

BUZZ CUTS

by

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Registered WGAw

FADE IN:

FAMILY MOVIE FOOTAGE of rolling wheat fields, IN SLOW MOTION, from a truck driving along a two lane highway.

MUSIC BEGINS. A guitar theme. Haunting and ethereal.

We pass a sign that reads: "Entering Walla Walla."

INT. DARRYL'S PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Two boys, BRIAN AND BEN DOWLING, identical twins of about 7, sit in the cab beside their father, DARRYL, driving with his arm out the open window and a few days growth of beard.

Ben looks out the back window. Brian plays with the radio, looks at the camera and laughs. The twins' antics contrast with their father's calm, thoughtful demeanor.

EXT. BARBERSHOP - WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON - DAY

CREDITS BEGIN over a classic family-owned barbershop on Main Street, with a working antique pole. A pickup truck pulling a horse trailer drives by in NORMAL SPEED.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

The afternoon sun forms a rug of hot light on the black-and-white checkered floor. The twins sit in barber's chairs for their annual summer buzz cuts. Between them is their father getting his hair buzzed too, his face now clean shaved.

BILL SR., the older of the two barbers with a grey flattop, uses an electric razor to shave the back of Brian's head, the older of the twins by two minutes.

Bill's son BILL JR. cuts Darryl's hair.

THE ELECTRIC RAZOR

buzzes up the back of Brian's head as his hair falls away. Ben looks at his brother in the mirror, then leans forward to see him across the front of his dad's apron. The twins exchange a goofy grin, playing to the FAMILY MOVIE CAMERA.  
EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The combine cuts a swath through the vast rolling wheat in rich, NON-FAMILY MOVIE CINEMATOGRAPHY. The sky turns burnt orange along the horizon. The air is hazy with chaff and dust behind the tractor.

THE COMBINE BLADES

slice through the golden, full-grown wheat in SLOW MOTION.

INT. COMBINE (MOVING) - DAY

Darryl drives with Brian in the cab also. A haul truck waits on the ridge. Darryl grabs the cb radio mic.

DARRYL

Alright Darin.

INT. HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben talks into the cb radio mic as DARIN, a teenager, starts the engine and grinds into gear.

BEN

Ten four good buddy. Over.

INT. COMBINE (MOVING) - DAY

Brian now holds the mic, watching Darin's truck drive up alongside the combine.

BRIAN

No duh. Over.

Darryl looks over at his son, smiles.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Back to FAMILY MOVIE FOOTAGE: The twins run towards the house as their father climbs down from the combine.

Darryl waves to Darin and another teenager, TIM, standing by the trucks parked at the barn as he walks up to the house.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - PORCH - DUSK

Family dinner. Light fading. The twins sit at the table as their young mother, MELISSA, serves beans from the skillet on thick plates with barbecued steak and corn-on-the-cob.

Melissa looks at the camera and smiles, with the regal air of the beauty queen that she was; the former queen of the Walla Walla Frontier Days Fair, together with her husband the queen and king of their senior prom as well, and still the topic of gossip in a town with lots of gossip.

The twins goof off for the camera after Melissa goes inside, each trying to stuff his corn-on-the-cob in the other's ear.

INT. FARM HOUSE - TWINS' BEDROOM - DAWN

The twins lay on top of the covers in Power Rangers undies. Brian blinks in the blue dawn light, then peers up at his father standing in the doorway. Ben rustles awake as well.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Darryl oils the combine axle while Brian sits in the cab pretending to drive. Ben sits on the huge wheel and watches Darin prepare the haul trucks with Tim.

INT. BARN - DAY

The twins' older sister, EMILY, a reckless beauty of 14, appears on the family movie camera for the first time. She feeds her chestnut Arabian mare named BELLE, shoveling hay into her stall with a pitchfork.

Emily holds her hand up, objecting to being filmed by one of her brothers, then grabs at the camera. It jerks away and points at the ground in a dead run, then CUTS TO...

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The mostly cut, rolling wheat spreads out to the horizon. Large puffy clouds roam across the blue sky in TIME LAPSE.

EXT. RIVER - ROPE SWING - DAY

End of harvest. Ben swings from a huge oak tree IN SLOW MOTION, flying out into the river with a splash.

Ben grins as he climbs up on the bank dripping wet, then throws the rope up to Brian waiting in the tree. Brian swings out over the river and splashes in.

Emily appears again, lanky and tan in her bikini top and cut offs. She climbs the branch of the huge oak tree, then grabs the rope thrown up by one of her brothers. Emily swings out over the river and dives in with a splash.

Moments later, Emily comes up and blows her nose, then swims ashore. She climbs onto the bank and puts her hand up to the camera, which bolts away from her again and CUTS TO...

The camera pans the calm surface of the river. The water is slow and calm and then the home movie camera CUTS TO BLACK.

END CREDITS AND MUSIC AND FAMILY MOVIE STYLE FOOTAGE.

FADE IN:

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

A ceiling fan WHIRLS against the summer heat, blowing down on...

THE TWINS, now 17, sit in barber's chairs for their annual summer buzz cuts, their hair longer than usual. Bill Jr., the only barber in the shop, cuts Ben's hair with a long sweeping motion across the top.

Ben winces as his bangs fall onto his bib.

Melissa sits off to the side, ten years older but hardly looks it. She flips through a magazine casually, chewing gum.

Brian looks at his brother's buzz in the mirror and grins.

BEN

What er you lookin' at?

Brian looks back at his mom, who feels his look without looking up from her magazine.

MELISSA

You're next, Brian Dowling.

BRIAN

I think I'll have him leave some on top.

BEN

Shut up.

MELISSA

Don't be ridiculous. You're getting a buzz cut just like your brother's.

BRIAN

Maybe I don't want one this year.

BILL JR.

Buzz cuts for harvest, boys. Besides, the girls love em. Right, Mrs. Dowling?

MELISSA

You'll have to ask their girlfriends.

Bill Jr. brushes the back of Ben's neck.

BEN  
I don't have a girlfriend.

BRIAN  
What?

BEN  
You heard me.

BRIAN  
Since when?

BEN  
Since Wednesday.

Melissa looks up from the magazine.

MELISSA  
She quit you or you quit her?

BEN  
Have to ask her.

MELISSA  
That means she quit you.

Bill spins Ben around and holds a mirror up for him to check the back. Ben nods and runs his hand over his close-cropped head as Bill removes his bib. DING.

Darryl enters already buzzed as Ben rises from the chair.

DARRYL  
Nice buzz.

BEN  
Yeah. Whatever.

Ben walks outside, teenager moody. The bells on the door DING again. Melissa watches Ben pass by out the window.

DARRYL  
What's wrong with him?

MELISSA  
Jennifer broke up with him I guess.

IN THE MIRROR

Darryl looks at Brian as Bill Jr. snaps Brian's bib.

DARRYL

That true?

BRIAN

How would I know?

Bill Jr. adjusts his razor and starts in on Brian's head.

Darryl looks out the window as Ben walks away.

EXT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Ben walks down Main Street. A pickup truck parks across the street. Ben turns to watch as he walks.

WAYNE COLLINGS gets out of his truck, a year older than Melissa and Darryl, a rugged cowboy with a chew tin stain on the back of his Wranglers, still trying to live up to his bad boy high school reputation. His wife, LUCY COLLINGS, gets out of the passenger side and walks around to the front of the truck, kisses Wayne and walks off down the street as Wayne looks to cross.

INT. MERCHANTS - DAY

Ben enters the funky Walla Walla mainstay, a combination restaurant, bakery, coffee shop, and international grocery store. The floorboards creek as he walks up to the counter. Dozens of patrons dine in the restaurant behind him; families, and many college and high school students.

SARAH, a pretty tomboy of 17, comes over from the deli area in her Merchants apron and stands behind the counter.

SARAH

Hey Ben. Nice buzz.

BEN

Thanks. Can I get an iced triple latte?

SARAH

Sure.

Sarah looks off past Ben into the restaurant, then turns to the espresso machine. Ben turns to look back where Sarah just looked.

BEN'S POV - of JENNIFER, 18, sitting with her PARENTS and a clean cut guy named JIM at a table near the window. Jennifer feels his look and glances up at Ben briefly, then turns back to listen to Jim talk.

BEN

turns back to the counter with a self assured smirk as...

Sarah, with her back to Ben, pours the milk and then turns back to the counter with his drink.

She catches Ben's smirk and smiles slightly at him, looking off again in Jennifer's direction as she rings up Ben's drink at the cash register.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Bill shaves up the back of Brian's now nearly buzzed head.

BILL JR.

I hear it's three to one girls to boys over at the high school.

BRIAN

Nah, I heard it's two to one.

BILL JR.

Well, more girls than boys anyway.

MELISSA

Your daughters won't have any trouble finding dates for the prom, though.

BILL JR.

Nope. They don't seem to.

Melissa looks over at Darryl, his head buried in the paper.

MELISSA

Our daughter wouldn't of either.

Darryl looks up from his newspaper and looks at his wife.

Brian stares at his mother in the mirror.

Bill Jr. runs the razor over Brian's ears, the BUZZ of the razor is suddenly broken by...

The bell DINGS as Wayne Collings enters and stands just inside the front door, taking in the sight of the Dowlings.

Melissa looks up from her magazine as Bill Jr. greets him.

BILL JR.

Wayne. Have a seat. It'll just be a minute.



DARRYL  
Hey Wayne.

WAYNE  
Hey Darryl. How's the crop?

DARRYL  
Walla Walla golden. Can't wait to  
get it off the ground.

WAYNE  
And get the money in the bank?

DARRYL  
Yeah.

Wayne takes his straw hat off and puts it on the peg, then saunters over.

WAYNE  
Me too.

CLOSE ON MELISSA

who looks at her husband, then back at Wayne. Smiles.

WAYNE

smiles back at her as he sits.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Brian leans in on his girlfriend, TIFFANY, also 17, sitting in her beat up Chevy Nova. She runs her hand over his closely shaved head. Smiles.

Brian kisses her.

BRIAN  
I'll see you later?

TIFFANY  
I gotta work.

BRIAN  
I know.

Brian looks off down the driveway and back at her.

TIFFANY  
Maybe.

Brian smiles.

TIFFANY  
I gotta go. I'm late.

Brian pats the door and stands as Tiffany speeds off.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Melissa washes lettuce in the sink as Darryl opens a bottle of wine.

MELISSA  
Remember those movies Emily took?

DARRYL  
Sure.

MELISSA  
Where are those anyway?

DARRYL  
Probably in the cellar.

MELISSA  
I couldn't find 'em.

Darryl looks at her.

DARRYL  
What's got her on your mind all of a sudden?

MELISSA  
Harvest. This is the tenth year.

DARRYL  
I know.

MELISSA  
Think that old projector still works?

DARRYL  
I don't know.

MELISSA  
What about the camera?

Darryl shrugs as he pours a glass of wine, then looks at Melissa and walks out with his glass to tend the barbecue.

Melissa looks down into the salad bowl, lost in thought.

INT. BARN - DAY

Brian brushes his horse, DAISY, a large black Arabian mare.

Ben's horse, MILLER, a chestnut Arabian, peers off at the chickens roaming haphazardly. Behind him is Belle, Emily's horse ten years earlier, looking tired and forlorn.

Ben pours more feed into their troughs.

BRIAN

I don't know what you expect.

BEN

I don't expect anything.

BRIAN

He's looking to go Navy. Says he's gonna fly jets.

BEN

So.

BRIAN

So. He's got plans for his life.

BEN

I got plans.

BRIAN

Like what?

Ben looks off at the amber wheat.

BEN

There's nothin' to him. Never was.

BRIAN

What'd she say?

BEN

Not much.

BRIAN

Well. I don't know what you expect. She ain't worth it, anyways.

BEN

How would you know?

BRIAN

I got eyes.

BEN

What are you talkin' about? She's hot.

BRIAN

I wouldn't let it get you down, is all I'm sayin'.

BEN

Whatever.

Ben walks off toward the house, done with brotherly advice.

Brian watches Ben walk back to the house, then turns back to brush down Daisy once more.

Belle whinnies behind him. Brian turns and walks over to Belle, who has laid down in her stall. He bends to inspect her hoof, tapping at it with his finger.

The horse shivers with obvious discomfort.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Melissa pours seasoning on the salad. Brian washes his hands in the sink. Darryl sips a glass of red wine.

BRIAN

I'm just sayin'. It don't look good.

DARRYL

I know.

BRIAN

I think it's Laminitis. She can hardly walk.

Brian dries his hands with a dish towel.

MELISSA

Do you think we should call the vet?

DARRYL

I'll call Darin after dinner, maybe he can take another look tomorrow.

Darryl looks at Brian, then at Melissa as Brian walks out.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Ben sits at the dinner table reading a book. Darryl follows Brian out and starts serving their steaks from the barbecue. Melissa appears from the house with a salad.

Ben downs his water and pours some wine in his water glass.

DARRYL

What do ya think you're doin'?

BEN

What's it look like I'm doin'?

Darryl looks at Melissa, now seated, and brings the plate of steaks over to the table.

DARRYL

Since when are these guys allowed to drink alcohol?

MELISSA

Since last summer, remember?

DARRYL

I don't remember.

Darryl sits, offers the wine bottle to Brian who nods his head no. Melissa bows her head to say grace. Darryl and the twins stare at her.

MELISSA

Lord bless this meal and our time around the table. And bless the harvest. We pray for productive days in the weeks ahead. In our Lord Jesus' name, Amen.

The twins fork their steaks onto their plates. Darryl serves Melissa and then himself, then looks at Melissa.

DARRYL

We never blessed the meal before.

MELISSA

'Bout time we start.

Darryl pours himself more wine and a glass for his wife.

MELISSA

(to Brian)

Going to Tiffany's later?

BRIAN  
She's working late.

MELISSA  
That mean no?

BRIAN  
Yeah.

MELISSA  
Good.

Brian stares at his mother with a mouthful of meat, stops chewing, spits the word out through his food.

BRIAN  
What?

Melissa looks at Darryl, then back at Brian.

MELISSA  
Get a good night's sleep for a change.

Ben looks across the table at Brian, a sly grin. Darryl looks up from his food, then finally laughs. Ben starts to laugh too. Melissa remains poised and polite.

INT. FARM HOUSE - TWINS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies awake in the moonlight. Brian's bed is still made across the room.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brian sits in boxer briefs and talks on the phone quietly.

BRIAN  
I know, but we're gonna have to put her down soon, and who knows...

Melissa appears in the doorway in a nightgown. Brian looks up and her look says "get off the phone and get to bed." She turns to go back to bed, confident that she was perfectly understood without having said anything.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Darryl oils the axle on a brand new Allis Chambers combine, totally updated and modern from the one we saw previously.

The twins are now working the harvest with their father, preparing the haul trucks for the first day's work. Brian checks the oil on one of the trucks and Ben tests the hydraulic lift on the other.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - SUNRISE

The sun rises on the expanse of amber wheat as the combine cuts the first swath. The wheat changes colors in the wind, like velvet.

INT. BRIAN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Brian sits in his truck on the hill drinking coffee out of a travel thermos. He calls his dad on the radio.

BRIAN  
How's the new rig?

DARRYL (O.S.)  
Smooth and quiet. I can actually  
hear the radio.

EXT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben pees in the dirt, looks off at the new combine.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The combine pours the load of wheat into Brian's truck. Brian looks at his father in the cab. Darryl nods and drives off.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben watches from the crest of the low rise as Brian's truck drives away from the combine and disappears over the hill.

INT. BRIAN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Brian drives past the farm house and waves to his mother standing in the kitchen window.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Melissa washes onions at the sink and watches Brian's truck disappear past the driveway. She starts slicing onions on the cutting board quickly, like an expert chef, then stops. She looks out the window again.

The dusty road curves away from the house and forks off to the north and south ends of the farm.

MELISSA

looks back down at the chopped onion on the board with tears streaming down her cheek.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben sips his coffee and reads a book, his engine off.

DARRYL (O.S.)  
Bring it in, Ben.

Ben grabs the radio off the dash.

BEN  
Coming.

INT. COMBINE - DAY

Darryl watches Ben drive his truck alongside the combine. He reaches for the lever and pulls it, emptying the wheat into the back of Ben's truck.

INT. BRIAN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Brian drives along the two lane highway. He tunes the cb radio and stumbles onto some nasty trucker chatter.

TRUCKER 1  
(scratchy)  
10-4 Madhatter you rollin' into  
Ellensburg they got pussy for days at  
the Big Easy.

TRUCKER 2  
Cheap as hell too.

TRUCKER 1  
(laughs)  
Make you cry and sing like a  
jailbird.

TRUCKER 2  
10-4 Good buddy. Over.

Brian drives up on another haul truck coming opposite. He waves at the other DRIVER, not much older than him.

EXT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY

Brian stands outside his truck and dumps his load in the elevator shaft. A beer-bellied elevator attendant named JIM



stands with him in a feed store hat, a huge ball of tobacco in his cheek.

JIM

I reckon you'll get the job, Brian.  
Can't see Coach Keller givin' it to  
nobody else.

BRIAN

Me neither.

JIM

(spits)

After the way you threwed last game  
last year I don't see how it would go  
to no one else.

BRIAN

Charlie's starting this fall at  
Oregon.

JIM

I know it. You'll be entertainin'  
some offers too with a good year.

BRIAN

Hope so. Don't see no point in going  
to college at all if I can't play  
football.

JIM

Heard that.

Brian jumps up in the truck bed to scrape out the rest of  
the grain with a shovel.

JIM

Looks like you been working out.

BRIAN

Yeah. A little.

JIM

Your brother been training too?

BRIAN

Not so much.

JIM

(spits again)

You two was quite a team back in  
Little League.

BRIAN

Yeah.

JIM

Well, this should be a good season,  
long as you all stay healthy.

BRIAN

We'll give it our best.

JIM

I coulda played for the Ducks myself,  
if it weren't for fuckin' up my knee.  
(spits)  
Excuse my French.

A truck from another farm pulls up behind Brian's. Jim gives Brian a receipt for his load and walks off to talk to the another teenaged DRIVER as Brian secures his lift.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Brian's truck drives towards us on straight two lane road. Suddenly Ben's truck passes, driving the opposite direction.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben sees Brian's truck coming at him. COUNTRY MUSIC blares on the truck radio. He drives into the middle of the road as a dare.

INT. BRIAN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Brian speeds into the middle of the two lane road also, with the same country song playing on his radio, never one to back down from a friendly game of chicken.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben holds the middle of the road, right over the white tripe, as Brian drives right at him.

As he drives up on Brian's truck Ben and Brian both swerve at the last minute back into their lane and flip each other the finger out the window.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

With the trucks parked haphazardly in the field Darryl and the twins sit in the shade from the trucks eating carne asada tacos on warm tortillas wrapped in tinfoil.

DARRYL

Don't remember it ever being so humid  
the first day.

BRIAN

Yeah.

DARRYL

Nobody's said nothin' about rain?

BRIAN

Nope.

Darryl finishes his tacos and drinks the last of his coke  
from a can, then rises to get back to work.

BEN

Union break's a half hour.

DARRYL

You see a union boss around here?

Brian looks at his brother and rises with his mouth still  
full of the last bite of his taco.

Ben sits in the dirt watching the two of them climb back  
into their trucks.

INT. BARN - DAY

Melissa stands with Darin, the same guy who used to work  
harvest for Darryl, ten years older and now a veterinarian,  
putting his tools back into a bag slung over his shoulder.  
Belle lies on the ground in her stall in the b.g.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Ben's truck is already parked outside the barn, with Ben  
bent over hosing down the back of his head. Water drips  
down his dirty clothes as he rises to see...

Melissa and Darin walk out of the barn as Darryl drives up  
and parks the combine. Melissa looks at Ben walking over.

Brian drives around the combine as his father climbs down,  
and parks beside the other truck.

Darryl walks over from the combine as Brian gets out,  
drinking the last of a Gatorade as he saunters over also.

DARRYL  
(to Darin)  
How is she?

DARIN  
I'm afraid she can't be helped,  
Darryl. Ten CCs of dramamine and  
she's still complaining.

MELISSA  
That horse is in a lot of pain.

Darryl looks at the twins, then back at Darin.

DARRYL  
I guess we've gotta put her down.

DARIN  
The sooner the better, in my opinion.

Ben walks off to the house suddenly, the crucial information  
already said.

Melissa watches him go, then looks at her husband watching  
Ben go as well.

The four of them stand there in stunned silence until Darin  
moves to go.

DARIN  
Tomorrow's good for you all then?

MELISSA  
Yeah. Thanks Doctor.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - PATIO - DUSK

Darryl stands at the barbecue, his hair still wet from the  
shower. He flips the burgers and sips a beer.

Brian curls a dumbbell while Ben kicks back on a recliner  
with a beer, reading a book.

DARRYL  
Should'a bought the new rig a long  
time ago. But we didn't have enough  
money on the ground to make it work.

BRIAN  
Looks like it could be a big year.

DARRYL

If we can get it all up.

BRIAN

What do ya mean?

DARRYL

Bob says they're not takin' the whole crop. So we might have to store some at Jim's.

BEN

That's fucked up.

BRIAN

Same old farming politics if you ask me.

Melissa appears with a bunch of corn cobs for the barbecue. Darryl watches her from the grill as she puts them on the table, bending slightly in tight Levis and a red gingham blouse.

MELISSA

What do you guys want to drink?

BRIAN

Got any more Gatorade?

MELISSA

No. You drank it all.

DARRYL

Yeah what'd you have, like twenty of 'em today?

Brian sneers, lifting the last curl with a red face.

MELISSA

I'll get some more at the market.

DARRYL

That stuff's expensive.

MELISSA

Yeah.

DARRYL

Take it easy on that stuff, huh? It's all sugar anyway.

BRIAN  
Alright already. Geeze. I'll just  
have water then.

MELISSA  
Please?

BRIAN  
Please.

MELISSA  
Ben?

Ben looks up from his book. Swigs his beer.

BEN  
Another beer. Please.

DARRYL  
That stuff's expensive too.

BEN  
No shit.

DARRYL  
Hey. Watch it.

MELISSA  
(to Darryl)  
Another beer?

DARRYL  
Sure. Thanks.

Melissa goes back inside for their drinks. Darryl flips the sizzling burgers on the barbecue and puts the cheese on.

DARRYL  
(to Ben)  
That a new book?

BEN  
Old book.

DARRYL  
New one from the one you were  
reading, is what I mean.

BEN  
Yeah.

BRIAN

You finished the other one or just skimmed it?

Ben gives his brother a don't-bother-me look and closes the book. He drinks the rest of his beer as Melissa comes out. Darryl rolls the corn cobs on the barbecue and serves their burgers on toasted buns.

INT. BARN - DAY

The wind howls through the barn. Ben, Brian, Melissa and Darryl watch Darin prepare the syringes. Belle lies inert on a large canvas spread out on the dirt floor. The other horses are gone from their stalls, out to pasture.

Belle looks up forlorn as Darin approaches and inspects the hoof once more as if to be sure. He inserts the first syringe of tranquilizer.

Melissa watches intently.

Darryl watches Melissa, then looks at Brian, his eyes fixated on the horse.

BEN

watches as the final syringe enters the horse, then looks down in the dirt. He turns abruptly and walks out.

Melissa stands away from Darryl and Brian. The three of them watch Ben go. The ethereal GUITAR THEME begins again as the horse expires calmly.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Ben climbs on his horse and rides out west from the house. The wind is calmer now and sun dips under the puffy clouds before him.

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - TWILIGHT (SERIES OF ANGLES)

Ben rides along the fenceline at the western edge of the farm, coming down from the north to the end of the wheat at the southern edge where the terrain turns green and lush as it drops toward the Walla Walla River.

EXT. RIVER - SUNSET

Ben dismounts and walks out to the bank of the river and stands watching the sun set through the trees, the river flowing silently towards it.

Daisy ambles over to drink from the river, breaking Ben's steady gaze. He watches his horse lapping water.

INT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - SUNSET

Brian drives the hand-me-down Ford F150 pickup that he shares now with Ben, Darryl's truck ten years earlier.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DUSK

Ben rides his horse back to the barn. The last of the day's light glows upon the half cut fields behind him.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DUSK

Brian turns into the driveway of a modest home. Chickens scatter in the headlights as he slows to a stop and honks.

INT/EXT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK - DUSK

Brian kills the engine and headlights. Tiffany appears from the house in a summer dress and walks over to Brian's window as the GUITAR THEME ends.

TIFFANY

What took you so long?

BRIAN

Nothin'.

Brian leans out and she kisses him, then giggles as she opens the door and climbs on top of him, laying him back on the cab bench with the door held open by their tangled legs.

BRIAN

You been drinking?

TIFFANY

A little.

BRIAN

Where's your folks?

TIFFANY

Out.

BRIAN

When'll they be home?



TIFFANY

I don't know.

Brian looks at her, smiles.

TIFFANY

Not here.

BRIAN

Where then?

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

The moon shines on the slow flowing river. The steady HUM of insects like music. Brian and Tiffany lie on the grassy shore, her head on his chest.

BRIAN

Your mom knows you're on the pill?

TIFFANY

Oh, God, no.

BRIAN

Are you sure?

TIFFANY

No.

Brian turns to look at her. A silent question.

TIFFANY

What?

BRIAN

I don't want to fuck it up with your folks. I mean, how could they not know?

Tiffany runs her finger softly along the bridge of his nose to his lips.

TIFFANY

Don't worry about it.

BRIAN

They know we're serious?

TIFFANY

I think so.

A crow SQUALLS in the trees. Tiffany looks up.

TIFFANY  
Tonight's the harvest moon.

BRIAN  
Yeah.

TIFFANY  
Uncle Wayne said it might rain.

BRIAN  
How far along is he?

TIFFANY  
I don't know.

Brian looks off again at the river.

TIFFANY  
Think you'll always be a farmer?

BRIAN  
Maybe. What else would I do?

TIFFANY  
Play quarterback for the NFL.

BRIAN  
(laughs)  
And make a couple mil' a year.

TIFFANY  
And have a lot of kids.

Brian looks at her.

TIFFANY  
I want a lot of kids.

BRIAN  
Me too.

A fish jumps out in the river. SPLASH. Brian looks off at the moonlit rings flowing out from the moving center.

BRIAN  
It's been ten years since Emily drowned.

TIFFANY  
I know.

BRIAN  
Ten years, Tiff. You'd think we  
would have worked it out by now.

Tiffany looks off at the river where Emily drowned, then  
back at Brian.

TIFFANY  
I love you.

Brian looks at her.

BRIAN  
I love you too.

INT. FARM HOUSE - TWINS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben reads TENDER IS THE NIGHT with the light from a small  
lamp on the bedside table. Someone KNOCKS.

Melissa peeks in the room, a look of concern on her face.

MELISSA  
What're ya doin'?

BEN  
Reading.

MELISSA  
You okay?

Ben doesn't answer, pretending to read.

MELISSA  
Do you want to talk about it?

Ben looks up from his book for the first time.

BEN  
About what?

MELISSA  
About Emily's horse.

BEN  
No.

MELISSA  
About Jen breaking up then?

BEN  
Mom, I'm okay with it.

MELISSA  
 You sure? 'Cause sometimes you don't  
 realize-

BEN  
 Yeah like you know all about it. I  
 bet you never had anyone break up  
 with you.

Melissa considers this.

MELISSA  
 I guess not. But I'm here to talk  
 about it if you want.

BEN  
 Mom, give it a rest, OK?

MELISSA  
 OK.

BEN  
 I told you, I'm fine.

Ben goes back to reading. Melissa hesitates for a moment,  
 then closes the door.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DARRYL AND MELISSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darryl is already in bed, shirtless, with his arms folded  
 behind his head. Melissa puts on a cotton nightgown.

DARRYL  
 (whispers)  
 He's a teenager, what d'ya expect?

MELISSA  
 It's not that, Darryl. He bottles it  
 up just like you.

Darryl looks over as she slides into bed.

MELISSA  
 Think he'd go back to therapy?

DARRYL  
 He don't need therapy.

MELISSA  
 Why not?

DARRYL

He just don't.

They are silent for awhile. Darryl reaches over, tries to hold her hand. Melissa turns away from Darryl, reaches over and turns off the light. Darryl slides up behind her, caresses her hair, then reaches down beneath the covers. She brushes his hand away from her breast, annoyed.

CLOSE ON MELISSA

her eyes gleaming in the moonlight.

MELISSA

Yes he does.

INT. FARM HOUSE - TWINS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits on the covers in a tank top and boxers, writing in a notebook. The harvest moon shines in the open window. Crickets CHIRP outside.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Ben works on the haul trucks alone by the barn. Darryl prepares the combine in the background, where Brian appears walking out from the house.

Brian passes Darryl without a word, walks to the trucks.

BEN

I topped off your hydraulic fluid.

Brian zips a hooded sweatshirt with "Blue Devils" on the front. Darryl whistles over at the combine. The twins turn.

DARRYL

Come take a look, boys.

Brian and Ben walk over to the combine.

DARRYL

Tell me that axle don't look like  
it's grindin' the shock cam.

Brian climbs around the huge tire, looks down on...

THE AXLE, covered in dirt and oil except for the spot near the cam where Darryl has wiped it away with a filthy cloth.

BRIAN  
I can't tell.

DARRYL  
Maybe I should call someone to take a  
look.

BRIAN  
You wanna wait on it this morning?

DARRYL  
Nah. It's gone two weeks.

BEN  
Dad, you sure?

DARRYL  
Yeah.

BRIAN  
Wayne said it might rain.

DARRYL  
When'd you talk to Wayne?

BRIAN  
Tiffany saw him. You want to wait?

DARRYL  
No. I wanna get as much in as I can.  
Especially if it's gonna rain.

Darryl climbs in the combine as the boys go to their trucks.  
All three engines start in unison.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Darryl drives over the hilly section, with dust billowing up  
into the growing wind.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben drives up next to the combine for a load.

INT. COMBINE - DAY

Darryl pulls the lever to release the grain, then turns to  
see it pouring out of the snout into Ben's truck.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben drives up on the farm house and sees Melissa walking out

to her van. He turns the radio off (National Public Radio) and rolls down the window. Slows while passing her.

MELISSA

Going to the market. Need anything?

BEN

Nah.

Ben shrugs and drives off.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Melissa watches the truck drive away and climbs in her van.

EXT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY

Ben unloads his truck at the elevator. Jim stands talking with him, wearing the same clothes and feed store hat we saw him in weeks earlier.

JIM

It's startin' to blow ain't it?

Jim looks up at the puffy salt and pepper clouds moving rapidly under the deep blue sky above them.

BEN

Wayne said it's gonna rain.

JIM

That why he laid out?

BEN

I don't know. Is he not workin' today?

JIM

Haven't seen his trucks.

BEN

Maybe he's done?

JIM

Nah. I seen at least an acre uncut this morning driving in.

BEN

We're almost done.

JIM

Good. Just in time for the fair.

BEN  
They go rain or shine?

JIM  
Ted said they only do half the  
business if it rains.

BEN  
Let's hope it holds, for Ted's sake.

JIM  
For all our sake.

BEN  
Yeah.

Ben climbs up with a broom to sweep the last of the grain.

INT. MELISSA'S MINIVAN (MOVING) - DAY

Melissa drives into the parking lot of a plain motel. She parks, then looks around the mostly empty lot.

INT. WAYNE'S PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Wayne Collings sits in the cab of his truck across the street. He watches Melissa walk up to the motel room door, knock softly and look around.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Melissa knocks again and waits. She tries the door knob and opens the door slowly when she finds it unlocked. She looks in the room, then looks back out in the parking lot.

INT. WAYNE'S PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Wayne watches Melissa go inside the motel room and close the door, then looks around and gets out of his truck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Wayne crosses the street, jogging slightly, in cowboy boots, to avoid an oncoming car. He stops outside the motel room and takes out a wad of chewing tobacco from his lower lip.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Melissa stands beside the bed. The room is barely lit from the slit in the closed shades.



Wayne enters and closes the door slowly behind him, stops. They look at each other a beat, as if waiting for the other to speak. Wayne then walks over and kisses Melissa on the mouth but there's little passion. She didn't come for that.

WAYNE  
You okay?

MELISSA  
No.

WAYNE  
What's up?

Melissa looks at him.

MELISSA  
It was Emily's horse.

WAYNE  
I know it. I'm surprised she lasted  
this long.

Wayne runs his finger along her neck. Melissa stares off at the slit in the blinds. Wayne takes her in his arms.

MELISSA  
Not today, Wayne.

WAYNE  
Tomorrow, then?

Melissa shakes her head, backs away from their embrace.

MELISSA  
No. Not ever.

WAYNE  
What are you talking about?

MELISSA  
I can't come again.

WAYNE  
You called me, remember.

MELISSA  
I know.

WAYNE  
What's going on? Darryl found  
out?

MELISSA

No.

WAYNE

What about the boys?

MELISSA

The boys don't know.

Wayne studies her. Melissa grabs her purse off the bed.

WAYNE

Just like that, huh?

MELISSA

Yeah.

WAYNE

Well, now that's fucked up. Ruined a perfectly good-

MELISSA

Yeah it is fucked up. It isn't right.

WAYNE

Feels alright to me.

Melissa looks at him.

MELISSA

Not to me. Not anymore.

WAYNE

What's that supposed to mean?

MELISSA

Exactly what I said.

WAYNE

Just like that, huh? You walkin' out?

MELISSA

Exactly like that, Wayne. It's over.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Melissa opens the door and walks out of the dark room, then closes the door behind her and walks out to her van. Wayne opens the door in the background and watches her go.

INT. MARKET - DAY

Melissa roams the aisles with a shopping cart nearly full of groceries. She stops in the beer section, grabs a twelve pack of generic canned beer.

Wayne's wife Lucy walks up with their ten year old daughter KAREN pushing the cart.

LUCY

Hi Melissa.

Melissa turns, surprised to see Lucy and her daughter.

MELISSA

Hi Lucy.  
(nods at the girl)  
Karen.

Karen looks up at Melissa and nods.

LUCY

How's Darryl and the boys?

MELISSA

Fine. Darryl and the boys are fine.

LUCY

Glad to hear it.

Lucy smiles, then grabs a twelve pack of the same generic beer and walks off.

MELISSA

Bye.

LUCY

See ya around town.

Melissa walks away awkwardly, down the aisle away from Lucy, who whispers something to her daughter in the background as Melissa rounds a corner and sneaks a peak.

INT. MARKET - THE REGISTER - DAY

Melissa unloads her groceries on the table as AMY, with a nametag, BEEPS them through the scanner.

AMY

Find everything okay, Mrs. Dowling?

MELISSA

Yeah. Thanks.

Lucy appears from an aisle and lines up behind another register, smiles at Melissa.

Amy BEEPS another item through.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - PATIO - DUSK

Brian and Ben sit on the patio before dinner. Dark clouds on the horizon make dusk come earlier than before. Ben sips a beer as they both listen to their parents fighting inside.

Darryl appears on the patio with a platter of steaks. Melissa follows him out with a bowl of tossed salad.

DARRYL

Next time maybe go to the market after lunch is handed off.

MELISSA

Okay. I will.

DARRYL

How long does it take at the market anyways?

Melissa looks at Ben, who looks sympathetic. She refuses to answer Darryl's question. There follows an awkward silence.

Ben looks off at the horses grazing, takes a long swig of his beer and stands up, walks off the porch.

DARRYL

Where you going?

BEN

(keeps walking)  
I don't know.

DARRYL

Dinner's ready.

ANGLE ON BEN

walking away, Darryl and Brian watching him in the b.g.

BRIAN

I'm using the truck tonight.

Ben yells without looking back.

BEN  
Bullshit. I'm goin' out.

Ben climbs in the pickup truck and starts the engine and peels out, leaving a trail of dust blowing up to the barn.

INT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Ben drives down Main Street. The streets are almost empty.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Some KIDS are smoking by a statue and some park benches.

INT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Ben watches them from his truck and pulls over to park.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Ben walks up to a guy named STEVE with long straggly hair. Nods hello. A girl named CATHERINE stands with Steve, her eyes heavily made up, almost gothic. Ben nods at her also.

STEVE  
What do you want, Dowling?

BEN  
What do you got?

Steve eyes Ben suspiciously. Suddenly we're in the middle of a HEAVY ROCK SONG blaring over the sound of an engine accelerating as Steve digs in his jean jacket pockets.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Ben drives fast down a country road, taking the rolling hills like a roller coaster, the wind blowing in the open windows. The HEAVY ROCK SONG blasts on the radio. Ben sweats profusely, as much from the drugs as the humid night.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Dark clouds and steady rain over the half cut amber fields in the b.g. The house is still and quiet in the brown day.

INT. FARM HOUSE - TWINS' BEDROOM - DAY

Brian lies still sleeping in his bed. The sound of someone

showering down the hall.

INT. FARM HOUSE - SHOWER - DAY

Ben showers, rubbing shampoo lather over his buzzed head.

INT. BARN - DAY

Darryl works in the barn repairing the door on the horse trailer. Ben appears from the house.

BEN  
Fixin' the trailer?

DARRYL  
Daisy busted it pretty good.

BEN  
Where's mom?

DARRYL  
Church.

Darryl pounds a metal bracket with a mallet. Ben waits.

BEN  
You guys doing okay? You and  
mom?

Darryl looks at his son.

DARRYL  
Yeah. Fine. What's that  
supposed to mean?

BEN  
Nothin'.

DARRYL  
We're fine.

Ben nods at the broken door of the trailer.

BEN  
You need any help?

DARRYL  
No.

BEN  
I'm going to work on my truck  
then.

DARRYL

Fine.

Darryl watches him walking away.

DARRYL

You OK, bud?

Ben turns and looks at his father, surprised by the question.

BEN

Yeah.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brian sits on the sofa doing curls with a dumbbell in the empty living room, still in his black boxer briefs.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The Presbyterian pastor, ALBERT, prays the benediction of a service concluding, with his right hand extended upward.

ALBERT

Go now in peace, and may the Holy  
Spirit dwell in our hearts...

Melissa sits alone in the pew with her head bowed.

ALBERT (O.S.)

... so that we may know the gift of  
God's grace and forgiveness. Amen.

As the organist plays the BENEDICTION, Melissa rises from the pew and leaves, along with the other PARISHIONERS.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Melissa walks down the steps of the old Presbyterian Church and brushes past several PEOPLE waiting in line to greet pastor Albert as they leave.

LUCY (O.S.)

Hello Melissa.

Melissa turns to see Lucy standing with her daughter Karen in their Sunday best.

MELISSA

Hi Lucy.

LUCY  
Fancy seeing you here.

MELISSA  
It was a nice sermon, huh?

LUCY  
It's always nice. You plan to come  
around regular?

MELISSA  
Maybe.

LUCY  
Imagine that. Is Darryl going to  
come?

Melissa shakes her head no.

LUCY  
I can't get Wayne to come either.

Melissa nods, anxious to get out of there.

MELISSA  
Have a nice day.

LUCY  
Same to you.

Melissa looks at Karen.

MELISSA  
Bye Karen.

KAREN  
Bye Mrs. Dowling.

Melissa walks out to the parking lot. Lucy watches her in  
the background. It's unclear whether she knows about  
Melissa and Wayne.

INT. MELISSA'S VAN (MOVING) - DAY

Melissa drives out of the Church parking lot conflicted.  
She looks out on the well dressed families walking together  
to their cars and feels somehow out of place.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DUSK

Family dinner, inside this time, except without Brian.



Melissa and Darryl and Ben eat silently. Darryl takes a drink from his beer.

DARRYL

You can do what you want. No one's gonna be too happy about it is all.

BEN

Like who?

DARRYL

Like your brother, for one.

Brian looks down into his beer.

DARRYL

He ain't gonna like it one bit.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Darryl climbs in the combine, anxious to get back to harvest. Ben and Brian each check oil in their trucks.

BRIAN

Dirk said Coach is having tryouts two weeks earlier this year.

BEN

I'm not gonna play.

Brian turns.

BRIAN

You what?

BEN

I said I'm not gonna play. I've had enough football for one life. Time to do something else.

BRIAN

Like what?

BEN

I don't know.

BRIAN

What the fuck are you talking about? This is our year to make State.

BEN

I don't care.

BRIAN

Obviously not.

Darryl starts up the combine engine in the background and drives off. Ben opens the door and climbs in his truck.

Brian watches him start the engine and drive off.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The combine cuts a swath over the hilly section of the farm.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben watches the combine disappear over a ridge. He starts up the engine and drives up to the ridge, looking over to check his father's position.

INT. COMBINE (MOVING) - DAY

Darryl drives the combine over a hill, leaning heavily to the right. He picks up the radio mic.

DARRYL

Ben, drive on down to the  
fenceline; you'll take your load  
there.

BEN (O.S.)

Alright.

INT. FARM HOUSE - THE CELLAR - DAY

Melissa digs into a dusty box full of pictures on a rickety shelf. She takes out a handful of old pictures and flips through them, then blows some dust off one in particular:

A photo of Emily at 13 or 14, holding a rodeo trophy, standing with her horse in her cowgirl gear and a huge smile.

Melissa flips through the rest of the pile and stops on another of...

She and her daughter, both of them smiling with sunglasses on, the photo taken by Emily, with her outstretched arm reflected in her glasses.

Melissa puts the pictures away and digs into another box for

a beat, then bends down to look at another box behind the shelf, where an old movie projector sits gathering dust.

Melissa yanks the box out from behind the shelf and opens it. A bunch of Super 8 movie reels are randomly piled up. Melissa pulls the projector off the shelf and dusts it with her shirt.

EXT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY

Brian sweeps the grain from the back of the truck. He looks up at the sun peaking through the puffy white clouds, then jumps down to secure the truck gate. Jim brings his ticket.

JIM

I can't see why he don't wanna play.  
Senior year and everything.

BRAIN

Me neither.

JIM

His mind's made up is it?

BRAIN

Seems to be.

JIM

Well, I'll talk to him anyways.  
See if I can't change his mind.

Brian nods and climbs in the cab.

BRAIN

Thanks Jim. He won't listen to me,  
that's for sure.

JIM

If y'all finish up next week we  
just might be able to get it all  
in here.

Brian starts the engine and drives off. Jim watches him go.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The combine dumps a load in Ben's truck.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben watches the grain piling up to the brim of the truck bed, then his father giving him a thumbs up. He drives off

along the fenceline and turns up a steep grade, looking back at the combine cutting back into the wheat on the grade.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The twins' haul trucks appear on the empty road coming towards each other. Another farm's combine turns up dust in the field beside the road.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben drives up on his brother coming towards. They both glare at each other as they pass. Then Ben cranks up the local college radio station when a new SONG comes on.

EXT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY

Wayne Collings stands next to his truck as Ben drives up behind him. Ben climbs out and goes to the soda machine, nods at Wayne.

WAYNE

You boys almost done?

BEN

Week and a half, maybe less.

WAYNE

Whoowee. Your dad don't mess around. Or is that new combine speeding things up?

BEN

Both. Who's drivin' your combine, sir?

WAYNE

Will's drivin' it.

BEN

You prefer drivin' the truck?

WAYNE

We trade off. Gives us a break from the noise and dust.

BEN

I guess, yeah.

WAYNE

Your mom make you boys a good lunch?

BEN

The best.

WAYNE

What's on the menu today?

BEN

I don't know. Somethin' good.

Wayne sweeps his load from the back of the truck.

JIM (O.S.)

What's this I hear about you not  
playing football?

Ben turns to see Jim walking out from the office. He looks  
at Wayne as Jim hands Wayne his ticket.

BEN

I just don't feel like getting banged  
up is all.

JIM

Why don't you play safety then? You  
can do the bangin'.

BEN

Nah. I've had enough of football.

Jim shakes his head and Wayne climbs in his haul truck.

Ben watches him drive off as he lifts the hydraulic truck  
bed with the lever.

JIM

Well. Suit yourself. But if you ask  
me there ain't no better glory in  
life than winning that State title  
your senior year. Best fucking time  
of my life.

(beat)

Excuse the French.

BEN

That right?

JIM

Yep.

Ben lets the truck bed down and climbs in to sweep up. Jim  
brings the ticket from the machine.

BEN  
Well. See you around.

WAYNE  
Yep.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Melissa packs lunch in tinfoil and paper bags. Brian drives by outside and honks; he's back to the elevator with a load.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben drives the road back to the farm, waves to THE DRIVER of a haul truck from another farm passing opposite.

BRIAN (O.S.)  
(over radio)  
I'll get it on the way back, OK?

MELISSA (O.S.)  
Alright, I'll leave it on the kitchen counter. I'm going to run to the market.

BRIAN (O.S.)  
Again?

MELISSA (O.S.)  
Yeah. We're out of beer. Again.

DARRYL (O.S.)  
What's for lunch?

MELISSA (O.S.)  
Chicken pot pie with corn bread and cobbler.

DARRYL (O.S.)  
Thanks honey.

MELISSA (O.S.)  
Bye.

Ben looks at his watch.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Melissa's van stops at an intersection. As she makes a turn we can see Ben's truck appear on the road in the background.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben looks down the road at his mother's van driving away from the intersection ahead of him.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben drives by the empty house. He calls on the radio.

BEN  
Dad? You still up by the north  
fence?

Ben drives into the harvested fields waiting for a response. He looks over at the horses out to pasture, but strangely agitated.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Ben's truck drives out into the harvested fields.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben calls on the radio again, uneasy.

BEN  
Dad? Where you at? I'm coming  
to the north fence.

Ben drives on, still no response. At the crest of the hill he looks down on the harvested fields to the north.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Ben drives the dusty road north along the fenceline.

INT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ben crests another rise on the hilly section of the farm and finally sees the combine TURNED OVER on a steep hill. Ben accelerates and fumbles for the radio.

BEN  
(into radio)  
Dad! You okay? Dad!?

Ben drives faster toward the overturned combine.

BEN  
(into radio)  
Brian! Dad's turned over! Are  
you in range?

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Ben skids to a stop near the overturned combine and jumps out, frantic now.

BEN

Dad!

Ben runs up and finds his father crushed under the weight of the cab and bleeding all down his face from broken glass.

BEN

Dad! Jesus.

Ben clears glass away from his father's face. Darryl lays there, unconscious, as Ben checks for a pulse.

BEN

Dad!

Ben tries to pull him from under the weight of the combine, but can't get him to budge. He then tries desperately to lift the combine off his father. His face turns red and the veins in his neck pop but it's no use.

Ben runs back to his truck for the radio.

INT/EXT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben grabs the radio.

BEN

Brian! Dad's hurt! You copy?

INT. BRIAN'S HAUL TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Brian drives down the road listening to the country music station. Hears the radio squawking, nothing that he could make out though.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The overturned combine in the foreground. Darryl is still unconscious. Ben is in the b.g. talking into the radio.

BEN

Anybody out there I need an ambulance at the Dowling's Farm. Now! Fuck!



INT. BRIAN'S TRUCK - DAY

Parked outside the house, empty with Brian not in it.

BEN (O.S.)  
 (on radio)  
 Brian! Brian!

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brian runs out to his truck with their lunch in brown bags.

BEN (O.S.)  
 Brian! Help! Are you in range?!

INT. BRIAN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Brian drops the bags on the seat and grabs the radio.

BRIAN  
 Ben. What's going on?!

INT/EXT. BEN'S HAUL TRUCK - DAY

Ben stands beside the opened door to his truck with the overturned combine in the b.g.

BEN  
 The combine turned over! I can't  
 get him out.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brian throws the mic on the bench and runs into the house.

BEN (O.S.)  
 Call 911!

The horses are pacing in the pasture.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Ben runs back over to his father. Darryl's eyes are OPEN.

BEN  
 Dad! You okay?

Darryl looks up at his son and squints, trying to gauge his condition through the pain.

DARRYL  
 What the hell.

BEN

Are you okay?

DARRYL

What happened?

BEN

The combine went over. It looks like  
the axle's broke.

DARRYL

Damn.

Darryl starts to get up, winces in pain.

BEN

No. Dad. Just sit tight. Brian's  
calling the ambulance.

DARRYL

Nah. Nothin's broke, Ben.

BEN

You don't know that. Plus you hit  
your head pretty good. You were  
unconscious for awhile.

Darryl lays back down, looks up at the blue sky.

DARRYL

Shit.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

A firetruck and ambulance are parked out in the field away  
from the still overturned combine.

FIREMEN and PARAMEDICS are gathered around Darryl, sitting  
on the ambulance bumper, testing the motion of his shoulder.

Ben sits a ways up the hill in the wheat, staring at the  
scene unfolding.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brian talks with the FIRE CHIEF. Tiffany walks from her car  
parked beyond a squad car. Brian walks out, embraces her.

Melissa stands with a POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN

He's going to be fine, Melissa.  
They're just taking him in to make  
sure.

Melissa nods, and turns to see Ben walking in from the wheat field.

The fire chief stands in the driveway directing traffic for a tow trailer that drives by the house with the combine on top. Behind the tow truck Wayne's pickup truck appears and parks by the barn. Wayne Collings gets out.

Ben walks up to Melissa, notices Wayne standing by the barn.

MELISSA

He's going to be fine.

BEN

Looks like it.

Ben watches over his mother's shoulder as Wayne talks to Brian in the driveway. He catches Wayne glancing in his mother's direction.

BEN

Did you call Wayne?

MELISSA

What?

BEN

Did you call Wayne?

MELISSA

(turns)

No.

Melissa looks over at Wayne.

ANGLE ON BRIAN

standing with Tiffany and Wayne as Ben and Melissa walk up.

BRIAN

I don't know how soon they can get  
another combine out here. This one's  
broke.

WAYNE

Y'all can use mine to finish up after  
next week.

BEN  
(to Wayne)  
No thanks.

Brian looks at his brother, then back at Wayne. Ben watches Wayne watching Melissa go inside.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Brian talks on the phone. Ben and Tiffany stand around the kitchen listening.

BRIAN  
I know it's not supposed to but I'm  
telling you the axle just about broke  
in half. ... It just seems a little  
unusual for it to happen on a brand  
new combine.

Melissa appears from the cellar with a manilla folder, opens it to hand Brian the papers.

BRIAN  
The order number is 1004962294, and  
the combine serial number is  
22395497654...

Melissa shuffles through the papers.

BRIAN  
It's a what?... A flat land combine.

Ben looks at Melissa.

BRIAN  
Wait a minute. Just let me get this  
straight. My father almost died  
today because you shipped us a  
combine that was supposed to go to a  
farm in Kansas... Yeah, he's injured.  
He's at the hospital right now...  
Alright... No, don't call me back.  
You'll be hearing from our lawyer...  
That's right.

Brian hangs up.

MELISSA  
Honey. He's not hurt. I think it's  
going to be okay.

BRIAN  
We don't know that.

MELISSA  
It was probably an honest mistake.

BRIAN  
A dangerous mistake.

BEN  
Mom. He was unconscious for at least  
five minutes.

MELISSA  
We don't have a lawyer.

BRIAN  
We're gonna get one.

MELISSA  
What we need more than a lawyer is  
another combine to finish harvest.

BRIAN  
We can use Wayne's after next week.

MELISSA  
By then we might be able to have  
another one from Allis Chambers.

BRIAN  
What's wrong with Wayne's?

MELISSA  
Nothing's wrong with Wayne's.

Ben looks at Melissa, then back to Brian.

TIFFANY  
What do you say we all go out for  
lunch?

Melissa looks at Tiffany, impressed with her poise.

BRIAN  
Sounds good. I'm starved.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Ben and Melissa wait for Darryl to check out with A NURSE.

DARRYL  
You don't need nothing else?

NURSE  
We're all set. You take it easy on  
that shoulder Mr. Dowling.

DARRYL  
Thanks.

The three of them start to walk out the sliding doors.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Melissa walks with Darryl to Darryl's pickup truck, Ben in  
the background walking to his.

MELISSA  
Brian was pretty amped up about the  
financial possibilities of a lawsuit.

DARRYL  
Well. We'll see.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Darryl stands talking on the phone. Melissa watches.

DARRYL  
Well. I appreciate that Wayne...  
Alright. I'll call you next week.

Darryl hangs up and Melissa waits on his words.

DARRYL  
We're gonna use his combine.

MELISSA  
And who's gonna drive it?

DARRYL  
He offered to help us finish up.

MELISSA  
Wayne's gonna finish our crop?

DARRYL  
That's what he said. So I can fully  
recover.

INT. FARM HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Ben stands at the sink, stops brushing for a moment to listen in on his parents' conversation from the kitchen.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Melissa peels lettuce off the bundle.

MELISSA

Why can't Brian drive it?

DARRYL

Who's gonna drive the truck?

MELISSA

I'll drive it.

DARRYL

I don't see the problem. It's a neighborly offer. I'd do the same for him.

MELISSA

I just don't want to owe him nothing.

DARRYL

We won't owe him nothin'. It's Tiffany's uncle, for Christ's sake. We're nearly related.

Melissa, concerned, watches Darryl's back as he walks out.

INT. FARM HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Ben appears from the bathroom as Darryl walks up.

DARRYL

You don't mind finishing up with Wayne, right?

BEN

I guess not.

DARRYL

Doctor doesn't want me workin' for a month.

BEN

Sure.

DARRYL

I'm taking a shower. Can you help  
your mother?

Darryl steps into his and Melissa's bedroom. Ben watches  
him close the door.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Wayne drives his combine over the last of the wheat left to  
cut near the house. Brian drives his truck up for a load.

The combine dumps the load in the truck.

EXT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY

Ben sweeps out the back of his truck.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The screen door slams as Ben walks out peeling a banana and  
heads towards the haul truck parked outside the barn.

When he approaches the driver side, he hears murmurings  
inside the barn and stops, then walks quietly to the barn  
and eavesdrops on the conversation.

Ben's POV through the barn doors - Wayne stands talking to  
Melissa.

INT. BARN - DAY

Wayne turns to go.

WAYNE

What was I supposed to do, say no?

MELISSA

That's not what I'm saying, Wayne.

WAYNE

I'm trying to protect you, dammit.  
Wouldn't it look worse if I refused?

Daisy bays in her stall.

MELISSA

Sssh.

Melissa turns towards the large barn door, and just then Ben  
appears in the light coming from outside, as if on cue.



Melissa and Ben exchange a look that signals their mutual recognition of a secret now brought to light between them.

MELISSA

We were just talking about how much longer it's going to take out there.

Ben offers no response, watching his mother and letting her squirm, glancing back and forth between Wayne and Melissa.

Wayne looks nervous as hell.

WAYNE

Another day or two, don't you think Ben?

Ben turns to leave, mutters something under his breath.

Wayne watches Melissa. She seems paralyzed, like a doe caught in the headlights.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DARRYL AND MELISSA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Darryl sits up to get out of bed, throws the pillows aside. An *Utne Reader* lays on the bed. Darryl grabs his crutches and pulls himself up to walk.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Darryl walks on crutches from the hallway. He pauses in front of the window and sees Ben driving off in his pickup.

Darryl's POV - Melissa comes out of the barn, heading for the farmhouse.

Darryl walks on crutches into the kitchen, doesn't see Wayne lingering in the doorway to the barn, watching Melissa go.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Darryl pours some juice in a glass as Melissa enters. The coffee maker starts percolating through their conversation.

MELISSA

What are you doing out of bed?

DARRYL

Making coffee.

MELISSA

How's the leg?

DARRYL

Sore as hell.

Melissa looks at his leg, then back at his eyes.

MELISSA

They're almost done. Couple more hours is all.

DARRYL

Wonderful.

Melissa moves for the papers on the kitchen table.

MELISSA

I was gonna call on the combine.

DARRYL

Why don't you let the lawyer do it.

MELISSA

You on the boy's side on this?

DARRYL

What's that mean?

MELISSA

It's like there's dollar signs clouding their minds. It's an honest mistake, Darryl. No one's allowed an honest-

DARRYL

A costly mistake, and a dangerous one. I say we let the lawyer handle it.

MELISSA

Fine. You gonna call him, then?

DARRYL

I already did.

(beat)

What's bothering you, babe?

MELISSA

Nothing.

DARRYL

Can't talk to me about it?

Melissa stares at her husband, no response.

DARRYL

Is it Ben?

Melissa shakes her head no.

DARRYL

Emily?

MELISSA

It's nothing, Darryl, really. You  
need anything?

Darryl looks at his wife, knows she's lying.

DARRYL

No.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The sun beats down on the mostly cut field near the farm house. Wayne's combine cuts the last of the field. Ben's truck waits for the last load.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

End of harvest. Ben cracks open a beer with a bottle opener. Wayne clinks his with Darryl's bottle and then Brian's. Melissa holds hers up as well. They all drink.

EXT. DEMOLITION DERBY - FRONTIER DAYS FAIR - DAY

A beat up Chevy Impala SMASHES into an old Ford Mustang, then reverses to drive away for more action.

Foot stomping COUNTRY MUSIC blares over the loud speakers in the dirt arena where a dozen cars remain in competition. Others are stalled out and lifeless, spread out like an obstacle course.

INT. BEN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Ben drives an old beat up car wearing a motorcycle helmet. He holds his arm up to the window as if to block the oncoming car that SMASHES into him behind his driver side door and spins him around. Dust fills the car as he floors the pedal and speeds off, still in the game.

EXT. DEMOLITION DERBY - DAY

Ben's junker speeds off to avoid another collision, then turns hard to drive at another car

INT. BEN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Ben turns the wheel hard, still peeling the turn and then accelerates up on another car which we soon can see is driven by Brian.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Brian tries to speed away from Ben's car but Ben turns hard and SMASHES into Brian's front end, spinning him abruptly in the opposite direction that he was trying to turn.

EXT. DEMOLITION DERBY - DAY

Brian's car appears finished as Ben peels off his car in reverse and drives off to go after another victim.

EXT. DEMOLITION DERBY - THE STANDS - DAY

Tiffany sits with Sarah, the tomboy from Merchants, the two of them laughing at the carnage.

SARAH

Next year I'm doing this with my car.

EXT. RIVER - ROPE SWING - DAY

Brian and Ben are at the rope swing with Tiffany and Sarah and her friend DANIELLE, along with Danielle's boyfriend DIRK and his friend BOB.

Ben swings down over the river and lets go, splashing into the water. Brian throws the rope up to Dirk.

Dirk swings and splashes in. Sarah climbs the branch to try the swing as Ben climbs out of the river. He looks up as rain drops start falling through the trees.

BEN

Go, Sarah.

Tiffany looks up as Brian throws the rope.

TIFFANY

Is she gonna do it.

Sarah grips the rope, hesitates, then leaps from the tree, swinging out over the river and splashing in.

Everyone claps as she surfaces and whoops.

BRIAN  
(to Tiffany)  
Who's next?

TIFFANY  
I don't think so.

DANIELLE  
Me neither.

As Sarah climbs out of the river and up on the shore it's raining harder now. Ben throws her a towel and without words the group starts walking the trail back to their cars.

EXT. CARNIVAL - FRONTIER DAYS FAIR - NIGHT

Ben walks with Brian and Tiffany holding hands through the maze of rides and booths set up for the annual state fair.

The three of them walk up to Sarah, Danielle, and Dirk standing by the food stand eating snow cones.

Tiffany says something to Sarah, who laughs at something, then eyes Ben flirtatiously.

Jennifer walks up from the background with clean cut Jim; everyone in the group recognizes the awkwardness between Jennifer and Ben.

JENNIFER  
(to Ben)  
Hey.

BEN  
Hey.

Jim kisses Jennifer on the cheek and then walks away. Tiffany watches him go and then backs up with Brian, Dirk, Danielle and Sarah to give Jennifer and Ben some space.

JENNIFER  
I was hoping we could still be friends.

BEN  
Sure. Whatever.

JENNIFER  
What does that mean?

Sarah looks back at Jennifer and Ben.

BEN  
It doesn't mean nothin'.

JENNIFER  
Well. I was hoping we could still  
talk once in awhile.

BEN  
About what?

JENNIFER  
About anything.

Ben considers this.

BEN  
He's not jealous?

JENNIFER  
No.

BEN  
That's good. Good for him.

Jennifer eyes him suspiciously.

JENNIFER  
All it takes is trust.

Ben looks off at Jim buying another snow cone.

BEN  
When's he goin' in the Navy?

JENNIFER  
Soon.

BEN  
He really goin' in?

JENNIFER  
Sure. He keeps his word.

BEN  
Who'd he promise?

JENNIFER  
What?

BEN  
Nothin'. Look, I'll see you around,  
okay?

JENNIFER

Sure.

Ben looks off at his brother and their friends in line for a ride.

JENNIFER

Is it true you're not going to play?

BEN

Yeah.

JENNIFER

Why not.

BEN

Sick of it is all.

JENNIFER

I'm gonna miss watching you play.

BEN

Really?

Ben walks off to catch up with his brother. Jennifer watches him go. Jim can be seen in the b.g. watching.

INT. ROUNDY ROUND (MOVING) - NIGHT

Brian and Tiffany are spinning and laughing, the mix of neon and fluorescent lighting below them a blur as the car swoops down violently. Tiffany screams.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Ben stands with some GUYS from school including Dirk and with Sarah and Danielle.

A stoner named MARK opens a beer from his jacket and slams about half. The others laugh and look around nervously.

MARK

(to Ben)

There's a kegger in Dayton out near Jeff's. You wanna go with us?

BEN

Sure.

MARK

We're leaving now. This is boring.

BEN  
Just let me tell Brian.

MARK  
He knows where it is.

BEN  
Is he going?

MARK  
Who knows. Let's go.

INT. MARK'S MUSCLE CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Ben sits in the back next to Sarah and the guy named JEFF.  
Mark drives and DIRK rides shotgun and slams a beer.

Ben watches Dirk slamming beer. Mark turns on the  
windshield wipers against the light rain.

BEN  
Those Dayton cops are harsh. Throw  
your ass in the can.

SARAH  
Yeah his dad's one of 'em.

Everyone laughs. Ben looks over at Sarah.

EXT. WOODS - KEGGER PARTY - NIGHT

Cars are parked haphazardly in the tall grass meadow. HARD  
ROCK music BLARES from a monster car stereo somewhere in the  
meadow. KIDS everywhere. On top of cars. In truck cabs.  
Standing around smoking pot in small closed circles.

Ben walks with Sarah, Mark, Dirk, and Jeff over to the kegs  
lined up in the back of a drunk guy's truck. It's Steve,  
the long haired stoner who sold Ben drugs in the park a  
month ago. Mark grabs the pump and starts pouring their  
beers in red plastic cups.

BEN  
(to Steve)  
What's in the kegs?

STEVE  
What the hell kind of question is  
that, Dowling? There's beer in them  
kegs, dumbass.



BEN  
What kind of beer?

STEVE  
What kind you want it to be?

Ben looks around at everyone waiting for his answer. Ben savors the moment and comes out with the joke.

BEN  
Heineken.

Steve laughs obnoxiously.

STEVE  
Heineken!? Fuck that shit, dude.  
This here's Pabst Blue Ribbon.

Sarah laughs at the reference. Ben looks off at some girls in tank tops bobbing their heads to the music. He catches Sarah staring at him as Mark, Dirk and Jeff walk away with their beers, laughing. Ben starts walking with them awkwardly and Sarah follows him.

SARAH  
Wait up?

Ben turns and waits.

SARAH  
Where you going?

BEN  
Nowhere.

Ben drinks his beer.

SARAH  
You want to take a walk?

BEN  
Sure.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ben walks with Sarah away from the party. HEAVY ROCK MUSIC recedes with the distance.

SARAH  
How come you're not going to play?

BEN

What does it matter? You're about the fifth person to ask me that this week.

SARAH

Sorry, geeze. I was just asking.

BEN

I'm just sick of getting all beat to shit every damn season.

SARAH

Is your brother upset?

BEN

I don't know. Have to ask him.

(beat)

What should he care? Got his life all mapped out, you know?

SARAH

You mean with Tiffany?

BEN

Maybe.

SARAH

What do you plan to do with yours?

BEN

Nothin'.

SARAH

Bullshit.

Ben looks at her.

BEN

I don't know.

SARAH

I don't believe you.

Ben stops, looks back at the party through the trees in the distance, then back at Sarah.

BEN

I want to be a writer.

SARAH

Really? Me too.

BEN

No way.

SARAH

What kind of things would you write?

BEN

I don't know. Short stories. Maybe movies.

SARAH

Movies? How do you write movies?

BEN

I don't know.

SARAH

Hmmm. I love movies.

BEN

Me too.

SARAH

We should go sometime.

BEN

Sure.

(beat)

My sister's name was Emily.

Sarah looks at him.

SARAH

Was?

BEN

She died ten years ago.

Sarah looks at him as he takes another drink of beer.

SARAH

How'd she die?

BEN

Drowned in the river. She was fourteen.

Ben takes another swig. Drains the cup.

BEN

Sorry. I don't know why I brought it up.

SARAH  
It's okay.

BEN  
We put her horse down last month.

SARAH  
How come?

BEN  
Luminitis.

SARAH  
The hoof disease?

BEN  
Yeah.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ben makes out with Sarah, deep in the woods with the headlights and bonfire from the kegger party in the b.g.

The rain comes harder suddenly and then THUNDER in the distance, the two of them going at it even more now.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DARRYL & MELISSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melissa lies awake, listening to the thunder. A lightning strike illuminates her face momentarily. Darryl is next to her, sound asleep. She hears Daisy bay out in the field.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - NIGHT

Ben rides Daisy out into the rainy night, riding hard on the road along the buzzed wheat. Lightning strikes at the top of the hill behind him.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DARRYL & MELISSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melissa lies awake and listens to the front door OPEN and CLOSE, a CREAKING sound on the hardwood floor in the entry.

INT. FARM HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ben walks in then stops in his tracks from the creaking floorboards, trying to be quiet, his hair and clothes dripping wet.

MELISSA (O.S.)  
Brian, is that you?

Ben doesn't answer initially. Suddenly Melissa is there, standing in her nightgown.

MELISSA  
Where's Brian?

BEN  
I don't know.

MELISSA  
Were you riding?

BEN  
Yeah.

MELISSA  
Ben? Who drove you home?

BEN  
No one.

Melissa winces at the alcohol on his breath.

MELISSA  
Is Brian drunk too?

BEN  
No. Mom, enough already.

MELISSA  
What's going on?

BEN  
Nothing...  
(beat)  
Mom, I'm going to bed, alright.

Ben turns and walks down the hall as deliberately as he can. Melissa watches him. Lightning flashes, then THUNDER.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Ben shuts his locker and starts down the hall full of loud STUDENTS. He passes Jennifer hanging with some GIRLFRIENDS and hardly notices her.

JENNIFER  
Ben!

BEN

keeps walking then decides to stop. Turns.

BEN

Hey Jen. What's up?

JENNIFER

You avoiding me now?

BEN

No.

JENNIFER

See you in chemistry.

BEN

Right. Sure.

Ben walks away. Jennifer gives him a "what's wrong with you" look in the background and one of her friends smirks.

Ben walks up on Sarah standing by her locker.

SARAH

turns to acknowledge Ben, then closes her locker quickly.

SARAH

Hey.

Ben plays it cooler than she wants.

BEN

Hey.

SARAH

You made it home, I guess.

BEN

Yeah.

SARAH

You shouldn't have driven home.

BEN

My folks said the same thing yesterday.

SARAH

Good.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Ben looks hangdog beside the bleachers watching Brian standing aside while JOE, another quarterback, directs his two wide receivers in pass formations to end the practice.

Joe drops back, waits, cocks his arm and throws a bullet over the wide receiver's outstretched arms.

JOE

Bitch.

The wide receiver, Johnny, a black kid, looks back at Joe.

COACH KELLER looks on, more or less fuming.

COACH KELLER

What the hell do you want, Johnny, a Christmas present?

Since it's not really a question, Johnny doesn't answer.

COACH KELLER

Dowling, run the play again, we're not ending on that...

Brian steps up to run the play again, takes the snap and drops back. He scrambles left and throws on the run to another receiver and completes the pass.

Coach Keller looks on, blows his whistle to end practice.

COACH KELLER

Nice throw, Dowling.

BRIAN

Thanks, Coach. Good enough to start?

COACH KELLER

What'd you say, kid?

BRIAN

Nothing.

COACH KELLER

(mean)

You leave the coaching to me, Dowling. You got that?

BRIAN

Yes sir.

Brian runs after his teammates heading for the locker room.

EXT. GYM - DAY

Ben waits in the wings as Brian comes out of the locker room in street clothes laughing with some other PLAYERS, his hair still wet from the shower and his face flushed.

BRIAN

What's up with Blevins, guys?

Brian looks up, surprised to see Ben.

BRIAN

What are you doing here?

BEN

Nothing.

BRIAN

I thought you went home with Sarah.

BEN

No.

BRIAN

Well, we're going to Bob's Big Boy.

BEN

What about mom?

BRIAN

I'll just eat twice.

BEN

Whatever.

BRIAN

Yeah. Whatever.

(to John, another player)

Can you drop me off at home after Bob's?

JOHN

Sure.

BRIAN

(to Ben, distant)

Later.

BEN

Later.



INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Melissa grabs a bottle of milk from the refrigerator and pours a tall glass. Animated conversation in the next room.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa enters from the kitchen with a tall glass of milk.

MELISSA

Let's forget about the lawsuit and enjoy our dinner, shall we?

Melissa sets the milk down at Ben's empty chair.

DARRYL

He should have told us if he wasn't going to be home for dinner.

BRIAN

He took off after school. I don't know where he went.

MELISSA

What's gotten into you two?

Brian slams the table and stands.

BRIAN

That's bullshit.

DARRYL

Hey, take it easy.

BRIAN

He's the one fucking up. For me.

MELISSA

What's that supposed to mean.

BRIAN

You think Coach would have let Joe QB if Ben was still on the team. Fucker's punishing me!

DARRYL

Hey, watch your language.

BRIAN

I say we send his ass back to therapy.

MELISSA  
You think he'd go?

BRIAN  
(turns to Melissa, angry)  
How would I know? Ten years and he's  
still not over it.

Brian walks off to the entry.

MELISSA  
Where you going?

BRIAN  
Tiffany's.

MELISSA  
Oh no you're not.

BRIAN  
Oh yes I am.

MELISSA  
You're staying here to have dinner  
with the family.

Brian steps back into the living room, yells at his parents  
in the dining room.

BRIAN  
What family? Ben's out getting  
stoned every night. Fucking up his  
life. I don't want any part of it,  
alright? So quit askin' me about it.  
I'm not answering for him anymore.

DARRYL  
Never mind him. Your mother asked  
you to stay for dinner.

Brian looks at Darryl and then his mother, then storms out,  
deliberately defying them. Darryl stands and grabs for his  
crutches.

DARRYL  
You're not taking my truck.

The front door SLAMS. Darryl turns to Melissa, lets him go.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is silent and dark, except for the headlights coming up the drive outside. We hear the faint sound of the TRUCK ENGINE shutting down with the headlights. The car door OPENING and CLOSING.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DARRYL AND MELISSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melissa lies naked and awake cuddling her sleeping husband. She listens to the CREAK of the wood floors in the hallway.

INT. FARM HOUSE - TWINS' BEDROOM - DAY

Brian comes in with a towel around his waist, puts a shirt on over his rippled abs quickly.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Brian walks in and Melissa closes the fridge and turns.

MELISSA

Need a ride?

BRIAN

Yeah.

Brian grabs his backpack off the counter and the two of them start walk out.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Melissa closes the screen door behind her and walks out to her car with Brian.

MELISSA

You'll ask him where he was?

BRIAN

If he's even there.

EXT. SMOKING AREA - OUTSIDE GYM - DAY

Ben stands smoking with the STONERS, puffs the last of his butt and throws it on the ground and walks out.

INT. GYM - PEP RALLY - DAY

THE CROWD roars as the CHEERLEADERS finish their routine to blaring HIP HOP MUSIC and scamper off the floor. Tiffany and Jennifer are among them.

ANNOUNCER(O.S.)

Tonight's opening game against  
Kennewick promises to be a sellout  
after last years narrow loss at  
Districts...

Ben walks into the bleachers and sits.

INT. GYM - ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - DAY

The ANNOUNCER, grey and balding with fifties glasses, riles  
up the students.

ANNOUNCER

...So come on out and support the  
Blue Devils in their season opener.

The students roar enthusiastically and mocking at the same  
time.

EXT. FOOTBALL GAME - NIGHT

The Walla Walla High team runs onto the field with the CROWD  
roaring in the background.

Brian runs along carrying his helmet. Looks up at the sold  
out crowd in the stands, then at Tiffany in her cheerleader  
outfit.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Two STONERS sit on an ugly brown couch passing a joint.  
HARD ROCK MUSIC blares on the stereo. Ben walks past with  
his beer held close to his mouth and swigs as he walks into  
the kitchen. Many of the PARTIERS were also seen at the  
kegger in the woods.

IN THE KITCHEN

A group of GIRLS abruptly stop their raunchy conversation as  
Ben walks in. Catherine, a dark skinned beauty with heavy  
make up who we saw earlier with stoner Steve, eyes Ben as he  
squeezes past. Ben nods at her and Catherine follows him to  
the back door.

SARAH

stands in the dining room watching Ben walk outside with  
Catherine, ignoring another GUY trying to flirt with her.

Ben doesn't notice Sarah as he walks out with Catherine.

Sarah looks back at the girls in the kitchen. One of the kitchen girls stares back at Sarah.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

A bunch of GUYS are doing beer bong on the back patio. The THEME FROM ROCKY plays on a boom box in the back yard, blaring over the sound of the HARD ROCK MUSIC from inside the house like a cacophony. The beer guys cheer the FAT GUY doing a victoriously endless chug.

Ben stands at the perimeter watching them. The fat guy finishes his chug and raises his arms to the cheers of his buddies, then staggers a bit before turning to spray barf all over the lawn.

Ben turns to Catherine and grins.

CATHERINE

Oh my God that's disgusting.

Ben laughs, then starts to walk around the side of the house, nodding with his head for Catherine to follow.

They walk around the side of the house against the fence where it's dark. KIDS are partying in the driveway at the front of the house also. Ben turns and brings Catherine in close to him with his hand then leans into her against the house and kisses her passionately on the lips. She responds with her tongue then stops.

CATHERINE

Aren't you going to even say hello first?

BEN

Hello, Catherine.

SIRENS flash from down the road as a couple of COP CARS drive up on the party house.

CATHERINE

Shit. It was just getting fun.

BEN

C'mon.

Ben takes her by the hand through the gate in the fence, then out into the woods.

Ben fumbles for a ladder hanging from a tree in the dark, then motions without speaking for Catherine to climb it.

Cops come out into the back yard in the background as ben climbs up after Catherine into the treehouse.

INT. TREEHOUSE - NIGHT

Ben pulls a small bag out of his jeans with a bottle of beer. Ben cracks the beer open with his teeth, then pops a white pill and swigs his beer. Catherine laughs, then takes the pill and pops it in her mouth. She holds her tongue out with the pill stuck at the end, then swallows suddenly, her eyes wide with excitement. Ben watches her.

BEN  
You feel it?

CATHERINE  
Not yet.

BEN  
You will.

CATHERINE  
Whose is this anyways?

BEN  
Mine. Best X in town.

CATHERINE  
No. I mean the treehouse.

BEN  
Oh. I don't know.

Catherine looks at him. Ben smiles mischievously, then leans in to make out with her again.

JOE (O.S.)  
Three-thirty four. Three  
thirty-four. Hut.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Joe drops back in the middle of the action to pass. He scrambles left and throws on the run to the sidelines and completes the pass to a receiver who steps out of bounds quickly to stop the clock.

BRIAN

looks on from the sidelines, standing with his helmet off among his teammates. He turns to look at the scoreboard.

Brian's POV - ON THE SCOREBOARD: Home: 24. Visitor: 27.  
Only :37 left in the fourth quarter.

Brian looks down the sideline at Coach Keller calling the next play to a PLAYER who then runs on the field to give the play to JOE, the quarterback.

Tiffany does a cheer with the other Cheerleaders.

Joes throws another pass incomplete downfield and the clock continues ticking as the REF calls the ball back to scrimmage.

Brian watches as their field goal KICKER runs on the field to set the play quickly.

Suddenly the ball is snapped and the kicker unloads with all he's got but it's not enough. THE CROWD MURMURS their disappointment as the visiting team CHEERS victoriously.

Coach Keller hangs his head with disappointment as he walks across the field toward the Kennewick COACH.

Brian watches his coach shaking hands with the Kennwick coach, then walks off the field with his dejected teammates. He looks off at Tiffany with the other cheerleaders.

Tiffany meets his gaze but doesn't smile, upset by the loss.

INT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Brian drives into the parking lot of school. Ben's head is thrown back against the window and seat, apparently asleep.

INT. TWIN'S PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Brian pulls into a space near the edge of the parking lot. He looks over at Ben asleep and frowns.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Brian gets out of the truck with his backpack and starts to walk around the back of the truck and towards the school, then thinks twice and abruptly opens the passenger door.

Ben's head falls and he startles awake.

BRIAN

What the hell, dude, are you still  
drunk?

Ben looks around like he's disoriented.

BRIAN

Coach still thinks you're going to show up at practice before long.

BEN

Yeah, well, I ain't.

BRIAN

How the hell is he supposed to know that if you haven't told him shit?

Ben sulks but doesn't answer. Brian is disgusted with him.

BRIAN

Just like you didn't tell mom you wouldn't be at dinner, then you never even came home. I'm sick of covering for you all the time.

Brian walks off as Ben climbs out of the truck slowly.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Ben grabs his books from his locker as Sarah walks up.

SARAH

What are all those books?

BEN

AP English.

SARAH

Where'd you go last night?

BEN

What do you mean? I was at the same party you were.

SARAH

I thought you didn't see me?

BEN

I saw you.

SARAH

Then why didn't you talk to me?

Ben looks at her. Noncommittal.

SARAH

Are you going with Catherine?



BEN  
I gotta get to class.

SARAH  
Bullshit. I'm talking to you.  
Listen. I'm late.

Ben turns to look at her, doesn't get it.

BEN  
What are you talking about?

SARAH  
I think I missed my period.

Ben closes his locker, almost slamming it. He looks around to see if anyone may have heard.

BEN  
You took a test?

SARAH  
Not yet.

BEN  
Holy shit.

SARAH  
No kidding.

BEN  
I gotta go to class.

SARAH  
We'll talk later?

BEN  
Yeah.

SARAH  
Like when?

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DUSK

Darryl sits at the table. Tiffany is in the kitchen with Melissa in the background.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Melissa and Tiffany prepare the meal in silence.

INT. BARN - DUSK

Brian pours feed into the horses' stall, then pats Daisy on her nose. He does the chores meticulously and efficiently.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Brian comes in from the barn. Tiffany puts the salad on the table and looks up at Brian.

INT. TWINS' TRUCK (MOVING) - DUSK

Ben drives fast down a winding road through the cut brown wheat fields with the radio blasting a heavy rock song.

He drives off the road into the field and does a full throttle donut and comes to a stop with dust billowing out around the truck and all inside the cab through the opened windows.

Ben sits for a moment in the eerie silence. As the dust clears we can again see out into the open field.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Brian, Darryl, Tiffany and Melissa sit at the dinner table, eating in silence. Melissa looks at the clock on the wall.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Brian walks the halls in his Blue Devils letterman's jacket. He sees Sarah climbing the stairs and walks after her.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - STAIRWAY - DAY

Brian climbs the stairs chasing Sarah.

BRIAN

Sarah!

Sarah turns to face Brian walking up to her.

BRIAN

Have you seen Ben?

SARAH

No. And I need to talk to him.

BRIAN

He never came home last night.

SARAH

Maybe you should ask Catherine.

Sarah walks away.

BRIAN

Catherine who?

Sarah keeps walking. Brian watches her.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Melissa and Wayne at the window table of a restaurant off the freeway. Unfamiliar surroundings, it's not in Walla Walla but several towns away.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Wayne pokes at a slice of cherry pie with his fork, not looking at Melissa.

MELISSA

We can't do this.

Wayne's eyes meet hers for a beat, then he looks down again.

MELISSA

It's totally over, Wayne. We're going to have to live with having done it, but at least it's over, right?

Wayne sighs, moping.

MELISSA

Ben knows. I can't have that.

(beat)

Or live like that, sneaking around

...

Wayne butts in.

WAYNE

I guess it had to end sooner or later.

A tear on Melissa's cheek, more of relief than sadness.

MELISSA

I couldn't live with myself otherwise.

Wayne looks intently at Melissa's beautiful face for a beat.

WAYNE

You goin' to the game tonight?

Melissa cracks a smile through the tears.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Brian sits on the bench with his helmet off. He looks over at Tiffany doing a cheer with the cheerleading squad.

In the stands, Melissa looks for Brian on the bench. Darryl sits next to her, his crutches sideways on the bleachers.

The SCOREBOARD reads: VISITOR: 17, HOME: 7. 3RD QUARTER.

Suddenly the crowd goes wild and there's a bunch of commotion on the sidelines in front of Brian. He looks on disinterestedly, not quite able to see through the butts of his teammates as the crowd hushes.

Tiffany looks on the field with a concerned look and then looks over at Brian.

Brian finally realizes that someone's hurt on the field and stands to check it out.

Joe lies on the ground with Coach and the trainer squatting down over him.

Brian looks over at Tiffany and this time catches her eye.

The coach walks off the field with the trainer and a linebacker helping Joe up. He's limping badly as he walks off the field with the trainer and a teammate's help.

COACH KELLER

Dowling!

Brian grabs his helmet and walks through his teammates to the side of the field. The Coach walks up as Brian snaps the chin strap on his helmet.

COACH KELLER

Take it easy for a few plays,  
Dowling, you're not warmed up. Hand  
it off to Guy a couple downs and see  
if we can get the first down.

Brian watches Joe limp off. The two exchange a competitive glance as Brian runs on the field to join the huddle.

Coach Keller looks on, claps encouragement.

Brian breaks the huddle and comes up behind his lineman for the snap. He calls the play with a firm voice, utterly confident, then takes the snap and drops back for a pass.

He throws a bullet over the lineman to his receiver cutting across the middle with tight coverage. Right in the numbers and the receiver gains another five yards for the first down before getting dragged down by the defensive back.

Tiffany does a cheer with her pom pom.

Melissa and Darryl, excited about Brian getting some p.t.

Brian looks over at the Coach signaling the next play. Nods, then calls another one in the huddle.

Brian takes another snap and drops back to pass, this time drilling Johnny Blevins near the sideline for another quick completion and another first down.

The coach looks on, unable to disapprove, and signals a play. Brian relays it in the huddle and comes up for another snap.

He takes the snap and this time hands off to his back for another quick five yards. The crowd CHEERS.

The opposing team's Coach looks concerned as Brian drops back to pass.

Brian throws long to Johnny sprinting down the sideline.

Johnny's got his man beat, and reels in the catch and runs the twenty yards remaining for a touchdown.

The crowd cheers as Brian runs off the field triumphantly. He gives Coach Keller a "told you so" look and says nothing.

COACH KELLER

Nice arm, Dowling.

Brian nods and walks through his teammates, who slap him on the butt and shoulder pads.

EXT. LOCKER ROOMS - NIGHT

Brian emerges from the locker room door, his hair still wet. Darryl is leaning against an old Gremlin, the weight off his leg. Melissa walks forward to meet him near the doorway.

MELISSA

You played great. As usual.

Brian looks up, sheepish. Darryl approaches on crutches.

DARRYL

Good game, kid.

BRIAN

Thanks for coming.

Melissa exchanges a look with Darryl, then back to Brian.

MELISSA

Sorry about last night, Brian.

BRIAN

Yeah.

MELISSA

If you see Ben...

Brian hardens again at the mention of his brother.

BRAIN

Mom.

MELISSA

Just tell him we're here for him  
whenever he's ready to come home.  
Tell him to...

BRIAN

Enough already. I gotta go.

Brian backs away from his parents slowly and joins some of his teammates in the parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mostly empty, with Tiffany's Chevy parked among some other cars still scattered about after the game and some STUDENTS hanging around trying to find out where the party is.

INT. TIFFANY'S CAR - NIGHT

Brian and Tiffany are in the middle of a heavy makeout session in the parking lot.

FIVE GUYS walk over to Tiffany's car and bang on the hood.

INT./EXT. TIFFANY'S CAR - NIGHT

Brian swings his head around, startled.

GUYS

C'mon Dowling. Let's go to Jeff's.

Brian rolls down the steamed up window. Johnny Blevins looks in.

JOHNNY

Where's your truck?

BRIAN

Ben took it.

JOHNNY

Let's go to Jeff's. You too Tiff.

BRIAN

We'll see you there.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

THE MUSIC blares in the room. Everyone dancing and drinking after the game.

Brian walks in with Tiffany but no one notices them. Brian leads her by the hand through the party to the kegs in the kitchen. Beers are already poured in plastic cups on the counter with a pitcher for money. Brian throws in a five and hands Tiffany a beer then grabs another for himself.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

The usual beer bong antics are going on in a circle. Ben sits on the couch with a beer, already drunk. His eyes are glassy and vacant, but he can still see into the house where...

Brian and Tiffany stand in the kitchen window drinking beer.

Ben stands with his beer, totally wobbly, and starts to walk to the house.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben steps in the back door as Brian walks up. Tiffany stands behind Brian and eyes Ben suspiciously, shocked at how drunk he is.

BRIAN

Where the hell have you been?

BEN

Nowhere.

BRIAN

Like hell. Where's the truck?

BEN

Outside.

BRIAN

Gimme your key, man, 'cause you ain't driving it home.

BEN

Since when do you tell me what to do?

Ben steps forward, tries to brush Brian back with his beer but it spills on Brian's letterman's jacket.

BRIAN

What the fuck dude, you're acting like a loser.

BEN

Fuck you.

BRIAN

No fuck you you piece of shit.

Brian goes after Ben still trying to get past, throwing him up against the washer and dryer.

TIFFANY

Brian!

Ben tries to slither away but Brian pounds him in the face with his fist. Blood spurts from Ben's lip as he composes himself and runs at his brother and tackles him out the back door and onto the ground.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben and Brian go at it on the ground, fists flying everywhere but mostly a wrestling match.

EVERYONE crowds around the fight totally excited, except Tiffany, who dives in trying to break it up.

TIFFANY

Brian, stop it.



DRUNK GUY

Leave them alone, bitch.

Ben tries to hold Brian off with his arm as Brian wrestles him over violently and pins him. Tiffany still tries to pull Brian off, alone in her valiant effort.

Ben spits at Brian's face and Brian pounds into Ben's face harder. Ben's nose and lip are bleeding now as he scrambles to get out from under his brother.

TIFFANY

No! Brian!

GUYS

Yeah, man. Pound him.

Johnny runs outside and jumps in to help Tiffany pull Brian off. Johnny yanks Brian off and holds him back.

Brian stands off Ben now, looking down on his brother with contempt. Brian wipes the spit and blood off his mouth, breathing hard.

Ben gets up, staring his brother down. He spits blood on the ground in front of his brother and leaves.

The crowd of partiers watch Ben go, then look at Brian.

Brian watches him go around the side of the house.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Ben runs out to his truck parked out by the road. Brian, Tiffany, and Johnny are in the b.g. walking after him, but Brian stops, decides to let him go.

INT. TWINS' PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

Ben jumps in and starts the engine and drives off without even closing the door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ben peels off down the street, finally closing the door as he speeds away.

A CROWD gathers in the front of the house. Everyone watches Brian turn to walk back into the house. Nobody says a word.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAWN

Melissa sits in the kitchen drinking coffee from a large mug as headlights flicker on the wall behind her. She waits.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Brian climbs out of Tiffany's car alone and walks up to the front door, opening the screendoor slowly to avoid creaking.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAWN

Melissa stands in the kitchen in her bathrobe with a coffee mug in hand as Brian enters. He puts his jacket on the post in the entry and turns to face his mother.

Melissa starts to say something but Brian gets there first.

BRIAN

Yeah, I saw him.

MELISSA

Brian. What happened?

BRIAN

We had a fight. It was like he was hopped up on speed or something.

MELISSA

I'm worried about him. You think he's alright?

BRIAN

I don't know.

MELISSA

Where's he been spending the night? In the truck?

BRIAN

I don't know, mom. He might have left town last night.

MELISSA

I'm thinking of calling the police.

BRIAN

Don't do that. He'll turn up.

Darryl appears from the hallway, looks his son up and down.

Darryl walks into the kitchen and pours himself some coffee.

DARRYL  
You want some coffee?

BRIAN  
No. Thanks. I gotta get some sleep.

Melissa looks at him. Brian starts toward the hallway.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - ONE MONTH LATER

Another family dinner, sans Ben. Everyone is eating in silence. Uncomfortably tense. Melissa breaks the silence.

MELISSA  
We finally settled on the combine.

Brian looks up, interested.

BRIAN  
How much?

MELISSA  
Four times the replacement cost.

Brian more animated now.

BRIAN  
That's it?

Melissa turns to Darryl.

DARRYL  
The lawyer gets a third. Medical's covered plus pain and suffering, loss of work, even though we never paid Wayne.

BRIAN  
That sucks.

DARRYL  
No it doesn't. Nothing broken. I'm already 90%, you know. Accidents happen, as we all know.

BRIAN  
What's that supposed to mean?

DARRYL  
I'm alive and healthy, Brian, and that matters. I have a wife and two sons...

BRIAN

Yeah, except one's AWOL.

Brian leaves for his bedroom.

Darryl looks at Melissa.

MELISSA

It's been three weeks... No, a month.  
Don't you think we should do  
something?

DARRYL

We don't even know where he is,  
honey.

MELISSA

He must have gone to Portland.

DARRYL

But he doesn't know anyone in  
Portland.

MELISSA

Well he's not around here, we know  
that. Nobody's seen him since that  
night.

Darryl considers this.

DARRYL

I guess we should file a ... you  
know.

MELISSA

Missing person's report.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DARRYL & MELISSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melissa lies asleep next to Darryl, tossing and turning.  
She opens one eye and catches a glimpse of a shadow moving  
across the wall opposite. Suddenly she sits up, wide awake.

Melissa's POV - of Emily, in a white nightgown, floating up  
to the foot of the bed. Her eyes are locked on Melissa's,  
staring hard. She smiles.

Melissa puts her hand over her mouth and switches on the  
lamp. When she looks back, nothing.

INT. CHURCH - DAY - ONE MONTH LATER

Melissa sits in the pew with her head deeply bowed as Pastor Albert prays.

ALBERT

In this season of thanksgiving let us rejoice in God's love, in his abundant grace and goodness. Let us now pray as Jesus taught us, saying...

MELISSA

mouths the words with the rest of the CONGREGATION.

MELISSA

Our father. Who art in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins...

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A cold wind blows leaves across the church steps as THE PARISHIONERS come down the steps, greeting Pastor Albert before they leave.

MELISSA

stands in line to meet the pastor.

Albert greets her with a warm smile and handshake.

ALBERT

I don't believe we've met.

MELISSA

Melissa Dowling.

ALBERT

Albert Gillin. Thank you for coming, Melissa.

MELISSA

Could you please pray for my son, Pastor.

ALBERT

Of course. What's his name?

MELISSA

Ben. He's a senior

ALBERT

Anything in particular that I should pray for.

MELISSA

He hasn't been home since September.

ALBERT

I will pray for him.

(beat)

I'm available any time during the week. To talk.

MELISSA

Thanks.

Melissa pulls her hand from his and moves on, walking out to her car. Albert stands in the b.g. watching her, then turns to greet the other parishioners in line.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The bell rings and Brian rises with the other STUDENTS with his books.

TEACHER

Alright class. Hope to see you at the big game tonight. And good luck fellas.

Brian walks out with his books. He's king of the school.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Emily stands waiting for him.

INT. CAFETERIA - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Brian and Tiffany sit with Sarah, listening.

SARAH

He's in Oregon.

BRIAN

For sure?

SARAH

I know it was him on the other line. It was a 503 area code, like a pay phone or something, and then he hung up.

TIFFANY

So he has your number?

SARAH

Yeah. I gave it to him the night I told him.

BRIAN

Told him what?

Sarah and Tiffany exchange a glance. Tiffany nods to tell him.

SARAH

That I'm pregnant.

Brian looks a bit stunned, letting this new wrinkle sink in.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Final game of the season. Much colder than the earlier game. Coach Keller, in a turtleneck and sports jacket, pulls his headphones off and storms down the sideline.

COACH KELLER

Dowling!

Brian runs off field and takes some heat from his coach during a time out, then he's back onfield to the huddle.

IN THE HUDDLE

Brian calls the play and breaks the huddle with a clap.

Darryl and Melissa look on from the stands, bundled up with down parkas and a blanket.

Brian takes the hike and steps back to pass, then throws a bullet up the middle at one of the receivers cutting across field for a completion, but he gets hammered to the ground immediately by an aggressive cornerback.

ON THE SCOREBOARD: VISITOR 14; HOME 21; 4TH QUARTER; 1:27.

Brian steps back for another pass and throws a bomb downfield for an incomplete pass. He looks to Coach Keller on the sidelines to call the next play.

Tiffany looks on, a Blue Devils painted on her cheek. We see her breath in the cold air, but she's not wearing much.

Brian hikes and hands it off to the back for a quick ten yards up the middle before being hauled down by his shirt.

Brian rushes to make another play in the closing minutes. He calls it quickly at scrimmage and steps back to throw but no one's open. He scrambles toward the sideline and takes it himself across the first down flag and gets tackled out of bounds.

Teammates slap Brian on the helmet as he runs back on the field for one last play.

Darryl looks at the scoreboard.

ON THE SCOREBOARD: VISITOR 14; HOME 21; 4TH QUARTER; :34

Brian steps back for another pass and throws down field.

JOHNNY

runs downfield at full speed and catches the pass for a touchdown.

The crowd ROARS.

BRIAN

runs downfield with his teammates to congratulate Johnny on the touch down.

JOHNNY

Regional champs, baby! City champs!

Johnny runs off the field with Brian flashing number one with his arm raised to the crowd.

Coach Keller calls the special team in for the extra point.

The kicker kicks the extra point through and runs off the field victoriously.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Brian walks to class with another TEAMMATE, both wearing letterman jackets. The halls are full of students at their lockers and goofing off.

Sarah stands at her locker, already showing under a sweater. Brian walks up to her deliberately, leaving his teammate



without a word. Sarah turns.

SARAH

Hey.

BRIAN

Hey. How you doing?

SARAH

Okay.

Brian nods his friend away and the friend leaves.

SARAH

He's in Portland.

BRIAN

I know.

SARAH

How'd you know?

BRIAN

I just know.

An announcement comes on the PA. Sarah and Brian start walking to class and talk over the various announcements:

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)

A reminder for Juniors, sign ups for SATs begin after Thanksgiving break... And drama department opens with "As You Like It" tonight in the Auditorium...

SARAH

I called the payphone and someone finally answered. It's in Burnside District, downtown.

BRIAN

My mom filed a missing person's report, but no sign of him yet.

(beat)

What are you doing for Thanksgiving?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah is at the table, dressed in a loose, baggy sweater, with a big turkey in the middle and candles lit.

Darryl is pouring red wine into everyone's glasses, but she

waves a hand over her glass to indicate she doesn't want it.

MELISSA

You sure your mother didn't mind?

SARAH

I had dinner with my mom earlier, so it's OK.

MELISSA

Two turkey dinners in one day is a lot.

Sarah hesitates.

SARAH

We had spaghetti and meatballs.

Everyone looks up. Melissa is mortified by her faux-pas.

MELISSA

Well, we're glad you could join us.

As Melissa blesses the food, Brian sneaks a glance around the table, first at Sarah, then his brother's empty chair.

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Albert Gillin at his desk, a single bookshelf behind him.

Melissa sits in an armchair across from the desk.

MELISSA

That's not the only reason I came.

Melissa gathers herself, a pained expression on her face.

MELISSA

I had an affair.

Albert doesn't say anything, as if waiting for her to go on.

MELISSA

It's over now, but I can't help thinking I'm partly to blame. For Ben I mean...

ALBERT

Does he know about the affair?

MELISSA

Yes.

ALBERT  
And your husband?

MELISSA  
No.

ALBERT  
I wish I could tell you to recite the  
Rosary. I'm afraid it's not so  
simple.

MELISSA  
I'm dreading the thought of another  
holiday without him home.

ALBERT  
Thanksgiving was hard on you, I  
suspect.

MELISSA  
Sarah was there, his girlfriend I  
guess.

ALBERT  
But no Ben.

A beat.

MELISSA  
I think he's in trouble, on drugs or.

She breaks off.

Albert is patient, caring in a pastoral, nonjudgmental way.

ALBERT  
It's the second time you've lost a  
child, isn't' it?

Melissa marvels at his penetrating insight into her past.

MELISSA  
Yes it is.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

The front porch light glows outside the Dowling farmhouse.  
A blue halo around it. Bitter cold.

There's a wreath on the front door, and Christmas lights on  
the tree in the living room, just visible inside the house.

INT. BARN - DAY

Brian feeds the horses with Tiffany watching, her cheeks rosy and her arms folded around her jacket against the cold.

TIFFANY

Maybe we should go try to find him.

Brian turns, doesn't answer.

TIFFANY

Why not?

BRIAN

I don't know.

TIFFANY

Brian, c'mon, he's your brother.

(beat)

He should be home for Christmas.

BRIAN

What if he doesn't want to come home?

TIFFANY

When he sees you I think he will.

BRIAN

I don't know, Tiff.

TIFFANY

He needs to know that we all care about him. That you care.

Brian shovels the last of the feed and drops the shovel to pet Daisy, contemplative.

BRIAN

Not yet. Maybe after Christmas, though. We could take Sarah with us. Remind him of his fucking responsibilities as a human being.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa decorates the Christmas tree. She reaches into a box and pulls out an old-fashioned wooden horse ornament, then a silver picture frame: A photograph of Ben, Brian, and Emily at Christmastime long ago, when the twins were about four, and Emily nearly eight.

Melissa stares at the photo, the pain obviously still there. An eerie silence pervades the house.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Christmas eve dinner: Darryl and Melissa at opposite ends of the dining room table; Brian and Tiffany sit on each side.

Heads bowed in prayer, but Brian looks up and exchanges a glance with Tiffany, who admonishes him with a stern look.

DARRYL

... Bless this food to the  
nourishment of our bodies. In  
Jesus' name, amen.

Brian reaches immediately for the bowl of mashed potatoes.

MELISSA

Ladies first, honey.

Brian stops with a spoonful of potatoes suspended above his plate, and points the spoon across the table to Tiffany. He puts the spoon back in the bowl and passes it across to her.

Darryl watches all this with his elbows on the table and a kind of hangdog look due to the formality of a holiday meal.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting around the Christmas tree after dinner, the Dowlings are quiet, at a loss about what to say. A long silence, broken finally by Melissa who can't take it anymore.

MELISSA

Say something, somebody.

BRIAN

Like what?

MELISSA

Like what's the plan tomorrow?  
What time are you coming in the  
morning?

Brian looks over at Tiffany, then at his dad Darryl.

BRIAN

Well, we were planning to be with  
Tiffany's folks. Her sister will  
be there with the baby and all.

Darryl studies Melissa from across the room, as if gauging the effect of any mention of a baby. She is looking down.

MELISSA

We'll see you in the afternoon  
then.

TIFFANY

My family's having Christmas  
dinner early tomorrow, around two  
I think.

Melissa just stares at her, then looks straight at Brian.

MELISSA

You're saying I won't see my only  
son on Christmas day, is that it?

BRIAN

I'm not your only son, mom.

MELISSA

You know what I mean.

DARRYL

C'mon, you guys, it's Christmas  
eve.

(to Brian)

The least you could do is come  
over and see your mother  
tomorrow.

BRIAN

Who said we weren't coming over?  
It's just going to have to be a  
bit later is all.

DARRYL

Like how much later?

Brian looks over at Tiffany, pained by the family tension.

BRIAN

Around 4:00 or 5:00.

MELISSA

I'm sorry, honey. I don't blame  
you for wanting to be with her  
family.

BRIAN

What the hell's Ben's excuse for

not showing up today, I'd like to know.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Melissa emerges from the house with a suitcase packed on a dreary afternoon, with brown, crusty snow in patches around the house and driveway. She walks slowly to Darryl's truck, opens the passenger door and hoists her suitcase up on the seat. No sign of her van outside the house.

INT. DARRYL'S TRUCK - DAY

Melissa at the wheel, turning the keys in the ignition, her breath visible in the cold December air. The engine starts up and roars as she presses on the gas for a few seconds.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

From the front, we see Melissa put the truck in gear and pull away, glancing sideways at the house as she drives off.

INT. DARRYL'S PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Melissa drives down the cold highway, with snow piles up on the sides and the road wet.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brian and Tiffany knock at the front door. Darryl answers the door, looking somber.

DARRYL

Your mother left the house this morning.

BRIAN

What do you mean? Where'd she go?

DARRYL

She wouldn't tell me. I think she's going to Portland.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tiffany sips hot chocolate, while Brian puts some more logs on the fire. The presents under the tree remain unopened even though it's late in the day. Sun descending outside.

Darryl comes in from the kitchen with two cans of beer and offers one to Brian. He's making an effort to be upbeat.

DARRYL

Shall we open some presents?

TIFFANY

Sure.

BRIAN

Shouldn't we wait for mom to get back?

DARRYL

Nah, we may as well go ahead. Who knows how long she'll be gone...

BRIAN

Or whether she'll even find him.

Tiffany is kneeling down and sorting through the presents. She holds one up.

TIFFANY

C'mon, Brian. Here's the one from us to your dad.

She hands the present to Darryl.

TIFFANY

Hope you can still use this.

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

The truck is parked at a rest stop off I-80 in Oregon. It's Christmas day and hers is the only vehicle at the rest stop.

EXT. FALLS - DAY

Melissa stands against the fence, watching the falls. The sound of the rushing water roars in the small canyon.

Melissa stares at the waterfall with glassy eyes, lost in thought. We don't hear the falls now.

EXT. BURNSIDE BRIDGE - PORTLAND - DUSK

Darryl's truck drives over the Willamette River on the Burnside Bridge, headlights on against the dark winter clouds.

EXT. DARRYL'S PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - DUSK

A sleet-like rain pelts the windshield as Melissa drives.



INT. DARRYL'S PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - DUSK

Melissa glances down at an old AAA map on the passenger street, then up at the intersection, looking carefully at the street signs as she drives.

She pulls up at an old brown duplex, with a ratty, faded-blue chair getting drenched next to a bunch of garbage cans. A front window is broken, and the shades are all drawn down.

EXT. DUPLEX - PORTLAND - DUSK

Melissa rings the buzzer but doesn't hear anything, so she rings again. She steps back and rubs her hands together.

A nosy neighbor WOMAN peers out from behind her blinds as Melissa goes down the steps to her truck.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - PORTLAND - DUSK

Melissa is on the front porch across the street, talking to an OLD WOMAN in a nightgown and cap looking paranoid and maybe a little crazy.

OLD WOMAN

What's it to you, lady?

MELISSA

He's been living in that duplex across the street. Did you see anyone leave the house today?

OLD WOMAN

Can't say if I did or I didn't.  
I mind my own business...

Melissa smirks despite herself.

MELISSA

I saw you looking at me just now.

OLD WOMAN

Well, you never know what you'll see in this neighborhood, if you know what I mean.

MELISSA

Look, I'm trying to find my son.  
Have you seen him around lately?

The woman softens a bit, but still looks suspicious.

OLD WOMAN

I haven't seen anyone over there  
in awhile.

(beat)

Ever since the cops busted 'em  
that night.

MELISSA

And how long ago was that?

OLD WOMAN

A month, maybe more.

Melissa looks dejected.

MELISSA

Thanks anyway, ma'am.

As Melissa walks away, the old woman suddenly seems  
contrite.

OLD WOMAN

I'm sorry I can't help you, lady.

EXT. POLICE STATION - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Darryl's truck is parked outside the Police headquarters.

INT. POLICE STATION - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Melissa sits in the waiting room as the DESK CLERK talks to  
a distraught MOTHER with a two year old toddler in tow.

MOTHER

It wasn't him, I'm telling you.

DESK CLERK

Calm down, now. There's nothing  
we can do once an arrest has been  
made.

MOTHER

He's 11 years old, for God's  
sake!

DESK CLERK

You can take it up with his  
court-appointed lawyer in the  
morning.

MOTHER

Jesus, you mean he's going to court?

DESK CLERK

Juvenile court. A hearing will be scheduled within the week.

MOTHER

Sweet Jesus.

The toddler has made his way unsteadily across the room to where Melissa is sitting. She smiles and the boy stares up at her, but warily. The woman turns around.

MOTHER

Damon, get over here! We're goin'.

She comes over and grabs the boy by the arm, marches him out of the waiting room.

INT. POLICE STATION - PORTLAND - NIGHT

A POLICE OFFICER appears from the back and calls Melissa in.

INT. POLICE STATION - AN OFFICE - PORTLAND - NIGHT

The police officer sits at his standard-issue metal desk, looking sympathetic but also resolute and unforthcoming.

POLICE OFFICER

Unfortunately, I can't give out that information.

MELISSA

You don't believe I'm his mother?

POLICE OFFICER

I didn't say that. But even if you're his wife, the new laws say we cannot divulge criminal record information.

Melissa looks incredulous.

POLICE OFFICER

Except of course for sex offenders.

MELISSA

That just seems so ridiculous.  
I'm only trying to find out where  
he is.

POLICE OFFICER

I don't agree with it either,  
ma'am.

INT. DENNY'S - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Melissa sips from her coffee cup and uses her fork to poke, not eat, her eggs and pancakes. She looks around the room.

Melissa's POV - Old people in the booth opposite hers; some teenage kids; the WAITRESS in her traditional skirt and Denny's-issue blouse; the geeky MANAGER up at the register with the keys.

At another table, a PUNK GIRL with black biker boots and tattoos on her arms returns Melissa's stare with an intense, "don't-fuck-with-me" look.

The waitress comes up to give Melissa the check.

WAITRESS

Whenever you're ready.

She starts to walk off.

MELISSA

Do I pay you or at the register?

The waitress turns around and glares.

WAITRESS

It's Denny's. You pay up front.

MELISSA

Can I ask you something else?

The waitress doesn't answer but lingers, still glaring.

MELISSA

Where would I buy drugs around  
here?

The waitress laughs, looks around to see if anyone can hear.

WAITRESS

Jesus, lady, you tryin' to get me  
fired.

MELISSA

No. I'm sorry. But if I wanted to, where would I go?

WAITRESS

How the fuck should I know?

She walks off in a huff. Melissa doesn't know where to go. Suddenly the punk girl walks up and sits down at her booth.

PUNK GIRL

You saying you wanna buy some?

MELISSA

Sort of.

PUNK GIRL

Either you do or you don't.

MELISSA

Actually I don't. I just want to know where one would buy drugs.

PUNK GIRL

I can't help you with that, then.

The punk girl starts to leave; Melissa is getting desperate.

MELISSA

Please, I'm trying to find my son.

The punk girl turns around, looks long and hard at Melissa.

PUNK GIRL

What's his name?

MELISSA

Ben. Ben Dowling.

PUNK GIRL

Burnside district.

MELISSA

(excited)

Do you know him?

PUNK GIRL

I didn't say that... Try the club down on 24th Street.

MELISSA

You've seen Ben there?

PUNK GIRL

It's just a warehouse-looking place.

MELISSA

OK, thanks.

EXT. BURNSIDE DISTRICT - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Melissa wanders the deserted streets around midnight. She turns a corner and there's a homeless guy sleeping beneath a tattered blanket, his shopping car full of junk beside him.

She keeps walking. The faint sound of music coming from somewhere, getting louder as she walks. Suddenly she sees light coming from a warehouse across the cobblestone street.

EXT. WAREHOUSE NIGHTCLUB - PORTLAND - NIGHT

The bass is pulsing now, as Melissa stands in front of a club with no sign out front, only a deserted bouncer podium.

She opens the metal door. Strobe lights pulsing inside. The air thick with a smoky haze.

INT. WAREHOUSE NIGHTCLUB - PORTLAND - NIGHT

The dancefloor is surprisingly empty. Everyone's hanging out in booths and on bar stools, drinking and smoking.

Melissa wanders aimlessly, checking people out.

Melissa's POV - A BLONDE GIRL stands next to a guy dressed in all black, sipping her mixed drink and watching the older woman, Melissa, dressed all wrong and looking out of place.

Melissa decides she's had enough of clubland and heads out.

The blonde girl follows her out the door.

EXT. WAREHOUSE NIGHTCLUB - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Melissa is already halfway down the street.

BLONDE GIRL

Hey!

Melissa stops in her tracks and looks around suspiciously. The girl catches up to her, slightly out of breath herself.

BLONDE GIRL  
You looking for someone?

MELISSA  
Why?

BLONDE GIRL  
You don't look like a regular  
clubber.

MELISSA  
I've never been to that club before.  
I came because I thought...

BLONDE GIRL  
You looking for your son?

MELISSA  
Yes. I am looking for my son.

BLONDE GIRL  
Ben, right?

MELISSA  
How'd you figure that out?

EXT. HOMELESS SHELTER - PORTLAND - NIGHT

The blonde girl points to a sign above the shelter.

BLONDE GIRL  
They don't charge anything for a cot,  
and guys come in at all hours of the  
night, often drunk or all stung out.

MELISSA  
What makes you think Ben's here?

BLONDE GIRL  
He's here. Listen, I gotta get home.

MELISSA  
You've done enough. Thank you.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Melissa walks down a row of cots. She stops at the cot of a  
guy with greasy, matted hair, with tattoos on his thin arm  
outside the mission-issue wool blanket. She checks him out.

Melissa notices his blue veins, with needle marks all over  
his arms. His eyes sunken in, his face gaunt. It's Ben.

Melissa sits down at the foot of the bed, watching her son.

She leans forward and nudges Ben on the shoulder. He stirs, without waking. She pulls the hair back out of his eyes and nudges him again.

MELISSA

Ben, it's me. Wake up.

Now Ben registers and turns his head, eyes open but glassy.

BEN

What are you doing here?

MELISSA

I came to get you, ask you to come home.

BEN

What time is it?

This time Melissa notices his teeth, yellow and rotting.

MELISSA

Oh my God, Ben. What have you done to yourself?

She's almost crying now. Ben is shivering in the bed.

BEN

I'm cold. I think I need help, mom.

MELISSA

I'm here to help, Ben. You don't belong in this place. I'm taking you home.

BEN

No, I mean serious help.

MELISSA

I know, honey.

BEN

Does Brian know I'm on drugs?

MELISSA

Not like this.

Melissa takes him in her arms.



MELISSA

I'm so sorry, Ben. For everything.

BEN

It's not your fault I'm a drug addict.

MELISSA

I could have been there for you more. Afterwards I mean.

BEN

Why did she have to die, Mom?

MELISSA

I don't know. All I know is I pulled away from you guys; I realize that now.

Ben begins to sob.

MELISSA

Sssh. Let's get the hell out of here.

BEN

I'm sorry I couldn't save her.

MELISSA

Sssh. I know you are.

(beat)

Listen, it's over between me and Wayne. I know it's never going to be like it was, but I want us all back together.

EXT. MOTEL - PORTLAND - NIGHT

Melissa parks outside the office of a Motel 6 on the outskirts of Portland.

Ben stares off into space next to her, a neon VACANCY sign reflected in the passenger window.

MELISSA

Be right back.

INT. DARRYL'S PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

Ben watches his mother talking to the motel's night clerk. Melissa comes out and gets in the driver's side door. She leans on the steering wheel and looks sideways at Ben.

MELISSA  
We'll stay here tonight.

BEN  
What about tomorrow?

MELISSA  
I don't know.

Ben looks away out the window again, then back at her.

BEN  
There's supposed to be a place in  
Lake Oswego that's not too expensive.

Melissa looks at him.

MELISSA  
Don't worry about the cost. If you  
think it's for the best, we'll...

BEN  
You gonna tell Dad?

MELISSA  
I'll pay for it, whatever it costs.

They both sit in silence for a beat.

MELISSA  
Oh Ben, it's so good to see you  
again. I'm glad your alive.

BEN  
Me too.

EXT. BARN - DUSK

The rusted china lamp struggles against the fading light.  
A motorcycle PURS in the distance as a shadow moves inside  
the opened barn doors. Signs of springtime everywhere.

INT. BARN - DUSK

Brian opens the spigot on the faucet and water pours into  
the horses' tub. As Daisy begins to drink he shovels hay  
with a pitchfork into Miller's trough and spreads it around  
with his hands.

Ben appears at the barn doors behind Brian and stops. Ben's  
arms are heavily tattooed below a tight motorcycle t-shirt;

his hair is shoulder length and unkempt, falling around his face. He watches his brother turn off the water.

Brian pats his horse on the nose as he chomps on some hay, then turns, suddenly aware that his brother is there.

BRIAN

looks at his brother across the barn for the first time in months; looks at the tattoos covering his arms and his long hair. The contrast between them is stark.

BEN

returns his brother's gaze, measuring it against his own awareness of how different he now looks; against his past.

MILLER

turns to take in the sight of Ben also, then goes back to his meal.

BRIAN

How long you been standing there?

BEN

Not long.

BRIAN

When'd you get back?

BEN

Last night.

Brian considers this as Ben moves closer, gauging Brian's reaction with each step. Ben smiles nervously, and Brian notices the missing teeth; the ugliness of what remains.

BRIAN

Nice tats. Mom told me about the sleeves.

BEN

Yeah.

BRIAN

How much did that cost?

Ben looks down at the ground.

BRIAN

What? Couple hundred? Couple thou-

BEN

Not much.

BRIAN

Yeah right.

BEN

I had a friend that did 'em.

BRIAN

For what? For drugs?

Ben looks past him at the horses staring back at them.

BEN

She still ride like a train?

Brian turns around to look at his horse, then back at Ben.

BRIAN

She rides like a horse.

(beat)

How was rehab?

BEN

Look, is this how it's gonna be?

'Cause I can just leave.

BRIAN

Suit yourself.

Brian walks past his brother towards the doors. Ben turns.

BEN

I came back didn't I? That's a  
start, isn't it?

Brian turns back at him.

BRIAN

Yeah. Barely.

BEN

Look, what do you want me to do?  
What's done is done.

BRIAN

Oh it's done alright. What about  
Sarah? You've got a kid, man.

Ben looks at the ground again but it offers no protection.

BRIAN

You fucked up Ben. You owe a lot of people a lot of apologies, starting with Sarah, and mom, and me.

BEN

looks up from the ground at his brother, knows he's right.

BEN

I'm sorry.

Brian stares at him like he never thought he'd hear it.

Daisy WHINNIES, as if pleading for relief from the tension.

BRIAN

So you staying for dinner, or what?

BEN

I don't know. Am I?

BRIAN

Of course you are, you bastard.

Brian turns to walk out and Ben follows tentatively.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Brian closes the barn doors and walks a step ahead of Ben, then past Ben's motorcycle parked by the farm house.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tiffany is preparing the salad when Brian walks in. She looks up from the table as Ben appears and stands in silence a beat, then walks over to give Ben a hug.

TIFFANY

Welcome home, Ben.

Ben returns her embrace awkwardly, looks at his brother.

INT. FARM HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa and Darryl are watching TV on the couch, his arm over her shoulder. A remote control on the coffee table with a bunch of magazines.

Brian enters from the hallway, heading for the front door. Melissa cranes her head around against Darryl's arm.

MELISSA  
You going out?

BRIAN  
Just for a bit.

MELISSA  
Yeah, right.

The screen door SLAMS off screen. Darryl and Melissa on the couch as the engine starts up on Brian's truck outside...

MELISSA  
Reminds me of us back then.

DARRYL  
Yeah. I know.

MELISSA  
Except they're not as dumb as we were.

DARRYL  
I guess we were pretty clueless.

MELISSA  
And in love.

DARRYL  
Not to mention horny.

Melissa laughs. Darryl grins.

EXT. GRADUATION - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Brian stands in cap and gown among the other GRADUATES, lined up in rows on the football field.

Melissa and Darryl are in the stands looking on. Ben stands with them in shirt and tie. You can still see a bit of the neck tattoos but other than that he's cleaned up well. Suddenly there's a huge cheer and...

The graduates on the field throw their caps in the air.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - AFTER GRADUATION - DAY

Brian stands with his parents as Tiffany, also in cap and gown, takes their picture.

Ben walks over with Sarah, pregnant under her cap and gown.

Brian gives Sarah a hug. Sarah looks past Brian to Melissa.

Melissa absorbs Sarah's look, then looks away.

Tiffany hugs Sarah and then Ben, then walks away awkwardly with Brian to be with their fellow graduates.

Ben urges Sarah to follow Brian and Tiffany, but she pulls Ben along with her. He nods no, not wanting to be around all the graduates, but then reluctantly comes away with her.

Melissa and Darryl watch them go and then start to leave.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Ben still in his tie from graduation, but Sarah has taken off her graduation robe and her belly looks even bigger now. She sits on the ground at the edge of the lake, her legs to the side underneath a maternity dress.

BEN

Remember that conversation we had about what we wanted to do with our lives?

SARAH

Yeah. You wanted to be a writer.

Ben laughs.

SARAH

You still could, you know.

BEN

Guess I should be thinking about getting my GED.

SARAH

Yeah.

BEN

Then get a job.

Sarah doesn't respond. Hopeful but wary of pressing the issue of their future.

Sarah reaches out to hold his hand.

SARAH

That would be nice.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben loads a film reel in the projector. Sarah, still very pregnant, sits on the couch with Tiffany and Brian, eating popcorn. Melissa sits on the arm of the chair where Darryl sits, eagerly waiting the screening of Emily's home movies.

BEN

Yo. Try this after twenty years with digital, huh. Kodak rocks.

BRIAN

Shut up and start the movie, bro.

Tiffany pokes Brian in the ribs, urging more politeness.

BEN

Here we go.

Ben threads the take up reel tight and clicks the switch on the old Bell & Howell projector.

A white leader image comes on the screen. The noise of the projector is more than expected, but the six of them are still transfixed by the images that appear on the screen, flickering in their faces one after another with much laughter. END CREDITS BEGIN OVER FAMILY MOVIE FOOTAGE:

Ben and Brian at 7 in their underwear, jumping on their parents bed.

Ben runs past camera which follows him down the hall and into the living room then outside, where Darryl is walking towards the house from the old combine. Ben runs in his underwear and bare feet on the dirt to his dad. Brian appears, running behind as Darryl gathers Ben up in his arms. The camera pushes up to Darryl and his two sons. Darryl smiles for the camera and keeps walking inside.

Rolling wheat fields, IN SLOW MOTION, from a truck driving along a two lane highway.

Darryl drives the old pickup truck with the twins in the bend cab with him, making funny faces at the camera pointing in the passenger side window, obviously held by Emily in the back of the truck.

Emily appears with her horse, Belle. She climbs up in the saddle gracefully and pops out of the top of frame for a moment before the camera tilts up to her sitting in the saddle. Emily rides off into the field and the camera cuts.



Melissa, eleven years younger, works in the kitchen. She takes a pie out of the oven and smiles for the camera, heavily backlit from the windows.

The twins again, getting their buzz cuts at the barber shop, both of them in the chairs at the same time, goofing off.

THE END