

Linda examines his foot while Tim grimaces.

LINDA
It doesn't look swollen.

TIM
I don't swell much.

Ryan and Mickey exchange knowing looks.

RYAN
You know if you don't practice, you
can't play on Tuesday.

TIM
I know.

EXT. FRESHMAN FOOTBALL GAME - DAY

Mickey is on the field as a running back. Tim, not suited up, sits on the sidelines with his foot propped. Ryan, finished with varsity practice watches from the stands. By half-time, Linda, Bill, Amy and Billy join Ryan.

BILL
(to Ryan)
How's Mick doing?

RYAN
Tecumseh's got some big guys.

AMY AND BILLY
Come on, Mickey!

The clock shows 55 seconds left, and no time outs. Score is Tecumseh 7, Shawnee 3.

Shawnee has the ball at Tecumseh's 30 yard line. Their

quarterback passes the ball to Mickey. Fans leap to their feet, but the Tecumseh defensive back tackles Mickey who fumbles. Tecumseh recovers the ball and wins 7 to 3.

After his team shakes hands with the other team, Mickey spots Colleen and Ellie watching. Tim also sees the girls and waves, and they both wave back to Tim.

INT. FAMILY VAN - DAY - TRAVELING

Mickey slams his gear into the rear of the van. He crowds in the backseat with Amy and Billy. Dad drives with Mom in the front. Ryan and Tim are in the middle seats.

BILL

Good game, Mick.

LINDA

You played a great game. It's a shame you didn't win.

Ryan turns around and looks at Mickey.

RYAN

You did pretty good, but how did you lose the ball?

TIM

Gave it away.

MICKEY

Look who's talking. At least I didn't wimp out and played.

BILL

That's enough.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

As the evening passes, the whole family watches TV. The phone rings in the kitchen and Amy runs to answer it.

AMY (O.S.)

Tim! It's for you.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim comes into the kitchen and takes the phone from Amy.

AMY

It's a lady.

TIM'S MOTHER is on the line. Tim stretches the phone cord so he can talk in the hallway, away from the family.

TIM

Hello?

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

(brightly)

Hi, Timmy. How you doing?

TIM

Mom?

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Your one and only. Sorry I couldn't call sooner. How long you been there?

TIM

I don't know. Almost a week. But it's just til they find a place for me in town. Unless you--

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

(interrupting)

I got your new phone number from your case worker.

Tim peers into the family room to see if anyone's listening.

TIM

Mr. Hamilton?

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Oh, Timmy, I wanted to call you, but I've been so busy. And then, well, now I've got news. Good news. I just had to call you and let you know. Timmy, I'm getting married!

Tim drops the phone to his side.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)(CONT)

Timmy, honey? Did you hear me?

Tim slides down the wall to the floor.

TIM

Yeah. I heard, and it stinks.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Don't talk like that to me. I expect

you to congratulate me.

TIM
Sure. Congratulations.

Tim grabs his hair in frustration.

TIM (CONT)
What about me?

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)
You'll be okay. We just need some time together.

TIM
(brightly)
Yeah? When?

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)
No, no. I mean my fiancé, Frank. We need some time together. Alone time.

Tim holds the phone away in disgust.

TIM
Sure. Alone time with some guy but never with me.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)
I told you not to talk to me like that. I'm doing my best.

TIM
That's what you always say.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)
I've got my own life to live. You'll understand when you're older. I wanted you to meet Frank, but there's just been no time.

Tim rocks back and forth.

TIM
Yeah, I know.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)
Frank ain't ready to take on a kid. Anyways you've got a good home now.

TIM

Yeah.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

It wouldn't work. You and Frank. He's a bit touchy around kids. Now he's got this offer to do some work in Florida. We'll be getting married this week.

TIM

Married? Florida?

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Just for six months or so. When we get back, you can meet him. Maybe you can stay with us on weekends. You know, see how it goes.

Tim stands up and paces while still on the phone.

TIM

Sure.

TIM'S MOTHER (V.O.)

I'll call from Florida. We'll keep in touch, okay? I gotta go now. Love you.

TIM

(sadly, resigned)

Love you, too.

Tim quietly hangs up the phone so no one notices and goes outside to the basketball court. He no longer limps.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Outside barn light is on. Tim shoots from the free throw line. He shivers in the cold. He makes some shots and misses others. He wipes tears from his eyes in between shots. Eventually he quits and goes back inside.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan and Mickey are wrestling with each other. Linda, Bill, and Amy watch TV. Tim stands at the door.

LINDA

(to Tim)

Everything okay?

TIM
 (sullen)
 Yeah. I got some homework.

Tim leaves. Everyone shows curiosity about the call.

LINDA
 It must have been his mother. Who
 else? She finally called him?

BILL
 He'll let us know when he's ready.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

At practice, the freshman football team is finishing drills with coaches and TEENAGE TEAM MANAGER.

COACH HUPP
 (yelling to the team)
 First team offense. Huddle up!

Tim runs ahead of Mickey to take his position as a running back. The coach swats Tim on the rear. Tim is charged.

COACH HUPP
 (to Tim)
 Now let's see what you can do.

Tim makes several catches and gains yardage, but then someone tackles him hard. Tim grasps his side and cries and moans like he's in a lot of pain. Coaches check him over and try to calm him. TEENAGE TEAM MANAGER stands by.

COACH HUPP
 (to the team manager)
 Better be on the safe side. Call the
 squad.

The manager runs toward the school. Coach spots Mickey on the periphery and motions him over.

COACH HUPP (CONT)
 You better call your mom.

MICKEY
 Huh?

COACH HUPP
 Call your parents. We're taking Tim to
 the ER. Now!

Mickey takes off running toward the school. Teammates mill around as coaches hover over Tim who continues moaning.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Coach Hupp walks alongside Tim on the stretcher as he's wheeled into the ER. Linda waits for them. She rushes over as she sees them come in. She takes Tim's hand.

LINDA

Tim, are you okay? What happened?

She looks to the coach for reassurance. She pushes Tim's sweaty hair out of his eyes. Tim still acting in pain.

COACH HUPP

He'll be okay. Won't you, Tim?

Tim looks at Linda and nods bravely.

COACH HUPP (CONT)

They'll probably take him to X-ray.

LINDA

I have to check him in but, Tim, I'll be with you as soon as I can.

The EMT's start to move the stretcher through a set of double doors. Linda squeezes Tim's hand as she and Coach step back. Tim smiles but winces in pain.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM CUBICLE - DAY

Tim is rolled in on a cart. Linda and Coach Hupp stand to the side. The DOCTOR comes in and hangs the X-RAYS.

DOCTOR

X-rays look fine. No broken bones.

Doctor checks all over Tim. Tim flinches at his touch.

DOCTOR (CONT)

I'm going to let you go home.

TIM

You're not keeping me?

DOCTOR

No, you'll be fine. Probably had the wind knocked out of you. At worst, you'll be feeling some sore muscles.

Doctor writes on chart. Linda is smiling at the good news.

DOCTOR (CONT)

Take some Tylenol for pain.

COACH HUPP

That's great. I was just telling Tim, before he got hurt, that I was thinking about starting him in next Tuesday's game.

TIM

Instead of Mickey?

COACH HUPP

We'll see.

TIM

(to doctor)

How long before I can play?

DOCTOR

(smiling, positive)

Whenever you feel ready.

Everyone smiles, except an ambivalent Tim.

EXT. CAR IN DRIVEWAY AT HOME - DAY

Linda pulls into the driveway. Dink cuts in front as he welcomes them home. Linda blows the horn.

INT. CAR - DAY

LINDA AND TIM

(saying in unison)

Darn that dog.

TIM

I'm gonna teach him to stop that.

Dink almost knocks Tim down as he gets out. Tim tosses a stick to him and Dink chases it. Tim goes in the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mickey grills CHEESE SANDWICHES for Amy and Billy. Tim, head down, follows Linda into the kitchen.

AMY
(to Tim)
What happened? Are you okay?

Tim, glancing at Mickey, hesitates to answer but does.

TIM
Yeah. Some kinda freak thing. It was
pretty bad but nothing's broke. Doc
says I gotta take it easy.

Mickey smirks and flips sandwiches on the grill.

LINDA
He's lucky it's nothing serious.

MICKEY
You gonna practice tomorrow?

TIM
I don't know. Too soon to tell.

Linda leaves. Tim opens and closes the refrigerator. Mickey
plops sandwiches on Amy and Billy's paper plates.

MICKEY
You get hurt a lot.

TIM
What's that supposed to mean?

Amy and Billy look apprehensive as they listen.

MICKEY
Awful funny you hurt your ankle and
couldn't play and now this.

TIM
You oughta be glad. Coach said he
might start me.

MICKEY
No way.

TIM
We'll see.

Tim shoves past Mickey, bumping him in the shoulder.

MICKEY
Hey, cut it out! I'm not taking that

off anyone!

Mickey throws the first punch and the two boys fight. Linda rushes into the kitchen and pulls them apart. She looks particularly angry at Mickey.

LINDA
What's going on?

MICKEY
I've had it with him.

TIM
You started it!

Linda gives "the look" to Mickey.

LINDA
We're not going to have any fighting here.

TIM
I know. We fight. I go. What difference does it make? I'll be leaving anyway.

Tim storms out of the room. Mom touches Mickey's arm.

LINDA
Mickey, I don't know what's going on here, but I want it to stop. You need to help him, not fight him.

MICKEY
You don't believe this stuff about him being hurt, do you?

LINDA
He's hurting alright. Just a different kind of hurt.

Mickey paces while Billy and Amy, both upset, watch him.

LINDA (CONT)
Remember what we've taught you about walking in someone else's shoes?

MICKEY
(fed up)
I know. But how about my shoes?

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Mickey opens his packed lunch. Curt has a school lunch. Mickey vents about the fight with Tim the night before.

MICKEY

I wish my mom didn't stop us. I could've taken him easy.

CURT

You in trouble over it?

MICKEY

Nah. I think she feels guilty about going back on her word about quitting foster care.

CURT

So, you don't get in trouble even if you start it?

Mickey shrugs and eats while Curt mulls it over.

CURT (CONT)

I got nothing against him; but if you want to be sure he doesn't stay, maybe you can do some stuff that'd make him be glad to leave.

MICKEY

Huh?

Curt dangles a long FRENCH FRY dripping with KETCHUP.

CURT

Make his life miserable with the McAllister's.

MICKEY

But how?

CURT

I don't know. Beat him up?

MICKEY

Yeah, right.

CURT

I thought he was dying yesterday. But still he was hit hard, and he was playing good. Real good.

MICKEY

He'll wimp out today.

CURT

Ya think?

MICKEY

I think.

TWO GUYS, football teammates, stop by the table.

GUY #1

Is it true Tim's quitting?

MICKEY

I don't know what he's doing, but I doubt he's quitting. I couldn't be that lucky.

The two guys move on leaving Mickey and Curt to their lunch.

CURT

I saw him earlier, and he wasn't limping or anything. I bet he'll practice. He'll want to take your spot. He could start next game.

MICKEY

Maybe, but I bet he wimps out.

Curt considers the odds and goads Mickey.

CURT

How much?

MICKEY

(pauses to think it over)

No cash. I got nothin'.

He grabs one of Curt's French fries and downs it.

MICKEY (CONT)

How about I'm right and Tim doesn't practice. I win and you gotta ask Tracy to the dance.

CURT

I'm gonna ask her, and I don't have to lose a bet to do it.

Curt finishes up the last of his fries. They both start

cleaning up their space.

MICKEY

Maybe not. But this way you have to do it right away. I'm tired of you whining about it.

Curt wads his napkin and throws it at Mickey.

CURT

What if I win? What if he practices?

MICKEY

He won't.

CURT

If he does, you gotta ask Colleen.

MICKEY

I can't ask her. I barely know her.

CURT

You can at least talk to her.

Mickey bangs his head on the table.

CURT (CONT)

If you win because Tim doesn't practice, I ask Tracy to the dance. But if I win and Tim plays, you have to at least talk to Colleen. Can you handle that?

MICKEY

No sweat. Tim won't play.

INT. FOOTBALL FIELD HOUSE - DAY

Tim suits up for practice while Mickey and Curt watch him hopping around with energy, jogging in place.

TIM

(to Curt and Mickey)

Ya coming?

Tim rushes out the door with a couple guys behind him.

MICKEY

I don't believe it.

Mickey slams his helmet on the floor. Curt laughs.

Tim catches up with the coach as they leave the building.

TIM
 (confident, optimistic)
 Coach, sorry about yesterday. I did a
 lot of thinking last night and I'm
 ready. You'll see.

EXT. MCALLISTER'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Linda, Mickey, and Tim pull into the driveway after football practice. Mr. Hamilton stands outside his car. Dink runs to greet them and cuts in front of their car.

MICKEY
 (racing past Mr. Hamilton)
 Hi.

MR. HAMILTON
 (watching Mickey fly by)
 Hi there.

Mickey goes inside the house as Linda stops to chat. Tim pets Dink and waits to see what Mr. Hamilton wants.

MR. HAMILTON
 Sorry I didn't call, but I had a
 chance to stop by so thought I would.

LINDA
 Oh, that's fine.

MR. HAMILTON
 So, how's he doing?

LINDA
 Good. He's a nice kid.

They both glance back at Tim with Dink.

LINDA (CONT)
 Did you see the report that we made a
 visit to the ER? I called it in.

MR. HAMILTON
 Yes, I saw it. Glad he was okay.

Awkward silence as they watch Tim play with Dink.

MR. HAMILTON (CONT)
 Umm, we got a call from his mother

last week. I assume she called Tim.

LINDA

He did have a phone call the other night. He never said anything about it, and I didn't want to pry.

MR. HAMILTON

I understand. I need to talk with him about his mother; but first I'd like to take him out for a bit.

LINDA

Of course.

Mr. Hamilton approaches Tim playing with Dink.

MR. HAMILTON

Hey, Tim. How's it going?

TIM

Okay.

LINDA

I've got to get dinner started.

MR. HAMILTON

I'll be in touch.

Linda goes inside the house, leaving the two.

MR. HAMILTON

How about if we go for a ride?

TIM

Can I drive?

MR. HAMILTON

Dream on. You don't even have a permit.

TIM

Aw, come on. Mr. Monroe let me practice in his driveway.

MR. HAMILTON

Can you handle a stick shift?

TIM

Sure.

MR. HAMILTON
Just back it down the lane and no
further.

TIM
There's no police around here. It
won't matter.

MR. HAMILTON
Driveway or nothing.

Mr. Hamilton throws his keys to Tim.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Tim hops into the car, steps down on the clutch, slips it
into neutral and starts the engine without a hitch. Tim
shifts into reverse. The car lurches, jerks, and dies.

TIM
I'm a little out of practice.

Tim chugs half way down the lane and gives up. Mr. Hamilton
takes over. They drive around the hilly countryside, the fall
leaves sparkling in the sunlight.

MR. HAMILTON
I'm glad you're okay. After your visit
to the E.R.

Tim looks a little embarrassed and nods.

MR. HAMILTON (CONT)
Beyond that, how you doing?

TIM
I don't know. Okay, I guess.

They drive past some homes clustered near a small church.

TIM (CONT)
This is the closest town to us.

MR. HAMILTON
(laughing)
Almost missed it.

TIM
I don't like this country bit. Nowhere
to go. Nothing to do.

MR. HAMILTON
I think I've heard that before. Only
then you lived in the city.

TIM
That was different. At least I had
some friends around.

Mr. Hamilton brakes and waits for a farmer to usher his cows
across the road from their pasture to the barn.

MR. HAMILTON
You getting along with everyone?

TIM
Except for Mickey. We get into it
sometimes.

MR. HAMILTON
You're not fighting with--

TIM
(interrupting, angry)
He started it.

MR. HAMILTON
Linda didn't say anything so I guess
it wasn't too bad. I don't want to put
you in the Children's Home; but if you
blow it here, I won't have a choice.
(beat) Unless I find a permanent home.

TIM
I know. They're hard to find.

Mr. Hamilton drives past the last of the cows.

MR. HAMILTON
I understand your mother called.

TIM
I wish she didn't.

MR. HAMILTON
How's that?

Tim stares out the window, waits before talking.

TIM
She's getting married and moving to
Florida.

MR. HAMILTON
(honestly distressed)
I'm sorry to hear that.

TIM
(agitated)
Ever since my dad left, she's, like
not the same. She never drank before
but then she started and can't quit.

Tim, upset, faces Mr. Hamilton and talks angrily.

TIM (CONT)
And now she's getting married and
moving to Florida. Without me! Can you
believe her?

Tim throws his arms in the air in frustration and anger.

TIM (CONT)
She'll never change.

Mr. Hamilton shows empathy but doesn't speak. Tim sighs.

TIM (CONT)
Guess it means I really do need a
permanent placement.

MR. HAMILTON
I'm working on it.

TIM
I wish I could stay with the
McAllister's.

MR. HAMILTON
I promised them no more than 30 days,
and it's the only reason they agreed.

TIM
Maybe they'll change their minds.

MR. HAMILTON
Not impossible, I suppose. But don't
get your hopes up.

TIM
If it wasn't for Mickey, they'd
probably let me.

EXT. AWAY VARSITY FOOTBALL GAME - NIGHT

A LARGE SIGN outside the high school shows Springfield vs. Shawnee, Friday night. Mickey sits with Curt in the student section. Tim sits with the family. He doesn't watch the game but continually scans the crowd.

TIM
(jumping up, excited)
I gotta see someone!

LINDA
Okay. We'll be here.

AMY
Where's he going?

LINDA
Meeting a friend, I hope.

Tim races down the steps to where Colleen and Ellie, sharing a bag of popcorn, are standing by the fence.

TIM
Great game, huh?

COLLEEN
We're losing.

TIM
(chagrined)
But we're playing good.

Though embarrassed, Tim looks at Ellie who smiles.

COLLEEN
You know my friend, Ellie?

TIM
Sort of. Hi.

ELLIE
Hi.

All three look out on the football field as if interested.

COLLEEN
Tim, I was wondering, is Mickey going to the homecoming dance?

TIM
Huh? You know Mickey?

COLLEEN
Not really, but I'd like to. He says
hi to me once in a while. We're in
study hall together.

Ellie nods enthusiastically. Tim is shocked.

TIM
(to Colleen)
Are you going to the dance?

COLLEEN
If you're asking if I have a date, the
answer's no. But I'll go with or
without one.

TIM
And you're thinking of Mickey?

COLLEEN
You're getting the picture.

Tim leans against the fence for support.

TIM
I haven't heard him say anything. We
don't talk much.

COLLEEN
(disappointed)
Oh. I was kind of hoping, well, you
know. You help me...

Colleen offers some popcorn to Tim. He takes a handful.

COLLEEN (CONT)
I'll help you out... with Ellie.

Ellie and Tim look at each other in mock horror.

ELLIE
You're helping?

Tim grins at Ellie and turns to Colleen.

TIM
You'd go with Mickey?

COLLEEN
He seems pretty nice.

TIM
(sarcastic)
Real nice.

COLLEEN
Could you find out if he has a date,
or if he's planning on going stag? But
don't say anything about me!

TIM
Maybe helping you and Mickey get
together could help me too.

COLLEEN
If you say so.

EXT. STUDENT SECTION - NIGHT

Curt juggling a BAG of POPCORN and POP is all smiles when he
joins Mickey in the student section in the grandstand.

MICKEY
You found Tracy?

CURT
Yep.

Curt stuffs popcorn in his mouth, takes a slug of pop.

MICKEY
And she's okay about the toilet-
papering?

CURT
Her dad's not pressing charges.

They both feign relief and laugh.

MICKEY
You taking her to the dance?

CURT
Of course. Told you I didn't need some
dumb bet to ask her.

MICKEY
She could have said no.

CURT

To me?

He offers popcorn to Mickey who declines.

CURT (CONT)

But you lost and now you pay up on our bet. At least talk to Colleen. Maybe ask her to the dance.

MICKEY

Not likely.

Mickey points to Tim laughing with the girls by the fence.

MICKEY (CONT)

Look at her and Tim down there. How come he's so lucky?

CURT

Wouldn't exactly call him lucky.

MICKEY

The bet was to talk to her. Not ask her to the dumb dance.

CURT

Not gonna happen, huh?

They watch Tim leave the girls and join the McAllister's. Score board shows final score: Springfield 14, Visitors 7.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (SATURDAY)

Tim scratches his job off the JOB LIST posted in the kitchen. Billy comes in and scratches off his job.

BILLY

You want to ride bikes?

TIM

Nah, I'm gonna play the Atari.

BILLY

Come on. You can do that any time.

TIM

No, I can't. I hardly ever get a chance.

BILLY
I'll give you my time on it.

Tim opens the cabinet doors, searching for a snack while thinking about it.

TIM
You promise?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/CREEK - DAY

Billy and Tim, with Dink running alongside, pedal to a bridge. Dropping their bikes in the tall grass, they scoot down the hill to the creek. Dink follows. Billy hunts along the edge of the creek for CRAWDADS. Tim watches.

BILLY
Hey, Tim! I got one. A big one!

Billy holds a crawdad with its pincers snapping.

TIM
Killer crawdad.

Billy shoves the thing toward Tim's face. Tim fakes being attacked by it. Billy plays along.

BILLY
Here. You hold it.

TIM
(not wanting to touch it)
No! Come on, let's go.

Pretending to kiss it goodbye, Billy throws it back.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/FARM - DAY

They get back on their bikes. Dink runs alongside. Further down the road, Tim points to a LARGE WINDMILL by a barn.

TIM
Look! It looks like... It is! There's a little kid up there.

Tim throws his bike down, jumps a fence and runs toward the windmill. Billy and Dink race after Tim. A LITTLE BOY, two years old, stands on the ladder's top rung.

BILLY
What'll we do? He could get killed.

TIM
We don't want to scare him.

BILLY
I'll get help!

TIM
There's no time! I'll climb up and get
him. You stay down here.

Tim starts to climb the rung ladder while ordering Billy.

TIM (CONT)
Don't take your eyes off him. If he
falls, you have to catch him!

BILLY
Catch him? Are you crazy? I can't
catch him.

TIM
Yes, you can. Or break his fall. Now
watch him!

Tim skips rungs as he races toward the little boy.

TIM (CONT)
(looking up to the boy)
Stay there, hold on. Don't move.

Tim gets close enough to wrap his hand around the boy's small
arm and hangs on to the ladder with his other hand.

TIM (CONT)
(gently)
Hi, I'm Tim. What's your name?

The boy doesn't answer. He looks scared. Tim looks down at
Billy and Dink. The boy's MOTHER runs toward the windmill.

TIM (CONT)
Your mom's waiting for you. Hold on to
me, nice and tight.

Tim carries the boy down the rungs. As they make it safely to
the bottom, the tearful woman grabs her little boy.

BOY'S MOTHER
Oh, Buddy.

With her arms wrapped around her son, she turns to Tim.

BOY'S MOTHER (CONT)

I can't imagine how he got up there.
He's only two years old.

Tim and Billy grin proudly at each other. Dink paces.

BOY'S MOTHER (CONT)

He was playing in the sandbox inside
our fenced yard and then the phone
rang. I never gave it a thought that
he would, that he could, get out and
climb up there. I didn't think I was
on that long. Oh, thank heavens, you
came by when you did.

She pulls the little boy's face up toward hers.

BOY'S MOTHER (CONT)

Buddy, you could have been killed.

She squeezes the boy tight. They're both about to cry.

BOY'S MOTHER (CONT)

What are your names?

BILLY

I'm Billy McAllister. We live down the
road.

She nods and looks at Tim.

TIM

Tim Reese.

BOY'S MOTHER

And where do you live?

TIM

With Billy.

BOY'S MOTHER

(pensive)

McAllister. Yes, I think I know where
you live. You boys are heroes. Real
heroes. That was such quick thinking
and so brave of you. I'll never be
able to thank you enough.

She hugs on her son more while he looks at the boys.

BOY'S MOTHER (CONT)
Buddy, what do you say?

BUDDY
(baby-talk, pointing up)
Me go.

They all laugh.

BOY'S MOTHER
(to Buddy)
Say thank you to the boys.

BUDDY
Tank you.

Tim and Billy shrug modestly. They swagger through the field back to their bikes. Dink trots alongside.

BILLY
I was never called a hero before.

TIM
Me neither.

They find their bikes and head home with Dink.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

When Tim and Billy get home, the family waits in the kitchen. Linda hugs them as soon as they walk in the door.

LINDA
I'm so proud of you! Mrs. Collins
called and told me what you did.

An exhausted Dink stretches out on the floor.

BILL
(to Tim)
Sounds like you did some pretty quick
thinking. You ought to be real proud.

Ryan and Mickey stand near the door to the family room.

AMY
We got heroes in the family!

Amy starts a cheer.

AMY (CONT)

Give me an H, give me an E, give me an
R, give me an O! H-E-R-O! Heroes!

No one cheers with her but everyone laughs. Mickey pets Dink while Tim struts around proudly.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tim notices Mickey in the kitchen while Linda is putting away DISHES from the DISHWASHER. Tim joins them.

MICKEY

Can I make some brownies?

LINDA

If you clean up all your mess.

Linda leaves the kitchen. Tim bides his time while Mickey pulls out a box of BROWNIE MIX and gathers the PANS and INGREDIENTS to make them. He turns on the oven.

TIM

(friendly, hopeful)

You make them a lot?

MICKEY

I guess.

Tim pulls up a BAR STOOL at the counter, grabs an APPLE from the bowl, munches on it, acting casual. Mickey puts the pan of brownies in the oven; sets the timer.

TIM

I love brownies.

Mickey licks the bowl and spoon. Tim takes a deep breath.

TIM (CONT)

I was wondering.

Mickey puts the bowl into the sink. His back is to Tim.

TIM (CONT)

I was wondering. Are you going to the Homecoming dance?

MICKEY

Why? What's it to you?

TIM
Nothing. Just wondering.

Mickey wipes off the table. He faces Tim.

MICKEY
Are you going?

TIM
Um, yeah. I guess so.

MICKEY
Guess I'm not.

Mickey walks out of the kitchen. Tim shakes his head.

TIM
(loudly)
You're not going because I'm going?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The older boys get ready for school. Linda packs lunches. Bill reads their small weekly NEWSPAPER with his coffee. He sees an article with the headline, "Teen Saves Boy."

BILL
Hey, everyone! Mickey, go get Billy and Amy.

Mickey shrugs and leaves, then returns with Billy and Amy who rub sleep from their eyes.

BILL (CONT)
(Sit down and listen to this.)

He slaps the newspaper open and reads the article.

BILL (CONT)
The headline reads Teen Saves Boy. Fourteen-year-old Tim Reese is a hero according to Mrs. Collins.

TIME LAPSE as he reads the first and last sentences of the article.

BILL (CONT)
Collins praised the boys for their quick thinking and action.

Most everyone laughs and carries on about the news article, congratulating Tim and Billy who beam with pride.

LINDA
We're so proud of you.

TIM
(exaggerating, funny)
Aw, it was nothing. Nothing at all.

AMY
Can I have your autograph?

BILLY
What about me? I helped too.

RYAN
It's a good thing you didn't have to
catch him.

BILLY
(laughing)
No kidding.

Tim fusses over Dink.

MICKEY
Here, Dink!

Dink leaves Tim. Resigned, Tim shrugs. Mom looks at the
newspaper. Tim gets SCISSORS from a drawer.

LINDA
How in the world did the paper know
about it?

BILL
I'll bet the mother called them. And
you know how they're always looking
for local news. Human interest story.

LINDA
How nice of her.

Tim cuts out the article. Billy grabs it and waves it.

BILLY
Everyone at school will see it.

TIM
Billy, I wanna take it to school. You
can tell your friends. They'll believe
you.

Billy looks disappointed but accepts it.

AMY

You're both gonna be famous.

Mickey ignores them and roughhouses with Dink.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The cafeteria is crowded. Tim carries his brown paper bag lunch and happens by where Ellie and Colleen sit.

COLLEEN AND ELLIE

(in unison)

Hi, Tim. Come sit with us.

He sits down and pulls out the newspaper article out of his back pocket. He looks sheepish but shares it.

TIM

Did you see this?

COLLEEN

What?

Tim lays the article on the table so both can read it. The girls stop eating and fuss over Tim and the news.

COLLEEN (CONT)

Wow, congratulations!

ELLIE

Tim, this is so cool.

TIM

I never thought it'd be in the newspaper.

Tim folds the article back in his pocket. They start eating.

ELLIE

Did you ask Mickey?

Colleen looks away at some passing guys.

TIM

He said he's not going.

Colleen looks back startled.

COLLEEN
Not going? Why? What did he say?

TIM
He said if I'm going, he's not.

Colleen and Ellie exchange disappointed looks.

ELLIE
Why would he say that?

TIM
I don't know. Just stupid.

Mickey and Curt sit a few tables away. Curt spots them and nods to Mickey who turns around and sees Colleen.

COLLEEN
Look, there's Mickey watching us.

TIM
You want me to say something to him now?

COLLEEN
No! Don't you dare.

ELLIE
We think he's kind of shy. And that's where you come in.

TIM
That's where I leave.

He chokes down some of his sandwich.

COLLEEN
(looking at Mickey)
I wonder if he dances? Do you know?

TIM
How would I know?

COLLEEN
You live with him, don't you?

ELLIE
Do you dance?

TIM
A little.

Ellie smiles and twists her hair. Nervous, Tim jumps up and gathers his trash.

TIM (CONT)

I gotta go.

The girls look at each other a bit perplexed.

INT. ATTIC FORT - DAY

Billy shows Tim the enlarged news article in a CARDBOARD FRAME he made. Dink stretches out on the mattress.

BILLY

Look at this. Mom made a big copy of it at work.

Tim holds the framed article.

TIM

Cool.

TIM (CONT)

(to Dink)

See this, boy. You're a hero too.

AMY (O.S.)

(yelling up the stairs)

Tim! Tim! You got a phone call. Some girl named Colleen.

BILLY

A girl?

Tim ignores Billy and crawls his way out of the fort.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tim signals to Amy to leave but she doesn't. He stretches the phone cord around the corner.

COLLEEN (V.O.)

Tim, what happened? You left the cafeteria so fast. We wanted to talk more about the dance.

TIM

(hesitantly)

Do you think she'd go with me?

COLLEEN (V.O.)
She almost asked you herself.

TIM
She did?

Tim twists himself in the cord as they talk. Amy spies.

COLLEEN (V.O.)
Now she's thinking of going with Tony Rizzo.

TIM
She really wants to go with me?

COLLEEN (V.O.)
Duh.

TIM
Give me her number. I'll call her right away.

Tim motions to Amy who's nearby to come to him.

TIM (CONT)
Get me a pen and something to write on.

Amy scrambles in a kitchen drawer and pulls out a scrap of paper and a pencil. She gives them to Tim and leaves.

TIM (CONT)
What's the number?

Tim awkwardly balances the phone and scribbles the number.

COLLEEN (V.O.)
It's 485-2176. But wait, what about Mickey?

TIM
Mickey?

COLLEEN (V.O.)
It'd be nice if we could double.

TIM
Double?

COLLEEN (V.O.)
You know, two couples. Together.

Tim tries to untwist himself from the cord.

TIM
That'll never happen.

COLLEEN (V.O.)
Why not? Did you ask him about me?

TIM
No. I didn't get a chance.

COLLEEN (V.O.)
Will you?

TIM
I'll try, but I gotta call Ellie. Like
now.

He untwists out of the phone cord and miss-dials several times before it rings. Ellie answers on the first ring.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Hello.

TIM
Hi. Ellie?

ELLIE (V.O.)
Yes, this is Ellie.

TIM
Hi, this is Tim, Tim Reese.

He wipes a clammy sweaty hand and then the other on his jeans, switching the phone from one hand to the other.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Hi, Tim.

TIM
Hi.

Tim is speechless. Ellie speaks up.

ELLIE (V.O.)
I showed my parents the article in the
paper. They were impressed.

TIM
Thanks.

More silence. Tim, speechless, hits himself in the head.

ELLIE (V.O.)
 (frustrated, impatient)
 Colleen told me you might like to take
 me to the homecoming dance.

TIM
 Um, ah, yeah. She did?

ELLIE (V.O.)
 I was beginning to think you changed
 your mind. That is why you're calling,
 isn't it?

TIM
 Um, yeah.

ELLIE (V.O.)
 So?

He twists in the phone cord again. He doesn't see Amy
 listening at the door.

TIM
 (stammering)
 So, will you go with me? To the dance?

ELLIE (V.O.)
 I'd like that a lot.

TIM
 You would? Me too.

ELLIE (V.O.)
 Now you just gotta find out about
 Mickey.

TIM
 Right.

ELLIE (V.O.)
 Colleen and I are hoping we can
 double. Won't that be fun?

TIM
 A ball.

ELLIE (V.O.)
 I'll see you tomorrow, okay?

TIM
Okay. Bye.

Tim hangs up. Amy sashays around him.

AMY
(sing-song)
I know a secret.

Tim growls and fake grabs at her like a monster. Squealing, she tears out of the room.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Mickey is watching TV when Amy runs in screeching. Mickey playfully grabs at her as she runs past.

MICKEY
Hey, what's going on?

AMY
Tim's gonna get me.

She breaks away from Mickey's hold and looks back for Tim who retreats into the kitchen. Amy chases back after Tim. Stretched on the couch, Mickey flicks channels with the remote. A couple minutes later Amy waltzes past Mickey.

AMY
(sing-song)
I gotta a secret. I know something you
don't know.

Mickey ignores her, but she keeps it up.

AMY (CONT)
I got a secret. It's about Tim.

Mickey raises an eyebrow. He knows she can't wait to tell him so he waits.

AMY (CONT)
Tim's going to the dance.

She waltzes around.

AMY (CONT)
I heard him ask her.

MICKEY
(nonchalant)
So, who's he taking?

AMY
A girl named Colleen.

Mickey bolts upright.

MICKEY
How do you know?

AMY
I answered the phone, and she told me
her name.

He aims the TV remote at the TV and rapidly shoots off one
channel after another.

INT. RYAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mickey walks into Ryan's room. Ryan's lying in his bed.

MICKEY
I gotta talk to you.

Mickey kicks aside the clothes near the door.

MICKEY (CONT)
You know... Mr. Hamilton might not
find a home for Tim.

RYAN
Yeah. Who wants a teenage delinquent?

MICKEY
Only *our* parents. So would you want
him to stay?

RYAN
Right.

Mickey sits on top of the dresser.

MICKEY
I bet if they don't find him a place,
Mom and Dad'll let him stay.

RYAN
No bet.

MICKEY

They'll keep him if the only choice is the Children's Home.

Ryan sits up. They ponder the problem.

RYAN

He's not as bad as some of the others. Hasn't set anything on fire or stole anything.

MICKEY

What if he's trying to steal your girl?

RYAN

Steal whose girl? What girl?

MICKEY

The one I'd have if he'd bug off.

RYAN

He's stealing a girl you don't have?

Mickey hops off the dresser and paces.

MICKEY

There's one I like, and he's taking her to homecoming.

RYAN

No way.

Mickey nods his head miserably.

MICKEY

Way. He started making moves on her his first day at school.

RYAN

I see your problem. But when did you start liking girls?

MICKEY

Come on. This is serious.

Ryan pulls his socks off and throws them at Mickey.

RYAN

You want to beat him up?

Mickey gives him a dirty look.

MICKEY

What if he wants to leave? No matter what? No matter where?

RYAN

That won't happen.

MICKEY

But what if we make it happen?

Mickey sits on top of the dresser again.

RYAN

Where you going with this?

MICKEY

Maybe we could help him make up his mind. Help him decide he wants to leave. Realize that anywhere would be better than here. With us.

Ryan leans back against the wall.

RYAN

Where you going with this?

MICKEY

We could do something to make him so mad he wouldn't want to stay.

RYAN

And then we'd get in a bunch of trouble.

MICKEY

Maybe. Maybe not.

RYAN

Who's the girl? Is she worth it?

MICKEY

It isn't just that. Aren't you tired of, you know, being a foster home?

RYAN

Whaddaya think?

Mickey jumps down from the dresser and sits with Ryan.

MICKEY

Curt says maybe we make his life so miserable he can't wait to leave.

RYAN

Didn't think Curt was that smart.

They sit in silence, thinking.

RYAN

I got it. Old Man Bollick wants us to round up his chickens. He can't sell the eggs since he can't find them, so he wants to sell the chickens.

MICKEY

So?

RYAN

So, maybe Tim comes with us and something happens. Our first step to making his life miserable.

MICKEY

He's scared of the bull.

RYAN

Mom'll be glad if we invite him to come along.

MICKEY

And can we help it if something bad happens?

Mickey smiles slyly, relishing the idea.

MICKEY (CONT)

This could work.

EXT. FARM COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Bright fall morning. Mickey, Ryan, Tim, and Dink crunch their way through fallen leaves. Tim walks with Ryan.

TIM

How do you catch chickens?

RYAN

With great difficulty.

Mickey laughs. They make their way across the creek. Tim

makes a show of stepping on the stones without falling.

MICKEY

(whispering to Ryan)

What are we going to do?

RYAN

I don't know yet. Maybe nothing.

Mickey glances back at Tim who looks around nervously.

MICKEY

Look at him. He's watching out for the bull. Maybe that's our answer.

RYAN

You wanna kill him?

Mickey smiles wickedly. They walk to Bollick's house.

RYAN

Last one to the house has to be the one to talk to him.

All three boys take off running. Mickey loses. Dink wins.

INT. MR. BOLLICK'S KITCHEN - DAY

The three boys look around the kitchen with disgust. Mickey approaches Mr. Bollick sitting at the table.

MR. BOLLICK

You'll find the chickens over by the barn... or the milk house.

TIM

(whispering to Ryan)

Or in the house.

MICKEY

Where do you want us to put them?

MR. BOLLICK

I got a big crate down by the barn. You'll see it.

Mr. Bollick lays his shotgun on the filthy table.

TIM

(whispering to Ryan)

Is it loaded?

Ryan nods yes.

MR. BOLLICK

I got about fifteen of them. Gonna get a dollar apiece. Called on that radio talk show and advertised them. Lady said she'd take 'em all.

Mr. Bollick picks up his shotgun and waves it in the direction of the barn. Tim ducks.

MR. BOLLICK (CONT)

You just go on and get them in that there crate.

MICKEY

Okay, Mr. Bollick. We'll get 'em.

MR. BOLLICK

Good boys, you are.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The boys find the battered CRATE near the barn door. Ryan pulls open the lid.

RYAN

How does he think we'll fit fifteen chickens in here?

Tim looks nervously around the inside of the barn.

TIM

Where's that bull?

RYAN

Don't worry about it. Let's get going. I wanna get home.

MICKEY

Heeere, chickee, chickee, chickee.

Ryan and Tim laugh at him. No chickens are in sight.

RYAN

Let's split up. They gotta be around here somewhere.

They hunt in opposite directions around the barn area.

RYAN
 Hey, you guys! There's a bunch over
 here, down the hill.

EXT. STONE MILK HOUSE - DAY

Tim and Mickey lug the crate and join Ryan. Ten CHICKENS
 scratch at the dirt around the old STONE MILK HOUSE.

RYAN
 Quiet. You'll scare them.

Mickey creeps up behind a chicken and lunges forward. The
 chicken flies out of reach. Mickey falls flat. The boys race
 in different directions after the helter-skelter chickens.
 Dink's chasing and barking makes it worse.

MICKEY
 He should have given us one of those
 long hooks to snag the stupid birds.

Ryan struggles with a chicken. Tim opens the crate lid and
 Ryan shoves the squawking bird inside.

RYAN
 That's my share. You get the rest.

TIM
 I'm not touching them.

An old hen crashes into Tim's back almost knocking him over.
 He races after her but can't catch her. Ryan and Mickey catch
 six chickens and squeeze them into the crate.

RYAN
 We'll never fit any more in here.
 Let's go back to the barn and look for
 some gunny sacks.

MICKEY
 Do you wanna carry it up there now?

RYAN
 Nah, leave it here.

Ryan looks toward the barn and gets an idea.

RYAN(CONT)
 (whispering to Mickey)
 Check out the pile of manure on the
 side of the barn.

Mickey spots it but isn't catching on.

MICKEY

So?

RYAN

Come on, Tim. We'll race you.

Mickey looks at Ryan and the pile of manure with skepticism and then understanding.

RYAN(CONT)

See the haystack on the side of the barn. First one to jump in doesn't have to catch any more chickens.

TIM

Where?

RYAN

Can't you see it stacked right by the door? It's huge. It'll be fun.

Ryan and Mickey, egging Tim on, point to the haystack.

RYAN (CONT)

See how fast you can run up hill.

MICKEY

Not fair. You know I'm not that fast.

TIM

Tough luck.

RYAN

First one to jump in, wins. No more chickens.

Mickey takes off, but Ryan and Tim quickly pass him up. As they reach the top of the hill, Tim races past Ryan who slows down slightly. Tim takes a running leap and lands hip deep in the pile of old wet manure and straw.

Coughing and gagging, Tim pushes his way out. Catching up to him, Ryan and Mickey cringe at him covered in manure.

RYAN

Oops. It looked like a haystack.

MICKEY

At least you don't have to catch any

more chickens.

Tim knocks Mickey flat on his back and pins him to the ground. Tim punches Mickey in the stomach and face.

TIM

I hate you! You...

Ryan grabs Tim from behind and throws him off Mickey. Tim scrambles to his feet and runs off. Mickey shakes off the pain and the crud. Tim disappears down the hill.

RYAN

You okay, Mick?

MICKEY

(shaken, his hand to his face)
Yeah. But he got me pretty good.

RYAN

Come on. Let's get done and out of here. There's gotta be some sacks.

They find some GUNNY SACKS and walk back to the milk house to catch the rest of the chickens. Dink follows them.

MICKEY

What do you suppose he'll do?

RYAN

I don't know but he's not the only one in a heap of you-know-what.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Close to tears, Tim wades into the creek to slosh the manure off his clothes.

TIM

I hate those jerks.

He watches the bits and pieces of manure and straw float away from him. He cleans up best he can.

TIM (CONT)

I never did anything to them.

INT. HOUSE - TIM'S BEDROOM, BATHROOM, LAUNDRY - DAY

Tim sneaks into the house and gets clean clothes from his bedroom. He showers and throws his dirty clothes in the

washing machine in the laundry room. No one sees him.

INT. BARN - DAY

Tim sneaks into the barn and picks up a PISTON from the broken mini-bike and hides it in the old HAYLOFT.

EXT. MCALLISTER'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Linda backs out of the driveway when Ryan and Mickey return home. She stops and rolls down the window. The boys stand by while Dink collapses in the grass.

LINDA

Did you have any trouble?

RYAN

Trouble?

LINDA

Getting the chickens?

RYAN

No. We got 'em all.

LINDA

Mickey, what happened to your face?

MICKEY

It's okay. Chicken got me.

RYAN

Mr. Bollick offered us fifty cents,
but we told him it wasn't necessary.

LINDA

(chuckling)

That was nice of him. Where's Tim?

Ryan and Mickey exchange fearful looks.

RYAN

He came home earlier.

LINDA

I didn't see him. Did he help?

RYAN

Some.

LINDA

Good. Be sure and get your jobs done.
I'll be back soon.

She continues backing out of the drive. They walk on.

MICKEY

She doesn't know. He didn't tell.

RYAN

Probably afraid of getting in trouble
for beating you up.

MICKEY

He didn't beat me up. He just took me
by surprise.

RYAN

And it's a good thing I saved you.

Mickey gives him a brotherly shove.

MICKEY

So, now what?

RYAN

We'll wait. See what he does first.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Everyone's at the dinner table. A PLATTER and SERVING BOWLS
are passed around. It's unusually quiet.

LINDA

(to Dad)

Did you hear Mr. Bollick offered the
boys a whole fifty cents for rounding
up all his chickens?

Both parents laugh. Ryan and Mickey are uptight and neither
look at Tim who's quiet, ignoring everyone.

BILL

Tim, I bet you never thought you'd be
rounding up chickens. You catch any?

TIM

A couple.

RYAN
 (interrupting)
 Dad, did you hear I got more
 information today from Ohio State
 University? I'm going to apply.

BILL
 (taking over the conversation)
 Now, there's a lot to consider.

Inaudible conversation. Mickey smiles with relief. Tim pushes his plate aside and leaves.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Late that evening Mickey signals Ryan to join him in the laundry room. Mickey unloads the DRYER while they talk.

MICKEY
 Can you believe Tim never squealed on
 us? Do you think he still might?

RYAN
 I don't know. I can't figure him out.

MICKEY
 Think he'll want to move out now?

RYAN
 After what we did, he should.

MICKEY
 I know I'd want to kill us if that'd
 been me.

RYAN
 Maybe he's waiting to get revenge.

Ryan lunges at Mickey grabbing him around the neck, pretending to strangle him.

RYAN (CONT)
 Like murder us in our sleep.

Mickey breaks Ryan's hold and tries to get away, but Ryan wrestles him to the floor. They knock into the basket of dry clothes, dumping it out. They pick up the clothes.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Curt rushes up to Mickey in the hall outside their class.

Curt's out of breath with excitement.

CURT
You're never going to believe this.

MICKEY
I never believe anything you say.

CURT
Guess I shouldn't tell you.

Curt walks away but Mickey follows.

MICKEY
Tell me what?

CURT
I just found out, from Tracy.

For a minute, they get separated by some kids walking past.
As they catch up together, they walk toward class.

MICKEY
This better be good.

CURT
It's so good, you won't believe it.

MICKEY
Try me.

CURT
Tim isn't taking Colleen to the dance.
He's taking Ellie!

Mickey stops and grabs Curt's arm.

MICKEY
You're lying.

CURT
Nope.

MICKEY
I don't get it. She called Tim. Amy
heard him ask her.

CURT
And you jumped to all the wrong
conclusions. Colleen was helping to
get Tim and Ellie together.

Mickey staggers backward in exaggerated shock.

MICKEY

I don't believe it.

CURT

And Colleen doesn't have a date. Yet.
And there's not much time.

They start walking to class in the crowded hall.

CURT (CONT)

So, what you gonna do?

MICKEY

I don't know. Nothing.

CURT

You're such a loser. It's time you pay
up on our bet.

MICKEY

I guess I can talk to her.

CURT

Better hope she hasn't heard what you
did to Tim.

MICKEY

I'm dead.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Family home from freshman football game. Telephone rings as they enter kitchen. Linda grabs the phone.

RYAN

You guys won in spite of your
quarterback. And great defense too.
You both got in some awesome tackles.

MICKEY

I can still feel them.

RYAN

And, Tim, I couldn't believe you
nailed their quarterback.

Tim is all smiles and hangs on every word.

RYAN (CONT)

I hope we do as good on Friday.

LINDA

(trying not to show upset)

Tim, that was Mr. Hamilton. He's on his way over to take you out.

INT. MCDONALD'S FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Tim and Mr. Hamilton sit in a booth away from other customers. Both have BIG MAC'S, FRIES and DRINKS.

MR. HAMILTON

Sounds like it was a great game. Sorry I missed it.

TIM

Linda and Bill missed it too. (beat)
Even Mickey and Ryan said I did good.

MR. HAMILTON

How did Mickey do?

TIM

He played good too.

MR. HAMILTON

How you two getting along?

TIM

Hard telling.

Mr. Hamilton rubs his hands and smiles while Tim eats.

MR. HAMILTON

Remember, you're at the McAllister's for just 30 days; and the 30 days are almost up.

TIM

Yeah?

MR. HAMILTON

And you were sick of moving around?

TIM

Yeah?

Tim stops eating. Looks up at Mr. Hamilton who's smiling.

MR. HAMILTON

I found a home for you. A permanent one. A good home and no more moves.

TIM

What about my mom? What if she...? Maybe there's still a chance.

MR. HAMILTON

Tim, I'm sorry, but you know that's not going to happen.

Tim shoves his food away from him.

MR. HAMILTON (CONT)

This is what you wanted, aside from living with your mom. A permanent home, and it's a great one. He's a mechanic, and she's a nurse's aid. And they don't have any kids.

TIM

How come they want me? Something wrong with them?

MR. HAMILTON

No. There's nothing wrong with them. Or with you.

Tim starts packing up all the wrappers and uneaten food.

TIM

I'm supposed to be happy?

MR. HAMILTON

It'd be nice.

TIM

Will I still go to Shawnee?

MR. HAMILTON

No. I'm sorry. The Conley's don't live around here. But their school has a good football team. Their coach will be glad to have you.

TIM

But I've got friends here. I don't want to go to another school. I want to stay here. I mean at Shawnee.

Mr. Hamilton gathers his wrappers and soft drink.

MR. HAMILTON

You'll like it there. You didn't want to come here either, remember?

Tim slumps down in the booth.

TIM

Do the McAllister's know?

MR. HAMILTON

I told Linda on the phone.

TIM

What did she say?

MR. HAMILTON

She's disappointed. (beat) But the two older boys were already burned out. They took you with the understanding it'd only be for the 30 days.

TIM

Burned out? It wasn't just me?

MR. HAMILTON

What do you mean?

TIM

Nothing. When's it supposed to happen?

MR. HAMILTON

We'll set up a meeting with the Conley's, and you should move in with them in a week or so.

TIM

That fast?

Following Mr. Hamilton out, Tim slams the uneaten food and wrappers and the TRAY into the garbage can.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (SAME TIME)

Linda, Bill, Ryan, Mickey, Billy, and Amy are in the kitchen. They buzz about what a great game it was.

Linda and Bill whisper together. Bill raises his hand.

BILL
Come on, everybody. Sit down.

MICKEY
(under breath to Ryan)
Oh, oh. This can't be good.

BILL
You know, Mr. Hamilton picked up Tim.
They'll be back soon.

LINDA
We've got something to tell you before
they come home.

The kids share a look of apprehension.

MICKEY
(whispering aside to Ryan)
Here it comes. Tim's staying.

RYAN
Or he ratted on us.

Bill looks directly at Mickey and Ryan.

BILL
The big news is (beat) Mr. Hamilton
found a permanent home for Tim. He's
telling Tim right now.

Mickey reels back in shock.

MICKEY
I don't believe it.

AMY
I bet he likes it better here.

BILLY
Yeah.

LINDA
I'm sure it's a very nice home.

Amy sides up next to her mother for comfort.

MICKEY
I can't believe it. Children's
Services kept their word.

RYAN
Someone else is filed under "S."

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (LATER SAME DAY)

The family, including Tim, sit at the dinner table. All are quiet while they eat.

LINDA
Guess we're all thinking the same thing.

AMY
I don't think it's right, Tim leaving.
I want him to stay.

Everyone shoots Amy the "be quiet" look. Tim is embarrassed and keeps his eyes riveted to his plate.

TIM
(looking directly at Amy)
It's okay, Amy. I'll miss you but I need to move on. Maybe some day you can visit me.

BILLY
Me too.

LINDA
I'm sure we can work something out.

EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

Tim waits for Ellie to get off the school bus. He takes her by the hand to a corner where they can talk quietly.

ELLIE
What's wrong?

TIM
I'm leaving. I'm moving to another home.

ELLIE
What? Moving? I don't understand.

TIM
Remember, I told you I was just at the McAllister's for a month or so.

ELLIE

But you thought it might be longer.

TIM

I know. I shouldn't have said it.

ELLIE

What about the dance?

TIM

Don't worry. We'll still go. No matter what.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mickey and Curt stand at Mickey's locker.

CURT

I can't believe it. Tim's leaving? I was starting to like the guy. And the coach won't be happy.

MICKEY

My folks aren't happy either.

CURT

They don't know what he did to you.

MICKEY

They don't know what we did to him.

Mickey closes his locker door quietly and they walk on.

MICKEY (CONT)

I thought they'd never find a home, and we'd get stuck with him.

CURT

You're not sorry, are you?

MICKEY

Heck, no. It's cool. It's great!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Colleen waits for Mickey outside study hall.

COLLEEN

Mickey! We don't know each other very well, but I have to know. Is it true that Tim has to move away?

MICKEY
 (flabbergasted, apologetic)
 Children's Services is moving him.

COLLEEN
 He's really upset about leaving.

MICKEY
 He is?

They move out of the way of a pack of noisy students.

COLLEEN
 Of course. Wouldn't you be? And here
 he's going with Ellie now. And he's
 doing great with football. It just
 doesn't make any sense.

MICKEY
 I suppose.

COLLEEN
 Is it absolute that he has to go?
 Can't you do something?

MICKEY
 Me?

COLLEEN
 Tim said your parents would probably
 let him stay, but you and your brother
 want him to leave.

Mickey looks embarrassed, flustered.

MICKEY
 Don't blame me. It's all Children's
 Services.

COLLEEN
 I'm not blaming you. I just thought
 you could help him, if you wanted to.

Colleen softens and flirts a little with Mickey.

COLLEEN (CONT)
 Ellie really likes Tim. And I'm her
 best friend and I kind of thought you,
 you know...

Mickey squirms and not knowing what to say, says nothing.

COLLEEN (CONT)

I guess I was wrong.

Colleen stalks into study hall.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Linda and the three older boys oversleep and then rush around getting ready for school.

LINDA

(complaining to herself)

I hate it when we oversleep. This is nuts! Here.

Linda hands out PACKAGED MUFFINS and money to buy lunch.

RYAN

Bus is coming!

The boys grab their backpacks and jackets. In the rush out the door, Dink slips outside with them. The boys see him but don't have time to take him back to the house.

INT/EXT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

The boys take their seats. The bus moves while Dink runs alongside. He cuts in front of of the bus. The FEMALE BUS DRIVER hits the brakes hard, pitching everybody forward. Distraught, she looks back at the confused faces.

BUS DRIVER

Ryan, Ryan McAllister. I need you to come up here.

Ryan walks to the front and leans down to hear her whisper. Mickey and Tim watch with dread. Ryan, looking sick, turns back and looks at them. And they know.

MICKEY

Dink!

Mickey and Tim rush to the front of the bus.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Hurrying down the steps, Ryan crouches in the tall grass next to Dink laying on the road. Mickey and Tim are stricken.

MICKEY

Is he? Is he dead?

Dink, perfectly still, lies in the grass. The bus driver gets off the bus, its hazard lights blinking.

BUS DRIVER
I'm so sorry. I didn't see him. He cut
right in front of me.

RYAN
(fighting tears)
He must've died instantly.

Kneeling, he pets the dog.

RYAN (CONT)
There's not a mark on him. Probably
broke his neck.

Ryan gently moves the dog's head to a better position.

RYAN (CONT)
He never knew what happened.

Mickey and Tim, both in tears, drop to their knees by Dink.

RYAN (CONT)
I'm sure he didn't suffer.

BUS DRIVER
I'm going to have to go on. I'm so
sorry. I really am.

Kids peer out the bus window. Mickey looks up at them.

MICKEY
(grief stricken)
I'll stay.

TIM
I'll stay too.

RYAN
It won't take all of us to bury him. I
got a Chemistry test first period.

Mickey trades places with Ryan.

RYAN (CONT)
You'll have to tell Mom and Dad.

Ryan touches Mickey on the shoulder and boards the bus. The bus pulls away with Mickey and Tim kneeling by Dink.

MICKEY
 (shaking, fighting tears)
 You stay with him. I'll tell Mom and
 Dad... ah, my parents.

Tim sits by the dog and rocks back and forth. Mickey glances back a couple times as he runs to the house.

EXT. ROADSIDE AND DRIVEWAY - DAY

Mickey carries a RED PLASTIC SLED with an old ARMY BLANKET in it back to Tim and Dink.

TIM
 Billy and Amy know?

MICKEY
 Mom's telling them.

Mickey lays the sled next to Dink.

MICKEY (CONT)
 I thought we could put him in this.

Mickey spreads the blanket across the bottom of the sled. They lift Dink into the sled and pull the blanket ends over him. They each pick up an end of the sled.

MICKEY(CONT)
 We'll bury him up the hill, behind the
 barn.

As they pass by the front porch, they see Amy and Billy in their pajamas; Linda cries with them. They stay on the porch while Bill hands the boys a COUPLE SHOVELS.

EXT. BACK PROPERTY - DAY

Mickey and Tim carry the dog in the sled up the small hill. Each shoulders a shovel.

MICKEY
 We'll bury him under the Walnut tree.

Waist-high weeds cover the hard ground, making it difficult digging. When finished, both dirty and sweaty, kneel next to Dink and lift the blanket away from him.

TIM
 I can't believe he's dead.

Each of them lightly pets the dog. Tim's eyes begin to tear up. Mickey looks away, keeping his head down. Mickey closes the blanket over the dog and stands up.

MICKEY

Pick up the corners of the blanket,
and we'll lower him in.

They lower the dog into the grave and shovel dirt over him. Both cry quietly as they pat the dirt into a mound.

MICKEY(CONT)

We should mark it with something.

They look around. Tim finds a COUPLE BROKEN BOARDS from an old wooden fence. A rusty nail holds them together.

TIM

How's this?

He pushes one board up, forming a cross.

MICKEY

That looks good.

They pound it into the ground at the head of the grave.

MICKEY(CONT)

Dink would like that.

TIM

He was a great dog.

MICKEY

Sure was. The best.

TIM

I had a dog once.

Tim sits down next to the grave and packs the dirt with his hand. He rocks a bit. Mickey sits opposite him.

TIM(CONT)

He was a little brown mutt. I was only eight when he got sick. But my mom's boyfriend wouldn't take him to the vet. He said he wasn't wasting any money on some dumb dog.

MICKEY

What happened?

TIM

It died. Larry, the jerk, said it would have died anyway so it didn't matter. I didn't even cry.

MICKEY

You cried about Dink though.

TIM

We both did.

Tim smooths the dirt. Mickey hands him a shovel. Mickey picks up the sled, and they trudge down to the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mickey and Tim enter the kitchen where Linda and Bill wait. Linda wipes her face and tries to control her tears.

LINDA

(to each boy, individually)
Are you alright? Mickey? Tim?

Both boys nod yes. Tim goes to the bathroom to clean up. Mickey straddles a chair and Linda rubs his shoulders.

BILL

I'll take you to school as soon as you're both cleaned up. We'll all be better if we just keep busy.

MICKEY

How are Billy and Amy?

BILL

Pretty upset. We left it up to them whether they'd take the bus. They decided to go ahead.

MICKEY

They'll be telling everyone.

LINDA

Talking about it will help.

Tim comes back into the kitchen. He and Mickey exchange empathetic looks as Mickey goes to wash up. Tim sits at the table and rocks back and forth.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (LATER SAME DAY)

Family finishes dinner and everyone is at the table trying their best to cope with Dink's death.

BILLY

Everyone felt sorry for us.

MICKEY

Word got around fast. Even the teachers said how sorry they were.

AMY

I picked some flowers for his grave.

BILL

He'd like that.

LINDA

We'll have the funeral as soon as we finish eating. We won't even clean up the kitchen. I don't want to be up there when it's getting dark.

Everyone nods in silent agreement.

EXT. HILL BEHIND THE HOUSE - DAY

Amy carries a bouquet of seven YELLOW MUMS and leads a procession of her family up the hill to Dink's grave.

RYAN

Amy, you going to sing Amazing Grace?

LINDA

That'd be nice.

RYAN

Mom, I was joking.

At the grave, Amy gives everyone a Mum.

AMY

Everyone should say something good about Dink and then put your flower on his grave. I go first.

She steps closer to the grave.

AMY (CONT)

Dink, you were the best, most

beautiful, smartest dog in the world.
I love you.

Amy starts to cry and lays her flower on the grave. Each of the family follows suit. Mom and Billy cry quietly.

LINDA

Amy's right. Dink was wonderful. We all loved him so much.

BILL

Dink loved my dirty socks.

Some snickering. The boys follow suit.

RYAN

Dink, you won't be scared of storms any more.

MICKEY

My favorite memory is when we got you as a puppy for Christmas.

BILLY

And you helped us be heroes. And you were good at catching sticks.

TIM

I wish I could've taught you not to cut in front of the car.

INT. RYAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mickey enters Ryan's bedroom. Ryan is at his DESK.

RYAN

What's the matter with you?

Mickey shrugs and sits down on the floor by Ryan's bed.

MICKEY

Remember that girl I was telling you about?

RYAN

The one you thought Tim was after and you're afraid to ask to the dance?

MICKEY

Colleen. She thinks it's my fault that Tim's leaving. She says I should help

him so he can stay.

RYAN

Is she crazy? It's a done deal.

MICKEY

But she thinks I can stop it.

RYAN

Like how?

MICKEY

I don't know. That's just it. What can I do?

Ryan sits on the edge of his bed, near Mickey.

RYAN

I guess he isn't as bad as we thought. But still, he seems okay about the move.

MICKEY

But he isn't! He told Ellie, and she told Colleen, and she told me.

RYAN

Colleen wants him to stay, so you're willing to change your mind?

Ryan gives Mickey a disgusted look.

MICKEY

No. It's not just because of Colleen.

Mickey gets up, paces a little.

RYAN

It's not our decision.

MICKEY

But would you be mad if he stayed?

RYAN

Maybe keeping him would be easier than getting some new kid. They still have our name filed under "S".

MICKEY

You're probably right.

RYAN

What do you mean, probably? I'm always right.

MICKEY

You know Mom and Dad would like him to stay. It's the two of us. We're the problem.

RYAN

Go on, get out of here. I gotta study.

Mickey starts out the room.

RYAN (CONT)

It's not a problem for me. I don't care if he stays.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Linda and Bill talk softly at the kitchen table so they won't be overheard. Bill gets up and calls Tim who is in the family room with the other kids.

BILL

(calling from the kitchen)

Tim, could you come in here please?

Tim enters the kitchen. Bill motions him to sit down.

LINDA

Mr. Hamilton called. He's set up a visit for you, with the Conley's.

Tim doesn't answer and rocks in the chair.

BILL

They're coming on Saturday. Mr. Hamilton thought it'd be good for them to meet all of us too.

LINDA

It'll make it easier for us to visit later.

TIM

When?

LINDA

I don't know. After you get settled.

TIM

No. I mean Saturday. What time?

BILL

In the afternoon. Before the dance.

Tim sighs with relief.

LINDA

Mr. Hamilton will be here too.
Assuming everything goes okay, you'll
visit them Sunday at their house.

Tim sees Amy peeking in the doorway but her parents don't.

BILL

And you'll move there the following
Saturday.

LINDA

I know this is hard on you.

BILL

But you're a good, strong kid. It'll
work out just fine for you.

The three sit quietly, not knowing what more to say. Tim
pushes away from the table and walks into the family room.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Tim slips into the family room where the other kids are
messing around. Everyone looks at Tim who's obviously upset.
Tim sits back on the couch next to Mickey.

MICKEY

What's wrong?

TIM

Nothing.

AMY

He's gonna move next Saturday.

Everyone looks at one another and then at Tim.

MICKEY

Gotta move to another home, huh?

Tim glares at Mickey.

TIM
Don't be too happy.

MICKEY
I'm not happy. I think maybe you're
just chicken.

TIM
Chicken?

MICKEY
Yeah. Chicken.

Mickey eyeballs Ryan. Amy looks nervously back and forth
between Mickey and Tim. Billy looks scared.

MICKEY (CONT)
Chicken to stay here.

TIM
Huh?

MICKEY
With us.

TIM
Are you crazy?

MICKEY
Maybe we're not as bad as we seem.

Before Tim can say anything more, Mickey swings him by the
shoulder and wrestles him to the floor. Tim, taken by
surprise, gets pinned immediately. Tim catches sight of Amy
and Billy who are smiling and excited.

BILLY
Come on, Tim. You can get him.

Tim wiggles free and moves out from under Mickey. They
wrestle more. Amy and Billy are cheering Tim on. Linda and
Bill, hearing the ruckus, rush into the family room.

BILL
What's going on?

MICKEY
Just having some fun. Right, Tim?

They stop wrestling and sit side by side on the floor.

AMY

Tim said he's leaving, and Mickey said he's chicken to stay.

MICKEY

(to Mom and Dad)

Chicken to stay with us. Just letting him know he has a choice, if it's alright with you.

RYAN

I'm in.

Bill puts his arm around Linda who nods, smiling broadly.

BILL

If you want to, Tim, we'd like you to stay.

TIM

(shocked but ecstatic)

Of course, I do!

Mickey grabs Tim and they wrestle and laugh.

AMY

He's gonna stay! He's gonna stay!

LINDA

(quietly to Bill)

Can you believe this? I'm calling Mr. Hamilton with the good news.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim is on the phone in the kitchen. No one else is around.

TIM

Ellie? You'll never believe it.

ELLIE (V.O.)

What? Speak up, I can't hear you.

Tim peers around the corner to be sure no one is near.

TIM

I'm not leaving. I don't have to move.

ELLIE (V.O.)

No way. How? What happened?

TIM
I'm not sure.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Not sure about moving?

TIM
No, I'm sure about staying; but it's so weird. Mickey was calling me chicken for moving out. And then he says he wants me to stay.

Tim gets wound up in the wall phone cord as he paces.

ELLIE (V.O.)
That doesn't make any sense.

TIM
No kidding. I still can't believe it. You're going to have to put up with me longer than just the dance.

ELLIE (V.O.)
I can handle it. But what about Colleen and Mickey?

TIM
Oh, man. Colleen. You think she still wants to go to the dance with him?

ELLIE (V.O.)
Why not? And now she'll think he's really nice since he helped you get to stay.

Shocked, Tim almost drops the phone.

TIM
What? How do you figure?

He twists out of the phone cord.

ELLIE (V.O.)
She told him he should.

Brooding in silence, Tim leans against the wall.

ELLIE (V.O. CONT)
Tim, Tim? Are you there? What's the matter? What's wrong?

Angry, Tim paces and glances around to be sure no one is near.

TIM

You mean the only reason I'm staying is so Colleen will go to the dance with Mickey?

ELLIE (V.O.)

Now you're being an idiot. I didn't say that. Do you seriously think the whole family would put up with you so Mickey can get a date? If they didn't like you, want you, they wouldn't have you stay. Who'd be that crazy?

Tim considers what she's said and finally grins.

TIM

You're so cool, Ellie.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mickey comes in his bedroom to get ready for bed. Tim, still dressed, sits on his bed.

MICKEY

I didn't know you were in here.

TIM

I've been waiting for you.

MICKEY

Now what?

TIM

I think you're the chicken.

MICKEY

Huh?

TIM

You said I was chicken. Maybe you are.

MICKEY

What are you talking about?

Tim gets out of the bed and walks toward Mickey.

TIM

You're chicken. Chicken to ask Colleen

to the dance.

MICKEY

I thought you were taking her.

TIM

Me? Taking Colleen?

Mickey looks embarrassed and kicks aside some clothes.

MICKEY

I had it kind of mixed up. Or Amy had it mixed up. She told me you asked Colleen. She heard you on the phone.

Tim starts to laugh, his laughter explodes.

TIM

You thought I was after your girl? That's why you were so mad at me?

MICKEY

She wasn't, isn't my girl.

TIM

No, but you wanted her to be. And you thought I was moving in on her.

Mickey slams a dresser drawer shut, his back to Tim.

MICKEY

Just forget it.

TIM

Forget it?

Tim stretches confidently back on his bed.

TIM (CONT)

You're going to like me now.

Confused, Mickey turns to face Tim.

TIM (CONT)

The whole time, Colleen wanted you to ask her to the dance. She asked me to help her. But you were such a jerk I couldn't.

MICKEY

Colleen wanted to go with me? I don't

believe it.

TIM
Fine, don't.

Tim gets out of bed.

TIM (CONT)
I'm getting my shower.

MICKEY
Wait a minute.

Mickey blocks the doorway.

MICKEY (CONT)
You're not just getting even with me?
Setting me up for some big fall?

TIM
Would I do that?

Mickey looks Tim straight in the eye.

MICKEY
Yeah, you'd do that all right.

TIM
Not this time.

Tim gives Mickey a playful shove.

TIM (CONT)
(laughing)
But look out for next time.

Mickey grabs Tim, and they wrestle to the floor. Mickey stops and sits back.

MICKEY
Help me with Colleen?

TIM
(very happy)
That's what I've been trying to do.

Tim stands up and gives Mickey a hand up.

TIM (CONT)
(over the top cheerful)
We'll double.

MICKEY
(laughing)
With Mom as our chauffeur. (beat)
Brother.

THE END

OVER END CREDITS

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

The big Homecoming dance - walls and ceiling are decorated with silver and blue cardboard stars and glittery decorations. "Close-music" plays loudly over speakers.

Curt and Tracy, Tim and Ellie, Mickey and Colleen slow dance on the crowded floor. All looking lovestruck.

INT. BARN - DAY

Tim slips into the barn and retrieves the piston he had hidden in the hayloft and starts to fix the mini-bike.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Tim rides the fixed mini-bike to the front porch. Ryan and Mickey rush outside in shock that the mini-bike is running. Tim gets off and Ryan rides away. Tim and Mickey laugh together.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Christmas Day Morning, Billy and Amy play with their new GOLDEN RETREIVER PUPPY.