

SCRIPT TITLE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. 6TH-GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY (POV)

Spring 1999, Des Moines, Iowa. Bespectacled & hungry BEN Smith, 11, clearly sees wall clock approach 12 noon as:

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BLDG. - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Wall clock shows 12:00. Attractive/struggling secretary, divorcee & mother of 3, MICHELE Smith, 30, gets her purse & hurries away from her desk in high heels.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Michele hurries to & into her late-model used car.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHELE'S MOVING CAR

Car needs muffler & gas gauge is on "E".

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM

Ben sits alone at corner table with head resting on folded arms as STUDENTS eat hot lunch when Ben HEARS his chubby sister's metal leg brace on lower left leg scraping floor. Ben sits up when sister PAM Smith, 10, sits across from Ben.

PAM

Mom's going out with Dutch again.
She says she wants us to see his
farm. And you know what that means.

Ben returns his head to his folded arms on table.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVE-UP ATM

Anxious Michele gets cash from ATM & needs gas asap.

BACK TO:

INT. MICHELE'S MOVING CAR

Car SPUTTERS as gas station is on other side of railroad tracks where slow freight train approaches & blasts HORN. Michele risks crossing tracks & coasts to gas pump relieved.

BACK TO:

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - LATER

Ben & Pam sit alone in lunchroom, both with head on table.

PAM
(looks at clock)
Five more minutes.

BEN
Shut up.

They HEAR their mother's high heels approaching & hurry over to her as stressed Michele buys 3 hot lunches:

MICHELE
Sorry I'm late. We've got only five minutes to eat.

They eat fast & talk at table:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
Ben, how do like your new glasses?

BEN
I can see the blackboard now.

Pam laughs at her brother's dry sense of humor.

MICHELE
Grandma Merle's coming over.

PAM
No! I hate it when she babysits!

BEN
That's because she snores louder than YOU.

MICHELE
I have another date with Dutch.

BEN
Dutch? That's the name of a paint.

PAM
That's Dutch Boy, dummy.

BEN
Shut up.

MICHELE
Benjamin Smith, how many times have
I told you not to say that?

The bell RINGS. Michele gives Ben a 10-dollar bill:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
After you pick up Debi you can stop
for ice cream.

After return food trays they all hurry out of lunchroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DES MOINES SIDEWALK - LATER

DEBI Smith, 3, walks hand-in-hand with Ben as Pam trails
behind in her leg brace after exiting Debi's daycare.

BEN
(to Debi)
I'm getting chocolate ice cream.

DEBI
Me too!

The kids know cab driver ERNIE, 40s, skinny alcoholic, who
talks through passenger window when he pulls over to curb:

ERNIE
C'mon kids, I'll take ya home!

Pam & Debi get on back seat of cab, Ben rides shotgun:

CUT TO:

I/E. ERNIE'S PARKED & MOVING CAB

Pam helps Debi put on her seatbelt:

PAM
 (to Ernie)
 My mom said we can get ice cream.

DEBI
 Chocolate ice cream!

ERNIE
 (to Ben)
 Ice cream?

Ben shows Ernie the 10-dollar bill his mother gave him.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
 Then, let's go get some ice cream!

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. SMITH APARTMENT - NIGHT

Modest 3-bedrm apartment on 2nd-floor of house. Debi cries in Michele's bedroom as Michele gets ready for date. Pam lies on Michele's bed, not feeling well. Ben's washing dishes.

MICHELE
 (to crying Debi)
 Yes, Mommy's going out tonight.
 I'll bring you a treat if you're
 good for Grandma Merle.

BEN (O.S.)
 Mom, can Pam dry the dishes?

MICHELE (O.S.)
 Pam's not feeling well, Ben!

BEN
 (muttering to self)
 She's faking it.

Ben HEARS a car door outside & hurries to window:

BEN (CONT'D)
 Grandma Merle's here!

MICHELE (O.S.)
 Turn on the porch light for her!

GRANDMA MERLE, 60S, enters. Ben dreads wrinkled kiss:

GRANDMA MERLE
 Hello Benny!

Michele check's Pam's forehead for a fever:

MICHELE
You are a bit warm. Sleep in my bed
tonight.

In kitchen, Grandma Merle removes vodka bottle from purse.

GRANDMA MERLE
Benny, I'll finish those dishes.
Where's Pammy?

BEN
In Mom's room. She's pretending to
be sick. She ate too much...again.

Merle enters Michele's room. Michele dabs on perfume:

GRANDMA MERLE
(to Michele)
What's wrong with Pammy?

MICHELE
She's got a slight fever.

GRANDMA MERLE
(to Pam & Debi)
How does hot chocolate sound?

Pam smiles at her brother while nodding yes with excited Debi as Michele checks herself in mirror:

GRANDMA MERLE (CONT'D)
(to Michele)
Well don't you look all fancied up!

When Ben leaves bedroom with Merle:

PAM
(to Michele)
Mom, how come you're so beautiful
and Dad married someone else?

MICHELE
(in dresser mirror)
Oh, Pam, you should be happy your
father found someone else.

PAM
Why can't I go with Dad to Korea?

MICHELE
We've gone over this many times and
I'm not going to discuss it now.

Ben sees DUTCH Beal, 50s, park his baby-blue '57 T-bird. Ben's wary of this farmer ascending steps in dress boots, suit & string tie. Weather-worn Dutch has bag of ice cream.

BEN
He's here!

Ben opens door as Grandma Merle makes hot chocolate.

DUTCH
(to Ben & Merle)
Hi there!
(gives ice cream to Ben)
Make sure you share that with your
sisters.

BEN
(pushes up glasses)
I will.

Michele enters kitchen with Debi. Dutch is impressed.

MICHELE
Hi.

DUTCH
Hello there.

BEN
(closes freezer door)
Dutch brought us ice cream.

MICHELE
I see that.

Pam enters in pajamas; she doesn't like any man who might replace her dad. Michele's wary of Debi's crying episodes:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
Merle, there's baby aspirin in the medicine cabinet if her temperature goes up.
(points @ phone by fridge)
Dutch's phone number is there, under the phone.

GRANDMA MERLE
Oh, go on! We'll be just fine! Get out of here and go have some fun!

Ben & Pam watch from window as Dutch opens front passenger door for happy Michele. As they watch T-bird drive away:

PAM
I'll bet she marries him.

BEN
Shut up.

BACK TO:

INT. SMITH APARTMENT - LATER

Kids eat ice cream watching Boy Meets World on TV as Merle happily smokes by open window & sips her vodka on ice.

CUT TO:

I/E. DES MOINES STEAKHOUSE

Dutch's precious T-bird is parked away from other vehicles.

Dutch & Michele enjoy prime rib & drinks. At nearby table:

FARMER'S WIFE
(to husband)
Good Lord, she's half his age.

CUT TO:

EXT. STEAKHOUSE PARKING LOT - LATER

Dutch & Michele exit steakhouse holding hands. Dutch sees & knows REDNECK DRUNK with cowboy hat who parks close to T-bird & purposely BANGS his door into the T-bird. Big mistake:

DUTCH
(to Michele)
Wait here.

Michele sees Dutch examine damage to his T-bird then:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
You're gonna pay for this.

REDNECK DRUNK
It's just a scratch, Beal!

Drunk redneck sees Michele, removes cowboy hat & winks at her. Dutch knocks him to ground & Michele stops Dutch from kicking the man to death. T-bird tire rolls over cowboy hat.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING T-BIRD - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch is breathing hard & Michele is shaken by incident.

MICHELE

I hope you didn't kill him.

DUTCH

He's an asshole with no brains.

MICHELE

You know him?

DUTCH

He owns a junkyard in Ames with his old man, who's even dumber.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING T-BIRD - LATER

Dutch turns onto rural gravel road that leads to his well-maintained 400-acre farm near Ledges State Park by Boone.

MICHELE

You said you were married for nine years and no children...

DUTCH

That was a long time ago.

(laughs)

She left me for California, where there's more people than cattle.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER

High heels on muddy ground as very large dog, DUKE, BARKS at Michele then soon cowers & WHINES at Dutch's feet.

MICHELE

Does Duke bite?

DUTCH

(not kidding)

Only if I tell him to.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

On porch of 2-story old farmhouse Dutch proudly shows impressed Michele his full freezer of wrapped meat.

Michele likes large kitchen.

DUTCH
Bathroom's in there. Too small for
this big ole house.

Dutch leads Michele into large living room sparsely furnished with recliner & pole lamp facing console TV.

In master bedroom, Michele sits on king-size bed after admiring antique roll-top desk. Dutch looks hopeful.

BACK TO:

INT. SMITH APARTMENT

Ben's awake on his twin bed. He gets up, puts on glasses, opens door & HEARS Grandma Merle's snoring.

Ben checks Pam's forehead for fever as Debi is asleep beside her sister. Pam's eyes flutter open. Her lips are dry.

BEN
(whispers above snoring)
I'll get you some cold water.

Ben opens fridge & light reveals telephone with Dutch's phone number. Ben fills glass of water from fridge pitcher.

Pam drinks water, then Ben pats cold washcloth on Pam's face:

PAM
(urgent whisper)
Ben, I had this dream about Dad: I
was on the front seat of his red
convertible. We were parked facing
a lake with the top down. He took
off his wedding ring and told me to
open my hand. He put the ring on my
palm and squeezed it shut, Ben.
Then he kissed the top of my head.

BEN
So what?

PAM
(crying whisper)
Ben, he was saying goodbye to me.

After Ben helps her with another drink of water:

PAM (CONT'D)
It was so real, Ben.

After Ben adjusts washcloth on Pam's forehead:

PAM (CONT'D)
Do you think Mom will marry Dutch?

BEN
(stern whisper)
Go to sleep. Don't wake up Debi.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL FARMHOUSE - LATER

Dutch & Michele are asleep when kitchen phone RINGS, waking Michele in dark bedroom.

MICHELE
Dutch... It might be Merle.

Dutch's naked body heads for kitchen phone.

DUTCH (O.S.)
(answers wall phone)
Hello. Hello.

Michele HEARS Dutch's footsteps returning to bedroom:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
Wrong number. They hung up.

After Dutch gets back into bed:

MICHELE
(concerned about call)
If it rings again I'll answer.

BACK TO:

INT. SMITH APARTMENT - DAY

Kids are asleep as Merle has coffee at kitchen table when Michele returns home from overnight date with Dutch.

GRANDMA MERLE
Well, good morning!

MICHELE
(happy whisper)
Good morning! How's Pam?

GRANDMA MERLE
She's snorin' like a lumberjack.

Michele sits with Merle & pays her cash for babysitting:

MICHELE
I made Dutch breakfast at five.

GRANDMA MERLE
That's a farmer. Get the chores
done. Does he have a nice place?

MICHELE
(heads for her bedroom)
Merle, it is SO nice.

Michele checks Pam for fever. They whisper as Debi sleeps:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
Your fever's down. How do you feel?

PAM
Okay.

MICHELE
You feel good enough for a movie?

PAM
Will you go with us?

MICHELE
I have things to do for Grandpa
Hutch.

PAM
He's not my grandpa. He's a dirty
old man who was once your step-dad.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHELE'S MOVING CAR - LATER

Ben's embarrassed by sound of MUFFLER. Pam laughs at Ben.

BEN
(ducks down)
Mom, when are you going to get that
muffler replaced?

MICHELE

When I can afford one, Ben. Count
your blessings for what we have.

PAM

(teasing & pointing)

Yeah, Ben.

BEN

Shut up!

MICHELE

That's enough! Both of you!

CUT TO:

INT. MICHELE'S PARKED CAR - LATER

Downtown parking lot, Michele puts on lipstick in mirror:

PAM

My leg hurts! Can I wait here?

MICHELE

(in rear-view mirror))

Hutch likes to see all you kids.

PAM

He can't see anything!

Ben laughs at Pam's impression of blind Hutch.

MICHELE

(to Pam in mirror)

And don't be making those faces,
pretending to be blind in front of
Hutch. He's taking us to lunch and
treating you kids to a movie.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN DES MOINES SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

The girls walk hand-in-hand with Ben trailing. As they near
seedy dark hotel's front entrance to stairway Pam recalls:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. HUTCH'S DARK HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Ben exits room to restroom. Pam's alone in room on chair when blind, silver-haired HUTCH, 70, seated on his bed, makes his way over to scared Pam. She gets away before he touches her.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

I/E. HUTCH'S HOTEL ENTRANCE - (PRESENT)

Smith family enters & stands at bottom of 2-flight stairway as sharp-dressed blind Hutch walks down stairs with cane on forearm as same friendly cab driver Ernie trails Hutch:

ERNIE
Hi Michele.

MICHELE
Hi Ernie. Who's that handsome man
in the sharp suit?

Hutch smiles big as he descends closer, his sightless blue eyes bright & sinister, causing Pam to duck outside fast.

CUT TO:

I/E. DOWNTOWN BAR - LATER

Ernie smokes a cigarette in his cab while parked in lot as:

Hutch & Michele seated on barstools at bar having lunch while Ben sits across from Pam & Debi in booth having lunch:

PAM
(discreetly to Ben)
Look, he's touching Mom's leg.

BEN
Shut up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Ben's burning up with fever at his desk when BEN'S TEACHER:

BEN'S TEACHER
(whispers to Ben)
Benjamin, you're excused to go
home. Leave your books.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALK - LATER

Ben's weak legs meander on sidewalk as he recalls:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. KEN SMITH'S PARKED CONVERTIBLE - DAY

KEN Smith, 30s, Navy man in uniform, is parked alone with son Ben. Ken is distraught because of soon divorcing Michele:

KEN
(crying)
Leaving you and your sisters is the
hardest thing I've ever done.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Ben collapses on lawn in front of his apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH APARTMENT - LATER

Ben shivers in bed under his covers as Michele reads his temperature on thermometer as Debi cries & Pam worries:

PAM
(to Michele)
What's his temperature?

MICHELE
A hundred-and-three.

DEBI
(cries)
Ben's sick!

MICHELE
He'll be better in the morning.

BACK TO:

INT. SMITH APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Michele nurses Ben's fever:

Pam's in her bed praying for Ben.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMITH APARTMENT - DAY (SUMMER)

Dutch parks T-bird as Smiths hurry downstairs dressed for a picnic. Pam is without leg brace & Michele's a blonde.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING T-BIRD - LATER (POV)

Near Beal farm, Dutch drives on gravel road where Ben & Pam see trees of 1200-acre Ledges State Park a quarter-mile away.

BEN
(to Dutch, points)
What's that place?

DUTCH
That's Ledges State Park, where
we'll have our picnic.

DEBI
(on Michele's lap)
Picnic!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch parks on graveled lane in front of old 1-stall garage. Duke circles T-bird. Pam & Ben are wary of Duke. Debi sees & points at wild cats by back porch & cob house.

DUTCH
(to kids)
Duke won't bother ya.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Ben scans farm: outhouse; shop & machine shed; elevated gas tank; chicken coop; hog barn/hayloft & hog yard; huge cattle yard with cattle & calves in pasture on other side of dirt service road; feed house; expansive back & front yard with tall trees. Then: Ben focuses on farm's tallest building behind hog yard: 50-foot high corncrib. Plenty to explore.

Dutch & girls exit house with picnic supplies Dutch puts on truck bed of pickup parked near shop. Pam sees Ben gazing up at lone window atop tall corncrib.

CUT TO:

I/E. DUTCH'S MOVING PICKUP - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Pam & Ben ride on truck bed, backs against cab as they pass entrance sign to "Ledges State Park". Ben's impressed with tall trees & 75-foot-high sandstone ledges. A stream spills over onto road as PARK VISITORS play in Ledges. Ben likes the trails, bridges & walkways in this oasis in boring farmland.

PAM

Ben, what's Dutch's real name?

BEN

How would I know? Ask him.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES PICNIC SHELTER - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch parks near picnic table & barbecue grill.

MICHELE

It's so beautiful here.

Pam gives Ben a knowing look when Michele kisses Dutch.

BEN

Mom, can I look around?

DUTCH

(smiles at Michele)

I'll honk when the meat's done.

Ben walks toward the highest ledges in the park.

BACK TO:

EXT. LEDGES PICNIC SHELTER -LATER

Pam watches Dutch's burgers & hot dogs sizzle on the grill.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES INSPIRATION POINT

Ben hikes up railroad tie steps near summit & HEARS Dutch's horn signal. Winded, he stops & heads back down steps.

BACK TO:

EXT. LEDGES PICNIC SHELTER - MOMENTS LATER

Ben returns winded & excited as he joins family at table:

BEN

Mom, it's cool here! There's so many trails to explore! I made it to the top of the highest ledges!

Pam is not happy about Ben's enthusiasm.

BACK TO:

EXT. LEDGES PICNIC SHELTER - LATER

Finishing their meal at picnic table:

PAM

Mom, can I have another hot dog?

DUTCH

(to Michele)

You think she should eat three?

MICHELE

(upbeat to Pam)

We'll split one without a bun.

BACK TO:

EXT. DUTCH'S MOVING PICKUP - LATER

Leaving Ledges after picnic, Ben & Pam ride on truck bed:

BEN

(teasing laugh)

You think she should eat three?

PAM
(jabs Ben's side)
Shut up.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES ENTRANCE AREA - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

GENE Rainbow, 30s, nods his head no constantly & rarely speaks ever since childhood accident. He wears state uniform: baggy pants & T-shirt, an orange vest while picking up trash with gloves & putting in garbage bag. Gene watches Dutch's truck leave Ledges & head for the farm. Dutch & Gene share a mysterious connection to Ledges they both want to forget.

Gene removes 2 AA batteries from pocket, rubs them together, thinking of something he has to do later as his head nods no.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Pam trail's Dutch's upstairs tour with hitch in left leg.

Dutch swings open door to storage room as Michele holds Debi's hand at doorway with Ben & Pam behind them.

DUTCH
Storage room in here.

Dutch leads the way to end of 2nd-floor hallway to large furnished bedroom with pink walls, queen-sized bed, dresser & vanity with windows that overlook large front yard's trees.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
This was my sister's room.

MICHELE
You girls will sleep here tonight.

Exiting bedroom they pass by a mysterious locked room:

PAM
(hoping)
Is that the bathroom?

DUTCH
Bathroom's downstairs.

Ben smiles at Pam.

Tour continues downstairs to Ben's room, next to master bedroom. Ben looks at double bed & dresser.

Dutch & Michele show kids front porch facing huge front yard.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
Ben, you ever drive a tractor?

Ben's eyes widen behind his glasses as he nods no.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN WINDOWS - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Girls watch thrilled Ben in central farmyard drive tractor (headlight on) as MUTED & patient Dutch straddles axle while shifting gears for Ben, who steers while using clutch into 2nd gear headed for the main road, causing the girls to move to west window then running for the front porch to watch Ben.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FARM ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Tractor in neutral, Ben's anxious about driving on road:

DUTCH
You got this Ben!

Ben's right hand takes over shifting as they leave farm:

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL FRONT PORCH - (POV)

Michele holds Debi as they excitedly watch Ben drive tractor. Pam is not happy about her brother's new experience.

BACK TO:

EXT. MOVING TRACTOR

Ben's thrilled driving tractor on gravel road (headlight on).

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CATTLEYARD - LATER

The Smiths watch Dutch feed cattle with same tractor in muddy dung-filled cattleyard. Michele sees Ben watching Dutch's every move. Pam knows this is more bad news.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - NIGHT

All enjoy prime rib dinner that Michele made. Michele & Dutch exchange smiles. More bad news for Pam.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL BATHROOM - LATER

Pam & Debi in bubble bath. Pam's listening to conversation in kitchen until Debi SPLASHES about.

PAM
(scolding whisper)
Quiet, I can't hear Mom!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM

Ben's listening too:

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN

Michele & Dutch talk while finishing supper dishes:

DUTCH
I want you and the kids to move in.

MICHELE
What are you saying, Dutch?

DUTCH
They may as well have the whole summer to get used to livin' on the farm before school starts. I could sure use Ben's help this summer. I'll pay him to hoe beans.

MICHELE

So, you're saying we get married
after school gets out?

DUTCH

(animated)

We drop the kids off at Dick and
Merle's... We fly to Vegas.

MICHELE

Okay.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pam, in bathrobe, sits on floor against door crying.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - LATER

Michele tucks girls in bed.

PAM

Mom, please leave the light on.

MICHELE

I'll leave the hall light on.

Ben waves goodbye to Pam, teasing her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DICK & MERLES'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ben waves goodbye to Michele & Dutch in Michele's old car
while holding crying Debi. GRANDPA DICK & Grandma Merle wave
goodbye from front porch. Brooding Pam tries to quiet Debi:

PAM

(in Debi's face)

Mommy will bring you a nice present
from Las Vegas!

(tries again)

Daddy's coming soon to take us to
Okoboji!

Debi stops crying. Everyone's grateful.

CUT TO:

INT. DICK & MERLE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Ben & Pam are in bed on each side of sleeping Debi, laughing at Dick & Merle's intoxicated conversation upstairs:

GRANDMA MERLE (O.S.)
Those damn kids are drivin' me
nuts, Dick! They eat, fight, and
run all day! Pam eats like a horse!

Ben laughs.

GRANDMA MERLE (CONT'D)
Debi cries all day for her mommy
and Ben steals change from my
purse! That's your daughter and
your grandkids and I'm doin' all
the God-damn work! I'm tired of it!

GRANDPA DICK
Ken will take them to Okoboji
tomorrow and you'll get a break.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. KEN'S MOVING CONVERTIBLE/RURAL IOWA - DAY

Chief Petty Officer KEN Smith, 30s, wears glasses & civilian clothes. He drives his red convertible with top down. Pam rides on front seat with Ben & Debi in back.

PAM
Is that your new wedding ring?

KEN
Yep. That's my new wedding band.

PAM
Your new wife's name is Mary.

KEN
Yep. She's Mary Smith now.

PAM
Does my name change when Mom
marries Dutch?

KEN
No. Not unless he adopts you.

PAM
I'll keep my name.

BEN

Me too!

KEN

(into rear-view mirror)

I hope so!

PAM

So we won't see you for two years?

KEN

South Korea's a long ways from
Iowa. Two years will fly by!

PAM

Promise?

KEN

I triple-promise!

Ben rolls eyes at Pam's drama. Ken points to billboard:

KEN (CONT'D)

Who wants ice cream!

KIDS

(in unison)

I DO!

BEGIN MONTAGE:

CUT TO:

I/E. OKOBOJI AMUSEMENT SHELTER/PARK - LATER

Pam selects & plays MUTED song on jukebox as Ben plays pinball. Debi, in Ken's arms, enjoys ice cream cone.

CUT TO:

EXT. VEGAS WEDDING CHAPEL

Newlyweds Dutch & Michele hold hands walking to rental car.

BACK TO:

EXT. OKOBOJI AMUSEMENT PARK - LATER

Ken & the girls watch Ben bounce on a trampoline.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVING ROLLER COASTER - LATER

The Smiths enjoy their ride on the roller coaster.

CUT TO:

I/E. VEGAS CLUB/RESTAURANT - LATER

Newlyweds enjoy meal with champagne on ice.

CUT TO:

I/E. OKOBONI COTTAGE - LATER

Ben chills by parked convertible in front of small cottage.

Ken helps Pam with leg brace as Debi bounces on king bed.

CUT TO:

I/E. OKOBONI RESTAURANT - EARLY EVENING

The Smiths enjoy dinner in a booth.

CUT TO:

INT. VEGAS HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

Dutch unlocks & opens door & carries bride over threshold.

END MONTAGE.

BACK TO:

EXT. OKOBONI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

After dinner, near convertible Pam HEARS ballroom music:

PAM

Daddy, can we go dancing?

BEN

You can't dance with your sore leg.

PAM
 (whines)
 I have my brace on. Please Daddy, I
 won't see you for two whole years.

CUT TO:

INT. OKOBOJI DANCE HALL - LATER

Ben's on chair holding sleeping Debi as his Ken & Pam join him after finishing waltzing on dance floor with few DANCERS.

KEN
 (to Pam)
 How's your leg?

PAM
 It doesn't hurt at all! Can we
 dance some more, please?

KEN
 It's bedtime, unless Ben wants to
 dance?

BEN
 (hands Debi to Ken)
 No way.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAKE OKOBOJI - DAY

Smiths are having picnic by lake. Brooding Pam picks at food.

KEN
 Aren't you hungry, Pam?

Pam starts to cry. Ben is wise to his drama-queen sister.

KEN (CONT'D)
 What's wrong, Pam?

PAM
 Why can't I go with you to Korea?

KEN
 Pam, you have to stay with your
 mother. She would never let you go
 that far away, you know that.

BEN
 (to Pam)
 Quit whining. You're making Dad
 feel bad.

Ben watches Pam use her braced leg to torture their father.

KEN
 (holds Debi)
 Ben, Pam, come here.

Pam sits by Ken on picnic table with Ben standing nearby:

KEN (CONT'D)
 Ben, I want you to take care of
 your sisters while I'm gone.

Pam leans into Ken's side while smirking at Ben.

CUT TO:

INT. KEN'S MOVING CONVERTIBLE - LATER

Top down near Boone on rural highway. Ken has an idea:

KEN
 (to kids)
 We must be close to the farm. I'd
 like to see your new home. You
 know how to get there from here?

BEN
 It's close to Ledges State Park!

Pam is not excited about seeing the farm.

CUT TO:

I/E. SLOW-MOVING/STOPPED CONVERTIBLE - LATER

Ken's lost on the fringe of Ledges by river on dead-end
 gravel road. He stops, turns off engine to look at map.

Ben HEARS faint music beyond weed-choked fence-line; he
 unbuckles seat belt & tries to see where music's coming from.

BEN
 Dad, do you hear music?

PAM
 I do.

KEN
 (listening)
 I hear it. Maybe somebody's fishing
 nearby or having a picnic.

DEBI
 Picnic!

BEN
 Can I go see?

KEN
 Maybe they want some privacy, Ben.

BEN
 Dad, I won't bother anybody.

KEN
 (back to map)
 Just for a few minutes, till I
 figure out where the heck we are.

After Ben hops out of convertible:

KEN (CONT'D)
 Don't sneak up on anybody!

BEN
 I won't.

EXT. OLD RURAL CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Ben crosses old fence & sees old grave markers in tall weeds.
 MUSIC is more distinct. He walks toward music gape-jawed:

KEN (O.S.)
 Ben, come on back now!

BEN
 Dad, you have to see this!

Soon, Ken & Ben stare at 6-foot decorated Xmas tree with
 silver star atop. Tree is between two graves marked "RAINBOW"
 on a well-maintained family plot. They step closer to see
 wrapped presents under tree & idle toy train on tracks that
 circle base of tree. MUSIC plays from battery-operated radio.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (points to graves))
 Why do they say Rainbow?

KEN

That was their last name. Strange
there's no date of birth & death or
first names. These are old graves.

BEN

Why would someone leave music on
and these presents under a
Christmas tree in the summertime?

KEN

I have no idea. Sure is strange. We
better get back to the girls.

Ken & Ben head back:

BEN

I wonder what's inside those
presents.

KEN

(smiles)

Maybe nothing.

BEN

I wish Pam had seen it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FARMHOUSE/GARAGE AREA - LATER

Ken drives down graveled lane & stops near front of house.
Ken sees Dutch's precious T-bird parked in open garage.

KEN

That's a classic T-bird. How does
he leave a car like that unguarded?

INT. KEN'S IDLING/MOVING CONVERTIBLE - (POV)

Pam turns back to Ben, both realize their fear out loud:

BEN & PAM

Duke.

Ben & Pam see Duke prowling toward them, picking up speed:

BEN & PAM (CONT'D)

Go Dad!!

Ken sees Duke running toward them & floors it across front
yard to dirt service road with Duke chasing them off farm.

PAM (O.S.)
That's our new home.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. DICK & MERLES'S HOUSE - DAY (5 DAYS LATER)

Ben watches from front window as he HEARS his mother's car:

BEN
They're here!

Suntanned, radiant Michele Beal gives hugs & kisses to kids, then laughs at smiling Dick & Merle on porch who have kids' bags packed & ready for Dutch to load in Michele's old car.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHELE'S MOVING CAR - LATER

As Dutch drives his new family home; Debi on Michele's lap:

BEN
(above loud muffler)
Mom? Dad and I saw a Christmas tree in a cemetery near Ledges!

Dutch doesn't let on that he's interested.

MICHELE
(turns back to Ben & Pam)
Your father was at Ledges?

BEN
He wanted to see the farm!

PAM
Duke chased us away!

BEN
(excited)
Mom, there was a toy train with music playing from a tiny radio under the Christmas tree! The graves only said Rainbow!

MICHELE
Rainbow?

DUTCH
(turns onto gravel road)
Gene Rainbow.
(MORE)

DUTCH (CONT'D)

He's a local character who works part-time for the state picking up trash in the park and he cleans the school buses for the county.

(points beyond Ledges)

Gene jumped off the High Bridge when he was a boy. It messesd up his brain or somethin'.

(demonstrates)

He shakes his head no, back and forth day and night.

MICHELE

That's so sad! But why a Christmas tree in the cemetery?

DUTCH

His folks are buried there. He keeps it like that year 'round.

PAM

Is his last name really Rainbow?

DUTCH

Yep.

DEBI

(points to sky)

Rainbow!

Only newlyweds laugh as Ben & Pam look at distant Ledges.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - PRE-DAWN

Ben's asleep when his door opens & light comes on:

DUTCH

Ben! Get up! Time for chores!

Ben squints & fumbles for glasses & dresses in a daze.

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Michele serves groggy Ben breakfast. He wears jeans/T-shirt.

MICHELE

I'll get you a sweatshirt, and you'll have to get some overshoes.

Michele sees Ben looking absently out window:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
Ben, what's wrong?

BEN
It's still dark.

Frugal Dutch enters from back porch dressed in overalls:

DUTCH
Ben, why's your bedroom light on?

MICHELE
(covers for Ben)
I left it on when I went in to find
Ben a sweatshirt.

Michele heads for Ben's bedroom after serving Dutch's breakfast. Ben's eyes thank her for taking the blame.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL HOGYARD/BARN - LATER

City boy Ben wears sweatshirt & Nikes on tip-toes following Dutch's over-boots in dark dung-laden dirt hog yard.

Dutch turns on lights in barn as NOISE from hungry sows alarms Ben. Dutch shovels dung from barn floor to hog yard. Dutch hands Ben shovel & pair of old work gloves:

DUTCH
Scoop this shit out of here.

As Ben shovels shit he sees Dutch slapping & kicking hogs:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
(to squealing hogs)
MOVE! GET OUTTA THE WAY!

Just then: a herd of smaller hogs enters the barn:

DUTCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ben! Use that shovel on the rack to
put five scoops of those pellets in
that trough! Spread it out some!

Dutch exits barn & barn swallow swoops over Ben's head, causing Ben to spill pellets on floor & fearfully pick up.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MORNING (POV)

Michele watches from window: Dutch takes cash from FARMER who buys her old car. Dutch kicks tailpipe & gives farmer title.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Michele takes her prescription for depression with tap water.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL HOGYARD/BARN

Ben finishes scooping. He removes gloves & sees blisters.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN

Debi & Pam in pajamas at breakfast table with Michele.

MICHELE
Pam, you start your diet today.

PAM
I know! Dutch thinks I'm fat.

MICHELE
No! He never said that!

PAM
He told me not to eat so much.

MICHELE
You shouldn't eat so much and let
your weight get out of hand. Extra
weight is hard on your leg. Did you
turn off the lights upstairs?

PAM
(rolls eyes)
Yes. Dutch is really a tight-ass.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - DAY (2 WEEKS LATER)

Hot summer afternoon as Ben scratches his name in the dirt with heel of dirty Nikes. Pam stands on the letter "B".

BEN
Get off it!

PAM
Show me how the pigs eat out of your hand.

Pam follows Ben to:

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL HOGYARD/BARN - MOMENTS LATER

When Ben gives Pam a handful of pellets in barn:

PAM
You've got blisters.

BEN
No kidding.

PAM
It smells like shit in here.

They exit barn dropping a few pellets for hogs. Ben shows Pam how SQUEALING hogs chase him for pellets around hot hogyard.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch rolls out from under tractor on a creeper, listening:

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL HOGYARD/BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Ben & Pam are having fun running from hogs until:

DUTCH
(angry as hell)
You kids get outta there! Those hogs are here to gain weight!

Ben & Pam walk fearfully toward Dutch at open gate.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

After closing the gate, Dutch kicks Ben in the buttocks:

BEN
Sorry, I won't do it again.

Duke circles as Pam sympathy-limbs toward the house. Pam turns her head back to see Ben get another kick that drops Ben face-down on ground, his glasses flying off his face.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL BACK PORCH/COB HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Pam's on back porch & sees Dutch zip-down his overalls to remove his black leather belt from his jeans, terrifying Ben.

DUTCH (O.S.)
Get in the cob house!

BEN (O.S.)
(pleads)
Dutch, I won't run the hogs again!

DUTCH (O.S.)
Get in there!

Pam HEARS her brother pleading & sound of a belt spanking.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL FRONT PORCH/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Debi's helping Michele clean windows when they HEAR Pam:

PAM (O.S.)
Mom! Mom!

Michele sees Pam is hysterical & breathing hard:

PAM (CONT'D)
Dutch kicked Ben and gave him a
spanking for running the hogs!

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH/COB HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Michele sees Ben exit cob house humiliated to the core.

DUTCH
Go to your room, Ben!

Ben hurries to back porch as Dutch zips up his overalls:

MICHELE
(shocked)
What happened?

DUTCH
(angry)
They were running the hogs.

Dutch heads back to his shop. Michele is stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN/BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In doorway to upstairs, Michele turns on light for Debi to climb stairs alone:

MICHELE
Tell your sister I'll be up soon.

Michele is stressed out; she takes medication with tap water.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michele enters room after light KNOCK on door; Ben's curled up on his bed & facing window, humiliated. She sits on bed.

MICHELE
Ben, Dutch's animals are important
to him in ways we don't understand.
(rubs his back)
This is a big adjustment for all of
us, Ben.
(looks for glasses)
Where's your glasses?

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Michele picks up Ben's dirty glasses from ground.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Michele stands by tractor as Dutch works from creeper:

MICHELE
Dutch!

Dutch rolls out, looking up at his angry wife.

MICHELE (CONT'D)
My kids are NOT farm kids! They
were raised in the city and
EVERYTHING is new to them HERE! I
NEVER spank my kids! And YOU NEVER
will again.

Dutch rolls back to work. While turning a wrench:

DUTCH
They could've gotten hurt real easy
by those hogs, Michele. You don't
know...

MICHELE
(squats down)
And you TEACH them that by
explaining it to them! You don't
kick them or SPANK them like
they're livestock!
(softer)
I've seen your temper, Dutch.
You're a strong man.

Dutch keeps his focus on work. Angry Michele leaves shop.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ben's in bed listening to his mother & Dutch arguing:

MICHELE (O.S.)
I want you to promise me you won't
be physical with my kids again.

DUTCH (O.S.)
I'll promise you that if they DON'T
get SOME discipline when they screw
up, they'll get hurt on this farm.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - NIGHT (A WEEK LATER)

Family dinner. Michele is back to brunette.

DUTCH
(to Ben)
Tomorrow after chores we'll haul
some hogs to the yards. Afterwards
we'll drive over to South Dakota to
get some fireworks.

BEN
Can we get some bottle rockets?

DUTCH
Roman Candles, bottle rockets, some
big fountains, all that stuff.

Ben smiles at his mother as Pam is not impressed.

CUT TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - PRE-DAWN

Dutch wakes up Ben. Ben hops out of bed, dresses fast.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL HOGYARD CHUTE - DAWN

Ben helps Dutch load several SQUEALING hogs into hog trailer.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING BEAL PICKUP - DAY

Ben looks at his blistered hands as Dutch drives.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIOUX CITY STOCKYARDS - LATER (POV)

Ben watches Dutch unload hogs from trailer with swift kicks & sees that ominous belt with the "D" on Dutch's belt buckle.

CUT TO:

I/E. FARM IMPLEMENT STORE - LATER

Dutch buys over-boots & gloves for Ben.

Ben helps Dutch load boxed 6'-square wading pool for girls.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREWORKS STAND - LATER

Dutch & Ben carry large bags of fireworks to Dutch's truck.

END MONTAGE.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MORNING (4TH OF JULY)

Ben unravels bandoliers of firecrackers. At his feet are several plastic army men standing in formation as:

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - (POV)

Before descending stairs for breakfast, Pam sees Dutch reach up to ledge above locked door & retrieve key to locked room.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Pam joins Debi at breakfast table as Michele is about to serve them breakfast. They HEAR Dutch coming downstairs.

DUTCH
You girls ready for a surprise?

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA - MOMENTS LATER

They follow Dutch outside. They see a garden hose leading to 6'-square, 18"-high blue wading pool filling with water.

DEBI
(jumps for joy)
A swimming pool!

DUTCH
I don't know about swimming in it,
but you'll get wet. Should be warm
enough in a few hours in this heat.

Michele kisses Dutch on his cheek as Duke rests nearby.

MICHELE
Girls, what do you say to Dutch?

PAM & DEBI
(in unison)
Thank you, Dutch.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD

Near shop, Ben lights firecracker with burning wick & tosses it at positioned army men. A miss. Ben is startled by:

DUTCH (O.S.)
That was close!

Dutch lights & tosses firecracker & blasts 2 downed army men.

BEN
Good one!

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - LATER (POV)

Pam sees a man walking down lane toward the house:

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL GRAVEL LANE

Gene Rainbow with his negative nod wears boots, baggy pants, T-shirt & worn red baseball cap with "GENE" printed in white soiled letters on cap. He brings gifts.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH/CENTRAL FARMYARD/SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Duke greets Gene with friendly tail-wagging as Ben turns to see who KNOCKED on back porch door as Dutch is in his shop.

MICHELE
(to nodding Gene)
Hi!

Girls follow Michele outside. Gene gives Michele dozen eggs.

MICHELE (CONT'D)
Thank you...
(looks at moving hat)
Gene!
(extends right hand)
I'm Michele.

Gene smiles, pointing at his hat, all-the-while nodding no as wide-eyed thumb-sucking Debi & Pam stare at Gene's handicap.

MICHELE (CONT'D)
(to nodding/smiling Gene)
This is Debi. Debi, can you say hi to Gene?

DEBI
(with thumb in mouth)
Hi, Gene.

MICHELE
And this is Pam.

PAM
(returns Gene's smile)
Hi, Gene.

Gene removes wrapped bubble gum baseball cards from pants pocket & points to Ben in the central farmyard watching them.

MICHELE
That's Ben. I'll introduce you.

After Ben tosses another firecracker at his plastic target:

MICHELE (CONT'D)

Ben, this is Gene.
 (shows Ben eggs)
 He brought us some fresh eggs and a
 gift for you, I think.

Ben takes baseball cards offered in Gene's calloused hands:

BEN

(to nodding/smiling Gene)
 Thanks.

Michele walks away waving to Gene with Debi in-hand:

MICHELE

Nice meeting you Gene!

Gene waves with nodding smile. Ben sees Gene looking at his targets. Ben hands Gene wick & firecracker. Gene lights & throws firecracker that HITS target. Gene SQUEALS with joy:

BEN

Good shot, Gene!

Gene's smile ends when sees Dutch looking at him from shop:

DUTCH

(nods & wipes hands)
 Gene.

Ben sees that Gene is wary of Dutch as Dutch approaches:

DUTCH (CONT'D)

Gene, I hear you want to drive a
 school bus for the county?

GENE

(strains)
 Test... Monday.

DUTCH

And the driving test?

Thumbs up from Gene as Pam kneels by Ben setting up targets:

PAM

(whispers to Ben)
 The Christmas tree.

DUTCH

(to Gene)
 Ya know the board may not approve
 you. Ya know that, don't ya, Gene?

Gene's nod speeds up with a thumbs up & eyes averted.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
(returning to shop)
Good luck, Gene.

Ben & Pam watch Gene walk away:

BEN
Thanks for the baseball cards!

Gene waves to Ben. Gene walks fast to graveled lane as Dutch wipe hands with oil rag in front of open shop garage door.

DUTCH
(to Ben & Pam)
I want you kids to start usin' the outhouse when you're outside! We need to save well water because of the wading pool!

As Dutch walks into his shop:

PAM (O.S.)
But there's wasps in the outhouse!

DUTCH
They won't bother ya!

Pam's terrified of wasps as she looks at her brother:

PAM
I have to pee now.

BEN
(points to outhouse)
Well... Go.

PAM
(pleads)
Ben, PLEASE stand by the door!

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL OUTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Pam fears wasps flying near ceiling as she pees. When she tries to leave outhouse Ben holds door shut:

PAM (O.S.)
BEN! LET ME OUT! I'M TELLING MOM!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/STORAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

After outhouse ordeal Pam discreetly enters storage room.

Pam opens boxes until finds boy's clothing.

Pam exits storage room & stops at locked mystery room. She looks up to ledge above door's frame where Dutch keeps key.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Pam sits at vanity combing hair. She exits room with comb.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Pam comes downstairs. Debi colors at table with Michele:

PAM

Mom, my comb slid under the door
that's locked and I can't get it.

MICHELE

(stops coloring)

How'd that happen?

PAM

It fell out of my hand and my foot
kicked it. Will you get it for me?

MICHELE

I'll have Dutch get it later.

PAM

(whines)

No, Dutch might get mad at me.

MICHELE

I don't have the key.

PAM

It's above the door. You can reach
it, Mom, please...

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/LOCKED ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michele gets key from ledge above door, unlocks & opens door:

Pam & Michele see 1930/1940-era model airplanes suspended from ceiling by strings. Room is small, hot, & no windows.

PAM
(looking at airplanes)
Dutch must like airplanes, Mom.

Michele gets comb, blows off dust, locks door & returns key:

MICHELE
C'mon, help me make your bed before
Grampa Hutch gets here.

Hutch's 4th of July visit is bad news for Pam.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As mostly Michele makes the bed:

PAM
Why does he have to come here?

MICHELE
He hasn't met Dutch, so we invited
him out to the farm.

PAM
He can't see it anyway.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD RURAL CEMETERY - (POV)

Gene nods faster upon reaching his family plot. He drops to his knees near the torched Xmas tree reduced to ashes. The melted train & radio; the presents & silver star: blackened.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES STATE PARK - LATER

Gene hikes through the park, a shortcut home.

CUT TO:

I/E. DARLENE'S HOUSE - LATER

Gene reaches & enters his brother's shanty house after seeing a familiar pickup parked by front door.

Gene scans filthy front room: full ashtrays, dirty glasses, old sofa & chair covered with dirty clothes. The kitchen is a mess. Darlene's parents work long hours packinghouse.

Gene enters bedroom of his wild redneck niece DARLENE Rainbow, 14; she's having sex with LOCAL BOY, 17. Gene's boot pushes the boy off her bed. Gene exits room & boy soon after:

DARLENE
UNCLE GENE!

Darlene wraps her body in sheet & chases boy to his truck as Gene walks to & enters his trailer parked behind the house.

DARLENE (CONT'D)
What about my smokes?

LOCAL BOY
(before drives away)
Because of that crazy retard uncle
of yours...no smokes for you!

DARLENE
(to dust cloud)
Asshole! Bring me those smokes or
you ain't gettin' no more from me!

CUT TO:

I/E. GENE'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Wrapped in a sheet & barefoot, Darlene walks toward Gene's trailer. An old bicycle leans against trailer.

Gene sits with a floor fan blowing on him when Darlene enters. Gene's nod is fast in his spartan/clean trailer.

DARLENE
How are you going to drive a bus
when you only have that bicycle?

Darlene stands in front of fan. Gene removes cap & hangs his nodding head over back of chair with eyes closed. She gets a cold washcloth in kitchen & pats his moving head. Darlene secures the sheet above her breasts & sits on Gene's lap. She laces her fingers behind his neck, thumbs on each side of his jaw slowing his nod, whereupon Gene raises his head:

DARLENE (CONT'D)
(into his tearing eyes)
Hold me.

She falls onto his chest embracing him. His nod stops:

GENE
(Boy Gene's voice)
I want you to stop giving your body
to these guys, Darlene.

Darlene cries with Gene as they hold each other.

GENE (CONT'D)
I know I can do good drivin' a bus.
I practice a lot.. The money I
make can buy clothes for you. And
get a washin' machine for you and
your mom.

DARLENE
I don't need no washin' machine or
new clothes. You need your money
for that operation in Iowa City.
You have to show them how your head
stops, and maybe they can make it
stop for good. And I'll go with ya.

GENE
I won't go for no operation. They
say it may paralyze me on one side.

Darlene holds his chin, stopping Gene's nod.

GENE (CONT'D)
At least now I can walk and ride my
bike. I went over to Dutch Beal's
farm today. I met his wife and her
three kids.

DARLENE
Did he say anything about drivin'
for the county?

GENE
He doesn't think I can do it.

DARLENE
(little girl's voice)
Uncle Gene, can you buy me a pack
of smokes?

GENE
Would you steal 'em if I say no?

Darlene nods yes and laughs as:

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL WADING POOL/FRONT GRAVEL LANE

Michele & the girls enjoy wading pool in bathing suits as Pam HEARS Duke growling at Ernie's cab coming down the lane:

PAM (O.S.)
Oh no, dirty old Hutch is here.

MICHELE (O.S.)
Pam, stop it.

CUT TO:

I/E. ERNIE'S PARKED & MOVING CAB - MOMENTS LATER

Ernie's wary of DUKE resting near cab's front bumper as blind Hutch extends twenty-dollar bill to Ernie from back seat as Michele opens back door of cab:

MICHELE
Hi Ernie! You're welcome to eat
with us.

HUTCH
Ernie has plans in Boone! He'll
pick me up at seven.

Michele
(takes over)
Ernie, come back at seven for
potato salad and fireworks.

Hutch exits cab with cane & bottle of bourbon. Hutch wears Bermuda shorts, silk shirt, knee-high socks & canvas shoes.

ERNIE
There's a big dog on my bumper.

MICHELE
He'll move.

Duke chases Ernie's cab off the farm as Michele leads Hutch:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
Poor Ernie. He's so scared of Duke.

HUTCH
 (cynical smile)
 He'll be drunk soon, and won't even
 remember it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Pam covers herself with a beach towel as Hutch nears:

MICHELE
 There's Pam.

HUTCH
 (blind & wide-eyed)
 Happy Fourth of July, Pammy!

Hutch extends an arm expecting a hug but Pam runs into house.

MICHELE
 She's upset because she had to use
 the outhouse.

HUTCH
 You do have indoor plumbing?

Michele laughs as Dutch approaches from his shop:

DUTCH
 Hello Hutch! I'm Dutch.

Hutch smiles at Dutch as Duke returns & GROWLS at Hutch.
 Dutch SNAPS his fingers & Duke goes away submissively.

MICHELE
 (to Dutch)
 Where's Ben?

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB ENTRANCE/PLATFORM - (POV)

Ben climbs 40-foot-high attached ladder to corncrib's platform, a 10-ft-wide walkway between massive corn bins filled with sea of corn & level with the platform.

It's stifling hot on platform. Ben goes to lone window & sees the farm & distant Ledges.

Ben tries to open stuck window by pounding window frame until knife-sized piece of glass from window falls to the floor.
Ben panics: stabs piece of glass into corn near platform.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA/BACK YARD

Pam helps Debi light black snakes on the back patio bricks.
In shaded area by house Dutch lights his charcoal grill.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN

Michele's busy as Hutch sits at table with bourbon on ice.

HUTCH
Are your city kids adjusting to
farm life?

MICHELE
I think they are.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM

Ben walks on support beam over sea of corn & steps into corn:

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK YARD - LATER

Hutch sits in shade by card table covered with food that Michelle sets up as Ben approaches Dutch grilling his own meat: hot dogs & hamburgers.

MICHELE
Where have you been?

Ben shrugs.

HUTCH
(barks)
How's Ben been?

BEN
(doesn't like Hutch)
Fine.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Ben watches Pam light black snakes for Debi.

PAM
(excited whisper)
Ben, you should've seen the model
airplanes hanging from the ceiling
in that locked room upstairs.

BEN
(discreetly)
How'd you get in there?

PAM
I had Mom get the key on the door
ledge. It was creepy in there, Ben.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK YARD - LATER

Kids eat on blanket as tipsy Hutch eats & drinks from TV tray
with Michele's assistance. Dutch enjoys his burger & beer as:

HUTCH
(tipsy singing)
Dogs and burgers on the Dutch Beal
farm!

Only Dutch & Michele think Hutch is entertaining.

PAM
Ben, I have to go to the bathroom.

BEN
(points to outhouse)
The wasps are waiting for you.

Ben watches Pam limp toward the outhouse.

EXT. BEAL OUTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Pam enters the outhouse & exits right away:

PAM

Mom, there's wasps in there!

DUTCH (O.S.)

They won't bother ya!

Pam enters outhouse. Ben tosses in lit lady finger: POP! Pam exits pulling her pants up, screaming mad at her brother as Hutch's obnoxious-sounding LAUGHTER sends Pam fuming into the house to finish her business. To Ben's relief: Dutch laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Topsy Ernie warily sits on hood of his cab eating potato salad & watching Dutch launch his fireworks from makeshift launcher as Duke eyes Ernie. Michele & Hutch sit on folding chairs as Ben helps Dutch load rocket launcher while Pam & Debi twirl sparklers on gravel lane. Michele HEARS phone ringing in house, grabs Hutch's empty glass:

MICHELE

One more for the road.

Pam watches her mother run to front porch door as more rockets are launched & explode above farm. Soon:

MICHELE (CONT'D)

(from front porch door)

DUTCH! TELEPHONE!

Dutch hustles to house. Pam eyes the dirty old man she hates.

PAM

(discreetly to Ben)

Give me one of those cherry bombs.

BEN

No way. They're too much for you.

PAM

(stern whisper)

Give me one or I'll tell Dutch you peed in the bathroom!

BEN

What are you gonna do with it?

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch hangs up phone. CHERRY BOMB explodes in front yard.
Michele carries Hutch's drink, following angry Dutch.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Debi CRIES, Duke BARKS as Michele & Dutch see Ernie helping injured Hutch onto the back seat of cab.

INT. ERNIE'S PARKED CAB

Hutch has minor burns on legs & angry with messy hair.

MICHELE
Hutch, what happened?

HUTCH
Your BRATS tried to blow me up! My ass and legs are numb! My ears are ringing! Did you bring my drink?

After Michele puts Hutch's trembling hand around glass:

MICHELE
Where's Ben and Pam?

DUTCH
Duke! Get 'em!

Michele is concerned as Duke runs toward the front road.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL GRAVEL ROAD

Ben & Pam run on the dark road. Pam limps, unable to keep up.

BEN
(stops running)
We have to go back!

Ben walks back to Pam. They're both breathing hard as Duke arrives & escorts them back toward the farm & Dutch.

PAM
Easy for you to say.

BEN

I gave it to ya and lit it! That'll
get me in the cob house for sure!

PAM

What about me? I'm the one who put
it under his chair!

(laughs)

Did you see his face when he
flipped backwards off his chair?

Ben's too fearful of Dutch to see the humor right now.

PAM (CONT'D)

We'll say it was an accident.

As they see Duke chase after Ernie's cab leaving the farm:

BEN

Ernie had to see it!

PAM

It's our word against his. I can
say I got scared when I lit it and
I threw it at Hutch by mistake.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT YARD/GRAVEL LANE - MOMENTS LATER

Michele holds Debi as Ben & Pam arrive. Dutch is in his shop.

MICHELE

I suggest you both go to your rooms
and stay there.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - LATER

Ben's in bed listening to his mother & Dutch argue:

DUTCH (O.S.)

Sending them to bed early is NO
punishment! Hutch could SUE ME for
damages, for Christ's sake!

MICHELE (O.S.)

It was an accident, Dutch! Ernie
even said it was!

DUTCH

That Pam has a temper. I think she
meant to do it.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. BOONE COURTHOUSE - DAY

Gen's old bike leans against a tree near the courthouse.

Gene's head nods fast as COUNTY OFFICIAL checks test results:

COUNTY OFFICIAL

A perfect score, Gene. You've aced
your vision and written tests.
After lunch you'll take the driving
test. See ya at one, Gene.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOONE MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gene wears his "GENE" cap low. He picks up sidewalk litter.

CUT TO:

INT. BOONE CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Gene sits at counter nodding at open menu as WAITRESS:

WAITRESS

What ya gonna have, Gene?

Gene points to menu for her. Gene gives her thumbs up after:

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

(writes up order)

Goulash special and a Coke.

BACK TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

After lunch, Gene watches fast-moving freight train speed
through downtown Boone. His fast nod is from past trauma.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL SOYBEAN FIELD - DAY

Hot early morning, Dutch shows Ben how to machete-chop weeds:

DUTCH
Get 'em low! Don't hit the beans!

Dutch gives machete to gloved Ben & walks to his truck:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
I'll leave ya water! Make it last!

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL SOYBEAN FIELD - LATER

Hotter & mosquitoes as sweaty & exhausted Ben SNEEZES from ragweed, glasses slide down nose while hoeing beans. Ben misses: chops down bean stalk & re-plants it fearfully fast.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL SOYBEAN FIELD - LATER (POV)

Lunchtime: Ben examines his blisters as Dutch's pickup nears.

INT. MOVING/PARKED BEAL PICKUP - (POV)

Michele & girls bring Ben's lunch, more water, insect repellant & sunscreen. Debi cries seeing Ben's condition:

BEN
(to Debi)
Shut up!

As exhausted & hot Ben enjoys water, sandwich & A/C, Michele applies sunscreen & repellant to Ben's sunburned skin:

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm so tired, Mom.

MICHELE
(compassionate & upbeat))
I know, honey. At least you'll make
some money for your hard work.

As Pam & Debi start to sing "Jesus Loves Me":

BEN
Shut up!

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. GENE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Bedroom light is on at one end of Gene's trailer.

Smiling Gene lies on his bed with eyes closed as fan blows on him. His slow-moving head rests on Bible. Open letter under light: "Gene Rainbow: Trial probation period APPROVED to drive a school bus for Boone County School District."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL BUS STOP - (POV)

First day of school:

BEN
Here it comes!

Yellow school bus nears: Ben & Pam are dressed in new school clothes as Michele holds Debi's hand across road from farm.

CUT TO:

I/E. MOVING/STOPPED SCHOOL BUS

Bus door opens manually by smiling/nodding Gene in baggy pants, flannel shirt & "GENE" cap:

MICHELE
Hi, Gene! Congratulations! Mind if we come aboard?

Thumbs up. Michele carries Debi onto bus after Ben & Pam (no leg brace) sit behind Gene. The few BUS PASSENGERS stare at Michele & these new rich Beal kids on their route:

MICHELE (CONT'D)
(exiting bus)
See, Debi, this is what it looks like inside a school bus! One day you can ride to school on it, okay?

As Michele & Debi wave goodbye from bus stop:

PAM

(discreetly to Ben)

I hope she doesn't do this every day.

(watches Gene in mirror)

Gene drives good. It just looks like he's checking his side mirrors all the time.

BEN

Shut up.

BACK TO:

INT. MOVING/STOPPED SCHOOL BUS - LATER

Gene stops to pick up 8th-grade niece Darlene as she butts her cigarette at bus stop in front of her house. Darlene wears knee-high socks, short dress; her hair wild & messy; she chews bubble gum fast as she sits alone across the aisle from Pam & Ben. She's thrilled to see her uncle driving bus:

DARLENE

Good morning, Uncle Gene!

Gene puts finger to lips as if to say no talking to driver. Darlene catches shy Ben looking at her & she winks at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOONE K-8 SCHOOL - LATER (POV)

Gene parks bus in front of school. He opens door & stands outside smiling & nodding to exiting passengers. Ben sees the same belt buckle as Dutch's with "D.J." on Gene's buckle.

BEN

(to Pam)

Did you see Gene's belt?

PAM

(concealing limp)

No, why?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - DAY

Saturday: Ben sights down the barrel of new BB rifle at one of his army men & misses until 3rd try. Ben smiles at a kill.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kids watch SNORING babysitter BONNIE in recliner with TV on:

PAM

(whispers to Ben)

Who's doing the dishes? You know Dutch doesn't like coming home to dirty dishes.

BEN

If you dry the dishes I'll stay in your room tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - LATER

Debi's sleepy at table as Pam finishes drying the dishes:

BEN

Take her to bed. I'll be up soon.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM/MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben turns off TV and HEARS snoring sitter.

Ben turns on Dutch's desk lamp, finds Dutch's bank book with "100,000.00 Balance" Ben finds more bank books & "Accidental Death Policy on: Michele, Ben, Pam & Debi".

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - LATER

Debi is asleep between Ben & Pam in dark bedroom:

PAM

Who do you think D.J. is?

BEN
How would I know?

PAM
When do you think Dad will call us
from Korea? I mean South Korea.

BEN
How would I know?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL PASTURE - DAY

Saturday morning in October: Dutch & 3 SKEET SHOOTER farmers stand with shotguns 20 feet behind stacked bales of hay:

DUTCH
PULL!

The disc-throwing arm hurls the clay saucer way out. Dutch HITS it. Just then: Ben stands up from behind bales of hay:

BEN
Good shot, Dutch!

Gene's powerful arm yanks Ben down. Gene's hat is turned backwards on his moving head as Ben loads another disc:

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Gene, that was dumb.

Thumbs up & smile as Gene releases disc after:

SKEET SHOOTER #1
PULL!

After another HIT & while reloading, Ben surprises Gene:

BEN
What does D.J. stand for? On your belt, the one you wear on the bus.

Ben notices Gene's trembling fingers on release button:

SKEET SHOOTER #2
PULL!

CUT TO:

I/E. MOVING BEAL PICKUP - LATER

Gene & Ben ride with hay bales on Dutch's truck bed as 2 skeet shooters follow in truck. As Dutch drives:

SKEET SHOOTER #1
How 'bout Gene Rainbow, bus driver?

DUTCH
I hear he makes his route on time.

SKEET SHOOTER #1
(laughs)
I hear the kids mind him 'cause
they're scared of him. Yeah, Gene
the bus driver, who'd a thought...

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL TOWN CAFE - LATER (POV)

Dutch & skeet shooters sit in booth with backs to Ben & Gene. Ben sees Gene's lowered nodding head scribble something on a napkin, fold it & keep it in fisted hand until:

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVING/STOPPED BEAL PICKUP - LATER

Near Gene's trailer, from Dutch's truck bed:

BEN
You live in Darlene's house?

Thumbs down, Gene points to his trailer then discreetly gives Ben folded napkin from cafe & exits truck bed. As Dutch drives away, Ben opens napkin & reads "DUTCH JUNIOR".

CUT TO:

INT. GENE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gene lies on bed with Bible under head, his eyes closed with "D.J." belt buckle on his heart he recalls his best friend:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. LEDGES STATE PARK - DAY (OCTOBER, 1975)

BOY GENE, 12, his head is still as he walks along stream:

D.J. (O.S.)
GENE!

D.J., 12, runs down timbered steps that lead up to highest point in Ledges. He wears his "D.J." buckle on belt.

BOY GENE
I thought you'd chicken out.

D.J.
(walking together)
I almost did. If my dad finds out I skipped school to cross High Bridge, I'm dead.

Boy Gene smiles at his best friend as they exit park to:

CUT TO:

EXT. DES MOINES RIVER'S BANK - LATER

Boy Gene & D.J. walk along riverbank trail to High Bridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH BRIDGE - LATER

Railroad bridge 185' high, spans half-mile across river. Boys have climbed up to & under frame of bridge & just under the tracks, side-stepping slowly on one of two iron ledges with crisscross timbers between the ledges 20 feet apart & 20 feet of terrifying space 18 stories above the black-shaded river. D.J. leads them to a cross-beam they have to straddle every 50 feet then back onto the ledge. They keep side-stepping, nearly halfway across bridge. Boy Gene's afraid of heights.

D.J.
If we get caught: I'm tellin' my dad we were goin' fishin'!

BOY GENE
Without a rod?

D.J.
You think of somethin' then!

BOY GENE
I can't think now!

D.J.

Your dad ever whip your ass for
shit you did?

BOY GENE

No, he just looks at me with his
sad, tired eyes. But we're NOT
gonna get caught, so quit talkin'
about it!

(changes subject)

When's your mom get out of that
crazy place?

D.J.

(fires back)

She's not crazy! It's a hospital!
She had a nervous breakdown!

BOY GENE

You said she tried to kill herself!
That's pretty crazy!

D.J.

Shut up!

BOY GENE

I have to pee!

D.J.

Go ahead!

BOY GENE

Wait for me!

As D.J. waits for Gene to finish peeing, he HEARS something:

D.J.

Listen!

They HEAR a distant freight train approaching the bridge:

BOY GENE

What do we do?

D.J.

We can't go back. We gotta find a
place to hang tight when it starts
shakin'. On the cross beam...

They go to nearest cross-beam & straddle, shaking increases:

D.J. (CONT'D)

Hold onto me!

Gene wraps arm over D.J.'s back. Both hold ledge with one hand as long train reaches bridge causing more vibration. NOISE & intense vibration moves Gene's hand off ledge:

BOY GENE
I'm losin' my grip on the ledge!

Train RUMBLES overhead as D.J.'s body is vibrating off the cross-beam. Gene grabs D.J.'s hand as D.J.'s other hand slips off the ledge, causing D.J.'s body to fall off cross beam:

D.J.
(terrified)
Hold me, Gene! Don't let me go!

BOY GENE
(into eyes)
I won't!

Soon: Gene sees D.J.'s long fall into the swirling river far below. Stunned Gene gets to his feet on the ledge, then QUIET, the train passes. Gene leaps into the void & river.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

INT. GENE'S BEDROOM/BATHROOM

Gene holds his breath, his nod moves faster with D.J.'s actual belt, the buckle in-hand with voices from the past:

ADULT VOICES OF PAST (V.O.)
They tried to kill themselves! A
suicide pact! It took that Beal kid
two cracks at it! His mother's in
that mental hospital! What a shame.

Gene gets up, enters bathroom: takes aspirin with tap water.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM/HALLWAY

Ben motions for Pam to come out to hallway as Debi plays.

Ben shows Pam the napkin:

PAM
(reads out loud)
Dutch Junior.

Ben hushes Pam, so they both whisper in hallway:

BEN

Gene gave it to me. This means
Dutch had a son. I asked Gene what
D.J. stands for and he wrote that.

PAM

A son? That explains the clothes.

BEN

I think we should tell Mom.

PAM

No, not yet. What if Gene's making
it up, or, I don't know...

BEN

You know Gene's not like that.

PAM

Maybe he can write more stuff if we
ask him to. And maybe Mom already
knows and it's no big deal. Don't
say anything. It may be nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ben hides napkin in bean money envelope under mattress.

CUT TO:

I/E. MOVING/PARKED SCHOOL BUS - DAY (POV)

Next morning: Gene parks bus in front of school.

Ben & Pam notice Gene isn't wearing "D.J." buckle.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL FRONT ENTRANCE/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ben & Pam follow Darlene until Pam's sore leg causes:

PAM

Darlene!

Unpredictable Darlene stops, turns, chewing gum fast:

PAM (CONT'D)
Do you know anything about Dutch
Junior?

DARLENE
D.J. That was Uncle Gene's friend.

Darlene disappears into maze of ARRIVING STUDENTS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STOPPED/MOVING SCHOOL BUS - DAY (WINTER)

After school: Pam & Ben board bus in winter coats. Darlene hops onto bus without a coat. Gene gives Darlene his coat.
BOY PASSENGER sits in Darlene's usual seat:

DARLENE
Outta my seat, cracker!

Boy wants nothing to do with wild Darlene & leaves seat.

BEN
(to Pam)
Mrs. Jorgenson gave me a part in
this stupid Christmas play. I have
to give the introduction.

PAM
(teases)
I'd be scared to do that. You can't
even hide behind a character.

BEN
Shut up.

As bus leaves school:

DARLENE
(to Ben & Pam)
Uncle Gene bought a car! He said
if I don't flunk anymore classes
I'll get the car when I graduate!

BACK TO:

INT. MOVING/STOPPED SCHOOL BUS - LATER

When bus stops at Darlene's house, as Darlene exits bus:

DARLENE
 (to Ben & Pam)
 See ya tonight!

Ben & Pam are confused as bus moves on.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Pam overhears her mother & Dutch as they get ready to go out:

MICHELE (O.S.)
 How old is Darlene?

DUTCH (O.S.)
 I don't know. Ask her. I know she
 won't eat as much as Bonnie does.

MICHELE (O.S.)
 How do you know her?

DUTCH (O.S.)
 She's Gene Rainbow's niece. I know
 her folks Ray and Charlotte.

MICHELE (O.S.)
 What do they do?

DUTCH (O.S.)
 They work long hours at the pork
 plant in Carroll. They stay in a
 travel trailer all week. Darlene's
 independent. She's a tough girl.

Pam goes into kitchen where Ben is washing dishes:

PAM
 Guess who's babysitting us?
 Darlene.

BEN
 She smokes. Mom won't let her smoke
 in the house.

Pam imitates Gene's head nod:

BEN (CONT'D)
 What?

PAM
 (whispers)
 D.J.

BEN

Darlene doesn't know anything. Dry
the dishes.

PAM

(drying dishes)

I hear she goes out with guys in
high school, even older.

BEN

So?

PAM

So, she's only in eighth grade.

BEN

She should be a freshman, but she
flunked a grade.

PAM

How do you know so much about her?

BEN

I hear things.

PAM

My leg hurts. If you dry these
I'll help you learn your lines.

BEN

Okay.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE

It's winter cold as Gene HONKS from his idling used car.
Darlene exits her house in Gene's coat he gave her on bus.

CUT TO:

I/E. GENE'S STOPPED/MOVING CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Gene takes cigarettes from (his) coat pocket:

DARLENE

Okay! No smoking in the Beal house!

As Gene drives to Beal farm:

DARLENE (CONT'D)

I hear Mrs. Beal is real pretty.

Thumbs up, head nodding while eyes focused on driving:

DARLENE (CONT'D)
What should I say if Ben and Pam
ask me about D.J.?

Gene waves his hand no & puts a hushing finger to his lips.

DARLENE (CONT'D)
Okay! I won't say anything.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL GRAVEL LANE/BACK PORCH - LATER

Darlene exits car, runs to back porch in Gene's coat as:

BACK TO:

I/E. GENE'S STOPPED/MOVING CAR - (POV)

Gene looks at Beal house & drives away slow, recalling:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. LEDGES INSPIRATION POINT - DAY (AUGUST, 1975)

It's hot, 2 months before their fall from High Bridge. Boy Gene runs up timbered steps to Inspiration Point, highest point in Ledges & sees sad D.J. sitting on edge of ledge looking absently at view. Boy Gene sits next to D.J.:

D.J.
(eyes on view)
When I die I wanna be buried in
that little cemetery where your
grandparents are buried. I know it
won't happen 'cause my dad's folks
are buried in Boone.

D.J. starts sobbing; Gene puts his arm around his friend:

BOY GENE
What's wrong?

D.J. cries, choked up with emotion, unable to speak.

BOY GENE (CONT'D)
You miss your mom?

D.J. leans into Gene's shoulder sobbing. Gene holds him:

D.J.
(into Gene's shoulder)
I put a bunch of holes in the
chicken coop windows with my BB
gun. He pushed my face to the
windows. Then he whipped me with my
belt in the cob house and locked me
in that room upstairs.

BOY GENE
The one with the model airplanes
and no window?

D.J. nods yes into Gene's shoulder as D.J. continues:

D.J.
(sobbing)
It was so hot in there! If I had my
belt I would've hung myself beside
his precious airplane collection.
He wouldn't let me out, Gene!

Gene cries with D.J. while he holds & rocks his friend.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

I/E. GENE'S MOVING/PARKED CAR - LATER

Gene parks car beside his trailer after dropping off Darlene.

Gene places his nodding head over seat, closes eyes & cries.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN

Dutch, dressed up, sits at table with Darlene. Gene's coat draped over chair. Dutch notices a hickey on Darlene's neck.

DARLENE
My Uncle Gene bought a car!

DUTCH
I heard that he did. Good for him.
(changes subject)
How are your folks?

DARLENE
Fine. Workin' long hours as usual.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL MASTER BEDROOM

Michele's dressed & ready after she dabs on perfume from bottle on dresser. She dons coat & grabs purse.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Ben watches TV on floor. He follows his mother into kitchen to meet Darlene. Darlene's intimidated by Michele's beauty:

MICHELE
Hi Darlene!

DARLENE
Hi.

DUTCH
(exiting to back porch)
I'll warm up the bird.

MICHELE
(to Darlene)
Bedtime for the kids is ten. The girls take their bath around nine.
Help yourself to anything.

Pam & Debi come downstairs & enter kitchen.

MICHELE (CONT'D)
(wary of crying spell)
Debi, this is Darlene, your babysitter tonight. Bonnie's sick.

DEBI
Darlene, wanna see my room?

DARLENE
Sure!

MICHELE
Pillow and blanket's on the sofa for you, Darlene

DARLENE
Okay, thanks.

MICHELE

Ben, why don't you show Darlene around.

DEBI

Upstairs first!

Pam kisses her mother goodbye as Ben leads girls upstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Darlene's on floor with Debi peering into dollhouse:

DARLENE

I always wanted a dollhouse.
(to Ben in doorway)
You guys have a CD player?
(after Ben nods no)
I know! I'll call my Uncle Gene!
He'll bring my CD player and
something for you, Ben!

Debi runs out of room with Darlene & Ben turns off light.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Gene arrives with bags of goodies: Darlene takes CD player & CDs into living room with Pam & Debi as Ben & Gene sit at kitchen table assembling model airplane gift for Ben. Darlene has the girls dancing to Buddy Holly's "That'll Be the Day".

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - LATER

Ben & Gene are at table admiring finished model airplane as the girls come in from living room flushed from dancing:

DARLENE

Whatcha got there, Benny?

PAM & DEBI

(teasing Ben)

Benny!

Just then: Darlene stands behind Gene's chair & wraps her arms around Gene, squeezing his chest. Kids watch in awe as their bus driver's nodding head slows then stops moving:

DARLENE
(holding Gene/whispers)
I love you, Uncle Gene.

GENE
(Boy Gene's voice)
I love you too, Darlene.

DARLENE
(to Gene)
Somethin' you wanna say?

Darlene rests her head on Gene's still head, her eyes closed.

GENE
I better get home. Call me if ya need anything.

The kids see Darlene release hug & Gene's nod returns. As Gene puts on his coat:

DARLENE
(to kids)
If ya hold him his head stops shakin'. He talks real good too.

Gene exits to back porch to put on shoes & over-boots.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL BATHROOM - LATER

Darlene shaves her legs & underarms enjoying bubble bath.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Under Dutch's desk light Darlene fills Dutch's pipe with tobacco. Snoopy Darlene smells Michele's perfume in bottle on dresser then admires Michele's wardrobe in closet.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Via window: Ben sees Darlene smoking pipe in cob house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - DAY

Ben eats breakfast. Dutch enters from porch & sees model airplane on table & examines it as Michele washes dishes:

MICHELE

Ben put that together by himself!

BEN

Gene helped me.

DUTCH

Gene brought this last night?

BEN

When he brought Darlene her CDs.

DUTCH

(puts plane on table)

Ben, after breakfast, shovel the back patio and a path to the shop. Shovel's in the cob house.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PATIO/SHOP AREA - LATER

10" of snow: snowbanks from shoveling are high near cleared patio as haggard Ben finishes path to Dutch's shop, bad news:

DUTCH

(at shop doorway)

Ben, shovel a path to the T-bird's garage and out to the mailbox!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Nervous Ben stands off-stage soon to open Xmas play. Dutch & the girls are seated in front row. Gene's seated in back row as lights dim. Lone light shines on stage as Ben walks out alone. Michele & Pam are anxious for Ben.

BEN
Good evening ladies and gentlemen.
A Christmas Night begins in a small
town...like ours.

Ben forgets his next line when he looks at Dutch in audience:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - DAY

Ben flashes back to time when Dutch kicked him to the ground.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben's teacher, MRS. JORGENSON, gives Ben his line. Pam glares at GIGGLING boys near her. Ben exits stage & play begins.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Ben's steps outside without coat, then HEARS car horn:

DARLENE
(in Gene's idling car)
Ben! Over here!

Darlene's behind wheel smoking a cigarette with window down:

DARLENE (CONT'D)
I thought you were in the play?

BEN
I was. My part's over. I sucked.

DARLENE
Get in.

CUT TO:

INT. GENE'S PARKED CAR - MOMENTS LATER

As Ben warms up in Gene's idling car:

DARLENE
Wanna go for a ride?

BEN
I better not.

DARLENE
Then, BYE! 'Cause I do.

CUT TO:

INT. GENE'S MOVING CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Darlene drives the speed limit around downtown Boone:

DARLENE
Your mom doesn't like me, does she?

BEN
I don't know.

DARLENE
Then how come I don't babysit you
and your sisters anymore?

BEN
My mom says Pam and I are old
enough to babysit Debi now.

BACK TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - LATER

Darlene parks in same spot.

INT. GENE'S PARKED CAR

Darlene turns off engine & surprises Ben:

DARLENE
(smiles while chewing gum)
I know how you can find out more
about D.J.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - DAY (XMAS EVE)

Pam & Debi wear silk pajamas their father sent from Korea.
Pam waits for her dad's call. Michele answers on 1st RING:

MICHELE
 (on wall phone)
 Merry Christmas! We're all fine!
 Pam's been waiting for your call!
 Yes, she's wearing her gift now!
 Here's Pam while I round-up Debi
 and Ben!

PAM
 (on phone)
 Merry Christmas, Daddy!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Michele hurries into the warm shop as Dutch tinkers:

MICHELE
 Have you seen Ben?

Dutch nods no.

MICHELE (CONT'D)
 Ken's on the phone. I told Ben to
 stay by the house.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

From window: Stoic Ben HEARS then sees his mother calling for him from central farmyard. Ben turns quickly, aims & fires BB rifle at standing baseball card at other end of platform. Ben walks to & sees "baseball card player shot through his EYE".

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - DAWN (XMAS MORNING)

Excited Debi (in silk pajamas) enters Ben's room & wakes him:

DEBI
 Ben! Santa brought you a bike!

Ben hustles out of bed in his new silk pajamas.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben turns on headlight of new red 26" 3-speed Schwinn bike as Dutch & Michele exit bedroom in robes & slippers. Michele's happy to see her kids enjoying gifts from Santa by Xmas tree.

MICHELE
(to happy kids)
Merry Christmas!

Michele exits room to make coffee as Ben sits on bike:

DUTCH
(to Ben)
You know ya can't ride that till
spring.

BEN
When's spring?

DUTCH
(bad news for Ben)
Maybe late March this year.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN/BATHROOM - LATER

Dutch finishes breakfast & heads for back porch to do chores:

MICHELE
(to Dutch)
You're not working Christmas
morning.

DUTCH
(smiles)
Cattle have to eat on Christmas
too. Unless you wanna feed 'em?

After Dutch exits to back porch to dress for chores:

DEBI (O.S.)
Mommy, look in your Santa stocking!

Michele opens bathroom medicine cabinet to take medication:

MICHELE
Be there in a minute, sweetie!

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH/COBHOUSE - DAY

Ben shovels snow The Wallflowers song "One Headlight" begins.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - LATER

Ben shovels deep snow at entrance to T-bird's garage.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL COB HOUSE - LATER

MUSIC STOPS before lyrics begin as Ben turns on light to smile at his new bike covered by clear plastic

END MONTAGE.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL HOG BARN - (PRE-DAWN)

It's 20 below. Ben shivers holding light for Dutch as Dutch castrates SQUEALING pigs with razor, causing Ben to:

BEGIN DAYDREAM:

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES STATE PARK - DAY

Spring in Ledges. The Wallflowers song "One Headlight" begins as Ben rides bike in park. MUSIC STOPS before lyrics begin:

END DAYDREAM.

BACK TO:

BEAL HOG BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Ben's startled back to reality:

DUTCH (O.S.)
God-dammit Ben! Keep that light up!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL COB HOUSE - DAY

After castrations: Ben stares at his covered bike.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOVING/STOPPED SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Gene wears new plaid shirt. Ben holds onto mysterious paper bag. Pam jabs Ben's side when Gene stops to pick up Darlene:

PAM
(whispers to Ben)
She's wearing Mom's clothes!

BEN
(nervous)
Shut up.

Darlene runs onto bus to take her seat. Darlene's wearing Michele's black wool pants & gold sweater. As bus moves:

DARLENE
(turns to Ben)
Got somethin' for me, Benny?

Ben hands Darlene the mysterious bag. Gene sees the exchange:

DARLENE (CONT'D)
Thank you, Ben! Uncle Gene? Ben
and Pam got me a Christmas present!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - (POV)

Debi colors at table, wall phone RINGS, Michele answers as she sees Dutch in central farmyard walking in snow with Duke:

MICHELE
(on phone)
Hello.

HUTCH (O.S.)
(on phone)
Hello Princess! There's a rumor
about your husband I thought you
should hear the next time you
defrost my fridge.

MICHELE
What rumor?

CUT TO:

EXT. - DICK & MERLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Debi cries at window as Michele drives away in Dutch's truck.

CUT TO:

INT. HUTCH'S HOTEL STAIRWAY/HALLWAY/ROOM - LATER

The Wallflowers "One Headlight" begins as Michele climbs stairs to dark hallway: song STOPS before lyrics begin, right before Michele enters Hutch's room:

MICHELE
(enters Hutch's room)
Hello handsome!

Hutch sits at head of his bed cross-legged in boxers, sleeveless T-shirt & socks smoking a cigarette:

HUTCH
Hello princess! So nice of you to visit your blind ole step-daddy!

Hutch offers his empty shot glass for Michele to pour him a shot of whiskey. When she takes shot glass:

MICHELE
You shouldn't smoke in bed.

HUTCH
(impish grin)
I shouldn't do many things in bed!

Michele opens fridge/freezer doors, turns off freezer, emptying contents before pouring Hutch's shot of booze.

MICHELE
(delivers shot)
What's this rumor you heard?

Michele chips away frost from freezer with butter knife:

HUTCH
(after swallows shot)
You know Dutch was married?

MICHELE
(chipping frost)
Yes.

HUTCH
And they had a son...

MICHELE
(stops chipping)
Who told you that?

HUTCH
Dutch's lawyer.

Michele continues chipping harder & harder until:

HUTCH (CONT'D)
It seems that the first Mrs. Beal
was a raging alcoholic! Dutch made
her sign contracts drawn up by this
shyster! One of which was their
divorce papers that gave Dutch sole
custody of their son!

Michele's stunned by this news & moves closer to Hutch:

HUTCH (CONT'D)
His ex was still living on the farm
after their divorce was final and
without a clue! You better sit
down, Michele.

MICHELE
No, go on.

HUTCH
She had taken back her maiden name
on paper! Dutch had her committed
to a mental hospital in Cherokee as
a ward of the state!

MICHELE
What about the boy?

HUTCH
Not too long after his mother was
committed, he killed himself!

Michele's stunned; she sits at foot of bed:

MICHELE
No, this could be just a rumor.

HUTCH

I don't think so. You have to stay
on your toes with that Dutchman.
Get a lawyer and get all you can.

Michele returns to defrosting freezer & totally in her head.

CUT TO:

INT. DUTCH'S MOVING PICKUP - LATER

After Michele picks up Debi after Michele's visit with Hutch,
Michele's in her head about Dutch & runs a stop sign safely.

CUT TO:

INT. STOPPED/MOVING SCHOOL BUS

Duke BARKS from the Beal front yard as Gene stops to let Ben & Pam off-board: Darlene wears another outfit from Michele's wardrobe: a maroon dickie sweater & black pedal-pushers.

DARLENE

BYE, BEN!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - MOMENTS LATER

Ben & Pam walk down the lane:

PAM

Could you smell Mom's perfume?

BEN

I almost hurled on the bus.

PAM

You better pray Mom doesn't find out. You know she will, next time she goes out.

BEN

Shut up.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA - MOMENTS LATER

As Ben & Pam near the back porch door:

PAM
When's Darlene going to tell you?

BEN
I don't know!

PAM
You made a deal with her, Ben.

Michele's voice startles them at the open back door:

MICHELE (O.S.)
What deal?

BEN
Nothing, Mom.

PAM
We were talking about someone at
school.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ben & Pam are alone watching TV while lying on the floor:

PAM
(whispers)
Mom's worried about something.

BEN
(whispers)
You think she knows about her stuff
missing?

PAM
No. Ever since she saw Hutch she's
been on edge.

BEN
(snickers)
You sure got him good with that
cherry bomb.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BOONE K-8 SCHOOL - DAY

After school: Ben & Pam board bus. Banner above school front entrance: "WINTER CARNIVAL/SATURDAY NIGHT".

CUT TO:

INT. PARKED/MOVING SCHOOL BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Gene & Darlene are about to board the bus:

BEN
(discreetly to Pam))
You ask her. And don't chicken out.

PAM
(nervous about Darlene)
Shut up.

Darlene boards bus in pedal-pushers & perfume. Gene boards bus, closes door & drives as Ben & Pam switch seats:

PAM (CONT'D)
(motions Darlene closer)
Darlene, please don't wear my mom's
clothes to the carnival.

DARLENE
(discreetly pissed)
You think I'm stupid or somethin'?

PAM
(intimidated)
No, no, I didn't know if you knew
that my mom was going to be there.

BEN
(leans & intervenes)
She didn't mean anything by it,
Darlene.

Darlene turns to face them, leaning across aisle to them:

DARLENE
(discreetly)
I got what you want.

They watch Darlene reach down to waistband & remove a folded newspaper clipping from pack of cigarettes she hands to Ben:

DARLENE (CONT'D)
I was gonna bake it inside a cake
and surprise ya with it tomorrow
night at the carnival.

Ben fists the clipping, not wanting to read it now.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL BUS STOP/FRONT GRAVEL LANE - LATER

After exiting bus: Pam's slight limp follows Ben on his shovaled path as Duke BARKS at moving bus. Ben throws snowball at Duke, causing Duke to run away & stop barking.

PAM
Let's read it now.

BEN
(turns to Pam)
No! They might see us. You know my high place?

PAM
Where you broke the window?

BEN
Yeah. Meet me there after ya change clothes.

PAM
I can't climb up there.

BEN
I'll help ya. After I change clothes I'm goin' up there and hidin' it there.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - LATER

After changing clothes: Pam follows Ben as Dutch is welding.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL CORNCRIB ENTRANCE/PLATFORM - LATER

Ben helps Pam onto platform. She rubs her sore leg with red gloves as Ben sits under window. Ben gives clipping to Pam:

BEN
Read it to me.

PAM
(reads clipping)
Boy's Fall at Ledges Linked to Friend's Suicide Attempt. Boone County Sheriff's Office ruled 12-year-old Irving Beal, Jr.'s fatal fall at Ledges State Park an accident with no foul play. On October 1st, young Beal and classmate Eugene Rainbow skipped school according to their teacher. In Ledges, the boys were climbing at Inspiration Point when Beal fell to his death. Two hours after the accident, Eugene's body was found on the west bank of the Des Moines River 300 yards downstream from the 185-foot High bridge located 3 miles west of Boone. Rainbow's fall from High Bridge has been ruled a suicide attempt after his friend's fatal fall in Ledges. Rainbow's condition at a Des Moines hospital is critical. Irving Beal, Jr., is survived by his father, Irving Beal of rural Boone.

Stunned Pam gives Ben back folded clipping & they brainstorm:

PAM (CONT'D)
So Gene tried to kill himself after D.J.'s fall in Ledges?

BEN
Why would Gene walk that far to the bridge?

PAM
I don't know, maybe he had to get away from there...

BEN
You think Mom knows about this?

PAM
She may not even know about D.J. If she knew, she'd tell us. You know she tells us everything.

BEN
 (clipping in hand)
 Yeah. You think we should give her
 this?

PAM
 (stares at clipping)
 I don't know. Why wouldn't Dutch
 tell Mom about his son who died
 like that? Unless it was too
 painful..or..

BEN
 Or what?

PAM
 (points to clipping)
 Or that's not true.

Ben paces platform with clipping, gesturing wildly:

BEN
 We can't show Mom this if it's not
 true! Right? We've gotta find out
 from Gene! Remember? Darlene showed
 us he can talk!

Ben waves clipping at Pam, excitedly flailing his arms:

BEN (CONT'D)
 This: is our ticket OUT OF HERE!

Just then: in SLOW-MOTION they watch the clipping sail out of Ben's hand into sea of corn several feet from platform ledge. Ben panics & steps off ledge into corn with over-boots on:

PAM
 (runs to ledge)
 Ben! What are you doing?

Ben sinks fast in corn up to his waist; he must get clipping:

PAM (CONT'D)
 You're sinking! Pull out one of
 your legs and reach with your leg!
 No! Take your belt off and use it
 to get the clipping then reach me!

Ben removes belt, uses buckle end of belt to rake coupon to him. Pam, on her belly, holds end of belt so Ben pulls himself out after balling clipping & tossing it on platform:

BEN
 Oh, no, Pam, my boots came off!

Pam finishes pulling her exhausted brother onto platform as they both cry for different reasons. Ben's feet: only socks.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (exhausted & fearful)
 I'm in big trouble now, Pam. My new
 school shoes are inside my boots!
 Dutch will kill me. What do I say?

PAM
 (emotional)
 I almost lost you, Ben.

BEN
 I'm okay.

PAM
 I know!

Pam removes her red gloves & balls them together:

PAM (CONT'D)
 We'll tell Dutch we were playing
 catch with my gloves... And you
 went in the corn to get them.

BACK TO:

I/E. BEAL CORNCRIB ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

After Ben helps (gloveless) Pam down ladder he realizes:

BEN
 Oh, no, Pam, he'll see the window!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ben runs gingerly in socks on frozen ground as Pam limps after him. Then, Ben stops, another realization to Pam:

BEN
 The clipping. I tossed it on the
 platform. Did you pick it up?

Pam's negative nod is more bad news for them.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL BACK PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch is on the back porch when Ben, then Pam enters:

DUTCH
(to fearful Ben)
Where's your boots?

BEN
(stammers)
I lost them...in the corn...in the
corncrib.

DUTCH
You did what?

Ben's eyes freeze on Dutch's belt buckle as Pam intervenes:

PAM
It's my fault. I threw my gloves in
the air and they went in the corn.
And when Ben tried to get them for
me, his boots came off in the corn.

DUTCH
(mean eyes)
What were you doin' up there?

PAM
(protects Ben)
I wanted to see how high it was,
and see if I could see Ledges.

DUTCH
(to Ben)
Get some shoes on and show me where
they went in.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michele looks for perfume bottle on dresser; Pam enters:

PAM
(cries about Ben)
Mom, Ben's in trouble with Dutch!

MICHELE
What happened?

PAM

We were in the high corncrib and my
gloves fell in the corn! Ben tried
to get them and lost his boots in
the corn! Dutch made Ben go back
and show him where his boots are!

Before Michele hurries out of bedroom:

MICHELE

Watch your sister.

BACK TO:

I/E. BEAL CORNCRIB ENTRANCE/PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER

Michele stops to listen before enters corncrib as Dutch lifts sheet of plywood up ladder to Ben on the platform. Before Dutch climbs to platform Ben sees balled clipping on floor.

DUTCH

(carries plywood)

Where'd you go in?

BEN

(points)

By the gloves.

Dutch lays plywood on corn by gloves & sees broken window:

BEN (CONT'D)

That was broke when we got here.

DUTCH

Damn birds after the corn.

Ben's relieved about window. As Dutch crawls out on plywood Ben backs up discreetly to get clipping & is startled by:

MICHELE

I hear you had an accident!

Michele walks over to Ben as Dutch plunges arm into corn. Ben & Michele are anxious as Dutch makes another attempt in corn. Michele steps up to platform ledge & Ben picks up clipping.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL BACK PORCH/BEN'S ROOM - LATER

Ben's over boots are on the floor.

Pam enters Ben's room, sits on bed as Ben counts his savings:

PAM
You found your boots.

BEN
Dutch did.

PAM
And he didn't do anything?

BEN
Only because Mom was there.

PAM
(whispers)
You got the clipping?

Ben nods yes. Pam's relieved.

PAM (CONT'D)
You better hide it.

Michele lightly KNOCKS on door & stands in doorway:

MICHELE
Dinner's ready.

PAM
Mom, do we get to go to the
carnival tomorrow night.

MICHELE
I hope so.

BACK TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

In bed: Ben HEARS his mother & Dutch's inaudible (O.S.)
arguing about his over boot fiasco, triggering:

BEGIN DAYDREAM:

EXT. RURAL GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT

"One Headlight" begins as Ben pedals his new bike fast, away
from farm; again song STOPS before lyrics begin.

END DAYDREAM.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL COBHOUSE - DAY

Saturday morning: Ben prints "BEN" on cold bike's chrome.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - MOMENTS LATER

Ben's dressed warm in over boots as he walks to:

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES STATE PARK - LATER (POV)

Ben looks up to Inspiration Point & imagines D.J.'s fall.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES HIKING TRAIL/SCENIC OVERLOOK - LATER (POV)

Ben sees deer tracks on trail & follows tracks to rock that overlooks river & distant High Bridge.

END MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

I/E. GENE'S TRAILER - LATER (POV)

Ben sees Gene's car parked by his trailer.

Ben & Gene sit at Gene's small kitchen table after Gene serves Ben a cup of hot chocolate. Ben shows Gene clipping:

BEN

It says you jumped off High Bridge
after D.J.'s accident at Ledges. Is
that what happened, Gene?

Gene's head nods no as he struggles to speak then stands, breathing deep, folding his arms across his chest to relax:

BEN (CONT'D)
Can you write it down?

Gene waves no with hand then draws the letter "Y" in the air:

BEN (CONT'D)
Why?

Thumbs up from Gene. Ben confesses:

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm planning on running away, on my
bike. I need to know if my mother
and sisters are in danger.

Gene points to Darlene's house, wanting her to come over:

BEN (CONT'D)
Darlene? No!

Ben removes coat & hat, stands in front of Gene & rests his head on Gene's heart, embracing as Gene's nod slows & STOPS:

GENE
(Boy Gene's voice)
We skipped school and went to High Bridge. A train came and D.J. fell into the river. I jumped in after him. I was knocked out when I hit the water. D.J. must've gotten me to the riverbank. I was in a coma for two months in the hospital.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY FENCE - DAY (NEXT SPRING)

Boy Gene walks near cemetery & finds D.J.'s belt on fence.

GENE (V.O.)
Next spring I was walkin' by the old cemetery and D.J.'s belt was hangin' on the fence. I had to sit down and think about what it meant:

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

INT. GENE'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Gene & Ben continue to embrace standing so Gene can speak:

GENE
D.J. didn't want to face Dutch.

BEN
So he jumped off Inspiration Point?

Gene nods yes.

BEN (CONT'D)
Why'd he leave his belt there?

GENE
If I lived, he knew I'd find it
there. If I died, he wanted to be
there too, with me.

BEN
That's why you put the Christmas
tree there.

GENE
Dutch sent D.J.'s mom to a mental
hospital and paid to keep her there
with D.J.'s insurance money. They
don't pay off for suicide.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. DUTCH'S DESK - NIGHT

Ben recalls seeing insurance policies on his family.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

INT. GENE'S TRAILER

Gene & Ben embrace:

GENE
When you leave it'll be hard on
your mom. Does Dutch treat ya bad?

BEN
He kicked me and spanked me when we
first moved there. I'm scared all
the time that I might mess up
around him. My mom won't let him
touch us again. I don't know if I
should tell my mom any of this.

GENE
That's up to you. Dutch might get
in trouble. Then things might
really get bad for all of you.

BEN

Can't you have an operation so you
can talk like this all the time?

GENE

Doctors said there's a risk that I
might not walk again.

Gene drops his arms, they separate, & Gene's nod begins.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BOONE K-8 SCHOOL ENTRANCE/GYM - NIGHT

Winter carnival's arriving PARENTS & STUDENTS. Dutch, Michele & kids enter. Michele carries cake she baked. They remove coats & give them to Darlene checking coats hung on portable wardrobe rack. Michele smells her perfume on Darlene.

PAM

(to Ben)

I hope we get our coats back.

Ben buys tickets for BB rifle target game MALE TEACHER monitors. After Ben's first shot at target with BB rifle:

MALE TEACHER

(uses binoculars)

Bullseye!

Michele & the girls roll plastic bowling balls at plastic pins set up by nodding Gene as Dutch mingles with LOCAL MEN.

Ben's last shot to win a prize:

MALE TEACHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Bullseye! Ten in a row!

The male teacher awards Ben a pair of plastic binoculars as:

Ben's teacher, Mrs. Jorgenson, sits at table with old record player surrounded by cakes. On floor is circle of colored & numbered circles to stand on during:

MRS. JORGENSEN

(into microphone)

Cake walkers! Come get your number!

Pam & Debi pull Michele away from bowling to cake walk. Michele & girls wave back to Gene & hurry to get their numbers & stand on number with CAKE WALKERS as MUSIC begins.

They walk from number to number until Mrs. Jorgenson STOPS music & cake walkers stop on a number that Mrs. Jorgenson draws out from a pickle jar:

MR. JORGENSON
Number sixteen is a winner!

Debi stands on "16" circle; Michele's excited & Pam leaves:

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pam limps into restroom stall. Sitting on stool she smells smoke in the next stall. Soon, Darlene stands on stool:

DARLENE
(smokes cigarette)
Hi Pam.

PAM
(awkward)
Hi Darlene.

DARLENE
Did you read it?

PAM
Yeah.

DARLENE
Uncle Gene says it ain't true.

PAM
What really happened?

BACK TO:

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

Ben (with binoculars around neck) reverse-spins a Hula Hoop as Pam confronts her brother after her chat with Darlene:

BEN
Look what I won for you and Debi.
If ya can't get it around your
waist, you can always do this.

PAM
Shut up. I just talked to Darlene.
(imitates Darlene)
Gene says that story ain't true.
(MORE)

PAM (CONT'D)
 They jumped off High Bridge, then
 D.J. jumped off Inspiration Point
 after he saved Gene from drowning.

BEN
 Anything else?

PAM
 She said Gene can prove it.
 (intense whisper)
 This is our way out, Ben!

BEN
 (having 2nd thoughts)
 Things are better now.

PAM
 (angry whisper)
 Because he didn't kick your butt
 for losing your boots? That's only
 because Mom was there, stupid.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - LATER

Ben pretends to be asleep when Michele KNOCKS & sits on bed:

MICHELE
 Ben, I think you know something
 about my missing bottle of perfume.

BEN
 Mom, I'm sleepin'.

MICHELE
 Darlene was wearing my perfume.

BEN
 I accidentally broke it. Don't tell
 Dutch.

MICHELE
 Okay. Good night. I love you.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - DAY

Pam comes downstairs dressed warm as Michele makes breakfast:

MICHELE
You're up early on a Sunday!

PAM
I'm going for a walk with Ben.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben bolts out of bed after Pam stands over him & says:

PAM
I'm going to see Gene.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - LATER

Ben catches up with Pam walking; she's mad at Ben:

PAM
You're keeping things from me.

BEN
What are you talkin' about?

PAM
(mocks Ben)
Things are BETTER NOW. You know more than you're telling me! And you KNOW if Mom hadn't come up there when you lost your boots, you'd have a sore BUTT right now.

BEN
Why do you have to know everything?

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES STATE PARK - LATER

Pam limps along road as they look up to Inspiration Point:

PAM
That's where D.J. jumped.

BEN
Why are you going to Gene's anyway?

PAM
To hear for myself what happened.

BEN
I'll tell ya more at this cool spot
I found. You can rest there.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES HIKING TRAIL/PICNIC TABLE - LATER

Pam's leg hurts as she trails Ben:

PAM
Tell me now, Ben, so I can get my
mind off my leg.

BEN
(walks backwards)
I went to Gene's trailer. I told
him I needed to know about the
clipping. He wouldn't write down
anything, so I held him like
Darlene did. Gene said there's life
insurance money that Dutch was paid
because D.J.'s death was ruled an
accident and not a suicide.

PAM
And Gene said he could prove it was
a suicide?

BEN
Gene found D.J.'s belt hanging on
the cemetery fence!

PAM
(stops walking)
He was so afraid of Dutch, he
jumped. That gives me chills.

Pam rests at a picnic table with Ben; she rubs her sore leg:

BEN
I don't think we should tell Mom.
There might be stuff we don't know.

Ben continues walking; Pam follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES SCENIC RIVER VIEW - LATER (POV)

Pam sits on flat rock admiring winter view with Ben:

PAM

After last night Mom has to know
Darlene has her perfume.

BEN

I told Mom I broke the bottle.

PAM

She believed you?

BEN

Yeah, so everything's cool.

PAM

Mom should know this stuff.

BEN

No! Gene would lose his job! If
Dutch gets violent again...

PAM

I'm not waiting for that to happen.

Ben gets back on the trail; Pam follows.

BACK TO:

EXT. LEDGES HIKING TRAIL/WALKWAY BRIDGE - LATER

Ben faces Pam by walking backwards on trail:

BEN

Gene really likes his job, Pam.

PAM

Alright, next time he does anything
violent I'm telling Mom everything.

Ben stops on walkway bridge & hushes Pam when sees deer:

BEN

(whispers to Pam)

That's like the way Gene lives:
quiet and not hurting anyone.

PAM
(whispers back)
Yeah.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. BOONE K-8 SCHOOL/DUTCH'S PARKED PICKUP - DAY

Springtime: Michele & Debi are parked in Dutch's pickup down a ways from school front entrance as lunch school bell RINGS.

Michele wears sweatshirt & denim jeans. She looks at her cracked, short fingernails & down to over-boots on her feet:

DEBI
(points)
Darlene!

Darlene lights smoke on sidewalk. Michele's (POV): Darlene's wearing her missing clothes: black petal pushers & dickie sweater as Darlene gets into car of arriving HIGH SCHOOL KID.

DEBI (CONT'D)
(points)
There's Ben! There's Pam! Ben and
Pam go to the dentist!

MICHELE
(breaks thought pattern)
Yes!

CUT TO:

INT. DENTIST'S WAITING AREA - LATER

Debi colors while Pam & Ben with dentist, Michele recalls:

- A) Michele smells perfume on Darlene at carnival coat check.
- B) Michele in Ben's room:

BEN (V.O.)
I accidentally broke it. Don't tell
Dutch.

- C) In Hutch's room:

HUTCH (V.O.)
Leave him. Get a lawyer and get all
you can.

END FLASHBACKS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM/MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

That night: Michele exits kitchen with purse to back porch.

The kids watch TV in living room as:

Dutch is busy with bookwork at lamp-lit desk.

CUT TO:

I/E. DARLENE'S HOUSE (POV)

From Gene's trailer: Gene sees Michele arrive at Darlene's.

Darlene mutes TV after KNOCK on door. Darlene opens door:

MICHELE
Darlene, I have to talk to you.

Michele sits on sofa. Darlene searches ashtray for butt.

MICHELE (CONT'D)
I saw you wearing my clothes. And
my bottle of perfume is missing.

DARLENE
(intimidated)
I didn't steal your stuff.

MICHELE
Then how did you get them, Darlene?

Darlene finds a butt in ashtray & after nervously lights it:

DARLENE
Ben and Pam gave 'em to me.

MICHELE
(confused)
Ben and Pam gave you my things?

DARLENE
(averted eyes)
They wanted to know things my Uncle
Gene knows.

MICHELE

What things? Why would my kids
want to know these things?

DARLENE

Mrs. Beal, I'll give you back your
things. I don't want any trouble
for my uncle or me.

(stands)

I'll get your stuff.

MICHELE

(stands & snaps)

I don't want them! Keep them! But
you better tell me what you know!

DARLENE

Can you take me to get some cigs?

BACK TO:

INT. GENE'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Gene sees Mrs. Beal drive away with Darlene in Dutch's truck.

CUT TO:

INT. DUTCH'S MOVING PICKUP - MOMENTS LATER

Darlene puts Michele's clothes & perfume bottle between them.

MICHELE

I said you can keep them, Darlene.

As they turn onto Main Street that leads to downtown Boone:

MICHELE (CONT'D)

(urgency)

What did Ben and Pam want to know
SO BAD they'd give you my things?

DARLENE

(head bowed in shame)

I gave them a newspaper story about
Gene and D.J.

MICHELE

Who's D.J.?

DARLENE

Dutch Junior. Dutch's son. He was
my Uncle Gene's best friend.

Michele's flustered & keeps prying to Darlene's bowed head:

MICHELE
What happened to D.J.?

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN BOONE - MOMENTS LATER

As Dutch's pickup moves through downtown Boone:

BACK TO:

INT. DUTCH'S MOVING PICKUP

Michele's stunned as she listens to MUTED Darlene as song "One Headlight" begins. Michele & Darlene are oblivious to:

EXT. RED FLASHING RAILROAD CROSSING/MOVING TRAIN HEADLIGHT

We HEAR (PARTLY-MUTED) TRAIN WARNING HORN. In SLOW-MOTION: Dutch's pickup is side-swiped by train & pushed down tracks until music STOPS just before lyrics begin.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - LATER

Pam & Ben doing dishes when phone RINGS. Pam answers:

PAM
(on phone)
Hello. Just a minute, please.

Ben watches spinning phone receiver dangle on cord until Dutch answers phone. Ben & Pam listen while doing dishes:

DUTCH
(on phone)
Hello. Yes.

Ben & Pam watch Dutch listen to bad news, then:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
(on phone)
I'll be right there.

As Dutch exits to back porch, shaken by the phone call:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
Ben, you watch the girls.

BEN
Okay.

Ben & Pam see fear in each other's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOONE TRAIN ACCIDENT/AMBULANCE - LATER

Dutch parks T-bird near CROWD as SHERIFF BUELL sees Dutch. FIREMEN remove Darlene's dead body from Dutch's truck while working to free Michele. PARAMEDICS know Dutch & show Dutch Darlene's face before lifting stretcher into ambulance as:

FIREMAN #1 (O.S.)
(checking Michele)
I've got a pulse!

Dutch helps transport Michele's injured body into ambulance:

DUTCH
(to Paramedic #1)
She gonna make it?

PARAMEDIC #1
If she does, it's a miracle. She
related to you?

DUTCH
My wife.

PARAMEDIC #1
You know her blood type?

DUTCH
No.

PARAMEDIC #1
We better get her to Des Moines.

DUTCH
I'll follow ya.

Sheriff Buell gives Dutch Michele's purse & clothes that are saturated with her perfume fragrance that Dutch recognizes.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - LATER (POV)

Bathroom door open as Debi takes her bath alone. In dark kitchen, Ben & Pam stand at kitchen window when they hear a distant ambulance SIREN & see flashing red lights on highway:

PAM
(losing it)
Ben, it's her! That's Dutch's T-
bird following the ambulance!

BEN
(angry whisper)
Keep it down!

Pam rushes for the phone & Ben stops her from dialing:

PAM
I'm calling the police!

BEN
(angry whisper)
Wait!

Pam dials 911 as Ben closes bathroom door so Debi won't hear:

PAM
(on phone)
The Boone Police and please hurry!
(when police answer)
Was there an accident tonight
involving a pickup truck in Boone?

Ben holds his breath as Pam HEARS bad news on phone:

PAM (CONT'D)
(on phone)
A train? Was anybody hurt?

Ben pushes down phone flash hook as Debi cries out. Ben yanks phone receiver from Pam & hangs up, on his way to Debi:

BEN
(to Pam)
Stay off the phone in case Dutch
calls!

After Ben quiets Debi, Ben & Pam sit on chairs facing window:

PAM
(crying whisper)
She said a truck was hit by a
train. Ben, Mom's dead!

Ben cups his hand over Pam's mouth forcefully:

BEN
(raging whisper)
Shut up! Don't get Debi goin'! How come Dutch was following a speeding ambulance? They don't go that fast unless they're alive!

After Pam pushes Ben's hand away from her mouth:

BEN (CONT'D)
We'll wait for Dutch. And be quiet.

Pam cries, resting her head on Ben's shoulder as:

CUT TO:

INT. GENE'S TRAILER

RAY & CHARLOTTE Rainbow, mid-30s, (Darlene's parents) enter Gene's trailer in work clothes to deliver bad news to Gene:

RAY
Gene, Darlene's been killed. She was hit by a train with Mrs. Beal.

Gene's nod increases with grief. Charlotte is pissed:

CHARLOTTE
What's Darlene doin' with Beal's wife?

Gene shows a thumb down, indicating he doesn't know.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Did you see her pick up Darlene?

Thumb up. Charlotte lights a cigarette nervously:

RAY
Beal told the sheriff he didn't know his wife was gone.

CHARLOTTE
(falters)
She didn't suffer, Gene. That's what the sheriff told us.

RAY
She never knew what hit her.

GENE
(groans with difficulty)
Mrs. Beal?

RAY
Ain't s'posed to make it. She's got
three kids, don't she?

Thumb up & nodding no fast while thinking of Michele's kids.

CHARLOTTE
Beal's payin' all funeral expenses
for Darlene, I know that! She drove
right in the path of that train
like she didn't see it! If he don't
pay, we'll get a lawyer.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Michele's doctor, DR. STEMME walks up to Dutch:

DR. STEMME
Mr. Beal, we don't know the extent
of the swelling on her brain. She
has internal bleeding. Her right
lung's collapsed and beyond repair.
Six broken ribs, a broken jaw and
collarbone. And both of her
cheekbones are fractured. Dr. Knoll
from Iowa City will see her this
morning. He's an expert with this
kind of brain trauma.

DUTCH
She gonna make it?

DR. STEMME
It doesn't look good.

DUTCH
Can I see her?

CUT TO:

INT. INTENSIVE CARE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Michele's on life support as Dutch stands at bedside:

DUTCH
 (softly to Michele)
 I'll see that the kids are taken
 care of and that Ken's notified.

No tears. Dutch leaves.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - LATER

Lights out. Debi's asleep as Ben & Pam watch for Dutch:

PAM
 (crying whisper)
 God wouldn't take her away from us.
 What if she died on the way?

BEN
 (angry whisper)
 Shut up!

Just then Ben sees Dutch's headlights coming toward the farm:

BEN (CONT'D)
 There he is.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben places sleeping Debi on bed with Pam as Ben exits fast:

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch enters Ben's room & sits on bed. Ben's awake.

DUTCH
 Ben, I want you to go upstairs and
 bring your sisters down here so I
 can tell you all at once.

BEN
 (before exits room)
 Debi too?

DUTCH
No, let her sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dutch on recliner under light as Ben & Pam stand before him:

DUTCH
Your mother's been in a accident.
She's hurt real bad.

PAM
(cries)
Is she alive?

DUTCH
Barely.

PAM
Will she die?

DUTCH
I don't know.

BEN
What happened?

DUTCH
She was drivin' my truck across the railroad tracks in Boone, and she got hit by a train. They took her to the hospital in Des Moines.

BEN
Can we go see her now?

DUTCH
After chores we'll go. Don't tell Debi about your mother. We'll drop her off at Dick and Merle's first. She'll stay with them awhile.

BEN
Could Mom die?

DUTCH
Ben, she could.

PAM
Let's go see her now.

DUTCH
No visitors till later today.

PAM
(stops herself)
But what if she...

DUTCH
You kids try to get some sleep.
I'll getcha up after chores.

PAM
Can Ben sleep upstairs?

DUTCH
Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - LATER

As Debi sleeps between Ben & Pam:

PAM
(whispers)
Will you pray with me, Ben?

BEN
No.

Ben turns away to cry as Pam whispers inaudible prayer.

CUT TO:

EXT. DICK & MERLE'S HOUSE - DAY

T-bird drives away as Debi CRIES behind front window.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING T-BIRD - MOMENTS LATER

Car RADIO announces: "Darlene Rainbow was killed in the accident"; Dutch turns off radio. Pam's stunned riding on front bucket seat as well as Ben riding in back. Ben sees Dutch adjust his rear-view mirror onto Ben's face as:

PAM
Darlene was killed in the accident?

Dutch nods yes, then:

DUTCH
(into rear-view mirror)
You kids have any idea why your
mother would be with Darlene?

Ben shrugs at mirror as Pam nods no with her brother.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Brain trauma expert, DR. KNOLL, after hours of surgery:

DR. KNOLL
(to Dutch & kids)
The next twenty-four hours are
critical. There's no telling what
effect this will have. The good
news is her spinal cord was not
severely damaged. She's strong.

PAM
Will she die?

DR. KNOLL
(sits by Pam)
I'll know more in a day or two.

PAM
Can we see her now?

CUT TO:

INT. INTENSIVE CARE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Ben & Pam are alone with comatose Michele on life support:

PAM
(crying whisper)
I love you, Mommy.

CUT TO:

INT. RURAL CAFE - LATER

Ben & Pam watch Dutch eat lunch.

DUTCH
You'll both stay in school here.
Debi can stay with Dick and Merle.
(MORE)

DUTCH (CONT'D)
I'll call your father and let him
know he doesn't have to come back.

PAM
Unless she dies.

Ben jabs Pam's side as Dutch eats.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEAL BUS STOP - DAY

Ben's in the ditch picking wild flowers as bus nears:

PAM (O.S.)
He's coming!

I/E. STOPPED/MOVING SCHOOL BUS

Gene opens door. He wears white shirt with black tie.

BEN
(gives Gene flowers)
These are for Darlene.

As Pam stares at Darlene's empty seat while bus is moving:

PAM
(they whisper)
It's our fault Mom's gonna die. And
we helped kill Darlene.

BEN
Shut up.

PAM
Mom was seeing Darlene about her
clothes and perfume. You know that.

BEN
It's not our fault.

PAM
Darlene must've told Mom about D.J.
and how we knew. She didn't see or
hear the train. You know how she
drives when she's upset.

BEN
So, it's all our fault?

PAM

It's nobody's fault. Darlene was using us too. If we had told Mom what we knew, she still would've gone to see Darlene.

BEN

Whatever happens to Mom, either way I'm leavin'. I'm not goin' to Korea or stayin' here.

PAM

(louder)

You're going to leave us?

BEN

Shut up.

The bus drives past Darlene's house; they watch it go by.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OLD RURAL CEMETERY/RAINBOW PLOT - LATER

Gene's finished digging Darlene's grave in white shirt & tie as Ray & Charlotte park behind Gene's car & hearse as Dutch arrives in T-bird. Ray & Charlotte watch Dutch remove coat & help Gene carry Darlene's coffin to nearby grave.

Dutch & Gene lower casket into grave with ropes under both ends of casket. Ray & Charlotte exit car when Dutch leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN DES MOINES - LATER

Dutch's T-bird is parked in his lawyer's parking area.

CUT TO:

INT. DUTCH'S LAWYER'S OFFICE

DUTCH'S LAWYER sits behind his desk across from Dutch:

DUTCH'S LAWYER

Sorry to hear about your wife,
Dutch. How is she?

DUTCH

Still on life support. Doctors don't know what's gonna happen.

DUTCH'S LAWYER
How are the kids?

DUTCH
They're hangin' in there.

DUTCH'S LAWYER
I was talking with your father-in-law awhile back.

DUTCH
Dick? You talked to Dick?

DUTCH'S LAWYER
Hutch, the blind fella.

Dutch is wary of what his lawyer told Hutch.

DUTCH
Hutch is Michele's step-dad.

DUTCH'S LAWYER
(delivers bad news)
You do realize that the Rainbows will most-likely sue you?

DUTCH
(not happy)
That Charlotte Rainbow's sue-happy.

CUT TO:

I/E. STOPPED SCHOOL BUS/BEAL BUS STOP - LATER

After school: Pam exits bus as Gene gives Ben a note.

Ben reads note outside bus door & before Gene closes door:
Ben answers note by giving Gene one thumb up as Duke BARKS.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - MOMENTS LATER

Ben quiets Duke by feigning throwing something at him as Ben catches up with Pam down the lane. Ben hands Pam note:

BEN
Gene gave me this. I told him yes.

PAM
I'm going with you.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA/COBHOUSE - LATER

Ben & Pam exit house after changing clothes. Ben wears over-boots as he hurries into cobhouse, removes cover from bike, kicks up kickstand & turns on headlight:

PAM (O.S.)
Hurry, Ben! Before Dutch gets back!

As Ben pushes bike toward shop:

PAM (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

BEN
Tires need air.

PAM
Hurry!

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL GRAVEL ROAD/MOVING BIKE - LATER

Pam rides side-saddle gripping lower part of handlebars:

BEN
(getting tired)
Don't steer!

PAM
Why don't you just pedal and let me
steer?

BEN
Oh, sure! I'll just close my eyes
and do all the legwork!

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES STATE PARK ENTRANCE/RESTROOMS - LATER

Ben & Pam roll into green park with bike's headlight on:

PAM
What do you think Gene wants?

BEN
How would I know?

When stopping at restrooms & dismounting bike:

PAM
Let's run away, Ben. No, really,
let's just keep going now. We can
borrow a little money from Gene,
get food in stores...

As Ben wipes mud splatters off new bike:

BEN
Wouldn't that be nice, when Mom
comes out of her comas and we're
GONE. That would kill her for sure.

PAM
You really believe she'll live?

BEN
Yeah, I do. And you can walk back
if you talk about her that way.

Pam goes into restroom. Gene parks his car near Ben. Gene turns on headlight of bike & takes bike for a ride. Pam exits restroom & they watch Gene enjoying his bike ride in Ledges:

PAM
He's like a boy.

BEN
That's not a bad thing.

Gene pedals up to his car & puts Ben's bike inside trunk:

CUT TO:

EXT. INSPIRATION POINT - MOMENTS LATER

Gene kneels on the spot where D.J. died & motions for Ben to embrace him. Pam joins them. Soon, Gene's nod slows & STOPS:

GENE
(Boy Gene's voice)
How's your mother?

PAM
Not good. She might die.

BEN

Pam, shut up. She's in a coma,
Gene.

GENE

Why was she with Darlene?

BEN

We gave Darlene some of our mom's clothes and perfume. And our mom found out about it. She wanted to know why Darlene had her stuff.

GENE

So Darlene told her everything.
Ben, are you still running away?

BEN

I don't know.

PAM

Don't go without me, Ben.

GENE

Your sisters will need you. Your mom would want you together.

BEN

I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - LATER (POV)

Dutch is angry after his visit with his lawyer & the "open letter" on Dutch's desk from law firm stating that Dutch is being sued by Ray & Charlotte for Darlene's wrongful death. Dutch sees Gene unload Ben's bike from trunk & drive away:

PAM

(T-bird's in garage)

He's home Ben.

BEN

(pushes bike to cobhouse)

We don't know anything about D.J.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA/COBHOUSE

Dutch exits house & Duke circles master as Dutch is angry:

DUTCH
 (to Ben)
 What'd I tell ya about ridin' the
 bike in the mud?

BEN
 I'm going to clean it now.

PAM
 (changes subject)
 How's Mom?

DUTCH
 (to Pam)
 Get in the house!

As Pam over-limps to back porch door:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
 Pam! What were you doin' with Gene
 Rainbow?

PAM
 We went for a ride on the bike.
 Gene saw us and gave us a ride.

Pam goes inside back porch when Dutch turns to Ben & bike:

DUTCH
 (to Ben)
 Take the hose to it then dry it off
 with rags in the shop.

Ben warily pushes bike past Dutch, then Dutch kicks Ben,
 causing Ben to fall on top of his bike.

Pam is terrified for Ben while peeking out window (POV):

PAM
 (out loud to self)
 Stay down, Ben.

Dutch stands over Ben & fuming-mad about Rainbow lawsuit:

DUTCH
 What were you and Rainbow talkin'
 about?
 (removes belt)
 Tell me why your mother was taking
 her clothes and perfume to Darlene?

BEN
 I don't know!

DUTCH
Get in the cobhouse!

Pam cries when hears Dutch's BELT WHACKS on Ben. She removes her shoes & hurries:

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Pam finds Gene's phone number written on back of phone book, but decides not to call Gene; Pam heads for upstairs bedroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

That night: Ben's enraged about Dutch's 2nd kick & belt.

CUT TO:

INT. PAM & DEBI'S UPSTAIRS ROOM

Pam inaudibly prays under the covers.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Next morning: Ben's butt is sore on bouncing bus.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHELE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

That night: Dutch scowls in a chair as Ben & Pam stand at Michele's bedside. Michele wears head bandages in a coma.

PAM
(softly to Michele)
The doctor says the swelling on
your brain is going down. You're
coming back to us like Ben said.

Ben can't look at his mother. He's mad & ashamed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - DAY

Saturday morning: Pam enters without knocking & sees Ben counting his cash from envelope. Pam sees rumpled clipping:

PAM
I'm going to visit Darlene. Will you give me a ride? It's not muddy out and Dutch will be gone all day.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL GRAVEL ROAD/RURAL CEMETERY - LATER

Dark clouds over Ledges as Ben pedals Pam with headlight on:

BEN
(breathing hard)
Why don't you get your own bike.

Ben parks bike by Rainbow plot. Pam kneels by Darlene's unmarked grave & sees re-planted wild flowers Ben gave Gene.

PAM
What's your favorite memory of Darlene?

BEN
(looking at clouds)
I don't know.

PAM
(looking at grave)
Mine was when we danced that time she babysat us. She was so alive.

BEN
Let's go before it rains!

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES SCENIC RIVER VIEW - LATER

Standing on flat rock together looking at storm clouds:

PAM
The land is like a table, isn't it?

BEN
How's that?

PAM

All the things that God places on
it: the river, the farms, the
animals and all the trees...

BEN

(heads for bike)

And the roads. Let's hit the road.
It feels like it's gonna rain hard.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEDGES INSPIRATION POINT - LATER (POV)

RAIN begins as Pam rides side-saddle looking at high ledges:

PAM

I want to go up to the top!

BEN

(pedaling)

No way. We gotta get back!

Stubborn Pam drags right foot on ground. Ben stops:

BEN (CONT'D)

Why do you want to go up there?

PAM

(limps to timber steps)

I want to see what D.J. saw!

BEN

(watches her climb steps)

It's too many steps for your leg!

Raining hard as Ben looks up at ledges & fearing for Pam he parks bike & begins running up timber steps in downpour:

BEN (CONT'D)

(running to summit)

Pam! C'mon! We gotta get back!

Ben finds Pam standing on highest of ledges; her arms raised up with the rain pouring down, flooding the park below:

BEN (CONT'D)

(above deluge)

Get away from there!

Pam laughs as Ben grabs her & pulls her away from the ledge:

BEN (CONT'D)
Are you crazy! You fall off here
and Mom dies too!

PAM
My leg hurts!

Ben turns to ledges overlook & sees flooded park. Ben helps Pam struggle down timber steps in deluge. Pam waits on bottom step as Ben wades in knee-high water & can't find his bike. As Ben helps Pam to main road & higher ground:

BEN
I can't go back without that bike!

PAM
You'll find it later!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LANE - LATER

Pam & Ben are both soaked & glad the T-bird's not in garage.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOVING SCHOOL BUS - DAY (POV)

Next morning: Gene sees that Ben isn't feeling well.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S CLASSROOM/SCHOOL NURSE'S OFFICE - LATER

Mrs. Jorgenson feels Ben's hot forehead & whispers:

MRS. JORGENSEN
Ben, go to the nurse's office. You
have a fever.

Ben exits classroom in a daze.

CUT TO:

INT. STOPPED SCHOOL BUS/BEAL FRONT GRAVEL LN - LATER (POV)

After school: Duke BARKS as Gene sees weak Ben trailing Pam.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - LATER

Pam holds cold cloth to Ben's forehead as Ben shivers under covers in school clothes. Pam gives Ben a drink of water:

PAM
In the morning during chores we go.

Pam tries to find Ben's envelope under mattress. It's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL BAR

At bar, angry Dutch pays for another shot with a bill from Ben's open envelope of cash & rumpled newspaper clipping.

BACK TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

RAINING as Ben sleeps. Pam's dressed & ready to escape.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL BACK PORCH AREA/BEAL KITCHEN - DAY (POV)

Next morning: Dutch exits back porch to do chores in rain.

At kitchen window: Pam sees Dutch & Duke headed for chores. Pam quickly dials phone number:

PAM
(on phone)
Please send Ernie to the Beal farm.
It's an emergency. No! Only Ernie!
He knows where it is. Please hurry.

Pam hurries to back porch & gets her & Ben's shoes.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pam's put on her shoes. As she puts Ben's shoes on him:

PAM
Get up, Ben! Ernie's coming!

Just then: Pam HEARS Gene's (O.S.) bus honk from front road:

PAM (CONT'D)
 (as Ben gulps water)
 Don't honk, Gene!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CATTLEYARD

Dutch drives tractor while feeding cattle in rain as:

CUT TO:

I/E. STOPPED/MOVING SCHOOL BUS

Behind windshield wipers Gene looks down lane & drives away.

BACK TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM

Ben's sitting up slumped over & weak. Pam has to get him up.

PAM
 This is our chance to get away!
 Your money's gone! And the
 clipping! Dutch knows, Ben!

BEN
 (stands)
 My rifle.

PAM
 You can't bring that!

Ben grabs his rifle & cylinder of BBs, slings binoculars around his neck & exits room with Pam toward front porch.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL T-BIRD GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER (BINOCULAR POV)

At garage door Ben watches for Ernie with binoculars:

BEN
 (above rain)
 We don't have any money now!

PAM (O.S.)
 Ernie will take us to Mom!

BEN
There he is!

PAM (O.S.)
Let's run to the road!

BEN
NO! Duke will see us!

Ben waves at Ernie when cab slows & turns onto service road:

BEN (CONT'D)
He took the wrong road!

CUT TO:

I/E. ERNIE'S MOVING/STOPPED CAB - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Ernie's wary of Duke as he drives on muddy central farmyard. He HONKS horn & sees Pam & Ben (toting rifle) running to him. Ben & Pam get into cab's back seat:

PAM
GO ERNIE, GO!

Ernie fishtails & when rounds corner: BRAKES. Pam SCREAMS seeing tractor blocking exit. Dutch jerks-open cab door:

DUTCH
(into Ernie's eyes)
Get 'im, Duke!

Duke pounces on Ernie. Ben & Pam exit out back door of cab. Dutch removes keys from cab's ignition, SNAPS fingers: Duke STOPS attacking Ernie. Ernie staggers toward front yard as Dutch walks toward his shop & Duke waits until:

DUTCH (CONT'D)
Get 'im!

Duke chases poor Ernie down & we HEAR his (O.S.) SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL FRONT YARD/SHOP - (BINOCULAR POV)

Duke's killed Ernie. Dutch enters his shop.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM

Ben lowers binoculars as Pam breathes hard rubbing sore leg:

PAM
Dutch had Duke kill Ernie, Ben!

Ben loads rifle with BBs from cardboard cylinder container:

BEN
(gives Pam binoculars)
He's in the shop. Let me know when
he's comin'.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL SHOP - MOMENTS LATER (BINOCULAR POV)

Dutch exits shop in RAIN, headed for corncrib:

PAM (O.S.)
Here he comes, Ben!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL PLATFORM LADDER/CORNCRIB ENTRANCE (POV)

Ben's on his belly, shooting eye & rifle barrel focused on entrance far below; finger trigger ready, then Ben HEARS Dutch's footsteps nearing entrance. When Dutch looks up to platform: Ben pulls trigger & Dutch is hit in right eye & YELLS, sending Dutch reeling away in obvious pain.

Ben goes to platform window, takes binoculars from Pam:

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL SHOP/BACK PORCH AREA (BINOCULAR VIEW)

Dutch runs to back porch door holding injured right eye.

BEN
(sense of urgency)
He's in the house! You have to get
to the phone and call the police!

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL BATHROOM

In mirror: angry Dutch uses tweezers to remove BB from eye.

CUT TO:

I/E. BEAL CORNCRIB ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Ben stands at bottom of ladder talking Pam down ladder:

BEN

That's it! One leg down, then the
other. Hold the ladder tight!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CATTLEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ben points to Pam's route via muddy, dung-filled cattleyard:

BEN

(above rain)

Wait at the gate! Run to the house
when he's out of your view!

PAM

What about Duke?

BEN

(demonstrates)

You've seen me fake-throw something
at him! He'll run away for sure!

PAM

Too bad Ernie didn't know that.

Ben helps Pam over fence & watches her slog through mire.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER (BINOCULAR POV)

At corncrib platform window: Dutch exits house & heads to shop with patch covering right eye. Ben BREAKS window with rifle butt to draw attention to himself & away from Pam.

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL CATTLEYARD GATE - MOMENTS LATER (POV)

Pam's covered with mud in rain as she watches Dutch via open shop door from behind cattleyard gate. Pam's fear increases:

BACK TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD - MOMENTS LATER (BINOCULAR POV)

From platform broken window: Ben sees Dutch standing in shop doorway wearing welder's mask with face shield flipped up. To mess with Ben: one-eyed Dutch sees broken window & removes his belt from waist as The Wallflowers song "One Headlight" begins & plays through montage as Dutch flips down face shield & heads for corncrib in heavy rain with belt in-hand:

BEGIN MONTAGE: PAST & PRESENT SHOTS (IN-SYNC WITH LYRICS)

Rural Cemetery - Gene stops shoveling to look at trees when digging Darlene's grave as Ray & Charlotte grieve on plot.

Beal Farm - Gene meets beautiful Michele when delivers eggs.

Gene's Bus - Michele on bus with kids 1st day of school.

Beal Farm - Ben drives tractor with Dutch (one headlight on).

Beal Farm - Ben kicked to ground by Dutch (1st time).

Beal Farm - 4th of July: Ben throws firecracker into outhouse, Pam exits outhouse then Hutch laughs at scene.

Beal Farm - 4th of July: Pam throws cherry bomb under Hutch.

Rural Gravel Road - Ben & Pam running after cherry bomb incident.

High Bridge - Boy Gene & D.J. looking at railroad bridge.

Beal Farm - (PRESENT) Pam runs for back porch door in rain then stops & scares Duke away after fake-throwing at Duke.

Beal Kitchen - (PRESENT) Pam discovers wall phone is gone.

Beal Master Bedroom - (PRESENT) Pam removes handful of keys from desk drawer.

Ledges Main Road - Gene rides Ben's bike with headlight on.

Gene's Trailer - Ben holds Gene as Gene tells Ben about D.J.

Train Accident - Train headlight before hits Dutch's pickup.

Ledges - Ben & Pam holding Gene on ground where D.J. fell.

END MONTAGE.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM - (POV)

Song FADES OUT. We HEAR Dutch's heavy breathing behind welder's mask as Dutch steps onto platform with belt in-hand looking for Ben. Dutch sees Ben's glasses & BB rifle decoyed in corn. Dutch removes welder's mask, drops mask & HEARS air breathing in the corn near broken window. Dutch sees Ben's BB cylinder end above corn used as airhole for submerged Ben as:

CUT TO:

INT. BEAL T-BIRD GARAGE

Pam frantically tries several keys in ignition of T-bird as:

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM

Dutch kneels & drops kernel of corn into BB cylinder airhole tube, causing Ben's head to rise out of corn COUGHING; Dutch puts boot on Ben's head, pushing Ben into corn to suffocate.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL T-BIRD GARAGE

Pam starts T-bird with key, into reverse & a jerky exit.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM

Ben fights for his life, arms flailing as one-eyed Dutch keeps his boot on Ben's submerged head until Dutch hears his T-bird's HORN honking (O.S.) & leaves gasping Ben for window:

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAL CENTRAL FARMYARD/MOVING T-BIRD - (POV)

Enraged Dutch sees & HEARS Pam fishtailing his T-bird in mud. Pam chases Duke down with T-bird & kills dog instantly. T-bird stuck in mud, burns rubber rocking back & forth in rain.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM

Ben struggles in sea of corn to find piece of broken glass he stashed earlier. When Dutch starts to put his boot on Ben's head: Ben stabs Dutch's calf with the found glass. Dutch SCREAMS in agony & falls onto platform. One-eyed Dutch looks up from injured leg & sees nodding Gene at top of ladder with D.J.'s belt & visible buckle in Gene's fisted hand. Gene rushes to pull exhausted Ben with bleeding hand out of corn.

DUTCH
(stands, to Gene)
Where'd you get that belt?!

As Gene wraps Ben's hand with Ben's shirt: Dutch gets BB rifle & swings butt of rifle at Gene. Gene blocks rifle with forearm, grabs rifle & violently yanks it away from Dutch. Gene punches Dutch to platform, pounces on him, wrapping D.J.'s belt around Dutch's neck, dragging Dutch by his neck toward the platform ledge near ladder as the terrified one-eyed farmer sees Gene's head slow then speak while dragging him closer to the perilous 40-foot-high platform ledge.

GENE
(enraged Boy Gene voice)
D.J. left it FOR ME TO FIND at the cemetery!
(closer to ledge)
You know WHY he jumped?

Gene extends Dutch's upper body over ledge with D.J.'s belt:

GENE (CONT'D)
(to Dutch's terrified eye)
He was afraid of YOU! You LOCKED him in that HOT ROOM like he was one of your MODEL AIRPLANES!! You killed D.J.!!

Dutch's terrified eye sees Gene's head STOP moving as:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. HIGH BRIDGE - DAY (POV)

Boy Gene sees D.J.'s eyes when Gene must let go & D.J. falls.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

INT. BEAL CORNCRIB PLATFORM/ENTRANCE

Gene: into the eye on D.J.'s killer, lets go of D.J.'s belt, causing Dutch's SCREAMING fall just as Pam had driven the mud-splattered T-bird into the corncrib entrance. Dutch crashes headfirst through front passenger-side windshield of T-bird, killing Dutch instantly. Stunned & horrified Pam gets out of T-bird relieved to see Ben & Gene standing on platform ledge.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OKOBOJI AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY (2 YEARS LATER)

Summer: Happy Michele's recovered & sits with Debi at picnic table catching up with Ken & KEN'S WIFE, back from Korea.

KEN
 (to Michele)
 Poor Ernie. Killed by that dog.
 And Darlene's parents settled for
 how much?

MICHELE
 (looking for someone)
 Three hundred thousand. I paid
 that when I sold the farm.

KEN
 And you bought Gene a house in
 Boone?

Michele nods yes & sees restored T-bird arriving & stands.

CUT TO:

I/E. AMUSEMENT PARK GAMEROOM SHELTER

Excited Pam sees T-bird & hurries to play song on jukebox. Excited Ben leaves pinball game & hurries with Pam out of gameroom as Mel Carter sings "Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me" that plays from amusement park speakers as Ben & Pam run to:

EXT. PARKED T-BIRD

INSERT - REAR LICENSE PLATE: "GENE".

CUT TO:

EXT. OKOBOJI LANE

Gene's head is still as he walks down lane & starts running to Pam & Ben as they run to him, joyously embracing each other as Michele & Debi join in the long group hug on the lane as Ken & wife watch joyous reunion as song continues:

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY/RAINBOW PLOT

Song continues from small transistor radio near Darlene's headstone with Ben's wild flowers in bloom as credits roll, song ends, credits continue until:

FADE OUT.