

COREY'S HAND

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FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

COREY TREXLER AGE 2, his mother, ALLYSON TREXLER [28, tough litigation attorney] and DOCTOR BENJAMIN COURSON [50s, pediatric hand surgeon, very formal] discuss an MRI showing the bones of Corey's right hand on a computer screen.

DOCTOR COURSON

What we have here is most unusual. There is pronounced elongation of the distal, proximal and metacarpal phalanges of the thumb and index finger. The other bones in your son's hand are perfectly normal.

Allyson struggles to deal with Corey(2), who fights to escape her grip.

ALLYSON

I've been dealing with my son's hand since he was an hour old. They don't teach "bones of the hand" in law school, but I've dealt with enough doctors and studied enough anatomy texts and orthopedic charts to pass some medical school classes. Forgive my directness, Doctor Courson, but we've come to you to find out if there is a surgical procedure that will produce a normal hand for Corey.

Allyson puts Corey on the floor. He walks around, banging his right hand on the cabinets.

DOCTOR COURSON

I understand. Do you and your husband appreciate how lucky you are that other than these two fingers, Corey's hands are perfect? Come here, Corey.

COREY (2)

(shrieking)

Ahhhhh.

Corey runs away from the doctor. Allyson gives chase and grabs him.

ALLYSON

I understand that and I'm grateful,
but bottom line, can you repair
Corey's hand.

DOCTOR COURSON

The answer is yes, and no. That's not
so different than law, is it?

ALLYSON

What exactly does that mean?

DOCTOR COURSON

It means that when the hand stops
growing, when Corey is a teenager, we
can give it a near normal appearance,
but at the expense of a considerable
loss of function.

SUPER:

"EIGHT YEARS LATER"

EXT. TREXLER HOME BACKYARD - DAY

COREY TREXLER AGE 10 throws a tennis ball against a strike
zone target on the garage wall. His father, RAY TREXLER
[tall, in good shape, former high school pitching star],
watches. Corey's throws badly miss the strike zone.

COREY (10)

I suck. Can't even throw a tennis
ball.

RAY

So what?

COREY (10)

If I can't throw a tennis ball, how
can I be a baseball pitcher?

RAY

I've told you over and over that your
hand isn't made for baseball. You
can't pitch with your hand.

COREY (10)

I want be a pitcher, like you.

Ray walks away, dismissive.

RAY
Forget pitching. Go do your homework.

COREY (10)
(yelling after him)
Why don't you want me to pitch? I finished my homework. I want to be a pitcher. You were.

Corey starts a hard throw of the tennis ball.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. TREXLER HOME BACKYARD - DAY

SUPER: "FOUR YEARS LATER"

COREY (14) throws a tennis ball as hard as he can. The ball misses the strike zone target. His best friend, JADEN MARSHALL (14), [Corey's best friend, very smart, unathletic, Black], watches the ball. Out of sight of the boys, RAY watches.

JADEN (14)
You're getting closer.

COREY (14)
You're lying.

JADEN (14)
Okay, I lied.

COREY (14)
You try it.

JADEN (14)
Me? I'm so bad it'll make you look good.

COREY (14)
That's the idea.

Jaden (14) tries a pitch. He's awkward, but hits the strike zone. Jaden (14) jumps up and down in celebration. Corey (14) shrugs his shoulders, picks up the tennis ball and throws it away. Ray watches.

COREY (14) (cont'd)
I quit. I'll never be able to pitch, my father is right.

Ray walks away.

EXT. MILBURN HIGH SCHOOL, ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A group of boys, led by TOMMY MENDOZA [17, big super-jock with attitude], the star of the Milburn Pioneers baseball team, surrounds TYLER JOHNS [16, weak, effeminate] lies on the hall floor.

A CROWD OF STUDENTS, including LARRY REYNOR [16, big mouth follower in Tommy's group] AND MATTHEW CROFT [17, obnoxious, cruel, third-string on baseball team] watches.

TOMMY

Get up, you pathetic loser. You don't belong in this school. Shit, you don't belong on this planet.

TYLER

(crying)

Please leave me alone. Why can't you leave me alone?

LARRY

You being around annoys everybody. Go kill yourself.

TYLER

(crying louder)

Please, leave me alone.

Matthew looks over at Tommy for approval. Tommy nods.

MATTHEW

You almost forgot your books.

Matthew holds Tyler's backpack filled with books over Tyler's head and drops it. Tyler is hit on the side of his head. The Crowd of Students laugh.

TYLER

(moaning)

That really hurt. Someone please call the nurse.

COREY [Now age 16, more mature than at 14, very tall, very thin] runs down the hall, accompanied by his good friend, NANCY ROCKWELL [16, a track and field athlete, appearance leans masculine, unclear sexual orientation].

COREY

Leave him alone. C'mon, Tyler, get up.

TOMMY

This is a laugh. Look at who came to the mutant's rescue. None other than The Claw. It's a freak show.

Uproarious Laughter from the Crowd of Students.

Matthew gets in Corey's face and shoves him.

MATTHEW

You some kind of hero, Claw? You wanna take Tommy on? Me, maybe? Can you throw a punch with that hand, Claw, huh?

Corey helps Tyler up. As he gets to his feet, Tyler pushes Corey away.

TYLER

Leave me alone! I hate you. You got me sent away. I know it was you. You and Jaden and Nancy and Raj. I'm back in school, so there...

Tyler grabs his backpack and runs away.

TOMMY

Looks like it's you and me, Claw. Here or outside?

LARRY

This long, skinny mangled excuse for a human needs a bitch slapping, Tommy.

Corey begins an adrenaline rush. Nancy touches his arm.

TOMMY

You getting ready to cry, Claw? Nothing to say? Is your tongue as fucked up as your hand or you just getting ready to bleed?

Corey starts to charge at Tommy, but Nancy holds him back.

NANCY

Don't do it, Corey. You'll take a beating and this bully will play victim.

Corey gets loose and charges Tommy, grabbing his shirt and is about to head-butt Tommy's nose. He's stopped by two teachers, MR. ZAMORA [40s, professorial appearing math teacher, strict and not friendly to students] and MR. SHEPPARD [30s, wrestling coach, short, tough, no nonsense, muscular, former college wrestler.

MR. SHEPPARD
That's enough, Trexler.

Mr. Sheppard pulls Corey away.

MR. ZAMORA
I don't know what's going on here, but I have a good idea what started it. The rest of you get to class before we set a world record for detention. Trexler, you and I are going to have a talk. I talk and you listen.

Tommy starts to walk away, smiling and triumphant.

MR. SHEPPARD
Stay right there, Mendoza. You're next. The rest of you, get to class-now.

Tommy freezes in place. His smile has disappeared.

INT. CHEMISTRY LAB CLASSROOM - DAY

Corey and his group of friends are not part of the school's in-crowd. Nancy, Jaden and RAJ SHARMA [16, math prodigy], sit at their desks in chemistry class. They look at each other, anticipating the dismissal bell.

The DISMISSAL BELL RINGS

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Corey, Nancy, Jaden and Raj head down a nearly empty side hallway. Jaden stops and points at a bulletin board.

JADEN
Corey, look. Baseball tryouts. You gonna go out?

NANCY
That's not funny. Don't tease him about that.

COREY
I wish. With this hand? Jaden has a better chance and he has no chance.

NANCY
Look at the bright side.

COREY
What bright side?

JADEN
Yeah, what bright side?

NANCY
Girls believe that the length of a guy's fingers are a clue about the length of something else he's got.

RAJ
Believe that one...

COREY
No comment.

NANCY
You love baseball, so go out. What's the worst that can happen? You don't make the team.

COREY
They'd make me the towel boy because they don't need deformed players.

JADEN
(imitating the coach)
Son, some of us are born to be baseball players, like your father and me. You can't pitch with that hand. Life is not fair. Get used to it.

Nancy, Corey and Raj enjoy Jaden's performance.

COREY
You do the Coach better than the Coach does.

NANCY
You'll never know if you don't even try. I'm on a team they call the Dyke Squad. So what? You think they're on

NANCY (cont'd)
my mind when I'm throwing the
javelin?

RAJ
Maybe if you threw the javelin at
them.

SEXT. TREXLER HOME BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Corey and Ray are playing catch with an old baseball.
They're not very far apart. Ray throws straight tosses.
Corey's throws are weak and arc.

RAY
How was school today?

COREY
Same old, same old.

RAY
Any new friends, maybe a girlfriend?
What about your sister's friend,
what's her name?

COREY
It's Sarah. Like she's ever be
interested in me. This is how it is,
Dad, I'm an outcast. My only friends
are other outcasts.

The easy tosses go back and forth.

RAY
Maybe you need some, how should I put
this, normal friends.

COREY
If you'd only get to know them.

RAY
The Indian kid talks like he's a
professor from MIT, the black kid has
coordination problems eating
spaghetti, and that girl is a
thirteen on an odd scale of ten.

Corey holds the ball instead of throwing it back.

COREY
They're my friends and they mean a
lot to me.

Corey throws the ball back to Ray as hard as he can. Ray has to jump to catch it.

RAY

I just think you should expand your circle of friends, that's all.

COREY

I'm thinking of going out for baseball.

Ray stops and holds the ball.

RAY

We've been over this before, many times. You're not doing it. I don't want you humiliated.

COREY

All I want to do is pitch for the Pioneers, like you did. Guys on teams get respect at school.

RAY

Respect? You want respect? Don't become a car salesman like me.

COREY

I have a simple dream and you won't help me. Why? You're ashamed of me because of this hand.

Corey runs into the house.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Corey is asleep, still dressed. He's in the midst of a nightmare.

DREAM SEQUENCE - INT. BLACK CYLINDER - NIGHT

Corey is in a tight, black cylinder with smooth walls. It's too tight for him to raise his arms. He looks up, but can't see the top, only a small shaft of light. He struggles to look at his right hand, but the cylinder and the darkness prevent it. He stops moving and breathing. His eyes close and he stops moving. Corey is dead.

COREY (V.O.)
I'm dead. That's good. I can't see my
hand. I'm not The Claw anymore. Do my
friends miss me?

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Corey wakes up in the middle of the night, groggy. He's not alone.

COREY
I must've fallen asleep. What time
is it, Dad?

MORDECAI BROWN [early 30s, ace Chicago Cubs pitcher in the early 1900s], who died in 1948 is in Corey's room, wearing his 1907 Cubs uniform. Mordecai's right hand, his pitching hand, is mangled and looks worse than Corey's.

MORDECAI
It's 2:43 in the morning, by that
clock over there, but I'm not your
father.

Corey strains to see the person in the room with him.

COREY
Are you going to kill me?

MORDECAI
Of course not.

COREY
Kidnap me and hold me for ransom?

MORDECAI
Why would I want to do that?

Corey's eyes have adjusted to the low light in the room.

COREY
You're wearing a baseball uniform.

MORDECAI
Of course. What else?

Mordecai walks around Corey's room, checking it out.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
Nice room.

Corey sits up in bed.

COREY

I can scream and get my father in here. He's a big guy, much bigger than you.

MORDECAI

If that's what you want to do, go ahead.

COREY

You have a weapon?

MORDECAI

Sure do.

(laughs)

A really wicked change-up.

COREY

You're a pitcher.

MORDECAI

How many outfielders you know can throw a good change-up?

Corey gets out of bed and walks up to Mordecai.

COREY

Is that a Cubs uniform? Hey, you're wearing cleats in the house. Wait a minute, that's not a real Cubs uniform.

MORDECAI

It was made special for the 1907 World Series, which we won, by the way.

COREY

1907? How old are you?

MORDECAI

Dead,. Died on Valentine's Day, 1948. Babe Ruth died the same year.

COREY

Am I dead?

MORDECAI

You look fine to me.

COREY
Are you a ghost?

MORDECAI
To tell the truth, I'm not sure.

COREY
Who are you?

Mordecai extends his hand.

MORDECAI
Mordecai Brown.

COREY
I don't shake hands.

Mordecai holds his hand up to show Corey.

MORDECAI
Mine is uglier than yours.

Mordecai's index finger is missing. His middle finger is bent in two directions around the joints. The knuckle on his ring finger is huge and his little finger is bent over with the tip parallel to the ground.

COREY
Were you born with it like that?

MORDECAI
Nah. Accident. When I was five, I put my hand in a feed chopper on my uncle's farm. Doc amputated my index finger and set the others. About a month later, I fell and messed up Doc's work.

Corey shows his hand to Mordecai.

COREY
The kids at school call me The Claw.

MORDECAI
Better than what they called me.
Three Finger. It was an insult 'till I started playing baseball.

COREY
How come you're here in my room?

Mordecai walks over to Corey's desk chair and puts his foot on the seat. Corey makes a face of disapproval, but says nothing.

MORDECAI

Good question. Not sure myself, except I think I'm supposed to help you.

COREY

Help me with what?

MORDECAI

Don't ask me to help with your homework. Pitching. I'm a pitcher, so that's what.

COREY

Seriously? You can teach me to pitch with this hand?

Mordecai holds up his mangled hand.

MORDECAI

You kids sure talk funny. Haven't you ever heard of me?

COREY

No, and my father collects baseball cards, signed balls, all that stuff. Keeps it in what he calls The Shrine. He doesn't have anything of yours. Weren't you any good?

Mordecai takes his foot off Corey's chair and paces. Corey goes over to the chair and brushes it clean.

MORDECAI

You tell me. I pitched fifty-five shutouts, four consecutive scoreless games and had six consecutive seasons with twenty or more wins. Took a no-hitter by Christy Mathewson to beat me in '05. After that, I beat him nine times in a row. We won the 1907 World Series. I pitched the last game. Beat 'em in five. 1908 we won again. I won 2 games in that series. My lifetime ERA was 2.06 and I had 1,375 strikeouts.

Mordecai sits down at Corey's desk.

COREY
Wow! You're one of the best ever.

MORDECAI
Not bad for a guy with a messed up
hand.

Mordecai stands to leave.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
You get some rest. You've got
baseball practice after school.

COREY
Practice? I'm not even on the team.

MORDECAI
Not practice with the team, with me.

COREY
You?

MORDECAI
And Johnny.

COREY
Who's Johnny?

MORDECAI
Johnny Kling. My catcher. Great on
defense and a damned good hitter,
too.

COREY
Is he dead, too?

MORDECAI
Let's just say he's like me. You know
that field by the elementary school?

COREY
Sure.

MORDECAI
Meet me there after school. Oh, and
best if you didn't mention this to
anybody.

Mordecai tips his cap and disappears. Corey notices infield dirt on the floor. He picks some up and rubs it between his thumb and first two fingers on his left hand.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

Mordecai and JOHNNY KLING [early 30s, average height and thin, not like a typical catcher] wait for Corey. Johnny surveys the pitcher's mound and home plate. Mordecai and Johnny are dressed in their 1907 uniforms. Corey rides up on his bicycle.

MORDECAI

Glad you made it. Wasn't sure you believed me last night.

COREY

I'm still not sure.

MORDECAI

Can't blame you. Bring your glove?

Corey nods.

MORDECAI (cont'd)

You're not gonna practice in those shoes, are you? Looks like you're going to a dance.

COREY

I brought sneakers.

MORDECAI

No cleats? Sneakers, huh. New fangled things. Meet Johnny Kling, my catcher. If you're gonna pitch you need to throw to a catcher.

Johnny looks Corey over.

JOHNNY

So you're the kid Brownie here is gonna make into a pitcher. Lemme see your hand.

Corey reluctantly shows Johnny his hand.

MORDECAI

You can't never be afraid to show your hand to anyone. You might think it's a dud now, but when you win ball games with it, you'll be proud of it.

JOHNNY

That hand ain't half as ugly as Brownie's here.

MORDECAI

Get changed. It's already gettin' cold and it'll be dark soon.

Corey runs over to his backpack and changes his pants and shoes. He runs back to Mordecai.

MORDECAI (cont'd)

Let's start with the basic grip for a fastball. Show me how you hold the ball.

Corey takes the ball from his glove and grips it. Mordecai looks over at Johnny, then takes the ball from Corey.

MORDECAI (cont'd)

We got some work to do. Corey, there are two basic fastball grips: four seam and two seam.

Mordecai moves the ball in his own throwing hand.

MORDECAI (cont'd)

You gotta use the seams to get your hand firm on the ball. The four seam is easy to learn. You can throw it hard, but the ball don't move much. Two seam is the way to go.

JOHNNY

Oh, yeah. You listen good to what Brownie tells you. You do that, you'll do fine.

Mordecai moves the ball around in Corey's hand until the index and middle fingers go across the narrow seams of the ball and his hand rests against the bottom of the ball.

MORDECAI

How's that feel?

COREY

Strange. I'm used to a tennis ball.

MORDECAI

Don't worry. You'll get used to it. Now keep that long index finger of yours hard on that seam. Use your long thumb for balance and to lock the grip. When you hold the ball

MORDECAI (cont'd)
tight, it makes the pitch move and
the hitters miss.

JOHNNY
Ready to try a few?

MORDECAI
Let's make him practice doing the
grip right.

Corey lets go and then tries over and over until he gets the grip right. Mordecai corrects him when he gets it wrong.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
Good. You're getting it. Let's try a
few throws to Johnny.

Johnny gets behind home plate, but remains standing.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
Come back half way, Johnny.

Johnny comes halfway back toward the mound. Corey throws the baseball. The ball doesn't make it to Johnny. Corey is dejected.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
Hold your head up, boy. What'd you
think, you'd start out like Christy
Mathewson?

COREY
Who?

JOHNNY
(laughing)
Brownie's big rival. Lots more famous
than Brownie.

MORDECAI
Let's see what happens after a few
more.

Corey starts improving. The pitches get closer and closer to home plate as Johnny backs up. The last pitch gets to home plate.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
Now let's do it with the windup.

Corey does a full windup and throws. The ball slams into Johnny's glove.

JOHNNY

Moved pretty good, Brownie. Pace is starting to pick up.

MORDECAI

We'll do another 10-15 minutes and then call it. Tomorrow, same time, same place.

COREY

For sure. No way I'd miss it. Maybe I can learn to pitch.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Corey throws to Johnny, pitches get better and better.

Mordecai watches and nods with approval.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Corey is doing his homework. His sister MARISSA [15, well liked at school, looks like her mother], comes to see him carrying her math book and a scratch pad. She knocks on his door jamb.

MARISSA

You busy?

COREY

What'ya need?

MARISSA

Math help, what else.

COREY

Sure. Let's see your book.

They sit at the desk. Marissa points to the math problem she's stuck on.

COREY (cont'd)

You're getting stuck because you're trying to do a couple of steps in one.

Corey points at her work.

COREY (cont'd)

See what you did here? Raj always says to break a problem down into

COREY (cont'd)
small pieces, even if you think you
don't need to.

MARISSA
Raj does the whole thing in his head.

COREY
Yeah, there is that.

Marissa re-does the problem and gets it right. Corey checks
her work.

COREY (cont'd)
Yup. Perfect. See?

MARISSA
Thanks. It's not that hard when you
do it Raj's way.

Marissa gets up to leave, but Corey stops her.

COREY
Can I ask you something?

MARISSA
Sure, Bro. If I can ask you
something, too.

COREY
Okay, you go first.

MARISSA
What do you think of Sarah?

COREY
Sarah. Uh, seems nice. You guys are
pretty tight, right?

MARISSA
Suppose I said she likes you?

COREY
I'd laugh and then say, "Yeah,
right." Next you'll tell me that
Taylor Swift wants to date me.

MARISSA
Your turn. Ask away.

COREY
It's about baseball. I'm gonna tell
Coach Strano tomorrow I'm trying out
as a pitcher. What'ya think?

MARISSA

Dad'll go nuts when he finds out.
He'll call the Coach. You'll do it
anyway and take more shit than ever
about your hand. You want that? You
know you're not gonna make the team.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY OUTSIDE COACH STRANO'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY
AFTER SCHOOL - DAY

Corey is alone, stands outside the Coach's office, and
stares at the letters "Coach V. Strano" on the frosted
glass. He knocks three times.

COACH STRANO (O.S.)

What?

COREY

(opening the office
door)

I, um, wanted to ask you something,
Coach.

INT. COACH STRANO'S OFFICE - DAY

Corey watches COACH STRANO [mid 40s, a no nonsense guy, ex-
military], doing paperwork at his desk.

COACH STRANO

What is it, Trexler? I'm busy.

COREY

It's about...

COACH STRANO

Go ahead, Trexler.

COREY

Baseball tryouts. Not as the
equipment manager. I want to pitch.

COACH STRANO

Like your father?

COREY

Yes, sir.

COACH STRANO

Did your father ever tell you I was
his catcher?

COREY

He said you were a great catcher.

COACH STRANO

Nobody had an arm like Ray Trexler.
Did you know his nickname was Sting
Ray?

COREY

No. He doesn't talk much about when
he played.

COACH STRANO

I gave him the nickname. Came up with
it because when his fastball hit my
glove, my hand would sting like hell.
If he hadn't gotten hurt...

COREY

He got hurt?

COACH STRANO

He never told you?

Corey shakes his head.

COACH STRANO (V.O.)

We were in a tournament and he
pitched day after day. The hitters
couldn't touch him. We couldn't lose
when Sting Ray Trexler was on the
mound.

FLASHBACK - EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

RAY TREXLER AGE 17 pitches in the state finals.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Ray Age 17 pitching.

Batters striking out one after another.

After a pitch, Ray Age 17 grabs his right shoulder in
extreme pain.

Ray Age 17's MANAGER and YOUNG COACH STRANO AGE 17 run out
to the mound.

COACH STRANO (V.O.) (cont'd)
 He blew out his arm and that was it.
 The scouts disappeared and so did
 Ray's spirit.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. COACH STRANO'S OFFICE - DAY

COACH STRANO
 Tell me something, and be straight
 with me.

COREY
 Okay.

COACH STRANO
 Is this for you or your father?

COREY
 Both.

COACH STRANO
 Here's the deal. Today's a little
 practice for the returning varsity.
 You come with me and see what you'd
 be competing against. You still want
 to try out after that, I'll let you.

COREY
 Deal, Coach. Thanks.

COACH STRANO
 Don't thank me yet.

Coach Strano gestures for Corey to leave.

EXT. MILBURN HIGH BASEBALL PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

A large GROUP OF PLAYERS warm up. They throw the ball and
 field grounders. A few run. Coach Strano, accompanied by
 Corey, walks onto the field and heads for the mound.

Coach Strano's WHISTLE BLASTS one long and two short
 signals.

COACH STRANO
 Bring it in, ladies.

The players jog in towards the mound.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
 It's damned lucky we've got a month before the first game. We'd be lucky to win one game with this team. You forget how to play baseball since last year? Trexler here is going to take some notes for me. We'll start with a battery of Howell and Coleman. Mendoza, you'll be up first.

Coach Strano and Corey walk toward the stands. The players don't immediately move.

Mordecai sits in the stands and watches. No one notices him.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
 Now, if it's not too inconvenient.

Tommy Mendoza hustles past JACK HOWELL [17, confident], last year's pitching ace and deliberately bumps into DANNY COLEMAN [17, capable catcher and leader, well liked at school], last year's starting catcher.

TOMMY
 This is gonna be fun. I ain't hit against little league pitching since I was your size, Coleman.

DANNY
 Put up or shut up, Tommy girl.

Tommy is about to shoot Danny Coleman a bird, but stops when he sees Coach Strano look at him.

The players hustle into position.

DANNY (cont'd)
 Take your warm-up pitches, Jack.

JACK
 Get that Novocaine shot? I don't want to hurt you.

DANNY
 Don't worry about me. Tommy looks out of shape.

Jack takes his warm-up pitches, then looks over at Coach Strano and nods.

COACH STRANO
 Draper. You ump.

KENNY DRAPER [17], a backup catcher, gets into the umpire's position.

KENNY

On it, Coach.

COACH STRANO

Batter up. Let's see if Mendoza remembers which end of the bat goes where.

Danny signals for a fastball. Corey watches in disbelief at the speed and accuracy of Howell's pitch, low and inside.

KENNY

Strike one!

TOMMY

You sure?

Kenny nods. Jack throws a curve that Tommy swings at and misses.

DANNY

Little rusty, Tommy?

TOMMY

Shut up, asshole.

Jack's next pitch is deliberately wide, an attempt to get Tommy to swing at a bad pitch.

Kenny holds up fingers indicating the count on the batter.

KENNY

One and two.

On the next pitch, the baseball bat makes a LOUD, HIGH, VIBRATING PING as it strikes the ball. The ball clears the outfield fence.

We see Corey walk off the field toward the school.

COREY (V.O.)

There's no way I could ever pitch like Jack Howell. Not now, not ever. Baseball isn't for me. Mordecai can't fix it. I'm The Claw. I'll always be The Claw.

INT. TREXLER HOME LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

After dinner, the Trexler family is at home, sitting in their usual places, parents on the sofa, Corey and Marissa in comfortable chairs.

ALLYSON
How was school today, Corey?

COREY
(dejected)
Okay.

RAY
Corey? What is it?

ALLYSON
What's wrong? Something at school?

MARISSA
Tell them.

Corey holds up his right hand.

COREY
I want this cut off. It's ruining my life. I hate my life.

RAY
Is this about baseball?

ALLYSON
Ray-

Corey gets up and walks over to his father.

COREY
Coach let me watch a practice today. No way I could ever play like those guys. All I ever wanted was to be a pitcher like you. I don't want to be The Claw. I'd rather be dead.

Corey runs upstairs to his room.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE COREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marissa knocks on the closed door, but Corey ignores it.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Corey sits at his desk, books open, but he pays no attention to them. He stands, paces the room and his anger and frustration build. He rushes back to his desk and pushes all his books and the computer keyboard to the floor.

Mordecai appears and sits on Corey's bed.

MORDECAI

Somethin' sure got your goat.

COREY

What? Mordecai, it's you.

MORDECAI

Me, though I can't say "In the flesh," right?

COREY

I went to a practice today; saw the players from last year. I've got no chance. You wouldn't believe-

MORDECAI

I saw. I was there.

COREY

You were there?

MORDECAI

Sure. Gotta scout the opposition, right?

COREY

I didn't see you. Was Johnny there, too.

MORDECAI

Nah, just me. Now, you keep doing what I tell you and we'll just see how it works out.

INT. TREXLER KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING - DAY

Allyson, Ray and Marissa eat breakfast before school and work. Corey is still in his room.

ALLYSON

(to Marissa)

How's Corey this morning?

MARISSA

He seemed okay.

ALLYSON

What does that mean?

MARISSA

Corey was like he usually is. Not like last night.

RAY

I'm going to talk to him and put a stop to this talk about baseball.

ALLYSON

No, Ray. Don't push it. I'm worried about him.

RAY

I'm not going to let him make us look like bad parents. There's no way he can ever or will ever pitch with that hand.

ALLYSON

He's old enough to make his own decision about the baseball team and you're old enough to let him.

RAY

What does that mean, besides being a cheap shot? That's what you lawyers do in court, right?

ALLYSON

It means it's not about Ray Trexler, it's about Corey Trexler. Don't stomp on his dream.

RAY

Don't lawyer me. He is not going out for baseball, period.

Ray gets up and storms out, leaving his half eaten breakfast.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Corey packs his backpack for school: books, plus his glove, a baseball and an old pair of jeans and sneakers.

INT. TREXLER KITCHEN - DAY

Corey enters, backpack over his shoulder. Allyson approaches Corey and kisses his cheek.

ALLYSON
How are you, Corey?

COREY
Fine, Mom. About last night...

ALLYSON
You had us very worried.

COREY
I know. Really, I'm fine. Sometimes,
I let things get to me.

ALLYSON
How about some breakfast?

COREY
I already had cereal with a banana.
My dish is in the dishwasher.

Allyson, Ray and Marissa stare at Corey.

COREY (cont'd)
Gotta go. I'll be late getting home.

ALLYSON
Why?

COREY
Math club. We've got a competition
coming up.

MARISSA
Who can beat you with Raj on your
team?

COREY
Nobody on this planet. Later.

Corey rushes off to school.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is crowded with students as they get ready for their first class. Nancy, Jaden and Raj are at their lockers, pulling the books they need for class. They look around for Corey.

NANCY

I don't see him. He's never late.

RAJ

I'm always the one who's late.

JADEN

Here he comes.

Corey sees his three friends and hustles over to them. As he's coming down the hall, other kids are looking at him and laughing and mocking him about his hand.

FEMALE STUDENT 1

Nice hand, Corey.

FEMALE STUDENT 2

Some bones.

MALE STUDENT 1

Show and tell is gonna be fun today!

MALE STUDENT 2

The baseball team won't be the same.

Corey looks around, confused.

JADEN

Did you get on TikTok today?

COREY

Yeah. Nothing much to see.

JADEN

Not your page. The Milburn page.

Raj pulls his iPad from his backpack and opens it.

NANCY

Corey...

Corey looks at the screen.

INSERT - IPAD SCREEN

A picture of Corey's right hand with the caption "This wants to pitch for the Pioneers. The Claw must die."

BACK TO SCENE

Corey stands silent, head down.

NANCY (cont'd)
What sick creep would do this?

RAJ
Mendoza and his subhuman lemmings.
He's too stupid to do this without
help. I'll find out who and I'll fix
them all. Watch what that page looks
like tomorrow. I bet something is on
Snapchat, too, so they could delete
it fast. And Instagram.

NANCY
Let's glue a bat to his hand with
Gorilla Glue.

JADEN
If we do anything, we'll get in
trouble. Jocks don't get in trouble.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTER SCHOOL - DAY

The hall is crowded as students put their books back in their lockers. Corey is with Raj, Nancy and Jaden at their lockers, across the hall from his. Raj slams his locker and spins the lock.

RAJ
I think we all need to plan our next
move over ice cream. New flavor at
The Float.

NANCY
Is there ever a time you don't want
ice cream? You're a human ice cream
scoop.

JADEN
He's an ice cream addict.

COREY
I can't go. Got to do errands for my mother.

RAJ
You'll miss a great new flavor.

COREY
Then, I might have to kill myself.

They look at Corey, very concerned, but say nothing.

COREY (cont'd)
I'm kidding. Bad joke. Sorry. Got to go.

CLASS BELL RINGS

The crowd of students, and Corey, Nancy, Jaden and Raj, disburses as they rush to class.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIELD - AFTER SCHOOL - DAY

Mordecai throws soft pitches to Johnny. Corey rushes in on his bicycle.

MORDECAI
Thought you might not show up.

COREY
No way I'd miss this. Class let out late and I didn't want to run into my mother.

JOHNNY
Your mother a teacher?

COREY
No, she's a lawyer.

MORDECAI
A woman lawyer? You in some kind of trouble at school?

COREY
Nah. Some idiots at school were making fun of me on the Instagram page. Mom is gonna make them stop.

MORDECAI
What's an Instagram page?

Corey's phone ALERTS a text message.

JOHNNY
What's that sound?

COREY
My phone. Text message.

Corey holds up his smart phone. Mordecai and Johnny look at each other.

MORDECAI
That's a phone?

JOHNNY
Where's the cord?

MORDECAI
Put that thing away, whatever it is.
We got work to do.

Corey changes into jeans and sneakers.

COREY
Ready to go.

MORDECAI
Remember, you gotta stretch before
you pitch.

Corey copies the stretch routine Mordecai and Johnny do.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
Okay, throw some easy stuff to
Johnny. Slowly make your throws
harder.

Johnny gets behind the plate, mask in place and Corey throws hard.

MORDECAI (cont'd)
I said slow. You're too anxious to
knock Johnny over with a pitch. That
ain't gonna happen, but you could
hurt yourself doing that with a cold
arm.

COREY
Sorry. I'll go easier.

Corey slows down his pitches to Johnny.

MORDECAI

Now pick it up some. About halfway.

COREY

This better?

Corey throws harder for three throws.

MORDECAI

Okay, now let a few rip.

COREY

I wish we had a radar gun.

MORDECAI

A what?

COREY

The gun, to tell how fast I'm throwing.

MORDECAI

It ain't about speed. You put the ball where you want and make it move. No gadget does that. Practice is what does it.

Corey keeps throwing hard.

JOHNNY

His two-seam is moving. Good zip, too.

MORDECAI

Think he's ready for the moneymaker, Johnny?

COREY

What's that?

Johnny stands up, laughs and takes off his catcher's mask. He flips the ball to Mordecai, who's standing on the mound next to Corey.

Mordecai takes the ball and moves his fingers into an odd grip. He puts his thumb under the ball, his stump of an index finger on the narrow part of the leather and his two twisted fingers across the top seam. He balances the ball with his little finger and thumb.

MORDECAI

Your hand is different than mine, so we'll have to adjust things.

Mordecai moves the ball into Corey's hand and adjusts his fingers on the ball. Johnny runs back behind home plate and Corey prepares to pitch.

COREY
This feels really strange. I don't know if I can throw it. Feels like it's stuck in my hand.

MORDECAI
Use the same motion as the fastball. Don't try to throw it through a wall.

Corey throws a pitch.

JOHNNY
Didn't move. Fat pitch.

Mordecai adjusts Corey's grip.

MORDECAI
How's that feel?

COREY
Better, I think. Still strange.

Corey throws another pitch.

JOHNNY
Oh, yeah! Moved plenty. We're cookin' now.

MORDECAI
There's your moneymaker.

COREY
I don't get it.

MORDECAI
Your change-up. Hitters are looking for the fastball. You throw a change-up and they miss by a mile.

JOHNNY
Let's show the kid the cutter next.

EXT. TREXLER HOME - FRONT - LATER - NIGHT

Corey gets off his bicycle.

TEXT MESSAGE ALERT SOUNDS on Corey's phone. He checks the screen.

COREY

Nancy.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN TEXT MESSAGE

"R U OK?"

BACK TO SCENE

Corey calls Nancy back instead of texting.

INT. TRELXER HOME FRONT DOORWAY/INT. NANCY'S HOME KITCHEN -
SPLIT SCREEN - NIGHT

NANCY

Hey? What's going on? You're not you.

COREY

Yeah, I'm trying to deal with stuff
at home.

NANCY

Your dad?

COREY

Yeah.

NANCY

Like me and my brother. He thinks
being older makes him my deputy
father.

COREY

Might be because your mom treats him
like the man of the house.

NANCY

Are you trying to change the subject
on me? Look, if something is ever
wrong, you better tell us.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Corey is at his desk, on his computer. He opens the Milburn
High page on TikTok.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

Doctored image of grossly obese people with Corey's,
Nancy's, Jaden's and Raj's faces. The caption reads
"Milburn's Biggest Losers."

BACK TO SCENE

COREY
(screams)
Damn them.

Marissa comes running into Corey's room.

MARISSA
What's wrong?

Corey points to the computer screen. Marissa looks at the screen.

MARISSA (cont'd)
That's it. I'm telling Mom.

COREY
I better stop Raj before he does
something real bad.

INT. TREXLER HOME FRONT DOOR AREA - NIGHT

Allyson is back after a long day at her office. She's barely in the door when Marissa calls out.

MARISSA (O.S.)
Mom! You're home. Corey needs to show
you something. You're gonna have to
sue the school.

Allyson puts her briefcase down and starts to remove her coat.

ALLYSON
Corey, what's going on? What is your
sister talking about?

Allyson, exhausted, slowly climbs the stairs after shedding her coat and high heels.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Allyson enters Corey's room and looks at the computer screen.

ALLYSON
Disgusting. This is your school's
page? Who's doing this? I'm going to
talk to your friends' parents.
Tonight.

MARISSA
 (whispering to Corey)
 Mom just turned back into a lawyer.

ALLYSON
 Print that for me and then get that
 crap off the screen.

MARISSA
 Know what you get when you cross a
 Pit Bull with a lawyer?

COREY
 Mom.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - ABOUT AN HOUR LATER - NIGHT

COREY
 Mom...

ALLYSON
 What is it, Corey?

COREY
 Thanks.

Allyson gives Corey a hug and kisses the top of his head.
 She looks down at the floor and sees the infield dirt
 Mordecai left.

ALLYSON
 Clean that dirt off the floor. Don't
 use a good towel.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY - DAY

Allyson, PRINCIPAL LEONG, School Board member NADINE PASSARO
 and School Board Attorney CHARLES SHULMAN in a conference.
 Allyson stands. The others are seated.

NADINE PASSARO
 The school board's interest is in
 preventing litigation.

ALLYSON
 And my interest is stopping the
 pattern of libel and psychological
 damage that the school's social media
 page is being used to perpetrate.

CHARLES SHULMAN

The school cannot be responsible for what persons unknown are doing with that page.

ALLYSON

The *school's* page, Mr. Shulman. Keep that in mind. If the family car runs over and kills a pedestrian, are you saying that the owner of the car is not responsible because it was intended that multiple people had the right to drive it?

CHARLES SHULMAN

I don't think it's the same thing and I don't need you to school me on the law.

ALLYSON

You might find yourself in court to litigate how similar the car and the school's page are.

PRINCIPAL LEONG

I share your concerns, Mrs. Trexler.

NADINE PASSARO

Cyber-bullying is such a complex issue.

ALLYSON

That's bullshit and you know it. Corey and his friends have been the victims of consistent bullying, cyber and otherwise, by the same mob led by your baseball star, Tommy Mendoza, for a long time. What has the school done to stop it? Nothing.

CHARLES SHULMAN

It is not within the school's authority to discipline students for what takes place outside the school.

PRINCIPAL LEONG

We are all aware that bullying has existed for as long as students have attended schools.

ALLYSON

This cyber version of bullying may be new, but it's also profoundly

ALLYSON (cont'd)
destructive to the victims. Need I
point out the suicides...

NADINE PASSARO
We're aware of some unfortunate
situations.

ALLYSON
You're in effect telling me that the
school will do nothing, out of fear
of litigation by one side or the
other?

NADINE PASSARO
I wouldn't put it that way, Mrs.
Trexler.

ALLYSON
You're going to see how I put it.

Allyson storms out.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is crowded with students, providing Matthew an
audience. SARAH DRUMMOND [16], smart classmate of Corey's
and close friend of Marissa's is there. Sarah watches.

MATTHEW
Yo, Claw. I hear you're going out for
baseball. Good. We need cheerleaders.

Matthew laughs at his own joke. Corey doesn't say anything.
A voice comes from behind Corey.

SARAH
Shut up, Matthew. You're third string
only because there's no fourth
string.

Matthew walks away.

SARAH (cont'd)
That's it, walk away, tough guy.

MATTHEW
(Muttering)
Bitch.

COREY
Thanks. Sometimes I feel like
everybody's mocking me.

SARAH
Not everybody.

Jaden, Raj and Nancy approach Corey and Sarah. Sarah smiles at Corey.

SARAH (cont'd)
I better get going. See you in class.

Sarah rushes off.

RAJ
New girlfriend?

COREY
No.

JADEN
She's not bad looking. Smart brain
and smart mouth.

NANCY
She likes you, Corey.

They laugh until Corey gets serious.

COREY
No girl wants a boyfriend with a hand
like this.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Corey is at his desk trying to concentrate as he does homework.

ALLYSON (O.S.)
Corey, telephone for you on the
landline.

Corey doesn't respond.

ALLYSON (O.S.) (cont'd)
Corey, are you awake?

COREY
Coming, Mom.

INT. TREXLER HOME KITCHEN - NIGHT

Corey picks up the kitchen phone.

COREY
(tentatively)
Hello.

JADEN
What the hell is going on?

COREY
Jaden. You called on the landline.
That's my mom's for legal stuff.
What's up?

JADEN
That's what I'm asking you. You keep
ignoring us. Why?

COREY
Sorry.

JADEN
Sorry for what?

COREY
There's some stuff that I promised
not to tell anyone.

JADEN
Even me?

COREY
Even my parents.

JADEN
Is it like a crime?

COREY
Me? A crime? My mother's a lawyer.

JADEN
Gotta be baseball, then. What's the
deal?

COREY
Don't ask me anything else. I'll see
you tomorrow.

JADEN
Okay. We're worried about you. That
shit with Tommy...

COREY
You thought I might kill myself?
Really?

JADEN
Something like that.

COREY
This is just between us. Deal?

JADEN
Deal. If you can't trust me-

RAY(O.S.)
Corey, I want to talk to you.

COREY
(to Jaden)
Gotta go. My father.

Ray enters the kitchen as Corey hangs up the phone.

They sit after getting Oreos and coffee (for Ray) and chocolate milk (for Corey). As they talk, we see how similarly they eat cookies and drink.

RAY
You're lucky. You got your mother's
brain instead of mine.

COREY
Is this going to be a talk about real
life?

RAY
Just listen. No attitude, okay? The
only smart thing I ever did was marry
your mother. You've got a brain. You
can do anything. I've never been more
than a baseball player and a car
salesman.

COREY
Dad-

RAY
I've felt guilty about you being born
with a bad hand. It was like Sting
Ray Trexler failed again. Listen to
me. Baseball's a trap. It sucks you
in, then you get hurt and you've got
nothing.

COREY
I know about you getting hurt.

RAY
I thought I would play baseball forever. Every guy that's loved the game thinks that.

COREY
But you couldn't.

RAY
Right. That's why I want you to be an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer or anything you want.

COREY
Dad, ever hear of Mordecai Brown?

RAY
No.

COREY
Pitched for the Cubs a long time ago.

RAY
Since when are you interested in old Cubs pitchers?

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Corey, Jaden, Nancy and Raj stand at their lockers. The hall is crowded with students. Tommy Mendoza and his crew arrive. A crowd of students watches. Tyler Johns watches from around a corner. He is wide-eyed, but not afraid.

Tommy, DEION TAYLOR [17, huge, Black, football player], Matthew and Larry approach from behind Corey. Tommy jams a finger into Corey's back.

TOMMY
Hey, Claw. There's a rumor that you're going out for baseball.

COREY
I'm thinking about it.

TOMMY
What a joke. You, baseball?

LARRY
Yeah, you're a total joke, Claw.

Tommy, his friends and other students move in closer. Some raise their phone cameras to record the action. Tommy shoves Corey against the locker.

TOMMY
Tryouts end tomorrow. You better be there.

Tommy grabs Corey's right wrist and squeezes as hard as he can, inducing pain.

COREY
Owww. Let go, Tommy.

JADEN
Leave him alone, Tommy. It's up to him if he tries out.

Tommy shoves the much smaller Jaden, who falls to the floor. Jaden looks up at Deion for help. He gets none.

TOMMY
Mind your own business, shrimp.

Tommy, Deion, Matthew and Larry leave. Nancy and Corey pick Jaden up. Raj stands like a protector. The students in the hall go back to what they were doing. Tyler Johns stays hidden, but continues to watch Corey and his friends.

COREY
Thanks. Jaden and I were about to get crushed.

JADEN
Yeah, me, too. Thanks.

RAJ
You still gonna try out?

JADEN
He's got to, now.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIELD - LATER THAT DAY - DAY

Mordecai and Johnny stand at home plate, as they wait for Corey. Mordecai has a wooden bat on his shoulder.

COREY
Last practice before tryouts.

JOHNNY
What's been missing, Corey?

COREY
Missing? A curveball?

JOHNNY
Not a pitch, a batter. You gotta have
a batter to see if your pitches are
working.

Johnny points at Mordecai.

COREY
Mordecai? With his hand?

JOHNNY
You think he can't hit? He can.
Switch hitter, too.

MORDECAI
Warm up, kid.

Corey does his warm up stretches and throws warmup pitches.

JOHNNY
Batter up!

MORDECAI
This is a game. Pitch like I'm your
worst enemy.

Corey throws a fastball and Mordecai sends a line drive into
the outfield.

Johnny gives Corey the sign for a fastball, low and inside,
and and Mordecai hits it down the third baseline.

COREY
I guess I'm not as good as I thought.

MORDECAI
Get the grip perfect and don't rush.
Concentrate. Use that hand God gave
you.

JOHNNY
Two runners on. Pitch from the
stretch.

Corey gets into the stretch. Johnny signals for a change-up.

He throws the change-up. Mordecai is way out in front and
misses.

MORDECAI

Got me that time, kid. That's what the change-up does.

JOHNNY

Way to pitch Kid.

COREY

Let's do some more.

MORDECAI

That's enough for today. Rest up for tomorrow.

JOHNNY

He's right. Brownie here pitched too much. He'd have been around longer if he rested more.

MORDECAI

Let's talk your game plan. You want to impress the coach and make him want you on the team. We didn't get to work on fielding, pick-off moves, those things. Tomorrow, you make sure your grips and pitching mechanics are just so. And don't rush.

JOHNNY

You won't have a catcher that's on your side, so you have to decide what to throw. Keep your game face on.

MORDECAI

I want you to volunteer to pitch against the best hitter on the team.

COREY

Tommy Mendoza! Are you crazy? He's the best hitter in the whole state. Word is he's going to the majors right from high school. He hates me. Calls me The Claw.

MORDECAI

Hates you? Good. He's the one. You gotta look the part. Wear the uniform I put in your closet.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM/INT. TREXLER BASEMENT BASEBALL SHRINE/
 INT. MARISSA'S BEDROOM/INT. ALLYSON'S HOME OFFICE - SPLIT
 SCREEN ALTERNATING - LATER - NIGHT

Marissa is on her bed asleep. Allyson works on law files.
 Ray is in The Shrine and studies his baseball collectibles.
 Corey tries to concentrate on his homework, but he's got a
 baseball in his hand and rotates grips over and over.

COREY
 Two-seam, change-up, cutter.
 Two-seam, change-up, cutter.
 Two-seam, change-up, cutter.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Corey goes to his closet and opens the door. A complete,
 1900s-era Cubs uniform, down to cleats and cap, hangs on an
 old fashioned wire hanger. Corey looks it over and then gets
 into bed.

INT. TREXLER HOME KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING - DAY

Corey, Marissa, Allyson and Ray eat breakfast.

COREY
 I have something to tell you.

Everyone stops what they're doing.

COREY (cont'd)
 I'm going out for baseball. Tryouts
 are today.

RAY
 I thought we decided against it,
 Corey.

COREY
 You did. I didn't.

RAY
 Does Coach Strano know?

COREY
 Not yet. I'll tell him today. He
 knows you're against it.

RAY

You think you know more about baseball than Coach Strano and your father?

COREY

It's not like that. I have to try. If I don't make it, that's that. I know I'm probably gonna fail miserably.

RAY

But you've never played, never pitched. Never had coaching.

COREY

I've been practicing.

RAY

Playing catch with me? Throwing a tennis ball and missing the target?

ALLYSON

Ray-

RAY

I won't allow him to go out and make a fool of himself.

ALLYSON

This is about Ray Trexler thinking that if his son doesn't make the team it makes him a failure instead of the big star he was a long time ago.

Ray turns away.

ALLYSON (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Ray. That was a cheap shot.

RAY

Corey, you need a parent permission form. I'm not going to sign it.

COREY

Dad, please. I can't try out without it.

RAY

I said I won't sign it.

ALLYSON
I'll sign it.

Allyson hugs Corey. Ray storms out.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY AROUND THE CORNER FROM COACH STRANO'S
OFFICE - DAY

Corey and Coach Strano almost collide.

COACH STRANO
What's the hurry, Trexler?

COREY
I was coming to see you. To sign up.

COACH STRANO
Great. I need another student
manager.

COREY
No, Coach. I'm going to try out as a
pitcher.

COACH STRANO
After what you saw on the field, you
still want to try out?

COREY
Yes, Coach.

COACH STRANO
Got the parent permission form?

COREY
Right here.

Corey hands the form to Coach Strano.

COACH STRANO
Your mother signed it.

COREY
She said only one parent has to sign.

COACH STRANO
That's right, but I thought your
father would sign.

COREY
He doesn't want me to do it. Can I
still try out?

COACH STRANO

This is between you and me. Your father had his chance, and this is yours.

Coach Strano starts to walk away and then turns back.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)

You must be tougher than you look. I'll be surprised if you come close to making the team, and either way, you'll be giving the bullies more crap to throw at you. Bring your glove and don't ever be late for one of my practices.

The CLASS BELL RINGS

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Students rush to their next class.

EXT. SCHOOL BICYCLE RACK - DAY

Corey cuts his next class. He unlocks his bike and rides off furiously.

EXT. COUNTRY WOODS CHEVROLET SHOWROOM - DAY

Corey locks his bike to a post and enters the showroom.

INT. COUNTRY WOODS CHEVROLET SHOWROOM - DAY

Three salesmen jump up, to get to Corey as a potential customer. Then, one, ART COLLINS, recognizes him.

ART COLLINS

Hey, Corey. Looking for your father?

COREY

He around, Art?

ART COLLINS

I'll find him for you.

COREY

I'll be in his office.

Corey heads to his father's office.

ART COLLINS (O.S.)
(through the paging
system)
Ray Trexler, you have an important
customer in the showroom.

INT. RAY'S DEALERSHIP OFFICE - DAY

Ray rushes in and sees Corey.

RAY
What's wrong? Why aren't you in
school?

COREY
I had to talk to you.

RAY
About what?

COREY
Baseball tryouts. Today.

RAY
Your mother signed the form, so why
are you here?

COREY
I want your permission. I need you to
say it's okay for me to try to pitch
for the Pioneers like you did.

RAY
You know why I don't want you to do
this, don't you?

COREY
You're protecting me.

RAY
Yes. And, I don't want you to turn
out like me. You can do anything with
that brain of yours. You don't need
baseball.

COREY
I'm not thinking about pitching in
the majors, Dad. I only want to
experience what you did in high
school. I know I'm going to college
and then grad school.

RAY

You want cheerleaders chasing you. I get it.

COREY

Like that would ever happen.

RAY

Let's get serious, Corey. Pitching is about technique, mechanics, the right grip. The two of us playing catch, that's nothing.

COREY

I've been getting some coaching.

RAY

Who? Who was coaching you?

COREY

An old guy I bumped into in the park. He offered to teach me some pitches.

RAY

With your hand?

COREY

He said it wasn't a problem.

PA SYSTEM VOICE (V.O.)

All sales personnel to the conference room for a product meeting.

RAY

Got to go. Where's your form?

Corey hands his father a parent permission form. Ray signs. Corey wraps his father in a bear hug.

EXT. ROAD BACK TO SCHOOL - DAY

Corey pedals as fast as he can back to school.

EXT. SCHOOL BIKE RACK - DAY

Corey locks his bike. Danny approaches.

DANNY

What's this about you trying out?

COREY
Fact.

DANNY
Pitcher? Seriously?

COREY
You know it.

FIRST CLASS BELL RINGS

INT. MR. ZAMORA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Corey arrives a minute after the second CLASS BELL RINGS. He accidentally closes the door so hard the DOOR RATTLES. Jaden writes a solution to a calculus problem on the whiteboard.

MR. ZAMORA
Corey Trexler. I see that you are a proponent of the "better late than never" school of thought when it comes to attending my class.

COREY
Sorry, Mr. Zamora. I-

MR. ZAMORA
On the other hand, I am of the "late doesn't cut it" school of thought. Perhaps you should explain your tardiness to someone in the guidance department.

Corey starts for the door.

MR. ZAMORA (cont'd)
No, no, Trexler. You will remain in class and pay your penance after school today.

COREY
I can't do it after school today. I'll go now.

MR. ZAMORA
That won't do. Here's what we'll do, you will take a test. If you pass, all will be forgiven. If you do not, you will report here for the last period and beyond, forsaking whatever plans you've made.

Corey looks at Jaden and Nancy. They shake their heads "no."

MR. ZAMORA (cont'd)
Let's get started then, shall we.
Marshall, retake your seat. Trexler,
to the board, with your textbook.

Jaden returns to his seat. Corey removes his math textbook from his backpack and walks to the front of the classroom. He points to Jaden's work. Mr. Zamora makes an "erase it" gesture. Corey erases Jaden's work.

COREY
I'm ready.

MR. ZAMORA
Good. Now, turn to chapter nine,
problem number fifteen.

COREY
Mr. Zamora, our assignment was one
through ten. We weren't assigned
problem fifteen.

MR. ZAMORA
You are correct. Why merely challenge
you with one you've already done?
Let's make this more interesting.
Problem fifteen. Begin.

Corey stares at problem fifteen.

MR. ZAMORA (cont'd)
Today, Trexler.

Corey copies the X and Y axes and the curve from the drawing in the textbook. He writes slowly and gets to a point where he's stumped.

RAJ (V.O.)
Break it down, step by step, like I
showed you. Think about where you
need to take the problem and then use
the formulas you know. Complex things
can be broken down into a series of
simple steps.

Corey starts work again and completes the problem. Mr. Zamora walks from the back of the classroom to the board and stands next to Corey.

MR. ZAMORA
Is that your final answer?

COREY

Yes, it is.

MR. ZAMORA

Ladies and gentlemen of the calculus jury, has Mr. Trexler correctly solved this problem?

NANCY

Looks right to me.

JADEN

I agree.

MR. ZAMORA

Mr. Trexler's friends think he's right. The rest of you seem to have nothing to say. Interesting.

Corey mouths "thank you" to Nancy and Jaden.

COREY

Did I get it right?

MR. ZAMORA

What do you think?

COREY

Yes, it's correct.

MR. ZAMORA

Are you sure?

COREY

Totally.

Mr. Zamora turns to Corey and after hesitating, sticks out his left hand for a handshake, avoiding Corey's deformed hand.

MR. ZAMORA

Congratulations, Mr. Trexler. You are one of a very few students to successfully complete one of my challenges. You are now back in good standing.

SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER - DAY

Raj has joined Corey, Nancy and Jaden in the crowded hall.

RAJ

I heard what happened to you in Zamora's class. Awesome.

COREY

You totally saved my ass, man.

RAJ

I bet Zamora thought he had you nailed.

COREY

You got that right. I'd have missed baseball tryouts if I got it wrong.

NANCY

Playing baseball's not really that big a deal, is it?

COREY

You're on the track and field team. Is that a big deal to you?

NANCY

Nah. I want to be a geologist, find oil and get filthy rich.

RAJ

You'll get filthy, all right. Then you'll be as dark as me.

JADEN

Maybe even as dark as me.

COREY

You guys gonna watch tryouts?

NANCY

Won't it make you nervous?

COREY

Maybe. Yeah, for sure.

JADEN

I'm not going. Watching you and the other jocks out there—BORING.

NANCY
Unless you're gonna try out like
that, you better change.

COREY
Right. Got my stuff right here.

Corey indicates his backpack.

NANCY
Text us after.

Corey runs off to change.

JADEN
We're going to watch, right?

NANCY
You know it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - OUTSIDE BOYS ROOM - DAY

Corey comes out in the classic Cubs uniform Mordecai left for him. Nancy, Jaden and Raj wait for him. Except for the four of them, the hallway is empty. When his friends see him, they are shocked.

JADEN
Whoa. Are you nuts? That's a Cubs
uniform. What's with that bear cub?

RAJ
It's a throwback uniform. Where'd you
get it?

NANCY
Why not a Cardinals uniform? You're
gonna get seriously abused.

COREY
I better get going. Coach warned me
about being late.

They wave to Corey as he runs down the hall.

Corey's BASEBALL CLEATS CLICK on hall floor.

EXT. MILBURN PRACTICE FIELD - SIGN UP TABLE - DAY

MR. BELLAMY [late 20s, former college baseball player], a gym teacher and assistant baseball coach, mans the sign-up table. Corey walks up to the table.

COREY

Trexler.

Mr. Bellamy looks Corey up and down and half-rises out of his seat to look at Corey's cleats. He says nothing, but gestures to direct Corey to a group down the first base line. Corey moves next to the others in the group.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD BLEACHERS - DAY

A small number of students, including HECKLER 1, HECKLER 2 and HECKLER 3 are in the bleachers.

HECKLER 1

Look at The Claw. Is it Halloween or has the circus come to town?

HECKLER 2

What kind of idiot wears a Cubs uniform in this town?

HECKLER 3

Putting a baseball uniform on The Claw is like putting lipstick on a pig.

EXT. MILBURN PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The tryout group tries to stay away from Corey. Mr. Bellamy comes over to the group. He stares at Corey.

MR. BELLAMY

Your father was a pitcher here?

COREY

Yes, Coach.

MR. BELLAMY

You can forget making it as a legacy. You've got to earn your spot.

COREY

I'll do my best.

MR. BELLAMY

(to the group)

Coach Strano handles pitchers.
Outfielders, guess where you go.
Infielders follow me. Pitchers meet
Coach Strano on the mound.

The tryout players scatter. Corey and JEREMY ROYCE [16] walks to the pitching mound. Coach Strano is waiting.

COACH STRANO

Let me tell it to you like this. A pitcher isn't just someone who can throw a ball sixty-feet, six-inches. A pitcher gets batters out. Some pitchers do it with speed, some with control. Questions? No. Good.

Corey starts to stretch the way Mordecai taught him. After Coach Strano looks over at Jeremy, Jeremy starts to copy Corey.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)

Your father show you that?

COREY

A friend.

COACH STRANO

Good warm up routine. You guys ready?

Jeremy nods.

COREY

Yes, Coach.

COACH STRANO

Royce, you're first.

Coach Strano lets out a NO FINGERS WHISTLE.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)

Wilson, catch Royce. We'll do a dozen warm-up pitches and then get a batter in there. Trexler, over to the bullpen. Coleman, you get Trexler ready.

CHARLIE WILSON [16, backup catcher] gets behind the plate. Corey and Danny jog over to the bullpen area.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD BULLPEN - DAY

Corey throws to Danny Coleman, slowly at first and then increases his speed. In the background, Jeremy throws his final warm-up pitches on the mound, waiting for a hitter.

DANNY

(to Corey)

Royce has good speed, but the ball doesn't move. I haven't seen him throw a curve or a cutter yet. You?

Corey isn't used to talking baseball with one of the school's jock stars.

COREY

No, uh, no I haven't.

DANNY

You better show the Coach more than Royce. He doesn't need batting practice pitchers.

COREY

Batting practice?

DANNY

Watch.

They look over to the baseball diamond between Corey's warm-up pitches. Jeremy Royce is pitching to HITTER 1.

DANNY (cont'd)

Chambers is a good fielder, but not much of a hitter.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Hitter 1 hits Jeremy Royce's pitch to left field.

Hitter 1 hits Jeremy Royce's pitch to right field.

Hitter 1 hits a Jeremy Royce pitch out of the park.

Corey looks at the stands now filled with students.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. MILBURN PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

COACH STRANO
(hollering)
Trexler and Coleman. Let's go. I'm
not getting any younger.

Corey and Danny hustle to the mound where Danny taps Corey on the arm with his catcher's mitt as encouragement.

Corey's first pitch is so wide, Danny has to stand and reach for it.

His next pitch is a strike and Danny gives him the approval sign, pointing at him. Corey then throws another strike.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
You throw anything besides the two-seam fastball?

COREY
Cutter and change-up.

COACH STRANO
Ray show you those?

COREY
A friend.

COACH STRANO
Let's see what your friend showed you. Throw a couple of cutters and then some change-ups.

Corey signals cutter and then throws a few. Danny stands up and nods.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
Let's see your change-up.

Corey gives Danny a fist signal, which Danny doesn't understand. Danny runs to the mound.

COREY
Change-up.

DANNY
Got it. Keep it up. Lookin' good.

Danny runs back and gets into the catcher's squat. Corey throws four good change-ups.

Coach Strano stands, silent, hands on hips. He looks over at the stands and sees Tommy Mendoza talking with DRUG DEALER [20S, rough character overdressed in fancy clothes and lots of gold jewelry].

COACH STRANO

Mendoza. Grab a bat. Let's see if you can hit Trexler.

Tommy starts laughing as he comes down from the stands. There's laughter from the students in the stands. Tommy grabs his bat and heads to home plate.

TOMMY

Time for batting practice. Hey, Claw, it's okay to move closer. Here's where you need to get the ball.

Tommy indicates the strike zone. Corey ignores him.

COREY

(to himself)

Okay, Corey, go big or go home.

TOMMY

Cute uniform. Get it at the costume store?

Tommy does an imitation of Babe Ruth calling his home run.

COACH STRANO

Shut up, Mendoza. If you want to act, I'll send you to Miss Phillips. Maybe the drama club could use you. Play ball.

HECKLER 3

It's The Man versus The Claw. Yeah.

Corey throws a fastball and it goes so high Danny has to jump to catch it.

TOMMY

I'm not that tall, Claw. This is baseball, not basketball, understand?

Danny signals Corey to calm down.

Mordecai appears next to Corey. Only Corey sees him.

MORDECAI

Do it like I showed you. Set your grip. Take your time.

Before Corey can answer, Mordecai disappears.

Corey throws a perfect fastball. Tommy Mendoza swings and misses.

TOMMY

You call that a fastball? My sister
throws faster than that.

Danny signals for a cutter. Corey nods.

BALL PINGS off Tommy's aluminum bat.

The ball is hit deep, but curves foul. Danny starts to the mound, but Corey stops him with a traffic cop's gesture. Danny goes back and signals for another cutter. Corey shakes him off. Danny puts down a fist, Corey's signal for a change-up.

Tommy makes faces at Corey. Corey throws a perfect change-up. Tommy swings as hard as he can, but misses badly and goes off-balance, falling face first into the dirt. The crowd, which has noisily reacted to everything between Corey and Tommy, is suddenly quiet until a lone female voice breaks the quiet.

SARAH

(shouting)

Mighty Tommy has struck out.

Tommy stands and brushes the dirt off. Danny runs to the mound and fist-bumps Corey. Tommy glares at Corey and then starts toward the mound, stopping when Coach Strano heads to the mound.

DANNY

Coach, I've never seen a change-up
move like that.

COACH STRANO

I was gonna try another hitter, but
that's a waste of time. You're on the
team, Trexler.

Coach Strano turns and walks off the mound. Students start crowding around Corey, who doesn't notice Nancy, Jaden, and Raj in the crowd.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - LATER - DAY

Corey has changed his clothes and leaves the school building. Sarah waits for him.

SARAH

I'm so proud of you, Corey. You did great. You shut Tommy Mendoza up.

COREY

I'm not sure it was smart making him look bad. How come you're still at school?

SARAH

I wanted to watch tryouts.

COREY

You were there? Was Marissa with you?

SARAH

No. She thought it'd make you nervous.

COREY

No way I could be more nervous than I was. You heading home?

SARAH

Yes. My mother is working late. Emergency surgery. My father is in New York on business and my little brother is at a neighbor's.

COREY

Mind if I walk with you?

Sarah smiles at Corey.

EXT. STREET HEADING TOWARD COREY'S AND SARAH'S HOMES - EARLY EVENING - NIGHT.

Sarah nods and they start their walk. They don't talk much on the way. There is uncomfortable space initially, when Corey tries to decide what to say. Sarah has no problem when she speaks.

COREY

Does it feel odd, your mother being a surgeon, operating on kids?

SARAH

Not really. It's like she has a job with odd hours. I don't think about what she does. Your mother is a lawyer. How does that feel?

COREY

Intimidating. What's your brother like?

SARAH

A seven year old pain in the butt. He doesn't listen to my parents and acts like I don't exist, except as somebody to annoy.

They reach an intersection where they would go in different directions to get home.

SARAH (cont'd)

I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

COREY

Sure. Hey, want to have dinner with us? Your house is empty and at my house, Marissa will be there and maybe my Dad.

SARAH

I'd like that. You won't get into trouble?

COREY

I'll call and let them know.

EXT. STREET HEADING TOWARD COREY'S AND SARAH'S HOMES/INT.
TREXLER KITCHEN - SPLIT SCREEN - NIGHT

Corey calls Marissa's phone, which she immediately answers.

MARISSA

What's up, Corey?

COREY

Hey, Marissa. Sarah is gonna join us for dinner, okay?

MARISSA

(laughing)

Yeah, it's okay.

Marissa ends the call, still laughing.

MARISSA (cont'd)

This is gonna be fun. Sarah wants Corey, but he's too shy to believe it. It would be nice, my brother and my best friend...

EXT. TREXLER HOME FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Accompanied by Sarah, Corey has his key out to unlock the front door. Marissa beats him to it and opens the door from inside.

INT. TREXLER HOME FRONT DOOR AREA - NIGHT

MARISSA

Come in. It's getting cold out there.

Marissa hugs Sarah and takes their coats. Allyson and Ray greet them.

ALLYSON

Marissa told us Sarah was joining us for dinner. Anything interesting happen at school today, Corey?

COREY

Not really...

ALLYSON

Let's have it.

COREY

Coach Strano said...

RAY

What did he say?

COREY

I made the team!

MARISSA

It's all over school.

SARAH

It was awesome. No one would have believed that Corey could strike out Tommy Mendoza.

RAY

You struck out Tommy Mendoza?

SARAH
On three pitches.

RAY
What did you throw him?

ALLYSON
Does it matter what pitches Corey
threw?

RAY
It matters. Baseball is about little
details.

COREY
A change-up, after a fastball and
cutter.

RAY
Mendoza, hmmm. Who taught you the
change-up?

COREY
The old guy in the park. He showed me
the grip.

RAY
For *your* hand?

MARISSA
(interrupting)
Who are you taking to the Spring
Dance, Corey?

Corey is embarrassed and looks away. Sarah looks at Corey, who does not see her smile and then Sarah looks at Marissa and winks.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY AT LOCKERS - NEXT DAY - DAY

The hall is crowded with students on the way to their first class of the day. Corey approaches Nancy, Jaden and Raj, who all ignore him.

COREY
What's wrong guys?

NANCY
You don't know, do you?

COREY
No.

JADEN
You ignored us after tryouts.

COREY
You were there?

NANCY
You were too busy with your new jock-worshipping friends.

COREY
That's not fair. I thought you weren't coming.

RAJ
We were there. We're always there for you.

CLASS BELL RINGS.

Nancy, Raj and Jaden walk away, and leave Corey behind. He stands and watches everyone else rush to class.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY AT COREY'S LOCKER - AFTER THE FIRST CLASS - DAY

The hall is crowded with students between classes. Corey pulls a book from his locker for his next class when he feels Sarah pressing against him from behind.

SARAH
Hey, Pitch.

COREY
(trying unsuccessfully to be casual)
What's up, Sarah?

SARAH
Do I get a kiss from the baseball star?

COREY
Um, Sarah, we're at school.

SARAH
Who cares?

Sarah stands on her tip toes, pulls Corey to her and kisses him on the lips. Corey tries to break the kiss, but his hand slips and lands on her breast.

COREY

I'm so sorry, Sarah, uh, I didn't mean to-

MARISSA

Corey Trexler, shame on you. No PDAs allowed at school. I'll have to tell Mom.

A crowd of students has witnessed the kiss and the boob touch, including Nancy, Jaden, Raj, Deion Taylor and TWO FOOTBALL JOCKS. The Football Jocks clap.

DEION

Good job, Man.

Nancy, Jaden and Raj walk away from Corey. Corey watches them.

Sarah looks at Corey with a big smile. Marissa starts giggling.

MARISSA

See you at home, Big Brother.

EXT. SCHOOL SIDE DOOR - LATER - DAY

Nancy, Jaden and Raj are waiting for Corey.

JADEN

You are a total asshole.

COREY

For sure. I plead guilty as charged.

NANCY

Tell us about that lip lock with Sarah Drummond.

COREY

She kissed me.

NANCY

Oh, you poor guy. I'm surprised you survived it.

RAJ

Deion called you Man. That's progress. No more Claw?

COREY

I hope, but who knows with them.

JADEN

What's up with you and Miss Kiss
Corey in the hall?

COREY

She told Marissa that she likes me
and the two of them engineered the
whole thing. Marissa confessed after
I told her if she didn't spill, I
wouldn't help her with math homework
anymore.

NANCY

I saw your hand land in the "no-no"
zone. Slick move.

COREY

That was an accident.

JADEN

Yeah, right. That's what all you
guilty guys say.

COREY

Are we good?

NANCY

We're good.

RAJ

For sure. Now, you can get us in with
the cool crowd.

EXT. MILBURN PRACTICE FIELD - DAYS LATER - DAY

Baseball practice is underway.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Jack Howell pitches batting practice.

Tommy Mendoza and other hitters wait at the batting cage
while Matthew is batting.

Infielders and outfielders waiting for a batting practice ball
to be hit to them.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

MR. BELLAMY

That's enough, Howell. Trexler,
you're on the mound. Draper, you're
up.

The players swap places as instructed. Corey throws easily
to KENNY, who hits the batting practice pitches well.

MR. BELLAMY (cont'd)

Okay, Draper. Do your laps. Mendoza,
you're up.

Tommy walks across the diamond instead of going to home
plate. He deliberately crashes into Corey, knocking him off
the mound to the infield level.

TOMMY

(sneering at Corey)

Like I could stand looking at you and
that disgusting claw. Stay away from
me if you know what's good for you.

Tommy Mendoza turns to Coach Bellamy.

TOMMY (cont'd)

Got some business to take care of,
Coach. I'll do my swings in a few
minutes.

Tommy walks toward the stands, where Drug Dealer waits.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - DAY

Jack Howell is on the mound against Summerfield High in the
first game of the season.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Howell gets a Summerfield hitter to ground out.

Howell gets a Summerfield hitter to hit a soft fly to the
infield.

Howell throws a third strike past a Summerfield hitter.

Tommy hits two tape measure home runs.

Marissa and Sarah are in the crowd. Corey is in the dugout.

INSERT - SCOREBOARD SHOWING MILBURN 8. VISITOR 0

EXT. MERRICK HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - THE FOLLOWING WEEK - DAY

Corey is on the bench again. JESSE BLAKE [17] pitches for Milburn.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Jessie Blake gets three Merrick batters out.

In the fourth inning, Jessie Blake walks two batters, then a double scores two runs.

Danny looks over at the bench.

Coach Strano comes to the mound and replaces Blake with KENJI SATO [17, Japanese exchange student, relief pitcher], who shuts Merrick down.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Kenji Sato mows down the Merrick hitters with strikeouts and easy ground balls.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INSERT - SCOREBOARD SHOWING VISITOR 4, MERRICK 2

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. MERRICK FIELD VISITOR'S DUGOUT - DAY

The Milburn players run into the dugout after the last Merrick out. Jesse Blake sits next to Corey.

COREY
Great game, Jesse.

JESSE BLAKE
Sure, with the usual Sato relief pitcher magic to save my ass.

Kenji Sato enters the dugout.

COREY
You slammed the door on them, Kenji.

KENJI SATO
That's my job. You mess it up, I fix it up.

Corey is down, unhappy that he's not gotten into a game. Jesse notices.

JESSE BLAKE

Chin up, my man. You'll get into a game.

KENJI SATO

Always remember that I'm just a bullpen away.

COREY

Thanks, guys. Coach might pitch me if the game doesn't matter. The games always matter, don't they?

EXT. MERRICK HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - AFTER THE GAME - DAY

Corey is with Marissa and Sarah.

MARISSA

I don't have a date for the Spring Dance, Corey. How about fixing me up with one of your cute teammates? You two are set, so how about helping your sister out?

COREY

I haven't exactly asked Sarah.

SARAH

I'd love to, Corey.

Sarah jumps up and kisses Corey on the cheek.

Corey sticks his tongue out at Marissa, but gives her a left handed thumbs up.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY - DAY

The stands are packed for the game against arch rival, the Everett High Explorers. Coach Strano is giving the team his pre-game speech in the dugout. Jack Howell and Danny Coleman are warming up in the bullpen.

COACH STRANO

This is one game I don't have to say much about. You all know how important this game against Everett is to our season and this whole town. We *will* win this game, because this

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
 game *is* our season. We beat Everett,
 it's a good year. We lose to Everett
 and no matter what else happens, it's
 a losing season. Put that in your
 heads and keep it there. You may not
 be in the lineup, but you damned well
 better be ready to get in the game if
 we need you. Understand?

TEAM VOICES
 Yes, Coach.

COACH STRANO
 What?

TEAM VOICES
 (screaming)
 Yes, Coach.

The crowd is on their feet for the singing of the National Anthem.

NATIONAL ANTHEM SINGER finishes the anthem and the crowd cheers.

Corey looks at the crowded stands for his sister, parents and Sarah. He can't find them in the crowd.

Jack Howell and Danny Coleman take their places on the mound and behind the plate. The rest of the Pioneer team runs onto the field. Jack Howell takes his final warm up pitches. The UMPIRE moves behind home plate.

UMPIRE
 Play ball!

SERIES OF SHOTS

The lead-off Everett hitter steps into the batter's box and digs his cleats in. The first pitch is well outside the strike zone.

UMPIRE (cont'd)
 Ball one.

The next pitch is hit to left field over the third baseman's head.

The second batter hits a towering foul ball that Danny Coleman catches behind home plate.

The third batter hits a long foul ball down the left field line, and on the next pitch hits into a double play to end the inning.

The Everett Explorers take the field.

The first two Pioneer hitters make easy outs, a grounder to short and a soft fly to right field.

Danny Coleman removes his catcher's gear, grabs his bat and hits a single between first and second base.

The crowd cheers wildly as Tommy Mendoza comes to home plate. Tommy plays mind games with the pitcher, as he calls for time out and steps out of the batter's box. Then, he points his bat at the pitcher like it was a sniper rifle.

The first two pitches are out of the strike zone. Tommy lets the third go by for a called strike. Tommy disagrees with the call and glares at Umpire.

Tommy hits the next pitch out of the park.

The first Everett hitter in the second inning hits a single over the infield on Jack Howell's third pitch.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. PIONEER FIELD DUGOUT - DAY

Coach Strano comes over to Corey.

COACH STRANO

Trexler, go warm-up in the bullpen.
Dawson, get him ready. Coleman
doesn't think Jack has his good stuff
today. Hustle. You might just be on
the mound soon.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD BULLPEN - DAY

Corey and catcher ERIC DAWSON [16, backup catcher] are warming up. Eric looks back at the pitcher's mound and sees Coach Strano.

ERIC DAWSON

Coach is talking to Jack. He's
stalling for time. Let's pick up the
pace, Pitch.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - DAY

Coach Strano walks back to the dugout.

The crowd screams.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Corey throws hard in the bullpen. Jack Howell hits the next Everett batter.

Umpire follows Coach Strano as he walks to the mound to join Jack Howell and Danny Coleman.

UMPIRE

Make a decision, Coach.

Umpire heads back to home plate.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. PIONEER BULLPEN - DAY

ERIC DAWSON

Watch the Coach. Ump ain't gonna give us any more time. Let's get another couple pitches in.

Corey throws a perfect, hard fastball.

ERIC DAWSON (cont'd)

Good one.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - DAY

Coach Strano points to the bullpen and taps his right forearm with two fingers.

EXT. PIONEER BULLPEN - DAY

ERIC DAWSON

That's the signal. You're in.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - DAY

Corey runs from the bullpen to the mound.

Corey joins Coach Strano, Jack Howell and Danny Coleman on the mound.

COACH STRANO
How do you feel?

COREY
Okay, Coach.

JACK
Sorry I left you such a mess. I
didn't have my stuff today.

Coach Strano takes the ball from Jack Howell, who walks back to the dugout. Umpire walks to the mound.

Polite applause from the crowd.

COACH STRANO
It's your turn, Trexler. This is what
you wanted, so show everybody what
you're made of.

Coach Strano pats Corey on the back and slowly walks back to the dugout.

UMPIRE
Take your warm-ups and let's get
going. It's getting cold out here.

DANNY
Yes, sir.

Umpire walks back to home plate.

DANNY (cont'd)
Just like practice. Stay calm and
forget everything except what you and
I are doing. Got it?

Corey nods and Danny runs back to home plate. After Corey takes his warm ups, the Explorer batter steps into the batter's box and smiles at Corey. Then, he makes a crab claw gesture.

Mordecai appears on the mound next to Corey.

MORDECAI
Forget about that guy. He's trying to
get into your head. Watch the
runners. Be careful with your
stretch. You don't want to balk.
Keep the ball low. We want the ball
in the infield.

Umpire looks at Corey and gestures for him to pitch. Corey throws his first pitch. It's way outside and Danny has to reach for it.

MORDECAI (cont'd)

Settle down. You're rushing. Set your grip perfect and you'll have your stuff and control. Start him off with the cutter.

Danny signals for a fastball. Corey shakes him off. Danny signals for the cutter and Corey nods. The batter lets it go, but it's a strike.

UMPIRE

Strike one. One and one.

The batter makes the claw gesture again. Corey ignores it this time. Danny Coleman calls for the change-up. Corey throws it and the batter hits an easy tap back to Corey, who throws the ball to third base, getting the runner out. Corey gets two quick strikes on the next batter.

UMPIRE (cont'd)

Strike two. Oh and two.

Mordecai appears and stands next to Corey.

MORDECAI

Time for the moneymaker.

Mordecai disappears.

Danny has the same idea and puts down the fist signal. Corey throws a change-up. The batter misses badly.

UMPIRE

Strike three!

Next batter is Everett's best power hitter, EVERETT STAR [17, big guy, arrogant, arm tattoo]. Everett Star flips his bat around and pretends to grind sawdust out of the aluminum bat.

EVERETT STAR

Let's see what you don't have,
Trexler Claw.

Danny calls for a change-up on the first pitch and the ball is popped up to the second baseman. Everett Star sulks back to his dugout.

EVERETT STAR (cont'd)
 (mumbling)
 What the hell kind of pitch was that?

SERIES OF SHOTS

Corey strikes out a hitter.

Corey gets a hitter to hit an infield grounder.

Corey throws a change-up that makes a hitter miss badly.
 Danny pumps his fist.

For the third out that ends the game, Corey throws a change-up to the Everett batter, who pops up to the second baseman.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INSERT - PIONEER FIELD SCOREBOARD

Pioneers 2, Visitor 0

The crowd cheers wildly.

BACK TO SCENE

Danny runs to the mound and bear hugs Corey. The crowd pours onto the field. Coach Strano reaches Corey. Ray and Allyson come up behind Coach Strano. Marissa is laughing and crying at the same time.

COACH STRANO
 Way to pitch, kid.

COREY
 Dad, this is Danny Coleman, my catcher.

Danny shakes hands with Ray.

DANNY
 Mr. Trexler. Coach told me they used to call you Sting Ray. That true?

RAY
 I'm afraid it is. Fine job catching, Danny.

DANNY
 Thank you. Means a lot coming from you. I just thought of a nickname for Corey.

COREY

A nickname?

DANNY

Check this.

(pause)

Trexler. T. Rex, like the great dinosaur.

ALLYSON

Oh, my.

Marissa takes out her phone and starts texting.

MARISSA

I like it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - THE FOLLOWING MONDAY - DAY

The hall is crowded with students congratulating Corey.

MALE STUDENT 1

Way to go, T. Rex.

FEMALE STUDENT 1

(sexily)

Hi, Corey.

Female Student 1 blows Corey a kiss.

MALE STUDENT 3

Man, you can throw a baseball.

Tommy walks past Corey, ignoring him.

COREY

Way to hit, Tommy.

TOMMY

Shut up. You're still nothing but a deformed loser.

Danny watches the exchange between Corey and Tommy.

DANNY

Forget him. He's used to being the big star. You're stealing some of his thunder.

COREY

Over one game? But-

DANNY

You made him look bad at tryouts.
Half the school saw it and the whole
school heard about it.

COREY

I'll try to talk to him.

DANNY

Stay away from Tommy. He can be
dangerous.

Corey walks to his first class. A crowd of students follows
him.

CLASS BELL RINGS

Jaden, Nancy and Raj catch up to Corey. They're not happy.
Corey doesn't notice.

COREY

Let's catch up at lunch. There's a
ton of stuff I need to tell you.

His friends ignore him and walk away.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NEAR CAFETERIA - LUNCH BREAK - DAY

DEION

You're eating with us today, T. Rex.

COREY

Can't. Got to meet my friends off
campus.

DEION

Nope.

Deion puts his arm around Corey and leads him into the
cafeteria.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

DEION

Our table.

The cool kids table is filled with jocks and cheerleaders.
Deion leads Corey to the crowded food line, where they barge
into the long line.

Deion and Corey get their food. Deion has enough for three on his tray. They arrive at the reserved table where there are three empty seats. Deion points to a seat across from Danny. Deion sits next to Danny. Corey takes his "assigned" seat and starts looking around.

DANNY
Looking for Tommy?

COREY
Yeah, I guess.

DANNY
Said something about having to meet someone.

COREY
A scout? College or pro?

DEION
(through a mouthful
of food)
I don't know and Tommy didn't say.

JOCK 1, JOCK 2, JOCK 3 and CHEERLEADER 2 [17, not a scholar] seated at the table stare at Corey.

JOCK 1
Didn't your father pitch here?

COREY
Yes.

JOCK 2
Your sister is Marissa, right?

COREY
Yes.

JOCK 3
Your mother is a lawyer?

COREY
Yes.

DEION
How come you hang out with those losers, T. Rex?

COREY
We've been in classes together forever. You know, AP, stuff like that.

JOCK 2
Your father teach you to pitch?

COREY
Some. Must be in the genes.

CHEERLEADER 2
It's in your pants?

DANNY
Genes, like DNA.

CHEERLEADER 2
(without
understanding)
Oh.

DEION
Takes after his old man.

CHEERLEADER 2
We're gonna win state 'cause we've
got Corey.

JOCK 3
Why do you call him Corey? He's T.
Rex.

CHEERLEADER 2
You call him what you want and I'll
call him what I want. Do you have a
girlfriend, Corey?

The table erupts in laughter and teasing. Cheerleader 2
stands.

CHEERLEADER 2 (cont'd)
Got to run.

Cheerleader 2 bends over and kisses Corey hard on the lips.
Corey kisses her back, but doesn't notice Marissa and Sarah
watching.

Cheerleader 2 runs off.

SARAH
Asshole. What did I ever see in your
brother, Marissa?

MARISSA
You are such a jerk, Corey.

Sarah runs off in tears. Corey has finally noticed Sarah and Marissa. He stands, unsure what to do.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY OUTSIDE CHEMISTRY LAB - DAY

The hallway is almost empty. Nancy, Jaden and Raj are standing next to the lab door.

NANCY

We heard.

COREY

What?

RAJ

So, now you're in to cheerleaders.

NANCY

You blew us off to have lunch with your new friends and then you act like you're hot stuff with that airhead with an IQ of not much.

COREY

That's not fair.

NANCY

(to Jaden and Raj)

Let's go.

Jaden turns back to Corey after he, Nancy and Raj start walking away.

JADEN

You dumped Sarah for that?

Corey watches his friends walk away. He tries to talk to them.

COREY

I didn't dump-

INT. TREXLER HOME UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Corey and Marissa head to their rooms. Marissa ignores Corey.

COREY

Marissa, can't we even talk about it?

Marissa goes into her room and slams the door. Corey talks to her door.

COREY (cont'd)
I need to talk to Sarah, to explain.
My friends won't talk to me, not even
Jaden. If you won't talk to me, I've
got no one. Please, Marissa.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - THE NEXT DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Coach Strano is on the sidelines, watching Corey pitch during a team practice. The other players are working at their positions, working with their coaches.

COACH STRANO
(whistles and shouts)
Bring it in, guys.

All the players and coaches come in and sit in the stands.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
Corey, you're gonna start against
Pemburton. You've earned it.

The team applauds and then starts a "T. Rex, T. Rex" chant.

COACH STRANO (cont'd)
Hit the showers.

The players head back to the school gymnasium. Coach Strano leaves the field. Corey is about to walk back to school when he sees Tommy Mendoza sitting in a corner of the dugout. He walks toward the dugout and sees Tommy, head down.

Corey starts to say something to Tommy, but stops and jogs back to school.

EXT. PIONEER FIELD - TWO DAYS LATER - DAY

Corey warms up on the mound for the game. Danny catches him. Corey finishes his warm-ups and Danny runs out to the mound.

DANNY
We can take these guys, right?

COREY
You know it.

DANNY
 Don't get overconfident. We need this
 one. Stay focused. Pitch like we're
 playing the Cubs.

Corey laughs and Danny hustles behind the plate. UMPIRE 2
 takes his place behind Danny.

UMPIRE 2
 Play ball! Batter up!

Corey turns around to check the infield and the outfield.
 Tommy is not in center field. Corey stands there and Danny
 comes running back to the mound.

DANNY
 Something wrong?

COREY
 Tommy's not in center.

DANNY
 He wasn't in school the last couple
 of days. Doesn't matter. The ump
 wants to know why you're stalling.

COREY
 I'm ready.

Danny gets back in position and the batter has taken his
 warm-up swings. Umpire 2 points at Corey. Corey pitches, but
 everything is off. The first hitter gets a clean drive into
 left field that rolls to the fence for a double. Danny runs
 to the mound.

DANNY
 What the hell was that pitch? That
 wasn't what I called.

COREY
 I don't know what happened.

DANNY
 Concentrate, man.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Danny gets back behind the plate and gives Corey the settle
 down gesture.

Danny calls for a change-up when the count on the next
 hitter goes to 3 and 2.

The third baseman grabs the slow dribbler and throws the hitter out, but the first hitter gets to third base.

Corey gives up singles to the next two batters and a run scores.

The next batter walks and the bases are full.

Coach Bellamy signals the bullpen for a relief pitcher to warm up.

The next batter hits a single just over the first baseman's glove and two more runs score.

Pemburton has three runs. Coach Strano signals Corey to intentionally walk the next batter, which he does.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Mordecai appears next to Corey on the mound.

MORDECAI

Some days nothing works. Now, you've learned that lesson.

COREY

Am I glad to see you. Where've you been?

MORDECAI

Listen. Figure out what's working for you. Your fastball isn't there. How's the cutter?

COREY

So-so.

MORDECAI

Mix the cutter with the change-up. Throw a fastball now and then, but not where they can hit it, just to keep 'em honest. Don't rush. Get the grips and your motion perfect. Your stuff might come back.

COREY

What should I do with this next batter?

MORDECAI

Moneymaker low and away. He'll hit into a double play.

Mordecai disappears.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Corey throws a change-up and the batter hits into a double play.

Corey's stuff slowly returns as he pitches and he only allows one more run.

Corey strikes out the last Pemburton batter in the top of the 7th inning.

Loud crowd booing.

Corey walks dejectedly off the mound.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. MILBURN HIGH MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Corey enters school alone.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

As Corey walks to his locker, he's ignored by the other students in the crowded hall. MALE STUDENT 4 confronts Corey.

MALE STUDENT 4
You blew that game. Cost us
conference and a shot at state. Nice
going, loser.

Corey reaches his locker and tries the combination lock. He's so distracted that he can't get it open. Cheerleader 2 ignores Corey as she walks past him.

COREY
Tammy.
(then louder)
Tammy.

Cheerleader 2 stops and looks at him with total disdain. The crowd of students watches them.

CHEERLEADER 2
You are a loser. I can't believe I
like wasted my time on you. You
belong with the other losers.

MALE STUDENT 5

Choke artist.

MALE STUDENT 6

Go transfer to Pemburton. They knew how to lose before you ruined our season.

CHEERLEADER 1

Stay away from Tammy and stay away from all of us, Claw.

INT. TREXLER HOME KITCHEN - NIGHT

Corey and Marissa are seated in the kitchen.

MARISSA

The note from Mom said dinner was in the refrigerator.

COREY

I'm not hungry. I need to study.

MARISSA

Test tomorrow?

COREY

Nah. I'm lost in calculus without Raj.

MARISSA

How's your head?

COREY

My head?

MARISSA

You know what I mean.

COREY

My life sucks worse than ever. I wanted baseball. I got it, got everything I wanted and then it all turned to shit.

MARISSA

The kids at school are shallow idiots.

Marissa goes to the refrigerator, takes out a covered dish and puts it in the microwave and starts reheating the food.

COREY

Not my friends.

MARISSA

No, not them. But, you were a real asshole to them after you became the baseball star.

COREY

That bad? I know I made some mistakes.

MARISSA

Mistakes? Like how you treated Sarah.

COREY

You're right. I was a jerk.

MARISSA

I said you were an asshole.

COREY

I was. Damn. I really like Sarah.

MARISSA

She likes you. Or did. You lip locked that airhead cheerleader, Tammy, in front of Sarah.

COREY

You saying I got what I deserved?

MARISSA

No. You lost one game. Tommy Mendoza wasn't even there to help. Some big star. Where is he, anyway?

COREY

I don't know. Nobody seems to know. He's skipping school or something.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY AT LOCKERS - NEXT MORNING - DAY

The hallway is crowded with students. Corey walks alone to his locker across from Nancy's, Jaden's and Raj's. They ignore Corey. Corey opens his locker. His Pioneer uniform is gone, but his team cap, glove and an old baseball are on the top shelf.

FEMALE STUDENT 3 (O.S.)

(screaming)

No! Somebody help.

Students back away from Nancy, Jaden and Raj, and reveal the back of the dark figure of Tyler Johns dressed all in black. Corey looks for help, but none comes.

Tyler Johns, in a psychotic episode, turns around and stares at Corey. Camouflage makeup hides his identity. Tyler Johns holds two, black military knives, waving them, moving closer with each swipe.

COREY

Hey, you, Tyler Johns.

TYLER

Get over here, Corey. You're one of them. You want to control me. You let them make fun of me.

Tyler Johns gestures at Corey with the knife.

TYLER (cont'd)

Come here. Now, or I'll kill them.

COREY

Leave them alone, Tyler. They didn't do anything to you. I didn't do anything to you. I tried to help you, remember? They didn't get you sent to that facility. You said you were going to kill the principal and blow up the school.

TYLER

(screaming)

No. It wasn't me. You and your friends made it up. You wanted me in that horrible place.

COREY

They let you out. They said you were fine.

TYLER

(chillingly calm)

I fooled them, didn't I? I'm going to kill all of you. First, I'm going to cut off your hand, Corey. Then, I'll kill all of you.

COREY

They won't let you stay in school if you hurt anyone, Tyler. Put the knives down. I'll go with you to the

COREY (cont'd)
principal's office, and we'll get
this straightened out.

Students watch, but no one does anything. Tyler Johns turns back to Nancy. Students' phones are out everywhere, recording the scene.

TYLER
(to Nancy)
I know what you want. You want to be
a boy. I bet you've always wanted to
be a boy.

Tyler Johns points a knife at Jaden's crotch.

TYLER (cont'd)
(to Nancy)
I'm going to cut his dick off and
give it to you.

The knife touches Jaden's crotch and he gasps.

COREY
Leave Nancy alone. She's my friend.

TYLER
No. All of you must die.

Tyler Johns moves the knife above Raj's head.

TYLER (cont'd)
I want his brain. I'll cut it out of
his head and put it in my head. I'll
be the smartest kid in school. After
I kill all of you, I can have lunch
with the popular kids. They'll all
want me with them. I'll be famous.

Teachers rush out of their classrooms.

RAJ
Somebody, please help us.

TYLER
(his voice has a new
sound, like a radio
announcer)
Kill them, Tyler. You must kill them.

COREY
Don't do it, Tyler. Come with me to
the principal's office. We'll talk to
Mrs. Leong.

TYLER

I will kill. I have to. There's nothing left.

MALE STUDENT 3

Go for it, sicko.

COACH STRANO (O.C.)

Shut-up. Don't you say another word.

Coach Strano runs down the hall toward Tyler Johns.

COREY

Don't get any closer, Coach. Tyler could go off any second.

NANCY

Please, Tyler. Don't hurt us. We didn't do anything to you.

JADEN

We never bullied you. We got bullied, like you. Corey, Nancy, Raj and me. Just like you.

TYLER

Yes, you did. Yes, you did. You bullied me. You kept doing it, more and more. Think I didn't know it was you all the time? Your costumes, the makeup, none of it fooled me. You can't fool me. I have to kill you to protect myself.

Tyler moves in closer with the knives. He raises them above his head and starts mumbling incoherently.

Mordecai appears and stands next to Corey.

MORDECAI

You know what to do. You're a pitcher. Pitch.

Corey hesitates for a second, then reaches into his locker and grabs the baseball from the shelf. He moves his fingers into the two-seam fastball grip.

Corey looks at Mordecai, who nods his approval. Corey takes a full stride and releases the baseball. The ball hits Tyler behind his ear, as he is about to bring the knives down on Nancy, Jaden and Raj. Tyler falls straight down, unconscious.

Crowd of students cheers.

Coach Strano and Mr. Zamora drag Tyler Johns into a classroom and close the door.

SIRENS as police cars approach the school.

The SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER runs down the hall and into the classroom where Tyler Johns was taken.

Corey, Nancy, Jaden and Raj hug.

COREY
I'm so sorry.

NANCY
(laughing and crying
at the same time)
You should be.

JADEN
We're sorry, too.

RAJ
You saved our lives with a baseball.

Danny comes up to Corey and fist bumps with him.

DANNY
Best pitch of the season, T. Rex.

Mr. Sheppard approaches Corey and his friends.

MR. SHEPPARD
You're wanted in the principal's
office, Trexler. Right now.

NANCY
I'll call your mother.

Corey and Mr. Sheppard walk down the hall toward the principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

The SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER [50s, uniformed], Principal Leong and MR. HALVORSON [40s], the guidance counselor, are with Corey.

PRINCIPAL LEONG
This incident will require numerous
investigations and reports.

SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER
Zero tolerance, remember.

MR. HALVORSON
I would remind everyone that we have two boys whose interests must be looked after. Corey Trexler and Tyler Johns.

COREY
My mother is on her way.

Coach Strano barges in.

PRINCIPAL LEONG
This meeting doesn't concern you, Coach Strano.

COACH STRANO
The hell it doesn't. Trexler is one of my players. So was Tommy Mendoza.

COREY
Was? What happened to Tommy?

PRINCIPAL LEONG
We don't talk about that, Coach.

COACH STRANO
Yes I do, with my team. What I tell you goes no further, Trexler.

COREY
Yes, Coach. I won't say anything to anybody.

COACH STRANO
Tommy was arrested. Selling drugs. He was working with that creep that was always hanging around. Blew what could have been a pro career.

MR. HALVORSON
I think we need to focus on Corey and Tyler, not Tommy. Tommy is out of our hands. Corey's actions, while seeming to have ameliorated Tyler's possible actions, could have resulted in death or serious injury to Tyler. Now, Corey, why did you decide-

Allyson enters the room.

ALLYSON

Why is my son being questioned
outside my presence?

SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER

This is a potential criminal case
involving your son, Mrs. Trexler.

PRINCIPAL LEONG

No, it's not. As far as I am
concerned, Corey isn't guilty of
anything, except saving lives today.
He used his good judgment and his
athletic skill to avert a tragedy.
He's a hero in my book.

COACH STRANO

If you think he's a hero now, wait
'till he gets us a state title next
season.

INT. TREXLER HOME KITCHEN - NIGHT

Allyson, Ray, Corey and Marissa are having a celebratory
buffet junk food dinner. Nancy, Jaden, Raj and Sarah are
with them.

MARISSA

You can't believe all the great stuff
everybody at school is saying about
Corey. Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, or
is it X now, everywhere... Maybe
he'll be on TV.

RAY

I think we should give social media a
rest. At least for tonight, okay?

Jaden raises a mug of root beer in a toast. The others join
in.

JADEN

A toast to my best friend Corey, and
us being together again.

RAJ

And having all this food our parents
never let us eat. Ice cream later?

NANCY

You and ice cream, Raj. Really.

Corey sneaks a glance at Sarah. She looks back at him and winks.

SARAH

Together.

They all clink glasses.

INT. TREXLER HOME FRONT DOOR AREA - NIGHT

Nancy hugs Corey. Raj and Jaden exchange handclasps and chest bumps with Corey. Sarah comes up to Corey, stands on her tip toes and wraps her arms around Corey's neck.

COREY

I'm so sorry. I was stupid. Are we good?

SARAH

You figure it out.

Sarah hugs Corey and plants a big, eyes-closed kiss on his lips.

SARAH (cont'd)

Yeah, we're good.

INT. COREY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Corey can't sleep. He tosses and turns. Mordecai appears.

MORDECAI

Can't sleep?

COREY

You're back.

MORDECAI

Only to say goodbye.

COREY

What about next season?

MORDECAI

You know what to do. You don't need me.

COREY

Of course I need you. You saved my life, my friends, too.

MORDECAI

You did it. You changed your life by listening to a few tips from an old pitcher.

COREY

You never told me how you came back to help me.

MORDECAI

Don't know. Does it matter?

COREY

Are you like a guardian angel or something?

MORDECAI

All I know is you needed me and then here I was.

COREY

Can you come back again if I need you?

MORDECAI

If it was up to me, I'd hang around and watch you pitch. Maybe all this is because I love baseball so much and never wanted to leave it.

COREY

When I lost the Pemberton game, I wanted to quit. I lost my best friends and I blamed everything on baseball, but it was because of me. I decided I'd never pitch again.

MORDECAI

Now?

COREY

I'm going out next year for sure. I want to go after a baseball scholarship.

MORDECAI

Chase every dream you've got, kid.

COREY

Can I tell people about you now?

MORDECAI

Fine with me. Think they'll believe you?

COREY

No. My mother will get me tested. My father will shake his head and look disappointed. Marissa won't admit I'm her brother.

MORDECAI

Maybe these will help.

Mordecai hands Corey an original, autographed 1906 Mordecai Brown baseball card. Then, extending his mangled right hand, he gives Corey an autographed 1907 World Series baseball.

CLOSEUP - BASEBALL CARD AND WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

MORDECAI (cont'd)

I struck out Ty Cobb with that ball in the ninth inning. We beat them Tigers 2, nothing and took the Series in five. I want you to have it.

Corey stares at the card and the baseball.

BACK TO SCENE

COREY

I'll never be able to thank you enough, for everything you've done for me. Johnny, too. These will blow my father's mind. Think he'll believe they're real?

Corey looks up. Mordecai is gone.

Corey opens his bedroom door and calls out.

COREY (cont'd)

Dad. Hey Dad, are you awake?

FADE OUT.

THE END