

STAY CLOSE TO ME

by

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EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

On a windy, overcast afternoon, a blue midsize SUV sits amid a sea of similar midsize SUVs and the odd minivan.

The suburbs.

Various comers and goers come and go to the pharmacy, the bank, the organic food shop, and various other stores and small businesses, such as the...

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, WAITING ROOM

MIKE TROSTLE - 15, skinny, short-haired and just starting to grow into his frame - sits alone, half-listening to the conversation ongoing in the office through the open door next to him. His eyes explore the waiting room.

DR. STRAUSS (O.S.)
...It won't be easy. Especially
with his father having been a
teacher there.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
It just feels so soon.

DR. STRAUSS (O.S.)
The grieving process has its own
timeline, different for everyone.
His first day back, it could be
tough. But he'll readjust.

In the office, CLAIRE TROSTLE, 48, sits across the desk from DR. DAVID STRAUSS, 50. She signs a check and slides it over to Dr. Strauss, then glances back toward the doorway.

CLAIRE
Readjust? God, that just sounds so
cold.

DR. STRAUSS
Mike needs to be a kid again. Play
with his friends, crush on a girl,
maybe even get into some trouble.

CLAIRE
Isn't high school hard enough
already, without this?

A moment later, Claire emerges into the waiting room. Mike stands up, and they exit together.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE, THE NEXT MORNING

Along a tree-lined street with plenty of leaf piles waiting to be cleared, a two-story house sits among a block of similar middle-class homes. In the driveway is a familiar blue SUV on this bright, blustery morning.

INT. KITCHEN

Mike finishes off the last of his Cheerios at the kitchen table. His eyes turn to the chair to his right.

It's empty.

The doorbell rings. Claire enters from the living room.

CLAIRE

I can drop you and Bart off on my way to the office. You sure you want to walk?

Mike nods. He grabs his backpack and starts to leave.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Michael.

He stops, gives his mom a hug. She kisses his head.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE

On the porch is BART FRANKLIN, 15, noticeably bigger than Mike - somewhat so in height, clearly so in width.

The door opens, revealing Mike.

BART

Hey.

Mike closes the door behind him. The two kids walk down toward the sidewalk. Bart reads a text on his phone.

BART (CONT'D)

Fucking Cameron says he overslept again, so he's gonna sneak in later. Dumbass freshman. Am I cursing a lot? Sorry. Do you wanna, I dunno, talk about anything?

Mike keeps walking, Bart sticking by his side.

BART (CONT'D)

You going to the game tonight?

Bart stumbles over a crack in the sidewalk.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL, FRONT STEPS, SOON AFTER

Hooper High School is a three-story brick building at the top of a hill. A rather majestic architectural creation, it is known by some as the Castle on the Hill.

Mike and Bart walk up the stone steps leading to the two tall, open front doors, through which students enter on their way to their lockers and homerooms.

As Mike reaches the entrance, he pauses to look up at the arches over the two doors, the bricks, the-

VOICE (O.S.)

Mike!

Approaching from inside is TOBY SAWYER, 60, with short hair grayed at the temples. He holds the door open for the two boys. His dark brown eyes turn to Mike.

MR. SAWYER

It's good to have you back.

Mr. Sawyer places a gentle hand on Mike's shoulder as he and Bart pass through the threshold. A strong gust of wind follows the boys through the front doors, knocking students' baseball caps off and some fliers from the wall.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

I'll see you fourth period?

Mike nods, and he and Bart head inside.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

The hallway buzzes with the early-morning sounds of lockers opening and closing, sneakers squeaking and students gossiping amongst each other.

As Mike and Bart walk down the hall, numerous students chattering in groups nearby cover their mouths or look down at the floor when Mike passes.

A door swings open, nearly hitting Bart and Mike. A short student carrying a huge mesh bag of soccer balls comes out.

BART

Watch it, cocktoast.

SHORT STUDENT

You watch it, lard ass.

As he closes the door, which says 'ATHLETIC DEPT. EQUIPMENT ROOM', the student's bag splits, unleashing the fifteen or so balls, which go bouncing every which way in the hall.

BART

You dropped something.

Turning the corner, Bart and Mike come across a cluster of students - some lightly sobbing, all quietly examining a large posterboard sitting on an easel by the wall.

As Mike approaches it, he spots a SENIOR GIRL, 17, with teary red eyes standing directly in front, signing her name beneath a short note.

It is one of many such notes surrounding the photo of a man in his early 50s, medium-length flowing brown hair, sitting at a teacher's desk. Beneath the photo it says: 'WE LOVE YOU MR. TROSTLE'

Upon seeing Mike, she takes a huge deep breath and gives him a tight hug, now weeping onto his shoulder.

SAD SENIOR GIRL

Your dad was the only math teacher
I ever liked. I'm so sorry.

She snuffles, then pulls away and heads off down the hall.

Mike turns back to the memorial of his father. He reads some of the many notes of affection. Bart joins him.

BART

They put this up right after he
died.

Mike studies the image of his father: his softly smiling face, his white shirt and cheerful orange tie, his hands folded neatly on the desk.

A strange whirring sound enters Mike's ears - maybe static coming from the public address speakers up on the wall? Mike looks around, but no one else seems to hear it.

The fluorescent light overhead flickers ever so slightly. Again, only Mike notices.

He looks back at the photo - but everything goes dark. An instant later, the darkness lifts, revealing...a large *EMPTY SWIMMING POOL*. The image barely registers before-

BART (CONT'D)

Mike!

-the real world comes rushing back. Bart helps Mike up by the arm. He had partially collapsed.

The surrounding students inch closer to inspect.

NEARBY STUDENT

Is he-

BART

He's fine. Give him some room.

As Bart leads Mike through the crowd away from the memorial, Mike looks back at the photo of his dad.

BART (CONT'D)

Let's go. We gotta get to class.

INT. HALLWAY BY MIKE'S LOCKER, SOON AFTER

Mike opens his locker, dumps some books in and takes out a few others, as packs of students pass behind him.

INT. BIOLOGY CLASS, LATER

MS. RUBIN, 35, stands next to a TV displaying a close-up of the inside of a blood vessel, with all the blood cells coursing through.

MS. RUBIN

Arteries carry oxygen-rich blood away from the heart. Veins bring oxygen-depleted blood back to it.

Mike scribbles down notes as she lectures.

INT. CAFETERIA, LATER

Mike, Bart and some other students eat lunch inside the loud, raucous cafeteria. Bart flings a French fry across the table, leading to a series of retaliations.

Mike quietly eats his sandwich, ignoring the food fight.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BOYS BATHROOM, LATER

Throngs of students pass by the closed bathroom door.

INT. BOYS BATHROOM

Quiet. Inside a stall, Mike sits and stares down. His face is wet with tears, though the crying is over with. Mostly.

He grabs some toilet paper and dries his eyes.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL, LATER - DAY

The sound of the bell ringing.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL, FRONT STEPS, SOON AFTER

Mike and Bart descend the stairs, joined this time by freshman CAMERON HENKEL, 14, short and narrow-shouldered, with a backpack way too big for a kid his size.

CAMERON

...I'm telling you, she's got BOMBS, and I came this close to touching 'em.

BART

Cameron, if you actually did touch 'em, she'd kick your scrawny ass so bad, you'd have to repeat eighth grade. The schoolbuilding itself would be too embarrassed to let you back in.

CAMERON

Please, it let you come back after that world-historic fail of a football tryout-

BART

Look, I have an unusual catching technique.

CAMERON

A technique better known as dropping.

As Bart and Cameron argue, Mike walks beside them silently, taking in the breezy late-autumn afternoon.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD, LATER - NIGHT

On the scoreboard: GHOSTS 17, VISITORS 21.

Three seconds left.

Above the scoreboard, off in the distance, Hooper High School sits atop a hill facing the field, like it's watching the final moments of the game below.

Under the lights at Hooper Field, the Ghosts have the ball at the 2-yard line, down by four. The offense huddles up.

In the first row of the stands, Bart yells to the players.

BART
Play-action! Roll-out to the
corner! For the love of God,
PLAY-ACTION!

Behind the end zone, the marching band plays the school's fight song. Among the band are snare-drummer Mike and bass-drummer Cameron next to him.

Cameron's playing is hopelessly offbeat, drawing the wrath of the hunchbacked old conductor, MRS. FUSSTRECK, 70.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Too fast, Henkel! Either stay on
beat or drop that drum!

Over in front of the bleachers, VALERIE HENKEL, 17, leads the cheerleading squad before the buzzing crowd.

The TEAM MASCOT, dressed in a flowing white bedsheet with a big, scary headpiece, does a silly little dance.

Ten rows up in the stands, a bored-looking couple, SARA HENKEL, 15, and TIM DANZIGER, 16, look far more interested in their phones than the game - or each other.

SARA
This is so boring.

TIM
We could try having sex?

Sara rolls her eyes.

Down in the first row, Bart - growing ever more desperate - closes his eyes and prays.

BART
Play-action...play-action...

On the sideline watching, Hooper High Head Coach ENNIS DECK, 50, stands with impeccable, military-style posture.

Back at the 2-yard line, the quarterback takes the snap and fakes a hand-off, then rolls out - textbook play-action.

BART (CONT'D)
Holy shit. Holy shit!

The QB hurls the ball to the corner of the end zone, where his wide-open receiver catches it - TOUCHDOWN. The receiver, TYLER BENTLEY, 17, takes off his helmet (revealing a huge mohawk) and screams. The crowd ERUPTS.

Final score: GHOSTS 23, VISITORS 21.

The ghost mascot taunts the losers as they sulk away.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - SOON AFTER

By now, most of the players have already showered, dressed and left, but a few remain, putting on their shoes.

Still there is team mascot LOGAN WELLER, 15, getting out of his ghost outfit and back into his regular clothes.

Coach Deck bangs loudly on the locker room door.

COACH DECK
Let's go, we're closing up!

The last few players hustle out, leaving Logan alone.

LOGAN
Wait, I'm almost ready. Hey!

The coach shuts the door, turns off the light.

Logan gropes around in the dark for his shirt. A moment later, he hears the door open.

LOGAN (CONT'D)
Coach?

Nothing.

Logan resumes his shirt search.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hi Logan.

Logan freezes - he recognizes the voice.

He makes a run for it, but someone BLOCKS his path - it is BILLY, 17, thwarting Logan's only escape route.

As Billy talks, CARL, 17, sneaks up behind Logan.

BILLY
I won't touch you, I promise.

On cue, Carl closes in and PUNCHES Logan right in the ribs. Logan crumples to the floor. Billy laughs.

Carl heaves Logan face-first against the lockers. He grabs Logan's underwear by the waistband and YANKS it upward viciously. Logan howls in pain.

Carl lets go, dropping Logan to the floor. The two bullies laugh and high-five. As they look away, Logan seizes his chance and UPPERCUTS Carl in the crotch. He collapses.

Logan dashes off, weaving through the rows of lockers.

BILLY (O.S.)
There's only one door, Logan!

Logan scans the room urgently for a place to hide.

INT. BAND ROOM, SAME TIME

Members of the marching band remove their uniforms and store their instruments in the various cubby holes.

Mike and Cameron pack up their things, while Bart basks in the glow of gridiron victory.

BART
Play-action. They heard me.

CAMERON
How 'bout this - maybe everyone else was offbeat, and I was the only one playing it right?

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Logan sneaks along the back wall. There, behind a tall stack of gym mats and crates of old athletic gear, a BLACK CURTAIN covers a boarded-up area a few feet wide.

That curtain...there's something about that curtain.

As Logan studies the curtain, the sounds of Carl and Billy hunting through the locker room muffle. All he can hear now is his own BREATHING and quickening HEARTBEAT.

Logan makes his move: he pries the stack of gym mats away from the wall and squeezes behind them. He pulls back the curtain and hides between it and the wooden boards.

He waits. Sounds of the room return.

BILLY (O.S.)
Turn a light on.

When the light comes on, Logan's hiding spot is vulnerable. Feeling desperately around the wall behind the curtain, he discovers several loose boards at the base of the wall. Logan wrests the bottom few boards off, revealing a SMALL HOLE in the wall, about two feet wide.

Through the hole is a room with a floor about fifteen feet lower. He starts squeezing into the tiny hole, feet first. Logan is almost through, when Billy PULLS BACK the curtain.

BILLY
Hi again.

He reaches for Logan, who lets go and falls to the ground below. On impact, his leg BUCKLES beneath him. His head hits the floor with a thud. He lies there, motionless.

Billy sticks his head through the hole and...can't quite believe what he sees: a huge EMPTY SWIMMING POOL.

Carl comes over and looks through the hole with Billy.

CARL
Shit, we got a pool?

Billy sees Logan's twisted leg, then immediately scrams. Carl looks back at Logan, then hurries out after Billy.

INT. POOL ROOM, SOON AFTER

On the cold tile floor of the abandoned pool room, Logan tries to get up but winces in pain - his leg is broken.

Lying beside an empty pool that looks like it hasn't been used in years, Logan inspects his strange new environment.

Resting along the bottom of the pool are five thick nylon red-white-and-blue STRIPED ROPES that once delineated the six swimming lanes.

Across the pool is a door, above which is a sign: 'Towels'

Logan looks back up to the hole he fell through.

LOGAN
Hello? HELLOOOOO?! HELP! I'M DOWN
HERE, I CAN'T WALK!

His words echo around the dark, vacant room.

He tries again to get up, but can't. Too painful. It now sinks in: he's alone, and he can't get out.

Just then, a noise - a soft clang. Logan glances over at where he heard it. He sees nothing. Then another CLANG, louder this time, like an old radiator coming back to life.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

As Mike, Bart and Cameron exit the band room, Mike stops and looks around. Did he just hear something?

INT. POOL ROOM

Joining the clangs is a soft RUMBLING sound like a car engine, coming from somewhere across the room.

Tracing the noise's origin, Logan spots a SILVER HANDRAIL on the far wall leading diagonally down, indicating a staircase heading toward some lower level.

He fixates on that area. The rumbling intensifies.

Something GRABS his foot - one of the striped ropes from the pool has wrapped itself around his ankle. The rope JERKS him halfway over the side of the pool. He clutches the pool's edge, DESPERATELY HOLDING ON as a second rope captures his other ankle.

Two more ropes attack, these from above. They seize Logan's wrists and yank him up - the two pairs of ropes tug from opposite sides, SUSPENDING HIM IN MID-AIR above the pool.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Mike staggers backward till he hits the wall. He shuts his eyes and sinks to the floor.

We see a quick series of images, blurry and mostly in shades of gray: *rows of lockers...a black curtain...a huge, empty swimming pool...a BRIGHT YELLOW human arm yanked upward at the wrist by a striped rope...*

INT. POOL ROOM

The fifth rope rises in front of Logan, its end pointing directly at his face, like a snake eyeing its next meal.

LOGAN
AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH-

The dangling rope LUNGES forward, curling around Logan's neck, stifling his voice. Only the occasional pathetic choking sound escapes. His skin burns from the friction.

In midair, Logan's entire body CONVULSES violently. His bloodshot eyes bulge. His body stiffens completely - then goes limp.

The ropes release him and retreat out of sight. Logan's dead body falls twenty feet, hitting the floor of the pool with a disgusting THUMP.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Bart and Cameron frantically try to snap Mike out of it - he's SQUIRMING on the floor, face in his hands.

The image shifts, coming into much clearer focus: *A man in a white shirt and tie, his head bowed...standing at the bottom of the empty swimming pool...his head raises...we can see his face...it is GEORGE, Mike's father.*

GEORGE
(whispers)
Michael.

MIKE
Dad?

Mike's eyes open wide. Bart and Cameron sit him up.

BART
Mike! Hey! Are you there?

CAMERON
Did you faint?

Mike looks around and gets his bearings.

MIKE
The...the locker room.

INT. LOCKER ROOM, SOON AFTER

The door bursts open. Mike, Bart and Cameron race inside. Mike looks up and down the rows of lockers, searching for...there it is: THE BLACK CURTAIN. He charges toward it.

Once there, he pulls it up, revealing the massive swimming pool - and Logan Weller's broken body lying dead center.

Mike stares open-mouthed at this most unexpected sight.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - TUESDAY MORNING

SUPER: Three days later

Leaves swirl in the wind on a sunny morning. Bart trots down the sidewalk toward Mike's house.

INT. FRONT HALL

Claire helps Mike put his jacket on.

CLAIRE

You call me if you feel weird or want to talk about anything, okay?

MIKE

Okay.

CLAIRE

Did you know him? Logan?

MIKE

Not really.

The doorbell rings. Claire hands Mike his backpack.

CLAIRE

Call me anyway, okay? Just to check in.

MIKE

Okay.

She hugs him, but holds it a little longer this time.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE

The door opens. Mike walks out, and he and Bart head down the front walkway. Claire lingers in the doorframe, watching as the boys turn onto the sidewalk.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Bart waits till they are sufficiently out of earshot.

BART

Any ideas on your vision thing?

I was Googling shit all weekend.
Sometimes people under a lot of,
like, emotional stress, they think
they see things.

MIKE

But I did see things. They
happened.

BART

Yeah. That's some heavy shit.

EXT. HENKEL HOUSE, SIDEWALK, MINUTES LATER

Mike and Bart approach the Henkel residence which, for the
moment, appears calm. However, inside...

INT. HENKEL HOUSE, FRONT HALL

At the foot of the stairs, BEVERLY HENKEL, 48, tries to
corral her children out the front door.

BEVERLY

Valerie! Sara! Cameron! Where are-

SARA

I'm right here.

Beverly turns and sees Sara, who calmly waits on the front
step, tying a scrunchy around her long dark hair.

Moments later, head cheerleader Valerie comes downstairs,
hardly noticing anything besides her phone.

BEVERLY

Skipping breakfast again, Valerie?

VALERIE

Hi Mom, bye Mom.

Valerie rushes past Beverly out the front door.

BEVERLY

CAMERON EDWARD HENKEL, GET DOWN-

On cue, Cameron comes bounding down the stairs three at a
time, his enormous backpack nearly toppling him over when
he gets to the bottom.

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

Careful!

Cameron barrels past his mom and out the door, where he-

EXT. THE HENKEL HOUSE

-spots Mike and Bart waiting for him.

At the curb in a white SUV is Tyler Bentley, sculpting his mohawk in the mirror. Valerie opens the passenger door.

VALERIE
Ugh, what is that smell?

TYLER
My gear.

He nods to the back seat, which is filled with dirty football gear: his uniform, padding, socks, gloves, etc.

VALERIE
You didn't wash it?

Sara approaches, as Valerie sits in the passenger seat.

TYLER
Hey Sara, you want a lift? I can make room back there.

VALERIE
With that vile filth?

TYLER
Oh come on, it's not that bad.

Sara glances at the pile of filth, then shakes her head.

SARA
Um, no thanks.

VALERIE
Go with Cameron and his friends, you'll be better off, I promise.

Mike's eyes light up. He tries to speak to Sara-

MIKE
...

-but nothing comes out.

CAMERON
(to Sara)
No way, get your own friends!
Can't your boyfriend drive you?
Oh, that's right - Tim flunked his driver's test!

SARA

I swear you were adopted.

Sara SHOVES her way past Cameron, Bart and Mike, and stomps off to school by herself.

Mike, still failing to make words, waves as she passes. But Sara doesn't look back.

VALERIE

GO! This stench is like a dead dog puked up a meal of its own shit.

Tyler slams on the gas, and the SUV blazes down the street.

BART

Your sisters rock.

CAMERON

Blow me.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL, SOON AFTER

On the school's front lawn is what remains of a vigil for Logan Weller - flowers, melted candles, photos as he grew up, etc. Mike glances at it as he, Bart and Cameron pass.

BART

Cops said he killed himself. Lotsa kids who get bullied do that.

CAMERON

Of course they'd say that. But maybe that's not what really happened.

The trio walk up the stone steps leading to the two tall, open front doors. Above each door now is an arching banner, like the doors' eyebrows. One says 'HAPPY HOMECOMING', the other 'WELCOME BACK GHOSTS'.

BART

If it wasn't safe, they wouldn't have reopened the school. It's been three days, what else is there to find?

CAMERON

Maybe they'll find your athletic talent.

Bart lunges for Cameron, who anticipates the attack and easily evades Bart as they pass through the front doors.

INT. FRONT HALL

Among the numerous flyers on the wall is one that reads 'HOMECOMING HALLWAY CONTEST'.

CAMERON
Let's check out the locker room.

BART
They're not letting you in there,
you choad. It's a crime scene!

CAMERON
I thought you said it was suicide.

BART
What the fuck ever it was, there's
no way you're getting in there.

CAMERON
Oh, I'll get in there.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOCKER ROOM, MOMENTS LATER

Strands of yellow caution tape reading 'POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS' block off the hall leading to the boys locker room. Outside the entrance, a police officer sits in a chair sipping coffee and reading something on his phone.

BART
See? Get through that.

CAMERON
There's always another way in.

Mike stares at the locker room entrance.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Maybe they'll cancel gym!

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM, LATER THAT MORNING

Mike and Bart sit in class with 15-20 other students. Mr. Sawyer leads a discussion of 'Hamlet', as we can see by names like Claudius and Laertes on the chalkboard.

Mike stares out the window, paying no attention whatsoever as Bart and curly-haired ANDREA BROWN, 15, argue.

ANDREA
...No, he says it all to Ophelia.

BART

But Hamlet's alone for 'To be or not to be'. It's a soliloquy - as in 'solo'.

Mr. Sawyer notices Mike daydreaming.

ANDREA

Ugh. He saw his dad's ghost and his mom married his gross uncle, so he wants to talk to his girlfriend about how he's feeling.

BART

Ugh. Have you even seen the movie?

The bell rings. Students begin packing up their things.

MR. SAWYER

Quick announcement: The sophomore Homecoming hallway will be on the third floor tonight. If you plan to come, let me know in advance so I can inform Mrs. Fusstreck.

LAZY STUDENT

Do we get extra credit if we come?

MR. SAWYER

No, but you will receive the thrill and honor of personal investment in your school's traditions.

The students groan and start to exit the classroom.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Mike, stick around for a minute?

Mike and Bart stop just before the door.

BART

See you at lunch.

Bart leaves. Mike comes over to Mr. Sawyer's desk.

MR. SAWYER

Saw you daydreaming. I had hoped you might offer some insight.

MIKE

Yeah, I liked Hamlet, I just...

MR. SAWYER

How are you feeling?

Mike looks away.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
If you want to talk to someone
about it-

MIKE
No, it's just...

MR. SAWYER
Forget I asked. Now, I'll see you
tonight for Homecoming prep?

MIKE
Uh, I wasn't planning on-

MR. SAWYER
It's tradition. I insist.

Mr. Sawyer takes out the sign-up sheet. Mike reluctantly
signs his name, then heads for the door.

He stops and turns around.

MIKE
Mr. Sawyer - you know the pool
room? Did you know it was there?

MR. SAWYER
The pool was news to me as well,
and I've been here thirty years.

MIKE
How do you think people used to
get into it?

MR. SAWYER
I wish I could tell you.

SARA (O.S.)
Mr. Sawyer!

In the doorway is Sara, evidently in an urgent rush.

SARA
Courtney quit! Her mom won't let
her be at the school at night
after what happened on Friday.

Mr. Sawyer observes how Mike is looking at Sara.

MR. SAWYER
Well then, looks like you need a
new co-captain for the decorating
team tonight.

SARA
Not really-

MR. SAWYER
Mike was just telling me how excited he was to help the sophomores win back the Hallway Trophy. Right, Mike?

Mike doesn't/can't speak.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Mike.

MIKE
Uh, yeah. Yes! Yeah-

MR. SAWYER
I'm sure Sara can fill you in on whatever still needs doing.

SARA
Fine. Just make sure you're here at six-thirty sharp.

Mike nods.

MR. SAWYER
I'm counting on you two. I miss that trophy. Let's get it back.

SARA
Gotta run, gonna be late for trig.

Sara departs as urgently as she arrived. Mike watches her leave, then looks back at his teacher.

MR. SAWYER
You're welcome.

Just as Mike's out the door-

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Mike!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ENGLISH CLASS

Mr. Sawyer follows Mike out into the hallway.

MR. SAWYER
The pool room.

Mike turns back.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
You weren't thinking about
sneaking in there?

Mike says nothing.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Because if you told me that, I'd
be obligated to advise you not to,
and to mention it to Principal
Delaney.

He places his hand on Mike's shoulder.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
If you told me that.

MIKE
No. No, of course not. No way.

Mr. Sawyer smiles. Mike runs off down the hall.

MS. RUBIN (O.S.)
Playing favorites, are we Toby?

He turns and sees Ms. Rubin, then looks back at Mike.

MR. SAWYER
Trying not to, Beth... But how do
you cope with that level of grief
at his age? Such a challenging
time, full of change, hormones,
life-or-death problems every time
you walk down the hall.

Mike turns the corner out of sight.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
As if high school wasn't hard
enough already?

INT. HALLWAY

Down the hall is Cameron, a few feet from two students
WRESTLING. Other kids around the combatants egg them on.

But Cameron isn't watching the fight. Instead his eyes
study the ceiling - one of the long fluorescent lightbulbs
SURGES in brightness when one fighter slams the other down.

Moments later Tyler Bentley, in his letter jacket,
intervenes and separates the two battlers.

TYLER

What the balls is the matter with you? I thought you were friends!

Cameron observes as the bulb starts to CRACK. Beneath it are two SENIOR GIRLS, one a redhead, eyes glued to Tyler.

CAMERON

Look out!

He dives toward the girls and pushes them out of the way as the broken bulb falls and SMASHES on the floor - right where the girls had been standing.

Much shorter than either senior, Cameron's face is smushed up against the redhead's rather ample chest. He pulls away, looks up at her face - and smiles ear-to-ear.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

I rescued you.

REDHEAD GIRL

Ew, get off me, you perv. Gross!

She and her friend hurry off down the hall. Cameron waves.

CAMERON

Cool, so text me later!

INT. CAFETERIA, SOON AFTER

Mike and Bart chow down on some pizza and chocolate milk.

BART

The Homecoming hallway thing? That shit's for dorks.

MIKE

I'm the new co-captain. With Sara.

Bart gives Mike a long look.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What?

BART

Cameron's sister?

MIKE

So?

Cameron comes to the table and SLAMS his food tray down.

CAMERON
What up, chumpstains?

BART
Nothing.

CAMERON
I had some major contact with
Chloe Tarricone, that redhead with
the double-D's. I saved her from
this - hey wait, have you guys
noticed anything weird with the
lightbulbs? Three times today...

Mike's attention wanders: Sara and her boyfriend, Tim, sit
down a few tables away. Looks like they're fighting. He
can't hear what they're saying, but he watches them anyway.

Over at their table...

TIM
You know how many girls would be
happy to lose their V-card to me?

SARA
You are so full of yourself, it's
sickening.

VOICE (O.S.)
May I have everyone's attention?

The students' heads all turn toward the front of the
cafeteria, where PRINCIPAL VICTORIA DELANEY, 55, stands
with a microphone. A senior boy waits beside her.

PRINCIPAL DELANEY
It is my pleasure to announce this
year's Homecoming King and Queen.

The senior boy hands her a white envelope, which she opens.

Back at Mike, Bart and Cameron's table...

CAMERON
Who. Fucking. Cares.

PRINCIPAL DELANEY
Your King is...Tyler Bentley!

Tepid applause. Cameron was right: Only a few people there
actually care about this stuff.

CAMERON
Huh. An appealing choice - the
jock who's not a complete dick.

Tyler gets up from his table and joins Principal Delaney, waving to the room as he walks.

PRINCIPAL DELANEY

And this year's Queen is...Valerie Henkel!

CAMERON

Recount!

More scattered applause as Valerie gets up from the same table Tyler did and approaches Principal Delaney.

PRINCIPAL DELANEY

Congratulations to you both.

Valerie and Tyler clasp hands and raise them to the room.

PRINCIPAL DELANEY (CONT'D)

One more bit of news. For those who haven't yet heard, Valerie has been awarded the Fortini Prize, the state's highest achievement in mathematics, so if any of you seniors want to catch her for valedictorian, you've got your work cut out. She truly is exceptional.

Principal Delaney smiles proudly and claps.

Back at her table, Sara crosses her arms and sighs.

TIM

Anyway, back to us. You really wanna risk dying a virgin like that Logan kid?

SARA

Ugh! You just suck.

Sara stands up and storms off. Tim starts eating her fries.

TIM

Too soon?

Mike trails Sara as she heads for the door.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CAFETERIA

Sara SLAMS open the door, then stops a few steps into the hall and leans against a locker, fuming.

INT. CAFETERIA

Just inside the door, Mike stops to collect himself. He takes a deep breath, trying to work up his courage.

Now ready, he turns and walks through the door.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CAFETERIA

There she is, just a few feet away.

MIKE

Uh...hey...

She looks right at him. He freezes.

SARA

What?

MIKE

...

Oh no, not again - wait, is she walking right toward him?

SARA

Are you fucking serious?

Mike's face turns bright red. But Sara passes right by him and stops, looking at something back in the cafeteria.

Mike exhales, then turns and sees what she does: A pretty blond girl is chatting up Tim back at the table. Her very low-cut V-neck top easily dominates Tim's attention.

Sara turns and stomps away, KICKING a locker hard enough to dent it - and ignoring Mike the whole time.

On the ceiling, one of the fluorescent lightbulbs buzzes, brightens, then CRACKS with a slight POOF sound.

Mike looks up briefly at the sound, then back down to Sara, who turns a corner out of sight.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

The wind blows the final few leaves off one of the trees.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM - LATER

Mike and Cameron open the band room door, unleashing a HORRIBLE CACOPHONY of brass, woodwinds and percussion.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - SOON AFTER

Mike on snare drum and Cameron on bass drum march around the field, as the band practices its halftime routine.

The conductor, Mrs. Fusstreck, very tall and broad with a noticeable hunchback, observes from the bleachers. During the middle of the school song, she fires up her megaphone.

MRS. FUSSTRECK

STOP!

Everyone stops.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)

Henkel! What are you doing?

Cameron peeks around the gigantic bass drum strapped to his narrow chest. He can barely hold it up.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)

You do understand that if you keep speeding up, it ruins everything?

Cameron looks down, embarrassed.

Next to Mike, the cymbals player whispers to him.

CYMBALS PLAYER

I heard one year she went through five bass drummers. Five!

MRS. FUSSTRECK

Again. Instruments up! One-two-three-four, one-two-three-FOUR!

The band starts up. Again it devolves into a complete mess.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)

STOP!

Mrs. Fusstreck SLAMS down her megaphone and lumbers down the bleacher steps. She hurtles her body through the band, making a direct line for Cameron. It's a rather frightening maneuver, this hunchbacked 70-year-old woman moving with such swift, angry purpose.

She RIPS the drum mallet away from Cameron's hand.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)

LIKE THIS! ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR,
AT-THE-SAME-SPEED!

As she yells, Mrs. Fusstreck bangs the drum in beat - with enough force to nearly knock Cameron over into Mike. The other band members avert their eyes.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)
Is that so hard? Are you incapable
of performing such a basic task?

MIKE
Give him a break, would you?

Mrs. Fusstreck turns her glare to Mike.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
What was that, Trostle?

MIKE
He just messed up, you don't have
to go psycho on him like that.

The conductor saunters over toward Mike.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Mr. Sawyer tells me you plan to
attend the Homecoming decorations
tonight. Not anymore.

MIKE
What?! You can't!

MRS. FUSSTRECK
I assure you - I can.

Furious, Mike TEARS OFF his snare drum and HURLS it aside. He storms off the field back up toward the school.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)
Don't even think about showing up,
Trostle. I'll be watching the
front door all night.

EXT. SIDE DOOR AT THE SCHOOL, SOON AFTER

Mike enters a side door, then SLAMS it shut behind him.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike, still pissed as hell, turns a corner and nearly runs right into Mr. Sawyer, busily conducting hallway traffic.

MR. SAWYER
Mike! Hang on a second. I have an
idea about tonight.

MIKE
I'm not going.

MR. SAWYER
You're - why not?

MIKE
Because Mrs. Fusstreck sucks,
that's why.

Mr. Sawyer halts his traffic duties and turns to Mike.

MR. SAWYER
Michael. You cannot speak like
that about one of your teachers-

MIKE
Don't call me Michael, okay?
You're not my dad.

Mike turns away and enters the crowd.

Mr. Sawyer lets him go.

Mike pushes his way through the packed hallway. He slows down as he sees a girl CRYING HYSTERICALLY. On the wall above her is a picture of Logan Weller.

She crumbles to the floor, head in hands, wailing. The girl's friends try to comfort her, but she is inconsolable. Passing students give her a wide berth.

Mike watches her for a moment, then moves on down the hall. Soon we lose track of him in the crowd.

If you were to look from above at the students flowing through the hallway, it would look similar to how the blood cells coursed through the blood vessel on the TV earlier.

ALL COLOR VANISHES. Everything looks and moves the same, just in shades of gray. Gradually, the assorted students gain individual colors one by one. Some appear red, some orange, some aqua, yellow, amber, purple and others.

This shades-of-gray look soon...returns to NORMAL COLOR.

[NOTE: In the following THREE-PART sequence, the viewer takes a quick trip through the school, exploring its three floors and various classrooms and hallways etc.]

INT. STAIRWELL (PART 1)

At the bottom of a busy stairwell, a JUNIOR GIRL and BOY are going through a very public breakup.

JUNIOR GIRL

She's still sending you nudes. I
saw them on your phone!

Again, all color vanishes - except for the arguing couple, who both appear GREEN against the gray walls, stairs and students around them.

JUNIOR BOY

So you decided to fuck my best
friend - why, to make me jealous?

Again, normal color returns.

From up above in the stairwell, we hear-

OBNOXIOUS STUDENT #1

You're single now, show us your
tits!

OBNOXIOUS STUDENT #2

Hey buddy, kill yourself!

A P.A. speaker on the wall starts BLARING - an EXCRUCIATING blend of static and feedback. Everyone covers their ears.

INT. HISTORY CLASSROOM (PART 2)

Lights are dim as the students watch a documentary DVD. Two SENIOR GIRLS sit in the back, whispering. One is in tears, the other tries to console her.

CRYING SENIOR GIRL

I'm never getting into college. My
parents already hate me.

CONSOLING SENIOR GIRL

No, they just don't understand
you.

Her sobs get the attention of the other students in class.

NEARBY STUDENT

Everyone hates you.

The crying, AQUA-colored girl runs out of the class.

As she exits, the DVD starts skipping and the TV goes dark, like the screen died. The DVD player makes a hissing sound.

When the teacher takes a look, the machine ejects the disc - which FLIES OUT like a missile, barely missing several students' heads before SHATTERING on the back wall.

A barrage of SPARKS shoot out from the outlet where the machine is plugged in - landing on a curly-haired student's head. He SCREAMS and covers his head, which is smoking.

INT. THIRD-FLOOR HALLWAY (PART 3)

Tyler Bentley puts some books away in his locker. As he does, STEPHANIE, 16, a pretty junior in a knee-length skirt, passes behind him and ruffles his mohawk.

He jerks his head around for a look at who would DARE try a stunt like that - but smiles when he sees Stephanie.

She dances away toward a close-by classroom door, smiling back at Tyler and nibbling her lip. He hesitates for a second, then closes his locker and follows her inside.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

The unlit chemistry room contains a series of workstations with various instruments and equipment - Bunsen burners, electronic balances, etc.

Tyler closes the door, peeking through the small window at the oblivious students walking past.

TYLER

You trying to get me in trouble?

STEPHANIE

Trouble? You're the King. The King can do whatever he wants.

He turns to her, sitting on a workstation and giving him some major 'Come hither' eyes.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Or whoever.

Stephanie is BRIGHT PURPLE, as is Tyler. He moves toward her and they start kissing. She wraps her legs around him.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Mmmmm...you're such a good kisser.

He shoves his tongue deep into her mouth. She pulls back from his sudden aggressiveness, so he starts sucking on her neck, his hands wandering along the sides of her body.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Stop. Tyler, no, slow down-

He sticks his hand up her shirt.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Tyler, I said no!

She yanks his hand away from her breast and tries to push him away, but he doesn't budge.

TYLER
I'm gonna tell all your friends
you let me fuck you in the ass.
Everyone's gonna know what a
little slut you are.

STEPHANIE
Fuck you.

Stephanie turns from PURPLE to RED as she SLAPS him, spinning his head to the right.

He looks back at her, his face enraged. In a split-second, his hand is around Stephanie's throat SQUEEZING.

Her RED becomes YELLOW, with Tyler now a burning RED.

TYLER
You don't get to say no to me.

As Stephanie tries to pry his hand off her throat, she sees as Tyler's eyes - fierce with fury - CHANGE COLOR, turning from brown to a cloudy gray just for a moment.

She pulls his arm and kicks him with her heels, but to no avail. He's too strong. He tightens his grip on her neck.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY, SAME TIME

Mike freezes. Several students bump into him from behind.

He staggers over to the wall, his eyes closed. Blurry images, mostly gray, flood his brain: *science workstations ...a girl wearing a skirt...a burning-red hand squeezing the girl's throat...*

INT. THIRD-FLOOR HALLWAY, SAME TIME

Head Coach Ennis Deck marches through the hallway, his posture ever so perfect, ordering students to stop dawdling and get to class already before the bell rings.

Passing by the chemistry room, he sees through the window something he wishes he hadn't: one of his players' letter jackets...and a girl's legs wrapped around him.

Reluctantly, he opens the door.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

The amorous couple doesn't stop at the sound of the door.

COACH DECK
Christ, is that you, Bentley?

Coach Deck can now hear...are those gagging sounds? Moving closer, he glimpses the girl's face over Tyler's shoulder - her eyes tilting back into her head.

He grabs Tyler by the arm and yanks him off of Stephanie, who falls back and bangs her head on the desktop, OUT COLD.

At the same time, Tyler reaches his arm back and-

COACH DECK (CONT'D)
What are you d-

-ELBOWS his coach's jaw, sending him crashing to the floor.

Looking up, Coach Deck can barely recognize his star player - his face gnarled up in anger, his eyes a ghostly gray.

COACH DECK (CONT'D)
Listen up, Bentley, you on some kind of roid rage?

As Tyler stalks toward his cowering prey, every device nearby goes crazy: Bunsen burners ignite, various gadgets whir and buzz, the wall clock's hands spin furiously, etc.

COACH DECK (CONT'D)
I told you that shit'll shrink your balls into blueberries.

Chairs slide across the floor, knocking over desks. Coach Deck looks around the room in astonishment.

TYLER
I've always hated you...Coach.

The door swings closed with a BANG.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike WRITHES on the ground. Some students stop and stare.

More images: *a man cowering...a boy with a mohawk...*

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

The hairs on the back of Tyler's neck stand up as he closes in on his football coach.

Tyler, a deep AMBER, towers over his bright-YELLOW victim.

COACH DECK

Bentley, don't you come near me-

Tyler jumps on top of Coach Deck and grabs his face with both hands. He raises the coach's head up and BASHES it down onto the granite floor. Coach Deck's body goes limp.

Then Tyler does it again. And again. And again. A pool of blood grows beneath Coach Deck's crumbling skull.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike's hands cover his face as he thrashes on the floor, in seeming AGONY. More students have stopped to observe.

CURIOUS STUDENT

Should we get the nurse?

The blurry image of the back of a man's head CRACKING OPEN ...a puddle of blood...

The vision changes - it's the pool room. Very dark. The image once again comes into focus. A man in a white shirt walks along the back wall, approaching a SILVER HANDRAIL. He grabs it, and begins to walk down the stairs.

Halfway into the blackness, he turns toward Mike. He is wearing an orange tie. It is George.

GEORGE

Find me.

The blackness around George in the stairwell starts to swallow him up. He reaches out his hand-

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

MIKE

DAD! WAIT!

The onlookers hear Mike's outburst, then watch as he opens his eyes - a look of UTMOST TERROR - then FAINTS.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

After the ninth or tenth impact, Tyler stops. The cloudy gray disappears from his eyes, which return to normal. He blinks repeatedly, a confused look on his face.

The electrical instruments stop buzzing, the furniture sits still. The room is silent, but for Tyler's heavy breathing.

Tyler looks down at his coach's lifeless body, then lifts up his hands: dark red stains cover his fingers.

TYLER

What the...

He looks back at Coach Deck: the dark red puddle under his head grows bigger by the second.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Balls!

He turns to his left: Stephanie, lying on the desk.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Fuck, what the balls?

Tyler stands up and examines the room: the chairs and desks strewn about all over, a total mess.

TYLER (CONT'D)

What in fucking balls?!

The bell rings.

His eyes dart over to the door, which is thankfully shut.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

A student tries to shake Mike awake, but he doesn't react.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

Tyler peeks through the door window - a few stragglers hurry to get to class, but the hallway quickly empties out.

He runs to the sink on the side wall and washes the blood off his hands - then he has an idea.

EXT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

Tyler opens the door and peers around. The coast is clear. He walks into the hall, his face sweating with desperation. He tries all the nearby lockers, but nothing's open.

At last Tyler locates an unused, unlocked locker. He swings open the door, then returns to the classroom.

Moments later, he hauls Coach Deck's body from the chemistry room down the hall to the locker.

Tyler lifts him up and STUFFS him inside. He tries to shut the locker door but can't - the body is too big. So he maneuvers the coach's arms and legs a bit, but fails again. Finally, he just throws his shoulder into the door and, after a sickening CRUNCH, the locker shuts.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY,

Mike suddenly SITS UP, eyes open, breathing hard.

CURIOUS STUDENT
Shit, bro, you scared the piss
outta me!

Mike looks around, figuring out where he is.

CURIOUS STUDENT (CONT'D)
You wanna go to the nurse?

Mike gets up, pushes his way past, then runs down the hall.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

Tyler grabs a bunch of paper towels from near the sink and sops up the puddle of blood as best he can. He stuffs them into his pocket and looks around for any more blood when-

COUGH.

Stephanie starts moving.

TYLER
Balls!

She sits up, still quite woozy. Tyler BOLTS out the door before she sees him.

INT. THIRD-FLOOR STAIRWELL

He barges through the door and runs down the stairs, leaping four at a time all the way down three flights.

INT. THIRD-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike throws open the door at the other end of the hall and starts looking for the right room.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM, MOMENTS LATER

Mike enters and notices all the overturned furniture. His eyes quickly find Stephanie, groggy and rubbing her head, sitting on the workstation. She looks over at him.

MIKE

Who else was in here?

Stephanie thinks for a moment.

STEPHANIE

Tyler.

MIKE

Who else?

She shakes her head, then grimaces.

STEPHANIE

What happened?

She rubs the back of her head, where it hit the desk.

INT. THIRD-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike exits the chemistry room and looks around the empty hall. He spots the open door to the stairwell.

INT. THIRD-FLOOR STAIRWELL, BOTTOM, MOMENTS LATER

At the bottom of the stairwell, Tyler sits, hiding beneath the back of the stairs. He's shaking, staring at the floor.

Mike walks down the final flight and stops at the bottom. He hears someone breathing hard, nearly hyperventilating. Looking back around the corner, he discovers-

MIKE

Tyler?

Tyler doesn't react.

MIKE (CONT'D)
What happened in the chem room?

Tyler looks up at Mike.

TYLER
How do you know about that?

MIKE
I sorta...saw it.

TYLER
What? What did you see?

MIKE
I'm not sure.

TYLER
That wasn't me. I don't know what happened, but that wasn't me. You gotta believe me.

MIKE
Who else was there?

Tyler stands, his face turning from fearful to furious.

TYLER
Don't tell anyone about this - you got that? Don't fucking say shit!

He punches the wall next to Mike's head and immediately recoils in pain.

Tyler backs away, crying now, a petrified look on his face.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry...

He turns and runs out the door.

EXT. SIDE DOOR AT THE SCHOOL

The same side door Mike recently entered FLIES OPEN. Tyler bursts through then freezes in the bright outdoor light. He half-walks/half-runs away from the building.

The light above the doorway, which flared up when Tyler appeared, flickers momentarily before going dark.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE, LATER THAT AFTERNOON - DAY

Cameron and Bart toss the football around in the street. At the end of the block, a blue midsize SUV turns the corner.

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR, MOMENTS LATER

As Claire pulls into the driveway, Cameron and Bart stop playing and wave.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM

Mike lies on his bed staring at the ceiling as he thinks.

Through the window, we can see Bart and Cameron jumping into leaf piles down on the street.

Mike glances at his bookshelf. His eyes settle on a pair of orange goggles hanging off a third-place swimming trophy.

EXT. TOWN POOL, FIVE YEARS EARLIER - DAY

START FLASHBACK.

A beautiful sunny day at the town pool. About a hundred kids, parents and seniors escape the sweltering July heat.

At an uncrowded corner of the pool are 10-year-old Mike and his dad, George. Mike, wearing those orange swimming goggles, stands at the edge of the pool, his hands raised in a diving position. George waits in the pool.

Mike hesitates.

GEORGE

All right, no problem, there's no rush. Just take a deep breath.

Mike lowers his hands and backs away.

George swims over to the edge of the pool. He's in quite good shape for a man approaching 50, with a full head of dark brown hair specked with gray.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Remember when you didn't even want to go in the shallow end?

MIKE

But this is diving.

GEORGE

You learned to control your fear.
That's all this is, it's just...

George notices that Mike's attention has shifted to a girl his age walking toward them.

Mike raises his goggles to get a clearer look. The girl walks along the pool's edge and turns the corner, heading directly where Mike is standing.

Sara flings her towel toward a chair. Standing a few feet to Mike's side, she raises her hands and with supreme confidence DIVES gracefully into the pool.

As she comes up from underwater, she looks back at Mike.

SARA

Hi Mike, you coming in?

Mike's voice gets stuck in his throat for a second.

MIKE

...I...like diving...

He puts his goggles back on and jumps, but forgets to assume a diving position. He hits the water awkwardly, causing an ugly splash.

Underwater, Mike struggles. His hands FLAIL ABOUT while his feet try their hardest to find the floor - just a few stubborn inches away.

Through Mike's orange-tinted goggles, we see Sara dip underwater in front of him. In SLOW MOTION Sara waves hello to him and smiles - a huge, toothy grin - then turns and swims away.

Mike fights his way to the surface and takes a huge breath of air. He battles the water but soon sinks back down, swallowing a mouthful of chlorine.

Now he CAN'T BREATHE. Everything Mike has learned about swimming is out the window - it's pure survival mode.

George lets it happen - for a few moments anyway. Then he grabs his son and lifts him by the armpits up above water. Mike coughs up some water, gasping and heaving.

GEORGE

Use your legs, remember? Like
you're riding your bike.

Mike starts moving his legs. His desperation eases a bit.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I'm gonna let you go. Ready?

George releases him and backs off.

Mike wobbles at first, his head dipping back below the water before he recovers - and begins treading water. It's not pretty, but he manages to keep his head dry, barely.

He swims to the edge of the pool and takes off his goggles - still breathing hard, but safe now.

George comes over and rubs him on the head.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
If only we could get Sara to come by every time you were scared - you'd be able to do anything.

MIKE
Dad! I wasn't scared.

GEORGE
It's good to learn there are some things you can control and some you can't.

MIKE
What about what I can't control?

GEORGE
Like how you feel about Sara?

MIKE
I don't feel anything about her!

GEORGE
Okay, okay! That's gonna be tougher to figure out, though.

MIKE
How will I know if it's something I can control or not?

GEORGE
When it's important, you'll know.

We hear the sound of someone knocking on a door.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM, PRESENT DAY

Another knock. A moment later, Claire opens the door.

CLAIRE

Hey.

Mike snaps out of his daydream.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I saw Bart and Cameron outside.

She sits down on the bed next to him.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

What's up? You can talk to me, you know. I'm a good listener.

Mike looks out the window.

MIKE

Sometimes I think I see him. Like at breakfast, I see him sitting next to me, reading the paper.

CLAIRE

Having his coffee.

MIKE

Yeah. But today, it felt different. Like...

CLAIRE

Go ahead.

MIKE

Like he was there. At school. Like he was looking for me.

Claire touches his hand.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I wish we could be together, all of us. Just one more time.

CLAIRE

Me too.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE SARA'S HOUSE, SAME TIME

Sara and Andrea Brown walk toward Sara's house.

SARA

Throw some pics up on the school's Facebook too, not just Snap and Insta.

ANDREA

Ugh, Facebook? So everyone's parents can follow along?

SARA

I know, I just want to make sure we have everything covered.

ANDREA

Fine, fine.

Sara stops.

SARA

I know I'm being a hard-ass about this. But Valerie never won the hallway contest. We have to do something exceptional.

ANDREA

Then wait'll you see what I've been working on. We got this.

SARA

Sophomores!

ANDREA

SOPHOMORES!

Andrea shoves a fist in the air, sticks her tongue out, then turns and crosses the street.

As Andrea walks off, Sara spots a Gunnar Water Beds delivery truck parked in front of her house.

INT. THE HENKEL HOUSE

Inside, Sara drops her backpack and scans the house.

SARA

Mom?

She hears some giggling upstairs - and is that a male voice? She hustles up the stairs, following the sounds.

INT. BEDROOM

Upon entering, Sara sees her mother, Beverly, lying back on a queen-size water bed. At the foot of the bed, two DELIVERY MEN adjust the frame's level.

As they adjust it, the bed shimmies, causing Beverly to giggle as her body rocks side-to-side on the new bed.

SARA
Oh my God.

BEVERLY
Lie down, you have to try this.

DELIVERY MAN #1
So we can haul off the prior bed?

BEVERLY
Yes. Thank you, gentlemen.

The two delivery men exit.

SARA
What is this?

BEVERLY
I have always wanted a water bed.

Sara crosses her arms and leans against the doorway. Beverly notices her daughter's body language. She sits up and motions for Sara to come over and join her.

Sara does, steadying herself with her hands as she gets used to the feeling of sitting on such a bed.

SARA
So, you just decided to get one?

BEVERLY
I sat on one once, at Sears.

SARA
Have you talked to him?

BEVERLY
He calls. Every day.

SARA
Are you gonna get divorced?

BEVERLY
Sara, these things take time.

Sara gets up and stands by the window, looking out.

BEVERLY (CONT'D)
I remember being in high school. I know it's hard enough already without your parents fighting.

SARA
So why don't you just stop?

BEVERLY

Sometimes even people who love each other for a long time... They grow apart. They want different things. I'm sorry to put you through this.

Sara looks back to her mother.

SARA

It wasn't you who cheated. You shouldn't blame yourself.

Beverly leans back onto the bed, which ripples, causing her to bounce up and down. She smiles.

BEVERLY

You really should try this.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MIKE'S HOUSE, SAME TIME

Mike jogs out the front door toward Bart and Cameron.

CAMERON

Can we play some Interception now?

MIKE

First let's talk about tonight. You guys gotta sneak me in.

The three meet in the middle of the street.

BART

You know if Fusstreck sees you, you'll get suspended.

CAMERON

The Hunchback of Notre Douche might even try to get you expelled.

MIKE

That's my problem. Tell me about that secret door thing you use when you're late.

CAMERON

No way, I'm not showing you guys that!

BART

Come on, cocktoast, you owe him for getting your back with Fusstreck.

CAMERON

Okay, fine, whatever. I just don't get why everyone cares about this Homecoming hallway crap so much.

MIKE

It's a personal investment in our school's traditions.

Cameron rolls his eyes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Besides, it's not about that. I want to get in that pool room.

And now he rolls them right back onto Mike.

CAMERON

Duuuuuude, I'm so down for that.

BART

Excuse me. You mean where a kid just died under mysterious circumstances? You wanna go there at night, alone - on purpose?

MIKE

I need to see what's down there.

BART

But how? You saw it's blocked off. There's a cop outside!

CAMERON

I doubt the cop's there overnight.

Bart lets out an exasperated sigh.

MIKE

You can just be lookout if you don't want to go in.

CAMERON

And while you're looking, see if you can find your balls.

Bart shoves Cameron.

MIKE

I had another incident.

They both turn to Mike.

BART

Like on Friday?

MIKE

This one was much longer, more intense. It was like I could see what was happening. Parts anyway.

CAMERON

What happened?

MIKE

It was Tyler Bentley. I think he might have hurt someone. Maybe even killed him.

BART

No shit? Who?

MIKE

I couldn't see who. When I ran up to the chemistry room after, there was only this girl in there. She didn't know what happened. But I found Tyler downstairs and he...he looked all stressed out and scared. I've never seen him like that. He looked...

BART

Like he just killed somebody?

MIKE

I dunno. Like he didn't know what the hell just happened either.

CAMERON

So both times you've had these visions or whatever, someone died?

MIKE

I think so.

BART

Well fuck, let's definitely sneak in there now!

CAMERON

Were you born without balls or did they fall off from lack of use?

BART

Shut the fuck up!

Mike steps between them.

MIKE

Cameron! Just...go get the ball.

Cameron hustles off looking for the football.

MIKE (CONT'D)
There's something else.

BART
Is this about Sara?

MIKE
What? No, it's-

BART
Friends' sisters are unpursuable.
That's a rule.

MIKE
Would you shut up? It's not that.
I saw my dad. Both times.

Cameron comes back with the football, tosses it to Bart, who drops it and quickly picks it back up.

BART
Go deep.

Cameron sprints away down the street. Bart HURLS the ball way out of Cameron's reach, then looks back to Mike.

BART (CONT'D)
You saw him? What, like a ghost?

MIKE
No, it's...I think it's just in my head. Whatever it is, I feel like it's calling me. I gotta see what's there. Sorry I didn't tell you. I didn't want you to think I was going crazy.

Bart thinks for a few seconds as Cameron hustles back.

BART
Alright, I'm in. Let's huddle up.

The boys form a huddle. Bart draws up the play.

BART (CONT'D)
We'll walk over to the school after dinner. We sneak Mike in, go to our hallways, make sure people see us, then sneak away and meet up at eight.

MIKE
Where should we meet?

CAMERON

Outside the band room. There are
no hallway projects close to that.
It should be clear.

BART

Done. Okay, BREAK!
(to Cameron)
10-yard out. Go!

Cameron turns and runs his route.

BART (CONT'D)

That'd be real fucked up.

MIKE

What would?

Bart slings the ball over to Cameron.

BART

If your dad was haunting the
school.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL FRONT STEPS, LATER - NIGHT

It's a chilly, windy night. A long line of students extends
down the front steps, with Bart and Cameron near the back.

At the front of the line, the two arching banners that look
like eyebrows above the front doors flap wildly with each
gust. One shivering student points up at the 'WELCOME BACK
GHOSTS' banner over the right door.

SHIVERING STUDENT

That thing won't last the night.

INT. FRONT LOBBY

Inside, Mrs. Fusstreck keeps a careful eye on everyone at
the sign-in table. It's like a nightclub, with Mrs.
Fusstreck as the world's prickliest bouncer.

INT. SOPHOMORE HALLWAY, THIRD FLOOR

Upstairs at the sophomore hallway, things are going great.
Under Sara's leadership, groups of students are spread
throughout the hall working on different aspects of the
school-spirit project: balloons, mural design, banners,
hanging big paper ghosts up on all the walls, etc.

Sara focuses intently on her task: using a small yellow-and-black DeWalt box-cutter to cut out a perfect S from a piece of oaktag - the final letter in a 'LET'S GO GHOSTS' banner that she passes off to another student.

SARA

Tape that up over the stairwell door so everyone can see it.

The other student runs off with the banner. Sara tucks the box-cutter into her back pocket, then heads down the hall.

She finds Andrea decorating a locker - Tyler Bentley's, as we can see by the enormous, absurdly accurate painting of a fired-up, shoulder-pad-wearing Tyler, mohawk prominently featured, that Andrea is putting the finishing touches on.

SARA (CONT'D)

Wow. That's...incredible, Andrea.

ANDREA

Only took about eleven weeks. Your sister won't mind, will she?

SARA

I don't care.

Andrea snaps a selfie with the painting.

ANDREA

Weird, though, isn't it-

As Andrea posts the pic on Instagram, just to the left of Tyler's locker we see the door to the chemistry classroom.

ANDREA (O.S.)

-how Tyler wasn't around this afternoon? He always stops by his locker after sixth period.

Peering farther down the hall, away from everyone, we see the locker that Tyler stuffed Coach Deck into. At the bottom, a thin TRAIL OF BLOOD leaks out, dripping slowly onto the floor.

ANDREA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Anyone seen him tonight? I hope he didn't get injured at practice.

Back at the decorating area, Mr. Sawyer approaches Sara and Andrea, examining all the students' work along the way.

MR. SAWYER

Sara, this is going swimmingly! I do love that word.

He stops, takes a long look at Andrea's painting of Tyler.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Fascinating.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL FRONT STEPS, SAME TIME

Bart and Cameron wait in line.

CAMERON
...Chloe is so fucking hot. Those perfect titties? When the girls in my grade are seniors, I hope even one reaches her level.

BART
Will you get focused? Tonight's not about girls, dick, especially not senior chicks you have no possible chance with.

Bart turns away, staring at the long line still ahead.

CAMERON
But those tittays...

Down on the ground below, Mike sneaks along the wall of the school in the dark. He reaches the edge of the building, turns the corner, and heads toward the back of the school.

INT. SOPHOMORE HALLWAY, SOON AFTER

From behind, we see several pairs of feet enter the sophomore hallway.

At the far end of the hall, Sara, Andrea and everyone are busy decorating.

As the pairs of feet walk, we hear the sounds of paper tearing; numerous decoration items fall to the floor.

It's the seniors, there to disrupt shit, led by ASHLEY BURNS, 17 - the same blond girl Sara saw flirting with Tim at lunch. Following her, three other seniors (plus junior Tim) RIP DOWN much of Sara and her classmates' hard work.

Tim jumps up and yanks down the 'LET'S GO GHOSTS' banner, which he crumples up with relish.

Sara quickly discovers what's happening. She charges down the hall to confront the intruders.

SARA

What the hell are you doing?

A bunch of the other sophomores join her. It's now a standoff: The seniors vs. the sophomores.

Sara and Ashley eyeball each other.

Ashley glances at the destruction her gang just inflicted.

ASHLEY

Hallway looks great so far.

SARA

Are you done here?

ASHLEY

Tim has an announcement.

Tim steps forward, looking right at Sara.

TIM

On account of you being such a damn prude, I am officially dumping your ass.

The seniors laugh and gesture rudely at Sara.

TIM (CONT'D)

Just to be perfectly clear...

He walks over to Ashley. They start MAKING OUT, all sloppy tongues and gross slurping sounds.

Tim puts his arm around her and smiles like a douche.

TIM (CONT'D)

I do love an older woman.

Ashley shakes her head at Tim and pushes him away.

ASHLEY

You really should never speak.

Ashley returns her glare to Sara, who glares right back.

SARA

That supposed to get a rise out of me?

ASHLEY

Oh, aren't you adorable.

SARA

Just so you know, Ashley, when Tim gets nervous, he farts. One time during Game of Thrones, he shit his pants.

Tim's eyes bulge.

SARA (CONT'D)

It kinda kills the mood. I'd warn you not to get too busy in an enclosed space, like his car, but it's not like he can drive anyway.

The sophomores burst out laughing.

ANDREA

Savage!

TIM

You little bitch!

He makes a move toward Sara, but Ashley stops him.

TIM (CONT'D)

But she's lying! She's a liar!

ASHLEY

We're done here.

Ashley turns back to Sara, who's busy receiving high-fives from the sophomores.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

One last thing. It's a secret.

She moves close to Sara, lowers her voice.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I'm the one who fucked your dad.

Ashley leans back, smirking.

Sara ATTACKS, shoving Ashley into the wall. She reaches back and balls her hand into a fist, but just as she's about to swing, other students jump in and separate them.

Ashley grins, as several sophomores restrain Sara.

Hearing the commotion, Mr. Sawyer comes into the hallway.

MR. SAWYER

What's going on out here?

He hurries toward the gathering of students, who divide into their two sides.

ASHLEY
We were just leaving.

Mr. Sawyer notices all the torn-down decorations.

MR. SAWYER
What happened here? Sara?

Sara takes a moment before she speaks.

SARA
Nothing.

Ashley smirks, then walks away, followed by Tim and the seniors. Sara heads off in the opposite direction, pushing her way past her fellow sophomores.

INT. FRONT LOBBY

Bart and Cameron finally reach the sign-in table, behind which sits a JUNIOR GIRL. In front of her is the sign-in sheet and a pen, next to her phone, which is plugged into the wall, charging.

Standing beside the table blocking the way forward is Mrs. Fusstreck, who glowers at them - especially Cameron - with suspicion and disdain.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Where's your friend?

BART
Who?

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Trostle.

BART
Oh, Mike? He's at home. Studying.

Mrs. Fusstreck stares at them, as if waiting for one to crack. The band teacher's eyes narrow as they dart back and forth from Cameron to Bart.

Then back to Cameron.

Then Bart.

Bart tries his hardest to maintain eye contact - each millisecond feels like a week. All his muscles stiffen.

The light around and behind Mrs. Fusstreck's body DARKENS. It gets quiet. Is she...growing bigger? Her eyes now paper-thin, her hunchback more prominent than ever.

All other sound stops fully, except for the whistle of the wind outside.

The hairs on the back of Bart's neck stand up. He gulps, praying for this inquisition to cease.

The wind grows louder.

The gigantic Mrs. Fusstreck leans forward and-

SMASH!

The junior girl's phone screen shatters on the floor beside the table. Bart audibly GASPS, which is covered up by-

HORRIFIED JUNIOR GIRL

My phone!

The light and sound in the hallway return to normal.

Mrs. Fusstreck's attention momentarily shifts to the junior girl picking up the pieces of her busted phone.

Bart and Cameron don't move. Mrs. Fusstreck slides the sign-in sheet across. After what feels like forever...

MRS. FUSSTRECK

Sign your names.

Bart picks up the pen and writes his name, as does Cameron.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)

(to Bart) Sophomores third floor, even side. (to Cameron) Freshmen, first floor, odd side. No one is permitted on the second floor.

INT. HALLWAY, MOMENTS LATER

Cameron and Bart turn the corner and pick up their pace.

CAMERON

Tell me you didn't just feel that.

Bart says nothing, just keeps walking.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

You felt that, didn't you? What was that?

BART
I don't know! Come on, we gotta
get Mike.

EXT. BACK OF THE SCHOOL, SAME TIME

Mike waits in the dark along the back wall of the school.
Cold, he blows into his hands. A moment later...

CAMERON (O.S.)
Mike!

Hidden behind some bushes is a window, about one foot wide,
two feet high - with a hand reaching out, waving at Mike.

INT. MAINTENANCE ROOM

Inside a custodial storage room (mops, slop sink, etc.)
await Bart and Cameron. Mike squeezes in through a small
window and hops down onto the floor.

CAMERON
The lock on the window's busted.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE MAINTENANCE ROOM

Bart and Cameron turn right as they exit.

BART
So something weird happened with
Fusstreck. I don't know what it...

Mike glances left down the hall, at the end of which is a
white door with a big red handle.

That white door...there's something about that white door.

As Mike approaches the door, Bart's voice muffles. For a
few moments, the sounds of Mike's own breathing, his HEART
BEATING faster and faster, are all he hears. Until-

CAMERON
Mike! What are you doing?

Mike stops, and notices that his hand is on the red handle
like he was about to push it open. Above the handle, a sign
reads 'EMERGENCY DOOR - DO NOT OPEN - ALARM WILL SOUND.'

He pulls his hand away and looks back at Cameron and Bart.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Come on, this way.

The three boys walk toward the stairwell and up the stairs. At the first-floor exit, Cameron stops.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
See you guys at eight.

Cameron flashes an odd smile and exits.

BART
That kid's weird.

MIKE
So what happened with Fusstreck?

INT. SOPHOMORE HALLWAY, MOMENTS LATER

Mike and Bart open the door to the sophomore hallway and look around. They observe the devastation wreaked by the seniors. It's quiet.

Down the hall, Andrea and a few of the other sophomores are cleaning things up, repairing the damage.

ANDREA
Where've you guys been?

BART
There's a line.

MIKE
Hey, is Sara here?

ANDREA
She went that way after the seniors came through.

Mike heads down the hall, leaving Bart with Andrea.

BART
Hi, Andrea. Uh, I'm Bart.

ANDREA
I know.

BART
Bartholomew, uh, actually. My full name. Bart's fine, though. You got a full name?

ANDREA
Andrea.

BART
Right, right-

ANDREA
You gonna help or what?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THIRD-FLOOR STAIRWELL

Mike peeks through the narrow window in the door and sees the back of Sara's head below. He takes a deep breath.

INT. THIRD-FLOOR STAIRWELL

Sara sits on one of the steps. Her eyes are red.

Up the stairs, behind her, Mike opens the door.

Sara gives her eyes a quick wipe with her sleeve, but doesn't look back.

SARA
I'll be right back up.

Mike stands there, once again trying to find his voice.

After a moment, Sara turns and looks back at him.

SARA (CONT'D)
You forget what time six-thirty sharp is?

MIKE
Sorry, I... There was a line. What happened?

SARA
Some of the seniors, they came by.

Mike walks down and sits on the step - near her, but not right next to her. A few moments of quiet.

SARA (CONT'D)
Why are people such assholes? I never even liked Tim. I only went out with him because Valerie said I should. Then he dumps me in front of everyone. And that's not even what I care about. Ashley. What is her problem? She said this thing - it's not true. It can't be. I just...I cannot deal. I probably shouldn't lay all this on you. But you asked.

INT. FRESHMAN HALLWAY

The freshman hallway is...not impressive. Mostly just poorly cut-out attempts at ghosts made from construction paper, plus misspelled banners, etc.

Cameron sits on the floor against the wall, bored as shit. He checks the clock on the wall - it's a quarter to eight.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Meanwhile, Tim and Ashley are engaging in a particularly sloppy make-out session along the wall. She pulls away and takes Tim by the hand, leading him down the hall.

TIM
Where we goin'?

She turns a corner and stops. About twenty feet away, at the end of the hall, is the door to the boys locker room, still blocked by all the 'POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS' tape. The chair the officer was sitting in earlier is empty.

TIM (CONT'D)
The locker room?

ASHLEY
No one'll bother us in there.

Ashley ducks under the tape. Tim hesitates. She turns back-

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Just follow me.

-and gently rubs his crotch over his jeans.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Okay?

Ashley smiles, then resumes making her way around and under the tape, toward the door. Tim follows, eagerly now.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike and Sara wander down the empty second-floor hallway.

SARA
I heard you stood up for Cameron today. In band.

MIKE
Fusstreck's always giving him a hard time.

Mike subtly checks his phone - 7:55.

They walk in silence before coming to a stop outside a glass display case - the 'HOOPER HIGH WALL OF FAME'. Inside the case are framed news articles about students and faculty, sports-team photographs, trophies, plaques, etc.

One article has a picture of Valerie with the headline 'H.H.S. Senior Wins State Math Award'. Sara stares at it.

SARA

She's probably gonna go to Harvard, cure cancer and become president. She is exceptional. Sometimes I feel like there's nothing I can do at this school that Valerie hasn't already done better.

MIKE

It's just some award. You're really smart too.

SARA

Not like her.

Sara notices an article with a fairly recent picture of a smiling couple: Mrs. Fusstreck and a man her age. The headline: 'H.H.S. Teachers Celebrate 40 Years Together'

SARA (CONT'D)

I guess that's her husband? Says he was a teacher here too.

MIKE

Someone married her?

SARA

That poor man.

MIKE

He's the one who should get an award.

Sara laughs. Mike smiles.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Cameron approaches the band room door. He stops and looks around. No one's there. He checks his phone - 7:59.

INT. SOPHOMORE HALLWAY, MOMENTS LATER

Andrea dumps some of the badly damaged decorations into the garbage bag Bart holds.

ANDREA
They cannot get away with this.

BART
They cannot get away with this!

Andrea shoots Bart a look.

BART (CONT'D)
Just, uh, I think you nailed it.

Bart's phone buzzes. A text from Cameron: 'where r u guys?'

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Ashley opens the door and peeks in, then leads Tim inside. As they walk through, Tim spots Logan's ghost-mascot costume lying along the wall - which startles him.

TIM
Shit! Should we really be in here?

At the area by the hole in the wall where Logan fell, things look different. The gym mats, the crates of athletic gear and the wooden boards have all been moved aside.

Still hanging, though, is the BLACK CURTAIN.

Ashley moves right for it, pulling it up from the ground to reveal a much larger hole than before. Through it, she gazes down into the pool room - eerily quiet, empty, dark.

Ashley is mesmerized.

ASHLEY
I can't believe we've had a pool
all these years.

Next to her, Tim peeks down through the hole.

TIM
Okay, this is kinda freaking me
out. A kid died like right there.

He backs away. She turns to him.

ASHLEY
You don't want to look? Fine.
Bring one of those mats over.

Tim does as he's told. Ashley's gaze returns to the pool. She can't take her eyes off it.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Cameron checks his phone again - no response. It's 8:10.

He stands up and looks around. His eyes land on a nearby door, beside which is a sign: 'MARILYN FUSSTRECK, CONDUCTOR & CHAIR, MUSIC DEPT.'

Cameron walks over to the door, then checks to see if anyone's around. Nope. The hallway's totally empty.

He smiles and reaches for the doorknob. It's unlocked.

INT. MRS. FUSSTRECK'S OFFICE

Inside, Cameron finds a desk with piles of sheet music, an old-timey wood-encased radio, a shelf with books about Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. Booooring.

Behind the desk, though, is a door marked 'STORAGE'.

That door...there's something about that door.

The room goes totally silent. Cameron can hear nothing but his own breathing, the HEART BEATING inside his chest.

INT. BAND STORAGE ROOM

The door opens easily. Cameron enters and fumbles with the light switch, but it doesn't work. He takes a flashlight from his backpack and closes the door behind him.

He weaves between some old music stands to the back wall, where he shoves aside a stack of trombone cases and points his flashlight down to the floor...revealing a TRAP DOOR.

He grabs the trap-door handle.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike and Sara stroll down the hall.

SARA

So you heard about my dad, right?

MIKE

Yeah. That sounds really hard.

SARA

Oh, I'm so sorry. Your dad - I didn't mean to... You must think all my problems are so small.

MIKE

No, I don't.

SARA

My sister said he was the best teacher she ever had.

Mike looks down at the floor.

SARA (CONT'D)

It's okay if you don't want to talk about it.

MIKE

No, it's just...everyone asks me if I want to talk about it. My mom, Bart, even Mr. Sawyer. It's like, why is that the only thing? He's dead - I get it, okay?

SARA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to-

MIKE

Like, am I allowed to feel anything else? To think about anything else? Because I do. A lot. And then I feel guilty, like why should that even matter?

SARA

But it does.

MIKE

Yeah. You're actually the first person to say it's okay if I don't want to talk about it. Thanks. I feel better getting that out.

INT. TOWEL ROOM

From the floor, we see Cameron pull open the trap door above and shine his flashlight down through it.

He descends the creaky wooden ladder and swings the light around. The small room is quite dusty, like no one's been in there for decades. There are some life preservers, a bin for 'Used Towels', and a tall wooden lifeguard chair.

Finally, the light finds a door.

Cameron tugs the door's rusty slide bolt, which doesn't give way at all. He grabs it with both hands and puts his legs into it. A few strenuous seconds later, it DISLODGES. The door is unlocked.

Cameron pulls it open, just a few inches, and peeks in.

It's the POOL ROOM.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Their clothes scattered nearby, Ashley and Tim roll around nearly naked on the gym mat, mere feet from the huge hole leading down to the pool room.

It's an awkward hookup - lots of stopping and starting and unintentional bumping of body parts. Ashley pushes Tim onto his back and kisses him.

He tries to unhook her bra but fumbles it, so she does it for him. She slides her hand down between his legs.

After a moment...

ASHLEY
Everything all right down there?

TIM
It's just a little spooky in here.
I never thought this would be how-

Tim stops himself. Ashley sits up.

ASHLEY
Wait - is this your first time?

TIM
No!

ASHLEY
So that's why you're so nervous.

She stares at him. Tim is silent.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Oh my. Look, do you still want to
do this?

TIM
Yes.

ASHLEY

Good.

TIM

Can we just shut that curtain?
Please.

Ashley reaches up and pulls the thick black curtain down-

INT. POOL ROOM

-completely covering the hole. From this side, we see the curtain drop down over the hole fifteen feet up the wall... just as the door under the 'Towels' sign opens.

Cameron pokes his head out, his eyes following the flashlight beam as it investigates the room.

He steps onto the tile floor and stands perfectly still.

CAMERON

Sweeeeet.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Ashley, now down to only her skirt, straddles Tim, in just his boxers (and socks), on the mat.

TIM

It's your first time too, right?

ASHLEY

(laughs)
No. Sorry.

TIM

No? Who have you...you know.

ASHLEY

Really want me to answer that? You wanna be thinking about me having sex with other guys, or with you?

TIM

Guys? Like plural? How many-

ASHLEY

For fuck's sake, STOP TALKING!

Tim stops talking.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Let's try something else.

She pushes Tim off the mat, then lies down on her back where he had been.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Take off your underwear.

Tim hesitates, but does as he's told. She looks him up and down.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Now take mine off.

She raises her knees. Her skirt falls back to her hips, revealing a purple thong. She grins.

Tim reaches both hands up along the outsides of her thighs. His fingers clutch the thong, and he pulls it up to her knees, then back down again past her ankles and off.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Good. Come here.

He leans forward and they kiss. She places her hands on his shoulders and gently nudges him down her body.

When Tim's head is at her navel, she lifts her skirt up and opens her legs.

Tim starts breathing really heavy.

TIM
I've never-

ASHLEY
Stop talking.

INT. POOL ROOM, SAME TIME

Cameron walks along the side of the pool, his flashlight revealing its full depth and size, along with several STRIPED ROPES lying on the bottom.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Ashley's facial expressions alternate between enjoyment and frustration during Tim's clumsy efforts at pleasuring her.

ASHLEY
Slow down. Try going in circles.

Tim moves his head in a circle.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Not your head. Your tongue.

Again, Tim does as he's told.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Oooohhh, that's good. I knew we'd
find a better way to use your
mouth...mmmmm...

After a few moments of genuine delight, Ashley hears an instantly recognizable sound.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Did you just fucking fart?

TIM
No, it was...the mat did it.

ASHLEY
Oh my God, it reeks.

Ashley sits up and shoves Tim's face away from her.

INT. POOL ROOM

Cameron's flashlight beam scans the outer edges of the room, soon finding something on the side wall: a SILVER HANDRAIL heading diagonally down.

He creeps toward it, sticking close to the wall, just a few feet from the edge of the pool. He reaches the handrail and points his flashlight down, but can't see much. The stairs veer left and out of sight.

He takes out his phone and starts typing a text.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike and Sara turn a corner into a new hallway. Mike glances at his phone and reads Cameron's text: 'i'm in the pooooool roooooom'. He shoves the phone back in his pocket.

SARA
You keep looking at your phone.
Got somewhere to be?

MIKE
No, just, well yeah, kinda.

SARA
Can it wait?

Mike looks down the hall, then back to Sara.

MIKE

Yeah.

They resume their walk, in silence for a few steps.

Sara stops and points at a classroom door. On it is a 'Have a Day' poster - with about a hundred of those smiling 'Have a Nice Day' faces, except each one is a variation. (The 'Have a Mutant Day' face has three eyes, for example.)

SARA

I love these.

Mike and Sara mimic some of the 'Have a Day' faces. Mike does 'Have a Viking Day' by sticking his fingers up above his ears like the horns on a Viking helmet.

MIKE

Haaarr, I'm Bjorn von Bjornsson.
Surrender!

SARA

Ha! You need a beard, though. Let
me try that one.

Sara points to 'Have a Suspicious Day', where the smiley face has one eyebrow raised.

SARA (CONT'D)

Soooo what's this secret meeting
you have to go to, hmmmmmm?

She stares at Mike and narrows her eyes like she's interrogating him. She tries, but can't quite isolate one eyebrow at a time. Either both go up or both stay down.

SARA (CONT'D)

I could never do that one-eyebrow
thing.

MIKE

Here, let me.

Mike reaches for her right eyebrow, but hesitates just before touching her face.

He and Sara lock eyes. She nods.

He gently pushes her eyebrow up with his thumb.

MIKE (CONT'D)

There. Looks just like it.

Sara holds the pose for a few moments, then cracks up, her smile the same toothy grin Mike saw underwater years ago.

It gets quiet. They're so close to each other now.

They lean in for their first k-

VOICE (O.S.)

Trostle!

Mike pulls back, instantly recognizing the venom in the voice. It's Mrs. Fusstreck, marching down the hall right toward Mike and Sara, her hunchback larger than ever.

MRS. FUSSTRECK

Well, well, well. Isn't this marvelous?

She towers over them, clearly enjoying the moment.

INT. POOL ROOM

At the stairwell, Cameron peers down the winding stairs below. Deep breath. Then he takes his first step. Whew.

On the next step, though, his foot lands awkwardly on a crumbling stair. He stumbles and grabs the silver handrail for support - but drops his flashlight.

The metal torch bounces then rolls, THUMPING down each stair, the sound ECHOING off the walls as it hits step, after step, after step - all the way down.

Cameron looks around the room. It's really dark now.

His breathing quickens.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mrs. Fusstreck leads Sara and Mike down the hall, approaching the stairwell up to the third floor.

SARA

Mrs. Fusstreck, I know we're not supposed to be on the second floor, and we're sorry about that, but we're co-captains of the-

MRS. FUSSTRECK

Your co-captain, as you call him, was explicitly banned from tonight's events earlier today.

Sara stops and looks at Mike. Mrs. Fusstreck turns around.

MRS. FUSSTRECK (CONT'D)
Did he not mention that?

Mrs. Fusstreck smiles, and continues walking.

MIKE
I was gonna tell you.

INT. POOL ROOM

Cameron, now nearly blind, hears a RUMBLING sound like a car engine emerge from the bottom of the stairwell.

Across the room, he hears a CLANG, like an old radiator. Then another, louder CLANG.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY, SAME TIME

Mike freezes. He's heard that sound - in his head - before.

MIKE
Shit.

INT. POOL ROOM

ALL COLOR VANISHES. Everything appears only in shades of gray - brighter than what Cameron can see, but not by much.

Windy sounds, like the air in a seashell.

After a few seconds of scanning the grayness from an area hovering above the empty pool...there it is: a BLOT OF YELLOW appears at the far wall.

At that instant of discovery, we ROCKET toward the color, flying directly over the pool and closing in on the yellow target with the human outline.

The windy sounds crescendo to a frighteningly loud gust. The rumbling sound intensifies.

Cameron looks up at something hovering above the pool, a terrified look on his face. He SPRINTS to the towel room.

The yellow grows brighter as he races for the door.

Just before he reaches the towel room door, it SLAMS SHUT. He pushes against it as hard as he can, but it won't budge.

Behind him, the five STRIPED ROPES rise up from the pool into the air...

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Tim and Ashley both stumble as the room SHAKES, followed by a rumbling sound. They have no idea what's going on.

TIM
It's an earthquake!

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike falls to his knees, the sickeningly familiar sensation overpowering him. He tries to keep himself together.

Visions flood his brain: *the pool room again...a flashlight bouncing down stairs...somebody wearing a backpack...a room with a tall wooden chair...*

Mike clutches his stomach.

MIKE
Stop!

Mrs. Fusstreck and Sara turn back. They see Mike on the ground in obvious distress.

INT. POOL ROOM

Cameron RAMS his shoulder into the door, which won't move.

The metal bench on the floor next to him gyrates, as if trying to unmoor itself from the ground. Various metal chairs screwed into the floor around the room do the same.

CAMERON
HEEEEEEEELP! HELP ME! SOMEBODY!

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Through the ever-louder rumbling, earthquake-like sound, Ashley hears someone yelling - sounds like 'help' - from behind that black curtain.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike rolls over onto his back, in a near-CATATONIC state.

Sara runs over and kneels next to him.

SARA
What's wrong?!

Mrs. Fusstreck follows her over.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Faking a seizure won't get you out
of this, Trostle.

Eyes still shut, Mike mumbles quietly.

MIKE
Cam...Cameron...pool room...

SARA
Cameron? Mike, open your eyes!
Talk to me-

INT. POOL ROOM

A metal chair SMASHES into the wall next to Cameron's head.

He turns around just in time to DUCK as another one comes right at him, bashing the door with enough force to send it flying open.

The beaming-yellow human outline that is Cameron, ducking, stands back up. We are close enough now to make out his facial features.

The gusting-wind sounds escalate to gale-force strength.

The door finally open, Cameron's about to escape into the towel room - when another soaring chair DRILLS him just below the knee, buckling his leg.

He looks up at the ceiling, just in time to see the trap door slam shut. While he does, a final chair nails him square in the back of the head, KNOCKING HIM OUT.

He falls, chest down, his lower legs extending out through the doorway onto the cold tile floor. His backpack rests on top of him like a blanket.

The door comes to a rest at Cameron's motionless hip.

The yellow human outline - bright as the sun a split second ago - DISAPPEARS instantly, leaving the entire room gray, cold, lifeless.

We back up and hover over the center of the empty pool, spinning around in all directions, searching for that vibrant yellow that just vanished.

The striped ropes dangle above the pool, darting this way and that, as if unsure which direction to strike.

Everything inside the room starts to vibrate. The rumbling sounds grow into something like a GUTTURAL SCREAM.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike turns his head to the side and VOMITS.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

It really does feel like an earthquake in here now.

Ashley lifts the black curtain.

ASHLEY

There's someone down there.

On the floor below, Ashley sees a pair of legs sticking out of a door along the side of the room.

She leans forward to take a closer look.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

He looks hurt.

Tim struggles to get his clothes on as fast as he can.

TIM

Ashley, let's get the fuck outta-

Before he can finish the thought, a striped rope wraps itself around Ashley's neck and YANKS HER THROUGH THE HOLE.

She doesn't even have time to fight - she plummets head-first onto the tile floor below, SHATTERING HER SKULL.

TIM (CONT'D)

ASHLEY!

Tim rushes over to the hole. He sees Ashley's body, blood gushing from her head, staining the tiles.

He backs away instantly. The walls shudder all around him.

Tim turns to run, but a rope SNARES his ankle, tripping him. He hits the ground, hard, then reaches back and fights desperately to unwind it as it tugs him toward the hole.

Finally, it's off, and Tim scoots away along the floor.

The rope retreats into the pool room, but hovers there, watching him through the hole as he sits on the floor.

TIM (CONT'D)
Ha! Eat shit, rope!

A huge bang, like a MASSIVE THUNDERCLAP, hits the room.

Tim looks up - and sees a giant chunk of ceiling falling straight for his face.

TIM (CONT'D)
AAAAAAAHHHHHH-

SPLAT.

The rest of the locker-room ceiling near the hole collapses as well, burying Tim completely and blocking the hole with an immense pile of debris.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Curled up in a ball and shaking, Mike sees multiple split-second images: *a rope encircling a girl's throat...a body crashing to the floor...a ceiling caving in...*

At the sound of the THUNDERCLAP, everything changes.

A strange room with an ancient-looking wooden door...two stone altar-like tables...a staircase ending behind the altars...a man in a white shirt and ORANGE tie descending the stairs...

Mike OPENS HIS EYES.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL

Outside, every single light in the Castle on the Hill surges brightly for a moment, then goes out completely.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike sits up, sweating and panting. An emergency light flickers on, providing meager illumination.

SARA
Hey! What was that? Are you-

MIKE
I saw Cameron.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Trostle, you go wait in my office.
Miss Henkel, come with me-

SARA
What happened to Cameron? Is he in
the pool room?

Mike nods.

MIKE
I think he's hurt. Bad.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Trostle, I said go-

SARA
How do we find him?

MIKE
We gotta get Bart.

SARA
Let's go.

Sara helps him up, and they sprint down the hall, right
past Mrs. Fusstreck.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
I said - you get back here!

INT. SOPHOMORE HALLWAY

In the dark, Mr. Sawyer and the sophomores hold still,
wondering what will happen next.

A moment later, the lights return - dimly at first, like
they are trying to get back to full power but can't.

BART
What in the fuck was all that?

Andrea runs down the hall, away from everyone.

MR. SAWYER
Andrea, where are you-

ANDREA
I gotta get my painting!

Just as Andrea reaches her absurdly detailed painting of
Tyler, another BOOMING THUNDERCLAP knocks her to the floor.

A moment later, she looks around. Numerous locker doors have been flung open, spilling their contents.

As Andrea pushes herself up from the floor, her hand slips in a POOL OF BLOOD. She falls back, her head landing on... Coach Deck's chest.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
AAAAAAHHHHHHH!

She stops screaming and scurries away a few feet, covering her mouth with her hands.

Lying beside Andrea is the badly twisted body of Coach Deck - his once-perfect posture destroyed by a mangled back.

His body lies splayed out on the hallway floor in a horrific zig-zag fashion, a puddle of blood beneath him expanding rapidly as it oozes out of the now-open locker.

Mr. Sawyer and Bart come running down the hall toward her.

MR. SAWYER
Andrea! What-

ANDREA
It's Coach Deck!

Mr. Sawyer looks past her and sees the body.

The other sophomores soon join them.

MR. SAWYER
Nobody touch it. Go gather your things and head downstairs.

The sophomores can't stop staring at Coach Deck's body.

Mr. Sawyer turns and faces them.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Go. Now!

This snaps them out of it - Bart, Andrea and the rest of them spin around and run back the other way.

Mr. Sawyer kneels beside Coach Deck.

About ten feet away, the stairwell door opens, and in rush Mike and Sara - who come to a skidding stop at the sight of Mr. Sawyer and Coach Deck.

SARA
Oh my God!

Mr. Sawyer looks up at them.

SARA (CONT'D)
Is that Coach-

MR. SAWYER
Mike? What are you doing here? You
told me you-

MIKE
I had to come. I'm sorry. I-

The rumbling sound SURGES.

Mr. Sawyer stands up and ushers Mike and Sara away from the
body down the hall toward the other sophomores.

MR. SAWYER
Never mind that now.

SARA
What is happening to the school?

MR. SAWYER
I wish I could tell you.

BART (O.S.)
Mike!

Mike spots Bart at the end of the hall. He runs toward him,
followed by Sara.

BART
Come on, let's get the fuck outta-

MIKE
Cameron's in trouble.

BART
Did you go meet him?

MIKE
I was gonna, I just-

BART
Yeah, I got sidetracked too.

Mike, Bart and Sara enter the stairwell and hurry down,
behind Andrea and the other sophomores.

MIKE
I think he got attacked.

SARA
Attacked? By who?

MIKE

By this...I don't know what, but I could see it happening. He's in-

BART

The pool room. I saw his text.

The lights go out again. The ground shakes, forcing Mike, Sara and Bart to grab whatever they can to hold steady.

BART (CONT'D)

Guys, we should really-

SARA

Run if you want. I'm getting my brother.

MIKE

The locker room. Let's go.

Mike and Sara head down the stairs in the dark. Bart follows, looking up the stairwell as the sound of something CREAKING above grows louder.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR STAIRWELL

At the bottom, Mike and Sara run back into the hallway, against the flow of a dozen freshmen rushing past them in the opposite direction - toward the exit door.

Bart makes it down and looks at the exit - safety outside so close - then back to Mike and Sara, getting farther away down the hall.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL FRONT STEPS

Students pour out of the two front doors. The wind has torn the 'WELCOME BACK GHOSTS' banner halfway off the archway.

A deafening BOOM erupts from the school, sending those students descending the front stairs tumbling down.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR STAIRWELL

As the final few freshmen file past Bart, he again looks back to Mike and Sara, who turn a corner out of sight.

BART

Guys! Wait-

Above him, that ominous creaking sound intensifies. Bart looks up and instinctively backs into the hallway. Just in

time too: a HUGE CRACK splinters the ceiling over the exit door, where a teacher shepherds the last kid out.

The ceiling CAVES IN, dropping tons of BRICK AND CEMENT directly onto the poor teacher - and cutting off the exit.

Bart, stunned, turns and runs before it happens again.

BART (CONT'D)

MIKE!

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL FRONT STEPS

As students continue flooding through the front doors, a familiar creaking sound grows louder.

Moments later, an immense cave-in destroys the doorways, CRUSHING several fleeing students under the wreckage.

EXT. SIDE DOOR AT THE SCHOOL

Another cave-in, this time at the door Tyler Bentley escaped from, totally blocking all passage.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF THE SCHOOL

From the outside we see desks, tables and chairs hurled up against the inside of all the windows - sealing the school.

No one's getting in or out now.

INT. LOCKER ROOM, SOON AFTER

The door swings open, and Mike and Sara rush in and sprint for the back wall - which now lies behind an impenetrable mountain of rubble where the hole to the pool room was.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM

Bart comes running around a corner just as Mike and Sara exit the locker room.

BART

We're fucked! The doors...the...

His chest heaving, he can barely get the words out.

SARA

What about the doors?

Bart's breathing slowly starts calming down.

BART
Caved in. All of them. Windows
blocked up. We're stuck in here.

Sara takes out her phone, then her shoulders slump.

SARA
Check yours.

Mike takes his out, so does Bart.

MIKE
Totally dead.

BART
Mine too. We could try-

SARA
Stop. First, can someone tell me -
(to Mike)
How do you know Cameron is hurt?

MIKE
I just...I just know.

SARA
What was that up there with you
after Mrs. Fusstreck found us?

BART
Fusstreck caught you? Fuuuuuck-

SARA
Was it a seizure?

Mike looks at Bart.

BART
Another incident?

Mike nods.

SARA
A what?

MIKE
I can't really explain it. But a
few times now, it's like, I can
see what's going on somewhere else
in the school. First it was when
Logan died. It happened again
today.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I didn't realize it was Coach Deck
- but I saw when it happened. It
was Tyler Bentley. He killed him.

SARA

Tyler killed Coach Deck?

MIKE

I don't think he meant to. It's
something about the school. Like
it watches us, it knows stuff
about us. Maybe it can make us do
things.

SARA

What does it know?

MIKE

Like how we feel - I think it sees
that. When I have an incident, it
gets stronger every time - but I
think I understand it more. It's
like we're connected or something.

Sara stares at him closely.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I know how it sounds-

SARA

I believe you. Whatever happened
upstairs, you weren't faking it.

She and Mike hold their eye contact.

SARA (CONT'D)

Now let's figure out how to get
into the pool room.

BART

What about the-

MIKE

It's blocked. Totally buried.

SARA

There's gotta be another way in.

BART

Cameron would know where to look.

SARA

Let's think. We're here. The locker room's there, and the hole to the pool room was that way.

She turns and points to the locker room door.

SARA (CONT'D)

So it goes here, locker room, then the pool room. What would be on the other side of the pool room? Maybe there's a way through there.

Mike and Bart think for a second, then both realize...

MIKE & BART

The band room.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH SCHOOL

The lights and sirens of arriving police cars mirror the chaos of the students and teachers fleeing.

Through the upper-floor windows of the school, we can see the occasional flickering light. Everything on the ground floor is completely sealed off.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Mike, Sara and Bart cautiously make their way through the halls, their eyes adjusting to the darkness as they step around the broken glass from shattered lightbulbs and ejected locker contents littering the floor.

The rumbling sound comes and goes regularly.

Mike examines every upturned chair or bit of debris he passes. He could swear he saw at least one chair twitching.

Sara picks up the top of a broken desk, which she brandishes like a shield.

BART

Not a bad idea.

Bart's eyes move from her shield to a door down the hall.

INT. ATHLETIC DEPT. EQUIPMENT ROOM

Inside the pitch-black, windowless room, we hear a pounding sound. Again. Again. Until the door BUSTS OPEN, with Bart falling forward into the room, letting in a bit of light.

Sara stands in the doorway as Bart checks out the room's shelves: bags of soccer balls, team uniforms, lacrosse sticks, etc. Bart grabs a few wooden baseball bats.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Outside the equipment room, Mike walks over toward the wall. He reaches down and picks up the posterboard that sat on an easel earlier in the day - his father's memorial.

He looks again at his father in the white shirt and orange tie. The tears come fast.

INT. ATHLETIC DEPT. EQUIPMENT ROOM

Bart finally finds the football section.

BART
Fuck and yes.

He grabs a set of shoulder pads and a helmet.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

Sara and Bart step out of the equipment room.

SARA
Mike?

They look around - and hear someone sobbing. In the corner, Mike sits, staring at his father's photograph.

MIKE
What did I do?

Bart drops the pads, helmet and bats, and rushes over to his friend.

Mike closes his eyes...

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, MONTHS EARLIER

START FLASHBACK.

Silence.

Mike reads a textbook in an armchair beside the couch where his father, George, lies resting under a blanket. A basket on the coffee table holds bottles of assorted medication, vitamins, stool softeners, etc. A bedpan sits on the floor.

Cancer has ravaged George's body. His hair, once thick and dark brown, is mostly gone but for some gray patches. Once a sturdy and muscular man, he now looks fragile and gaunt.

It's like the cancer has sucked the life right out of him.

George starts coughing (this is silent), startling Mike, who drops his textbook. The coughing quickly grows worse.

Mike grabs George's quivering hand, but his coughing fit only escalates. Mike looks at his father's emaciated face - a look of UTMOST TERROR on it.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM

...and now opens them again. He sees Bart, kneeling before him, gripping his hand tightly, looking right at him.

BART
Oh thank fuck. Did you see something?

Mike's eyes are red, his face wet with tears.

MIKE
Why did he have to die?

Bart hugs him.

MIKE (CONT'D)
What did I do?

BART
You didn't do anything.

Bart pulls away and grabs Mike firmly by the shoulders.

BART (CONT'D)
You hear me? You didn't do anything wrong. Okay?

Mike is still really shaken up.

BART (CONT'D)
We need you now. You're our best - our only hope of figuring out what the hell is going on.

Bart picks up the baseball bat lying on the floor next to Mike and hands it to him.

BART (CONT'D)

It's not you, it's this thing. You said it's something about our feelings, right? Like it knows how we feel?

Mike looks over at Sara. He wipes his eyes and stands up, gripping the bat with both hands. He takes a deep breath.

MIKE

Let's go find Cameron.

Sara nods, lifting her desk-top shield.

Bart puts on the shoulder pads and helmet.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Dark. Quiet.

Mike, Sara and Bart come around the corner ready for business - Mike and Sara on either side out front, Bart behind watching everyone's back. They navigate the smashed glass and overturned chairs and desks strewn about.

The pandemonium from earlier in the night may have receded, but the stillness is equally unsettling. It looks and feels like the hushed aftermath of a tornado.

The BAND ROOM DOOR is now in sight at the end of the hallway. Mike, Sara and Bart approach their target. The occasional sound of glass cracking under one of their shoes is all that breaks the silence.

Bart holds his bat up in ready position, set to swing away at whatever comes their way.

Sara sees numerous papers on the floor rustling, as if blown by a phantom gust of wind. She STOPS SHORT - Bart bumps into her from behind with his bat.

SARA

Watch what you're doing with that.

MIKE

Quiet!

They resume their march.

BART

Why are you even here? You're only slowing me and Mike down.

SARA
If anyone here's slowing us down,
trust me, it's you.

As Sara and Bart argue, their voices rise.

Mike watches several overturned chairs and desks vibrating.
He puts his hand on the floor and closes his eyes.

BART
You know everyone likes Valerie
more, right? How's that feel -
being the butt-ugly sister?

SARA
I dunno, how's it feel knowing no
one will ever want to have sex
with you, you fat fucking failure-

Bart raises his bat up right behind Sara's head and is
ABOUT TO STRIKE, when Sara whips around and places the
yellow-and-black DeWalt box-cutter AT HIS THROAT.

Bart freezes.

Mike looks up at his friends.

MIKE
Move!

Mike SHOVES Sara and Bart aside - just before an overturned
desk LEAPS UP off the ground and hurls itself right at
them, barely missing and CRASHING into the wall.

Mike pulls them both into the closest classroom and yanks
the door shut.

INT. CLASSROOM

Mike, Sara and Bart gather near the teacher's desk.

BART
The fuck just happened?!

MIKE
How do you feel?

SARA
What?

MIKE
How do you feel - both of you?

BART
Pissed off.

SARA
Yeah.

MIKE
Why?

Sara and Bart think for a second.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Exactly. There's no reason for you
two to be at each other's throats.

Mike takes a moment to organize his thoughts.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Our feelings - that's what it
feeds on, what it uses against us.
Our...emotional energy, whatever
you want to call it. Maybe it also
happens when we get sad or
embarrassed-

SARA
Or scared.

MIKE
Yeah. I bet it likes fear best.

SARA
(to Bart)
When I was yelling at you, I just
kept getting angrier.

BART
Yeah, same.

SARA
Like I lost control of myself.

MIKE
That's it - we gotta control our
fear. Stay calm, focus on finding
Cameron. Clear your heads of
anything else.

BART
How? We don't know what's out
there.

MIKE
I dunno. But if we don't, we die.

BART
Oh fuck, that helps!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Mike, Sara and Bart approach the band room door.

Mike slows down. Something feels weird. He looks to his right. Mrs. Fusstreck's office door - is it slightly open?

INT. MRS. FUSSTRECK'S OFFICE

The door swings inward. Mike enters and looks around. He spots some music books, an old radio...and a familiar framed picture. He takes it off the wall.

BART (O.S.)
Dude!

Mike turns and sees Bart and Sara in the doorway.

BART
You can't just wander off like that!

MIKE
Remember this?

He hands Sara the framed picture. It's Mrs. Fusstreck and her husband, the same image they saw on the Wall of Fame.

SARA
From the article. You think she has something to do with this?

Mike resumes his examination of the room. Moments later...

MIKE
There.

He points to the storage room door.

MIKE (CONT'D)
It's that way.

INT. BAND STORAGE ROOM

Mike opens the door. He, Sara and Bart search among the broken music stands, bumping into several as they move through the dark room. Nothing looks promising.

BART
What are we looking for?

As Bart turns, his foot kicks something and he stumbles, falling to the ground and knocking over a few music stands.

BART (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Bart looks back at what tripped him - the trap-door handle.

BART (CONT'D)
Um, guys?

Mike and Sara come over and inspect Bart's discovery.

MIKE
That's gotta be it.

Mike and Sara exchange a look. Bart is breathing heavily.

SARA
Stay calm.

Bart nods.

Mike grabs the handle to the trap door. He pulls it up.

INT. TOWEL ROOM

From the floor, we see Mike peer down through the trap door, like Cameron did earlier.

A moment later he finds something - CAMERON. He's lying on the floor under his backpack, by the halfway-open door about ten feet from the ladder.

Mike silently mouths the words 'I see him' to Sara. He puts his finger to his lips in a 'Shhh' gesture, then descends into the darkness below. Sara follows right behind him.

Bart removes his helmet and shoulder pads, so he can fit through the trap door. He makes his way down the ladder, which creaks ever so slightly under his weight. It sounds a hundred times louder than it really is.

Mike and Sara reach Cameron and kneel beside him.

MIKE
Cameron?

SARA
Is he...

BART
Tell me he's not dead. I swear,
I'll be nicer to him from now on-

MIKE
He's breathing.

Mike and Sara slowly turn him over onto his back.
Cameron's eyes open.

SARA
Cameron! Shhhhh!

Cameron blinks a few times, getting his bearings.

CAMERON
Where am I?

He looks around.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Oh shit. Go go go - get me out!

MIKE
Okay, get up.

CAMERON
I can't. My leg's busted. Pull me
inside - fast!

Bart jumps down from the ladder, landing with a huge THUD. He grabs hold of Cameron by his underarms, getting ready to hoist him up, Cameron looks at Mike and Sara. There is fear on their faces - Cameron's too.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Oh no.

INT. POOL ROOM, SAME TIME

Rising from the floor of the empty pool, we search the gray, cold room once again.

The sounds of gusting wind pick up.

There, across the room, just inside the doorway: YELLOW. We ROCKET right for it.

INT. TOWEL ROOM, SAME TIME

Cameron, looking out through the door into the pool room, recognizes what's happening.

CAMERON
GO! NOW! GO GO GO!

Bart pulls Cameron up off the floor, but just as he hauls him inside the room, a striped rope SNARES Cameron's leg and YANKS him back through the doorway. Cameron screams.

Bart holds on to Cameron's torso with all his might. Mike grabs Cameron around the waist, as Cameron pins his hands along the inside of the doorjamb, holding on for dear life.

INT. POOL ROOM

The yellow bodies - FOUR OF THEM - turn brighter as they struggle.

The wind sounds grow to an ear-splitting, high-pitched shriek, as we rapidly close in on them.

INT. TOWEL ROOM

Bart is now screaming too, as he and Mike desperately try to pull Cameron back away from the pool room.

Sara reaches for the rope that has wrapped itself around Cameron's ankle. She tries to uncoil it, but can't.

She reaches for her back pocket and pulls out the box-cutter. With it, she SLICES the rope - sending Bart, Mike and Cameron tumbling backward into the towel room.

Sara stands just inside the doorway.

SARA
Cameron, are you-

Three other ropes FLY through the door and ENWRAP Sara's ankles, waist and shoulders. A fourth clutches her head, gagging her mouth. The box-cutter flies from her hand somewhere into the pool room, gone.

In a breathtakingly fast motion, the ropes SNATCH her away from the door straight back into the pool room.

She glides through the air above the pool - just as the door SLAMS shut, the slide bolt LOCKS.

MIKE
SARA!

Mike tries to pry open the lock, pulling with his strength he has. But this time it won't dislodge.

MIKE (CONT'D)
NOOOOOO!

He thrusts his shoulder into it - all to no avail.
Cameron stares at the door in shock.

CAMERON
It has her. Fuck, it has her!

BART
We need to get out.

MIKE
Not without Sara!

CAMERON
SARA!

BART
That thing's gonna come for us
next. We gotta get Cameron out of
here first - he can barely move!

Bart hoists Cameron up onto his shoulder.

INT. BAND STORAGE ROOM

Once they're all up the ladder and on the same level,
Cameron leans up against the wall, clearly in serious pain.

MIKE
How did you find that room?

CAMERON
I'm not sure. I was waiting for
you guys, then something just, I
dunno, guided me there.

MIKE
I bet that's what happened to
Logan. No one found that pool room
in decades - and now you both did?

Cameron nods.

CAMERON
One thing I remember - the heart.

BART
It has a heart?

CAMERON

I could hear it beating. I thought it was mine, but... I felt like it was pulling me toward it. Down there, it wanted to kill me, but it must've knocked me out.

MIKE

Did you see a stairwell?

CAMERON

Yeah.

MIKE

With a silver handrail?

CAMERON

That's where the heart must be.

Mike stands up and looks at Bart.

MIKE

Get him out. No one else dies.

BART

How are you even gonna find it?

MIKE

I heard the heartbeat too - at that white door I almost opened.

Bart stands. He pulls Cameron up onto his shoulder again.

BART

The white door, got it. I'm takin' him the fuck out of this building, then I'll come find you.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BAND ROOM

Bart carries Cameron out the door. Mike watches them disappear around a corner, then turns the other direction and runs down the hall.

The walls have begun to rumble again.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE MAINTENANCE CLOSET

Mike passes the janitor's closet he was in earlier tonight and approaches the white door at the end of the hall. He sees the 'ALARM WILL SOUND' warning above the handle-

INT. HALLWAY

-but no alarm sounds when he rams it open.

What he sees is a short hallway with six doors - three on each side. He tries opening one, but the doorknob won't turn. He hurriedly tries the other five - all locked.

He notices how hard he's breathing, and puts his hand over his heart. He closes his eyes.

MIKE
Control my fear.

His breathing slows down and he kneels, placing one hand on the floor.

After a few moments pass, he hears a CLICK. When Mike opens his eyes, the small light above one of the six doors flickers briefly. He dashes for the door - which opens without a problem.

INT. STAIRWELL ROOM

This new room seems almost impossibly large and deep. It's a maze of descending staircases, some metal, some wooden, all spiraling downward and outward in different directions.

Mike's hands grip the metal guardrail in front of him, which is BURNING HOT. He rips his hands away and looks at them - no burn marks.

He takes a deep breath and shuts his eyes, then touches the metal guardrail again. No pain this time. After a few moments, he looks.

All but one of the staircases have vanished.

As he reaches the lone remaining staircase, he looks down. Once again Mike is baffled by the depth - it must be fifteen flights.

INT. STAIRWELL

Mike descends the winding stairs, which turn and turn as he gets lower and lower. At last, he reaches the bottom.

Looking back up, he can't even see the top.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT HALLWAY

The long, narrow hall has a dirt floor, like a mineshaft. Somehow there's just enough light to see.

He moves to the end of the hall, which bends right. Later, it bends right again, then right again, with the occasional series of steps leading ever farther down.

Finally, a WOODEN DOOR at the end of the hall.

Approaching it, Mike notices just how ancient it looks. It's made of oaken planks several inches thick. The arched doorframe is bordered by unevenly shaped stones.

He pushes the stunningly heavy door inward halfway, revealing a room with a ceiling higher than you'd expect.

EXT. SIDE OF THE SCHOOL, SAME TIME

Outside, things are quiet - at least until one of the doors opens from the inside.

Bart shoves aside some wreckage to clear enough space, then picks Cameron back up and brings him outside.

BART
Can you make it from here?

CAMERON
Yeah, I'll figure it out.

After a few steps, he sets Cameron down.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Are you really going back in there?

Bart nods, then turns and heads back through the door.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Bart!

Bart stops and looks back.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Come back with them.

Bart runs inside.

Cameron, his weight all on his one good leg, looks around and finds a fallen tree branch - good enough for a walking stick. He picks it up and hobbles off toward the flashing police lights in the distance.

INT. HEART ROOM, SAME TIME

Mike steps inside the high-ceilinged, temple-like room.

Four thick, stone columns, each one just a few feet inside the corners of the room, reach from floor to ceiling. The walls, cold and gray, are covered in a layer of grime and dust that must have accumulated over many, many years.

Mike's view is mostly blocked by the closest stone column, but something in there offers a dim light.

He creeps toward the nearby column. Peering low around it, he sees...SARA, lying on her back, eyes closed, along an altar-like stone table near the center of the room.

There is a second altar beside Sara's, this one empty.

Above them, dangling on a chain from the ceiling, is an oil lantern, the source of the meager light.

Peering farther around the column, Mike sees someone standing between the altars, someone tall and hunchbacked - MRS. FUSSTRECK. She's not moving. Her head is bowed low, as if in prayer.

Mike freezes. He can only see her back.

Mrs. Fusstreck's head rises. She turns around and walks back toward the head of Sara's altar. Her eyes are shut.

Mrs. Fusstreck's movements look peculiar - like her body is out of rhythm, each limb acting independent of the others.

At the head of the altar, Mrs. Fusstreck reaches below the stone top and unveils an ornate TWELVE-INCH KNIFE - which she raises above Sara's head.

Mike stands up. He CHARGES at his enemy, lowers his shoulder and WALLOPS the band teacher at full speed.

This knocks them both to the ground, the knife falling away to the side.

Mike jumps onto Mrs. Fusstreck, grabs her by the shirt. He lifts her up and SLAMS her back down - her head BOUNCES off the stone ground.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
Stop...don't...

MIKE
DON'T WHAT?

He pulls her up again. She looks him right in the eye.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
No... Run.

MIKE
That's it. No more talk.

Mike reaches a few feet to his left and grabs the twelve-inch knife. He lifts the blade HIGH IN THE AIR.

Looking down at Mrs. Fusstreck, Mike notices something he's never seen before in her eyes: fear.

He pauses.

Something GRABS his elevated wrist: a striped rope.

VOICE (O.S.)
That's far enough.

The rope tightens around Mike's wrist. He drops the knife, which bounces over between the altars.

The rope retreats out of sight.

Mike looks back to where he heard the voice.

Behind the two columns on the other side of the altars, Mike notices a SILVER HANDRAIL and a set of stairs heading upward along the wall, barely visible in the weak light.

He hears footsteps coming down but can't make out who it is. Finally, at the bottom of the stairs, the figure emerges - wearing a white shirt and orange tie.

Mike stares for a moment...

MIKE
Mr. Sawyer?

Indeed it is. The English teacher's face comes into view as he approaches Sara's altar.

MR. SAWYER
Hello, Mike.

Mike backs away, leaving Mrs. Fusstreck on the ground between them, until his back hits a stone column.

MIKE
What are you doing here?

He looks closely at Mr. Sawyer's eyes. They are unlike what Mike has seen before - gray and cloudy now, with no pupils.

MR. SAWYER

We've been watching you. No,
encouraging, is the better word.
For the moment, we're going to
need you to remain where you are.

All five striped ropes fly out from behind Mike and
CRISS-CROSS over his chest and legs, wrapping around the
column and immobilizing him against it.

Next to Mike's head, the end of the fifth rope dangles in
midair, awaiting further instruction.

MIKE

Who's 'we'?

MR. SAWYER

We wish we could tell you.

Mr. Sawyer holds up a metal flashlight he's been carrying.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Your friend Cameron dropped this
upstairs.

He places it on the altar beside Sara, then looks down to
Mrs. Fusstreck.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Come on, Marilyn.

With difficulty, Mr. Sawyer drags the much larger band
teacher by the arms over toward the empty altar.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

We'd have come down earlier, Mike,
but we wanted to let you explore
all those wonderful, aggressive
feelings you have toward Mrs.
Fusstreck. You did well.

He hauls Mrs. Fusstreck's body up from the floor onto the
altar - no easy task for a 60-year-old man.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

You might not think it, but it's
so rare for you kids to act on
your emotions. Every day around
here, someone's heart is broken,
someone thinks they're a failure,
that their parents hate them.

He finally has Mrs. Fusstreck on top of the altar.

MRS. FUSSTRECK
 ...don't...please-

Mr. Sawyer takes a handkerchief from his pocket and shoves it into Mrs. Fusstreck's mouth.

Two of the striped ropes leave Mike and encircle Mrs. Fusstreck, strapping her to the altar.

Mr. Sawyer walks around to the other altar. He leans over Sara and smells her, then looks back at Mike. His ghostly gray eyes are lit up with energy.

MR. SAWYER
 Oh don't worry. She's...asleep,
 shall we say. We'll wake her when
 it's time. But first...

Mr. Sawyer picks up the twelve-inch knife from the floor and severs Mrs. Fusstreck's right wrist. Blood trickles out slowly. He does the same to her left wrist, then moves down and makes similar incisions to her ankles.

Mr. Sawyer walks back toward the top of Mrs. Fusstreck's altar and looks down at his trembling victim. He sets the knife down beside her head.

She looks back up, into his cloudy, terrifying eyes. Again, there is genuine fear in the once-formidable conductor.

Through Mr. Sawyer's eyes, Mrs. Fusstreck appears as a shape of extremely BRIGHT YELLOW. Everything around her body is gray - but this time, the shades of gray are far more detailed, even gaining the occasional hint of color.

The sounds of softly blowing wind.

Mike watches as Mr. Sawyer raises his hands and places one on each of Mrs. Fusstreck's cheeks.

The English teacher looks to the ceiling, shuts his eyes.

Mrs. Fusstreck squirms at Mr. Sawyer's touch. She GROANS through the handkerchief stuffed into her mouth.

MIKE
 What are you doing to her?

MR. SAWYER
 Looking for something.

After a few moments, Mr. Sawyer smiles.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Ah, that's the one. Normally, we
would draw this out over several
days - weeks if possible.

Mr. Sawyer looks over at Mike, anticipating his question.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Now we will eat her life.

His hands tighten their grips on Mrs. Fusstreck's face.

A WHITE, STEAM-LIKE SUBSTANCE emanates from Mrs. Fusstreck
- first from her nostrils and ears, then through the cuts
Mr. Sawyer just made at her wrists and ankles. Her whole
essence appears to be leaking out.

Mr. Sawyer's mouth opens wide.

The band teacher CONVULSES against the ropes.

The white steam grows thicker as the various streams
conjoin on their way toward Mr. Sawyer's gaping mouth -
which draws it in with an AWFUL HISS.

Mr. Sawyer is sucking the life right out of his victim.

Mrs. Fusstreck's groans intensify. If her mouth were not
gagged, she would be screaming at the top of her lungs.

Mr. Sawyer SWALLOWS the final bit of steam.

After one final quiver, Mrs. Fusstreck goes limp. Her body,
once sturdy and intimidating, is unmistakably gaunter,
paler, frail-looking - like she aged fifty years in the ten
seconds before she died.

The two ropes uncoil and rejoin the others around Mike.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
So much resentment, sadness, pain.

Mr. Sawyer releases Mrs. Fusstreck's face. Unlike his
victim, he looks stronger than ever, bigger, younger even.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
You both lost someone close - in
quite the same way. In her case,
her husband, not long ago. Did you
know? He taught here too.

Mr. Sawyer circles around the altar, passing Sara.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Do you realize how much shame,
jealousy-

We see images intercut: On 'shame', it's the AQUA senior girl crying in biology class; on 'jealousy', the GREEN junior couple fighting in the stairwell-

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
-lust-

-Tyler and Stephanie, both PURPLE, making out in the chemistry room-

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
-flow through this school's halls every day? We simply tap into that, nudge it along.

MIKE
So that's what you do - you find what hurts people, and make it worse.

MR. SAWYER
We didn't create any of this. You did. We couldn't exist otherwise.

MIKE
What are you?

Mr. Sawyer closes in on Mike.

MR. SAWYER
We are...very old.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT HALLWAY, OUTSIDE HEART ROOM, SAME TIME

Bart, his every breath a major heave after all those stairs and that long-ass tunnel, turns the last corner. He sees a dim light flickering through the stone archway ahead.

He pushes forward, reaching an old-looking wooden door that's halfway open - like the others before.

INT. HEART ROOM

Bart creeps forward. He sees Sara first, lying still on an altar. Peering around the column, he spots a second altar - with Mrs. Fusstreck on it.

And then there's Mr. Sawyer, speaking to...someone Bart can't see from that vantage point, so he shuffles around to the other side of the column.

Holy shit, it's Mike - pinned against another stone column by what looks like a bunch of ropes. Bart listens in...

MR. SAWYER

...those other feelings, they're common, easy to aggravate. You, however, brought us something much fuller, tastier. What we needed.

Mr. Sawyer lifts the band teacher's head off the slab.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Like Mrs. Fusstreck before you, you brought us the greatest gift of all - your grief.

He lets go. Mrs. Fusstreck's head hits with a THUD.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

But yours was special. Your grief - it reawakened us, when you walked through the front door.

A quick image appears of when Mike first returned to school three days ago. As Mike enters, Mr. Sawyer holds the front door open and looks away briefly - his eyes turning CLOUDY GRAY for a split-second as a strong gust of wind blows a student's baseball cap off and some fliers from the wall.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

It gave us strength enough to lure that boy down to the pool room, to set all this in motion. And now, through you, we shall descend and join...well, you can think of it as our father. Tell me, how does that make you feel?

Mr. Sawyer and Mike stare at each other. Mr. Sawyer closes his eyes, sniffs the air.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Ahh, delicious. We're getting closer now to shuffling off this mortal coil.

Mr. Sawyer smiles at Mike.

Across the room, Bart, now utterly confused, silently mouths "What the f-"

Mr. Sawyer approaches Mike, who tries to wriggle free from the ropes, but has no chance. As Mr. Sawyer moves closer, he turns his back to Bart.

Bart seizes his chance. He emerges from behind the column and CHARGES at Mr. Sawyer's back.

Mike sees Bart and is about to yell when one of the ropes wraps around his mouth, GAGGING him. Two other ropes uncoil from Mike and lunge, lightning-fast, at the oncoming Bart. They each grab an ankle, tripping him easily.

Bart falls forward, his face SMASHING into the stone floor a good ten feet from Mr. Sawyer, who now turns.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

We were beginning to wonder if
you'd ever come out.

Bart pushes himself up, revealing a badly broken nose and several busted front teeth. Blood pours down his chin.

The ropes FLING Bart toward Mrs. Fusstreck's altar, slamming his head into the stone. Bart drops to the ground, barely moving, blood gushing from his head.

Mike, still gagged, tries to scream.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

We were going to use Sara for this
next part, but surely a longtime
best friend will work better.

With one hand, Mr. Sawyer drags Bart by the collar over toward Mike. With his new strength, he does it so easily, Bart may as well be a stuffed animal.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

High school crushes can be so
fleeting. We've seen thousands.

He situates Bart so that he is sitting up, facing Mike, just a few feet away. He digs a knee into Bart's back, then grabs one of the ropes - which he manipulates like any normal rope - and wraps it around Bart's throat.

Mike looks at Bart's bloodied, disfigured face.

Then he meets Mr. Sawyer's eyes.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Now pay attention. No daydreaming.

Mr. Sawyer SQUEEZES the rope from both ends and drives his knee forward. Bart's head jerks to the side. He gags and

coughs up blood, which splatters down his chest. His body twitches. Bart's eyes, barely open, tilt back.

Mr. Sawyer tightens his stranglehold.

Mike, red-faced with rage, battles with all his strength to free himself. But he can't. He must simply watch.

A few harrowing seconds later, it's over. Mr. Sawyer removes the rope from Bart's neck. Bart falls over on his side, dead. Mr. Sawyer stands up.

In the silence, Mike stares at his friend's body.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Don't fight it. Feel it.

Mr. Sawyer stands directly in front of Mike, who seethes. He writhes against the ropes hard enough to give himself burns on his arms and neck, anywhere the ropes touch skin.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Not just the anger. We want everything this freshest, rawest grief causes. Make us powerful enough to escape this wretched place - that we may descend.

Mr. Sawyer raises his hands toward Mike's face. Mike stares directly into his teacher's eyes - his cold, cloudy eyes.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)
Think about your father.

Once Mr. Sawyer's hands make contact with Mike's cheeks, we see a quick series of events from Mike's life, some of which we've seen before, some not - just glimpses, nothing lasting more than a moment or two:

At the town pool with his father and Sara...

He and Bart playing video games...

His mother crying outside her bedroom door...

His father coughing on the couch...

The funeral...

INT. HOSPITAL, INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

Quiet. Claire lies asleep on a hospital bed, various tubes inserted into her arms, nostrils, etc. Only the

intermittent soft beeps of the medical devices beside her break the silence.

Outside the room, looking in from behind a large window, is Mike. He bangs his hand on the glass.

MIKE

Mom! MOM!

He looks left and right down the hallway.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Is anyone here?

His words echo in the empty hall.

Mike focuses back on his mother.

VOICE (O.S.)

She won't live.

Mike looks to his right for the source of the sound. He's stunned to see HIS FATHER standing beside him.

George looks like he did back when he and Mike were in the pool practicing diving - fit and healthy, with a head full of thick, dark brown hair.

MIKE

She's dying?

GEORGE

Yes.

MIKE

Why?

GEORGE

She's got nothing to live for. I know how she feels. You could have saved me.

MIKE

But you had-

GEORGE

I could've beaten it if you'd loved me enough to fight as hard as I did.

Mike recoils.

MIKE

I did. I loved you.

GEORGE
You let me die.

Mike looks back at his mother. His eyes water, his breathing grows heavy, his body shakes uncontrollably.

MIKE
You got sick.

GEORGE
I would still be alive if you had cared enough.

Mike puts his hands on his knees to steady himself and takes several deep breaths. His eyes close tight.

MIKE
I had no control over that.

GEORGE
And now your mother is going to die too.

The soft beeps grow louder and speed up, becoming a long, drawn-out note.

MIKE
No...

INT. HEART ROOM

Still pinned against the stone pillar, Mike opens his eyes.

MIKE
...she isn't.

Mr. Sawyer's hands fly off of Mike's cheeks, along with multiple WHITE SPARKS. He staggers backward away from Mike, bumping into Mrs. Fusstreck's altar.

Behind him on the other altar, Sara's EYES OPEN, like she's been released from a spell.

Mr. Sawyer glares at Mike.

MR. SAWYER
Strong. Stronger than we thought.

Mr. Sawyer looks weaker, shaken. Something is different.

Behind him, Sara gets her bearings. With Mr. Sawyer's back to her, she sits up and looks at Mike.

They make eye contact - just for the briefest moment.

Mike glowers back at his teacher, then thrashes violently against the ropes.

MIKE

Come on, just fucking do it.

MR. SAWYER

We were hoping to take our time with you. It tastes better that way. But no matter.

Mr. Sawyer walks over and grabs Mike by the throat. Mike stops thrashing.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

What, no more fight left?

MIKE

Make it quick. Do it NOW!

At which point SARA STABS MR. SAWYER FROM BEHIND with the twelve-inch knife. The blade slices through the English teacher's upper body, the tip poking out below his neck.

Sara withdraws the bloody knife and raises it - ready to strike again. Mr. Sawyer releases his grip on Mike and turns back to Sara. He falls to his knees.

When he hits the ground, the entire room QUAKES.

The rumbling sound returns. The ceiling starts to crack.

Sara runs over to Mike and cuts him loose from the ropes, which drop to the floor without resistance - the life that was in them before now all but gone.

She looks back and sees Bart's body, lying face down by Mrs. Fusstreck's altar. She looks at Mike.

SARA

Is he...

Mike nods.

MR. SAWYER

Wait.

Mike and Sara can only see his back.

They slowly walk around to face him.

Mr. Sawyer's dark brown eyes return - the gray vanishes.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

MIKE

For what?

MR. SAWYER

For releasing me.

Mr. Sawyer, one hand on the ground now, looks up at the cracked ceiling and rumbling walls, then back to Mike.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

The temple won't last long. Use the passage.

He points toward the stairway with the silver handrail.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Under the stairs. They always put one in, just in case.

SARA

They?

He looks at the ornate twelve-inch knife in Sara's hand.

MR. SAWYER

Finish it. Destroy the heart.

Mr. Sawyer finger-taps his own chest.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

I can't hold it in much longer.

The thunderous rumbling sound hits a crescendo. Entire chunks of the ceiling and walls SMASH onto the floor.

Sara and Mike lock eyes. He holds out his hand.

She passes him the knife.

Mike looks down at his favorite teacher - but doesn't move.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Do it.

Mike remains frozen.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Hurry, Mike.

MIKE

But we can get you out-

MR. SAWYER

No!

Mr. Sawyer raises his head. He looks into Mike's eyes.

MR. SAWYER (CONT'D)

Michael.

Mr. Sawyer's eyes FLASH GRAY.

Mike SCREAMS, then rears back and PLUNGES THE KNIFE directly into Mr. Sawyer's heart.

A huge cloud of white vapor - like the steam we saw emanate from Mrs. Fusstreck - EXPLODES from Mr. Sawyer's body.

He collapses to the ground, dead.

The burst of energy knocks Mike and Sara to the ground. Sara gets right back up, but Mike, who bore the brunt of the explosion, doesn't move.

SARA

Mike!

Sara's attention quickly shifts back to Mr. Sawyer. His body starts SPLITTING OPEN from where the knife entered.

Her eyes bulge at the sight: what looks like a ball of shimmering white lightning emerges from the growing chasm in what was Mr. Sawyer's chest. As it escapes, it tears the English teacher's body apart.

It soars upward with the sound of a THUNDERBOLT, quickly coalescing with the smoky white vapor cloud that exploded from Mr. Sawyer moments earlier.

Sara's hair stands up, like the level of static electricity in the room just spiked.

Above her, the electrical storm expands, now LASHING OUT in all directions. One of the four stone pillars takes a direct hit from the smoke-lightning and CRACKS, its lower half crumbling into a pile below, smothering Mrs. Fusstreck.

It has no head or body, but this white smoke-lightning creature rockets off the walls, going ever higher until it stalls beneath the center of the ceiling.

The various smoke-lightning strands converge into a colossal sphere - which begins to shrink, condensing until it's the size of a brilliant-white baseball.

At last, the ball of energy SELF-DESTRUCTS - accompanied by a DEAFENING BOOM - firing shards of smoke-lightning outward to the walls and ceiling and floor.

It then dissipates into the air, completely gone.

But the structural damage is catastrophic. The collapse of the walls accelerates. Gigantic ceiling chunks fall.

Sara shelters Mike in her arms, protecting him as best she can from the falling wreckage.

She looks at Mike's face, his eyes still closed. She lifts him up closer to her, cradling him amid the bedlam.

SARA (CONT'D)
You came down here for me, don't
you dare leave me now. MIKE!

He still isn't moving.

SARA (CONT'D)
This thing feeds on our fear, our
anger, right? That's what gives it
its power?

She looks up at the ceiling crumbling all around. The wall just above the stone archway where Mike came in dissolves into an immense mound of rubble.

SARA (CONT'D)
Maybe this will help.

Sara leans down and KISSES Mike. Their lips hold together for several moments.

The rumbling sound drifts away. The ceiling stops falling.

As Sara pulls back, she sees Mike's open eyes looking right back into hers. A moment of peace. Did their love really just save the-

CRASH! An enormous slab of ceiling SHATTERS on the floor mere feet from Mike's head.

Mike sits up, wide awake now.

The rumbling returns, louder than ever. Everything in the room starts falling inward. Mike and Sara dash for the passage by the stairs - but they don't know where it is.

After searching for a moment, Sara finds it: a doorway.

SARA (CONT'D)
Here!

Mike grabs the flashlight off the altar and tosses it to Sara. Another slab of ceiling crashes down behind him.

He takes one last look at Bart, then sprints to the-

INT. SECRET PASSAGE

Sara leads the way, her flashlight illuminating an otherwise pitch-dark passageway that gets skinnier with every step.

Mike looks back to see the doorway now blocked by wreckage. Even worse, the demolition is chasing them - as they run, they are only scarcely ahead of the sounds of certain doom.

Seconds later Sara's flashlight discovers a WOODEN LADDER.

She races to it and climbs up, finding a TRAP DOOR, like the one in the towel room. She pushes, but it won't budge.

Mike glances back at the oncoming destruction.

SARA

Get up here!

He squeezes up next to her on the ladder. They both shove the trap door with all their might, their faces growing redder and redder with the strain.

It MOVES - just an inch, before they release it, exhausted.

MIKE

Together. One-two-THREE!

They both give it everything they've got, screaming now. Behind them, the passage is almost completely caved in. A few more seconds, and they'll be buried alive.

EXT. HOOPER HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD, SAME TIME

Outside it is much quieter, the starry sky rather pleasant.

The green grass below the scoreboard rises an inch.

INT. SECRET PASSAGE

One of the ladder steps SNAPS under Mike's foot. He nearly falls all the way back down, but holds on with Sara's help. He regains his footing on a different step.

SARA

Last chance.

MIKE

GO!

They THRUST their hands up at the wooden door-

MIKE (CONT'D)

AGAIN!

-one more time-

MIKE (CONT'D)

AGAIN!

EXT. HOOPER HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD, SAME TIME

-the ground BURSTS OPEN as the wooden door swings upward, sending grass and dirt flying like a massive divot.

Sara climbs out first, then pulls Mike up behind her. Grime covers their faces. They inhale huge breaths of fresh air.

Standing beneath the Hooper High football scoreboard, Mike and Sara trace a straight line of depressed earth where the passage caved in from the trap door all the way back to the school building in the distance.

Lights inside it flash, bang and erupt like there's a LIGHTNING STORM within the walls.

The building IMPLODES.

It is an awesome sight: as the Castle on the Hill collapses in on itself, a gigantic cloud of dust and smoke billows upward into the night sky.

Fluttering toward the field is the 'WELCOME BACK GHOSTS' banner, caught in one of the swirling winds.

Mike and Sara stare at the place their school once stood. Their breathing eases in the relative peace the distance provides, as the final bits of Hooper High School disappear.