

Oxley's Road

by

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7/31/06

Lakeshore Ent.

Guy Walks into a Bar

FADE IN:

CREDITS ROLL AS WE SEE... several BLACK and WHITE STILL PHOTOS, one DISSOLVING into the other, and all representing the history of Oklahoma. The early OKLAHOMA LAND RUSH, THE DUST BOWL, GIANT OIL FIELDS, NATIVE AMERICAN RESERVATIONS, BONNIE AND CLYDE, JESSE JAMES, WILL ROGERS. This is the very soul of America. Brave. Heartbreaking. Resilient.

CLOSE ON BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO of A MAN, 40, his arms around the shoulders of A BOY, 18. They are both very rugged-looking, Cherokee-Irish. Both are smiling. Standing at their feet and looking up at them is a small boy, 2 1/2 years old. He already wears glasses and doesn't look quite so rugged. In fact, he looks like he's on the outside, looking in.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWN OF SALLISAW, OKLAHOMA -- DAY - ESTABLISHING

SUPER: "SALLISAW, OKLAHOMA, WINTER"

The town is surrounded by the Tallaquah Mountains. Signs of local oil and gas production are everywhere: PUMPS, DERRICKS and other "oil patch" activity. The sucker pumps move up and down in unsyncopated rhythm. Whether there is oil below or not, they keep up their relentless search.

EXT. - MAIN STREET, SALLISAW - SAME

A BOY walks. This is CALVIN (CAL) OXLEY, 14. He's small for his age, barely 100 pounds, and wiry. He wears glasses, his hair long over his innocent, yet wise face. This is the 2 1/2 year old from the old photo. Grown up, yet still an outsider.

Head down, he walks past The Sooner Cafe, Quinn's Hardware, Tallaquah Bank, Sallisaw Feed and Grain. Cal doesn't seem to notice that in every window, proudly displayed, is the cardboard poster (4' x 3') of the SALLISAW WRESTLING TEAM'S SCHEDULE. First match of the season is against Claremore and it is taking place right now.

Many of the shops, are mostly devoid of customers, despite the fact it is midafternoon. And every window Cal passes has the wrestling team poster displayed, or a banner proclaiming, GO COWBOYS!

INT. SALLISAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - LOBBY -- DAY

We PAN a massive floor-to-ceiling TROPHY CASE, probably more than sixty years' worth - FOOTBALL, BASEBALL, BASKETBALL - and then, at the center of it all - WRESTLING; trophy-after-trophy. As we PAN SLOWLY we stop and PUSH IN ever so slightly on two distinct NAMES on two different three-foot tall OKLAHOMA STATE CHAMPION trophies; distinct because they share the same last name; OXLEY.

One, MAC OXLEY, is dated 1966. The other, MIKE OXLEY, is dated 1989.

We are interrupted by a sudden explosion of CROWD NOISE just beyond the wall. This takes us into:

INT. SALLISAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM -- DAY

The BLEACHERS are filled to the rafters with what seems like most of the town. They are screaming themselves hoarse at the ACTION on the FLOOR. HANGING CHAMPIONSHIP BANNERS tell us that Sallisaw has been a wrestling powerhouse for years.

ANGLE ON GYM FLOOR - Where a single WRESTLING MAT sits. Sallisaw, in ORANGE and BLACK, Claremore, in RED and WHITE - twenty-four wrestlers in all - sit on chairs on opposite sides of the mat. The twelve on each squad range from 103 pounds to the unlimited heavyweight class.

In the center of the mat, the two 112-pound opponents are in mid-battle. BILLY BARROW, for Sallisaw, has a fierce, cocksure determination that belies his 16 years, as he dominates his opponent. He taunts the kid, nearly pinning him, then letting him escape so he can rack up more points to gain a SUPERIOR WIN (more than a 15 point margin). Finally, the third period ends and the referee raises Billy Barrow's hand high over his head. The victor. Proud. Beaming. A hero to the screaming crowd.

EXT. - OK FISH & FEED - CONTINUOUS

In the silence of the streets, Cal stops outside this store, and seems to notice that there is no Sallisaw wrestling schedule in the window. He checks the door, and the store is open, and he shoulders in.

EXT. OXLEY HOME -- DAY

Quiet, peaceful. A small clapboard, single-frame house sits at the end of a quiet paved road. It rests on a third of an acre of land. The back yard borders a small patch of woods.

INT. OXLEY HOME -- SAME

The house is modest, well-kept, well-lived in. Living room, dining room, kitchen and family room are really one big room.

BOY'S ROOM -- SAME

The walls are covered with NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC fold-outs and maps of Australia and the Caribbean. A classic poster of the movie BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (clearly a hand-me-down), and one of a candy-apple red NORTON MOTORCYCLE, cover one wall. The theme here looks like "getaway". His shelves are filled with various encyclopedias and school books. A CD player sits on a desk, next to a stack of CD's.

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

We TRAVEL through the woods behind the home and come upon a small pond. Where Cal...

... tinkers intensely with a CRUDE PUMP at the edge of what appears to be a CATFISH POND/FARM. A cooler, with the OK Fish & Feed logo on the side, sits next to the pump.

Cal opens the cooler, revealing a dozen or so CATFISH swimming around inside. He sprinkles food into the cooler, then speaks to the fish with his slight "Okie" drawl.

CAL

If I don't get this pump fixed, y'all are gonna have to reside in the bathtub, which will not be popular with the owner of that bathtub, 'cause I know y'all will pee in there.

Cal lights a cigarette and contemplates the pump problem.

EXT. SALLISAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM -- DUSK

Billy Barrow and some of the other wrestlers, now in street clothes and carrying duffle bags, leave the gym, to the accolades of the cheering fans. They are clearly heroes after a dominant win.

EXT. WOODS -- DUSK

Billy, his chest puffed, walks through the woods with JOE EASLEY, 17, also a wrestler, his ears cauliflowered from years on the mat. They come to a clearing and stop.

BILLY

Hey... Oxley!!

Cal looks up and sees them. This is not a welcome sight.

CAL

(to the fish)

Stay cool. I won't let them hurt you.

BILLY

Oxley!!... What're ya doin'... waxin' it?

Cal ignores them, continues working on his pump, which suddenly SPRINGS TO LIFE. Cal smiles, then quickly shuts it down, not wanting to attract any more attention than he already has.

Just then, a pretty good-sized ROCK lands a few feet away from where he sits. Cal looks up.

Billy holds an even larger rock in his hand.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey, Oxley... Stand still. It's hard to hit such a skinny target.

CAL

Your mother didn't think I was too skinny.

Billy and his friends look at each other. Bad answer.

3RD KID

What the hell does that mean?

JOE

With your Mother?... He means with your mother. Like... with your mother.

BILLY

That son-of-a-bitch.

Billy throws the rock and it almost hits Cal, who doesn't budge. The boys walk over. Cal stands. Billy gets right in Cal's face.

BILLY (CONT'D)

My Mother?

Billy pushes Cal hard, who falls back, partially submerged in the water.

Cal has landed near the pump, and turns on the timer as he gets up. Billy starts to close in.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Come on, Oxley, get up!

Before Billy can get back to Cal, the pump suddenly SPUTTERS to life. It's loud, like an engine without oil. It startles the boys. Cal feigns surprise.

CAL

Run, quick, it's going to explode! It's attached to a gas line. Run!

They all start to run. Billy and Joe are almost out of sight before Billy turns and sees Cal calmly turning off the pump. He turns back, with Joe right behind him.

BILLY

Explosion, my ass.

Suddenly, Billy is right back in Cal's face. He pushes and Cal pushes back. Quickly the two of them are rolling in the mud. Instead of fists, this is more of a wrestling match and, as we have seen, Billy is good. Every time Cal tries to stand or get leverage, Billy pins him to the ground. Joe laughs.

JOE

Take him, Billy. Keep him down.

Billy enjoys the power, as he digs deeper into Cal's back and neck, tying up his arms. Eventually, Cal is too tired to get up. A small GASH opens under his right eye, trickling BLOOD.

BILLY

Now, your mouth is shut, isn't it?
Faggot.

Cal doesn't respond, but his silence is a kind of defiance, and Billy finally releases him.

Billy laughs arrogantly as they walk away, taking time to kick over the cooler, leaving Catfish flopping on the ground, desperate for water.

Cal watches Billy and Joe disappear, laughing, into the woods.

Cal then gets up, and carefully scoops the half-dozen catfish into his pond.

CAL

There you go, guys. Sorry. Say hello to your new neighbors, stretch out a bit.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OXLEY HOME - BACK PORCH -- EVENING

Close on a cigarette and pull back to reveal Cal sitting, deep in thought, tugging on the square and listening to Italian ARIAS playing on the STEREO inside. Every once in a while he touches the cut above his eye.

An open wallet sits on his lap. A PHOTO in his free hand. It is an old photo of a boy, roughly his age. But the boy in the photo looks built for speed and strength. 150 lbs. of sheer muscle and a bright intensity in his eyes. We recognize the boy from the first photo that showed Cal at age 2 1/2.

Approaching headlights interrupt Cal's thoughts. He tosses away his cigarette and places the photo and wallet in his back pocket. The front screen door slams shut.

SHARON OXLEY, 49, appears at the kitchen screen door. She is a striking woman with soft features and full hair that she lets from its bun after a long day at work. Loose, her hair falls below her shoulders. Lovely. Years ago, she could've been a beauty queen.

SHARON

Hi, darlin'.

CAL

Hi, darlin'.

SHARON

What are you doing?

CAL
Waiting on you.

He turns, forgetting the injury under his eye. Sharon sees it.

SHARON
Inside, cowboy.

INT. OXLEY HOME - KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Cal sits on a kitchen stool, while his mother tends to the wound.

SHARON
So, who's the culprit?

CAL
(playing)
Why, what are ya gonna do, take him out?

SHARON
I could.

CAL
If it gets to the point of my mom
fighting my fights for me, we'd be better
off moving.

Sharon laughs.

CAL (CONT'D)
I was thinking we might could get some
chicken tonight.

SHARON
We could, but could a third person come
along?

CAL
Who?

SHARON
His name is Larry Edwards.

Sharon butterfly bandages the cut and tosses out the wrapper.

CAL
How come I never heard of this "Larry
Edwards?"

SHARON

He's on his way over. You can hear of him then.

CAL

And what does this Larry Edwards do?

SHARON

He's a debit insurance salesman. (beat) I know. Fascinating. But he's a nice man...

CAL

And the only one with the guts to ask you out.

SHARON

Something like that. We're going to Ft. Smith for dinner. I think the Holiday Inn.

CAL

So he's got guts. But no taste.

Sharon walks into her bedroom. Cal drifts into the hall.

INT. BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Standing in front of her bedroom mirror. She prepares for her date, touching her face, as if to make it young again.

SHARON

Your homework done for tomorrow?

CAL (O.S.)

Yeah, I did it last Monday.

SHARON

Probably before they gave it to you.

INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

Cal stares at himself, at the damage Billy Barrow caused to his face in the hallway mirror, touches the bandage.

CAL

Ma, have you heard from Mike lately?

INTERCUT

Sharon sighs.

SHARON

No.

CAL

Know where's he's living?

SHARON

You know he moves a lot. And he doesn't seem that interested in keeping in touch. Why all this sudden talk about Mike?

CAL

I don't know. Just wondering. What he's been doing?

SHARON

He's a rig hand, so he's probably on an oil rig. Somewhere.

Sharon walks into the hallway, dressed for dinner.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I'd tell you if I knew.

HEADLIGHTS appear through the window.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Get the front door for me will ya, Hon.
(beat) How do I look?

CAL

Real good. As usual. (beat) How do I look?

SHARON

With the bandage, pretty damn tough.

Just then, there is that silly "shave and a haircut, two bits" rap at the front door... Cal shows his displeasure at the corny knock, then opens the door and there stands a debit insurance salesman. LARRY, 50's, could be a poster boy for pasty white guys with uncomfortable hair. He has a swirling sweep that appears to begin from the very bottom of the back of his head.

CAL

(to himself)

This is too easy.

LARRY

Hi... Larry Edwards. Something tells me you're Calvin.

CAL

Something is wrong.

LARRY

Pardon?

CAL

It's Cal.

Cal let's him in, but doesn't offer Larry a seat, so Larry stands there awkwardly, staring around the room.

LARRY

Your Mom tells me you're quite a little science whiz. Cal.

Cal smiles politely, but offers no answer.

LARRY (CONT'D)

So, what are you going to be... a geologist?... Keep us all in oil? Maybe I can buy from you directly... Heh, heh.

Cal is staring at Larry's hair.

CAL

(straight-faced)

Actually, I'm studying Alopecia Areata.

LARRY

(nodding, as if he understands)

That's wonderful.

There is a long beat as the two of them look around the room. Sharon emerges before it gets ugly.

SHARON

Larry. I see you've met my son.

LARRY

Yes, I have. It was a pleasure to meet you, Cal. Good luck with your... whatever.

Cal gives Larry an approving Father-to-boyfriend wink. He then hugs Sharon - tightly. Larry, smiles back weakly as he escorts Sharon out the door.

EXT. - HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cal watches as Larry's car taillights disappear down the road.

INT. - SHARON'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Cal retrieves a chair and places it just inside the closet, repeating a ritual he has performed before.

He pulls down a couple of photo albums and hears something fall as he does. He feels around the top of the shelf, and with his fingertips, can feel the edge of a lone shoe box all the way at the back. This is a new discovery. He stretches up just far enough to pull it down.

INT. - SHARON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal sits on the bed with the two photo albums to the side and the shoe box, which is duct-taped shut. Using his dexterous hands, he gently slides the top off the shoebox without severing the tape.

Cal pulls out the contents of the box one by one, and lays them on the bed, keeping one ear toward the driveway, to make sure he doesn't get caught.

It is half-filled with old NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS and PHOTOS of MAC OXLEY, Cal's father. There are headlines, wrestling box scores and accolades, dated late 1960's. Mac looks dynamic and powerful in his wrestling gear. Cal stops at one clipping.

MAC'S OBITUARY, accompanied by a photo, dated February 21, 1993. We see pieces; auto ACCIDENT in the snow. He was 42. It also mentions that a SON MIKE, 18, was also in the accident, but unhurt.

A LARGE MANILA ENVELOPE sits underneath the obit. Cal opens it and pulls out the contents. They are PHOTOS and CLIPPINGS of MIKE OXLEY, who looks even more dynamic than his Father. He appears physically larger and a bit meaner. Headlines read;

"Sallisaw's Oxley Regional Champ."

"Oxley State Champ at 167 lbs."

Cal picks up one screaming headline, "Oxley pins Herlbert with last second Reverse Cradle!" He scans the article quickly, then he picks up a single, white, aged envelope sitting in the bottom of the shoe box. Inside are a couple of newspaper clippings.

One has been ripped from the paper and contains only the headline and a piece of the first paragraph.

INSERT HEADLINE -- March 3, 1992 "Oxley out! -- Serious knee injury threatens College career." Mike Oxley's much anticipated trip to the NCAA's is now history. Last night at 1:34 of the second period, the Oklahoma Sophomore tore...

The story ends there. Cal looks through the box for the rest of the article. There is none. But there is another dated newspaper clipping. It's a REGIONAL newspaper.

INSERT -- COMMUNITY SECTION - February 7, 1985

HEADLINE - "A BOY REMEMBERS -- THE OXLEYS"

Cal - digs in, as if discovering a long lost love letter. After a moment, and with the arias playing softly inside, we hear what he reads.

CAL (V.O.)

"Mike Oxley, age 13. My hero is my dad Mac Oxley".

Cal reacts to hearing that out loud.

CAL (CONT'D)

My dad, Mac Oxley... "Mac Oxley is my best friend. He was one of the great school boy wrestlers in the history of Oklahoma. He...

At this point the voice reading the piece cross-fades from Cal's to that of another boy, maybe a bit younger and a bit more "Okie".

V.O. (CONT)

"...never feared anyone. He teaches me the same. How not to fear anyone... How to win... how to be so prepared that the match is often over before it starts, he says. He teaches me confidence. Prepares me for life ahead. Confidence and preparation go hand-in-hand. I wouldn't be anywhere without my dad. We're a team.

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT) (CONT'D)
He teaches me how to win. We carry each other."

Cal has to wipe away a sudden tear. He places the articles back into the shoebox and picks up one last old news photo of his brother, Mike. Cal searches for something familiar in the photo. Anything at all.

CLOSE ON PHOTO - Mike's face.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON MIKE'S FACE

Now 30 years-old. He's lying on his back, staring at the ceiling. O.S. SOUNDS of metal banging.

MALE V.O.
Hey,... Oxley!

A gray ceiling... then bars. We're in a jail cell. A GUARD stands outside the cell.

GUARD
Ass up. You're outta here.

Mike sits up and rubs his eyes. He barely resembles the handsome, schoolboy star he used to be. A handful of mostly homemade tattoos ink his still muscular arms. His face has aged twice as fast. As he passes by the guard...

GUARD (CONT'D)
See you in a few weeks, Oxley? That's about your limit, ain't it?

Mike gives him the finger.

EXT. MIKE'S TRAILER -- DAY

It is a small beat-to-hell single trailer in the middle of the scariest looking trailer park in Oklahoma. A torn LAZYBOY rests on a small patch of grass out front. A rusted WEIGHTLIFTING BENCH sits on the small porch, next to a boxer's heavy bag hanging from a dying tree.

Mike pulls into the driveway in a late seventies Chevy that's on its last legs. He gets out of the car with two six packs of whatever was on sale, and walks slowly toward the trailer.

INT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - 3PM

Kids slam lockers and head for home. Amidst the crowd, Cal looks singularly alone. He lets the students pile past him as he drifts over toward the trophy case, outside the gym.

INT. - TROPHY CASE - SAME

Cal's reflection rests on the trophies bearing his father and brother's names.

Joe Easley, in wrestling sweats, walks by.

JOE

Hey, Oxley, you can quit looking. They don't give trophies for being a geek.

Laughter up and around him, but Cal keeps looking.

INT SCHOOL GYM -- MOMENTS LATER

Cal scales the folded-up bleachers. In the background, we hear a man YELLING instructions, followed by short blows of a referee's WHISTLE, then a lot of heavy breathing and moving bodies.

MAN (V.O.)

Switch!... Switch!... Switch!

Cal finally reaches the second tier of seats. Safely out of view in the upper corner of the bleachers, he leans forward to see the action below.

CAL'S POV - GYM FLOOR

Fifteen pairs of WRESTLERS performing floating drills -- one wrestler kneeling down, while the other places his chest on the wrestler's back and spins around him without the use of his hands.

COACH STU TENNENT, early 50's, handsome and powerfully built, is the man with the whistle. On every call of "Switch", each wrestler changes direction. With a quick look to the stands, he notices Cal.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS - Working their drills. They're a tough-looking bunch of kids -- short hair, muscular, sweat, BRUISES, CAULIFLOWER EAR and MAT BURNS -- the antithesis of our boy Cal sitting twenty rows up. One of those kids is Billy Barrow. It is an intimidating ritual to watch.

CAL
(impressed)
Damn.

TENNENT
Okay, end of Pine Road and back. Steady pace. Back in twenty minutes. Go!

The boys hustle out of the gym, and Tennent retreats to his office.

When Cal is certain everyone is gone, he slowly makes his way down the bleachers and onto the mat. He stands there, feeling the rubber surface for the first time. He begins to move around, imitating some of the action he saw earlier. Awkwardly.

EXT. WOODS -- EVENING

Cal walks home alone through the woods that run parallel to the high school. He hears VOICES nearby and stops to see who it is.

CAL'S POV - FIVE BOYS, Roughly his age, standing together facing A GIRL whose BACK is to us. This might normally spell trouble. In this case, however, the girl seems to be in charge. We cannot see her face.

GIRL
I told you, don't bunch up.

The boys back up a step and suddenly, she lifts up her shirt for a brief moment, revealing her bra. All the boys react.

ALL TOGETHER
Whoa!... First time man! Holy shit...! I can't believe she did it!... Sweet!

Cal ducks behind a bush, drops his voice a few registers and yells as loud as he can.

CAL
Hey, get away from that girl!

The boys turn and run as fast as they can.

The girl tucks her shirt in and turns toward the voice. This is LULI STRINGFELLOW, 15, and a life-long friend of Cal's. She exists somewhere within that confusing state of tomboy and blossoming woman and has a rough edge to her that hides whatever beauty may be blossoming.

LULI

I knew that was you. What the hell did you do that for?

CAL

Everyone knows you grew melons over the Summer. You don't have to show 'em.

LULI

I got reasons. Anyway, they like it.

He turns around toward Luli and she playfully starts to open her shirt again.

CAL

Cut it out. I've known you too long.

They start walking.

LULI

Is the pump working?

CAL

Not good enough. I'm gonna have to buy a new one or I'm not gonna have many fish to sell. It's almost a five-hundred dollar pump.

LULI

How much you got?

CAL

Not that much.

They walk in silence while Luli counts her money.

CAL (CONT'D)

If I tell you something, you promise you won't laugh?

LULI

No.

CAL

I wanna join the wrestling team.

LULI
Do you know how?

CAL
No, but Mike was a Collegiate All-American. My dad was a college national champion before that. I figure it's gotta be in the genes.

She takes an exaggerated look at his butt.

LULI
Doesn't look like it to me.

CAL
I bet he could show me a lot.

LULI
Who, Mike?... You don't even know where he is.

CAL
Yeah, I do.

LULI
Yeah?

Luli doesn't buy it, but she gently decides to leave it alone.

LULI (CONT'D)
Well, would you wear those little tight-fitting wrestling suits?

CAL
I guess.

LULI
I'd watch you.

CAL
Do me a favor. I wanna try a couple of moves on you.

LULI
Sure.

CAL
Go ahead and resist. I'll go slow.

Cal gets on his hands and knees.

CAL (CONT'D)

Kneel next to me. Put your arm around my waist, then try to push me forward. I'll try to roll you.

LULI

Then what'll we do?

CAL

Nothing. Don't get any ideas.

Luli and Cal get set. She starts pushing him forward. Cal hooks her elbow with his arm, thrusts his hips and easily rolls, nearly throws, Luli off of him.

CAL (CONT'D)

You alright?

LULI

Oh, yeah. Nice move.

Then while Cal is not expecting it, she uses her weight to suddenly roll him flat on his back, then straddles him, so he can't get up. He stares at her, dead-pan, waiting for her to let him go.

CAL

Can I get up now?

LULI

Only if we can do it again.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE -- SAME

The inside of the trailer matches the outside; something you might see on the series, COPS. Southern rock plays loudly in the background. An exposed gas flame keeps the place warm on this chilly Autumn afternoon.

Mike, dressed in only jeans and Red Wing boots, sits at the kitchen table, watching a T.V. chat show with the sound down. There are four beer cans, three empties and one in his hand. Half a joint and a couple of "roaches" rest in an ashtray.

A trashy/pretty 30 year old woman, JILL, comes up behind him. She was gorgeous ten years ago.

MIKE

(re: T.V.)

God, people are stupid. Go on these shows like assholes.

JILL
I'd go on, tell Dr. Phil about my mean
boyfriend who makes me smoke this dirt
weed.

MIKE
You could go on home where you belong, or
I'd give you more to tell him.

Jill tries to cuddle around his neck, but he won't warm
to it. She tries to turn up the volume, but he blocks
her hand.

JILL
Baby, the sound's off.

MIKE
Exactly.

She grabs a beer and backs off from his latest mood.

INT. - OXLEY'S HOUSE - SAME

Cal enters. He opens the refrigerator door and starts
yanking out food-ham, cheese, chips, bread and three
cherry tomatoes, before Sharon enters.

CAL
Hey, Ma.

SHARON
Hey, Mr. Man, making your own supper?

He proceeds to make a sandwich by placing the chips
strategically between the ham and cheese, then the
tomatoes on top of the chips and finally smashing it all
together between bread. Takes a huge bite. Sees his
mother's expression.

CAL
(mouth full)
What? I'm hungry.

SHARON
How was school?

CAL
Rob Weaver threw up today.

SHARON
Was he sick?

CAL

No. He filled his thermos with scotch
and drank it during two breaks and lunch.

SHARON

How awful.

CAL

Not really. It cut fifth period in half.

Watching Cal devour his sandwich brings a smile to her
face. He smiles a mouthful back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - SHARON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sharon is asleep, her reading lamp still on, a book open
on her chest.

Cal enters, tucks her in, turns off the light.

INT. - SHARON'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal locks the door, then strips down to his boxers and
stands on his mother's scale. 100 lbs. Barely. He
checks and rechecks, but every time, he's 100 lbs. Even.

Cal looks in the mirror, frustrated by his skinny frame.
He makes a wiry muscle, but it ain't impressive.

Then he stares at his reflection, into his own eyes.
Deeper. Deeper. What does he have in there?

INT. - CAL'S BEDROOM - LATER

With a half-gallon of ice cream opened on his desk, and
in between spoonfuls, Cal searches for Mike on the
internet. Tons of stories of his former success, none of
his present whereabouts.

He does an ADVANCED SEARCH, typing in Mike Oxley Rig
Hand. And up pops two articles from the Sawyerville News
and the Opaloma Courier.

Both from the crime blotter. "Mike Oxley, rig hand..."
Cal reads the articles. Mike had gotten into a fight
with a foreman. Fifty stitches for the foreman, two
weeks in jail for Mike.

Cal writes down the information.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OIL PATCH / RIGS - DAY

Mike approaches the TOOLPUSHERS (supervisors) of a few different drilling rigs, only to be told there is no work.

INT. CLASSROOM -- SAME

ANGLE ON CAL - who watches the clock carefully from his desk.

THE BELL RINGS creating instant chaos. Cal very slowly gathers his backpack and starts out. His teacher, BILL FENELON, whiskered and late 30's, looks up from the work on his desk.

FENELON

Cal, excellent work on your geology report... really extensive. I know some geologists in the region who would be happy to have that much knowledge of Shistocene.

CAL

Tell them. I'd be happy to sell it to them.

ESTABLISHING - MID-STATE DRILLING COMPANY - DAY

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE -- SAME

Mike sits quietly, watching from across the desk as PETER HARRIS, 45, Personnel, reads his employment application.

HARRIS

Mike, I did a little checking.

Harris continues looking over the application. Mike stands and begins to leave.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Don't be so quick to walk out. I just want to...

Mike stops.

MIKE

I'll show up... Sober. I'll spin a pipe.
I'll take the grave yard shift and be the
last guy on the rig. And I'll keep my
mouth shut. You get no problems with me
here. I can't afford it.

Harris thinks a beat.

HARRIS

Okay, then. But next time you walk into
my office with beer on your breath, don't
bother.

INT. GYM - DAY

Tennent is yelling instructions to multiple groups of
wrestlers in different phases of their routines.

TENNENT

Give me a sit out, Markowski. Deep sit
out, then... Switch!... Switch! Thirty
seconds! Sawyer, you're stalling!
Jesse, work the legs! Don't let him walk
you around. Damnit, Botnick, you look
like a crab on ice skates. Hold your
ground. Twenty seconds!

THE DOOR opens and Cal walks in quietly. This time, he
takes a seat just a couple of rows up, in full view of
the mat. Tennent is the only one who notices.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

Keep it going!... Switch partners after
thirty!

Tennent walks slowly toward Cal.

CAL

Is it okay to be here?

TENNENT

Well, that depends. Are you here to
watch or do you want to get on the mat?

CAL

I'd like to get on the mat, Sir.

TENNENT

I'm Coach Tennent.

CAL

I'm Cal.

TENNENT

What's your weight, Cal?

CAL

103 pound class... I guess.

TENNENT

Good. We're a little thin there.

Tennent and Cal walk through the two dozen plus bodies moving around on the mat. Along the way Cal and Billy Barrow make eye contact. Billy glares. Cal looks down.

MONTAGE

An assistant coach runs Cal through a series of basics, stance, positioning, balance. He is raw, but determined. The lightweights workout with the lightweights, middles with middles and heavies with heavyweights.

Cal is rotating with two other wrestlers, one, TIMMY HUGHES, is the team's regular 103-pounder. At the sound of the whistle, Cal tries the same "sitting switch" that flattened Luli earlier. Just when he thinks he has scored a reversal, Timmy utilizes a counter move and flattens Cal. Billy Barrow loves it.

BILLY

Nice move, Catfish.

Joe laughs, as do other wrestlers. Cal is humiliated. Billy walks over close.

BILLY (CONT'D)

If you wanted another beating, why didn't you just ask nicely.

Cal immediately lunges for Billy and they are down on the mat, flailing and grappling.

Takes two heavyweights to pull them apart, holding them up like a couple of suitcases.

TENNENT

You two have a little history between you?

BILLY

Yessir. I think Oxley is interested in my mother, Coach.

The wrestlers laugh out loud. Tennent is a little startled by the answer and tries hard to conceal his amusement.

TENNENT

Oxley, are you interested in Barrow's Mother?

CAL

No, sir. I've never seen Barrow's Mother. (then loud enough so Barrow can hear)...not with all of her clothes on.

And the fists are flying again.

EXT. GYM - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Cal, with an obvious mat-burn, wheels his bike past Tennent.

TENNENT

How's the face?

CAL

Good. It's a little hot.

Awkward pause.

CAL (CONT'D)

You gonna ask me about Barrow's mother?

TENNENT

Should I?

CAL

No, sir.

Another beat.

TENNENT

Have you ever seen Barrow's mother?

CAL

No. Just with clothes, yes. I mean. No, I haven't.

TENNENT

Your last name is Oxley?

CAL

Yessir.

TENNENT
Mac Oxley's boy?

CAL
And Mike's brother.

TENNENT
(hesitant)
How is Mike?

CAL
I don't know. I haven't seen him in a while. Do you know him?

Tennent hesitates, then smiles.

TENNENT
Every wrestler knows about Mike Oxley.

CAL
I don't guess I'll ever be that good.

TENNENT
You got one thing in common with your brother. You don't seem to have a lot of fear.

CAL
Thank you, Sir.

TENNENT
It's a commitment. No easy days here.

CAL
Not interested in easy, Sir.

TENNENT
Good. And enough with the Sir.

CAL
Yessir, Coach, Sir. I mean. You know what I mean.

Cal rides away, feeling new found optimism surge through his body.

INT. SHARON'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Cal sits silently at the table, closely watching Sharon, who is over the stove, spooning food from pan-to-plate.

Dinner is chicken fried steak, vegetables, boiled potatoes and a salad. She begins to spoon gravy on Cal's chicken fried steak.

CAL

More gravy, Ma.

He doesn't say when until the plate is flooded. He scoops on more potatoes and begins to eat like a man possessed.

Sharon stares at Cal.

LATER

The two of them sit across from each other, eating in silence.

Cal takes a third helping. You can tell he's full, but he's still eating. He occasionally glances up at Sharon, who is closely watching his actions. The silence grows uncomfortable. Finally, Cal feels he had better speak.

CAL (CONT'D)

I joined the wrestling team today.

She immediately hits the table with her hand, startling Cal.

SHARON

Damn it, I knew it! You're eating to gain weight. You're wrestling!

CAL

I just said that.

SHARON

Next you'll be trying to spit weight. When did this start?

CAL

I told you... Today.

SHARON

Why, Calvin?

CAL

It looks like fun.

SHARON

Don't mess with me, Cal.

Cal hesitates, not wanting to answer, then;

CAL

Mike wrestled.

Sharon takes a long beat. This is the conversation she had always hoped to avoid.

SHARON

Baby, you and Mike are two entirely different people.

CAL

What's that mean?

SHARON

It means it was in his blood... whatever you guys call it. Wrestling was Mike's thing. You have a lot of other things going on.

CAL

Name three.

SHARON

Geology, your music, science club, your catfish pond, debating, school newspaper, how many more do you want?

CAL

And, if I wrestle, I can't do all that?

SHARON

No.

CAL

Why, will it make me stupid?

SHARON

Apparently. That was a stupid question. Cal, I know wrestling. It's demanding. It'll take you away from other things... Everything else comes to a... Why now?

CAL

Mike wrestled... And Dad.

SHARON

I know. You said that already. And it ate them up. Mike also got hurt and he was built like a car. You are a 98 pound bean pole.

CAL
100 and rising. And thanks for reminding me.

SHARON
Should we pretend you're something else?

CAL
No, they have a 103 pound weight class, or have you forgotten everything?

They sit in silence again. Then the subject shifts.

CAL (CONT'D)
You know that Mike never lost a high school match?

SHARON
(irresolute)
It doesn't matter.

CAL
He had ninety-six pins in 121 matches.

SHARON
I know. Cal, why are you so interested in Mike all of a sudden?

Cal hesitates.

CAL
I get beat up a lot.

She realizes he is serious.

SHARON
That was one time Cal.

CAL
One that you know of. I'm tired of being...

SHARON
What?

CAL
Me.

Cal rises and strides to his room. Sharon sits in silence until Cal returns for his plate.

SHARON
You have no idea who Mike is.

CAL
He's my brother.

SHARON
One who hasn't been around in ten years.

CAL
Who's fault is that?

SHARON
(beat -- defeated)
Calvin. It'll be the biggest
disappointment of your life.

EXT. CATFISH POND -- NIGHT

Cal is simultaneously tinkering with the pump and feeding the fish. He is clearly irritated and mutters to himself.

LULI approaches Cal from behind. For some reason, she is dressed reminiscent of Daisy Mae from L'il Abner.

LULI
Talking to your fish again, Dr.
Doolittle.

Cal turns to see her posing in her new outfit, as she lights a cigarette.

LULI (CONT'D)
How freaked out would you be if they ever
talked back?

Luli sits next to Cal, a little disappointed he didn't notice. She offers him a drag, and he surprises her by turning it down.

LULI (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

CAL
Nothing... I wanna wrestle, Luli.

LULI
I thought you were. What happened?

CAL
I told Mom, and she almost gave birth.

LULI
That's not good at her age.

Cal and Luli sit in silence. Luli sits back and poses again. Finally Cal notices her outfit.

CAL
What are you wearing?

LULI
Do you like it?

CAL
Sure. You going somewhere?

LULI
Nope, just here.

There is an awkward beat as she smiles at him. Then she leans in, brushes shoulders with him and whispers in his ear.

LULI (CONT'D)
I'd love to see you wrestle.

EXT. SCHOOL - PHONE BOOTH -- DAY

Cal has a pad, pencil and a phone book.

CAL
Personnel, please... Hi, do you have a
Mike Oxley working on any of your rigs?..
I'm his brother, and we have a family
emergency... Okay, Thanks.

INSERT LIST -- Cal crosses off another of several names
on a list. He dials another number and we...

CUT TO:

INT. BUS -- DAY

Cal sits toward the back of a sparsely crowded GREYHOUND
BUS, his back pack beside him. He holds the crumpled
sheet of paper.

PAPER - An address. "16 Hilltop Trailer Court, Rural
Route 2, Bartlesville, Arkansas".

CAL'S POV - The countryside through the bus window. Flat
and endless as a wasted life.

EXT. HILLTOP TRAILER COURT -- DAY.

Cal stands outside the entrance of Mike's run down trailer park. If cars were not parked in front of some of the trailers, one would think the area to be abandoned. The sight makes Cal a little uneasy. He looks again at the address. This has got to be wrong.

EXT. "16" HILLTOP COURT -- DAY

Cal knocks softly a couple of times. Then louder. Moments later, the front door cracks open.

Jill stands in the doorway, barely dressed. She looks as though she has been asleep for three days.

Cal hesitates, uncertain that he knocked on the right door.

JILL

Yeah?

CAL

I'm here to see Mike Oxley. I'm Cal...
Mike's brother... Is he here?

Jill doesn't respond. Instead, she walks back into the darkness, leaving the door open for Cal to enter on his own.

INT. MIKE'S TRAILER -- SAME

The SHADES are pulled. Cal can barely see as he adjusts from the bright light of outside. He stands quietly with his hands in his pockets, looking around.

Every inch of space in the small kitchen is covered with still dirty frying pans, plates, bottles and cans, none of which look as if they've been touched in weeks. Garbage sits on the counter. It's cold and he can smell the stale tobacco and beer mixing with the gas of the open stove top flame. It looks like survival or something less.

Mike leans in and lights a smoke off the flame, then slowly appears in the darkened doorway leading from the thin hall.

Cal doesn't recognize him. He stares silently, searching the face for something familiar. Whatever he expected is not what stands before him.

CAL

Mike?

Nothing.

CAL (CONT'D)

(looking for something to
say)

Cal... Calvin...

The two of them stand five feet apart, just staring at each other, until Cal can no longer hold the stare.

MIKE

How'd you find me?

CAL

It wasn't easy. Took me a while.

More silence, real uncomfortable.

CAL (CONT'D)

Can I use the bathroom? It was a long
bus ride.

Mike nods in the direction of the bathroom. Cal maneuvers his way down the hallway, around a couple of shotguns, and spilled out ammo.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal unzips, but he's too nervous to pee. He looks in the grime-smeared mirror and only gets a ghostly reflection back.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mike sits on the couch, beer in hand. Cal is across from him in the only other chair in the room. Neither says a word as they both sit, occasionally looking at each other. Jill watches it all while she paints her toenails. Finally;

MIKE

You didn't haul out here just to use the head.

CAL

No.

MIKE

What is it?

CAL

I was thinking about trying out. For the wrestling team. Maybe start as a 103. But I don't know much. I know a couple of things, but I don't think it's enough. Sit-out. Reversal, you know...

Mike stares at Cal for a long beat.

CAL (CONT'D)

What about just the basics?

Mike doesn't answer.

CAL (CONT'D)

I think I could be good. Don't look it, maybe, but... with the right teacher. Coach.

MIKE

I'm real busy right now.

Cal looks around the trailer. "Busy with what?"

CAL

(that thread just broke)
Okay. (beat) Maybe we can just visit sometime.

No answer.

CAL (CONT'D)

I just thought that... cause we're brothers, we could...

MIKE

(ashamed)
Sorry, kid. You picked the wrong place to come looking for heroes.

Mike rises and disappears into the back of the trailer. Jill looks blankly at Cal, who is fighting hard not to cry.

INT. BUS -- NIGHT.

Cal sits in the rear of the bus alone, fighting back tears, staring out the window. He looks down at the piece of paper he holds bearing Mike's address, then lets it blow out the open window.

INT. SOONER CAFE - DAY

We are in the middle of a bustling breakfast business at the cafe. A banner hangs over the kitchen, announcing the Wrestler's Breakfast Special, sold as the Half-Nelson (2 eggs and sausage), the 3/4 Nelson (3 eggs, sausage and ham) and the Full Nelson (illegal, but delicious, 4 eggs, sausage, ham and bacon).

We FOLLOW a WAITRESS, loaded down with a breakfast order. She passes by a BOOTH occupied by Stu Tennent and Sharon.

SHARON

If I told you I have real concerns about Cal wrestling, would you know what I was talking about?

TENNENT

I assumed he had your permission, Sharon.

SHARON

He doesn't. I don't think Cal is interested in wrestling at all. He's interested in being friends with his brother.

TENNENT

I don't know. He seems eager to learn.

SHARON

I'm sure he is, but I've already lost one kid to this sport. That's enough.

Sharon tries to subdue her growing emotion.

The waitress appears. She's been working here since time began.

WAITRESS

Coach, what'll ya have?

TENNENT

Ladies first.

WAITRESS

Not during wrestling season. Just kidding. Sharon?

SHARON

Coffee.

TENNENT

The special for me. (beat) I get to eat what my boy's don't.

Waitress leaves.

SHARON

I know your only memory of Mike was the kid who would back down to no one, but that didn't exactly prepare him for the rest of his life.

Tennent thinks for a moment.

TENNENT

If I say no to Cal, I think you may be only asking for a different kind of trouble. How about I watch him closely and make certain he is out there for the right reasons? Keep him practicing, he doesn't even have to get in a match.

SHARON

So if another "Mike" shows up at practice determined to win at the cost of everything else, are you going to tell him to ease off?

TENNENT

Yes, ma'am. I would.

SHARON

Why should I trust you?

TENNENT

Because I care about these kids, too.

Waitress sets down coffees.

WAITRESS

Ralph says it's on him today, as long as you tear the heads off St. Luke's.

Waitress walks away.

Sharon gathers her things and stands.

SHARON

Maybe it's not wrestling. Maybe it's this town.

TENNENT

So let the boy find his own way here.
(pause) I think he could surprise you.

SHARON

I can't afford any more surprises, Coach.
I'm running out of sons.

She walks off without turning back.

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM -- DAY

Cal sits alone at a table, chowing through bad cafeteria food.

Luli saunters through the room with her food tray, wearing something that probably fit her when she was nine. Every table watches her as she passes including Billy Barrow's. Joe Easley whispers something into Billy's ear as she passes.

BILLY

You're kidding.

JOE

Fifty cents a shot.

Billy digs into his pocket.

BILLY

Wonder what she'll do for a buck-and-a-half.

ON Luli. She spots Cal, and slides in next to him.

CAL

Everyone is watching you, you know.

LULI

I know. It's about time.

CAL

I didn't say they were admiring you.

Cal is nervously bouncing his knees together, shaking the table.

LULI

Nervous or just happy to see me?

CAL

I have a wrestle-off today against Timmy Hughes.

LULI

What's a wrestle-off?

CAL

It's when the backup wrestles the starter in each weight class to see who will wrestle in the next dual meet.

LULI

I thought you said you could never beat Timmy Hughes.

CAL

I did say that. And then I challenged him in the hallway after third period. It was like I was possessed.

LULI

Are you going to be wearing tights?

CAL

They're called singlets.

LULI

I'll be there.

CAL

No, you won't. I don't want anyone there. I'm sure when it's over, the singlet will be on inside out.

Just then Billy, Joe and the others park themselves in front of the table..

BILLY

Hey, Luli, when is the next show?

LULI

I don't know, Billy, how often do you dream?

BILLY

Hilarious. Nice girlfriend, Oxley.

CAL

Thanks, Barrow. I'll take that as a compliment coming from an amoeba.

BILLY

Keep it up, Cal. You'll be eating cottage cheese full time.

They walk away.

LULI

What's an amoeba?

CAL

It's a spineless animal that lacks any permanent cell organs.

LULI

Speaking of which, don't be such a pansy, Cal. You're not gonna die from Timmy Hughes. Anyway, what have you got to lose?

CAL

Nothing.

(then)

Alright, come if you want to.

LULI

Maybe I will.

INT. SALLISAW GYM -- DAY

The team, thirty or so of them, including Cal, sits in a half circle on the wrestling mat. Stu Tennent addresses the boys.

TENNENT

Alright, let's talk about Ridgecreek. Last year was the first time in fifteen years that they snuck by us. Let's make that an anomaly. Kratzert, you know what an anomaly is?

Kratzert, the heavyweight, smiles.

KRATZERT

No, sir. But it sounds delicious.

All laugh, including coach Tennent.

TENNENT

Good answer, heavy, but it actually means it ain't going to happen again. (beat) Wrestle-offs today, boys. Drew, get 'em started.

DREW FRAZIER, 18, a tough 171 pounder and the team captain, who resembles Mike-a long time ago-leads the team in their warm-ups.

DREW

Partner up! Fifty pummels, then foot fires and push and snaps. On my count. Go.

Cal and the other wrestlers go through their conditioning drills in Marine-like unison. He is maybe a half-step behind the others, but determined.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYM -- LATER, DAY

EXTREME CLOSE ON LULI

LULI

COME ON CAL!! RAP HIS TIGHTS AROUND HIS HEAD!!

PULL BACK to reveal Luli and about a hundred other students. Even practice draws fans at this school.

ON THE MAT - The wrestle-offs are set up like actual matches with wrestlers wearing either home or away singlets, to create two different teams.

Since Cal is competing in the 103 pound class, his is the first match. He walks rather underwhelmingly to the center of the mat and shakes hands with Timmy, his eyes never leaving the floor. Tennent referees. The two square off. Cal immediately goes after Timmy, who is caught by surprise. He quickly recovers and soon Cal is on the bottom looking for a way out.

TENNENT

Work it, work it. Watch your time. Ninety seconds.

Timmy, with the clear edge in skills, quickly has Cal on his back.

However, before he can move in for the pin, Cal instinctively hooks Timmy's elbow, arches up onto his head and feet into a "bridge" using Timmy's own weight and momentum to quickly reverse their positions and suddenly finds himself on top.

Luli jumps up from her seat.

LULI
GO BABY!! INTRODUCE HIM TO THE OX!!

Cal is so surprised by his reversal, he doesn't seem to know what to do next. Timmy, equally jolted, quickly gets back to his stomach, (base) and sets up for a reversal. At this point, Cal is just hanging on, flailing away.

And just as quickly, Timmy is back on top of Cal and has placed him in an arm-bar hold. Seconds later, Cal is once again on his back and Tennent slams his hand onto the mat, signifying a pin.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

A dejected Cal sits alone on a bench in the far end of the locker room. He is in street clothes. His tossed wrestling singlet, sits in a small pile at the other end of the floor.

The rest of the wrestler's laugh and roughhouse like true teammates. Their camaraderie echoes off the metal lockers, even as they drift away, leaving Cal entirely alone. Cal stares at his locker, too angry, sore and frustrated to move.

TENNENT (O.S.)
Cal?!

Cal doesn't answer.

TENNENT (CONT'D)
Oxley, you back here?

CAL
Yes, sir!

Cal slowly rises, picks up his singlet and folds it neatly on the bench next to him. Tennent appears by his side.

TENNENT
Look on your face says you were expecting to win.

CAL

No... but to last at least a minute.

TENNENT

Hey, don't think you didn't get Timmy's attention for about ten seconds. Sometimes that's all it takes. (beat) You didn't quit or give in to fear. Bring that every week, I'll do my best to teach you the rest. I saw a spark out there, kid.

CAL

It's a deal, sir... I mean coach. I mean... hell, yeah.

INT. GYM -- NIGHT.

The stands are filled. Cal sits with Luli, and other students watching Timmy compete in an actual match, against Ridgecreek High.

Timmy is struggling in the grasp of his opponent.

Suddenly, he is AIRBORNE, courtesy of a "pancake", a common, but dangerous move where the wrestler is actually lifted and thrown backwards, over his opponent's head, with the top wrestler landing on top of the thrown wrestler. Timmy resists, decreasing his opponent's leverage, causing him to land on his shoulder.

Timmy yells out in pain. The referee halts the match. Medical default. The crowd watches silently while Stu and the team trainer stand over the fallen wrestler. The opponent is declared the winner.

Cal watches in tight-lipped, SILENCE as Timmy is helped from the mat.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE/PHONE BOOTH -- NIGHT

Cal, at the phone booth, dials a number. We can HEAR the other line RINGING through the earpiece... four... five rings. Cal is about to hang up when someone finally answers.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Hello.

CAL
(beat)
Is Mike home?

WOMAN (V.O.)
No.

CAL
Is this Jill?

WOMAN (V.O.)
No.

CAL
You know where he is?

WOMAN (V.O.)
No.

CAL
Could you leave him a message? On a
piece of paper. Could you tell him that
Cal is wrestling Friday night?

Long silence.

CAL (CONT'D)
Did you get that?

WOMAN (V.O.)
Yeah...

She hangs up, and slowly Cal does, too.

EXT. OIL RIG -- NIGHT

Mike, covered with MUD, and four other hands are manning
a rig, in the middle of nowhere. TERRY JAY, the
Toolpusher, sticks his head out of the engine room and
calls to Mike.

TERRY
Oxley!... Oxley!... Come on in!

Mike's ears perk up to his name. He instinctively
recalls a time when hearing it meant cheers, not trouble.

Pull back slowly as Mike walks to the office. His body
language says he already know he's being let go.

Track back wider, until Mike looks small against the wide
expanse of sky.

Mike enters the engine room. Receives the bad news of being let go. Leaves before Terry's even done talking.

And we watch him walk into the darkness until it swallows him whole.

EXT. SALLISAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM -- NIGHT

Building crowd rumblings can be heard from inside the gym.

A large MARQUIS in front of the gym promotes tonight's match. "WRESTLING TONITE-SALLISAW VS. ST. LUKE'S" 7:30 PM

INT. GYM -- SAME

It is filling to capacity with students and fans from both schools.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- SAME

Roughly twenty feet below the gym, fourteen wrestlers from each squad, stand huddled in their underwear, surrounding a large official SCALE. Behind the scale stands the REFEREE, who is flanked by the two respective coaches of each squad. This is the ever-entertaining weigh-in that must be conducted prior to the match.

As the new official 103 pounder, Cal is first on the scale.

Cal appears slowly from the shadows and gingerly steps onto the scale.

REFEREE

One-O-one!

Cal steps back off the scale.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

St. Luke's!

ST. LUKE'S COACH

Mark Hayes.

Mark Hayes steps confidently to the scale. Mark is quite physically built and actually appears a lot larger than Cal, and, thanks to a five o'clock shadow, looks about 25.

Cal, who has never even seen a razor, stands off to the side, quietly stunned at the sight of Mark Hayes.

REFEREE

One-O-three.

Hayes slowly steps off and glares at Cal.

Cal speaks softly to Kratzert, the heavyweight.

CAL

He has no neck. How the hell does he turn his head?

Cal looks up at Kratzert, who also has no neck. Kratzert smirks and bites into a Mars Bar.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- SAME

Each wrestler is involved in his own style of preparation, either moving around nervously, sitting or laying down.

Cal, still not feeling a part of the team, sits alone in front of his locker, breathing slowly, methodically.

Tennent approaches Cal.

TENNENT

Cal, this kid is good. He shoots relentlessly and moves non-stop. Stay with him one period at a time. And never stop out there.

CAL

First law of Thermodynamics, Coach. I know.

TENNENT

You can explain that to me later, kid. Tonight, just don't get your tail pinned. Drew, take it up!

INT. - GYM - CONTINUOUS

The wrestlers, in their orange and black warm-ups, are led into the room by Drew Frazier. They are met with an enormous cheer as they jog onto the mat and begin a short pre-match warm-up.

THE MAT

As the P.A. announcer begins his introductions, Cal rocks and fidgets nervously.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to
Sallisaw High.. The Cowboys versus St.
Luke's High...

Mark Hayes stands across the mat, staring Cal down.

Cal, his knees turning to rubber, looks away and begins searching the stands. He finds Luli almost immediately, as she is DRESSED in something out of CAESAR'S PALACE. She gives him a "thumbs-up". Cal nods and continues searching, unable to find who it is he is looking for.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Representing St. Luke's in the 103 pound
class... Mark Hayes...

St. Luke's fans cheer wildly for their 103 pound star.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...And for Sallisaw...

The Sallisaw contingent responds loudly to the sound of their school name, forcing the announcer to wait.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In his first match for the Cowboys...
CAL...OX-LEY!

The fans scream their support for Cal. Some of the older fans REACT to the familiar name. The Oxley name passes like a fever through the crowd.

The referee escorts the two wrestlers to the center of the mat. Hayes continues his psyche-out by staring a hole through Cal who is looking anywhere but back at Hayes. They shake hands and go to their neutral positions. The referee blows his WHISTLE.

The next ten seconds are a BLUR. Immediately, Cal is on the bottom, struggling, while Hayes tries to flatten him out and muscles him into a half-nelson.

Cal tries to get to his knees. When he does, Hayes hits him hard with a "cross-face", which truly stuns Cal, to the point of nearly being knocked-out. From that moment on, he doesn't seem to know where he is.

In a last ditch attempt to free himself, Cal arches up high, keeping his shoulders off the mat.

The move momentarily throws Hayes off balance and brings a hopeful reaction from the Sallisaw fans. Hayes quickly recovers, however, kicking Cal's feet from underneath him. The referee finally SLAPS THE MAT on the pin. A mere :27 seconds have ticked off the clock.

In the stands, Luli seems restrained for the first time since we have met her. One Sallisaw fans speaks to another.

FAN
Different Oxley.

Cal shakes his head as he slowly gets to his feet. SWELLING has already begun under his left eye. The referee raises Mark Hayes' hand in victory. Tennent makes his way to Cal.

TENNENT
Shake it off. Way to battle. Good effort. Go cheer 112.

The other wrestlers turn their attention to the next match. Billy, who is up, walks right by Cal.

BILLY
Thanks for the hole. Watch me dig us out.

EXT. MIKE'S TRAILER -- NIGHT

While SOUTHERN ROCK blares from inside, Mike wails away on the makeshift HEAVY BAG hanging from a tree. He hits it with enormous intention and rage, stopping only long enough to drink from an open beer.

A woman, LORI, 20's, half as pretty as Jill, appears at the door and watches.

LORI
I gotta go...

Mike keeps working the bag.

LORI (CONT'D)
I forgot. Your brother called.

Mike finally stops.

LORI (CONT'D)
He said he was wrestling or something. I guessed you'd know what that meant.

Mike stares at her for a moment, then continues firing away at the bag. Lori leaves. Mike punches with all his fury. Then, just as suddenly, he stops. He holds onto the bag.

INT. SHARON'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Sharon is alone at the kitchen table. Cal enters and sits beside her. Sharon stares at him for a long beat.

SHARON
(re: Cal's face)
That's an interesting look.

CAL
What?

SHARON
Your eye.

CAL
Yeah... the girls like it.

SHARON
I thought Luli was your girl.

CAL
You know she ain't.

SHARON
Isn't. (pause) Does she know that?

CAL
Come on, Ma.

SHARON
How is Luli?

CAL
I don't know, she's going through a weird phase.

SHARON
I'd say. I think she needs a woman in her life.

CAL
Yeah... Her mom never comes to see her anymore.

SHARON
And she has four brothers?

CAL

Yeah. It's pretty rough over there.

SHARON

Tell her to come see me sometime. Before she forgets what it's like to be a girl.

CAL

No threat of that with Luli.

They sit in silence for a beat.

SHARON

Are you alright?

CAL

You mean am I going to keep wrestling?

SHARON

Yeah, I guess that's what I mean.

CAL

I don't know... yeah.

SHARON

Honey, I hope you're not doing this to get your brother's attention. I hope there are other reasons, because if you are, it'll only end in frustration.

CAL

Why are you so sure?

SHARON

Well, as strange as this may sound, Mike was never as strong as you are. You're probably better suited for the sport than he was. I don't mean physically. Physically, no one could touch Mike. He was completely prepared for everything... except losses, injuries, anything that wasn't a part of his plan. That's how he and your dad worked. That was Mike. You, on the other hand, handle loss and rejection as well as anyone I know.

CAL

Is that a compliment?

SHARON

You bet.

CAL
Mike never lost?

SHARON
Not until the injury. And he's been wandering ever since. Making choices that kind of force him to stay away. Baby, you don't have to do this. You've proven yourself, if that's what you're thinking.

CAL
You think wrestling is what hurt Mike?

SHARON
Yes, I do.

CAL
You know it's more than that. You should know.

Cal hurries out of the room.

Leaving Sharon alone with her fears, and her inarticulate heart.

COMPETITION MONTAGE

We DISSOLVE from scene-to-scene of Cal being beaten in his next half-dozen matches, though each loss is not as bad as the last.

He is pinned twice.

He has the wind "slammed" out of him to end one match.

Cal survives, losing on points. He seems relieved.

He loses on points again, but is starting to score.

INT. ROADSIDE HONKY-TONK -- SAME.

Mike shoots pool in the SMOKE-FILLED BAR. He is minding his own business and certainly not looking for any trouble. He downs the last of his beer and a shot of Jim Beam, prepares to shoot.

He is bumped hard by some Neanderthal, practically knocking the cue out of his hand. Mike gives him a look. The guy returns a "fuck you" look and smacks Mike, completely unexpectedly.

Mike reacts instinctively, executing a text-book "Fireman's Carry" of his own and throws him a half dozen feet across the room.

The guy gets up and comes back at Mike, who uncorks a devastating UPPERCUT, dropping him instantly to the floor. Mike stares at his fallen opponent, as instant chaos starts to build around him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SALLISAW HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT -- DAY

Cal and DONALD WORTHINGTON, a 15 year old future rocket scientist in training, walk along the grounds of the school.

CAL

What is the process called by which cells extract energy from their environments, then use that energy to synthesize and assemble the components from which cells are made?

DONALD

Metabolism.

CAL

Right. I owe you... a hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars.

DONALD

What fuels metabolism?

CAL

Energy obtained from nutrients or solar energy.

DONALD

You owe me a hundred and four thousand.

CAL

Donald, you think I'm the worst 103 pounder in the region?

DONALD

You haven't officially wrestled in enough matches to be considered the worst wrestler in the region. According to the State Athletic...

CAL

How do you know so much about wrestling?

DONALD

I may be a geek, but I'm still from Sallisaw. (beat) Do I think there is anyone in the region you can defeat?... Before the year's over... sure. Anyone is beatable. There's always injury and default.

Just then Billy and Joe pull up in Joe's car.

BILLY

Hey, Oxley, I hear your brother used to be the man. Didn't help you much did it.

CAL

So?

BILLY

So now he's a criminal.

Billy flings a newspaper at Cal as they burn rubber out of the parking lot. Cal picks up the paper. It is THE FAYETTE CO. NEWS.

CAL

Fayette County?

DONALD

Arkansas. Probably Barrow checking up on his opponents. Good wrestlers always know what move to make, long before their opponent does.

Cal opens the paper. CIRCLED WRESTLING BOX SCORES ARE ON PAGE THREE. A crudely drawn ARROW takes us to the POLICE BLOTTER. Suddenly, Cal arrives at a passage and freezes.

Cal stares at the article in disbelief. He starts running as fast as he can, leaving a bewildered Donald standing there.

EXT. CATFISH POND -- NIGHT

Cal sits on a rock shivering and staring into the water. He tosses fish food into the pond. His hands are shaking so much, he gives up.

INT. - FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF SALLISAW - SAME

The church choir is in full flight, singing "Just a Closer Walk with Thee", and the best voice in the choir belongs to Sharon. Her clear alto-soprano rises above the rest like a bird leading the flock to higher ground. But we can see that she can't lose herself in the music. Her mind is elsewhere. Worried.

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE -- DAWN

Cal is dressed in heavy outdoor gear. He slings on a back pack, counts out all the funds he has to his name and stuffs it in his pocket. He moves quietly through the house, tacks a NOTE onto the refrigerator and slips out the kitchen door.

NOTE - "Early Lab. See you tonite."

EXT. LULI'S HOUSE -- DAWN

Luli's house is desolate. Three cars on blocks in the yard. Handful of stray dogs. A house owned by and lorded over by lazy men. It does not look like a safe place for a girl to grow up.

Cal taps lightly on Luli's window, only gets a few mean dog snarls from the strays. Dares to try again. Moments later it opens.

LULI

This is so romantic.

CAL

I need to borrow your scooter. I'll bring it back tonight.

Luli disappears for a moment, then returns with the keys.

LULI

Are you in trouble?

CAL

I want you to give this note to Coach Tennent. Promise?

LULI

Yeah. Wow, this is exciting. I feel like we're eloping.

CAL

Yeah... except you're not going.

LULI

At least kiss me good-bye.

He does. On the cheek.

CAL

Thanks. I owe you one.

LULI

I'll be collecting, too.

As he rides away, she shoots him a "peace" sign, something they do. He returns it.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY -- DAY

Cal, bundled heavily, navigates the scooter in the bitter cold as the sun squints a weak glow over the horizon.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - FAYETTEVILLE -- DAY

Cal parks the scooter and removes himself gingerly, as he is half-frozen from the long ride.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

A dozen or so people are scattered throughout the room. The bailiff and court reporter sit on either side of the judge's bench. Mike and his public defender, LAURA MELTON, sit to the right of 60 year old, JUDGE ELAINE GARDNER, who sits on the bench. Melton is young and a combination of over-prepared and under-qualified.

MELTON

Your Honor, my client's altercation with Mr. Brock was a reaction to both physical and verbal taunts. With regards to the two officers, my client had been drinking for some time prior to the confrontation, and with the immediate chaos that followed, I don't believe he was fully cognizant. I believe Mr. Oxley felt that he was fighting for his life.

(MORE)

MELTON (CONT'D)

In addition, he is open to the idea of entering into an alcohol rehab and personal therapy program to address his issues with violence. I would ask, at this time, that the Court allow my client to pursue this under the State's supervision.

Mike continues staring at a distant space.

GARDNER

Thank you, Counsel. Next time try to say that in two sentences. (beat) Mr. Oxley, anything you care to add?

Mike looks up at the Judge. He already looks defeated. He clears his throat, but then decides not to speak.

GARDNER (CONT'D)

Well, if that is all...

CAL

Ma'am? Excuse me, Judge. Your honor, ma'am.

Everyone turns to the back of the court room. Mike finally breaks his gaze and slowly turns toward the sound of the voice. There stands Cal in his sneakers and an extremely ILL-FITTING SUIT.

GARDNER

Tell the Court your name, son.

CAL

My name is Calvin Oxley. I'm Mike Oxley's brother.

Cal glances nervously toward Mike, who is stunned.

CAL (CONT'D)

My dad died when I was young. Mike is really all I have... for a dad. (pause) My mom works a lot. We all do.

GARDNER

What does your mother do?

CAL

She runs an insurance office.

GARDNER

And you and Mike?

CAL

He works the rigs... and when he's home, we run a fish farm together. Though he hasn't been pulling his weight lately. Fish aren't too happy about that.

Mike leans forward so as to hear this better.

CAL(CONT'D)

He teaches me a lot of things... that my mom can't.

GARDNER

Did he teach you to fight like he does?

CAL

No, Ma'am. Sometimes guys come after Mike 'cause he's a target. He and I have a deal that I will go out with him and step in if any trouble starts, so he can walk away. Sometimes I can't be there. (beat) Ms. Gardner...

GARDNER

Judge Gardner.

CAL

Judge Gardner I give you my word that you won't see either one of us in your courtroom again. I need Mike. He keeps me out of trouble and... We kinda carry each other.

GARDNER

Calvin, does your mother know you're here?

CAL

No, Ma'am. She's at work. She's got enough worries as it is.

The room grows quiet. Judge Gardner stares at both parties. If she's not buying the story, she may be buying the performance. Cal and Mike finally lock eyes.

EXT. COURT HOUSE -- DAY

Cal, once again bundled in his "driving gear" dances in place, trying to keep warm, Luli's scooter beside him.

Mike walks quietly out of the court house and toward Cal, who stops dancing and waits nervously as Mike slowly approaches. For a long moment, neither knows what to say, standing inches apart.

MIKE
You paid the bail?

Cal nods.

Mike studies him, then pulls out a small wad of bills and hands it toward Cal. Cal initially shakes him off. Mike hands him the bills again, along with a look that says "you should take this". Cal does.

MIKE (CONT'D)
I'll get you the rest. (beat) You hungry?

CAL
Uh... Yes I am.

INT. MIKE'S TRAILER -- DAY

Mike and Cal sit at Mike's cluttered kitchen table. They are still both very tentative.

MIKE
What do you want?

CAL
I don't know. It's been a lot of years.

MIKE
I mean to eat?

CAL
Oh. I don't know. I'm having a little trouble with my weight. Keeping it up.

Mike goes to the refrigerator and pulls out some leftovers.

MIKE
It ain't much... probably not like you're used to.

Cal is already ripping into the meal.

CAL
(mouth full)
Mom's good... She misses you.

An awkward silence again fills the room.

CAL (CONT'D)

Mike, I don't want anything from you. I just wanna know you.

TIME DISSOLVE:

THE SAME - LATER

The brothers continue in conversation. Cal speaks quickly, trying to catch up on the missed years. Mike is softening a bit, and on his third beer.

CAL

... So I win the Geology essay competition and use the money to build a catfish farm. And then the damn pump won't work. Hardly, not 500 bucks worth. But I make a little money. I like hanging out there. It's super quiet. It gives me time to think.

MIKE

I can't stand the quiet. What do you think about?

CAL

I think about living on the water or near the water. Maybe owning a fleet of tuna boats. I'm tired of the smell of gas and oil. I wanna be as far away from sucker pumps as I can get. (beat) Where's your girlfriend?

MIKE

Who, Jill? Not really a girlfriend. Not so good at those.

CAL

She was pretty. Almost.

MIKE

You got a girl?

CAL

Nah. I mean, I do if I want her.

MIKE

It's that easy for you?

CAL

No. It's just... you know how some people, they're really hard to get rid of?

MIKE

(sly grin)

Matter of fact, I do.

Mike stands and grabs another beer, doesn't open it.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Let's get this straight. The smell of fish appeals to you. You're winning awards at school. For school. You sure we're brothers?

They laugh.

CAL

(smiling)

I guess only Mom knows for sure.

MIKE

Does she know you're here?

CAL

It's late. I better go.

MIKE

How is she?

CAL

Okay. I think she wishes she had girls.

MIKE

Listen... It never really occurred to me that you were there. I've just been kind of...

Cal nods.

CAL

It's okay.

MIKE

You're on top, you want to share that with people. Things get a little more complicated, when it goes the other way.

CAL

I know what you mean.

Mike shrugs, sizes up Cal, who can't quite hold the gaze.

MIKE

You want me to teach you how to wrestle?

CAL

No, Mike. You got a lot going on. It's not that important...

Mike stares at Cal again. It's an uncomfortable stare.

CAL (CONT'D)

Okay... yeah. That would be great.

Mike writes on a piece of paper and hands it to Cal.

MIKE

It's about fifteen minutes from Sallisaw. Sunday at five... It's between you and me. Understand? This ain't no goddamn family reunion.

CAL

You and me. Sunday.

Cal steps out the door. Mike calls after him.

CAL (CONT'D)

I'll do the best I can.

MIKE

Me, too.

Mike shuts the door. Cal waits until Mike is out of view, then pumps both fists into the air.

INT. OXLEY HOME -- EVENING

Sharon sits in the kitchen, waiting. She is a little stressed. Make that a lot stressed.

Cal quietly opens the door. Sharon hears it, turns, sees Cal and sighs deeply in relief. He steps in and sits down beside her. There is a long silence. She gets up and paces back and forth. She wants to yell, but doesn't. Finally;

SHARON

Did you find what you were looking for?

CAL

Yeah.

SHARON

Was I right?

Cal thinks long about the question, before answering.

CAL

Yeah.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CONCRETE BUILDING, COWLINGTON -- EVENING -
ESTABLISHING

The building sits isolated, on the edge of town.

INT. CONCRETE BUILDING --SAME

It is a bare, gray, musty room. Swirls of dust are illuminated by streaks of dimming sunlight passing through two upper, nearly covered windows. On the floor sits an age-old WRESTLING MAT. Pieces of DUCT TAPE cover numerous tears...

Scattered sets of DUMBBELLS in various degrees of rust sit on the floor in a corner of the room. Two sets of STEPS, extending from floor to ceiling, and connected by a twenty-foot long 2"x 10" piece of wood, sit at the opposite end of the building.

The silence is broken as the door creaks open. Mike steps inside, breathes deeply and takes in the scenery. It is obvious by his expression that he spent a lot of time in this room - a long time ago. After a few moments, he walks out.

MATCH CUT:

The door opens again. This time it is Cal, dressed in work-out gear. He looks around as if he just made an archeological find. He slowly walks over and stands on the mat.

The silence is again broken by the opening of the door. Mike walks in dressed in sweats. He looks focused.

CAL

What is this place?

MIKE

It's where you go to get an edge. Let's talk about wrestling.

MONTAGE

Mike hands Cal a set of dumbbells and points to the steps. Cal starts up one set, Mike, the other. OVER WHICH, we hear:

MIKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There are four parts to becoming a complete wrestler; take-downs, offense, defense and psychology. We'll talk about the psychology later. In order to succeed, you have to have a game plan, just like an offense in football. If one strategy doesn't work, you immediately switch gears to another. Improvisation is key. Wrestling is about speed, leverage and knowledge. You gotta know and work to your strengths. Strength is the foundation. We need to build yours.

Mike stands, while Cal dives at him, attempting to secure a "single-leg take-down". When he does, Mike pushes against him, steps back and Cal finds himself grabbing air.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Come in with your back straight. That's where you get your power. Now, as you circle, look at my left leg. Focus on it. Start to shoot for it, then half way through it, quickly shift to the right, pull the right leg in, wrap your right leg around it to keep me from panning out, then put me down. Next time, shoot for the leg you are staring at. Or better yet, don't look at all. Just keep coming, juking. You are both moving target and arrow. Make him miss and look for your opening.

Cal soaks up every word.

INT. SALLISAW WRESTLING ROOM -- DAY

A dozen or so wrestlers, Billy Barrow among them, are moving about on the mat when Cal jogs into the room. His teammates see him enter, but none are very quick to greet him.

BILLY

Oh, he's back. Now the State title is surely within our grasp.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

What'd ya take, a little vacation, Oxley?
You and your fish.

TENNENT (O.S.)

Cal, walk it in.

Cal and Tennent go off to the side.

CAL

Sorry, there was a problem I couldn't
avoid. Luli told you, right?

TENNENT

Yeah... listen, your mom is looking for a
reason to pull you. I told her you were
here to wrestle. Don't make a liar out of
me. I need you to play it straight. I'm
having a difficult time telling these
guys why you weren't here. I consider you
my 103. Are you with me or not?

CAL

I'm here.

TENNENT

Alright. (beat) Go hit the mat.

Cal starts toward the mat. Then;

CAL

Coach, can I ask you something? How good
a wrestler was Mike?

TENNENT

Flawless, just like your dad.

CAL

You saw them?

TENNENT

I told you I wrestled Mac.

CAL

Did you ever win?

Tennent thinks for a beat.

TENNENT

What do you think?

Cal smiles to himself as he heads for the mat.

INT CONCRETE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Mike and Cal work through a similar series of moves, including reversals and pinning combinations. During this sequence, Mike alters Cal's moves, giving each greater effectiveness.

LATER - The two sit in the middle of the mat, drenched in sweat.

CAL

I read that you once pinned a guy with a "reverse cradle" in a close match.

MIKE

Yeah, but the cradle isn't something you can really shoot for, not against a good wrestler. It's an easy way to get pinned if you don't know what you're doing... But you can manipulate your man into thinking you're done. If he falls for it and gets out of position, then you spring it. I'll show you.

Cal on hands and knees, balls up like a rock. Mike lays over him.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Now, if I am convinced you're stalling, I will begin to push to flatten you out. As I jerk forward, trying to flatten you, my head is naturally going to come forward over your right shoulder. When you see it come over a second or third time, you have a split second to headlock me, then hook the leg. Now lock your hands,... squeeze, then tilt me on my shoulders. The match is over. There is no way I can escape. Try it.

Cal squeezes hard as Mike half attempts to bail out of it. Mike's right. It's a tough escape. Cal, hanging on, arrives at a small revelation.

CAL

Wow... I have Mike Oxley in a headlock.

Which brings a smile to the both of them, however subtle. Until Mike unpeels Cal and quickly has him face down.

CAL (CONT'D)

And now I don't.

EXT. CONCRETE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Cal and Mike prepare to go their separate ways.

CAL

I hope you didn't find a job.

MIKE

Thanks.

CAL

Because I got ya one... through my geology class... I know some guys... at Arkla. I can get you off the rigs, put you in a truck servicing the online wells...

The more Mike stares, the more Cal tries to sell him on the job.

CAL (CONT'D)

Early shift, so we can work the nights... Money ain't bad... Steady.

MIKE

You're gonna get me a job at Arkla?

CAL

Already have, actually. I gave them some data they needed and instead of money, I asked for a favor.

Mike looks at Cal incredulously, as Cal hands over a business card.

CAL (CONT'D)

Call the foreman. Name's Hank Westerlund. Nice guy. A little sweaty, but nice.

Mike looks down at his sweat-soaked clothes.

MIKE

I'll fit right in.

CAL

Problem is, Hank looks like that without working out.

They laugh and leave.

EXT. - BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

CAL

Mike, I have a wrestle-off coming up.
Versus the kid whose spot I took.

MIKE

And?

CAL

And... what do you think?

MIKE

Who's the 103 pounder? Right now?

CAL

Me.

MIKE

Let him know it.

INT. GYM -- DAY

But this time, instead of looking down, Cal locks eyes with Timmy, surprising him. The showdown is on.

Timmy offers Cal one leg to shoot for and when he does, Timmy uses Cal's momentum to drive him to the mat. 2 points for Timmy.

The wrestler's erupt, as Timmy seizes control.

Before Timmy can gloat, Cal slips free. Escape. 1 point.

From a neutral position they dance, looking for any opening. They lock up, grabbing each other's necks. The team is cheering overwhelmingly for Timmy.

CAL

I like you, Timmy... but I like wrestling more.

Cal gets a double leg and takes Timmy down hard. 2 points. He stops Timmy from completing a rollover and counters with a nearfall. 3 points. Cal leads 7-1.

TIME DISSOLVE:

Third period. Cal leads 10-6. Timmy's only hope is a pin as the clock winds down. The teammates are screaming, now more for Cal than for Timmy.

Timmy tries a Granby Roll in desperation, and Cal seems in trouble for a split second, but then is able to rotate Timmy directly into another nearfall. 3 points. 13-6 Cal.

The wrestlers go nuts as the buzzer sounds. Cal is mobbed by his impressed teammates. Even Timmy has to admit he lost to the better man, shakes Cal's hand. Only Billy Barrow withholds his enthusiasm, but it doesn't matter. Cal is one of the gang. Tennent smiles. He can tell he's not the only one teaching Cal.

EXT. - OXLEY'S HOUSE - EVENING

It's a warm night for the season and Sharon is sipping on hot coffee and sitting on the porch.

A car rolls up and she stands, expecting to see Cal pop out. Instead, it's Coach Tennent.

TENNENT

Evening, Sharon.

SHARON

You have my son in there?

TENNENT

No, ma'am. Practice finished two hours ago.

SHARON

He's been missing a lot of supper's recently. Thought he's been with you.

TENNENT

Probably at the library. Cal takes the student part of student-athlete awful serious.

SHARON

Well, you got what you wanted. He's wrestling.

Tennent walks up onto the porch, sits next to her.

TENNENT

Coffee smells good.

SHARON

It's the last cup.

Sharon realizes she's being rude and offers him the mug.

SHARON (CONT'D)

But it's still hot.

Tennent smiles, takes a long sip.

TENNENT

I've got two daughters, one in Nevada,
and one in Vermont. Even have a couple
grand kids that I see at Christmas time.
Cute little squirts. Also girls.

SHARON

You don't like having all those girls?

TENNENT

Love it. Only one woman I didn't like
having around, and she felt the same
about me, so that evened out.

SHARON

You came here to tell me that?

TENNENT

No, I just wanted to say that if I'd ever
been blessed with a son... I'd want him
to be like Cal.

This moves Sharon, and Tennent hands back the coffee cup
as he rises.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

I haven't forgotten what we talked about.
I'll stay close to him.

SHARON

Thank you.

TENNENT

We have a meet against Riverton on
Thursday, and Cal's my 103. He earned
it.

SHARON

I'll think about it. You're a stubborn
man, Stu.

TENNENT

Coming from an expert, I'll take that as
a compliment.

They share a smile and Tennent is gone. Sharon watches
him disappear down the road.

INT. CONCRETE BUILDING - NIGHT

Mike shows Cal the fine art of take-downs and countering
take-downs, utilizing the opponent's momentum.

The two of them jump rope. Cal shows increasing finesse
and skill. There's also a growing spark in Mike, who is
in unusually good condition, considering where he's been
these past years. Muscle memory is serving him well.
They begin to pack up for the night.

CAL

You should've seen me today, Mike. I
waxed the kid whose place I took at 103.

MIKE

Take it easy.

CAL

It was sweet.

MIKE

You beat him today. Not for the rest of
his life.

EXT. CONCRETE BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Mike and Cal exit the building.

MIKE

What do you know about your opponent
tomorrow?

CAL

He's five-and-five. I've never seen him
before, but he lost to a kid who beat me
11-to-6. Should be a good one to see.

MIKE

Listen, Cal. I don't think I'm gonna
come yet. You understand?

CAL
(disappointed)
Not really.

MIKE
A lot of people who will be in that gym
might have more to say about what I've
been doing lately rather than what I did
ten years ago. I don't want it to get in
the way of your match.

CAL
Okay. When are you gonna hook up with
Mom?

MIKE
That's not why we're here, is it?

CAL
No.

They walk on. Mike to his car. Cal to Luli's scooter.

MIKE
Want a ride? Your bike should fit in the
trunk.

CAL
I'll see ya, Mike. Couple of days.

MIKE
You can do it, Cal. You're good enough.
You don't need me there.

Mike gets in his car and Cal watches him drive away.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM BASEMENT - EVENING

The two teams are spread out around the locker room.

REFEREE
Northside, 103 pounds.

NORTHSIDE COACH
Smith!

The gangly Northside 103 pounder steps onto the scale, so
tall and thin, he looks like a praying mantis.

MIKE (V.O.)

During the weigh-in, completely ignore
your opponent.

Cal sits on a locker room bench, staring at the floor,
out of view of his opponent.

REFEREE

102 and-a-half. (beat) Sallisaw 103.

TENNENT

OXLEY!

ANGLE - We follow Cal to the scale from his torso up. He
walks-deliberately and composed-to the scale.

MIKE (V.O.)

When you get on the scale, you have one
thought in your mind: that your girl
friend is in the front seat of his Chevy
and if you lose, she's going home with
him. Keep thinking that, it'll show.

All eyes are on Cal, including that of his opponent,
Smith.

REFEREE

103!

MIKE (V.O.)

Not till you step off that scale do you
look at your opponent, square in the eye.
Hold it for a two count, no expression.
Then slowly walk away from the scale....

Cal does this and sure enough, Smith, looks away.

MIKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Finally.... weigh-in naked. It makes 'em
uncomfortable that you're proud and have
nothing to fear.

WE PAN DOWN to reveal that Cal is, in fact, naked.

LATER - Cal sits alone, in front of his locker. PUCCINI
can be HEARD through the HEADPHONES.

MIKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A couple more things, find a private
place to call your own before you go out.
And find some music that really gets you
amped, gives you an edge. The more
edges, the more he'll bleed.

PUCCINI UP FULL - Cal, eyes closed, hands clenched. As the MUSIC fills his soul, we;

SMASH CUT:

INT. GYM -- NIGHT

We are in the middle of the last period of Cal's match. The crowd is on its feet. Donald and Luli sit together. Luli is screaming herself hoarse. Donald is his usual reserved self, trying to figure the odds of Cal actually winning on a pocket Blackberry calculator.

CLOCK/SCOREBOARD - 3RD period :35 remaining. SALLISAW 7 N. SIDE 5.

Cal is riding Smith, constantly moving, trying to flatten him. He is controlling the match.

Tennent is on his feet yelling instructions.

PAN UP to reveal a SKYLIGHT/VENT in the ceiling. WE FIND MIKE, obscured, standing on the roof, to the side of the skylight, looking down intensely, watching the final seconds tick away.

THE MAT

The BUZZER SOUNDS securing Cal's FIRST EVER WIN. He immediately jumps off of his opponent and throws his hands into the air. He's a little stunned to finally feel VICTORY.

The team, is on its feet. So are the two thousand plus supporters. Luli SQUEALS with delight.

The ref raises Cal's hand in victory.

Cal searches the crowd for Mike, but finds an even more shocking discovery.

Sharon. She is clapping, but also worried. Her applause slows as it dawns on her that Cal is really giving himself to the sport. And the roar of the crowd sounds to her like a warning.

Cal and Sharon lock eyes, pride beaming back and forth, only to be interrupted by the cacophony of Luli's chant. Soon, the crowd joins along.

LULI & CROWD
Oxley! Oxley! Oxley! Oxley!

EXT. GYM ROOF -- SAME

Mike, still watching from above, smiles to himself. He then walks to a remote corner of the roof, kneels down and wipes off some caked-on dirt, revealing in hand writing:

Mike Oxley, April 1994, 27-0 #1 in Oklahoma.

Then he wipes off more dirt several inches below that, revealing in different hand writing:

Mac Oxley, 3/14/76, Sooner State Champ, 167 lbs.

INT. CAL'S ROOM -- NIGHT.

Cal is at his desk doing homework. Sharon sticks her head in his door.

SHARON

Busy?

CAL

A little behind, that's all. Geology waits for no man.

SHARON

Listen, I just want to say that I'm proud of you for getting out there.

CAL

But...

SHARON

But nothing. Let me talk. I was wrong for not supporting you. It's the first time you have ever gone after something that wasn't easy for you and you're doing it. I wish it were golf, but it's not, so... just know that I'm going to try to be there for you. Just...just... don't let it push you too far... Please.

CAL

Ma, I'm having fun.

SHARON

One of these days when we're older and sitting in rocking chairs, I want you to describe to me in a way I can understand how this is fun.

CAL

You looked like you were having some fun tonight.

SHARON

That was after the match. After you won.

CAL

So you don't like losing either.

SHARON

Hey, practice ends about 4:30 every day right?

CAL

Yeah.

SHARON

So, what exactly do you do for the next few hours?

CAL

Jog, work on the weights, go to lab.

SHARON

Okay... Well it must be working. You look good. No. You look grown up.

MONTAGE -- MUSIC UP

INTERCUT between Mike and Cal stepping up their workouts, and Cal's subsequent remaining few matches;

The referee raises Cal's hand in victory, his second.

He loses his third, a close match, 10-8.

Mike and Cal perfect take-down techniques.

He wins the final match of the regular dual meet season, 4-2, utilizing the same techniques, while Mike still WATCHES FROM ABOVE. And Sallisaw wins their conference.

A Gatorade bath for Tennent.

EXT. - MAIN STREET - DAY

All of Sallisaw is abuzz with wrestling-fever. In every store window we see a hot off-the-press SALLISAW WRESTLING TEAM POSTER. It shows the 14 Cowboys headed to Regionals. Cal has made the poster.

Even Rodrigo is putting one up on the window of Fish & Feed.

INT. CONCRETE BUILDING -- EVENING

Mike and Cal are leaving the building at the end of a workout.

MIKE

We're gonna pick it up a bit for the Regionals. You got a week of Spring Break coming up and eleven days till they start. Where are they this year?

CAL

Tulsa.

MIKE

Junior year was there.

CAL

You win?

MIKE

Yes.

CAL

How tough are the Regionals?

MIKE

Everybody that matters is going to be there. You'll be ready.

They walk together.

CAL

(thinking)

Mike, how did you get hurt... in your last match?

Mike takes a long moment.

MIKE

A kid named Conway, from Iowa. Both of us undefeated. I had no plan. No focus. I just wrestled pissed off. It worked all Freshman year at OU, but that kind of anger can be a vulnerability. You could hear my leg snap across the entire gym.

CAL

Why didn't you come back?

MIKE

It was too late, Cal. Everything was already gone. Anyway, that was a thousand years ago. This ain't about me. (beat) We got eighteen days to make you suffer, so that don't happen to you.

INT. CAFE -- NIGHT

Cal and Luli occupy a booth together. She has a large plate of fries in front of her. Cal eats a scoop of cottage cheese.

CAL

You know a good friend wouldn't eat that in front of me.

Luli looks at him, torn, then --

LULI

I thought you were trying to gain weight.

CAL

Did it too well. Now I'm on Ex-Lax and water to keep it low for Regionals.

Luli reaches across, squeezes his bicep.

LULI

I like your new body.

CAL

It's for wrestling, not for looks.

LULI

I can like it how I want to. (beat) So, we going to the dance together?

CAL

I might be working out.

LULI

What?!

CAL

Yes, I'm taking you to the dance.

LULI

What are you wearing?

CAL
I haven't thought about it. What are you wearing?... Or should I ask?

LULI
It's a surprise. I'm making it.

CAL
Is it legal?

She punches him.

CAL (CONT'D)
Luli, you're not still flashing your bra are you?

LULI
No... Hey, you wanna wrestle?

CAL
All wrestled out for today.

LULI
You're looking good on that mat, C.O. You actually look like you know what you're doing.

INT. CONCRETE BUILDING -- DAY

Cal enters the building just in time to see Mike-large dumbbells in each hand-finish the last of several laps up and down the stairs. Mike's body is coming back to life.

CAL
That looks brutal.

MIKE
I'm in the worst shape of my life.

CAL
What do you look like when you're in good shape?

Cal senses someone behind him, turns and freezes.

CAL (CONT'D)
Shit, howdy... who's that?

There, standing on the edge of the mat is THEO HENDERSON, 30, an enormously muscular, powerfully compact, bald, bearded black man, who stands all of 5'2" tall with his wrestling shoes on. He wears an old USA wrestling singlet.

MIKE

Theo Henderson, big time tiny wrestler.
We call him the "Gnat". He's the
smallest guy I could find.

CAL

He's not that small.

MIKE

How much you weigh?

GNAT

A buck-fifteen.

CAL

In each leg?...

With Mike now observing, they work every aspect of Cal's possible inventory; offense, defense, takedowns, snapbacks, reversals, the whizzer, the guillotine. Gnat is intense. He combines strength with lightning speed, which forces Cal to be more selective and quicker than he has been.

They do conditions. Army crawls. High knees. Hip heists. Sumo drills. The works.

Finally, the three wrestlers lay, quietly, in the middle of the mat, staring up at the ceiling. Cal doesn't have an ounce of strength left.

CAL (CONT'D)

Where you from, Gnat?

NAT

Oklahoma City. Met Mike at the first
wrestling camp I ever attended in
Shawnee, 1985. Your Dad ran a tight camp.

CAL

Dad coached a camp?

GNAT

Taught me how to perfect a pancake. Won
my first tournament using it when I was
twelve years old.

CAL

I'm gonna get some water. If I can stand up.

Like a foal, Cal gets to his exhausted feet, leaving the two of them alone. After a beat;

MIKE

Gnat, what happened to me?

GNAT

Well... you broke one of your own golden rules. You stopped moving. You're up now. You look good. Stay up. Keep moving.

Gnat looks over at Cal. He nudges Mike, who looks over.

GNAT (CONT'D)

There's your reason. That's you, man.

INT. BUILDING -- NEXT DAY

Mike, Gnat and a third wrestler, SHANE NICHOLS, roughly Mike's size are working furiously on the mat.

Cal walks in quietly and watches some of the best wrestling he may ever see. This is the first time he has ever really seen Mike work.

INT. - BUILDING - LATER

Cal, Mike, Shane and Gnat work the weight bench.

Cal, Mike and Gnat work the jump rope, then run the stairs. Cal is holding his own. His work is now smooth and deliberate.

Mike referees a short impromptu match between Gnat and Cal. Cal is almost competitive. Gnat and Cal embrace afterwards.

Cal is doing pushups after the workout. Rhythmic. Powerful.

GNAT

(to Mike)

How many?

MIKE
I stopped counting at two hundred.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - BUILDING - LATER

Mike and Cal, alone now, shut the place down.

MIKE
You're going to be the underdog in every match of the tournament. That's good news. Treat each one like every other match you've wrestled. And if you get in trouble, whatever you do, do it quick. The longer you stay in trouble, the more likely you won't dig your way out.

CAL
That's why it's good to have a little help.

Mike takes Cal's meaning in as it dawns on him.

MIKE
(a mantra)
Last thing. When you step on the mat, you own your opponent. You are inside his head. Before he has a thought, you know it. Before he makes a move, you see it. Look him in the eye and let him know he belongs to you. Sometimes you can win a match before it has even started.

CAL
Wow.

MIKE
Yeah. I was waiting til you were ready.

CAL
Dad?

Mike's expression means he doesn't need to say yes.

MIKE
And just in case you were wondering, I'll be at the tournament.

CAL
Good.

INT SCHOOL GYM -- NIGHT

The gym is decorated. A band is on stage. Everyone is "slow" dancing, some well, some not so well.

Cal and Luli suddenly appear, making an unavoidable entrance, as Luli, true to her word, is dressed as though she has just jumped out of a birthday cake at a stag party. Cal, not inclined to set fashion trends, does sport a fine bolo tie.

All eyes follow Luli, who is milking this moment.

DANCE FLOOR

Cal and Luli dance to some fine rock 'n roll. Luli dances at a break-neck pace, causing most of the kids to stop and watch, for at any moment, she will certainly fall out of her dress. Cal moves pretty well himself.

LATER

They dance very closely to a slow number.

Cal and Luli walk over to the food table, passing Billy, who is without a date, but attached at the hip to his band of idiots.

BILLY

Hey, Stringfellow, will five bucks get me a private showing?

They both ignore Billy, but suddenly he is beside them.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Come on, Babe. I must be the only kid in town who hasn't been down Boob Boulevard.

LULI

Sounds like a personal problem.

CAL

Barrow, walk away.

BILLY

Come on Lu... I'm a big spender.

Billy moves a step behind the two of them, grabs the zipper on the back of her dress and pulls. In her attempt to pull away, not only does the zipper rip, but so does a part of the dress.

She turns to swing at Billy, but has to catch herself before the dress falls. Humiliated, she begins to cry.

LULI

You perverted shithead!

Cal turns quickly and shoves Billy, who shoves back.

A full crowd has gathered. Just what Billy was waiting for. He shoves Cal, who takes the hit. Billy shoves him again.

CAL

Is that it, Barrow? Is that all you're bringing?

Billy shoots for Cal's legs. Cal hooks Billy's arm before it can reach his leg, and instantly pulls him into the whizzer. He drives Billy hard into the floor, face first, where he is knocked cold. The crowd is speechless. Cal takes Luli by the arm and calmly walks away before the school authorities step in.

EXT. - SCHOOL -- MOMENTS LATER

Cal and Luli walk away from the school. She wears Cal's jacket over the torn dress.

LULI

Why does stuff like this always happen to me?

CAL

Cause you ask for it.

LULI

I hate myself.

CAL

No, you don't, Luli. You just try too hard. You're like a butterfly in a wind storm.

LULI

Meaning what?

CAL

Meaning, hell I don't know. You want people to like you, I guess, but you go about it the wrong way. I happen to think they'd like you if they knew who you really were.

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

And start liking yourself. You're very sweet. Anyway, you always got me.

Luli takes all this in for a beat.

LULI

Would you just hug me, Cal?

They hug. Cal strokes her hair softly. She rubs her cheek against his. And very soon their lips meet and they kiss. For the very first time. When they break away, they stare at one another. That was more fun than Cal thought it would be. He pulls her to him and they kiss longer.

EXT. WINTER'S BAR & GRILL -- NIGHT

Mike pulls up at the traffic light directly in front of Winter's Bar & Grill.

MIKE'S POV - the bar, the NEON BEER SIGNS, the GIRLS walking in and out. He watches for a long beat, then drives on. Moments later, he passes another gin joint. This one seems to beckon him, like an old girl friend.

INT. HONKY TONK -- NIGHT

Mike is greeted by a WAITRESS. We recognize her as Jill.

JILL

Hey, Stranger?

MIKE

Okay. Didn't know you'd be working tonight.

WAITRESS

Lucky you. What'll it be. Beam and a beer?

Mike thinks for a long beat.

MIKE

Sure. (beat) Sorry about how...

JILL

No apologies. Nice to see you. You look really good.

He grabs a stool at the bar and looks around. His beer and shot are delivered. He stares at them, then touches the mug to his lips. One beer won't hurt anything.

ANGLE ON - A FACE IN THE CROWD, watching Mike. He's 6'3" of ugly and mean. In fact, it's the same BASTARD Mike drilled in the pool hall several weekends earlier. Then the Bastard makes a call.

EXT. HONKY TONK -- NIGHT - LATER

Mike leaves the bar, gets into his car and exits through the back of the parking lot. He doesn't appear to be lit up or buzzed in any way.

ANGLE ON - A COP CAR parked - hidden - on the other side of the lot. Without lights, they pull out just after Mike does.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Within seconds, BLUE-FLASHING LIGHTS appear in Mike's rear-view. The life drains right out of him. He pulls over and is immediately confronted by two COPS, one is on a mission. He forces Mike out of his car.

COP

Step out of the vehicle. Put your hands where I can see them! You holding?

MIKE

No, Sir. Don't you need to see my license? I wasn't speeding or nothin'.

COP

Shut up and don't move.

The cop goes back to his car while Cop #2 holds Mike tight. After a few moments we hear the sound of breaking glass. The cop returns.

COP (CONT'D)

I stopped you because of a faulty taillight.

We see the taillight, now shattered.

COP (CONT'D)

You drinking?

MIKE

I had a beer.

COP
(to Cop #2)
Open the trunk.

MIKE
You got a reason?

COP
Damn right I do, Mr. Oxley.

Cop #2 opens Mike's trunk and searches it. He pulls out what looks like a couple of open beer cans in the car.

MIKE
Those ain't mine, you sonofabitch.

The cop gets chest-to-chest with Mike.

COP
You resisting, son? Tell me you're resisting arrest.

Mike puts his hand up to keep the Cop off him and the Cop takes it as aggression, goes for Mike. Mike puts out a stiff arm to protect himself and Cop #2 hits Mike from behind with his billy. Hard. As Mike is blacking out, he hears.

COP #1
That was easy.

COP #2
Yeah, he ain't as tough as he looks.

BLACKOUT.

INT. CONCRETE BUILDING -- EVENING

Cal sits in the middle of the mat waiting for Mike. Cal moves around the room, picking up the weights, working moves, but he is clearly becoming concerned. Finally, he leaves.

INT. MIKE'S TRAILER -- NIGHT

The phone ringing.

INT. OXLEY HOUSE -- DAY

Cal stands in the kitchen, waiting on the other end of the line. He finally slams the phone down in frustration.

CAL

Shit!

Sharon walks into the kitchen.

SHARON

What's wrong?

CAL

Nothing... I'm going for a run.

Sharon watches Cal dart angrily out the front door, confused by his sudden turn of behavior.

EXT. CONCRETE BUILDING -- EVENING

Cal paces back and forth in front of the building.

INT. OXLEY HOUSE -- EVENING

Sharon is eating alone, when Cal enters, almost in a panic. THE PHONE RINGS. She grabs it before Cal can.

SHARON

Hello.... what?... what?... where?

She stares at Cal, while listening, her face tensing, then resignation.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I don't understand... Cal?... Why?

After a long beat with the phone to her ear, she finally replaces it.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Thank you. I understand.

CAL

What?... Was that Mike?

SHARON

It was his lawyer. Why would she be calling you?

CAL

What did she say?!

SHARON

He's in jail! Drunk and disorderly.
Again. This time he assaulted a cop.

CAL

Bullshit!

SHARON

Cal!

CAL

He wasn't drunk. No way!

SHARON

How would you know? Calvin.

There is a momentary stand-off as Sharon searches Cal's eyes for some truth.

CAL

He hasn't had a drink for weeks. Been going to meetings. He's got a job.

SHARON

How would you know all this? Cal?... How would you know what Mike's been doing?

Cal turns on her quickly.

CAL

I see him everyday! That's why... Mike's been teaching me to wrestle... We've worked almost everyday for the past month. He hasn't had a drink the whole time. Something happened!

SHARON

That's what you've....

CAL

Yes! How do you think I won anything?!

SHARON

Coach Tennent.

CAL

He's working with two dozen different wrestlers, Mom... come on! I couldn't go from loser to... to having a goddamn chance without Mike.

SHARON

You watch your mouth, mister!

CAL

I'm a geek, Mom. A kid who got his butt kicked since I can remember, and Mike's been turning me into something else. Something better.

SHARON

Cal, you were already amazing.

CAL

Something was missing, Mom, and Mike found it. He's turning me into an Oxley.

This one stings.

SHARON

How and where did you find Mike?

CAL

In his house... Where do you think... Not that hard if you're actually looking.

SHARON

Stop it! That's not what I'm asking. You've never kept anything from me before.

CAL

I didn't want it to go wrong. I didn't want you to mess it up.

SHARON

What?

CAL

(really letting it out)
Mike Oxley is my brother! He's my brother. And you can't take that away.

Cal walks out the front door, leaving Sharon stunned silent, all the tears trapped inside.

INT. - COUNTY JAIL - CELL - SAME

Mike sits alone, face swollen, an innocent man, and truly without a clue as to how to get out of this one.

EXT. - FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF SALLISAW - NIGHT

Light streams through the stained glass windows, and the muted strains of the choir practicing "Balm in Gilead" for Sunday's service, makes it out into the cold night air.

Sharon's car rolls to a stop.

INT. - CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The choir is louder in here, though much the poorer in quality without Sharon. REVEREND GEORGE, a hearty man in his early sixties, is in a back pew, checking the racks for something. Sharon slides in beside him.

REVEREND GEORGE

You're either late for rehearsal or early for church.

SHARON

Didn't really feel like singing tonight, Reverend. Do you have a minute?

REVEREND GEORGE

Give me two seconds, I have to finish a count. Seems we're losing about four hymnals per Sunday these last few weeks. Now, either my daughter's friends are playing a trick on me or the town's thieves are starting a rival choir.

Sharon manages a weak smile.

REVEREND GEORGE (CONT'D)

(re: choir)

If you don't come back, might have to bring in the thieves.

INT. - REVEREND GEORGE'S OFFICE - LATER

Reverend George sits behind his desk, while Sharon creases and uncreases her dress on the other side.

SHARON

He found Mike.

REVEREND GEORGE

That explains how he improved so much so fast.

SHARON

Reverend, this is not about town pride.
This is my family.

REVEREND GEORGE

And...

SHARON

It's happening. Exactly what I feared.
I don't want to lose... I can't afford to
lose another son.

REVEREND GEORGE

He's not yours to lose, Sharon.

She wants to hit him, or cry out. Instead, she bites it
down.

REVEREND GEORGE (CONT'D)

Annie will go off to State this fall.
I've already got one son in the Navy and
one in the workforce. Although I
wouldn't exactly call what Percy's doing
work. You know they pay him to create
ice cream flavors? If I'd have known
that was a job, this belly of mine'd be
worth millions.

SHARON

You're not listening to me.

REVEREND GEORGE

No, Sharon. I heard every word. Every
inch of pain, and I'm sorry. Sorry that
you're stuck with it and sorry because I
know it so well.

SHARON

I don't want a sermon, Pastor. I want...

REVEREND GEORGE

Someone to agree with you? Then this is
the wrong place. Cal doesn't belong to
you. Neither did Mike. God loans us our
children for a short time, time enough to
teach them how to be on their own. To
teach them how to leave. Do you know why
Cal was able to find Mike? Why he was
able to learn something from Mike that
Mike had probably given up on in himself?
Because you did a beautiful job raising
an extraordinary boy. Don't ask Cal to
not be himself.

Sharon takes it in. Hard medicine.

Reverend George stands.

SHARON

Thank you.

REVEREND GEORGE

Thank me by buying me a popcorn on
Wednesday night.

Sharon doesn't understand.

REVEREND GEORGE (CONT'D)

At the Regionals in Tulsa. 7:30. Annie
and I will be there. I believe she has a
bit of a crush.

He walks her to the door.

REVEREND GEORGE (CONT'D)

He's a special kid, your son.

INT. - OXLEY'S HOUSE - LATER

Sharon enters, sets down her keys.

SHARON

Cal? Calvin.

She checks the house, winds up outside his closed bedroom
door. She opens it. Cal is under the covers, eyes
closed.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Good night. I love you.

Sharon closes the door and Cal opens his eyes. Stares
into the darkness with unblinking force. Sleep will not
come tonight.

INT. - KITCHEN - MORNING

Cal eats a bowl of fruit, silently. Sharon makes her
morning tea, sits down. They sit there, disconnected.

SHARON

What do the two of you talk about?

CAL

Wrestling.

SHARON

That's it?

CAL

Work, school. It's not like we talk about the wives or kids or favorite colors. I mean we practically just met.

SHARON

Cal, that's not fair. I may have been afraid of you and Mike together, but he wasn't exactly pushing to come see you. In fact, after wrestling, I became a little afraid of Mike. I didn't know how to help him. He didn't seem to want it.

CAL

What happened? That night. I've read the newspaper article, but I've never heard you say.

SHARON

Mike and Mac were headed to Eufala to scout one of Mike's opponents. It's what they did. They scouted all his opponents. These guys were prepared, Cal. There was heavy snow, some ice. I begged them not to go. Mike insisted they needed to see this guy. Polson. Craig Polson. Isn't it crazy? I still remember his name. Your dad never gave it a second thought. (beat) He was killed almost instantly, they said. Mike had hardly a scratch. Two years later, he gave up. He blamed himself for Mac. I guess I blamed him, too.

CAL

He didn't quit 'til two years later.

SHARON

But he really gave up the night your dad died. (beat) You know I was twenty when Mike was born. We were kids at the same time. He was my first and your first is always your baby, no matter what happens. You were an adult when you came out. I had to ask for your ID.

Cal can't help but smile.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Mike used to have a cowlick. He would pour a pint of Vitalis on it daily to make it lay down. He used to wear the same corduroys, nearly every day, because he loved how they felt when he rubbed his hands across the fabric... You know the garden out back? Well we gave Mike his own section. He asked for his own seeds, all flowers. He would sit in his little chair and wait for hours for something to grow. (crying now) They would bloom, and he would run in the house squealing with joy.

CAL

What about Dad?

SHARON

There was nobody like Mac. You couldn't take your eyes off him. So there was that... half the women in Oklahoma were looking. Yet I never once felt threatened by it. He had a way of convincing you that you were the only one in the room. Made you feel invincible... My 190 pound security blanket. (beat) And he had the same effect on Mike. That's a lot to lose.

Cal takes this in. He's thinking.

CAL

Ma, you said Mike blamed himself for Dad's being killed... Anybody ever tell him it wasn't his fault?

She's been fighting that one along time. There's a painful silence. Leave it to Cal to get to the heart of it.

DISSOLVE:

INT. SCHOOL GYM -- DAY.

Tennent stands before the team.

TENNENT

I think everyone in this room has a shot at the medal round.

(MORE)

TENNENT (CONT'D)

The next couple of days will show
Oklahoma what we're made of. We leave
the parking lot at 7:30 a.m.

The boys place their heads together.

TEAM

Cowboys!!

The wrestlers head for the lockers. Tennent senses
something about Cal.

TENNENT

Cal?

CAL

Yeah?

TENNENT

What's wrong? Talk to me, Cal.

Cal walks away without answering, leaving Tennent behind.

EXT. TULSA'S MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL -- DAY.

SUPER: DAY ONE

MARQUIS - "2005 6A REGIONAL OKLAHOMA STATE WRESTLING
TOURNAMENT"

The campus parking lot springs to life as WRESTLERS from
all over the region begin to pile in.

INT. GYM -- SAME

The gym is massive in comparison to the Sallisaw gym. It
easily seats six thousand. "REGIONAL 6A WRESTLING"
banners adorn the walls. The gym floor is covered by
three separate WRESTLING MATS, each with its own set of
scoring tables.

INT. OXLEY HOUSE - KITCHEN -- SAME.

Sharon is on the phone.

SHARON

Hello, District Attorney's office,
please?... Hi, is Jason Flaherty in?...
Yes, could you tell him that... Mac
Oxley's wife is calling?... Mac Oxley.

INT. TULSA MEMORIAL HIGH GYM -- DAY

The Sallisaw team has just arrived. Cal is intensely focused, angry. We haven't seen this on him. He looks every bit the seasoned wrestler. His hood is pulled tightly around his face. His team jacket is buttoned tightly. "Oxley 103 lbs." embroidered on the right-side breast.

INT. GYM LOBBY -- DAY

All of the weight class SEEDINGS are posted on large BOARDS. Cal goes right to the 103 POUND BOARD. There are thirty-two wrestlers. Cal, seeded low at 24th, is in the bottom bracket. The number one seeded 103 pounder, is fortunately positioned in the top bracket. It is a familiar name; MARK HAYES, the monster who pinned Cal in his very first match.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- SAME.

Cal finds a spot in a corner of the room to stow his gear. A dozen or so wrestlers are moving around nervously. Cal, still in full sweats, sits on the floor. His knees and hands begin moving like they are electric. Tennent enters.

TENNENT

Who's coming tonight?

CAL

I don't know.

Cal is flat out angry. Sitting next to Cal, Tennent tries a different approach.

TENNENT

Don't tell anybody, but I came out of Nebraska. About thirty years ago, I was in a big national A.A.U. tourney. 167 pounds. I made it to the medal round and went up against another wrestler, seeded higher than I was. He had a serious reputation, but I was big time confident, had no fear of anyone. That guy proceeded to shut me down at every angle. The most complete wrestler I ever encountered. I couldn't score a point on him. I was so frustrated afterwards, I thought "what's the point of continuing.

(MORE)

TENNENT (CONT'D)

Obviously I've gone as far as I'm going to go. I'm not going to be able to hang with the big boys." And I was damn good.

He's getting Cal's attention.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

About an hour later. I'm sitting alone in my own misery... And this same guy sits down across from me. Starts talking about the match. Going over every detail. How I could have scored if I took this angle, that leverage, different technique. He had the nerve to give me a wrestling lesson right there in the locker. (beat) And it worked. What he did was to teach me a little about humility, that there may always be someone around the corner working just a little harder, who might just be a little bit better.. That there was much to learn. And that guys like this existed... that would share their knowledge and confidence with you. I didn't know it at the time, but it was one of the defining moments in my life. (long beat) I don't guess I need to tell you who that fella was.

Cal finally allows a smile. You can see him visualizing this in his mind's eye.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

Relax, stay focused. One match at a time. I'm with you Cal. Everyone is with you.

Tennent walks over to more of his wrestlers. Cal closes his eyes. We can hear Mike's instructions.

MIKE (V.O.)

Let your opponent know he belongs to you. Sometimes you can win a match before it's even started.

Cal puts on his earphones and starts to move around the floor.

PUCCINI fills his soul. Cal moves, eyes, closed, hands clenched.

The music takes us to:

THE GYM -- SAME.

The gym is standing-room only. A few hundred from Sallisaw have made the sixty-mile trip to Tulsa.

STANDS - We find Luli, "dressed down" but hyper, and ready to bring it on. Donald stands a few feet away, pacing nervously, as if he is about to do battle himself. Sharon slides up next to Luli and gives her a hug.

Over the crowd, we can barely hear the public address announcer call for Cal's match. Tennent walks to the center mat.

ANGLE ON - Gym door, which is literally thrown open. Cal runs through.

MIKE (V.O.)

Do anything you can to get an edge, like change your appearance.

And RIGHT ON CUE; Cal, intensely focused and in constant motion, throws off his sweats, revealing a body that has taken on DEFINITION in the past couple of weeks since we have last seen him wrestle. He has also SHAVED HIS HEAD, save for a half inch of hair. Over what's left, he wears a black headgear. The old Cal is long gone.

For Sharon, total deja-vu.

For Luli - "Hello".

MONTAGE

An overly aggressive Cal registers the first pin of his career over a completely psyched-out opponent. Stu hugs Cal, who is all business.

Opponents and coaches alike are watching.

Cal searches the stands, finds Sharon, but is clearly looking for Mike.

He wins his second, controlling the match, 5-1. TENNENT is the support here, but we clearly see Mike's specific teachings at work.

We also see an aggressive anger that so worries Sharon, she has to walk out of the gym. She paces outside, unable to leave and unable to watch. She bumps a cigarette from a stranger.

Cal, in the locker room waiting for his next match, music pulsating through the headphones.

He wins his third, 3-2, with a stunning last second reversal, using a specific move that Mike has taught him, causing pandemonium amongst the Sallisaw crowd. Luli cries. In fact, the majority of the crowd has adopted Cal as their 103 pounder.

But Cal just shows anger, walking off the mat, right past Tennent, ignoring his outstretched hand...

TWO OPPOSING COACHES compare notes in the stands.

COACH #1

Where the hell did this kid come from?

COACH#2

Oxley... No... You think?

EXT. GYM -- NIGHT.

Cal exits the side door. Luli, who has been looking for him, spots him from a crowd walking nearby. She runs to catch up in an outfit that appears to have shrunk since we saw her only moments ago.

LULI

Hey, Ox!!

Cal continues walking as if he doesn't hear.

LULI (CONT'D)

Calvin!

CAL

I'm busy, Luli.

LULI

(oblivious)

Not right now you're not. Hey those girls in there are all asking about you.

They're freaking. I gotta protect ya.

You know that move we worked on? I told 'em...

Cal turns on a dime.

CAL

Hey, Luli, I'm not interested in talking about you right now!... or your problems!

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

I don't need you! You embarrass me, alright?!

LULI

I'm not asking you...

CAL

There's nothing special about you! You're just... Luli.

Cal walks away quickly, leaving a stunned Luli behind, as several people witnessed this.

Embarrassed and crushed, she walks off alone in another direction.

INT. COUNTY JAIL -- DAY (MINIMUM SECURITY)

Mike sits alone, waiting in the visitor's room.

The door opens and in walks Sharon.

Mike, obviously expecting Cal, is dumbstruck at the sight of his mother. This is a painful humiliation. After a long silence:

SHARON

Cal thinks this cop thing may have been some kind of set-up.

MIKE

He's right. He said that?

SHARON

Yes. I made a call. Somebody else made one as well. There's some questions about the officer. He seemed to know you. You know him?

MIKE

It's my fault. I had it coming.

SHARON

Cal just found you?

MIKE

Knocked on the door one day. So skinny and cold, I thought he was a runaway.

SHARON

He sort of was. (beat) You could be out before the night's over.

MIKE

I doubt that.

SHARON

Cal was sure you weren't drinking.

MIKE

It doesn't matter. Stupid of me to think otherwise.

SHARON

What?

MIKE

That the past would just walk away. It's everywhere. Everywhere I look.

SHARON

That's for you to decide, Mike. You can look ahead.

MIKE

I tried.

SHARON

Are you looking for a reason to walk away from him?

Mike stares at her, but doesn't answer.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I never thought I would say this, but Cal needs you. .

She looks around the dank room, tears come to her eyes.

SHARON (CONT'D)

He's "being" you out there. And I'm afraid he won't know how to stop.

MIKE

You come to me for that? Look where "being me" winds up.

SHARON

I don't want that to happen to Cal.

MIKE

He's too smart for that. I had nothing on the other side of wrestling.

SHARON

Yes, you did. You were just too afraid and proud to ask for help.

MIKE

Help? Since when did you try to help me?

SHARON

I've been praying for you to come walking back since the day you left.

MIKE

I guess prayer really works.

SHARON

(breaking down)

You have no idea how I've tried. I've never not known where you were. I've tracked you over three states. And not a day goes by that I don't walk into your room thinking maybe this is the day you'll show up. And I'm listening to Cal tell me that you two wrestle, that you talk... that you're his new friend. And I'm thinking... I want that... I want my boy back. (beat) After your dad died, I blamed you at a time when I should have been comforting you. And then I just gave up. It was easier to blame you... (beat) Michael... I am so sorry. Look at me, please. I am sorry.

INT. SCHOOL BUS -- NIGHT

Cal and the team are headed back to Sallisaw. He stares out the window with ambivalence. The team is raucous with celebration, but now Cal is a loner by choice.

INT. OXLEY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- DAWN

Cal is wearing his school sweats and hood and is placing gear in his duffle bag. He looks up to see Sharon, in her bathrobe, watching him. He stares back, waiting for some news.

SHARON

That was some great wrestling yesterday. You got most of that from Mike?

Cal nods.

SHARON (CONT'D)

But not all of it. Some of it was pure Cal Oxley. (beat) I got nervous and had to go. I've never seen you that angry. I couldn't watch.

CAL

Where'd you go?

SHARON

Mike.

CAL

Is he out?

She is slow to answer.

SHARON

We're trying to get some help. But you were right. It was a set up.

CAL

He's not going to make it, is he?

SHARON

Go wrestle. When you show up, things happen. I know that's what Dad would say.

CAL

Oh, yeah?

SHARON

He'd also say "shoot for a double and let your opponent sit out deep until he's vulnerable to a snapback". But I think you already know what to do.

CAL

I'm nervous, Mom.

SHARON

Then be nervous. Nothing wrong with nerves.

Cal takes no comfort, goes to his room and shuts the door.

INT. TULSA MEMORIAL HIGH - GYM -- DAY

SUPER: DAY TWO

The place is buzzing. Cal and teammates enter through the wrestler's entrance. He seems resigned, unfocused, even though he is the center of much of the attention from well-wishers and fans.

He stops in front of the 103 pound seeding boards.

BOARDS - Cal will wrestle a kid by the name of JOHN LEONARD. Mark Hayes, seeded number one, is in the other semi-final.

INT. WARM-UP ROOM -- DAY

Cal sits alone on a corner of the mat in his wrestling gear and sweats.

Tennent approaches Cal.

TENNENT

You were sensational yesterday. The whole tournament is, talking. You put a name back on people's lips that they've been longing to say.

Cal's not really listening.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

You created something. You did. Keep it alive.

INT. OXLEY HOUSE -- SAME

Sharon prepares to leave for the tournament.

She walks past the front door screen where something catches her eye...

SHARON'S POV - MIKE'S CAR parked at the driveway entrance. Mike is sitting behind the wheel.

INT. MIKE'S CAR -- LATER

They are still parked in the driveway, Mike staring straight ahead, hands on the wheel.

MIKE

So what do you do when the high point in your life happens when you're seventeen?

SHARON

That's the oldest story in the world, Mike. The streets are littered with people wishing they could relive high school.

MIKE

I should've known that there was nothing after wrestling. Even if I never got hurt. Dad should have told me that. (cracking) I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

SHARON

You're right. We should've told you.

MIKE

What do you want from me?

SHARON

I want you guys to be friends. Brothers. And if it takes wrestling, then I have to be strong enough to let that be okay.

Mike strangles the steering wheel.

MIKE

I've never been able to figure out what to do with my hands. My body. It's like there's all this electricity loose inside of me and I never learned how to let it out. Not in the right way. Not for a good thing.

SHARON

Let this be your good thing. It's working. Cal's got a real shot.

MIKE

What if he loses?

SHARON

Everybody loses sometimes, Michael. It's what you do after that really matters.

There is another long silence.

MIKE

I don't know if I'm right for Cal. I don't think I know how to handle losing.

She stares hard at Mike.

SHARON

Baby, we have to - somehow - put Mac to rest. You and me, Mike.

MIKE

(breaking)

Yeah.

SHARON

And that's what I think Cal is trying to do. He's trying to help us. Do you see?.. Please, try to see.

This is pretty crushing to the both of them. She squeezes his knee and strokes his hair for the first time in years.

INT. WARM-UP ROOM - MAT -- DAY

Cal sits in a corner of the room, away from the mat.

Cal's POV - three dozen or so of the other semi-finalists preparing. These guys are the cream of the crop.

As Cal watches, we can feel the distance, the draining confidence, reminiscent of his first foray onto the mat. He's second-guessing what got him here.

He subconsciously toys with his duffle bag. Feeling something in one of the side compartments, he unzips it and pulls out the fish food he packed a day earlier, but forgot to deliver. He then pulls out a folded piece of paper and opens it, revealing:

A HAND-DRAWN BLUEPRINT OF A PUMP that he has been working on. He looks at it like it's an old friend-one that he misses.

As he watches JOHN LEONARD, his next opponent, warm-up for a match that is less than two hours away. The lack of confidence is beginning to turn to fear.

Suddenly, the wrestlers Cal is watching appear EXAGGERATED, FASTER, STRONGER. John Leonard suddenly seems much larger than life.

INT. TULSA MEMORIAL - MAIN LOBBY -- DAY

Cal, still in sweats and with duffel bag thrown over his shoulder, is leaving.

He takes a final glance toward the main "stage" of mats. Then he turns and walks out the door.

EXT. GYM -- SAME

Cal shields his eyes from the glare of the sun. Suddenly a SHADOW BLOCKS the sun, the shadow of all the FANS streaming into the building, as he's trying to leave. Cal can't make out any of their faces, but they know who he is.

FAN #1

Hey, good luck to you, Cal.

FAN #2

Hey, little man, tear 'em up.

The fans continue by, rubbing Cal's head for good luck, patting him on the shoulder.

FAN #3

Hey little man, tear him 'em up.

FAN #4

Sallisaw 103!

Cal can barely catch his breath against the onslaught of compliments.

FAN #5

Oxley. That's a hell of a name. Good luck, kid.

Cal watches this fan pass, noticing he wears an Oklahoma University Wrestling Letterman's Jacket. And he looks like a contemporary of Mike.

FAN #5 (CONT'D)

Oxley, Oxley, Oxley...

... until the whole hallway is chanting his name. And then, just as quickly, it is silent and Cal is alone.

He stands, closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He turns and standing between him and the door is some GUY who must be in his seventies, maybe older. He wears a very worn TULSA LETTER JACKET, and stares intently at Cal. His name is ELL.

ELL

Are you Oxley?

CAL

Yes, sir.

ELL

Would you be so kind as to sign this? Be careful with it.

He hands Cal a well preserved sepia toned photo of a young wrestler in "ready" pose. It's probably circa 1960's.

Cal doesn't seem to recognize anything in the photo, but then again, the sun is bearing down on him.

CAL

Who is it?

ELL

That's your dad.

Cal freezes, turns the photo toward the light for a better angle and sure enough, there he is, Mac, probably no older than Cal at this moment.

CAL

Where did you get this?

ELL

I took it. He was fourteen. Already a name. Promised to sign it, years later, but life always seemed to get in the way. (beat) I've come a long way. I would be a big favor.

He holds out a pen. Cal takes the pen, but has to turn away. This is a little more than he can handle. He's staring at himself and the photo is looking back. He slowly signs his name under the photo.

INT. BATHROOM - LOBBY -- SAME

Cal enters, goes to the sink, throws cold water on his face and stares back at his reflection. He looks at his body like he had weeks before. It is now a strong, new physique. He almost doesn't recognize himself.

MAIN LOBBY -- SAME

Cal walks past the OPEN DOUBLE DOORS that give us a glimpse of the main gym - three mats situated on the main floor. Cal glances through the door, as he walks.

CAL'S POV - THE CENTER MAT

With his back to us, kneeling on the center of the mat is someone who could be Mike.

Cal stops, backs up and looks again. IT IS MIKE.

You can see a bolt go through Cal. He walks to the edge of the mat, overwhelmed with emotion that he tries hard to swallow. He then slowly approaches Mike.

There they stand before each other for an awfully long beat.

MIKE

The smell of the mat. It never leaves you.

CAL

(still dumbfounded)

You're here. (beat) Everything alright?

MIKE

Pretty much. (then) With a little help.

CAL

Mom?

MIKE

(looking right at Cal)

Believe it or not. (beat) Got two more matches in you?

CAL

Do you?

Mike finally smiles and they walk, side-by-side, out of the gym.

MIKE

Tell me about John Leonard.

POV - FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM- watching Cal and Mike exit the room, is Tennent, who has just left the coach's meeting.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Cal and Mike walk in and find a spot in the corner of the room. Cal tosses his gear, sits on the floor and starts to loosen up.

They get into their routine almost immediately, as if nothing had happened, head-to-head, talking strategy.

TENNENT (O.S.)

Mike Oxley.

Mike looks up and extends a hand.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

Stu Tennent. It's good to see you.
You've done great work here. Can I grab
you for a second?

The two of them step off to the side.

TENNENT (CONT'D)

I want you to know you're welcome to take
the coach's seat next to me when Cal is
up.

MIKE

(genuinely moved)

Thank you. I'd like that.

TENNENT

Great... (beat) Hey, I recognized the
moves... his "trapped arm gut" is almost
perfect. And his spirit. I figured it
was you. Welcome back.

INT. GYM -- LATER

We find a huge Sallisaw contingent, making its way into the stands. Sharon has found Luli. Donald has brought a Geek patrol. Reverend George is there with his daughter. Even Rodrigo is there.

Gnat shows up, along with four other guys, all of whom look as though they competed at one time. They are quickly recognized as they pile in.

INT. WARM-UP ROOM -- SAME

Mike and Cal, laying on a corner mat, talking, face-to-face.

MIKE

Go over your combinations. We got five
minutes. Where's your music?

CAL

I got it here.

MIKE

Plug it in. What are you listening to?

CAL

Puccini. (pause) It's Italian... Opera.

MIKE

Take it in. Crank it up. Find your place. I'll be back to get you in a minute.

Mike walks away.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Opera?

Cal sits on his haunches in the corner of the room. He plugs in an Ipod and closes his eyes. PAVAROTTI performing PUCCINI'S "NESSUM DORMA from TURANDOT", flows from his earphones. Cal starts to move to the music

PUCCINI UP FULL as we INTERCUT Cal gaining internal strength from the music, with a cut of the simultaneous CROWD BUILD in the gym.

ON CAL - hands clenched, eyes closed, caught up in NESSUM DORMA's crescendo. He flows with the music until its final climax.

ON THE ANNOUNCER - calling for the Oxley-Leonard match.

SUPER: DAY TWO - SEMI-FINAL ROUND

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY.

We closely follow Mike and Cal as they head to the gym doors. Mike walks behind with his hands on Cal's shoulders.

INT. GYM -- SAME.

Cal and Mike EXPLODE from the corridor, which happens to be right in front of the Sallisaw contingent. Cal immediately removes his warm-up and hood.

Sallisaw screams with delight. Many notice Mike as well as Cal. Sharon is instantly overwhelmed at the sight of her two boys together.

So is Tennent, the team and even Billy Barrow.

Luli, terribly saddened, watches, wondering, hoping, praying, but still cheering.

Mike pulls Cal close and gives him one final piece of instruction which we don't hear.

Cal walks slowly, but with intention, to the mat. As he does, he glances around the gym until he finally finds, then locks eyes with Luli. With a couple of thousand people watching, he then sends her one of their little peace signs and a smile. His look tells her he is sorry.

And with that, Luli's prayers were just answered, and half the set of eyes have turned toward her. She's back. She does a crazy shimmy of joy.

Once on the mat, Cal bounces, then sprints to the center, where John Leonard awaits him, somewhat more nervously, having just witnessed "the entrance".

Mike walks to one of the two coaches' seats, shakes hands with Tennent and sits. And immediately stands, too amped for a seat. Cal quickly slaps hands with his opponent, goes to his neutral position and waits like a coiled snake for the referee's whistle, which we hear seconds later.

Both wrestlers battle in an impressive, workman-like, low-scoring finesse match, with each effectively countering the other.

Mike proves to be an animated coach. He is everywhere, using body English to get his instructions across.

Finally, in the last period, while both wrestlers are tied up in the neutral position-and Cal with a 3-2 lead, Cal glances to Mike, who signals him back. Cal adjusts his hold, works it in deeply and suddenly unleashes a tremendous "pancake", the same move that forced Timmy Hughes out of the Sallisaw lineup for the season. The move is devastating. You can hear the wind literally fly out of Leonard's lungs as both bodies hit the mat.

Cal doesn't get the chance to finish him. Leonard simply cannot continue. The match ends, due to injury default. Cal seems a little stunned by his own strength.

Mike and Tennent quickly hustle Cal out of the gym before he has a chance to think about it. The gym is rocking as the three of them walk off toward the locker.

Luli runs down the bleachers and inexplicably out the door.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

They enter and immediately go to their space on the warm-up mat, where Cal puts his sweats back on.

TENNENT

Are you hurt at all?

CAL

No.

MIKE

(big grin)

Where'd that come from?

CAL

(same grin)

I don't know. I had a little spinach last Tuesday.

TENNENT

Listen, that was textbook wrestling. I don't know any other way to put it. Rest. I'll be back.

Tennent exits.

MIKE

You got one match left, two hours from now; your buddy Mark Hayes. Let's make him work for it. No pressure. Just wrestle.

Mike leaves Cal alone on the mat. He immediately lays down and closes his eyes.

INT. CORRIDOR -- SAME

Mike walks down the corridor. Sharon stands at the other end. She tries to dry the last of what must be endless tears.

He walks to her. She embraces him tightly and hangs on.

SHARON

This is a good day.

INT. GYM -- SAME

Mike and Sharon walk back in. The room is still abuzz. A dozen or so people approach him. Some are press, some peers, some well-wishers. He seems a little overwhelmed by the attention. Sharon watches him closely.

Luli suddenly approaches Mike.

LULI

I want you to know you're everything Cal described, only better-looking. I'm Luli. Hi, listen, I have a gift for Cal. Could you give it to him before his final match? It's very important.

MIKE

Sure.

Luli hands him a large gift-wrapped box that must weigh forty pounds.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What is it, a car?

She nods, but really didn't hear the question. She's a little awestruck by the sight of Mike.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Mike carries Luli's gift-wrapped box.

CAL

What's that?

MIKE

A heavy present from someone named Luli.

Cal opens the box revealing a new pump for his fish pond. A card is attached to the pump.

INSERT ON CARD - *"I'm sorry... And I forgive you. Thank you for always being there. P.S. Don't even ask where the money came from. I love you...Lu."*

Cal is genuinely taken by the gift.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I guess now you got a girl.

CAL
I guess I do.

INT. GYM -- NIGHT

SUPER: DAY TWO - FINAL ROUND

Reverend George, with his daughter, ANNIE, takes his place in the stands alongside Sharon.

SHARON
Thanks for coming out, Reverend.

REVEREND GEORGE
I'm not leaving until you buy me that popcorn.

SHARON
I found your hymn books.

REVEREND GEORGE
No.

SHARON
Cal was using them to make his backpack heavier, build his strength.

REVEREND GEORGE
That's the best usage of a hymn book I've heard of in a long time. I told you that boy had wings.

SHARON
I know. And it's a lot nicer just watching him fly.

A SINGLE MAT remains in the center of the gym for the final round. The place is electric, as the first match is moments away.

Mark Hayes walks in, looking just as intimidating as he did weeks earlier. He moves and shoots imaginary take-downs. His entrance draws a strong cheer from the packed house. Mark and his coach move to one end of the gym.

Moments later, Cal, Mike and Tennent, walk through the same door. Cal is busy keeping loose. They are met with a deafening roar from the house. Both still and video cameras jostle from an increasingly growing army of press. The word is out about Mike. He, Cal and Tennent move to the opposite end of the gym.

Mike and Cal stand side-by-side, both moving nervously, as the P.A. announcer begins the intro.

Cal scans the bleachers. He spies Sharon. Then three rows back, Ell. They lock eyes.

CAL

Hey, Mike. Do you think Dad would've been proud?

MIKE

He's here, Cal. That ought to let you know.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now our 103 pound finalists.
Representing Sallisaw High School with a
duel record of 5-6, Calvin Oxley...

The crowd roars their approval.

ANNOUNCER

And please welcome back to the tournament
past All-American, NCAA finalist and two-
time State Champion, Mike Oxley.

Mike responds humbly to the applause. And it is an
avalanche of applause.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And representing St. Luke's High School,
last year's State runner-up, with a duel
meet record of 24 and 1, Mark Hayes.

As the crowd responds, Mike is face-to-face with Cal.

MIKE

Six minutes, Cal. You're already going
to State. Let's go as number one. Keep
moving. Never protect a lead, build you
lead. You know the mantra. And listen
for me.

CAL

Listening to you is to only reason I'm
here.

Cal sprints to the mat to the roar of the crowd. He and
Mark come to the center of the mat, shake hands, step
back and wait for the whistle.

MONTAGE - THE MATCH

Both wrestlers show great skill, but Hayes is clearly the dominant wrestler. He counters virtually everything Cal throws at him.

Cal never backs down, moving tirelessly in search of a foothold, responding to everything Mike yells. When he does score, the crowd screams their approval.

After two periods, Hayes is out in front 9-4.

The final period begins with Cal in the down position. Hayes looks like he has more left than Cal does and his support group is yelling for a pin.

When the whistle blows, Cal attempts a stand-up. Hayes stands behind him with his hands locked tightly around Cal's waist. Cal spends a moment too long trying to break Hayes' grip--just what Hayes is hoping for. He launches Cal through the air and onto his stomach. Cal is momentarily dazed. The referee halts the match and asks if he is alright.

Mike walks toward Cal, who jumps up and waves him off.

Cal goes back to the down position. Hayes stands over him, looking for the kill. The referee restarts the match. Rather than stand-up, Cal tightens into a ball, forcing Hayes to work harder for the pin.

THE CLOCK reads 1:29 and ticking.

Hayes moves from side-to-side, trying to flatten Cal. At one point, Hayes nearly turns him over. Cal wriggles back to his base, but suddenly looks as though he is about to expire. He makes certain that Hayes sees he is in pain, but stays tight like a ball. He even yells, almost cries out, convincingly.

CLOCK READS 00:53

Mike cocks his head and looks at him strangely.

Hayes, sensing a pin, starts to lurch forward in an attempt to flatten Cal.

Mike finally senses what Cal is after.

CLOCK READS 00:26

CAL'S POV - SLOW MOTION

Hayes' head continues to lurch forward, just over Cal's shoulder. Cal watches the head, at the same time, positioning his left leg for leverage. The head comes over once... twice... The third time, Cal rears his arm back with lightning speed, hooks it around Hayes' head, simultaneously hooking Hayes' left leg. He instantly clasps his hands. He has just placed Mark Hayes in a "REVERSE CRADLE!" Hayes, suddenly in deep trouble, starts squirming wildly like a headless chicken.

MIKE

Cradle!!

Mike flies down the side of the mat, drops to his knees and screams;

MIKE (CONT'D)

Squeeze it!!! Squeeze it!!!

Tennent, down the side of mat like his underwear is on fire.

Gnat is airborne himself, yelling for all he's worth.

The gym erupts into pandemonium. Everyone is up stomping the bleachers, screaming in unison; "Pin!! Pin!! Pin!!". The building sounds as though it is coming down. Sharon, in a complete turnaround, actually leaves her seat and sprints toward the floor screaming, momentarily forgetting she is a spectator.

SHARON

Squeeze it Cal!!! Pin him, Calvin!!!

Cal is squeezing his grip with every ounce of strength he has. Hayes fights for his wrestling life.

THE CLOCK reads :08.....:07....:06....:05

Reverend George is on his feet.

REVEREND GEORGE

(screaming)

Finish him, Cal... Finish the sonofa...

The referee is down on his knees, his hand in the air, inches from the mat, ready to slap it the moment both Hayes' shoulders come in contact with it.

SLO-MO

Cal arches his back, forcing Hayes' closer to the mat.

CLOCK reads :02...:01...

Just as the referee is about to slap the mat, the scorer throws a ROLLED UP TOWEL at him (to get his attention, should he not hear the final buzzer over the crowd noise). At the same time we think we hear an AIR HORN, signaling the end of the match.

Pandemonium. We do not know who won. Both Cal and Hayes slump to the mat. Mike is stretched out, face down. Tennent mirrors Mike on the other side of the mat.

The referee confers with the scorers and within moments, both wrestlers stand in the middle of the mat, where Mark Hayes, looking dazed, is DECLARED THE WINNER. The final score, 11-9.

Cal walks slowly off the mat in the direction of Mike, who is still slumped on his knees, and we only see Cal from behind.

As Cal walks, everything goes to SLOW MOTION. We see only his back as he walks toward Mike. Mike's head is down, his whole body limp.

Cal finally stands before his brother. For a long moment, neither seems to know quite what to say or expect from the other. Mike appears to be in anguish. We still can't see Cal's face. Then Cal reaches down and lifts his brother up.

Mike looks into the eyes of his younger brother and sees something unusual -- C.U. CAL. His face a picture of absolute CALM, a self-assured calmness that tells us he may have found whatever it is he was searching for.

CAL

Hey, Mike. It was never about the wrestling.

They embrace and for the first time, Mike looks free. Twenty years fall off his back like a pinned opponent. Mike notices the pro-Oxley crowd. They're standing now. And, at that moment, we sense that Mike realizes it was, in fact, a victory, after all.

As the two walk away from the mat, they are quickly met by Sharon, who holds onto Cal for what seems like an eternity. As she does, Mike looks up, as if for his Dad. Mac's not visible, but he is there nonetheless.

Cal Sees Luli standing off to the side waiting. He goes to Luli and puts his arms around her.

CAL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. You're my best friend. And I...

LULI

That's okay, Calvin, I love you. That was amazing. (whispering) So sexy.

We find Tennent, satisfied, watching all of this from a corner of the gym, before moving on to prepare another wrestler. Sharon comes up to him and gives him a hug.

SHARON

Thanks for looking after my boy.

TENNENT

It's been an honor.

Angle on Cal and Mike almost out the door, the sound of the crowd echoing behind them.

CAL

Welcome home, Mike.

Mike pulls him close.

They open the door onto blinding sunlight and we go to white...

FADE OUT:

THE END