-Flipped-

BRYCE(Narration) : All I ever wanted was for Juli Baker to leave me alone.

It all began in the summer of 1957,

before the start of second grade.

STEVEN: Here we are.

PATSY: Ha, ha. What do you guys think? LYNETTA: I like this place.

BRYCE: It's cool.

LYNETTA: Uh, what color is my room?

PATSY: Just you wait.

LYNETTA: Let's see what's inside.

STEVEN: Hey, come on, buddy Bryce.

Why don't, uh, you and I go help unload the van and the womenfolk here can get in the kitchen and start setting up. LYNETTA: Okay, Dad.

BRYCE(N): For me, it was the beginning of what would be more than half a decade of strategic avoidance and social discomfort.

JULl: Hi, I'm Juli Baker.

STEVEN: Hey, hey, what are you doing?

JULl: Don't you want some help?

STEVEN: No. There's some valuable things in there.

JULl: How about this one?

STEVEN: No, no, no. Want you run own home. Your mother's probably wondering where you are.

JULl: Oh, no, my mom knows where I am. She said it's fine.

BRYCE(N): It didn't take long to realize this girl could not take a hint.

STEVEN: It's crowded in here with three people. JULl: I don't mind.

BRYCE(N): Of any kind.

JULl: You wanna push this one together?

STEVEN: Bryce, isn't it time for you to go help your mother?

BRYCE: Huh? Oh, yeah.

BRYCE(N): I mean, nothing would stop her. I was about to tell her to get lost when the weirdest thing happened. I couldn't believe it.

There I was holding hands with this strange girl. How did I get into this mess?

PATSY: Well, hello. I see you've met my son. JULl: Uh-huh.

BRYCE(N): Finally, I did the only manly thing available when you're 7 years old. [BELL RINGING]

BRYCE(N): However, my troubles were far from over. The minute I walked into Miss Yelson's classroom...

JULl: Bryce? You're here.

BRYCE(N): it was clear. School would not be a sanctuary.

[CHILDREN LAUGHING]

BOY1: Hey, Bryce, where's your girlfriend?

BRYCE(N): I was branded for life.

BOY2: Hey, Bryce, why don't you ask her to marry you?

GIRLS [SINGING]: Bryce and Juli sitting in a tree, K-l-S-S-l-N-G

BRYCE(N): My first year in town was a disaster. GIRL: Look at them.

BRYCE(N): And the next three weren't much better. But finally, in the sixth grade, I took action.

I hatched the plan.

BRYCE: Sherry. Sherry, wait up.

SHERRY: Hi, Bryce. Heh.

BRYCE(N): I asked out Sherry Stalls.

BRYCE: I was wondering if you wanted to go...

BRYCE(N): To full appreciate the brilliance of this plan you have to understand that Juli hated Sherry Stalls though I never understood why.

Sherry was nice, friendly and she had a lot of hair.

SHERRY: At first, my mother wouldn't let me get my ears pierced,

but I begged

BRYCE(N): The idea was that Sherry would eat with me maybe we'd walk

around together, and hopefully Juli would lose interest.

SHERRY: But I still can't get the hoops till I'm 16. BRYCE: Oh, that's a shame.

SHERRY: So Melanie wanted to get her ears pierced, but of course her mother said no.

So she threw a fit and smashed her Johnny Mathis Greatest Hits album

[LAUGHS]

SHERRY: and she got grounded,

so now she can't come to my pajama sleepover party.

BRYCE(N): Things were unfolding quite nicely.

GARRETT: Hey, What are you doing for your science project?

BRYCE(N): That is, until my supposed best friend, Garrett Einbinder took an interest in Sherry himself.

SHERRY: I was thinking of showing how split ends react with different hair conditioners.

GARRETT: That's fascinating.

BRYCE(N): Loyalty gave way to desire and Garrett, the turncoat told Sherry what I was up to.

SHERRY: Jerk.

BRYCE(N): She didn't take it well.

Word got back to Juli, and pretty soon she started up with the goo-goo eyes again. Only this time it was worse. She started sniffing me.

That's right, sniffing me.

What was that all about? My only consolation was that next year would be different. Junior high, bigger school. Maybe we'd be in different classes and it would finally, finally be over.

JULl(N): The first day I met Bryce Loski, I flipped. It was those eyes, something in those dazzling eyes.

JULl: You wanna push this one

together?

JULl(N): His family had just moved into the neighborhood and I'd gone over to help them. I'd been in the van all of two minutes when his dad sent him off to help his mom.

I could see he didn't wanna go.

So I chased after him to see if we could play a little before he got trapped inside. The next thing I know,

he's holding my hand and looking right into my eyes. My heart stopped.

Was this it? Would this be my first kiss? But then his mother came out.

PATSY: Well, hello.

JULl(N): And he was so embarrassed, his cheeks turned completely red.

I went to bed that night thinking of the kiss that might have been.I mean, it was clear he had feelings for me,

but he was just too shy to show them. My mother said boys were like that. So I decided to help him out.

JULl: Bryce? You're here.

[CHILDREN GIGGLING]

JULl(N): I would give him plenty of opportunity to get over his shyness.

By the sixth grade, I'd learned to control myself. Then Sherry Stalls entered the picture. Sherry Stalls was nothing but a whiny, gossipy, backstabbing flirt.

All hair and no substance.

And there she was holding hands with Bryce. My Bryce.

The one who was walking around with my first kiss.

My solution was to ignore her.

I knew a boy of Bryce's caliber would eventually see through a shallow conniver like Sherry Stalls.

It took all of a week. They broke up at recess. [LAUGHS]

She didn't take it well.

Now that Bryce was out of Sherry's evil clutches, he started being nicer to me. BRYCE: Hi, Juli. JULl: Hi, Bryce.

JULl(N): He was so shy and so cute and his hair, it smelled like watermelon.

I couldn't get enough of it.

I spent the whole year secretly sniffing watermelon and wondering if I was ever going to get my kiss.

BRYCE(N): Seventh grade brought changes, all right. But the biggest one didn't happen at school.

It happened at home.

My grandfather came to live with us.

Mom said he stared like that because he missed Grandma.

That was not something Grandpa would ever talk about with me.

As a matter of fact, he never talked about much of anything with me.

That is, until Juli appeared in the local newspaper.

CHET: Oh, Bryce. May I speak with you? BRYCE: What?

CHET: Have a seat, son. Tell me about your friend Juli Baker.

BRYCE: Juli. She's not exactly my friend. CHET: Oh. Why's that?

BRYCE: Why do you wanna know?

BRYCE(N): Now, Juli Baker did not wind up in The Mayfield Times

for being an eighth-grade Einstein.

No, she got front-page coverage

because she refused to climb out of a sycamore tree. Juli Baker and that stupid sycamore tree.

She always thought it was God's gift to our little corner of the universe.

JULl: Hey, Bryce. Do you wanna come climb the tree with me and my brothers? BRYCE: No, thanks.

JULl: Bryce. Come up here. It's fun. You can see everything.

BRYCE: I can't. My dad needs me to help him fix a thing.

BRYCE(N): That's all I needed.

Climb up a tree with Juli Baker.

I'd be dragged right back into the second grade.

Bryce and Juli sitting in a tree.

Why don't you just make me eat lima beans for the rest of my life.

JULl: It's three blocks away.

Two blocks. One block away.

BRYCE: Like that's valuable information.

GARRETT: I hate it when she does that. I like to think there's at least a chance the bus won't show.

JULl: I think the tree looks particularly beautiful in this light. Don't you?

BRYCE: If by "beautiful" you mean "unbelievably ugly," then, yes, I would agree.

JULl: You're just visually challenged.

I feel sorry for you.

BRYCE(N): "Visually challenged"? "Visually challenged"?

This from the girl who lived in a house that was the joke of the neighborhood? They had bushes growing over windows and weeds all over the place.

It bugged my dad big time.

STEVEN: Oh, there he is.

The bricklayer who thinks he's a painter. That truck's not ugly enough in real life?

He's gotta make a painting of it?

LYNETTA: No, he does landscapes. Sells them at the county fair.

People say they're beautiful.

STEVEN: Landscapes? Let me tell you something. The world would have more beauty in it if he'd do a little landscaping on that piece of crap he calls a yard.

PATSY: I feel bad for his wife. She married a dreamer.

Because of that, one of the two of them will always be unhappy.

STEVEN: Yeah, fine. But why do we have to be unhappy?

BRYCE(N): As annoying as the yard was to my dad

It was nothing compared to how annoying Juli Baker was in that tree.

JULl: Three blocks away.

BRYCE(N): Every morning we had to listen to the sound of her

blow-by-blow traffic report.

JULl: Two blocks.

WOMAN: There you go.

GARRETT: Why do they call it The Three Stooges?

I mean, there's five of them.

BRYCE: What?

GARRETT: Well, yeah, there's Moe, Larry, Curly, Shemp and Curly Joe.

BRYCE: Yeah, but they only have three at a time.

GARRETT: Yeah. You know, I hate Curly Joe.

I mean, he shouldn't even be a Stooge.

WORKER2: Listen, girl, I'm this close to calling the police.

You are trespassing and obstructing progress on a contracted job.

GARRETT: What's going on?

WORKER: Either you come down. Or we're gonna cut you down.

JULl: Bryce. You guys, come up here with me. They won't cut it down if we're all up here.

GARRETT: Bus, bus, bus.

BRYCE(N): Juli was frantic.

They wanted to cut down her tree.

 I couldn't understand why that mutant tangle of gnarly branches

meant so much to her.

JULl: Bryce, please.

BRYCE(N): I felt bad for her.

GARRETT: Leave her.

BRYCE(N) : But I wasn't about to cut school over it.

GARRETT: Come on, bro.

CHET: Why isn't she your friend, Bryce?

BRYCE: You'd have to know Juli.

CHET: Well, I'd like to. BRYCE: Why?

CHET: That girl has an iron backbone.

Why don't you invite her over sometime?

BRYCE: An iron backbone?

She's just stubborn and she's pushy beyond belief. CHET: Is that so?

BRYCE: And she's been stalking me since the second grade.

CHET: Well, a girl like that doesn't live next door to everyone.

BRYCE: Lucky them.

CHET: Read this. Without prejudice.

BRYCE(N): Like I needed to know anything more about Juli Baker.

Juli wasn't at the bus stop the next morning. Or the morning after that.

She was at school, but you'd never know it.

GARRETT: Little Joe? He's got so much makeup on...

BRYCE: He doesn't age.

BRYCE(N): I told myself I should be glad about it. I mean, isn't that what I'd always wanted?

But still, I felt bad for her.

I was gonna tell her I was sorry, but then I thought,

hey, no that's the last thing I needed:

Juli Baker thinking I missed her.

JULI: I see why you like to come out here.

RICHARD: Would you mind explaining it to your mother?

JULl(N): I loved to watch my father paint. Or really, I loved to hear him talk while he painted.

I learned a lot about my dad that way. He told me all sorts of things like how he got his first job delivering hay and how he'd wished he'd finished college.

Then one day he surprised me.

RICHARD: What's going on with you and, uh, Bryce Loski?

JULl: What do you mean? Nothing.

RICHARD: Oh, okay. My mistake.

JULl: Why would you even think that?

RICHARD: No reason. Just that you talk about him all the time.

JULl: I do? RICHARD: Mm-hm.

JULl: I don't know. I guess it's something about his eyes. Or maybe his smile.

RICHARD: But what about him?

JULl: What?

RICHARD: You have to look at the whole landscape.

JULl: What does that mean?

RICHARD: A painting is more than the sum of its parts.

A cow by itself is just a cow.

A meadow by itself is just grass, flowers. And the sun peeking through the trees is just a beam of light. But you put them all together and it can be magic.

JULl(N): I didn't really understand what he was saying until one afternoon

when I was up in the sycamore tree.

I was rescuing a kite.

It was a long way up, higher than I'd ever been. And the higher I got,

the more amazed I was by the view.

 I began to notice how wonderful the breeze smelled.

Like sunshine and wild grass.

I couldn't stop breathing it in filling my lungs with the sweetest smell I'd ever known.

BRYCE: Hey, you found my kite.

JULl: Bryce, you should come up here. It's so beautiful.

BRYCE: I can't. I sprained my, um..,

I have a rash.

JULl(N): From that moment on, that became my spot. I could sit there for hours, just looking out at the world.

Some days the sunsets would be purple and pink. And some days they were a blazing orange setting fire to the clouds on the horizon. It was during one of those sunsets that my father's idea of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts moved from my head to my heart.

Some days I would get there extra early to watch the sunrise.

One morning I was making mental notes of how the streaks of light

were cutting through the clouds

so I could tell my dad when I heard a noise below.

JULl: Excuse me. Excuse me. I'm sorry, but you can't park there.

That's a bus stop.

WORKER1: Hey, what are you doing up there? You can't be up there, we're gonna take this thing down.

JULl: The tree?

WORKER2: Yeah. Now come on down.

JULl: But who told you, you could cut it down? WORKER2: The owner.

JULl: Why?

WORKER2: He's gonna build a house, and this tree's in the way.

So come on, girl, we got work to do.

JULl: You can't cut it down. You just can't.

WORKER2: Listen, girl. I'm this close to calling the police.

You are trespassing and obstructing progress on a contracted job.

Now either you come down, or we're gonna cut you down.

JULl: Go ahead. Cut me down.

I'm not coming down.

I'm never coming down. Bryce.

You guys, come up here with me.They won't cut it down if we're all up here.

Bryce, please don't let them do this.

Come on, you guys. Bryce, please. You don't have to come up this high. Just a little ways.

Bryce, please. Please.

JULl(N): What happened after that was a blur. It seemed like the whole town was there. But still I wouldn't move. Then my father showed up.

He talked a fireman into letting him come up to where I was.

RICHARD: Sweetie, it's time to come down.

JULl: Daddy, please don't let them do this. RICHARD: Sweetie...

JULl: Daddy, look. You can see everything. You can see the whole world from here.

RICHARD: No view is worth my daughter's safety. Now, come on.

JULl: I can't.

RICHARD: Julianna, it's time to come down now. JULl: Please, Daddy.

RICHARD: It's time.

JULl(N): And that was it. I must've cried for two weeks straight.

Oh, sure, I went to school and did the best I could but nothing seemed to matter. TEACHER: Juli? JULl: Huh?

TEACHER: Do you know the answer?

JULl: Uh, the Peloponnesian War?ㅊㅊ

TEACHER: I'm sure that's the answer to something but I was looking for the area of a rhomboid.

[CHILDREN LAUGH]

JULl(N): Somehow, rhomboids and isosceles right triangles didn't seem so important. I rode my bike so I wouldn't have to pass by the stump

that used to be the earth's most magnificent sycamore tree.

But no matter what I did, I couldn't stop thinking about it.

[KNOCKING ON DOOR]

RICHARD: Are you okay?

JULl: It was just a tree.

RICHARD: No, it wasn't just a tree.

I never want you to forget how you felt when you were up there.

JULl: Thanks, Dad.

JULl(N): It was the first thing I saw every morning and the last thing

I saw before I went to sleep.

And once I could look at it without crying I saw more than the tree and what being up there meant to me.

I saw the day that my view of things around me started changing.

And I wondered, did I still feel the same things about Bryce?

BRYCE(N): I've never been a huge fan of eggs. I mean, I could always just take them or leave them.

That is, until one day in Skyler Brown's garage when my feelings about eggs were solidified.

[BAND PLAYING ROCK MUSIC]

SKYLER: Hey, hey, hey. Guys. Edna's found her breakfast.

BRYCE(N): I mean, if a slimy reptile found them appetizing there was certainly no place for them in my diet.

MARK: Oh, man, that's so cool.

She doesn't even have to chew.

I mean, think of all the time you'd save. BRYCE(N): I could've gone my whole life not knowing that snakes eat eggs raw if it hadn't been for Lynetta. She had a major-league thing for Skyler Brown.

LYNETTA: I think it's gross.

BRYCE(N): He and Juli's brothers,

Matt and Mark, had formed a band.

And Lynetta would watch them practice. MARK: That is so neat.

MATT: How about that, huh, Bryce?

BRYCE: Yeah. Neat.

SKYLER: So, Brycie, how do you think he's gonna digest that?

BRYCE: Stomach acid?

SKYLER: You'd like to think that.

Wait, everybody quiet. Here he goes.

[SHELL CRACKING]

SKYLER: Eggs over easy.

LYNETTA: Gross. Gross, gross, gross.

SKYLER: Wait, wait. You haven't seen the best part.

LYNETTA: Ugh! Gross.

BRYCE(N): I tried to be casual about it, but it didn't take.

I started having bad dreams.

I'd be trapped inside a huge egg and this monster would open his jaws

and start to devour me. I'd wake up just in time.

[KNOCKING ON DOOR]

BRYCE(N): Then the real nightmare began.

JULI: Hi, Bryce. I brought these over for you and your family.

My chickens are laying eggs.

BRYCE: What?

JULI: You remember Abby and Bonnie and Clyde and Dexter and Eunice and Florence? The ones I hatched for the science fair.

BRYCE: How could I forget?

BRYCE(N): It was classic Juli Baker.

She totally dominated the fair.

And get this, her project was all about watching boring eggs hatch.

 I mean, here I had a live-action erupting volcano and all anyone cared about was Juli's boring chicks

breaking out of their boring shells.

JULl: Oh, I think the last one's hatching. WOMAN1: It's hatching.

WOMAN2: Oh, it's hatching.

WOMAN1: Kids, come over here.

BRYCE(N): But hey, she won. I lost.

I've never been one to dwell.

WOMAN2: Here it comes.

BRYCE(N): But that didn't mean I had to eat her lousy eggs.

PATSY: I think it was very sweet of Juli to bring us those eggs.

BRYCE: I don't care. I'm still having cereal tomorrow.

STEVEN: Yeah, how do we know there's no chicks in one of those eggs?

CHET: I used to eat farm-fresh eggs when I was a kid.

They were delicious.

STEVEN: Yeah, well, that's all well and good but what if we crack one open

and a dead chick falls out?

CHET: Do they have a rooster?

If they don't have a rooster the eggs can't be fertile.

PATSY: And if they had a rooster, we'd know.

The whole neighborhood would know.

LYNETTA: Maybe they got it de-yodeled. STEVEN: "De-yodeled"?

LYNETTA: You know. De-cock-a-doodle-doo'd.

STEVEN: What the hell are you talking about?

LYNETTA: Like they de-bark dogs.

PATSY: Bryce, why don't you just ask Juli? BRYCE: I don't think that...

LYNETTA: What? You afraid to talk to her?

BRYCE: I'm not afraid to talk to her.

[MIMICS CHICKEN]

BRYCE(N): I know you are, but what am I?

STEVEN: Okay. Just talk to her and find out. LYNETTA: Bryce.

BRYCE: How do you tell if one's a rooster?

GARRETT: Well, a rooster's bigger. Longer feathers. BRYCE: Mm-hm.

GARRETT: They've got that red stuff growing out of their head.

And around their neck too.

BRYCE: That shouldn't be too hard to spot.

GARRETT: Although, come to think of it, chickens have the rubbery red stuff too. Just not as much.

BRYCE(N): Garrett's expertise in roosters was the cornerstone of our plan to avoid contact with Juli Baker.

The balance of which involved spying over her back fence.

BRYCE: Come on, come on.

Shh. Shh. Over here.

BRYCE: I can't see the stupid chickens.

GARRETT: We gotta get them out of the coop. [CLUCKING]

BRYCE: Is that a rooster?

GARRETT: No, it looks like a chicken.

BRYCE: How can you tell?

GARRETT: It just does.

BRYCE(N): See what I mean?Expertise.

BRYCE: Shh, shh! GARRETT: What?

BRYCE: Juli.

JULl: Here, guys. Come on, there you go. Here, guys. Come on.

GARRETT: Yeah, they're all chickens.

BRYCE: There's no rooster?

GARRETT: What did I just say?

BRYCE: How can you tell?

GARRETT: Well, none of them are

strutting. JULl: Here, come on.

BRYCE: Roosters strut?

JULl: Come on, guys.

GARRETT: What did I just say?

JULl: Here.

GARRETT: Plus, hardly any of them have any rubbery red stuff.

JULl: What are you doing?

GARRETT: Yeah. They're definitely all chickens. BRYCE: They're all chickens.

CHET: I'm proud of you, Bryce. You overcame your fear. BRYCE: Huh?

CHET: You talked to her.

BRYCE: Oh, heh. Yeah.

It's no big deal.

STEVEN: That's what she told you?

They're all chickens?

BRYCE: Yeah.

STEVEN: She's a genius. You're both genius. Of course they're all chickens.

A rooster's a chicken. The question is:

Is one of them a rooster or are they all hens?

BRYCE(N): Hens? Who said anything about hens? Then it hit me. Garrett didn't know jack shit about chickens.

Do roosters strut?CHET: Yes, they do.

STEVEN: What does that have to do with anything?BRYCE: They're all hens.

PATSY: Well, the main thing is the eggs are okay. It's all settled.

BRYCE(N): Not for me.

There was no way I was ever gonna eat anything that had anything to do with Juli Baker.

BRYCE: I'm not eating them.

PATSY: Well, why not?

BRYCE: Have you seen their yard? It's

There's not even any grass.

It's all mud and chicken turds.

LYNETTA: Ew. Gross. Salmonella.

PATSY: Do you suppose they could have salmonella?

CHET: It's not very likely.

STEVEN: Why take the risk?

PATSY: What do we do with the eggs?

STEVEN: Give them back.

BRYCE: Give them back? To Juli?

STEVEN: Sure. You talked to her before, right? It didn't kill you.

BRYCE: Well, what do I say?

STEVEN: Tell her we don't eat eggs.

Uh, we're allergic to them or something. Come on, use your brains.

BRYCE(N): It didn't feel right to lie.

Besides, even a seventh grader would know that entire families aren't allergic to eggs. But I didn't wanna hurt her feelings either.

So that left me with only one option.

And thus another near-death experience in my ongoing saga

with Juli Baker had been successfully avoided. Until one week later.

JULI: Hi, Bryce. Brought you some more eggs. BRYCE: Wow. Thanks.

JULI: Did your family like the first batch?

BRYCE: Do you even have to ask?

JULI: Great. See you at school.

BRYCE(N): What I hoped would be a one-time event was just the beginning of a life consumed

with lies, intrigue and deception.

Every morning I'd be on the lookout for Juli so if she happened to come,

I could whip the door open before she knocked. BRYCE: Thanks.

BRYCE(N): Then I'd dump the eggs before anyone noticed.

And why? Why couldn't I just face her? Why couldn't I just say

"No, thanks. Don't want them.

Don't need them. Give them to the snake"?Was I really afraid of hurting her feelings or was I just afraid of her?

RICHARD: Now, you wanna make sure you get it.

JULl(N): When Mrs. Brubeck first suggested hatching eggs as my science project I was less than excited. That is, until I saw my first

sign of life. TRINA: Is that it?

RICHARD: That's the embryo. Heh.

TRINA: Wow.

JULI: It looks like a bean.

TRINA: It does.

JULI: Let's try the other ones.

JULl(N): Suddenly it felt real.

All the eggs were alive.

There were, like, little bean babies inside every one.

On the day of the fair, all six chicks hatched. What are the odds?

MEISNER: This year's top prize goes to Juli Baker for her wonderful project

 "A Chicken is Born."

JULl(N): I won first place.

And that was cool, but all I really cared about were my chicks.

JULI: There you go. There you go, guys.

JULl(N): My mom wasn't crazy about us raising chickens.

But I begged and pleaded.

I told her I would take care of everything. And I did.

JULI: Where's Clyde? Clyde?

Hey, Clyde. What's the matter?

Are you okay? Aren't you hungry?

Come on. Come here. What's wrong, baby? Come here.

Hey, you're not Clyde. You're Clyde and eggs. Mom!

JULl(N): As it turned out, my hens laid more eggs than we could eat.

At first we tried to keep up but after a month of boiling,frying and deviling like that movie The Blob, we were being overtaken by eggs.

Then opportunity in the form of our neighbor, Mrs. Steuby, knocked.

STEUBY: Hello, dear.

If you ever have any extra, I'd be happy to buy them from you.

JULI: Really?

STEUBY: Certainly.

And I happen to know that Mrs. Helms would be interested as well.

JULI: Great.

STEUBY: Nothing like fresh eggs.

JULI: Thanks, Mrs. Steuby.

STEUBY: You bet, dear. Bye.

JULl(N): Between Mrs. Steuby and Mrs. Helms, my egg overflow problem was solved. Then I realized that Mrs. Loski deserved eggs too.

But I didn't think it would be right to charge her.

She had been such a good neighbor, lending us supplies when we ran out giving my mother a ride when our car wouldn't start it was the least I could do. Besides, if I happened to run into Bryce, that wouldn't be the end of the world. JULI: Hi, Bryce.

JULl(N): By the third time I brought eggs over to the Loskis I realized Bryce was waiting for me.

Waiting to pull open the door and say, "Thanks, Juli. See you at school."

And in return, I got a few moments alone with the world's most dazzling eyes. Thanks, Juli. See you at school. It was a bargain.

Until the day it wasn't.

It was two weeks after the sycamore tree was cut down and I was just starting to feel normal again.

BRYCE: Hey, Juli. Right on schedule.

JULI: Yeah, well, neither rain nor sleet.

BRYCE: Huh?

JULI: You know, the mailman thing?

BRYCE: Oh. Right. So, um, will you start riding the bus again?

JULI: I don't know. I haven't been up there since...

BRYCE: It doesn't look so bad anymore. It's all cleared away.

Well, um, I better get ready for school. Guess I'll see you there.

JULI: See you.

JULl(N): Maybe Bryce was right.

Maybe it was time I started riding the bus again. After all, didn't he just tell me he wanted me to?

Could it be that Bryce Loski actually misses me? [DOOR OPENS]

BRYCE: Juli? What are you still doing here? JULI: I was just thinking.

BRYCE: It's pickup day. The cans are in front.

JULI: I know. You need some help?

BRYCE: No. Maybe I'll do it later.

JULI: Are those my eggs?

BRYCE: Yeah. Yeah, I dropped them.

JULI: They're not broken.

Why are you throwing them away?

Don't you want them?

BRYCE: It wasn't me. My dad didn't think it was worth the risk.

JULI: Risk? What risk?

BRYCE: Salmonella.

JULI: What are you talking about? He's afraid of being poisoned?

BRYCE: Well, Juli, I mean, look at your back yard. It's a complete mess.

It's, like, covered in turds.

JULI: That's not true. I clean up after my girls every day.

BRYCE: We just didn't wanna hurt your feelings.

JULI: Have you always thrown them away? You know, Mrs. Steuby and Mrs. Helms pay me for my eggs.

BRYCE: They do?

JULI: They pay me 60 cents a dozen.

BRYCE: I didn't know.

JULI: How could you? BRYCE: I'm sorry.

JULI: No, you're not.

BRYCE(N): It didn't take me long to realize that I'd traded in my old problems with Juli Baker for a whole

set of new ones.

It was actually worse having her mad at me than having her annoy me.

The way she ignored me was a constant reminder that I'd been a jerk. Then one day I was coming home from playing basketball with Garrett and things got weird.

CHET: Don't be so timid. Come on, you won't hurt them. JULl: Like this?

CHET: Yeah, that's it.

BRYCE(N): My grandfather. All I ever saw him wear was slippers.

Now, where did he get those work boots? I couldn't stop looking over there. And the more I looked,

the madder I got.

My grandfather had already said more to Juli in one hour than he'd said to me in the whole time he'd been living with us. I was pretty sure I'd never seen him laugh.

And what was his deal with Juli Baker? [KNOCKING ON DOOR]

BRYCE: Hi, Grandpa.

CHET: Juli told me about the eggs.

You know, Bryce... One's character is set at an early age. I'd hate to see you swim out so far you can't swim back. BRYCE: Sir?

CHET: It's about honesty, son.

Sometimes a little discomfort in the beginning can save a whole lot of pain down the road.

BRYCE(N): When it came to holding a grudge, Juli Baker was truly impressive. All week I tried to approach her at school.

She'd always find some way to duck me. And whenever she was in her yard, Grandpa was always there with her. Finally, one Saturday I saw my opening. My grandfather had gone into town to buy some Bengay.

I guess the yard work was starting to get to him.

BRYCE: It's looking real good.

JULI: Thanks. Chet did most of it.

BRYCE: I'm sorry for what I did.

JULI: I just don't get it, Bryce.

Why didn't you just tell me?

BRYCE: I don't know. It was dumb.

And I shouldn't have said anything about your yard, either.

It wasn't right.

JULI: Maybe it's all for the best.

I mean, look, I learned so much from Chet, it's amazing.You're lucky. I don't even have grandparents anymore.

BRYCE: Oh.

JULI: I feel sorry for him.

He misses your grandma.

Can you believe it? He says I remind him of her. BRYCE: What?

JULI: I know. That's what I said.

But he meant it in a nice way. Something about her spirit.

BRYCE: Yeah. Well...

Good luck with the grass.

I'm sure it'll come up great.

JULI: Thanks.

BRYCE: I guess I'll see you around.

JULI: I guess so.

[BONANZA THEME PLAYING]

BRYCE(N): While Juli's acceptance of my apology was not all that I'd hoped for at least the eggs thing was finally behind me.

The first time in months I could truly enjoy Bonanza.

STEVEN: Where you going and why you dressed like that?

LYNETTA: Skyler's.

Matt and Mark are bringing over recording stuff and they're gonna make a demo.

STEVEN: Demo? Like they know how to make a demo.

LYNETTA: You don't even know them.

STEVEN: I don't have to. I know the type.

LYNETTA: You don't know anything.

STEVEN: Don't talk to me like that.

LYNETTA: I'm late.

STEVEN: Be back by 11.

BRYCE(N): Yep. Everything was back to normal.

STEVEN: Is that girl working you too hard?

CHET: That girl's name is Juli.

And, no, she isn't working me too hard.

STEVEN: You've developed quite a soft spot for her, huh? PATSY: Steven.

STEVEN: No, Patsy. Just wanna find out why your father has the energy

to befriend a complete stranger

when he won't throw a baseball around with his own grandson.

BRYCE: It's okay, Dad.

STEVEN: No, it's not okay.

BRYCE: Juli reminds him of Grandma.

STEVEN: Of Renee? Heh. That's ridiculous.

CHET: You know why the Bakers haven't fixed their yard?

STEVEN: Yeah, because he's too busy with his paint-by-numbers kit.

CHET: If you had a brother with a severe handicap, what would you do?

STEVEN: What the hell does that have to do with anything?

CHET: Juli's father has a retarded brother.

STEVEN: So what? He's not the gardener, is he? Heh.

PATSY: Steven.

STEVEN: Ha-ha-ha. It was a joke.

You know, other people have family troubles and they manage to mow their own lawns.

I don't know where their pride in ownership is.

CHET: They don't own that house.

The landlord's supposed to maintain it. Mr. Baker puts every extra penny he has into caring for his brother.

PATSY: Don't they have government facilities for that sort of thing?

CHET: Maybe they thought that a private facility would be better for him.

STEVEN: Either way, it's not our fault

that their family has some chromosomal abnormality.

CHET: It has nothing to do with chromosomes. When Juli's uncle was born, he had the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

If he'd had enough oxygen, he would've been a perfect little baby,

just like your son.

STEVEN: Goddamn it, Chet.

Patsy? Patsy? PATSY: Leave me alone!

[DOOR SLAMS]

CHET: Sorry about that.

BRYCE: Why is Mom so upset?

CHET: Because but for the grace of God your mother could be standing in Mr. Baker's shoes.

BRYCE: Did her brother have the cord wrapped around his neck too?

CHET: You did.

Luckily, the doctor who delivered you was on the ball and got it untangled

but it easily could've gone the other way. Wanna go for a walk?

BRYCE: Huh?

CHET: I find it helps clear the mind.

BRYCE: What would they have done with me?

CHET: You can't dwell on something that might've been, Bryce.

BRYCE: The way my dad was talking,

sounds like he would've thrown me in a nuthouse.

CHET: No, no. Now, that's not fair.

You can't condemn him for something he hasn't done. [CHUCKLES]

CHET: This is where that tree was, wasn't it? BRYCE: Yeah.

CHET: Must've been a spectacular view. She's quite a girl.

Some of us get dipped in flat... some in satin... some in gloss.

But every once in a while you find someone who's iridescent.

And when you do nothing will ever compare.

BRYCE(N): Flat, glossy, iridescent?

What the hell did that mean?

Juli Baker had always just seemed plain to me. Until now.

And the way she talked about what it felt like to be up in that tree

to be held above the earth, brushed by the wind. Who in junior high talks like that? This weird feeling started taking over in the pit of my stomach

and I didn't like it. I was slipping, man. And it was time to get a grip.

JULl(N): I'd never been embarrassed by where we lived before.

I also never really thought about money. I knew we weren't rich, but I didn't feel like we were missing anything. That is, until Bryce Loski called our home a complete mess.

MARK [SINGING]: What's your name?

MATT [SINGING]: What's your name?

[IN UNISON] : Is it Mary or Sue?

What's your name?

Do I stand a chance with you?

It's so hard to find a personality

With charms like yours for me

Ooh-ee, ooh-ee, ooh-ee

JULl(N): I had to do something and I knew what it was.

[IN UNISON]: What's your name?

[BOTH SCATTING] [ALL LAUGHING]

TRINA: Oh, you're sounding really good.

MATT: Yeah. We'll record it in Skyler's garage.

TRINA: That's a wonderful project.

JULI: Speaking of projects, I was thinking it might be cool to fix up the yard. RICHARD: What? I mean,

how much can grass seed cost?

JULI: I could plant a lawn, maybe some flowers.

I could even put up a fence.

RICHARD: Honey, that's a major undertaking.

JULI: I could pay for it with my egg money.

RICHARD: No. That's your money.

The landlord should be the one taking care of all this.

JULI: But he doesn't. And we live here. And it looks so bad.

RICHARD: Jules. What's going on?

JULI: Nothing, Dad.

TRINA: It's okay, sweetheart.

You can tell us.

JULI: The Loskis have been throwing away my eggs because they're afraid of salmonella.

Because our yard is such a mess.

TRINA: Did Patsy say that?

JULI: No. Bryce did.

TRINA: But it must have been a family discussion. A boy doesn't come up with that on his own.

MATT: Who cares what they think?

MARK: Yeah, who cares? TRINA: I care.

RICHARD: Trina. Let's not get into this.

TRINA: No, I'm tired of living like this, Richard. I'm tired of having to take temp jobs just to make ends meet.

I'm tired of having to push a chair up against the washing machine

just to keep the door shut.

I'm tired of having to borrow Mrs. Steuby's vacuum cleaner every time ours breaks down.

RICHARD: Do you think this is the life I pictured for us?

Sometimes you have to sacrifice to do the right thing. We always end up agreeing that Devonhurst is the right thing for Daniel.

TRINA: Well, maybe we should start thinking about what's right for us.

Our daughter is suffering because we won't fix up our own yard.

RICHARD: It's not our yard.

TRINA: How can you say that, Richard? How? We've lived here for 12 years and for 12 years we've been saying it's temporary, but it's not.

This is our home.

Is it wrong to wanna live somewhere you can be proud of?

To have enough to send your kids to college? Maybe it's time we considered government care.

RICHARD: We are not moving my brother.

TRINA: He's more important than your own children? JULI: Dad!

RICHARD: How dare you!

JULI: Stop it, Dad! Please, just stop.

RICHARD: I'm sorry. Julianna, this is not your fault.

We'll work this out, I promise.

JULl(N): That was the first time I ever heard my parents really yell at each other.

RICHARD: I'm sorry about tonight.

JULl(N): That night they each came into my room. My father talked about his brother and how much he loved him and how he promised his parents he'd always take care of him.

My mother talked about how much she loved my father for his strength and kind heart. When she kissed me good night she whispered that of all her many blessings, I was her best.

I felt sorry for my father.

I felt sorry for my mother.

But most of all, I felt lucky for me that they were mine. I wanted to think the reason I started working on my yard had nothing to do with Bryce. It was about making our house better. After what he did with the eggs, why should I care what he thought? But I did.

CHET: Are you pruning that or trying to hack it to death? Hi. I'm Chet Duncan, Bryce's grandfather. Sorry it's taken me so long to come over and introduce myself.

JULI: Nice to meet you.

CHET: So are you trimming all these to the same height?

JULI: Well, yeah, that's what I was thinking, but I don't know.

Do you think it would look better to take them out?

CHET: Oh, these are Hicksii shrubs. These will prune up nicely.

JULI; Listen, Mr. Duncan.

CHET: Call me Chet.

JULI: Chet. If you're here because of what Bryce said I don't need your help.

CHET: Read about you in the paper.

Renee would've sat up in that tree with you.

She would've sat up there all night.

JULI: Renee?

CHET: My wife.

You remind me a lot of her.

JULl(N): We worked on the yard for weeks. And the whole time we worked, we talked. JULI: Right there?

CHET: Perfect, yeah.

JULl(N): He wanted to know more about the sycamore tree.

He knew exactly what it meant about the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

He said it was the same with people

but sometimes with people, the whole could be less. I thought that was pretty interesting. I started looking at people I'd known since elementary school trying to figure out if they were more or less than the sum of their parts.

Chet was right. A lot of them were less. Of all my classmates, the one person I couldn't seem to place was Bryce. Until recently, I would've said with absolute certainty that he was greater, far greater, than the sum of his parts. But now I wasn't so sure.

BRYCE: It's looking good, Juli. Nice job.

JULI: Thanks. Chet did most of it.

BRYCE: I'm sorry for what I did.

JULI: I just don't get it, Bryce.

Why didn't you just tell me?

JULl(N): Was he really sorry?

Or was he just saying these things to make himself feel better?

Then I thought maybe I just wanted him to be more than the sum of his parts. But as I looked into his eyes... those dazzling eyes...

For the first time I was pretty sure that Bryce Loski was less.

PATSY: We're going to invite the Bakers over for dinner.

STEVEN: What?

BRYCE: I don't know, Mom.

CHET: I think that's a marvelous idea.

STEVEN: Patsy, what purpose does this serve?

PATSY: Trina Baker is a very nice person.

LYNETTA: And Matt and Mark are really cool. STEVEN: I hate cool.

PATSY: Something we should've done years ago.

STEVEN: Yeah, but we didn't.

And now we can't. The statute of limitations has run out.

PATSY: We're having the Bakers over for dinner.

STEVEN: If this is about what I said last night, I'm sorry, okay?

But, you know, having them over for dinner is not gonna fix his brother.

PATSY: It's going to be a sit-down dinner. And I expect everyone to dress accordingly.

STEVEN: Oh, God. Can't we just have a barbecue?

PATSY: It's going to be a sit-down dinner.

STEVEN: Just shoot me now.

CHET: Careful what you wish for.

BRYCE(N): So that was it.

A dress-up, sit-down dinner with Juli Baker was in my immediate future.

And that made seeing Juli at school more uncomfortable.

I found myself staring at her in class.

And the way her hair fell back over her shoulders she looked just like the picture in the newspaper.

Dana Tressler caught me watching.

If I didn't do something fast, this could spread like wildfire.

BRYCE: There was a bee in her hair.

See, there it goes.

DANA: There's no bee.

BRYCE: It flew out the window.

BRYCE(N): I convinced myself I'd dodged a bullet.

I had to put Juli out of my mind.

Keep the focus on the important stuff like schoolwork.

My weakness was unnerving.

I need your sharpener.

BRYCE: You ever heard of knocking?

LYNETTA: Hey, what you got there? Dad's Playboy?

BRYCE: None of your business.

LYNETTA: Give my best to Miss October. BRYCE: Get out.

LYNETTA: Or should I say your best? Ha, ha. BRYCE: You're disgusting.

BRYCE(N): Another disaster avoided.

My life had become a minefield.

GARRETT: Hey, man. BRYCE: Hey.

GARRETT: What's this? Whoa.

BRYCE: It's not what you think.

Okay, it is what you think, but I can explain. Okay, I can't explain.

Can we just talk about it later?

GARRETT: Whatever you say.

BRYCE(N): I had to talk to someone.

Why not Garrett? Maybe he could help me get back on track.

Garrett was surprisingly sensitive in matters of the heart.

GARRETT: Are you freaking mental? Juli Baker. You hate her.

BRYCE: That's what's weird.

I don't think I do.

I can't stop thinking about her.

GARRETT: You got it bad, man.

BRYCE: Well, what do I do?

GARRETT: Well, you gotta nip this in the bud. These aren't real emotions.

BRYCE: They're not?

GARRETT: You feel guilty because of the egg thing.

BRYCE: Yeah, and I insulted her yard.

GARRETT: Exactly. Of course, the place is a dump anyways.

BRYCE: Her dad's got a retarded brother and all their money goes to helping him.

GARRETT: A retard? Well, shoot, that ought to tell you something.

BRYCE: About what?

GARRETT: About Juli.

BRYCE: What are you saying?

GARRETT: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

BRYCE(N): I couldn't believe it.

I wanted to yell at him. Tell him that he didn't know Juli like I did.

But all that came out was:

BRYCE: Heh, oh. GARRETT: Right.

BRYCE: Yeah. Right. Um, I'll talk to you later.

BRYCE(N): I was supposed to go to Garrett's after school but I couldn't be around him. He'd crossed the line.

And standing right next to him across that line was my father.

I didn't care what they thought.

I liked Juli Baker.

JULl(N): Sunday mornings are peaceful in our house. My dad lets himself sleep in. My mother lets herself not fix breakfast. If my brothers have been out late playing with their band

you won't even know they're around till noon. But this Sunday, I woke up feeling weird. I had to do something to shake off the confused feelings about Bryce that were starting to creep back in.

RICHARD: You really did it, didn't you? Heh. Proud of you.

JULI: Thanks, Dad. Where you going?

RICHARD: To see Daniel.

It's his birthday.

JULI: I wanna come with you.

RICHARD: Oh, honey, just enjoy the morning, stay with your mom.

JULI: No, Dad. I wanna come.

RICHARD: Sweetheart, listen.

Sometimes, with Daniel...

JULI: I'm coming, Dad. RICHARD: Okay.

We'd better leave a note for your mother.

JULl(N): In all the years, I'd never visited my Uncle Daniel. I don't know why. It was always something my dad did alone. We didn't say much to each other on the drive to Devonhurst, but I didn't care.

I just liked being with my dad.

Somehow the silence seemed to connect us in a way that words never could.

RICHARD: The residents tend to the grounds as part of their therapy.

 It takes some getting used to.

They're good people, though.

Daniel? Daniel.

DANIEL: Richard! You're here!

Richard for my birthday.

Who? Richard, who? Who?

Who? Who? Richard, who? Who?

RICHARD: Daniel, Daniel, it's Julianna.

It's my daughter. Your niece.

DANIEL: Julianna. Ha, Julianna.

JULI: Happy birthday, Uncle Daniel.

DANIEL: Ha-ha-ha. Richard.

It's my birthday.

I have your pictures, Julianna.

I have your pictures.

RICHARD: We have a present for you.

DANIEL: A puzzle? A puzzle, Richard?

RICHARD: Not just a puzzle.

A puzzle and a pinwheel.

DANIEL: A pinwheel! Thank you, Richard. RICHARD: Yes.

DANIEL: Orange. Outside? Outside, Richard?

RICHARD: You wanna go outside?

All right, we'll go to, uh, McEIliot's.

We'll walk out there for an ice cream.

DANIEL: Ice cream!

RICHARD: Oh, no. No, no, we can't.

Daniel doesn't like ice cream.

JULI: Aw.

DANIEL: I do like ice cream, Richard.

RICHARD: I'm only kidding.

I know you like ice cream.

DANIEL: Ahh!

RICHARD: You love ice cream. All right, come on. Here you go. Got it?

DANIEL: Ah! It's my birthday.

[LAUGHING]

DANIEL: Lollipop. It's my birthday.

RICHAD: You like it? Oh!

All right, Daniel. Okay, wait, wait.

DANIEL: Ice cream. Ice cream.

My ice cream. My ice cream. Ugh!

RICHARD: It's okay. Daniel.

Daniel! Daniel! Leave it, I'll get y...

DANIEL: Ice cream on the floor. Ice cream on the floor.

RICHARD: Would you go get him another cone? JULI: Yeah.

DANIEL: I need ice cream, Richard!

It's my birthday, Richard. It's my birthday! Ice cream, Richard! Ice cream, Richard!

RICHARD: Stop! Stop it!

DANIEL: I need it!

RICHARD: Stop it! Stop it!

[YELLING] JULI: Here we go.

DANIEL: Ice cream!

Aah! Richard!

RICHARD: Okay, okay.

I've got some ice cream.

DANIEL: Birthday ice cream.

That's good, Richard.

RICHARD: I'm so sorry.

He hasn't done anything like that...

JULl(N): I'd often heard my father talk about how difficult life was for Daniel. But I never really understood it until now.

JULI: Yeah, there you go.

DANIEL: Heh. Orange.

JULl(N): On the walk back, Daniel acted like nothing had happened.

JULI: Other way. Other way.

JULl(N): On the ride home, my dad told me that Uncle Daniel used to live with him and Mom before we were born.

But after a while, it became too difficult. When we got home, everything looked the same.

But it wasn't. Before today, Daniel had always been just a name to me.

Now he was part of the family.

[DOOR CLOSES] [RICHARD SIGHS]

RICHARD: Hey.

TRINA: Hey. How'd it go?

JULI: I'm glad I went.

TRINA: I'm glad you went too.

RICHARD: Trina, it's Sunday.

What are you doing mopping the floor?

TRINA: Patsy Loski invited us over for dinner Friday night.

RICHARD: Shouldn't she be mopping her floor?Or did she ask to borrow ours? [CHUCKLES]

TRINA: Nervous energy.

RICHARD: Did she invite all of us?

TRINA: Yes, she did.

RICHARD: Even our friend Sal Monella?

TRINA: Richard.

RICHARD: Why, after all these years?

TRINA: Well, she said she felt really bad that they hadn't invited us before and apparently they want to get to know us better.

RICHARD: And you wanna go?

TRINA: Well, she insisted.

And I think it would be really nice.

RICHARD: All right. We'll go.

JULl(N): I wasn't too thrilled about dinner with the Loskis but I could see it meant a lot to my mother.

[BELL RINGS]

JULI(N): At school the next day,

I couldn't seem to concentrate.

My thoughts kept running back to Daniel. I wondered what my grandparents had gone through having a son like him when reality interrupted.

DANA: Bryce Loski likes you.

JULI: What?

DANA: He's got a big crush on you.

JULI: What are you talking about?

Bryce Loski does not have a crush on me.

DANA: Oh, yeah? In science, I caught him staring at you. He said it was because there was a bee in your hair. Is that the lamest cover-up or what? JULI: Maybe there was a bee.

DANA: The only bee you're attracting is B-R-Y-C-E. I'm telling you, that boy is lost in love land. Come on.

JULI: Where?

DANA: I saw him sneaking off with Garrett. Come on.

GARRETT: Are you freaking mental? Juli Baker. You hate her.

BRYCE: That's what's so weird.

I don't think I do.

I can't stop thinking about her.

GARRETT: You got it bad, man.

BRYCE: What do I do?

GARRETT: You gotta nip this in the bud. These aren't real emotions.

BRYCE: They're not?

GARRETT: You feel guilty because of the egg thing.

BRYCE: Yeah, and I insulted her yard.

GARRETT: Exactly.

The place is a dump anyways.

BRYCE: Her dad's got a retarded brother and all their money goes to helping him.

GARRETT: A retard? Well, that ought to tell you something.

BRYCE: About what?

GARRETT: About Juli.

BRYCE: What are you saying?

GARRETT: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, my friend.

BRYCE: Oh, heh. Yeah. Right.

GARRETT: Yeah.

BRYCE: I'll talk to you later.

GARRETT: Okay.

DANA: I'm sorry. I thought...

JULI: It's okay. It's fine.

JULl(N): And it was.

Because now my confusion was gone.

I was sure I no longer liked Bryce Loski.

BRYCE: Mom, are you trying to make the Bakers feel totally worthless?

PATSY: I want it to be nice.

And why aren't you dressed?

BRYCE: I'm going.

BRYCE(N): I wanted to look good for Juli. But I didn't want her to think that I wanted to look good for her.

It was a fine line. A very fine line.

[DOOR BELL RINGS]

PATSY: Bryce, they're here. Come on down. BRYCE: Coming!

CHET: Hey, come on in.

PATSY: Come in, come in.

CHET: There goes the waistline.

TRINA: I'm glad you could make it.

PATSY: Lynetta, Steven, company's here. LYNETTA: Coming!

PATSY: What is this? Homemade pie?

TRINA: Yes, it's pecan and blueberry cheesecake.

PATSY: Let's take them to the kitchen.

TRINA: Okay. LYNETTA: Hi, guys.

MARK: Hey, looking good.

This is my dad.

LYNETTA: Hi, I'm Lynetta.

RICHARD: Hi, nice to finally meet you.

LYNETTA: Nice to meet you too.

RICHARD: My boys are telling me that... STEVEN: Hey, big guy.

RICHARD: Hey, Steven. How are you?

STEVEN: We should've done this a long time ago. Come on in.

MATT: This is a cool place.

LYNETTA: Yeah, it's all right.

Come on, I'll show you my room.

MATT: You gotta hear this new song we wrote. MARK: It's so good.

BRYCE: Hi. You look nice.

JULI: I heard you and Garrett making fun of my uncle in the library.

And I don't wanna speak to you.

 Not now, not ever.

CHET: And I say you can.

RICHARD: But what you're proposing would require a perpetual-motion

machine, so it's not possible.

JULI: If you had two opposite charged poles with a neutral conductor...

BRYCE(N): Perpetual motion?

Here I was, dying inside, and they were talking about perpetual motion.

And how did Juli know about all that stuff?

PATSY: Come on, everybody, dinner's ready. Lynetta! Dinner!

BRYCE: Juli, can I talk to you?

It was wrong, what Garrett said.

I know it.

JULI: Did you know it was wrong when he said it?

BRYCE: Yeah. I wanted to punch him.

But we were in the library.

JULI: So instead you just agreed with him and laughed. BRYCE: Yeah.

JULI: Then that makes you a coward.

BRYCE(N): I had to sit across from Juli for an entire dinner. My dad was right. We should have barbecued.

PATSY: I just want to say how wonderful it is to have you share a meal with us. May it be the first of many. [COUGHING]

STEVEN: Wrong pipe.

TRINA: Well, we couldn't be happier.

We are just all so thrilled to be here.

STEVEN: Juli, you did a really nice job on your yard.

JULI: Thanks. Chet was a big help.

STEVEN: Yeah, I know.

You gotta tell me your secret. I can't get him to do a thing around here.

PATSY: Steven. STEVEN: I kid.

[TRINA LAUGHS]

STEVEN: I'm telling you, the neighborhood is really coming to life.

I mean, that new house is taking shape. PATSY: Which one?

STEVEN: You know, the one where they cut down that big ugly tree.

BRYCE(N): I wanted to say that a lot of people liked that tree, but I didn't.

I didn't want to go against my dad.

RICHARD: Some people thought that tree was the jewel of the neighborhood.

STEVEN: Yeah, well, there's no accounting for taste. So, Matt, Mark, Mark, Matt... You guys are, uh,

gonna be graduating soon, huh?

MATT: Yeah, thank God.

STEVEN: You don't like high school?

MATT: You kidding?

STEVEN: No. High school was the best time of my life.

MARK: Not for us, no.

MATT: Yeah, we've had enough of that scene.

STEVEN: Ah. So college is probably out of the question, huh?

MARK: No, it's a possibility.

RICHARD: They've actually been accepted at several places already.

TRINA: Yes, they have.

STEVEN: Really? Well, that's good.

MATT: But, um, we're gonna give music a shot first. STEVEN: Really?

TRINA: Oh, they are very talented.

LYNETTA: Oh, their band is really boss.

They did a bunch of demos and they're really cool.

MARK: Thanks, Lyn.

PATSY: When Steven and I first met, he was playing in a band.

LYNETTA: You played in a band?

PATSY: He was a wonderful saxophone player.

MATT: Cool. You still play?

STEVEN: Well, l...

MARK: Well, if you want, you can come jam out with us sometime.

STEVEN: Uh, you... No, I mean... Heh.

 That's not me anymore.

PATSY: Have you boys ever performed in front of an audience?

MATT: A lot of times.

BRYCE(N): The more Matt and Mark talked about their musical exploits

the quieter my dad got.

He tried to plaster on a smile now and then but underneath he seemed really sad.

TRINA: But my parents didn't like him at first.

CHET: Republicans fought like crazy against the New Deal.

BRYCE(N): The rest of the evening was painless enough.

But through it all, Juli didn't say a word to me.Never even looked at me.

Until she was about to leave.

JULI: I'm sorry I was so angry when we first came in.

I think everyone had a good time.

Your mom was really nice to invite us. See you.

BRYCE(N): Her apology made things worse. JULI: Hey, wait for me.

BRYCE(N): I knew I wasn't forgiven.

It was like I wasn't even important enough to hold a grudge against.

PATSY: Well, I think they're a delightful family. Those boys were nothing like I expected.

CHET: I thought they were very nice young men. STEVEN: Hoodlums.

PATSY: What?

STEVEN: How you think they can afford all that recording gear?

PATSY: Steven, please. You can't just make an accusation like that.

STEVEN: Don't be so naive, Patsy.

Do you know how expensive it is to record a demo?

They're probably stealing hubcaps, for chrissake.

LYNETTA: You are such an asshole.

PATSY: What is the matter with you?

LYNETTA: Go to hell.

STEVEN: Don't you talk to me like that. PATSY: Steven, stop!

STEVEN: Nobody talks to me like that in my own house! PATSY: Stop!

BRYCE(N): I'd seen my father angry before, but this was different.

As I lay in bed that night

I thought about how my dad always looked down on the Bakers.

And how he'd called them trash and made fun of Mr. Baker's paintings.

And now I realized he was just mad at himself. But why? Juli called me a coward. Was it possible my dad was a coward too?I didn't know.

What difference did it make?

Juli Baker was out of my life.

Or, more accurately I was out of hers.

JULl(N): As I was getting dressed for the Loskis' dinner party I found myself staring at the painting my father had given me

and became furious all over again.

Bryce had never been a friend to me, ever. He hadn't taken my side about the tree he'd thrown away my eggs and he made fun of me at my uncle's expense. When my mother called that it was time to go

TRINA: Juli, let's go, we're late!

JULl: I went out with every intention of telling her that I wasn't going to the Loskis. TRINA: Please hold these.

I need to check my hair really quickly one more time.

RICHARD: Your hair is perfect.

TRINA: Really?

JULl(N): But she looked so happy

and she'd gone to so much trouble over the pies that I couldn't.

TRINA: Ooh! Oh, my gosh.

Oh, God, what a disaster.

TRINA: Okay. Here, hold one, and you hold this.

RICHARD: I don't wanna hold it.

TRINA: I won't have you hold it.

Let's go, boys.

JULl(N): But that didn't mean I had to be nice to Bryce.

JULI: And I don't wanna speak to you.

Not now, not ever.

JULl(N): It felt good to take charge.

I felt strong, in control. I told Bryce what I thought and I was determined not to talk to him for the rest of the evening. At dinner it struck me that we were sharing a meal with a group of strangers. We'd lived across the street from the Loskis for years

but except for Chet, I didn't know these people at all.

Mr. Loski was clean and smooth on the outside but it seemed like there was something rotten buried just beneath the surface.

By the end of the evening, all I felt was detached, neutral.

No fireworks, no leftover anger no flutters, nothing. JULI: See you.

JULl(N): I went to bed that night feeling peaceful. TRINA: You okay?

JULI: Yeah.

JULI(N): I was grateful that I had the family I had. And it felt good to no longer care about Bryce Loski.

BRYCE(N): The dinner with the Bakers had taken its toll on me.

Then the annual school fundraiser arrived and I found myself with a whole new set of problems.

I was a Basketboy. To fully appreciate the humiliation of being a Basketboy you need to know that the chosen few are auctioned off in front of the student body to the highest-bidding females.

Yes, technically, each of us comes with a lunch in a basket but let's not kid ourselves.

This was a beefcake parade.

GARRETT: There he is, my idol.

BRYCE: One word, you're a dead man.

GARRETT: No, man, I'm serious.

 Listen, you won't believe this.

BRYCE: What?

GARRETT: Two of the hottest chicks are fighting over you.

BRYCE: What are you talking about?

GARRETT: Sherry is breaking up with Mitch. She and Melanie are having a bidding war over you.

BRYCE: I don't care.

GARRETT: Are you nuts?

Sherry dumped Mitch because of you.

You're my idol.

BRYCE(N): As comforting as it was to be Garrett's idol it didn't diminish the horror of being Basketboy number nine. And my only hope was that a giant tornado would destroy the school before the event.

It was a long shot.

McCLURE: Welcome, everyone to this year's Mayfield Boosters Club Auction.

Once again we are pleased to present 20 of Mayfield's finest young men

GARRETT: Bryce, Bryce, Bryce.

BRYCE: What are you doing here?

GARRETT: Juli's in the third row.

BRYCE: So?

GARRETT: So she's got a wad of cash.

BRYCE: Bullshit.

GARRETT: Bull-true.

I saw her counting it by her locker.

McCLURE: And now please give a big Mayfield School welcome to your 1963 Basketboys.

BRYCE(N): Juli with cash? What did this mean? Was it possible she was gonna bid on me?

McCLURE: First up, we have Raymond Hughes. Raymond's on the chess team and his hobbies include stamp collecting and the yo-yo.

Remember, when you bid you'll not only be getting the handsome Mr. Hughes you'll also be enjoying

a lovely chicken-salad sandwich and what looks to be a tasty bean dip, and... Oh. Excuse me, onion dip.

And a big slice of cherry pie. Okay, who will start the bidding at $5?

BRYCE(N): Thus began the bidding.

McCLURE: Anybody?

BRYCE(N): Or in Raymond Hughes' case, the lack of bidding.

McCLURE: Very good, here we go.

GIRL1: Five. McCLURE: Sold.

GIRL2: Ten dollars. McCLURE: Sold.

DANA: Fifteen.

McCLURE: Sold.Come on. Do I hear 10?

GIRL3: Ten. GIRL4: Ten. GIRL5: Ten.

McCLURE: Peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich. GIRL6: Fifteen.

McCLURE: Sold for $15.

Number eight is Eddie Trulock.

Eddie is a member of the debate team.

BRYCE(N): Now only Eddie Trulock stood between me and the auction block.I wasn't interested in his hobbies or what was in his basket.

McCLURE: Let's start the bidding at$5.

BRYCE(N): All I could think of was Juli.

McCLURE: Anybody?

BRYCE(N): What if she did bid on me?

What if she got in a bidding war with Sherry and Melanie and lost out?

McCLURE: No bidders?

BRYCE: I was contemplating the horrors of this when...

JULl: Eight dollars.

McCLURE: There you go. Eight dollars,

that's more like it. Do I hear 10?

BRYCE(N): Juli Baker was bidding on Eddie Trulock?

McCLURE: Okay, 8 going once.

BRYCE(N): How could she bid on Eddie? McCLURE: Eight going twice.

BRYCE(N): How could she bid on anyone? McCLURE: Sold to Juli Baker.

[APPLAUSE]

McCLURE: Next is Basketboy number nine, Bryce Loski.

BRYCE(N): I knew I was supposed to step forward, but I couldn't move.

McCLURE: Step up, Bryce, don't be shy. Better late than never. Ha, ha.

Bryce likes to play baseball.

SHERRY: Five dollars.

McCLURE: Oh, well, wait until l...

MELANIE: Ten.

McCLURE: Oh. Well, it appears the bidding is underway.

SHERRY: Fifteen. MELANIE: Twenty.

SHERRY: Twenty-five.

MELANIE: Thirty. SHERRY: Thirty-five.

MELANIE: Forty. SHERRY: Fifty.

McCLURE: Oh, my. Fifty dollars. Wh...

Fifty going once. Fifty going twice.

Sold to Miss Sherry Stalls for $50.

An all-time record.

Oh, the boosters will be very grateful for such a generous donation.

BRYCE(N): It's strange.

Here I was, having lunch with the hottest girl in school and I was miserable.

SHERRY: We're going up to the lake. My dad has a cabin there

and you get the most outrageous tan.

BRYCE(N): Because less than 20 feet away from me was Juli.

My Juli with Eddie Trulock.

She's laughing.

What was she laughing about?

How could she sit there and laugh and look so beautiful?

SHERRY: Bryce, are you all right?

BRYCE: What?

SHERRY: What are you staring at?

BRYCE: Nothing.

SHERRY: Lunch is really delicious, Bryce. Bryce, did you hear me?

This is a really delicious lunch.

BRYCE: Can we not talk about tans or food?

SHERRY: Well, what do you wanna talk about?

BRYCE: I don't know, perpetual motion?

Do you know anything about that?

SHERRY: Perpetual what?

BRYCE(N): I don't know what came over me. It was like I was possessed or something.

BRYCE: Juli, I gotta talk to you.

JULI: What? What's going on, Bryce?

What are you doing?

Bryce, stop it.

BOY: Bryce, you didn't even make it to first base.

GIRL: I'll kiss you. Ha, ha.

BRYCE: Juli! Juli! Juli, wait.

Can we talk? Juli!

GARRETT: What's the matter with you?

BRYCE: Leave me alone, Garrett.

GARRETT: You get a date with the finest girl on campus and you blow it for Juli.

BRYCE: You wouldn't understand!

GARRETT; I completely don't understand! We're talking about Juli Baker here. Nightmare neighbor, know-it-all nuisance.

The coop-poop babe.

BRYCE: Shut up!

GARRETT: Hey, have you flipped?

What's the matter with you?

You know what, if you're gonna be like this,I don't need the association.

BRYCE: Well, good, because neither do I. GARRETT: Yeah, neither do I!

BRYCE(N): As I walked home with the dirty dishes clanking inside my picnic basket all I could think of was Juli.

 And I realized Garrett was right about one thing:

I had flipped. Completely.

[KNOCKING ON DOOR]

TRINA [OVER PHONE]: Hello?

BRYCE: Oh, heh. Hi, Mrs. Baker. Is Juli there?

TRINA: Oh. I'm sorry, Bryce.

Juli doesn't wanna talk.

[DOOR BELL RINGS]

BRYCE: Please, Mrs. Baker.

I gotta see her.

TRINA: I'm sorry, Bryce.

But I'm afraid she's locked herself in her room.

BRYCE(N): I tried to go to bed early that night but I couldn't sleep.

I watched her house from my window for hours. I had to find a way to show her how I felt.

JULl(N): Monday morning, as I made my way into school I was deciding which of the Everly Brothers I'd rather marry when Dana Tressler forced Bryce back into my brain.

DANA: Juli. The list is out.

There he is, number nine, your main dish.

JULI: Bryce Loski's not my main dish.

DANA: Oh, you're sticking to your diet.

JULI: It's not a diet, Dana.

I'm over him, okay?

DANA: I'm glad to hear it.

Because rumor has it Sherry's already staking her claim on him.

JULI: Sherry? Sherry Stalls?

DANA: Oh, Liz. Macy. The list is up.

[GIRLS CHATTERING]

JULl(N): That afternoon, I found myself obsessing about the Basketboy auction.I could feel myself backsliding about Bryce. But why should I care if Sherry liked him?

I shouldn't even be thinking about him.I had to rise above this.

Bryce Loski was no longer in my life.

[CLUCKING]

JULI(N): On the morning of the auction, I was on edge. I found myself, without even knowing

how it happened, staring at my egg money. I needed a strategy.

It was simple. If I left my money at home, I'd leave temptation with it.

My strategy suffered a setback when I ran into Mrs. Steuby.

STEUBY: Julianna. Julianna. Hello, dear.

I'm so sorry it's taken me so long to get this to you but I keep missing you in the morning.

JULI: Mrs. Steuby, I don't want that. You don't have to...

STEUBY: Oh, No. Don't be ridiculous. Of course I'm gonna pay you.

I'm going to pay you.

JULI: Oh, no, no. Really I don't want it.

I don't want that. No. I don't want it.

STEUBY: Oh, That's alright.

Yeah, I want you to go out and buy yourself something festive.

Pedal pushers. Ha, ha.

JULI: Mrs. Steuby. Mrs. Steuby.

STEUBY: Bye, dear.

JULI: Mrs. Steuby, I don't want pedal pushers.

STEUBY: No, no. You'll look great.

[SIGHS]

JULI: It's okay. It's okay. No big deal.

Just pretend like I don't have it.

SHERRY: I hear you're planning to bid on Bryce.

JULI: What? Who told you that?

No, I'm not.

SHERRY: Someone saw you with a wad of cash this morning.

How much do you have?

JULI: It's none of your business.

And I'm not bidding, okay?

I don't even like him anymore.

SHERRY: Oh, that'll be the day.

JULI: It's true. Go ahead, waste your money on him. I don't care.

McCLURE: And now, will you all give a big Mayfield School

welcome to your 1963 Basketboys.

JULl(N): I could say I didn't care all I wanted but seeing Bryce walk out in his jacket and tie holding that picnic basket set my head spinning again.

McCLURE: Fifteen going once.

JULl(N): The auction seemed to fly by.

McCLURE: Fifteen going twice.

Sold to Macy Taylor for $15.

JULl(N): Before I knew it, Eddie Trulock was called.

McCLURE: Number eight is Eddie Trulock.

JULl(N): Which meant Bryce was next.

McCLURE: Eddie is a member of the debate team. And his hobbies include fishing and model-airplane building.

Who will give me $5?

JULI: Why isn't anyone bidding?

He's so nice. DANA: Exactly.

McCLURE: Nobody?

JULI: Eight dollars.

McCLURE: Sold to Juli Baker for $8.

JULl(N): How did this happen?

Was it because I felt bad for Eddie?

Or was it because I couldn't trust myself with Bryce?

As I made my way to the multi-purpose room

I contemplated the startling turn of events. Here I was, about to have lunch with Eddie Trulock while the boy I mooned over for half my life

was going to share a meal with my mortal enemy.

Eddie: I wanna thank you for bidding on me. It was touch-and-go there for a while.

JULI: No, I wanted to.

This will be fun. I hear you like building model airplanes.

Eddie: Yeah. My father and I just finished a Russian MiG-19.

It was made in 1955.

MiG's first supersonic fighter.

Tricky because the cockpit was recessed...

JULl(N): I tried to give Eddie my full attention. But it was difficult, because Bryce was right behind him.

Eddie was saying something about intake valves when out of nowhere, Bryce stood up and marched straight towards me.

BRYCE: Hey, Juli, I gotta talk to you.

JULI: What are you doing?

JULl(N): He was going to kiss me. To kiss me. All my life I've been waiting for that kiss.

But not like this. Not this way.

I pedaled home so hard, I thought my lungs would burst.

TRINA: Julianna? Julianna.

[KNOCKING ON DOOR]

TRINA: Honey? What's wrong?

JULI: I can't.

TRINA: Sweetheart...you can tell me.

JULI: Bryce tried to kiss me.

TRINA: He did?

JULI: In school. In front of everybody.

[DOOR BELL RINGS]

JULI: Mom, please don't get it.

It's probably him.

TRINA: Sweetheart...

maybe you should talk to him.

JULI: I can't. I can't. [RINGING]

JULl(N): Bryce wouldn't leave me alone.

He kept calling on the phone.

And knocking on the door.

He even snuck around the house and tapped on my window.

BRYCE: Juli! Please, I gotta see you!

Come on out, just for a minute!

JULl(N): Why didn't he understand that I just wanted to be left alone?

BRYCE: Please!

JULl(N): After two days, Bryce stopped.

And I thought it was finally over.

Then, one afternoon, I was coming into the front room to read

when I heard a noise in the yard.

[SCRAPING]

JULI: Hey, what's he doing?

RICHARD: Juli, calm down. I gave him permission.

JULI: Permission? Permission for what?

 He's digging a hole.

RICHARD: I told him he could.

JULl: But why?

RICHARD: I told him he could.

JULl(N): It was torture seeing him dig up my grass. How could my father let him do this?

Bryce knew I was there too.

JULI: He's gone.

A tree? He's planting a tree? Is it a?

JULl(N): I didn't really need to ask.

I could tell from the shape of the leaves and the texture of the trunk.

It was a sycamore tree.

BRYCE(N): When she walked out of the door, I thought back to the first time I saw her.

How could anybody, ever, have wanted to run away from Juli Baker?

JULl(N): He looked at me with those eyes. Those once again dazzling eyes.

And I knew that Bryce Loski was still walking around with my first kiss.

But he wouldn't be for long.

As we stood there, I realized that all these years we never really talked.

JULI: Do you need some help?

BRYCE: Yeah.

JULl(N): But that day, we started.

BRYCE(N): And I knew we'd be talking for a long time.