

FLIPPED

by
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Based on the book by Wendelin Van Draanen

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EXT. A SYCAMORE TREE - DAY - FIVE YEARS AGO

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

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

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - STREET - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

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

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

She throws open the window and shouts across the street.

JULI
Hi!

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

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

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

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

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

BRYCE
Lynetta, zip it.

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

On Bryce:

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

JULI
I'll be right down!

Juli slams the window shut.

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

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

PATSY
I thought you liked the Christmas decorations.

RICK

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

Rick starts toward the moving van.

RICK

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

PATSY

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

INT. MOVING VAN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

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

JULI

Here I am. I love moving.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Who loves moving?

JULI

I'm great at moving.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

RICK LOSKI

Hey, those are valuable.

EXT. TRUCK - A SECOND LATER

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

RICK LOSKI

Your mom's probably wondering where
you are.

JULI

She knows where I am.

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

JULI

(to Bryce)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

How was I going to get rid of this girl?

RICK LOSKI

(to Bryce)

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

BRYCE

Sure thing.

Bryce jumps off the truck.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

JULI (V.O.)

It was weird. I started to follow him --

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

Juli passes Bryce, grabs his arm and stops him.

JULI (V.O.)

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

Hold on them.

On Bryce, looking at Juli.

On Juli, looking at Bryce.

JULI (V.O.)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

She looked so sappy I couldn't believe it.

JULI (V.O.)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

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

PATSY

Well, I see you've met my son.

Bryce untangles himself and shoots straight into the house.

ROLL CREDITS

END CREDITS

EXT. SAME STREET

FOUR YEARS LATER

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

JULI

Hey, Bryce! Good work!

Bryce goes on mowing.

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

PATSY

Dinner everybody!

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

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - DUSK

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

PATSY

Is that all you're eating, Lynetta?

LYNETTA

Could be.

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

PATSY

(calling to her
grandfather who's still
outside)

Dad? Dinner?

BRYCE

I think he heard you.

LYNETTA

Maybe he's not hungry.

Rick and Patsy exchange a look.

PATSY

Don't say it, Rick.

BRYCE
Don't say what?

Patsy goes to the front door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

PATSY
Dad? Come on. You gotta eat.

Her father shakes his head no.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Bryce in bed. Lights are out.

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

PATSY
Look, he's heartbroken.

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

PATSY
I am not sending him to a home --

RICK
He hates me.

PATSY
He doesn't hate you.

Hold on Bryce, listening.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - MORNING

As Bryce comes out the door.

His grandfather is sitting in the chair, rocking.

BRYCE
Morning, grandpa.

His grandfather doesn't answer.

Bryce starts down the block.

EXT. SYCAMORE TREE - DAY

The huge sycamore tree at the top of the hill.

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

SHELLY

Hi Bryce.

BRYCE

Hi Shelly.

ALL THE OTHER GIRLS

Hi Bryce.

JULI (SHOUTING)

The bus is three blocks away!

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

JULI

Two and a half!

Everyone stares at each other and shrugs. Typical Juli.

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

JULI

(to the group)

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

The bus stops and everyone starts to get into it.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Bryce sits down in the bus with his friend GARRETT.

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

DARLA

Hey, Jules --

JULI

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

JULI

It could be two hundred years old.

BRYCE

I seriously doubt that.

JULI

Well it could.

On Bryce, determined to ignore Juli.

JULI

(continued)

It could.

BRYCE

That tree is an ugly mutant tangle of gnarly branches.

DARLA

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

JULI

He can't help it. He's visually challenged.

(she pulls a sycamore leaf
out of her notebook)

A lot of people confuse the sycamore leaf with a maple but it's not.

She hands the leaf to Bryce.

JULI

Keep it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

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

MISS BRUBECK
The science fair is in six weeks --

Juli is sitting behind Bryce.

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

MISS BRUBECK
-- and good science projects take
time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHELLY
No, Miss Brubeck.

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

The bells ring.

Shelly looks back at Juli.

SHELLY

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

She stands up to leave.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER CLASS

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

MISS BRUBECK

Do you have a science project,
Juli?

JULI

No. But I will.

MISS BRUBECK

Of course you will.

JULI

Although I wish I knew what it was.

MISS BRUBECK

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

JULI

What if they die?

MISS BRUBECK

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

JULI

I don't care about getting an A.

Miss Brubeck looks at her.

JULI

Okay I do.

Miss Brubeck smiles at her.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

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

As Mike, Matt and Robert come into the kitchen:

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

TRINA
Why don't you just grow beans?

JULI
That's like a third-grade thing.

MIKE
Make a volcano.

MATT
Volcano, dude.

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

ROBERT
I could help you make an incubator.

JULI
You could?

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

MATT
Nope.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

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

BRYCE
Whatever I do I am not doing the volcano thing.

LYNETTA

Why don't you do plants?

BRYCE

Plants?

LYNETTA

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

BRYCE

Oh sure. Me talking to plants.

RICK

What's wrong with the volcano thing?

LYNETTA

It is so lame.

INT. BAKER BASEMENT - NIGHT

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

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

ROBERT

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

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

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - MORNING

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

LYNETTA

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

BRYCE

Which proves what?

LYNETTA

(as to an idiot)

The ink turns the celery red,
proving that a plant sucks up
moisture. It's like putting a
flower in water.

BRYCE

So why not just put a flower in
water?

LYNETTA

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

PATSY

What's the Baker girl doing?

BRYCE

She is hatching eggs.

RICK

That girl loves to grandstand.

INT. BAKER BASEMENT - NIGHT

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

ROBERT

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

Juli looks. We can see the embryo.

ROBERT

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

We see it. It's pulsing.

JULI

Oh my God!

(shouting upstairs)

Everybody! Wait till you see this!

INT. BAKER BASEMENT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

All the Bakers are looking at the eggs.

JULI
Bonnie's heart is beating.

TRINA
Congratulations. You're a mother.

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

TRINA
I still smell that smell.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

ROBERT
It's barely a drop.

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

MATT
Mystery Pisser.

MIKE
Cool name.

They high-five each other.

EXT. SKY - DAY

A beautiful blue kite is flying in the sky.

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

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

It crashes into the top of the sycamore tree.

On Juli, looking up at the tree.

JULI (V.O.)

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

Juli starts to climb the tree.

Inside the tree, as she gets higher and higher.

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

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

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

BRYCE

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

JULI (V.O.)

I can get it --

BRYCE

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

JULI

I can get it --

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

BRYCE

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

Juli gulps.

JULI

No problem.

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

BRYCE

Break the string!

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

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

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

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

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

CLOSE ON Juli: elated.

BRYCE (O.S.)

Are you okay?

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

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

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

BRYCE

Thanks.

JULI

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

She turns and starts home, with Champ.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DUSK

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The Baker family is making dinner.

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

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

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

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

ROBERT
I think my tree-climbing days are
over.

There's a noise. A little noise.

Juli looks into the incubator.

One of the eggs is starting to hatch.

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

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

(continued)

INT. AUDITORIUM - SCIENCE FAIR - NIGHT

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

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

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

No one is looking at that volcano or at Bryce.

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

SHELLY
Hi, Bryce.

She puckers her lips at him.

But Bryce is looking over at a crowd of people.

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

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

A baby chick emerges from the shell.

THE ENTIRE GROUP OF SPECTATORS: AWWWWWWW.

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

INT. SAME SCENE - LATER

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

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

Bryce, eyes narrowed, watches...

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

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

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

BRYCE (V.O.)
And guess what?

The audience bursts into applause.

INT. SCIENCE FAIR - AN HOUR LATER

As Mrs. Brubeck pins a blue ribbon on Juli.

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

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

The audience laughs.

On Bryce, not laughing.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

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

SHELLY
Your lava was great, Bryce --

Bryce tosses the volcano into a dumpster.

EXT. SAME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

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

TRINA

But those go back to Mrs. Brubeck, right?

JULI

Are you kidding me?

TRINA

They're coming home?

JULI

Where else would they go?

TRINA

Darla could take them.

DARLA

My mom would kill me.

DARLA'S MOM appears.

DARLA'S MOM

I would. I would kill her.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

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

TRINA

But where are we going to raise chickens?

ROBERT

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

The family goes into the house.

JULI (V.O.)

So that's how we wound up with chickens.

(continued)

HOLD ON THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

EXT. BAKER YARD - DAY - A MONTH LATER

Six chickens in the front yard.

JULI (V.O., CONT.)

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

(continued)

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

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

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

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

(continued)

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

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

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

INT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

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

TRINA (O.C.)

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

EXT. BAKER GARAGE - DAY

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

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

INT. BAKER DEN - DAY

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

JULI
Mom, guess what?

She holds out her palms. Eggs.

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

JULI
Not chickens, eggs. Just eggs.

TRINA
Eggs.

CUT TO:

AN EGG, CRACKING INTO A BOWL.

Cracking into a bowl.

A PLATE OF SCRAMBLED EGGS ...

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

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

A PLATE OF DEVILLED EGGS

Robert pops one into his mouth.

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

A BOWL OF EGG SALAD

As Robert heaps egg salad onto his plate.

ROBERT
Love egg salad. Love it.

TRINA
Good thing you do.

AN EGG IN SOMEONE'S HAND ...

INT. SKYLER BROWN'S GARAGE - ANOTHER DAY

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

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

Skyler steps up next to Lynetta.

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

Lynetta waves the egg theatrically in the air.

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

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

BRYCE
(to Lynetta)
Mom wants you.

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

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

SKYLER

Lynetta, the egg please.

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

MIKE

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

ON BRYCE WATCHING as ...

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

ON BRYCE, FREAKED.

AND THEN THE BOA SWALLOWS A SECOND EGG.

AND THEN A THIRD EGG.

On Bryce, completely disgusted.

MIKE

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

Everyone laughs.

Mike releases the snake to the floor.

MIKE

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

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

MATT

Shhh, everyone, here goes.

Everyone watches.

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

MIKE
(theatrically)
Dinner is served.

CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Bryce and Lynetta walking home.

BRYCE
So sick.

LYNETTA
So cool --

BRYCE
I'm never eating an egg again.

THE SOUND OF A DOORBELL RINGING.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - A WEEK LATER - DAY

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

JULI
You know my chickens? From the
science fair?

BRYCE
(how could I forget them)
Yeah.

JULI
So these are for you and your
family.

She hands him the eggs.

BRYCE
Oh. Thanks.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - KITCHEN

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

PATSY
Scrambled? Fried?

BRYCE
I'm having cereal.

PATSY
More coffee dad?

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

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

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

PATSY
What snake?

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

PATSY
Across the street? Living across
the street?

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

PATSY
That's the name of the snake?

BRYCE
That's the name of the band.

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

RICK

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

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

PATSY

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

LYNETTA

Ewww.

She puts it back into the carton.

BRYCE

I'm having cereal.

RICK

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

(he laughs)

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

PATSY

Do they have sex with the hens?

RICK

Well they must.

He shrugs.

A pause at the table.

PATSY

They must.

A beat.

Chet looks up from his newspaper.

CHET

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

Chet is speaking. Everyone is riveted.

CHET (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

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

LYNETTA

Cock a doodle doo.

CHET

Exactly.

PATSY

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

Chet goes back to his newspaper.

BRYCE

I'm having seconds on cereal.

BRYCE

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

PATSY

What are their names again?

BRYCE

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

LYNETTA

Shut up, Bryce.

BRYCE
What did I do now?

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

BRYCE
Since when?

LYNETTA
Since yesterday.

Lynetta burst into tears.

PATSY
Did something happen with you and
Skyler?

LYNETTA
Like you care.

She leaves the room.

RICK
Oh boy.

EXT. LOSKI BACK YARD - NIGHT

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

RICK
Why don't you just ask Juli Baker?

BRYCE
I'm not asking her anything.

CHET
(from the porch)
They have no rooster.

RICK
Just ask her.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND BAKER HOUSE - DAY

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

They look over it.

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

Garrett and Bryce duck down behind the fence.

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

The hens fly out of it.

BRYCE

No rooster.

GARRETT

Correctomundo.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Back at the dinner table.

BRYCE

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

RICK

Why's that?

BRYCE

There's poop all over the place.

LYNETTA

Gross.

BRYCE

Chicken turds everywhere.

Lynetta stands up and leaves the table.

LYNETTA

You expect me to eat after this?

PATSY

Lynetta. You have to eat something.

LYNETTA

No I don't!

She leaves the room and sticks her head back in.

LYNETTA

Does the word salmonella mean anything to you?

She splits again.

PATSY

Do you think the eggs could have salmonella?

BRYCE

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

RICK

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

BRYCE

She just bugs me. She bugs you too.

RICK

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

PATSY

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

RICK

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

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

RICK

(to Chet)
What is it?

CHET

Nothing.

Chet looks back down at his plate.

RICK

(back to Bryce)

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

DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

Bryce opens the door for Juli.

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

BRYCE

Thanks, Juli.

He closes the door.

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

We hear his parents' door open upstairs.

RICK

(O.C.)

I'll be back about six.

As his father starts downstairs, Bryce quickly goes into:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

(MORE)

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

EXT. STUEBY HOUSE - DAY

As Juli brings her some eggs.

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

MRS. STUEBY
Nothing like free-range eggs.

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

EXT. HELMS HOUSE - DAY

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

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

As Juli crosses the street.

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

As Bryce throws open the door again.

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

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

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

BRYCE
Thanks, Juli.

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

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

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

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

INT. KITCHEN WASTEBASKET - DAY

More eggs being stuffed into the wastebasket.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - MORNING

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

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

EXT. STREET - DAY

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

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

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

EXT. TOP OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

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

JULI'S VIEW - GLORIOUS.

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

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

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

JULI (UP IN THE TREE)
What a morning!

EXT. STREET - A LITTLE LATER

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

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

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

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

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

WORKMAN #1
Sure we can.

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

The workmen look up at the tree.

WORKMAN #1
Is someone up there?

WORKMAN #2
Who's up there?

JON TRULOCK
Juli Baker.

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

WORKMAN #1
Is she crazy?

JON TRULOCK
No.

SHELLY
Yes, actually she is.

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

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

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

WORKMAN #1
How did she get up there?

BRYCE
She climbed.

DARLA
Juli, they're tearing down the
tree!

JON TRULOCK
They're serious!

Two workmen take chain saws out of the truck.

ON Juli, on top of the tree ...

JULI
(shock)
This tree? The sycamore tree?

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

BRYCE
They have chain saws.

DARLA
Huge ones.

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

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

DARLA
(also shouting up)
The owner.

JULI
(shouting down)
He has no right!

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

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

In the distance, the school bus is coming.

SHELLY
Bus is coming.

DARLA
Juli, the bus is coming.

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

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

BRYCE
She loves the tree.

WORKMAN #1
Spare me.

SHELLY
She's bananas.

WORKMAN #2
(calling)
Come down from there.

JULI
No!

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

WORKMAN #1
No.

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

WORKMAN
Your girlfriend's a nut.

BRYCE
She's not my girlfriend --

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

JULI
(shouting back)
I don't care!

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

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

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

ON BRYCE, as the school bus arrives.

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

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

BRYCE
Juli, they mean it. Come down.

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

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

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

DARLA
Me either.

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

The BUS DRIVER gets out of the school bus.

BUS DRIVER
Are we going to school or what?

A couple of the kids start toward the bus.

Darla is stricken.

Bryce is torn.

JULI
Please. Please. Oh man --

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

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

Bryce gets on the bus.

The bus takes off.

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

EXT. LOSKI PORCH - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

Chet looks up.

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

Chet stands.

A LOCAL NEWS TRUCK passes.

Chet walks out to the street and starts walking.

As he walks, Trina hurries past him.

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - A LITTLE LATER

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

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

TRINA
(to Rob's message)
I can't believe you're not
answering. Call me when you get
this message.

EXT. LUMBERYARD - SAME TIME

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

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - A LITTLE LATER

Some workmen and firemen are attempting to reason with Trina.

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

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

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

ON JULI, in the tree.

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

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

EXT. SAME SCENE - LATER

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

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

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

Trina, once again on the cellphone.

TRINA
Where are you?

EXT. REDMOND HOUSE - DAY

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

EXT. ROAD - DAY

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

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

MIKE'S VOICE (ON RADIO)
Stubborn.

MATT'S VOICE (ON RADIO)
A nightmare.

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

On Robert. What?

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

On Robert, floored.

He makes a U-turn.

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. TROP OF TREE - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - CONTINUOUS

Robert Baker pulls up in his pickup truck.

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

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

JULI
Dad! They want to tear down the
tree!

ROBERT
(calling up to her)
So I hear.

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

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

EXT. BASE OF SYCAMORE TREE - A LITTLE LATER

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

EXT. TOP OF THE TREE - CONTINUOUS

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

Chet watches from below.

ROBERT
It's not your tree, honey --

JULI
It's everyone's tree.

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

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

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

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

Robert nods. A beat.

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

A beat.

JULI

But what?

ROBERT

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

Juli and her father looking at one another.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

No view is worth my little girl's safety.

Another beat.

The sun is starting to set.

And then Juli suddenly vanishes.

She slides down the tree for the last time.

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

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE SYCAMORE TREE - CONTINUOUS

She lands.

ON JULI, A FEW MINUTES LATER,

speaking to a television news reporter with a cameraman.

JULI

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

ON Chet, watching her.

EXT. SAME SCENE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Juli gets into the truck with her father.

They drive away.

INT. TRUCK - A MINUTE LATER

We hear the first chain saw start to buzz.

Juli bursts into tears.

ROBERT

Hey, hey.

He pulls over.

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

ROBERT

I'm so proud of you.

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

CUT TO:

THE BASE OF THE SYCAMORE TREE - LATER IN THE DAY

The tree is mostly gone.

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

The whole landscape has changed.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - LATER

The entire family is watching the local news.

JULI ON TV

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

--

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

RICK

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

Bryce feels awful that he didn't.

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

Chet stands up and leaves.

RICK
(to Patsy)
Your father hates me.

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

EXT. LOSKI PORCH - NIGHT

As Chet sits in his rocker, reading the newspaper.

Bryce comes outside, sits down next to his grandfather.

The two of them sit there.

CHET
Did you read this?

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

Throws himself on the bed.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

On Juli's window. The curtains are drawn.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She's on the bed, weeping.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - A RAINY MORNING

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

The bus pulls up, they get on.

BRYCE (V.O.)

From then on, she refused to ride
the bus.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Juli mopes through the halls. She passes Jon Trulock.

JON TRULOCK

I'm really sorry about the tree,
Juli.

Juli nods.

Bryce at a locker, watches.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Juli stares out the window.

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

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

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

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

He walks on by.

INT. BUS - STREET

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

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

GARRETT
Weird, huh.

BRYCE
Juli's weird.

EXT. JULI'S HOUSE - DAY

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

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

CAMERA TRAVELS THOUGH JULI'S WINDOW...

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM

She's lying on the bed.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - BACK YARD

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

Champ is lying on the back porch.

Juli leans down to give him a nuzzle.

Champ is dead.

EXT. BACK YARD - ANOTHER DAY

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

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

The last spades of dirt are shoveled over the grave.

Juli is blowing her nose into a handkerchief.

The song ends.

Wide shot on:

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DUSK

As Robert pulls up in his truck, gets out.

A puppy jumps out of the truck, barking.

Trina opens the front door.

TRINA

Oh, Robert.

ROBERT

Don't even bother saying no --

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

ROBERT

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

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

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

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

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

Bryce whips the door open before she rings the bell.

JULI

Hi.

BRYCE

Cute dog.

JULI

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

She hands him the eggs.

BRYCE

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

Juli shrugs.

An awkward moment. A beat.

BRYCE

You don't have to give us these.

JULI

I know.

BRYCE

Well. Thanks.

He closes the door. Juli sort of stands there.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

Bryce walks with the eggs to:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The trash can is absolutely full.

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

He pulls out the whole trash bag.

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

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - DAY

As Bryce comes out the door carrying the trash.

We can hear the garbage truck coming up the block.

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

BRYCE

Hey --

JULI

Hey --

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

He gets to the curb, Juli following.

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

The egg carton pokes out.

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

JULI

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

BRYCE

Yeah and I'm really sorry about
that.

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

JULI

Why are you throwing them away?

BRYCE
Does the word salmonella mean
anything to you?

JULI
Salmonella?

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

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

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

The truck pulls away.

BRYCE
So that's basically it.

Bryce starts back toward his house. Juli follows him.

JULI
Salmonella?

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

JULI
It is not.

BRYCE
Oh come on, Juli. Look at it.

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

JULI
Have you always thrown the eggs
away?

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

JULI

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

BRYCE

They do?

JULI

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

BRYCE

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

JULI

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

BRYCE

(sarcastically)

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

(throwing her line back at her)

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

JULI

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

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

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

It is a mess, no question.

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

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

TRINA
Your Uncle David is coming again
this summer.

MIKE
How's Uncle David?

ROBERT
The same. Exactly the same.

MATT
Top of the Space Needle --

MIKE

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

Juli comes out of her reverie.

JULI

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

TRINA

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

JULI

I wasn't talking about Uncle David.

TRINA

We were talking about Uncle David's
annual visit.

JULI

Are we taking him to the Space
Needle?

The Bakers exchange looks -- where has she been?

ROBERT

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

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

JULI

Do we have, like, clippers?

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

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

JULI

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

TRINA

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

JULI

But it looks so bad.

TRINA

It does?

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Juli is in bed, reading a book on landscaping.

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

ROBERT

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

JULI

Nothing, Daddy.

Both parents sit on the bed.

ROBERT

Something happened.

A beat.

JULI

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

ROBERT

That is ridiculous --

TRINA

Did Patsy say that?

ROBERT

They are such snobs.

JULI

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

TRINA

Well, we used to have grass --

ROBERT

But then we had chickens --

JULI

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

She bursts into tears.

TRINA

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

ROBERT

Eccentric. We are eccentric.

JULI

I know, I know.

Juli still weeping.

TRINA

Oh, honey --

ROBERT

That silly woman with her DKNY purse.

Trina looks over at him.

TRINA

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

ROBERT

Whatever.

TRINA

Since when do you know about DKNY purses?

He shrugs.

ROBERT

I keep up.

TRINA

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

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

ROBERT

You really want to clean up the yard?

JULI

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

(beat)

They hate the Santa and the twinkles too.

TRINA

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

As Bryce and Garrett come bicycling down the street together.

BRYCE (V.O., CONTINUED)

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

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

Bryce turns into his driveway and Garrett bikes on.

JULI (V.O.)

(talking to the shrubs as she hacks away)

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

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

He slams the window shut.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ON BRYCE AMAZED.

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

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

BRYCE

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

A series of shots:

CHET AND JULI CUTTING BRANCHES.

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

JULI TELLING CHET SOMETHING. CHET LAUGHS.

BRYCE (V.O.)

All week long it went on.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

EXT. JULI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

CHET

Hey, there --

Juli looks up, just in time to see:

EXT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

As Bryce disappears out of sight, mortified.

EXT. BRYCE'S HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

INT. LOSKI DINING ROOM - NIGHT

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

CHET

Patsy, this is delicious.

PATSY

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

RICK

You all packed?

BRYCE

Almost, almost.

RICK

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

PATSY

How fascinating.

LYNETTA

Boring.

PATSY

That's rude, Lynetta.

Chet helps himself to another serving.

RICK

(to Chet)

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

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

CHET

Pass the salt, will you Patsy?

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

RICK

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

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

CHET

She wants to, is all.

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

Bryce, relieved, wipes his face with a napkin.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

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

His grandfather comes into the room.

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

CHET

Hey.

BRYCE
(surprised)
Hey.

Chet sits down on Bryce's bed.

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

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

CHET
She reminds me of your grandmother.

BRYCE
Juli?

Bryce waits. Finally Chet turns around.

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

BRYCE
Yes, sir.

CHET
Don't yes-sir me.

BRYCE
Sorry.

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

He hands Bryce some money.

Bryce is stunned, looks at the money.

BRYCE
Thanks.

CHET

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

He leaves.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

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

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

EXT. SYCAMORE TREE LOT - DAY

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

UNCLE DAVID

Hi Juli --

JULI

Uncle David --

UNCLE DAVID

Your tree's gone. You were sad.

Uncle David gives her a sweet, awkward hug.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - BACK PORCH

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

EXT. SPACE NEEDLE - DAY

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

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

INT. BAKER TRUCK - DAY

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

JULI
Don't drive past where the tree
was.

EXT. BAKER TRUCK - DAY

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

EXT. GREENHAVEN SANITORIUM - DAY

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

UNCLE DAVID
Too bad about your tree, Juli.

JULI
Thanks, Uncle David.

EXT. NIGHT SKY - A BEAUTIFUL HARVEST MOON

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DUSK

We see Juli through her window.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

ROBERT

Hi.

JULI

Hi, Dad.

He sits on the edge of her bed.

ROBERT

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

JULI

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

ROBERT

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

(beat)

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

(beat)

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

JULI

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

ROBERT

I know.

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

ROBERT

That's why I made this for you.

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

JULI
My tree. My sycamore tree.

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

JULI
Oh, Daddy, thank you. Thank you.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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

Juli opens her eyes.

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Juli comes out the front door.

JULI
Oh my god!

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

JULI
We have a lawn!

EXT. LAWN - DAY

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

JULI
My lawn!

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - BACK PORCH - DUSK

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

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

JULI
I just think we should talk about it.

(MORE)

JULI (cont'd)

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

MATT

(making fun of her big word)

Oh, unilateral --

JULI

But we are a family.

TRINA

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

ROBERT

And yet linked --

TRINA

-- questions.

ROBERT

Well I'm not taking the Santa Claus down.

TRINA

Okay. So much for Question Number One.

MIKE

So Question Number Two is --

JULI

The twinkle lights.

TRINA

Yes.

MATT

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

MIKE

Moi aussi.

JULI

(good-natured)

Oh shut up.

MATT

I'm not kidding. I do.

MIKE

So do I.

ROBERT

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

He flips the hamburgers.

TRINA

I was thinking ...

Robert leans over and gives her a kiss.

ROBERT

What were you thinking, love of my
life?

TRINA

I was thinking the problem with the
twinks --

Everyone leans forward ...

TRINA

Is we need more.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

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

EXT. STREET - DAY

As the Loski SUV drives into the Loski driveway.

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

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

BRYCE

It looks amazing.

RICK

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

INT. BAKER HOUSE -- SAME TIME

Matt is looking out the window.

MATT
The asshole is back.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

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

VIEW THROUGH BINOCULARS:

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

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

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

MATT
They're sitting down. You ready?

MIKE
Yep.

MATT
Hit it.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

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

INT. LOSKI DINING ROOM - SAME TIME

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

INT. BAKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

On Juli, flipping a switch.

INT. LOSKI DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Loskis get up from the table to look out.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

Their POV:

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - NIGHT

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

ON THE LOSKIS, STARING.

On Chet starting to smile.

LYNETTA

How cool is that.

On Bryce:

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

RICK

What's this supposed to mean?

CHET

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

Chet and Bryce look at each other.

INT. SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY

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

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

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

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

JULI (V.O.)
Boys.

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

BRYCE (V.O.)
Girls.

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

SHELLY
Hi, Bryce.

BRYCE
Hi, Shelly.

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

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

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

We see the eighth grade homeroom teacher, MISS SIMMONS.

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

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

BRYCE (V.O.)
Really tough.

JULI (V.O.)
Very stylish.

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

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

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

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

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

She starts passing out the papers.

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

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

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

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

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

MISS SIMMONS
What did you say, Bryce?

BRYCE
Nothing, Miss Simmons.

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

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

Bryce rolls his eyes at Garrett.

He looks at the ballot.

He looks over at Juli.

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

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

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

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

We see Jon Trulock again.

INT. CLASSROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

As the class files out, handing in their ballots.

JULI

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

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

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

BRYCE

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

PATSY

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

RICK

It's for a good cause, Bryce.

BRYCE

Someone's going to buy me!

He bangs his head down on the table.

LYNETTA

Only if you win.

BRYCE

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lynetta is following Bryce around, making kissing sounds.

LYNETTA

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

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

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

CHET
Worse things have happened.

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

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

LYNETTA
Grandma?

RICK
(disbelief)
She reminds you of your Renee?

CHET
Her spirit reminds me of Renee.

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

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

PATSY
Now who wants cake?

BRYCE
Me.

LYNETTA
Me.

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

LYNETTA
Forget it, I changed my mind.

RICK

(to Chet)

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

BRYCE

Take it easy, Dad.

RICK

(to Chet)

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

BRYCE

He has --

RICK

When?

BRYCE

The night before I went to camp.

RICK

So once.

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

PATSY

Who wants a la mode?

LYNETTA

I do.

Chet walks out of the kitchen.

PATSY

Don't you want cake, Grandpa?

There's a beat.

Chet walks back into the kitchen.

CHET

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

RICK

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

CHET

Juli's father has a retarded
brother.

RICK

What?

CHET

David. At Greenhaven.

RICK

And?

CHET

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

RICK

Well that certainly explains
everything --

PATSY

Rick --

RICK

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

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

RICK

(exploding)

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

Chet walks out of the kitchen.

Everyone looks at each other.

Suddenly we hear the front door slam.

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

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

On Bryce and his dad.

RICK

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

Bryce couldn't be more miserable.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bryce is lying on his bed, staring into space.

A pebble hits his window.

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

He opens the window.

CHET

Want to take a walk?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

We hear the sound of an owl.

CHET

That is the Western screech owl.

Chet imitates the sound.

The Western screech owl makes its cry again.

BRYCE

Wow.

CHET

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

BRYCE

She does?

CHET

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

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

They stop and Chet looks up into the night.

CHET

Must have been a spectacular view.

They look up at the starry night sky.

BRYCE

You probably know all the
constellations too.

CHET

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

BRYCE

Nailed.

(beat)

Did you ever see her up in the
tree?

CHET

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

They start on.

EXT. LONG SHOT - NIGHT

As we see Chet and Bryce walking together.

CHET

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

BRYCE

How did you do that?

CHET

A grand gesture. I made a grand gesture.

They come to a stop.

CHET

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

(beat)

Well. This is where I get off.

Bryce looks around.

BRYCE

Where?

CHET

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

BRYCE

Mrs. Stueby?

CHET

Don't wait up.

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

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

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE - NIGHT

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

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

FLASHBACK:

THE SYCAMORE TREE

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

JULI

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

Bryce gets on the bus. END FLASHBACK.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BRYCE, on the bed, reads on...

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

Bryce looks at the photo of Juli in the newspaper.

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

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

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

ON BRYCE, staring at the photo.

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

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - DAY

Patsy makes coffee.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE STAIRWELL - DAY

As Bryce comes downstairs.

He looks into:

INT. LOSKI LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rick is asleep on the couch, under a quilt.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

PATSY

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

BRYCE

We are? Does Dad know?

PATSY

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

BRYCE

Matt and Mike. Does Grandpa know?

PATSY

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

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

PATSY

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

LYNETTA

We are.

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - DAY

Trina is talking to Robert.

ROBERT

Friday night?

TRINA

All of us.

A beat.

ROBERT

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

TRINA

I have no idea, but she was insistent.

(MORE)

TRINA (cont'd)

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

Juli comes into the kitchen.

ROBERT

The Bakers have invited us all to
dinner.

JULI

No way.

ROBERT

Way.

JULI

Bryce Loski is my mortal enemy.

They all laugh.

JULI

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

TRINA

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

JULI

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

TRINA

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

ROBERT

Let's not be friends.

JULI

(relieved)

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

TRINA

We are going. I said yes.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- ANOTHER DAY

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

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

ON DARLA, looking at Bryce looking at Juli.

INT. GYM - DAY

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

At the other end Bryce is shooting with some boys.

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

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

INT. LIBRARY - ANOTHER DAY

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

FROM THE STACKS ...

DARLA
(a whisper)
Psst. Juli.

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

Juli goes over and huddles in the stacks with Darla.

DARLA
Bryce is bonkers over you.

JULI
(horrified)
Bryce Loski?

DARLA

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

JULI

Look at him? Shoot me first.

Darla literally turns her that direction.

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

Darla cracks up.

JULI

I have to go dinner there tonight.

DARLA

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

JULI

(laughing but horrified)
Stop it.

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

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

JULI

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

INT. BAKER HOUSE - LATER

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

She walks by her mother's room ...

INT. TRINA & ROBERT'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Trina deciding which blouse to wear. Juli looks in.

TRINA

Which one?

JULI

Both great.

(as she goes toward her
room)

I'm not dressing up.

TRINA

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

JULI

Oh, whoa, risotto.

INT. JULI'S ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

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

ROBERT

Two pies?

TRINA

Not everybody likes pecan.

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

TRINA

Absolutely out of the question.

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

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

The doorbell rings.

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Chet opens the front door.

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

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

MATT AND MIKE

(to Bryce)

Hey, baby brother, how's it going?

Lynetta appears, looking like a nocturnal rodent.

MATT AND MIKE

Hey, Lyn. Lookin' good.

Lots of shaking of hands and introducing.

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

Bryce and Juli suddenly together.

RICK

Drinks everyone?

JULI

(to Bryce)

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

She walks away.

INT. LOSKI LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

ON BRYCE, by himself.

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

RICK

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

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

RICK

Now who's for hors d'oeuvres?

On Bryce, watching his father be a total phony.

INT. DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

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

RICK

So guys, you're seniors this year.

MATT AND MIKE

Amen.

RICK

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

MIKE

The regurgitation gets to you after
while.

RICK

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

MIKE

Seriously, Dude. It's so bad.

Trina shoots Mike and Matt a look.

MATT

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

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

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

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

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

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

RICK
Really?

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

RICK
Oh, the music thing.

LYNETTA
Dad, your sarcasm is not
appreciated.

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

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

BRYCE
The band's really good, Dad.

RICK
I'm sure they are.

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

On Mike and Matt, pleased.

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

BRYCE
(to Lynetta)
Where's the CD?

He stands.

INT. SAME SCENE - A MINUTE LATER

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

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

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

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

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

CHET
You must write down the lyrics for
me.

RICK
Just one song?

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

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

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

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

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

She cracks herself up.

PATSY

No, honey, your father played guitar.

LYNETTA

Get out of here.

RICK

Country.

MATT AND MIKE

Dude! Total respect, man.

RICK

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

MATT

We found this guy on the Internet --

MIKE

He was blowing out his old analog gear for digital.

CHET

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

Everyone stares at Chet.

MIKE

Right.

TRINA

They've been saving pennies since they were twelve.

MIKE

(to Rick)

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

RICK

No thanks. That's not me anymore.

EXT. LOSKI HOUSE

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

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

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

They're embarrassed.

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

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

Juli looks at him, puzzled.

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

JULI
My Uncle?

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

JULI
What?

BRYCE
Because of Greenhaven and everything.

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

She's almost inarticulate --

BRYCE

What did I do now?

JULI

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

BRYCE

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

JULI

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

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

MIKE

Intrinsically limited genes.

MATT

Nothing much you can do about it.

JULI

Complete jerk.

MIKE

He was really grilling us.

JULI

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

ROBERT

Maybe Chet got confused.

JULI

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

MATT
Hey, he compared us to Husker Du.

MIKE
Yeah.

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

JULI
No.

A look among family members.

JULI
What?

MATT
You used to like him.

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

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

JULI
Bryce is exactly like his dad.

ROBERT
You sure of that?

MATT
Of course she is.

MIKE
She's sure of everything.

JULI
I am. What's wrong with that?

ROBERT
Nothing. Just checking.

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

Tears well in Robert's eyes.

TRINA
Who wants milk?

MATT
Just thinking that.

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

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - SAME TIME

As the Loskis clean up from dinner.

CHET
That was a delicious dinner, Patsy.

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

LYNETTA
Mike.

Rick comes into the kitchen with some coffee cups.

RICK
They're probably drug dealers --

LYNETTA
What?

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

LYNETTA
They don't take drugs.

BRYCE
They don't, Dad.

RICK
I know musicians.

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

A silence.

Rick slaps her, across the cheek.

Lynetta is stunned.

LYNETTA

You hit me? You hit me?

She runs from the room upstairs.

LYNETTA

I don't believe it.

Her door slams upstairs.

PATSY

Rick, how could you?

RICK

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

On Chet. He moves out of the room.

PATSY

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

RICK

Bryce, go on up to your room --

PATSY

He doesn't have go anywhere.

She walks out of the kitchen and starts upstairs.

PATSY

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

She slams her bedroom door.

Rick looks at Bryce. Together again.

RICK

Your mother and her dinner parties.

BRYCE
They're not drug dealers.

RICK
Fine.

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

RICK
Well I was mad.

Bryce walks out of the kitchen, leaving Rick.

A beat.

Bryce walks back into the kitchen.

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

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

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

It shatters. Shards on the floor, food everywhere.

BRYCE
Big mess, Dad.

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

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Bryce closes the door to his bedroom.

Lynetta is crying in the room next door.

His parents are shouting downstairs.

He sits down.

Hold on Bryce.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

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

INT. SCHOOL - DAY - BULLETIN BOARD

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

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

DARLA

Juli, Bryce is on the list --

Juli looks at the list.

JULI

Like I care.

MACY

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

JULI

Is that true?

DARLA

No, it's just a joke.

LIZ

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

JULI

I did. He's nice.

MACY

Well I guess you better bid for him --

JULI

I'm not bidding on anyone.

INT. LOSKI KITCHEN - DAY

Patsy mixes mayo into chicken salad as Bryce sits there.

PATSY

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

(answering her own question)

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

BRYCE

No.

PATSY

Yes.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Mom was so into it.

PATSY

Pickles. Potato chips. Cole slaw.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

There's a carrot cake.

PATSY

And of course my famous carrot cake.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Which wasn't famous.

Patsy starts to pack the lunch into a straw basket.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

EXT. STREET - DAY

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

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

She starts down the block.

MRS. STUEBY
(waving)
Juli --

She hurries to stop Juli. Juli stops.

JULI
Hi, Mrs. Stueby.

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

Mrs. Stueby hands her a wad of bills.

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

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

She stuffs the cash into Juli's pocket.

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

JULI
A rooster?

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

She goes back to her house.

JULI
But I don't want a rooster --

MRS. STUEBY
Everyone should have a rooster.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

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

GARRETT
Don't you look cute?

BRYCE
You're bitter, admit it.

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

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

SHELLY
Money, honey. Yes!

MIRANDA
You're all mine, baby.

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

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

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

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

In the audience we see Juli sitting with Darla.

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

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

(MORE)

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

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

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

JEFFREY BISHOP stands up.

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

(reading from an index
card)

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

The bidding begins.

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

As TIM PELLO is being auctioned off.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On Juli and Darla.

JULI
What's happening?

DARLA
No one's bidding.

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

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

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

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

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

JULI
Ten.

MRS. MCCLURE
Ten! Did I hear ten!

JULI
(to Darla)
Say twelve!

DARLA
What?

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

DARLA
Twelve!

JULI
Fifteen.

DARLA
Sixteen!

JULI
I've only got fifteen.

DARLA
Is that true?

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

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

On Bryce. Stunned.

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

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

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

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

SHELLY
Ten!

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

SHELLY
I don't care!

On Miranda Humes.

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

MIRANDA
Twenty.

SHELLY
Thirty.

Everyone in the audience reacting.

MIRANDA
Forty-five.

SHELLY
Fifty!

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

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

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

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

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

JENNY
One hundred dollars!

On Juli and Darla, amazed.

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

JULI
I know. God.

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

On Bryce, ready to die.

GARRETT
Bryce! You rule!

On Shelly and Miranda, now standing together.

SHELLY
One twenty-two fifty --

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

SHELLY
The two of us --

MRS. MCCLURE
You're pooling your resources?

SHELLY
Yes.

Everyone looks over at Jenny.

She's out of the bidding.

MRS. MCCLURE

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

A huge cheer goes up from the audience.

INT. MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM - LATER - DAY

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

The whole thing was demented.

Shelly and Miranda are jumping around, waving at everyone.

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

(beat)

But I did my best to ignore them.

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

Bryce looks across the cafeteria --

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

ON JULI, listening to Jon.

JULI (V.O.)

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

Back to Bryce:

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

Juli laughs at something Jon says.

Bryce looks back over at her.

BRYCE (V.O.)

How could she sit there and look so beautiful?

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

And so happy?

Shelly grabs Bryce's arm.

SHELLY

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

MIRANDA

What are you staring at?

BRYCE

(staring at Juli)
Nothing.

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

CLOSE ON JULI -- looking at Jon.

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

SHELLY
Bryce?

MIRANDA
Where are you going?

Shelly and Miranda stare.

JULI (V.O.)
Suddenly I realize Bryce was heading toward me.

BRYCE (V.O.)
It was like an invisible force was pulling me toward her --

JULI (V.O.)
And he grabbed my hand --

Bryce grabs Juli's hand and drags her away.

BRYCE (V.O.)
I grabbed her hand --

JULI
(to Bryce, confused)
Hey --

JULI
What is it? What are you doing?

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

BRYCE
(quietly)
Do you like him?

JULI
Who?

BRYCE
Jon.

JULI
Of course I like him --

BRYCE
(intense)
I mean "like" him?

Bryce takes her other hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

On Bryce looking into Juli's eyes.

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

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

He pulls her toward him.

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

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

And leans in to kiss her.

JULI
He was going to kiss me ...

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

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

Everyone is looking at them.

Juli breaks away and runs out of the cafeteria.

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

JULI (V.O.)
I ran.

He watches her go. All eyes on him.

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

ON EVERYONE, staring at Bryce.

SHELLY
I want my money back, Bryce Loski.

MIRANDA
Have you flipped?

BRYCE
Yes. I have. I've flipped.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Juli races home on her bicycle.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce runs home.

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

(MORE)

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Juli pulls in front of her bike and leaps off.

INT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

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

Trina gets up.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - DAY

As Trina opens the door.

Juli is lying face down on her bed.

JULI
He tried to kiss me.

TRINA
Who did?

JULI
Bryce.

TRINA
Oh. Bryce.

Trina sits on the edge of the bed.

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

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

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

The doorbell rings.

JULI

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

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

Bryce is ringing the doorbell.

No answer.

He bangs on the door.

INT. JULI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trina peeks out the window.

TRINA'S POV

As Bryce leaves to cross the street to his house.

TRINA

He's leaving.

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

TRINA

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

JULI

I know, I know!

TRINA

We're not moving, okay?

JULI

What am I going to do?

TRINA

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

JULI

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

TRINA

Absolutely. What about tea?

JULI
Tea. Okay.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

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

TRINA
I know.

The phone rings.

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

On Juli, frantically shaking her head no.

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

She hangs up.

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

Trina starts to smile.

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

TRINA
I don't think so.

JULI
Why not?

TRINA

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

She hands Juli a cup of tea.

TRINA (CONT'D)

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

JULI

I'm not going to. Ever.

TRINA

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

JULI

Mom! I'm only thirteen.

TRINA

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

INT. LOSKI HOUSE - SAME TIME

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

BRYCE

I can't tell you.

CHET

Fine. Don't tell me.

BRYCE

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

His grandfather starts to smile.

CHET

You did?

BRYCE

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

CHET

Maybe she thinks it's all a little sudden.

BRYCE

But it's not.

CHET

It's not?

BRYCE

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

CHET

Maybe you're the one who's different.

BRYCE

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

CHET

Big problem.

BRYCE

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

CHET

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

BRYCE

You're kidding.

CHET

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

BRYCE

Dowels --

CHET

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

On Bryce. He knows what he has to do.

EXT. JULI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

A LITTLE LATER

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

BRYCE (V.O.)

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

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

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

LATER:

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

BRYCE
But luck was on my side.

CUT TO:

THE SUN STARTING TO RISE ...

INT. BAKER HOUSE - MORNING

Juli comes downstairs.

INT. BAKER KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

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

JULI
What's going on?

Everyone shrugs.

JULI
What is it?

They all look at each other.

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

Matt and Mike nod. Trina is bursting.

MATT
Out front.

MIKE
Front yard.

MATT

Where to be.

Juli starts out of the room.

The family all stands to watch her.

INT. BAKER HOUSE ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Julie walks to the front door.

EXT. BAKER HOUSE - DAY

As Juli comes out the front door.

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

JULI (V.O.)

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

(continued)

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

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

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

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

(continued)

She looks over at Bryce's house.

He's in the window. He waves.

She waves back.

JULI (V.O., CONTINUED)

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

(continued)

Juli starts to walk toward Bryce's house.

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

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

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

Bryce and Juli meet in the middle of the street.

They lean toward each other to kiss.

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

THE LIGHT FILLS THE FRAME

HOLD ON THE LIGHT

And then, magically:

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

PULL BACK ...

MANY YEARS IN THE FUTURE ...

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

FADE OUT.