"STOLEN SUMMER"

by

Pete Jones

FADE IN:

EXT. O’MALLEY FRONT YARD - MORNING

MARGARET O’MALLEY, an auburn haired, sunburned 38-year old mother of eight, stands outside next to the running station wagon. Two children sit in the front seat while three are crammed into the back seat.

Margaret is waiting on her two youngest boys to fill the two way back seats that face backwards. KATIE, 4 years old, with strawberry blond hair, rosy cheeks, and a pot belly, sticks her head out the window.

KATIE
Mom, I told them to be ready by nine twenty. They just don’t listen.

Margaret ignores Katie. Katie pops back into the car.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE’S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

PETE, 7 years old, who looks like a poster boy for Ireland, lays on his stomach in front of the board game "All Star Baseball". He spins the dial. The dial lands on nine, which is the number that coincides with a strikeout. SEAMUS, nine years old, blondish brown hair, white skin, crystal blue eyes, angelic smile, jumps to the air in celebration.

SEAMUS
Another comeback stopped.

PETE
Reggie Jackson stinks!

SEAMUS
We gotta get going. Mom’s gonna freak.

Seamus heads for the door.

PETE
What should we tell her?

Seamus looks back at Pete. Pete’s hand me down plaid pants barely fit him and fall as he stands up.

SEAMUS
You couldn’t find your belt.

Seamus takes off down the stairs. Pete, with one hand holding up his pants, follows him down the stairs. Seamus runs out the front door and past his mom.
MARGARET
Why are you late?

Seamus, never breaking stride, climbs into the station wagon through the back window.

SEAMUS
Pete couldn't find his belt.

Pete runs past his mother.

MARGARET
Why are you late?

PETE
Seamus lost my belt.

Pete never breaks stride. He jumps into the back of the station wagon. Margaret turns and walks to the car with the kind of steam that only eight kids in 18 years can produce. She opens the car door, sits down, calmly puts the car in reverse, and turns her head for the reverse shoulder check. And then all hell breaks loose. Margaret screams at the top of her lungs.

MARGARET
God gives you 168 hours in a week. Can you not give him one full hour back? Is that too much to ask?

Katie at four years doesn't understand rhetorical questions.

KATIE
I've been ready for three hours.

EDDIE, 14, brown curly hair, brown eyes, athletic, is at the point in his life when he realizes he has more answers than his mom.

EDDIE
(to Katie)
Shut up you kiss ass.

Margaret, with no hesitation, stops the car and smacks Eddie across the face. Eddie winces while TOMMY, 17, also dark haired and dark eyed, laughs. Margaret puts the car in drive and cruises down the street like one big, happy family. WE FOLLOW the camera through the front of the car to the back.

PATRICK, 18, blondish brown curly hair and green eyes, holds MOLLY, six months old, in the front seat. Car seats have yet to be invented.

MARY, 17, auburn haired like her mother and Tommy's twin, sits behind the driver seat because she has learned the long hand of Margaret's wrath cannot reach her in that seat. Tommy reads Eddie the Bazooka Joe joke from his gum wrapper and the two laugh. In the back seat facing out, Pete and Seamus sit. Seamus holds electronic football in his hand and the electronic sound of electronic football players running reverberates throughout the car. WE GO TIGHT on PETE.
PETE (V.O.)
My dad is a fireman.

WE PULL BACK and see all of the kids hang out the window and wave at JOE, 40, who is Dark Irish, handsomely weathered, and happy to be at work when his wife takes the kids to church. WE GO TIGHT on JOE as he waves back to the kids.

JOE
(sarcastic to fellow firemen)
I wish I could be with them more.

PETE (V.O.)
And my mom?

WE GO TIGHT on MARGARET.

PETE (V.O.)
And my mom? She's a part time cook, maid, and nurse. But her full time job? She's a front line sergeant in God's army.

Pete screams as Seamus scores another touchdown on electronic football.

EDDIE
Goddammit, would you two shut up with that game!

Katie puts her hand over her mouth with the sound of the swearword.

Tommy prepares for battle by holding back his laughter. Margaret erupts.

MARGARET
The lord's name in vain? Son of a bitch.

At forty miles an hour in front of the firehouse Margaret lunges her open fist into the backseat and starts swinging like a tornado.

Kids scurry, hoping to avoid the path of the tornado. The wagon swerves into the other lane. Joe and his buddies watch from their lounge chairs outside the firehouse. He takes a swig from a plastic cup.

JOE
Dying in a fire sometimes doesn't sound so bad.

The station wagon pulls up to church and the children jump out like clowns from a small car. Margaret drives off as the children exit the station wagon. Patrick lifts Katie up to the basin of holy water.

Katie splashes water on her forehead and makes a sign of the cross.

Patrick, annoyed, puts her down and points his finger at
her. He gently touches the water with his index and middle finger and slowly makes the sign of the cross. Katie shakes her head in agreement.

Seamus dips his hand in the water and fake sneezes on Pete. Pete punches him in the shoulder. Margaret walks in and proceeds to lead her ducklings down the aisle as the heads in church turn to watch.

Each kid genuflects, some better than others, and sit. Pete sits between Seamus and Patrick. He looks at Margaret. She smiles and winks at him. Pete looks up to the life-size Jesus hanging high behind the altar. WE SLOWLY go TIGHT on JESUS hanging on the cross.

PETE (V.O.)

My cousins' families are similar to mine. Except some of the dads are cops. In my world, there's Irish Catholics, and then there's everybody else. The only part of this picture that doesn't fit for me is Jesus. From what I've learned, and according to my brother Seamus I've learned shit, that's why I'm in second grade, but from what I've learned, Jesus is not Irish Catholic. My dad says that's only a technicality, like Knute Rockne, but, still, Jesus is not Irish Catholic. He is Jewish. I don't know any Jewish people, they don't go to Holy Cross, but if I ever meet a Jewish person, my mom says my job would be to convert them to Catholicism. So they could go to heaven. I have decided this summer, the summer of 1976, I will help a Jewish person get to heaven. It will be my holy quest.

CUT TO:

INT. KEENEY/JONES FUNERAL HOME - A FEW DAYS LATER

REVERSE CAM - Looking out through Jesus's eyes. A WAKE. An Irish wake. Two little boys approach the casket. They kneel in front of the casket. Seamus looks at Pete. Pete's eyes are wide in anticipation. Seamus nudges Pete. Pete nudges Seamus back. Seamus makes the sign of the cross and Pete copies him. The two stand and walk away. WE FOLLOW them through the crowd. The boys continue to walk through the crowd but WE STOP at a circle of men holding drinks.

JOE, holding a Rum and Coke, is talking out the side of his mouth.

JOE

So? What do I do? Go up to Aunt Maggie. Hey Aunt Maggie, did I mention Uncle Jim owed me a nickel?

The other men laugh. Joe's fat brother, ROGER, answers as if he's Jim's wife. He pulls out a coin
ROGER
I know things are tight, Joe, but
this is cheap. Even for you.

Roger hands Joe the nickel.

JOE
Well, we'll call it even. That idiot.
You know if he was up a nickel with
the book, he would have lived to
collect.

The men laugh heartily.

JOE
A new way to fend off death. Be up
money with your bookie.

ROGER
May old Uncle Jim be in heaven thirty
minutes before the devil knows he's
dead.

JOE
He might need more time. What if the
devil has extradition rights?

All of the men laugh. A man hands Joe a drink. He finishes
the drink in his right hand as he accepts the fresh drink in
his left hand.

Seamus and Pete come running back through the crowd. Margaret,
standing with four women and smoking, calls them over.

MARGARET
Did you pray for your great uncle's
soul?

Pete looks at Seamus. Seamus looks down at Pete. Pete looks
up at his mom.

PETE
We didn't know his soul.

The women laugh.

WOMAN
Cause he didn't have one.

MARGARET
Go back up there and pray to Jesus
for the soul of your Uncle Jim. He
needs your prayers.

PETE
So I've heard. But Mom, how do we
know our prayers will help Old Uncle
Jim get to heaven?

MARGARET
SEAMUS
Mom, we can't go back up there. We already prayed to Jesus for his soul.

Mom looks at Pete for affirmation. Pete looks up to Seamus. He looks back up to Mom.

MARGARET
Did you pray to Jesus?

Pete looks at Seamus. Seamus gives him that scared look of having to look at that dead body up close again. Pete looks at the dead body.

He looks back at his mom. He nods his head in the affirmative.

MARGARET
Well, nobody can have too many prayers. Go again.

Pete and Seamus head toward the casket.

PETE
How did she know I was lying?

SEAMUS
You weren't convincing. And she's got some kinda built in lie detector.

PETE
How many lies do we get till we go to hell?

SEAMUS
Forty-seven.

PETE
I don't think I have many left. And I got my whole life ahead of me.

SEAMUS
That one doesn't count. You just nodded. Nodding up and down in China is like saying no.

PETE
Things are upside down in China.

Seamus begins to nod yes but changes it to a shake. Margaret watches the boys as they approach the casket. The boys approach the dead body.

PETE
What's faith?

Seamus's eyes are bugging out.

SEAMUS
A word grown ups use when they don't have the answer.

CUT TO:
INT. CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

WE GO TIGHT on an ELECTRONIC FOOTBALL GAME. WE HEAR the noises of the game. WE PULL BACK to see Pete playing the game in the back of the room. A nun stands at the front of the class and is talking to the class.

NUN
This summer, take time to reflect on your past year in the second grade. And how you can make third grade better.

The electronic defense tackles Pete and makes a double click noise.

PETE
No!

JIMMY
Yes!

NUN
Mr. O'Malley? Do you disagree with me?

PETE
No, Sister Leonora Mary. I agree.

The bell rings. The kids scream with happiness. School's out for the summer.

NUN
See you at church. And next year in third grade.

The boys run for the door.

NUN
Mr. O'Malley, may I speak to you for a moment?

The boys stop. Pete looks at them. The guys don't hesitate. They run out of the room. Sister Leonora Mary and Pete are alone.

PETE
Yes, Sister Leonora Mary.

NUN
How many times did I have to pull you by your ears to the front of the class and give you the ruler?

Pete looks around for the answer.

PETE
A lot!

NUN
Probably too many times, don't you think?
Pete nods.

NUN
I don't enjoy having to do that, you know.

Pete looks at the ground and scratches the back of his neck.

NUN
I think this is an important summer for you. This is the summer that you can choose to keep following the devil's way, or create a new path toward Jesus. Which path do you want to take?

PETE
The Jesus path.

NUN
Good. I expect to see a difference in you next year.

PETE
You will, Sister Leonora Mary. I've got a plan. A quest!

NUN
Good! You may go. Enjoy your summer, I know you will.

PETE
You too Sister Leonora Mary.

Pete heads toward the door. He turns around.

PETE
Do you know where I can find a synagogue?

INT. SYNAGOGUE - LATE AFTERNOON

Pete stops his bike outside the synagogue. He looks to the top to see if there is a cross. No cross. A small family walks out of the synagogue. The men wear yarmukles. Pete stares at the yarmukles. He walks his bike to the door. He tries to open the door and maneuver the bike through the door. He is unsuccessful. A bearded, tiny gray man with glasses opens the door. Rabbi Kenny Jacobsen smiles at the young leprechaun.

RABBI
May I help you, son of Saint Patrick?

Pete looks at him weird but shrugs off the name calling. He notices the rabbi wears a yarmukle also.

PETE
Whadaya got on the top of your head?

RABBI
It's a yarmukle.

PETE
Doesn't really block the sun.

RABBI
No but it covers bald spots.

The rabbi leans over, takes off the yarmukle, and shows Pete his bald spot.

PETE
It does cover the bald spot. My old Uncle Jim could have used that.

RABBI
So what can I do you for?

Pete looks around.

PETE
Jewish people go here?

The rabbi nods.

PETE
I'm looking to see if I can help Jewish people get to heaven.

RABBI
A noble endeavor.

PETE
A quest!

RABBI
A noble quest! What can I do to assist your quest?

PETE
Well, I just wanted to check out the synagogue. But there's no bike rack. Don't kids go here?

RABBI
Yes. But not for school. How 'bout I hold onto your bike in the back of the Temple as you look around?

PETE
Thanks.

Pete enters the temple with Rabbi Jacobsen following him with the bike. The place is round and expansive. Pete looks around. After looking, Pete heads to the back of the temple where the rabbi waits for him with his bike.

PETE
No cross?

RABBI
No cross.
PETE
I find the cross fun to look at. Sometimes I think about climbing the wall at Holy Cross and unscrewing the nails, and letting him go. Makes mass go faster. You should think about putting in a cross.

RABBI
I'll look into that. So what are you thinking?

PETE
That this is where the quest starts.

RABBI
Well, if I can be of service, you let me know. My office is just over there. I've got to get home to my family. I have a boy around your age. How old are you?

PETE
Seven. Almost eight.

RABBI
He's six. Almost seven.

PETE
You can have a family?

RABBI
Yes.

PETE
Then what do they call you?

RABBI
Well, my boys call me father. But my congregation calls me Rabbi. Rabbi Jacobsen.

Rabbi Jacobsen puts his hand out. Pete shakes it.

PETE
I'm Pete. Pete O'Malley. Nice to meet you Rabbi Jacobsen.

RABBI
Nice to meet you.

The rabbi and Pete head out of the temple.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The O'Malley's sit at the dinner table. Three things are a constant at the dinner table. Meat, potatoes, and chaos. Katie starts to yelp.

KATIE
Can I have your attention? Please. I
got something to say. Please!

Everyone at the table slowly quiets down.

    JOE
    Better make this good Katie.

    KATIE
    I will.

The room is quiet. Katie looks at everyone.

    KATIE
    Today. I was on my bike. And I pedaled my bike to the O'Connors. And I pedaled back. And it was sunny.

Everyone stares at her.

    KATIE
    That's it.

Eddie shakes his head in amazement and grins.

    EDDIE
    Katie, you need to come up with a more exciting story.

    KATIE
    I will.

    EDDIE
    You know, like maybe crash your bike, and get really bloody and do the wounded soldier back to the house.

    MARGARET
    Eddie!

The older kids laugh.

    PETE
    Anyone know what a yarmukle is?

    JOE
    A beanie?

Patrick looks at Pete.

    PATRICK
    Jewish people wear them. It's traditional headwear.

    SEAMUS
    Like feathers for an Indian?

    PETE
    What's it for?

    JOE
    To hide their horns.

The older kids laugh. Margaret winces.
PETE
They got horns?

MARGARET
No. They do not have horns. Joe, please. The young ones don't need this. Let's change the subject.

JOE
Patrick, your Uncle Charlie says he could get you an interview over at the city planners office.

PATRICK
No thanks.

MARY
What about the fire department?

JOE
That's always there. Well, kid, what the hell are you going to do?

The kids react to the word hell.

PATRICK
I've applied for some scholarships. I should hear about them soon. Until then, I can keep life guarding. Saving money.

JOE
Life guarding? I've raised a professional lifeguarder. In Chicago. Work three months a year.

EDDIE
And he doesn't even look like Sheila Moran in his suit.

Tommy blushes.

EDDIE
Sheila! Oh Sheila. Save me!

Joe laughs.

JOE
Don't let her old man catch her saving you.

TOMMY
Eddie doesn't know what he's talking about. I don't like her.

Mary speaks matter of factly.

MARY
Francis Demos told me Sheila likes you so all you need to do is ask her out.
Patrick gets up from the table as Tommy, Mary, and Eddie continue to talk about Sheila Moran. Seamus is bent over showing Pete where the horns protrude from the head. Katie feeds the cocker spaniel her mashed potatoes under the table while Molly drinks from the bottle in Nancy’s arms. Joe watches Patrick walk out of the room. He looks at Margaret for some answer. Margaret shrugs her shoulders.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET – NEXT DAY

Pete and Seamus walk down the tree lined city block in their neighborhood. The two sip milkshakes.

PETE
There’s nothing better than a bubble gum milk shake. How come that girl looks at us so funny when we order it?

Seamus shrugs.

PETE
I mean, it’s a two for one. Ice cream shake, and then the bubble gum sinks to the bottom, and when the shake’s done, you got a whole pack of bubble gum to chew. All for the price of one shake.

Seamus takes the lid off the cup and tries to finish the shake in one big gulp. He succeeds. Seamus now chews on a wad of gum. Pete and Seamus pass a lemonade stand.

Ten cents a cup. Pete motions to the lemonade entrepreneurs that his shake has bankrupt him for the day.

PETE
You ever feel that there’s more out there? Like there’s more for you to do than just play ball and eat ice cream?

Seamus shakes his head. He blows a bubble. Pete blows a bubble.

SEAMUS
You gonna play baseball at 11?

Pete shakes his head.

SEAMUS
You heading over to the synagogue?

Pete nods. Seamus blows a bubble.

SEAMUS
You know, this whole thing’s kinda weird. You going there, the quest.

Pete nods.

SEAMUS
Well, at least you know it’s weird.
Pete and Seamus walk down the street in silence. Enjoying another day without responsibility.

CUT TO:

INT. SYNAGOGUE - LATER THAT MORNING

Pete knocks on the door of Rabbi Jacobsen's office.

RABBI
Come in.

PETE
Hey Rabbi Jacobsen, Pete O'Malley. We met the other day.

The rabbi stands up from his desk. He puts his hand out. Pete shakes it.

RABBI
Mr. O'Malley. How are you today?

PETE
I'm good thanks. Ready to start my quest. But I thought I might ask you for your permission first.

RABBI
What are your plans?

PETE
Sort of a "lemonade-free trip to heaven" stand.

The rabbi chuckles. He stops.

RABBI
Enterprising.

PETE
Yep. Jewish people gotta like lemonade?

RABBI
Very much so. I believe Moses set one up at Mount Sinai.

Again Pete shrugs off that statement.

PETE
I figured I might set up the stand right at the door. And I'm not going to charge.

RABBI
A future car salesman.

PETE
Right. OK then. Thanks. I'll let you know how it goes.
RABBI
You know, Jewish people believe in heaven. It's just that we believe it's not open yet.

PETE
Well, maybe I can get the people that don't want to wait.

The rabbi laughs.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - MINUTES LATER

The rabbi walks back to the door. He turns back to look at Pete taping the poster to the wall. FREE LEMONADE. FREEtrip TO HEAVEN.

The rabbi laughs. He opens the door and heads into the synagogue.

Pete takes a seat at his stand.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - HOURS LATER

The rabbi watches Pete through a window in the synagogue. Pete looks around. No business. He looks around again. He pours himself a cup of lemonade and gulps it. He puts the lemonade back in its place.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - END OF THE DAY

The rabbi walks out to the stand. Pete looks dejected.

RABBI
Rome wasn't built in a day, Pete.

Pete doesn't understand.

PETE
How do you make any money here? I'm free, and still nobody.

The rabbi pats Pete on the top of the head.

RABBI
I envy your youth. Come back tomorrow.

Pete looks at all of his stuff.

RABBI
I'll store your office right here inside the front door. For free.

Pete smiles.

PETE
You and I seem to be the only two on this block that care about free stuff.

RABBI
Because we're the only two that realize that you can't buy what we have to offer. It's free.

Pete and the rabbi place the desk, chair, and poster inside the synagogue. Pete shakes the rabbi's hand and rides his bike home.

CUT TO:

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - NEXT DAY

Pete sits at his stand. The rabbi parks his car on the street 100 feet from Pete's stand. The rabbi doesn't want to block Pete's storefront billboard. The rabbi steps out of his car. His secretary, Julie, a pretty, voluptuous, middle aged woman who obviously was waiting for the rabbi, walks out the door and greets the rabbi. Pete watches her.

JULIE
Rabbi Jacobsen, you've received six messages.

RABBI
Door to door service. Julie, I don't pay you enough.

Julie hands the rabbi his telephone messages. The rabbi reads them and laughs.

JULIE
Members of the congregation don't seem to think this stand is a laughing matter. It's against Judaism.

RABBI
Most of the members don't seem to notice this temple, except during the high holidays or when they need something. Pete's giving us free advertising.

JULIE
But he's advertising Christianity.

RABBI
No, he's advertising thought. He's asking people to have a cup of free lemonade with him and maybe get some insight into how to get to heaven. Doesn't seem like this neighborhood cares about that. I wish a thousand Pete's opened up stands on this street.

Seamus rides his bike up to the stand.

SEAMUS
Hey.
PETE

Hey.

Seamus gets off his bike and pours himself a cup of lemonade.

PETE

Don't pour it all.

Seamus looks around. As if there was a public stampede for Pete's lemonade. Seamus waves to Rabbi Jacobsen. The rabbi walks toward the stand.

PETE

Rabbi Jacobsen, this is my older brother Seamus. He's nine.

The rabbi shakes Seamus's hand.

RABBI

I'm Rabbi Jacobsen. I'm forty-four. How many are there?

SEAMUS

Eight. But my oldest brother might go to college, so then there will be seven. And maybe we'll get his room.

RABBI

Quite a flock.

PETE

Got a dog too. Wanna cup of lemonade Rabbi?

RABBI

No thanks.

PETE

Mam?

JULIE

No thank you.

RABBI

Well, you keep up the...

YOUNG BOY

Rabbi! Rabbi!

A young boy comes running full speed around the corner.

YOUNG BOY

Rabbi! Rabbi!

The rabbi's face turns white.

RABBI

What is it Steven?

The sounds of fire engines roaring fill the air. A huge fire engine turns the corner and races past.
STEVEN
Rabbi, your house is on fire. Big fire!

The Rabbi doesn’t hear the last line. He takes off in a full sprint back the way Steven came. Another fire engine races past. WE FOLLOW the fire engine. WE PASS OVER THE TOP of the FIRE ENGINE to the other side where JOE O’MALLEY hangs on. WE FOLLOW THE FIRE ENGINE up the block where people stand outside watching a house burn. The rabbi reaches the house at the same time the fire engine does.

RABBI
My boys! Where are my boys? David?
Danny?

The rabbi furiously searches the crowd. Joe O’Malley reaches the rabbi. A quick exchange between the two. The rabbi takes off toward the stairs of his house. Two other firemen catch him and hold him back. Joe motions to the firemen to pull him back and the rest of the crowd to the other side of the street. He grabs a couple of other firemen who aim the hoses at the front door. Joe runs into the house and disappears into the smoke.

A CLOSE SHOT on Pete and Seamus, who have been watching from the corner. Mrs. Jacobsen arrives. The rabbi grabs her. Mrs. Jacobsen starts to cry. Everyone watches for Joe to reappear with two boys in hands. The firemen hose the flames. The rabbi makes another run for the house, but this time policemen hold him back. The rabbi goes limp as the two policemen hold him up. The rabbi’s eyes are fixated on the front door. Where there is just smoke, the outline of Joe O’Malley appears. He has a child, Danny, wrapped in a blanket in his arms. He runs down the stairs and across the street. He hands the boy off to the paramedics. Danny is suffering from smoke inhalation but is OK. His parents surround him.

The rabbi screams at Joe. Joe can only read his lips. David! David! My other boy! David!

Joe looks back at the house. The flames rage uncontrollably and the other houses are now in danger of catching fire. The rabbi grabs Joe by the shoulders and screams. This time Joe’s eyes are only on the fire. Joe takes off toward the house. A firemen tries to stop him but Joe bounces off him like a running back. As he reaches the front steps, an explosion knocks him back ten feet and flames roar out the front door. Firemen trample Joe as his coat catches on fire. They stamp out the fire while they hold him down. Joe rolls over and stares at the Jacobsens. Mrs. Jacobsen is hysterically crying as the rabbi stares aimlessly. The rabbi turns slowly and buries his wife’s head in his chest. Danny, his youngest son, stares over his oxygen mask and up at his parents. Joe stands up and is escorted toward the ambulance as other firemen storm the house with more hoses. A CLOSE SHOT of PETE. His face is void of any emotion other than a look that says he thought his dad was dead. A CLOSE SHOT of SEAMUS. Tears stream down his face. As his dad clears the crowd and reaches the ambulance on his own two feet, Seamus takes off in a full sprint and covers the fifty yards in seconds. Pete stands still.
SEAMUS
Dad! Dad! Dad!

Joe looks up and before he knows it Seamus is jumping into his arms.

Joe puts Seamus down instantly and starts to scream.

JOE
What the hell are you doing here?
Jesus Christ Seamus! Jesus Christ!

Seamus's face turns white. Joe looks up and sees Pete standing on the corner frozen.

JOE
And you brought your brother?

Joe slaps Seamus across the face.

JOE
How many times have I told you not to chase fire engines! It's dangerous. You could have killed yourself and your brother. Go home! And wait for me in your room!

Seamus turns around and walks toward Pete. Seamus reaches Pete, who is still frozen. Seamus never looks up from the pavement.

SEAMUS
Come on.

Pete looks at his dad, who now sits on the back of the ambulance as paramedics care for him. Pete looks further at Rabbi Jacobsen. Danny Jacobsen, six years old and bald, catches Pete's eye. They look at each other. Pete turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The O'Malley family sits around the TV and watches the news, which is reporting live from the fire, which still simmers in the background.

WE GO UP THE STAIRS AND DOWN THE HALLWAY to Pete and Seamus's room.

They both sit on their beds staring quietly at the ceiling. Seamus throws a tennis ball to himself. The front door opens and screams of DAD fill the house. Pete turns and looks at Seamus. Seamus fixates on the rotation of the ball as it leaves his hand. He repeats this over and over. Joe enters the bedroom and closes the door behind him.

Pete and Seamus sit up. Joe grabs a chair and flips it around so he's leaning forward on the back of the chair.

JOE
How many times have I told you boys?
Seamus begins to speak. Joe cuts him off.

JOE
People die in fires. You don't chase fires, you run away from them. That family lost a ten year old boy in that fire today.

PETE
Rabbi Jacobsen's son died?

Joe nods.

JOE
What were you two doing in that neighborhood?

Pete and Seamus stay silent.

JOE
You're both grounded. You can't leave this block. If I find either one of you outside this block or hear that either one of you left this block, you will get a whooping that you will still feel on your sixteenth birthday.

SEAMUS
But the baseball field...

JOE
That's it.

Joe stands up and exits the room. Seamus gets off his bed and grabs his glove. He starts to pound the ball into his glove.

PETE
I'm sorry. It's my fault.

Seamus stares out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - HOUR LATER

Joe sits in the backyard alone on a lounge chair drinking an Old Style beer. A floodlight illuminates the backyard. The backdoor opens and shuts. Joe continues to stare out. Pete grabs a chair, spins it around like his dad, and leans forward on the back of the chair.

Nothing is said for a few seconds as Pete stares out. Joe doesn't look at Pete.

JOE
What are you doing up?

PETE
Couldn't sleep.

(Pause)
Dad, Seamus was only in the area because he was checking up on me.

Joe takes a big sip from his beer.

PETE
I’m on a quest. To meet a Jewish person and help them get to heaven.

Joe takes another sip from his beer.

JOE
Jewish people can’t go to heaven.

PETE
Mom says they can be converted. Through Jesus. I asked Father Kelly and he said that is the role of a good Christian.

Joe takes another sip.

PETE
So I’ve been going over to the temple on Oakley. Looking for Jewish people. I met Rabbi Jacobsen. He’s like a priest over at the synagogue. He’s been real nice. And I feel really bad for him now that his son has died.

Silence.

JOE
How old are you?

PETE
Seven. And a half. You know.

JOE
You should be playing baseball and going to the pool. And asleep by nine.

PETE
Seamus was just seeing how things were going.

JOE
Don’t go to that synagogue anymore. You go to church. Let the Jewish people take care of themselves.

PETE
But I’m on a quest.

JOE
Not anymore. The Jews will be Jews. And Christians will be Christians. Don’t try to change things at seven and a half.

Pete stares out at the backyard.
JOE
Get to bed.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Margaret lays in bed watching "The Tonight Show" when Joe walks out of the bathroom. He jumps into bed and watches TV with her.

MARGARET
How bad was it?

Joe shakes his head.

MARGARET
Joe, I can't raise these kids alone and I've gained too much weight to find a new husband.

Joe laughs and squeezes her stomach.

JOE
Too much weight? You're skinnier and more beautiful than the first day I met you.

Margaret laughs.

MARGARET
Your charm worked on me when I was a teenager. I see what I see. Tell me about the fire.

JOE
It was a fire. They're never good.

Margaret knocks on the wall that the bed lays against. She turns her head and faces the wall.

MARGARET
(sarcastic to the wall)
Tell me about your day.
(As wall)
Well, it was a day like any other day. I stood firm, attached to the floor.

JOE
Whaddaya want from me?

MARGARET
Not the tough guy I'm being interviewed I did my job routine.

Joe touches Margaret's stomach and rubs it.

JOE
If you were skinnier when we met, I don't remember. And there's no way I
Margaret pushes his hand away and rolls over. Joe twists the pillow in half and stares at the ceiling.

JOE
Did you know Pete was going to a synagogue to convert Jewish people?

Margaret laughs.

JOE
I’m not finding that as funny.

Margaret rolls over and faces Joe.

MARGARET
Pete is searching for meaning in his life.

JOE
He’s seven. Baseball is the only meaning in a seven year old’s life.

MARGARET
Some kids are destined for greater things than baseball.

JOE
I don’t know honey. Sounds like Pete’s looking for a recipe to get beat up. I told him to leave those people alone. Don’t let him go over there.

MARGARET
I can’t watch these kid’s every move. Molly needs my constant attention. All I know is he walks out of the house in the morning, and when he comes back, he’s clean and nobody’s calling to say he was trouble.

JOE
Now that’s parenting 101. My kid’s clean and nobody says he’s trouble. Am I going to have to work and raise the kids?

MARGARET
Don’t start with me Joe.

Margaret rolls over. Joe spoons up against her.

JOE
Maybe we should bring another kid into the world who’s clean and doesn’t cause any trouble?

MARGARET
Well, if you’re looking for my womb, I think it fell out over there when I was dusting. Have at it.
Joe rolls back over and watches "The Tonight Show".

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREHOUSE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Joe sits on a lounge chair outside of the firehouse with a few other firemen playing cards. Roger, his brother and fellow fireman, is studying the sports page.

ROGER
The Sox hit lefties hard. Zisk loves lefties.

No comments.

ROGER
I think you gotta take the Sox tonight plus one fifty. They’re a good bet. A buck to win a buck fifty.

JOE
Why you try to convince us? You never bet against the Sox. Ever.

ROGER
I like their lineup. It’s explosive.

JOE
You ever think about betting the other team. When you’re betting, don’t let your heart get in the way of a good decision.

ROGER
Yeah, but when your heart and mind are in together, it’s a sure bet.

JOE
Funny how your heart and mind always say Sox.

JACK
Gin!

Joe throws his cards down.

JOE
Shut the hell up Roger. Jack’s crushing me cause of you.

(To Jack)
You should be a garbage man the way you pick up every card I throw. You do that to piss me off, Jack?

Jack adds the score.

JACK
I do it to win. Five hundred to two twenty. At a nickel a point. Fourteen bucks you owe me.

Joe goes into his pocket and fishes out fourteen dollars.
Rabbi Jacobsen walks up the driveway with his son Danny. The rabbi has two tinfoiled trays and Danny carries two bottles of red wine.

RABBI
Gentlemen.

The men get quiet. Joe walks over to help the rabbi with the trays.

Roger takes the wine from Danny.

RABBI
My wife, my son, and I wanted to thank you for your bravery and kindness.

The rabbi looks down at Danny. Danny's White Sox hat covers his bald head.

DANNY
Thank you.

The men, still quiet, nod. Jack takes a tray from Joe and the other tray from the rabbi. Joe puts out his hand.

JOE
Rabbi, Joe O'Malley. I'm sorry for your loss.

The men nod in agreement.

RABBI
Thank you. My son David was a good boy.

The rabbi looks at the shiny red fire trucks.

RABBI
He loved you firemen. Never understood why I couldn't be a fireman on the side and park the firetruck outside the house.

The men laugh. Danny smiles. Joe nudges Roger and points to his head. Roger nods knowingly and walks into the firehouse.

RABBI
My wife figures the best way to thank a man is through his stomach. She baked some lasagna for all of you in appreciation.

DANNY
It's real good.

Joe looks at Danny.

JOE
I bet it is.

(To Rabbi)
My guys love a good meal, but I wish your wife wouldn't have. We were
just doing our job.

RABBI
A heroic job you do. My wife wanted
to thank you personally. My synagogue
will want to thank you formally.

Joe looks down. Not heroic enough to save your other son,
Joe thinks.

RABBI
I don't know if you're allowed to
drink red wine on the job, but lasagna
just isn't as good without a fine
wine.

JACK
Nothing is as good without a fine
wine.

Roger comes back with a plastic firehat and button.

ROGER
This is for you. A deputy fire chief.

Danny takes off his White Sox hat and hands it to his dad.
He puts on the firehat.

DANNY
Thanks.

ROGER
You're welcome. You a big Sox fan?

DANNY
Huge. Zisk crushes the ball.

ROGER
Especially against lefties. You wanna
check out the firetruck?

Danny looks at his dad excitedly. His dad nods. Roger takes
Danny by the hand and walks back into the firehouse. The
other men follow.

Joe stays out with Rabbi Jacobsen. The rabbi breaks the
silence.

RABBI
It is Jewish custom to sit chiva at
the house of the deceased. It is a
sign of support to the family of the
deceased.

JOE
Like a wake.

RABBI
Yes, like a wake. I know you are a
busy man, but if you have time, I
would be honored if you could stop
by and sit for a few minutes with my
family and friends.
JOE
You bet.

RABBI
Obviously, it is not at my home. But at my brothers on 2243 Damen.

JOE
2243?

RABBI
Anytime after seven PM all week.

Danny is on the back of the truck.

DANNY
Dad! Check me out!

RABBI
Children realize life is about living. And death is about life. Do you have any children of your own?

Joe laughs.

JOE
Yep. I've got children all right. Eight.

RABBI
Eight? A blessed man.

Joe rolls his eyes as if the blessing isn't always so.

RABBI
The O'Malley clan? By any chance, is a beautiful young redhead named Pete yours?

Joe nods in embarrassment.

RABBI
Your bravery has been passed on. He's the most earnest, delightful young man I have ever met.

JOE
I found out he's been a nuisance at your temple and I've reprimanded him. He won't be bothering you anymore.

RABBI
Your son is a welcome sight at the temple.

Danny screams as he sits in the rear driving seat. Joe and the rabbi look at Danny.

JOE
Do you mind if I ask?
Joe points to his head.

**RABBI**
Luekemia. Chemotherapy.

**JOE**
I'm sorry. So sorry.

**RABBI**
God has a plan. A mysterious plan for my family.

Joe and the rabbi watch Danny.

**RABBI**
If you can find time, we would love to have you at my brother's house. Bring Pete. It would be good for everyone spirits to see a child so full of life like your son.

Joe smiles.

**JOE**
He's full of something.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY FAMILY ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Pete and Seamus lay on the floor playing "All Star Baseball". Katie dances around to music from the record player. Baby Molly sleeps in the crib. Patrick walks in the door with the day's mail. Katie runs over and grabs the mail from him.

**KATIE**
Getting the mail is my job.

She punches him, hands over the mail to Katie, who takes it over to the table. She rifles through the mail. Katie can't read.

**KATIE**
Bill! Bill! Bill! Looks like all bills.

Katie gets up and starts to dance. Patrick sits down and looks at the mail. A few pieces of official mail are addressed to him. Patrick opens them up and reads them. Patrick crumples the paper and leaves it on the table. He walks away from the table.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY KITCHEN - EARLY NIGHT

The family sits at the dinner table. Tommy and Eddie are missing from the table. The kids eat pot roast and roasted potatoes.

**JOE**
The boys game started at six?
SEAMUS
Doubleheader. Uncle Roger, Billy, and Roger junior are going.

Joe looks at Margaret. She nods.

JOE
You finish your chores?

SEAMUS
Yep.

Joe nods. Pete looks at his dad.

JOE
Rabbi Jacobsen invited you and me to a... a... chivas at his house.

PETE
Rabbi Jacobsen? Chivas?

JOE
Yep. Like a wake. I told him we would be there.

Joe looks at Margaret. She smiles.

PETE
How's he doing?

JOE
It's gotta be tough.

PETE
Yeah.

JOE
We'll go and then catch the second game.

PETE
Yeah. We'll do that.

SEAMUS
tell Rabbi Jacobsen I'm sorry for him.

PETE
I will.

JOE
You know he's got a boy your age. I met him today. He'll be there.

Pete nods.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY KITCHEN - AFTER DINNER

Joe and Margaret still sit at the table. Joe drinks a beer while Margaret drinks coffee. Mary rocks Molly. Seamus stands at the sink scraping food and washing dishes.
to Pete, who stands on a stool and rinses the dishes. Pete hands the dishes to Katie, who places the dishes in the dishwasher.

JOE
The rabbi's other kid has leukemia.

MARGARET
We've been blessed. I don't know how we've been so lucky, but I'm not to question it.

JOE
Stupid electrical wiring. Those damn old houses weren't built for modern wiring.

Patrick walks by.

JOE
Hey, lifesaver, why don't you sit down?

Patrick takes a seat.

JOE
So, your mother thinks you got some news?

Patrick plays with his fork.

PATRICK
Maybe I'll take a look at the job over at the city planners office.

Joe pauses.

JOE
It's a good job with nice benefits. I'll talk to Alderman McManus about it.

Patrick stays silent.

JOE
Well, don't go there with that attitude. The alderman's doing us a favor. So don't go acting like a punk.

From the kitchen, Katie mimics her dad.

KATIE
Yeah, don't go acting like a punk.

Patrick stays silent.

JOE
A lot of kids your age don't have a chance like this.

PATRICK
A lot of kids my age go to college.
Not to work.

JOE
Yeah, and when they graduate, they're four years behind you in the working world. All they've learned from college is how to smoke pot and sleep.

PATRICK
The good jobs nowadays require a college degree.

JOE
A city job is a good job, and all it requires is hard work and a good attitude.

PATRICK
The Irish way. Get a city job, work hard, have forty kids, retire on a crap pension in the same house you lived in all your life.

JOE
You wanna be some hotshot bigshot, have one point two kids, live in the suburbs in a big house with no love to fill a closet, and retire to Florida to die like a raisin?

PATRICK
Yeah, what if do?

JOE
Then go ahead. Be like the Jews. Have no more than two kids because it's not economical to have more. Make every decision based on money. Raise your kids to base their life on the size of their wallet. Raise them to worship the almighty dollar, not God.

PATRICK
No, Dad, I shouldn't raise my kids to base their worth on the size of their wallet when I can teach them to base it on how much booze they can handle without puking.

Joe gets up and cracks Patrick. The kids run to their mom.

JOE
You ungrateful, smartass prick. You got all the answers at eighteen, don't you?

PATRICK
No, but maybe if I work a city fucking job, I'll have all the answers at forty.

Joe cracks Patrick upside the head and knocks him over. The
kids scream. Patrick gets up. He thinks about charging his
dad, but decides to walk out of the kitchen and out of the
house. The kids cry. Margaret shakes her head. Joe finishes
his beer.

CUT TO:

INT. O’MALLEY STATION WAGON – AN HOUR LATER

Pete and Joe drive in the wagon. The White Sox broadcast
blares from the radio. They drive in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. RABBI JACOBSEN’S BROTHER’S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Pete and Joe enter the house. A lot of people sit quietly.
The rabbi’s brother greets them.

JEFFREY
I’m Jeffrey Jacobsen, Kenny’s brother.
We’re glad you could make it.

Pete hands Jeffrey some flowers. The room is void of any
flowers.

Jeffrey looks around for a place to put the flowers.

JEFFREY
I’ll bring this in the kitchen.

Thanks. Can I get you anything to drink?

JOE
Scotch.

JEFFREY
I’ll check to see if I have any
scotch. If not?

JOE
A beer.

JEFFREY
I’ll check to see if I have any beer.
If not?

JOE
You know what, I’m fine.

JEFFREY
You sure?

JOE
Yeah, I’m sure. Thanks.

Jeffrey looks at Pete.

PETE
No thanks.

People sit on the couch. A picture of David sits prominently
on the table. A handsome young boy. Joe works his way over
to Mrs. Jacobsen, who sits on the couch. Mrs. Jacobsen, a pretty but plain dark haired woman, shakes Joe’s hand.

JOE
I am sorry for your loss, Mrs. Jacobsen.

MRS. JACOBSEN
Thank you.

Pete stands quietly next to his dad. A gentleman gets up from the couch facing Mrs. Jacobsen and motions for Pete and Joe to sit. They sit. Small, quiet conversations take place around them. Pete and Joe sit quietly. Rabbi Jacobsen enters the room with Danny. He walks over to Joe, who has stood up to greet the rabbi. Joe puts out his hand. The rabbi shakes his hand, but also moves in to hug Joe. Joe moves in unexpectedly for the hug. The rabbi picks up Pete and hugs him. Pete laughs.

RABBI
My family is grateful to you.


DANNY
You wanna check out my room that I’m sharing with my cousin?

Pete looks at his dad. Joe gives him the OK. Pete and Danny take off.

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY’S ROOM – SECONDS LATER

Danny shows Pete his autographed glove. Sandy Koufax!

DANNY
My dad says it’s rare cause Mr. Koufax rarely signed things.

PETE
Yeah. Was he good?

DANNY
I think so.

Danny hands Pete another glove.

DANNY
This was my brothers. You wanna play catch?

PETE
In the house?

Danny grabs a tennis ball.

DANNY
Yeah. It’s just a tennis ball.
PETE
Sure.

Danny fires a strike.

PETE
How’d you lose your hair?

DANNY
Leukemia. It’s cancer. I take this medicine that makes me lose my hair.

PETE
Does it hurt?

DANNY
No. The hair just fell out. I used to have black hair.

PETE
I've got red hair.

DANNY
My friend Charlie's got red hair.

They throw the ball back and forth.

PETE
I'm sorry about your brother.

DANNY
Thanks. You know, since my cancer, he didn't beat me up as much. We had fun together. Do you have any brothers?

PETE
Four older brothers.

DANNY
Wow. You must get your butt kicked?

Pete nods.

PETE
My older sister's worse. My brothers just punch me in the gut. She pulls my hair. That hurts. I wish I were bald then.

Danny smiles.

PETE
Was the fire scary?

DANNY
I don't know what happened. David was watching cartoons in the TV room. I was upstairs playing baseball. And then I noticed a lot of smoke. I opened my door but there was a lot of fire. I tried to open my window, but I couldn't. I couldn't see the
fire anymore because the smoke got so thick. And then your dad came in. He saved my life, I think. It was nothing like the fire drills you do in school.

PETE
Where do you go to school?

DANNY
Briarwood. How ‘bout you?

PETE
Holy Cross. Going into third grade.

DANNY
I’m going into second. I missed a lot of first grade with all of the chemotherapy. That’s what they call the cancer medicine.

The boys throw the ball back and forth.

PETE
What's it like to be Jewish?

DANNY
I don’t know. Good.

PETE
I'm Catholic.

DANNY
What's that like?

PETE
Noisier.

DANNY
Things are usually noisier around here. But everyone's really sad.

PETE
My Uncle Jim died a few weeks ago. He was old. He was really my grandfather's brother, but we still called him Uncle Jim.

DANNY
I got an uncle like that. Harvey.

PETE
You would have thought my uncle’s funeral was a birthday party.

DANNY
Sounds like fun.

PETE
Yeah it is. My mom says that people are sad because they love the person, but are happy cause they get to go to heaven. Jewish people can't go to
heaven.

DANNY
Why not?

PETE
Cause they're Jewish. God doesn't let Jewish people in heaven.

Danny's quiet.

PETE
If you're interested, I think I can show you how to get to heaven.

DANNY
Yeah?

PETE
Yep. I would just have to convert you.

DANNY
How do you do that?

PETE
I don't know. I haven't converted anyone before.

DANNY
What can I do in heaven?

PETE
Anything you want. They call it paradise.

DANNY
Sounds good. When can we start?

PETE
Tomorrow.

DANNY
I got my last chemotherapy treatment on Friday. So that gives us all week.

PETE
Fine. Let's meet at your dad's synagogue.

DANNY
OK.

The boys toss the ball back and forth.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY STATION WAGON - LATER

Pete and Joe sit in the wagon.

JOE
Danny's a good kid, huh?
PETE
Yeah. His medicine makes him bald.
But it doesn’t hurt. I’m gonna convert him.

Joe shakes his head.

JOE
Leave him alone.

PETE
He wants to.

JOE
But his parents don’t. Look, he’s Jewish. His family’s Jewish. If they wanted to be Christian, his parents would change.

PETE
But it’s a quest.

JOE
The quest has been called off.

PETE
I promised Danny. We’re meeting at the synagogue.

JOE
Well, I’m breaking that promise. You can’t go converting Jewish kids the same way they don’t go converting you.

PETE
But he wants to.

JOE
I said no. No more lip from you. Do not go to that synagogue and do not bother Danny or his family anymore. Do you understand me?

Pete doesn’t answer.

JOE
Do you understand me? If I find out you’ve been going over there, you will get the spanking of a lifetime and be grounded until you’re sixteen. Do you understand?

PETE
Yes.

The lights of the local baseball field illuminate the night. Joe turns into the parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. SYNAGOGUE – NEXT DAY
Danny, with his White Sox hat covering his bald head, stands outside the synagogue. DIFFERENT SHOTS of Danny waiting. Danny finally decides Pete is not showing up. He gets on his bike and turns the corner back toward his uncle's house. As he passes an alley, Pete pops out and almost scares Danny off his bike. Pete sneaks back into the alley.

DANNY
What are you doing?

PETE
Our quest has to be done in secret. Our mission is now undercover.

DANNY
Why?

PETE
Cause.

DANNY
What's our mission?

PETE
To get you to heaven.

DANNY
Right. How we gonna know I got to heaven?

PETE
We'll just know.

DANNY
So what are we gonna do?

PETE
We got to set up some tests.

DANNY
Like school.

PETE
Yeah. But those tests aren't fun. What's the purpose of making it to heaven if the tests aren't fun?

DANNY
Have you taken any of these tests?

Pete thinks.

PETE
Since I'm Catholic, I don't think I have to. It's just automatic.

DANNY
That's cool.

PETE
Yeah. But you know what. For my first communion next year, I have to
complete first communion training.

DANNY
What's communion?

PETE
This piece of bread that is Jesus.

DANNY
And you eat it?

PETE
Yep.

DANNY
Gross.

PETE
I watch people eat it and they don't gross out. And my brothers say it tastes like wheat bread.

DANNY
Not as good as white. So I should do the first communion training.

PETE
I haven't done it yet, so I don't know what it is.

DANNY
Darn.

PETE
But we can make up our own.

The kids think.

DANNY
How about something like Bruce Jenner and a decathlon? Win the decathlon, go to heaven.

Pete thinks.

PETE
Yeah, something like that.

DANNY
And then we should have a gold medal ceremony. Gotta have a medal.

PETE
Communion can be your medal.

DANNY
The Jesus wheat bread?

PETE
Yeah.

DANNY
I'd rather have a medal.
PETE
We can talk about it later. Let's go, we can't be spotted.

DANNY
Why can't we spotted?

PETE
We're undercover.

DANNY
Right.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN - MINUTES LATER

Pete and Danny sit on the Elevated Train that runs from Chicago's north side to its south side. Pete looks out the window. They pass a car wash. Danny looks up and down the aisle.

DANNY
My parents don't let me on the El without them.

PETE
Father Kelly always talks about a risk reward. I think you'll be OK if your parents find out. We'll just explain the risk was worth the reward.

DANNY
Right.

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK STREET BEACH - MINUTES LATER

The beach is pretty full. Lake Michigan's waves crash weakly against the rocks. Gymnastic rings are set up at the north side of the beach along with an area filled with weights. Elevated five feet above the beach is a paved area for runners and bikers.

PETE
If we see my sister, just start running.

DANNY
How am I gonna know it's your sister?

PETE
I'll be running.

DANNY
Right.

The boys look around. Two teenage girls in bikinis walk past them.

The boys smile. The girls smile back. Danny does his best
Ponz impression. Pete laughs.

PETE
Bruce Jenner is faster, stronger, and can jump higher than anyone else. So that’s how we should do this.

DANNY
OK. I’m fast.

PETE
But first, you need to be baptized. My baby sister just got baptized. We all got baptized. I don’t remember mine, but I’ve seen pictures.

Danny nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - MINUTES LATER

Pete is trying to pick up Danny by his ankles. He lifts Danny up and they both fall into the water. Pete, determined to do it right, then grabs Danny by the ankles and lifts. Danny’s head, along with his shoulders, wade back and forth in the water.

PETE
Amen!

Pete lets go of Danny’s legs and Danny crashes completely into the water. Pete falls in also. They both wipe away the water from their faces.

PETE
I think it would have been easier if you were a baby.

DANNY
Let’s get started. What should we do first?

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK STREET BEACH - LATER

A SERIES OF SHOTS. Pete counting as Danny runs toward him. Danny hanging from a ring as Pete counts him down. Pete and Danny talking to a man with weights. Danny trying to lift the weight. He can’t.

Pete tries. He can’t. They take off some of the weight. Danny lifts the weight over his head. Danny climbs a small hill of rocks. Pete waits for him at the bottom, about six feet below. Danny jumps, hits the sand, and rolls.

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK STREET BEACH - LATER

Pete and Danny alternating turns drinking from a thermos.
DANNY
Nine down. One to go.

PETE
This one's gotta be tough.

DANNY
Some of those were tough.

PETE
Yeah, but the last one's gotta be real tough. Something that takes strength, speed, and courage.

DANNY
I don't know.

PETE
What can't you do well?

DANNY
I'm not a strong swimmer.

Pete looks out to Lake Michigan. A buoy signals the spot where the lifeguards don't want you to swim past.

PETE
Swim out to the buoy.

Danny looks for the buoy.

DANNY
I can't even see the buoy.

Pete points to it.

DANNY
I can't get there.

PETE
You're going to have to if you wanna win the decathlon.

Pete and Danny head toward the water.

PETE
Look, I'm not asking you to do something I can't. When I was your age, I could swim to the buoy.

DANNY
Do I have to get to the buoy and back under a certain amount of time.

Pete looks at the buoy. He looks at Danny.

PETE
What do you think?

DANNY
No.

PETE
Getting there and back is enough.

Danny smiles.

PETE
Don't worry. I'm here. And there are lifeguards everywhere.

Danny starts swimming. He dips his head in the water and slowly one arm dives in the water while one arm raises out of the water. He brings his whole head out of the water to breathe, dips his head in the water, and repeats the process. Halfway to the buoy, he tries to pick his head up to see where the buoy is. He begins to sink and panics. His arms start to flail. Pete dives into the water as Danny turns his body so he can float on his back. Pete reaches Danny and grabs him.

PETE
You OK?

DANNY
I couldn't make it. And then I remembered what my swim teacher taught me about floating. But I don't think I could float there and back.

PETE
No, I don't think so either. Can you make it back?

Danny nods and rolls over to his front. Danny starts swimming in and Pete follows him.

CUT TO:

INT. EL TRAIN - MINUTES LATER

Pete and Danny sit on the El. Danny's dejected.

PETE
In one day you passed nine tests. God's gotta be happy with you.

DANNY
Yeah, but I don't know how I'm gonna pass the last one. That's tough.

PETE
Look, we got all week. Trust me. You can do it.

DANNY
I hope so. I really want to go to heaven.

PETE
You will. Do kids die from what you have?

Danny nods.

DANNY
The first time I took chemotherapy, two other boys and a girl took it with me. When they started me on it a second time, I was the only one. The others died.

PETE
How do you know?

DANNY
I asked. The nurses got all quiet. Grown ups always get quiet when they talk about death.

PETE
Not at my uncle's funeral.

DANNY
Sometimes I hear my parents talk about it late at night and they cry. I feel so bad. And now with my brother, my mom cries all day and night. I don't want her to be so sad if I die.

PETE
No, I wouldn't want that either.

DANNY
So if I can convince her that I'm going to paradise, maybe she won't be so sad.

Pete nods. The boys look out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - THE NEXT DAY

Danny swims out toward the buoy. He doesn't make it. He floats and waits for Pete. He follows Pete back to the shore.

PETE
I don't understand. You look like you're going to get there, and then you don't.

DANNY
I don't know.

PETE
But you swim back to shore fine with me.

DANNY
I know.

PETE
So what is it?

DANNY
I look up to see where the buoy is, and I can't see it. And then I start
to realize how far out I am and...

PETE
What if I go with you?

DANNY
No. I gotta do it alone.

PETE
Well maybe if you don't look up.

DANNY
But then I don't know where I am.

PETE
We'll figure this out.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - NEXT DAY

Danny puts on the goggles. But he still can't do it.

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK STREET BEACH - MINUTES LATER

Pete puts on the goggles. He looks out toward the buoy.

PETE
I can see fine.

Pete hands the goggles to Danny. Danny puts them on and looks toward the buoy.

DANNY
I can see it from here. But when I get in the water, I can't see it and then everything starts getting really fast and I can't go any further.

Pete plays with the sand. Danny scoops sand and throws it.

PETE
Stand up.

Danny stands. Pete raises Danny's hands over his head. Pete then raises his hands over his head. He measures the difference.

PETE
You stay here and watch me swim to the buoy. I'll be right back.

Pete swims out to the buoy.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - MINUTES LATER

Pete swims ashore.

PETE
It took me fifty strokes there, and fifty five strokes back. One hundred and five strokes.

DANNY
So?

PETE
Your problem is when you look up and you can't see the buoy, you get scared and panic.

DANNY
I don't get scared.

PETE
Yeah you do.

DANNY
No I don't.

PETE
Listen. All you have to do is count your strokes. You don't need to look up. Can you count to fifty?

DANNY
Yeah.

PETE
Well, I'm a little bigger so it's going to take you a few more strokes. Can you count to sixty?

DANNY
Yep.

PETE
Well then, just count to sixty strokes and then swim back. It might take you a few more strokes on the way back.

DANNY
I can do that. But I'm real tired and I need to get back for my treatment this afternoon.

PETE
Right. Tomorrow. Tomorrow you complete the decathlon.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - THAT AFTERNOON

Danny sitting in a chair with IV's stuck in him. He's watching the White Sox. Through the door window, a doctor speaks to Rabbi Jacobsen and his wife.

DOCTOR
This last treatment will weaken his immune system greatly. The red blood
cells don't seem to be responding, so we upped the dosage.

RABBI
What's the prognosis?

DOCTOR
I don't know. If this treatment doesn't work, I don't think there's anymore we can do.

MRS. JACOBSEN
Why? Isn't there a stronger dosage or more intensive treatment?

DOCTOR
This is the most intensive treatment. And a stronger dosage would kill him.

Mrs. Jacobsen goes to speak but the rabbi grabs her hand. He squeezes it. The Jacobsen's enter the room.

DANNY
The Sox are getting clobbered Dad.

RABBI
They've been getting clobbered all my life.

DANNY
Mine too.

The rabbi squeezes his wife's hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - NEXT MORNING

Pete sits in the a doorway hidden from plain sight. The rabbi walks up to Pete.

RABBI
Danny told me I might find you here.

PETE
I don't know how he knew I would be here.

The rabbi smiles.

RABBI
Danny wanted me to tell you that he wouldn't be able to complete the decathlon today.

Pete stares at the Rabbi, hoping to be able to figure out how much the rabbi knows.

RABBI
You see, the medicine Danny's taking...
PETE
Chemotherapy.

RABBI
Yep. Chemotherapy. It zaps him of his strength. And weakens his ability to fight off disease.

PETE
Sounds like bad medicine.

RABBI
Yes it does. But that's how doctors fight cancer.

PETE
My oldest brother wants to become a doctor. My mom always tells me to do my homework so I can be smart and become a doctor.

RABBI
It's a noble profession.

PETE
My dad thinks they play too much golf. And they charge like assholes.

RABBI
I hate to disagree with your dad, but he probably wouldn't want you using that word.

PETE
Seamus says you can use swear words if you're quoting someone.

RABBI
Seamus sounds like a fine journalist. Is your oldest brother going to college to study medicine?

PETE
No. He can't afford college.

RABBI
Higher education is expensive. But worth it if you work hard.

PETE
Rabbi, when do you think Danny will be better?

RABBI
I did not study medicine in college, but even if I did, I don't think I could answer that. It's in God's hands now.

PETE
Well, you're close with God. Hopefully that rubs off a little on Danny. I hope he gets better, we've got some
unfinished business.

RABBI
I hope so too. Praying for Danny is all we can do now.

PETE
OK. I’ll pray to Jesus, you pray to God, and hopefully somebody listens.

RABBI
That’s a deal.

Pete jumps on his bike.

PETE
See ya later Rabbi Jacobsen.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - MINUTES LATER

Pete sits by himself in a pew at church. Father Kelly, 71, snow white hair, skin cancered face, cantankerous old man, notices Pete and walks over.

FATHER
Mr. O’Malley? Are you lost?

PETE
Hey Father. No, I promised a friend I’d pray for him. He’s sick.

FATHER
Well, maybe I can say a prayer for him also.

Father Kelly sits down next to Pete.

PETE
His name’s Danny. He’s got cancer.

Father Kelly does the sign of the cross. He closes his eyes. Pete stares at him. Father Kelly opens one eye at Pete.

FATHER
You finish your prayer?

Pete nods.

FATHER
Well, let me finish my prayers without you bothering me.

Pete stands up and walks toward the altar. Father Kelly watches him.

FATHER
Where are you going?

PETE
Just checking out how this place looks from your seat.
Pete takes a seat in a chair to the left of the altar. Father Kelly stands and walks toward the altar.

FATHER
That's my seat. Don't mess it up.

PETE
You get nervous with everyone looking at you?

FATHER
I'm used to being looked at.

PETE
You ever get nervous that you won't know what to say or you'll forget what you wanted to say?

FATHER
No.

PETE
How do you get paid?

FATHER
That's between me and the IRS.

PETE
Do you get the collection money?

FATHER
No. Someone tell you I did?

Pete shakes his head.

FATHER
Do you need to get home?

Pete shakes his head.

PETE
Your job's to help people to get to heaven, right?

Father Kelly nods.

PETE
How do you know if you've done your job good?

FATHER
Well. I pray that I do it well. Why? You have any complaints?

PETE
You ever actually seen someone in heaven?

Father Kelly shakes his head.

PETE
Then how do you know if the people
you're helping made it to heaven?

FATHER

Faith.

PETE

Faith?

FATHER

Yep. Believing in something completely without actually having proof of it. Faith. I don’t have any proof of heaven, but I have faith it exists.

PETE

What's the best way to get to heaven?

FATHER

By believing in Jesus and doing as he taught us.

PETE

How do we know if we're doing that? Is there some test?

FATHER

Life is a test.

PETE

But then you need to die to figure out how you did on the test?

Father Kelly laughs. He nods. He opens the altar and fills the chalice with hosts.

PETE

Don't you just once want to know if one of the people you prayed for made it to heaven?

FATHER

In due time.

Father Kelly finishes filling the chalice with bread.

PETE

What's the purpose of communion?

FATHER

To have a piece of Jesus be a part of us.

PETE

Why do I have to wait till third grade for that? Wouldn't that help me now?

FATHER

The Church believes that Catholics should fulfill a few requirements before they earn communion.

PETE
Like passing a few tests?

FATHER
Yes.

PETE
So if I pass all the tests, I get to have communion.

FATHER
Yes.

PETE
Thanks Father. You've cleared up a few things for me.

Pete runs off the altar.

FATHER
Good, glad the grilling is over.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY KITCHEN TABLE - THAT NIGHT

The family sits around the table.

MARGARET
Rabbi Jacobsen wanted to see if he could stop by after work. I said fine.

Pete's eyes light up but he doesn't want to say anything that would get him in trouble.

JOE
This gratitude stuff is becoming intrusive.

MARGARET
If the only fault you can find with a person is that they go overboard with kindness and gratitude, I can live with that.

KATIE
Me too.

JOE
Yeah. Yeah.
(To Patrick's chair)
Where's knucklehead?

KATIE
He said he'd be home late for dinner.

JOE
Oh yeah. Did he say why?

KATIE
He told me to mind my own business.

JOE
He's probably sitting on his ass reading a book in that lifeguard tower. Where the others?

SEAMUS
Tommy and Eddie have a game up north. Another doubleheader. And Mary's eating at a friends.

The doorbell rings. Pete and Katie run to get it. Pete lets Katie open the door. Rabbi Jacobsen stands with a tray of rugala, a Jewish pastry.

RABBI
Hello. I know Pete, and whom may I ask are you?

Katie puts her hand out. The rabbi goes to shake her hand but she put her hand out to take the tray.

RABBI
This might be too big for you.

KATIE
I handle bigger trays than that in the kitchen. How do you think I feed eight kids?

The Rabbi nods and hands the dish to Katie. She carries it into the kitchen.

PETE
How's Danny doing?

RABBI
He's doing better. Still not ready to play but he said to say hi and he'll stop by to see you when he can play again.

Pete looks back to see if his dad heard that. He didn't.

PETE
Come on in. We're just eating dinner.

The rabbi follows Pete into the kitchen. Seamus sits eating his potatoes. He stands up and shakes the rabbi's hand.

SEAMUS
Rabbi Jacobsen.

RABBI
Seamus. Nice to see you.

Joe stands up and shakes the rabbi's hand. The rabbi walks over and says hello to Margaret and pats little Molly on the head.

MARGARET
Would you like some dinner? There's plenty.

The rabbi looks at the well sliced pieces of ham and huge
bowl of mashed potatoes.

RABBI
No thank you. My wife knows when I’ve been eating other people’s dinner. She considers it a form of adultery.

Margaret laughs.

MARGARET
How ‘bout some coffee?

RABBI
Sure.

Katie stands up and walks toward the coffee pot.

KATIE
Black? Cream? Sugar?

RABBI
Two sugars. Thank you.

KATIE
You’re welcome.

JOE
Please sit.

The rabbi takes a seat at the table.

JOE
How’s your little boy?

RABBI
Hanging in there, thank you. He just finished more treatment and hopefully this works.

JOE
We hope so too.

Margaret comes back with the rugala on a plate. Katie hands the rabbi his coffee. Margaret takes a bite of the rugala.

MARGARET
It’s absolutely delicious.

The rabbi takes a little.

RABBI
She can’t get mad at me if I’m eating her own stuff. Rugala, a Jewish pastry. My favorite.

Margaret hands the rugala out to the boys and Joe. They’re all very happy.

JOE
So what’s going on?

RABBI
Well, remember when I told you that my congregation will want to formally thank you for your bravery.

JOE
There's no need, Rabbi. And that's the end of that.

RABBI
Well, maybe Margaret and you would like to talk about it more in private?

Joe looks at the boys. Seamus's busy eating his rugala and Pete stares at the rabbi.

JOE
That's OK.

RABBI
Well, you personally showed bravery beyond the call of duty when you saved Danny, and if it weren't for the gas pipe blowing up, you were going back in against the wishes of your partners.

Joe is embarrassed and quiet.

RABBI
The firemen saved the fire from spreading and many of the people from my temple live in that neighborhood.

Patrick enters the front door. He walks into the kitchen.

MARGARET
Patrick, I would like you to meet Rabbi Jacobsen.

RABBI
Patrick, your brother Peter has told me much about you. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands.

PATRICK
Nice to meet you, Rabbi. I'm sorry for your loss.

RABBI
Thank you. Well, Patrick, I was just telling your father that my temple would like to say thank you to him. And it might interest you.

Patrick sits down.

RABBI
Pete has told me of your wish to go to college and study medicine.

Patrick looks at Pete. Joe looks at Pete. Pete knows his
dad's look is not the same as Patrick's and Pete looks down.

RABBI
My temple gives educational scholarships to deserving students, and the scholarship board has recommended Patrick for a full scholarship to a state university.

Patrick's jaw drops. Margaret sits shocked and Joe stands up.

JOE
Rabbi Jacobsen, that is an extremely kind offer, but one that we cannot accept.

Patrick looks at Joe and tears form in his eyes.

RABBI
It would mean a lot to our congregation and personally to my family if you would accept it.

JOE
Other men risked their lives that day and every other day.

RABBI
We understand that. But, to be frank, it's more personal than say giving the fire department a sculpture in gratitude. Your fire chief approved it.

JOE
You spoke to my boss?

RABBI
Yes. We wanted to make sure it was within the rules. The scholarship board can only grant one scholarship, and when Pete told me of Patrick's desire, I recommended Patrick.

JOE
I imagine they want to give it to him in a big ceremony?

RABBI
Yes, I would imagine so. I think it would be a good public gesture.

JOE
Free publicity for the temple.

Patrick stands up at that last comment.

MARGARET
Joe!

JOE
Rabbi, thank you for stopping over.
My son Pete has a big mouth, and my family doesn't need your handouts. We thank you for your kindness.

PATRICK
You can't do this to me.

JOE
You will shut your mouth.

The rabbi stands from the table. He thanks Margaret and Katie for the coffee.

RABBI
I did not mean to cause any harm.

MARGARET
Rabbi, you have been anything but harmful. Thank you.

The rabbi pats Pete and Seamus on the head. He heads for the door.

RABBI
Mr. O’Malley. I did not intend for this to be thought of as a handout or a payout. But I did hope it would serve as a steppingstone for our two communities to come together. Have a good night.

The rabbi walks out the front door.

PATRICK
You’re so proud that you won't let me accept it.

JOE
You have done nothing to deserve it. It's a publicity stunt.

MARGARET
It is not a publicity stunt. It is returning an act of kindness with an act of kindness.

PETE
Dad, the rabbi is the nicest man in the world.

Joe looks at Pete furiously.

JOE
You have a big mouth. You tell the rabbi that we don’t have enough food to eat? Maybe he’ll set up a food drive for our family?

PETE
I never said that. We talk a lot.

JOE
I thought I told you to leave those
people alone?

Pete stays quiet.

JOE
You’ve been going to the temple?

Pete puts his head down.

JOE
You disobeyed my orders.

PETE
I was on a quest. To get Danny to
heaven. And we’re almost there.

JOE
On a quest for heaven? By disobeying
me, all you have done is put yourself
on the road to hell. Go to your room
and don’t come out ‘till I tell you
to.

MARGARET
Joe!

Pete starts to cry.

PETE
I was just trying to do the right
thing.

JOE
(To Margaret)
He disobeyed my word.
(To Pete)
The right thing? You’re not even
eight. You don’t know what the right
thing is. You know what I tell you,
and what your mother tells you. Jewish
people believe in their own thing.
They do not go to heaven. And neither
do Christians who disobey their
fathers. Now get upstairs. Now!

Pete walks up the stairs. Joe walks into the kitchen and
grabs a beer. Patrick follows him.

PATRICK
I’m going to see the rabbi myself
and work out a deal.

JOE
Over my dead body. Do you understand
it’s not about you? It’s not about
kindness. It’s about good publicity.
The Jews help out a poor Irish
Catholic family and they get on the
news and the people think, how nice
is it that the Jews share their money.

PATRICK
Why are you so cynical? You’re too
proud to take a handout?

JOE
Too proud? Maybe a little pride wouldn't hurt you. Instead of sitting there with your hand out, maybe if you took pride in a little hard work, you'd understand.

PATRICK
There you go again. I work hard. My dad worked hard. You will work hard. I will work hard. At school. To get a good job.

JOE
Bullshit! We are not discussing this anymore tonight. I didn't spend my day at the beach. I'm tired!

Patrick begins to speak. Joe gets in his face and puts his finger in Patrick's face.

JOE
No more! No more!

Patrick storms out of the kitchen. He stops to look at his mother, who holds Molly in her arms.

PATRICK
How can you just stand there? You're married to an asshole and you just stand there like this innocent bystander.

Joe rushes into the living room.

JOE
You will not speak to your mother like that. Get the hell out of my house.

PATRICK
Your house? Who wants your house? Or your bullshit rules.

Joe holds his ground though he wants to whack Patrick. Patrick walks out the front door. Seamus still sits at the table eating pastries.

Joe walks out of the living room. Margaret, with tears beginning to form in her eyes, looks at Seamus. Seamus shrugs his shoulders, takes a bite of his pastry, and stands up. He puts his arms out to take Molly from her arms.

SEAMUS
Mom. You know how after you send me to my room, you come into my bedroom and we talk? I think Dad needs you to talk to him.

Margaret hands Molly to Seamus and kisses him on the forehead. She enters the kitchen.
EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Joe sits in his lounge chair drinking a beer and looks out at the sun setting. Margaret pulls up a chair next to him.

JOE
Honey, I know what you're going to say. And my decision about the scholarship is final.

Margaret stares at the sunset.

MARGARET
You know, when Father Murphy married us...

JOE
Don't start with this crap.

Margaret stops.

MARGARET
Father Murphy said...

JOE
Father Murphy was an idiot.

Margaret grabs the beer right out of Joe's hand. She throws it against the fence.

MARGARET
I have got something to say and you will not interrupt me until I am finished.

Joe shrugs but realizes this isn't the time to fight her.

MARGARET
We agreed on a partnership. And our partnership has been for you to provide for the family while I raise the family. But somewhere along the line, this partnership has gotten out of whack. You come home, the house is clean, your food is hot, and your kids are behaved. You then bark orders at these children like a drill sergeant.

JOE
Cause they need discipline.

MARGARET
I am not finished. Trust me, these kids are disciplined. You think I run this house without discipline? Joseph, the older ones, they need more guidance than sternness. We've done our work with them, they now need to feel they can bounce things
off us.

JOE
That's a bunch of crap. You think I bounced things off my dad? Hell no.

MARGARET
You hated your dad growing up.

JOE
Yeah, he was an asshole, but I respected him. And looking back, he did a great job.

MARGARET
But looking back is too late. It would be nice for Patrick to feel close enough to you so that he could tell you his dreams, tell you that even though he doesn't want to grow up to be you, that you are still his hero.

JOE
That's bullshit.

MARGARET
Everything is not bullshit. I will not allow you to take away the chance for Patrick to pursue his dream. The rabbi is being generous and you think it reflects poorly on you.

JOE
That's not...

MARGARET
Yes it is. You can't afford to put your children through college, so you've decided that college is bad. You know what, I agree college is a waste of time for most kids. But not Patrick. He wasted his first few years of high school, but the last two years he has worked his butt off and he generally loves to learn. That's what college is all about.

JOE
How do you know what college is about?

MARGARET
Just because I didn't go doesn't mean I didn't think about it. But I fell in love, had babies, and haven't regretted one thing about the last nineteen years. Until now! You will not squash your children's dreams because they aren't your dreams.

JOE
It's not about dreams, it's about what's right. If Patrick really wanted
college, he could have gotten better grades and earned a scholarship.

MARGARET
He didn't take school seriously. Why? Cause he thought it was a waste of time because he would work for the city whether he got A's or C's. But one day he woke up and decided that not doing his best was not the O'Malley way. And he learned that from his father. And he's got nothing but A's that day forward. And he will do the same in college. From a scholarship that he accepts from Rabbi Jacobsen, or so help me God, Joe, the only thing colder than your food when you get home will be your bed.

Margaret stands up and walks back into the house. Joe is alone looking at a sun that has set in the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Pete sits on the floor alone playing the board game "All Star Baseball". He's busy spinning when Seamus enters.

SEAMUS
You can't play that game alone.

PETE
You wanna play?

SEAMUS
No.

PETE
So I gotta play alone. I'm crushing you.

SEAMUS
How can you be crushing me?

PETE
I picked one team for me and one team for you.

Seamus grabs the circular cards and looks at the teams.

SEAMUS

PETE
I gave you Harmon Killebrew. And Reggie strikes out all the time anyway.

SEAMUS
These teams are unfair.
PETE
Then we can redraft.

Seamus grabs his bat and glove.

SEAMUS
Maybe later.

PETE
How long do you think Dad will ground me?

SEAMUS
Who knows. Today’s only the first day. Definitely longer than one day.

Seamus walks out of the bedroom and down the stairs. Katie is dancing in the living room. Seamus walks out the front door. Danny is standing at the door. He’s sweaty and his White Sox hat is cockeyed.

SEAMUS
Hey. How you doing?

DANNY
Good thanks. Is Pete home?

SEAMUS
Yep. Upstairs. First room on the right. Take it easy.

Danny enters the house.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE’S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pete spins. The spinner lands on nine, which indicates a strikeout.

Pete laughs. Pete talks as if he’s announcing the game.

PETE
Another strikeout for Seamus’s team.

Pete’s team, trying to be the first team ever in the history of baseball to go undefeated, comes to bat with a thirteen run lead. (other announcer voice) Jack, they’re not only undefeated, but they’ve ten run ruled every team they’ve played. (back to original announcer voice) Good point, Charlie.

Danny enters the bedroom. Pete looks at him. He runs to the door, looks out in the hallway, pushes Danny inside the room, and shuts the door.

PETE
What are you doing here?

DANNY
We’ve got to complete the decathlon.
PETE
We can't. You gotta get outta here.

DANNY
We have to. I know I can do it.

PETE
I'm grounded forever because of you. If my dad saw me with you, I'd be grounded to infinity.

DANNY
I'd be grounded to infinity if my parents knew I was here. They think I'm napping.

PETE
I can't.

DANNY
I might not have another chance for awhile. I heard my mom talking to the doctor this morning. I think they're going to put me back in the hospital.

PETE
Listen. I'm not going to disobey my dad again.

DANNY
You told me about risk/reward. The risk is worth it.

PETE
No it's not.

DANNY
Yes it is. I gotta be able to tell my parents I'm going to heaven. They need to know I'm happy in paradise.

PETE
You wanna know the truth?

Danny nods.

PETE
You can't go to heaven. It's out of bounds, off limits, to Jews. There's nothing you can do.

Danny shakes his head.

DANNY
But you said.

PETE
I was wrong. The only thing that I did was put myself on the road to hell with you.

Danny screams.
Danny
No, you said if I finish the decathlon, I’m going to heaven.

Pete grabs Danny.

Pete
You gotta go home. You’re going to get me into trouble, and then I’m going to hell for sure.

Danny opens the door and leaves the bedroom. Pete lays down on the floor.

Pete
(announcer)
That was a brief rain delay. Pete’s team comes to bat.

Pete places a circular card into the spinner. He can’t position the card into the spinner. He throws the game across the room.

CUT TO:

Ext. Oak Street Beach – An Hour Later

It is overcast at the beach with the usual Chicago wind whipping off the waves of Lake Michigan. The beach is quiet, with just a few people running and biking. Danny puts on his goggles. The waves are a little rougher today. He walks into the water. He dives in. Like a windmill, his arms splash in and out of the water.

Danny continues to count his strokes. He breaks through the initial group of waves, but beyond the waves the water is choppy. The lifeguard in the tower looks out toward the lake. From his view, Danny is not visible. Danny’s head barely bobs out of the water as he swims.

Danny looks up to see where the buoy is. He takes in some water. He thinks he sees the buoy but takes in more water. He flips to his back and floats. He coughs up what water he can. When he calms down, he turns his head slowly to check for the buoy. He sees it not too far off in the distance. He flips himself over, takes a little water, and begins to swim toward the buoy. He counts his strokes.

Danny’s hands grasp the buoy. He looks up at the buoy. The
water splashes off the buoy onto Danny. Danny flips over and floats on his back. A big smile crosses his face.

DANNY
Seventy one strokes. And a little
more on the way back. I can do it.

Danny floats on his back. He turns over and begins to swim toward the shore.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY HOUSE – A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Pete walks down the stairs. Joe passes the stairs on the way to the front door. He looks at Pete but doesn't say anything. Joe walks out the front door. Pete heads toward the kitchen. Patrick runs past Pete and also heads out the front door. Mary takes a crying Molly out of the kitchen. Margaret cleans off Molly’s high chair.

PETE
Hey Mom.

MARGARET
Hi honey.

PETE
Where are Dad and going?

MARGARET
They have some business to take care of.

PETE
Patrick's getting a job?

Margaret bends down and fixes Pete's hair.

MARGARET
Always so busy worrying about everyone else's business. That's from my side of the family, you know?

PETE
Yeah. Dad tells me I get a lot from your side of the family.

MARGARET
That's right. Your sweetness, your humor, and definitely your nose.

PETE
So you think Dad will end my grounding?

MARGARET
Are you sorry for disobeying your dad? And lying to your mom?

PETE
It wasn't really a lie. I told you I was going out to play.
MARGARET
But you forgot to mention you were going to Lake Michigan and swimming with Danny.

Pete nods.

PETE
I'm sorry. It's just... it was a quest... and on a quest you have to take risks.

MARGARET
Lying to your mother is not a risk. It's wrong.

PETE
I know. Can you talk to Dad and put a good word in for me?

Margaret nods. Pete slowly heads out of the kitchen.

MARGARET
How did your quest end up?

PETE
Not good. I had to give it up.

MARGARET
You know, the way you went about your quest was wrong, sneaking to the beach and such, but the quest itself, it was good.

PETE
But Dad said...

MARGARET
Sometimes, even dad's are wrong.

PETE
Easy for you to say. He can't ground you.

MARGARET
Don't give up your quest.

PETE
How do you know the quest is good?

MARGARET
I have faith.

Pete nods and walks out of the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. SYNAGOGUE - MINUTES LATER

Rabbi Jacobsen sits at his desk. He is hurriedly shuffling papers when he hears a knock at his door.
RABBI
Come on in.

Joe and Patrick enter the rabbi's office. The rabbi stands up but is not his usual effusive self.

RABBI
I'm glad you came to see me but when we spoke before, I thought I would have time to talk. My wife called and told me I am needed at the hospital.

JOE
Is everything OK?

The rabbi shakes his head.

RABBI
Danny's not doing well.

JOE
I am sorry.

PATRICK
I'm sorry.

RABBI
I assume you want to talk about the scholarship?

Patrick nods.

JOE
It seems. I think. It's an opportunity for my son.

RABBI
It will open doors for Patrick that would be closed in today's society without a degree.

JOE
I just can't...

Patrick interrupts.

PATRICK
We know it will and if the offer is still there, I would love a chance at it.

The rabbi grabs his briefcase.

RABBI
Patrick, the scholarship is yours. You will make us all proud.

PATRICK
Thanks. Thank you.

JOE
You better get going. We better get
going. I hope everything gets better with Danny.

RABBI
Thank you.

The rabbi shows Joe and Patrick the door. The three exit the office and then the synagogue. They talk for a few more seconds and then part ways.

CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY STATION WAGON - MINUTES LATER

Joe and Patrick listen to the White Sox game on the radio.

JOE
Luckily, the Cubs stink, or else a lot of White Sox fans would be flocking north.

PATRICK
Never. There will be peace in Ireland before a Sox fan becomes a Cub fan.

Joe laughs.

JOE
You're probably right. And that's the way it should be.

They listen to the game. A White Sox batter strikes out with the bases loaded.

JOE
But they sure do test our loyalty.

PATRICK
I'm gonna work my ass off, Dad. I'm not going to be some pot smoking, sleep 'till noon college slacker. I'm gonna do it right.

Joe nods.

JOE
I know.

The two sit in silence as they drive home.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Pete is sitting on his bed tossing a tennis ball to himself. Joe walks in.

JOE
Pedro.

PETE
Hey Dad.
Joe motions for the ball. Pete tosses it to him. Joe throws it back.

JOE
Seamus said there's a big game over at Holy Cross and they could probably use another player.

PETE
So can I go?

JOE
Yep.

Pete jumps up from the bed.

PETE
Sorry Dad. I won't disobey you again.

Joe puts out his hand and Pete shakes it.

JOE
I saw Rabbi Jacobsen last night. I guess Danny's back in the hospital.

PETE
Yeah, Danny thought they might put him back in there. I hope he's doing all right.

JOE
It's tough. What he's got. It's tough on a kid. And the family.

PETE
I'll pray for him.

JOE
That would be nice.

PETE
I'll see you later Dad.

Pete walks out of the room.

JOE
Pete?

Pete pops his head back in.

JOE
The rabbi also told me to tell you that Danny completed the decathlon. Seventy-one strokes there, eighty-six back.

Pete's face lights up with a smile.

PETE
No way?

Joe nods.
PETE
I do it in fifty-five strokes.

JOE
That's good.

PETE
Yeah, but for his age and size, seventy-one strokes is great. He finished the decathlon!

Pete walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH STREET - MINUTES LATER

Pete rides his bike down the street toward the park. Holy Cross Church is attached to Holy Cross Elementary which is attached to Holy Cross Field, where the baseball field is located. Pete rides by the church and looks up at the big cross at the top of church. He rides toward the field and sees some of the boys playing catch while others sit on the bench and eat sandwiches. Seamus screams to Pete.

SEAMUS
Hurry up!

Pete waves to the guys. He gets to the field and hops off his bike.

He walks over to the bench where some guys are eating lunch. The corners of Jimmy Burns's lips are covered with jelly.

JIMMY
Pete, you missed the first game. Your brother’s team won again. Are you going to start playing with us again.

PETE
Yep.

JIMMY
The quest over?

Pete nods. Kevin Muldoon pulls out a ham sandwich on wheat.

KEVIN
(To Jimmy)
Trade you my ham and cheese sandwich for your other peanut butter and jelly sandwich?

JIMMY
What’s your ham sandwich on?

KEVIN
Wheat. Got extra mayo.

JIMMY
I hate wheat. Tastes like a sandwich on communion bread. Gross.
Pete ears perk up at the sound of communion. He looks up at the cross hanging high above the church. He takes off in a full sprint for his bike. He jumps on it and heads toward the church.

SEAMUS
Where you going?

PETE
To finish the quest!

Pete doesn't look back. He rides to the church, jumps off his bike, and runs into the church. The church is empty. Pete runs to the altar and grabs the communion chalice. He takes one, looks at it, and puts it in his pocket. He then takes another one just in case something happens to the first. He puts the second communion host in his other pocket. Father Kelly enters the altar from the hallway attached to the altar.

FATHER
Mr. O'Malley? Stealing communion?

Pete stops dead in his tracks. He slowly turns and faces Father Kelly.

PETE
Father Kelly.

FATHER
What are you doing? Tell me you're not hungry?

Pete laughs.

PETE
No Father, I’m not hungry. I hear this stuff isn’t good anyway.

FATHER
I wish we'd change bread distributors, but that's neither here nor there. What are you doing?

PETE
I've got a friend who really needs a piece of Jesus.

Father Kelly looks perplexed.

PETE
Ya see, he's really sick and in the hospital.

FATHER
We have people that give communion to the sick in the hospital.

PETE
But they can't give it to him.

FATHER
Why?
PETE
He's not Catholic and he's only six.

FATHER
Well, that poses a problem. Communion is for Christians who have earned the right to receive Jesus and are of age.

PETE
He's earned the right. He passed the tests.

FATHER
What tests?

PETE
Tests we made up to see if he's worthy of Jesus. And he is Father Kelly, he's as worthy as any Catholic I know. And just because he's not old enough, well that's not fair, because he may not live long enough to be old enough, and if Jesus didn't want him to have a piece of him only because he wasn't old enough, well, that doesn't seem like anything that sounds like the Jesus I know.

Father Kelly stands speechless.

FATHER
Go give your friend the host. May God bless him. And you.

PETE
Thanks Father. You too.

Pete runs out of the church and onto his bike. WE FOLLOW him as he rides a few blocks to the hospital. He enters the hospital and goes to the front desk.

PETE
Danny Jacobsen?

NURSE
Room 4104. Fourth floor.

Pete runs to the elevator, jumps in, and gets off on the fourth floor.

He looks at the sign that points rooms 100-115 is to the right. Pete turns the corner toward room 104. The hallway is empty. Room 115 on the right. Room 114 on the left. And the rooms descend in order as you walk the hallway. The hallway turns into another hallway to the left. Pete turns the corner and sees Rabbi Jacobsen in the hallway with many friends and relatives. Pete walks closer and the sound of crying fills the hallway. Pete starts to run. Rabbi Jacobsen sees Pete as Pete pushes through the crowd. The rabbi makes his way to Pete. Pete stops before the Rabbi, who's eyes are red and cheeks are tear stained.
PETE
Rabbi? Rabbi? I need to see Danny.

The rabbi starts to cry. He opens his arms for Pete.

PETE
Rabbi! No! Rabbi! I need to see him.
I've got his communion. Right here.

Pete pulls out the communion from his pocket.

PETE
See! Danny earned it! He passed the decathlon.

RABBI
Danny passed on. He's no longer in pain.

PETE
No! No! He didn't get his medal!

The rabbi hugs Pete. Pete starts to cry. Harder. And harder.
In the rabbi's arms. The rabbi holds Pete tight. Pete breaks away and runs into the room. Nurses attend to the equipment in the room.

Danny lays on the bed with a sheet over his body. The rabbi comes into the room.

PETE
I promised Danny, rabbi. I promised him.

RABBI
He told me.

PETE
The prize for finishing the decathlon was a piece of Jesus. So he could go to heaven.

RABBI
He told me. He wanted to thank you. He told me that he'll see you in heaven some day.

PETE
But he can't go without eating this. Rabbi! He can't go!

Pete moves toward the bed. A nurse blocks him. The rabbi gently grabs Pete. Pete starts to cry. The rabbi carries Pete out of the room. The rabbi whispers in Pete's ears.

RABBI
God will let him into heaven, Pete.
Danny has a good soul, and God will let him into heaven.

The rabbi holds Pete in his arms outside of the room.
EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - TWO WEEKS LATER

Pete takes a stick and cleans out the dirt in his cleats while he sits on the bench.

COACH
All right, guys, we need baserunners. Three runs to tie, four to win. Let's go get 'em.

The players scream. Jimmy Burns pulls his hat backwards.

JIMMY
Rally cap! Rally cap!

The players turn their caps inside out and backwards. In the stands behind the players, the fans, mainly parents, cheer. Joe sits with Margaret.

JOE
Last chance. I can't believe their not beating this team.

Rabbi Jacobsen and his wife spot Joe in the stands. They wave to him and climb the stands. Joe and Margaret move down to make room for the Jacobsens. Joe shakes the rabbi's hand and Mrs. Jacobsen.

JOE
We're down three runs.

The rabbi nods.

MARGARET
We're very sorry for your loss.

MRS. JACOBSEN
Thank you. The flowers you sent were lovely.

A player comes to the plate.

RABBI
I called your house and your daughter Mary said you'd be here.

JOE
Yep. Can't miss a game.

RABBI
Nope.

A base hit. The fans cheer. Another player walks to the plate.

RABBI
How's Pete doing?

Joe shrugs his shoulders.

MARGARET
He loved Danny. But he's a kid. They
move on better than we do.

RABBI
We can learn a lot from our children.

The next batter pops out to second base. Another batter steps to the plate.

RABBI
We sent the check for the University of Illinois. This is the receipt.

The rabbi hands Joe the receipt. The batter singles to left field.

The rabbi pulls out another document.

RABBI
And this is the legal document that explains our legal responsibility. Thirty pages to pretty much say we pay room, board, and tuition as long Patrick maintains a three point oh grade point average.

Joe accepts the document and shakes the rabbi's hand. The batter grounds out. Two out. Another batter walks to the plate. Pete puts on a helmet and stands on deck.

JOE
Patrick will meet every requirement. This I know.

RABBI
Me too.

JOE
Thank you. Are you sure you don't want to do this in front of cameras?

RABBI
You didn't rush my burning house so you could get your picture on the front page.

JOE
I looked around for the cameraman. I couldn't find him.

RABBI
A selfless act deserves a selfless act in return.

JOE
Thank you.

RABBI
Thank you.

Ball four! The batter walks to first base as the other base runners advance one base. Bases loaded. Down three runs. Two outs. Last inning. Pete pops the weight off of his bat and heads toward the plate. He looks into the stands and sees
the Jacobsens sitting with his parents. He smiles. Before he steps to the plate, Pete closes his eyes. He opens his eyes and steps to the plate. The pitcher winds up and throws the ball. Pete swings with all of his might and connects. The runners are off with the crack of the bat. The ball sails in the air and toward center field. Deep center field. The crowd stands as Pete puts his head down and runs toward first base.

The center fielder speeds after the sailing ball. Pete rounds first base and looks up. The center fielder dives as the ball looks like it is out of his reach. The ball hits the outer web of his glove and stays there miraculously like a snowcone. Out! The center fielder caught the ball and the visiting crowd erupts. Pete falls between first and second base and the home crowd lets out an audible groan.

The visiting team runs out to center field to congratulate the center fielder, who stands, shows the ball, and smiles wildly as his teammates tackle him. Jimmy Burns walks over to Pete and helps him up.

Joe watches wide eyed from the stands a Margaret covers her face in disbelief. The rabbi pats Joe on the back. Pete walks back to the bench as his teammates and coaches console him. Pete looks up into the stands quietly.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALLPARK - MINUTES LATER

Pete walks out to the stands where his parents and the Jacobsens wait for him. Margaret wants to hug him but knows that a hug from Mom in public is not what he wants. He looks to her wide eyed and she smiles.

MARGARET
You gave it your best shot.

PETE
Yep.

Joe pats him on the back.

JOE
You gave that ball a ride, son. I've never seen you hit a ball so well.

Pete nods. Rabbi Jacobsen puts his hand out. Pete shakes it.

RABBI
Nice try, Pete. Nice try.

PETE
Thanks Rabbi. Hi, Mrs. Jacobsen.

Mrs. Jacobsen smiles and hugs Pete. Pete looks at his mom and she gives him the OK sign. Pete hugs Mrs. Jacobsen.

MRS. JACOBSEN
I baked you some of that rugala you liked so much. It's in the car.

Pete smiles.
MARGARET
I’ll come with you to get it. I’d love to know your recipe.

Margaret and Mrs. Jacobsen walk toward the parking lot. Another parent walks over to talk to Joe. Pete stands alone with the rabbi.

PETE
How’s everything going?

RABBI
Well. And with you?

PETE
I really thought I hit that one over his head for a grand slam.

RABBI
You will.

PETE
You know how you said Danny was in heaven?

The rabbi nods.

PETE
He’s not.

The comment staggers the rabbi. Joe looks over.

PETE
I prayed to Danny before I hit that ball. I prayed to him in heaven to help me hit a grandslam.

The rabbi nods.

PETE
He’s not in heaven to answer my prayers, rabbi. I thought you should know.

RABBI
Peter, our prayers are not answered in our time, but in God’s time.

PETE
No. Rabbi. Danny said he would answer my prayers to let me know he was in heaven. I gave him two weeks till I prayed. He didn’t answer my prayer.

The rabbi is visibly hurt. Joe walks over.

JOE
Everything OK?

The rabbi nods.
Yes. I better get going. I have temple
in a few hours. It was nice to see
you.

The rabbi turns and walks toward the parking lot. Joe looks
at Pete.

Pete turns and walks toward the bench where some of the
players are still sitting. Joe watches the rabbi walk to the
parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT, O'MALLEY BACKYARD - LATER

Pete stands in the backyard throwing the ball to the dog. In
the background, in the kitchen, Joe hands Patrick the legal
document stating the rules of the scholarship. Patrick hugs
his dad. Joe pats Patrick on the back. He lets go and Patrick
bear hugs Margaret. The dog returns the ball and drops it at
Pete's feet. He bends down to pick up the ball and throws it
again. The dog chases after the ball.

Joe walks outside. Pete turns.

PETE
Hey Dad.

The dog returns the ball. Pete picks it up.

JOE
Let's see your arm.

Pete tosses the ball. The dog chases after it. Joe catches
it.

JOE
Nice throw.

Joe looks at the rubber ball.

JOE
What'd you say to Rabbi Jacobsen?

PETE
Not much.

Joe tosses the ball. Pete catches it.

JOE
You must have said something.

PETE
I told him Danny wasn't in heaven.

Pete throws Joe the ball.

JOE
How do you know?

PETE
I prayed to Danny to let me hit a
grandslam. I didn't.
Joe hands the dog the ball and walks closer to Pete. He sits down in the lounge chair and motions for Pete to sit down next to him.

JOE
Your brother Patrick is going to college.

PETE
I know. He's so excited.

JOE
I never went to college.

PETE
Why not?

JOE
Cause I couldn't afford it. And I got a good job. And then I started a family. And I had to take care of my family.

PETE
That sounds good.

JOE
It is good. And you know what I've learned?

PETE
Huh?

The dog drops the ball at Joe's feet. Joe picks it up and tosses it softly in the air to Pete.

JOE
I've learned that you take care of family. No matter what your differences are. You're family. And taking care of them is a dad's job.

Pete nods. He tosses the ball and the dog chases it.

JOE
You know Jesus is Jewish?

PETE
Yep.

JOE
And you know God is Jesus' father?

PETE
Uh-huh.

JOE
So God's probably Jewish too.

PETE
OK.
JOE
What I’m getting at, and I’m just thinking aloud, but if God is any kind of father, do you think he would turn his back on his own people, the Jewish people, and not let them back into his house?

Pete shakes his head.

JOE
Of course he wouldn’t. Just like I wouldn’t turn my back on you or any of your brothers or sisters. Dads take care of their family.

PETE
So what are you saying?

Joe laughs.

JOE
I’m saying, maybe Danny is in heaven. Even though he’s Jewish. I’m saying maybe when they say the kingdom of heaven can only be reached through Jesus, maybe what they really mean is heaven can be reached through being a good person just like Jesus. An Eskimo at the North Pole, who never heard of Jesus, who’s been a good person all his life, shouldn’t he be allowed into heaven?

PETE
Yes. But...

JOE
But what?

PETE
But then there’s no need for me to listen to the nuns at school anymore.

Joe laughs.

JOE
You’re not going to get out of Catholic school that easily. You still have to listen to them.

PETE
But they’re wrong.

JOE
They’re not wrong. They’re just teaching one way to get to heaven.

PETE
Sister Leonora Mary says there is only one way.

JOE
Well then, you and I will have to keep a secret from Sister Leonora Mary.

Pete laughs. The dogs brings back the ball and drops it at Pete's feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - LATER

Joe and Pete enter the synagogue. Rabbi Jacobsen stands at the pulpit and he is speaking to a quarter full audience. Pete grabs a yarmukle and puts it on his head. He looks at his dad to do the same thing.

His dad, reluctantly, puts on a yarmukle. The two take a seat in the back row. The rabbi finishes speaking and the people disperse. Pete waits for them all to pass the last row when he stands up. Rabbi Jacobsen has his back to Pete as he gives instructions to his assistant. Pete heads toward the altar as Joe stays in the pew.

PETE
Rabbi Jacobsen.

The rabbi turns. He smiles at Pete. He notices Joe in the back and waves to him. Joe gestures back.

RABBI
You cleaned up well from your game. What can I do for you?

PETE
Do you have a moment to talk?

RABBI
Sure.

PETE
You know how I had my quest to get a Jewish person to heaven?

The rabbi nods.

PETE
Did you realize that my quest is just like your quest as a rabbi, it's just that I called mine a quest and you call yours a job.

RABBI
I didn't realize that but it seems to be true.

PETE
Well, my quest ended with Danny.

The rabbi nods.

PETE
But your quest never ends cause it's your job.
RABBI
I think you're right.

PETE
Well I learned something on my quest that might help you on your quest.

RABBI
What did you learn?

PETE
I learned that just saying you believe or just praying to Jesus isn't how you get to heaven.

RABBI
No?

PETE
Nope. Jesus is only a symbol, like a letter or a number. You could really use anyone’s name just so long that the person’s name symbolized being good.

RABBI
That is interesting.

PETE
Yeah. I thought you might think so. My dad says I better stick to praying and acting like Jesus because the nuns wouldn't understand as well as you and him do.

The rabbi looks up and smiles at Joe. Joe waves back.

PETE
But, my dad and I think if the Jewish people don't want to copy the Christians by praying to Jesus, you guys can make up your own name to pray to.

RABBI
Do you have a suggestion for a name that I can bring to my congregation?

PETE
Danny.

The rabbi's eyes fill with tears and he puts his arms out for Pete.

Pete hugs him. And the rabbi squeezes tight. Pete lets go.

PETE
I thought that might help you in your job. On your quest.

RABBI
Thank you. It will.
PETE
I'll see you later.

Pete turns and walks toward his dad, who stands at the back of the temple. Pete turns back to the rabbi.

PETE
I almost forgot to tell you the most important thing.

RABBI
What's that?

PETE
That Danny is in heaven.

RABBI
How do you know?

PETE
Faith.

Pete smiles and turns around. He walks to his dad and Pete and his dad walk out of the temple together.

THE END