

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

SIMON, a scrawny nine-year-old boy, sits on a chair against the office wall. He is sporting a black eye and his glasses are broken. He is looking down at his hands and fidgeting. He is ASHAMED and NERVOUS.

The sound of a DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING O.S. Makes Simon look up. DICK, another nine-year-old boy, larger in build than Simon and also sporting bruises, walks past Simon with his PARENTS. All three look at Simon with various levels of ANGER and HOSTILITY as they EXIT THE BUILDING.

Simon looks back down at his hands as ANDRE, Simon's young, tall, gangly, and awkward teacher ENTERS. Andre crosses the room and sits next to Simon. As he walks, he makes an attempt at a reassuring smile, but it doesn't quite land.

ANDRE

So... I just got off the phone with your dad. Or your dad's work, I suppose...

Andre pauses to try and gauge Simon's reaction. Simon does not look up from his fidgeting hands.

ANDRE

It looks like he won't be able to pick you up for another hour or so. Hope you don't mind hanging out with your lame teacher for a little while.

(laughs nervously)

Simon does not react. Andre's expression falls. The room is SILENT for a beat. Andre STUDIES Simon.

ANDRE

(concerned)

Those glasses look like they've seen better days. Do you have a spare pair anywhere? I know that Jeremy keeps a pair in the nurse's office just in -

SIMON

(cutting off Andre,
slightly annoyed)

No.

The room falls SILENT again. Andre contemplates his next move. He is growing more DESPERATE in his attempt to get Simon to open up.

ANDRE

That eye looks like it hurts, how about I grab you an ice pack, bud?

Andre RISES without waiting for an answer. He walks to a mini-fridge on the opposite side of the room with a NERVOUS gait. Simon watches him with a vague CURIOSITY. He finds Andre's general awkwardness somewhat intriguing. Andre begins to dig through the fridge.

ANDRE

Do you want anything else while I'm over here, Simon? Maybe some water?
Or -

Andre moves to turn his head back towards Simon and HITS HIS HEAD on the top of the mini-fridge.

ANDRE

AH! SHI - uhh...

Andre remembers Simon's presence and catches himself before he can finish.

ANDRE

(cont.)

Uh... Tting the door now! Is was I meant to say from the beginning!

Andre blushes in EMBARRASSMENT as he shuts the door to the mini-fridge, ice pack in hand. Simon cracks a smile and then begins to LAUGH. Andre is pleasantly SURPRISED to see Simon begin to relax and smiles as well. He walks back to Simon, sits down, and hands him the ice pack.

ANDRE

Guess I should have brought two of those, huh?

Andre gestures to the ice pack and rubs the back of his head. Simon CHUCKLES as he passes it back and forth between his hands. He holds the pack out towards Andre SHEEPISHLY.

SIMON

You can use it if you want. My eye doesn't even hurt that bad anymore actually.

Andre COOS slightly at the gesture before gently pushing the ice pack back towards Simon and up towards his swollen eye.

ANDRE

That's very sweet of you, but I'm just being a baby. You keep that for yourself. It will help the swelling go down.

Simon's expression falls a little bit as the focus is placed back on his injury, but keeps the ice pack nonetheless. At that moment, Andre's phone BUZZES. He pulls it from his pocket and looks at the screen, revealing a TEXT NOTIFICATION against a background of a FAMILY PORTRAIT featuring Andre standing next to a handsome young man around

the same age as himself. The two men in the picture are holding an infant. Andre reads the text notification and Simon GLANCES over at the screen, catching a glimpse of the photo. Andre catches Simon looking. Simon blushes and turns his eyes towards the floor.

ANDRE

That was your dad. The text, I mean. He says he's leaving now. It's gonna be about 45 minutes or so.

Simon nods, still looking towards the floor. He is EMBARRASSED to have gotten caught eavesdropping. Andre CHUCKLES and TILTS the phone screen towards Simon, indulging his curiosity. He has lost some of the anxious energy from before and appears more SUBDUED.

ANDRE

They're my family, if you were wondering.

Simon let's his curiosity overtake his bashfulness and LOOKS at the picture. Andre points to a man standing next to himself in the photo.

ANDRE

That's my husband, Cole.

Andre's finger trails down towards the infant in the picture.

ANDRE

And our daughter, Poppy.

Simon is ENTRANCED by the picture. He seemingly does not notice that Andre has lost some of his previous cheer.

SIMON

They look nice.

Andre gives Simon another moment to stare at the photo before putting it back in his pocket. He is carefully avoiding eye contact with Simon.

ANDRE

Yeah, they really were.

The implications of Andre's response are not lost on Simon and the room goes silent again. Simon CONTEMPLATES how to respond.

SIMON

(mumbling)

My dad forgot about me.

Andre looks up in SURPRISE and CONFUSION. He looks like he is about to object, but Simon beats him to the punch.

SIMON

He was supposed to pick me up from school. Before the fight happened. But he forgot again.

Simon still looks towards the ground as he speaks. Andre watches him with both SYMPATHY and ATTENTIVENESS as he waits for Simon to continue.

SIMON

That's why I punched Dick. He kept asking me where my dad was and laughing. He thought it was funny.

Simon pulls his knees to his chest and lets the ice pack fall into his lap.

SIMON

I really thought he'd be here. He promised.

Simon begins to tear up. He buries his face into his knees. Andre looks at him, HEARTBROKEN. Andre scoots closer to Simon and loops his arm around his shoulders. He hesitates a moment before speaking.

ANDRE

Well, it sounds to me like Dick was really living up to his namesake, huh?

Simon looks up at Andre in SHOCK. After a beat, the joke catches up to him and he starts to LAUGH.

Andre smiles, grabbing a tissue out of his pocket and helping clean the tears from Simon's face.

ANDRE

Do me a favor and don't tell anyone I said that.

Simon chuckles and nods. Andre drops the tissue and grabs the fallen ice pack, lifting it back up to Simon's eye. Simon accepts the ice pack and leans back in his chair with a yawn. The two relax into their chairs, temporarily content.

CUT TO: