SPYTOWN

By

Adam Tobin
INT. DODGE DART - 1983 - DAY

A green sedan with vinyl seats -- in the passenger side is MIKEY STERN, 14, boyish, with sandy-brown hair that’s usually a mess. Nerdy but bright, looks like the wheels in his head are turning.

Now he sits somberly, staring out the window, with a book of AMERICAN MUSICALS open on his lap and a SHOEBOX next to him.

On the radio Ronald Reagan delivers a speech in somber tones.

REAGAN (O.S.)
... The events in Lebanon and Grenada, though oceans apart, are closely related. Not only has Moscow assisted and encouraged the violence in both countries, but it provides direct support through a network of surrogates and terrorists--

Mikey’s father LOU STERN, 42, driving, turns off the radio. In a corduroy blazer, he’s lanky, academic, but has a sweetness about him. Trying to make things seem okay.

LOU
No need for that today.

Silence.

MIKEY
So our things just get piled up in a box somewhere?

LOU
A storage locker. Just until I come home. It’ll be waiting for us with open armchairs.

Mikey doesn’t bite on the pun. Lou taps the wheel, nervous energy.

LOU
You’re gonna have fun. Uncle Hoss and Aunt Marlene, they’re fun. Do you remember them?
(Mikes shakes his head)
And Connor’s just a couple of years older, he’ll show you around.

MIKEY
I won’t know anybody in my grade. It’s like another planet.
LOU
  Just show them your sparkling
  personality.

Mikey shoots him a look.

LOU
  Or keep your head down. Either way
  it’s gonna be okay, Turk.

Unsure, Mikey puts aside the book and checks the contents of
the shoebox: hundreds of PUNCHCARDS, 4x8s with random
rectangular holes.

He closes the box and hugs it close.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - DAY

The Dodge turns onto a street of green lawns, wood-panneled
houses built in the ‘60s. They pull in behind a station
wagon, a Mercedes, and a Jaguar.

Lou gets out and looks to the house. Forces a pressed-lip
smile. Begins untying Mikey’s bike from the trunk.

Climbing out of the car, Mikey still hugs the shoebox.

MARLENE (O.S.)
  Helllooooo!!! Hello, Nephew!! Sweet
  little bundle of effervescence!

MARLENE STERN, 41, Mikey's aunt, barrels from the house. She
has a 70s fabulousness -- paisley prints, hip huggers, big
sunglasses. Once slim and gorgeous, Marlene now has more
motherly curves.

She smothered Mikey with a hug, breasts in his face.

MARLENE
  You poor poor dear. I just want to
  eat you for dinner!

LOU
  Hi Marlene. We can’t thank you
  enough.

HOSS (O.S.)
  Hey hey, adventurers. Who’s up for
  some Stern family fun?

Mikey's uncle, GERALD "HOSS" STERN, 46, approaches, spinning
a Baltimore Colts football. Plaid pants, barrel-chested, crew
cut. A slap-your-back kinda guy.
He hugs Lou with a few of those slaps on the back.

HOSS
You ready? Get a new suit? Take your religion off your passport? Nice Jewish boy among the fakakta Arabs?

LOU
I appreciate you doing this.

HOSS
We’re doing it for Nancy. Best thing you ever did was roping that heifer.

LOU
It was easy, I just compared her to livestock.

MARLENE
Now boys. She was very special. And beautiful.

Mikey hears that, it’s painful.

LOU
She was. Thank you.

Hoss pulls Lou aside, WHISPERS something Mikey can’t hear. Lou shakes his head, but Hoss reasserts it.

Mikey takes it in, trying to be positive, but this is awful.

Then out of the corner of his eye next door he sees--

A girl on a UNICYCLE. AMBERGENE KEYES, 14, African-American, with her hair natural and tied up, big and poofy. Wearing a Star Wars sweatshirt.

She weaves on the unicycle, mostly in control. Heads off.

LOU
You can always call the main line...

Lou kneels in front of him, holding out a paper with a phone number.

LOU
... they’ll know how to get to me.

MIKEY
Don’t go. Just don’t Dad. Please.
LOU
I have to, Turk. Without Mom’s work
I need this position. We need it--

MIKEY
I can come with you.

LOU
To Saudi Arabia? Egypt?
(beat)
It’s not gonna be forever. Ten
months. I’ll be back for July
Fourth, we can see the fireworks.
(it’s getting to Lou too)
Please, Mikey.

Mikey’s struggling with it. Lou hugs him close.

LOU
Love you.

Mikey looks away. Lou kisses his cheek and pulls away. Hoss kindly puts a hand on Mikey’s shoulder.

As the CAR PULLS AWAY, Mikey, Hoss, and Marlene watch.

MARLENE
Okay, who wants Hagen Daas?

INT. STERN HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Checking his new surroundings, Mikey enters the kitchen/family room. Linoleum, then three steps down to orange shag carpet and a wood-encased TV. Marlene takes a set of keys from hooks on the wall.

MARLENE
Here are your keys, you’ll share
Dink’s room, until we can liberate
Mr. Stern’s office.

HOSS
Promptly on the third day of never.
Sorry, Sport.

Marlene fixes herself an antacid -- plop plop fizz fizz -- gently winces at the heartburn. Hoss notices.

MARLENE
Anyhoo. Hoss says no ice cream
before dinner but I say bah hooey!
She pulls the freezer open as Mikey's cousin, Connor "Dink" Stern, 17, brushes past. He's tall, broad-shouldered but slouched like he's not trying too hard.

DINK
Mom, where's my hockey stuff? I can't find my cup.

MARLENE
Charming. Do I know? Connor, say hello to your cousin.

Dink sizes up Mikey. Sees not much, but isn't cruel about it:

DINK
Hey. Everybody calls me Dink now.

MIKEY
Why?

He punches Mikey's shoulder. Hard.

MIKEY
Ow!

DINK
That's why.

MARLENE
Connor!

DINK
What? That didn't hurt.

As Dink heads off, Mikey massages his shoulder:

MIKEY
How would he know?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Dink carries suitcases down the hall as Mikey struggles with a smaller one, still clutching the punchcard box.

DINK
We're down at the end of the hall.

He points out a door with an extra deadbolt.

DINK
My dad's office. No admittance. Es verbotten!
MIKEY
What’s inside?

DINK
Cyanide gas and plutonium. Sike!
Papers and stuff I guess. Who cares?

MIKEY
What’s Uncle Hoss do?

DINK
Works for the government. Over at the Fort.

Mikey bumps into a large POTTED PLANT in the hall.

DINK
Plant’s deadly, by the way. One lick and your tongue swells up and suffocates you. No joke.

Afraid, Mikey walks as far around the plant as he can.

Just then Hoss comes out of his bedroom, holding the football.

HOSS
Mikey! We’re gonna play catch, you and me. Before it gets dark. C’mon.

Off Mikey’s look. Uh, really?

EXT. STERN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DUSK

THE FOOTBALL COMES FLYING AT HIS FACE. He just manages to bat it away in time. Goes to get it.

Hoss sips a whiskey then puts it on the picnic table.

HOSS
That’s alright, son, first one.
Come a little closer.
(beat)
We gotta get you a nickname. You’re like a gun with no handle. Don’t know how to grip it.

MIKEY
Mikey's a nickname.
HOSS
Mikey's a diminutive. We're looking for your calling card. The brand on your hide.

MIKEY
My dad calls me Turk. Short for Turkey.

Hoss considers it.

HOSS
Nope, that's not it. Turks are assholes anyway. One step away from the Ruskies. Here toss it back.

Mikey throws a lame duck, Hoss has to lunge to get it.

HOSS
Whoa. Okay. Lou never taught you this? God love him. Look, your dad and I, we're not the same guy, obviously. But he knows I can help you grow into a man. Okay?

MIKEY
Okay.

HOSS
You wanna know the definition of a man, Mikey? (Mikey really does)
First, provide for your family. That's what Lou's doing now. Two -- don't tell Aunt Marlene or we're strictly FUBAR -- two is can you get a woman in bed. The more women, the more beautiful, the more the man. Simple truth. Third, can you get other men to do what you say. Bend them to your will. That's it.

MIKEY
What about how you treat people?

HOSS
What'd I just say?

Hoss tosses again, Mikey bats the football away and then runs after it. Hoss takes another sip of his drink.

HOSS
Maybe we get you a tennis racquet.
He gets a BUZZING on his hip and looks down. A BEEPER.

HOSS
Hup, that’s the Bat Signal. You hold onto that. Keep practicing.

Hoss heads inside and Mikey looks at the ball -- how’s he supposed to practice alone?

He takes a look around. Green grass. Suburbs.

A large TREE at the house’s corner. He heads around to ... 

THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE --

The tree stretches up to a lone WINDOW on that side, up on the second floor.

He looks up at it to see Hoss enter the room and PULL THE CURTAINS shut.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - EVENING

Mikey steps back into the house, carrying the football, and as he turns to the kitchen he sees --

His mother NANCY, 39, small, with bird-like angles but a soft bearing. She’s chopping vegetables, like any other person.

    NANCY
    You want a snack before dinner, sweetie?

    MIKEY
    Mom?

Suddenly she’s got A SCARF covering her WHISPY HAIR. A CANCER PATIENT. Still smiling.

    NANCY
    You’re going to be okay here, Mikey, I promise.

It takes all he’s got to not cry. And then she’s GONE AGAIN. Like there’s a physical hole in space.

Mikey shakes his head, goes toward the stairs.
INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Mikey heads back to Dink’s room. As he passes Hoss’s office, CLASSICAL MUSIC plays inside, over Hoss’s muffled voice.

Mikey steps closer.

HOSS (O.S.)
--- No, nyet tovarishch, eto novyy...

Mikey’s eyes go wide. Is that ... Russian? He presses his ear to the door.

HOSS (O.S.)
Sandler Park -- Ya dolzhen chto-to dlya vas v blizhayshey vremyan.
No tol’ko na Sandler Park.
Podozhdite. Wait, hold on a sec...

Mikey hears a clunk inside the room. Footsteps.

He quickly backtracks, bumps into the plant and turns to the stairs. Almost there ...

HOSS
Mikey, what are you doing?

MIKEY
Uh, nothing.

HOSS
It’s not nothing, you’re on your feet in the middle of the hall.

MIKEY
I was going downstairs.

HOSS
You look like your father, anybody tell you that? Okay, dinner’s soon, go wash your hands.

MIKEY
I was just--

Hoss SLAPS Mikey. A “just to wake you up” slap. This has never happened to him before.

HOSS
We don’t talk back in this house. Got it?
(Mikey is speechless)
You’re a good boy, Mikey. Go wash.
Mikey nods and slips into the hall bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT
Shaken, Mikey turns on the water. Sits on the toilet.
Lets the water run.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT
The family happily passes plates around, all chatting. Except Mikey, who nods but sneaks looks at Hoss, sizing him up.

MARLENE
I mean, Grenada? It’s a tiny tiny island.

HOSS
Big enough for a 9,000-foot airstrip and a squad of Ar-22s.

MARLENE
Big man Ronnie needs a distraction from Lebanon. Boys just can’t resist their guns, no matter how big.

HOSS
Can we just let it rest for once?
One time, dear God.

MARLENE
I can.

There’s silence. Awkward. Chewing.

MARLENE
So, Mikey, are you excited for your first day at Hanssen?

MIKEY
I guess.

DINK
He’s gonna be dead meat.

MARLENE
Connor!

DINK
What?
MARLENE
Don’t listen to him. High school is totally rad! Connor will show you around.

The boys exchange a look. Not gonna happen.

HOSS
Of course he will, he’s family. And speaking of, your old man’s got good news, no more glowering faces.
   (to Marlene)
First, a question. What could make the center of my universe shine even brighter?

MARLENE
Corny metaphors?

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small JEWELRY BOX. Marlene is genuinely surprised.

MARLENE
Hoss, what’ve you done?

HOSS
They’re for Dink.

He winks at Dink, then opens the box, revealing ... DIAMOND EARRINGS.

MARLENE
Oh Hoss. They’re beautiful.

HOSS
Better be. The gal at the PX upsold me like a towelhead.

MARLENE
How can we afford these?

HOSS
Not a problem for the Sterns. You know that division head job, guys on the Ninth Floor keep dangling? More responsibility, more access. It’s comin’ our way, sweetheart.

She smiles a closed-lip smile, genuine. They kiss.

HOSS
Pleased as punch? Abso-frickin-lutely.
Mikey seems reassured by the domesticity.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mikey, in Spiderman pajamas, finishes brushing his teeth, spits into the sink. As he turns off the water, he hears ...

CRYING. Faint.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

He’s out in the hall. The door to the master bedroom is open just a bit.

He gets closer. Inside he sees ...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marlene. Sitting on the edge of the bed, holding the DIAMOND EARRINGS, crying. Sound of Hoss singing in the shower...

HOSS (O.S.)

".... know when to walk away ...
know when to run ."

Mikey feels terrible but can’t seem to move. She tries to pull herself together. She looks up and ... SEES HIM standing there.

She looks away, wraps herself in her robe, wipes her face. He hangs his head and goes back to his room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

A new morning. Marlene drives, Dink rides shotgun, now wearing a Washington Capitals jersey and army jacket. Mikey sits in the backseat bench alone.

DINK

You should just let me drive, it would be so much faster.

MARLENE

Faster is not particularly a selling point. Maybe after Mikey’s first day. I want to see him off.
Mikey’s watching out the window, not excited. Which is when they pass ...

SANDLER PARK. The park Hoss mentioned in his Russian phone call. A sign for it and a road leading into the woods. He cranes his neck to see it.

MIKEY
Excuse me, what’s that?

MARLENE
What, dear?

MIKEY
Sandler Park. We just passed it.

DINK
It’s a park. You know, playground, slide? Don’t be such a spaz.

But Mikey’s curious. Looks back at it, hands to the window.

INT. HANSSEN HIGH HALLS - DAY

Mikey wanders through the packed halls. What passes for culturally diverse in the ’80s suburbs -- BLACK PUNK ROCKERS, CONFEDERATE FLAG SHIRTS, PREPPY PASTELS.

Everybody knows everyone else. They don’t notice him or care.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

The raked seating of a choir. THIRTY STUDENTS, mixed races, more girls than guys. Mikey sits in the back.

In the first row he spots Ambergene, the girl next door with the unicycle. Talking to her friend RAJIT, 17, Indian-American, a bit more dapper than your average teenage boy.

At the front of class, MR. DWYER, 40s, thinning hair, mustache. Once was hip and casual, but is still steely enough to pull rank.

MR. DWYER
Here’s a thought. Music is the original language of our animal brains. It is a complex mathematical system we decode instantly and unconsciously. It is our primal mode of communication.

(MORE)
Okay, we heart music. Now, pieces for the Christmas concert.

He hands out a stack of music sheets.

MR. DWYER
Ubi Caritas. Sopranos, let’s begin.

The sopranos stand to sing. Mikey settles in, for maybe the first time he kind of relaxes.

LATER --

Students are filing out. Mr. Dwyer steps toward Mikey.

MR. DWYER
Michael Stern?

Mikey stops. Others continue out, but Ambergene slows.

MR. DWYER
A solid tenor’s a rare thing in high schools. You sing at your old school?

MIKEY
A little.

MR. DWYER
Well, we could really use you in Madrigals. You interested?

MIKEY
(hesitates)
I don’t want to stand out or anything ...

MR. DWYER
Sure, I get that. But standing out’s sometimes the way to fit in.

Mikey’s considers. Which is when Ambergene pipes in.

AMBERGENE
Did you tell him about the costumes, Mr. D?

MIKEY
Costumes?
INT. MUSIC ROOM - CLOSET - DAY

Dwyer flicks on the light to reveal: a coat rack lined with two dozen MEDIEVAL MADRIGAL GOWNS.

MIKEY
Dresses?

MR. DWYER
Tunics. They’re historically accurate. Representations, anyway.

MIKEY
I can’t ... I mean, I just moved here, I’m not wearing a dress ...

MR. DWYER
Mikey, there’s thirteen girls in Madrigals and three other boys. You do the math.
   (going through the gowns)
I get it, my buddies at the Fort didn’t know how to handle our Christmas concert either--

MIKEY
At the Fort?

MR. DWYER
--but ya can’t do madrigals without ... madrigals.

MIKEY
My uncle works at the Fort. He’s not in the Army, he works for the government.

MR. DWYER
NSA probably.
   (off Mikey's blank look)

MIKEY
Why’d they need a music teacher?

MR. DWYER
That’s funny. No, cryptography.
Here, hold up the brown one.

He hands it to Mikey, who holds it up for size, pained.
MR. DWYER
Lemme see if I can find a smaller one.

MIKEY
Would they ... speak Russian?

MR. DWYER
Russian, Chinese, Arabic. I’m not supposed to say really, but no point listening to other countries if you can’t speak their language.

MIKEY
So it’s spy stuff? Like James Bond?

MR. DWYER
More like James Bookkeeper. A ton of us mathematicians had musical backgrounds.

MIKEY
I’m not sure my uncle is the bookkeeper type.

Dwyer hesitates.

MR. DWYER
(hesitates)
Well, they have other types too.
Here, put on the hat.

He tops Mikey off with a jaunty Renaissance hat.

MIKEY
This is supposed to help me get girls?

INT. STERN HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Mikey uses his key to unlock the front door, drags his backpack in. Looks around.

MIKEY
Hello? Anyone home?

No one answers. A note on the side table: “Afternoon hockey. Pizza at 8.”
INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

As Mikey trudges toward Dink’s room, he notices ... HOSS’S OFFICE.

He pauses. Considers. Reaches out to the doorknob, turns ... It’s LOCKED.

Okay, well that was that. Heads back to Dink’s room when he sees ...

THE MASTER BEDROOM. That door is ajar.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Mikey steps in.

MIKEY
Aunt Marlene?

No one there. It’s quiet, charged. That moment of being alone in someone else’s room, some place you’re not supposed to be.

King-sized bed, unmade. Over it on the wall is a giant mirror. Matching side tables, mid-century modern.

Mikey edges to Marlene’s side table. It’s a mess -- romance novel, jewelry, lipsticks. He picks up a pink clam-shell, birth-control pills. No idea what this is, it unnerves him.

As he puts it back, he notices a small clutch purse. A corner of a paper sticks out from a side pocket -- a pocket you wouldn’t notice otherwise.

Mikey considers, then reaches for it, slips the paper out -- it’s a PHOTO of Marlene with a HANDSOME MAN WITH A MOUSTACHE. They’re happy.

Guilty, he puts it back.

He backs away, about to head out when he notices, in the open closet, a pile of old comic books.

He kneels down -- Flash Gordon, Crime Suspense Stories -- they’re on a stack of shoeboxes. He opens one box -- finds more old comics and a stack of PLAYBOYS. He pulls one out, looks, puts it aside for later inspection.

As he puts the boxes away, he notices the wall-to-wall carpet in the closet has a little flap loose by the wall. He pulls at it, it comes up easy and reveals: a SMALL TRAP DOOR. He hesitates, then pries it open. Inside ...
A STACK OF CASH. Still with the bank wrapper banding it together. $5,000. He’s never seen this much money. And ...

A small VELVET POUCH. He carefully spills out its contents into his hand to see ... THREE SIZABLE DIAMONDS.

His hands shake, afraid, as he strives to put the diamonds back in the pouch and the pouch in the hole. As he does he notices the last thing inside ...

A Green Passport. EAST GERMAN. Inside is HOSS’S PICTURE but a different name: ERHARD BAASCH. Confused, Mikey ...

MEMORY FLASH TO:

INT. PASSPORT OFFICE - DAY

A brightly lit office with steel desks and potted plants. Mikey, a year younger, sits with his mother Nancy. She really enjoys him.

They’re across from a PASSPORT ASSOCIATE, 40s, sweet woman.

PASSPORT ASSOCIATE
You need to sign here. And he needs to sign here.

Nancy signs, passes it to Mikey, who signs. He beams, proud, doing something “grown up."

NANCY
It’s his first passport. His play is going to Geneva and Paris on a world tour.

MIKEY
It’s not a world tour.

NANCY
It’s two countries and it’s across the world -- it’s a world tour.

PASSPORT ASSOCIATE
Oooh lah lah.

MIKEY
(smiling)
They don’t really say that. It’s like us saying Holy Cow.

NANCY
Holy cow!
MIKEY
Mom.

As he rolls his eyes at her...

MARLENE (O.S.)
What in God’s name are you doing?!

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Marlene towers over him -- he’s on the ground, surrounded by the passport, the Playboy.

MARLENE
This is a complete invasion of privacy! Of this home you’ve been invited into!

He scrambles to put them away.

MIKEY
I’m sorry-- I--

She’s down by him, grabbing his wrist.

MARLENE
What if someone did this to you?
(grabs the Playboy)
What if someone showed this around your school? What then?!

MIKEY
It’s not mine.

That just makes her angrier. She’s a little unhinged.

MARLENE
What if every time someone saw you they saw this in their mind?! You can’t unsee things!

MIKEY
I’m sorry! I’ll forget it!

MARLENE
You can’t! Don’t you understand?! Everything else gets added on, filtered through! No matter what you do! Get out of here. Get out now.
Mikey crawl/stumbles past her. He looks back to say one more “I’m sorry” but it wouldn’t be enough.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Siting in silence over pizza: Mikey, Marlene, Dink, Hoss. Marlene variously glaring at Mikey -- he’s avoiding her look. Hoss chews broadly, but there’s an edge to him tonight.

MARLENE
Any word on the division head position?

HOSS
(shakes his head)
They’re tight-lipped as a virgin.
(to Dink)
How’s hockey? When’s the vote for captain?

DINK
Next week. Think I’ve got a good chance.

HOSS
You think or you know? Anybody we need to rub out before the vote? That Ohlhauser kid?

MARLENE
The Norwegian Ambassador’s son?

HOSS
He’s a creepy little dick.

MARLENE
Hoss.

DINK
Howser’s more an enforcer. He just knows when the code of men has been broken.

HOSS
Oh ho, code of men. You a big man now? You gonna pay the mortgage, pay the insurance?

DINK
No, I ...
(beat)
No sir.
Silence. Hoss chews some more.

MARLENE
Mikey, there was a postcard in the mail for you. That is, if you didn’t look through it already.
(Mikey looks down)
It’s from your father. I thought--

That changes things -- Mikey springs up to follow her to the kitchen counter. She hands it over, and he reads, devouring.

DINK
What’s it say?

HOSS
Yeah, what’s my brilliant kid brother up to? He cure gonorrhea yet?

MIKEY
He says he’s good. He misses me. Going to Egypt tomorrow. Says he’s saving lives.

DINK
I guess that’s kind of cool.

MIKEY
Thanks. Yeah. I mean, not cool like being a spy.

Dink is confused.

DINK
Why? What do you mean?

Hoss GLARES AT MIKEY. Mikey looks at Dink, who’s still confused, then at Hoss. Oh boy.

INT. DINK’S ROOM - NIGHT

Mikey in pajamas, feet pulled up on the bed. Dink paces at the mirror, flexing his fingers into fists.

MIKEY
I didn’t know you didn’t know! He probably does one of those safe jobs. Codebreaker, or like the guys who help James Bond in the lab.

DINK
Does that sound like my dad to you?
Mikey's quiet. No.

DINK
You’re here like what, a week? And you know more than I do?

MIKEY
I don’t, I just--

DINK
What makes you so special, huh?! You stick your nose in where it doesn’t belong, make trouble. I gotta go. Watch TV or something.

MIKEY
I’m sorry.

DINK
It doesn’t matter if you’re sorry, it’s a fact.

And he’s gone. Mikey feels even more shitty.

LATER--

Dink sleeps. Mikey lies in bed in his pajamas, flipping the postcard from his dad over and over, finally tucks it into his shoebox with the punchcards.

As he does, he notices the paper with the PHONE NUMBER his father gave him. Grabs it and heads out.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT
He passes by Hoss’s office -- dark. The door looms.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT
Mikey dials on a rotary phone -- waits.

An emotionless recorded WOMAN’S VOICE comes through:

ANSWERING MACHINE VOICE (V.O.)
Please leave your message at the tone.

Followed by a beep. Confused, Mikey starts, his best impression of a grown-up.
MIKEY
Hi, um, I’m trying to reach Louis Stern, he’s my father. My name is Mikey. He should call at my uncle’s house. Soon Dad, please? Okay, bye.

Hesitantly he hangs up the phone. Looks at it. Not knowing what to do, he heads back to bed.

INT. DINK’S ROOM – DAWN

The ALARM BLARES. It’s 4:45am. Dink leaps out of bed.

DINK
Let’s go let’s go let’s go! I’ve got hockey practice!

Mikey rolls over, struggles to focus.

MIKEY
What? ... What time is it?

DINK
4:45.

MIKEY
You know what, I think I’ll ride my bike today.

DINK
Whatever.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS – DAY

A sunny, cool day. Mikey rides his bike, weaving in the breeze, enjoying it. Pedals hard, coasts and passes ...

SANDLER PARK.

He slows to a stop. Gets off his bike and stands looking in.

EXT. SANDLER PARK – DAY

Inside, it’s lovely -- swingsets, basketball hoops. A little footbridge. YOUNG MOTHERS watch TODDLERS in a sandbox.

Mikey looks around, in circles, no sign of anything. It’s idyllic. But to him it’s spooky.
EXT. HANSSEN HIGH - DAY

He pulls his bike up to school just as the BELL RINGS. Dink, crossing from the station wagon, spots Mikey but doesn’t acknowledge him.

They head into school through different doors.

INT. MUSIC CLASS - DAY

Mikey stands in the MEDIEVAL TUNIC and white tights. Ridiculous. Along with Ambergene and Rajit. The girls look like dolls, the boys like pubescent troubadours.

They sing “Go Tell It On the Mountain” brightly. But Mikey’s got something on his mind.

INT. MUSIC CLASS - CLOSET - DAY

Kids hang up their costumes and head out as Mr. Dwyer checks the inventory. Mikey lingers.

MIKEY
Mr. Dwyer? When you worked at the NSA did people ... would a person have a lot of money around? Like wrapped up? And diamonds?

MR. DWYER
Diamonds? If they got ‘em from the KGB, maybe.

He sees Mikey’s reaction, backpedals.

MR. DWYER
A joke. A lot of people squirrel away cash for a rainy day. Afraid of inflation, banks. The person you know have any of those tendencies?

MIKEY
Maybe. I don’t know. So what should I do about it?

MR. DWYER
You ever hear of Operation Fortitude? They teach you that in history?

(Mikey shakes his head)

Course not. Why teach something useful?

(MORE)
Fortitude was a misinformation campaign in World War II. We didn’t want the Germans knowing where we’d invade on D-Day, so we passed along false intelligence. One double agent convinced the Germans he had a network of 27 operatives, names he just made up. So the day 24,000 Allied troops landed in France, the Germans thought we were invading Norway.

MIKEY
What’s that got to do with diamonds?

MR. DWYER
Nothing. Or everything. You have no way of knowing, there’s too much outside your field of vision. If you’re wrong, you’re going to hurt people. If you’re right ...

MIKEY
What?

MR. DWYER
Your job is to be a kid. Be a kid. Safest thing to do is to butt out.

Mikey takes that in. Not very comforting.

EXT. KEYES HOUSE - DAY
As Mikey rides his bike home, he passes Ambergene, on her unicycle in front of her house.

MIKEY
Hey.

AMBERGENE
Hi.

MIKEY
So that really is a unicycle?

AMBERGENE
Either that or you’ve got single vision.

MIKEY
Don’t people like ... make fun of you?
That hurts a little, she tries not to show it.

**AMBERGENE**
I’m a chubby black girl who likes Star Wars. At least from up here I can look down on them. (hops off) Figured out Hoss is a spy, huh?

Mikey looks at her, stunned.

**AMBERGENE**
My dad’s NSA too. I don’t think he likes your uncle that much.

**MIKEY**
It’s like ... Is everybody here a spy?

**AMBERGENE**
I’m not. Or so I say.

He smiles. There’s a beat of silence. It’s awkward, but only because they’ve enjoyed themselves so far.

**AMBERGENE**
You wanna ... whatchu up to?

**MIKEY**
Homework. Supposed to read *1984* by December. In case it comes true, I guess.

**AMBERGENE**
Oh. Okay.

**INT. AMBERGENE’S ROOM – DAY**

Turns out that wasn’t all ... She leads him into her room with a nonstop monologue.

**AMBERGENE**
...just like obsessed with them. Anywhere these like huge cultures overlapped...

Her room is girlish enough, there’s some purple inlay to her dresser. But the walls are covered with STAR WARS stuff, and MAPS, MASKS, a poorly-made art project of a MONGOL ARMOR CHESTPLATE. FLAGS of all nations.
AMBERGENE
... made something else. The Great Game. Ethiopia. Istanbul.

MIKEY
What’s the Great Game?

AMBERGENE
Are you kidding me? The Brits versus the Russians in Central Asia? You can’t understand the Soviets without understanding the Great Game.

MIKEY
When you talk it’s sort of like an AP test.

AMBERGENE
(hurt)
It’s called intelligence.
(less buoyant now)
With this year’s addition of Saint Kitts and Nevis, there are exactly 158 member nations of the UN. I intend to put my feet down in every one of them.

He glances at her, looks away.

MIKEY
You’re not, by the way.

AMBERGENE
What.

MIKEY
Chubby.

That floors her. Neither one is making eye contact. She changes the subject.

AMBERGENE
Your turn. What’s in your room?

MIKEY
Hockey posters. AC/DC. Dink’s stuff. All I’ve got that’s mine is a postcard from my dad and my mom’s punchcards.

AMBERGENE
Punchcards? Computer data stuff?
MIKEY

(nods)
Her dissertation research.
Education, girls in math. She
thought, I don’t know, she could
change things. It’s all just holes
in paper, I don’t know what it
says, but someday maybe.

He shuts down, she can feel his sadness.

AMBERGENE
Hey, you wanna see something cool?

He looks up, curious.

INT. AMBERGENE’S DAD’S OFFICE - DAY

She leads him into her dad’s office still with a nonstop monologue.

AMBERGENE
... And the end, what a rip, right?
They just all show up as happy
ghosts? I mean, Darth Vader is a
happy ghost? That’s the end?

MIKEY
My dad took me right after my mom
died. I kinda liked that part.

AMBERGENE
Oh. Yeah.

MIKEY
You’re allowed in your dad’s office?

AMBERGENE
Of course. We’re not in the Gulag.

He takes stock of the room: it’s bright -- a guest bed,
bookcases, small Brazilian pottery. A photo of MR. KEYES, 44,
a big man in a suit, round glasses, standing with GUION
BUFORD, the first African-American astronaut.

The desk is neatly arranged. With a COMPUTER TERMINAL -- not
a computer though it looks like one. Keyboard and screen in
one.

MIKEY
Do you think your dad has secrets?
AMBERGENE
Everybody has secrets. That’s basically what makes you a person.

MIKEY
No, like ... bad secrets.

AMBERGENE
My mom maybe. My sister definitely. My dad’s a straight-shooter. I used to follow him around town on my bike when I was younger, I’ve never seen him do a bad thing to a living creature.

MIKEY
You followed him?

She shrugs. Swivels in the desk chair, once around and then faces the terminal. Turns it on -- GREEN CURSOR on a SMALL BLACK SCREEN.

Fast, she picks up the phone, dials. It rings, then SQUEALS TONE. She slams it face down into a box with two circles that hold the earpiece -- a 1980s modem.

AMBERGENE
It’s connecting to the Fort. There’s this crazy powerful mainframe there.

MIKEY
Like in Wargames? Is this, like, legal?

AMBERGENE
No, we’re guilty of treason. There’s a SWAT team outside.
(beat)
We do it like every day.

The text on screen kicks in. Ambergene smiles, Mikey looks. It reads out, one letter at a time:

YOU ARE FACING A CAVE. WHAT DO YOU DO?

She looks at Mikey. He’s confused, has no idea. She types:


There’s a pause. Then the screen answers:

A FEROCIOUS WAMPA CHARGES OUT OF THE CAGE. ATTACKS, TEETH OPEN.
AMBERGENE
Technically that should be mouth open, teeth bared. I don’t think these guys are literary minds. So what should we do?

MIKEY
Kill Wampa?

Ambergene smiles. Types:

K-I-L-L W-A-M-P-A. And ENTER.

Excited, Mikey settles in, sitting against the edge of the desk.

EXT. KEYES HOUSE – DUSK

It’s late, sun going down. Ambergene leads Mikey out her front door. He nods to her. Gets his bike.

MIKEY
See ya.

AMBERGENE
Yeah.
(beat)
May the Force be with you!

He smiles, waves, awkwardly trips, but rights himself.

As he does, LAURA KEYES, 17, preppy and flirty, lighter skin than her sister, gets out her Jeep convertible. She has a ballet dancer’s carriage, lithe not brittle.

She sees Mikey walking away.

LAURA
Have fun with your little boyfriend?

AMBERGENE
Shut up. He is not.

And they’re bickering inside.

EXT. STERN HOUSE – DUSK

Smiling, Mikey walks his bike over to his house. As he does, he sees ...

HOSS’S JAGUAR, pulling out. It drives away, not seeing Mikey.
Mikey considers. Considers.
And then hops on his bike. Following.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - DUSK

He’s pedaling hard to catch up to Hoss. Trying to keep the Jag in sight but not be seen. The car crests over a hill.

He pumps harder, standing on the pedals to get up the hill. He tops the hill, exhilarated, cruising down the other side ... And sees Hoss’s car up ahead, STOPPED at a stop sign.

Mikey makes a hard left onto a cul-de-sac, veering off, almost skidding. Has to circle wide to turn around.

And when he gets back to the main street, Hoss is gone.
 Damn it. Lost him.
Then he has a hunch.

EXT. APPROACH TO SANDLER PARK - NIGHT

Mikey bikes up to Sandler Park, where -- bingo -- Hoss’s Jaguar is parked out front. He hops off and ducks down behind a hedge.

Hoss kills the lights, gets out, gives a nonchalant look around. He’s dressed in sweats, running shoes, windbreaker.

Hoss approaches the wooden SANDLER PARK sign. Takes something out of his pocket, presses it against the sign. Mikey can’t see what it is.

Hoss heads into the park, so Mikey runs up to the sign. Pressed in where Hoss stood is a YELLOW THUMBTACK. Huh?

EXT. SANDLER PARK - NIGHT

Mikey watches from a distance, behind a set of trees, as Hoss makes his way through the empty park. The older man goes to the FOOTBRIDGE ...

And ducks underneath it. Mikey has to peek out from the tree to keep Hoss in sight.

From his windbreaker pocket, Hoss pulls out a small GREEN STAKE.
It’s plastic, pointed at one end, cylindrical at the top. Like something to secure a tent’s rope or to treat a lawn.

Hoss puts the stake down beside the footbridge, point into the mud, and steps on it with all his weight. It sinks into the mud.

Mikey's leaning in, trying to get a better view, just as ...

Hoss turns around --


Can hear Hoss’s footsteps, getting closer, closer ...

And passing by. Further and further away. Mikey lets out a breath. Finally peers out -- Hoss is gone.

Mikey looks back at the footbridge.

CUT TO:

Kneeling, muddying his knees, Mikey reaches around in the mud for the stake. Struggles to pull it out, finally does.

He inspects it as well as he can in the dark. It’s got a screw-top, like a bottle. He unscrews it, opens it to find...

FILM CANISTERS. Two of them. Finished but undeveloped.

He stares at them, glances around, not sure what to do.

Finally .. he puts them back in the spike, screws the top on, and stomps it back into the mud.

INT. STERN HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Mikey, exhausted and muddy, slips in the front door. Heads for the stairs.

HOSS (O.S.)
Been up to something, sport?

He startles. Turns to see Hoss there in the kitchen doorway.

HOSS
Coming home late. Out on your bike?

MIKEY
Yeah. Just riding around.
HOSS
Something you wanna tell me?

_Busted. Or is he?_ He cautiously sounds it out.

MIKEY
About ...

HOSS
Dink. And that brain fart you pulled over dinner.

Relieved. Trying to look like he’s not.

MIKEY
I’m ... I’m really sorry. I--

HOSS
That truth you found out, that was my truth to tell, not yours.

MIKEY
Yes sir. I wasn’t thinking.

HOSS
So think.

It feels a little like a threat. Mikey nods. Hoss switches to smiley. Puts his arm around Mikey.

HOSS
Aw, to be honest I figured he’d find out years ago. Let’s get dinner. Just don’t do anything stupid like that ever again. You read me?

MIKEY
Yes sir.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family sits down to dinner, Mikey the last to get there. Just as he sits ...

THE PHONE RINGS. Marlene puts down the salad on the table and goes to answer.

MARLENE
(into phone)
Hello? Hello, I can’t ... Oh, Lou!
(Mikey perks up)
Yes, yes, he’s here.
(MORE)
Mikey, it’s your father. He’s calling from Riyadh.

She holds out the phone, he grabs it.

MIKEY
Dad?

INT. HOTEL LOBBY – RIYADH – DAY

Lou Stern paces in a run-down hotel lobby in Saudi Arabia. It’s early morning.

LOU
Mikey! Mikey, how are you, Turk?

INTERCUT:

Mikey looks over his shoulder at the Sterns, who are watching him talk.

MIKEY
I’m good. I’m fine.

LOU
They said you left a message. I was worried. Is everything okay?

He tries to turn his back to the family at the table. Speaks softly.

MIKEY
Um. When are you coming home? I really need you to come home.

LOU
Turk, we talked about this. I can’t come home yet. In a few months.

MIKEY
I just wish it could be now. Please, Dad.

LOU
Look, Mikey, unless you’re in mortal danger, I need to be here. Are you in danger?

Mikey looks over at Hoss. Considers.

MIKEY
I don’t think so.
LOU
Okay then. Hang in there, tough it out. You’re gonna be okay. You can lean on your Uncle Hoss if you’ve got a problem.

Mikey again looks at Hoss, who shoots a mime gun at him.

LOU
I’ve gotta go. The long distance costs more than your college fund.
Love ya, Turk.

MIKEY
Love you too, Dad.

And he hangs up.

HOSS
Everything hunky-dory?

Mikey nods, gives a pained smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STERNS’ HOUSE – DAY

Bright day. Mikey wheels his bike out of the garage, his backpack over his shoulder. Is about to get on the bike...

But he spots the BACK TIRE -- FLAT.

He inspects it. A small nail is imbedded in the tread, like he ran over it. He squeezes, more air comes out around the nail. He shakes his head.

Just then Dink comes out and gets into the station wagon.

MIKEY
Dink! Dink, can I get a ride?

Dink rolls his eyes, nods to the car door. Mikey double-times it to get in.

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

Mikey sits in class. A BURNOUT GIRL is in front, presenting a poster on the tank capability of the USSR versus USA.
BURNOUT GIRL  
As you can see, the USSR has, like, a lot more tanks than us. Like, by a lot.

The whole thing makes Mikey anxious, tapping his knee unconsciously.

TEACHER  
How many exactly, Charlene?

BURNOUT TEEN  
Many many more.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY  
Mikey heads into music class with Ambergene, speaking in hushed tones.

AMBERGENE  
Did he see you?

MIKEY  
I don’t think so. I mean, I could’ve run over a nail. I don’t remember doing it.

AMBERGENE  
Or somebody didn’t want you riding anymore.

MIKEY  
That’s like, too dramatic.  
    (beat)  
I still don’t get what he was doing.

AMBERGENE  
It’s called a dead drop. He puts a signal -- I haven’t heard of a thumbtack, but that’s cool. It tells his contacts he’s dropping material. Then he leaves, and when his contact picks it up, it could be days later, they add a different signal to say they got it. They trade material but they’re never spotted in the same place at the same time. It’s basic spycraft.

MIKEY  
Sure, they teach it in kindergarten.
AMBERGENE

The question is, what was on that film.

INT. HALL - DAY

Mikey and Ambergene continue their conversation after class.

MIKEY
Yeah, and who would pay him for it.
And speaks Russian. Does your dad have cash lying around the house?
Diamonds?

AMBERGENE
Not that I’ve seen.

MIKEY
He left film there. He wasn’t getting information. What if he’s selling secrets?
Nuclear missiles, weapon systems?

AMBERGENE
That’s not what they do at NSA. They do codes. Besides, it could be plans someone needs. It could be fake information.

MIKEY
That’s what Mr. D said. Maybe he’s right, maybe I should just mind my own business.

AMBERGENE
On the other hand, isn’t that the phrase every dictator loves to hear?

(beat)
Look, if you really want to know, you know what door you need to get behind. The only one in your house that locks.

Mikey grimaces.

AMBERGENE
You coming to lunch?

Just then he spots Dink, arm around a red-haired girl -- HOLLY, 17, country rock, chewing gum. She’s leaning into him.
Dink pulls out a cigarette as they head for the outside doors. Catches sight of Mikey. Pauses.

Dink gives a SLIGHT NOD for Mikey to come along.

MIKEY
(to Ambergene)
No, you go ahead. I’m gonna go with Dink.

She raises her eyebrows. Okay ...

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Kids pile in -- Dink and Holly up front with a SKINNY GIRL next to Holly. ANOTHER EIGHT in the back and the back-back. The front door is open, but Mikey hesitates.

DINK
Come on! Get in!

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Dink driving, smoking. He’s got a RABBIT’S FOOT hanging from the keys in the ignition.

Mikey rides shotgun with the Skinny Girl on his lap, arm around his shoulder. He’s kind of excited and trying not to show it.

Skinny girl rolls her eyes, pops a bubble, and looks back to talk to the others.

INT. CAPTAIN SUBMARINE SANDWICH SHOP - DAY

A hole-in-the-wall suburban sandwich place, filled with WHITE-Collar WORKERS, DELIVERY MEN, DENTAL HYGIENISTS.

The school gang waits in line, gossiping, laughing. Mikey gets his food and carries it to a table. Dink pulls away from Holly for a minute to join him.

DINK
I’m not worried about him getting hurt.

MIKEY
What?
DINK
My dad. I mean, I guess so but ...
Mostly, I have no idea who he is. I thought I knew.

Mikey takes that in. He’s about to answer when--

SKINNY GIRL
Oh my God, teacher!!!

Out the window A WOMAN IN A HIPPY FLORAL DRESS, 40s, walks toward the cafe. Students FREAK OUT, go scattering.

Mikey grabs his sandwich and runs.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - DAY

Mikey walks along the road, cold, eating his sandwich.

A few moments, then the STATION WAGON drives by, pulls over.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Now Mikey's sitting on Skinny Girl’s lap. Neither one is thrilled.

EXT. HANSSSEN HIGH - SIDE PARKING LOT - DAY

At the school’s side parking lot, everyone piles out, sneaks around to the ballfields.

Dink lingers with Holly, lighting up another cigarette.

DINK
Hey Mikey.

Mikey's optimistic. Looks for a bonding moment.

MIKEY
Yeah?

DINK
I’m goin’ to Holly’s after school. You need to find your own way home.

MIKEY
(coversing)
Yeah. Right. Sure.
EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

Mikey trudges home, backpack on his shoulder. It’s a long walk, but he’s managing.

He passes the posts for electrical wires. Taps one, keeps walking. Goes to tap the next one and sees ...

A YELLOW THUMBTACK on it.

Stupefied, he looks closer. Spins around, looking -- is there anyone here? Anyone watching? He scans the ground -- anything there? Nothing.

Finally backs away from the post, spooked.

INT. STERN HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Mikey drags himself in the door. As he does, Marlene -- arms full of party decorating materials -- whirlwinds at him from the kitchen.

MARLENE
There you are! I’ve been waiting for anyone I mean anyone to come home. Where’s my beloved son?

She doesn’t wait for an answer. Struggles to put on her coat.

MIKEY
He’s with Holly --

MARLENE
Does anybody tell me anything? It’s bad enough your uncle -- Here --

She shoves supplies in Mikey’s hands and puts on her coat.

MARLENE
The Temple Fund wants new ideas for the gala. What do you think of “Parting of the Red Seats?”

She waits. She’s really asking.

MIKEY
Do they have red seats?

MARLENE
Well, that’s a problem, obviously. Okie-doke, there’s a casserole in the fridge, Hoss will know how to heat it up.
MIKEY
Wait, you’re leaving?

MARLENE
Watch some TV until he gets home.
You’ll be fine.

She takes the supplies back and is gone.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

Mikey watches TV -- cheeky Roger Moore as James Bond in “For Your Eyes Only.” He’s getting briefed in a wood-pannelled Minister’s office.

MINISTER
Now if that transmitter were to fall into the wrong hands, it would render our entire Polaris fleet useless.

BOND
Every order could be countermanded.

MINISTER
Worse, our own submarines could be ordered to attack our own cities.

Mikey can’t take it, he quickly turns it off. Looks back toward the stairs to Hoss’s office.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Mikey faces Hoss’s office door again. Tries the handle -- locked. Wheels turning in his head.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - SIDE YARD - EVENING

Mikey stands in the backyard, looking up at Hoss’s office window. He looks to the TREE ...

And this time he starts climbing. Makes his way, not so easily, slipping. Gets to the branch closest to the wall.

He leans out with his feet still in the tree -- thud -- hands against the window, almost breaks it but doesn’t.

He jiggles the window. tries to open it, but it won’t budge. Locked.
INT. DINK’S ROOM – EVENING

The postcard taped to the wall is now joined by others: Pyramid. Seaside. One just says, “Love ya, Turk! Dad.”

Mikey sits on his bed, wringing his hands. Doesn’t know what to do. Shakes them out, gets up to pace.

MIKEY
What do I do what do I do what do I do ...

Finally ... he kneels down, pulls out the box of punchcards.

INT. STERN HOUSE – DINING ROOM – NIGHT

At the dining room table, which seats twelve but is undisturbed.

Carefully, Mikey takes out a stack of the punchcards. Lays them out one by one. Particular. Soothing.

MEMORY FLASH TO:

INT. MIKEY’S FAMILY KITCHEN – DAY

It’s a bright kitchen, colored in yellow and orange. Nancy buzzes around.

Mikey, 12, sits at the table as his Mom brings out the same box, brand new.

NANCY
I want you to help me Michael. This carries the results of 6000 students taking 6000 tests. There’s an order to them. You can organize the whole world if you just limit the variables. If we do it wrong, it means nothing to the computer. Or worse, it means the wrong thing.

Mikey holds up a card, looks through the holes which let a little bit of light through. Runs his fingers over them like reading Braille.

NANCY
But if you put them in just the right order, the puzzle snaps into focus.
Mikey carefully orders them, taking the responsibility very seriously.

BACK TO:

INT. STERN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mikey deals out another card and places it beside the others. He’s organizing his universe.

HOSS (O.S.)
What’s this?

Mikey looks up to see Hoss, pouring Jack Daniels in a glass.

HOSS
Solitaire? Where’s Dink? Where’s your aunt Marlene?

MIKEY
She left, she--

HOSS
Ninth Floor’s shoving polygraphs up my ass all day, and I come home to your little paddycake?

Hoss takes a random few cards from the table, looks at them.

MIKEY
They’re my mom’s. Don’t do that.
Please--

Mikey reaches, but Hoss holds them up in the air, keeps him at arms’s length.

HOSS
You think you can read ‘em? Got a supercomputer in that little brain of yours?

Mikey struggles, jumping for the cards.

HOSS
(laughing)
Easy, tiger! Easy. There you go little man!

Hoss tosses the cards back on the table, spilling the drink on himself a bit. Mikey goes to them.
HOSS
(re: spill)
Goddamn it.

MIKEY
You messed up the order! They’ll never go back! You lost everything my mom ever did!

HOSS
Mikey. Mikey, they’re ordered. See the little number in the corner. The cards are numbered in order. You didn’t know that?

Breathing heavy, Mikey processes.

MIKEY
What?

HOSS
Jesus, boy, you think you know something and you’re just full of shit.

Mikey looks at him astonished.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mikey and Hoss sit across the table over warmed up casserole. Hoss keeps drinking and pouring throughout. At the moment he’s stabbing at the casserole on his plate with his fork.

HOSS
You know what it’s like to feel trapped, Mikey? I mean really trapped. If I told you you only had one choice, right now, would you take it? Or would you fight it? And what if that fight costs you?

MIKEY
What choice?

HOSS
Doesn’t matter. Casserole. I tell you you’ll eat nothing but this broccoli casserole for the rest of your life, seventy straight years. What do you do?

Mikey shrugs.
HOSS
That an “I don’t know” shrug or a
“I’m a teenager I don’t talk”
shrug?

MIKEY
I mean, it’s a weird hypothetical.
Eating nothing but casserole.

HOSS
Alright. C’mere.

He grabs Mikey and pulls him to the broom closet. He opens
the broom closet door.

HOSS
Go in.

MIKEY
No.

HOSS
Go in, goddamn it.

MIKEY
I don’t want to.

HOSS
I didn’t ask if you wanted to, I
said put your ass in there.

Mikey stands. Looks. Does not move.

HOSS
MOVE IT! NOW!

Grudgingly Mikey starts to move. Not fast enough for Hoss --
he grabs Mikey, forces him into the closet.

Mikey straightens himself back out, beside the brooms and

HOSS
You understand now? You gonna shrug
at me now?

Mikey glares at him.

A beat. Something in Hoss lets go of the anger.

HOSS
I’ve had a bad day. Plan on having
a worse night. Do us both a favor
and steer clear.
Mikey still glares. Hoss grabs his drink and stumbles off, almost knocking over a lamp.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - NIGHT

Mikey sits on the front stoop. It’s late, dark. Winter coat on, books and papers next to him, he’s doing homework by the porch light.

Or he should be. Instead he’s holding up a PUNCHCARD. Sees the NUMBER Hoss pointed out: 57.

He holds the card up to the moon -- it shines through a hole and then doesn’t, then through another one as he moves it.

    NANCY (O.S.)
    I should’ve told you.

She’s sitting next to him. Not in winter clothes, not cold. He doesn’t look at her.

    NANCY
    I was just trying to keep you occupied and do my work. It seemed more magic this way. And I wanted you to be careful with them.

    MIKEY
    (a realization)
    You lied to me.

Huh. He keeps looking at the card. She’s gone.

INT. STERN HOUSE - FOYER

Mikey struggles to bring in the pile of his books and papers, the punchcard tucked into a textbook on top. The place is empty.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Heading to Dink’s room, he notices ... HOSS’S OFFICE door is CRACKED OPEN and the light breaks out of it.

He steps quietly toward it. Peeks in to see ...

INT. HOSS’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hoss asleep, head slumped over the desk, SNORING slightly. Empty whiskey glass nearby.
The office is cramped, cluttered. Nothing screams “spy.” Instead there’s a desk with papers and typewriter, bookshelf of war paperbacks, wrestling trophies. A Hi-Fi record player.

A box of COLORED THUMBTACKS.

But there’s a small SAFE in the corner. And a FILE on the desk.

Eyeing Hoss, Mikey edges to the desk. Scans the papers -- a series of typed binary numbers: 01100001100, 10110001011, and on and on for pages.

He puts down his books on the desk. Carefully reaches over to the title page of the document. As he does, Mikey’s PUNCHCARD SLIPS OFF his books and onto the desk -- he doesn’t notice.

Instead he sees the title page of Hoss’s document: TOP SECRET, NATIONAL SIGNAL INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS LIST. Below that, the NSA insignia -- an eagle holding a key.

And underneath it, a handwritten note: 6/82 $40,000, 8/82, $50,000 1/83, $50,000 10/83, $35,000

Mikey doesn’t know what it means, but it’s bad.

Hoss stirs a bit. Mikey freezes as the drunken sleeper closes his mouth. Waits. Hoss seems to settle back into sleep.

Mikey quickly makes his way to his books on the desk, picks them up and heads to the door--

But stops just before leaving. He backtracks to the WINDOW -- UNLOCKS THE LATCH -- and tiptoes back out of the room.

The PUNCHCARD, unseen, remains on the desk.

INT. DINK’S ROOM - NIGHT

Mikey lies in bed, facing the wall, eyes darting as he figures things out.

He hears the door -- Dink enters -- and Mikey’s eyes snap shut, pretending to be asleep.

Dink sits on the edge of his bed, stares out, upset. Lies down, covers himself with a sheet, faces away from Mikey, and soon his silhouette makes telltale jerky signs of masturbating.

Mikey scrunches his eyes tight, pretending he’s asleep.
INT. HOSS’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sleeping in his office chair, Hoss stirs. Stretches, rubs his face, slaps his cheeks a few times.

Hoss scans the room -- it’s a mess.

HOSS
Sloppy, Stern. Contain your shit.

He gathers up his papers -- including the PUNCHCARD though he doesn’t see it -- and kneels down to the safe.

Spins the dial three times, opens, and stuffs them inside. Closes it and spins the dial again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Early morning. Tired, Dink gathers his hockey gear. Mikey eats cereal.

Marlene comes in, tying her silk bathrobe, sluggish. As she scoops coffee grounds from a can of Maxwell House...

Hoss comes barreling through -- manic salesman mode. Briefcase on the table.

HOSS
Dink old man! Knock somebody’s teeth out today, okay son?!

DINK
Okay, Dad.

HOSS
I’m headed to New York for a couple of days.

Mikey looks up at that, curious.

MARLENE
How long?

HOSS
Just until Sunday. Can’t live without me, can ya?

He gives her a peck on the cheek. Deadpan, she humors it.

As Hoss tosses a banana into his briefcase, Mikey notices what’s inside: the GREEN PASSPORT.
INT. FOYER - DAY

Looking out the front door of the house, Mikey eyes Hoss leave in his Jaguar.

INT. AMBERGENE’S ROOM - DAY

Mikey paces in Ambergene’s room, talking it out.

MIKEY
There was a list of money and dates. And a top secret document.

AMBERGENE
Those are never supposed to leave the Fort.

MIKEY
It just had numbers. Hundreds of numbers, ones and zeroes. It didn’t make any sense.

AMBERGENE
That’s binary.

KNOCK KNOCK. Mr. Keyes leans in through the open door. He’s a big man, has a bit of a beer gut, white fluffy hair. Kind but mannered.

MR. KEYES
Door stays open, Miss Ambergene.

AMBERGENE
Yes, Papa.

MR. KEYES
About 30 minutes until supper.

AMBERGENE
Yes, Papa.

Without looking at him, she blows him a kiss. He gives a small guffaw and leaves. Beat.

AMBERGENE
So what was the document called?

MIKEY
I don’t know, it was like … Signal Requirements. Something like that. Signal Requirements List. What does that even mean?
Ambergene is stunned.

MIKEY
What?

AMBERGENE
The National Signals Intelligence Requirements List is our code keys. It lists every key to decipher every code we use around the world. Military, nuclear, undercover spies. Whoever has those codes has access to any secret the United States keeps.

They’re stunned.

AMBERGENE
Did he take it with him to New York?

MIKEY
I didn’t see it in his briefcase.

AMBERGENE
Do you think it was on the film he left?

MIKEY
I don’t know. Or maybe it’s the next dead drop.

AMBERGENE
If he didn’t take it with him, you have some time.

MIKEY
I mean, what do I even do? Call the police? The FBI? I’m 14. They’re not going to believe me.

AMBERGENE
Could you tell your dad?

MIKEY
I don’t think that’s gonna work.

AMBERGENE
You could tell mine.

He considers, shakes his head.
INT. KEYES HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Passing through Ambergene’s living room to head home, Mikey sees Mr. Keyes in a corner by the window, reading, his back to Mikey.

The teen stops, debating. He could tell Keyes everything.

But instead he heads on through to the front door, determined.

CUT TO:

EXT. STERN BACKYARD - TREE - EVENING

Mikey looks up the tree. Climbs again, quicker than before.

He leans out, hands on the wall -- he’s getting used to this.

He jiggles the window, still unlocked. That’s a relief. Scoots it more open. Carefully climbs in.

INT. HOSS’S OFFICE - EVENING

There’s more light in here during the day, and it catches the dust in the air. Mikey slides the window shut, pulls the curtains.

The place is still a mess, but the desk is now mostly EMPTY. He shuffles through the material on it, no Requirements List.

Mikey looks at the safe. Bends down to it. Spins the dial, listens to the door, hoping he can hear something. Click click click. PULLS THE LEVER --

Nope, doesn’t open.

MIKEY

Damn it.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - SIDE YARD - EVENING

Mikey climbs back out the window, sure to close it behind him.

INSIDE THE SAFE --

The Signal Requirements List and MIKEY’S PUNCHCARD sit there waiting.
INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Mikey slumps back into the house, defeated. As he does, Marlene calls to him from the top of the stairs.

MARLENE
Mikey? Mikey I have a favor to ask of you?

He looks up at her. I guess so, sure.

MARLENE
I’ve scheduled a hurried doctor’s appointment for tomorrow. I’ll be taking a taxi home, but may need some help getting into the house. Dink has a game, can you be here in the afternoon?

MIKEY
Um, sure. Are you okay?

MARLENE
That’s sweet. After all this. You’re a sweet boy, Mikey.

And she turns and goes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The next day. Mikey waiting at the kitchen table. Doing his homework. He hears a CAR pull up, HORN HONK.

INT. FOYER - AFTERNOON

Mikey opens the front door to see Marlene closing the cab door. She’s woozy, carrying a small day bag. She staggers slowly toward the house, and he runs out to help her.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

As Mikey helps her up the stairs, she leans on him and the railing.

MIKEY
Are you okay?
MARLENE
Ohh, they gave me medicine, but I added a few of my own lovelies.
(giggles, then winces)
I need to go to bed.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

As she settles in bed and Mikey stands at the door, she winces again, reaches an arm out.

MARLENE
Mikey, be a precious gift and get me the heating pad. It’s in my bag.

He reaches in and pulls out a heating pad, complete with plug and switch. Carries it to her, awkward to be this close.

MARLENE
Plug it in, would you?

He does. A bit loopy, she starts talking.

MARLENE
I wasn’t always like this. I used to rock. I was bad. Traveled with the J. Geils Band. Angel is the Centerfold? That’s me.

She adjusts the heating pad, shifts her position.

MARLENE
Not the centerfold part. But not the angel, I can tell you! ...
(beat)
Sometimes the ground shifts, yes?
“Like sands through an hourglass!”
And all you can do is fall and tumble and hurt and then it all stops. And you don’t think you can survive it another time. But then, you do.
(beat)
He just ... made me feel ...
something? Not so afraid. Good. But it’s done. Done done done. It’s just better. You know?

Mikey nods. He doesn’t exactly know, but he’s being polite.
Marlene closes her eyes, trying to sleep. Mikey backs away.
INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Mikey sits in Hoss’s armchair, eats Fruity Pebbles, watches HOGAN’S HEROES on TV: Richard Dawson picks a safe by listening to it with a stethoscope. Mikey rolls his eyes.

Dink comes in, carrying his hockey bag and stick.

DINK
Hey.

MIKEY
Hey. You win?

Dink shakes his head.

DINK
Scored twice, though.
(beat)
Team voted before the game. Made me captain.

MIKEY
Congratulations. That’s great.

DINK
Yeah.

He sort of stands there, looks around. No parents to celebrate it.

DINK
Yeah. So.

More awkward. Which is when Marlene comes shuffling past, into the kitchen. She’s out of it, but not as woozy as before.

She opens the freezer and takes out microwave dinners.

DINK
Hey Mom, there’s a party at Howser’s tonight.

MARLENE
Be back by eleven-thirty. And bring Michael. He deserves some fun.

Dink and Mikey exchange a look.

DINK
It’s at Howser’s.
MARLENE
I don’t care if it’s at Muammar Quadaffi’s--

DINK
But--

MARLENE
You wanna talk buts? I can whip some butts, your father’s not the only one who can whip butts in this house. I wiped your butt, I can whip your butt.

Beat.

DINK
Mom, can you stop saying ‘butt’?

That shakes her out of it. She smiles, Dink smiles. She throws a potholder at him, he bats it away.

INT. HOWSER’S FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

A party in progress in a very nice house. Over the mantel is a picture of AMBASSADOR OHLHAUSER with Ronald Reagan.

Surrounding it, TEENS drink from WINE COOLERS and beers, mixing drinks. It’s not the wildest party but there’re definitely no adults.

Dink leads Mikey to a corner, sits him down in a chair opposite a velvet brown beanbag.

DINK
Stay here. I’ll get you before we go home.

Mikey nods. Dink goes and Mikey sits there, alone, looking around. A GUY almost spills a drink on him. ANOTHER GUY and GIRL grope in the corner.

A DRUNK GIRL walks by, wiping her lips. Skinny girl sees her.

SKINNY GIRL
Oh my god, blue lips. Total BJ.

Mikey looks back, curious. Still nothing for him to do.

Which is when Laura, Ambergene’s sister, plops down on the beanbag.
LAURA
Hey there, cowboy. You liking the rodeo?

MIKEY
Huh?

She’s wearing a fedora cocked on her head and a long dress with a low neckline. She’s bored, playful.

LAURA
You like my hat? Howser says he saw a streetwalker on The Block with one just like it -- ugh, he’s such a pig. But I don’t mind. I think it’s jaunty. Do you think it’s jaunty?

MIKEY
Um, sure. Yeah.
(beat)
Is Ambergene here?

LAURA
Probably off searching for Ewoks. Don’t you want to talk to me?

MIKEY
Um, sure.

She’s lounging on the beanbag, running her finger along the neckline of her dress.

LAURA
You ever have a girlfriend, Mikey?

CUT TO:

EXT. HOWSER’S HOTTUB - NIGHT

Dink sits in the hot tub, Holly cuddling on his lap, steam rising around them. They’re making out, but he doesn’t seem that into it.

KEVIN “HOWSER” OHLHAUSER, 17, a blond weasel with a chipped tooth and ANOTHER HOCKEY PLAYER snort lines of coke off the side of the tub. Variously punching each other.

HOWSER
Yes! Yes!!
(then)
I WILL destroy that tree!
Howser leaps out of the tub and -- despite snow and lack of clothes -- climbs a tree. His buddy follows, laughing.

In the tub, Holly breaks off the kiss. Puts her hands to Dink’s face, tries to connect. Dink sips from a beer.

HOLLY
You never answered about skiing Christmas break. It’ll be fun.

DINK
Yeah. I don’t know. Maybe.

HOLLY
What else are you going to do?

Dink absentmindedly draws a finger on her arm. She likes that. He’s spelling out words, and she’s deciphering them.

HOLLY
G... o... Go ... to the ...

He spells an M ... an ... O

HOLLY
M... o...

(beat)
Moon? Go to the moon? What the fuck does that mean?

(Dink shrugs, swig of beer)
Uch. Hockey boys. Shut up and kiss.

She starts kissing him again.

Just then, Rajit -- the dapper kid from Madrigals -- passes by. He catches Dink’s eye, crooks an eyebrow.

Dink connects with him, then looks away, back to Holly. Rajit walks off, a little hurt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Laura lounging, Mikey just above her in the chair. She’s toying with him, totally out of his league. But that doesn’t mean he’s not interested.

MIKEY
It’s Mike. You can call me Mike.

LAURA
(amused)
Okay, Mike. So have you?
MIKEY
Have I what?

She kneels up, somewhat between his legs.

LAURA
That thing of yours. Anyone ever touched it but you?

MIKEY
That’s ... top secret.

She laughs. She’s close. And in the distance...

Ambergene bounds into the room. She sees them together. Stops flat. This moment absolutely sucks for her.

Just then, the front door BUSTS OPEN. A DAD, 40s, storms in.

DAD
Jennifer! Jennifer where are you!!

He pulls apart one couple. Then another. Grabs a GIRL, apparently JENNIFER. Kids scatter. Laura stands, Mikey shifts.

DAD
That’s it. Party’s over! I’m calling the police.

Mikey looks around -- Laura is gone and so is Ambergene.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Dink drives, Mikey riding shotgun.

MIKEY
Where’s Holly?

DINK
Shut the fuck up, that’s where. Other fish in the pond, that’s for sure.

Dink looks flustered, Mikey looks away, doesn’t want to piss him off any more.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Sunday morning. Mikey and Dink swap colorful comics pages. Marlene mills, making toast. She’s not back to 100% sparkling, but she’s more the Marlene we knew.

MARLENE
We’ve got nothing planned today. Mikey, you want to go to the mall?

MIKEY
Sure.

MARLENE
That’ll be fun. We’ll get you some new duds.

Which is when Hoss comes in the front door.

HOSS (O.S.)
Loving family! I’m back from the wars!

She’s more careful now. He’s harried but even-tempered. Quickly kisses Marlene.

HOSS
I’ve gotta stow some things upstairs, then I want to hear everything about everything.

And he bounds out of the room.

INT. HOSS’S OFFICE - DAY

Hoss quickly kneels to the safe, unlocks it. He stashes new stacks of cash into it.

As he shifts contents around, he sees ...

THE PUNCHCARD.

In the safe, peeking out of the folder. He reaches for it, holds it up. His face clouds over.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mikey still reading comics. Grabs a different section. Hoss comes in, slowly.
MIKEY
(to Dink)
Bloom County’s good today. It’s
written backwards. Mirror writing.

DINK
Yeah, I didn’t get it.

HOSS
Hey, Encyclopedia Brown. We need to
talk.

Mikey stops. Marlene notices.

MARLENE
Hoss? What about?

HOSS
Just a little man to man. Right,
Mikey?

Mikey’s not so sure.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Key in the lock, Hoss unlocks the deadbolt of his office
door. Heads in, warmly welcomes Mikey.

HOSS
Come on in, it’s not booby trapped.
Much.

Mikey steps in, not sure what to do.

INT. HOSS’S OFFICE - DAY

Hoss heads toward his desk, past the row of bookcases.

HOSS
Been in here before? I don’t think
so. I don’t look it, but I can be a
very private person. Have a seat.

He points to a canary-colored armchair. Mikey sits. Hoss
points out things on his bookshelf.

HOSS
My wrestling trophies, wanna
wrestle? Your old man used to steal
‘em, put ‘em under his bed. Wedding
picture, your aunt Marlene. Wow,
she was something. This here ...
(MORE)
HOSS (CONT'D)
(he takes down a small box)
Purple Heart and Bronze Star.
Matched set. The “v” is for valor.
Not one of those “suck up” stars
they were handing out like
chocolate bars.

MIKEY
Wow.

HOSS
Wow is fucking right. Maybe you
don’t know everything yet.

Mikey nods barely.

HOSS
Ordinary crap. Kinda snowballs on
you as you get older, you can’t
lose any of it. Thing is, soon as
you lock a door, people think
there’s a mystery behind it. Ooohh.
But it’s pretty ordinary. And when
it’s not, it’s just ...
(pointed)
... messy, that’s all.

He smiles. Mikey tries to smile back, but it’s forced.

HOSS
There are some very bad people out
there. People who would gladly,
eagerly, wipe out our way of life.
Free press, free elections, free
speech. You like your speech? What
I do makes sure these people never
get to run our country the way they
run theirs. And make no mistake,
they want to.

(beat)
So let’s do a little exercise here.
You’ve got a good imagination,
right?

MIKEY
I guess so-

HOSS
A great one. Let’s imagine, instead
of me inviting you, you came in
here on your own. The door was
open, no big deal, right?
MIKEY
I didn’t--

HOSS
Don’t. Now let’s imagine you saw something. You don’t know what, but it concerns you. Something cooks up in that hot pot mind of yours. And you mention it, and somehow -- somehow the people I work for end up hearing it. You with me?

MIKEY
Yes.

HOSS
Yes sir.

MIKEY
Yes sir.

HOSS
Now what, in your imaginative opinion, do they do?

Mikey knows better than to answer.

HOSS
They investigate? Even if it’s completely reasonable they might decide to freeze my assets. Mrs. Stern moves to her mother in Arizona, takes Dink with her. Does she take you? You’re not her family. Does your father? Not at this time, no.

(beat)
So, in this imagining, you and I -- just the two of us -- live alone in this house. No money. Reporters follow me, follow you. If I somehow in this fiction go to jail, how do you think your life turns out?

Mikey still doesn’t answer.

HOSS
You know the toughest thing to do as an adult, Mikey? It’s to look a hard truth straight in the eye, really look at it ... and then keep it to yourself.
Hoss seems to be done. He looks at Mikey, waiting for some kind of an answer. Mikey nods.

HOSS
Say it.

MIKEY
And keep it to myself.

HOSS
Good boy.
(beat)
You’re a threat to me now, Mikey. We’re threats to each other. Guess that’s what being family means.

Mikey takes that in, uneasy.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

The same music class, but now it seems too bright in here. Mikey sits, not singing, staring out, while the rest of the madrigals sing “Joy to the World.”

He catches Ambergene’s eye. She looks away, cold.

MR. DWYER
Mikey! Sing!
(to everyone)
The Christmas concert is two weeks away and you all are completely unfocused. Again, please.

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH - DAY

Waiting at the station wagon, Mikey sees Ambergene toss her unicycle into her MOTHER’S CAR and climb in. Mikey waves but she ignores him.

Dink approaches with Howser, who is so brimming with gossip he doesn’t notice about Mikey.

HOWSER
... at the Hungry Tiger. I swear, bare-ass neked. We’re going tonight. You in?

DINK
No.
HOWSER
Come on! Laura Keyes stripping? How do you miss that?

DINK
I just do.

He looks at Mikey and they both get in the car, ignoring Howser together.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY
Dink and Mikey drive in quiet. Then...

MIKEY
Really?

DINK
Howser’s an idiot.

More silence between them.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - DAY
Dink gets out of the car and heads inside. Mikey leaps out and makes a bee-line for Ambergene’s house.

EXT. AMBERGENE’S HOUSE - DAY
Nervous, Mikey rings the door bell -- CHIMES. Waits.

Mr. Keyes opens the door, looming over Mikey.

MR. KEYES
Mikey. Can I help you?

MIKEY
Is Ambergene here?

MR. KEYES
She’s in her room studying. Gave express instructions not to be bothered. By anyone. Is there a message I should give her?

Mikey tries to think what that would be.

MIKEY
No, sir.
MR. KEYES
How are you doing, Mikey? How’s living with your Uncle Hoss?

He hesitates.

MIKEY
Good.

MR. KEYES
No trouble?

MIKEY
No sir.

MR. KEYES
You know, you can say something besides “yes sir” and “no sir.”

MIKEY
Yes sir.

Mr. Keyes smiles, so does Mikey a bit.

MR. KEYES
I’ll tell Ambergene you stopped by. (beat) Oh, have you seen Laura by any chance?

Mikey's a little sad at that one.

MIKEY
No sir.

INT. STERN HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Mikey comes into the kitchen, finds it empty. He pulls out a YELLOW PAGES, flips through it. Finds the right page.

Picks up the wall-phone and dials. Waits.

UNINTELLIGIBLE VOICE on the other end. Mikey launches in:

MIKEY
Laura Keyes is seventeen and underage. If she performs tonight you’ll be visited by the police.

The unintelligible voice is angrier now, but Mikey strongly slams the phone down.
INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Smiling, Mikey does a little dance step around the poisonous plant and opens up Dink’s door ...

    MIKEY
    Dink! I did it, I think I--

INT. DINK’S ROOM - DAY

To find it empty. Dink’s not there. Mikey looks around.

EXT. STERN BACKYARD - DAY

Mikey comes around the backyard, looking for Dink.

    MIKEY
    Dink?

As he does, he spots TWO SHAPES up against the house behind the bushes. It’s Dink ... and Rajit, kissing. They break apart.

    DINK
    (pushing Rajit away)
    Get outta here. Go.

    RAJIT
    Connor.

But Dink is already charging toward Mikey.

    MIKEY
    I didn’t see anything!

    DINK
    (to Mikey)
    I’ll kill you. So help me God, I will fucking kill you!

    RAJIT
    Connor!

    DINK
    Get outta here! This is family business!

Dink storms inside. Rajit, sheepish, nods at Mikey and heads away. Mikey follows inside.
INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Mikey steps in through the sliding glass door--

And Dink GRABS HIM, pushes him up against the wall.

    DINK
    You stir up trouble. You should not be here!

    MIKEY
    Dii--

    DINK
    Your ruin things! Your Mom died and your Dad went across the world and left us holding the shitbag! You say a word, to anyone, give a look, I will beat you to a pulp. You understand?

Mikey, hurt, afraid, but chin up, almost steely -- nods.

Dink lets go, storms off. Mikey catches his breath and watches him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - NIGHT

Cars park and crowds file into the hockey rink building.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - NIGHT

A night game. Marlene and Mikey in the stands, cheering them on. Fast motion on the ice, Dink charging.

Out of nowhere, an OPPOSING PLAYER SLAMS Dink into the glass, blindsiding him. SUCKER-PUNCH to Dink’s face. Mikey and Marlene stand, worried.

Furious, Dink rips off his gloves, pulls off the other guy’s helmet, and starts POUNDING HIS FACE.

    MARLENE
    Connor! Connor, stop it!

Refs blow WHISTLES, Dink doesn’t stop, he’s relentless.

As his teammates pull him away, blood on his hands, his pads, on the ice, a stretcher comes out.
Mikey watches -- this is his fault.

INT. ER WAITING AREA - NIGHT

Dink, Mikey, and Marlene wait. Marlene pacing.

MARLENE
Like an animal. Is that what we need in the world?! Is that what we’ve raised?

DINK
It was a sucker-punch. He got what was coming.

Dink’s not very convincing. Marlene looks at him, her mouth slightly agape. Throws her hands up, speechless.

MIKEY
(under his breath)
I feel bad about this.

DINK
Good. Feel like shit.

And slumps down in a chair.

That’s when a HANDSOME GUY WITH A MUSTACHE comes in, RICK, 45. Mikey recognizes him as the man from the picture he found in Marlene’s clutch purse.

Rick puts a hand gently on Marlene’s arm, but she subtly sluffs it off.

RICK
I spoke to the other family. They understand hockey, they just want an apology. We’ll arrange it in a controlled setting and time. Dink should admit no guilt.

MARLENE
Hoss is going to explode.

Rick sees Dink and Mikey watching, pulls her aside. Says something to her quietly but strongly, she’s shaking her head, no. No. He relents.

MARLENE
We’re going home, boys. Connor, you will apologize as soon as it’s asked of you.
Dink hangs his head. He’s not going to fight this one.

EXT. STERN HOUSE – NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls up next to the Station Wagon, but there’s no Jaguar there. Hoss isn’t home.

Dink gets out of the car, slams the door and heads in.

INT. STATION WAGON – NIGHT

Mikey is about to get out, but notices Marlene hasn’t turned off the car yet.

MARLENE
I was so close.

Mikey stops. Listens.

MARLENE
Dink goes to college next year, I’d be done with Hoss. Free and clear. And then here you are, and it’s three more years holding my breath.

MIKEY
My dad should be back in six months.

She shakes her head slightly, sadly, she’s not so sure.

MARLENE
You shouldn’t be here. It’s not safe for you. It’s not your fault, but ... I hate you for it.

She turns off the car. Heads inside.

INT. DINK’S ROOM – NIGHT

Dink snores, earplugs in his ears.

Mikey lies in bed, staring at the ceiling. Trying not to cry.

From out of the silence, he hears it ... ARGUING.

INT. HALLWAY – NIGHT

It’s coming from behind the Sterns’ bedroom door. He faces it.
INDECIPHERABLE YELLING FROM BOTH OF THEM, HARSH. Then a CRASH. Mikey almost flinches.

Silence.

Mikey reaches out ...

And OPENS THE DOOR. He’s face to face with Marlene -- flushed, shaking. Behind her, the MIRROR is SHATTERED. It’s not clear who broke it.

Hoss stands across the room, fists clenched, catching his breath.

She sees Mikey, that makes it worse.

MARLENE
Oh fuck, my little shadow! I can’t help you, I'm drowning, I'm in quicksand. Be a man for a goddamn second!

She storms back into the room, slams the master bathroom door shut. Hoss has calmed down, seems to have pity for her. Slowly steps to Mikey.

HOSS
Back to bed, son. Aunt Marlene just needs some rest.

And he closes the door. Mikey stands there.

INT. DINK’S ROOM - NIGHT

Mikey lies in bed, eyes wide open, all night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Mikey and Marlene sit silently at the breakfast table. She sips coffee, tries to sit upright, brush her hair out of her face, but her hands are shaking.

Dink streams by and out the door with his hockey gear.

More silence. Finally.

MIKEY
Are you okay?

She barely sends him a glance. Then.
MIKEY
I didn’t tell him anything.

She smirks, weary.

MARLENE
I did.

And gets up to refill her coffee.

CUT TO:

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH - PARKING LOT - DAY

Mikey gets out of the station wagon. Dink doesn’t say a word as he heads into school.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mikey passes Laura with her PREPPY FRIENDS. She acts like she doesn’t know him.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

In the music room, Mikey sings with the madrigals. Ambergene won’t look at him. Neither will Rajit.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Parked at school, Mikey gets into the station wagon with Dink at the wheel.

MIKEY
You were right. I ruin things.

Dink doesn’t answer. Puts the car into reverse and pulls out.

INT. STERN HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

As Mikey comes in, he’s met by Hoss. Friendly Hoss, almost apologetic, trying to sidle up to him.

HOSS
Mikey. Hey boss, let me talk to you for a second.

Mikey stops, grudgingly. That teenager thing where he looks down, pissed.
HOSS
What happened last night, it ... well, it wasn’t good, I can tell you that.
(no response)
It’s just ... one of those things that happens in families.

MIKEY
Not in my family.

HOSS
Well this is your family, so yes, it does. We’re ... Your aunt and I, we’re passionate people.

MIKEY
That’s a word for it.

HOSS
So I’m the bad guy now?
(Mikey looks at him)
You’ll understand. When you have kids, when you have real responsibilities. Money, survival. You have to do it yourself, they can’t do it for you.

MIKEY
Who? Do what?

HOSS
All of it. The world shovels you shit until you’re just bone grinding against bone. You’ll see.

MIKEY
I won’t be like you.

Hoss takes that in.

HOSS
No. You’ll be like your dad. Where’s he now, exactly?

Mikey heads for the stairs.

HOSS
That’s right. Run away.
INT. STERN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Mikey considers the POISONOUS PLANT. Fingers a LEAF, looking at it closely. He PULLS, snaps a couple off and puts them in his pocket.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family sits around the table, eating. Mikey pushes his salad around, while ...

Under the table, he pulls the POISONOUS LEAF from his pocket. Rubs it between his fingers.

HOSS

So Huppert sneaks into their room, Honeymoon suite, right? And plants the little box under the bed.

He’s forcing the story -- Marlene is barely present and Dink is partially following along.

As Hoss waves his fork around, Mikey eyes HOSS’S SALAD.

HOSS

So every time they turn out the light, it makes this cricket sound! And when they turn it back on, the sound stops. All night long. I mean, those engineers are tricky bastards!

But Mikey reconsiders. Puts the leaf back in his pocket and stabs a hunk of salad.

INT. DINK’S ROOM - DAY

Mikey passes into Dink’s room. Slowly but with purpose. Grabs the box of punchcards.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - DAY

In the driveway, Mikey drops the punchcard box in the trash. As he turns to go inside, his mother Nancy is there again, behind him.

NANCY

Mikey, sweetie...

MIKEY

You’re not real.
And he keeps walking.

In the distance, Ambergene has come out from her house. She saw it all (not Nancy, of course), but Mikey hasn’t seen her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINK’S ROOM – NIGHT

Dark out the window, dark in the room. Mikey pulls off his covers to reveal he’s FULLY DRESSED. As Dink snores, Mikey stuffs clothes and a flashlight into his BACKPACK and quietly steps out.

INT. FOYER – NIGHT

He zips his winter coat and heads to the front door.

As he starts to open it ... BRRRINNG! THE PHONE RINGS behind him. The bell is harsh --

BRRRINNG!

BRRRINNG!

Then it stops. Silence -- that’s almost worse.

He drops his backpack and steps over to the phone. Then carefully, so carefully, tips it off the receiver. Listens...

HOSS (O.S.)
... in the middle of the fucking night?! At my house? We have procedures, goddamn it. Where’s Victor?

Another voice answers on the phone, English, with a SOUTH AMERICAN accent.

SOUTH AMERICAN MAN (O.S.)
I don’t know, that’s what I’m telling you. I don’t know. Sandler Park is compromised. We need to talk.

HOSS
Not another fucking word. Meet me in the woods, behind the high school.

Click. Hoss has hung up.
SOUTH AMERICAN MAN (O.S.)
Hello? Gerald? Hello?

Mikey hears a DOOR OPEN upstairs. Oh no. He hangs up the phone and ducks out of sight, into ...

THE KITCHEN --

Watching the front hall. As Hoss comes down the stairs, Mikey spots HIS BACKPACK still by the front door.

Hoss, quickly putting on his coat, TRIPS slightly on the backpack.

HOSS
Goddamn it!

And kicks it away. He’s OUT THE DOOR.

Mikey spots DINK’S KEYS, rabbit’s foot dangling, from the hook on the wall. He grabs them, then moves --

THE FOYER --

He peers out the window -- sees Hoss’s headlights drive away --

EXT. STERN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT
Mikey runs to Dink’s station wagon, gets in.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

He’s too short to look over the wheel. He fumbles with the keys, gets them in the ignition. Starts it up, practically standing up to reach the gas.

He tries to put it in reverse but instead hits the WINDSHIELD WIPERS. Turns them off again, puts the car in gear.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

It’s dark, Mikey doesn’t have the wagon’s lights on, he weaves all over the street.

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH - NIGHT

He pulls up to the road outside the school. Only two cars parked in the lot, in far separate spaces. One is Hoss’s Jag, the other is a sedan.
Mikey kills the ignition. Heads out and sneaks across the empty parking lot, but he’s completely exposed.

He passes Hoss’s car -- empty.

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH FIELDS - NIGHT

The ball fields behind the school are vacant. Again Mikey is small and exposed -- he skirts by the playground to try to hide -- as he heads to the woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

He steps slowly, carefully into the woods. Ahead he sees a flashlight pointed down at the ground and TWO MEN standing by it.

He crouches down, getting as close as he can.

He sees ... Hoss, a small red glow from his cigarette. And a SKINNY MAN in a disheveled suit and raincoat. Black hair, longer than usual, and a mustache. His name is ANDRES GARCIA.

The men are arguing, loud, not expecting to be overheard. Andres is Argentine, speaks with an accent.

HOSS
At my house, Andres?! You think if Victor has been identified my phone isn’t bugged? Fucking idiots!

ANDRES
I keep looking around, I could be taken at any second. You could be too.

HOSS
When you pull shit like this, yes.

ANDRES
They want to know what happened with your promotion. You promised them--

HOSS
I’m working on it, goddamn it.

ANDRES
They want the document they paid for. I leave for Buenos Aires tomorrow night.

(MORE)
ANDRES (CONT'D)
If I don’t have it, things will be very bad for both of us, Gerald.

HOSS
I’ll ... shit. I’ll get it tomorrow, we can set up a new drop.

ANDRES
No drops. In my hands before I get on the plane.

HOSS
I can’t ... Jesus, tomorrow night’s my pain in the ass nephew’s Christmas concert.

ANDRES
I’ll meet you there. We’ll do it there. We can all use a little peace on earth, yes?

HOSS
Fuck you.

Hoss snubs out his cigarette. Mikey realizes: they’re done.

He scrambles and backs up. A few feet away he BOLTS. Running. Fast as he can. Fast as he’s ever run.

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH FIELDS - NIGHT
Again skirting the playground, he sprints all out.

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH PARKING LOT - NIGHT
He’s running again, hoping he can get to his car before Hoss sees him. He looks back, no sign of them.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HANSSEN HIGH - NIGHT
Mikey darts to the wagon. Gets in and starts the car. Again, no car lights on, he pulls out.

As he does, he sees Hoss’s HEADLIGHTS go on in the lot.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT
Mikey careens through -- SPEEDING, SWERVING on the turns.
EXT. STERN HOUSE - NIGHT

Mikey pulls in to the driveway -- a bit crooked -- and kills the ignition. He ducks into the well of driver’s side just as--

Hoss’s Jag pulls up. Lights illuminate the wagon around Mikey, but he crouches, hiding, terrified.

Hoss’s lights go off. The CAR DOOR opens and closes. Silence. Footsteps past the wagon.

And then the front door to the house opens and closes.

INT. STERN HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Hoss tromps inside, closes the door and heads upstairs, past Mikey’s backpack again.

A long beat.

Then Mikey slips in, muddy. He picks up his backpack to go -- then remembers, carefully puts it back where Hoss kicked it.

INT. DINK’S ROOM - NIGHT

Mikey settles back in bed, pulls the covers to his chest. Stares up at the ceiling, eyes wide open.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dink rooting through his backpack, Marlene pouring coffee -- ordinary day to them.

Mikey eats cereal, eyeing the front foyer.

Hoss finally comes down, scattered, putting on his suit jacket and looking for his briefcase.

HOSS
Where’d I put my goddamn ... Marlene, do you have my --

She points to the chair where his briefcase is.

MARLENE
Don’t forget Michael’s concert tonight.
HOSS
His what?
(feigning remembering)
Oh, right. Fa la la la la. Give it your best Elvis, kid.

Mikey sees right through him.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MUSIC CLASS - DAY
Mikey heads into music class when Ambergene stops him.

AMBERGENE
Hey.

MIKEY
Hey.

She’s got the PUNCHCARD BOX. Holds it out to him.

AMBERGENE
It’s got some stains from the garbage, but otherwise it’s all there.

He takes it.

MIKEY
Thanks.

AMBERGENE
Even if you can’t read them all now, one day, maybe. Like my countries. Right?

Mikey nods, smiles a bit.

MIKEY
Right.

She smiles a bit too.

AMBERGENE
Any word on the document?

Mikey, conflicted, shakes his head no.
INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Mr. Dwyer paces, tries to contain his own excited energy. Ambergene smirks, Mikey’s distracted, eyeing the door.

MR. DWYER
There’s no reason to be nervous tonight. You’ve done great work. Rajit, don’t forget the long line of breath on your solo. Ambergene, I want you to introduce the program, here are your note cards.

He hands them to her.

AMBERGENE
Or maybe I’ll just say what comes naturally.

MR. DWYER
Or maybe you’ll just read the cards.

Ambergene smirks, nods. Mikey’s thoughts are far away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HANSSEN HIGH - NIGHT

PARENTS and ASSORTED FAMILY MEMBERS park and file into the school to get out of the cold.

Mikey gets out of the station wagon with Marlene and Dink, looks around. All the activity feels very different than the empty night before.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LOBBY - NIGHT

The school is decorated cheaply -- art project Christmas trees, Menorahs, tinsel.

Mikey comes in first, searching the crowd for Hoss or his contact. Doesn’t see them. Marlene follows, forced airily, Dink lagging behind, spots Rajit in the distance but doesn’t acknowledge it.

MARLENE
Ah, for a few precious days we value goodness.
DINK
More like suckage. Why do I need to be here?

MARLENE
Because we’re family. God knows we’ve been to enough hockey games.

DINK
Hockey doesn’t suck.
(beat)
Where’s Dad?

MARLENE
He’ll be here.

Mikey’s still on tip toes scanning the crowd. In the distance he sees the KEYES FAMILY -- Mr. Keyes, Mrs. Keyes, and Laura.

HOSS (O.S.)
Boo!

Marlene jumps a bit. Rolls her eyes.

HOSS
Wrong holiday, couldn’t resist.
What I miss?

Mikey sees Hoss has his briefcase with him. Gripping it tightly in his hand. He’s scanning the crowd.

MARLENE
You brought your briefcase?

HOSS
Locks on the Jag are busted, I didn’t want to risk it.

Which is when Rajit comes up, doesn’t quite make eye contact with Dink.

RAJIT
Hi Mikey, we should get in costume.

MIKEY
Hey Raj. I’ll come in a minute.

HOSS
Are the Robinsons here? The McPhersons?

MARLENE
They went to Atlanta for family. The Keyes are here.
HOSS
You seen Andres Garcia?

MARLENE
I don’t think so. Don’t his kids go to Oakdale?

Hoss shrugs it off, but Mikey registers it. Dink still refuses to look at Rajit. Finally:

RAJIT
Mr. D. said he’s locking the closet in five minutes. We have to get our stuff.

MARLENE
Go ahead, Mikey. We’ll be in the audience.

Everyone looks at him, not understanding his hesitation.

MIKEY
I’ll be right back.

He quickly heads out, shooting a look back at Hoss as he does.

DINK
Mom, I’m gonna go talk to Holly.

MARLENE
Okay. I’ll save you a seat, meet us inside.
   (to Hoss)
You coming?

HOSS
Save one for me too. Gotta go water the crapper.

INT. MUSIC ROOM CLOSET - NIGHT

Mikey and Rajit get into their costumes, Mikey doing it as fast as he can.

RAJIT
I heard what Connor did at hockey. Jesus.
   (Mikey nods)
He just gets mad, that’s all. He cools down eventually.
MIKEY
Yeah.

RAJIT
Can you not tell my parents, though? They would fucking kill me.

MIKEY
There's nothing to tell.

RAJIT
Thanks.

Rajit seems relieved.

MIKEY
I gotta go.

He puts on his stupid Renaissance cap and heads back out.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT
Mikey peeks around the crowd. Hard to see the whole place. He steps up on a chair to scan the area -- no Hoss, no Hoss's contact.

INT. HALLWAY NEAR AUDITORIUM - NIGHT
Rajit, in madrigal costume, steps out, spots Dink heading out the side door.

EXT. HANSEN HIGH - SIDE DOOR - NIGHT
Dink lights a cigarette. Rajit peeks out from the door, comes closer. Arms crossed from the cold.

DINK
I can't. Can't do it. Not anymore.

RAJIT
Do what?

Rajit is hurt. Dink shoots him a look: You know what.

DINK
Not with all this stuff. My dad. Hockey.
RAJIT
Okay. I get it.
(nods)
I’m gonna go sing.

He passes Dink, their hands get close, and Dink reaches his out just the smallest bit. The two brush past, then hold hands. Sweet. Longing and goodbye.

And the door opens. Hoss steps out, looking. Sees the boys.

They pull apart, but not fast enough.

HOSS
(at Dink)
You? You?!

Rajit backs away. Dink prepares for a fight.

RAJIT
Mr. Stern, we’re not--

HOSS
You do not speak!

INT. HALLWAY NEAR AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Mikey still searching. Heads to the door. Ambergene sees him and follows.

AMBERGENE
Where’re you going? Show’s this way.

MIKEY
I need to find my uncle. Have you seen him?

She shakes her head. He strides toward the door.

EXT. HANSEN HIGH - NIGHT

Hoss drops his briefcase, looms over Dink.

HOSS
You humiliate your father this way? Your family?

He smacks Dink in the back of his head. And again.
DINK
Dad, this isn’t-- You don’t have to be--

Hoss pushes him, Dink staggers back.

HOSS
Worthless to me. You know what the Ninth Floor would do with this? The Soviets? Say it! “I’m worthless”!

Which is when Mikey and Ambergene come out. Mikey sees the BRIEFCASE LYING ON THE GROUND.

Hoss sees Mikey see it. Steps back from Dink. The older man takes a breath and picks up the briefcase.

HOSS
And I thought he was the fairy. You two should switch costumes.

He heads back inside.

The kids all look at each other -- three in madrigal costumes, one a flushed humiliated jock. None sure what to do, they file back inside.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Mikey, Ambergene, Dink, and Rajit see Hoss head into the auditorium. They nod to Dink, who follows Hoss, as the performers go through a different door.

DINK
(deadpan)
This should be fun.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The ORCHESTRA is on stage playing. Badly.

IN THE WINGS --

Mikey and the Madrigals watch as ... 

IN THE AUDIENCE --

... Hoss and Dink scoot past seated audience members to next to Marlene -- Hoss first, Dink nearer the aisle.

Behind them, a few rows back, sits the Keyes family. The crowd listens politely to the orchestra.
And then, filtering in late, is ANDRES GARCIA. He trips a bit over the cord of the VIDEO CAMERA in the aisles.

Garcia SITS a few ROWS IN FRONT OF HOSS, easy to spot. In the wings Mikey sees him too.

As the orchestra finishes, there’s polite applause.

The musicians bow, file out as the madrigals enter. They take their place expectantly on the risers with Mr. D. in front.

At that moment, GARCIA GETS UP TO LEAVE. Amid the change, no one really notices, but Hoss sees it.

Mr. D. nods at Ambergene, who steps forward on stage with her index cards. As she does, HOSS STANDS and starts edging toward the aisle. Marlene’s eyes go wide.

MARLENE  
(whispered) 
They’re about to sing!

HOSS  
My pager. I’ll be right back.

On stage, Mikey sees Hoss stand, so he suddenly STEPS FORWARD and grabs Ambergene’s cards. She’s confused, but gives way.

MIKEY  
Hi everyone, I’m here to say a few words to introduce the madrigals. And I especially want to say them to my uncle, Hoss Stern, right there. Could you all give him a round of applause, please?

The audience, puzzled, gives a half-hearted applause. Hoss, trapped, waves, and Dink, noticing Mikey’s concern, stands up next to Hoss. Like a loving son, but really blocking his way to the aisle.

MIKEY  
I’m new here, and it took me a while to really find my place, but I did. Thanks to Mr. D., and the madrigals, and especially to my Uncle Hoss.

It’s awkward -- some members of the audience smile, others titter in discomfort. Mr. D. eyes him carefully, so does Keyes.
MIKEY
We’re so close, sometimes it feels like just him and me, the two of us, living alone in our house, I can really imagine that.
(pointed)
And sometimes it feels like I know just what he’s thinking, what he’s going to do next. And I’d really like to share that with all of you. All of it, with all of you.

He and Hoss are staring each other down, each feigning public friendliness. It’s awkward.

MIKEY
Unless, that is, Uncle Hoss would rather just hear us sing?

The audience laughs, applauds -- they think it’s his final punchline. Hoss spots Keyes looking at him, and Dink still blocks Hoss’s way.

Reluctantly, Hoss SITS BACK DOWN.

MIKEY
Our first song is “Go Tell It on the Mountain.”

He steps back to the risers and stands straight. Ambergene and Mr. D. eye him, but he doesn’t acknowledge it.

Mr. D raises his hand to conduct, and they sing.

Mikey watches Hoss sitting there stewing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

A big crowd filing out. Hoss is among them, briefcase in hand, looking for Garcia.

From another hallway, Mikey rushes out, still in his costume.

He spots Hoss heading for the front door and goes to follow. But he’s stopped --

MR. KEYES
Mikey. You can stop now.
MIKEY
Oh, hi, Mr. Keyes, I’m sorry but I’ve really got to go.

MR. KEYES
You don’t. You’ve done enough.

That stops him. What?

MR. KEYES
It’s not your job. It’s ours. Your uncle’s not going anywhere.

MIKEY
But--

MR. KEYES
It’ll be taken care of.
(beat)
Ambergene and her mother and sister are going out to Friendlies to celebrate. You should go too.

Mikey’s unsure.

MR. KEYES
Most young men wouldn’t have done what you did. It took courage.

He takes that in. Almost smiles. Nods.

EXT. FRIENDLIES RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Through the window we can see Mikey, Dink, Rajit, Marlene, Ambergene, Laura, and Mrs. Keyes eating sundaes. Dink punches Mikey’s shoulder.

MIKEY (V.O.)
Uncle Hoss didn’t come home that night. He called to say he had a business meeting in Mexico City. He was gone for two weeks.

EXT. STERN HOUSE - DAY

MEN IN SUITS lead Hoss, handcuffed, to a black car. Mikey watches from an upstairs window.

MIKEY (V.O.)
When he did come back, I had a front row seat on his arrest.
(MORE)
They emptied out his home office, it was evidence, even the wrestling trophies. It was hard on Dink, but he went away to college. It was hard on Aunt Marlene, but she moved to take care of her parents in Arizona.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Mikey’s father Lou comes out of a gate, sees Mikey (with Marlene and Dink) waiting. He rushes to his son and hugs him.

MIKEY (V.O.)
That next week my father called to say he got a position at NIH. I didn’t know how it happened, but I don’t think it was a coincidence.

EXT. LAKESIDE - NIGHT

Mikey and his dad watch July 4th fireworks over a lake. Happy, at ease.

MIKEY (V.O.)
I never knew what my dad was doing during his time abroad, but he was back. And Hoss was gone. For me, life was the same and was never the same again, you know?

He watches the explosions in the sky. The ash falls limply, kind of like a mushroom cloud.

FADE OUT.

THE END