

HOME

家

By Gary A. Piazza

(Based on a true story)

SUPER - OVER BLACK - *"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent"* --Eleanor Roosevelt

CONTINUE BLACK

A SCUFFLE, a connected PUNCH, flesh meets flesh, as we...

CUT TO:

INT. BLACKPOOL, U.K. - SCHOOLYARD - DAY

...see a FIST as it connects in SLOW-MO to the mouth of fifteen year-old, and slightly overweight Chinese student, WONG CHI LAM, aka JIMMY WONG.

Throwing the punch, fifteen year-old CHARLIE WARNER, Caucasian, school bully. He looms above, grimace on his face.

CHARLIE
Chink dog!

The scene FREEZES before the next punch can be thrown. Charlie's hand cocked back, ready to throw the blow.

Jimmy's face in despair, hopelessness, as he's locked on Charlie's fist.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK - Another PUNCH...then A HEARTBEAT, heavy BREATHING, the SOUND of feet on pavement as we...

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. BLACKPOOL, U.K. - STREETS - DAY

...see Jimmy running down the street, backpack spilling school supplies, books.

ON JIMMY'S FACE - Tears, bruises, blood, and embarrassment.

He continues running, passing other PEDESTRIANS, bumping into a MAN walking his DOG...

AERIAL - VICTORIA STREET PROMENADE - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy races down the promenade to...

NORTH PIER - THE COMEDY CARPET - CONTINUOUS

...the comedy square, a patchwork of comedy quotes covering the square, arranged and shaped like newspaper clippings. He stops before it, turns, looks up.

We PULL BACK to reveal the exhibit title on the ground, "**Nice to see you - to see you nice!**", and Jimmy looking up to the sky.

Continue PULL to reveal the BLACKPOOL TOWER at North Pier.

INT. BLACKPOOL TOWER - OBSERVATORY - DAY

Jimmy stands in the empty skyview, stares out at the ocean, blank-faced, stoic, and composed. He then looks down...

JIMMY'S POV - ...between his sneakers, the glass floor revealing a 500 foot drop.

He hears an indistinct VOICE O.S., turns and sees no one. Another indistinct VOICE O.S., turns the opposite direction, sees no one. The VOICES begin to layer and stack, increasing in frequency...the VOICES now calling his name. He panics, holds his head...

Suddenly, he finds himself falling, the ground rushing up, the VOICES call his name repeatedly, then a SMACK...

INT. HOME - EVENING

...in the shoulder by his auntie, LI MAI YAN (AMY), at the dinner table. Amy can be energetic, busy, is intelligent and oftentimes mixes her Cantonese with English.

AMY

Jimmy...Jimmy! It's getting cold,
la! Sik faan! Jimmy!

Jimmy pops straight up...snaps out of a deep trance. His face is covered in bruises and cuts.

AMY (CONT'D)

Come on, eat!

Jimmy shakes it off, picks up his chopsticks. Digs into a bowl of chicken feet and rice.

AMY (CONT'D)

Now, tell me what happened to your face.

Jimmy's uncle, WONG TAI WEI (DAVID WONG), enters the small apartment carrying takeout. He works at a Chinese takeout as a line cook and his clothes are covered in grease. He speaks very little English and just wants to relax at home.

He walks up to the table, sets a bag of food in front of Amy and Jimmy. He notices Jimmy's face.

NOTE: All dialogue in [brackets] is spoken in Cantonese. Subtitled in English.

DAVID
[What happened to him?]

AMY
[We were just getting to that.]

David opens the containers of food. More chicken feet. Amy notices, becomes frustrated.

AMY (CONT'D)
[Again? Chicken feet for three days now, la! Crazy!]

DAVID
[It's free!
(Gestures at Jimmy)
I don't see him complaining.]

DISSOLVE TO:

DINNER TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

They eat quietly for a BEAT...chomping, slurping, chopsticks CLICKING on bowls...

AMY
When you going to talk about your face?

DAVID
Did you fight someone?

JIMMY
No.

AMY
How then?

JIMMY
I...tripped.

DAVID
Tripped?
(looks to Amy for
translation)

AMY
Dit dou...

DAVID
[Clumsy, tie your shoes next time.
Or learn to fight back.]

David and Amy remain unconvinced. The slurping and eating continues.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy sits at his small table, opens his diary, rests the pen nib on the page. He thinks, then...

ON DIARY - Jimmy writes, *"Dear diary, me again, writing my thoughts out on paper because I'm unable to speak them."*

Under that line, he draws an image of a Manga character, himself, fending off the devil with a patch over his mouth.

He finishes the drawing then continues writing...

JIMMY (V.O.)
With each passing day in this
foreign world, I find myself
becoming almost permanently silent.
I don't dare speak to anyone during
the day or evening just to
avoid...conflict. I don't belong
here. Life with my aunt and uncle
here in the U.K. is not the same as
it was in Hong Kong. I wish I was
stronger. I wish I could stand up
for myself.

FLASHBACK - SCHOOL GROUNDS

Charlie and TWO CLASSMATES beating up on Jimmy. A punch to the nose, blood running down his face, watery eyes...

JIMMY (V.O.)
Today again, I was punched in the
face. This time I was hit in the
nose. It hurt. My face dripped with
blood. It's not the first time, and
probably won't be the last.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

Jimmy stares at his wall. A few Manga images are pinned to it, along with a stack of used tickets for the Blackpool tower. One of the images is his likeness, flying like an eagle.

He writes more...

JIMMY (V.O.)
I always wondered what it feels
like to fly...

INT. BLACKPOOL TOWER - DAY

Jimmy stares out of the tower windows.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Up here, I can imagine myself
flying away from it all...falling
peacefully asleep. Forever.

FLASH CUT TO:

SUPER - TITLE: **HOME**

FADE IN:

INT. HOME - JIMMY'S ROOM - MORNING

Jimmy's ALARM goes off.

ON JIMMY - Eyes opening, staring at the ceiling. Takes a deep breath. Bruises and facial discoloration obvious.

INT. SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - MORNING

Jimmy walks into school. Another day in hell, same predominantly white CROWD. He makes his way to class.

Charlie and his mates, JULIAN (15), and CHRISTOPHER (15), sneak up behind Jimmy. The three are known as the POSSE.

They trip him up, he falls face first to the floor.

He looks up to see them and OTHERS laughing.

CHARLIE
Get to class, freak! You're gonna
be late!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Jimmy sits at his desk, reading, taking notes. The teacher, MR. JONES (30's), grades papers, oblivious to the slight CHATTER in the room.

Charlie, Julian, and Christopher sit huddled. Scheming.

They look down and notice Jimmy's shoelace dangling, untied.

Charlie sneaks behind Jimmy, ties his shoelace to his chair, then returns unnoticed.

The school bell RINGS. STUDENTS gather their supplies and leave their desks.

Jimmy stands, tries to step, but is tripped up by his shoelace. He falls to the floor, the desk topples.

Charlie and his posse pass by laughing, carrying on.

Jimmy unties his shoe as Mr. Jones approaches. Mr. Jones hands Jimmy a paper with a poor grade on it.

JONES

You can do better, Jimmy. Work on it.

INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Jimmy walks into the lunch room, takes a seat. He removes his lunch from his backpack.

He sees Charlie and his posse in the lunch line. Decides to get up, re-pack, and leave the lunch room.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy walks outside, takes a seat on the ground around the corner. He begins eating his lunch.

Charlie and his posse arrive.

CHARLIE

Too good to eat with the rest of us?

Charlie reaches down, grabs Jimmy's lunch bag.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What's for lunch, chinky boy?

He pulls out a plastic container. Opens the lid, sees chicken feet and rice.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
What the fuck is this?

He holds one up, shows his posse.

JULIAN
Feet?

CHRISTOPHER
What the...

CHARLIE
You eat this shit? Are you kidding me?

JULIAN
Thought you people mostly eat dog!

CHRISTOPHER
Bloody disgusting. Mental.

O.S., we hear ADULTS chatting nearby, getting close.

The posse laughs. Charlie tosses Jimmy's food back at him.

CHARLIE
Eat up!

The posse leave the area, escape the adults.

Jimmy picks up his lunch, brushes off the mess.

Two TEACHERS approach Jimmy, see him with his lunch.

TEACHER 1
School lunches are to be eaten
indoors. Move it before I write you
up.

Jimmy looks up, nods.

INT. SCHOOL - TOILETS - DAY

Jimmy wipes his face with a paper towel. Wipes food from his shirt. Stares at himself in the mirror.

O.S., we hear the VOICES of the posse.

Jimmy ducks into one of the toilet stalls. Shuts the door.

Charlie, Julian, and Christopher enter the room. They all relieve themselves, then head to the sinks, mirrors.

JULIAN
I think I pissed myself.

Julian wipes his hand on Christopher's shirt.

CHRISTOPHER
Hey! What the...

Christopher pushes Julian into Charlie.

CHARLIE
Watch it, cunts! I'll shit on ya' myself!

CHARLIE'S POV - MIRROR - Checking his look, combing his hair, he focuses on Jimmy's shoe just IN FRAME below the toilet door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Hey, you guys. Check it out.

They all turn quietly, gaze at the toilet stall.

INSIDE STALL

Jimmy remains motionless, head in his hands. He look down at the ground, seeing the shadows of footsteps by the posse.

BACK TO TOILET ROOM

Charlie kicks the door open, Jimmy is gone.

From below, we see Jimmy crawling from stall to stall.

Charlie kicks each door in, chasing Jimmy down the line.

CHARLIE
Where are you, chink dog!?

Julian approaches the last stall and is immediately SMACKED in the face by the stall door. He falls to the floor, holding his face.

Jimmy jumps over Julian and sprints out of the room.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Get him!

Charlie gives chase.

Julian is dragged by Christopher out of the room.

JULIAN
Come on, he's getting away!

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Jimmy runs like never before. Past the grounds, he turns back to see if he's being followed. All clear. He turns to run and...

...bumps into a taller and stockier Asian BOY, VIJAY (15). Jimmy falls to the ground.

Vijay holds out his hand. Jimmy accepts, rises to his feet.

JIMMY
Sorry.

VIJAY
It's okay. Running from those
idiots?

Jimmy nods, brushes himself off.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
You don't need to run from them.

Jimmy thinks about that for a BEAT. Vijay sees the wariness in Jimmy's eyes.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
Come on, I'll walk you back.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Jimmy walks into class tardy.

The teacher, Mr. Jones, becomes annoyed at the disruption.

JONES
Nice of you to join us, Mr. Wong.

STUDENTS in the class giggle.

Charlie speaks under his voice but audible enough...

CHARLIE
Maybe he went the 'Wong' way.

The CLASS breaks out in laughter.

JONES
Okay, that's enough.

Jones holds his hand up to silence the group.

JONES (CONT'D)
I said, that's enough.
(Gets close to Jimmy)
Mr. Wong, if you are going to be
late for my class, please spare us
the disruption of your arrival and
wait outside.

Jimmy starts to get up to leave. Jones pushes him back in his chair.

JONES (CONT'D)
I don't mean this very moment. I
was referring to future
interruptions. Consider this a
warning. Got it?

Jimmy nods, bows his head in shame.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

School has ended. Jimmy and Vijay walk outside amongst the other STUDENTS.

VIJAY
You okay?

JIMMY
Yes.

Charlie and his posse walk by Jimmy and Vijay.

CHARLIE
Got yourself a boyfriend, huh?

VIJAY
Shut your mouth, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Or what, brown boy?

Vijay pretends to lunge at the Charlie. Charlie backs off, grabs his posse, and they race off.

VIJAY
They won't stop.

JIMMY

I know.

VIJAY

I can't be around all the time to help you.

JIMMY

I know.

Vijay spots his dad's car.

VIJAY

Hey, you need a ride home? My dad can drop you off.

Jimmy shakes his head no.

EXT. PROMENADE - VICTORIA STREET - DAY

Jimmy walks down the promenade with this backpack. He sees a shop that sells goodies.

INT. SHOP - DAY

Jimmy walks into the shop, stands at the candy rack. He looks over to see a LITTLE GIRL staring at him.

The MOTHER of the little girl appears in the aisle.

MOTHER

I told you to stay close...

The mother gets a good look at Jimmy. She pauses, then whisks her daughter out of the aisle.

EXT. BLACKPOOL PROMENADE - DAY

Jimmy walks along the promenade, eats his candy. Those who do pass by him, take a good glance, then look away.

He begins crossing the street towards the arcade, steps out in front of a car.

The car HONKS its horn, the DRIVER yells RACIAL OBSCENITIES at Jimmy.

EXT. ARCADE ENTRANCE - DAY

Jimmy stands before the arcade entrance. Stares at the sign above.

INT. ARCADE - DAY

Jimmy walks through the arcade, observes the various games, claw and prize machines, bowling lanes...

He finds the Treasure Cove game. A game with a row of rifles to shoot various targets for prizes.

He puts his coins in, grabs a gun and begins shooting. When finished, a row of tickets spits out of the dispenser. He rips them away, counts them.

THREE BOYS approach. A bit LOUD and obnoxious, they each grab a rifle and pretend to shoot each other. They don't notice Jimmy until he turns and they see his bruised face.

BOY 1

Wow! What happened to him?

BOY 2

Chasing parked cars, mate?

They laugh.

Jimmy walks away, heads to the back of the arcade.

EXT. NORTH PIER - DAY

STATIC SHOT of ocean from pier. A mini train passes in FOREGROUND. We see Jimmy sitting alone on the mini train.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JIMMY HANGING AROUND THE PIER

- Walking along the weathered planks. Observing tourists.
- Looking over the railing.
- Buying a snack at one of the vendors.
- Watching the seagulls. Having one shit on him from above.
- Wiping his clothing clean.
- Reading his book on one of the benches.
- Observing a COUPLE with a baby stroller.

- Jimmy looking at the BABY in the stroller. The couple turning the stroller away.
- Taking a ride on the carousel.

EXT. NORTH PIER - LATER

Jimmy approaches the end of the pier. He sets his pack down, sits on the deck, back against the mesh railing. He takes out a book, begins reading.

A few meters away, an OLD MAN (70's), wearing grubby fisherman garb, casts a fishing line into the ocean.

The old man pulls out a flask, sneaks a sip, stows it. He looks out over the ocean, then over to Jimmy. Curious, he walks over, stands in front of Jimmy.

OLD MAN

What's that you're readin'?

Jimmy looks up. Stares at the old man.

The old man gets a glimpse of the bruises on his face. Withdraws a bit.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Ah, sorry to bother ya', lad. I don't often get company at this end of the pier. Are you okay? I mean...

(gesturing to his own face)

Jimmy nods, then returns to his book.

The old man returns to his rod, looks out over the ocean, lights a pipe. He smokes for a BEAT, occasionally stealing glances at Jimmy...

...then the fishing rod begins to shake, the line gets taught.

Jimmy hears the reel clutch BUZZING, looks over at the old man.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

There ya' go, there ya' go!

Jimmy closes his book, watches the old man fight the rod.

The old man reels and tugs, reels and tugs, fights the catch with his pipe still in his mouth.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Come on, you bastard. I got ya'
this time! Arghhh!!!

Jimmy stands, looks over the pier railing, follows the line
in the water.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Today's your day, old man! I can
feel it!

Jimmy sees the old man struggling, but no fish yet. He
switches his gaze back and forth from the water to the old
man, then...

SNAP! The line breaks.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Ah, holy hell! Not again!

The old man leans over the rail, removes his pipe, yells out
into the ocean.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
See if I care! I have many more
days, mate! I'm comin' for ya'!

The old man sees Jimmy staring back at him.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Not the first time he's gotten
away. But I'll get'im. He knows it,
loves to toy with me.

The old man gestures him over, offers the rod to Jimmy.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Have a go at it?

Jimmy shakes his head no.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Come on, lad, give it a go!

Jimmy opens his mouth to speak, but shakes his head no
instead.

The old man becomes a bit annoyed at Jimmy.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
To hell with ya' then.

Jimmy picks up his backpack, shoves the book inside. He slings it over his shoulder, gives a shy smirk, and walks away.

The old man shakes his head, re-lights his pipe.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Jimmy sits in his room doing homework. Amy walks in, hands him a phone.

AMY

Your mum.

Jimmy takes it, Amy exits.

JIMMY

[Mum]

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)

[Your auntie sent me your school progress report. It looks like you're doing very well.]

JIMMY

[Yes, it's...okay.]

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)

[You don't sound very happy for someone getting good grades.]

JIMMY

[I'm tired, and I feel...]

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)

[Ah! Very busy boy. Hard work! Okay, you're father and I wanted to make sure you're doing good over there! Keep it up! Bye, bye!]

She hangs up before he can finish saying more.

He closes his study materials. Takes the phone...

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

...into the living room. He hands it to Amy.

AMY

Good?

He nods, and has a seat on the couch.

David sits in his chair, watches a Chinese program on the television, laughing at the show, disregarding Jimmy.

ON TELEVISION - A physical comedy. Actors are slapping each other around. Funny, but brutal.

Jimmy becomes uncomfortable with the violence portrayed on the television. David continues to laugh and giggle.

Jimmy gets up, walks into...

KITCHEN

...the kitchen and opens the refrigerator.

AMY

Don't eat food now. Almost time for dinner! Shoo! Shoo! Go!

DINING ROOM - MOMENT'S LATER

David, Amy, Jimmy eat. More slurping and scooping food. There are chicken feet, but it's not the main course this time. Today it's eggplant.

David immerses himself in a newspaper as he eats.

Amy passes Jimmy some chicken feet. Jimmy refuses. David dishes himself some eggplant then goes back to his paper.

Jimmy picks up the tea pot, fills each cup.

AMY

No "tripping" today, Jimmy?

JIMMY

No.

AMY

Your grades are good. I think your parents like that. We like that, too.

DAVID

[You're wasting your time. He doesn't like to talk.]

AMY

[I don't think that's true. Maybe he doesn't have anything to say right now.]

DAVID

[Not just right now. All the time,
la!]

AMY

Maybe he's a bit shy. Why don't you
two get to know each other more? Go
to a football game. Show Jimmy
around.

DAVID

[Huh?]

AMY

[Take him to a football game, show
him around.]

DAVID

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I busy during
week.

AMY

Maybe this Saturday.

DAVID

I busy Saturday.

AMY

No! You are not!
[You take him!]

David recoils. They engage in a staredown.

AMY (CONT'D)

This Saturday. Is that okay, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Sure.

INT. HOME - JIMMY'S ROOM - MORNING

Jimmy's ALARM goes off.

ON JIMMY - Eyes opening, staring at the ceiling. Takes a deep
breath. Bruises and facial discoloration has faded.

Jimmy gets out of bed, heads to his desk. He opens his diary.

ON DIARY - Jimmy writes, "Dear Diary. Why am I different?"

He pauses. Unable to continue. Drops the pen.

He walks to his closet, gets dressed in his school clothes.

He checks himself in the closet door mirror. Standing lazily, slightly slumped over, he lifts himself up, stands straight. He touches his face where the bruises reside.

After staring at himself for a BEAT, he exhales, slumps again.

He walks over to his diary. Picks up the pen.

ON DIARY - He writes, "*Why am I so fucking ugly?*" next to a manga picture of himself looking ugly.

He sketches quickly in his diary, then drops the pen, grabs all of his books and supplies, stuffs them into his backpack.

INT. SCHOOLYARD - MORNING

David drops Jimmy off at school. Drives away.

Jimmy walks through the courtyard, head down, as STUDENTS congregate and mingle before the morning bell.

Passing through the group, he looks up to see Charlie and his posse approaching. They make eye contact. He gets scared...

...looks for an out, retreats back through the group, then runs across the courtyard.

Charlie and his posse give chase.

ON JIMMY - Following him around the schoolyard, to the side of the school, then off of the grounds.

He finds thick brush to duck into.

The posse races past.

BEAT - Jimmy catching his breath.

No SOUND, all clear.

BEAT - Jimmy steps out of the brush...

...and finds the posse bearing down on him once again.

He tries to run, but feels a tug on his backpack...stopping him in his tracks.

CHARLIE
Not so fast!

Jimmy is taken to the ground. They begin kicking him violently in the stomach and head. They crush and stomp his hands and legs like a cereal packet.

We feel every cruel, brutal, and inhumane blow.

The posse backs off a bit, laughing hysterically.

Charlie picks up a large stone.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You're gonna run from me? Good!
Because you don't belong here.
You're an outsider, and your kind
isn't welcome at our school.

Charlie raises the stone over his head, ready to deal a crushing blow. Then...

A TEACHER sees the boys at the edge of the school grounds.

TEACHER
Let's break it up, boys!

The school bell RINGS. Charlie watches as everyone heads for the building.

CHARLIE
It's your lucky day, slant eyes.

The posse leaves Jimmy on the ground, holding his stomach, curled up in pain.

Vijay approaches, helps Jimmy up by the arm.

VIJAY
Sorry, mate. My dad was late
dropping me off.

Jimmy gives him a wry look, wipes blood from his mouth.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
Remember what I told you. I can't
be there all the time. You gotta
fight back.

Jimmy tears away, rushes into the school.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Jones has a drawing of the sun on the board. He draws lines out from various points of the sun.

The class is quiet. Jimmy observes.

MR. JONES

It's the same reason we can put our hands in a 200 degree oven momentarily and not get burnt. It's called convection.

Mr. Jones turns to the class.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

Let's do a little experiment. Wave your hands in the air like this.

(waves, watches the class do the same)

Now, what do you feel? Nothing, right? Ambient air temperature.

Julian sits behind Jimmy, chewing gum, twirling his pencil. Not interested in the activity.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

Okay, hands down. Now, grab the metal legs of your chairs. What do you feel?

The class abides, then unanimously responds with, "COLD!"

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

Wrong! It's the same temperature as the air in this room. Now, let's do it again. Hands up, wave them...

Julian removes the gum from his mouth, sticks it to Jimmy's chair. Charlie and Christopher notice.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

...and grab the legs.

Jimmy's hand squishes into the gum. He pulls his hand back disgusted, gum sticking and stringing from the leg to his hand.

The posse laughs, satisfied of the prank.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

Something funny over there, boys?

Mr. Jones sees Jimmy trying to remove the gum.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)
Ah, I see.

Mr. Jones walks over to Jimmy's desk.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)
When you've released yourself from
your bonds, please go to the office
and explain to the head why you
were chewing gum in my class.

JIMMY
But...

MR. JONES
Now.

INT. SCHOOL - HEAD OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Through the window, we see Jimmy being chastised by the HEAD through indistinct dialogue. Jimmy nods in agreement. Looks sad, defeated.

EXT. ARCADE - DAY

Jimmy looks up at the arcade entrance sign.

INT. ARCADE - DAY

Jimmy shoots up the targets on his favorite game. He's immersed and a long stream of tickets dangle out of the dispenser.

A HAND reaches down and rips them out of the dispenser.

Jimmy finishes the game, places the gun back in its rest. He looks down and sees no tickets.

He quickly looks around and sees no one. Discouraged and defeated, he heads for the entrance.

Passing by the ticket redemption booth, he sees the three boys trading tickets for prize items.

The boys watch Jimmy pass by, give him a dirty look, then start laughing.

EXT. BLACKPOOL PIER - DAY

Jimmy sits in his usual spot, reads his book.

The old man approaches with his pole and bucket. He sets up as he chats with Jimmy.

OLD MAN
Hey there, lad.

JIMMY
Hello.

OLD MAN
Well, that's new to me. You can speak!

Jimmy closes his book. Puts it in his pack. He stands and approaches the old man.

JIMMY
May I try...sir?

The old man is surprised. Wasn't anticipating this.

OLD MAN
Absolutely! But on one condition.

Jimmy nods.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Don't take four years to make a catch...like me!

Jimmy barely cracks a smile.

The old man hands him the pole.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Has your dad ever taken you fishing?

Jimmy, saddened by the question, shakes his head no.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
That's okay! Quite all right, lad!
We'll do this together, yeah?

The old man grabs bait out of his bucket, a sardine. He places it on the hook.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You gotta make sure the bait is sure and fixed on the barb, or you'll lose it straight away.
(shows him)
Like this. Yeah?

Jimmy nods.

JIMMY
What is the bait?

OLD MAN
Sardines. Turns out fish like them
more than people do!

The old man sets the bail on the reel.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Okay, when the bail is pulled back,
the line is loose and ready to
cast. Got it?

Jimmy nods.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Hold the line with your finger
tight against the rod, give her a
good swing, then release your
finger. The weights will pull the
line out. Yeah?

Jimmy nods, pulls the rod behind his shoulder and tosses. The
line, bait, and weights wrap around the pole.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Ah, see, you forgot to let go. Try
again.

The old man unwinds the line, resets.

Jimmy rears back, gives the rod a good toss. The line sails
out over the railing and into the water.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Good! Now set your bail.

Jimmy looks at him confused.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
This here.

He sets the bail on the reel. It CLICKS.

JIMMY
Now what?

OLD MAN
You wait.

JIMMY

How long?

OLD MAN

Uh, that depends. For me it's been
a lifetime.

Jimmy looks at him surprised.

The old man chuckles. Pats Jimmy on the back.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I won't keep ya' here
that long.

DISSOLVE TO:

DOCK - LATER - SUNSET

The sun is setting and the old man and Jimmy look out over
the rail. The old man is telling sea stories...

OLD MAN

...towing the marlin in to shore,
well, the sharks decided they
wanted it more than I did.

JIMMY

Were you afraid of dying out there?

OLD MAN

No. I don't fear death. Never have.

Jimmy ponders.

The old man smokes his pipe. Looks over at the rod.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Looks like it isn't gonna happen
today.

Jimmy looks at his watch.

JIMMY

It's getting late.

Jimmy grabs his pack, walks a few steps...

OLD MAN

I never got your name!

Jimmy turns around.

JIMMY
It's Jimmy.

The old man removes his pipe, salutes Jimmy.

OLD MAN
Here's to ya', Jimmy!

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy walks in. Amy stands by with her phone in her hand.

AMY
Where you been? I tried to call.
You never answer!

JIMMY
My battery...died. Sorry.

David sits at the table eating, ignoring Jimmy and Amy.

AMY
The school sent a notice. You got a
warning for chewing gum!

JIMMY
It wasn't me.

AMY
Huh?

JIMMY
Some kids put it on my chair.

Amy takes a step back. Looks Jimmy up and down.

AMY
Some kids...

JIMMY
Yeah. Wasn't me.

AMY
Go to the table before your uncle
eats everything.

DISSOLVE TO:

DINING ROOM - LATER

David reads a copy of the South China Morning Post. Amy and Jimmy shovel rice into their mouths.

Amy's phone BUZZES. She picks up.

AMY

Wei...

She continues to eat while listening/talking.

AMY (CONT'D)

[When? Oh, okay, yeah. Finish and stop by. You can see Jimmy again. So big now! Okay, bye, bye!]

DAVID

Fanny?

AMY

[She will stop by tomorrow. Stay for a couple of days. Jimmy can stay on the couch so she can have her room back. Okay, Jimmy?]

Jimmy nods, continues to eat.

INT. HOME - JIMMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy at his desk, writes in his diary.

O.S., we HEAR Amy and David ARGUING. The indistinct VOICES drive Jimmy crazy.

He grabs his headphones, plugs them into his phone. He searches for a playlist, resumes his diary entry.

ON DIARY - A MUSICAL MONTAGE OF JIMMY WRITING/DRAWING - Jimmy writes, *"Dear Diary, I am at the end of my rope. I don't know if I can take it much longer."*

JIMMY (V.O.)

The loneliness is more than I can bear, and I hurt all over. I hate it here. I hate my life. I hate my school and the ignorant teachers. I hate my parents for sending me here. I miss home and don't know if I'll ever see it again. I'm stuck. I want out. Soon.

Jimmy finishing up the sketch. We see an image of his Manga self barely holding onto a rope. At the top of the rope, the posse, his aunt and uncle, the teachers...looking down at him with knives pressed against the rope.

Jimmy finishes the sketch, places the pen down.

He stares at the image for a BEAT, then rips it out of the diary. He crumples the page, tosses it into the rubbish bin.

He takes to his bed, drops face first into his pillow...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOME - JIMMY'S ROOM - MORNING

...where he remains until his ALARM goes off.

He wakes up, turns over, realizes he's still in his clothes from the day before.

He stands and approaches the mirror. Takes a deep breath.

INT. HOME - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Jimmy sits at the table, stoic, blank-faced.

Amy brings him a bowl of soup broth.

AMY

You going to wear the same thing
today?

Jimmy picks up a spoon, takes some of the broth.

He puts the spoon down, picks up the bowl and drinks from it.

AMY (CONT'D)

You okay?

He nods.

AMY (CONT'D)

Sorry we got upset yesterday. We
want to make sure your parents know
you're okay...that you're doing
well in school.

Jimmy finishes, puts the bowl down. Stares at Amy.

AMY (CONT'D)

I'm not stupid, okay? I know you're
not having a great time right now.
We can see that. It's not easy
going to a strange place and
starting over. We understand that.

Jimmy stands, grabs his backpack.

JIMMY
You have no idea.

Amy closes her eyes, shakes her head in disbelief.

David comes out of the back room. Has his car keys in hand.
Approaches the table.

DAVID
Ready to go?

A concerned look on her face, Amy watches David and Jimmy leave.

INT. CAR - MORNING

David drives, another silent commute to Jimmy's school. They pass by a football field. Jimmy takes notice, then...

JIMMY
Is this where we're going Saturday
for the game?

DAVID
Huh?

JIMMY
[Football. You said you would take
me.]

DAVID
[No time. Too busy.]

JIMMY
[Auntie talked to you about this.
You agreed.]

DAVID
No, la! Too busy!

Jimmy sighs. Becomes saddened, dejected.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - MORNING

Jimmy walks towards the school as David drives away.

Vijay approaches Jimmy.

VIJAY
Jimmy!

Jimmy is actually happy to see Vijay.

JIMMY

Hey.

VIJAY

You okay, man? Look, I'm sorry--

JIMMY

--it's okay.

VIJAY

Really?

JIMMY

Yeah. It's okay.

Vijay pats Jimmy on the shoulder. They head across the schoolyard.

INT. SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - MORNING

Jimmy and Vijay are stopped by the posse.

CHARLIE

Ladies? Let me ask you a question.
How is it that a school such as our
beloved Presley Downs allows sewer
rats to enroll in the curriculum?
Who's dick did you have to suck to
get in here anyway?

Vijay looks down at Charlie's crotch.

VIJAY

Someone more, ehem, distinguished
than you, little man.

Jimmy holds back a giggle. Charlie gets in Vijay's face.

CHARLIE

Oh, you think that's funny, guy?

Vijay notices a cut on Charlie's face.

VIJAY

What happened to your face?

CHARLIE

Cut myself shaving. Fuck off!

Vijay and Jimmy press on, walking towards their respective classes.

The posse look on, pissed off, needing redemption.

INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Jimmy and Vijay share a table, eat their lunches.

JIMMY
Thank you.

VIJAY
For what?

JIMMY
I don't know...I feel like...

VIJAY
Spit it out, man.

JIMMY
I get to enjoy my lunch for once.

VIJAY
What does that have to do with me?

JIMMY
Everything.

Vijay looks at Jimmy. Tries his best to analyze Jimmy's demeanor.

VIJAY
Don't get used to it. You still
need to find your own footing.

JIMMY
Can I ask you something?

VIJAY
Sure.

JIMMY
How do you do it?

VIJAY
Do what?

JIMMY
Ignore the abuse.

FLASHBACK - SCHOOL - VIJAY AND THE POSSE

SUPER - "TWO YEARS AGO"

Vijay in the toilet. Finishes his business, goes to the sink.

VIJAY (V.O.)
We had just moved to the area and I
was new to the school...

Charlie and his goons walk in.

VIJAY (V.O.)
The abuse became the norm.

The goons wrestle Vijay to one of the toilet stalls.

VIJAY (V.O.)
I told myself that it would be over
soon if I didn't fight back.

TOILET STALL - TOILET POV

The goons force Vijay's head into the dirty toilet.

VIJAY (V.O.)
I didn't understand it. I didn't
ask for it, and I wanted to kill
those guys as much as they wanted
to kill me.

BACK TO TOILET STALL

FROM ABOVE, we see the goons dunking Vijay's head into the
toilet over and over again.

The goons flush the toilet, pull Vijay back a final time.

VIJAY (V.O.)
A part of me died inside each time
I stepped foot in school.

SCHOOL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Charlie and his goons trip up Vijay. His big body slams
against the floor.

VIJAY (V.O.)
One day I just broke. I had enough.
I was ready to kill that Charlie
fucker.

Vijay stands, a menacing look on his face. He's had enough.

He grabs Charlie by the throat, lifts him off the ground, and
forces him against the wall/lockers.

Charlie gasps for air, Julian and Christopher try helplessly to get Vijay to release Charlie. They are no match for his size.

VIJAY (V.O.)
And I *was* going to kill him...

Charlie turns blue...begins to fade...

VIJAY (V.O.)
But a teacher broke us up.

A TEACHER approaches. Pushes Julian and Christopher out of the way.

TEACHER
Come on, now. Break it up, gents!

Vijay releases Charlie, he drops to the floor holding his neck.

VIJAY (V.O.)
I was expelled for two weeks.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

JIMMY
They don't touch you now.

VIJAY
They may not touch me physically,
but they still poke the bear using
words as weapons...as you've
noticed.

Vijay takes a bite of food. Ponders. Jimmy eats, listens intently.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
So, to answer your question, I
don't ignore the abuse. In a way, I
think I'd rather take a beating
than hear those hateful words. Cuts
and bruises heal, but what's in
here...
(points to his head)
...never goes away. It can't be
ignored, it can't be forgotten.

Jimmy ponders. Begins eating a chicken foot. He offers one to Vijay.

Vijay takes one from Jimmy's container. Looks at it, then proceeds to eat it peacefully.

They enjoy the food for a BEAT, a moment of peace.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
These aren't bad. May I have
another?

Jimmy smiles, hands Vijay the container. Vijay grabs one more, begins eating.

JIMMY
There's more where that came from.
(beat)
You busy after school?

VIJAY
No. Why?

JIMMY
I want you to meet someone.

EXT. BLACKPOOL - NORTH PIER - DAY

Jimmy and Vijay approach the end of the pier. Jimmy looks over to the Old Man's fishing spot. It's empty.

JIMMY
That's strange.

VIJAY
What's strange?

JIMMY
He's not here.

VIJAY
Who?

JIMMY
An old man. He fishes from here
every day.

VIJAY
Looks like he took the day off.

JIMMY
Yeah. Sorry.

VIJAY
It's okay. We can try another day.

Jimmy turns to walk back down the pier. In the distance he sees the Blackpool Tower. He looks over at Vijay who also has the tower in his sights.

INT. BLACKPOOL TOWER - DAY

Jimmy and Vijay look out at the ocean through the tower glass.

VIJAY
I like the view...

Vijay looks down between his feet. Sees the ground 500 feet below the glass floor.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
...as long as it isn't down.

Jimmy places his hand on the window. Loses himself in his thoughts as he stares out at the ocean.

JIMMY'S VISION - AERIAL - Flying out over the promenade then the pier. Jimmy enjoying the flight into the sunset. O.S., a phone RINGS, muffled, followed by Vijay's muffled VOICE.

BACK IN TOWER

VIJAY (CONT'D)
Jimmy! Your phone.

Jimmy snaps out of his trance. He reaches for his phone. Answers.

JIMMY
Hello.

AMY (V.O.)
Where are you, Jimmy?

JIMMY
In the tower.

AMY (V.O.)
When you coming home?

JIMMY
Soon.

AMY (V.O.)
Soon. What does that mean? When is soon?

JIMMY

On my way.

AMY (V.O.)

Okay, see you...SOON!

Jimmy hangs up.

VIJAY

Time to go?

Jimmy nods yes.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy walks into the house. It's empty. He walks upstairs to his room.

UPSTAIRS - OUTSIDE ROOM

Jimmy opens the door. Inside is his cousin, FANNY (20's), shirt off, changing clothes. They are both surprised.

JIMMY

Sorry!

She covers herself up as he quickly shuts the door.

Jimmy stands outside the door, gathers his thoughts, then returns to the living room.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy sits on the couch, watches television.

Fanny enters, stands before him.

FANNY

I guess I didn't give you any warning. Sorry about that.

JIMMY

No, I'm sorry. I should have knocked first.

FANNY

Do you always knock before going into your own room?

JIMMY

No.

FANNY

Then that's on me. Accept my apology?

She sticks her fist out, they bump.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Look at you! All grown up now. Last time I saw you, your mum and dad were wiping your ass on that very couch.

Jimmy looks down at the couch, a bit disgusted.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Tired of the chicken feet yet?

Jimmy nods yes.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Good, let's go grab a bite. Mom and dad decided to do some shopping and eat out. I told them I'd feed ya'.

EXT. RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON

Jimmy and Fanny sit at a table outside. They enjoy fish and chips.

FANNY

You don't talk much.

JIMMY

I have nothing to say.

FANNY

That's funny. I remember you being very chatty when you were small.

Jimmy continues to eat the tasty meal.

Fanny pulls a crumpled piece of paper from her pocket. She opens it, sets it in front of Jimmy. It's the Manga drawing he threw in the rubbish bin.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Having a bit of trouble here, are we?

Jimmy reaches over, grabs it.

JIMMY

That's mine.

FANNY

Was yours. You turned over rights
when you tossed it into the rubbish
bin.

Fanny reaches over, snatches it back from Jimmy.

Jimmy glares. Wipes his mouth with a napkin.

JIMMY

You gonna judge me, too?

FANNY

Far from it.

Jimmy looks confused.

FANNY (CONT'D)

You're quite an artist. This is
fabulous work. Quite an
imagination.

JIMMY

Thank you.

FANNY

But it is a shame.

JIMMY

What?

FANNY

That your only able to do it when
you channel your pain.

JIMMY

I don't--

FANNY

--ah, ah...don't deny it. Child
psychology is one of my studies.

JIMMY

I'm not a child--

FANNY

--says the boy who leaves his
soiled knickers under his...my bed.

Jimmy stands. The embarrassment too much.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Come on, sit down. Let's talk about
why you're struggling here.

Fanny gets up, walks behind Jimmy, presses down on his shoulders, forcing him back into his seat.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Come on. Have a seat.

JIMMY

You got that from a drawing? That I'm struggling?

FANNY

Not only that. You left a trail of tidbits all over the place. Not to mention your apparent and obvious demeanor...and the fact that my mum has a big mouth.

JIMMY

It's bad. I don't belong here at all.

FANNY

It's not easy starting over in a new place. I get it.

JIMMY

I don't think so. You were born here. I...I'm a fish out of water.

FANNY

So tell yourself you're not a fish out of water. Instead of being the fish. Be the water. Assimilate, smile, carry yourself with confidence. Your body language says a lot about you. Humans get one shot at that first impression. If you've already presented yourself as a victim, you will be treated as such.

JIMMY

I'm not like you. I don't think I can--

FANNY

--here, let's try something. You see these people passing by us? Some are locals, some may be tourists. They could use a good greeting once in a while.

JIMMY

How do you know that?

FANNY

Watch me.

Fanny focuses on a YOUNG MAN in a hoodie walking past the restaurant. She stands, waves, and greets.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Good day to you, sir. Beautiful day, isn't it?

YOUNG MAN

Ah, fuck off!

Jimmy shakes his head. Fanny bites her lip.

FANNY

Hey, I didn't say it works on everyone. It's a numbers game. Okay, here comes another.

A FAMILY OF FOUR pass by the restaurant. A husband, wife, and two kids.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Hello there! Beautiful day!

The husband looks at his wife, she shrugs her shoulders, then they all wave back, forcing smiles.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Just visiting?

The husband shrugs, continues to wave and smile.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Enjoy Blackpool!

Fanny sits back down.

FANNY (CONT'D)

See? They smiled. Probably made their day.

JIMMY

I'm sure.

FANNY

Have a girlfriend yet?

JIMMY

No.

FANNY

Why not?

JIMMY
Too shy. Too ugly.

FANNY
Oh, come on. I'm sure there's a lady out there who will find you to be the handsome paragon of manly virtue. You just have to be patient.

JIMMY
Do you?

FANNY
Do I what?

JIMMY
Do you think I'm a handsome paragon of...what?

Fanny stares at him, a serious look on her face. Then Jimmy starts to giggle.

FANNY
Oh, my word! You smiled!

They both have a laugh...finish their fish and chips.

EXT. NORTH PIER - LATER

Jimmy and Fanny walk towards the end of the pier.

JIMMY
Want you to meet someone.

As they approach, the end of the pier is empty. Nobody there.

Jimmy is saddened, looks around desperately.

FANNY
Who is it?

JIMMY
I don't understand. He's here every day!

FANNY
Who?

JIMMY
The old man. He fishes from that spot every day!

FANNY
Maybe he went home for the day? It
is getting late.

JIMMY
Yeah...yeah, sure.

INT. HOME - EVENING

Jimmy and Fanny arrive, close the front door behind.

David sits on the couch watching tv. Amy puts groceries away.

AMY
Ah, good timing. Help me with these
groceries?

Jimmy carries two bags in the kitchen.

Fanny sits by her dad. He looks over at her, smiles, then
resumes his tv program.

DAVID
[Good to see you. How is school in
Birmingham?]

FANNY
[It's good.]

DAVID
[Graduation next year...right?]

FANNY
[Yeah, dad, I'm doing great. Hey I
want to ask you about Jimmy.]

DAVID
[Jimmy's doing great, too.]

FANNY
[He's not.]

DAVID
[What do you mean? He has good
grades.]

FANNY
[That doesn't mean he's doing
great.]

DAVID
[Then what is it?]

FANNY

[He's being bullied in school, for one.]

DAVID

[Ah, school is where he will become a man. He will learn this. That is why it's called school.]

FANNY

[This is not China, dad. It's fucking wrong!]

Fanny storms out of the room. David is left with a puzzled look on his face.

EXT. SCHOOL - JIMMY'S DREAM - MORNING

Jimmy wears a Manga-like outfit with a cape and carries a cardboard sword. IN SLOW-MO, he walks confidently across the school grounds.

STUDENTS immediately take notice. They part, allowing him to pass through to...

INT. SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - JIMMY'S DREAM - CONTINUOUS

The main corridor...he's all alone except for...

Charlie at the other end of the corridor, also holding a cardboard sword. They stand face to face, several meters apart. A showdown.

JIMMY

Bring it!

CHARLIE

I'm gonna tear you a new asshole!

They both race for each other, swords carried forward, mouths wide open.

They meet in the middle, swords strike. The flimsy weapons bend and fold with each strike and blow.

Jimmy gets the upper hand, trips Charlie to the ground. He jumps in the air, brings the sword down into Charlie's gut.

Charlie's eyes widen as he holds Jimmy's sword...then his body goes limp.

Jimmy stands proud, a leg on Charlie's chest, hunter/killer.

The STUDENTS have filtered into the corridor, cheering and clapping. Then...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy sleeping on the couch, tosses and turns.

Fanny in her pajamas, holding a glass of water, wakes him up.

FANNY
Jimmy! Hey, Jimmy!

Jimmy comes to, is surprised to see Fanny.

JIMMY
Wha...?

FANNY
Helluva dream. Kick some ass, did ya'?

Jimmy tries to hide himself in the blanket.

FANNY (CONT'D)
I brought you some water.

Jimmy takes the glass, downs the whole thing.

JIMMY
Thanks.

Fanny notices his diary on the table next to the couch.

ON DIARY - The page is open to his Manga character holding a sword, standing atop Charlie in victory.

Jimmy reaches over, closes the book.

FANNY
Have you spoken to your parents about your struggles here?

JIMMY
Yes.

FANNY
And?

JIMMY
They are only interested in my grades.

FANNY

That can't be entirely true. I know your mum and dad. They love you and want the best for you.

JIMMY

You don't understand. Before I left to come here, my dad was all about me becoming a man...

(drinks)

They don't want to hear about my weaknesses, and I don't want to shame them with my failures.

FANNY

Try to get some rest.

Jimmy nods, sets the glass on the table and rolls over with the blanket.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Jimmy hears FEET, SHUFFLING, CAR KEYS...VOICES.

He opens his eyes, sits up.

Fanny and Amy get their jackets and purses and head for the door.

JIMMY

Where are you going?

AMY

Girls day. Shopping!

JIMMY

Where's uncle?

AMY

He got called into work. Sorry, Jimmy, no football game today.

Feeling left out, Jimmy sighs.

AMY (CONT'D)

It's okay, you won't have fun shopping for panties and bras with us anyway. We'll bring you back a fancy dessert, how's that?

Jimmy frowns as the girls rush out.

EXT. NORTH PIER - DAY

Jimmy sits at the end of the pier, reads his book.

The old man approaches, rod and bucket in hand. He bends down, looks at the cover of Jimmy's book. We see Jimmy's eyes over the book edge only.

OLD MAN
Still reading that same tiny book?

JIMMY
Yes.

OLD MAN
Seems to me you could have finished
it in one sitting.

JIMMY
This is my tenth time reading it.

OLD MAN
Must be one hell of a story.

The old man rises up, heads over to his side of the railing.

Jimmy continues to read.

The old man baits the rod. He lights his pipe. Presents the rod to Jimmy.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Have a go today?

Jimmy closes his book. He stands, grabs his pack, and removes a can of sardines.

He walks over, hands it to the old man.

JIMMY
Bait.

OLD MAN
For me?

JIMMY
For the...you know...the fish.
Bait.

OLD MAN
Ah! That's great, lad. Thank you.
Much appreciated.

The old man opens the can of sardines. He takes one out and pops it into his mouth.

Jimmy looks surprised.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Oh, I do love me a good sardine.

JIMMY
That's bait.

OLD MAN
No, that's bait.

He points to his bucket containing whole sardines.

He pops another in his mouth, offers one to Jimmy.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
This is a most heavenly snack! And
they're the Portuguese variety as
well. Thank you, kind sir.

The old man hands Jimmy the rod. Jimmy places his pack on the ground and accepts.

Jimmy checks the bait, pulls back the bail, and casts the line. He sets the bail and they wait.

Jimmy turns and sees the old man finishing the sardines. He notices some oil on the corner of the old man's mouth. Gestures for him to remove it.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Ah, thank you.

The old man notices that Jimmy wants to say something, but is holding back.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Ooh, I know that look. Go on...

JIMMY
I don't have many friends.

OLD MAN
I gathered.

JIMMY
Well, I do have one friend. Vijay.

OLD MAN
Ah, there ya' go. One friends is
better than no friends.

JIMMY

I brought him out here to meet
you...but you weren't here.

OLD MAN

That's strange.

JIMMY

I thought so, too.

OLD MAN

I'm here every day, rain or shine.
Have been for the last thirty
years!

JIMMY

But you weren't.

OLD MAN

Oh, I was.

JIMMY

Actually, it happened twice. I also
brought my cousin, Fanny, here. You
weren't here then either.

OLD MAN

I don't know what to tell you, lad.
I never miss a day!

JIMMY

You think I'm making it up.

OLD MAN

Oh, no, no, no, no. I think you're
being entirely honest and truthful.
I just can't explain it for ya',
that's all.

JIMMY

So, if I come back tomorrow with my
friend, you'll be here?

OLD MAN

Like I said, I never miss a day!

Jimmy forces a smile, stares at the fishing rod.

JIMMY

Can I ask you a question?

OLD MAN

Ask away.

JIMMY

Do you really think this is the best fishing spot?

OLD MAN

No. I don't think it is.

JIMMY

Then why do you keep fishing here?

OLD MAN

Well, there's more to fishin' than just...fishin'. Right lad?

JIMMY

I don't understand.

OLD MAN

Look at us. You, me, this place, our conversations. It's always been my belief that the fish are out there to bring good people together. In a silly way, we're the ones being caught, wouldn't you say?

JIMMY

I guess so.

OLD MAN

And the byproduct of our efforts can sometimes fill our bellies. Right?

JIMMY

Yeah...

OLD MAN

Ah, don't get me wrong. I curse every day I leave this place empty-handed.

(beat)

But there's something more important I take with me every day, and it's bigger than any fish.

JIMMY

What's that?

The old man looks out over the ocean. He pulls out his pipe, loads it, then lights it. He takes a big puff and exhales happily.

OLD MAN

This.

The old man then turns and points at Jimmy's head.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

This.

He then points at Jimmy's heart.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

This.

Jimmy nods, he gets it.

INT. HOME - LATER

Jimmy walks into the house. The girls have returned and are pulling garments out of their bags from their shopping haul.

Amy holds up a bra, models it.

AMY

Jimmy! What do you think?

JIMMY

Nice.

Amy pulls out a blouse from her bag, holds it up against Fanny.

AMY

And I bought this for Fanny. Good?

JIMMY

Yeah. Good.

FANNY

He doesn't like it.

AMY

Of course he does.

FANNY

No. He doesn't--

JIMMY

--No...I do. It's nice.

Fanny stares him down. Looking for the lie.

FANNY

You're not convincing me.

JIMMY

I don't have to. Go look in the mirror.

Fanny runs over to the bathroom. There is a BEAT, and she returns.

FANNY

Okay. I'll keep it.

JIMMY

Hey, I need to get a fresh set of clothes out of my...er, your room.

FANNY

Go ahead. Don't mind the mess, though.

INT. JIMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy walks into the room, closes the door behind.

He notices clothes and towels hanging from furniture and on the floor, the bed unmade.

He walks over to the desk, sees Fanny's school books.

He walks over to the closet, but something on the bed catches his eye.

He gets close, sees a pink, egg-shaped device with a small cord attached.

Suddenly, the door SMASHES open, Fanny barges into the room.

FANNY

I just...um...realized, that I, uh, forgot something!

She races over to the bed, picks up the device.

Jimmy watches, has no clue what the device is or why Fanny needs it.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Yeah. You know I get neck cramps and this helps.

She turns it on and off. Smiles nervously.

JIMMY

I think I need one of those.

FANNY
No, you...don't.

JIMMY
But my neck is sore from sleeping
on the couch.

FANNY
Oh, no. It doesn't work on men. I
mean, what I'm trying to say
is...men have bigger...um necks.
It's only for ladies.

JIMMY
So the one for men is bigger? Do
they have them at Tesco?

Fanny hides the device in her pocket, points Jimmy to the closet.

FANNY
I'll only be here one more day,
then you can have the bed back.
Then your neck will be better.
Yeah?

Jimmy nods, walks into the closet.

Fanny exhales with relief.

FANNY (CONT'D)
So...how was your day?

JIMMY (O.S.)
Good.

FANNY
Where did you go?

JIMMY (O.S.)
Fishing.

FANNY
So the old man was there today?

JIMMY (O.S.)
Yep.

Jimmy walks out of the closet, a bundle of clothes in his hand.

FANNY
Hey, thanks for being cool about
the massager.

JIMMY
Oh, no problem.

FANNY
And if you could just keep it
between us, that would be even
cooler. I don't want to worry my
mum about my...sore neck.

Jimmy nods.

EXT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fanny has her bags in hand, stands by the entrance.

Amy and David give her a big hug.

AMY
Be safe. And call us when you get
back to Birmingham.

FANNY
Yes, mum. Jimmy, you have my
number. If you need to chat, give
me a call. Okay?

Jimmy nods, gives her an awkward hug.

FANNY (CONT'D)
And if you ever draw me in one of
your books, I want green hair and a
rocket launcher. Yeah?

JIMMY
Yeah. Sure.

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Vijay and Jimmy walk towards the school.

VIJAY
Good weekend?

JIMMY
Okay, I guess.

VIJAY
Look, Jimmy, I'm afraid I have some
bad news.

JIMMY
How bad?

VIJAY
Not bad...bad. Just, you know, it's
just...I have to leave.

JIMMY
Leave?

VIJAY
We're moving.

JIMMY
Where? When?

VIJAY
Two more days here, then off to a
new school in Birmingham.

Jimmy's spirits sink. He doesn't have the words.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I don't want to go. I
think you're a pretty cool
dude...but my parents--

JIMMY
--It's okay.

VIJAY
I'm not abandoning you.

JIMMY
I know.

VIJAY
We're mates. Stay in touch, right?

They approach the school entrance. Jimmy opens the door for Vijay.

VIJAY (CONT'D)
How about we hit the arcade and
pier again after school?

JIMMY
You got it.

INT. ARCADE - PRIZE SHOP - DAY

Jimmy and Vijay look through the prize shop. They both have a handful of redemption tickets.

VIJAY

I don't know. Too many tickets for candy, and not enough for the game console.

Vijay hands Jimmy his tickets.

JIMMY

What are you doing?

VIJAY

I'm leavin' anyway. Might as well save them up for your next visit.

JIMMY

No. You--

VIJAY

--take them. Seriously. I'll just buy more candy and I don't need that. My teeth are fucked as it is.

Jimmy smiles, accepts the tickets. He shoves them into his backpack.

EXT. NORTH PIER - LATER

Jimmy and Vijay are mid-pier, heading for the end.

VIJAY

You'll need to stand up. Be strong.

JIMMY

I'm one. They're many. I don't have your size or strength.

VIJAY

Outwit them. Be smarter.

JIMMY

How?

VIJAY

Take advantage of their weaknesses. Remember, you're smarter than all of them together.

Vijay's phone RINGS. He answers.

VIJAY (CONT'D)

Hello.
Yes.
Yes.

(MORE)

VIJAY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Yes.

Okay.

Bye.

He hangs up. Stops walking.

VIJAY (CONT'D)

Looks like this is it. I have to go.

Jimmy's disappointment stands out. He becomes upset.

JIMMY

But I really want you to meet the Old Man.

VIJAY

Gonna have to wait for another day, mate. I have to race back home now.

JIMMY

Tomorrow?

VIJAY

Packing tomorrow. Won't have time. I won't be at school either, so this is goodbye for now.

JIMMY

For now?

VIJAY

It's not forever. I'll come visit. Promise.

JIMMY

When?

VIJAY

Summer break?

Jimmy remains disappointed. Sighs.

Vijay backs away, picking up his pace as he leaves the pier.

VIJAY (CONT'D)

I have to run. So sorry. I'll chat you up soon!

END OF DOCK - LATER

Jimmy approaches, sees the old man fishing, smoking his pipe.

OLD MAN
I was wondering if you'd make it
today.

JIMMY
I was at the arcade with my friend.

OLD MAN
Would love to meet your friend.

JIMMY
We tried. But...

Jimmy trails off, looks out over the ocean.

The old man steps closer, they both gaze off into the
horizon.

OLD MAN
Want to talk about it?

JIMMY
My one and only friend...

OLD MAN
...ehem...

The old man pulls out his pipe. Gives Jimmy a wry look.

JIMMY
I mean one of my only friends is
moving away.

OLD MAN
Sorry, lad. That's always
difficult.

JIMMY
He was my lifesaver at school.

OLD MAN
Then he taught you something.

JIMMY
All I did was hide behind him when
I got in trouble with the bullies.
I'm not sure I learned a great
lesson from that.

OLD MAN
I think you're missing the point.

JIMMY
What point?

OLD MAN

That in order to protect yourself,
you need to learn from those who
first spilt blood. I'll bet your
friend had some words of wisdom for
ya' when you felt helpless or lost?
Yeah?

JIMMY

Yeah. He did.

OLD MAN

Best friend to ever have is the one
who cares enough to let you into
their world of pain. They kindly
share a piece of themselves so you
can avoid the hell they've been
through. Understand?

JIMMY

I think so. Yes.

OLD MAN

Good. Then the rest is up to you.
Make good choices. You can always
make new friends. Be bold!

Jimmy nods.

They resume their gaze out over the ocean. Taking in the
ocean air.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Jimmy sits in class, chews gum.

Mr. Jones writes an assignment on the chalk board.

Jimmy starts to chew LOUDLY, blows a bubble. He continues
until Mr. Jones stops writing.

Jones turns, sees Jimmy blowing bubbles. He approaches.

MR. JONES

What have I told you about gum, Mr.
Wong?

Jimmy spits his gum at Mr. Jones. Jones becomes furious.

JONES

Go see the head. Now!

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - LATER

Jimmy sits in the office. He looks around, scanning the various cabinets and record-keeping files.

The administrator, a cranky older WOMAN (60's) approaches Jimmy.

WOMAN

Mr. Riggs will see you now.

HEAD OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy walks in. Takes a seat across from the desk of Principal (Head) RIGGS (50's).

Jimmy scans more. Looks at the file cabinets in the office. He spots the student file cabinet.

Riggs walks in. He's older in mind and spirit than his youthful body displays.

RIGGS

Mr. Wong.

He shuts the door behind, takes a seat.

RIGGS (CONT'D)

I've spoken with Mr. Jones and I'm aware of your silly act of...whatever that was. You do know that gum is not allowed in the school?

Jimmy nods.

RIGGS (CONT'D)

But you brought it anyway. You do realize this is your second visit to my office involving gum?

Jimmy nods.

RIGGS (CONT'D)

The fact that you had the gum, not once, but twice, upsets me. Further, and what really has me baffled, is why you felt compelled to spit your gum at Mr. Jones.

Jimmy shrugs his shoulders.

RIGGS (CONT'D)
You don't know? Or you don't want
to tell me?

Riggs gets up from his chair. Sits at the corner of his desk
top.

RIGGS (CONT'D)
Mr. Wong. I'm going to let you in
on a little fact.

Jimmy nods.

RIGGS (CONT'D)
(shouting)
We don't allow gum in this school!
Understand?

Jimmy's taken aback, recoils into his chair.

RIGGS (CONT'D)
Do you understand?

Jimmy nods.

RIGGS (CONT'D)
I want to hear a 'yes' out of you.

JIMMY
Yes.

Satisfied, Riggs returns to his chair. He picks up a pen and
scribbles something on a piece of paper. He then hands it
over to Jimmy.

RIGGS
Rather than expel you, I have a job
that needs attention.

JIMMY
Toilets.

RIGGS
Give our hard-working janitor a
break as he most certainly deserves
it. You'll clean the toilets for
one week. Take that note to our
janitor after school. He'll provide
you with all the tools you'll need.

Riggs folds his hands, stares at Jimmy.

RIGGS (CONT'D)
Dismissed.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The corridor is empty. Jimmy tucks the note paper in his pocket, looks around carefully for others.

He approaches one of the fire alarms. It's not far from the toilet. He pulls it, then ducks into the toilet.

The ALARM BLARES, moments later, students and staff pour out of classrooms.

INSIDE TOILET ROOM - STALL

Jimmy squats on top of the toilet in the last stall. O.S., the ALARM continues and we hear the SHUFFLING and CHAOS of students and teachers exiting the building.

O.S., we hear SOMEONE ENTER the toilet room.

PERSON (O.S.)
All clear, no one here...

Jimmy waits in the stall for the chaos to subside. With the ALARM still BLARING, he exits the stall, leaves the toilet room, heads into...

CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

...the corridor, slinks his way back into Mr. Riggs' office.

HEAD OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy approaches the file cabinets. He opens the cabinet at the end, with names in WXYZ.

ON CABINET FILE - He sifts through the "W" section, finds **Charlie Warner**.

He opens the file, searches through the papers. Finds Charlie's home address. He pulls his phone out, take a photo, then returns the file.

CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

He rushes out of the school, pretending to buckle his trousers.

Mr. Riggs stands at the school entrance, sees Jimmy fumbling.

RIGGS
Come on! Move it, Mr. Wong! Muster
in the courtyard!

JIMMY
Sorry! I was on the toilet!

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - CONTINUOUS

He joins the large CROWD of students. In the distance, SIRENS
can be heard.

Jimmy pulls his phone out, looks at Charlie's address.

INT. HOME - JIMMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy at his desk, writes and draws in his diary. He looks at
the clock on his desk, it reads 8:00p.m.

Jimmy puts on a dark hat and jacket. Leaves the room.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy passes by Amy and David as they watch television.

AMY
Where are you going?

JIMMY
For a walk.

AMY
Why?

JIMMY
Clear my mind, get some fresh air.

AMY
Not safe. Better stay here.

DAVID
[Let him go, la! He needs to grow
up sometime!]

AMY
(reluctant)
Don't be too long.

Jimmy nods, leaves the house.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Jimmy looks at the address on his phone. He approaches the street he was looking for.

He stands on the sidewalk and checks the address on his phone, matching it with a house across the street...Charlie's house.

EXT. CITY STREETS - CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jimmy quietly approaches the house. Hides in the bushes. All is quiet momentarily.

Jimmy rises up a bit to get a better look into the house.

JIMMY'S POV - He sees Charlie and his MOM and DAD through the window in silhouette. They exchange words, but indistinct. The words elevate, turning into SHOUTING.

Jimmy moves closer to the house, in another bush he hides.

JIMMY'S POV - We see that the SHOUTING has turned physical. Charlie's dad SMACKS Charlie with the back of his hand.

Jimmy sits and ponders.

FLASHBACK - SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Vijay and Charlie confronted by the posse.

VIJAY

What happened to your face?

CHARLIE

Cut myself shaving. Fuck off!

BACK TO SCENE - CHARLIE'S HOUSE

Jimmy watches as the abuse continues with Charlie and his dad.

With every hit and CRY, Jimmy squints and feels the pain himself. It becomes too much and he darts off across the street.

Jimmy walks down the street, alone, hands in pocket, head up.

ON JIMMY'S FACE - We see the welling up of tears in his eyes.

INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Jimmy sits at the table, alone again. He looks over at Vijay's spot, reflects.

He unpacks his lunch and begins eating.

Charlie and the posse approach, take a seat next to Jimmy.

CHARLIE

Hey, dickhead. What's for lunch?
More feet?

JIMMY

Beef chow fun.

CHARLIE

Chow what?

JIMMY

Beef and noodles.

Charlie takes it from Jimmy, hands it to Julian.

CHARLIE

Taste it.

JULIAN

Fuck that. You taste it!

Julian tosses it back to the table. It spills.

CHARLIE

Where's your girlfriend?

JIMMY

Your mom and I broke up a long time ago.

CHARLIE

Excuse me, nut sack?

Jimmy notices another blemish on Charlie's face.

JIMMY

Cut yourself shaving again?

Charlie becomes agitated. Can't believe what he's hearing from Jimmy.

CHARLIE

Where in the fuck did this shit come from? Are you trying to commit suicide right now, chink?

Jimmy stands, confronts Charlie face on.

JIMMY
Don't call me that, fuckface.

School STAFF mingle nearby. Charlie wants to fight, but withdraws...fumes...

CHARLIE
You're dead!

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Jimmy walks out of the school at the end of the day. He heads for the buses.

Charlie and his posse approach Jimmy. Jimmy has a relaxed, half-smile look on his face.

JIMMY
Hey, fuckface.

Charlie's had enough with Jimmy. Charlie and his posse drag Jimmy into a secluded spot next to the school.

CHARLIE
What's up with you, chink dog? Why so bold all of a sudden?

JIMMY
What's up with you? Tell me about those marks on your face.

Jimmy takes a step closer to Charlie despite being held by Julian and Christopher.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
How does it feel when he hits you?

CHARLIE
Excuse me?

JIMMY
He hits your mum, too. Doesn't he.

Charlie knows immediately who he's referring to, becomes embarrassed, embraces denial.

Julian and Christopher look at Charlie curiously.

CHARLIE
What are you mouthing off about?

Jimmy points to one of the blemishes on Charlie's face.

JIMMY

He did that to you.

Charlie grabs Jimmy's hand by the finger. He wraps Jimmy's arm behind, spins him around in an arm lock.

Charlie uses his knee to collapse Jimmy's leg, forcing him to the ground.

CHARLIE

You think you can challenge me?
Huh, smart boy?

Jimmy fights the pain as Charlie continues to wrangle his arm behind his back.

JIMMY

Does...he love y-you and your m-m-mum?

Charlie punches Jimmy in the back of the head while holding him down with his knee.

Charlie looks up at Julian, gives him a nod to kick Jimmy.

Julian gives Jimmy a hard kick to the ribs. Jimmy GROANS, all of the air leaving his lungs. He lies there, nearly motionless.

CHARLIE

You don't talk about my mum! You know nothing about me! Nothing!

Charlie stands, spits on Jimmy, begins kicking him over and over again. Jimmy can no longer feel the pain.

Julian and Christopher pull Charlie back. He tears away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Let go of me!

Christopher steps in.

CHRISTOPHER

Hey, man. You're gonna kill him.

CHARLIE

That's the idea!

Jimmy coughs and sputters, begins giggling uncontrollably.

Charlie kneels beside Jimmy, grabs him by the hair. Jimmy giggles through the pain, blood covering his teeth and mouth.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You're one stupid dog, you know
that?

He drops Jimmy's head and grabs Jimmy's backpack. He opens it up.

Charlie pulls out Jimmy's favorite book, flips through it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Well, look what we have here. I
always wanted to read this one.

Jimmy reaches for it.

JIMMY
Put it...b-b-back.

CHARLIE
This is the one I always see you
readin'...but never finishin'. Must
be good. It's mine now, chink!

JIMMY
It belongs to the library.

Charlie grips the book, kisses it.

CHARLIE
No. It belongs to me.

Charlie stands, gathers his composure, adjusts his hairline with his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Keep this up, please. I'm really
enjoying our little meet-ups.

JIMMY
Next time he hits you...you need to
hit back.

Charlie pauses, then gives one more kick. He leaves hurriedly with the posse.

Jimmy pulls himself up, rubs his ribs and stomach, wipes the blood from his mouth. He reaches over and pulls his backpack into his lap, places spilled items back inside.

He struggles to stand, winces from the pain, slings his pack over his shoulder.

He wipes his mouth...smiles wryly, walks away.

EXT. NORTH PIER - DAY

Jimmy walks to the end of the pier. He searches for the old man, but the pier is empty.

The overlapping VOICES in his head appear. He presses his hands to his head.

VOICES (V.O.)

"I'm here every day, rain or shine.
Have been for the last thirty
years!..."

"It's not easy going to a strange
place and starting over...."

"Cuts and bruises heal, but what's
in here never goes away..."

"Chink dog..."

"What's that you're readin'..."

"What an imagination..."

"What an imagination..."

"What an imagination..."

He leans over the edge of the railing, stares at the water below. The VOICES continue repeating, over and over...

Jimmy tears away from the railing, runs along the pier, passing the shops, theater, and rides. TOURISTS and LOCALS stare at him as he races by.

NORTH PIER - STEPS TO BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy rushes down the steps, reaches the beach and takes off towards the pier underbelly.

Reaching the pier, he runs through it and onto the adjacent beach. The tide is out, the beach is massive, he's merely a speck.

Jimmy tires, slowly comes to a stop. He drops to his knees, breathing heavily.

He looks out over the beach and ocean, both of which begin to calm him down.

He pulls out his phone.

ON PHONE - Dialing Fanny...

Jimmy listens, it's goes to VM.

FANNY (V.O.)
I'm not available...well, not for a
chat anyway! Leave a message!

Jimmy hangs up, stows his phone. He looks back at the pier
and heads in that direction.

EXT. BLACKPOOL PIER - UNDERBELLY - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy walks under the pier, looks out through the beams and
supports.

He moves to the head of the pier, takes a seat on the piling
embankment holding the pier up.

He removes his diary from the zipper pouch on his backpack.

ON DIARY - "Dear Diary. Thought I was making progress,
thought I would stand up..."

JIMMY (V.O.)
...but the world isn't as simple as
everyone makes it out to be. Am I
crazy? Does any of this make sense?

Over his dialogue, he sketches the underside of the pier...

JIMMY (V.O.)
The voices remind me of how much of
a failure I am. A crushing blow to
my confidence, so how can I be
confident when evil is all around?
Doesn't matter who I talk to, the
end result is like walking through
ten miles of dog shit with rocks
tied around your ankles.

Jimmy continues his sketch, holds the diary up to the pier,
then resumes his sketch.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I want it to be over, but there is
no stop button, no fast-forward.
I'm stuck in play without the
ability to turn it all off. For
now, I think I'll just hang out
here...

Jimmy finishes his sketch. Admires his work.

ON DIARY - A Manga image of Jimmy hanging by noose from one of the trusses under the pier, eyes bulging, tongue out.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

David drops Jimmy off at school. Jimmy watches David's car speed off.

Jimmy sees the school, the other KIDS filing in. He decides to turn and walk away from the school.

EXT. PROMENADE - MORNING

Jimmy walks down Victoria street, it's early, all shops are closed, the street is empty.

He makes his way out to the arcade entrance. It's closed.

He looks across the street towards the North Pier. Cars cross and the trolley makes a pass as well.

EXT. NORTH PIER - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy walks to the end of the empty pier. He takes a seat in his usual spot. He looks at his watch.

He pulls his diary out, begins sketching again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NORTH PIER - LATER

Jimmy hunched over, asleep, the diary pages blowing in the breeze.

ON DIARY - We see a basic sketch of him with his mum and dad. Above their heads, the Chinese symbols for HOME (subtitle here.)

He awakens to the sound of seagull's CAWING. Then...SPLAT. He's showered with a stream of white goo. It covers his shoulder.

He looks at it, shakes his head, purses his lips.

There are PEOPLE on the pier now, it's much later. He checks his watch.

He grabs his backpack, looks at the old man's spot, sighs, then heads out.

INT. HOME

Jimmy enters, pulls off his pack.

Amy marches up to him, angry, shaking a finger at him.

AMY
Where have you been, mister?

JIMMY
School.

AMY
That's bullshit! You were *not* in school.

JIMMY
I'm tired.

Jimmy heads for the stairs.

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

Jimmy continues, heads to...

JIMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...his room and falls onto the bed.

Amy barges in.

AMY
[What is going on with you, Jimmy?]

A long pause, then...

JIMMY
[I don't want to be here! This is not home!]

AMY
[Right now, this is your home!]

JIMMY

[No! My home is where my parents are. Where I can walk down the street and be like everyone else! Where I can go to school and not have this shit kicked out of me! My home is where I am *accepted* for who I am, not rejected because of my skin color or the shape of my eyes!]

AMY

Jimmy, you're here to learn. All you have to do is get through school, and then you can go anywhere you want.

JIMMY

You do that all the time.

AMY

Do what?

JIMMY

Sweet talk, auntie. You try to make it sound like rainbows and unicorns, but it only makes it worse! You and uncle David don't give a shit about me. You're only hosting me here because my parents hosted Fanny...and you owe them a favor! You are evil!

Amy slaps Jimmy across the face.

Jimmy takes it, stands firm, stares into her eyes as tears well up.

AMY

We are doing this because we love you. Don't you ever, *EVER*, speak to me like that again.
[Do you understand me?]

Jimmy's mouth quivers, he searches for the words, can only nod.

AMY (CONT'D)

[If it's so bad here, then go. Tell your parents that you backed out when things got tough. Go on!]

Amy marches out of the room, SLAMS the door behind.

Jimmy pulls out his phone. Keys in his parents' number. He holds his thumb above the dial icon/key, hesitates, then cancels.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

David, Amy, and Jimmy sit at the table. Another slurpy meal, but Jimmy's not eating. He toys with his food and chopsticks.

DAVID
[Don't like the food?]

JIMMY
[Not very hungry right now.]

AMY
You need to eat.

Jimmy lays his chopsticks down.

JIMMY
I'm sorry I yelled at you, auntie.

AMY
Be sorry later. Eat now.

JIMMY
I will. But first, listen to me.
Please.

Amy rolls her eyes, but agrees with a reluctant nod.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Can you go to the school and talk
to the head?

AMY
Why?

JIMMY
There's these kids. Three of them.
They won't leave me alone.

AMY
Why can't you do it?

JIMMY
I'm already on everyone's shit
list.

AMY
Hey, the language!

JIMMY

Sorry.

DAVID

Fight back!

JIMMY

I tried that.

DAVID

[What about the big kid? Your friend?]

JIMMY

Vijay? He moved to Birmingham.

David continues eating. Not missing a beat.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Uncle David, can you try?

DAVID

Huh? Me? Oh, no, no. My English no good.

Jimmy steers his attention to aunt Amy. There is a brief stare-down.

AMY

Lei yau mou gaau cho ah!
(Are you kidding me?)

She eventually gives in to Jimmy's sad eyes...

INT. SCHOOL - HEAD OFFICE - DAY

Silhouetted through the window, Amy sits before Mr. Riggs. There is an unintelligible exchange of dialogue.

HEAD OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Amy wears her Sunday best. Sits before Riggs and listens.

RIGGS

...and this school has the best grade point averages in the area. Jimmy should be taking advantage of the opportunities the school has to offer.

AMY

I have no doubts about my nephew's intelligence, Mr. Riggs. He's a smart kid. Maybe smarter than most of your students. The problem is the bullying in school. That's where he struggles. He comes home sad, with bruises and cuts, stories of abuse. That's wrong, sir. Just wrong.

RIGGS

This school has one of the best physical education programs around. It's not uncommon for students to go home with a few bumps and bruises.

AMY

Bumps and bruises?

She slams her fist onto the table.

AMY (CONT'D)

These are not bumps and bruises!
These are...are...!

RIGGS

I completely understand, Mrs. Li. I shall have a word with the boys you mentioned. We'll put a stop to this. Sound good?

Amy nods reluctantly. She's not buying it.

RIGGS (CONT'D)

Remember, the door swings both ways, Mrs. Li.

AMY

What does that mean?

RIGGS

Jimmy needs to step it up, too. His attendance, his behaviour, it all works against him. And lately he's been spending too much time in that chair your sitting in.

AMY

It's because of your students!

He stands, approaches her chair.

RIGGS

As I said, we'll take care of it.
Now, if there's anything else we
can help Jimmy with, please don't
hesitate to call my office.

He offers to help her up.

AMY

I can move on my own!

Amy tears away, barges out of the room.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Charlie, Julian, and Christopher chase Jimmy around the
school in QUICK CUTS of SLOW MOTION running, tackling and
punching.

REMAINING SLOW MOTION - Jimmy trying to break free from the
posse, making a great effort, but failing in the end.

SCREAMS, PUNCHES, KICKS, SHOUTING...FADE INTO...

INT. HOME - DINING ROOM - EVENING

...Jimmy, David, and Amy at the dinner table.

AMY

I don't know what to tell you,
Jimmy. I spoke with Mr. Riggs. He
said he would take care of it.

JIMMY

He didn't. Nothing has changed.

DAVID

[School almost done for the year.
You can do it.]

JIMMY

Almost done? Two more months left,
uncle! Might as well be a lifetime!

Jimmy pushes his bowl away, sets his chopsticks down. He
leaves the table.

INT. JIMMY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy sits at his desk, phone to his ear with one hand, the
other hand sketching in his diary.

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)
Yes, Jimmy. But it's so close to
the end. You still have good
grades, right?

JIMMY
I guess. Not great, but okay.

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)
[You have made it this far. Do your
best to work with the system and
finish it out.]

JIMMY
[Work with the system?]

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)
[Studying abroad is not easy. We
knew this when we sent you there.
But we also knew you would embrace
the local customs and make the best
of your experience. We have faith
in you.]

JIMMY
[Mom! It's not working! There is no
embracing these bullies or the
teachers! I've had enough!]

We hear SHUFFLING on the other end of the phone. Jimmy's dad
is now on the line.

JIMMY'S DAD (V.O.)
[Jimmy! What have we taught you
about standing up for yourself?
Hmm? Was our time wasted teaching
you this?]

JIMMY
[No sir.]

JIMMY'S DAD (V.O.)
[Your auntie and uncle are doing
the best they can. Your school is
one of the best in England and we
made sure we picked only the very
best for you.]

Jimmy listens, pulls the phone away from his ear, Continues
to sketch.

JIMMY'S DAD (V.O.)
Jimmy! Jimmy, are you listening to
me?

JIMMY
Yes. I heard you.

JIMMY'S DAD (V.O.)
[Good. Your mother and I plan to
come to England after school is
out. You need to finish, Jimmy. Do
you hear me?]

Jimmy continues sketching.

JIMMY
[Yes, dad. Loud and clear.]

There is a SHUFFLING on the other end of the phone. Jimmy's
mom now back on line.

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)
Jimmy, we know you can do it. We
can't wait to see you when you have
finished.

JIMMY
Me, too.

JIMMY'S MOM (V.O.)
Okay, I go now. Will talk again
soon! Add oil! Add oil!

JIMMY
Thanks, mom.

Jimmy hangs up the phone, places it on the desk.

ON DIARY - We see a sketch of a noose as it covers the page.

HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Amy and David watch television. Jimmy passes through, heads
for the front door.

AMY
Where are you going now?

JIMMY
For a walk.

AMY
Homework done?

JIMMY
No homework today.

DAVID
[Did you speak to your parents?]

JIMMY
Yes.

DAVID
And?

JIMMY
[They want me to finish.]

DAVID
[Ah! There you go!]

Jimmy frowns, opens the door, slowly walks out.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jimmy walks up to the front door, pauses for a BEAT, then knocks.

Another BEAT, the door opens.

Charlie's mom, AGNES, haggard but young, greets Jimmy.

AGNES
Yes?

JIMMY
Uh...hi, Mrs. Warner. May name is Jimmy. Charlie and I are schoolmates.

AGNES
He's almost finished with dinner.
Would you like to come in and wait?

JIMMY
No! That's...okay. Umm...Charlie has a book of mine and I need to return it to the library.

Charlie's dad, CARL, yells from inside the house.

CARL (O.S.)
Who the fuck is it, Agnes? We're tryin' to eat!

AGNES
A friend of Charlie's. He's asking about a school book.

JIMMY

Uh...that's okay, Mrs. Warner. I'll come back another time.

Carl and Charlie approach the door behind Agnes.

Charlie and Jimmy make eye contact. Charlie is surprised and angry.

Carl is just plain rude and racist.

CARL

What can we do for you, Jackie Chan?

JIMMY

Charlie has a book of mine. I need to get it back.

CARL

Couldn't it wait for school tomorrow?

JIMMY

I need it for my book report. It's due tomorrow.

CARL

You have his book, Charlie?

CHARLIE

No. I don't have it. Nope.

Agnes looks at Charlie, knows he's lying...as does Jimmy.

AGNES

Maybe it's in your room, Charlie?

CARL

Agnes, if my boy says he doesn't have it, then he doesn't have it.

JIMMY

I really need that book, Charlie. Please.

CHARLIE

I never had your book!

Jimmy sighs, takes a step back. He makes eye contact with Agnes. They both know Charlie is full of it.

AGNES

If it shows up, I'll have Charlie
bring it to school. So sorry.

JIMMY

Thank you.

Charlie makes a throat-cutting gesture with his finger as the
door shuts.

MONTAGE - JIMMY'S NEW ROUTINE

- Waking up to the ALARM.
- Being dropped off at school, walking the other way.
- Mr. Jones' classroom, Jimmy's empty chair.
- Visiting the pier looking for the old man.
- Visiting the pier another day looking for the old man.
- And yet another day spent looking for the old man.
- Amy showing Jimmy a report card, slipping grades.
- Amy on phone with school about attendance.
- Jimmy sitting on Pier steps near shore, drawing a noose in
his diary.
- Jimmy in the North Pier Tower.
- Jimmy eating and arguing with aunt and uncle.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Jimmy walks to class. He passes by the Head office, sees
Charlie's mom, Agnes, speaking with the ADMIN ASSISTANT.
Agnes hands something to the assistant out of view.

He slows down, peeks in to get a better look. They finish
their conversation. Agnes heads towards the exit.

Jimmy nervously escapes unseen, heads for his class.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The bell RINGS, Jimmy gets up to leave. Mr. Jones stops him near his desk.

MR. JONES
Mr. Wong, before you go, I have
something for you.

Jimmy approaches apprehensively.

The posse whisper under their breath as they pass by.

POSSE
Ooooh...big trouble now...

The class empties.

MR. JONES
I'm going to recommend to the board
that you be transferred to another
school for next year's curriculum.

JIMMY
But...I...

MR. JONES
You have issues, plain and simple.
Attendance, assignments, the social
circle you isolate yourself from--
It's all preventable and easily
rectified.

Jimmy thinks, doesn't know what to say...then it hits him.

JIMMY
Maybe it's you, Mr. Jones. Maybe
it's everyone in this fucking
school! Racists! All of you!

Jimmy rushes to the door, it opens, he bumps into Mr. Riggs.

RIGGS
Oh, Jimmy. Just the person I need
to see. I have something for you.

Riggs holds out the book. Jimmy's anger becomes relief.

JIMMY
Where did you...?

RIGGS

Charlie Warner's mom dropped it off today. Said it was urgent that you get it back.

Jimmy grabs it, returns a disappointed look to Mr. Jones, nods to Riggs, then walks out.

EXT. NORTH PIER - DAY

Jimmy walks to the end of the pier. He sits in his usual spot. He takes out the book, begins reading it.

There is a BEAT, then the old man walks towards him, rod and bucket in hand.

OLD MAN

Well, I'll be damned. You did show up.

JIMMY

I'm here every day.

OLD MAN

Me, too.

JIMMY

No, you're not.

OLD MAN

I beg to differ, lad.

JIMMY

Why is it you're never here when I bring someone? Why is it your never here unless I have this book with me?

OLD MAN

You'll have to ask the man upstairs about that. I'm here every day. I wouldn't lie about that.

JIMMY

Maybe you're not real! Maybe you're just my imagination!

Jimmy stands, approaches the old man. He reaches out, touches the old man. He taps him on the shoulder, then touches his cheek with his finger.

OLD MAN

Satisfied?

Jimmy withdraws, becomes distant.

JIMMY
No...I...I...

Jimmy returns the book to his backpack, slings it over his shoulder.

Jimmy gives the old man a long, heartbreaking, and unpleasant look...then walks away.

OLD MAN
I'll see you tomorrow, lad!

Jimmy walks down the pier, leaving the old man behind.

EXT. BLACKPOOL - HARDWARE SHOP - LATER

Jimmy approaches a hardware shop. Looks up at the sign. He stands there for a BEAT, takes a breath, then walks inside.

CUT TO:

HARDWARE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy walking out of the hardware shop.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amy hovers the carpet, tidy's up the house a bit. She sees Jimmy walk in, gives him a nod, turns off the hoover.

AMY
How was school today?

Jimmy's eyes are intentionally averted away from her.

JIMMY
Good.

AMY
Everything okay?

Jimmy nods, forces a fake smile.

JIMMY
Good. Yeah. Got homework.
(points upstairs)

AMY
Dinner in an hour. Or after your
uncle gets home. Whichever comes
first.

Jimmy heads to his room.

JIMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy enters, sets his sights on the closet. He removes his
backpack, tosses it on the bed.

INSIDE CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

He quickly removes clothing from the rack, tosses it onto the
floor in a big pile.

With the clothing removed, the rod is exposed. He removes it
from the rod hanger.

IN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He tosses the rod to the floor and grabs his backpack, opens
it.

He pulls out a bundle of thin rope and two J-hooks with
coarse threads, industrial grade.

O.S., we hear the hoover FIRING UP again.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amy hoovers the living room, being sure to pick up anything
in her way.

JIMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy has the J-hooks screwed into the ceiling and the rod
suspended between them.

He works on tying the rope while watching a YouTube video how-
to on Fanny's old computer.

Satisfied with his work, he holds it up, opens the loop wide,
sizes it up to his head. He drops it on the floor and begins
writing in his diary.

ON DIARY - "Good bye mum and dad. I can't deal with the pain any longer and it's come to this. I'm sorry I failed you. I love you. The End."

He shuts the diary, turns the computer off.

He takes the chair and positions it under the rod, then loops the rope over. He ties it off then stands precariously on the chair.

Jimmy grabs the rope and places it over his head and around his neck. He cinches it tightly...

He takes a deep breath...

Stands emotionless...

Looks at the Blackpool tower tickets on the wall...

Closes his eyes...

JIMMY'S VISION - Standing in the Blackpool Tower, looking down through the floor, stepping into the fall, then...

A RING from his phone. He opens his eyes, nearly falls from the chair.

He reaches in his pocket, sees it's Fanny calling. He pauses, lets it ring, doesn't want to answer. Switches it off and tosses it to the bed...

He loses his balance, the chair gives out...

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amy finished with the Hoover, turns it off. She places it back into its closet. Then...

CRACK! THUD! The ceiling shakes and Amy looks up. She immediately runs to Jimmy's room.

JIMMY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She races in to see Jimmy lying on floor, body bent backwards, pieces of the chair pile up under his back, the rod broken in two.

AMY

Jimmy!!!!

His eyes are wide open as is his mouth, but he's motionless, laboring.

Amy rushes over, kneels down and tries to get a response from Jimmy.

AMY (CONT'D)
Jimmy!!! What did you do????!!!!
Jimmy!!!! Jimmy!!!

Jimmy's eyes are fixed ahead, no movement.

Amy continues to get Jimmy's attention, her CRIES slowly FADE into the ether...

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER - "SIX MONTHS LATER"

EXT. NORTH PIER - DAY

A wheel rolls along the weathered planks of the pier.

We PULL BACK to reveal Jimmy being pushed by his MUM and DAD in a wheelchair.

They reach the end of the pier, park Jimmy next to the railing.

He pulls himself up from the chair with his father's help.

JIMMY
I got it, dad.

Jimmy struggles, but manages. His dad backs away.

Jimmy takes in the ocean air, looking out over the water.

OLD MAN (V.O.)
*"...there's something more
important I take with me every day,
and it's bigger than any fish."*

JIMMY (V.O.)
"What's that?"

OLD MAN (V.O.)
"...this...this...this..."

Jimmy tears up, his legs start to wobble.

JIMMY'S DAD
Here, son. Sit back down.

Jimmy returns to the chair, takes a deep breath.

He reaches into the chair pouch, pulls out his book. We finally get to see the cover and title...

ON BOOK - "*The Old Man and the Sea*"

Jimmy brushes the cover with his hand, rolls it up, wedges it into the webbing on the railing.

Jimmy's dad kneels before Jimmy.

JIMMY'S DAD (CONT'D)

Okay?

Jimmy nods.

Jimmy's dad takes the chair, turns it towards the other end of the pier. They begin walking back.

We TRACK behind as they continue walking down the pier then we TURN into...

NORTH PIER - SHOP

...one of the gift shops. We slowly CLOSE IN on a photo of the old man with his pipe in his mouth. In the photo, he holds a fish...a big one. Under the photo, a placard that reads, "Old Man, 1946-2022".

FADE OUT:

The End