

THE RIDE HOME

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DUSK

The sun dips behind the fence.

JAMES "JIMMY" RYAN JR. (5) hovers over a frisbee emulating home plate as his father, JAMES RYAN SR.,, lobs wiffle balls.

Jimmy taps the frisbee twice with a yellow plastic wiffle bat.

JAMES
All right, Jimmy. Now remember,
elbow up. Weight back.

Jimmy raises his elbow, shifting his weight back.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Good.

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - DECK - CONTINUOUS

KIRSTEN RYAN steps onto the deck. She smiles softly, watching.

KIRSTEN
Boys, inside. Dinner's almost
ready.

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

James looks at Jimmy.

JAMES
You heard your mom. Bottom of the
ninth. Two outs. Game seven of the
World Series.

Jimmy grins.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(announcer's voice)
Now batting for the Los Angeles
Dodgers, number nine... James Ryan
Jr.

Jimmy steps up, taps the frisbee twice, and stares James down.

James smirks, takes a fake sign from the catcher, shakes it off, then nods, coming set.

He winds up and underhands the wiffle ball. It floats toward home plate.

Jimmy tracks it, laser-focused. He swings -- WHACK!

JAMES (CONT'D)
(announcer's voice)
Swung on and hit to deep center
field. Way back, way back...

The ball WHISTLES over the fence into the neighbor's
backyard.

JAMES (CONT'D)
... gone! Ryan Jr. walks it off.
The Dodgers win the World Series!

Jimmy tosses the bat, pumping his fist as he rounds the
bases.

James cheers, waiting at home plate.

Jimmy stomps on the frisbee. James scoops him onto his
shoulders and runs around the yard, celebrating.

TITLE CARD: "The Ride Home"

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "12 Years Later"

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - DAY

CLOSE UP - JIMMY'S FACE

Same laser focus.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

JIMMY (17) at bat in gray-and-Gatorade-orange uniform, number
9 on the back.

Runners lead off from first and third.

The catcher throws down three fingers. The pitcher nods,
comes set, and delivers.

Jimmy swings -- PING!

The ball rockets toward right field. The fielder freezes, watching it disappear into the trees.

The crowd goes wild.

Jimmy rounds the bases, brimming with confidence, low-fives the THIRD BASE COACH, and touches home plate.

He fist bumps the runners, then glances into the stands, locking eyes with James.

James nods.

SCOREBOARD - TIGERS 10, VISITORS 1, 0 OUT, BOTTOM OF 6TH

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy leads off from third.

NICK HAMMEL (17), an egotistical jock with wavy bro flow, HITS a weak pop fly into shallow left-center.

Jimmy drifts toward home.

The left fielder dives, snatching the ball.

Jimmy scrambles back to third -- too late to tag.

Nick throws up his arms, shaking his head at Jimmy as he jogs to the dugout.

Jimmy's shoulders slump. He nervously glances into the stands.

James watches a SCOUT jot down a note, then locks eyes with Jimmy, jaw tight.

Jimmy quickly looks away.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - NIGHT

Tobacco spit splatters the dugout floor. COACH STRICKLIN (30), a hard-nosed former pitcher, stands in front of the Tigers, a wad of chew in his cheek.

COACH STRICKLIN

Good win, boys. That's the kind of effort I want to see every game.

(beat)

(MORE)

COACH STRICKLIN (CONT'D)
Griff, you're on the bump tomorrow,
so don't give me any reason tonight
to change my mind.

GRIFFIN MYERS (17), a wisecracking pitcher, smirks.

COACH STRICKLIN (CONT'D)
I mean it. No parties.

Coach Stricklin looks at Nick.

NICK
What are you looking at me for?

Several Tigers chuckle.

COACH STRICKLIN
All right, get outta here.

They pack up. Jimmy sits there, replaying his mistake...

-- SMACK. Nick knocks the dirt off his cleats.

NICK
Sienna's parents are out of town
again.

GRIFFIN
Dude, when are you gonna take a
hint? She's not interested.

NICK
Fuck you, she's not interested.
She's just playing hard to get.

GRIFFIN
Like that time you thought Amber
was playing hard to get?

NICK
She was.

SCOTT DEEKS (15), a light-hearted sophomore who's still
carrying some baby fat, butts in --

SCOTT
Yeah, because she liked your
sister.

GRIFFIN
Who can blame her? Why else do you
think I hang out with this guy?

NICK

Bring up my sister one more time. I
dare you.

GRIFFIN

Whoa, relax, tough guy. We're just
busting your balls.

NICK

Whatever. I'm telling you,
tonight's the night.

GRIFFIN

Yeah, we'll see.

A beat.

NICK

Jimmy, you coming?

Jimmy doesn't answer, lost in thought.

NICK (CONT'D)

Jimmy?

He snaps out of it.

JIMMY

What?

NICK

Sienna's party. You coming?

JIMMY

Uh...

Jimmy hesitates, glancing at his dad. James stands by the car
-- a plain SUV -- arms crossed.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

... Not tonight.

GRIFFIN

You sure, man?

JIMMY

Coach said no parties.

NICK

Oh, come on. Don't give me that
bullshit.

Jimmy picks up his bag.

JIMMY
I've seen you strike out enough
already.

Nick's smile vanishes. Griffin and Scott burst out laughing.

SCOTT
Jimmy, wait. Jimmy!

Jimmy keeps walking.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
What's his problem?

Nick glares, watching him go.

NICK
He thinks he's too good for us,
that's it.

GRIFFIN
Dude, shut up.

Griffin smacks Nick on the head, sending his hat flying.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy trudges toward the car as MARK CRAWFORD (40), another devoted father, approaches James. James fakes a smile.

MARK
Heck of a game.

JAMES
Sure was. Boys played great.

MARK
Where's Kirsten?

JAMES
Little League.

MARK
Of course.
(beat)
Your phone must be ringing off the
hook.

JAMES
Tell me about it. One of them even
called Kirsten at work.

MARK
What'd she say?

JAMES
School comes first.

Mark chuckles.

MARK
Stanford will like the sound of
that.

JAMES
Yeah, she's thrilled.

MARK
She should be. I mean, it's
Stanford.

JAMES
I know.
(looks at Jimmy)
But we've got bigger dreams.

Jimmy joins them.

JIMMY
Hi, Mr. Crawford.

MARK
Hey, Jimmy. So... have the Dodgers
called yet?

JIMMY
(gestures to James)
Ask him.

MARK
Come on, I can keep a secret.

JIMMY
So can I.

Mark smiles.

MARK
(to James)
You've taught him well.

James places a proud hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

JAMES
I can't take all the credit.

Jimmy plays along.

JIMMY
I hope not. I mean, what would Mom say?

JAMES
Good point. Thanksgiving was a nightmare.

They share a laugh.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Well, we better hit the road.

MARK
Yeah, me too.

JIMMY
See ya later, Mr. Crawford.

MARK
Good night, Jimmy.

James starts the car. Jimmy throws his bag in the trunk and gets in.

INT. RYAN CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy closes the passenger door. James backs out of the stall and pulls onto the road.

Neither says a word. Then --

JAMES
Look, these scouts, Jimmy --

JIMMY
I know.

Jimmy stares out the passenger window.

JAMES
(restrained)
Then what the hell was that?

JIMMY
I don't know. I just...

JAMES
Just what?

Jimmy's jaw tightens.

JIMMY
Nothing. Forget it.

James stares at Jimmy for a moment, then exhales, letting it go.

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The garage door of a suburban home OPENS. The Ryan car pulls into the driveway and parks.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kirsten sets the dinner table. A televised baseball game PLAYS in the background. The garage door CLOSES.

KIRSTEN
How'd it go?

James saunters in, grabbing a beer from the fridge.

JAMES
Jimmy went three-for-four with a homer.

Jimmy enters, uniform covered with dirt.

MAX (O.S.)
(teasing)
Three-for-four?

MAX (10), Jimmy's energetic little brother, grins at him from behind the couch.

JIMMY
Oh, yeah? Well, how'd you do?

Max looks down.

KIRSTEN
That's enough, boys.

Jimmy flops onto the couch and puts Max in a playful headlock, eyes on TV. The Los Angeles Dodgers are playing the San Francisco Giants, their longtime rival.

JIMMY
(to Max)
What's the score?

MAX
One-nothing Giants. But Mookie's
up.

INSERT - BASEBALL GAME

Mookie Betts pulls a pitch foul.

BACK TO SCENE

JIMMY
Fastball high and inside?

James takes a sip of his beer, watching them with a subtle
smile.

MAX
No, changeup low and away.

JIMMY
Now you're learning.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - DINETTE - NIGHT

Kirsten joins James and the boys at the dinner table. As
usual, they've already started eating, but she doesn't seem
to mind.

KIRSTEN
(to Jimmy)
So you had a good game?

Jimmy glances at James.

JIMMY
Uh... yeah. I guess.

KIRSTEN
Wish I could have been there,
but...
(looks at Max)
... someone threw a wrench in my
plans.

Max gives her a cheesy grin.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
I'm just kidding, buddy. We always
have a blast together, don't we?

MAX
Definitely!

Jimmy pokes at his food.

MAX (CONT'D)
Dad, are you coming Friday?

JAMES
Can't, kiddo. Jimmy's got a game.

MAX
Oh. Okay.

James pats him on the back.

JAMES
Next time.

Max nods, disappointed.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(to Kirsten)
What did the doctor say?

KIRSTEN
I'm fine. Just one of those days.

JIMMY
What's wrong?

KIRSTEN
My arthritis.

A beat.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Oh, Jimmy, by the way, you have a
meeting with Mr. Turner tomorrow
morning.

JIMMY
Again?

JAMES
It'd be a lot easier if he just
moved in.

Only Max laughs. James winks at him.

KIRSTEN
(to Jimmy)
A free education is not something
to take lightly, especially from a
school like Stanford. Mr. Turner's
dealt with this before. He can help
you make the right decision.

JAMES

Honey, relax. He's got plenty of time.

KIRSTEN

(firm)

Two weeks is not a lot of time to make a life-altering decision, James. He can't play baseball forever, which is why it's important he seriously considers his options now.

JAMES

He has been. I just think at this point we're beating a dead horse. I mean, what can Mr. Turner say that he hasn't already heard?

Kirsten's temper starts to boil.

KIRSTEN

Well, for one --

-- RING. James's phone buzzes on the kitchen island. Jimmy jumps up.

JIMMY

I'll get it.

KIRSTEN

Leave it. We're eating.

JAMES

Just get it.

Jimmy hesitates, caught in the middle, then picks up.

KIRSTEN

Jimmy.

JIMMY

Hello... Yeah, this is him.

Jimmy straightens, eyes widening.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Hey! Hi... Uh, yeah. Yeah, that works...

Kirsten and James look at each other, curious.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Okay, great... You too.

Jimmy hangs up, stunned.

KIRSTEN
Who was that?

JIMMY
Mike Carter.

JAMES
The sports agent?!

Jimmy nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What'd he want?

JIMMY
To meet.

JAMES
When?

JIMMY
Next week. He's in town for a few
days.

James shoots up.

JAMES
Holy shit!
(hugs Jimmy)
You did it, Jimmy!

Kirsten watches, concerned, hand tightening around her wine glass.

JAMES (CONT'D)
See? I told you. Hard work pays
off.

Jimmy's smile slowly fades -- potentially another person he could disappoint.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dodgers paraphernalia covers the walls. A trophy case full of first-place medals and MVP awards stands next to the bed.

Jimmy lies on his back, staring at a poster on the ceiling -- the historic shot of Kirk Gibson celebrating his walk-off home run in the 1988 World Series. His dream.

He rips off the blanket and gets up, determined.

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jimmy HAMMERS baseballs into the batting cage netting.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

James stirs, squinting at the alarm clock -- "11:39". He slips out of bed and peers into the backyard.

Jimmy tees up a ball.

James watches, a small smile forming, then goes back to sleep.

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy pulls out his phone.

Instagram stories of his teammates at Sienna's party play on the screen.

He stuffs the phone into his pocket and tees up another ball, SMASHING it into the netting.

EXT. SIENNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Music BLASTS from a Hollywood Hills mansion.

INT. SIENNA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

High school chaos: beer pong, keg stands, chugging contests.

Teens pack the living room, jumping to the beat.

EXT. SIENNA'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

More fill the pool, splashing and shouting. A couple makes out in the hot tub.

Nearby, Nick, Griffin, and Scott eye a group of girls dancing on the patio.

SIENNA CLARK (16), a spirited beauty, throws her arms into the air.

Nick, Griffin, and Scott watch as her hips sway, mesmerized.

Just then, Sienna heads inside.

Griffin hits Nick on the arm --

GRIFFIN

Now's your chance, bro. You can settle this once and for all.

NICK

Uh... I don't know.

GRIFFIN

I thought tonight's the night?

SCOTT

(to Griffin)

He's all talk, man.

Nick stares inside, psyching himself up.

NICK

Fuck it.

He crushes the rest of his beer and marches off.

INT. SIENNA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sienna collects solo cups scattered across the counters.

NOELLE (16), her opinionated best friend, joins her --

NOELLE

(sighs)

I really thought Craig was different.

SIENNA

What happened?

NOELLE

What was I thinking? No one wants to study on a Friday night.

Sienna chuckles.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

It's not funny.

SIENNA

Sorry. You okay?

NOELLE

Boys will be boys.

(beat)

What about you? Is he here?

SIENNA

Who?

NOELLE

Who do you think?

A coy smile tugs at Sienna's lips.

SIENNA

Haven't seen him.

-- CRASH! Sienna whips around.

Two GUYS pick up an end table they knocked over arm wrestling.

Sienna nips it in the bud --

SIENNA (CONT'D)

Hey!

(points outside)

Outside. Now.

The guys sheepishly follow orders.

NOELLE

You should come to a game. The view's spectacular, if you know what I mean.

SIENNA

You're pathetic.

Sienna heads outside. Noelle tags along.

NOELLE

Oh, don't act like you haven't noticed.

SIENNA

Still.

They bump into Nick at the door.

NICK

Sienna. Hey.

SIENNA

Oh. Hey, Nick.

NICK

Great party.

SIENNA

Thanks.

NICK

Hey, Noelle.

NOELLE

Hey.

NICK

(to Sienna)

Missed you at the game.

NOELLE

That's what I said.

Sienna shoots Noelle a warning. Noelle glances outside.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Oh, look. A chicken fight.

She bugs off. Sienna watches her go, annoyed.

NICK

You don't like baseball?

SIENNA

I didn't say that. It's just, you know, sports aren't really my thing.

NICK

(flirtatious)

Not yet.

Sienna frowns, unsure what to say.

SIENNA

Uh... okay.

An awkward beat.

NICK

So... what are we going to do about this?

SIENNA

About what?

NICK

Come on. Do I have to draw you a picture?

SIENNA
Excuse me?

Griffin and Scott wander over, eavesdropping.

NICK
Look, you're hot.

SIENNA
Oh. Um... thank you.

NICK
So?

SIENNA
Nick, I mean... don't take this the wrong way, but you're not really my type.

Nick smirks, ego bruised. Then --

NICK
Who the hell do you think you are?

SIENNA
What?

NICK
You should feel lucky I even asked. Half the girls in this school would beg to be with a guy like me.

SIENNA
You know what? You're right.
(beat)
Too bad I don't date second stringers.

With that, Sienna leaves, rejoining her friends.

Griffin chokes on his beer. Scott's jaw drops.

Nick stands there, speechless. Griffin pats him on the shoulder.

GRIFFIN
Well, I guess that settles it.

Nick shoves him, storming off.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Birds CHIRP. The morning sun breaks through the blinds, shining a light on Jimmy's sleeping face.

His alarm sounds: the iconic Tom Hanks line from "A League of Their Own" -- "THERE'S NO CRYING IN BASEBALL!" -- plays repeatedly.

Jimmy groans, rolling over. He lies there, listening for a moment, then blindly shuts off the alarm.

INT. RYAN CAR - DAY

James drives Jimmy to school. He glances at him, wondering what he's thinking.

EXT. CLAREMONT HIGH - PARKING LOT - DAY

The Ryan car pulls up to the main entrance of Claremont High - a Spanish Colonial-style high school in the L.A. suburbs, with white stucco walls and clay tile roofs.

INT. RYAN CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy grabs his bag.

JIMMY

See ya.

JAMES

Have a good day.

Jimmy opens the door and steps out.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Jimmy.

Jimmy pauses, looking back.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you.

Jimmy nods, forcing a smile, then closes the door.

EXT. CLAREMONT HIGH - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy heads inside as James drives off.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

Lockers SLAM. Sneakers SQUEAK.

Jimmy makes his way down the hall -- heads turn.

A group of FRESHMEN GIRLS whisper and giggle, glancing at him. Jimmy flashes them a smile.

He daps up a couple of FOOTBALL PLAYERS.

At his locker, Nick and Griffin hover over this month's edition of Baseball Digest. A photo of Jimmy mid-swing graces the cover.

Griffin spots Jimmy --

GRIFFIN
(re: magazine)
You read this?

JIMMY
No.

Jimmy opens his locker, shoving his bag inside. Griffin reads out loud --

GRiffin
"A generational talent, James Ryan Jr. has cemented himself as the consensus number one high school baseball player in the country..."

Griffin's voice FADES. Jimmy hides behind his locker door, eyes shut tight. The POUNDING of his heart drowns out the hallway noise.

He shuts his locker --

JIMMY
How was the party?

GRiffin
Oh, dude. If you thought Sienna was playing hard to get before, she took it to a whole 'nother level last night.

NICK
Shut up!

Sienna heads their way. She locks eyes with Jimmy. Nick and Griffin might as well be invisible.

They watch her pass. As soon as she's gone, Griffin pipes up -

Nick slams Griffin into the lockers. Griffin laughs.

The bell RINGS. The hallway empties.

Jimmy takes off.

JIMMY
Counselors' office.

GRIFFIN
What for?

JIMMY
To keep the peace.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - COUNSELORS' OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy steps inside as a few stragglers race past, late for class.

His gaze drifts to the bulletin board. A flyer grabs his attention. He wanders over, reading it.

MR. TURNER (O.S.)

He turns around.

MR. TURNER (30), a compassionate, level-headed counselor, stands in his doorway.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)
Come on in.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MR. TURNER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy slumps into the chair, ready to get this over with.

The office is sparse -- a few mementos from Mr. Turner's playing days for the Alabama Crimson Tide and a photo of his wife holding their baby girl.

Mr. Turner kicks his feet up, grabbing a football.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)
So, how's it going?

JIMMY
Not bad.

MR. TURNER
Big game tonight.

JIMMY
(unenthusiastic)
Yeah.

MR. TURNER
Your mom said you wanted to discuss
your options?

JIMMY
Apparently.

MR. TURNER
Well, everyone's got an opinion,
but at the end of the day, it's
your decision. Not theirs.

JIMMY
Doesn't feel that way.

Jimmy looks off, the weight of the world on his shoulders.

MR. TURNER
Yeah... It never does.

Mr. Turner sits up, changing the subject.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)
What were you looking at?

JIMMY
What? Oh, uh, just a flyer -- some
art class with Mr. Morris

MR. TURNER
You should go. Who knows, it might
be fun.

JIMMY

Fun? Fun doesn't make you a first-round pick.

Mr. Turner chuckles.

MR. TURNER

No, but it does make you human. And not every choice is life or death.

(beat)

Your batting average can't be the only thing you care about, Jimmy.

JIMMY

It's not.

MR. TURNER

Then what do you have to lose?

Jimmy reconsiders.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)

Just think about it. And if your mom asks, tell her I had to reschedule.

Jimmy cracks a smile.

JIMMY.

All right. Thanks, Mr. Turner.

MR. TURNER

Don't mention it.

Jimmy leaves, a little more pep in his step.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MR. MORRIS'S CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. MORRIS (50), an eccentric character, roams around the classroom like a tour guide describing the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

MR. MORRIS

Our perception is shaped by our experiences. Our experiences shape who we are. Drawing teaches you to see what's hidden in plain sight. The more you draw, the clearer it becomes.

Mr. Morris zeros in on Sienna, head buried in her sketchpad. She shades in the Ferris wheel at Santa Monica Pier. It could be mistaken for a photograph.

MR. MORRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You kids these days have the
attention span of a five-year-old.

Noelle coughs, warning Sienna, but she's oblivious.

MR. MORRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Eyes glued to your phone, the
universe in your pocket.

Mr. Morris snaps Sienna's sketchpad shut. She flinches.

MR. MORRIS (CONT'D)
And it drives me nuts.

The class chuckles. Sienna gives an embarrassed smile.

MR. MORRIS (CONT'D)
But I digress. Today, we're going
to focus on the perception of
edges.

The slow CREAK of the doorknob cuts him off. Jimmy steps inside.

MR. MORRIS (CONT'D)
Mr. Ryan. You lost?

JIMMY
Uh...

Jimmy freezes. The class stares at him, whispering. Noelle elbows Sienna, eyes wide.

MR. MORRIS
Mr. Ryan?

JIMMY
Sorry. Wrong room.

Jimmy bolts, yanking the door closed. The class bursts into laughter.

MR. MORRIS
Well, that was unexpected. Now,
where was I? Ah, yes. The
perception of edges.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy leans his forehead against the door, lets out a discouraged sigh, and walks off.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - DAY

A commercial jet flies over McNicoll Park, the home of the Claremont Tigers -- a state-of-the-art facility with stadium seating behind the backstop and perfectly mowed checkerboard grass. State championship banners cover the outfield wall, rippling in the breeze.

MONTAGE - PRE-GAME

The Tigers take the field for batting practice. Jimmy steps into the cage, launching balls into the sky.

Players pair up along the foul line, getting loose.

Infielders field ground balls; outfielders shag pop flies -- hit by coaches with fungos.

Coach Stricklin fills out the lineup card.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - DUGOUT

Jimmy straps on his shin guards, then pulls out his phone. A text from Kirsten reads: "What did he say?".

He exhales, tossing the phone in his bag.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - BULLPEN

SNAP! The ball zips into Jimmy's glove.

He takes off his catcher's mask and walks over to Griffin, glancing at the growing crowd.

Griffin notices.

GRIFFIN

Did you see Ms. Reya today?

JIMMY

Yeah.

GRIFFIN

How am I supposed to concentrate on Spanish when she's wearing something like that? I mean, it's already hard enough.

JIMMY

That's what you're thinking about right now?

Si. GRIFFIN

Jimmy shakes his head, handing Griffin the ball.

SERIES OF SHOTS - GAME PREP

GROUNDSMAN #1 chalks the third baseline.

GROUNDSMAN #2 sprays the infield dirt.

The overhead door to the concession stand rolls open.

Kirsten and Max take their seats.

James chats with a group of parents, loving the attention.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - GAME TIME

Jimmy calls the Tigers together --

JIMMY
(raises fist)
All right. Hands in.

They raise their fists.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Tigers on three! One, two, three!

TIGERS

The Tigers take the field.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Let's hear it for your Claremont
Tigers!

The crowd cheers.

SERIES OF SHOTS - LEAD UP TO FIRST PITCH

Griffin throws warm-up pitches.

Scott rolls grounders to the infielders.

JIMMY
Balls in!

Scott and the outfielders toss their balls to the dugout as Jimmy throws to second.

The PLATE UMPIRE brushes off home plate.

Glenrosa Batter #1 steps up to bat.

Griffin delivers.

PLATE UMPIRE
Strike!

Jimmy throws it back...

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - TOP OF FIRST

... Griffin catches the ball.

Behind him, the scoreboard reads: "Tigers 0, Visitors 0, 2 Outs, Top of 1st."

Nick throws up two fingers to the outfield, signaling the number of outs.

Griffin winds up and delivers.

Glenrosa Batter #2 hits a high fly ball to center field.

The CENTER FIELDER camps under it and makes the catch, ending the top of the first.

The Tigers hustle off.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - BOTTOM OF FIRST

Nick knocks the doughnut weight off his bat and struts to the plate.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Leading off for the Tigers, the
shortstop, number six, Nick Hammel!

The crowd cheers.

Nick SLAPS a single into left field and jogs to first. The FIRST BASE COACH gives him a fist bump.

Scott waddles up to bat.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now batting, the first baseman,
number thirty-three, Scott Deeks!

He SMACKS a screamer past a diving Glenrosa first baseman.

The Tigers leap to their feet.

Scott charges out of the box as the ball rolls to the right field corner, and barrels around first, helmet flying.

TIGERS
Go for three! Go for three!

He rounds second, pumping his arms, headed for third.

TIGERS (CONT'D)
Oh shit, he's going for it!/No way!

Nick scores.

The Glenrosa right fielder picks up the ball and throws it to the second baseman in shallow right.

The third base coach motions for Scott to slide --

THIRD BASE COACH
Get Down! Get Down!

The Glenrosa second baseman relays it to third.

Scott dives for the bag in a cloud of dust, wrapping his arms around it as the Glenrosa third baseman tags him.

BASE UMPIRE
(makes safe signal)
Safe!

Scott throws his hand in the air, clinging to the bag --

SCOTT
Time!

He stands up, bent over and panting. The Tigers laugh and cheer.

TIGERS
White Lightning!/Atta boy,
Scotty!/Gettin' dirty!

SCOREBOARD - TIGERS 1, VISITORS 0, 0 OUTS, TOP OF 4TH

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Griffin wipes the sweat off his brow, a runner on second.

The plate umpire yells out the count --

PLATE UMPIRE
One and Two!

Glenrosa Batter #3 steps into the box. Jimmy glances at him, then gives Griffin a series of signs -- two, one, four, two.

Griffin nods, comes set, checks the runner, and hurls the pitch toward home.

The ball curves into the dirt, bouncing in front of home plate. Glenrosa Batter #3 swings and misses.

Jimmy drops to his knees. The ball deflects off his chest protector and rolls toward the on-deck circle.

Glenrosa Batter #3 runs to first.

Jimmy scrambles to his feet, grabs the ball, and fires.

Time SLOWS. The ball sails over Scott's head into right field.

The crowd gasps. James shoots up, hands on his head.

Glenrosa Batter #3 rounds first, heading to second as the RIGHT FIELDER chases after the ball. The runner scores.

Jimmy stands there, watching in shock.

The right fielder throws it to the SECOND BASEMAN as Glenrosa Batter #3 races to third.

Jimmy walks back to home plate, in total disbelief.

James slowly takes a seat, on edge.

JAMES
(clapping)
Shake it off, Jimmy.

GLENROSA BATTER #4 digs in, muttering under his breath --

GLENROSA BATTER #4
All-American, my ass.

Jimmy looks at him, unnerved, then gives Griffin the sign. Griffin nods, comes set, and delivers.

PLATE UMPIRE
Strike!

Jimmy throws it back. Griffin jumps, snagging the ball by his fingertips. Coach Stricklin shouts from the dugout --

COACH STRICKLIN
Settle down out there!

Griffin looks at Jimmy -- *that was close.*

James suddenly leaves his seat. Kirsten calls after him, trying not to make a scene --

KIRSTEN
James! James!

He ignores her.

Jimmy throws down one finger, breathing shakily. Griffin nods, comes set, and delivers.

PLATE UMPIRE
Ball.

Jimmy stands up, heart POUNDING through his chest. Griffin holds his glove open, waiting...

Jimmy throws. The ball bounces off the side of the mound.

The runner breaks for home. Nick darts across short, scooping up the ball. The runner stops, rushing back to third.

James paces behind the backstop, furious.

JAMES
Get it together, Jimmy!

Jimmy's eyes widen. His breath shortens.

The Glenrosa dugout leans over the railing, talking trash.

GLENROSA BATTER #4
Don't choke now.

Jimmy shuts his eyes, trying to block out the noise, then gives the sign.

Griffin nods, comes set, and delivers. Glenrosa Batter #4 swings and misses.

Jimmy grips the ball, hand trembling. Suddenly, the field CLOSES IN. TRASH TALK fills his ears.

He throws. It sails into center field.

The runner sprints home. The Glenrosa dugout cheers.

A passionate FAN stands up, shouting --

FAN
Get him out of there!

Max scowls at him. Kirsten grabs Max's hand. James glances at several SCOUTS on their phones.

Coach Stricklin steps onto the field --

COACH STRICKLIN
Time, Blue!

Jimmy heads to the mound, shoulders slumped. Nick lets him have it --

NICK
What the fuck, man!

GRIFFIN
Cool it!
(to Jimmy)
Dude, you okay?

Jimmy doesn't answer.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)
Jimmy?

Coach Stricklin joins the huddle.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)
Coach, something's wrong.

COACH STRICKLIN
Jimmy, look at me.

Jimmy looks at him, terrified. Coach Stricklin signals to the BACKUP CATCHER, who quickly gears up.

COACH STRICKLIN (CONT'D)
Take a seat, Jimmy.

Jimmy glances into the stands, noticing the empty seat beside Kirsten.

Coach Stricklin pats him on the back. Jimmy shamefully nods, walking off the field as the crowd falls silent.

SCOREBOARD - FINAL SCORE - TIGERS 1, VISITORS 3

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

The Tigers pack up their gear, sneaking glances at Jimmy.

INT. RYAN CAR - NIGHT

Jimmy gets into the back seat, head down. He glances at James through the rearview mirror.

James keeps his eyes on the road, jaw tight, hands gripping the wheel. Finally, Kirsten breaks the silence --

KIRSTEN
Are you all right, baby?

Jimmy avoids her gaze.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Talk to us, honey.

He stares out the window, teary-eyed.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Jimmy.

JAMES
Kirsten, enough. He's a big boy. He can handle it.

James looks into the rearview mirror, locking eyes with Jimmy -- cold and unforgiving.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Right, Jimmy?

Jimmy nods slightly.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

Jimmy heads to his locker, hat low. Students stare, whispering as he passes.

KEITH (18), a beefy lineman, gestures to a few of his TEAMMATES.

Jimmy fumbles with his locker combination when, suddenly --

KEITH (O.S.)
Heads up!

A football hits him on the shoulder.

KEITH (CONT'D)
Sorry, Jimmy.

Jimmy picks up the ball --

KEITH (CONT'D)
Wait! Wait!

Keith moves within a few feet of him, palms up, ready to catch it.

KEITH (CONT'D)
Close enough?

The hallway erupts in laughter. Keith snickers. Jimmy glares at him, temper flaring.

He whips the football at Keith's face. Students wince.

Keith grabs his nose, grimacing in pain, then looks at his hands, covered in blood.

JIMMY
Honestly, I think it's an improvement.

Keith clenches his fists. Jimmy drops his bag. The students form a circle around them.

Just then, Mr. Turner steps in --

MR. TURNER
Jimmy, my office. Keith, go clean yourself up. The rest of you, get to class.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MR. TURNER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Turner closes the door.

MR. TURNER
What was that?

Jimmy sits there, adrenaline pumping. Mr. Turner sits down.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)
Fighting won't solve your problems, Jimmy.

JIMMY
Asshole deserved it.

MR. TURNER
I'm not talking about Keith.

Jimmy looks at him.

JIMMY

What? Can't I have a bad game
without the world ending?

MR. TURNER

Relax, Jimmy. I'm just trying to
help.

JIMMY

Well, I don't need your help. I'm
fine... Seriously. Now can I go?

Mr. Turner studies him for a moment, then gestures toward the door.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy storms out of the counselors' office, colliding with Sienna.

JIMMY

Oh, shit!

SIENNA

Whoa!

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

SIENNA

Hi.

Jimmy straightens, composing himself.

JIMMY

Hey.

SIENNA

Rough morning?

JIMMY

Yeah... Something like that.

Sienna smiles, amused.

SIENNA

Do you always leave in such
dramatic fashion?

JIMMY

What?

SIENNA

The door didn't know what hit it.

JIMMY

Oh. You saw that?

SIENNA

Very avant-garde.

Sienna gives him a cheeky grin.

SIENNA (CONT'D)

You know, everyone loves a
redemption story.

JIMMY

Yeah, no, thanks. I've learned my
lesson.

SIENNA

Mr. Morris would have a heart
attack.

JIMMY

Exactly.

SIENNA

It's not that scary, I promise.

JIMMY

I'm not scared.

SIENNA

Well then?

Jimmy stares at Sienna, feathers ruffled. Then --

JIMMY

You know what? Fine. If it'll wipe
that smile off your face, I'll go.

SIENNA

That's the spirit.

Satisfied, Sienna carries on her way. Jimmy watches her go,
perplexed.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MR. MORRIS'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Students take out their sketchpads, sharpen pencils, chat.

Mr. Morris sits on the edge of his desk, listening to Noelle
groan about her art project.

NOELLE

I don't know what to do, Mr. Morris. I've tried everything.

MR. MORRIS

Art isn't a puzzle, Noelle. It's a conversation with the page. Let your pencil do the talking. Inspiration is allergic to complaining.

Just then, Jimmy enters. Sienna gives him a big smile, gesturing to the empty seat beside her.

NOELLE

Yeah, but --

Mr. Morris turns --

MR. MORRIS

Mr. Ryan.

Jimmy stops dead in his tracks.

MR. MORRIS (CONT'D)

Back so soon?

JIMMY

I uh...
(looks at Sienna)
... thought I'd broaden my horizons.

Mr. Morris's mouth curves into a smile.

MR. MORRIS

Have a seat.

Jimmy sits down beside Sienna.

MR. MORRIS (CONT'D)

Quiet down.

The class settles. Noelle scampers back to her desk, shooting Sienna a teasing grin.

MR. MORRIS (CONT'D)

Thank you. Most of us don't draw what we see -- we draw what we think we see. Forget what you think a rose looks like. Forget what you think a cloud looks like. Stop assuming. Start observing. That's what it means to be an artist.

Sienna whispers to Jimmy --

SIENNA
Mind-blowing, isn't it?

JIMMY
(whispering)
Totally.

SIENNA
(whispering)
That's why I love it. It's my
escape from reality. If I want a
white Christmas in July, I draw it.
If I want to walk on the moon, I
draw it. It can be a reflection of
who you are or who you want to be.
And it's different for everyone.

Jimmy gazes into Sienna's eyes, her passion shining through.

SIENNA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
What?

He looks away.

JIMMY
(whispering)
Nothing. Nothing. I just... never
thought of it that way.

Sienna's expression softens, seeing Jimmy in a different light. He glances at her, a coy smile on his lips.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

Students file out of class. Jimmy and Sienna are the last to leave.

SIENNA
So... what'd you think?

JIMMY
It was... eye-opening.

SIENNA
(smirks)
Was that a joke?

JIMMY
Maybe.

A beat. Sienna stands there, waiting for Jimmy to ask her out. He smiles, eyes fleeting. Then --

JIMMY (CONT'D)
See you around?

SIENNA
Uh... yeah.

JIMMY
Cool.

Jimmy walks away.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(to self)
Fuck me.

Sienna watches him go, hoping he'll turn around. She exhales, disappointed --

JIMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey, Sienna.

She looks up. Jimmy runs over.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
What are you doing later?

SIENNA
Not much, why?

JIMMY
Do you want to... I don't know,
hang out?

SIENNA
You mean...?

JIMMY
Yeah. Except this time, it'll be on
my turf.

SIENNA
Your turf?

JIMMY
It's not that scary, I promise.

Jimmy gives Sienna a playful grin. She smiles, smitten.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - DAY

The Tigers gear up for practice, cracking jokes.

Jimmy steps inside. Eyes lower. A heavy silence fills the air.

One by one, the Tigers grab their gloves and head onto the field. Griffin hangs back.

JIMMY

What?

GRIFFIN

Nothing.

Jimmy laces up his cleats.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Want to come over and play The Show
after practice?

JIMMY

Can't.

GRIFFIN

Come on, I'll even let you win.

JIMMY

I got plans.

GRIFFIN

With who?

Jimmy gives him a sly smile.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Fuck off. Sienna?

Jimmy nods, playing it cool.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

No way. Holy shit!

(beat)

I can't wait to tell Nick.

JIMMY

Dude, no!

GRIFFIN

I'm kidding... That's your problem,
not mine.

(beat)

Oh!

Griffin digs through his bag, looking for something.

He pulls out his cup.

Jimmy looks at him, confused.

GRiffin (CONT'D)
(gestures to Jimmy's
crotch)
For the merchandise.

Jimmy smacks the cup out of Griffin's hand, lunging at him. Griffin dashes out of the dugout, laughing.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - DAY

Jimmy crouches behind home plate, eyes on first. Nick creeps toward second. Scott holds him on.

Griffin comes set, checks the runner, and delivers. Nick takes off.

SCOTT
Runner, runner!

Jimmy fires to second. The ball sails into center field. Coach Stricklin loses it --

COACH STRICKLIN
Jesus Christ, Jimmy! Get out of
your head!

Jimmy's shoulders slump.

JIMMY
Sorry, Coach.

COACH STRICKLIN
Just figure it out.

Coach Stricklin looks around. The Tigers stare at him, dejected.

COACH STRICKLIN (CONT'D)
What is everyone looking at? Do it
again!

They hustle back to their positions.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kirsten scrubs a pot. James stands beside her with a dish towel, waiting.

JAMES
So I was thinking we'd catch a game
this weekend. The Yankees are in
town.

Kirsten keeps scrubbing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's been a while since we've gone
as a family. And Jimmy won't be
here much longer.

KIRSTEN
I'm not really in the mood.

Kirsten scrubs harder.

JAMES
All right, if you've got something
to say, just say it.

She drops the pot into the sink with a CLANG.

KIRSTEN
Don't expect me to pretend
yesterday never happened, James.
You're not fooling anyone.

JAMES
What are you talking about?

KIRSTEN
You know exactly what I'm talking
about. You've always been hard on
him.

JAMES
He's not a baby, Kirsten. You can't
protect him forever.

KIRSTEN

Forgive me for wanting our son to
get an education.

JAMES

School's not going anywhere.

KIRSTEN

Neither is the MLB.

JAMES

Look, Stanford's one thing, but the
MLB, it's his dream. Always has
been.

KIRSTEN

His dream, or yours?

JAMES

What difference does it make?!

Kirsten pauses, stunned.

KIRSTEN

Unbelievable.

She dries her hands and stalks off.

JAMES

Where are you going? Don't walk
away. Kirsten!

She keeps walking, done.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - DAY

Jimmy and Sienna stand in left field for a game of catch.

JIMMY

Ready?

SIENNA

(poses)

Do I look ready?

Jimmy pauses -- *damn*.

JIMMY

Yeah. Okay, here it comes.

He tosses her the ball. She jumps out of the way, throwing
her glove at it. Jimmy chuckles.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Great start.

SIENNA
I'm just getting warmed up.

Sienna fetches the ball. Jimmy gives her a target.

Feet facing forward, Sienna steps with the same foot as her throwing arm and lets it fly. The ball sails wide. Jimmy looks at her, dumbstruck.

SIENNA (CONT'D)
Oops.

He laughs, shaking his head, then retrieves the ball.

JIMMY
All right. Let's try this again.

He tosses the ball. Sienna knocks it down with her glove.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
You have to *catch* the ball, Sienna.
That's kinda the whole idea.

SIENNA
You know, this is a lot harder than it looks.

JIMMY
Oh, believe me, I know.

Sienna winds up.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on. Turn your body toward me.

Sienna turns to her left.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
No. The other way.

She does a one-eighty, grinning.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Now step with your left foot.

SIENNA
Like this?

Sienna steps, pretending to throw. It's not pretty.

JIMMY
Uh... sure.

She throws with everything she's got. Again, the ball sails wide. Jimmy looks at her, the same expression on his face. She shrugs.

MONTAGE - SIENNA'S AND JIMMY'S GAME OF CATCH

Slowly but surely, Sienna improves until she and Jimmy have a nice game of catch going.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Sienna fires a strike into Jimmy's glove.

JIMMY
I'm impressed.

SIENNA
Who knew?

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - HOME PLATE - DAY

Jimmy takes a knee next to a bucket of balls halfway between home plate and the pitcher's mound.

JIMMY
All right, let's see what you got.

Sienna steps onto home plate, gripping the bat like a hockey stick. Jimmy bursts out laughing.

SIENNA
What?!

JIMMY
Okay, first off -- back up.

Sienna steps toward the backstop.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
No, not that way. If you stand there, you're gonna get hit.

SIENNA
Well, excuse me.

She moves over to the right-handed batter's box.

JIMMY
Hands together.

She does as he says.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Now we're talking. Okay, take a
practice swing.

Sienna takes a hack.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Not bad. Let's see what you got.

He lobs a ball. PING! Sienna smokes a line drive through the infield. Jimmy looks at her, wide-eyed. Sienna smiles, boasting.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Beginner's luck.

Sienna scoffs, gripping the bat tighter -- game on.

Jimmy lobs another. PING! Sienna drills a comebacker straight at his head. He throws up his glove, deflecting it just in the nick of time.

SIENNA
Oh my god! Jimmy!

Sienna drops the bat, rushing over.

SIENNA (CONT'D)
Jimmy! Are you okay?

He starts laughing, lying there. Sienna stares at him, shocked.

SIENNA (CONT'D)
Asshole!

She punches Jimmy in the gut. He groans, grabbing her. They tumble -- Sienna ends up on top of him, their faces inches apart.

The laughter fades. Breathing slows. A kiss feels inevitable.

Instead, Sienna pulls the brim of Jimmy's hat over his eyes and rolls off.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - STANDS - DUSK

Sprinklers sweep across the empty diamond. Jimmy and Sienna sit behind home plate, watching the sun fade.

SIENNA
So... how'd I do?

JIMMY
Think I found our new clean-up
hitter.

SIENNA
Put me in, coach.
(swings)
I'll knock it out of the park.

A playful beat.

SIENNA (CONT'D)
When's your next game?

JIMMY
Why, you wanna come?

SIENNA
Maybe.

A flicker of a smile crosses Jimmy's face.

JIMMY
Friday.

SIENNA
You don't sound very excited.

JIMMY
To be honest, that was the most fun
I've had playing baseball in a long
time.

SIENNA
Really? How come?

JIMMY
I don't know. It's just different
now. Everyone's counting on me. I
don't want to let them down, you
know?

SIENNA
Is that why you play?

JIMMY

No. I play to be the best. Because I love it -- the same way you love art. It's just my dad, he...

Jimmy sighs, disheartened.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

... never mind.

Sienna stares at him, seeing what he won't say.

SIENNA

Sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it.

Jimmy looks off, his gaze distant.

JIMMY

Yeah.

Sienna rests her head on his shoulder.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy stares at the Kirk Gibson poster, a shadow of doubt in his eyes for the first time.

MAX (O.S.)

You coming?

Max stands in Jimmy's doorway.

JIMMY

Not tonight.

MAX

But Ohtani's pitching.

Jimmy keeps staring.

JIMMY

I don't care.

MAX

What do you mean? It's Ohtani. Come on.

Jimmy sits up, voice sharp --

JIMMY

I said no! All right? Just watch it yourself. Fuck.

Max looks down.

MAX

Sorry.

He leaves, shoulders sagging. Jimmy exhales, lying down.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kirsten sits on the couch, a bag of ice wrapped around her knee, grimacing. Jimmy comes down the stairs.

KIRSTEN

Hey, hun. Can you hand me my medication? It's in the cabinet beside the fridge.

JIMMY

Sure.

Jimmy grabs a bottle of pills out of the cabinet, reading the label.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Where's Dad?

KIRSTEN

Went for a walk.

Jimmy hands Kirsten the pills and takes a seat.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

(beat)

You know, we never really talked about what happened last game?

JIMMY

There's nothing to talk about. It was just a bad game.

KIRSTEN

I know your dad can be hard on you, but he's not trying to be -- and I'm not defending him. He's a grown man.

(beat)

It's not your fault... It's mine. I'm your mom. I should've said something. I should've known. I...

Kirsten sighs, heart heavy with regret.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Jimmy. And so is your
dad... He just has a funny way of
showing it.

Then, lightheartedly --

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Between you and me, sometimes it
feels like there are three kids in
the house.

Jimmy smiles.

JIMMY
Well, not for long.

KIRSTEN
Oh, don't remind me. I'll start
crying.

Kirsten gets misty-eyed.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Are you sure you're okay?

JIMMY
I'm fine, Mom. Are you okay?

KIRSTEN
I'll survive.

She caresses Jimmy's cheek.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
I love you so much, my beautiful
boy.

JIMMY
I love you too.

-- PING. Jimmy looks outside. Max practices his swing in the
batting cage.

Jimmy walks to the deck door, watching as Max tees up a ball.

KIRSTEN (O.S.)
There's some leftover spaghetti if
you're hungry.

Max swings, knocking the tee over. Frustrated, he kicks the
bucket, spilling balls everywhere.

Jimmy sighs.

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - DECK/BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Max drops a ball into the bucket, discouraged.

-- The deck door OPENS. Jimmy enters the cage, helping Max pick up the balls.

MAX

I'm never going to be as good as you.

JIMMY

Dude, you're ten. How do you know?

MAX

I just do. If I were, maybe Dad would come to my games too.

Jimmy pauses, struck by the sadness in Max's voice.

JIMMY

I'm sorry about earlier. I was a dick.

Max stares at the ground.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(kneels)

Hey. Look at me.

Max meets his gaze.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Baseball's supposed to be fun.

MAX

I know. It is.

JIMMY

(raises Max's chin)

Then chin up. Everyone strikes out... Even me.

Jimmy gives him an encouraging smile. Max suddenly wraps his arms around him, catching Jimmy off guard. Jimmy hugs him, squeezing tightly.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MR. MORRIS'S ROOM - DAY

Waves and swirls of yellow, orange, and red brush strokes cover a canvas.

Sienna steps back, examining her work.

Jimmy peeks through the door lite, then slips inside.

JIMMY
Hey.

Sienna gives him a warm smile.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
What are you working on -- your
next masterpiece?

SIENNA
(laughs)
I wish.

Jimmy looks at the painting.

JIMMY
What is it?

SIENNA
Abstract. It's kinda like...
painting a feeling instead of a
picture. It's not supposed to make
sense. It's supposed to make you
feel something.

JIMMY
You sound like Mr. Morris.

SIENNA
Is that really so bad?

Jimmy smiles.

JIMMY
No.

A beat. Then --

SIENNA
You try.

Sienna hands Jimmy the paintbrush. He looks at it, hesitant.

SIENNA (CONT'D)
I trust you.

Jimmy takes the paintbrush and strokes the canvas.

JIMMY
Now I see it.

SIENNA

What?

JIMMY

You. That fire. That "who gives a shit?" attitude.

SIENNA

Yeah, well, don't let it fool you. Things aren't always as they seem.

JIMMY

What do you mean?

SIENNA

You should know. I mean, when people look at you, they see a star. Out there, you seem invincible. But deep down... you're like everyone else.

Jimmy stares at the painting, reflecting.

JIMMY

Okay, so what do you think people see when they look at you?

SIENNA

You said it yourself. Someone who doesn't give a shit. Someone who never has to worry because daddy's got money.

JIMMY

I didn't mean it like that.

SIENNA

I know. It's just maybe I have dreams too.

JIMMY

Yeah, like what?

SIENNA

(points to painting)
Like this.

JIMMY

Art?

Sienna nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

So what's stopping you?

SIENNA

Nothing. I mean, I want to go to CalArts.

JIMMY

Have you applied?

SIENNA

No... Not yet.

JIMMY

Why not?

SIENNA

I don't know. I'm going to. It's just...

JIMMY

Just what?

SIENNA

What if I don't get in?

JIMMY

Oh, come on. That's bullshit.

Sienna looks at Jimmy, taken aback.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What -- you can dish it, but you can't take it?

SIENNA

Ha-ha.

JIMMY

Look, if you really want to be an artist, you can't be scared of rejection. It comes with the territory. Doesn't mean you're not good enough.

(beat)

Seriously, even that guy who cut off his ear -- you know, the one who painted that sky with the swirls?

SIENNA

Van Gogh.

JIMMY

Yeah, him. Wasn't his work torn apart at first?

SIENNA

You do know Van Gogh only sold one painting in his life?

JIMMY

Fuck. Okay, bad example. The point is, he didn't let that stop him. And if you ask me... you're more than good enough.

An adoring smile spreads across Sienna's face. She slowly leans in and kisses Jimmy -- long, deep, and passionate.

Outside, Nick watches through the door lite, seething.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He storms off, slamming his fist into a locker.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - DINETTE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MIKE CARTER (50), an imposing figure in a custom suit, sits across from Jimmy and his parents.

His phone BUZZES with a barrage of notifications. He tucks it into his pocket.

CARTER

Sorry about that.

(beat)

All right. I'll cut to the chase. I've had my eye on you, Jimmy -- since freshman year. And from what I've seen, you're as good as they say -- a franchise player. Which is why I want to work with you.

-- CRACK!

MAX (O.S.)

Yes!

Max jumps up from his seat in front of the TV.

MAX (CONT'D)

Go! Go! Send him, send him!

KIRSTEN

Max!

Max turns around.

MAX

Sorry.

He turns off the TV and races up the stairs. Jimmy smiles inwardly, admiring his little brother's passion.

KIRSTEN

(to Carter)

He takes the Dodgers very seriously.

CARTER

No need to explain. I'm a Red Sox fan.

KIRSTEN

Oh, that might be a problem.

They share a laugh.

CARTER

I like to think my reputation speaks for itself, but I've orchestrated some of the largest contracts in MLB history. My team's the best in the business -- trainers, sports scientists, physicians -- you name it. Everything Jimmy needs to reach his full potential.

(to Jimmy)

Now, I understand you've committed to Stanford.

JIMMY

Yes, sir.

Jimmy glances at his parents.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

But I'm still undecided.

Carter smiles.

CARTER

Good answer. If we play our cards right, we can use that as leverage.

KIRSTEN

Leverage?

CARTER

To maximize his signing bonus.

KIRSTEN

But he is seriously undecided.

CARTER

And he should be. There are no guarantees in baseball. Hundreds of first-round draft picks never play a game in the Big Leagues. But the reality is, prospects who re-enter the draft, nine times out of ten, leave money on the table. Jimmy has a chance to play the game he loves for a living. School will always be there.

JAMES

That's what I've been saying.

Kirsten bites her tongue.

CARTER

Tell you what -- you've got a game Friday, right, Jimmy?

James interjects --

JAMES

Friday night, yeah.

CARTER

(to Jimmy)

Talk it over with your parents, and after the game, we can finish this conversation. Sound good?

JIMMY

Yeah, okay. Thanks, Mr. Carter.

Carter hands Jimmy his business card, then stands.

CARTER

If you have any questions, give me a call.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Ryans show Carter to the door.

KIRSTEN

Thanks for stopping by.

CARTER

My pleasure.

Carter opens the door, then stops, turning back --

CARTER (CONT'D)
Oh, I almost forgot. Jimmy, how's
your arm?

Jimmy stiffens.

JIMMY
My arm?

CARTER
Yeah. You know, I hear things.

James steps in --

JAMES
It's fine. Nothing serious. Right,
Jimmy?

James looks at Jimmy.

JIMMY
... Yeah. Yeah, it's fine.

CARTER
Oh, okay. Well, don't try to be a
hero. This is only the beginning.

His words linger.

JIMMY
I won't.

Carter leaves.

James gives Jimmy a smile. Jimmy walks off, done pretending.

Kirsten glares at James.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy stares at his reflection, brushing his teeth.

The MUFFLED SHOUTS of James and Kirsten echo through the walls.

Jimmy spits, then lets the tap run. Steam begins to rise, fogging his face in the mirror.

He clenches his jaw. The water HISSES. His eyes fill with pain.

Finally, he pulls his hand away. The skin across his palm is scalding red.

He looks at himself again, ashamed of what he sees.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jimmy stares at the Kirk Gibson poster. A tear trickles down his cheek.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James folds the spare blanket, grabs his pillow off the couch, and heads upstairs.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy rolls out of bed.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

James tucks the blanket into the closet. He turns --

Jimmy steps out of his room. James freezes, pillow in hand, nowhere to hide.

Their eyes meet. Jimmy hurries into the bathroom.

James's heart sinks.

INT. RYAN CAR - DAY

James drives Jimmy to school.

Jimmy sticks his hand out the window, feeling the wind between his fingers.

James turns on the RADIO, catching the red streak on Jimmy's hand. He glances at him, afraid to ask.

EXT. CLAREMONT HIGH - PARKING LOT - DAY

The Ryan car pulls up to the main entrance.

INT. RYAN CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy gets out.

JAMES
Have a good day.

JIMMY
You too.

James watches him go, swallowing the lump in his throat.

A car behind him HONKS. He raises an apologetic hand and drives off.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - CLASSROOM - DAY

Jimmy and his classmates sit at their desks, working on a problem set.

A SECRETARY steps inside, flagging the TEACHER. They exchange a few quiet words. Then --

TEACHER
Jimmy.

He looks up.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MR. TURNER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Turner checks last night's scores. Jimmy marches in, sitting down.

MR. TURNER
Jimmy. Hey.

Mr. Turner gets up and closes the door.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)
Sorry to pull you out of class.

JIMMY
Sure. What's up?

Mr. Turner sits back down.

MR. TURNER
Your mom called.

JIMMY
Fuck me. Now what?

MR. TURNER
She's just worried about you,
Jimmy.

JIMMY

No, she's not. She worried I won't go to Stanford.

MR. TURNER

It's not that simple. The NCAA takes agents very seriously. There are rules for a reason. Break one, and you could lose your eligibility.

JIMMY

Who cares? Let's face it. I'm not going to Stanford. Not with my dad in the picture.

Jimmy exhalles, hanging on by a thread.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
I can't do this anymore.

MR. TURNER

You don't mean that.

JIMMY

Yeah, I do. You have no idea what it's like.

MR. TURNER

You're right, I don't. But I do know what it's like to be told to suck it up. That talking about your feelings is for "pussies", and admitting you need help means you're weak.

(beat)

You don't have to go through this alone, Jimmy. Talk to your parents. Tell them how you feel.

(beat)

I know you don't want to let them down... but if you don't, you're letting yourself down.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy steps into the hall, a shell of himself. Suddenly, his heart starts to POUND.

He clutches his chest. The walls CLOSE IN. TRASH TALK fills his ears, growing louder.

He squeezes his eyes shut.

QUICK FLASHBACK

Jimmy grips the ball, hand trembling, about to throw it back to Griffin.

BACK TO SCENE

Jimmy's eyes snap open, wide with terror.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The bathroom door flies open. Jimmy rushes inside, slamming a stall door behind him.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - BATHROOM STALL - CONTINUOUS

He drops to his knees, chest heaving, gasping for air.

Finally, his breathing slows. He slumps against the stall door, eyes hollow with anguish.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - DAY

The Tigers jog out to left field for practice.

COACH STRICKLIN

Jimmy, hold on.

Jimmy stops.

JIMMY

Yeah, Coach?

COACH STRICKLIN

Come here.

Jimmy jogs over.

COACH STRICKLIN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna give you the night off.

JIMMY

What? No, Coach, you can't.

COACH STRICKLIN

It's one game, Jimmy.

JIMMY

No, you don't understand. I have to play. Mick Carter's coming.

COACH STRICKLIN
Mike Carter?

JIMMY
Yes. He's coming -- he told me.

Coach Stricklin scratches his head, reluctant.

COACH STRICKLIN
Look, Jimmy --

JIMMY
Coach, please. Let me play.

Coach Stricklin studies Jimmy, reconsidering.

COACH STRICKLIN
You sure?

JIMMY
I need this.

Jimmy holds Coach Stricklin's gaze, determined. Then --

COACH STRICKLIN
Fine. You want to play, you'll
play.

Jimmy smiles, relieved.

JIMMY
Thanks, Coach.

COACH STRICKLIN
(light-hearted)
Yeah, whatever. Now screw off.

Jimmy jogs out to left field, his smile fading.

EXT. MCNICOLL PARK - LEFT FIELD - DAY

The Tigers jog to their gloves, spread along the foul line.

While Jimmy isn't looking, Nick grabs the ball out of Jimmy's glove and stuffs it in his back pocket.

Jimmy picks up his glove, noticing the ball's gone.

JIMMY
Who took my ball?

No one answers. They start throwing.

Jimmy spots the ball in Nick's back pocket.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Nick, give me my ball.

NICK
What ball?

JIMMY
Don't fuck with me. Just give me my ball.

NICK
I didn't take your ball.

JIMMY
Yes, you did. It's in your pocket.
Now give it back.

NICK
Dude, I didn't take your fucking ball. You're not that important.
(throws)
Jesus Christ.

Jimmy glares at Nick, exhaling. As he walks by, Nick mutters -

NICK (CONT'D)
Bitch.

Jimmy spins around --

JIMMY
What the fuck did you call me?

Nick catches the ball, then faces Jimmy.

NICK
I called you a bitch.

Jimmy drops his glove, getting in Nick's face. The Tigers stop throwing.

NICK (CONT'D)
Careful... I mean, what will Daddy say?

Jimmy's jaw tightens, itching for an excuse.

JIMMY
You're a piece of shit, you know that?

NICK
Speak for yourself.

Jimmy starts to walk away, but Nick won't let it go.

NICK (CONT'D)
I can't wait until Sienna finds out
she's got bigger balls than you.
Who am I kidding -- that's never
gonna happen. You've barely passed
first base.

That's the final straw. Jimmy charges, slamming Nick onto his back, then lands a punch.

The Tigers rush in. Griffin and Scott drag Jimmy off Nick. Jimmy thrashes, shouting --

JIMMY
Who's the bitch now?!

Coach Stricklin sprints onto the field. Nick slowly gets up, spitting blood.

COACH STRICKLIN
What the hell is going on?!

NICK
This asshole fucking jumped me.

JIMMY
That's bullshit.

NICK
Try it again. Watch what happens.

COACH STRICKLIN
All right, enough! Both of you. Now
grab your shit and go home.

Neither moves.

COACH STRICKLIN (CONT'D)
Now!

Jimmy breaks free from Griffin and Scott, snatches his glove, and stalks back to the dugout.

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

Jimmy waits outside Mr. Morris's room. A door OPENS. He straightens.

Students, including Sienna and Noelle, funnel out.

Sienna's eyes light up, spotting Jimmy. She says goodbye to Noelle and skips over.

SIENNA
Shouldn't you be at practice?

JIMMY
Uh... we finished early.

SIENNA
An hour and a half early?

JIMMY
Uh... fuck. No, I, uh... I got sent home.

SIENNA
What for?

JIMMY
Fighting.

SIENNA
With who?

JIMMY
Doesn't matter. My dad's gonna kill me.

Sienna's mouth curls into a troublesome grin.

SIENNA
Come on.

She grabs Jimmy's hand and races down the hallway.

JIMMY
Wait, where are we going?

SIENNA
You'll see.

EXT. CLAREMONT HIGH - MAIN ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Sienna bursts out of the school with a cheer, yanking Jimmy along.

EXT. CLAREMONT HIGH - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

They sprint to her car -- a white convertible. The doors UNLOCK, taillights flashing.

Sienna tosses her bag in the back and gets behind the wheel. Jimmy hops in.

INT./EXT. SIENNA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sienna WHIPS out of the stall and TEARS across the parking lot. Jimmy grips the dash, holding on for dear life.

JIMMY
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

She blows through the stop sign, laughing. Jimmy shoots her a look, scared shitless. They disappear down the road.

MONTAGE - SIENNA CHEERS JIMMY UP

Sienna WEAVES in and out of traffic. Jimmy clutches the seatbelt. She glances at him, cracking up.

They cross the L.A. River into the Arts District, speeding past the League of Shadows SCI-Arc Graduation Pavilion.

They wander through warehouse galleries, stopping to "interpret" the pieces on display, trying not to laugh.

They face off at air hockey, then foosball, talking smack. By now, Jimmy is having the time of his life.

INT./EXT. SIENNA'S CAR - SUNSET

Sienna drives Jimmy home. He sneaks a look -- the sunlight catches her eyes, hair blowing in the wind. His heart skips a beat.

INT./EXT. SIENNA'S CAR - NIGHT

Sienna pulls over in front of the Ryan House. Jimmy stares at the door, apprehensive, then turns to Sienna.

JIMMY
(appreciative)
Thanks.

Sienna smiles tenderly.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
See you tomorrow?

SIENNA
Definitely.

Jimmy leans in, pressing a gentle kiss to Sienna's lips. They slowly separate, wishing the night didn't have to end.

He gets out, bag slung over his shoulder, and heads up the driveway.

SIENNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Jimmy.

He stops, turning back --

JIMMY
Yeah?

Sienna grins.

SIENNA
... Nothing.

Jimmy shakes his head, a smile tugging at his mouth.

JIMMY
I'll see you tomorrow.

Sienna drives off. Jimmy sadly watches her go.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

James and Kirsten sit on opposite ends of the couch, stone-faced, a comedy PLAYING. Canned LAUGHTER fills the room, cutting through the silence.

The front door CLOSES. Jimmy enters.

KIRSTEN
You're home late.

JIMMY
Yeah... I, uh, was at Griff's.

JAMES
Oh, yeah? That's funny, because
your coach called with a different
story.

James turns OFF the TV.

JIMMY
All right, I can explain.

JAMES
What the hell is wrong with you?
Are you trying to blow it?

JIMMY
No, I --

JAMES
Then what are you doing?

Jimmy hesitates.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Huh?

JIMMY
If you paid attention, you'd know.

JAMES
What's that supposed to mean?

JIMMY
This isn't fun anymore. You've made
sure of that.

JAMES
Oh, grow up.

KIRSTEN
(stern)
James.

JAMES
No, Kirsten. He needs to face
reality.
(to Jimmy)
If you can't handle a little
criticism --

JIMMY
A little? Are you fucking
delusional?

KIRSTEN
(to Jimmy)
Hey!

JAMES

(to Jimmy)

If you think it's going to get any easier, you're the one who's delusional.

JIMMY

Wow, great pep talk, Dad. You should write a book.

JAMES

Watch it.

Jimmy throws his bag down.

JIMMY

Or what? You'll ground me?

JAMES

You're goddamn right!

JIMMY

You don't give a shit about me or what I want!

JAMES

You don't know what you want!

KIRSTEN

Enough!

JIMMY

How would you know?!

JAMES

I will not let you throw your life away!

JIMMY

IT'S MY LIFE!

(then)

Not yours.

-- CREAK. Kirsten looks upstairs.

KIRSTEN

Max, go back to your room!

Max scurries back.

James and Jimmy stare at each other, fuming.

JAMES

If you hate it that much, you can leave.

He grabs Jimmy's bag and hurls it against the door.

JAMES (CONT'D)
The door's open.

Jimmy's chest rises. The anger in his eyes cracks, stung by his father's words. He steps forward, voice low and biting --

JIMMY
Fuck you.

He storms upstairs.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy reaches the top of the stairs, stopping suddenly.

Max stares at him, heavy-hearted. Jimmy rushes past.

The door slams SHUT.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James looks at Kirsten. She holds his glare, disdain in her eyes.

JAMES
What?

KIRSTEN
You should be ashamed of yourself.

Kirsten marches upstairs.

JAMES
Of course, go after him. You're not doing him any favors!

James stands there, alone.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kirsten approaches Jimmy's door, reaching for the knob.

-- A soft SNIFFLE grabs her attention. Her gaze shifts to Max's room.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy sits on the edge of his bed, hollow-eyed. A shadow creeps under the door.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kirsten looks at her hand, torn. Her fingers slowly loosen, letting go of the doorknob.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The shadow retreats. Jimmy's head falls...

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - DECK - NIGHT

James stares into the yard.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - DINETTE - CONTINUOUS

Kirsten sits at the dinner table, eyes clouded with heartache. She looks outside...

EXT. RYAN HOUSE - DECK - MOMENTS LATER

... The deck door SLIDES open. Kirsten steps out.

KIRSTEN
You gonna come inside?

James gets up, walking to the edge of the deck.

JAMES
I got tired of the couch.

Kirsten snaps back --

KIRSTEN
You have to stop being so hard on him! He's hard enough on himself.

James faces her, pointing --

JAMES
So do you!

Kirsten turns away, shaking her head. A tense silence hangs between them.

Finally, softer --

KIRSTEN
We both do... It's his choice. And I made it harder than it had to be.

James sighs, lowering his guard. He goes to Kirsten.

JAMES
I'm sorry.

She wraps her arms around him.

KIRSTEN
I know. Me too.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jimmy and Max sit at the kitchen island, eating breakfast.

Kirsten gingerly opens the cabinet next to the fridge, glancing at Jimmy. She pops two pills, then packs Max's lunch.

KIRSTEN
(to Jimmy)
Your dad's already gone to work, so
you're gonna have to walk to
school.

Jimmy shovels down the rest of his cereal and puts his dishes in the dishwasher.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
And Max has a game tonight, so...

He grabs his backpack and heads for the door.

JIMMY
Later, dude.

MAX
Later.

JIMMY
Knock 'em dead.

Kirsten calls after him --

KIRSTEN
Jimmy.

He stops, turning back. Kirsten stands there, remorseful.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Good luck.

He nods.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - STANDS - GAME TIME

Fans pack the stands.

Sienna and Noelle take a selfie, decked out in school colors.

Carter finds a seat.

James is nowhere to be seen.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - HOME PLATE - CONTINUOUS

Coach Stricklin, OAKWOOD'S HEAD COACH, and the UMPIRES shake hands. The coaches return to their dugouts.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

The Tigers huddle up.

Jimmy scans the crowd. Fans wave "Go Tigers" posters, buzzing with excitement. Carter sits off to the side, glued to his phone.

Sienna catches Jimmy's eye, giving him a little wave. He musters a smile.

GRiffin

All right, boys. Let's show 'em what Tigers baseball looks like.

NICK

Hell, yeah! Take it to 'em.

GRiffin

Jimmy.

Jimmy stares at the crowd, uneasy.

GRiffin (CONT'D)

Yo, Jimmy.

He snaps out of it.

JIMMY

Shit. Yeah, okay -- bring it in.

He raises his fist. Nick glares at him, raising his.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Tigers on three. One, two, three.

TIGERS
Tigers!

The Tigers take the field. The crowd cheers.

The PITCHER fires a pitch into Jimmy's glove.

Jimmy drops to his knees, then nervously grips the ball, glancing at the pitcher.

The pitcher stands there, glove open.

Jimmy takes a few short breaths, then lets it go. The ball lands in the pitcher's glove.

Jimmy breathes a sigh of relief.

MONTAGE - GAME HIGHLIGHTS

Nick turns a double play with the second baseman and Scott.

Jimmy hits a missile to the warning track, scoring two runners. Sienna jumps up and down, clapping. The scoreboard changes to "Tigers 2, Visitors 0".

Oakwood Batter #2 strikes out looking. Jimmy sends the ball around the horn.

Griffin blows a giant bubble and sticks it on top of the backup catcher's hat.

Jimmy throws out a runner trying to steal second. Carter nods, impressed.

Nick leads off from first. The Oakwood pitcher throws home. Scott slaps a grounder through the infield. Nick rounds second and heads to third. The Tigers cheer.

Jimmy steps up to bat. Griffin blows another giant bubble and sticks it on top of the backup catcher's hat. The backup catcher squishes them. Griffin bursts out laughing. The backup catcher pounces on him -- PING! They look up.

Jimmy sprints out of the box. The ball two-hops the fence in right-center field. Nick and Scott race around the bases, scoring. Jimmy gets on his horse, headed for third. He slides headfirst, narrowly beating the tag. The crowd erupts. Jimmy springs to his feet, brushing the dirt off. The third base coach gives him a fist bump.

SCOREBOARD - TIGERS 7, VISITORS 0, 1 OUT, TOP OF 5TH

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The floodlights cast the diamond in a white glow.

The pitcher takes signs from Jimmy, a runner on first.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Ryan car parks. James gets out.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Oakwood Batter #3 pokes a single into right field. The runner sprints to third.

Jimmy steps in front of home plate, signals the number of outs, and gives the infield signs.

He turns around, freezing. James stands off to the side. Their eyes lock.

JAMES
(clapping)
Let's go, Jimmy.

Jimmy crouches, shaken.

The pitcher comes set, then spins, firing to first. The runner dives back.

BASE UMPIRE
(makes safe signal)
Safe!

Jimmy blinks, jaw tight. He gives the sign.

The pitcher nods, checks the runner, and throws home. The runner takes off.

SCOTT
Runner, runner!

Jimmy pump-fakes to second. The runner on third breaks for home.

Jimmy fires to third. His breath catches. Time SLOWS.

The runner dives back. The third baseman leaps. The ball sails over the tip of his glove.

The crowd gasps. The LEFT FIELDER chases after it.

Jimmy watches as both runners score, clearing the bases. The Oakwood dugout cheers.

James runs a frustrated hand through his hair.

Jimmy crouches, staring at home plate, devastated. The pitcher waits for the sign.

Carter leans forward. In the dugout, Coach Stricklin paces, packing a can of dip.

COACH STRICKLIN
Shake it off, Jimmy.

Griffin glances at Coach Stricklin, on edge.

Jimmy finally looks up, giving the sign. The pitcher nods, comes set, and delivers.

Oakwood Batter #4 swings and misses.

Jimmy drops to his knees, gripping the ball. Suddenly, the field CLOSES IN. TRASH TALK fills his ears.

GLENROSA BATTER #4 (V.O.)
Don't choke now.

Terrified, Jimmy gets rid of the ball. It sails into center field.

GRIFFIN
Oh, shit.

The same fan from the last game blurts out --

FAN
Here we go again.

The center fielder scoops up the ball and tosses it to Nick.

Sienna shifts in her seat.

Nick looks at Coach Stricklin, who stuffs a wad of chew in his cheek.

Jimmy's eyes widen. His breath shortens. Sweat trickles down his brow, smearing his eye black.

The pitcher throws home.

PLATE UMPIRE
Ball.

Jimmy stands up, heart POUNDING. You could hear a pin drop.

SERIES OF SHOTS - ANTICIPATION OF JIMMY'S THROW

Nick gets on his toes.

Sienna bites her lip.

Coach Stricklin spits, the Tigers on the edge of their seats.

James holds his breath.

BACK TO SCENE

Jimmy lets it go. The ball skips off the side of the mound.
Nick fields it.

The fan yells at Coach Stricklin --

FAN
What are you waiting for?!

Coach Stricklin adjusts his hat, contemplating.

Oakwood Batter #4 swings and misses. Again, Jimmy throws it away.

Coach Stricklin sighs. Jimmy looks at him, practically begging to be taken out.

Coach Stricklin signals to the backup catcher, then calls time, stepping onto the field --

COACH STRICKLIN
Time, Blue.

The Tigers stare at the dugout floor, demoralized.

James leaves, unable to watch anymore.

Carter makes his way down the stands, on the phone.

Jimmy heads to the mound, fighting back tears. Background sound FADES, replaced by his slow, heavy BREATHS. Everything becomes a BLUR.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT - NIGHT

Griffin sits with Jimmy, quietly consoling him. Nick glances at them, packing up.

Griffin pats Jimmy on his shoulder and leaves. Nick exhales, then goes over.

NICK

Hey, man. Do you, um, do you need a ride home or... I don't know?

JIMMY

No. No, I, uh... I just feel like sitting here for a while.

NICK

Yeah, all right.

Nick turns --

JIMMY

Thanks, though.

He stops. Jimmy looks at him, apologetic. Nick nods, then leaves, beef squashed.

Sienna lingers outside the dugout. Their eyes meet, both heavy with concern. Nick keeps walking.

Sienna watches Jimmy for a moment, then steps inside, joining him on the bench.

SIENNA

I'm so sorry, Jimmy.

(grabs his hand)

Is there anything I can do?

Jimmy pulls his hand away, on the verge of tears.

JIMMY

No. I just need to be alone right now.

Sienna nudges him.

SIENNA

Hey, come on. Cheer up. It's just one game.

He looks at her sharply --

JIMMY

This isn't one of your stupid art projects, Sienna! There's no starting over. That was it. That was my shot.

SIENNA

I know. Sorry, I just --

JIMMY
You know what? Just go.

Sienna pauses.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Leave!

Her eyes fill with tears.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Seriously, fuck off!

She runs out of the dugout, heartbroken. As soon as she's gone, Jimmy breaks down, sobbing.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - NIGHT

The park is empty, except for Jimmy, who hasn't moved from his seat in the dugout.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - TIGERS' DUGOUT/FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy stares onto the field, forlorn. He grabs his bat and walks to home plate.

JIMMY
(announcer's voice)
Bottom of the ninth. Two outs. Game seven of the World Series. And the chance of a lifetime for James Ryan Jr.

Jimmy taps the plate twice, takes his stance, and swings.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(announcer's voice)
Swung on and hit to right field.
Back at the wall, looking up, gone!

He jumps up and down the first baseline.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(announcer's voice)
He's done it! Ryan Jr. walks it off. The Dodgers win the World Series.

Jimmy rounds the bases, raising his arm to the sky, one finger up -- a boyish grin spread across his face.

Just as he's about to touch home plate, the floodlights SHUT OFF.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jimmy tiptoes up the stairs. The light turns on.

Kirsten steps into the hall, closing the bedroom door.

JIMMY

Sorry.

A beat.

KIRSTEN

Dad told me what happened.

Jimmy looks down, broken.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

We can talk about it in the morning.

He nods, going to bed. Kirsten covers her mouth, tearing up.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy stands in front of his trophy case -- each plaque and medal, years of hard work and sacrifice, now a painful reminder of a dream he let slip away.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

BIRDS CHIRP. A ray of light shines on Jimmy's body, still dressed in his uniform.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kirsten gently knocks on Jimmy's door.

KIRSTEN

Jimmy.

Silence. She knocks again, firmer.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

Jimmy.

INT. RYAN HOUSE - JIMMY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door cracks open.

KIRSTEN
Baby?

Jimmy doesn't move. Kirsten slowly approaches, concern growing as she nears, and softly touches his hand -- cold.

She gasps, then drops to her knees, shaking him.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Baby, wake up.

Jimmy stays limp. She shakes him harder.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Wake up, baby.

Kirsten screams, shaking Jimmy violently.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Jimmy!

The door bursts open --

JAMES
What's wrong?!

KIRSTEN
Call nine-one-one!

James's eyes fill with horror.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)
Now!

He bolts for the phone, brushing past Max. Max peers inside, freezing in shock.

James reappears, frantically dialling.

Kirsten's eyes dart to a prescription bottle on the nightstand -- her medication. The label reads "Oxycodone".

Her face turns pale, FADING into the DARKNESS as James calls for help...

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - DAY

CLOSE-UP - GRAD PHOTO OF JIMMY

PULL BACK to reveal a closed casket with Jimmy's baseball jersey draped over it.

James, Kirsten, and Max sit at the front. Kirsten wipes her eyes. Max sniffles. James stares at Jimmy's jersey, numb.

A CLERGYMAN recites scripture. He steps aside. James rises, taking the stand.

Coach Stricklin and the Tigers sit together, wearing their jerseys. Mr. Turner and Sienna are also among the mourners.

JAMES

Uh, thank you for coming.
(clears throat)

Every parent wants to believe their child is special, but from the first time I held him in my arms, I knew -- Jimmy was born to play baseball.

FLASHBACK - JAMES AND JIMMY IN BACKYARD

James lobs a wiffle ball. Jimmy swings, crushing it with his yellow bat. James cheers.

JAMES (V.O.)
As soon as he could walk, I bought him a Little Tikes t-ball set.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - DAY

James smiles softly, reminiscing.

JAMES
I'd never seen a smile so big. That yellow bat went everywhere with him.

BEGIN FLASHFORWARD SEQUENCE

INT. CLAREMONT HIGH - COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Sienna sits at a computer, the CalArts' application page on the screen.

JAMES (V.O.)
As you got older, I watched you
grow into someone I could only
dream of -- on and off the field.

EXT. MCNICCOL PARK - FIELD - NIGHT

Griffin crouches behind the mound, tracing a "9" in the dirt. He bows his head, whispers a few words, then steps onto the rubber.

Finally, he nods and delivers.

END FLASHFORWARD
SEQUENCE.

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

James looks at Jimmy's coffin --

JAMES
But then somewhere along the way,
my pride became your burden. I
forgot what made our backyard my
favorite place on earth... You. My
boy.

His voice trembles.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Jimmy. I'm sorry it
took losing you to remember that.
(through tears)
You weren't just your brother's
hero. You were mine.
(beat)
You're the greatest thing that ever
happened to me. I love you.

INT. RYAN CAR - DAY

James sits in a parking lot, alone with his thoughts. A faint PING echoes in the distance.

The passenger door opens. TEENAGE MAX (13) gets in, uniform on. He stares out the passenger window, disappointed -- the same way Jimmy once did.

James gives him a moment, then --

JAMES

Have fun?

Max smiles.

TEENAGE MAX

Always.

JAMES

Good.

James starts the car. The radio KICKS ON. A feel-good song PLAYS. Max turns it up.

AERIAL SHOT - RYAN CAR - CONTINUOUS

The Ryan car pulls out of the parking lot and drives off.

FADE OUT:

THE END