

THE WONDER YEARS

by

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(PILOT)

Rev. Second Draft

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The Wonder YearsACT ONEFADE IN:

MUSIC UP: The Beatles, "Revolution"

1 TITLE MONTAGE

1

A MONTAGE of news footage from 1968: The Vietnam War, peace marches and National Guardsmen with clubs and teargas, more war footage, the King assassination and funeral, the Chicago riots, black American athletes with fists raised in protest at the Mexico City Olympics, hippie protestors sticking flowers in Guardsmen's gun barrels, Bobby Kennedy's assassination and funeral, Kent State, more war footage, etc.

As the news footage runs we HEAR KEVIN ARNOLD'S ADULT VOICE:

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

1968 was a big year. The superball was invented. The skateboard was almost perfected. Denny McClain won 31 games, and the Monkees got their own TV show. But most important of all -- I started junior high school. In many ways, the first day of junior high was the worst day of my life; and in many ways it was the best. But we'll get to that.

CUT TO:2 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

2

A VERY HIGH BIRD'S-EYE SHOT of a sprawling suburban area -- shopping centers, parking lots, subdivisions, garden apartment complexes. As we listen, the CAMERA DESCENDS ever closer to one particular suburban neighborhood...

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

There's no pretty way to put this: I grew up in the suburbs. I guess most people think of the suburbs as a place with all the disadvantages of the city and none of the advantages of the country. And vice-versa.

We are now just above ground level in our neighborhood and THE CAMERA LOOKS DOWN on block after block of identical small middle-class houses, moving past them slowly at first, then faster until they almost seem to blur into one another.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

But in a way, those really were the Wonder Years for us there in the suburbs. It was a a kind of golden age for kids.

As Kevin speaks, the CAMERA SLOWS AGAIN to pick out individual houses and the people who live in them -- people mowing lawns, hanging out laundry, washing their Fords and their Buicks, kids swimming in those big round above-ground pools, kids just playing in a sprinkler, kids on bikes, kids playing basketball in their driveways, kids playing kickball in the streets.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I was born in 1956, the peak year of the baby boom. Throughout our lives we 56ers have watched the world spring up around us -- shopping centers, houses, schools. We're always stretching the system to its bursting point as we pass through -- sort of like a rat being swallowed by a boa constrictor.

CUT TO:

3 3 EXT. STREET - DAY

3

The CAMERA HAS COME TO REST over a typical football game on a typical street. Eight boys between the ages of ten and 14 play as four or five girls on a front lawn do cartwheels and handsprings.

As one of the football teams breaks its huddle and comes up to the line of scrimmage WE FOCUS on the intense face of one twelve-year-old boy.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

There. That's me. Kevin Arnold. 1968. The summer before junior high school.

The ball is snapped and Kevin goes out for a pass.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

And I don't mind saying I was a pretty fair little athlete.

As Kevin turns, the ball hits him hard in the chest knocking him over. The ball bounces away toward the group of girls, who giggle -- except for WINNIE COOPER, 12 years old, pig-tailed and tomboyish. She retrieves the ball and brings it to Kevin.

WINNIE

It was a pretty hard pass.

KEVIN

Well, yeah...uh, I think it had sort of a reverse spin on it -- it was actually a pretty good play just to keep it from boring a hole through something...

QUARTERBACK

Come on, Kevin, stop gabbing with your girlfriend!

The other kids snicker. Kevin embarrassedly grabs the ball and heads back toward the huddle.

KEVIN

She's not my girlfriend.

Winnie shoots the quarterback a dirty look and goes back to her friends.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

This was true. Winnie Cooper was not my girlfriend. When we were very little, we used to go down to the creek and catch frogs and crayfish, but we really hadn't hung out at all together since we were about nine.

WE go back to the huddle. The QUARTERBACK, who's 14 and much larger than Kevin, addresses him:

QUARTERBACK

Uh-oh, Kev, I think your girlfriend's mad. Maybe you better go give her a big French kiss.

The quarterback laughs and lets his tongue loll out like a St. Bernard. He looks at the other 14-year-old kid in the huddle, who laughs, too.

KEVIN

Shut up, Wayne.

QUARTERBACK

Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot! You don't know what a French kiss is, do you?

KEVIN

Shut up, Wayne.

QUARTERBACK

Oh, you do know what it is? Hey, girls, come over here. Kevin's gonna tell you what a French kiss is!

The quarterback and the other 14-year old laugh hysterically.

KEVIN
(under his breath)
Buttface.

QUARTERBACK
What did you say?

KEVIN
Nothing.

The quarterback suddenly tackles Kevin and begins punching him not that hard, but repeatedly, in the shoulder.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
This is the way most of my conversations with my brother Wayne ended. I didn't understand it at the time, but years later, when we were both adults, Wayne explained that basically, he just deeply regretted the fact that I had been born, and he wanted me to feel the same way.

Wayne is still punching Kevin. The fourth kid on their team, 12 years old, small, timid, asthmatic and bespectacled, PAUL PFEIFFER, steps forward. He is wheezing.

PAUL
(wheezing)
Come on --
(wheezing)
Way --
(wheezing)
Wayne. Let --
(wheezing)
Let him up.

WAYNE
(never losing his punching rhythm)
I'm sorry, Paul, this is a family matter.

As Wayne continues, Paul, wheezing, tries futilely to push Wayne off.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
That was my best friend, Paul Pfeiffer. Paul was allergic to everything. Wayne used to say he was even allergic to his own snot. Wayne was a funny guy all-around.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Hey, Wayne, knock it off before I
 do the same thing to you!

CUT TO:

4 EXT. COOPER'S DRIVEWAY - DAY 4

SHOT OF A MUCH OLDER KID IN A NEARBY DRIVEWAY

The rather large, good-looking but tough 19-year-old kid has been working under a 1963 Dodge Challenger which is up on blocks. Three attractive 17 or 18-year-old girls sit on the front lawn, watching him, talking in low tones and giggling.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. STREET - DAY 5

WAYNE AND KEVIN

Wayne thinks about it, then hits Kevin one more time before reluctantly getting off him.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. COOPER'S DRIVEWAY - DAY 6

ANOTHER SHOT OF THE OLDER KID

As he slides out from under the car, lights a cigarette, and goes over to sit with the three gorgeous girls.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 Winnie's brother, Brian Cooper. He was 19 and for us, he defined cool. He got in a lot of trouble in school before he dropped out. And he had this really cool Dodge Challenger -- it didn't run, of course, but he was always out there working on it, sweaty, with grease all over his hands. But that just made him cooler to us.

Brian wipes his blackened hands on his jeans and takes a drag on his cigarette. Kevin watches admiringly.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 That June he got drafted and packed off to Vietnam, but his car was still out front, up on blocks, as sort of a reminder of who really ran things on our street.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. STREET - DAY

7

A SERIES OF SHOTS of the game as it gets darker and darker.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Those games used to go on until
we couldn't see anymore.

SHOT of the other kids carrying Paul off the street.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Or until Paul couldn't breathe
anymore.

CUT TO:

8 INT. ARNOLD LIVING ROOM - EVENING

8

Kevin drags a wheezing Paul in and plops him on the couch.
Somewhere in the house the TV evening news drones. Kevin shouts
toward the kitchen:

KEVIN

Mom, can Paul stay for dinner?!

NORMA ARNOLD (O.S.)

Sure, if his mom knows!

PAUL

(wheezing)

Wha --

(wheezing)

What are --

(wheezing)

What are you having?

KEVIN

(toward kitchen)

What are we having, mom?

NORMA (O.S.)

Meatloaf!

PAUL

I'm --

(wheezing)

I'm allergic to it.

KEVIN

(toward kitchen)

What else?!

NORMA (O.S.)

Salad!

Kevin looks hopefully at Paul. Paul shakes his head sadly.

CUT TO:

9 INT. ARNOLD KITCHEN - EVENING 9

CLOSE SHOT of a plate with a couple of pieces of buttered white bread on it. PULL BACK to reveal it's Paul's plate. Wayne and Kevin each have meatloaf, salad, and a bowl of fruit cocktail in front of them.

Norma, dressed in Keds and a tidy light blue culotte outfit, is watching the TV news as she lays out the silverware.

CUT TO:

10 VIDEO INSERT 10

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...And more heavy fighting in the Mekong Delta today. Marines and South Vietnamese troops occupied and then destroyed several guerilla strongholds...

C.U. OF THE TV SET SHOWING FOOTAGE OF BURNING VILLAGES: children and old women trudge down a dirt road with bicycles and oxen.

CUT TO:

9 CONTINUED 9

KEVIN

When's Dad coming home?

NORMA

Any minute. And between the traffic and his job he's liable to be very tense, so let's not drive him crazy.

KEVIN

He's always tense.

Norma gives him an even look.

NORMA

That's right. He's always tense. But he's not crazy yet. Let's try to maintain that sense of equilibrium.

JACK ARNOLD enters through the back screen door. He's 41, his once fit body slowly paunching; his extremely wide tie, somewhat modish suit and modest sideburns are his only concession to the era -- otherwise, he's a timeless picture of middle-management.

Norma and the kids eye him a little warily, the way you would a mostly trained lion who'd come into your kitchen.

NORMA

How was the traffic, honey?

JACK

Traffic's traffic.

And he's gone, off to the bedroom to remove his tie and jacket.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Dad had a spartan sense of language.

The back door opens again and the boys' sister, KAREN, 16 and attractive, enters. She wears a "Make love not war" T-shirt, torn jeans and an Indian-bead headband.

NORMA

Karen, honey, I thought you were going to come back early and help me with dinner?

KAREN

(making the peace "V")

Peace, okay, Mom?

NORMA

Peace is fine, but I thought you were going to help me with dinner.

KAREN

You have so much bad karma in your life, you know that, Ma? I'd be careful if I were you.

NORMA

Yes, thank you, I'll keep an eye out. In the meantime, when your father comes back in here, try not to drive him crazy.

Jack comes back in a t-shirt and sits down. No one speaks.

JACK

Hi, Paul.

Paul tentatively waves a piece of bread. Norma squeezes Jack's shoulder, puts some meatloaf on his plate, and a vodka/tonic in his hand. He takes a sip.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Dad always said hi to our friends.
But it was like he had this
understanding with the family that
he had no obligation to communicate
until he was ready. He worked hard
for us, he provided for us, and he
certainly didn't want to have to
talk to us on top of that.

SHOT OF KEVIN sitting quietly, looking nervously from person to
person.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O)

My approach was to not make any sudden
moves or sounds until he'd finished
that first vodka/tonic and hope nobody
else did anything that might upset him
too much before then...

As Jack sips his drink, the uneasy silence, broken only by the TV
news, continues for a long beat.

KAREN

(finally)

I'm gonna get some birth control
pills. I thought you should know.

Norma looks stricken, the boys almost spit out their food. Paul
starts wheezing. Then, at once, EVERYONE IS TALKING, Norma
comforting Jack, telling him Karen's just trying to scare them,
Karen protesting her earnestness, the boys making lewd,
embarrassed speculations about their sister's sex life, etc.

SLOWLY, THE CACAPHONY AND THE PICTURE FADE OUT:

CUT TO:

11 EXT. SUMMER MONTAGE - DAY

11

FADE IN ON A SERIES OF SUMMER SHOTS of the kids playing
* three separate games of football, softball, and kickball. *
* During all the games, Paul is carried off, Wayne beats on *
* Kevin, and Winnie tosses the ball to Kevin. Brian Cooper's *
* car is up on blocks. The Arnold family is seen happily *
* partaking in a family barbeque. The Arnold family is *
* seen again at another barbeque arguing. Wayne, Paul and *
* Kevin wash the family car in the Arnold's driveway. The *
event results in a hose fight.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

That's pretty much the way that summer went. Sure, I knew junior high was coming up and every once in a while I'd feel this little pang of fear or even have a nightmare, but then I'd just remind myself there was a whole summer between now and then.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. STREET - DAY

12

SHOT OF A SOFTBALL GAME on the street

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

And then -- and this is where our story really begins -- it hit me like one of Wayne's punches. We were out playing softball. I went back to catch a fly, when all of a sudden...

SHOT of a fly ball bouncing out of Kevin's mitt

...I heard that sound.

SFX: A DEEP, RUMBLING MECHANICAL BELLOW.

C.U. OF KEVIN.

His face is contorted with horror.

A SCHOOL BUS

Rounding the corner and moving down the street towards an open-mouthed Kevin.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A twelve-ton metal reminder that, among other things, I would soon have to shower with twenty other people.

The bus bears down on the kids, its grill and headlights looking like an angry face with beady eyes and merciless teeth.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

The bus drivers were taking their practice runs. In the morning, they would be back for real.

The bus stops at a stop sign with a deafening squeal of its air brakes. As it pulls out, it blasts a huge cloud of black exhaust into the faces of the slackjawed boys.

AS THE BUS WHIZZES RIGHT PAST THE CAMERACUT TO:13 INT. KEVIN'S ROOM - EVENING

13

CLOSE ON THE COVER OF A LARGE OPEN PAPERBACK BOOK -- "OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES". PULL BACK TO REVEAL Kevin and Paul, wide-eyed, studying it. "Crystal Blue Persuasion" plays on Kevin's small tabletop radio.

PAUL
(reverently)
Holy Cow.

KEVIN
Try not to drool on it, okay. If Karen finds out I have this, she'll kill me.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
Paul and I decided that the best way to prepare for junior high school girls was to look at them naked.

PAUL
(off the book)
You ever seen that on a real person?

KEVIN
That is a real person.

PAUL
You know what I mean.

KEVIN
No.

Paul puts the book down.

PAUL
Let me see your class schedule again.

Kevin hands him his schedule and Paul compares it to his.

PAUL
It's too bad we don't have more classes together.

KEVIN
What are you talking about? We got five out of seven classes together.

PAUL
 Yeah, but I won't know --
 (wheezing)
 I won't know anybody in those other
 classes.

KEVIN
 Yes, you will. And you'll meet some
 new people. Don't worry about it.

Paul considers this. He's worrying about it.

PAUL
 What, you're not at all scared?

A beat.

KEVIN
 No.

Paul again picks up "Our Bodies, Our Selves."

PAUL
 I think Tracy Nellen would look a
 little like this naked.

KEVIN
 I don't know...I think hers are a
 little more --

There is a KNOCK AT THE DOOR. As the boys try to hide the book
 the door swings open and Norma enters.

NORMA
 What are you boys doing?

KEVIN
 Uh...we were, uh, we were...

PAUL
 Studying.

KEVIN
 Yeah, we were studying.

NORMA
 (after a beat)
 School doesn't start until tomorrow.

KEVIN
 Uh...yeah, that's right, but, uh,
 we were reviewing what we learned
 last year.

NORMA

I see. Paul, your Mom called. She'd like you to come home now.

PAUL

Okay.

Norma exits. Paul gets up and starts for the door.

PAUL

I guess I'll see you at the bus stop.

KEVIN

Yeah.

Paul starts out again, then stops.

PAUL

Last night I had a dream that I got to school and I realized I had no clothes on.

KEVIN

If you're naked when you get to the bus stop, I'll tell you.

PAUL

Thanks. Do you know what you're gonna wear?

KEVIN

Paul, I have no idea!

Paul considers this, then exits.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Actually, I'd been planning my wardrobe for about six weeks...

CUT TO:

14

INT ARNOLD KITCHEN - MORNING

14

*

Karen, Norma, and Jack are around the breakfast table. The latest war footage is on the morning news. Suddenly, they all focus their attention on something O.S. that must be fairly strange.

*

FAMILY'S POV

Kevin entering the kitchen in his best polka-dotted wing-collared puffy-sleeved shirt and bell-bottoms.

NORMA

(a beat)

You're not going to...wear that to school are you?

KEVIN

No, Mom. I got a job as a male model.

NORMA

You don't have to be a smart aleck. It's just that first impressions can be so important, and all your teachers --

KEVIN

All my teachers probably had Wayne, so I haven't got a prayer anyway.

NORMA

Aw, Kevin, you look so nice in your blue shirt...

KEVIN

(indicating Karen)

Why don't you pick on her. She's not wearing a bra, for God's sake.

KAREN

Neither are you.

KEVIN

Oh, touche.

JACK

Okay, alright, enough. For the next ten hours, people are going to be honking at me and screaming at me. I don't need it here.

KEVIN

Can I wear the shirt, Dad?

JACK

Absolutely. You can wear it, you can burn it, you can eat it. Just don't argue about it.

* Wayne enters, sees Kevin, laughs like a hyena. *

MATCH CUT TO:

15 EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - MORNING 15

KEVIN

* has changed into much more conservative school clothes. *

KEVIN
 (comforting; to someone O.S.)
 Paul, don't worry, you look fine.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL PAUL wearing a flower trimmed white shirt and loud bellbottoms. He's worrying.

PAUL
 Let me see your schedule one more time.

KEVIN
 No!

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 He was going to have to get a grip on himself. This was the junior high bus stop, and if we were going to hold our own with the older kids, we were going to have to act mature.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL WAYNE AND HIS FRIENDS

having a contest to see who has the longest tongue. Most of them are eighth and ninth graders, and they all seem to be at least a head taller than Kevin and Paul.

PAUL AND KEVIN

Watching the tongue contest uncertainly for a beat, then sticking theirs out to be measured.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 We seemed to have something of a height disadvantage, but we did our best to fit in.

Two ninth grade girls walk by Paul and Kevin. Their heads are offscreen because their breasts are at Paul and Kevin's eye level. Paul and Kevin track them, tongues still hanging out to the maximum.

C.U. KEVIN

He spots something interesting O.S.

KEVIN
 (garbled; his tongue still out)
 Who's that?

PAUL
 (garbled; tongue out)
 Who -- ?
 (putting tongue back in)
 I don't know...She must be a new kid.

Approaching from way down the street, a slim young girl with long brown hair, white go-go boots, pink fishnet tights and a short, short mini-skirt.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

This was either an incredible stroke of luck or God's idea of a cruel joke. A new kid -- young, beautiful, and by the looks of things, shorter than us. A helpless waif who would be even more lost than we were.

FROM BEHIND THE GIRL

The boys at the bus stop looking on, some with their tongues still lolling out of their mouths. We see the girl from the back as she continues toward them, with an allure that only a girl who doesn't yet know what allure is, can have.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

She had almost reached us before we realized who this vision in fishnet tights and go-go boots really was.

The girl stops in front of Kevin and Paul. They just gape at her.

GIRL

Hi, Kevin. Hi, Paul.

Paul and Kevin exchange a look, totally thrown.

PAUL

(aghast)
Winnie Cooper???

A BEAT. Winnie looks a little embarrassed at their reaction.

WINNIE

Gwendolyn. I don't want to be called Winnie anymore. My real name is Gwendolyn.

Kevin just stares, unable to speak.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

If there had been any question before, it was gone now -- we were entering uncharted territory. Even the familiar was cloaked in the vestments of the Devil. Junior high school was a whole new ball of wax.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO16 EXT. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

16

About thirty busses are lined up outside the school, discharging pupils. Kevin and Paul get out -- Kevin grabs back his schedule which Paul has clearly been looking at one last time.

They stop and look at two workmen who are putting new letters on the outside of the school building.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Like about half the schools in the country that year, my school was being re-named, "Robert F. Kennedy Junior High School."

Kevin and Paul head for the front door, then pause again amid the swarms of students.

As we approached those doors for the first time, we felt we were approaching the portals of manhood.

Kevin and Paul are shoved helplessly through by a tidal wave of teenagers.

CUT TO:

17 INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

17

Kevin stands before a door on which hangs a sign: "Homeroom -- 7th Grade, A-Cr".

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Fortunately, it was alphabetized.

CUT TO:

18 INT. HOMEROOM - MORNING

18

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I sat between Eric Antonio and Gail Aslanian...

Two attractive, "cool" seventh graders, ERIC and GAIL, sit one in front and one behind Kevin, holding hands around him, and looking into each other's eyes.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

They had met on the bus and had taken a liking to each other.

ERIC

I love you.

GAIL

I love you, too.

KEVIN

And I love you both, but I'm having a little trouble breathing, here...

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I was about to have my first sexual experience -- and I wasn't even one of the principle players.

MRS. RITVO, the rather forbidding-looking homeroom teacher, moves down the aisle taking the roll. She breaks up the tryst by rapping sharply on Kevin's desk with a pointer. Kevin barely escapes with his nose.

Ritvo looks disapprovingly at Kevin, then at her class list.

MRS. RITVO

Kevin Arnold. You're Wayne's brother, aren't you?

KEVIN

Well... according to my mother, yes. But my own theory is --

Ritvo cuts him off with another sharp rap on his desk.

MRS. RITVO

(eyes narrowing)

You've got a tough row to hoe, young man, a tough row to hoe.

KEVIN SWALLOWS HARD.

CUT TO:

19 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY LOCKERS - MORNING

19

Kevin refers to a piece of paper as he tries to open his combination hall locker.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Before we left homeroom, we were equipped with the first major accessory of adulthood -- our own lockers.

A gorgeous girl walks up to the locker two down from Kevin. He smiles suavely over and begins to tug on his locker.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I couldn't believe my good fortune. Two lockers down from mine was Debbie Ackerman, one of the prime knockouts of the seventh grade.

Kevin keeps trying to be suave, smiling as he tugs harder on the locker -- it is now open at the top, but stuck on the bottom. The girl smiles coyly back.

GIRL

Hi.

Suddenly, the LOCKER DOOR FLIES OPEN and slams Kevin in the face. He tries to look suave anyway and the girl is nice enough to try not to laugh.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

There was only one problem...

A BODY that must be twice the size of Kevin's fills the frame between Kevin and the girl. His HEAD goes OUT OF FRAME.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

...Charles Manson had the locker between us.

THE KID

He's huge. A "greaser." And he actually has facial hair.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A seventh-grader with a beard. This wasn't junior high school, it was a freak show. I hoped none of the girls would have beards.

KID

What's yuh locker combination?

KEVIN

Uh, well, I appreciate your asking, but actually, they told us we weren't supposed to tell anyone el --

The kid grabs Kevin by the collar and slams him up against the lockers.

KEVIN

(handing him the combination)
-- Here you go!

The kid takes a cellophane bag and a hunting knife out of his pocket and tosses them in Kevin's locker.

KID

Anybody finds out about these and I know who told 'em.

KEVIN
 (a beat)
 Who?

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 It was my only shot -- I thought
 maybe I could trick him.

KID
 You, that's who.

KEVIN
 Oh. Right.

The kid heads off leaving Kevin staring in horror at the stuff. He looks up just in time to see a teacher heading toward him. He quickly slams the locker shut and leans innocently against it as the teacher passes. The teacher eyes him suspiciously.

CUT TO:

20 INT. GYM LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

20

Shirtless skinny-chested seventh grade boys swarm through the locker room. Kevin, looking a little scrawny and vulnerable in his Fruit-of-the-Looms, stands at a locker, reading his combination off a piece of paper. He begins tugging at his locker again.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 In one of those quirks of scheduling,
 my first class was gym. This meant that
 I had to wake up in the morning, shower,
 get dressed, go to school, get undressed,
 run around, shower, and get dressed all
 in the space of about forty-five minutes.

Kevin finally gets his locker open -- and it hits him in the face.

THE FRAME IS FILLED by a huge body again -- WE PAN UP to see...IT'S THE HORMONE CASE AGAIN -- he's grinning at Kevin. He has a full growth of chest hair.

KEVIN

He shakes his head, then resignedly hands the kid his combination.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - MORNING

21

The class of boys in gym uniforms, including Kevin and Paul, is lined up facing an exceedingly trim, muscular, middle-aged man, MR. CUTLIP.

CUTLIP

Well, people, a lot of you probably think this is gym class.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I was overwhelmed by a sudden panic. Things hadn't been going that well so far -- but if this wasn't gym class, I was in bigger trouble than I thought.

CUTLIP

Well, it's not. People, it's physical education class. In there, (pointing to the school) they educate your minds; out here I educate your bodies. I'm an educator. A body educator.

The kids share some strange looks.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Of course we didn't realize it at the time, but this guy had the biggest inferiority complex since Napoleon.

CUTLIP

People, when you leave this class, you're going to have smart bodies, smart, smart bodies.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

He went on educating our bodies for about a half-hour. By the time he finished, I was ready to let my leg take a math test.

CUTLIP

One more thing before you do your laps: The jock strap: (a) what is it? and (b) what can it do for you?
(glancing at his class list)

Arnold.

Kevin FREEZES. All the other boys look at him expectantly.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

This was it. I was really on the line here -- as a student, and as a man.

KEVIN

The jockstrap, sir, is a particular type of strap, constructed of a special strap-type material, which is utilized exclusively for the purposes of jocks.

A LONG PAUSE. Cutlip's face is like stone. Kevin waits in terror.

CUTLIP

(finally)

Good answer, Arnold. And a word to the wise, people -- you're not little boys any more, you're men now. Starting next class, I want everybody to have one, and I want everybody to wear one. Okay, let's go -- ten laps!

Kevin looks relieved, if confused.

PAUL

(sotto)

How did you know that?

Kevin just shrugs and gives Paul a nonchalant, knowing smile.

CUT TO:

22 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

22

Kevin comes out of the locker room, his hair wet and combed slickly down over his forehead.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Okay, so I'd only outsmarted an idiot. The important thing was I'd created the general impression among my peers of being a pretty worldly guy.

WE SEE KEVIN striding confidently through the sea of students which fills the hall. A group of ninth grade girls goes by. Kevin smiles suavely at them.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Suddenly, junior high school seemed like a vast world of opportunity, of tantalizing adventure. As Mr. Cutlip had said, I was a man now. A man among men...

KEVIN'S POV

The seductive rear view of the group of girls. But suddenly a GROUP OF NINTH GRADE GIRLS IS COMING TOWARD US, breasts at about eye level...

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A man among women...

KEVIN'S POV

abruptly and follow the second group of girls. This happens several times until the final group turns and goes into a class -- the door closes. WE TURN to find ourselves facing an empty hall.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A man...

KEVIN

Standing alone in the empty hall, panic coming over him. He looks at his schedule, then up at the numbers over the doors. THE BELL BEGINS TO RING.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A man...

Kevin sprints to the end of the hall, wildly looks left, then right. It's like something from a horror movie.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A man ...who was lost on his way to second period.

A HAND

reaches suddenly from behind Kevin and grabs him by the shoulder. Kevin almost screams.

CUT TO:

23 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

23

A CLASSROOM DOORKNOB

turns slowly and the door opens -- revealing Mr. Brandenburg, a prim old guy in a bow tie, who is clutching Kevin by the shoulder. Kevin looks mortified.

MR. BRANDENBERG

Sorry to bother you, Miss Babson,
but one of your little sheep couldn't
find his flock.

KEVIN'S POV

A roomful of sadistic twelve-year-olds, all staring at him and tittering.

MISS BABSON

Thank you, Mr. Brandenburg.

Mr. Brandenburg ruffles Kevin's hair and sends him off with a little pat on the butt.

The class laughs louder. Kevin wants to disappear...then, on the far side of the room, he spots:

WINNIE

the only one who isn't snickering.

WE MOVE IN CLOSE ON KEVIN'S HUMILIATED FACE...

CUT TO:

24 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

24

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Lunch...at last, something I figured even I couldn't screw up.

Kevin and Paul come out of the cafeteria line and start looking for a place to sit. It's that uncomfortable moment when everyone in the cafeteria seems to be looking at you to see if you know anyone to sit with.

PAUL

Is it just me, or is everyone sort of staring at us?

KEVIN

Yeah...well...maybe they think we're celebrities.

PAUL

Where do you wanna sit?

KEVIN

Anywhere. Let's just sit here.

He starts to put his tray down at a table with two empty seats. A couple of OLDER KIDS give them flabbergasted looks.

OLDER KID

What are you pygmies doing?

PAUL

We're not pygmies, okay jerk!?

Kevin looks stricken.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Apparently, Paul was unfamiliar with the notion of "picking" your battles.

The older kid stands up. He's close to six feet tall.

KEVIN

I am. I'm a pygmy.
 (indicating Paul)
 He's never met my parents so he
 didn't realize, but I am.

Kevin starts quickly off to another table. Paul reappraises the situation.

PAUL

(following Kevin)
 Me, too!

They head to a nearly empty table, sit silently and eat, and look around self-consciously.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

A suburban junior high school cafeteria is like a microcosm of the world. The goal is to protect yourself -- and safety comes in groups. You have your cool kids...

SHOT OF COOL KIDS

Mostly older, many athletic, attractive, more expensively dressed girls and boys, laughing, flirting with each other.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

...you have your smart kids...

SHOT OF SMART KIDS

Nerds and foreign exchange students, gathered around a math book, working out a problem.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

...you have your greasers...

GREASERS

A group of tough looking kids, largely in black.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

...and in those days, of course, you had your hippies.

HIPPIES

A group of thirteen and fourteen-year-old "activists," in worn bell-bottomed jeans, army fatigue jackets, dashikis, headbands.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 In effect, in junior high school, who
 you are is defined less by who you
 are than by who's the person sitting
 next to you..

C.U. OF PAUL

His glasses are askew and he is stuffing his face with spaghetti
 and meat sauce, making little sucking noises as he inhales the
 last strands of spaghetti into his mouth.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 ...A sobering thought.

KEVIN
 Try to look like you're having fun.

PAUL
 What's fun about this? I'm sitting
 with you eating uncooked spaghetti --
 I can do that in my basement.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Hi, do you guys mind if I sit with
 you?

They look up.

KEVIN AND PAUL'S POV

It's Winnie, standing there with her tray, looking great.

KEVIN
 Sure, Winnie.

The boys look around happily, hoping others are watching.

WINNIE
 (sitting)
Gwendolyn.

KEVIN
 Oh, yeah, right. How 'bout
 "Lady Gwendolyn?"

WINNIE
 (irritated)
 I'm serious! At least call me Gwen.

KEVIN
 Okay, okay. Gwen.

Winnie starts eating and now the three of them sit there in
 silence -- but 33% less self-consciously.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

We were on our way -- our group was forming. And Winnie -- I mean Gwen -- was not chopped liver. Who knows, maybe we had an outside chance to become the cool seventh-grade group. If we could just remain inconspicuous until we picked up a few more members...

WAYNE (O.S.)

(shouting)

Hey Steve! Looks like my little brother and his girlfriend found each other!

Kevin looks up in horror to see Wayne grinning from ear-to-ear, calling across the cafeteria to Steve. About half the kids in the cafeteria are looking over, some laughing.

KEVIN

(through clenched teeth)

She is not my girlfriend!

WAYNE

(coming over; to Winnie)

He thinks you're cute.

KEVIN

I do not think she's cute.

WAYNE

He wants to give you a big wet kiss. He told me.

KEVIN

You liar. I never said that. I don't want to kiss her. I don't even like her!

Kevin stands up, grabs the apple off his tray, and storms toward the open doors of the cafeteria exit. A number of kids are now watching, including a STERN-LOOKING ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MR. DIPERNA, who stands by the door. Just as Kevin is about to exit, the assistant principal -- grabs him by the arm -- clearly a further affront to his manhood.

DIPERNA

Young man!

Kevin tries to squirm away as the assistant principal holds him firmly.

DIPERNA

(pointing)

What does that sign say?

THE SIGN

It says, "Positively no food outside the cafeteria."

DIPERNA

You take that apple through that door
and you're asking for detention.

Kevin looks from the sign to DiPerna to the kids in the cafeteria. If he's going to save any face, his options are clearly limited. He pulls away and storms out.

There are "oohs" and "ahs" from the cafeteria.

WAYNE

Half-grinning, half-grimacing. He certainly never expected this.

DIPERNA

He glares around the cafeteria, sending a hush over it, then storms after Kevin.

CUT TO:

25 INT. HALLWAY, JUST OUTSIDE CAFETERIA - A MOMENT LATER

25

DiPerna again grabs Kevin by the arm.

DIPERNA

(very evenly)

Young man. I think we have a
problem.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

He was right. There was a problem.
Although I thought it was very generous
of him to use the royal "we." I
considered asking him if he preferred
to start with my problem or his, but
I was pretty sure whatever his
problem was, it could wait...

KEVIN

Oh, yeah, the apple.

DIPERNA

That's right. The apple.

KEVIN

You wanted it inside the cafeteria.

DIPERNA

That's right.

KEVIN
And now it's outside.

DIPERNA
That's right.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
The conversation was getting stale. I knew that the kids inside could still see us, and to give in would cost me whatever shred of dignity I had left. I asked myself, "Now what would a guy like Brian Cooper do in this situation?"

Kevin suddenly winds up and hurls the apple as hard as he can back into the cafeteria. A deafening "Whoa!!" can be heard from inside. DiPerna is incredulous.

Suddenly, Kevin is hit by the full implication of what he has done. His face and body start to sag terribly.

KEVIN
Uh...if you want, I could, uh...I could get that...?

DiPerna just stares at Kevin, then looks toward the cafeteria exit where a group of boys is now carrying Paul out.

CUT TO:

26 INT. DETENTION HALL - AFTERNOON

26

Clean-cut Kevin sits among the future axe-killers of America -- the true whacko's and delinquents of junior high.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
I'd never had detention before, much less in junior high school. This was quite a crowd -- the kind of kids that get detention on the first day of school. My hunch was that one or two of my colleagues were repeat offenders.

KEVIN'S POV

Scanning the room. A few of the guys carve things into the desks or into their arms; a few are looking at Kevin dubiously, a few maliciously.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
I felt like Dennis the Menace on a chain gang with Lee Harvey Oswald and the Boston Strangler.

EDDIE, one of the most vile-looking, glares particularly harshly.

EDDIE

What'd you do -- go to the bathroom without a hall pass?

KEVIN

(as James Dean)

I threw an apple.

Eddie looks completely unimpressed, almost insulted. Kevin realizes this is a tough audience.

KEVIN

I threw it as hard as I could.

Still no appreciation from Eddie.

KEVIN

Into a room full of women and children.

Eddie just shakes his head disgustedly.

KEVIN

What, uh, what did you do?

EDDIE

I started Mr. Cunningham's car on fire.

KEVIN

Oh.

(swallowing hard)

Well, I was gonna do that if I didn't get caught throwing the apple.

Eddie gives him a "Sure, kid," look.

KEVIN

So, uh...what do your parents do when they find out you got detention?

Eddie looks almost incredulous.

EDDIE

My parents don't give a crap what I do.

Kevin considers this.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I wanted so much for my parents not to give a crap about what I'd done, that I just let my imagination run...

KEVIN
 (sneering; wistfully)
 Yeah. Yeah, mine neither.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 For a few brief moments, I could see how this "bad boy" thing could become intoxicating. There was a certain undeniable glamour in being a rebel.

KEVIN STRIKES A SERIES OF NONCHALANT AND ALIENATED POSES, INCLUDING SMOKING AN IMAGINARY CIGARETTE.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 I wished I had a cigarette, and that if I had one, that cigarettes didn't make me nauseous.
 ("flicking" away the cigarette)
 I even pretended I was Brian Cooper and that when I got out of detention, there would be six or seven beautiful women waiting for me outside the door... we'd drive away in my gleaming Dodge Challenger... I'd put my arm around the girl beside me, smearing a little axle grease on her blouse... But then suddenly I realized there was someone standing outside the door.

Kevin glances over toward the door...

THE DOOR

It is one of those wooden doors with a smoked glass window. Through the window we can SEE A WOMAN'S SILHOUETTE. SUDDENLY, THE DOOR OPENS AND SOMEONE ENTERS.

KEVIN

Snapping back to reality.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 But then suddenly I realized there was
 someone standing outside the door. It
 was a woman. And somehow I knew she was
 waiting for me.

Kevin glances over toward the door...

THE DOOR

It is one of those wooden doors with a smoked glass window.
 Through the window we can SEE A WOMAN'S SILHOUETTE. SUDDENLY,
 THE DOOR OPENS AND SOMEONE ENTERS.

KEVIN

Snapping back to reality.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 Unfortunately, it was my mother.

Mr. DiPerna follows her in.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 And she'd already heard his side of
 the story.

Norma stops, puts her hands on her hips, and just stares at
 Kevin. He waves meekly.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 Things weren't looking good. And
 then -- in what had to be the single
 most horrible moment of my young life --
 they went from bad to inconceivable...

Kevin's father enters. He doesn't look pleased.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 My father was with her.

Norma moves to Kevin, grabs him, tugs him toward the door.

INT. DIPERNA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Kevin is slumped in a chair. Norma and Mr. DiPerna stand
 menacingly over him. Jack, on the other hand, sits impassively in
 a chair across the room, his hands folded.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
 But when we got to the office for
 some unknown reason I was spared what
 I knew could be my father's hurricane-
 like anger. It was my mother and
 DiPerna who conducted the interrogation.

DIPERNA

Kevin, the question is, what did you hope to achieve by throwing an apple into a cafeteria?

C.U. KEVIN'S FACE

WE HEAR YOUNG KEVIN'S VOICE OVER, BUT HIS LIPS DON'T MOVE --
we're obviously hearing what he'd like to say:

YOUNG KEVIN (V.O.)

No, butthead, the question is why do you have a brain the size of a baby pea.

NORMA

Kevin. Mr. DiPerna asked you a question: what did you hope to achieve by throwing that apple into the cafeteria?

YOUNG KEVIN (V.O.)

World peace.

NORMA

Kevin?

KEVIN

Nothing.

DIPERNA

Well, that's exactly what you did achieve, Kevin. Nothing. Nothing except wasting a lot of my time, and your mother and dad's time, and your own time in detention. Now I'm going to let you off without any further punishment, but I want you to know I'll be keeping my eye on you. Do you understand that?

NORMA

Do you understand that, Kevin?

KEVIN

Yes.

A moment of silence.

JACK

(evenly)

I'd like to take him home now.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

And that's when I realized why my father hadn't gotten involved. It wasn't because he wanted to hear all the evidence before reaching a decision; it wasn't because he'd pacified himself with some "boys will be boys" philosophy...

C.U. JACK

Cracking his knuckles.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

It was because he was waiting to get me home where he could move his arms freely.

CUT TO:

29 EXT./INT. ARNOLD'S 1963 STUDEBAKER LARK - AFTERNOON

29

It is dead silent. Jack drives, staring straight ahead, Norma beside him. Kevin sits in the back, looking very anxious.

Kevin looks at his mother, she looks at him, then she looks at his father, then Kevin looks at his father, etc. Only Jack stares straight ahead, eyes never wavering.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

In my twelve-and-a-half years my father had never struck me, but he'd given Wayne a beating twice, and I recognized the glazed look in his eyes.

The car pulls up in the Arnold driveway and the three get out. Jack, still wordlessly, takes Kevin by the arm and leads him roughly toward the front door. Kevin's not resisting -- his head is down, like Jesus being led to the cross.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

Besides, maybe I deserved it. There really is no good excuse for hurling fruit around a cafeteria. He probably figured that if he laid down the law now, I'd stay in line -- and he was probably right. Anyway, I could take pain -- I decided I'd just shut my eyes and imagine it was Wayne.

JACK

(pulling Kevin by the arm)
Come on. Inside.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
Well, this was it. At least it would
be done privately, with dignity.

Karen comes out the front door, with Wayne trailing behind her.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
And then it happened -- we were
almost to the front porch. Karen
and Wayne came out the front door
and just stood there with this sort of
strange, pale look on their faces.
And before they even said anything,
it was like something about the way
they were, said, "Stop. It doesn't matter."

A LONG BEAT.

KAREN
Brian Cooper was killed.

Everyone just stands, motionless. Jack looks at his son and
slowly, unconsciously, his grip on Kevin's arm loosens and his
hand flops by his side.

NORMA
(finally)
Oh, my God. When did they find
out? I'll call Evelyn and see
if there's anything I can do. Oh,
God, poor Evelyn, poor Jim.

She heads for the phone. Karen follows her. Jack and Kevin just
stand there, Jack putting his hand back on Kevin's shoulder and
gripping it till it hurts.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

30

SERIES OF SHOTS of Kevin walking slowly.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)
That night I decided to go for a
walk. The days were still long and
back then kids could still go for
walks at dusk without fear of
ending up on a milk carton.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

31

Kevin enters a wooded area.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

I went down to the old pool in the creek where we used to find crayfish. I didn't admit it to myself until years later, but in my mind was the shadow of a thought that Winnie might be there.

He breaks through some brush and stops at what he sees.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

32

KEVIN'S POV

Winnie, dressed in her old tomboy clothes, sitting with her back to him on a rock by the creek.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

She was sort of hugging herself and rocking slowly back and forth. There was a bit of a chill in the air and she didn't have a sweater. For a minute I was scared to approach her.

Winnie turns and sees him.

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

But she saw me and I had to come over. I didn't know what to say. I had the strangest feeling -- it was impossible for me to believe that Brian was dead. I just couldn't see it. I wondered if she felt the same way. But I figured I couldn't really ask her that.

KEVIN

I'm sorry -- about Brian.

Winnie says nothing. Kevin sits awkwardly next to her.

KEVIN

And I'm sorry about what I said today. It's not true.

WINNIE

(barely audible)

I know.

MUSIC UP: PERCY SLEDGE'S "WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN"

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

It seemed to get a little darker and a little colder with each passing minute. Fall was really in the air.

He puts his arm gently around her shoulders. She turns and we can see that she is crying. Kevin starts to cry too. They hold each other. And after a minute, they begin gently, tentatively, to kiss.

AND THE CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK ON KEVIN AND WINNIE KISSING AND STILL ROCKING BACK AND FORTH A LITTLE IN THE DUSK. IT PULLS BACK ABOVE THE WOODS, ABOVE THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD WITH ALL ITS LITTLE IDENTICAL HOUSES. EVENTUALLY IT IS THE SAME BIRD'S EYE SHOT WE OPENED WITH, AS THE NARRATION CONTINUES:

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

It was the first kiss for both of us, and our last together. We never really talked about it afterward.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO PULL UP:

ADULT KEVIN (V.O.)

But I think about the events of that day again and again, and somehow I know that Winnie does, too, whenever some blowhard starts talking about the anonymity of the suburbs or the mindlessness of the TV generation. Because we know that inside each of those identical boxes with its Dodge parked out front and its white bread on the table and its TV set glowing blue in the falling dusk, there were characters and stories, there were families bound together in the pain and the struggle of love, there were moments that made us cry with laughter, and there were moments, like that one, of sorrow and wonder.

AND NOW, HIGH ABOVE THE SUBURBAN EXPANSE, WE:

FADE OUT:

THE END