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STILL STANDING

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Social Sciences

The University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of the Arts

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By

Wendy J. Rosoff

June 2009

Advisor: Sheila Schroeder

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Title: Still Standing  
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Degree Date: June 2009

## ABSTRACT

On April 20, 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked into Columbine High School and killed 12 students and 1 teacher. The days following the shooting were spent questioning their motive and it seems, to this day, some are still confused. If those in charge of the investigation would have stopped pointing fingers and listened to the cries of the shooters and the students, they would see that Columbine was a time bomb. Students tell stories of bullying and torment and many agree that a group of athletes dominated the school.

Most who see bullying see it as entertaining, but the victims live with it all their lives. Bullying is harmful as well as hurtful and needs to be recognized before it can be fought. The film I have written takes a look at two young men years after being bullied. We see how it has affected their lives long after high school and how they cope with seeing their bully again. The strength they find as friends helps them to overcome their fears and take the steps necessary for moving on.

## Table of Contents

### **Part I**

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	11
Research Questions.....	11
What is Bullying?.....	12
Types of Bullies.....	12
Who are the Bully, the Victim, and the Bystander?.....	15
Effects and Consequences.....	19
How to Reduce Bullying.....	21
Bullying in Films.....	24
<i>Mean Girls</i> .....	30
<i>Drillbit Taylor</i> .....	32
<i>Big Bully</i> .....	33
<i>Still Standing</i> .....	35
Styles and Concepts.....	37
Actors & Apparel.....	39
On Set.....	39
Sets.....	41
Music.....	43
Schedule.....	44
Budget.....	44
Conclusion.....	46
<b><u>Part II</u></b>	
Introduction.....	48
Script & Proposal.....	49
Pre-Production.....	53
Casting & Scheduling.....	54
Locations.....	56

Crew.....	61
Wardrobe & Props.....	64
Food.....	65
Budget.....	66
Storyboards & Shot lists.....	67
Production.....	70
The Set & Shooting.....	71
Scheduling.....	73
Actors.....	75
Post-Production.....	78
Conclusion.....	81
References.....	88
Appendix A – <i>Still Standing</i> .....	91
Appendix B – Actor’s Schedule.....	107
Appendix C – Shooting Schedule.....	108
Appendix D – Prop list.....	110
Appendix E – Storyboards & Shot lists.....	111

## **PART I**

### I. Introduction

On Tuesday, April 20, 1999 two students walked into Columbine High School armed to kill. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold set up bombs around the school in an attempt to kill as many students as possible, but when the bombs malfunctioned they strode into the cafeteria with their guns in hand. Their killing spree ended with 12 students and one teacher dead as well as many seriously injured. In addition to the dead and wounded, they left thousands traumatized, before taking their own lives.

Before the shootings, Columbine has been described as run by “a cult of the athlete” (Adams & Russakoff, 1999). The jocks ruled the school and separated themselves from the rest by wearing white baseball caps. Originally, the shooters set homemade bombs in bags and placed them among students’ bags under the jocks’ lunch table. The plan was to kill the jocks first and pick off others as they ran out of the school. When the bombs did not go off, Harris and Klebold took a different approach. When Harris and Klebold entered the cafeteria, they asked those with white hats to stand. They had decided that if they couldn’t get everyone, they knew who they really wanted. In the end, however, they killed a variety of helpless students, only one of whom wore a white hat (Adams & Russakoff, 1999).

There are many theories as to why these boys took this route. Many blame it on music or video games. Dr. Linda Mintle points her finger at “media pain that torments, addicts and overdoses our kids with violence through the impact of TV, films, music, and games” (Mintle, 1999, p.xiii) I do not agree with Dr. Mintle, but rather agree with the findings of the Adams and & Russakoff, writers for The Washington Post, and believe they were pushed to their limit by a culture which puts its athletic heroes on pedestals and often turns a blind eye toward anti-social behavior committed by these “role models” (Adams & Russakoff, 1999). The Washington Post uncovered instances of favoritism towards the athletes. The first sentence of the article points out the fact that a star athlete was “permitted to park his \$100,000 Hummer all day in a 15-minute space” (Adams & Russakoff, 1999).

Outsiders saw Columbine as any other suburban school, but the bullying committed there was anything but average. There are hundreds of stories of bullying at Columbine before the shooting that surpass usual high school hazing (Adams & Russakoff, 1999; Kass, 2000; Kurtz, 1999; Larkin, 2007). Jocks on probation were permitted to continue playing sports and students who reported sexual harassment by student athletes were persuaded by the school to drop charges (Adams, 1999; Kurtz, 1999). Witnesses were afraid to speak up in case they, too, would become targets. Students were also harassed by the jocks in front of teachers and coaches without any intervention or punishment by these adults in authority (Larkin, 2007). When these students were not punished for their actions they became emboldened and when bullies find no one who will stand up to them, there is no limit to the pain they can cause. While nothing justifies the actions of Harris and Klebold, seen in this context, one might

better understand their emotional state of mind.

There is one student in particular who is mentioned in several articles and in several students' accounts of the atmosphere of intimidation at Columbine. This student, Rocky Hoffschneider, was also at the top of Harris and Klebold's hit list (Larkin, 2007; Adams & Russakoff, 1999; Kass, 2000; Ames, 2007). Rocky began attending Columbine High School after being expelled from another Denver area school for fighting in 1997. In 1998 Rocky and four other students had felony burglary charges reduced to misdemeanors after assaulting a man and then trashing his apartment while he was in the hospital. Rocky's sentence was similar to probation and was offered record expungement if his record stayed clean for four years (Wright, 1999). It is widely believed that Rocky was given preferential treatment from those in power because he was a state champion wrestler. Normally, students who are arrested for felony charges are banned from school sports, but Rocky was allowed to continue. Had he been banned, he would have been ineligible for the wrestling scholarship he later received to The University of Wyoming.

There are many incidents of bullying that are seen by coaches or teachers and ignored. This allowance by authority figures made it possible for students to be pushed around without hope of punishment for the bullies. A student tells an incident of when Rocky had a megaphone in the hallways and yelled into the halls that a particular young woman was a slut and had sex with the entire football team. The coach took the megaphone back and that was the end of it for him, but the lasting repercussions for the female student were ongoing (Larkin, 2007). Rocky also continually harassed Jewish student Jonathan Green by chanting "another Jew in the oven" each time he made a basket in gym class (Larkin, 2007; Ames, 2007; Kurtz, 1999). After the harassment

became physical, Jonathan's father reported it to school officials and then to the police. Athletes were finally charged with harassment and sentenced to probation after Jonathan's father threatened a lawsuit (Larkin, 2007; Kurtz, 1999; Adams & Russakoff, 1999).

There was another incident in 1997 when Rocky missed the team bus to a football game because he was arrested for unpaid parking tickets. His parents drove him to the football game and the coach allowed him to play (Kurtz, 1999). The policy is normally to suspend the student from games with the time dependent on the severity of the infraction. The coach instead said, "Where do you stand by holding a kid out with unpaid traffic warrants?"(Kurtz, 1999). The fact of the matter is that it should not have been the coach's decision on whether or not Rocky should play. This is just another example of athletes receiving special treatment for the sake of high school sports.

I have heard through word of mouth that Rocky left college after a few years and returned to Littleton where he now works with his father. He is also a mixed martial arts fighter for the Tri Town Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy (<http://www.tbjja.com/News.html>). While he has slimmed down considerably from the massive figure he used to be, his personality has not changed. After journalist Mark Ames from the website *Exile.com* wrote an article asking people to track down Rocky and punish him, Rocky replied saying, "I am the sinner, not the saint...I regret none of my past as I will regret none of my future." As his e-mail continued he threatens Ames and his family and adds, "You will know first hand how truly fucked up I am" (Ames, 2007).

Rocky personifies the reckless disregard for student athlete behavior Columbine administrators more often than not let slip though the cracks. However, students at

Columbine before the shooting give other examples of athletes being able to abuse and harass others without any repercussions (Adams & Russakoff, 1999). A student recalls an incident where popular students were insulting him and his friends while there were teachers nearby. "If I did anything to stand up for myself, such as return the insult with a repartee, I would be the one who would get in trouble if anyone did" (Larkin, 2007). Other students tell of athletes spreading baby oil on the hallway floors and using the students as bowling balls. Teachers ignored them until a young girl's arm was broken (Larkin, 2007). Those being bullied could not go to teachers or coaches because nothing would be done to reprimand the bullies or protect the victims. The athletes at Columbine were free to do as they pleased and free to bully whomever they felt was different than they were. The only way for kids to feel safe is if rules against bullying are carried out consistently by the adults at the school.

I am in no way condoning taking the life of another or committing suicide as justification for being bullied. I merely intend to bring light to the truth of the situation in an attempt to learn from our mistakes. Bullying is rampant in our society (Nansel, et. al., 2001). We see the effects, but somehow the focus is on the tragic aftermath and not on the causes or actions of bullying. Blame the music. Blame the videogames. Blame their parents. But don't blame us. No one wants to take responsibility for tragedies that exist within the society that we have all created and that we all implicitly perpetuate with our silence.

After the shooting at Columbine, people began playing the blame game and settled on Marilyn Manson because of his unusual style and controversial lyrics (Phillips, 1999; Manson, 1999). The concert he was supposed to perform in Denver was

cancelled after the shooting. Manson wrote an article for *Rolling Stone* and expressed his opinion about the shootings and his apparent place in the blame.

Man's greatest fear is chaos. It was unthinkable that these kids did not have a simple black-and-white reason for their actions. And so a scapegoat was needed. I remember hearing the initial reports from Littleton, that Harris and Klebold were wearing makeup and were dressed like Marilyn Manson, whom they obviously must worship, since they were dressed in black... These two idiots weren't wearing makeup, and they weren't dressed like me or Goths (Manson, 1999).

In fact, the boys were wearing their signature trench coats as members of the Trenchcoat Mafia. Joe Stair, leader of the Trenchcoat Mafia, says they started out as the Trenchcoat Club. It was a hot day over 80° when the Rocky Hoffschneider coined the term. The lunch table of athletes meant to make fun of the group of kids, but instead the group liked the name and made it their own. Not only did they actually like the new name, they took the name as a way to fight back against the jocks. It was a chance to show they were not ashamed and show the jocks they did not have power over everything (Larkin, 2007).

We live in a society where violence is news and entertainment. While the country searches for a scapegoat, I am focused on the true motive. Let the words of the shooters be the final words on the matter. During the shooting Harris and Klebold were asked why. They replied, "We've always wanted to do this. This is payback. We've dreamed of doing this for four years. This is for all the shit you put us through. This is what you deserve" (Larkin, 2007). In addition, Harris left a suicide note which is said to resemble the e-mail sent to the police the night before the attack.

By now, it's over. If you are reading this, my mission is complete...Your children who have ridiculed me, who have chosen not to accept me, who have treated me like I am not worth their time are dead...Surely you will try to blame it on the clothes I wear, the music I listen to, or the way I chose to present

myself, but no. Do not hide behind my choices. You need to face the fact that this comes as a result of YOUR CHOICES...You have taught these kids to not accept what is different. YOU ARE IN THE WRONG. I have taken their lives and my own-but it was your own doing. Teachers, parents, LET THIS MASSACRE BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE. (Cited in Orr, 2003, p.21)

I was a junior in high school when I watched on TV as the students ran out of Columbine with their hands over their heads. At that time I couldn't imagine what would cause two kids to take the lives of others. I see now that this was because I had never been bullied. The moment I stepped into high school I was on top of the world. I had lots of friends, I was active in school activities, and I knew where I stood according to high school social standing.

When I decided to write this paper I tried to think back to high school and remember any bullies. I remembered the popular kids, but I couldn't remember any instances of bullying. Nevertheless, as I continued to do research I remembered one incident. I was a senior in high school and some of my friends showed up late to lunch and their table had been taken to the front of the cafeteria to sell tickets for something. My table was by the windows with the rest of the upperclassmen, but I saw my friends standing and decided to help. I actually forced a table full of freshmen to hand over their table. I told them that the table at the front was theirs and that they were sitting at my friends' table. They actually got up. I never thought about where they would go. I never looked back to see if they found another table or if they just wandered out into the hall. Thinking back, I could have invited my friends to sit at my table, but I know why I didn't. They weren't popular enough to sit by the windows and the freshmen paid the price.

I suppose now that I don't remember any bullies because at some level I was one. I can't think of other instances, but I am worried now that there are many more. There was no chance that I would get in trouble for anything I said or did. I worked in the attendance office and did morning announcements with the principal. I was in band, choir, and I was an honor roll student. I knew all of the teachers and security guards so while everyone else needed a pass, I was able to stroll around school without worry. I am afraid to ask my friends what I was like back then. I have changed, but I know most bullies don't.

The incident above was not enough to push someone over the edge, but bullies who harass the same victims can cause serious damage. It is so simple for something small to escalate into something big. Once a bully feels the power from putting someone else down, he/she might crave the feeling of power or others might cheer them on because they see it as entertaining. This leads to more and more harassment and the level of harassment escalates as well. The bullying that escalates from lunchroom hierarchies to school violence is often what we see on the evening news. The reason we know Edinboro, PA; West Paducah, KY; Littleton, CO; and Blacksburg, VA (Virginia Tech) is because of the violence that was perpetrated by students at these schools in these communities.

Five years after graduating high school, I moved from New Jersey to Castle Rock, Colorado and I realized I was living very close to Columbine High School. I remember driving into Littleton, but never seeing the school. It gave me the creeps to think I was in the same town as that terrible shooting. My family talked about it constantly and it was always on my mind. I suppose it is different for people who were in Colorado

at the time of the shooting. Being 1800 miles away made the experience different for me. It seemed almost unreal. When we sit in front of a TV for hours each day, how do we differentiate between fiction and reality? We all watched the students walking out of the building for hours and then for days. When I had been in Colorado for about six months, I met a Columbine survivor. I found myself grilling him for information and wanting to know the story from top to bottom.

Johnny was in science class when the shooting began. There was a pipe bomb on the door to his classroom, but he knew they were made with fireworks and would not go off. After barricading the door, Johnny calmed those around him until the signal was given to clear the building. Johnny and his fellow students stepped over bodies on their way out, not knowing if they were alive or dead. Amidst the chaos Johnny was cool and collected and can be recognized as the only student leaving the school without his hands on his head.

Three years later we are living in a house down the street from Columbine High School. I drive past it on the way to work and on the way to the supermarket. To this day, each time I drive past Columbine, my mind wanders to that day and the 13 people who were killed by enraged students who had been pushed to their limit. I know each day that I live down the street from such a terrible tragedy, yet no one else seems to pay it any mind. I have become captivated by this story as if it were a Shakespearean tragedy. I live with and in this story everyday and need to understand it if I am ever to overcome the dread with which it fills me. As I begin to understand, I will take my knowledge and apply it to my film in order to reach others with my message about overcoming the mental anguish created by bullying. How did such a tragedy happen and are we able

to prevent it from happening again?

As I write this paper and prepare my script and film about the effects of bullying, I look to Johnny for information and guidance to ensure I learn as many sides of the story as possible. There is no one truth regarding the climate at Columbine before, during, and after the shooting so each story and perception is a way to more fully understand what led to this terrible tragedy. Our varying experiences are what drive my interest in this subject. It is strange to think how different my life would be if the bomb on his science classroom door had actually gone off and how I would never know how affected I am by this terrible act of revenge. No matter how far away we were or how distanced we think we are, everyone is tied to the Columbine shooting. We are all affected. And we are all guilty.

Anyone can be a bully and of course this includes entire countries. History shows us that having power leads to wanting more power and this is where bullying occurs. The Roman Empire swept through Europe consuming entire nations and forcing them to become a part of the empire. Adolf Hitler led an army that killed millions in an attempt to form a perfect race. The United States uses its army as its muscle to “protect its own interests.” The 9/11 attack was someone pushing back at the bully just as the Columbine shooters did. Of course they are on opposite ends of the scale, but the steps and the warning signs are the same. If you push, someday you might get pushed back.

We have developed this society, but refuse to take responsibility for what becomes of its citizens. As long as our society ignores bullying and condones the use of force, we will live in fear of those who are pushed to their limit.

In the pages that follow, I have created five sections. Section II is a

literature review of bullying. This includes what bullying is, the different types of bullying, the effects and consequences of bullying, and suggestions on how to reduce bullying. Section III reviews films that deal with bullying as well as differences between pre- and post-Columbine films. Section IV introduces my thesis film and the purpose of its message. Section V outlines filming details of my script including actors, sets, budget, and timeline. Section VI concludes my proposal with a review of the purpose and intended result of this project.

## II. Literature Review

Bullying is a problem for people everywhere and of all ages. I intend to look at the different types of bullying and how bullying affects everyone. I will use this information to take a closer look at the Columbine Massacre and how bullying affected the shooters as well as other students attending Columbine at that time. I will also examine feature films that thematically explore bullying. I will find at least one film for each type of bully and deconstruct their methods and effects. The intention of this paper is to bring to light what bullying really is and how we are all affected by it. In addition, I will attempt to provide possible solutions to bullying.

I intend to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the different types of bullying?

RQ2: How does bullying affect high school students in particular?

RQ3: Is it possible to end or at least combat bullying? How could this be done?

RQ4: Why is it important to understand bullying and its consequences?

### What is Bullying?

Those who research bullying all run across a similar dilemma. There is no exact definition for bullying. Each author writes his/her own definition at the beginning of each paper or book so the reader knows what they are basing their observations on. For this paper I will be following the definition of Dan Olweus. He is considered the leading researcher on bullying and is referenced in almost every book I have read on bullying. Olweus states, "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (Olweus, 1993, p. 9).

### Types of Bullying

Although the basic criteria of bullying are the same, the actual bullying is different for every bully and every victim. The method and severity is determined by each bully and can take many forms. Researchers have divided bullying into categories in order to understand each form of bullying. The categories are malign vs. non-malign and direct vs. indirect (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Olweus, 1993).

Malign bullying is when the bully enjoys what he is doing and has complete power over the victim. The victim cannot stop the bully and the bully continues to abuse his power for his own enjoyment. The bully chooses victims who are weaker and not likely to tell an authority figure for fear or retribution. There are seven elements of malign bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Olweus, 1993; Nansel et. al, 2001).

- There is an initial desire to hurt

- The desire is acted upon
- Someone gets hurt
- A more powerful person or group hurts someone less powerful
- There is no provocation
- The behavior is typically repeated
- The bully enjoys hurting the weaker person (Harris & Petrie, 2003, 2)

Barbara Coloroso, author of *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*, refers to this type of bullying as physical bullying (2003). Physical/malign bullying is the most common type of bullying and it is what most people see in movies and television shows. An example is the film *Revenge of the Nerds*. In this film, the “jock” fraternity trashes the “nerds” house and lets pigs out into their party. In addition, they only refer to them as nerds and do not use their names. Malign bullies have substantial power over their victim and use it to humiliate and harm (DeHaan, 1997). This type of bullying is often misinterpreted as hazing or “boys will be boys” and let go by school officials. Examples include shoving victims into lockers, giving wedgies in view of others, or shoving the victim’s head in a toilet. Once malign bullies find a victim who can’t or won’t fight back, they tend to focus their attention on this person or group of people (Harris&Petrie, 2003; Pellegrini et al, 1999). Not only do they feel power from putting someone else down, but often they are revered by others in their group. Both the power and praise from their peers raises their self esteem which causes the bullying to continue.

My script gives examples of this kind of bullying using a flashback technique multiple times to show a bully chooses his/her victim carefully. Tommy is considerably smaller than Ethan as is his friend Dustin. Had Tommy’s best friend been older or

larger, Ethan would be less likely to bully because of possible repercussions. Ethan uses his physical size to humiliate Tommy by shoving him into a locker in the first flashback. The flashbacks also show adults in the background. This is reminiscent of accounts from Columbine that show that teachers and coaches did not interfere, but rather ignored the bullying, writing it off as typical behavior for high school students.

Non-malign bullying is often the bullying that precedes and/or accompanies malign bullying. This type of bullying is mostly verbal abuse such as name calling. It does not include physical harm, but name calling can cause emotional pain which can be as harmful as physical pain (Harris&Petrie, 2003). Athletes at Columbine were known to harass fellow students physically as well as verbally. The athletes were known to be racist, sexist, and homophobic. They called other students, “nigger lovers,” “sluts,” “homos,” and “queers”. Many of these insults were aimed toward the Trenchcoat Mafia (Larkin, 2007).

Malign and non-malign bullying fit into the categories of direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying is when the bully takes action him/herself (Harris&Petrie, 2003; Olweus,1993). Indirect bullying is when the bully influences others to bully a victim. When the bully has a following, he/she can influence his/her peers to bully in his/her absence (Olweus, 1993; Coloroso, 2003). In many instances, bullies choose other bullies or “wannabe bullies” to be a part of their social group which intensifies the indirect attacks (Pellegrini et. al, 1999). This also includes spreading rumors and ignoring. This is not typically the first thought of bullying, but it fits the criteria to be considered (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Coloroso, 2003).

In my script, *Still Standing*, I use flashbacks to illustrate the type of bullying

Tommy and Dustin endure. They are the victims of malign direct bullying. The bullies are seen in one of the flashbacks when Dustin lets Tommy out of a locker. The bullies are in the background enjoying their victory while the victims run in the opposite direction. This type of bullying is often what we think of when the topic of bullying arises. I chose these images of bullying because I feel that even if viewers cannot relate personally, they will recognize these images and associate them with being bullied.

In addition, I will be subtly tying the images to Columbine High School before the shooting. First, I am hoping to shoot the high school scenes in Columbine with permission from the principal and in cooperation with the drama department. I feel this will add to the film for those who may recognize it, but will not be obvious or insensitive. My pitch to the school will include how they can use this film to further address incidences of bullying within the school. Second, the bullies in the film will be wearing white baseball caps with sports logos on them. Not all articles or books regarding Columbine make reference to the white hats the jocks wore, but more in depth chapters on this event make mention of it. This has also been told to me by Johnny each time we speak about Columbine.

### Who are the bully, the victim, and the bystander?

There is no definitive answer as to how a bully becomes a bully. As with anything, there are thousands of influences in a person's life. Nevertheless, researchers first and foremost suggest home life is far and away the most dominant influence on a child. It has been found that many bullies have poor relationships at home and often

experience physical punishment. In addition, victims tend to have families that are very warm or affectionate (DeHaan, 1997; Olweus, 1993). If a child is raised in a home without violence, the child will not know how to react when faced with a violent act. In addition, bullies with unstable home often choose a child with a warm upbringing and use it as ammunition against their victim. An example would be a bully calling his victim a Mama's boy because of the way he dresses or what his mother packs for his lunch. A child's home life is one of the largest factors as to what kind of person s/he will become. If the child grows up in a hostile environment, s/he will most likely follow hi/her parents' example and use hostility with others (Perren & Hornung, 2005). If a child sees that violent acts will get him/her what s/he wants, it seems just that simple.

Dan Olweus has determined four conditions within the home that are conducive to the rearing of a bully. First, is the emotional attitude of the primary caretaker. A negative attitude increases the chances of a child becoming a bully. Second, is how tolerant the caretaker is of aggressive behavior. If the parent does not set limits, the aggressive behavior will increase. Third is the caretaker's use of physical force as punishment. Lastly, is the child's temperament. Whether s/he has a short temper or reacts normally to situations is a factor in bullying later in life (Olweus, 1993).

Within the school atmosphere, bullies are often popular. This is either what gives them the confidence to bully or they are popular because of their bullying of others. Either way, they are at the top of the social ladder with their victims lingering towards the bottom (Harris&Petrie, 2003; Nansel et.al., 2001). This also adds to the likelihood that not only will others follow in their example, but that they will not report the bullying to authorities. In addition to being less popular, victims are chosen for their

physical weaknesses and the victims usually have low self-esteem and are insecure. In general the victims are social outcasts who keep to themselves and do not fit in with the more popular crowds. The victims often have few or no friends which makes it less likely that someone will object to the bully's behavior (Harris&Petrie, 2003). The bystanders do not want to bring attention to themselves by telling authorities about bullying. It is common for people to keep their opinions to themselves if they feel they are in the minority. It is common for people to hide their true opinion to escape the social isolation of being the minority. This is called the Spiral of Silence theory and was introduced by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974 (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Although many victims have supportive home lives, the need for popularity and recognition is overwhelmingly stronger. The film *Charlie Bartlett* is about a very wealthy high school student's need for social recognition and popularity. He continuously gets kicked out of schools for illegal activities such as making fake IDs or giving prescription medications to students. He uses his talents to become someone the student body feels they need in their lives. When his mother states there are more important things in life than popularity Charlie asks "Like what?" and his mother has no response. This shows that during high school even a young man who seems to have everything still needs recognition from his peers to feel that he fits in.

Adolescence is a time of great change for most students. It is a time of great vulnerability and a desire to conform to their peers. Most students move from elementary school to middle or junior high school and then on to high school. Each time a student switches schools, they are thrust into a new social situation. They are no longer the oldest kids in school and now must compete with hundreds of others for

friends and a place on the social ladder (Pellegrini et al., 1999; Coloroso, 2003). High school is often seen as the hardest years for many students. This is the last school they will go to with these peers and feel the need to fit in before they all go their separate ways. In addition, high school years are the years when most students are dating and are looking for approval from their peers and the opposite sex. The pressure to fit in with the dominant group is especially great during high school.

Many bully films take place in high school for all the reasons stated above. It is seen as the last opportunity for a victim to stand his/her ground and claim his/her new social status as a reward. Films like *The New Guy* where a complete “nerd” gets a makeover and reinvents himself in a new school are uplifting, but misleading. Not all stories have an immediate happy ending. This is why my film takes a bit longer for the victims to stand their ground. Life is hard and not everyone can wake up one morning and be a different person.

Victims are often chosen because of a disability or a characteristic that causes them to stand out. This often results in special needs children being harassed as well as students with physical deformities such as a limp. The more superficial characteristics that children get harassed for, the less likely it is for anyone to stop the bullying. Children who have a lisp, are poor, or have out-of-date clothing are very likely to become the victims of bullying. Bullies use the misfortunes of others to their own advantage (DeHaan, 1997; Nansel et al, 2001)

Bullies and victims often arise based on their physical measurements (Olweus, 1993). The bullies in *Still Standing* are older and obviously larger than the victims. Tommy and Dustin are smaller and are what we think of as typical nerds. They are

at the bottom of the social ladder and are alone in their losing fight against the bullies. They are being picked on because of what they look like and how they dress. The film does not touch on the home life of Ethan in order to determine how he has become a bully, but the film does show that when Tommy and Dustin see him again he has a family. It can be assumed that he got married right after high school because he is 23 and his son is 5 years old. We see that bullies often have poor home lives and so it is when Ethan has a child of his own that he eventually matures and ends his own bullying ways. This, however, did not come about easily. We hear Ethan comment to Tommy that his son was being bullied at school and all of the trouble that it caused his son and his family. People do not often just change. Change is brought about by experiences, and we see that Ethan's experiences with having children of his own have changed him just as Tommy and Dustin's experiences with the new Ethan will change them.

### Effects and consequences

The lasting effects of bullying vary greatly between bullies and victims. The unbalanced power between the bully and the victim causes problems with power relations later in life. The way bullies behave in school can be just the beginning of a life based on having power over others. Adults who were bullies in school report high levels of depression later in life. They also report increased aggression which is often aimed towards family within the home. This in turn causes bullies to be more likely to have children who bully as well (Olweus, 1993; Nansel et.al, 2001). In Ethan's case, however, we see his son's picture and that he is a small boy with very large glasses. He looks awkward and is similar to Tommy and Dustin when they were young.

While in school, bullies are usually found to be relatively popular and known throughout the school. However, even with numerous acquaintances, bullies are not as capable of making close and lasting friendships. This incapability of closeness causes bullies to feel they are on their own and need no one else. These thoughts reflect on their schooling and cause them to be uninterested in school (DeHaan, 1997). Bullies are also found to be more likely to drop out of school and commit delinquent acts (Harris&Petrie, 2003).

The victims of bullying are in a constant state of stress and fear. Victims become scared to go to school or fear going to lunch or recess where most of the bullying occurs. This fear causes victims to refrain from making friends or even attending classes on a regular basis. Fear becomes the driving force in their lives and this leads to lowered self-esteem that often leads to depression. The most severe cases can end in suicide or murder-suicide like the Columbine Massacre. The long term effects of bullying vary depending on the victim and the level of harassment. Many victims leave school and are capable of continuing on with their lives. Others fall into a lasting depression and blame their bullies for the way their lives have turned out (DeHaan, 1997).

Dustin makes it very clear that he blames Ethan for the way his and Tommy's lives have turned out. Ethan is a successful businessman and they are deliverymen. As the film progresses, Tommy learns that they cannot blame Ethan for how their lives turned out. He was a terrible bully and ruined high school, but excluding him as Dustin wanted, makes them no better than Ethan was. Tommy at first wants to be Ethan's friend to make up for being rejected in the past and begins to see that life has changed Ethan. Ethan is a different person; Tommy realizes that accepting his apology is the

right thing to do. By accepting the apology Tommy is now in a position of power, which in many ways is a way for him to level the playing field of their relationship. Dustin does not see how forgiveness can help him move beyond the humiliation, doubt and fear of the past. Tommy also sees that what he does for a living is his choice, but how he turned out as a person has a lot to do with his experiences. This in no way absolves Ethan of his wrongdoing. Not all victims come out of bully situations as well rounded as Tommy and Dustin. Some do not come out of the situation at all. We see at the end that Tommy plans to exact some revenge from Ethan by overcharging him while at the same time increasing his own quality of life.

#### How to reduce bullying

My film is not a film about solving the bullying problem in our schools, because I am not so sure that it can be done. We have seen humans struggle for power throughout our history and we are constantly debating nature versus nurture. We may not ever be able to solve the question of whether people are born as bullies or become bullies, but that does not mean we cannot try to help both victims and bullies. Bullying has been around too long to end it with a single initiative, but we need to start wherever possible and no time is better than now. The “survival of the fittest” attitude makes it is easy for people to blame the victims for not being big or strong enough to fight back, but we cannot blame children for what is happening. The bullies and the parents need to be reached as well as school officials. When someone asks a coach or teacher for help, that authority figure needs to do something exacting about it.

Dan Olweus has developed an intervention program that involves

measures at the school level, class level, and individual level.

1) *Identify the extent of the problem on a campus through a questionnaire.*

There is no way to know how bad the situation is unless a short study is conducted in which the students are not afraid they will be punished for what they say. An unbiased assessment is needed.

2) *Begin a parental awareness campaign or parent circles.*

Victims are often embarrassed to tell their parents they are being bullied and likewise, most bullies will not admit to their parents that they harass kids at school. All parents need to be made aware of the situations their children face at school in order to understand and help their children.

3) *Involve students and teachers in developing class rules and implementing them.*

It is important for all students and teachers to understand what is expected of them while at school. Some teachers allow students to speak against students in class and everyone needs to agree on the rules of conduct before the rules can be implemented.

4) *Develop individualized interventions with bullies and victims as well as talking with parents of involved students.*

Victims may not feel comfortable telling on their bully, but those who witness the bullying should inform a teacher so the matter can be dealt with. The problem bully and the victim can be mediated and the bully can be punished with promise of more of the same in the future.

5) *Implement cooperative learning activities and role playing*

Very often the differences between bullies and victims are simply that they do

not know each other. It is more likely a bully will tease a random classmate than tease his/her friend. If students work together and begin to get to know each other, the bullies may feel less inclined to tease or hurt their fellow students and the victims may feel more confident in themselves if they feel they are on the same level as the bully

6) *Increase adult supervision.*

Many problems between bullies and victims occur out of range of teachers. Confrontations happen in the hall between classes, during lunch, or before and after school. Teachers are busy at these times preparing for classes and are not always free to police the halls. Security guards may be extreme in some schools, but I can say from experience that it helps having guards patrolling all areas of the school at any given time. Just the idea that a guard could be near will deter bullies and the guards don't need to be armed and dangerous to get the job done. The main guard at my high school is not what you would think of as a traditional security guard. She was a five foot redhead and she was about 60 years old. She was not there to intimidate or strike fear in the hearts of the students. She was meant more as friendly peacekeeper. She was outgoing and put everyone in a good mood with her smile. She deterred bullying and fighting just by being around. No one wants to get into a fight in front of someone who reminds them of their grandmother.

Another suggestion is to try to stop bullying before it starts. Parents cannot be with their children at all times of the day, but they should be aware of how their child interacts with others and ensure everyone is studying and playing in a safe environment. Children are like sponges when they are young and this is when they need to learn

about how to treat other people. Television shows such as *Sesame Street* do a great job of showing kids interacting in a stress free environment, and I think this is very important. When children are with others in places such as daycare or even kindergarten, I think it should be instilled in them what is and is not appropriate conduct with other students. I remember being sent to the corner in kindergarten because a boy was throwing blocks at me and when I finally got mad enough to throw one back, I was in deep trouble. Where was the teacher when he was throwing them? Most importantly, why did this little boy think that this was appropriate behavior? Parents are the main source of information for children and they and adult educators are the ones responsible for what happens in our schools.

### III. Bullying in Films

In today's society, electronic media is our main source of information and entertainment (Pawlowski, 2000). As years continue, electronic media becomes more and more pervasive. Newspapers needed to be purchased and readers could read what they wanted and discard the rest. With the introduction of radio and television, people have options of what they would like to listen to or watch, but the voices and images make more of an impact on viewers. Television and film have a sense of reality. It can seem that the characters we see are real as are the situations (Palowski, 2000). What we see is not always true to life, but it is believed because it is the only exposure to things we have never seen or encountered. If a child watches a film about men in prison, this becomes the child's idea of what prison is like. This is the idea behind George Gerbner's cultivation theory, but there are many other theories regarding the impact of television.

Researcher Suzanne Chamberlain believes that television promotes violence. One example is that of copycat killers. When I was a teenager, friends of mine admitted to copying such shows as MTV's *Jackass* where young men engage in violent acts for fun. On the other hand, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) states that violent television does not alone cause a child to act violent. There are many children in the world watching the same shows and not committing violent acts (ACLU, 2004). It is necessary to look deeper into the reasons for violent acts. It is easy to blame video games or television, but the fact of the matter is that there is something deeper causing these behaviors.

Almost every film has an antagonist and this character is often a bully who pushes the protagonist throughout the film. If you think of a film off of the top of your head, there is a good chance you can pick out the bully. Let's just name some films from the summer of 2008: *Iron Man*, *The Dark Knight*, and *The Mummy 3*. All of these blockbusters rely on this formula. One of the most common themes in films is that good triumphs over evil. The films with bullies are no different. Most films show the protagonist overcoming obstacles to finally defeat the bully in the end.

Films have followed this formula since the introduction of the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 otherwise known as the Hays Code (Bynum, 2006). The motion picture industry understood the impact that films could have on viewers. They took on the moral responsibility of censoring films before reaching the audiences to prevent a government run censorship program (Hayes, 2008). There are many specific rules in the code, but the three general principles are:

“1. No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those

who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.

2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.

3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation” (Bynum, 2006).

In 1931 William H. Hays hired Joseph I. Breen to ensure that motion pictures were adhering strictly to the Hays Code. Breen held producers responsible and imposed a \$25,000 fee for films without a stamp of approval (O’Sullivan, 2007). The code was dismantled in 1968 when the ratings system was introduced (Taylor, 2008). Although the code no longer exists, it is common for films to follow the guidelines it set forth. Many still agree with the idea behind the code while some films such as *Requiem for a Dream* seek to push at as many guidelines as possible. It seems the films that stray from the code are closer to true life than films that are watered down. Audiences deserve the option of which types of films they want to watch.

I believe it is important that we offer a realistic view of how these kinds of stories play out in real life. It often takes years for someone to retaliate or stand up for him or herself. *Still Standing* shows a realistic timeline of when someone might finally get the self-esteem and courage to stand up to his/her bully. It is difficult to build self-esteem with someone constantly putting you down. When victims leave high school, they do not instantly forget about all the put downs they have heard. It takes years for some victims to understand that the things said to and about them are either not true or not things to be ashamed of. Many of us hang on to traumatic experiences from high school

when a rumor was spread or we were picked on. Imagine if incidents like that happened to you everyday.

There are two films dealing with the Columbine Massacre I have watched but decided not to include in the section of films that deal with bullying. The first is *Bowling for Columbine*. Michael Moore chooses to focus on several societal problems that contributed to the Columbine shooting. Throughout the film, the central theme that emerges is our society's obsession with guns. He begins the film by visiting a bank that gives a free gun when you open a checking account. He then shows commercials for toy guns. Sometime after this, there is a cartoon that shows the history of the United States with a focus on our obsession with guns and how fear drives citizens to feel the need to have these guns for protection. This leads into the topic of racism and also how the media feeds our fears, a media strategy that results in increased viewer ratings.

About 30 minutes into the film, Michael Moore delves into the Columbine Shooting. He shows clips from the school cameras and has interviews with students and parents. The adults giving press conferences each have a different idea of what caused the shooters to go on a shooting rampage. We hear claims that it is video games or violent movies or Marilyn Manson. Michael Moore asks several people why only our country has so many gun related deaths when other large countries have the same contributing factors. Of course there is no answer to this. We can only speculate.

For the most part, this film is dedicated to dissecting our society and the factors that contribute to our fears and subsequent violence. While these are serious issues and very relevant to understanding why these tragedies happen, there are only two scenes that directly relate to my study of bullying. The first is a clip of a student at Columbine

telling the camera that he gets picked on by people he hates and points to another student just a few tables from him. This is the only point that bullying is directly mentioned. The other scene is the interview with Matt Stone who is one of the creators of the cartoon *Southpark* and a former Littleton resident. Matt tells Michael Moore that the faculty at Columbine did whatever they could to get the students to conform. They would scare the students by implying that whatever they are, they will be forever.

This is the opposite message of my film. My film tries to show that we can be anything and do anything if we really try. According to Matt Stone, the faculty at Columbine instilled into the students that if they are “losers” now they will always be losers. Based on various evidence including this compelling testimony by Matt Stone, I can imagine that the shooters believed this to be true which is why they chose to go through with their horrific plan even though they were only a few weeks from graduating.

Michael Moore discusses many important societal factors surrounding the Columbine shooting throughout this film. Although he does touch on bullying during the film, it was not enough for an analysis of bullying in films so I chose to speak about it separately instead of including it more thoroughly in the following section.

The other film not included in the analysis is *Elephant*. This film shows the lives of several students the day of a shooting that is based, in part, on the Columbine Massacre. It focuses separately on each student’s day with an emphasis on the mundane everyday life of a teenager. This is shown through conversations about shopping or watching a developing film. With each character that we follow, we are shown a serious issue that teenagers deal with today. The first character we follow is being driven to school by his drunk father. Three girls we follow seem to just be talking about boys

and shopping, but then we hear them vomiting up their lunch in the girls' bathroom.

We see short instances of both physical and verbal bullying in this film. There is a young girl who is obviously an outcast and it being made fun of by the popular girls in the locker room. The other instance of bullying happens to one of the young men who becomes a shooter at the end. He is in class and the boys in front of him are throwing wet paper at him. These instances of bullying are only a glimpse at how poorly some high school students are treated, but the film has a goal of bringing to light many problems teenagers face and bullying is just one.

The bullying in the film was not enough to analyze so it was not added into the following section, but there are similarities to the Columbine shooting so I decided to include it here. Before the shooting takes place, the shooters are seen watching Nazi videos and playing violent video games. They also order a gun online and test it out in the garage. People believe the shooters were influenced by video games and violent films, but this film also asks the question, where were the parents? This combined with the bullying begins to paint a picture of what drove the shooters to this point. In addition, one of the shooters points to a spot on the map and says it will have the best targets, "dumb ass jocks and shit". This is an aspect of this film that is true to the real Columbine shooting and relates directly to my research. However, although this film resembles the Columbine shooting, it does not focus on bullying of the shooters; therefore, I chose not to include it further in my analysis.

The following films I discuss have different timelines and different types of bullying, but all end with a bully free resolution which seems to be the formula in these happy ending stories. Each of these films has both elements common to bully films.

There are dramatic elements that are lightened by the comedic elements in an effort to get the point across to the target audience.

The first film I discuss is *Mean Girls*. This film was chosen to portray indirect bullying. This film deals mostly with name calling and rumors. With this film, I am trying to bring attention to the emotional effects and repercussions of verbal/indirect bullying. I feel it will be more easily recognized in a mainstream film. The second film is *Drillbit Taylor*. This film ends with the bullying being taken down by an even bigger bully who was helping the victims. I feel this is a more realistic portrayal of how bullying comes to an end in some circumstances as opposed to the victims overpowering the bully. The last film is *Big Bully*. This film was chosen to show the long term effects of being bullied. The main character of this film does not get over his feelings until he confronts his bully in adulthood. Even then, it is suggested that the feelings are not completely gone.

*Mean Girls (2004, 1hr 37 min)*

This film tells the story of a young woman, Cady Heron, who starts a new school and is befriended by The Plastics who are the most popular girls in school. The Plastics remain at the top of the social pyramid by not allowing others to join their group or be their friends. They also spread rumors about other girls in the school to keep them down while keeping their status high. They decide to allow Cady into their group because she is as pretty as they are. The film doesn't say, but they either don't want to have her as competition or the head of the Plastics, Regina George, wants someone else with whom to play her games.

Cady agrees to join the group because she is spying on the Plastics in an attempt to take them down. However, as a result of spending all of her time with them, she actually becomes one of toward the end. Cady wants to get back at Regina for dating the boy she likes. She learns bullying from Regina and uses it against her toward the end. For instance, Cady calls Regina with another Plastic, Gretchen Weiners, on mute and coerces Regina to say something mean about Gretchen. The goal is to have the girl hear what Regina really thinks about her and turn her against Regina. Cady then uses this to get Regina's secrets out of Gretchen in an attempt to compromise Regina's social status.

The Plastics also keep a book where they write mean things, both true and untrue, about the other girls in the school. Regina leaks the book at the end of the film and all of the girls begin fighting about the things that were said about them. This form of bullying is indirect bullying and borders between malign and non-malign. I would argue that the bullying shifts from indirect to direct when the book is leaked, because it is intentionally meant to hurt the readers rather than just poke fun at them. All of the girls in the film are guilty of spreading rumors or saying harmful things about the other girls in their grade. After a fight breaks out between all of the girls in the junior class, they have an assembly where they apologize and most of the ill will towards each other is resolved.

I chose this film because of its representation of indirect bullying. In *Still Standing*, Tommy and Dustin are the victims of all kinds of bullying. They were teased with nicknames in school and the names follow them throughout life. Even as adults, we can see the pain it causes them when they are called by their derogatory nicknames. It is important to acknowledge and understand the extent to which name calling can harm people. The sticks and stones mantra no longer applies for today's youth and the

bullying they deal with. Name calling and rumors can cause alienation as well as depression which can be more dangerous than physical injury.

*Drillbit Taylor (2008, 1hr 42 min)*

This is a recent release in the theaters in which the main character, Drillbit Taylor, is hired by three high school students, Wade, Ryan, and Jim, to protect them from the school bully. In this film, Drillbit is a homeless man who scams the kids out of their money and teaches them bogus lessons without actually helping them with their bully problem. When Drillbit finally decides to help them he disguises himself as a teacher at the school in order to warn them when the bully is near. The bully finds out what is happening and challenges the boys to a fight. The boys succeed in standing up to the bully and knock him down once. When the bully recovers he starts to win the fight. This is when Drillbit comes to the rescue and succeeds in beating up the bully. Other students begin to express their own fears of the bully and the boys become school heroes for ending the abuse for many students like themselves.

This is what we think of as the traditional bully situation and surprisingly, it is close to the truth as far as bully films go. Of course the homeless friend is not common, but it is common and in many cases necessary to have an adult fix the bully situation. This film shows a situation closer to real life because the only way the bully is brought down in the end is by an even bigger bully. This film's happy ending tries to mask the fact that the boys could not have beaten the bully on their own. Although the boys tried several times, they would not succeed because of their lack of physical strength.

The ability to have power over another is usually the reason why one victim is chosen to be bullied over another and physical strength cannot be acquired in a short period of time.

I chose this film as part of my analysis because of its characters' similarities to the characters in my film. They are physically weaker and have no chance against the bully without an authority figure to help them. The bullies in both films are larger and older than the boys being bullied. They both use their physical prowess to intimidate and torment others. The boys may try to stop the torment on their own, but the intimidation from the boys is not enough to sway the bully. If authority figures do not believe the victims or do not do enough to punish the bully, the bullying will continue. In *Drillbit Taylor*, the boys continually try to tell the principal of the bullying, but the bully puts on a sweet act and is believed by the principal. The victims have done nothing wrong and need help from those in power. In *Still Standing*, during the flashbacks we see coaches and principals ignoring the situation or laughing with the bullies. Too often the ones that are supposed to be helping are helping those on the wrong side. The authority figures need to serve as role models for the bullies to show them right and wrong behavior, not egg them on.

*Big Bully (1996, 1 hr 33min)*

*Big Bully* is the story of a young boy, David, who is physically tormented by a bully named Fang who seems to only bully David. He steals David's lunch money and pushes him around as many elementary school bullies are seen to do. David fears going to school and avoids Fang at all costs. When David finds out his family is moving, he uses the opportunity to finally tell the school principal that Fang had stolen a

moon rock from an exhibit.

David returns to his hometown as an adult and encounters his old bully as a new man. Fang was sent away to a boy's home after the moon rock incident and became withdrawn and quiet. When David returns he becomes like his young self again and Fang begins to torment David in the same childish ways. Fang and David are teachers at a grade school and while Fang is still seen as the quiet shop teacher, others see David running away from Fang and other teachers at the school think he is crazed.

David decides it is time he stands up to Fang and they begin to fight. They fight through the school, across town, and into the woods. Here David accidentally causes Fang to fall down a waterfall and thinks he has died. David goes to his home and Fang, still alive, meets him there. They continue their fight in the home until they are confronted by their two sons who have become friends despite David's son bullying Fang's son earlier in the film. David and Fang make amends as their sons had and they become friends. David sees this as closure and decides to move to another town.

Again, this film is not necessarily a mirror of reality, but it hits points that relate to my film. The repercussions of adolescent bullying can stay with someone into adulthood. Feelings of powerlessness and inferiority can last a lifetime if not dealt with properly. In this film as well as my own, there was no interference by parents or teachers so the victims were forced to deal with the bully alone. In addition, the bullies do not seem to have adequate role models to explain to them that what they are doing is wrong and inappropriate.

Most films have bullies and in many of these films, the bully learns their lesson and the victim becomes victorious. As often as we see the bully confronted in the

same time frame as the bullying, it is unlikely that the victims would be able to retaliate that quickly. Film narratives, however, are finite and a problem/solution formula can demand an expedited ending.

#### IV. *Still Standing*

For me, it is easy to write a story or script about bullying. Most Hollywood-style narrative films rely on a formula focusing on conflict between a protagonist and an antagonist. The protagonist is usually the main character. He/She is the hero and the character we are meant to identify with and root for to win. The antagonist is the enemy. This character is the driving force that pushes the protagonist throughout the film. A bully can be found in almost every film, but there are some films that are solely about the bully/victim relationship. Many are extremely popular films such as *Mean Girls* or *Dazed and Confused*. For my thesis project, I decided to skip ahead to the future and write and produce a short film about how bullying affects us later in life. While bully films generally concentrate on this dichotomy, few films write about the victims' recovery.

Tommy and Dustin are now twenty-three years old and have struggled through life. They were bullied incessantly in high school by a boy named Ethan who they run into five years after graduation. He is a recent business school graduate just starting a business of his own while Tommy and Dustin are several years into their jobs as delivery men. At first Tommy wants to make friends with Ethan, because he sees it as his chance to finally be accepted while Dustin is much more reluctant. As the film progresses, Tommy and Ethan become friends and Tommy sees that everyone has moved on

except for him and Dustin.

Tommy convinces Dustin that although high school was terrible for them, they need to move on. There comes a time when they are made stronger by their misfortunes in life or at least this is the justifiably positive spin Tommy puts on the situation in order to rise above the awfulness of his high school days. Just because they were put down, doesn't mean they can't rise above the humiliation and victimization to accomplish great and satisfying things in their lives.

The film attempts to show that once high school is over, there is a whole world out there. You can go to college anywhere in the world and start over or you can stay in town and prove yourself to those who think they are better. Of course, for those who have been bullied, changes may come slower. We are all trapped in a building together for four years and we are governed by the will of others. As time passes and they are further from our lives, we can slowly learn to live without fear.

Had Tommy or Dustin been facing Ethan alone, the same events would not have taken place. They were stronger because they were together and helped each other deal with Ethan and their past. Tommy and Dustin had different experiences in high school and resulted in different reactions to seeing Ethan again. Tommy had been bullied and felt the need to finally fit in when he saw Ethan again. Dustin had watched Tommy get bullied incessantly and did not trust that Ethan was a changed man. Their different viewpoints helped them cope with the fear they had been living with and learned that life is short and they need to keep moving. There are many more doors open to them now that they are willing to accept change.

The reality of bullying is those being bullied are often at the complete

mercy of their harassers. They are usually being bullied because they are smaller or weaker than others so it is unlikely that they will be able to fight back or deter the bullies. Dr. Laura DeHaan suggests that parents teach their children to ignore, move away, ask to stop, tell firmly to stop, or tell an adult when they are being bullied (DeHaan, 1997). These may seem like reasonable ways for victims to protect themselves, but following these suggestions is hard for someone who is being physically and emotionally harassed. Being identified as a tattler or a snitch can lead to additional trouble and labeling. Likewise, it often takes more than a few words from the victim or a teacher to stop a bully once he/she feels emboldened by his/her own power.

#### IV. Styles and Concepts

##### Actors & Apparel:

Since the Columbine tragedy I have felt strongly about bullying. It seems that people are so insecure with themselves that they feel the only way to feel better is to put someone else down. This is a terrible cycle that our society has fallen into. We should be encouraging one another instead of pushing each other down. For the general public, however, bullying seems to be something that everyone knows about, but there seems to be little that schools are doing to address this prevalent and growing problem.

Although I am taking a lighter approach to the subject, I believe stylistic choices can help make my intent to expose the real psychological consequences of bullying known. I believe one of the most important aspects of the film that will convey my meaning is the actors. I have chosen two students from The University of Denver

theater program to act as Tommy and Dustin. I originally had chosen two young men who are roommates and best friends, but I have decided to switch the actors to two students I worked with in a joint class between film students and acting students.

I have not yet spoken to the local high schools regarding use of students as actors for the flashback scenes. I intend on meeting with local drama teachers as soon as they return to school for the fall and a definite schedule is planned out. There are no lines to learn so the students will not need much rehearsal. If all goes well, the high school flashbacks can be done after school hours in a few days. I am confident that teachers will be interested in showing their students what acting for the screen consists of. I feel it is a good experience for any student who wants to be an actor to see the process up close.

The clothing the actors will wear will not be as important as how they wear it. The work uniforms for Tommy and Dustin will consist of navy blue pants, navy blue button down shirts, and navy blue hats with yellow logos that mimic the UPS logo. Tommy will wear his uniform correctly and portray himself as clean cut and hard working. To contrast him, Dustin will be unkempt and show laziness in taking care of his appearance. Ethan will be well dressed in khakis and a button down shirt with a clean white hat. He is meant to seem successful, but laid back at the same time.

The white hat is a reference to the white hats that the bully jocks at Columbine High School wore. From what I hear, the athletes began wearing white hats as a symbol of their supposed superiority. The hats are of various sports teams which represents them as athletes. The hats are always pristine white. The gleaming white is meant to represent the young men as clean cut and white bred. Other students in the school were not allowed by the jocks to wear clean white hats. It seems that dirty white hats were

excused or unnoticed because they felt it meant the hat wearer was not as good as they were.

### On Set:

Sets seem to run smoothly when each person on set has a particular job and they answer to one person. My set will be different, because I am taking on many roles. First and foremost, I am the producer. I had planned on using someone else as director, but unfortunately did not see anyone from the narrative class that I could entrust my film to so I will be directing as well. I did, however, find many students from the narrative class that I believe to be amazing at what they do. The students have said that as long as they are available at the time I am shooting, they would be glad to help. The students in the narrative class got to know each other well over the two quarters we were together, and I think working together on one project will not only be fun, but an amazing opportunity to pool everyone's talents.

I have been thinking about the kind of set I want to run. When asked about the sets I like to work on, I always like a set where there is one person in charge and has the final word. I would like to have a more open set. I do not want arguments in the middle of shooting, but I want the others on set to have an opinion and feel that they are really a part of the film. Of course this may not be as easy when we all get on set, but I intend to make it work. As the director, I will be the only person to talk to the talent with respect to the film. I am fully aware that having this many friends working together can slow down the process so I plan to have one person responsible for keeping everyone on track. I don't want anyone to feel they are being babysat, so no one will know but me and

whoever I choose.

It is difficult to set one time and place for others to share their opinions with me. Knowing each scene will be shot many times, I would hear opinions before or after the first take. If a shot does not work, it will need to be changed and that is when a room full of film majors come in handy. I also intend to have a cast and crew meeting before the first day of shooting to share the script and shooting plan in case someone has any ideas before we start production.

I'd like to work with a full-time editor. I have not decided who the editor will be, but I would like him/her to edit the film the way he/she see it then use my notes to make changes when we meet. I will be too invested in the film to be able to edit it objectively. If someone else is editing, I feel they can make decisions regarding which shots work best together and I can make any changes I feel necessary. Also, I feel that editing is where I am the weakest and would greatly appreciate the help of someone who feels editing is his/her strong point. I am speaking to two students I have worked with previously and make a very strong editing team. I believe these students would be willing to take on this task for the experience. If they plan on editing as a career, they will be taking notes from a director or producer on a daily basis. Also, I will be giving them the artistic space to edit as they see the story as long as I approve of the direction the film takes.

After the major roles are filled, there are still many jobs left. I will be using students from the narrative class to assist with lighting and sound. I have asked MacKenzie Cleveland to help with set and costume design and will most likely have her on my team when the shooting dates are finalized. I am also recruiting help from

home and from my job. There are several high school students who work for me that have volunteered to work as production assistants and food runners. Also, my best friend from New Jersey, who also has a bachelor's degree in film production, will be flying out in November to help me with any loose ends and editing if I do not find an editor.

Sets:

I am in the process of getting permission to shoot Ethan's business scenes at a landscaping company's headquarters which is close to my home. I am also working on using their name and logo which will be seen on Ethan's hat and perhaps around the office. I know someone who started a landscape company, but is not running it at the moment. I have been given permission to use the name and logo as the company that Tommy starts at the end. Shirts and hats with the logo are available off of the internet.

There are several other locations necessary for the script. I will film Tommy's home scenes at my own house so I can position the set as I need and not worry about bringing all of the plants in and out. The room that will be Tommy's is large and plain with its own bathroom so it will work well for his scenes. It is possible to put up posters, but not paint because the largest wall is wood paneled. I have permission from my neighbor to use her house as Dustin's house. I also have permission to use the inside for the scenes in his room. I will most likely be using her nine year old son's room and will leave the bunk bed to show Dustin's immaturity and need for someone to always be close to him.

There are many small scenes within the film that require special locations. I am talking to a local McDonalds that is in view of a Starbucks. I will be shooting the MDS

loading dock scene from the delivery door and the Walgreens I work at. The even smaller scenes from the montage will be decided once pre-production is really underway.

Pre-production has not fully begun, so I have not fully planned out what I plan to achieve with the camera movement and angles. I am very partial to the conventional five point camera setup, but I am also very interested in moving shots and long shots. The five point camera setup consists of an establishing shot, medium close-ups and close-ups of the two characters in the scene. This setup leaves less room for lack of coverage. Anything that is important in the scene will be shot including cutaways and reaction shots. Additional shots can always be shot, but it is important to have a strong base of available footage. One of the biggest problems I saw during the narrative class was lack of necessary shots. Many of the groups found it difficult to edit and were required to re-shoot their scenes. This is not a setback that I can afford with the limited time frame with which I am working. There is a lot of emotion that may be hidden by too many camera angles and movement. I believe the message is simple and so the camera angles should be simple and straightforward as well. An example would be the scene where Dustin confronts Tommy about his hanging out with Ethan. This is a very important scene for these two characters because we finally see how differently they are dealing with the past. I intend to use steady wide, medium, and close-up shots of the two characters. What they are saying is very important and I do not want anyone watching to be distracted by the camera angle or anything the changing shot might draw the viewer's eye to that is not essential to the dialogue.

A lot of the scenes take place inside the delivery truck so I have decided that a car mount is necessary and will save a lot of time and hassle in the long run. I am

working on finding a company that rents trucks, but does not have logos on the side. The other option is to borrow a friend's van and spray paint the MDS logo on the side or use a large magnet. As this moment the van does not run, but I am working on getting it fixed in time for shooting. If it cannot be fixed I can use a truck because that is what UPS uses, but DHL uses vans so it is believable either way. As far as lighting in the van, I am planning to simulate the indoor light of the car, but make it brighter. During the day shoots, the light will be natural. The sound will be collected either from wireless lavalieres or a boom in the backseat. Neither is a great option because the sound quality will be poor, but I will be trying to have the car stopped for the dialogue as much as possible. Very often Tommy and Dustin are just leaving or just arriving somewhere so I will have the car turned off as often as possible while they are talking. I will either have to change the scenes when the car is moving or set aside time for ADR(Automated Dialogue Replacement). I hope to avoid ADR, but will be prepared in the event it is needed. I will do what is necessary to increase the quality of sound for my film. I have heard many times that film makers often ignore sound and I intend to pay very close attention. Sound is very important, especially with a dialogue-based script like mine.

### Music:

I am currently collecting music from various artists who are friends or acquaintances and are willing to allow me to use their music in my film. These may not necessarily fit what I am trying to convey so I will also be putting an ad out on Craigslist for original compositions. Another option is to request music from bands that are no longer together. The music is still protected, but it is easier to get allowances

if the music is a bit older and no longer in circulation. If this is possible, I will be requesting this music from punk bands that I used to see play when I lived in New Jersey. Before it became mainstream, punk music was a subculture for people who were rejected or did not fit in to the mainstream. I believe these bands and this music represent Tommy and Dustin as outcasts because of the history of the music and also because the songs will not be recognizable by the majority of viewers.

Schedule:

I will be using the first weeks of October as pre-production. Because as I am doing this alone, I believe it will be difficult, but necessary. If the film is shot during October and November I can have my film edited and my paper written by late November, possibly December. I have already given my job notice that I will be taking off the month of November to edit my film to ensure I can finish within my timeline. This month should give me the cushion I need to get everything finished before I move to California.

Budget:

I am glad that I was a production manager for the narrative class because I now have valuable experience to help in planning and keeping the budget as low as possible. One of the largest expenses most student films incur is rental fees for locations, but at this moment I am not using any space that would require a fee. The next largest expense is food. Having already scoured Littleton, CO for food donations, I now know which eateries are willing to donate, and I am confident that these establishments will

donate food again. If planned well, I will only need to provide breakfast, snacks, and drinks.

The next largest expense will be the car mount for the camera. I will be pricing this out at the local film equipment rental shops and hopefully will be able to get a student rate. Other equipment will be provided by the school including the camera, sound equipment, and lighting equipment. I will also be using the school's editing equipment which would normally have been a large expense.

The props for the film will prove to be the most expensive part of making this film. I need special costumes for all of the actors as well as special props to decorate their homes. Tommy's house has many different types of plants. Real and fake plants are both relatively expensive so this will need to be further researched before purchase. Other props include the boxes and dollies for delivering the packages. The actors also eat a few times within the film so several meals will be needed for multiple takes.

The flashbacks have small props such as a Supersoaker and a large roll of toilet paper. There are other rather inexpensive props such as the mixed tape and the pictures of Ethan's family and the picture of Tommy and Dustin. Between the equipment, costumes, and props, I am estimating the film costs at around than \$500. I will add an additional \$50 for tapes and final DVDs for the cast and crew. I have not decided if I will be submitting this film to festivals so that cost will be overlooked for the time being.

Each piece of this section is necessary in making this film the way I have envisioned it. Each is guided by the memory of Columbine High School and the idea that bullying affects everyone. The set and costume design have been chosen specifically to represent real people in the wake of bullying. The styles and concepts are

meant to portray a real situation in a lighthearted fashion in attempt to reach every viewer.

Conclusion:

The tragedy at Columbine High School shocked the nation in the spring of 1999. The days following the shooting should have been spent researching and revealing what caused the boys to take action against their fellow students, but instead the time was spent pointing fingers. I can remember hearing on the news that no one could figure out what made the boys snap. As I delved into my research, it seemed more and more obvious. The boys were pushed to their limit. Their motive does not absolve them of their wrongdoing nor should it serve as an excuse, but it is the reason. Kids are bullied everyday and although many grow up and lead fulfilling lives, many are forever plagued by the pain the bullying caused them.

After living with a Columbine survivor, I became interested in what happened that tragic day in 1999 and all of the days before that. If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? If someone is bullied and no one reports it to an authority, did it really happen? Girls and boys are bullied everyday and while some are too scared to tell authority figures, others are blatantly ignored by them. Those in power are there to protect our children, not aid in their victimization.

No one person or group is to blame, but we should all feel responsible and feel a responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. We live together in a society that rejects some and reveres others. Ignoring the problem of bullying is almost as bad as doing the bullying yourself. This is a never ending problem and we must all

deal with it on our own levels first, to make any difference.

The film I am making is my attempt to make a difference. It is a way to educate bullies and victims about the effects bullying can have. It is meant for any audience and my hope is that viewers can see how long the effects of bullying can last. In the end, I intend for the audience sees themselves in the film and recognizes themselves as a bully, a victim, or a bystander. In identifying with one of the characters, the audience will see how their actions affect other, but also walk away with the idea that it is never too late to make changes in your life. The audience will feel sorry for Tommy and Dustin, but this will enhance the feeling of pride and satisfaction when they are able to face the past and take the next steps in their lives. The ability to make films is a tremendous power and I intend to use that power to educate as well as entertain.

## **PART II**

### I. Introduction

As a mass communications graduate student at the University of Denver, I chose to write a short narrative script and make it into a film in order to earn my degree. I have been through many stages in order to fulfill this requirement. As a video-emphasis major with an interest in pre-production, this is the main focus of the paper, but each phase was equally educational. When entering the Master's program, I was aware I would be required to propose and fulfill a thesis project, but was more concerned with the challenges and thrills of being a student again. As the quarters progressed, preparation for the project was facilitated through the required courses I took, yet I still had no particular goal in mind. My first mistake was underestimating the time and effort it takes to produce even a short student film. I was more interested in earning the degree, than what it takes to earn it. Because of this thinking, I struggled for some time, but did find a rhythm once I chose a topic I felt strongly about. In the paper below, I explain the process from the script and proposal writing, through the pre-production and production phases, to the editing of the finished product.

## II. Script & Proposal

Upon choosing to pursue my Master's degree, I decided to write a script and produce a short film. In addition to the script and the film, I wrote a thesis proposal regarding Columbine High School and the lasting effects of bullying. I also wrote a short script that deals with bullying to accompany the paper. This section details the many scripts and proposals I wrote before continuing on to the next phase of my thesis.

As a brand new student to The University of Denver, I chose "Developing the Screenplay" with Jeremy Dehn as one of my first classes. I was having a great deal of fun in the class writing short scripts. I did not realize until late in the quarter that I was meant to be writing the script that I would produce for my thesis project. Even then, the importance of the class did not sink in. It was not until much later that I realized how the school structured Master's classes to help prepare for the thesis project and scriptwriting, in my case, was the first step. When I did realize this script was meant to be carried on as my thesis, I contemplated starting a new script, but did not feel there was enough time. I had received good grades on my drafts of this script so I assumed it wasn't necessary to change it. Because of my lack of understanding and unwillingness to accept the inevitable thesis, I wrote a light hearted and pointless script that led me down a path that eventually circled me back to the beginning where I started from scratch on my thesis script.

Before our major script project began, I was sitting home waiting for a package from UPS. When the package did not come, I went to run some errands and saw the package in front of my door. I had been home the entire time and the UPS man had not even knocked on my door. I felt that this was a common occurrence and something

that others could relate to. This incident came to mind when we were told to start our final project in Jeremy's scriptwriting class.

Of course being a lover of comedy and excited to be back in school, I wrote a silly comedy about a young man who is being tormented by two deliverymen. As a class project it was fine. As a master's thesis, it was not. This script was not based on a significant topic. There was nothing interesting to research and overall the script had no message or meaning. This script developed further to being about the deliverymen and continued to take many forms. I even went as far as to write my first thesis proposal for the silly comedy script. The paper and the script were weak to say the least. Because the script did not deal with any serious societal or emotional issues, I wrote the proposal about people's perceptions of deliverymen. This was a topic that I forced myself to find within the script in an attempt to salvage the work I had done already. It was not a topic I cared about in the least, and I know now that I should have chosen a new topic and rewrote the script to fit. A master's thesis is not busy work, but a representation of the student. The topic is by far the most important aspect of the thesis. It is the basis of the proposal as well as the film. The end result cannot be captivating without first being significant to the creator.

When I asked Sheila Schroeder to be my thesis advisor, we began working on the script and I began to see that it was not representative of a Master's degree, and it was not something I felt strongly about. It took a bit of time before I finally found a subject that I was extremely interested in and turned the script around to match.

As is said in the first part of the proposal, my boyfriend Johnny attended Columbine High School at the time of the shooting that resulted in the killing of one

teacher and fourteen students including the shooters. This is a subject that I had an interest in from the day it happened. I was a high school student in New Jersey at the time and found myself caught up in the incident from afar. My interest was peaked further upon meeting Johnny and he began to tell me stories of what Columbine was like before the shooting. It turns out that Columbine was not the ideal suburban high school that the news had made it out to be. As a matter of fact, it was the complete opposite. It was an environment that revered athletes and rewarded bullying, while everyone else suffered. I felt that although I did not sympathize with boys who decided to kill 13 innocent people, I did feel it was important to see what drove these kids to this point.

I did not feel that I could make a film solely about Columbine with the time I had and could not do it justice in a short film. Instead I chose to focus my film on bullying and the effect it has over time. This is not a topic that is touched on often because people seem to believe that bullying is just stupid pranks and the victims get over it just as quickly as the bully. As my thesis proposal shows, this is not true.

The first script I wrote titled, “Sorry we missed you” was soon changed to “10 Years Still Standing” and later changed to “Still Standing”. (Please see Appendix A for complete script). Unfortunately, I do not know how many times the script changed, but I went through upwards of thirty drafts. To write the script I used a scriptwriting program called Final Draft. This is a program that applies the margins and spacing universally used for scriptwriting. Without this program the formatting would be extremely time consuming and much less accurate. One of the disadvantages of this program is its auto-save function. When receiving comments for whatever draft I was working on next, I would forget to save the new draft separately. I realized this each time I

starting writing because I would watch as the auto save bar went across the screen. Because of this, I have very few saved drafts to show my progression.

There is one huge story change that I made within the script. Originally, Tommy and Dustin are delivering packages when they deliver one to Ethan. They use this opportunity to torment Ethan until the end of the script. It turns out that Ethan had changed and they felt a small amount of guilt at the end. After doing research on the effects of bullying, this no longer seemed like a reasonable story to accompany what I uncovered from experts who have studied this phenomenon. I state earlier that victims generally have low self-esteem that would decrease even more if they were being continually bullied (Olweus, 1993). Tommy would have needed a life changing event or perhaps intensive therapy in order to have the self-esteem to stand up to Ethan, rather than run away. While anything is possible, this would send a different message about the realities of bullying. I read through Dan Olweus's research in order to form Tommy as the victim and Dustin as the bystander. We see in the flashbacks that Tommy stays hidden in the garbage can. This shows his submissiveness. Tommy and Dustin are also dressed "nerdy", which in my high school would have been enough to set someone apart. The script then began its change toward showing how all characters had matured since high school and how they change though the course of the film. The main characters are now both victims and heroes instead of becoming the bullies themselves.

Something else that changed between scripts are the locations and props. When writing the earlier scripts, I wrote what I wanted without any thought to actually having to put these scenes on camera. After working as the production manager on MacKenzie Cleveland's film *Tuffet* in the narrative class, I became very aware of how

important and helpful simplicity in a script can be on a student film. MacKenzie's script had one main location, but many props. While working on *Tuffet*, I began to look at my own script to decide what was feasible and what was impossible. This was an amazing advantage for me and is one of the reasons the pre-production ran so smoothly for me.

The scriptwriting and proposal writing were the first part of my thesis and proved to me how difficult this process was going to be. Once I saw the difficulties ahead, I concentrated and finally came out with a project that I believed in.

### III. Pre-Production

Once I defended my proposal and received the go ahead from my thesis committee, I was able get moving on pre-production for my short film which is the part of the process I was most looking forward to and most dreading. The time and effort put into pre-production can make or break a film. If it is not done properly, there is no point to showing up on set. Pre-production refers to everything that takes place before the actual filming on set. It encompasses the locations, the casting, the costumes, the props, and anything else you can think of. Simply forgetting a prop can force an entire shooting day to be cancelled. Many people choose not to do pre-production because of how time consuming and how important each part is. I was dreading it a little because all of the hard work I knew was ahead and because of the stress that can follow when something falls through. Luckily, I was also looking forward to it. I enjoy organizing and making the impossible happen. There is no greater feeling than the sense of accomplishment when a shooting day approaches and everything runs smoothly. Unfortunately in most cases, producing is a thankless job. If you do everything right, no one notices because

of how smoothly the set runs. Of course this is not the case because I also directed my film and each day that ran smoothly, I knew was because of all the hard work I did as the film's producer. This part of the process was the most time consuming and the most stressful, but I feel that hard work paid off.

I had originally been hoping to make my film parallel to the Narrative classes. I would do my pre-production during the first quarter and production and editing during the second. This was not feasible as my script and proposal were not yet finished. Instead I joined MacKenzie Cleveland and Andy Nease as the crew for *Tuffet*. As noted above, sharpening my skills as a producer on this project was incredibly useful to me when working on my own film and I would highly recommend this learning experience to anyone who hopes to be a producer. The more experience one has wearing this hat on a "real" film, the better they will be on subsequent projects.

#### Casting & Scheduling:

My first major task was casting. I worked as the casting director for the Narrative class, scheduling the auditions, purchasing refreshments for the greenroom, and creating a rotation schedule for duties of students not in the audition room. I watched many auditions and felt that I had found two actors to be the leads in my film. I thought that it was even better that they were best friends and would add realism to their characters. At the same time I was taking the Acting & Directing class with both of these actors and as I saw them on set I decided that one of them would be difficult to work with. When the time came to cast the actors I remembered another student from Acting & Directing that I thought would be perfect for Dustin and had seen a young man in *The One Acts* that

seemed to fit as Tommy. The actor for Dustin was very lively and comedic while still being a bit nerdy. The actor for Tommy was also a bit nerdy, but more shy and less vocal. Once they agreed to take the roles, the scheduling conflicts began.

Their busy schedules were difficult to work around. Almost all of their classes were conflicting and they both had part time jobs as well. I knew it would be difficult, but they were the actors I wanted. After meeting with them together and reading through on the script, I felt the connection I needed between Tommy and Dustin. I also noticed that while we were not reading through the script, their personalities were very similar to the characters they were going to be playing. As a director, I saw how close they were and knew it would help on screen. After the readings we would talk about what they felt about their characters and they felt as I did, that they were similar in a lot of ways. While they had not been physically bullied in high school, they had been picked on for their interests in music and theater. This led to an understanding of their characters that every director dreams of. Because of this connection and understanding, they did not need much coaching on their acting, but they were still a handful on set. After the first meeting, I knew that working with them was going to be a challenge because of the amount of adlibbing and their lack of focus, but I knew in the end it would be worth it because I saw how well they could act and I knew they would do well in the roles. It was worth it to me to work harder as a director in order to have the actors that I felt were right for the parts. I learned the trick was to feed the actors treats during meetings so they would snack when I was talking instead of talking to each other. On set, I just kept things running as smoothly as possible so there was less time for chatter. (For the actors' schedule please see Appendix B. For the shooting schedule please see Appendix C.)

The first few shooting days, we called David (Tommy) and Alex (Dustin) in at different times to shoot the individual scenes. Once David was not working anymore, we were able to meet more regularly. In all we had two rehearsal days and six shooting days.

Cameron who plays Ethan was a great find by my actors. I asked if they knew any other actors that fit his description and I feel he worked very well in his role. For the football scene he brought along a friend. I brought Johnny. Ryan Boulding, a contact from the Narrative sequence helped out, and another DU actor, Cody, came as well. We had two actors call to cancel the morning of the football scene so I am glad the others came to help on such short notice.

I feel very lucky that I was able call on friends and friends of friends to help out on set. Producing a no-budget film means everyone is working out of the goodness of their heart. This is something that can break a film. At any moment, a main actor can decide s/he doesn't have time, and the film is at a standstill. Having taken the Acting & Directing class was a huge help for me because it gave me a chance to get to know some actors and see how they worked with student directors. Another asset was MacKenzie because she was pursuing a minor in acting and knew many actors including the ones I chose. She was able to give insight about the actors that only other actors would know or see and agreed on my decision to use David and Alex in my film.

#### Locations:

In these six days we shot at ten locations. Some of the locations were easier to secure than others. Dustin's house belongs to Johnny's mother. Tommy's house was

my house. The house where Tommy is working at the end is also the house where they make the fake delivery and it belongs to a woman I worked with. The roll up door where Dustin picks up the van is the back of the Walgreens where I worked.

The park from the jungle gym scene is also the park with the swings and also where the driving lesson took place. We shot these on the weekends because it is a park near a school. Other parks in the area are busy on the weekends, but I live down the street and knew there would be minimal children around. We were careful not to show the children that were there or the school in the background. The field where the football game took place was a public park by DU. When writing these scenes, I did not have particular locations in mind. The only mandate was that the jungle gym had to have bars. This was important to the script. The school that the park scenes and driving lesson were shot at is the school that Johnny's little sister and cousin go to. While picking them up from school one day, I noticed the jungle gym and chose that as the location. This was the closest park to my house, which was the daily meeting place. Also, I knew that if necessary, I could get permission from the school since I had worked with them to put on that year's talent show.

When deciding on a park for the football game, I chose Observatory Park because we had previously driven by it while looking for a location for Scooter and MacKenzie's film *Paper Boy*. I chose a neighborhood park rather than a school field, to show the young men with Ethan are at a later stage in life. A school field would suggest that the football guys are stuck in the past as much as Tommy and Dustin, which is not the case. I also chose the field because it was close to the school and I felt it would be more convenient than Littleton because only football scenes were being shot that day.

There was no need to make everyone drive to Littleton when there was a usable park closer. This also helped because we decided to use two cameras and Liz Wynn offered to grab another from the equipment room in the Mass Communications building and we didn't lose any time.

I was very glad there were not many people at these locations because I was not sure if I needed permits to shoot in there. I remember during the narrative class, someone telling the students that public parks required shooting permits. To be honest, I chose the locations very last minute and did not have time to inquire about permits. Luckily no one seemed to mind us shooting at these parks. However, had I been planning to show this film publicly, I would have inquired about permits in advance.

As a student with not a lot of time and even less money, I feel these locations worked very well. They were chosen for their convenience, but I also feel that they fit what I was looking for. The park with the jungle gym worked very well with the way the script was written and proved a very versatile location when, last minute, we decided to shoot the lunch on the swings and the driving instructor scenes in the parking lot. The football scene field also worked very well. We found a large stretch of grass with plenty of sunlight. Another great aspect of this park was the amenities for the cast and crew. There was plenty of parking and lots of shade. We were able to keep our belongings and the equipment close by and out of the sun. It also served the cast well as a shady retreat during the breaks. The only major problem was the fact that the bathrooms were locked, but that problem was soon fixed by the gas station across the street.

When it was decided that Ethan was going to have a landscaping company, my first choice was Designs by Sundown. Johnny had worked there for a while and

knew they had small offices that would fit what I was going for. The owner was excited at the idea and offered me the office at the company's nursery. Most of the shoots ran smoothly besides the fact that we had to go on different days. The first day we got a lot done, but did not have the van yet. We found the back of a parking lot by the Walgreens and shot the unloading of the boxes there. The scene edits together seamlessly making it appear that Dustin and Tommy are unloading the boxes and delivering them all at the same location.

The second part of the DBS day was dedicated to the flashback scenes. I had originally thought that my idea to use Columbine High School would be difficult, but I did not run into any problems at all. The secretary to the principal let us use a space at the end of the hall and even made a joke about us not stuffing kids into lockers. I told her there would be students in garbage cans and she was ok with that.

Getting the location was the easy part. For me, being in the school was the hard part. After spending so many months researching what Columbine High School was like and all of the terrible things that had happened there, it was hard to see it as it is now. Now, it is just another high school. They did not even ask if the film was about Columbine despite the obvious bullying. Luckily the film is not a direct reference to the Columbine shooting, but I am not so sure it would have bothered them. It seemed that everyone has moved on. We were not supervised while in the school and the secretary did not flinch when I said we would be "shooting" as opposed to filming. I guess I was expecting something else from the students and faculty. I expected them to be continually haunted and perplexed by what happened there 10 years ago. I suppose it is easier to move on when you think two crazy unprovoked kids lost their minds one

day. There is nothing you can do to prevent that. I see it differently. I see what pushed them to that point, and I see how it can happen again.

The last location I needed permission for was the drive thru window. Originally I was looking for a McDonald's or a Burger King, but they need the window almost all day and I did not want to pay someone to stay with us in the very early hours of the morning. Instead I found out there was an Italian restaurant down the street from my house that was in an old Burger King building. They use the window for take out orders, but not very often. It took me a few tries to contact the owner, but he was delighted at the idea. We fixed the date on a weekend morning and the only catch was to promote the restaurant. Hence, the large sign in the foreground when the van pulls away. In all, I thought I was very lucky with my locations. I did not have to pay for their use and all locations were very accommodating.

Now that I am able to show pieces of the finished product to my friends and family, they are amazed at all of the locations I was able to use. They always ask how I did it and don't believe me when I say I just asked. No payment was required other than recognition of the location in the film. I was worried at first that these businesses would not care about a student film, but they are small family businesses and were glad to help a student in need. When going in to pitch these businesses, I made sure I had my business cards ready, dates ready, and I was dressed to impress. I wanted them to know that I was serious, and I would be in and out before they knew it. The great thing about making a film is it is easy to pay someone back for their service. I simply showed the Angie's sign and showed the DBS landscaping as payment for usage of their businesses. From this

experience I learned that nothing is free, but if you are open to suggestions, everyone can get what they want.

Crew:

During the Narrative class I had asked undergraduate Andy Nease to be my Director of Photography (DP). We worked together with MacKenzie on *Tuffet* for the narrative class. He was her DP and I felt he was talented and would be easy to work with. He accepted, but after we had some conflicts outside of class, I decided that it would be best to look for someone else. I am extremely glad and grateful MacKenzie Cleveland agreed to be my DP. She was the greatest asset I had during the whole process and I owe much of the success to her. MacKenzie joined on and together we decided the final shooting schedule as well as the storyboards and shot lists. She was on set almost all of the days and made the day run smoothly.

I had taken the experimental video class with MacKenzie before Narrative began. Although we did not speak much, I could see that she was talented and I like her work in Experimental. We worked on *Tuffet* together in the narrative class and things ran very smoothly. We are not similar in our personalities, but I think that is what made working together so beneficial. MacKenzie is very artistic, while I am more organized and plain. This led to us having very interesting discussions when deciding the shot lists and put an artistic flare on this film that would not have happened otherwise. We were able to take our different points of view and merge them together, rather than choose one or the other. The point of the process where we collaborated the most, was during the storyboard phase. Some of the storyboards were erased and redrawn four or five times until

we found a shot sequence that we both agreed on. An example of this is the shot when Dustin is looking for his bike and he is seen through the spokes of a bike tire. I had intended for the shot to be from the opposite angle without the bike tire, but after seeing the artistic shot, we decided to use it. I did not feel that if I let her help, that I would lose control of the film. We were working towards the same goal and MacKenzie's honest opinions were extremely valuable. Another benefit to working with MacKenzie was that previously I had been working as her subordinate and respected her opinion very much. When the positions changed, we were able to work more like equals while knowing that ultimately my decision was the last. MacKenzie was free to give me her opinions and I felt free to use or amend or reject without hurting her feelings. We began to work as a team instead of two people on the same film and the results were remarkable.

To repay the favor, I helped out with *Paper Boy* which is the film she was working on with Scooter Sackerson. This led to Scooter standing in as camera operator on the days that MacKenzie was not available and as sound person on the days she was. I also received help from Liz Winn as a favor since I had helped on her narrative project. There was one shooting day when Ryan Boulding was going to help, but we did not end up shooting that day although he did stand in as an actor during the football scene and helped set up the cameras that day. These four students were my crew during the entire process. I thought I would have needed more because of how we were taught a set should run. I assumed I would need a producer, director, assistant director, DP, boom operator, and a PA. Of course having extra sets of hands could have made the set run smoother, but it ran well and I think that more people may have gotten in the way.

It seemed on shooting days that no one needed direction on what their jobs were. I had spoken to Scooter previously about taking the camera when MacKenzie was away and explained that we would be following the shot lists and storyboards that MacKenzie and I had already worked on. He understood that we wanted the shots to be consistent and had no problems following what had already been decided. When we began unpacking equipment, everyone went to their respective equipment and got to work. The same goes for Liz. When I had enlisted her help, she knew it was for sound and/or to have an extra hand and she went straight to work. She would get the sound bag or help Scooter or MacKenzie with their equipment. It all depended on who was there that day. No one was angry about which position they were doing that day and did not say anything if the next day their job had changed. By the time I was done with the actors, the crew and equipment were ready to go. I do not think I could have asked for a better crew. They were the most talented from the narrative class and the people I trusted the most.

There was only one major problem that I had regarding changing of positions. On the last day of shooting, Scooter was the camera operator. I forgot to check the shots of the breakup scene (fight scene) and did not see until it was too late that they were not as close in as I would have liked. Also, the lighting on one side was very poor. In my determination to finish before the sun went down, I was rushing and I accept the fault for that scene.

Before this crew came together, I had gone into several classes to ask for help and sent out several emails, but to no avail. I thought more people would volunteer because it would be a good experience, but I feel that the driving distance was a problem since

we were shooting most days in Littleton. After shooting, I am glad the other students didn't respond to my e-mails. I am not sure they would have shown up even if they did respond. I have found that people you know are the people you can trust. I would have been angry with myself if I had enlisted the help of strangers and then had no one when the time came. My fellow classmates were experienced and understood what it takes to make a film after having completed the narrative classes. Other students who had not been through the Narrative classes may not have been so knowledgeable and definitely not as determined as when helping a friend. The narrative classes take you through the entire filmmaking process from scriptwriting through editing. It is one of the most beneficial classes I have taken and would prefer that those helping on my film would have the experience as well. Anyone who really wants to be a filmmaker needs to start alone and work their way up to see how difficult it can really be when there aren't others around who are required to help you to receive a passing grade.

#### Wardrobe & Props:

Luckily, the wardrobe for this film was not very elaborate. The delivery uniforms were Dickies which are work clothes that can be purchased at Wal-Mart and the hats were from a craft store. The only other wardrobe purchase was the elastic bottom sweatpants that Dustin wears during the football game. The DBS sweatshirt that Ethan wears at work belongs to Johnny and all other clothing belongs to the actors.

The props took a little longer to gather, but most were household items, returnable, or inexpensive to purchase. (For a complete list of props please see Appendix D). The most difficult prop was the delivery van. This is the reason one

shooting day was cancelled. A friend of a friend had agreed to the use of his plain white van. When we went to pick it up, he decided that he couldn't let me borrow it because it was a company van and I am not on the company's insurance policy. I then decided that trusting someone else with such a large part of the film was a terrible idea and rented the van instead.

### Food:

Obtaining food donations for the cast and crew is always the thing that makes me most nervous, but it is also the most rewarding. I was lucky to have had this task during the pre-production phase of *Tuffet* and knew where I would be able to find food without much trouble. My cast and crew were treated to Subway, Chipotle, Noodles & Company (twice), and Texas Roadhouse. I pitched the restaurants as I pitched the locations. I dressed nicely and had my business cards ready. I had made business cards especially for this part of this process so I would look professional and not be writing my information of a loose leaf piece of paper. I would then ask the manager of the restaurant if s/he would be interested in donating food for the cast and crew in exchange for their name appearing in the credits of my film. Of course many said no, but others were surprised that I was only asking for food for ten. The restaurants that are independently owned franchises were the most eager to donate in an attempt to get advertisement for their particular location. Noodles & Company, Chipotle, Subway, and Texas Roadhouse are all independently owned. Places like Burger King, McDonald's, Chili's, and Qdoba are not likely to offer donations. Pizza parlors are easy to get food from, but all students in the acting & directing class were told by Jeremy Dehn that serving pizza during an

all day shoot should be a last resort. It does has a tendency to it in the cast and crews' stomachs. It is better for long days of shooting, to have healthier food that is lighter on the stomach.

I always feel that feeding the cast and crew is important to their ability to work a full day, especially when they are working for free. Jeremy Dehn used to tell us that “a happy crew is a fed crew” and I absolutely agree.

The only food I did pay for was breakfast. I had told the cast and crew to eat before they arrived, but knew they wouldn't so I had doughnuts or muffins available. I also provided soda and water throughout the days.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>PURCHASED</u>	<u>DONATED</u>
Wardrobe	\$105	---
Uniforms, Sweatpants, Glasses		
Props (not returned)	\$24	---
(Please see Appendix D for complete list)		
Food	\$40	\$500
Donuts, Muffins, Water, Soda		
Van Rental	\$90	---
Locations	\$0	
2 days		
Equipment	---	\$2,625
Camera		
Lighting&Sound	---	\$750
Post-Production		
Media Dump	---	\$1,800
Editing	---	\$30,000
Duplication	---	\$150
<hr/> Total	\$265	\$35,325

### Storyboards & Shot lists:

I hate to admit it, but this was the part I dreaded the most. As a student with a video emphasis, I understand what is required, but feel my feet dragging when it comes time to do it. I suppose this would not be the case if I had a computer program to make the storyboards on, but I draw terribly and so I avoid this process because of my lack of artistic ability. Luckily, MacKenzie and I met on several occasions to work on the storyboards and shots lists together. I told her which locations we would be using. For the locations she had not seen before, I took photos so she could get an idea of what we were working with.

While in the narrative class, the director and DP were told to work on shot lists and storyboards together. I did not pay much attention to what tasks were meant to be separate, but I liked the idea of working together. When I asked MacKenzie if she would like to work on the shot lists and storyboards together, she agreed and I am glad she did. (For the shot lists and storyboards please see Appendix E.) I did not spend any time behind the camera during the narrative class, but MacKenzie's mind was fresh from having directed *Tuffet* and also from directing *Paper Boy*. Also, I knew this would make set days run faster and smoother because we would not have any discussions on the composition of the shots. It would also be very useful for the days when Scooter was camera operator to ensure consistency throughout the film. I understand that many directors prefer to choose shots on their own, but it is a filmmaker's duty to know when to ask for help and I believe I made the right choice at a very important moment.

I mention in the first part of my proposal that I intended to use the five point camera setup. After taking into account the constraints of each location, we decided on

a variety of different shots. For the most part, we used an establishing shot followed by a medium two-shot and a medium-close up of each actor. In a lot of cases the scenes were very short so one shot was used. This was the case for the pieces in the montage sequence in addition to the fantasy and pre-fantasy scenes.

Things are very different in theory in comparison to when the shooting actually begins. The scenes in this film were short and there was minimal dialogue throughout. I prefer wide establishing shots over close up shots and this became apparent throughout the process. I decided that since many of the scenes were extremely short that a wide shot would work best. It gets all the information without a lot of cutting. I am against cutting up short scenes into tons of pieces when the same effect can be made with a wider shot. Shots like the flashbacks and fantasies could have been shot from more angles and cut up, but as the director I made a choice not to mangle these scenes. In addition, close ups were not shot for dialogue scenes between characters. We decided to stay with wide and medium close up shots. Another scene with only a wide angle is when the boxes are being taken out of the back of the van in the beginning of the film.

One of the longer single shot scenes is when Dustin goes to Tommy's house after he isn't picked up for work. He walks to the door, knocks, hits the door with a newspaper, and storms off. Here we are asking the audience to read his body language to determine the change in his mood. This is a moment of privacy for Dustin. Here is when Dustin sees that Tommy was able to move on. He hopes that Tommy has slept in or is home sick, but there is no one at the house when he stops by. I did not want to interrupt the slow progression of feelings with too much editing, but we ended up using jump cuts anyway because the scene was so long. Most importantly, I feel that being further

away gives the audience a chance to see how lonely he is in this very wide shot. We had considered doing the shot closer to his face, but I think showing him alone and small is a more accurate representation of how he is feeling at this point.

Of course this way of thinking got me into a bit of trouble with the longer scenes that needed more cutting. Using fewer shots made editing difficult in some scenes and we did have to shoot pickups in order for them to make sense. For the most part the pickups were additional sound such as the singing Dustin hears when he walks around to the back of the house at the end of the film. The actors' adlibbing got continually worse as the shooting went on. They felt that some of the dialogue was phony and could not make it feel real so I allowed changes to be made, but the changes were not consistent. We also decided to try a few different lines to give options in editing, but there was always something wrong with a few and we ended up with fewer options rather than more. Looking back, I wish that I had just stuck with the script or sat down with the actors and come up with an alternate dialogue before the shooting began. The changing dialogue made editing nearly impossible in some places and definitely could have been avoided.

Another problem we had was lighting. A lot of the scenes were shot outside and the sun was moving during the shoot so the shadows would change or one person would be in complete darkness. Lighting has always been my biggest problem and it is something I would learn more about before making another film. As a producer, I felt extremely prepared for every aspect of the film except the lighting. I managed to overlook it during pre-production, clearly a mistake on my part, therefore was unprepared when shooting time came. I did see many similar mistakes in the narrative class'

films, but it is difficult to learn from others' mistakes. For instance, the most obvious scene with need of lighting is the fight scene in Tommy's car. We lost one half of this entire scene because the sun was going down and we were not prepared to set up lighting, nor did we have time. This was the one day we did not have a light kit and we could not find lights we could use in the garage at the location. We did the best we could by using a reflective window shade from my car. I know this helped, but it was not enough. When watching the film, this is the scene that I regret the most because I can do better.

Pre-production took a long time to complete, but it was extremely educational and rewarding. My goal for the future is to be a producer so this was an amazing experience for me. Time and patience combined with persistence make a great producer. I saw producers in the narrative class who were the downfall of their film and I would not let that happen to me. If I could not make everything work in pre-production, there was no need to begin shooting. There are so many aspects to pre-production and I know producing is what I am meant to do.

#### IV. Production

The production phase is what I hear my classmates always talking about. They talk about what cameras they like and what features they will use. This is the part that I was most afraid of. It is where you actually make the film and everyone can see what you have done. This is the part that people see and that gets judged and that is a lot of pressure. It involves what happens on the set, the camera work, the sound, the lighting, and the acting. Here is when you make the pieces that will soon be a film.

### The Set & Shooting:

The production stage of this film was extremely fun and rewarding. In the earlier part of the paper I decided the kind of set I wanted to run. I wanted to be open to suggestions with everyone knowing that I would make the final decision. Without someone I could trust to direct, I took on the role myself. I met with the actors before shooting to go over the script so once on set the questions were minimal. We read through the script and I gave the actors background on their characters. I also answered any questions they had and gave direction on the actual acting. It also helped that the actors were very similar to the characters they were playing. They could bring in real life experience that afforded them unique insights into these two men struggling to find their way in the world. For instance, after getting dressed for the flashback scenes I could sense David and Alex becoming more timid. By putting on clothes that reminded them of high school, they began to feel as they did when they had been picked on. This was a great moment for the film because the actors *were* Tommy and Dustin instead of just playing characters in a film.

Working with the crew was incredibly easy because it was so small. We all had worked together before and were comfortable with each other's opinions. I had been meeting with MacKenzie before each shoot so we were both on the same page. We would describe the shot to the crew while getting the sound equipment ready. If one of the crew had an idea or concern, they would pose it to MacKenzie or me before the shot and we would consider it. One problem I did notice was that I became so comfortable with MacKenzie that when Scooter was the DP I did not check his shots as much. This caused a problem with the "breakup scene" where I feel the shots were not close

enough and the lighting was poor on one side as well. I have learned that no one knows exactly what I want unless I make it very clear and am sure to check all shots before shooting.

On set, whoever was extra became our sound person. At first I was concerned about the sound because of the changing boom operators. Of course there were sound issues, but I made sure the DP kept an eye on the levels and we managed to avoid serious issues like missing sound or extremely loud noises. We did have problems with background noise that had to be sorted out. There were the usual dogs barking and planes overhead. Some we kept for continuity and others we reshot. One sound issue that could have been avoided was during the flashback scene where the garbage can is kicked down the hall. We had shot the scene with Ethan's son right before so we had him and Johnny's little sister with us. They were going to go home after Johnny was done with the garbage scene. We did not have an assistant director so we did not notice how loud the children were laughing in the background. I, myself, was laughing in my head and did not notice the children either. Once I saw the footage I replaced the laughing with ambient sound from earlier in the take. This is where having an extra crew member would have come in handy. That day it was just me and MacKenzie.

Lighting has always been the part of production with which I am the least comfortable, and I heard similar sentiments from my crew. We have all taken the same required mass communication courses and have learned the same about lighting, but we never feel it is enough. One week on lighting is not enough and we are not usually required to use lighting in our projects. We take a little bit of information and knowing it is not enough, we decide not to use it at all. It would be better if more projects required

lighting in order to gain more hands on experience. We took out a lighting kit each week, but barely used it. More often we used the lighting in the room and reflectors when we were outside. If there was something I could go back and do again, it would be the lighting. The scenes in the van and other automobiles caused lots of shadows and would have looked much better with consistent light. Also, a lot of the days were cloudy while others were sunny and I would have liked to make this more consistent. I am not sure how I could have avoided this problem. I did email a former student, Paul Pendell, to ask for lighting help on set, but he was not available. Having on-set rehearsals for lighting may have helped if the conditions were going to be the same and we did it at the same time of day, but by the time the lights were set the sun will have moved. In the future I will make films during the summer months when the day is longer. Most importantly, I will learn more about lighting and enlist the help of someone who works well with lighting.

#### Scheduling:

Re-scheduling was the most difficult part of the production process. My actors' schedules were very difficult to work around. One actor had to be back on campus at 3:00pm on Sundays and the other had a job for the first few weeks of shooting. Having shorter shooting days forced the shooting to run through October into November. This caused an inconsistency in some of the shots because leaves were falling off the trees. Luckily, it did not snow on our shooting days and the snow that did fall was melted when we were shooting.

Another major scheduling issue was with the van. I mentioned earlier that a

shooting day was cancelled when the van fell through. When I decided to rent the van, I did so for a weekend and all of the van shots had to be done in those two days. We had to move fast to get all of the van shots done and had to rearrange the second day according to which shots were more important in case we didn't get them all done.

On one of the days we had the van, we were supposed to have access to DBS. The office manager told me he would have someone open the gate, but it was not open when we arrived and I could not reach anyone on the phone. While shooting another scene, we found a fence at the end of a parking lot that had stones in front. We decided to use this instead of the actual spot at DBS. When we went back to DBS the next week, the only shots we had left did not require the van. This fast thinking and flexibility saved me a lot of time and a lot of money. I could not have afforded to rent the van again and was thrilled that we were able to get the van shots done in one weekend.

The final scheduling problem was finding crew members. A shooting day was changed because I had no crew. MacKenzie and Scooter were shooting *Paper Boy* so we decided to work around each other's schedules. This ended up working perfectly because we each had enough crew members for our shoots and we got into a comfortable rhythm with each other no matter who was in charge that particular day. I think the most important thing was that we had fun, but we were able to get the work done. Knowing that helping on *Paper Boy* would help my film, ensured my hard work and theirs. This is where I learned the importance of networking. Without this agreement between our two films, I am not sure that it would have turned out as good as it did. They worked hard for me because they knew I would work hard for them. I believe that this understanding that we were all helping each other formed a bond of trust between us that encouraged

us to work harder than an average crew member. We were a team no matter which set we were on and we all had the same goals.

Actors:

I am glad that I chose the actors that I did. I was correct in thinking that their being friends would add to the characters. Only once did David and I have to discuss his portrayal of Tommy because he did not agree with the direction I was giving. When Tommy was dropping Dustin off after the day they saw Ethan for the first time, David's acting showed Tommy as angry with Dustin for not liking Ethan. I decided that Tommy is not easily angered and a more light-hearted approach was taken.

Just as the actors adlibbed during rehearsals, I also had problems with the actors adlibbing during shooting. I am not completely against improvisation, but the actors would change their lines in each take or would only change them once. In the drive thru scene, David adds a very funny line. After the cashier says "even a quarter would be an improvement" Tommy says, "we use the quarters at the arcade". I found this line hysterical, but we could not use it because he only said it once and the boom was not catching his sound.

During some of the adlibbing the actors added a lot of swear words into the dialogue. For the most part I stopped them and asked them not to do it in the next take. Although I did not want a ton of cussing in this film, I had written some into the script. For the most part, the cursing in the final product is the original cursing from the script. I understand that using swear words may limit the audience that will be able to view this film, but I have faith in those with access to this film to choose who it is suitable for.

Personally, the children in my family hear much worse on a daily basis. In addition, I felt it necessary to show the range of emotions with these words in order to make the characters more realistic. They seemed flat and bland before this bit of color was added.

The production process was a very stressful time for me. I eventually had to quit my job because I needed the extra time and because I could not concentrate on anything else. Being the producer of this film is what I wanted from the beginning. Being the director was what I was not looking forward to. I had looked for someone else to direct, but decided in the end that it had to be me. I was the only one I could trust to bring this film to fruition. As a director, I forced myself to finish anything pre-production related before shooting began. I could not be running off to find props or looking for actors at the last minute. I had to be able to focus on shooting once the time came.

Directing was tough. It was less time consuming than producing, but it is not a role I fit into naturally. I was not tough enough with the actors because I believed it would work out for the best in the long run, but their adlibbing did not work as well as I had hoped. While shooting the final dialogue between Tommy and Dustin, they continually changed their lines. I asked them to do the new dialogue again so we would have more than one take to work with, but it changed so much that I could not keep track. When it was time to edit, the dialogue did not match up and the conversation no longer made sense because the dialogue was different for each angle. In the end, I chose the dialogue that I liked best and had the actors do some on set ADR. I was then able to use these lines on reaction shots and it flows much better now. Another scene that had a lot of adlibbing is when Tommy and Dustin fight at the football game. The actors changed the lines, but in this scene they said the same line each time. There was a large

amount of adlibbing after the scripted dialogue that was very funny, but not needed for the scene.

The shots, the lighting, and the sound were also my responsibility, but I feel I fell short. I do not know if I was a good director. To be honest, I was too afraid to ask. I feel that I got a lot done and did it fairly well, but I do not know if someone else would have done it better. Perhaps someone else would have been able to keep better control of the actors and keep a better eye on the crew. I was stretched thin and I did the best I could. I would recommend other filmmakers only take on as much as they know they can handle. Just producing or just directing this film would have been a full plate, but I did not have that option. If I would have had a full time director, perhaps I would have had more time to focus on other aspects such as the lighting. I would recommend that other students consider delegating tasks to others to ensure they do not get stretched as thin as I did. It is the film that suffers when one person tries to take on too much.

I was glad to be directing one scene in particular. It is the scene when we see that Ethan's son is being bullied. Tommy suggests lemon juice to take off the sharpie mustache and Ethan sees that he is the reason Tommy knows that and feels differently about himself, now that he is a parent. This is an important moment in the film because it is a turning point for the characters. It is possible that Ethan may have continued bullying Tommy if he had not been awakened to how terrible his actions were. He and Tommy both see the sad cycle of bullying and are capable of acknowledging it and moving forward. During shooting, the actors were unsure of the look of understanding and kept holding it too long. It seemed as if they were longing for each other which is not what the scene was meant to portray. We did the scene several times before we

got it right and I'm glad we did, because it is a very powerful moment. While I don't think I did the best job as a director, ultimately it was an experience that I am grateful for. Understanding different aspects of the filmmaking process is never a bad thing.

All of the aspects of production gave me some amount of trouble. It may be the part of filmmaking that I am the least comfortable with, but I think I learned a lot from the process. I saw how things changed when it was a film I cared about versus a short video for a class project. It takes more time and energy to prepare a 20 minute narrative film as opposed to a three minute short or experimental video. This means that when it comes time to shoot the film, you have already invested a significant amount of time. After preparing for so long, you want the film to come out as planned. With short films or videos, changes at the time of shooting were tiny speed bumps and didn't bother me much because there was not as much riding on the finished product. Production brings ideas to life and it is an amazing process.

## V. Post-Production

Post-Production is the editing phase of the project. It is mostly taking the video from production and piecing it together to make a story. The pieces have to go together in a way that the story makes sense and also so the audience feels for the characters. It also is when music is added and sound problems are fixed. The first cut to the last cut of this film are so different it is hard to believe it is the same film.

When I told MCOM Director of Engineering Bob Yablans I was going to be needing space on the edit bay for my project I also told him that I would be leaving during the editing process, but that it would be finished by MacKenzie and Scooter.

Bob expressed surprise that I was being allowed to give the final editing to other students. I explained to him that not only was I doing a lot of work on this film, but I would be editing much of it before leaving. In addition, I had been given approval to have an outside director so when I became the director I was given approval for outside editors. Of course they were with me throughout the process and I trusted them completely with my vision for this film.

During shooting I looked through the dailies and organized the shots in Final Cut. The shots were dumped on the drive by date and then organized by scene. The shots were labeled by scene and who was in the shot. As the weeks went by, I did rough cuts of the scenes we had shot. These scenes were in separate sequences so they could be edited more easily without affecting other scenes. Before I left, I had done a very rough cut of the entire film with much of the music added in. Once I had this, I met with MacKenzie and Scooter to talk about what I had done and what I was looking for with the rest of the editing. MacKenzie took detailed notes on what I was looking for, but I was not worried because she had a large hand in making the film as well. I gave them blank DVDs and addressed envelopes with thank you cards so that once the film was finished, she would be able to send it right out.

MacKenzie, Scooter, and I were in contact during and after each cut. I had set up an account on You Tube that would allow us to log in and see the videos without posting them publicly. This worked very well because I did not have to wait for a DVD or an e-mail with a very large attachment and I did not have to worry that it was being seen on the internet before it was ready. There were a couple of problems with YouTube. Even though the videos were not posted, they were still silenced during copyrighted

songs. Scooter arranged it so the song would stop after a short time. This appeased the copyright protectors and allowed the sound to be heard for the rest of the video. The other problem was the size of the screen. I was seeing the cuts on a tiny screen. If I enlarged it, everything became pixilated. Luckily, the video was not too terrible and I was able to send notes back to Scooter and MacKenzie via e-mail.

I would send notes explaining any questions or concerns I had as well as things that I felt needed to be done. They got additional notes from Professor Rod Buxton, and my thesis chair, Sheila Schroder, gave notes after multiple screenings. We had agreed on a completion time frame, keeping in mind that *Paper Boy* was still in production, and the deadline was met. I am very glad that I handed over the editing to MacKenzie and Scooter. They were able to make choices and changes that I would not have been able to make because I was so attached to the film.

Originally I was nervous about the jump cuts because it is something we are told to stay away from. Jump cuts are shots that jump from point to point and cut out the middle. An example is when Dustin is walking past Tommy's house and he jumps from one spot to another as opposed to watching him walk every step. Normally this is seen as a mistake because the shot is not continuous, but it was done as a stylistic choice in my film. The first time I saw the jump cut technique used, it was only in one scene. As the film came together I saw the jump cuts put in throughout the film and began to see what MacKenzie and Scooter were doing stylistically. It cut down the long takes and added a new style at the same time. In addition I was happy with the additional music they added during the box time lapse and when the van is leaving Angie's. These authentic choices by others who are not as attached to each moment as I was is the great advantage of

not editing my own film, and I am very pleased with the editing and the stylistic choices that were made. Having an idea of how you think your film should look often keeps you from taking risks and trying new ideas. Being open to change can bring some amazing elements into a film and having editors on my film was a great asset.

Editing was a tough phase for me because of how far away I was from the actual editing. I am so glad for the internet and the technology we have today because of how I got to have input and keep track of the film as it progressed. I will always wonder how different the film would be if I edited it myself. The great thing about editing is that everyone can make a different story from the same footage.

## VI. Conclusion

Overall, making this film was a very enjoyable experience. There are things I would do differently, such as not taking on multiple roles or allowing adlibbing, but the experience was extremely valuable and I am proud of the finished product. The story is serious, but has funny moments which I feel helps get the message across. The picture itself is clean and the editing turned out very well. I also like the pace of the film and the way the music keeps it upbeat. It is my first film and I am amazed by it. Start to finish, it was the most difficult task I have had and I feel that now I am better prepared for the entertainment industry.

I left my full-time job a few weeks into shooting, but I wish I had been able to leave sooner because of how time consuming the film was. I was amazed at how much time and effort it takes to make a short film. It would not have been possible without the help of my professors, classmates, and friends. I am grateful for the opportunity

to make my own film, but glad to have a break from the stress of being a filmmaker.

I regret leaving during the editing process, but a decision to move had been made and it was not something that could be changed. I was worried at first, but I believe it worked out for the best. The editors and I spoke during the course of the film about the fact I was leaving and they were prepared to take on the editorial roles. They expressed to me that they were excited to help and I had no doubt in their abilities. Editing is not one of my greatest abilities, which leads me to believe that it worked out for the best. I am glad I did the base of editing from which they worked, but extremely happy with what they made from it.

The most important thing I learned during this process was flexibility. In order to accomplish my goals and be able to take on so many roles, I had to be able to decide what was important and what was not. This especially went for the script. Had I tried to stick to the script verbatim, I do not believe the film would have been finished in such a timely manner. One scene that was changed was when Tommy is supposed to be handed a check by a man in a bank. I had trouble finding a location as well as an additional actor to hand over the check so it was replaced with the scene when Tommy opens the envelope with the “approved” letter inside. This cut serious time off of the pre-production as well as the production because the shot was quicker with only one actor in a location we had already secured. Another scene that changed was when Dustin is picked up by a driving school. I could not find a driving school to allow me to use their car or name nor could I afford to make a large sign for the side of my car. Instead we have Alex driving poorly in a parking lot next to what is meant to be an instructor with a clipboard.

Things may look amazing on paper, but when the time comes to bring the scene to reality, it is not so easy. For instance, an opening montage of Tommy getting ready in the morning that included a shower scene and a getting dressed scene no longer felt like the right approach after casting David to be Tommy. When writing the script, I planned Tommy to be more fit and tanned to show that although he had improved physically, he still had low self-esteem from being bullied. Once casting David, I decided to remove this scene because David is not as fit as I would have liked for a shower scene and not at all tanned. With David as Tommy, his physical appearance had not changed so the comparison between then and now was no longer necessary. I believe this change worked for the better because I then had the idea for the opening sequence with the boxes which is one of my favorite parts of the film.

Likewise, there were dialogue changes made in most of the scenes between Tommy and Dustin. The place this is the most obvious is the end scene when Dustin is delivering a package to Tommy. While in rehearsal they were having problems with the scenes because they felt fake and unnatural. Mostly it was the line “I need to take control of the things in life that I can control” and Dustin suggesting that he drive the truck. We arranged it so the same message would get across, but with more authentic acting and dialogue. Instead, Tommy asks Dustin about his new partner and Dustin says that the company can only afford one delivery person. Here he holds up the keys and we still get Tommy’s reaction to Dustin learning how to drive. This also changed to Tommy teasing Dustin before Dustin agrees to work with Tommy. Originally, Dustin changed his mind rather quickly. The actors and I felt that Dustin would need just a little bit of encouragement in a mocking tone to get his attention. This is the way he speaks to

Tommy for most of the film and it shows the change in both characters. I do not feel that these changes harmed the end result. They moved the story forward and ensured the dialogue did not sound unnatural. I am not upset that the film is not a copy of the script. I am pleased with the finished product, and I am grateful for the lessons I learned throughout this entire process.

Going into this process, I wanted the audience to identify with the characters in order to understand the lessons of the film. I do not assume that everyone will identify with Tommy or Dustin. Many will identify with Ethan instead, but there is a lesson to be learned from each of them.

There will be a minority of viewers who identify with Ethan, but will watch him and learn just as valuable a lesson as the other characters. Ethan comes face to face with Tommy, who he tortured all through high school. He is now the father of a young boy who is being bullied and finally feels the effect his own behavior must have had on Tommy. He is genuinely regretful for the things that he did to Tommy and sees that they actually have a lot in common. Although too much has happened in the past for them to be great friends, they form a work bond that shows them each of them how much the other has changed over time. Ethan can't change what he did to Tommy, but he can recognize it and be a better person and a better father. Hopefully his friendship with Tommy will help him with his son's similar problems at school. Viewers identifying with Ethan need to see that you should treat others the way you want to be treated because we all grow up, change, and do not know what is in store for us in the future.

Viewers who identify with Dustin see someone who is always relying on someone else. Dustin doesn't drive, and he lives with his mom. Some people will see

similarities with their own lives. Where they work or where they live might be a place they feel safe, and they do not want to leave without someone making the first move. They are scared to be on their own and fear any change and holds tightly to the status quo. When Tommy becomes friends with Ethan, Dustin doesn't want to lose his friend and also doesn't want to see his friend get hurt again. At first he thinks that Tommy just wants to be friends with Ethan because he has been rejected by him for so long. After seeing that Ethan is nice to Tommy, he just begins to fear change. When Tommy and Dustin fight, they go weeks without talking. In this time, Dustin begins to realize that he doesn't need to rely on someone else all the time. He decides that if Tommy doesn't need him, then he doesn't want to need Tommy. His act of rebellion against his friendship is to learn how to drive. This is the turning point for Dustin. He is taking initiative, which he has never done before. He is taking one small step toward being independent. When Tommy asks Dustin to work with him, we see some change in Dustin. He actually acknowledges that things have changed not only between them, but in his own more independent approach to life. With this, I am showing those who identify with Dustin, that change can be a good thing too. We should not let the past hold us down and make us afraid. Being independent gives us the opportunity to make choices that we feel are right for us.

Those identifying with Tommy see a man who is smart and has goals, but is insecure. Instead of running away from Ethan, he sees that Ethan has changed and is willing to give him a second chance. In opening his mind to change, other changes seem possible as well. When Dustin is angry with him, Tommy decides that this is his chance to go out on his own and do what he wants to do. Now that he doesn't have Dustin to

take care of, he can pursue his dreams with the help of his new friend. During the last montage Tommy starts a landscaping business of his own and we see his new relaxed persona. Tommy felt that he couldn't do any better than he was and used Dustin as an excuse for giving up, but he changes when he sees that he is in control. People identifying with Tommy should feel a sense of control on their own lives. Often, we let invisible things hold us back from pursuing our dreams. Tommy's turning points was recognition from his high school bully. Hopefully others see this growth in Tommy and use it to propel them toward their own dreams.

I hope this film shows people how much their actions can affect others. I do not assume that this film will end bullying, but I hope it shows that we are all affected by the way others treat us and by the way we treat others. Bullying is a real problem that has lasting effects on the victim as well as the bully. Putting other people down may make you feel better than someone, but it doesn't actually make you better.

I also intend for this film to show victims that life *can* turn around. Of course there are many levels of bullying, but life does go on. Being bullied is a terrible experience to live through, but it is possible to grow from it and move on as Tommy eventually does. Tommy's transformation happens as a result of his running into Ethan again, but I do not mean to suggest that an event like this must occur for this realization to take place. I intended for this film to take a serious subject and present it in a lighthearted way, but I fear that the seriousness of bullying may not come across in Tommy and Dustin's story as the audience tends to laugh when Tommy climbs out of a garbage can and gets chased down the hallway or gets a sign placed on his back. I do not regret writing this as a comedy because I feel that the audience opens up when they

laugh and becomes open to the message of the film. However, after doing so much research and investing so much time in this topic, I feel I am capable of writing a more dramatic film that is based on the events surrounding the Columbine Shooting.

Overall, this was an amazing experience in which I learned several valuable lessons. First, is the importance of networking. It is difficult to make a film when you cannot pay the actors or the crew. Meeting actors in the Acting & Directing class was a valuable asset. Working with actors before directing my film allowed me to practice while also seeing what actors might work with my film. Networking within my video classes was incredibly useful. Here I met the students that would ultimately make my film possible. Without working with other students and seeing their particular skills, my film would have been much more difficult to make. Also, in working with these students before, I trusted their opinions and felt safe opening the film to their suggestions. Allowing for collaboration with the crew allowed new ideas to emerge and made this film what it is.

The experience of making my own film from start to finish will prove to be my greatest asset as I look for a job in film production in Los Angeles where I have relocated. I have worked through countless issues from scriptwriting all the way through long-distance editing. Being able to make this film shows me and potential employers that I am proficient in all areas of filmmaking, especially organization and problem solving. As someone interested in pre-production, this experience has been invaluable. I now have a film to show as well as a well organized production notebook. I also have hands on experience managing and working with a crew. I am extremely pleased with the film and how it represents me as a filmmaker.

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## APPENDIX A

### INT. BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

A shower is heard but not seen through thick steam. A voice is heard singing with the radio.. The shower is turned off and TOMMY JACOBS steps out in a towel . He is an attractive 23 year old man with brown hair and glasses.

### INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Tommy walks into the kitchen.

TOMMY

Good morning.  
How did everyone sleep?

Tommy bows to his bonsai.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Gashi.

Tommy grabs his water spray bottle and waters his plants all around the house while greeting each one by name.

### INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Tommy stands in front of the mirror and buttons up the tan button down shirt of his uniform. He walks out of the door only to return and grab his hat. He puts it on facing forward and nods at himself. He says bye to his plants and walks out of the house.

### EXT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Tommy pulls up next to a minivan in front of a house in the HDS truck. He honks the horn several times. After a few tries DUSTIN walks out of the door with his shirt unbuttoned and a pop tart hanging out of his mouth.

DUSTIN (INTO THE HOUSE)

See ya, Ma.

### INT. TRUCK - DAY

TOMMY  
Ready?

DUSTIN  
Coffee

INT. TRUCK AT DRIVETHRU- DAY

Tommy and Dustin wait at the drive thru.

DUSTIN  
Man this sucks. Let's go to Starbuck's for once.

TOMMY  
Too expensive and you always seem to forget your wallet when we go.

DUSTIN  
Man when I drive the truck I'm going to Starbuck's every day.

TOMMY  
Well when you get over your testophobia and get your license let me know.

DUSTIN  
My mom says it's a very serious condition.

Tommy and Dustin pull up to the window and pay for the coffee. Dustin opens up the glove compartment and checks under the seat until he finds some change. He hands it to Tommy who already has a handful of change.

The CASHIER turns to the window.

CASHIER  
Your total is...oh, hold on.

She grabs an empty cup and sticks it out of the window. Tommy uses his hands as a funnel to get the change into the cup.

CASHIER (CONT'D)  
Dimes and nickels. What a shock.

Dustin leans over Tommy towards the cashier.

DUSTIN  
There's some pennies<sub>92</sub> in there today too.

CASHIER

Aren't you guys ever going to get your act together? Even a quarter would be an improvement.

Cashier hands the coffees to Tommy.

TOMMY

Ready now?

DUSTIN

One sec.

Dustin pulls out a cassette tape marked, "Band Camp 2003".

Tommy rolls his eyes and groans. They drive away to "Semi-Charmed Life" by Third Eye Blind.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Tommy and Dustin drive up to a house. Dustin is writing out the "sorry we missed you" slip. He grabs a package from the back and walks up to the house. He makes a knocking motion, but his fist doesn't hit the door. He puts the note on the door and walks away with the package still under his arm.

TOMMY

Seriously, that's not funny.

DUSTIN

Oh they'll get their package eventually. More packages, more overtime. Stop whining.

TOMMY

Okay. Well the next one is big so we're going in.

EXT. DESIGNS BY SUNDOWN - DAY

Dustin loads a dolly up to the top with boxes while Tommy gets the paperwork. He starts loading up one for himself with two boxes.

DUSTIN

This is stupid. The tag says these are rock samples.

Dustin picks up a rock from the parking lot and holds it up.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

How much can I get for this?

TOMMY

Different types of rock are used for different landscape designs. It adds color and texture.

DUSTIN

You watching DIY again, you loser?

Tommy grabs his dolly and motions towards Dustin's dolly.

TOMMY

What the hell, man.

DUSTIN

You know I have a bad back from having to carry all your stupid books. Chill out.

INT. SCHOOL - PAST

Flashback of YOUNGER DUSTIN taking the lid off of a large garbage can. Inside is YOUNGER TOMMY. Dustin takes a banana off of Tommy's head and helps him out of the garbage can.

They roll the dollies into the building.

INT. DESIGNS BY SUNDOWN(DBS) - DAY

The office is small with two counters and no receptionist. Ethan is in the hallway talking on the phone.

DUSTIN

Holy shit!

TOMMY

What?

DUSTIN

Hide.

Dustin pushes Tommy behind the dolly and hides behind him.

TOMMY

This is so stupid.

Tommy steps out from behind the boxes and sees Ethan. Ethan is 23 years old, tall and attractive. He hangs up the phone.

Tommy jumps back behind the boxes.

DUSTIN

See, dumbass. Let's try to get out of here in one piece.

INT. SCHOOL - PAST

Flashback continuation. Dustin helps Tommy out of the garbage can. They turn and see YOUNGER ETHAN at the end of the hall. The bullies see them look and run towards them. Tommy and Dustin run in the opposite direction. A TEACHER is seen laughing in the background.

Ethan walks up to the stack of boxes. Tommy is behind it but all we see is his hat.

An arm appears with a clipboard.

TOMMY

Sign here please.

Ethan smiles.

ETHAN

Sure. I have a box for you, too. Let me go grab it.

Tommy and Ethan move the boxes off of the dollies and pull their hats down over their eyes.

Ethan returns with a box and tries to see their faces, but the guys keep moving their heads around.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Tommy, is that you?

Tommy and Dustin push their hats up.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Hey guys. Wow it's been a long time.

Ethan holds out his hand and Tommy shakes it reluctantly.

TOMMY

Sure has.

Dustin puts out his hand, but pulls it away when Ethan goes to shake it.

DUSTIN  
Feels like yesterday to me.

TOMMY  
So is this your business?

ETHAN  
Yeah, didn't want to work for my Dad anymore.

TOMMY  
Looks like you're doing pretty well.

ETHAN  
Yeah, well right now I do rock walls and patios.  
Customers keep asking for plants but I'm only  
one guy.

DUSTIN  
You should talk to Martha Stewart over here.  
He's freakin' plant obsessed.

ETHAN  
Seriously? Can I ask you something?

Dustin walks away and starts touching everything in the office while Tommy and Ethan chat. The camera follows him as we hear the muffled rumblings of conversation in the background. He picks up pictures of Ethan's family and smirks. ETHAN'S SON is a scrawny boy with very large glasses.

TOMMY  
Sounds like fun. See you then.

The door to the office opens and Ethan's son sulks in with his head down. When he looks up he has a large curly mustache drawn on his face.

ETHAN  
Not again. I'll get a rag.

TOMMY  
That looks like sharpie. You're gonna need some  
lemon juice.

Ethan and Tommy exchange a glance and a nod.

DUSTIN

Jerk.

TOMMY

Did you hear any of the conversation?

DUSTIN

Asshole. Let's TP his office.

Dustin looks at the door with a restroom sign.

(Fantasy) Dustin is waving a huge roll of toilet paper over his head as he runs out of the office.

TOMMY

Grow up, Dustin.

INT. BURGER KING - DAY

DUSTIN

Okay I've got it. A drive by.

(Fantasy) The truck drives by. Dustin is leaning out of the passenger window wearing all black and aiming a super soaker.

TOMMY

I won't be able to bail you out of jail with dimes and nickels.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

DUSTIN

How about we kidnap his kid like in Ransom?

(Fantasy) ETHAN'S SON is sitting behind brightly colored bars. Dustin is walking in front of the bars as a guard.

TOMMY

First of all, the kidnapers die in that movie.

(Fantasy) Dustin is teasing the boy when he gets hit in the head with a football. He falls to the ground. The boy gets up from behind the jungle gym bars and kicks Dustin in the side before running away through the park.

DUSTIN

And...

TOMMY

Just let it go?

DUSTIN

Why can't you just have my back for once?

TOMMY

Because I talked to him today and you didn't. He apologized and invited us to hang out.

DUSTIN

Hell no. He'll probably steal our lunch money just for fun.

Tommy sighs.

TOMMY

Whatever, Dustin.

The truck stops in front of Dustin's house.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Be ready to go by 9 on Sunday. Last time I had to wait your mom made me do the dishes.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tommy stops in front of Dustin's house and honks the horn.

Dustin walks out wearing sweats and a hat. He gets into the passenger's seat.

DUSTIN

Why so early this week?

TOMMY

It's a surprise.

DUSTIN

There better be food.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Dustin and Tommy get out of the car.

DUSTIN

Uh, breakfast?

Tommy tosses a pop tart at Dustin and walks towards the field.

Tommy and Dustin get closer to the field and there are eight men of about the same age talking in a group. Ethan waves.

Dustin spits out his pop tart.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

What the fuck, man?

TOMMY

Flag football.

DUSTIN

We're going to play with every guy that ever gave me a wedgie?

TOMMY

Hopefully you're not still wearing those tighty whiteys.

DUSTIN

You're gonna get your ass kicked too.

TOMMY

Let's just pretend we fit in for once.

Tommy and Dustin reach the group of guys and they all exchange greetings.

ETHAN

Ok Tommy you're with us, Dustin you're with Bobby and those guys.

MONTAGE

Dustin looks at Tommy and storms off.

Tommy and Dustin step up to the line opposite each other.

The football is thrown to Ethan and the game begins.

Ethan throws to Tommy and he catches it.

Tommy's teammates give him high fives.

The football is thrown to Tommy again.

Dustin smacks the football away and struts obnoxiously.

The football is thrown to Ethan and Dustin tackles him to the ground.

The other guys look at him confused by his overly aggressive behavior.

The football is thrown to Ethan and he passes to Tommy who runs in a touchdown. After he throws the football down in celebration, Dustin tackles him.

TOMMY

What the hell Dustin! This is *flag* football.

DUSTIN

You think you're one of them now.

TOMMY

It's just a game.

DUSTIN

It *is* a game. Their game.

Dustin walks away.

INT. TRUCK - EARLY MORNING

Dustin walks out of the house and towards the truck. He gets into the passenger's seat.

TOMMY

Ready?

Dustin puts on his headphones.

Tommy and Dustin deliver packages in silence.

Tommy pulls up to Burger King for lunch.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

My treat.

DUSTIN

Not hungry. Something smells back there and is making me sick.

Tommy looks in the back. The plant he had hidden is beginning to show. It has a tag that says DBS on it.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
Let's get rid of it and then eat.

TOMMY  
Uh, not right now. I'm starving.

DUSTIN  
I just told you I can't eat.

TOMMY  
That package has to be delivered after 5. I'll cover it up and drop you off early.

Dustin looks suspiciously at Tommy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I'll deliver it myself so you don't have to get too close to it.

DUSTIN  
Ok.

Tommy runs to the back of the truck to cover the plant and returns to the driver's seat.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
You seem a little strange.

TOMMY  
I'm fine. I got an idea.

Tommy holds up the 2003 mixed tape and smiles. Dustin's scowl turns into a grin. They do the end of their secret handshake.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Tommy drops Dustin off at his house.

TOMMY  
Have a good night, buddy.

Dustin runs into the garage and grabs his mom's bike with a pink basket in the front. He follows Tommy in the truck.

EXT. DBS - NIGHT

Dustin rides up on his bike. He sees the truck and Tommy getting out of it. Tommy walks up to the office and is greeted by Ethan. They shake hands and walk to the back. They open folders and look at paperwork.

Dustin waits outside behind a bush. He picks the leaves off of branches and throws them.

Tommy walks out of the office and towards his car. He stops when he sees the pink bike. He opens the passenger side door.

Dustin emerges from the bush.

Dustin gets in the truck. Tommy puts the bike in the trunk and gets in.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Tommy and Dustin ride in silence. Tommy stops in front of Dustin's house.

TOMMY

You gonna say anything?

DUSTIN

You dropped me off so you could play house with jockboy.

TOMMY

I dropped something off for him and yes we hung out.

DUSTIN

So you'd rather be his friend than mine.

TOMMY

Grow up. He's different now.

DUSTIN

Are you serious? Have you forgotten winter formal?

FLASHBACK

Tommy stands in the hallway of a high school. He has a corsage in his hand. Ethan is pulling a GIRL away from Tommy. She lets go of Tommy's hand. He watches as Ethan walks down the hallway with<sub>102</sub>the girl. Ethan turns his head and gives a

thumbs up. There is a TEACHER laughing at the end of the hallway.

DUSTIN  
Or graduation?

FLASHBACK

Tommy puts his cap on in front of his locker mirror. Ethan walks up behind him and gives Tommy a slap on the back and a smile. Tommy turns around and they shake hands. There is a "I'm a Tool" sign on his back. Tommy closes his locker and walks down the hallway. Ethan and a TEACHER are laughing as he struts away.

DUSTIN  
He made our lives miserable.

TOMMY  
That was back then.

DUSTIN  
It's now too. He's the reason we can't afford a lousy Starbucks.

TOMMY  
You can't blame him for us not having more money. We haven't seen him in 5 years.

DUSTIN  
It's his fault.

TOMMY  
What are you...a victim now? Get off it, D, our lives have always been in our own hands, but I've been too scared to try anything new. I've been so used to being cut down, that I just stop trying. Ethan may have ruined high school, but we're responsible for today and we need to grow up.

Dustin opens the door.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Wait, Dustin.

Dustin grabs the bike and goes into the house without turning around.

INT. DUSTIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dustin is lying in bed.

DUSTIN  
Ma, call me in sick for the week.

INT. TOMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tommy gets dressed in a suit.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Dustin sits in his tree fort.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A MAN IN A SUIT hands Tommy a check. They shake hands.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dustin plays foosball by himself.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tommy looks tired as he works on his computer. He rubs his eyes and sees a picture of him and Dustin.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Dustin goes to the garage and he has a flat tire.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Tommy opens a box and pulls out a polo shirt with a logo on it.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A driving instructor car pulls up in front of Dustin's house.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Tommy takes his MDS hat off and throws it in the trash.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Dustin sits on his front steps. He looks at his watch and down the street a few times.  
He stands up and starts walking.

EXT. MDS OFFICE - DAY

Dustin walks up to the truck and doesn't see Tommy in it.  
The MDS MANAGER walks up.

MANAGER

Let's get a move on. You're late.

Dustin gets into the driver's seat. He turns his cap around forwards and turns the key.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Dustin walks up to a house with a package and rings the doorbell. No one answers.  
He hears something and walks around back.

He walks through the gate and sees Tommy on his hands and knees in the dirt with his hat on backwards.

Tommy looks up and smiles.

DUSTIN

I have a package for you?

TOMMY

It's actually for you. Open it.

Dustin opens the package and inside is a hat that looks just like Tommy's.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

The business is up and running and I could use a hand. Just like old times.

DUSTIN

I don't think it can be like old times.

Tommy stands up and wipes off his hands.

TOMMY

You can't be mad forever.

DUSTIN

I know that now. I really do.

TOMMY

So put it on.

DUSTIN

I can't. I can't always lean on you for support. I need to take control of the things in life that I can control. I can't hold on to the past.

They grin at each other and nod. Tommy looks around Dustin.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Which means...I get to drive the dump truck.

TOMMY

What about your testophobia?

Dustin holds up the keys. Tommy laughs and Dustin smiles. They give each other a hug. Dustin puts on his hat.

DUSTIN

Starbuck's is on me.

They do their secret handshake. They walk towards the truck.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Where'd you get such a nice truck?

TOMMY

Let's just say Ethan is paying me back for old times.

## APPENDIX B

ALEX  
DAVID  
October

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5 FREE BEFORE 2	6 1-7	7 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	8	9 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	10 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	11 BEFORE 3 BEFORE 11
12 FREE BEFORE 2	13 1-7	14 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	15	16 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	17 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	18
19 FREE FREE	20 1-7	21 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	22	23 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	24 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	25
26 FREE FREE	27 1-7	28 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	29	30 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	31 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	

November

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 BEFORE 3 FREE
2 FREE FREE	3 1-7	4 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	5	6 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	7 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	8 BEFORE 3 FREE
9 FREE FREE	10 1-7	11 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	12	13 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	14 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	15 BEFORE 3 FREE
16 FREE FREE	17 1-7	18 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	19	20 AFTER 4 AFTER 4	21 AFTER 12 BEFORE 2	22 BEFORE 3 FREE
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

## APPENDIX C

October

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Actors Rehearsal 7:30pm	10	11 Paper Boy
12	13	14	15	16 Actors Rehearsal in Littleton 5:00pm	17 Crew 10am David 10am-1pm Alex 2pm- 6pm	18 X
19 Shooting Crew & Talent 1pm(Cancelled)	20 Crew and Talent 8am	21	22	23	24	25 X
26 Paper Boy	27 Paper Boy	28	29	30	31 X	

November

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 Crew & Talent 9am
2 X Paper Boy	3	4	5	6	7	8 Crew 8am Talent 9am
9 Crew 8am Talent 9am	10	11	12	13	14	15 Pickup Day Crew & Talent 9am
16 Pickup Day	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

**Friday 10/17**

**Tommy: 1, 2, 3, 36, 38, 40, 34**

**Dustin: 41, 37, 33, 31,**

**Monday 10/20**

**Tommy, Dustin, & Ethan: 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 28, 29,**

**Saturday 11/1**

**Tommy, Dustin, Ethan & friends: 23, 22**

**Saturday 11/8**

**Tommy & Dustin: 6, 7, 18, 25, 43, 27&30**

**Sunday 11/9**

**Tommy & Dustin: 4, 5, 24, 20, 21, 8, 42**

**Saturday 11/15**

**Tommy & Dustin: 35, 16, 17, 18, 13, 15, 26, 19, 39**

## APPENDIX D

### Prop List

#### Already Owned or Borrowed

Prospect Landscape hat  
Prospect Landscape polo shirt  
Street Clothes  
Designs By Sundown sweatshirt  
Bike with flat tire  
Girl's bike  
Football  
Best friend CD  
Watergun  
Snacks & lunchbox  
Headphones  
Rolls of toilet paper  
Laptop  
Foam dart gun  
Action Figures

#### Purchased & Returned

Plants	\$115
Spray bottle	\$3
Clipboard	\$5
Large garbage can	\$25
Rockem Sockem Robots	\$20
Total Saved	\$168

#### Purchased & Kept

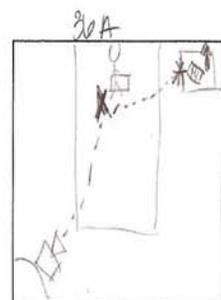
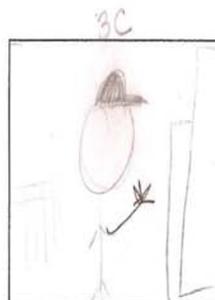
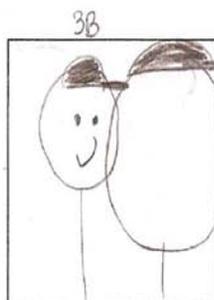
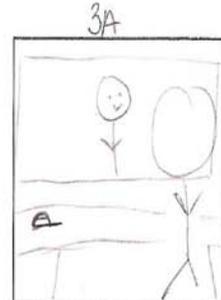
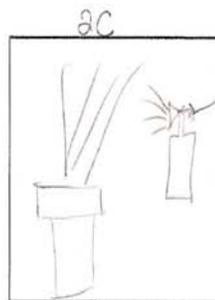
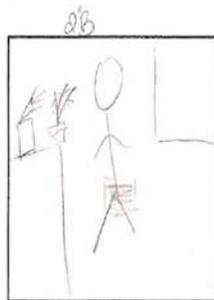
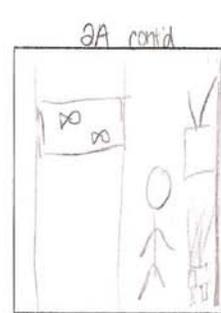
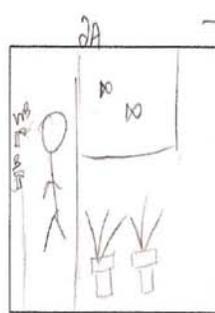
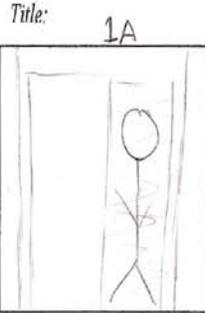
Uniforms	\$75
MDS Hats & lettering	\$10
Dorky Glasses	\$10
Sweatpants	\$5
Bandanas	\$5
Cardboard boxes	\$5
Picture & frame	\$7
Coffee cups	\$5
Poptarts	\$2
Flowers	\$5
Total Spent	\$129

**APPENDIX E**

10/17 Tommy

Mackenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards

Page



left into  
hallway

10/17 Dustin

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards

Page 2

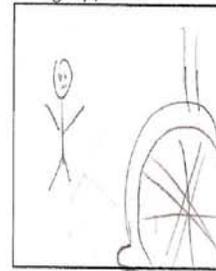
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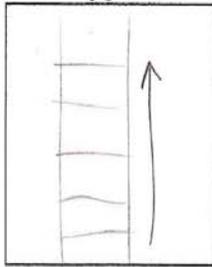
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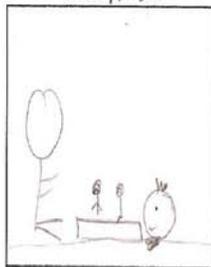
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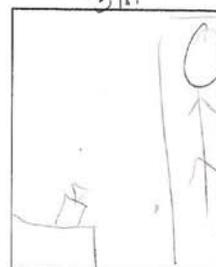
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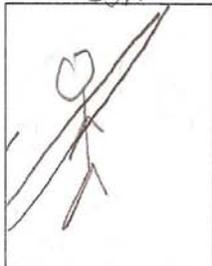
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31A

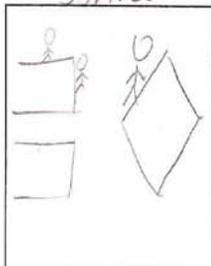


35A



Roll out

35A.2



football guy



## Shot List

*Still Standing*

October 17, 2008

1A. LS of shower

2A. LS of kitchen door, pan right

2B. MS of David grabbing bottle

2C. CU of spraying plants

3A. MS OTS of David in mirror, pan left

3B. MCU of David (reflection?)

36A. MLS of David on bed, dolly in, pan right to picture

41A. MLS of Alex on steps, pan left

37A. CU low angle of flat tire, Alex in background

33A. Track up ladder to MS of Alex

31A. LS of Alex in bed

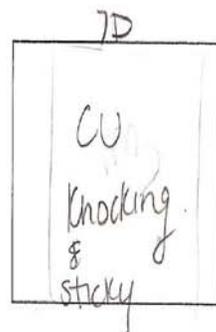
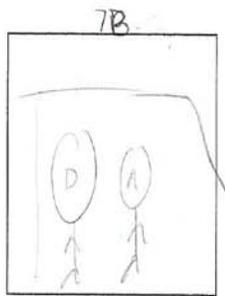
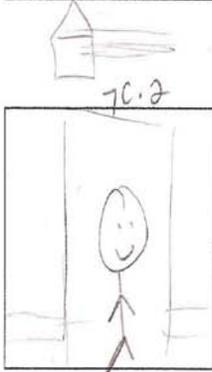
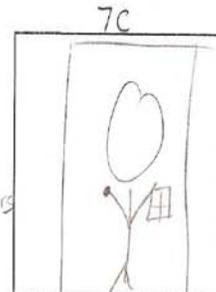
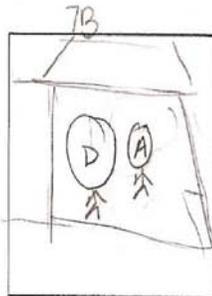
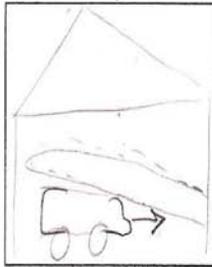
35A. ECU of foosball guy, dolly out to LS of Alex at table

10/19

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards

Page

Title: 7A



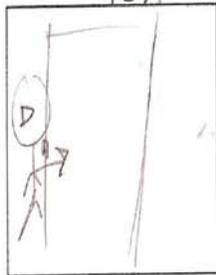
10/19

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson

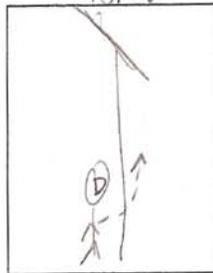
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Story Boards

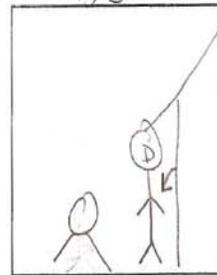
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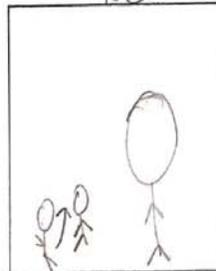
43A.2



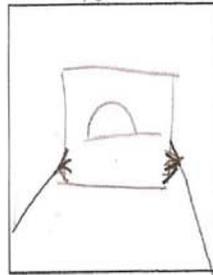
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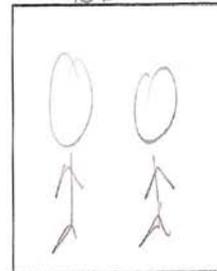
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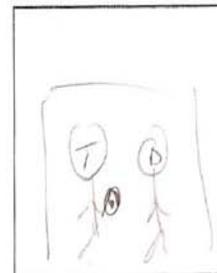
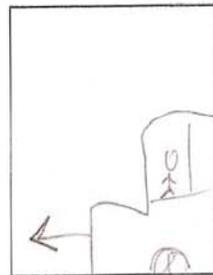
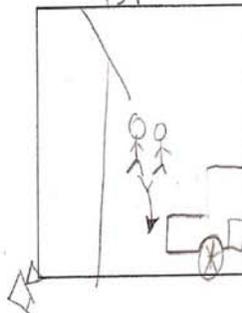
43D



43E



43F



## Shot List

### *Still Standing*

October 19, 2008

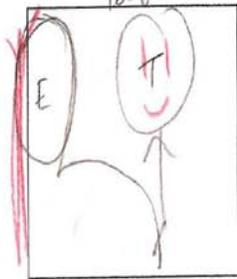
- 7A. LS of van driving up
- 7B. MCU of Alex past David
- 7C. MS of Alex at door
- 7D. CU of Alex's hand and note
  
- 43A. MLS of door, Alex enters, pan right
- 43B. OTS on Alex
- 43C. OTS on David
- 43D. CU on hat in box
- 43E. MS on both
- 43F. MS on both, pan to right to show truck
- 43G. MCU on both in truck

10/20

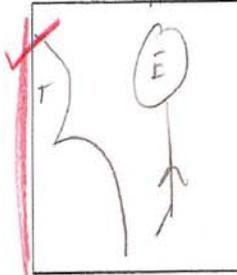
MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards

Page

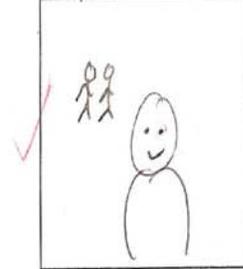
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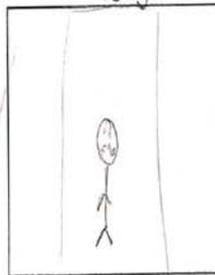
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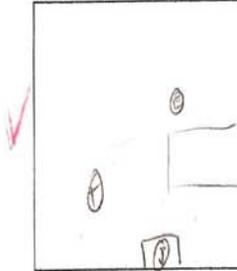
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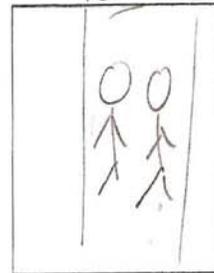
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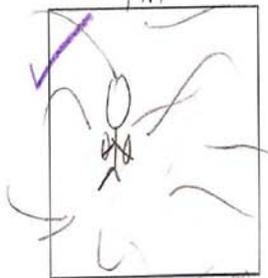
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13

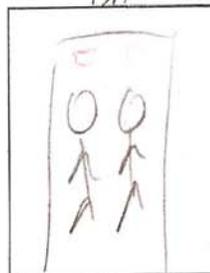


14A



crazymess in office

15A

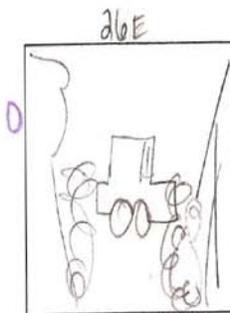
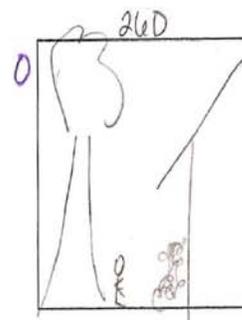
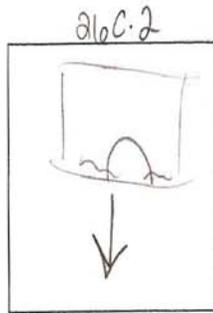
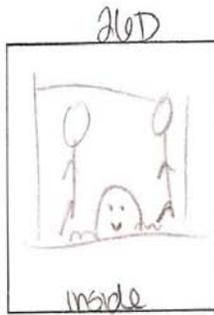
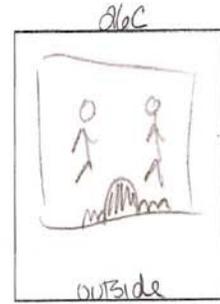
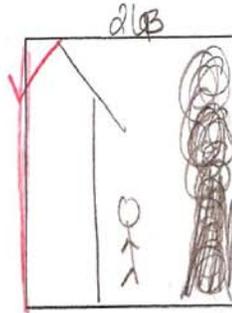
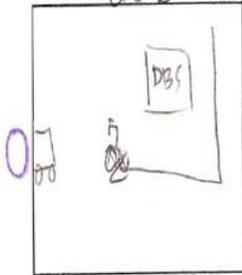


10/20

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards

Page

Title: 26A



## Shot List

### *Still Standing*

October 20, 2008

10a. LS of office  
10b. MCU of David peeking  
10c. MS of Cam  
10d. POV of Cam  
10e. MCU of both

12a. LS of office  
12b. MS of Cam and boxes  
12c. OTS LS of David and Alex  
12d. OTS MS of Cam  
12e. OTS MS of David and Alex  
12f. CU of un-handshake  
12g. OTS MS of Cam  
12h. OTS MS of David  
12i. OTS LS of Cam and David  
12j. MLS of Josh  
12k. MLS of Cam, David, and Josh

13/15a. MS of David and Alex

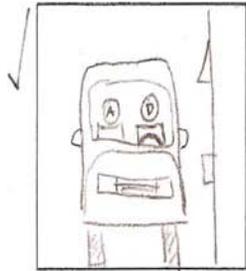
14a. MLS of Alex

26a. LS of Alex on bike, pan left  
26b. POV of David at door  
26c. MS of David and Cam through window, tilt to follow Alex  
26d. CU of Alex through window  
26e. LS of David and Alex getting in car

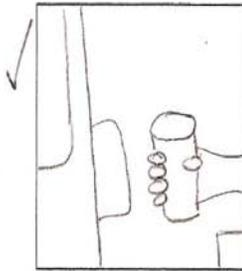
28 formal  
29 graduation  
9 trash can  
11 trash can

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards  
Title: scene 6

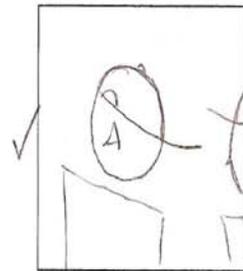
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11-8-08



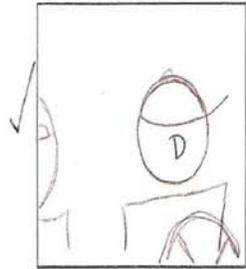
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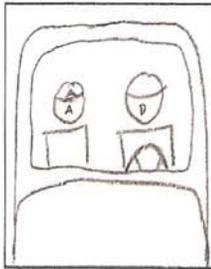
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6c



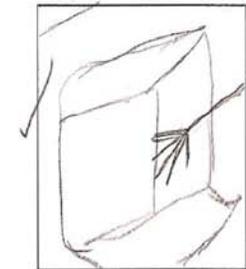
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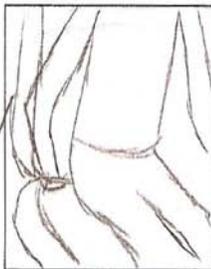
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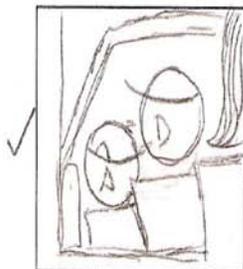
6f



6g



6h



6i



## Shot List

### *Still Standing*

November 8, 2008

- 6a. LS
- 6b. CU of cup
- 6c. CU of Alex
- 6d. CU of David
- 6e. MCU of both
- 6f. MS of MacKenzie through van
- 6g. CU of glove compartment
- 6h. CU of seat crack
- 6i. OTS on David and Alex
- 6j. CU of CD and player

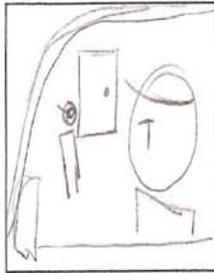
- 8a. MLS of both behind van
- 8b. MCU of David
- 8c. MCU of Alex
- 8d. CU of rock

13a/15a. MCU of both

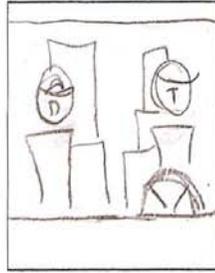
- 26a. LS of Alex riding bike (towards camera)
- 26b. LS of David exit house pan to LS of David get in car, Alex crouching

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards  
Title:

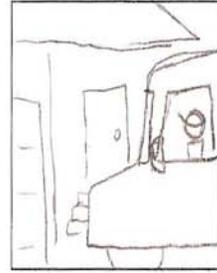
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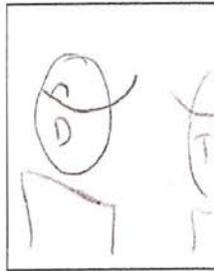
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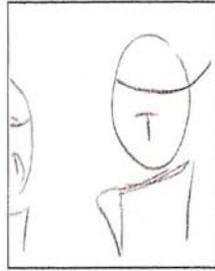
24b



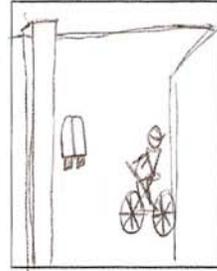
24c



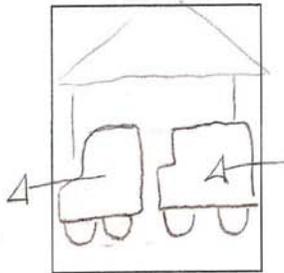
24d



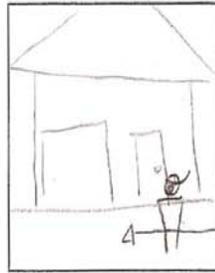
24e



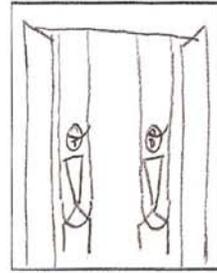
24f



24g



(A1.5)



14a

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards  
Title:

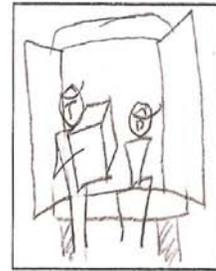
Page 2  
11-9-08



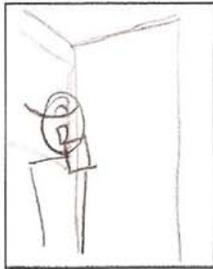
17a.



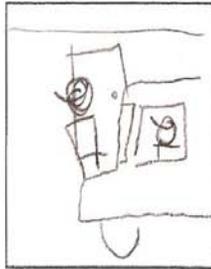
21a.



18a.



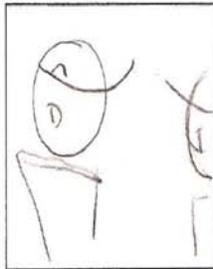
4a.



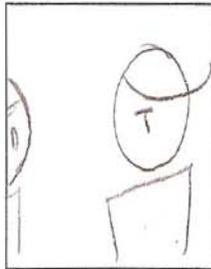
4b.



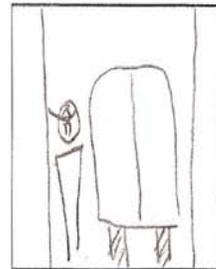
5a.



20a.



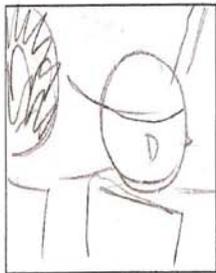
20b.



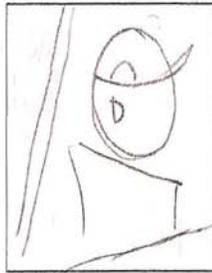
12a.

MacKenzie Cleveland and Scooter Sackerson  
Story Boards  
Title:

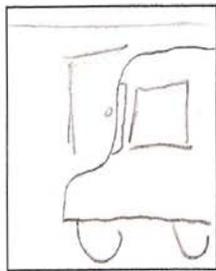
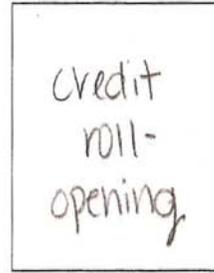
Page 3  
11-9-08



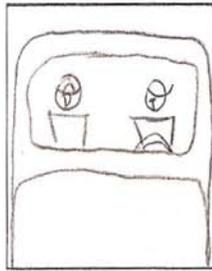
42b.



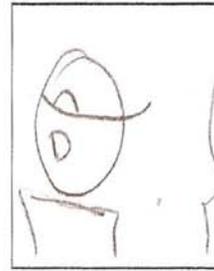
42c.



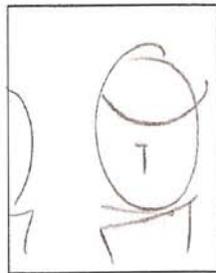
27/30a.



27/30b.



27/30c.



27/30d.



## Shot List

### *Still Standing*

November 9, 2008

- 24a. LS of Alex through van
- 24b. MS of both in van, time lapse-boxes disappear
- 24c. MLS of van stopping in front of Alex's
- 24d. MCU of Alex
- 24e. MCU of David
- 24f. LS of van driving away and Alex biking away
- 24g. LS of David's house and vans

(41.5) LS of Alex walking past David's house

16a. MLS of both on swings

17a. LS of van driving by

21a. LS of Alex through van

18a. MLS of both behind van

4a. MS of Alex at door

4b. LS of van pulling up and Alex

5a. MLS of both

20a. MCU of Alex

20b. MCU of David

42a. LS behind van

42b. MCU OTS of Alex looking in van

42c. MCU of Alex in van

27/30a. LS of van pulling up

27/30b. MS of both

27/30c. CU of Alex

27/30d. CU of David