

WHO FRAMED TOMMY CALLAHAN?

by

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fourth draft
2/28/12

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INT. DARK SPACE

SIX GLASS CAPSULES filled with YELLOW LIQUID sit in the palm of a small hand. Small fingers close, making a fist. Fist rears back and hurls the capsules. A quiet SMASH! Tiny shards of glass sprinkle to the floor. A child disappears into the shadows.

The VOICE of a WORLD-WEARY FIFTH GRADE BOY narrates.

NARRATION

Six glass vials. Each filled with the stink power of twenty rotten eggs.

BLACK. A SINGLE OPENING CREDIT. MUSIC: Dark, smoky, trip hop beat. Mischievous, dramatic, stark.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL 41 AUDITORIUM - DAY - SAME

A large meeting of PARENTS, TEACHERS, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS. P.S.41 PTA PRESIDENT, SUE PERILLO, mid 40's, abrasive, eagle-eyed, stands in front of the stage, holding up a LAMINATED CARD.

SUE PERILLO

See this? A regular hallway pass, right? Wrong! It's a fake! A counterfeit! Some sixth grader stole a hallway pass, made duplicates, got them laminated and BAM! Candy dealers are roaming the hallways selling candy to any second grader with a sweet tooth and loose change! Who is at the wheel here people?!

BLACK. ANOTHER OPENING CREDIT. BACK TO MEETING.

Sue Perillo now holds up a Hershey Mini bite-sized chocolate.

SUE PERILLO

And these! Hershey Minis. They're small, easy to smuggle into school, and delicious. Know how much caffeine is in four of these? Half a cup of coffee!

A balding dad nods looks at his coffee cup. The crowd murmurs.

(CONTINUED)

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SUE PERILLO (CONT'D)

Fourth grade teachers are finding these wrappers in classroom trash cans as early as NINE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING! Across the board teachers are saying that more kids can't focus and class disruptions are through the roof. The teachers can't teach! The candy dealing didn't just go away this year, people! It's alive and well, we just can't see it! We need solutions and we need them NOW! My Gregggy's peanut allergy today should be enough of a signal to everyone that we need to get tough!

Her son, GREGGY PERILLO, fifth grader, small for his age with narrow eyebrows and a huge head of black hair, sits off to the side, sheepishly.

SUE PERILLO (CONT'D)

I'm proposing morning and afternoon candy searches of backpacks and lunch boxes. Why do I smell rotten eggs?

CROWD

What's that smell?

BLACK. ANOTHER OPENING CREDIT. Back to meeting.

CROWD (CONT'D)

I know that smell. That's stink bombs. Someone threw stink bombs!

PRINCIPAL MITCHELL BURGER, early 40s, balding with a ponytail, sport coat with elbow pads, approaches the mic.

PRINCIPAL

Everyone just relax I'm sure-WHOA THAT'S STINK BOMBS. Okay. Please remain seated.

He goes to the side of the stage and pulls the curtain open. A ROTTEN-EGG STENCH SHOOTS OUT, permeating the entire auditorium.

CROWD

OH MY LORD! This school is OUT OF CONTROL! Stink bombs! Must be ten of them!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRINCIPAL
(covering nose)
We'll get this under control.

People begin exiting. Aisles become bottle-necked, someone trips, BANG! A baby starts crying. People start shouting.

INT. PS41 LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

People pour through the front doors, exiting into the street. An AUDIO VISUAL CART being wheeled into school topples over, DVD PLAYER, EQUIPMENT, A HUGE SPOOL OF STEEL CABLE, spills onto the street - BANG! Another baby starts crying.

NARRATION
The stink bombs cleared out the
entire auditorium. No one saw who
did it.

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME

The Principal stands backstage looking at a SKY-BLUE, HOODED SWEATSHIRT caught on something.

NARRATION
But right next to the stink bomb
juice on the wall was a sweatshirt
caught on a nail.

Yellow ooze drips down a stage flat. The Principal unhooks the sweatshirt from a rusty nail. From the POCKETS he takes out TWO SMALL CRUMPLED PACKAGES with a cartoon pictures of a man holding his nose and German words, labelled STINKENBOMBEN!. On the inside collar of the sweatshirt a name written in permanent marker: TOMMY CALLAHAN.

BLACK. ANOTHER OPENING CREDIT. MUSIC CONTINUES.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

TOMMY CALLAHAN, SIXTH GRADER, SEEN ONLY FROM THE BACK, wears a plaster wrist-cast, going halfway up his arm. On the table in front of him is the sky-blue hooded sweatshirt, crumpled stink bomb packages, thick folder labelled, and a thick folder marked: CALLAHAN, THOMAS - PERMANENT RECORD. The Principal paces behind him.

Off to the side DOREEN CALLAHAN, early 40's, thin and exhausted, dabs her eyes with a tissue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION

The grown-ups, the Principal and even our mom, completely fell for it. It was strike three for Tommy. He was out.

CUT TO BLACK:

NARRATION (CONT'D)

But Tommy didn't do it. Someone left his sweatshirt there to make it look like it was him.

INT. PS41 FIRST FLOOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - PRESENT MOMENT

Our hero, JOHNNY CALLAHAN, sits in a SKELETON COSTUME, WEARING A MASK, staring through the eye-holes at a large cardboard box labelled LOST AND FOUND.

NARRATION

And four weeks later, after I set out to find the kid who framed him, after all the twists and turns, where has it led me? Right back to where I started. Sitting in the first floor office of my school, staring at the lost and found box. Sitting here like a ghost.

SLOW MOTION: Johnny lifts his mask and upends a pack of Nerds into his mouth, swishing them around, deep in thought.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

I think back on that day the stink bombs went off. That morning. It was a Friday. I was in the same place I am now. It's funny how you can remember the strangest things about a moment. I was thinking about how some action figures float in the tub and some sink to the bottom...

MATCH CUT TO:

Johnny in the same position, sitting in the same seat, four weeks earlier only now wearing regular clothes.

INT. FIRST FLOOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - DAY

NARRATION

...when she walked in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL'S VOICE

You're a fifth grader now, Johnny.

Johnny looks up. He's scrappy with sandy brown hair and brown eyes, innocent but street smart when he has to be.

TATIANA SANTIAGO, mysterious, pretty sixth grader stands in the doorway.

TATIANA

You could be out in the yard collecting kick balls or whatever tough yard monitors do but instead you're still stuck at the lost and found desk.

JOHNNY

I like the lost and found.
(back down at the puzzle)
Lose something?

TATIANA

Yeah and it's not in the box.

JOHNNY

Write down what you lost, last place you saw it, time you came in, and I'll send a note up to your class if it comes in.

She writes CAGE on the clipboard.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Cage? Cage for what?

She holds out her hand: A SMALL BLACK TARANTULA in her palm.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(frozen)

Get that thing into a-

TATIANA

I told you. I lost the cage. No sudden movements. It only bites if it feels threatened. It knows me. I take it home every weekend.

She sets her palm down in front of Johnny. He backs up in his seat, pressed against the wall. The tarantula slowly climbs onto the jigsaw puzzle.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Take it away, Tatiana.

TATIANA

I'm gonna tell you something and I want you to tell Tommy.

JOHNNY

Take it AWAY.

TATIANA

I will but first you're gonna listen and promise to give Tommy the message.

JOHNNY

Tommy doesn't want me talking to you this year.

TATIANA

I know and he's still pretending I'm invisible.

The tarantula's legs stick to some of the puzzle pieces.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

Look at that, it wants to help you put the puzzle together.

JOHNNY

TALK.

TATIANA

Fourth grade teachers are finding Hershey Mini wrappers in the trash.

JOHNNY

So?

TATIANA

So tell Tommy if he's selling candy this year-

JOHNNY

He's not selling candy this year.

TATIANA

You sure about that?

JOHNNY

Yeah. He'd tell me if he was.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TATIANA

Did he tell you he's been skipping math tutoring in the resource room on Tuesdays and Thursdays?

Johnny looks at her.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

So I guess there's stuff he doesn't tell you. I don't want to see him get strike three this year, Johnny. You know what happens if he gets strike three.

INT. FIFTH GRADE CLASSROOM - LATER

Greggy Perillo, seen earlier during the meeting, stands in front of the class presenting a home-made cardboard and construction paper diorama of the school's large schoolyard.

NARRATION

Half hour later we were presenting dioramas in class and I was up next.

Across the top of Greggy's diorama a piece of dental floss spans from a cardboard building on one side of the schoolyard to a building on the other. A tiny figure hangs from the center of the dental floss.

GREGGY PERILLO

In the city of my dreams there'd be zipwires that go from building to building. That way we wouldn't have to waste time walking. I live right here.

(points to a window in one of the buildings)

But to get to school I have to go downstairs, around the corner, all the way down the block and then down another block. It takes four and a half minutes. A zipwire across the yard right into school would take ten seconds.

A few kids look on, nodding. Johnny stares.

NARRATION

Zipwires from building to building. He was making a good point but my mind was somewhere else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION (CONT'D)

I was thinking about what Tatiana had said. See, Tommy had started the year on two strikes from some trouble last year and was trying to do his best to stay out of trouble this year. He promised me he wasn't gonna get strike three and so far he'd kept that promise.

The whole class is looking at Johnny.

TEACHER

Johnny? Anybody home?

Johnny snaps out of it, gets up, walks to the back of the room and gets his own diorama from the back shelf.

MOMENTS LATER:

Johnny's diorama is of the island of Manhattan with a large diamond-shaped structure on the southern end. Inside the structure are four tiny paper people.

JOHNNY

For the "city of my dreams" diorama I'd build a huge fort that used to be up in Manhattan over two hundred years ago. It protected the city from anything that tried to attack it. It was called Fort Amsterdam.

Greggy Perillo pops a piece of chocolate in his mouth without anyone seeing. He chews quietly, eyes darting around.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

The forts that me and my brother Tommy make in the living room are made out of cushions and sheets and blankets and they come down after a few days but not this fort. This fort would be forever and I'd live in it with my mom, my dad, and my brother Tommy. I'd build it the way it was built in the first place; with stone, rock, and brick. It would be strong and it would be permanent. It would be forever.

SOUND OF: SCREEEETCH. Everyone turns and looks. Greggy Perillo has slid his chair out, staring at a small candy wrapper in his hand. It's a Mr. Goodbar. He looks up, face full of fear. He bolts out of his chair and runs to the garbage can, spitting out the chocolate in his mouth.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATER

Bird's eye view: Ceiling fan goes round and round.
Principal Burger stands with his arms folded. Across the
room, Sue Perillo strokes Gregggy's hair.

SUE PERILLO

My Gregggy could have died! Peanut
allergies can be deadly! I thought
the candy dealing in school was
done! I thought we fixed the
problem last year!

PRINCIPAL

He spit the chocolate out before he
bit into any peanuts, we had the
nurse look at him, any swelling
that occurred in the throat has
already gone down. He's okay.

SUE PERILLO

I want suspensions for whoever sold
him that candy! Let's start with
that sixth grader, Hiro Mazaki!
Who else is selling candy?

PRINCIPAL

Gregggy? Ready to give us some
names?

Gregggy looks up at the Principal and then up at his mother.

NARRATION

Candy.

MUSIC: KILO by GHOSTFACE KILLA. STARK, FUNKY,
BLAXPLOITATION-LIKE, hip hop beat.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

Last year the PTA forced the school
to ban candy and a week later kids
started secretly selling candy
everywhere. In the hallways...

INT. PS41 HALLWAY - DAY

A KID WITH A HEAVY BACKPACK points to another kid
approaching.

KID1

Hey! What happened with the
Yankees last night?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KID1 (CONT'D)

My mom wouldn't let me stay up for the game.

KID2

They won. Walk-off homer!

KID1

What'dya know!

He gives the kid passing a celebratory handshake. FREEZE FRAME ON HANDS, DRAMATIC ZOOM IN shows a CANDY BAR being exchanged for a HANDFUL OF QUARTERS.

NARRATION

During lunch.

INT. PS41 CAFETERIA - DAY

A SIXTH GRADE GIRL with pigtails sits and eats a sandwich at a lunch table. A boy sits next to her and pops a dollar into a small slot on the side of a lunch box. She looks around, pops the lunch box open and takes out a candy bar.

NARRATION

And most of all in the schoolyard where they'd just started doing construction and crowded us together even more than we were before.

EXT. PS41 SCHOOLYARD - DAY

BIRDS-EYE VIEW: The parking lot sized concrete schoolyard is divided by construction fencing going right down the middle. One side has construction equipment, the other side is packed with kids. MUSIC CONTINUES.

Instead of jump roping and organized games of kickball and basketball, kids simply walk, hands in pockets, hunched over, occasionally passing close enough to...FREEZE FRAME, ZOOM IN: exchange packs of gum and candy bars for dollar bills and loose change.

NARRATION

And when this year started the candy dealing was organized.

INT. SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

A teacher in front of a class and turns to write on the board. Half the kids in class take lightning fast bites of candy. The teacher turns back, the kids are back to normal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION

If you had some loose change and you knew who to go to you could be having your favorite candy bar during morning math. But sometimes kids got sloppy and forgot the rules.

BOY (O.S.)

Never tell any grown-ups...

INT. BOYS BATHROOM - FOURTH FLOOR - DAY

BOY (O.S.)

...and never put the wrappers in the trash.

A clean-cut fourth grader, MICHAEL BOWERS stands between two sixth grade goons, too tall for their heads to fit in the frame. Across from them in the shadows stands sixth grader, HIROJI MAZAKI, MAIN SUPPLIER OF THE CANDY BLACKMARKET.

BOY/HIROJI

I thought I was very clear about this. This is why I don't let monitors sell to anyone younger than fifth grade. Because they can't remember instructions.

MICHAEL

It wasn't me, Hiroji, I swear!

HIROJI

We're through. No more candy.

MICHAEL

But where else am I gonna get it? My mom walks me to school and picks me up! She's always there! I never get to go into stores myself!

HIROJI

Sorry, Michael. The teachers, Principal, all the grown-ups are watching too close this year.

MICHAEL

If you stop selling me candy...

Hiroji steps forward, his eyes illuminated by a sliver of light from a crack in the window. He's smart, calculating, observant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROJI

What? What are you gonna do?

MICHAEL

I'm gonna... I'm gonna-

HIROJI

Go to the Principal and tell on me?
Tell him the whole monitor squad
sells candy I smuggle into school?

MICHAEL

M..Maybe I will. You can't stop
me.

HIROJI

Your class elections are coming up,
right?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

HIROJI

Who's gonna vote for a president
who picks his nose and eats it?

Silence. Michael looks around and tries to laugh it off.

MICHAEL

Pick my...ha...where'd you get
that...?

HIROJI

Little sisters will tell all sorts
of secrets for free candy. She was
chewing on so many Skittles at once
I almost didn't hear her when she
told me you pick your nose and eat
in front of her. All the time.
Every day.

MICHAEL

(exploding)

She does that! Not me!

HIROJI MAZAKI

You're nine years old, right?

MICHAEL

Nine and a half.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HIROJI

And you've probably been picking and eating since you were about two. That's over seven years. 365 days in a year. 365 times 7. I already did the math, don't bother. 2,555 days. And your sister told me when do it, you really go at it so I'm guessing you get about 3, 4 boogers a day. 2,555 days times 4. 10,220. That's a lotta boogers, Michael.

Dead silence. Michael looks around, getting nervous.

HIROJI MAZAKI

You've picked and eaten over 10,000 boogers in your life. Big number. And a lotta people could know that number if you even think about going to the principal and telling him who brings the candy into the school. It's up to you.

Michael thinks and slowly backs out of the bathroom. Hiroji stands there nodding.

GOON 1 (O.S.)

Hey Hiro, The wrappers they been finding are Hershey Mini wrappers. You don't sell Hershey Mini's.

HIROJI MAZAKI

I know I don't sell Hershey Mini's. I want you to find out who is.

Hiroji takes out several packs of M&M's and hands them to both goons as payment.

HIROJI

Ask some of the new yard monitors. And while you're down there get my scorpion chain back from Tommy Callahan. I know he still has it.

GOON 1

He's got lunch now?

HIROJI

In five minutes he's getting off the Wall.

INT. PS41 LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny walks through the lobby plastered with colorful signs and collages.

NARRATION

The Wall.

INT. CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

MUSIC: The GZA's LIQUID SWORDS, a sparse, staccato hip hop beat...as Johnny enters the almost-empty cafeteria and passes the KIDS ON THE WALL: One entire wall lined with kids of all colors, shapes, and sizes, mostly boys, serving time for a crime, standing two feet apart with their hands behind their backs.

NARRATION

Some kids spent their life on the Wall. Some kids only a day. But if you got in trouble during school, there you were.

Every other boy is chewing some kind of candy or popping a piece into his mouth surreptitiously.

TOMMY CALLAHAN, FINALLY SEEN FROM THE FRONT, stands on the far end of the Wall. He's got a caesar-cut, wears cargo pants and a T-shirt, and has hardened eyes from a life in the principal's office. On his left hand is the plaster wrist-cast.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

Tommy was just finishing three weeks on the Wall for some stuff last year. I was getting off my shift at the lost and found as Tommy was getting off the Wall. I flashed my hallway pass and told the woman with the whistle I'd take my brother up to class myself.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy and Johnny walk down the glazed green-tiled back hallway.

TOMMY

I didn't think they were marking that down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY
Why you skipping math tutoring?

TOMMY
I told, I don't want you talking to
Tatiana this year.

INT. BACK STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

They enter the back stairwell and head up. A moment later...
TWO SETS OF SNEAKERS follow.

INT. BACK STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Tommy and Johnny head up another flight passing through the
shadows and blades of light from the steel-gated windows.

TOMMY
Yeah, I heard about the wrappers in
the trash.

JOHNNY
And you're not-

TOMMY
No, I'm not selling candy this
year. You know that.

They continue up the stairs. The SAME TWO SETS OF SNEAKERS
follow.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR STAIRWELL LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

The TWO SETS OF SNEAKERS stop on the landing, pause, and
finally exit through the doors into the hallway. TOMMY JUMPS
OUT from a steel pillar and rushes to the double doors,
closing the doors behind Goon #1 and Goon #2. He loops his
blue-hooded sweatshirt through the both door handles, locking
them together. The Goons spin around and stare through the
scalloped square door windows.

They try pushing the door but it won't budge. Goon #1 taps a
shiny monitor badge up against the window.

GOON 1
Just want to see your hallway pass
and ask you a question, Tommy.

TOMMY
(shouting through window)
I don't want any trouble. Stop
following me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOON 1

You're on two strikes, of course
you don't want trouble. Just hand
over the scorpion chain and we can
all walk away.

Tommy stares. Johnny looks on, confused.

TOMMY

I lost it somewhere in Shane's
fort. Tell Hiro for the millionth
time I don't have it. And if you
bug me about it again I'm gonna
wait until we're outside of school
and beat you both up at the same
time.

The Goons consider this and slowly move away from the door.
A class of fourth graders head down the stairs. Johnny and
Tommy disappear into the sea of kids, LEAVING BEHIND TOMMY'S
SWEATSHIRT TIED TO THE HANDLES.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

JOHNNY

What was that?

TOMMY

Nothing.

JOHNNY

Why does Hiroji Mazaki think-

TOMMY

I said forget it, it's nothing.

JOHNNY

You left your sweatshirt.

TOMMY

Someone will drop it in the lost
and found, you'll get it later.

NARRATION

But I never got it.

INT. FIRST FLOOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - LATER

Tommy's sweatshirt sits in the lost and found box. A child's
hand reaches in takes it out. We don't see who the child is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION

Two hours later the stink bombs went off and the next day Tommy was staring at that sweatshirt in the Principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Tommy sitting at the table, stoically, looking over the evidence.

PRINCIPAL

End of the line, Tommy. In the beginning of the year we said you could return but one more time in big trouble and that was it.

TOMMY

I told you I've been-

PRINCIPAL

Set up. I know. Someone planned this so you would get strike three.

Doreen sits off to the side with her fingers on her temples, staring at the pile of evidence on the table.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

But you see how the evidence combined with the fact that nobody can attest to your whereabouts when the stink bombs went off combined with a history of stink bomb activity makes it hard for me to entertain the question, who framed Tommy Callahan?

DOREEN

I'm sorry I gave you that tone on the phone, Mitchell. I just needed to see everything for myself.

Tommy looks up at her, dumbstruck.

INT. FIRST FLOOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

The office is empty. Johnny sits alone at his lost and found desk.

NARRATION

It was a Saturday. The school was quiet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION (CONT'D)

I sat outside the Principal's office waiting for Tommy and our mom to come out. I was nervous, trying to peel a sticker on the lost and found clipboard off without anything left behind.

Johnny's fingernail lifts the edge of a SMALL ROUND STICKER stuck to the lost and found clipboard. He peels it off but some sticker residue stays behind.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

Something always stays behind.

Principal's office door swings open and Tommy marches out.

DOREEN (O.S.)

Don't walk away from me when I'm talking to you!

TOMMY

(shell-shocked)

Mom thinks I did it too. Strike three, Johnny. I'm out.

Johnny's face goes cold. Doreen exits in tears, tissue in hand.

INT. CALLAHAN LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Doreen sits on the phone at a small desk of bills and stacks of paper in the livingroom of a small two bedroom apartment.

DOREEN

(into phone)

Military academy, that was the deal if he got strike three. Paperwork was done last year, they've been holding a spot for him...

INT. CALLAHAN BEDROOM - SAME

A NIGHTLIGHT OF THE NYC SKYLINE shines on the wall right below a PHOTO OF JOHNNY AS A FIVE YEAR OLD, standing on the observation deck of the Empire State Building, holding a medium-sized rubber King Kong doll. Next to him stands TOMMY, 6, and THEIR FATHER, a thin man with a goatee and sunglasses.

Muffled sound of Doreen on phone in livingroom:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOREEN (O.S.)

... Out of options, Sheryl, I was
out of options!

Johnny lies on the bottom bunk looking at the photo on the wall. In his arms he holds Tommy's sky-blue hooded sweatshirt. He inspects the large tear in the shoulder. Tommy lies on the top bunk staring at the ceiling.

JOHNNY

What time did I walk you up from
the Wall?

Silence.

TOMMY

I don't know.

JOHNNY

Because your sweatshirt must have
been either returned to the lost
and found box and stolen or never
returned to the lost and found box
at all, right?

TOMMY

Johnny.

JOHNNY

What?

TOMMY

Mom bought the bus ticket. I
already have a military school ID
number. It's done.

JOHNNY

It's not done.

TOMMY

Game over.

Johnny gets out of bed and climbs the bunk bed ladder, now eye level with Tommy.

JOHNNY

Do you know who did this?

TOMMY

What?

Johnny searches his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY

You fight about everything when you think something isn't fair and now, nothing.

TOMMY

I'm done fighting.

JOHNNY

You just let them kick you out and you barely argued.

TOMMY

I don't care anymore.

JOHNNY

There's something you're not telling me.

TOMMY

Just go to sleep-

JOHNNY

Because we just need to figure out who had your sweatshir-

TOMMY

Stop, Johnny-

JOHNNY

And who hated you enough to want to-

TOMMY

Johnny MIND YOUR BUSINESS!

Johnny stares, completely at a loss. Tommy rolls over and faces the wall.

Johnny slowly climbs down the ladder and gets back into bed.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

Johnny stands on a ledge high atop the Empire State Building. Tommy, wearing his wrist cast, stands next to him. Step by step they inch across.

JOHNNY

I see it.

A few yards away dangling off the ledge is the King Kong toy we saw from the photo. Johnny takes a step- SNAP! The ledge beneath him cracks, he falls-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Tommy!

CATCH! Tommy grabs his arm just in time. Johnny dangles off the Empire State Building holding onto Tommy's wrist cast... which begins slipping off.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

It's slipping!

Johnny is slipping from Tommy's grip, pulling off the plaster cast in the process. SHOOM! Johnny rips Tommy's cast clean off his hand, Johnny and cast plummeting to the earth.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Tommmmyyyyy

INT. CALLAHAN BEDROOM - SAME

Johnny's eyes open. Tommy shines a flashlight on him.

TOMMY

You were dreaming.

Johnny blinks, getting his bearings.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Same dream?

JOHNNY

Yeah.

TOMMY

I tried to save you but you still fell again?

JOHNNY

Yeah.

Tommy turns off the flashlight and puts his head back on the pillow. Johnny stares at the NYC SKYLINE NIGHT-LIGHT.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Next time tell yourself its just a dream and instead of falling grow wings and fly away or something. I mean, it's your dream, Johnny. You can do anything you want.

EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - DAY

Tommy and Johnny face each other. Tommy holds a duffel bag. A huge greyhound bus looms in the background. The Hudson River shimmers in the early morning September sun.

JOHNNY

(to Doreen, stoically)
You're sending him to hell.

DOREEN (O.S.)

(sniffling)
Don't make this harder than it has to be, Johnny. It's only for a year. Please say goodbye to your brother, don't want to hold up the bus.

She walks away so they can say goodbye.

TOMMY

You're gonna leave this alone.

JOHNNY

You only say "mind your business" when there's something you really don't want me to know.

TOMMY

I'll be back in a year and I don't want you getting into trouble-

JOHNNY

What are you not telling me?

TOMMY

I won't be there to help you.

JOHNNY

Help me? Can't even help yourself! Maybe if you spent more time on your times tables instead of skipping math tutoring then maybe you could do long division by now and the school wouldn't want to get rid of you so quick like last year!

Tommy nods. The bus engine roars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION

I went too far. I had a higher math level than Tommy but I never teased him about it.

TOMMY

(to Doreen)

If you see Johnny tell him something for me?

DOREEN (O.S.)

Come on, Tom. Now's not the time to do this-

JOHNNY

Sorry I said that, Tommy. Please don't pretend I'm invisible right now.

TOMMY

Tell him I don't really like sleeping in forts in the livingroom anymore. I was just doing it because I knew he liked it.

JOHNNY

I'm sorry I said that, Tommy. Come on.

TOMMY

And tell him I know why he's a lost and found monitor again this year and he's an idiot if he thinks it's ever coming back.

Tommy slings his bag over his shoulder and intentionally looks around Johnny as though he's invisible.

JOHNNY

(tearing up)

Don't pretend I'm invisible, Tommy. Sorry I said that!

Tommy steps up onto the bus and doesn't turn back.

NARRATION

And just like that... He was gone.

INT. CALLAHAN BEDROOM - NIGHT (SAME)

NARRATION

And I was alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED;

Johnny lies on the bottom bunk staring at the underside of the mattress above.

INT. PETER PAN BUS - LATER

The bus zooms up the highway. Tommy looks out the window. A sign reads: PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY 3/4 MILES.

INT. CALLAHAN BEDROOM - SAME

Johnny looks over at Tommy's sky-blue hooded sweatshirt, now with mended shoulder, hanging from a hanger.

NARRATION

When we were little Tommy showed me how you can hold a mirror up to another mirror and see into infinity. That's what the first night alone felt like. Like it lasted for infinity. Sometimes at night if I couldn't sleep I'd nudge the top bunk to see if Tommy was still awake. Tommy wasn't there but I did it anyway.

Johnny lifts his foot and nudges the underside of the top bunk bed mattress.

MATCH CUT TO:

TOMMY'S BUNK BED BEING NUDGED FROM THE BOTTOM.

INT. PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY - DELTA COMPANY BARRACK 3 - NIGHT (SAME)

KID BELOW

Callahan!

Tommy opens his eyes. He lies in the top bunk of a row of a dozen bunk beds in a dark barrack. His mattress gets nudged from the bottom again.

KID BELOW (CONT'D)

Hey Callahan!

Tommy swings his head over the side. Below lies a KID WITH A SCREW LOOSE AND A WILD LOOK in his eye.

KID BELOW/SCREW LOOSE

I'm doin it! This is your last chance. You with me or not?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOMMY

Not. Go to sleep.

CODY MCGILL, 12, throws the blankets off and gets out of bed, fully dressed in khakis, long sleeved shirt, and boots. He grabs a small sack and heads for the window. From across the room a boy's voice:

BOY'S VOICE

Don't let him do it, Callahan.
Control your barrack partner.

Tommy sits up in bed and looks on as Cody looks out the window and begins to open it.

RYAN TODD

I said control your barrack
partner, Callahan!

Cody jumps out of the window and hits the ground hard, half a story below. Tommy and a few other kids rush to the window and see Cody bolting through the campus grounds over a hilly stretch of well manicured grass, running top speed toward a FLATBED TRUCK ON ITS WAY THROUGH THE GATES. But Cody is too late. The truck is too fast and it's through the gate before he can reach it.

CADETS

He didn't make it!... He's coming
back!... He's done!... I've never
seen anyone miss the truck and then
make it back without getting
caught!

In the distance TWO ADULTS RUNNING TOP SPEED converge on Cody and apprehend him.

CADETS (CONT'D)

They got him. Damn.

The cadets disburse, shaking their heads. Tommy is spun around by a BIGGER KID, RYAN TODD, 13, tall with a huge scar on his scalp where no hair grows, who gets in his face:

RYAN TODD

I hate new cadets. Someone always
tries something on the first night
and they always get caught. Know
what this means?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOMMY

Means take a step back or see what happens.

RYAN TODD

Know how much E.D. The whole squad gets for Gross Poor Judgement? What your fellow cadet does reflects on the company and has CONSEQUENCES. You're responsible to make sure your barrack partner doesn't mess up.

Tommy takes a step closer, clearly not afraid. He looks around.

TOMMY

What's E.D.?

RYAN TODD

You'll see, New York boy. This place will fix you up good.

INT. P.S.41 SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Empty classroom with the overhead lights off. Overcast glow from the large windows. Tatiana stares into the big tarantula cage in the corner. JOHNNY appears in the reflection of the glass, standing in the doorway on the other side of the room. He holds an empty cardboard box.

JOHNNY

He's gone.

Tatiana taps the glass. The tarantula lifts a leg and slowly puts it down.

TATIANA

Tell someone who cares.

JOHNNY

Friday you're giving me a message to give to him and now you don't care?-

TATIANA

That's right, I don't care. Tommy wants to pretend I'm invisible and then break his promise of not getting strike three-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

He didn't do it. Someone else
threw those-

TATIANA

Come on, Johnny. He didn't care
about himself or anyone else. Boys
are just plain stupid. They don't
think. Know how stupid my brother
is?

We now see they aren't alone. In the back of the room
FRANCISCO, TATIANA'S SPARKPLUG THIRD GRADE BROTHER, looks up
from a math workbook.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

(to Francisco, in Spanish)

I didn't say stop doing your
homework.

Francisco looks back down at his work.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

Francisco was on a jungle gym when
he was little he got all the way to
the top and jumped off like he was
like he was diving into a swimming
pool, head first. Someone's mom
was right there and caught him
right before he hit the ground!
And when she put him down he just
smiled and ran away. Know why?
Because he's a boy and boys don't
think. They jump around like
monkeys, breaking rules, getting
into trouble, and ruining
everything for everyone else.
Climbing, running, fighting,
jumping. Your brother had to jump
up and touch the planet thing in
the science room every time he
passed under it. Why?

JOHNNY

(obviously)

He's tall enough to touch it now.

TATIANA

I've got enough to worry about
taking care of Francisco, making
sure he doesn't kill himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TATIANA (CONT'D)

I don't care if Tommy threw the
stink bombs or if someone else
them. I'm done caring.

Johnny approaches the tarantula cage.

JOHNNY

I saw you sword fight with Tommy in
the third grade at a playdate at my
house. You both said "I opposite
of hate you" and you told him one
day you'd get married to each
other.

Francisco breaks the tip of his pencil.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I was there I heard it. Don't tell
me you don't care.

Silence, except for the sound of the electric pencil
sharpener in the back.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

And why was he pretending you were
invisible this year? And why did
two sixth grade yard monitors think
he had Hiro Mazaki's scorpion
chain?

TATIANA

I think all those years at the lost
and found desk turned you crazy.

JOHNNY

I'm gonna find out who set him up,
Tatiana.

TATIANA

You do that, detective Callahan.
Hold on I think I've got some
invisible ink and magnifying glass
in my backpack.

JOHNNY

I'm gonna clear his name and bring
him home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

And if I find out it had anything to do with why he was pretending you were invisible, you can say goodbye to your class tarantula because I'm gonna make sure you or WHOEVER threw those stink bombs gets kicked out of this school FOREVER.

SMASH CUT:

SOUND OF: REMOTE CONTROLLED HELICOPTER WHIRRING.

EXT. PS41 SCHOOLYARD - LATER

A REMOTE CONTROLLED HELICOPTER flies through the sky. Johnny stands by the gates of the schoolyard looking in. A boy in the distance collects soccer balls, kick balls, and basketballs. The other boy, HANS SVELTE, SWEDISH SIXTH GRADER, turtleneck, glasses, thick Swedish accent, holds the helicopter remote control. Johnny approaches and stands next to Hans, both looking up in the sky.

HANS

Is it true? Military school?

JOHNNY

Yeah.

Hans shakes his head, eyes still locked on the helicopter. Boy in the distance collecting kickballs eyes them casually.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You know the two sixth grade monitors who sell Mazaki's candy during morning yard?

HANS

Yeah.

JOHNNY

They're usually down here, right?

HANS

They both got suspended.

JOHNNY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HANS

Greggy Perillo, the kid with the peanut allergy, got together with Michael Bowers and told on all the monitors. Hiro got suspended and those two monitors selling most of his candy got suspended too. Know what else?

JOHNNY

What?

HANS

Michael Bowers picks his nose and eats it. They say has eaten over 10,000 boogers in his lifetime.

Johnny looks off.

JOHNNY

Lotta boogers.

HANS

Yeah.

They stand there.

JOHNNY

You and Tommy were second-best friends in second grade, right?

HANS

Yeah.

JOHNNY

He was nice to you, even when you had your accident in your pants.

HANS

He was the only one who would sit with me at lunch.

JOHNNY

So if you knew anything about the stink bombs, you'd tell me, right?

The other monitor approaches with a net of kick balls, basketballs, and soccer balls.

YARD MONITOR

Not allowed to be in the yard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Johnny flashes his monitor badge.

JOHNNY
Lost and Found monitor, just
getting off my shift.

The kid nods reluctantly and tightens the rope around the net of equipment. Hans looks back to the helicopter in the sky.

HANS
(staring up at helicopter)
When you were little, Johnny, did
your mom or dad ever do the piggy
toe thing?

Strange question to ask.

JOHNNY
Excuse me?

HANS
"This little piggy" poem on your
feet.

The helicopter begins descending. The WHIRRING GETS LOUDER.

JOHNNY
Before my Dad moved away, when I
was really little, he used to do
that with me.

HANS
My farsa did that in Sweden when I
was little, too. And I had this
friend who's mother did it, too.
But she said it a little different.
She used to say...

WHIRRING gets louder...

HANS (CONT'D)
This little piggy went to market,
this little piggy went to town.
This little piggy had roast beef,
and this little piggy had none.
But this little piggy had a tiny
little comb. And this little piggy
went weeeeeeeeeee, all the way home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Johnny stares, utterly confused. The helicopter WHIRRING rises to a crescendo-

SMASH CUT:

AN EMPTY CARDBOARD BOX HITS THE FLOOR...

INT. SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Johnny kneels in front and reaches inside.

NARRATION

The school asked my mom to get
Tommy's stuff but she was working
so she asked me. He kept a pretty
messy desk.

He begins pulling out handfuls of messy pieces of paper and putting them into a cardboard box. A broken stapler, magic markers with no caps, pencils with worn out erasers, a hole puncher. Something falls on the floor. Johnny picks it up. A silver chain with a small glass pendant attached, A SCORPION SUSPENDED IN THE GLASS.

INT. CALLAHAN BEDROOM - NIGHT (SAME)

Johnny lies in bed staring at the SCORPION PENDANT ON THE CHAIN hanging from the underside of the top bunk.

We pull out to see Johnny wearing Tommy's sky-blue hooded sweatshirt.

Below is a MESS OF DISMANTLED ACTION FIGURES, legs, arms, torsos, scattered all over the floor.

EXT. HUDSON RIVER BOARDWALK - DUSK

Johnny walks with Greggory Perillo. Sue Perillo walks ahead of them on a cell phone.

GREGGY PERILLO

I was really glad when your mom
called my mom for a playdate,
Johnny.

Johnny walks, eyes on the huge boat docked on the pier.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming with me to
Hiroji's birthday. I don't think
kids really like me too much after
I got him suspended.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION

Greggy Perillo's mom did yoga with Hiro Mazaki's mom so even though Greggy had just gotten Hiro Mazaki suspended he was still invited to Hiro's big birthday party he had every year on this big boat.

They walk. Greggy is happy to have a friend to talk to, Johnny's mind is somewhere else.

GREGGY PERILLO

You ever dream, Johnny?

JOHNNY

What?

GREGGY PERILLO

You ever dream?

JOHNNY

I have this dream at night where I'm falling.

GREGGY PERILLO

Not that kind of dream, I mean, like a dream for something in the future?

JOHNNY

Oh. Um. No.

EXT. NYC CIRCLE LINE CRUISE SHIP - DUSK - LATER

An over-the-top birthday party with ACROBATS, JUGGLERS, STREAMERS. Greggy and Johnny stand off to the side. Hiro Mazaki, dressed in a silk shirt and slick spiky black hair, approaches.

HIROJI

Johnny Callahan. Haven't seen you at a birthday party in years. Finally decided to come out from behind the lost and found desk?

JOHNNY

Happy birthday, Hiro. Sorry you got suspended. Good party.

HIROJI

Funny, don't remember inviting you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GREGGY PERILLO

We were having a playdate and-

HIROJI

No. He set up a playdate with you because he knew you were coming here and he wanted to ask me about the stink bombs.

Hiroji's got a ninth grade reading level and it shows. Gregggy, hurt, looks at Johnny for confirmation he was used for a playdate. Johnny just looks at Mazaki.

JOHNNY

Tommy wasn't selling your candy this year because he was on two strikes.

HIROJI

He didn't want to get in trouble for anything this year. I could respect that.

JOHNNY

Could you?

HIROJI

Yeah.

JOHNNY

Maybe you couldn't trust a kid on two strikes.

HIROJI

What are you trying to say?

JOHNNY

Maybe a kid on two strikes would tell on you just to save his own butt. So maybe a kid like that had to go.

HIROJI

Look, Johnny. The stink bombs were thrown. Tommy got pinned. That's all I know. Things happen. The sun comes out in the day and the moon comes out at night but sometimes you look up in the middle of the day and there's the moon. Do we know why? It just is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY

Just is?

HIROJI

Just is.

JOHNNY

Right. Like the way some actions
figures float in the tub and some
sink to the bottom. Who knows why?
It just... is?

Hiro nods and puts his hands up, exactly.

HIROJI

We done here? Last time I checked
it was my birthday party and we
were on a boat with jugglers and
animals and whatnot.

JOHNNY

I notice you're not wearing your
scorpion chain this year. Why?

HIROJI MAZAKI

No reason.

JOHNNY

No reason?

HIROJI MAZAKI

No.

JOHNNY

No?

HIROJI MAZAKI

I said no. And last time I checked
it wasn't opposite day.

Johnny produces the SCORPION CHAIN from his pocket and holds
it up. Hiroji grabs it.

HIROJI MAZAKI (CONT'D)

Where'd you get this?!

JOHNNY

Back of Tommy's desk when I was
cleaning it out. Why did he have
it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HIROJI

Stole it from me at the birthday
sleepover this summer.

JOHNNY

That why you wanted him gone?
Cause he wouldn't give this back?!

HIROJI

Know what? Get outa here! You
weren't invited to this party! Get
off this boat!

Several kids and adults begin to crowd around and separate
them.

JOHNNY

Tell me Hiro!

HIROJI

Get him off this boat!

Johnny shouts over the crowd pulling him away.

JOHNNY

Know why some action figures that
float and some sink to the bottom,
Hiro?! The one's that sink to the
bottom are solid. The one's that
float have air on the inside. They
float because they're hollow!

SMASH CUT:

EXT. BOARDWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny and Gregggy walk, Sue Perillo ten feet ahead on her
cell.

NARRATION

We got kicked off the boat. Gregggy
didn't say a word to me.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

We're back on the side of the Empire State Building.

NARRATION

That night I had that dream again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Again, JOHNNY is dangling off the side. Again someone grabs his hand. But this time it's not Tommy. He can't make out who it is. The wind rips.

JOHNNY

Just a dream. Just a dream.

He intentionally lets go of the person holding his hand and plummets. He sticks his arms out and tries to fly. It's not working.

He plummets past EACH LINE OF TEXT of the PIGGY POEM Hans Svelte recited earlier, all in LIFE-SIZED WHITE WORDS:

This little piggy went to market.....
 This little piggy went to town.....
 This little piggy had roast beef.....
 This little piggy had none.....
 This little piggy had a tiny little comb.....
 And this little piggy went weeweeeweeeee!.....
 All the way home!

SHOOOOOM!

INT. JOHNNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (SAME)

His eyes open.

JOHNNY

There's an extra piggy. Six
 piggies. Six toes.

INT. JOHNNY'S CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

Johnny walks into class. Everyone's crowded around the back of the room. Johnny approaches. Kids quiet down. Gregggy sits in the middle of the crowd in tears. His ZIPWIRE DIORAMA and Johnny's FORT AMSTERDAM DIORAMA are completely smashed.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

BIRDSEYE VIEW: CEILING FAN slowly, round and round.

Johnny and Gregggy sit across from each other, their vandalized dioramas in the middle of the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRINCIPAL

Let me get this straight. You found Hiroji Mazaki's necklace in Tommy's desk and you thought it was a clue as to who "framed" Tommy for the stink bombs. So you made a playdate with Gregggy here just so he would take you to Hiroji's birthday party.

GREGGY PERILLO

(wiping tears)

He used me for a playdate to get to the party and this is what happened.

JOHNNY

I'm sorry, Gregggy.

PRINCIPAL

Right. So you both think this was done why?

JOHNNY

To send me a message, not to ask anyone about the stink bombs anymore. I made someone nervous.

PRINCIPAL

(nodding, deep breath)

You've been a lost and found monitor for how long, Johnny?

JOHNNY

Since second grade.

PRINCIPAL

Maaaaybe your imagination's gotten the best of you here, Hm? Maybe it's time we change up your monitor post, get a little change of scenery. I'm making some changes with Gregggy here, too. Making him monitor captain. And I must say, he's got some interesting ideas.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATE AFTERNOON

Gregggy stands in front of a crowd of adults, who nod and sip coffee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GREGGY PERILLO

My "Off the Wall" program would take troublemakers who are on the Wall every day after lunch and put them to work upstairs doing arts and crafts, giving them a chance to channel their energies and frustrations in a fun and creative way. I've never spent any time on the Wall but I imagine it's not fun. You stand there for the rest of lunch and all of yard and you do nothing. Where does all that negative energy, all that STUFF go? Goes right back to causing more trouble later. Right back to being bad again. Round and round it goes.

INT. CONVERTED STORAGE CLOSET - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

A converted storage closet with its door propped open and a sign reading: MONITOR SIGN-IN. A SIXTH GRADE DESK JOCKEY MONITOR, sits behind the desk marking something down on a clipboard. Johnny stands in front of him.

DESK JOCKEY

Back Hallway Dismissal post. Why you switching from Lost and Found?

JOHNNY

Being transferred.

DESK JOCKEY

Back Hallway Dismissal is a good post to get. You get out of class 20 minutes early, plus you're working the back staircase. Nobody even uses the back exit for dismissal. You could leave the school before three and nobody would ever even know. By the way, you were right about the inhaler I lost.

JOHNNY

Sister's backpack?

DESK JOCKEY

Yup. My mom put it in my sister's backpack instead of mine. Just like you said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

Hey, you the sixth grader with the helicopter, he's on lunch-yard now?

DESK JOCKEY

Hans Svelte?

JOHNNY

His class goes to noon lunch 12:30 lunch? ^{OR} ^

DESK JOCKEY

12:30. But he's gone today. Lice check this morning. They say he was crawling. They put him in another room and everything. Mom already came to pick him up.

Johnny thinks.

JOHNNY

Hey, how long you been in P.S.41?

DESK JOCKEY

I did Kindergarten in Pittsburgh and came here for first grade. Why?

JOHNNY

Ever know anyone with six toes?

DESK JOCKEY

Six toes?

JOHNNY

I think Tommy once told me about a kid in his class in third grade...

DESK JOCKEY

(thinking, remembering)
Yeeeah... kid with six toes. Brought nunchucks into school. They were real. Wood handles, steel chain in the middle. Got caught with them and he was kicked out of school. Casper Combs.

JOHNNY

Casper Combs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DESK JOCKEY

Third grader but the fastest kid in school. Faster than 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. That never happens. Some say the sixth toe on his foot made him run faster but you know, I mean who knows, right?

JOHNNY

Know where he's in school now?

DESK JOCKEY

No but I went to the races last year and he was there.

JOHNNY

(looking off)

The races.

NARRATION

Hiroji Mazaki's scorpion chain had gotten me nowhere. But Hans was trying to tell me something and I knew what I needed to do next. I was going to the races.

PRE-LAP SOUND OF: GUNSHOT. BANG!

EXT. ASPHALT GREEN OUTDOOR TRACK - UPPER EAST SIDE - DAY

SIX KIDS with NAME BIBS ON THEIR BACKS take off like rockets in a 100 meter dash. They cross the finish line, one with his hands in the air. The crowd cheers from the seats along the large green field overlooking the FDR Drive. Johnny sits in the stands with Doreen, biting into a hotdog.

NARRATION

Every year the fastest kids in their school got to see who was the fastest in the whole city.

A huge banner reads: THE FASTEST KID IN NEW YORK.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

I made my mom take me and I kept an eye out for the kid with six toes.

DOREEN

I'm glad we're doing this, hon. We haven't had a special time just the two of us in while...

(taking another bite)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOREEN (CONT'D)

...How are you sweetie? Talk to me.

Johnny nods looks down at a class picture he's brought along.

DOREEN (CONT'D)

Whatcha got there?

JOHNNY

Tommy's third grade class picture.

DOREEN

Yeah? Someone Tommy was in class with racing today?

JOHNNY

(scanning the picture)

Yup.

Johnny looks at the FACE OF A BOY in the class picture and sees the SAME FACE, NOW THREE YEARS OLDER, across the field. BINGO. A match. CASPER COMBS, 11, small for his age, sporting a crew cut and tank top with a racing bib on the back reading: COMBS P.S.124. Johnny sits up straight, eyes locked.

DOREEN

I think it's great you're taking interests in things that don't have anything to do with Tommy going away. Just doing your own thing, right?

On the field a kid approaches Casper and asks to see his sixth toe. Casper begrudgingly takes off his sneaker and shows the boy.

JOHNNY

Yup. Just doing my own thing.

ANNOUNCER

As the 12 year-old's prepare to get into their starting positions...

JOHNNY

Going to the bathroom. I'll be back in a sec.

MOMENTS LATER:

CASPER kneels in a starting position next to five other kids on their marks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He turns his head for a moment, locking eyes with Johnny in the second row a hundred yards away. Casper's eyes widen.

BANG! Race is on, Casper and the five other boys take off. Johnny watches them run and ten seconds later they cross the finish line, Casper coming in fourth.

Everyone slows down - EXCEPT FOR CASPER - who CONTINUES RUNNING TOP SPEED for the main facility building fifty yards away, tearing the racing bib off his back and tossing it in the air. Johnny nods to himself, "gotcha", and takes off after him, grabbing the racing bib as it floats down from the sky.

INT. ASPHALT GREEN ATHLETIC CENTER BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny enters the building and sees CASPER SLIPPING THROUGH A DOOR on the far end of the lobby. An adult calls after Casper:

ADULT

There's no running in the building!

Johnny walks quickly through the lobby and slips through the same door, following Casper into a...

INT. PREGNANT YOGA CLASS - MOMENTS LATER

Pregnant women doing yoga in all sorts of positions. Casper slips through the door on the other side. Johnny walks briskly around the perimeter of the room and follows.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny stands by the edge of the pool looking around. An elderly woman in a bathing suit and swimming cap says to another elderly woman:

ELDERLY WOMAN

Have you seen my goggles?

Johnny looks around. In the corner on the other side sits Casper Combs wearing goggles, reading a New Yorker magazine. Casper looks up. Busted. He tosses the goggles and slips through a door with a sign reading: LADIES LOCKER ROOM.

INT. LADIES LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny quietly follows Casper inside. The locker room is empty for the moment. Johnny spots a locker door closing by itself in the corner. Casper has slipped inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnny approaches. He hears women entering the locker room and he quickly hides in the locker adjacent to Casper's.

INT. JOHNNY'S LOCKER - CONTINUOUS

Johnny sits in the dark, eyes illuminated by the slivers of light from the ventilation slits. He hears Casper breathing through the locker wall.

JOHNNY

Why you running Casper? Did you
throw the stink bombs?

Silence.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Talk!

INT. CASPER'S LOCKER - SAME

Slivers of light illuminate Casper eyes as well.

CASPER

If I talk to you... I don't get my
nunchucks back.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Casper bursts out of the locker, grabs an open padlock from the bench and throws it on Johnny's locker, locking him in. Half naked women shriek and scramble to cover with towels. Casper covers his eyes:

CASPER

He's in there! He made me do it!
He made me hide in here to spy on
naked ladies! But I didn't want
to! I want my mommmmmmyyy!

Casper runs out of the locker room screaming.

CASPER (CONT'D)

I'm too young to see naked
ladieeeeees! I want my mommmmmmyyy!

Johnny tries to open the door but he's locked in.

DRILL SERGEANT (V.O./PRE-LAP)

Accountability. Integrity.
Discipline.

EXT. PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY - TRAINING FIELD

Tommy, Ryan, and Cody stand in a line with their company.
CADET INSTRUCTOR paces back and forth:

DRILL SERGEANT

6th grade Delta Company 3, each and every one of you made that pledge when you were driven through those hallowed gates. To strive to be whole and balanced in mind body and spirit. This is where you are now. Who you were before you got here? Doesn't matter. Who you are now depends entirely on how hard you want to work on yourselves.

(nodding)

And how hard you want to work...as a team.

Ryan shakes his head in disgust.

CADET INSTRUCTOR

Because of BC McGill's stunt and the ruling of Gross Poor Judgement on his part and the part of his barrack partner BC Callahan for not intervening...

Tommy rolls his eyes.

CADET INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

You are all to report to the "O" course grounds tomorrow for a team building exercise and complete one tour in the Bull Ring before noon.

EXT. BULL RING - MOMENTS LATER

A SMALL CIRCULAR ACTIVITY FIELD in the center of the school. Cadets march back and forth in single lines with heavy rifles on their shoulders.

BULL RING SERGEANT

The rifles are filled with cement and you will march for 45 minutes. Feel the weight. The weight of responsibility.

Tommy marches, rifle on shoulder.

MUSIC: CHORUS OF P.S.41 FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHORUS (O.S.)

Have you seen the ghost of John?...

EXT. BIRDSEYE VIEW - P.S.41 SCHOOLYARD - MORNING

Johnny walks the perimeter of the schoolyard, hands in pockets, not joining into any games. He stares out with a blank expression scanning kids faces.

CHORUS (V.O.)

Long white bones and the rest all
gone. Ooooh. Ooh, ooh, ooh,
ooh...

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

250 fifth and sixth graders sing rounds of GHOST OF JOHN in music assembly.

CHORUS (V.O.)

...Wouldn't it be chilly with no
skin on? Have you seen the ghost
of John? Long white bones and the
rest all gone...

Tatiana looks over at Johnny standing with his class, barely singing, mouthing the words halfheartedly, staring off.

CHORUS (CONT'D)

...Ooooh. Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh...

INT. FIRST FLOOR BACK STAIRWELL - LATER

Johnny sits alone at his dismissal post in the back stairwell at the end of a long hallway of glazed green tile. Lining both sides of the hallway are boxes and construction equipment.

CHORUS (V.O.)

...Wouldn't it be chilly with no
skin on.

THE SINGING ENDS. Clock on the wall says 2:40.

Johnny looks over at stacks of construction equipment and boxes lining the sides of the hallway.

NARRATION

It's funny the way grown-ups name
things. Makes no sense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATION (CONT'D)

Year after year my math workbooks always have the words Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch on the cover. I've spent a lot of time looking at those words. What do they mean? My new monitor post gave me more time to think, staring at all the school supplies and grown-up stuff being stored on the side of the halls.

Johnny's eyes pass over boxes labelled...

NARRATION (CONT'D)

Stainless steel velocity trolley, 3 MM plate, cable tensioner, break spring, turnbuckle, eyebolt, clamp. But really I was just killing time. I had to find out who Casper Combs was getting his nunchucks back from. That was the kid behind the stink bombs.

The clock says 2:45. Back to Johnny - BUT HE'S GONE. His seat is empty. The EXIT DOOR NEXT TO HIM CLOSING GENTLY.

INT. FIRST FLOOR BACK STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

GREGGY PERILLO stands with a clipboard shaking his head and marking something down.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Casper's racing bib: COMBS P.S. 124...is lowered out of frame, revealing a stone facade plaque: PUBLIC SCHOOL 124. The front doors of the school open. Kids come pouring out.

Johnny sits on a stoop across the street, puts his hood over his head and peers out from underneath. A group of boys tease a LONE GIRL.

BOYS

Look at me! I am french! I think I'm so cool because I am french!

A moment later Casper Combs exits the doors and is greeted by his GRANDMOTHER, who kisses him on the head. Together they walk away.

NARRATION

I followed Casper and his grandma all the way home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUSIC: HIP HOP BEAT, "100% Dundee", by The Roots...hard hitting, melodic, pulsing rhythm...

EXT. CITY STREET - MINUTES LATER

Casper walks into a building with his grandma. He stops, feeling eyes on him and turns. Nothing. He enters the building. Across the street, Johnny hides behind a car, takes a deep breath.

NARRATION

No luck. I'd come back again
tomorrow.

Johnny gets up and runs down the block, passing underneath an American flag.

MATCH CUT TO:

AMERICAN FLAG OUTSIDE THE...

INT. PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

MUSIC CONTINUES. Tommy sits at a desk drilling his times tables, teacher holds a stop watch. Tommy struggles but manages to finish.

MOMENTS LATER:

The teacher marks more than half of the answers wrong.

INT. ARTS AND CRAFTS ROOM - DAY

GREGGY goes from kid to kid, looking over everyone's shoulder in the "Off the Wall" program doing arts and crafts. Everyone's very serious and focused.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - NEXT DAY

Clock reads 2:40. Johnny, backpack on shoulders, slips through the exit door again.

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny runs down the block and catches a bus.

EXT. STOOP ACROSS FROM P.S. 124 - MINUTES LATER

Johnny sits on the same stoop as before and again watches from under his sweatshirt hood. The doors to the school open and kids pour out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Again, Casper's grandmother greets Casper and kisses him on the head, leading him away. A moment later the same group of boys begin teasing the same FRENCH GIRL.

BOYS

I am FRENCH! I like to FRENCH
kiss! Mlah-mlah-mlah!

MUSIC CONTINUES...

EXT. PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

In a team building exercise, Tommy and his company walk on a complex wood contraption that moves forward only if everyone walks in perfect unison.

CADETS

One two three LEFT! One two three
RIGHT! One two three LEFT! One
two three RIGHT!

Cody struggles and falls. The entire squad falls with him. Tommy picks him up and helps him get in rhythm with everyone else as they try again.

CADETS (CONT'D)

One two three LEFT! One two three
RIGHT! One two three LEFT! One
two three RIGHT!

INT. PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

Tommy does the multiplication drills again. This time around he's faster and more confident.

MOMENTS LATER:

The math instructor marks more correct answers than before.

EXT. PERCY MILITARY ACADEMY TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Tommy, Ryan, and the rest of the squad do another team building exercise where they each run up a ten foot inclined ramp and grab onto the hand of a fellow cadet standing at the top. Ryan runs up and grabs Tommy's hand. Tommy pulls him up with great strength. Cody runs up. Ryan grabs him by the hand and tries but he's not strong enough and Cody starts to slide down. Tommy grabs Ryan's arm and helps pull both boys up. The all stand and look at each other, nodding, "good job."

INT. ARTS AND CRAFTS ROOM - DAY

Greggy helps an ex-con Wall kid put the finishing touches on an arts and crafts project and gives him a "not bad kid, keep it up" look. LARGE DIORAMAS of CITY-SCAPES with LARGE CARDBOARD AND CONSTRUCTION PAPER BUILDINGS line the back shelf of the classroom. Greggy stares out the window to the schoolyard below.

INT. SCHOOL LOBBY - DAY

Kids stand in line in front of a table with a sign: PLEASE HAVE ALL BACKPACKS AND LUNCH BOXES OPEN AND READY. A school aid searches a backpack, zips it up and returns it to a child.

NARRATION

Because of Greggy Perillo's peanut allergy scare the school set up candy checkpoint tables. But it didn't do much, candy started flowing again in the schoolyard, in the halls, and in the cafeteria.

The child walks away. AN X-RAY IMAGE OF HIS BACKPACK shows CANDY STACKED IN NEAT ROWS in a SECRET COMPARTMENT.

INT. P.S.41 STAIRWELL - DAY

MONTAGE: All of the inventive candy dealing techniques from previous scenes are played out again, this time even more inventive and covert.

NARRATION

It'd been two weeks of the same thing. Casper was leaving with his grandma every day. And then...

EXT. STOOP ACROSS FROM P.S. 124 - DAY

Johnny sits waiting. The doors open and kids come pouring out. Johnny looks on as the group of boys toss around the FRENCH GIRL'S Eifel Tower plush toy. She tries to get it back to no avail. She walks away in tears and stops a few feet from Johnny's stoop.

KID1

Look at me! I am FRENCH! I don't know ENGLISH!

KID2

French! Blah blah chadabadaBOO!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnny watches the three boys toss around her Eifel Tower toy and grits his teeth.

KID1

I climb the Eifel Tower!

NARRATION

Every day with these kids. They
wouldn't leave her alone.
Something snapped.

Johnny gets up and makes a beeline for the group of boys. He grabs the Eifel Tower from a mid-air toss and pushes the big kid up against the building. The big kid is stunned and just stares silently at Johnny.

Johnny backs away and walks back to the stoop. Johnny hands the Eifel Tower to the French Girl, who looks at him gratefully, wiping a tear from her eye.

FRENCH GIRL

Merci- Um.
(French accent)
Thank you.

Johnny sits back down, eyes still on the school doors.

FRENCH GIRL (CONT'D)

Every day they take my stuff and
won't give it back. But it doesn't
matter. I am moving. I will
never have to see them again.

She sniffles and looks at Johnny with a faint smile. Johnny gives a faint smile back and returns his focus to the school doors.

FRENCH GIRL (CONT'D)

Do you go here?

JOHNNY

No.

She wipes her face again and looks at him.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

But I got something taken away from
me, too. And there's a kid who
goes here who knows why.

Casper exits. Johnny spots him. Casper doesn't stop to wait for his grandmother - he begins walking down the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NARRATION

Casper was on the move, no grandma.
I had to go.

Johnny gets up and walks away. French Girl watches Johnny go.

INT. MTA BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Casper sits in the front of the bus playing a game on a hand-held device. Johnny, sitting in the back, peeks out from behind a newspaper.

EXT. SIXTH AVENUE - MINUTES LATER

Casper gets off the bus. A moment later Johnny follows and ducks out of sight. Casper heads down the block and stops in front of a storefront with a big sign: VOLAKIS HARDWARE. He looks over both shoulders and enters. Johnny watches him go in.

INT. VOLAKIS HARDWARE - MINUTE LATER

SOUND OF: PIERCING KEY CUTTER. Johnny enters the store and looks around. Casper is nowhere to be seen. Two men with thick beards standing behind the counter barely look up. One makes a copy of a key, the other says something in Greek to the ANCIENT GRANDMOTHER sitting in the corner, eyeing Johnny. She says something back in Greek, ending the sentence with "Tommy."

MAN 1

She says you look like someone.

He shouts something back at the grandmother, who proceeds to take out her hearing aid and adjust it. She shouts something back in Greek.

MAN 1 (CONT'D)

(doing paperwork)

She remembers you when you were
little boy with your brother at
Shane's birthday long time ago.
Always liked your brother, he was a
good boy, she says.

JOHNNY

There was a kid just came in-

MAN 1

Went downstairs with Shane.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He motions Johnny can go to the back.

MAN 1 (CONT'D)

Tell him to come up in ten minutes
or I come down and make all of you
work.

Johnny disappears down the hall. A moment later TWO
POLICEMEN AND A MAN IN A SUIT enter the store. Man in the
suit FLASHES A BADGE.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Johnny peers down a long dark hall. An exposed light bulb
flickers on the wall. He taps it gently, it goes on. He
listens. Voices down a flight of stairs.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny heads down the stairs. The voices are coming from a
side door. The voices stop. Johnny pushes the door open and
walks into a...

INT. DARK SPACE - CONTINUOUS

In the distance he hears jingling. A door opens on the other
side of the large dark space and Casper Combs slips out
carrying a PAIR OF NUNCHUCKS. SUDDENLY The lights go on,
JOHNNY IS GRABBED BY THE COLLAR and swung around.

We see what Johnny can't because his back is to it: spanning
the entire large basement space: A HUGE, ELABORATE,
CARDBOARD AND WOOD PLAY SPACE WITH MULTIPLE LEVELS, SLIDES,
ROPE LADDERS, AND TUNNELS. But all Johnny sees is:

SHANE VOLAKIS, SEVENTH GRADER, mean, big, leaning Johnny over
the side of the railing of what we now see is a platform ten
feet off the ground. Johnny's arms scrape against the rough
bannister.

JOHNNY

Ah!

SHANE VOLAKIS

Why'd you come here?

JOHNNY

Did you just give Casper Combs his
nunchucks back?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHANE VOLAKIS

Why you here?! Or should I hang
you by the feet with your
sweatshirt?

He rips the sky-blue hooded sweatshirt tied around Johnny's waist and holds it up to him, menacingly. He tosses it over the railing to the dark basement floor below.

JOHNNY

The same sweatshirt you made Casper
Combs leave behind after he threw
the stink bombs and ran? Why'd you
make him do it? Why'd you want
Tommy gone?! And who ruined my
diorama because I asked Hiro Mazaki
about the scorpion chain?!

A GIRL'S VOICE from the darkness ten feet away:

GIRL'S VOICE

Leave him alone, Shane.

TATIANA SANTIAGO appears right outside the doorway. Shane looks at her and back to Johnny.

SHANE VOLAKIS

You have the scorpion chain the key
that was on it?

Johnny looks at him quizzically and then quickly nods.

JOHNNY

Yeah. And the key that was on it.

SHANE VOLAKIS

Tomorrow, 4PM. Egg section in the
CVS next door. Bring the scorpion
chain and the key and me and Renny
Spitz will tell you everything you
want to know.

Shane pulls Johnny back onto the platform and ushers him out the exit door back into the hallway, slamming the door behind him. BAM!

INT. TATIANA SANTIAGO APARTMENT BATHROOM - LATER

Johnny sits on the edge of the bathtub with a scraped wrist. Tatiana stands in front of him, dabbing his wound with hydrogen peroxide. SOUND OF: FIZZZZZ in the wound.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TATIANA

It's swollen. Does it hurt.

Johnny looks at her with distrust. She dabs it again.

JOHNNY

Why were you there?

TATIANA

Picking my brother up from a playdate with Gregg Perillo. They live in the same building.

JOHNNY

Gregg Perillo and your brother are friends?

TATIANA

Francisco did arts and crafts in Gregg's stupid Off the Wall thing. Now they're friends. I think sixth graders just hate Gregg now and he can't make any friends his own age.

She upends the bottle into another tissue and dabs again.

JOHNNY

But why were you down in that basement place?

TATIANA

Shane sometimes lets Gregg play in the fort.

Johnny stops and looks at her.

JOHNNY

That was Shane's fort?

TATIANA

You couldn't really see it but yeah. Shane's been building this huge cardboard and wood fort from all the stuff they don't use in the hardware store. Francisco left his stuff down there and I had to go get it.

JOHNNY

(realizing)

Damn. Tommy's blue sweatshirt. Shane threw it down there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCISCO stomps in and does the most perfunctory toothbrushing of all time. No toothpaste, no water. He stomps out.

FRANCISCO (O.S.)

Done!

Tatiana and Francisco's mother is heard from other room:

MOTHER (O.S.)

That was too fast. I didn't hear water!

FRANCISCO (O.S.)

9 O'clock is too early for bed!
Not fair!

Tatiana begins wrapping Johnny's wrist in an ace bandage.

TATIANA

Don't go to the grocery store, tomorrow, Johnny. Don't mess with those kids. Shane Volakis and Renny Combs get into real trouble, like with cops. I heard one time they were handcuffed in a police station until 11:30 at night.

JOHNNY

I have to go.

TATIANA

You don't have to.

JOHNNY

But-

TATIANA

But nothing, Johnny.

JOHNNY

I'm getting close, I just need to-

TATIANA

You told Shane you have the key that went on the scorpion chain but-

JOHNNY

But what?

SMASH CUT:

INT. SANTIAGO LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

TATIANA'S HAND reaches into the TARANTULA CAGE and lifts the ROCK FORMATION in the corner. From underneath she takes out A SHINY KEY.

TATIANA

Over the summer, right after Tommy broke his wrist at Shane's sleepover he gave it to me to hold and told me never to tell anyone about it.

Johnny stares. The tarantula sits in the cage, perfectly still a few inches away. Tatiana and Johnny's faces are illuminated by the soft glow from the cage light. The livingroom is dark except a TV on mute in the background.

JOHNNY

You've had it the whole time?

She hands it over. Johnny takes it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

What's so special about it?

TATIANA

I don't know but I guess it was attached to Mazaki's scorpion chain. Shane almost pissed in his pants when he thought you had it.

She puts the cover back on the cage

TATIANA (CONT'D)

I'm surprised the tarantula was out of its little cave so I could get it from underneath. I thought it was sick so the teacher let me take it home last week. It's been hiding for a while, not eating when I tried to feed it. But it wasn't sick.

She taps on the glass and gives a faint smile. The tarantula lifts a leg and slowly sets it down.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

(realizing)

It's getting ready to molt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnny looks in the cage. His own reflection stares back at him.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

You know, Johnny, Francisco's always jumping off things, Tommy's always climbing things, every boy I know is always doing something crazy, jumping, climbing, hanging from something, running, always one thing one minute, next minute something else. And then there's you. Sitting at the lost and found desk, looking at that box.

Silence.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

Waiting.

JOHNNY

Waiting?

TATIANA

What was so special about the King Kong, Johnny?

Johnny looks back at the tarantula cage.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

That is why you give up your lunchyard, to be close to the lost and found box, right?

JOHNNY

No.

Silence.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

It was nothing. It was a toy I got when I was little, when my Dad took me and Tommy to the Empire State Building.

TATIANA

And you lost it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY

I had it in my backpack in second grade the Day my dad took me and Tommy to school before he moved to California to live with his new girlfriend. In the middle of the day I looked in my backpack and it was gone. Tommy tried to help me find it, tried to see if anyone in school took it but it was gone.

TATIANA

You cried a lot that day.

JOHNNY

How do you know?

TATIANA

I remember.

Johnny stares off.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

And I remember Tommy was so mad that day, about your dad leaving. He cried a lot, too.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

(thinking back)

You know, Tommy was gonna be the first boy I ever kissed.

JOHNNY

He told me you told him that.

TATIANA

That was the plan.

Silence. They both stare into the glass.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

What about you?

JOHNNY

Me what?

TATIANA

Tommy told me you've never kissed on the lips before.

Johnny stares at the tarantula, embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TATIANA (CONT'D)

Ever wanted to kiss someone?

She studies his face. He just looks into the glass.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

I remember, I was once over for a playdate with Tommy and I saw you through the door kissing the bathroom mirror.

JOHNNY

(gulping)

Me? No.

TATIANA

Kissing the mirror. Like you were pretending to kiss someone.

(a sadness in her eyes)

Who were you pretending to kiss?

Was it me? Were you pretending the mirror was me?

JOHNNY

No.

TATIANA

Tommy told me you used to love me when you in third grade.

JOHNNY

No. Never said that.

TATIANA

You know... you look like him with hand all wrapped up like that.

Johnny looks down. He does. He looks up. They look at one another. She plants a peck on the his lips and pulls away.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

There. Now we've both kissed.

Johnny stares like a deer in headlines.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

But it doesn't really count unless its for five seconds. Then it's a real kiss.

JOHNNY

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TATIANA

One. Two. Three.

She They KISS ON THE LIPS for five seconds. Tatiana backs off and looks at him. He's on another planet.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

Promise me something, Johnny?

JOHNNY

(entranced)

Yeah.

TATIANA

Don't go to the grocery store tomorrow, Johnny. Don't go. For me.

From the CRACK IN THE DOOR on the other side of the room Francisco has been spying. He stands there as still as a statue.

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME

JOHNNY sits looking at what is now an ACE-BANDAGED WRIST. In his other hand is another one of Tommy's class pictures. He stares at Tatiana's face in the middle row.

BAM! Something hits him in the back of the neck. He turns and looks. MICHAEL BOWERS, THE DISGRACED FIFTH GRADE PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL, stands staring into the window. He's not in good shape. Face is pale, hair messy, chocolate smudged on the side of his mouth, a shell of his former self. Johnny looks down at the BRIGHT YELLOW RUBBER BAND on his lap. He looks back at Michael but Michael's gone.

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny exits the auditorium doors. Michael stands all the way down the hall peeking out of the stairwell entrance. Michael bolts again.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENT LATER

Johnny races up the stairs. He stops. He hears a conversation one flight up:

TEACHER (O.S.)

What did I just say?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

You said no running on the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEACHER (O.S.)

That's right. And what were you doing?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I was running on the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Johnny enters and looks down the hallway. Michael is running top speed at the other end. Johnny takes off after him. A HALLWAY MONITOR upends a pack of Reeses Pieces into his mouth and points:

HALLWAY MONITOR

No running!

INT. BACK STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Michael bolts up the stairs. Johnny pursues a floor below.

HALLWAY MONITOR (O.S.)

Third floor stairwell monitor! We got runners!

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Michael slips into a doorway marked LIBRARY.

INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

A TEACHER reads to a CLASS OF FIRST GRADERS on a rug. Johnny enters quietly. Michael and Johnny creep down parallel book aisles. Michael slides out a LARGE HARDCOVER PICTURE BOOK. Johnny sees him through the shelf and does the same.

MOMENTS LATER:

They sit across from each other out of breath, faces behind their oversized books.

JOHNNY

(whispering)

Why'd you hit me with that rubber band, Michael? Why you running?! Tell me what you know!

Silence. Johnny rips Michael's book away. Michael is gone. Other side of the room, the door gently closes. A hand on Johnny's shoulder. Gregg stands with two monitors on either side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GREGGY PERILLO

Running in the halls and
interrupting reading time of
another class. You know I gotta
bring you into the Principal's
office now, right?

(shaking head)

What happened to you, Johnny? You
used to be one of the good guys.

Johnny swipes Greggy's hand off his shoulder. The two
monitors on either side steel themselves for resistance.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

Don't make a big thing. We're in
the library. Go quietly.

INT. PERCY MILITARY SCHOOL - BARRACK 7 - SAME

Tommy puts the finishing touches on a PERFECTLY MADE BED.

RYAN TODD

Callahan. Honor Company. We got
it. And check out who got Barrack
Leader.

Tommy approaches a group of cadets crowded around a list on
the wall:

BARRACK LEADER/HONOR COMPANY LIST FOR WEEK BEGINNING 10/31
DELTA BARRACK 1 BL: TRIG MALONE
DELTA BARRACK 2 BL: RUBEN GARCIA
DELTA BARRACK 3 BL: THOMAS CALLAHAN - HONOR COMPANY
DELTA BARRACK 4 BL: PARKER MILLS
HONOR COMPANY BL REPORT TO OPERATIONS BUILDING FOR RIBBONS

Tommy stares at the list, playing it cool, trying not to
smile.

RYAN TODD (CONT'D)

Sleeping in on Saturday, eating
first at Mess. That's what I'm
talkin' about, Callahan.

Gives him a playful nudge.

RYAN TODD (CONT'D)

Go fetch us our ribbons, barrack
leader.

INT. SQUAD OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

The TV is on in the room. Nobody inside. Tommy stands in the doorway.

TOMMY

Hello?

A news report on the TV shows a REPORTER STANDING IN FRONT OF VOLAKIS HARDWARE in NYC. It catches Tommy's attention.

REPORTER

Where sources say police questioned a business in close proximity to where the Manhattan theft took place several months ago, suspicions being raised by this sky-blue hooded sweatshirt found in the building that matched an image taken by a security camera on the night of the theft. CVS security had this to say:

SECURITY GUY

You'd think that whoever would plan something like this would want to steal the expensive stuff like electronics, but they just went for the candy. About 150 cases of candy, mostly bags of those little Hershey Minis. Bam. Vanished. Gone.

Tommy looks like he's seen a ghost.

SMASH CUT:

INT. CALLAHAN LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

RING. Lights are off, nobody home, machine picks up. BEEEP.

TOMMY'S VOICE

Hi...um. Hi Mom, hi Johnny. It's Tommy...

INT. OFFICE NEXT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy, hiding under the desk, presses a phone receiver to his ear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOMMY

...Just wanted to know if Johnny
was there, it's really important, I
really gotta.

Line gets disconnected. Tommy slowly rises from under the
desk. A STERN FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR, 50s, in a crisp uniform,
stands with her finger on the dial.

INT. DELTA BARRACK 3 - LATER

Tommy marches with a cement filled rifle back and forth, eyes
glued to the window and THE TRUCK ACROSS THE CAMPUS.

RYAN TODD (O.S.)

I don't know what made you try to
make a phone call without having
phone privileges...

Ryan stands in the doorway with a whistle around his neck.

RYAN TODD (CONT'D)

And I don't know why you're staring
at that truck across campus.

Tommy just stares.

RYAN TODD (CONT'D)

But I don't like it.

TOMMY

You on barrack duty?

RYAN TODD

Why you eyein' the truck, Callahan?

TOMMY

Everyone's at Mess. I could make
it.

RYAN TODD

You get caught and there goes Honor
Company for the whole squad,
everything we've worked so hard
for.

TOMMY

If I don't go my brother could be
in a lot of trouble.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RYAN TODD

(shaking head)

I knew it. You're not part of a team. You're not part of anything.

Tommy lets the cement filled rifle drop to the floor.

TOMMY

You have any brothers or sisters?

RYAN TODD

My fellow cadets are my brothers.

TOMMY

I mean in your real family.

RYAN TODD

I got a little brother. But he's an idiot like BC McGill. One time he emptied the stuff from a lot of bang snaps into one big bang snap and it went off and almost burned his nostril off. I told him not to do it but he didn't listen.

TOMMY

Yeah. My brother Johnny did something I told him not to do also. But he did it. And now I gotta help him.

(staring at window)

Tell on me, Ryan, do what you gotta do, but just give me head start.

INT. GYM CLASS - LATER

Johnny stands with his hands in the air, reaching high. An EARTHY FEMALE GYM TEACHER leads the class in yoga-type stretches.

EARTHY TEACHER

Really want you to feel that stretch! Reach as high as you can!

Two boys begin giggling in the front row, whispering:

BOY

I saw her boob when her shirt came up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARTHY TEACHER

Think about how much fun we'll all have tonight at the Halloween party. Think about all the candy you'll all have from the trick or treating next couple of days, think about only having a few pieces a day, staying healthy...

More giggling from the boys.

EARTHY TEACHER (CONT'D)

Stretch...stretch...stretch...like your whole body's one big rubber band!

The giggling kids have completely lost it, cracking up.

Johnny slowly puts his arms down and takes out MICHAEL'S YELLOW RUBBER BAND. He looks closely: Something resembling a bar code in black ink

IIII

He STRETCHES it, MARKS EXPAND INTO LEGIBLE WORDS from:

IIII..... to..... NATURE SECTION 3:30

INT. SANTIAGO LIVINGROOM - DAY

Tatiana, dressed as MOTHER EARTH in an orange costume covered in colorful foliage, stares into the tarantula cage. Tarantula is now upside down part of its exoskeleton is molting. Francisco, dressed as a ninja begins to reach into the cage to touch it.

TATIANA

Don't touch it.

FRANCISCO

It's been like that since yesterday. It's dead.

TATIANA

It's not dead, leave it alone. Sometimes it can take a long time to molt if it's not strong enough or if it's sick.

FRANCISCO

Should we help it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TATIANA

You touch it and it could die. It needs to molt by itself. It needs to do it alone.

EXT. MILITARY SCHOOL BACK GATE - SAME

Tommy bolts up the hill, keeping low, and JUMPS ONTO THE BACK of a LARGE LAUNDRY TRUCK just as it's pulling out.

INT. BARRACK 3 - SAME

Ryan watches from a distance as the truck exits the gates. He stands there thinking. He raises a framed picture of his family, his hand on his little brother's shoulder.

INT. JEFFERSON MARKET LIBRARY FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Clock on the wall reads 3:45. JOHNNY stands under a sign: NATURE SECTION. He looks around. A YELLOW RUBBER BAND hangs from the back of the sign. Johnny climbs the bookshelf, grabs the rubber band, and jumps down. He looks.

IIIIII stretches out to read: BASEMENT WING C DOOR 737

INT. BASEMENT ROOM, WING C - MOMENTS LATER

DOOR marked, STAFF ONLY. KEYPAD on the wall. Johnny looks around. He punches 737 into the keypad. CLICK. Door UNLOCKS.

INT. WINDING STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

GOTHIC STAIRWELL. Hanging off the RICKETY WOOD BANISTER, ANOTHER YELLOW RUBBER BAND. Johnny grabs it and stretches:

IIIIII stretches out to read: KEEP GOING

INT. WINDING STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

DOOR marked, BELL TOWER. Johnny pushes it open.

EXT. BELL TOWER - CONTINUOUS

A HUGE BELL hangs above the open-air chamber. On the other side of the platform, IN THE SHADOWS IS MICHAEL BOWERS.

MICHAEL

I put books away over the summer, I saw the code to get up here on a piece of paper in the office.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I memorized it. Sometimes I come
up here to think.

He unwraps a Hershey Mini and pops it in his mouth.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Anyone follow you?

Johnny shakes his head. Michael steps to the side,
revealing: JOHNNY'S OLD KING KONG DOLL propped up against
the railing. Johnny stares, the wind blows.

Johnny walks over slowly and takes it off the ledge,
examining it, turning it over, looking at every inch.

JOHNNY

This is my King Kong from second
grade. Where did you get this?

MICHAEL

You know the girl in the sixth
grade, the pretty one who always
takes home the tarantula?

JOHNNY

Tatiana Santiago.

MICHAEL

Her little brother is in my
Taekwondo Do class. His backpack
was open. This was upside down
inside, I saw your name on the
foot.

JOHNNY

What was Francisco Santiago doing
with it?

MICHAEL

I don't know but it's yours and I
wanted to give it back to you.
Losing something is hard.

Michael looks out into the afternoon sun, the buildings of
Manhattan glowing in the October sky.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

After Hiro Mazaki told everyone
I've picked and eaten ten thousand
boogers in my lifetime I lost
everything, Johnny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Lost the class elections, nobody wanted to be my partner in line anymore because they didn't want to hold my hand. I got picked last in every game in the yard, except for soccer because you never touch the ball.

(back to Johnny)

I used to be someone important. I was president of my class in first and third grade. I used to have friends. And Hiroji Mazaki ruined all of that.

JOHNNY

What do you know, Michael?

MICHAEL

After Hiroji was suspended the monitors started selling candy again. Hershey Mini's. I love Hershey Minis. But my allowance ran out so fast every week so I started doing stuff for free candy.

He takes out another Hershey Mini and unwraps it, fumbles it, and loses it over the railing. He watches it fall to the street, takes out another Hershey Mini, unwraps it, and eats it.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Don't go to the Halloween party at school tonight, Johnny. He made me put empty packages of itching powder in your desk! I don't know why, I don't know what's gonna happen or why he made me do it! I had to or he wouldn't give me free candy anymore!

JOHNNY

Who made you?!

MICHAEL

If I tell you and he finds out I'll stop getting free candy, I'm sorry Johnny, I'm sorry!

Johnny stands there, King Kong in hand. The huge bell GONGS. It's deafening. Johnny looks at his watch. 4PM.

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny stands in front of the CVS, looking at the sliding entrance doors. He takes a deep breath and marches in.

INT. CVS - MOMENTS LATER

Shane Volakis stands in the dairy section. Johnny approaches, out of breath.

JOHNNY

I'm here.

SHANE VOLAKIS

Give me the chain and the key.

Johnny stares. A mother with a stroller passes, a baby inside crying.

JOHNNY

Tell me who framed my brother,
first.

SHANE VOLAKIS

Let me see the chain and key.

JOHNNY

You go first.

SHANE VOLAKIS

You lied. You don't have them.
Hold this, meet me outside, I don't
wanna talk here.

Shane takes off his backpack and gives it to Johnny.

INT. BACK SECURITY ROOM - SAME

SECURITY MONITOR shows JOHNNY WALKING OUT OF THE STORE.

VOICE ON WALKIE(O.S.)

Backpack leaving store.

INT. STORE EXIT - SAME

LARGE STORE MANAGER blocks the door so Johnny can't leave.

LARGE STORE MANAGER

Son, you can come with me.

INT. BACK SECURITY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MUGSHOT OF JOHNNY, terrified, scans down the computer screen.

JOHNNY

I didn't do anything. This isn't
my backpack. He gave it to me!

Johnny sits across from the MANAGER and SECURITY GUY. Johnny looks around, walls plastered with WEBCAM MUGSHOTS OF SHOPLIFTERS. Johnny's eyes lock on one picture in particular:

A GRAINY STILL FROM A SECURITY CAMERA of a boy hanging from the top of a delivery truck, hands clutching the roof of the truck, legs dangling. The boy's face is obscured but he WEARS A SKY-BLUE HOODED SWEATSHIRT.

Johnny's jaw drops.

MANAGER

I see you staring at that picture.
Do you know who this kid is?

JOHNNY

No.

NARRATION

But I knew that sweatshirt
anywhere. That was Tommy.

MANAGER

Lotta candy disappeared from that
delivery truck that night. This
was the only picture we got. We're
trying to identify this kid.

Johnny just shakes his head. Manager continues conversation with security guy.

SECURITY GUY

Okay, so don't bother putting his
info in now, the police are gonna
take their own report and then
contact the parent or guardian from
there.

Johnny gulps on "police".

JOHNNY

I'm only in the fifth grade. You
don't have to call the police.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANAGER

You were part of a group that included Reynold Spitz and he's sixteen, so by law we call the police. Come with me.

INT. STOCK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Door slams shut. Johnny stands in a small room. Two juice boxes on a table. Other side of the room in a chair, RENNY SPITZ, 10TH GRADER, SCRAGGLY FACIAL HAIR. A POLICE WOMAN walks by the door window. Johnny gulps.

RENNY

I know that one. Makes you wait. She's gonna go smoke a cigarette with the manager in the alley. Smoking and laughing while you wait. I think they're in love.

Behind Renny's head: A DOUBLE MIRROR REFLECTION created by glass walls on opposite ends of the room. JOHNNY'S IMAGE and RENNY'S IMAGE blending together, casting off smaller and smaller into infinity.

RENNY SPITZ

I always liked Tommy Callahan.

Johnny stares at Renny. Johnny SLAMS THE KEY ON THE TABLE and gives Renny a look of cold steel.

JOHNNY

Talk.

Renny looks at him and takes a juice box. He tears off the straw and taps it on the table, getting the plastic off.

RENNY

I remember, I was in fifth grade, your brother was in first or second maybe. Little kid. We were both on the Principal's bench waiting to go in this one day. I go in first and I get a speech about safety and all that stuff and when I come out and your brother's turn to go in, he passes something to me without anyone seeing.

(looking off)

He'd gone into the secretary's desk and stolen back my ninja throwing star. He didn't even know me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RENNY (CONT'D)

But he saw they took something away
from me and he got it back.

(nodding)

I hated that school. But your
brother Tommy? He was okay. I
never got to say thanks. So I'm
gonna do you a favor.

Renny goes to the wall and moves a trash can, revealing a
hole in the wall the size of a basketball.

RENNY SPITZ

You can see the alleyway through
the next stockroom. If they come
to get me first and leave you here
alone, you'll have shot, if you can
fit through.

Renny puts the garbage back. The door swings open and the
manager calls from outside:

MANAGER (O.S.)

Mr. Reynold. You're up first.

Renny chuckles "what timing" and passes Johnny.

RENNY SPITZ

One last thing.

(leaning in)

Get as far away as you can from
that key. And if you're smart
you'll stay away from the kid who
faked the peanut allergy, too.

Johnny looks at him.

JOHNNY

Faked?

RENNY SPITZ

The kid who lives in Shane's
building...

JOHNNY

He faked the peanut allergy?

RENNY SPITZ

...the smart kid with the mom on
the PTA-

JOHNNY

Greggy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Renny is yanked away. Door slams shut - BANG!

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
(staring off, stunned)
Greggy-

PRINCIPAL BURGER (PRE-LAP/O.S.)
Perillo!...

INT. P.S.41 CAFETERIA - SAME

PRINCIPAL BURGER
Greggy! Come on up!

Greggy Perillo raises his hands, runs up to the front, and takes the mic. Beaming teachers and parents applaud. Cafeteria is decked out with Halloween decorations. Greggy puts his hands together in a prayer-thank-you gesture. Crowd quiets down. The principal stands next to him like an assistant.

GREGGY PERILLO
Thank you, thanks. Four weeks-
(to Principal)
Was it four?

PRINCIPAL
(thinking, nodding)
Four.

GREGGY PERILLO
Four weeks ago if you had some
loose change and a hallway pass you
could be eating a chocolate bar at
9 O'clock in the morning...

INT. GROCERY STORE STOCK ROOM - SAME

Johnny squeezes his body through the whole in the wall...

INT. STOCK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

And comes out on the other side, somersaulting into a pile of empty crates.

EXT. FIRST AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny bolts from the alleyway, passing a COP CAR just pulling up.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

A PACKED GREYHOUND BUS of people decked out in full Halloween spirit; masks, costumes, the works. We travel down to the luggage compartment on the bottom part of the bus. X-RAY IMAGE shows TOMMY, INSIDE, hiding amongst luggage.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The bus zooms toward the SHIMMERING NYC SKYLINE.

INT. P.S.41 CAFETERIA - SAME

GREGGY PERILLO

Kids couldn't sit still, they were getting into fights, being wild, friends had to be separated in class, and the Principal's bench was jam packed every single day. Candy was...well...

(nodding seriously)

Candy was everywhere. There was so much candy going around I didn't even think to look at what I was biting into when I got the peanut allergy.

He takes a sip from a nearby Martinelli's apple juice bottle.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

And with the terrible stink bomb incident, boy, the school had seen better days. But then something happened. Principal Burger and the administration believed in an idea. That you can channel the energy of a child into something positive for the world. And the Off the Wall program was born. Since then trouble-making is down and school spirit up and we've got the arts and crafts to prove it. And they did some nice work, lets hear it for some of the "Off the Wall" gang!

Wild applause. A group of "OFF THE WALL" REFORMED CONVICTS sit off to the side smiling and waving. Next to them, on display on a table sit THEIR LARGE DIORAMAS OF CITY-SCAPES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

X-RAY IMAGE OF ALL OF THE DIORAMAS REVEAL: CANDY NEATLY STACKED in the HOLLOW INTERIORS of all of the paper and cardboard crafted buildings and structures.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

I thank you, Principal Burger, for letting me make that dream come true. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to get changed for the big Halloween party! I am, after, still just a kid!

More applause. Greggy trots off stage shaking hands like a politician. His "Off the Wall" cohorts get up and follow.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny walks in. Shane's grandmother is shouting into a telephone in Greek, adjusting her hearing aid. Johnny slips past her and goes to the back of the store.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny heads up.

INT. VOLAKIS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny stands there. The doors are open. He walks in.

INT. SHANE VOLAKIS'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny stands in Shane's bedroom. He looks out the window, an alleyway below. He hears voices coming from the apartment hallway and he ducks into Shane's closet, closing the door. Shane enters, followed by Greggy.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Johnny sits in the dark. He leans against the wall. Suddenly, a panel flips up and Johnny falls backward into a mysterious, dark space...

AIR SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

SOUND OF: CLANK CLANK CLANK. He's travelling down on some kind of dumbwaiter...steadily, steadily, downward.

INT. AIR SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

He continues down, faster. Suddenly, THE PULLEY SNAPS! Something BREAKS. The object under his feet, a MILK CRATE, plummets twenty feet down below. CRASH!

INT. BASEMENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He hangs there, HIS SMALL FIGURE cast in STARK SILHOUETTE ten feet above...

SHANE'S MASSIVE, MULTI-LEVELED, CARDBOARD BOX AND WOOD BUILT FORT, SPANNING THE LARGE BASEMENT SPACE. It's beautiful. The wood and cardboard structure looks almost like a living organism from the top. Tunnels wrapping and twisting and turning in all directions. Slides, rope ladders. The coolest fort in the history of childhood.

SNAP! CHAIN BREAKS. Johnny falls. CRASH! He falls through the tunnels of the third level. CRASH! And the second. BOOM! He lands on the pileup of cardboard on the first level. SHOOOM! The heap of cardboard buckles beneath him, depositing Johnny into an OPENING IN THE FLOOR, DOWN STEPS. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM...

INT. BUNKER ROOM BELOW BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

He lands on the floor a little more banged up, but still in one piece. He looks around. A SMALL BUNKER STYLE ROOM with a night-light in the corner. Against the wall HUNDREDS OF CASES OF CANDY BARS AND PACKS OF GUM stacked in neat piles.

INT. BASEMENT FORT - DOORWAY - MINUTE LATER

The door opens. A dark figure enters. Johnny now stands on a high platform looking down. GREGGY steps into the light.

JOHNNY

You framed Tommy.

Greggy looks up. He nods to himself.

GREGGY PERILLO

I never wanted it to come to this.

Shane enters behind Greggy, who closes the door and locks it.

JOHNNY

You got Tommy's sweatshirt that day
and you give it to Casper Combs,
who threw the stink bombs and ran.

Shane goes to the other door and locks it. All three trapped inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GREGGY PERILLO

Third level isn't finished Johnny
come on down. Shane's worked very
hard on this.

Shane stands silently.

JOHNNY

What did Tommy ever do to you?

GREGGY PERILLO

You can't trust a kid on two
strikes. They could ruin
everything just to save their own
butt.

JOHNNY

You faked the peanut allergy just
so you could clean out the monitor
squad and become captain and sell
candy. I saw the candy down there.
Shane's letting you keep your
supply down there. You're the
secret candy dealer in school now
aren't you?

GREGGY PERILLO

I control all of it.

JOHNNY

Those kids in the "off the Wall"
program doing the arts and crafts?

GREGGY PERILLO

I needed a new batch of candy
dealers and I knew where to look.

JOHNNY

I'm telling everyone everything.

Greggy goes over to the two ladders leading up to the level
on which Johnny stands and tears them away. He throws them
on the ground. They break. Shane looks on and winces.

GREGGY PERILLO

Now there's no way for you to get
down. We're gonna talk this out
right now, John. Even if you
yelled for help, there's nobody
close enough to hear you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY

Shane's grandma upstairs.

GREGGY PERILLO

She can't hear you if you're right
in front of her.

True. Johnny realizes he's trapped but he stands his ground.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

When you started asking Mazaki
questions I knew. I knew you were
gonna be a problem.

JOHNNY

Principal, the parents, everyone's
gonna know. It's over.

GREGGY PERILLO

Principal Burger? The parents?
Who they gonna believe, Johnny?
You? You're a monitor who can't
even stay on his post, leaves
school before dismissal. Shane
tells me you got busted for
shoplifting with Renny Spitz in the
back of a grocery store. You're
NOBODY. Me? I'm the monitor
captain, Principal Burger and the
grown-ups love me. And kids do
anything I say because I've got the
candy.

JOHNNY

We'll just have to see who they
believe.

GREGGY PERILLO

I'll give you a choice. If you
forget all of this, John, I'll make
you my number one monitor. You'll
be in charge of assigning the
monitor positions, you'll get ten
extra minutes of yard every day,
and you'll get all the candy you
want. Join me, John. I could use
a smart monitor like you.

JOHNNY

Never. I'm bringing you in and
clearing Tommy's name.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Greggy nods.

GREGGY PERILLO

I thought you might say that. Too bad. I always liked you. But I think your time at P.S.41 is done, just like your older brother.

JOHNNY

How are you gonna itch out the school, Greggy?

GREGGY PERILLO

Nice detective work. Yes, itching powder this time. After they sing Ghost of John is when the fun will begin. But not for you. Sorry, you have to stay here. Can't let you stand in the way of my dreams.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT (SAME)

Tommy, in his military school uniform, sits in a subway car packed with people, some in costume. TWO DRUNK WOMEN, a SHE-DEVIL and a SEXY WITCH, face him.

SEXY WITCH

Ohmigod, this kid is so cute, look he's a little soldier!

SHE-DEVIL

My nephew dressed up as a soldier, last year, cutest thing ever!

(hiccup)

So what are you, young man?! Navy? Army? Ssspecial forces Marine?

Tommy looks at them for a moment.

TOMMY

I escaped from military school on the bottom of a greyhound bus and came back to New York City to try and help my brother because I think he's about to get blamed for something he didn't do.

The train rumbles along.

SHE-DEVIL

(hiccup)

Kid really knows his back story.

INT. SHANE'S FORT - SAME

Johnny stands in the fort alone. He looks up.

JOHNNY
Hellooooo?!

The ceiling shaft that deposited him earlier is twenty feet in the air. Johnny begins climbing the wall next to it.

The rope Johnny fell from hangs in the center of the shaft, ten feet up. Johnny continues to climb... Now he's five feet from it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
(shouting up the shaft)
Helloooooo?!

Silence. Johnny measures the jump. He looks at the rope and leaps from the wall, reaching his hands out and...CATCH! He's on the rope. He begins to climb the pulley up into the dumbwaiter shaft. SUDDENLY, THE ROPE SNAPS and Johnny plummets but catches onto a ladder bolted to the inside wall of the shaft. He climbs the ladder all the way up, reaching...

INT. SHANE VOLAKIS'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny emerges from the closet in one piece. Shane stands there blocking the door and shaking his head with regret.

SHANE VOLAKIS
Can't let you leave, Johnny. I'm sorry.

JOHNNY
Greggy's making you do all of this.

Shane nods.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Or he'll tell on you about something.

SHANE VOLAKIS
I used a machine I'm not allowed to use.

JOHNNY
The key that was on the scorpion chain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLASHBACK TO IMAGE IN JOHNNY'S MEMORY: FLASH! Shane's uncle using the key duplicator in the hardware store, piercing sound of brass being cut.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You made a copy.

Shane sits in despair.

SHANE VOLAKIS

If anyone finds out they could
close my Dad and uncle's store.

JOHNNY

That's the best fort I've ever seen
in my life down there, Shane. And
one day I want my mom to call your
mom and set up a play date so I can
come over and play in it. Gregggy
just ripped those ladders off like
it was nothing, Shane. You build
forts. He tears them down.

Pre-lap kids singing:

CHORUS

WOULDN'T IT BE CHILLY WITH NO SKIN
ON?...

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME

The MUSIC TEACHER, DRESSED AS A WITCH, conducts rounds of GHOST OF JOHN. HUNDREDS OF KIDS IN COSTUME, stand in their seats facing the rest of the packed audience of parents and teachers.

CHORUS

*Have you seen the Ghost of John?
Long white bones and the rest all
gone. Ooh. Ooh-oo-oo-oo-oo.
Wouldn't it be chilly with no skin
on?*

Fusion of music: MARCIA RELIGIOSA - the parade procession music in "Godfather II" as young Vito Corleone traverses the rooftops... WITH... GHOST OF JOHN matching in rhythm and melody, underscored by a hard-hitting hip hop beat...

EXT. STREET - SAME

Johnny, now DRESSED IN A SKELETON COSTUME, heads through the streets back to the school.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHORUS

*Have you seen the Ghost of John?
Long white bones and the rest all
gone.*

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - SAME

Tommy weaves through crowds at Times Square.

CHORUS

*Ooh. Ooh-oooh-oooh-oooh.
Wouldn't it be chilly with no skin
on?*

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME

A boy in a monster costume points a FOG MACHINE toward the crowd. WOOOOOSH. THICK JETS OF ARTIFICIAL FOG fill the air.

GIRL IN AUDIENCE

Mommy, look at the smoke!

The crowd loves it, OOHING AND AAHING. ARTIFICIAL FOG fills up the entire auditorium. It's a spectacle, everyone's loving it, the singing reaches an end:

GROUP 3

*Wouldn't it be chilly with no skin
ooooooooon?*

Silence. Scattered clapping but mainly the sound of itching in the audience. Then louder and louder.

CROWD

*What itches so much?! There's
something in the fog! Turn off the
fog machine! There's something in
the smoke! Mommy why do I itch so
much?!*

All at once everyone breaks into chaotic, loud itching. People start filing out of the auditorium, itching their brains out, kids running around itching, teachers, parents itching and trying to maintain order.

On stage a teacher disconnects the fog fluid from the smoke machine and looks inside. Swirling around in the thick blue fluid - CLUSTERS of WHITE ITCHING POWDER DUST.

TEACHER

There's something in the fluid!

INT. FIFTH GRADE CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Greggy shines a FLASHLIGHT into JOHNNY'S DESK. Principal Burger takes out a handful of small empty packets that read: SUPER ITCHING POWDER. In the other hand he lifts a walkie talkie.

PRINCIPAL

All monitors and security be on the
lookout...

INT. LOBBY - SAME

JOHNNY enters the lobby to the itching hysteria and chaos just as a monitor speaks into a walkie.

MONITOR

I repeat, I've just gotten word
that Johnny Callahan is the kid who
put the itching powder in the smoke
machine fluid. If you see him do
not hesitate, make sure he can't
get away and bring him to the
fourth floor. I repeat, Johnny
Callahan, fifth grader. First
floor hallway monitors, do you read
me.

(walkie crackling, voice
of another monitor)
Loud and clear. Will keep a
lookout for Johnny Callahan.

Johnny stands in the skeleton costume looking around. He walks through the lobby and enters the first floor administrative office.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. DOORWAY OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

SLOW MOTION: Kids running past the door, itching in their Halloween costumes, adults running behind them. Chaos. Hysteria.

NARRATION

Which brings me right back to here.
Where I started telling you this
whole story in the first place.

INT. FIRST FLOOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

NARRATION

Right back to the lost and found desk. Maybe Tommy was right. Maybe I shoulda left it all alone. I mean, yeah, I found out who pinned Tommy for the stink bombs, but I also found out some stuff I didn't want to know like how I think it was Tommy who stole all this candy from a truck. And that Tatiana stole my King Kong when I was in second grade.

He takes out the King Kong doll and stares at it.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

It's funny. It was once my favorite toy. I hadn't seen it in years. It looked the same, it felt the same. But something was different.

Silence.

TATIANA (O.S.)

It's you, Johnny.

He looks up. Tatiana stands in the doorway in the MOTHER EARTH COSTUME.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

I can tell. I can tell by the eyes.

Johnny stares at her through the SKELETON MASK.

JOHNNY

Because my eyes look like Tommy's eyes, right?

TATIANA

The whole school is looking for you! They think you put the itching powder in the smoke machine!

JOHNNY

"A kiss is only a kiss if lasts for five seconds."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TATIANA

What?

JOHNNY

"Don't go to CVS Johnny, for me!
Please don't go."

Silence.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Greggy framed Tommy for the stink
bombs and you knew the whole time!

TATIANA

What?

JOHNNY

Don't pretend! He made Casper
Combs throw the stink bombs and
leave the sweatshirt behind. You
knew that and you didn't want me to
know! That's why you didn't want
me asking any more questions!

TATIANA

No, Johnny, I swear.

JOHNNY

And why did your little brother
Francisco have...
(stands King Kong upright)
...this?

Silence. She stands there looking at the King Kong.

TATIANA

THAT'S the reason I didn't want you
talking to those kids. I wanted to
be the one to tell you. I didn't
want you hearing it from them.
They knew who stole it from your
backpack when you were in second
grade.

JOHNNY

Why would they care who took it?

TATIANA

That was the only way they could
force him to go along with the
plan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY

Tommy?

TATIANA

Tommy.

JOHNNY

You're saying?...

TATIANA

Tommy stole it in second grade.

Johnny looks at the toy, stunned.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

He never knew why he did it, he just knew he was angry. Not at you, but at your dad for leaving. He gave it to me hold and I've had it for three years. And this year when I saw you were a lost and found monitor again I told him I told him I had to give it back to you and tell you the truth. I couldn't see you wasting your time staring at the lost and found box for another year. He said no way! He got so mad he-

JOHNNY

Pretended you were invisible. What plan. What did they make him do?

TATIANA

He wouldn't tell me, just gave me that key and told me to hide it. I think it was something about candy. But why would anyone want to sell candy now, Johnny? With Halloween coming nobody's gonna need to buy candy for a long time.

Johnny looks off. Several images flash in his memory:
FLASH! IMAGE OF GREGGY PERILLO'S ZIPWIRE DIORAMA. Johnny remembers back to something greggy said weeks ago:

GREGGY'S VOICE

I'm talking about a dream for the future, John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOHNNY
Greggy didn't do all this just to
sell candy.

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny walks across the lobby, still strewn with itching kids and adults. He sees a MONITOR WALKIE TALKIE on the floor and picks it up.

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Johnny crosses the cafeteria, ANOTHER IMAGE IN HIS MIND:
FLASH! Boxes stacked against the wall next to his new
monitor post, all of the words on the labels: CABLE
TENSIONER, TURNBUCKLE, EYEBOLT, CLAMP, 13MM BREAK SPRING...

EXT. SCHOOLYARD GATES - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny steps out into the empty schoolyard.

A STEEL CABLE four stories high runs across schoolyard from a building on one side to a building on the other side.

Johnny's walkie crackles.

WALKIE
(Greggy's voice)
They tell you to dream.

Johnny looks down at his walkie. He looks all around. He can't spot where Greggy is speaking from. Johnny lifts the walkie:

JOHNNY
Your zipwire diorama... was a scale
model.

GREGGY'S VOICE ON WALKIE
A scale model of my dreams, Johnny.

Johnny still can't spot where the voice is coming from.

GREGGY'S VOICE ON WALKIE (CONT'D)
Sneaking candy into the building is
one thing. Sneaking four hundred
feet of steel cable through the
front doors of school and then out
into the school yard without grown-
ups noticing? That takes something
big.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

The stink bombs were just a distraction.

(shaking head)

And the candy dealing?

GREGGY PERILLO

Where else was I gonna get the money I needed to buy a professional grade industrial strength zipwire, Johnny? It was expensive, about \$1400.

Johnny backs out of the schoolyard gates.

INT. GREGGY/SHANE'S APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny runs up the stairs. The OFF THE WALL kids see him intercept him.

INT. PERILLO APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The Off the Wall kids hold Johnny by the arms.

GOONS

Greggy! Open up. Got someone who wants to wish you a safe ride.

The door opens. Casper Combs, dressed as a ninja stands there, as does Hiro Mazaki dressed in a tuxedo. The ZIPWIRE CABLE runs right into the window, across the room, and is firmly bolted to a steel beam on the other side. Gregggy attaches something to the zipwire cable.

GREGGY PERILLO

Bring him in here and don't let him leave. I'm not letting him ruin the few chances we have to go across. It's only a matter of time before the grown-ups come up and make us take it down.

JOHNNY

You're gonna go across the schoolyard on a zipwire? What if you fall? Are you crazy?

GREGGY PERILLO

Maybe I am crazy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks off with a wispy chuckle as he snaps something into place on the steel cable.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

Maybe. Grown-ups say "maybe" a lot, too, don't they? And "soon". I'm always hearing soon and maybe. Well, while all the grown-ups are down at the Halloween party, the kids are up here and there's no maybe or soon here. Just "yes" and "now". YES, you CAN go across the schoolyard on a zipwire. When? NOW.

Greggy hands the handles over to Francisco who without second thought clips them on the VELOCITY TROLLEY attached to the cable.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

I promised Francisco he could go first. Test it out and everything. I'll go second. Then everyone else. If there's time, maybe you can have a turn.

JOHNNY

Francisco, if you don't die doing this, your sister's gonna kill you, anyway! Either way you lose big time! Think about what you're about to do!

GREGGY PERILLO

He's had a lot of time to think about this! Especially when he's in bed at 9 O'clock! That's a lot of time to lie there and do nothing but think!

FRANCISCO

In the summertime when I go to sleep sometimes it's still light out.

GREGGY PERILLO

9 o'clock bedtime. Sorry, not fair. I never have any time to do what I want! Not fair. But you wouldn't know anything about that, you told me your mom's never home, you don't even have a bedtime!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

I mean, open your eyes, John. Look around. They're cutting our yard in half to build a building with even more classrooms to trap us. That's not fair.

JOHNNY

And you framing Tommy for the stink bombs was fair?!

GREGGY PERILLO

This way he helped me make my dream come true and all of us can say we've been on the first zipwire ever in New York City. They wanted me to dream big so I did! But what would you know about dreams, Johnny?! You told me yourself, you don't have any dreams except for the ones you have at night! And even your dream diorama; a fort hundreds of years ago?! You're stuck in the past, Johnny, I'm talking about the future, John! The future!

He grabs the zipwire handles and hands them to Francisco, who steps up to the window sill and takes a deep breath.

GREGGY PERILLO (CONT'D)

One, two, three, GO!

Without second thought Francisco SLIDES OUT THE WINDOW. SHOOM! A few people in the schoolyard below GASP AND POINT. Francisco glides across the top of the schoolyard. Johnny watches, mouth agape. Francisco passes the halfway point, on his way to the other side, and begins to slow down.

Something about Francisco's weight and velocity isn't working correctly with the angle of the zipwire. He stops before reaching the other side and begins sliding backwards to the center of the zipwire. Everyone watches in horror. Francisco reaches the center of the zipwire and stops.

The GROWING CROWD BELOW GASPS AGAIN. Johnny breaks free from the kids and runs to the window. He looks down. He sees TATIANA looking up at her younger brother dangling four stories high.

TATIANA

Francisco hold on!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Johnny turns to Gregggy, who stares out the window in disbelief.

JOHNNY

You have another set of handles?!

GREGGY PERILLO

Yeah... But they're not put together.

Johnny turns to Casper.

JOHNNY

You got those real nunchucks?

Casper takes them out from under his black ninja shirt.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Gimmie.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - SAME

Adults point. People are on cell phones dialling 911.

WOMAN

Someone call the fire department!

MAN

Someone call the people with the huge cushions to land on!

EXT. POLICE STATION - SAME

A dispatch officer speaks into an earpiece.

DISPATCHER

Request to deploy H-551 chopper to Greenwich St. in the West Village, child dangling from a steel cable.

EXT. 11TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tommy races down the street, passing a NY1 NEWS VAN pulling up and parking hastily. The doors slide open and a small news crew jumps out.

INT. GREGGY'S BEDROOM WINDOW - SAME

JOHNNY slings the nunchucks over the steel cable and gets a firm grip. He steps up to the window and looks down. He and Tatiana make eye contact. She shakes her head. He takes a deep breath and Shoom! Off he goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slides across the zipwire, picking up speed, sparks shooting out from the steel chain of the nunchucks.

JOHNNY
(to Francisco)
Hold on tight!

Johnny puts his feet up and BAM!, makes direct contact with Francisco's trolley, sending trolley and Francisco across the rest of the length of the zipwire. Francisco enters the window on the other side, safely.

But now JOHNNY IS NOW STUCK WHERE FRANCISCO WAS, dead in the center of the zipwire. His legs dangle.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Oh shit.

The crowd shrieks.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD BELOW - SAME

Tommy runs up to the schoolyard gate and sees Johnny dangling a hundred feet in the air.

TOMMY
Oh shit.

Tommy looks at the fence separating the schoolyard from the building. His eyes scan the terrain: Over the fence === onto the big branch === onto the fire escape === up two floors === across the ledge of the building === into Gregg's window.

Tommy makes a dash for the fence and rapidly climbs to the top. Johnny, dangling from the zipwire, sees Tommy shooting up the fence.

JOHNNY
Tommy?! Tommy!

Tommy stands on the top of the fence and hops onto the branch, which dips more than he thought, but at the last second he jumps for the fire escape and catches it, lifts himself onto it, runs two floors up on the fire escape, scales the side of the building and jumps into Gregg's bedroom window.

The CHAIN in the middle of the nunchucks begins to bend. Johnny sees it and yells back to Casper standing in Gregg's window:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I thought the chain in the middle
was steel!

INT. GREGGY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Tommy backs Greggry against the wall, dead serious.

TOMMY

Zipwire handles. Any more?

Greggy lifts three separate pieces of steel parts.

GREGGY PERILLO

They're not put together yet.

Tommy grabs them and studies them quickly.

TOMMY

Hiro.

Hiro Mazaki approaches and stares at the steel parts. With lightning fast calculations Hiro assembles the handles and hands them to Tommy, who latches the handles onto the zipwire cable. He steps up to the window. SHOOM! The crowd gasps as TOMMY SAILS ACROSS THE ZIPWIRE. The news crew points the camera up to the sky.

REPORTER

You getting this?

CAMERAMAN

Gettin it.

SOUND OF: A HELICOPTER.

REPORTER

Okay, you getting THAT?!

The camera points to an NYPD HELICOPTER in the sky, speeding toward the schoolyard.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

PILOT

Got a visual on the boy, wait, make
that TWO boys.

EXT. ZIPWIRE - CONTINUOUS

Tommy speeds toward Johnny and tries to do the same move Johnny did with Francisco but the nunchucks are too narrow and Tommy winds up slamming into Johnny. BAM! They both hold on, hanging there, a hundred feet in the air, twisting and turning. The nunchucks' chain bends some more. The helicopter begins to descend from the sky, getting closer and closer to the zipwire. The noise is deafening.

INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

Doreen, at work, passes a small TV in the corner of the service station, her co-workers glued to the screen showing the live news broadcast.

CO-WORKER

You seeing this?

DOREEN

Whoa.

She leans in and looks more closely at the screen.

DOREEN (CONT'D)

Hold on.

EXT. ZIPWIRE - SAME

A ROPE LADDER is dropped from the helicopter. It's closest to Tommy. He grabs it with one hand and holds the other out to Johnny. The chain between Johnny's nunchucks - SNAPS! Tommy catches Johnny by the ace-bandaged hand at the last second. The nunchucks fall to the ground. The crowd gasps.

Now Tommy hangs from the rope ladder with one hand, other hand holding onto Johnny's ace-bandaged wrist, which begins slipping off.

TOMMY

The bandage is slipping!

Johnny grabs the zipwire with his other hand, his body is almost at a horizontal. The King Kong slides out of Johnny's pocket and down his arm, getting caught in the ace bandage, stopping it from slipping off.

Tommy latches his legs through the ladder, securing his lower body and freeing his other hand, which grabs onto Johnny's wrist cast as well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Got you. Now all you gotta do is
let go. Let go of the wire!

But Johnny is facing the other way, can't see Tommy.

JOHNNY

Can't let go! I'll fall!

TOMMY

You won't fall, John!

JOHNNY

Can't see you!

TOMMY

I'm right here, John! I got you
right here! I gotcha with BOTH
HANDS! JUST LET GOOOOOO!

Johnny lets go of the zipwire and swings his arm out blindly.
Tommy reaches for it, SNAP, grabs with his other hand. GOT
HIM.

Tommy and Johnny sail across the schoolyard on the rope
ladder and rise high in the sky. The crowd cheers below.

FADE TO BLACK.

SMASH CUT:

INT. INTERROGATION VIEWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A room full of cops, Doreen with her arm around Tommy,
stroking his hair, Tatiana, Francisco, their parents,
Principal Burger, Gregg and Sue Perillo all sit in the
observation room of a police station two-way mirrored
interrogation room. A cop eats from a bag of chips. Another
cop takes a sip of Coke, like he's watching a movie. They
all look on as:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME

Johnny sits at a rusty table, across from a detective with a
tape recorder on RECORD.

DETECTIVE

So there was a sleep-over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

June. A birthday sleep-over at Shane Volakis's house and Gregggy Perillo was there because they live in the same building. Gregggy had a plan and he forced the other kids to go along with it. They were gonna steal 150 cases of candy from a CVS delivery truck in the alleyway right outside Shane's bedroom window. Somehow Gregggy had gotten a hold of the truck key and Shane made a copy of it and put it on Hiro Mazaki's scorpion chain which Tommy had when he went down and opened the truck. Now I don't think Tommy wanted to steal anything but Gregggy knew that Tommy had stolen my favorite toy when I was in second grade and threatened to tell me about it if Tommy didn't go along with the plan. And the plan was to wait until the middle of the night and open the truck and they must have worked fast...

EXT. GREGGY'S COURTYARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

LARGE BOXES OF CANDY are passed from one set of hands to another, out of the truck, DIRECTLY INTO SHANE'S WINDOW.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

All 150 cases from the back of the truck, up the fire escape, right into the Shane's bedroom, right into his closet...

INT. SHANE'S CLOSET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

CANDY BOXES stacked in the MILK CRATE PULLEY, lowered into the DARK AIR SHAFT.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

...and through a secret shaft right down into his fort in the basement.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - PRESENT MOMENT

JOHNNY

At some point in the night, Tommy either fell from the truck or tried to jump off and landed the wrong way on the ground. And if I'm right, that's how he broke his wrist.

SERGEANT

So you're telling me the candy is still down in this...fort?

JOHNNY

Shane Volakis's fort. Probably half the candy, still there.

Johnny continues.

NARRATION

I told them everything.

INT. VIEWING ROOM ON OTHER SIDE OF INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME

Everyone listens, completely rapt.

NARRATION

I told them about the stink bombs, the kid with six toes, the women's locker room, the rubber bands and the clock tower. By the end of my story you could barely get a seat...

Cops and other adults stand in the back, craning their necks to get a view of Johnny finishing the story.

NARRATION (CONT'D)

They booked Tommy and the other kids for the stealing but said they were gonna go easy on the punishment because a lot of the candy could be returned, it was still unopened in boxes.

SUCCESION OF MUGSHOTS AND FINGERPRINTING INK LANDING WITH A BAM!

GREGGY PERILLO'S front view, side view, finger print. BAM.

SHANE VOLAKIS'S front view side view, finger print. BAM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOMMY CALLAHAN'S front view side view fingerprint. BAM,

NARRATION

They let Tommy go. We brought him to the bus to go back to military school that night.

EXT. BUS STATION - LATER

Tommy, Johnny, and Tatiana stand in front of a Peter Pan bus.

JOHNNY

The zipwire was all over the news, everyone's gonna know you snuck out. Just stay.

TOMMY

Well, my barrack gets into trouble if anyone doesn't show up for morning inspection and we just made Honor Company so I gotta get back.

JOHNNY

What's Honor Company?

TOMMY

I got phone privileges in two weeks, John. I'll tell you about it them.

JOHNNY

But I thought you're gonna get your stuff and come home?

TOMMY

Yeah. Well...

(looking off)

I took this pledge when I got there, sort promised I'd do my best and Thanksgiving break we get to go on this big journey thing in the forest where we cook all of our food in the woods for three days straight, some of the kids told me about it from last year, sounded pretty good. Maybe I'll stay until then.

Johnny nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOMMY (CONT'D)

And then there's this Christmas thing they do when...well, I'll tell you about it when I call.

Johnny nods again.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

And I got long division down, John.

JOHNNY

Nice.

TOMMY

Yeah. Converting decimals to fractions, all that stuff now.

JOHNNY

I hate converting decimals to fractions.

TOMMY

The worst.

He goes to Tatiana and without hesitation plants a kiss on her lips.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

How's that for a first kiss?

TATIANA

Not bad. But you're a little late, wasn't my first.

She gives Johnny a wink. Johnny looks in the other direction, acting casual.

MOMENTS LATER:

Tommy raises a hand goodbye through the window. Johnny raises a hand back, HIS SMALL FIGURE STANDING TALL in the bus terminal. He smiles and watches the bus drive off.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Greggy sits in tears across from Sue Perillo. Principal Burger, Johnny, Doreen, sit on the other side of the table.

PRINCIPAL BURGER

I think the new school you're going to is a great step forward, Greggy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUE PERILLO

They've got a very involved PTA
over at Montgomery Gifted. I'm
gonna really keep an eye on him.

Greggy looks off with a sadness.

PRINCIPAL BURGER

Doreen, this was a terrible mistake
if there's anything we can do-

JOHNNY

There is.

OUTRO MUSIC: DIAMONDS AND COMFORTS, Blaxploitation, funky
beat with a melody that speaks to hope and a new day...

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

CONSTRUCTION CREW works away at one side of the schoolyard.
Ground is just being broken. A large crane backs up, BEEP
BEEP BEEP.

NARRATION

I was back out in the yard playing
with other kids... But there was no
place to play. So I had an idea
and they went for it.

Johnny stands at a podium wearing a monitor badge that reads:
MONITOR CAPTAIN. Michael Bowers stands next to him looking
more presidential and less strung out. Shane Volakis stands
next to Principal Burger. Johnny addresses the half-
schoolyard packed with kids, standing, listening.

JOHNNY

The new classroom building is
getting built, whether we like it
or not. And there's no changing
that. The grown-ups make the
rules. They decide what happens.
But a deal has been worked out. A
compromise...

Principal Burger unveils a BRAND NEW SCALE MODEL OF THE NEW
CLASSROOM BUILDING. Johnny goes over and removes the front
half of the SCALE MODEL, exposing the inside, showing the
classrooms on each floor. But now BASEMENT LEVEL and FIRST
FLOOR are combined to make a TWO STORY LABYRINTHINE PLAY-
SPACE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

A deal to designate the basement level and first floor of the new classroom building to a huge, complex, state of-the-art fort. It'll have rope ladders, chutes, secret passageways, slides, tunnels, and trap doors.

HUNDREDS OF KIDS nod in unison, "this is good."

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Shane Volakis and Volakis Hardware will oversee the planning and design of the fort and there will be a sign-up sheet for anyone who has any other ideas.

Johnny looks out into the crowd.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Most forts are made of sheets and cushions and they sag and droop after a few days and then everything has to go back. But not this fort. This will be P.S.41's permanent fort. It'll be the biggest, coolest fort in New York City and it'll never have to come down.

Johnny looks up at the crowd.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

This fort will be forever.

Thunderous applause.

INT. FIFTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Johnny sits working at his desk. A teacher steps into class with her hand on a girl's shoulder. It's the FRENCH GIRL from P.S. 124.

TEACHER

Everyone we've got a new student and she's from France. She recently moved to this neighborhood and she's gonna be going here now.

French Girl steps into class and sees Johnny. They both light up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Oh terrific, you know someone here.
Why don't we add a table to the
group 3 desks and you two can be
line partners. Johnny want to help
Brielle get settled?

MUSIC CONTINUES...

MOMENTS LATER:

Johnny and Brielle stand at the back of the line.

BRIELLE

Did you ever get back what you
lost?

Johnny looks at her and thinks.

The line starts to move, line partners hold hands. Johnny
extends his hand. Brielle takes it. They both try to hold
back shy smiles. They follow the line out of the class.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Leaves fall. Kids run out into the yard. Johnny kicks a
soccer ball around with Brielle. Hundreds of kids play in
the crowded play section of the schoolyard. On the other
side of the construction fencing a crane moves a pile of
rubble.

THE SOUNDS OF THE CITY: construction, kids playing, traffic
from the street.

THE MUSIC SWELLS.

CREDITS.

INT. SANTIAGO LIVINGROOM - DAY

The TARANTULA, a new shade of GLISTENING BRIGHT BLUE sits in
the cage. It puts a leg up on the glass in front of
TATIANA'S FACE. She touches her finger to the glass in the
same spot.

And smiles.

END CREDITS.