

EMPATHY MAN

Written by

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**INT. THERAPIST OFFICE. DAY.**

Present Day.

JAY HENDERSON, 51 is sitting across from his therapist MOLLY JOHNSON, 72.

Somewhere in Central New Jersey.

JAY

Time heals all wounds is a lie.

MOLLY

How often do you have thoughts?

JAY

It is not every day I think about what happened forty years ago. While driving or trying to get some sleep, thoughts of that terrible day.

I have ongoing fantasies of delivering a beating that the scum who targeted me, would never have recovered from.

MOLLY

Could you have killed him?

JAY

For what he did to me, he deserved to die. I could have killed him.

I was a scared, thin 11 year old kid, years away from any male growth spurt. I was an easy target.

At one point I said that I could not breathe. He just said, "I don't care", and some in the crowd laughed.

MOLLY

Horrible.

JAY

Many years later in May 2020, can't breathe reminded me of.

MOLLY

George Floyd.

JAY

Yes.

I didn't recognize about half of the other boys in the crowd. This animal planned this sick show for days to ruin the life of another young kid.

MOLLY

I am so sorry you had to live through that day.

Bullying has been a huge problem. In school, at work.

A broken person in pain lashes out, trying to make another person feel worse than they do. Bullying is just about the worst evil there is.

JAY

Is there a cure?

MOLLY

If the bully could feel the pain they cause other people inside themselves, then bullying would slowly fade.

JAY

I have found that empathy in this world is at times, as rare as a diamond.

MOLLY

That seems to be true.

JAY

When I hear the word uncle. Even after so many decades. The word still bothers the hell out of me.

MOLLY

Its what you said?

JAY

During the fight, when I was wrestling with this scum, I said it so the fight would end. Then he said he would stab me if I hit him when it looked like I might win.

MOLLY

He said he would stab you?

JAY

Several times, I hardly ate in two days. All my energy was gone.

MOLLY

How were you hurt?

JAY

I was not punched in the face, or really the body. It was a stupid wrestling match, with so many kids standing around, like jackals, waiting for blood. It was disgusting.

MOLLY

What about after?

JAY

He kicked me in the rear end as I walked away. I was a terrified 11 year old kid.

The teachers found out about this fight. I never really saw this animal again after that day. The teachers must have stopped him from targeting me again.

I never found out if he was expelled or went to another school. I saw him one day in gym class in high school years later. That was the last time I ever saw him.

MOLLY

The school most likely expelled or banned him.

You are lucky he was not a continuing issue for you, while in high school.

JAY

I developed a stuttering problem after this happened. I was young child, the new kid in school, and I ran into an animal like this.

MOLLY

I am so sorry Jay.

JAY

Like I said, time far too often,  
does not heal all wounds.

MOLLY

That is not one of my favorite  
sayings.

**INT. TEACHERS CONFERENCE ROOM. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

A typical high school conference room in central New Jersey.

Present Day.

Twenty teachers are sitting at a large conference room table,  
several more walk into a conference room.

DAN REYNOLDS, 65, is the Principal of the high school. He  
enters the conference room followed by his Vice Principal,  
DEBRA VANCE, 46.

Dan sits at the head of a huge oak conference room table and  
Debra sits by his side.

Teachers DAVID HOBBS, 41, NATASHA HARRISON, 43 and RICHARD  
DONALD, 35 are sitting at different positions at the large  
oval conference room table.

DAN

Be seated everybody. There are some  
extra chairs in the hallway, for  
those who do not have a seat. Yes,  
back there. Thank you.

As everybody knows the first order  
of business is Justin Dutton. Our  
in house bully.

His very presence, according to  
several teachers, actually incites  
more bullying in this school.

Since Dutton has transferred to  
this school, we have had? Debra,  
what is that number?

DEBRA

Right now, about an 18% increase in  
bullying incidents since Justin  
started here.

DAN

We were already at the high end for this problem. Now we are at among the worst schools in this state.

RICHARD

It has been measurably worse the last few months in my English class. We have to do something.

NATASHIA

Is this Justin kid training other kids to be bullies?

RICHARD

I have no proof of that, but his presence has had a negative effect on too many students. A sick kid like this derives pleasure in the misery and fear of other kids who are smaller.

DAN

Hundreds of years of bullying and no real answers.

DAVID

I have seen some sadistic incidents in my history class. I am more than sick of this.

DEBRA

Would expelling Justin be the easy solution? Just to see if the bullying numbers reduce when he is no longer in school.

DAN

His parents have been fighting to keep him in school, none of this has been easy.

DAVID

The latest rumor is that he pulled a knife at a gas station and tried to stab someone working there.

DAN

If that were even remotely true there would be a police report that we would have known about. The police would have come here for Christ sakes.

DAVID  
This is still a rumor.

DAN  
Debra, please check into this.

DEBRA  
I will.

DAN  
We have to keep each other in the loop on all reported incidents. Social Services is our only alternative, other than expulsion.

DEBRA  
He is almost 13 years old. His mother recently died of Cancer, and his father now drinks heavily.

DAN  
All the more reason to get this kid away from other children who might be in the way of his rage.

DEBRA  
I agree.

DAVID  
Has anyone checked if he has a police record?

DAN  
I checked. He has no record.

RICHARD  
Has anyone talked to his father?

DEBRA  
I called last week. He was so drunk, I don't think he understood any of my questions.

DAN  
His father is not able to cope with his wife's death from Cancer.

It does not help matters that Justin is an only child.

I have sent a heads up to the police and social services about this kid, several times.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)  
If there are no other questions,  
our next meeting is tomorrow at  
8:00 AM.

They all stand up and start to leave the conference room.

**INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE TEACHERS CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.**

Several congregate in the hallway outside the conference room.

A teacher, KAREN VERNON, 38, walks up to Dan and Debra.

KAREN  
From what I have seen in my class,  
and from first hand conversation. I  
think Justin Dutton is dangerous  
enough to kill someone.

DAN  
You think this is that bad?

KAREN  
Yes. He is a very angry kid.

DEBRA  
Suggestions?

KAREN  
Call child Social Services.

DAN  
We have done this several times. I  
have heard nothing back yet, they  
said they are investigating. My  
guess is they do not have enough  
staff for all the problems in this  
school district.

KAREN  
I heard a weird rumor about some  
bullying expert on the internet.  
Some kind of a bullying whisperer.

DAN  
Find out who this person is and get  
in contact with him.

KAREN  
I will contact him and let you and  
Debra know.



DAN  
Thank you.

DEBRA  
We appreciate the help.

**INT. RAY HENDERSON'S FAMILY HOME. SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NJ.  
DAY.**

MAUREEN HENDERSON, 38 is washing dishes with her daughter  
LAUREN, 7, while her son RAY HENDERSON, 11 is on the couch  
playing chess online.

MAUREEN  
Ray, how you doing?

RAY  
Winning and then losing like  
always. Erratic.

MAUREEN  
Chess is the worlds most  
fascinating game. More like an art  
form, than a board game.

RAY  
It is.

MAUREEN  
Did you ever get your Dracula book  
back?

RAY  
Justin?

MAUREEN  
Yes, Justin.

RAY  
I got it back, but it was kind of  
dirty.

MAUREEN  
Dirty how?

RAY  
Fingerprints, some stains.

MAUREEN  
How rude.

RAY  
There are some bad stories about  
this kid.

MAUREEN

Bad how?

RAY

He pulled a knife on someone at an Exxon station. He might have been expelled a few times.

Ray is looking at his laptop while talking to his mother.

MAUREEN

Look at me Ray.

Ray turns to look at his mother.

MOLLY

You are to avoid this kid at all costs. Go nowhere near him.

RAY

What should I do if he comes up to me?

MAUREEN

Don't be rude. Cut the conversation short and anything you feel is not right you go immediately to school security. You got your book back that should be enough. Stay away.

RAY

OK Mom.

MAUREEN

I am already worried. What kind of an animal do they let into your school anyway?

RAY

Don't tell Dad about this.

MAUREEN

Why not?

RAY

He might make a big deal and go to the school. That would make the whole thing worse.

MOLLY

Why?

RAY

Other kids would find out and think  
I am a wimp.

Maureen rolls her eyes.

MAUREEN

I will keep it from your father for  
now. If things escalate then I will  
have no choice but to tell him.  
This kid sounds very dangerous.  
Deal?

RAY

Deal.

**INT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM. DAY.**

Next day.

Several ten and eleven year old boys are sitting on the side  
of a basketball, gym floor.

Ray is sitting next to his friend GEORGE, 11. The gym  
teacher MR. BURNS, 70 walks in front of the boys.

JUSTIN DUTTON, 12 is sitting 20 feet from Ray, with his  
friend, FRED DAVIS, 13.

MR. BURNS

Today will be a simple relay race.  
Same as last week.

GEORGE

So they moved you up a level? To  
the top class?

RAY

Yes.

GEORGE

Good for you.

RAY

They assumed because my family came  
from a poor town and school before,  
that I should be in the lower grade  
level.

GEORGE

Going to miss you in class.

RAY  
We will see each other.

MR. BURNS  
RAY!

Ray looks up at Mr. Burns startled.

RAY  
Yes?

MR. BURNS  
For a young man doing so well with high grades in class. What are you doing talking in my gym class? The rule is no talking. Remember?

RAY  
Yes. Sorry.

Several other boys in the class give Ray a bad look. Ray gives worried look to George. Justin Dutton and Fred look over at Ray.

JUSTIN  
(Whispers to Fred)  
What the fuck is the deal with this asshole kid? Does he think he is better than us?

FRED  
Sure looks like it to me.

JUSTIN  
Looks like a pussy to me. Smart boy? Better than us?

FRED  
Pay him a visit?

JUSTIN  
And soon.

Two other boys look over at Ray. RICHARD DAVIS, 11 and DAVID SAMUELS, 11.

DAVID  
That asshole is in our class now?

RICHARD  
Looks like a real moron.

DAVID  
For sure. He should not be in our  
class. He is not as smart as us.

RICHARD  
Some head slaps in his future.

DAVID  
Tomorrow.

**INT. HISTORY CLASS. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

Next morning, 8 AM.

Ray is sitting at his desk, waiting for the History class to start.

David Samuels enters the class, and taps Ray on the back of his head, followed by Richard who taps Ray harder on the back of his head.

Angry, Ray follows Richard to the back of the class room into the coatroom, and slaps the hell out of his head. SLAP!

RAY  
Don't do that again asshole.

RICHARD  
Want to make something out of this?

RAY  
Sure when? After this class?

RICHARD  
You got it asshole.

RAY  
Fuck you asshole.

Ray walks back to his seat, while Richard rubs the back of his head.

RAY (CONT'D)  
What the hell is going on here? I  
just started at this school.

**FLASHBACK TO:**

MR. BURNS  
For a young man doing so well with  
high grades in class.  
(MORE)

MR. BURNS (CONT'D)  
What are you doing talking in my  
gym class? The rule is no talking.  
Remember?

**BACK TO PRESENT.**

**EXT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM. DAY.**

Some two hours later. Richard and Ray are walking away from the school, up a road, about to make a left turn.

RICHARD  
You sure you want to have it out?

RAY  
You sure you two guys want to keep  
slapping me on the back of the  
head?

RICHARD  
Just kidding around.

RAY  
Do that again, and I will do much  
more than just slap you much harder  
on your head. Both of you guys,  
just leave me the hell alone. I am  
new to this school, trying to fit  
in. I don't need this.

Richard walks across the street and Ray keeps walking up the same road.

RAY (CONT'D)  
What a lowlife. Next time, he will  
not be so lucky.

**EXT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL MAIN SPORTS FIELD. DAY.**

11:45 AM. Several boys are playing in the field behind the school. Justin Dutton, and his friend Fred are standing by the fence watching other boys play touch football.

JUSTIN  
So many wimps on this school.

FRED  
This is my third school. More wimps  
here than any place I have been.

JUSTIN  
Seen Ray today?

FRED  
Saw him in the library an hour ago.

JUSTIN  
He should be our next big target.

A boy, STEVE DANIELS, 11 runs by carrying a football, and Justin trips him. He gets up and confronts Justin.

STEVE  
You did that on purpose.

JUSTIN  
No witness man.

The boy looks at Fred.

STEVE  
He saw it.

FRED  
Run along little shit. I saw nothing.

Steve looks at Fred, who towers over him and then Justin and slowly walks away.

The rest of the group of boys playing football look on, as Steve comes back to the group. Steve bumps fists with his friend DANIEL TIMMONS, 11.

STEVE  
Those two fucking guys over there.  
Dangerous. Sick.

DANIEL  
Why Justin is still in this school  
and not in jail or reform school?

STEVE  
He pulled a knife on someone.

DANIEL  
He may kill some kid before they  
throw him out of here.

STEVE  
As my father says about his bad  
job. "Where is management"?

DANIEL  
You said it.

**INT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

The principal of the school, Dan Reynolds is sitting at his desk when his phone rings. Dan answers the phone.

DAN

Yes?

SECRETARY

Its your meeting. Mr. Nodari sir.

DAN

Send him in, and call Debra to join us.

SECRETARY

Sure thing.

JACK NODARI, gray hair, 55 years old, 5'11 enters Dan's office.

Dan and Jack shake hands.

JACK

Nice to meet you sir.

DAN

You too. My vice principal will be joining us. Oh here she is.

Debra Vance enters Dan's office.

DEBRA

Nice to meet you.

Debra and Jack shake hands.

JACK

Nice meeting both of you. Thank you for inviting me.

DAN

Through several sources at some other schools, we learned some things about your services.

JACK

Was it my blog?

DAN

Yes. It was "Bullying: Curing the Disease".



JACK

That is the one that gets the most hits. Bullying has been a huge problem in schools for a very long time.

It seems sometimes that the problem never improves.

Within software applications that maintain school IT systems, bullying has an important subsystem for many years. The problems include, suicides, depression, calls to parents and even weapons.

DAN

Why does bullying happen?

JACK

You take a depressed insecure young kid. If its a boy, its more common for him to have his growth spurt ahead of other boys his age. For girls its about popularity and cruelty with girls less popular and less attractive.

Bullying is a way of lashing out to make someone else feel worse than the bully. Its almost as if the bully is trying to offload their intense emotional pain onto someone else and gain a temporary high.

I created a step by step method of identifying the problem, trying to understand the bully and then trying to teach them empathy.

DEBRA

Empathy?

JACK

Empathy is the cure to all bullying. This is my theory, not something that is considered a generally accepted solution.

DEBRA

What do you mean?

JACK

If the bully fully understands how their victim feels, my findings conclude that most of the time this can cause a reduction of the behavior and potentially a cure to the problem.

DAN

How long is this process and what is the success rate?

JACK

It can take weeks or months depending on the severity of the problem. We are successful about 90% of the time in at least greatly reducing the behavior within a school.

DAN

We have a problem where one bully Justin Dutton is infecting other kids with his bad example.

JACK

The other kids are afraid of Justin. They think its better for them to be a follower to avoid being his next victim.

DAN

Right now, we do not have enough evidence to expel this kid.

JACK

What were your bullying numbers prior to him arriving and now?

DAN

We had about a 15% frequency of bullying before he arrived, now its 23% and rising.

JACK

Its good that you called me.

The next step is for me to have an interview with Justin. Is that possible?

DAN

Given that he has to agree to it, that might be difficult.

JACK

Maybe I can just run into him  
somewhere and start talking.

DEBRA

This kid is so hostile, most of the  
teachers are afraid to go near him.

JACK

Can you print me out all the  
information you have about him? I  
also need his picture and home  
address. Any family history, etc.

DAN

His father is a drunk and his  
mother recently died. We just found  
out it was breast Cancer.

JACK

It is no wonder he is a dangerous  
bully after something like this.

DEBRA

We do need your help.

JACK

I will do my best. I will talk to  
this kid and let you know what I  
find out.

Tomorrow. After school, I will go  
to his house. Hopefully he will be  
there alone.

DEBRA

He could be dangerous. Be careful.

JACK

I will do that. Thank you.

**EXT. JUSTIN DUTTON'S HOUSE. SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY.  
DAY.**

One day later.

Jack leaves his car and walks up to Dutton's house, and rings  
the doorbell.

JUSTIN

Hey man! Just go away! I gave at  
the fucking office!

JACK

Sir. I am not a salesman. I am from the school.

JUSTIN

My school? What do you want?

JACK

I just want to talk. Just for a few minutes son.

JUSTIN

I am not your son asshole.

Justin violently opens his front door.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Who the fuck are you?

JACK

I am a new guidance councilor. Just started yesterday. May I come in, I just want a quick conversation.

JUSTIN

Just 10 minutes then I throw you out of the window.

JACK

Sounds like a plan. Nice to meet you.

Jack offers his hand and Justin turns away and walks into the living room. Jack follows and looks around at a dilapidated broken home, with newspapers and beer cans all around.

JUSTIN

You can sit over there.

Justin points to a dirty couch, covered in newspapers. Jack clears area and sits down.

JACK

This visit today is standard for the school after a student has suffered a recent loss.

JUSTIN

My mother fucking mother died of Cancer months ago. Now you guys come over?

JACK

There were delays. As I said, I just started a few days ago.

JUSTIN

You are some kind of a grief counselor?

JACK

I am a guidance counselor, but I specialize in grief counseling and bullying.

JUSTIN

She died because she is married to a scum bag and didn't have the balls to leave him.

I am over it. I don't give a shit anymore man.

JACK

You are almost 13 years old. Too young to pack it in.

JUSTIN

Your mother did not die when you were 13 did she?

JACK

No. She did not. Do you know the difference between empathy and compassion?

JUSTIN

Don't care.

JACK

Empathy is when someone reaches out and truly understands what you are going through. Empathy goes hand and hand with compassion, and a human desire to alleviate another person's pain.

I have the ability to empathize with other people. You do not.

JUSTIN

Why would I care?

JACK

You are on a path to reform school or prison.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

When someone older than you, wants to help. What they have to tell you, might save your life.

JUSTIN

My father is constantly drunk.

JACK

Did he drink before she died?

JUSTIN

A little, but never like this. Two nights ago I found him out in the yard half naked with a bottle of empty vodka, laying on a hammock.

JACK

Your father has to go into a detox facility and get help.

JUSTIN

I told him this.

JACK

What did he say?

JUSTIN

Nothing he just walked away.

JACK

Was your parent's marriage in trouble before she died?

JUSTIN

Arguing all the time, mostly about money.

JACK

What does your father do for a living?

JUSTIN

Construction.

JACK

With the dangerous drinking, for this long, I am surprised he still has a job.

JUSTIN

He took about 2 months off after she died. He returned about a month ago.

JACK

He is probably on thin ice.

I would like to go to local social services with all this. Is that OK with you?

JUSTIN

Would they even care?

JACK

This is their job to care about other people. Why they chose their careers in the first place.

JUSTIN

Nobody cared before.

JACK

I would like get out ahead of this. For both you and your father.

JUSTIN

Do what you fucking want. As you can see, I barely give a shit.

Justin gets up and walks into the kitchen. Jack follows him.

JACK

Justin. Here is my card. You can call me any time.

Justin takes the card.

JUSTIN

OK. Can you leave now.

JACK

People care about you and your father. Give us a chance. That is all I ask.

Justin just gets some juice from the refrigerator and ignores Jack.

Jack turns and leaves the house after dropping his card down on the kitchen table.

Justin walks out the front door. After leaving the house, Jack dials his cell phone.

JACK (CONT'D)  
(Into Phone)  
Hello Dan?

DAN  
Hello Jack.

JACK  
This is potentially worse than we thought. We have to get social services involved. His father is back at work after taking two months off. He may lose his job the way this is going.

DAN  
I will contact Social Services again. They have been ignoring me for weeks now.

JACK  
Can you also have them call me?

DAN  
Sure.

JACK  
OK thanks.

They both hang up.

**INT. LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL. DAY.**

Two days later. 2 PM.

The play "Little Abner" is playing on a high school stage. Ray is sitting in the 5th row, Justin in the 6th, a few seats to the right of Ray. Some other girls are sitting in Ray's row. GINA REYNOLDS, 11 is sitting next to Ray.

RAY  
What have you heard about this play?

GINA  
Never heard of it.

RAY  
Surprised they can afford this field trip.



GINA

Me too.

Justin leans over to whisper to Ray.

JUSTIN

Hey Ray.

Ray turns around.

RAY

Yes?

JUSTIN

Your ears are blocking my vision of the stage man.

RAY

They help me fly man.

Several girls laugh. Justin glares at Ray like he wants to kill him.

**EXT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. DAY.**

A sunny day, perfect weather, Justin and Fred are standing on by the fence, watching the gym class play a baseball game.

MR. BURNS

You guys going to play?

JUSTIN

No.

MR. BURNS

Why not?

JUSTIN

Don't want to.

MR. BURNS

You?

FRED

Same.

MR. BURNS

Guys. You are aware that there are grades for gym that are combined into your final GPA?

JUSTIN

Don't really give a shit.

MR. BURNS  
Watch your language!

DAVIS YOUNG, 11, hits a line drive up the field that becomes a home run. Davis stands behind a cage behind home base, after hitting the home run.

JUSTIN  
Nice hit man.

DAVIS  
Thanks.

JUSTIN  
I am planning something.

DAVIS  
What?

JUSTIN  
I have an event planned.

DAVIS  
What do you mean?

JUSTIN  
A fight with that asshole kid Ray.

DAVIS  
Why, what did he do?

JUSTIN  
Don't like his attitude.

DAVIS  
What attitude? Seems like an OK kid to me.

JUSTIN  
He needs a lesson. He thinks he is better than everyone because he moved up to the higher class.

DAVIS  
How the hell do you know what Ray is thinking? You are the guy to show him the ropes around here?

JUSTIN  
You got it.

DAVIS  
Not interested.

JUSTIN  
OK. Everybody will be there, except  
you.

DAVIS  
Don't care.

Davis walks away.

JUSTIN  
Maybe this asshole should be next.  
Another attitude to fix.

FRED  
I'm with you.

Some 20 minutes later. Justin and Fred walk over to some boys  
across from the baseball field.

JUSTIN  
Hi guys.

GROUP  
Hey.

JUSTIN  
I am organizing an event for  
Monday.

GROUP  
What event?

JUSTIN  
This new asshole Ray, who started a  
few months ago. Needs a reality  
check.

GROUP  
What do you mean?

JUSTIN  
Big fight in on Monday after gym. I  
am going to kick his ass.

GROUP  
Why?

JUSTIN  
He thinks he is better than the  
rest of us. Time to knock him on  
his ass. Many guys are coming from  
other schools.

Some nod in agreement. Most walk away.

GROUP

Where?

JUSTIN

After gym class. I will need some of you faster guys to catch this wimp if he tries to run away.

GROUP

Count me in.

Some others walk away. Davis walks up to Justin.

DAVIS

Just curious. What do you get from picking on a kid who is smaller than you. Younger than you. Who did nothing to you.

He is new to this school. Trying live his life and for some reason, you have a problem.

JUSTIN

Someone has to do it man.

Davis whispers into Justin's ear.

DAVIS

Anytime you want to try and pick on someone your own size. Let me know OK?

Justin looks angrily back and Davis.

JUSTIN

After I get the other asshole, OK?

DAVIS

You got it. Just name the place and time.

Davis glares at Justin and walks away.

FRED

Looks like a good number of guys will come.

JUSTIN

The more the better.

FRED

Major sporting event on Monday.

JUSTIN  
Cant wait to kick some ass.

FRED  
Your reputation is growing man.

JUSTIN  
I can feel it.

**INT. RAYS GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE. DAY.**

Ray is delivering some supplies to his 80 year old Grandmother, ADA STEVENS. Her house is blocks from his own house and Williams Middle School.

Friday afternoon, right after school. 4:30 PM.

Ray hands a bag to Ada.

RAY  
His is what mom packed this morning.

ADA  
How nice of your mother to pack this for me.

Ada hugs Ray.

RAY  
Thank you Grandmom.

ADA  
Take this chocolate chip cookie as my gift to you.

RAY  
Thanks. Looking forward to next week!

ADA  
Me too.

Ray turns to leave. He briskly walks down the stairs, and into Ada's front yard, making a left down the street. As Ray walks one more block, he runs into Justin and Fred as they are walking up the adjacent street and almost crash right into Ray.

JUSTIN  
HEY!

RAY

Hello.

JUSTIN

Nice seeing you here.

Justin stands in front of Ray with Fred standing to the left, towering over Ray.

RAY

What do you guys want?

Justin shoves Ray, and Ray starts to run. Justin and Fred chase after him but Ray is much faster and he escapes. As Ray escapes Fred and Justin easily, he looks back, as they turn away.

**EXT. OUTSIDE RAYS HOUSE. DAY.**

Three days later.

Monday morning, 8 AM.

Ray is walking to school, with this sister LAUREN, seven years old.

Ray and Lauren turn to the right from their house. Justin is standing there on the street corner, waiting.

RAY

What are you doing here?

JUSTIN

Waiting for you and what happens next.

RAY

What did I do to you? What is your problem?

JUSTIN

Doesn't matter. Will see you after gym.

RAY

For what?

JUSTIN

You know what.

Ray and Lauren, walk up the street.

LAUREN  
Who is that guy?

RAY  
Someone sick and insane. Welcome to  
the new school.

LAUREN  
You going to fight that guy?

RAY  
Don't know.

LAUREN  
You have had nothing to eat in two  
days. How can you fight this creep?

RAY  
Don't know.

Lauren looks over at Ray with a look of worry and great concern. Ray starts to look terrified as he and Lauren walk towards the school.

**EXT. BASEBALL FIELD. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

Four hours later. 12 PM.

Justin is standing behind the home base fence, with Fred.

The boys gym class is playing a variant of baseball, where the player hits the ball and then runs strait down the middle of the field where the other players try and tag him. Ray is at home base waiting for a pitch.

Ray looks over to the fence where Justin and Fred are waiting. They are both glaring at him.

Ray hits the ball pitched to him and runs at full speed towards a base at the other end of the field. Rather than wait at the base, in a state of extreme anxiety, Ray runs back to home base avoiding all attempted tags. Ray then walks over to the side of home base and waits for his next turn.

JUSTIN  
Don't even think of running later.

Ray looks at Justin. Then turns back to look at the field.

**EXT. BASEBALL FIELD. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

One hour later.

The gym class walks back to the main school building. Ray changes back to his school cloths and when he walks outside. When Ray walks outside to the parking lot, there is a crowd of about 50 to 60 of 11-15 year old boys waiting for him, along with Justin Dutton and Fred.

The crowd walks up a hill to the first crosswalk. Ray is walking in front of the crowd with Justin next to him.

Justin is holding a baseball glove in his right hand.

JUSTIN  
(Yelling loudly)  
What a great day today!!

RAY  
I don't believe in violence.

JUSTIN  
What a great day!!!

While yelling its a great day, Justin swings the baseball glove and hits Ray on the left side of his face.

Ray, shocked by this sudden attack, rubs his face and looks behind to see this huge crowd of young men, wanting to see this disgusting display of bullying.

The crowd reaches the crosswalk and turns left down road that runs perpendicular. They pass a series of houses and then Justin, jumps Ray from behind. They fall into a wrestling match, where Ray is on top at first, then Justin and then Ray again.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)  
If you hit me I will stab you.

Ray allows Justin to roll on top. Ray is quickly disgusted with his predicament.

RAY  
Uncle! I cant breathe!

JUSTIN  
I don't care!

Some in the large crowd laugh.

RAY  
Uncle. Enough already. Uncle.

About 10 minutes later the wrestling match ends. No punches were thrown at Ray's face. Ray is relatively lucky this was not worse.



Ray stands up and is kicked in the rear end by Justin as he walks away. A black boy DAVID GREER, 14 walks with Ray down the road.

DAVID  
You ok man?

RAY  
Yes. Who are you?

DAVID  
My name is David. I go to another school.

RAY  
Which one?

DAVID  
Reynolds prep.

RAY  
That is two towns away from here.

DAVID  
Justin and Fred invited many guys from all over.

RAY  
Sick. How many schools?

DAVID  
Don't know. He is a sick dude man. Sorry for you man. Good luck.

RAY  
Good luck.

Ray briskly walks back to his house.

**INT. RAYS HOME. SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NJ. DAY.**

Ray enters his house, where his mother Maureen is washing dishes. Lauren follows Ray into the house.

LAUREN  
I heard what happened.

MAUREEN  
What happened?

LAUREN  
Ray was attacked.

MAUREEN

What? What do you mean attacked?  
The Justin kid?

LAUREN

Yes, that lowlife creep.

MAUREEN

Are you hurt? Should I call the  
police? I should call the school!!

RAY

No, I am OK.

MAUREEN

What kind of a hell hole town have  
we moved to? What happened?

RAY

It looked like he invited  
everybody.

MAUREEN

From your school?

RAY

From all other schools in the area.  
I did not recognize half the other  
boys in the crowd.

MAUREEN

My God. I am going to that school  
today!

RAY

If you do that. This will get even  
worse.

MAUREEN

Thank God you are OK. You have to  
go back to school after lunch Ray.

RAY

Why?

MAUREEN

Because. It will show you have  
class and courage.

RAY

I just don't know if I can go back  
now.

MAUREEN

You can. I know you have courage.  
Don't let one lowlife creep ruin  
your life!

Ray looks up at his mother and starts to cry. Maureen hugs her son.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

You ran into a bully today, that is  
all that happened. You will  
survive, there is always tomorrow  
Ray.

RAY

I will go back.

**EXT. PERPENDICULAR STREET FROM WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

One hour after the fight.

Ray walks near the location of the fight.

Ray sees Justin, standing there, waiting.

RAY

Nice fight.

JUSTIN

Thanks.

Ray continues to walk to the school. Shaking his head in disbelief and fear.

**INT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

A few minutes later. Ray enters the school, and goes to English class. JOHN HIGGINS, 45, 5'10, black hair is starting to teach the class.

John looks at Ray. Ray sits at his desk.

JOHN

Ray. Can you come with me please?

RAY

Yes.

JOHN

We would like to work on a small  
project in this other room for the  
rest of today, OK?

RAY

Why?

JOHN

I know what happened today, we are trying to help you adjust.

RAY

OK.

JOHN

Principal Reynolds is aware of what happened he is looking into this.

RAY

Thank you.

JOHN

I promise, things will get better.

John puts his hand in Ray's shoulder. Ray starts to lose his composure. Ray is still shaking from the events of two hours earlier.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You hang in there son. Bulling is a problem in this school. We are working on it, OK?

RAY

OK.

**INT. PRINCIPALS OFFICE WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

The Principal of the school, Dan Reynolds, is in his office sitting at his desk. Dan answers the phone.

SECRETARY

It is Justin Dutton to see you sir.

DAN

Show him in please.

Justin walks into the office.

DAN (CONT'D)

You can sit there.

Dan points to the chair in front of his desk. Justin sits.

DAN (CONT'D)

I have contacted your father.

JUSTIN

Really? He is a fucking drunk.

DAN

Young man. That is not acceptable language for my office. Understood?

JUSTIN

Whatever man.

DAN

So the reason why you targeted our new student Ray today?

JUSTIN

He is a fucking asshole and I don't like his attitude.

DAN

You are already suspended two weeks. One more word like that, and its going to be a full month.

Why did you target and start a fight with Ray?

JUSTIN

For fun.

DAN

Fun?

JUSTIN

Fun.

DAN

Ray was the only student moved up to the higher class level about a month ago. That seems to be when the increase in bullying started. Is that one of the reasons?

JUSTIN

Whatever.

DAN

What does whatever mean?

JUSTIN

Whatever you want it to.

DAN

From what I am hearing. You turned this into large local sporting event. You invited boys from other schools? A fact I find just plain unconscionable.

JUSTIN

Sure why not?

DAN

For many reasons. Starting with humiliating a young man, 11 years old. Almost two years younger than you. Who did nothing to you.

JUSTIN

It was fun. I was famous for about an hour.

DAN

Famous?

JUSTIN

I was somebody.

DAN

Do you have any idea the damage that something like this can cause another human being?

JUSTIN

I don't care. I got my own problems man.

DAN

That much is obvious. Due to the number of incidents and the outrage of what happened today. You are suspended for 1 month.

I will be talking to others who work here and there is a possibility that we will have to ban you from the school, forever. Our next step for you is social services.

JUSTIN

Again, I don't give a flying shit.

DAN

You have serious problems. Some of them are understandable, considering the events of the last six months.

Unfortunately we can no longer afford to have you in this school, targeting students.

You are headed to reform school and maybe even prison.

JUSTIN

Don't give a fuck. My mother is dead. My father is an asshole drunk.

DAN

Your father is hurting badly because of his wife. His drinking is what some people do to hide from pain.

JUSTIN

Don't give a fuck.

DAN

Stand up, out of my office. Go home, we will send your father the paperwork. You are expelled as of today.

Justin stands up and walks out of the office, and knocks over some books on a bookshelf on the way out.

Dan shakes his head. Dan dials his secretary.

DAN (CONT'D)

Marcia, come in here please.

MARCIA DAVIS, 67, walks into Dan's office.

DAN (CONT'D)

Please fill out the online expulsion forms for Justin Dutton. He is out of here for the next five weeks. I just added another week, just for fun.

We will have to figure out our next steps. He is a danger to all the students in this school.

MARCIA

I will take care of this and email  
the you the paperwork.

DAN

Thank you.

**INT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.**

Next morning, 8:30 AM.

Several teachers are sitting at a large conference room  
table, waiting for Dan to arrive.

NATASHIA

Is this true? This sick kid invited  
other kids from other schools to  
watch?

DEBRA

He turned it into a huge sporting  
event. That 50 or 60 kids number I  
am not sure about. They all came to  
witness this fight. Like vultures.

RICHARD

What a nice way for our school to  
welcome the new kid.

Dan and Jack walk into the conference room and sit down at  
the conference table.

DAN

Everyone, this is Jack Nodari. He  
has a relatively new service that  
is trying to help schools with  
bullying.

RICHARD

So how is that going?

DAN

Something we will be discussing  
today. As I said in the email memo  
about this meeting, the recent  
fight between Justin and Ray has  
elevated our concern over bullying  
and Justin.



DEBRA

This inviting of other students from other schools to humiliate another child who just started at our school is unacceptable.

DAN

I have already expelled Justin for five weeks. For the safety of our students we are now working with the school board to permanently expel Justin.

Due to the issues with Justin's father, Social Services is looking into what to do with Justin.

NATASHIA

Do we have enough evidence to remove Justin from this school?

DAN

We do now. I have a meeting with the school board tomorrow night. Odds are we will have no problem getting him permanently out of here.

Richard looks at Jack.

RICHARD

Have you seen anything like this? Some sick kid creating a local sporting event to humiliate some poor kid?

JACK

At this level with this many kids from other schools, this is brand new to me. We all have to remember the perfect storm of extreme circumstances with Justin.

He is an only child. His mother dies of breast Cancer after a two year battle. His father cannot deal with her death and does nothing but drink and sleep.

From what I saw when I visited Justin at his house last week. His father might lose his job any day now, because of his drinking.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

If this happens, that will be the last straw.

NATASHIA

So we are all waiting on the word from the school board to save this kid?

JACK

What Justin needs is someone who cares. Someone with empathy. Carting him off to make him someone else's problem might not be the long term answer.

RICHARD

What is the answer?

JACK

I have a dialogue with him. Our conversation last week, considering the circumstances did not go that well, but I felt I was breaking through a little.

DAN

That problem is that Justin targeted Ray a few days after you spoke with him.

JACK

No way I or anyone else is going to fix this kid after one conversation. This is going to take intense therapy, over a long period of time. I believe the cure for sick bullying like this is empathy.

I have a road trip coming up in the next few days, if his father approves, I will be taking Justin with me.

DEBRA

You plan to teach empathy to Justin?

JACK

Empathy and lessons about life. He has no idea how bad the path he is on will be.

DEBRA

What will you do? What will you say?

JACK

Trying to get him through his pain over losing both his mother Cancer and his father from drinking.

He is trying to transfer his pain onto someone else. His brain is saying: "I feel so bad, now you feel worse. Now I can feel better".

NATASHIA

According to Ray's mother. This all started when the gym teacher singled Ray out after he made a mistake in gym. He talked about his excellent grades, other kids have been jealous of Ray being the only one moved to the higher class.

JACK

Unprofessional for a gym teacher to single out a student like that. It made Ray a target of several bullies at the same time.

Justin sees a happy successful kid and feels like his life is over. Jealousy over someone else's perceived success. A broken person cannot accept seeing another person in a great place. This is when a bully strikes.

RICHARD

This is all well and good. I have compassion for Justin, we all do. The problem though is that he is a great danger to all our other students. Pulling a knife on someone at a gas station is just one of the examples of what might happen.

JACK

I agree.

DAN

Somewhere along the line we have to try and do both.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)  
 Help Justin, who understandably is  
 broken and at the same time, keep  
 our students safe.

Marcia, Dan's secretary appears at the outside of the  
 conference room.

MARCIA  
 May I come in?

DAN  
 Yes of course.

Marcia hands Dan from a legal document. Dan reads the note.

DAN (CONT'D)  
 Justin's father was just arrested  
 for attacking his boss at his job  
 and then fired. This now means that  
 Social Services will automatically  
 step in.

JACK  
 Dan. Let me handle this. I will go  
 to court to talk to Justin.

If Justin's father cannot make bail  
 and then agrees that I can be  
 Justin's temporary guardian, I will  
 start my road trip with him today.

DAN  
 We appreciate the help.

JACK  
 This is part of what I do.

Jack stands up and follows Marcia out of the conference room.

DAN  
 Justin Dutton is no longer our  
 problem.

RICHARD  
 So we push him over to the State?

DAN  
 If you have a better idea, come to  
 see me in my office! Send an email.  
 Give a speech in the fucking lobby!

In the meantime Jack is going to  
 help us. Let him work with Justin.  
 Is that OK with everybody?

Everybody nods their heads.

**INT. LOCAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY LOBBY. DAY.**

Jack enters the main lobby and sees Justin in the main lobby sitting.

JUSTIN  
My dad was arrested.

JACK  
I heard. Why I am here.

Your father is seeing the judge in an hour. Odds are he will not receive bail, and cannot afford it anyway.

JUSTIN  
What happens to me?

JACK  
At age 12, almost 13, you are not allowed to be living in your house alone. This is when Social Services normally steps in.

JUSTIN  
What will that mean?

JACK  
It means you will be a ward of the State, and will have to remain so, unless your father is released from custody and is able to support you.

JUSTIN  
I will run away. I am not going to some hell hole because my father is a fucking drunk.

JACK  
We are all products of our parents, good and bad. Your father's situation is he could not accept his wife dying. Many have this problem, it does not make him a bad person.

JUSTIN  
What am I going to do?

JACK  
I have an appointment with your  
father in five minutes. I have an  
idea.

JUSTIN  
What idea?

JACK  
I will let you know after I talk to  
your Dad. Why was he arrested?

JUSTIN  
Big argument with his asshole boss  
and he punched him in the face.  
That scumbag was pushing my dad  
even before my mom died.

JACK  
How do you mean, pushing?

JUSTIN  
Bad boss stuff. Rude, nasty. Our  
family cannot catch a break.

JACK  
That is an example of bullying at  
work. Unfortunately bullying can be  
a problem for an entire lifetime,  
for many different reasons.

A corrections officer walks over to Jack.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER  
Are you Jack?

JACK  
Yes.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER  
Jonathan Dutton can see you now.

JACK  
This won't take that long. Wait  
here.

JUSTIN  
I got no place to go man.

Jack follows the correction officer to the prison section of  
the building.

**INT. PRISON INTERVIEW AREA. CORRECTIONS FACILITY. DAY.**

Jack enters the interview room and sits in front of a glass window.

JONATHAN DUTTON, 49 enters the room and sits down.

JONATHAN  
Who the fuck are you?

JACK  
I work for Justin's school.

JONATHAN  
What do you want?

JACK  
Due to the charges against you, it looks like you will be in prison waiting for trial for a while. The only alternative for Justin is Social Services.

JONATHAN  
What of it?

JACK  
I have an alternative.

JONATHAN  
What?

JACK  
I have worked with young men his age around the country, in regards to bullying. Justin is a dangerous bully. The reasons for this are obvious. His mother dying and your drinking.

JONATHAN  
You can keep the fucking kid. I have no use for him.

JACK  
You are at a very low point. You do not mean that.

JONATHAN  
I am in here now. It doesn't matter. Nobody cares that some fucking lowlife at my job was pushing me for years and I finally pushed back.

JACK

The authorities are looking into this. I am sure your lawyer will bring all the facts to the judge.

I have a pre-planned two week road trip, visiting schools west of here. With your permission I would like Justin to come with me.

JONATHAN

Why?

JACK

I want to teach Justin about empathy.

JONATHAN

What?

JACK

Empathy. It is my cure for bullying. This is my theory. It is the business idea that I market to schools around the country.

Jack dials his cell phone.

JACK (CONT'D)

Dan this is Jack. I am sitting in front of Jonathan, Justin's father.

Jack holds the cell phone up to the window in front of Jonathan.

JACK (CONT'D)

This is Dan Reynolds the Principal. He wants to talk to you.

DAN

Hello?

JONATHAN

Ya?

DAN

This is Dan Reynolds, the principal of Williams School, we met a few weeks ago.

JONATHAN

I remember.



DAN  
I can vouch for Jack. I know him  
very well and your son will be in  
very good hands.

JONATHAN  
Go ahead. Take the kid.

DAN  
Thank you sir.

JACK  
Thanks Dan.

DAN  
Good luck with your case.

Jack hangs up his cell phone.

Jack slides a form under the glass to Jonathan.

JACK  
Can you please sign this? Its your  
permission for this road trip.

Jonathan abruptly signs the form, passes it to Jack and  
rushes out of the room.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Easier than I thought.

**INT. LOCAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY LOBBY. DAY.**

Five minutes later.

Jack walks out of the prison hallway section towards Justin.

JACK  
Your father said it was OK.

JUSTIN  
What is OK?

JACK  
We are going on a road trip. For  
the next two weeks.

JUSTIN  
What?

JACK  
You heard me.

JUSTIN

What for?

JACK

I want to teach you empathy. I want to teach you about life. All things you do not know.

JUSTIN

I know what empathy means.

Jack looks closely at Justin.

JACK

You do not know what empathy means, because you are a vicious bully.

You either come with me, or I will be driving you to Social Services.

JUSTIN

Not much of a choice.

JACK

Its up to you.

JUSTIN

I will go. Where are we going?

JACK

We are headed west, then south. I am trying to establish my business to more schools.

JUSTIN

What is your business?

JACK

Trying to cure the disease of bullying.

JUSTIN

Good luck with that.

JACK

I just may be saving your life, kid.

Justin looks up at Jack as they head towards his SUV, they both get inside and head down the highway.

**INT. JACK'S SUV DAY.**

One hour later.

JUSTIN  
How many miles?

JACK  
I don't really know. I have  
meetings scheduled with 10 schools  
in the next 14 days.

Jack's cell phone rings in his car.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Hello?

DAN  
Jack. Its Dan.

JACK  
Hi.

DAN  
Thanks for your comments today at  
the meeting.

JACK  
No problem. Its what I do. I am on  
the road, as we discussed. I will  
be back in two weeks, I am a cell  
phone call away. Thanks for your  
help with Justin's dad.

DAN  
No problem. We are making some  
progress. Look forward to your  
return.

JACK  
I am with Justin. His father will  
be in prison for a while before the  
trial starts. Its either this trip  
or Social Services. He chose the  
trip.

DAN  
Young man. Can you hear me?

JUSTIN  
Yes.

DAN

Just wanted to let you know, that Ray has developed a rather severe stuttering problem since that incident with you, when you invited the local world to witness your sick attack on a very nice kid.

JUSTIN

I don't give a shit.

JACK

Is it any wonder why you need this road trip? You will be learning a great deal from me in the next two weeks.

DAN

Have a good trip. You as well kid. Try and learn something, for your own sake.

JACK

Whatever man.

Dan hangs up.

Some five minutes later.

JACK (CONT'D)

Can you give me the reasons why you bully other kids.

JUSTIN

It makes me feel good.

JACK

Good how?

JUSTIN

Hard to describe.

JACK

Is it a feeling of euphoria?

JUSTIN

I already said I don't know.

JACK

You said it was hard to describe.

JUSTIN

I don't know man. Too many questions.

JACK

This road trip is about you. Ultimately, the way things are going. This road trip might save your life. You look to be headed for prison or an early death.

JUSTIN

Don't care.

JACK

You say that now because you are not sitting in a jail cell for 30 years. Never getting out. Squalor, misery beyond comprehension.

JUSTIN

What is your fucking point?

JACK

My point is, how about answering my questions because right now, I am your only fucking friend!

JUSTIN

It makes me feel like I am dumping my horrible life on someone else.

Making them feel horrible like I feel. It is a high. Like weed.

JACK

That is what I thought. Very good answer. How often do you use weed?

JUSTIN

Since my mother died of Cancer, just about every day. I zone out and don't think about her.

JACK

Weed is temporary. Life is a lifetime. Escaping is for a short time. Then its time to deal with life again.

JUSTIN

That sucks.

JACK

I know it does.

JUSTIN

How do you know?

JACK

I have had my share of bad times,  
as have many of the young men I  
have interviewed since I started  
this business.

JUSTIN

You already said your mom did not  
die.

JACK

She was an alcoholic, mainly  
because she stayed married to my  
asshole of a father.

JUSTIN

Sounds bad.

JACK

It was. One difference.

JUSTIN

What?

JACK

I didn't bully some poor kid  
because I was feeling like my life  
is shit.

JUSTIN

So you are a better person than I  
am?

JACK

The point is figuring out what  
bullying is and try to find a cure.

My entire business is about  
teaching empathy to people who have  
never felt empathy towards anyone.

Your problem is that you grew  
faster than most boys your age. How  
would you feel if you were smaller  
and some guy much bigger came at  
you the way you went after Ray?

JUSTIN

I would kick their ass.

JACK

Really? You are about 110 pounds, almost 13, and some kid 15 years old and 160 pounds starts pushing you around.

Having the forethought to know how that would feel, is what empathy is. What would that feel like if it were me. Understand?

JUSTIN

You mind if I take a nap man? I am beat.

JACK

Glad I broke through. Go ahead and sleep.

Two hours later, Jack pulls into his first school on this road trip.

**EXT. DAVIS MIDDLE SCHOOL, SOMEWHERE IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES. DAY.**

JACK

Wake up kid.

Justin wakes up startled.

JACK (CONT'D)

You have a choice. You can come inside or sit in the car.

JUSTIN

I will come inside. Its hot in here.

JACK

I will be meeting with the Principal of this high school.

High Schools are the worst offenders when it comes to bullying. Come in, you might learn something.

Justin and Jack exit the SUV and head inside.

**INT. DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL LOBBY. DAY.**

The main lobby is dirty and run down, some parts of walls and floors are falling apart as Justin and Jack walk into the main hallway.

JUSTIN

Not the nicest of high schools.

JACK

Education in this country is about property taxes. Those who can afford it pay large amounts of property taxes, where around 70% pay for schools.

Bullying also degrades the quality of education, if that was not obvious to you already.

More money, means better education, better environment, much better teachers. Less bullying.

JUSTIN

Even I could have guessed that one. You saw my fucking house.

JACK

That I did.

EDWARD DAVIDSON, 59, high school principal, walks into the lobby. Edward extends his hand. Jack and Edward shake hands.

EDWARD

Nice to meet you!

JACK

You as well. Thanks for agreeing to meet.

EDWARD

I have heard good things.

JACK

That is nice to hear.

Edward looks at Justin.

EDWARD

And who might this be?



JACK  
He is a work colleague. He is here  
to observe and learn.

EDWARD  
Nice to meet you son.

Edward shakes Justin's hand.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
Come on in. We are in one of the  
conference rooms, my Vice Principal  
is waiting with coffee.

As they enter, Vice Principal JENNIFER DAVIES, 54 stands up  
to greet them.

JENNIFER  
Nice to meet you.

Jennifer and Jack shake hands.

JACK  
You as well.

And you are?

JACK (CONT'D)  
This is my colleague, he is in  
training. Justin Dutton.

Justin offers his hand.

JUSTIN  
Nice to meet you.

JENNIFER  
You too young man.

Justin and Jennifer shake hands.

EDWARD  
We have been looking forward to  
this for 2 weeks. So glad you can  
come now, because our bullying  
problem is as bad as they have ever  
been.

JACK  
What is the ratio?

EDWARD

We are about 25 percent. It used to be 15%. This is a three month surge of 10%.

JACK

Reason for the increase?

EDWARD

Could be this one nightmare student in particular. We are studying the situation. Jennifer has some documents.

Jennifer slides several documents of bullying incidents and numbers to Jack.

JENNIFER

Unfortunately, several days ago, we had a suicide.

JACK

My God. How old?

JENNIFER

He was a 15 year old boy, good grades, good kid, rather heavy set. Several other boys were beyond cruel both here and social media.

He hung himself in his bedroom. He was an only child. His parents are a disaster.

EDWARD

Last time a suicide happened was five years ago. A young girl named Mary, she was also overweight. Just 14 years old. Ninth grade.

The other girls were relentless mainly on social media. This one broke my heart.

JENNIFER

Six months later, her mother, committed suicide the same way her daughter did. She cut her wrists in the bathtub. Her husband found her when he came home from work.

JUSTIN

Horrible.

Jack turns to look at Justin.

JACK

A horrible reality in too many schools around the world.

Nobody has a works every time solution.

EDWARD

We called you because we understand the empathy idea, it might have legs. We are open to all ideas and potential solutions.

JACK

What is the issue with this one lead bully in the school. What is he doing?

EDWARD

His name is Jackson. We are trying to get him permanently removed from this school. Where he goes after, reform school, military is none of our concern. We only care about our students.

Cruel nasty comments in class. Pushing shoving, knocking books over, tripping other kids. Then, non stop social media attacks.

Facebook, Instagram, email, every platform. This is a sick kid. He is very dangerous. All of the teachers are afraid of him.

JACK

How many victims?

EDWARD

In that document that Jennifer handed you. 21 incidents in three months. These include witness testimony and parents calling us. Some threatening to sue.

JACK

Lawsuits is not a new issue when it comes to bullying. Some schools buy bullying insurance.

EDWARD

We have that insurance, as part of our non stop increasing expenses.

JACK

Not available everywhere but it is a viable insurance option that schools have been using recently.

EDWARD

What the hell kind of a world are we all living in?

JACK

A world that has problems and needs solutions is always my answer sir.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NJ.**

Ray is playing basketball in a run down local basketball court, by himself.

Ray's father BILL HENDERSON, 45 steps out of his car and walks toward Ray.

RAY

Dad, what-um, w-what are you doing here?

BILL

Coming to see you. Mom said you would be here.

RAY

I play here (stutter) some, sometimes.

BILL

I was asking your mom about your stuttering problem the last few weeks. She told me what happened after Justin Dutton attacked you.

RAY

I told her not to tell you.

BILL

I am your father. Situations like this one is when you find out if you are a good father.

RAY

I just stutter now, its no big deal.

BILL

It happened due to one day with that lowlife bully Dutton.

RAY

How. How-how do you know?

BILL

It was so obvious Ray.

If your mother and I had the power to take you and your sister to some far away place where there are no bad people, that is what we would do. We can't do that can we? This is the world we live in. Far too often it is horrible and very unfair.

Right now you are not prepared to deal with a bully. He invited something like 50 kids from other schools to humiliate you?

RAY

Yes.

BILL

Mom said you were not hit in the face. You came out OK.

RAY

He said, he would s-stab, stab me. If I hit him.

BILL

She told me. I wish I could say that what you are feeling will go away, but it doesn't. It stays with you for a lifetime.

Bullying in one form or another happens to way too many good kids in the world. It happens when you are in the working world.

RAY

Really?

BILL

As a contractor in the IT field,  
there is little I could do, because  
I am expendable. Against an  
established employee, I would just  
lose my job.

The most recent lowlife wanted me  
to lose my temper so I would lose  
my job. I went through hell for  
almost 7 years.

RAY

Why didn't you tell us?

BILL

I told your mom. I now know, I  
should have told you and Lauren.

When at work, there is no place to  
go. You have to coexist with  
impossible horrible people  
sometimes.

RAY

Just like s-school.

BILL

I hear Dutton is out of that  
school.

RAY

He might have been expelled for  
good. I don't know where he is now.

BILL

So now what? What about the next  
bully you run into? You are only 11  
years old. Another seven years of  
school and then high school is  
ahead.

RAY

I don't know.

BILL

I am here because of what is next.  
You are 11, your male growth spurt  
has not happened yet. It might  
happen later than other boys, in  
which case, we are back to dealing  
with the next bully.

RAY

What do you want me to do?

BILL

You have two choices. I will teach you to fight, or I will pay for Karate lessons.

This lowlife gave you a stuttering problem. That is how traumatic what happened to you was. What about the next bully?

RAY

Can I think about it?

BILL

Make a decision.

RAY

Ka-Karate lessons.

BILL

You're in luck. A new place opened up at the strip mall, I already checked it out. You start on Monday.

Ray looks like he is about to cry. Bill hugs him.

BILL (CONT'D)

My God. Your mom and I love you so much. More than I can ever tell you.

Ray starts to cry.

BILL (CONT'D)

I cannot be with you all the time. Neither can your mom. This is the tough part of growing up.

There is no cure for bullying. But you can be strong and do something about it!

RAY

I cant! I am too afraid!

BILL

I know! I was bullied too!

RAY

You were?

BILL

Yes. So were other kids my age. But you can learn to defend yourself! You will gain confidence! Bullies thrive on fear!

I promise. Things will get better. One day you will have no fear and will be free of this.

Bill and Ray continue to hug as Ray cries in his fathers arms.

RAY

When the hell will I get bigger?

BILL

I did! You will too!

RAY

I am always afraid dad.

BILL

I know. You will get past this. One day, then the next day. I promise.

**EXT. DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL. DAY.**

Jack and Justin are exiting from the high school into the parking lot.

JACK

I was impressed by your reaction.

JUSTIN

Reaction to what?

JACK

The suicides. The horrific stories you heard.

JUSTIN

Any human being would react.

JACK

And yet. You are the cause of this exact kind of humiliation fear and grief that they were talking about.

JUSTIN

Why do you say that?



JACK

Are you awake? You are the top  
bully in the school I work for.

You have terrorized other children  
for your own pleasure. One kid has  
developed a stuttering problem due  
to the trauma you caused.

JUSTIN

My mom died. My father is a drunken  
scum.

Justin turns and holds Justin by his shoulders.

JACK

Young man! Your life is shit right  
now! But that does not mean you can  
shit on other people who did  
nothing to you! Do you understand!  
Wake up!

You are headed for a life in  
prison, or dying young! Get with  
the fucking program! Before its too  
late!

Justin steps back shocked.

JUSTIN

Can we just drive?

JACK

I have a diner I go to about 3  
miles from here. Get in.

Justin and Jack get into his car.

**INT. LOCAL BAR. DAY.**

Twenty minutes later.

Justin and Jack enter a the lobby of a run down local bar.

They walk over to a booth and sit down.

JACK

I come here from time to time in my  
business travels.

JUSTIN

I will alert the media.

JACK  
Are you a comedian now, as well as  
a bully?

JUSTIN  
Lets order.

Jack and Justin both grab the menu.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)  
Can I have beer?

JACK  
You are 12 almost 13. No. Of course  
you cannot have beer. Do you want  
to get us both arrested?

JUSTIN  
Considering my life, I don't really  
care.

JACK  
Not caring about anything, is part  
of your problem.

JUSTIN  
I will have a hamburger fries, and  
some lemonade.

The waitress comes over. SARAH, 22, brunette.

SARAH  
Are you ready to order?

JACK  
The young man will have a hamburger  
fries and some Selzer water. I will  
have the house salad and Selzer  
water.

JUSTIN  
I said lemonade.

JACK  
Lemonade is loaded with sugar which  
is a toxic poison to the human  
body. Another thing you will be  
learning on this trip.

SARAH  
Thank you.

Sarah writes the order down and heads towards the kitchen.

JUSTIN  
How often do you come here?

JACK  
This is my main route, to schools I  
deal with. I come here at least  
once a month.

Two men and a 14 year old boy walk by. The boy, SAMUEL, 14  
gives Justin a murderous look as he passes.

JUSTIN  
Did you see that?

JACK  
See what?

JUSTIN  
That asshole gave me a bad look.

JACK  
Which asshole, there are probably  
five in here.

Jack looks around the bar.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Make that ten.

Justin nods his head towards Samuel as he sits with the two  
men in a booth nearby.

JUSTIN  
That kid.

JACK  
So what?

JUSTIN  
He looked like he wanted to kill  
me.

JACK  
How does that make you feel?

JUSTIN  
I don't know.

JACK  
He is about your size. Go over  
there and kick his ass.

JUSTIN  
What?

JACK

You heard me. Walk over there and take him outside and kick his ass. We already had this conversation. You said you would kick anyone's ass who bullied you. Remember?

JUSTIN

No.

JACK

Is it because he is bigger? Maybe he might kick your ass?

JUSTIN

I just fucking want to eat OK?

Samuel sees Justin look at him and walks over to Jack's table.

SAMUEL

Hello asshole. You a tough guy?

JUSTIN

What?

SAMUEL

You deaf? That look you gave me when I walked in here.

JUSTIN

You gave me a look. I was just sitting here.

SAMUEL

You a tough guy?

JUSTIN

No are you?

SAMUEL

You look like a tough guy to me. Want to take this outside?

JUSTIN

Like I just told him, I just want to eat something, OK?

SAMUEL

So you are a fucking pussy?

Justin glares at Samuel.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

There it is. The tough guy coming out. Lets take this outside tough guy.

JUSTIN

No.

SAMUEL

Are you are a fucking little girl? A pussy, afraid to fight me. You mother fucking pussy.

Samuel walks away, back to his table.

JACK

Wow. That was something.

JUSTIN

What the fuck was that?

JACK

What happens in this world every single day. Millions of times. Some rotten person trying to build himself up by knocking someone else down.

JUSTIN

You set that up?

JACK

Why would I do that?

JUSTIN

To teach me a lesson.

JACK

What did that feel like? A tough kid, bigger than you. About to jump down your throat.

JUSTIN

I don't know.

JACK

Fuck you. You know.

JUSTIN

I didn't like it.

JACK

How do think it felt for Ray that day.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
When you invited all of those other  
kids to witness your sick attack on  
some nice decent new kid?

If you say I don't know again, you  
and I are going outside.

JUSTIN  
I understand.

JACK  
Understand what?

JUSTIN  
What empathy is.

JACK  
Do you?

JUSTIN  
Yes.

JACK  
You sure?

JUSTIN  
Yes.

JACK  
I can call that kid over here again  
if you want.

JUSTIN  
I UNDERSTAND!

JACK  
If you really do understand, then  
just maybe you will not die in  
prison one day. Or live a life with  
jobs so horrible the upside is  
suicide.

Sarah comes over with the food.

SARAH  
Sorry about that kid. Looks like  
they are about to leave.

The two men and Samuel leave the restaurant as Samuel gives  
Justin another murderous look.

Sarah goes back to her post.

JACK

Do me a favor. While your eating your hamburger and fries. Think about Ray. Think about what you did that nice young man.

A terrified student in a new school. Trying to live his life. And you turned him into a major sporting event, to make you feel better about yourself.

Justin eats his fries and does not look at Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

I love your enthusiasm for what I am trying to teach you. Finish up, with have another school to visit in 1 hour.

**INT. LOCAL KARATE SCHOOL. DAY.**

Same day. Same time.

Ray walks into the Karate school gym. The instructor, DAVID THOMAS, 33, walks into the gym.

There are 11 other boys Ray's age all wearing white Karate uniforms with white belts.

DAVID

As you all can see. Karate is a fighting style, seven hundred years ago, originating in Okinawa Japan.

The modern version of Karate is only 100 years old. In this class we will be learning something called, Shito-Ryu. Any questions so far?

Nobody raises their hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)

As I look around the room, I can see that most of you young men are about the right size for your age group. The key thing to remember in Karate is that size means almost nothing.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
You will learn, not only to defend  
yourself from any attacker, but  
also to use your opponents size and  
superior strength against them.

Classes are two times a week. Do  
not be late for any class as we  
start right on time, with drills.

To begin each class, I will have  
two of my drill instructors run  
through some of the beginning moves  
each of you will learn.

Two instructors in their early 20s go through the motions of  
some easy to learn Karate moves as the class looks on.

**EXT. OUTSIDE KARATE STUDIO. DAY.**

Two Days later.

Ray's father Bill looks at his son through a side window,  
with a tear in his eye.

David sees Bill and beckons him to come into the studio.

**INT. KARATE STUDIO. DAY.**

Ten minutes later.

David and Bill are sitting in his office.

DAVID  
Bill is it?

BILL  
Yes.

DAVID  
I just want to let you know, your  
son is a natural.

BILL  
Really?

DAVID  
He has all the tools, all the  
moves, he is strong despite his  
size.



BILL

My God that is great news. Thank you.

DAVID

I heard the what happened to him. Some of my students have also had incidents with Justin Dutton. It is tragic that broken kids like Dutton are allowed in school.

BILL

From what I have heard, Dutton is one hell of a sick kid.

DAVID

The sky is the limit with your son. Trust me, he will be OK now.

Bill has a tear in his eye.

BILL

Thank you.

**EXT. LOCAL BAR. DAY.**

Jack and Justin are exiting the bar, and walking towards Jack's SUV. There are several construction workers, completing a parking lot resurfacing job.

It is a hot day. Jack recognizes one the workers. GREG LANNER, 55, Six foot, gray hair.

JACK

Greg?

GREG

Jack! How are you? Its been years.

JACK

About five years to be exact. That apartment building? Same crew as last time?

GREG

We are a team now, 8 years of hard work.

JACK

I said this to you five years ago. I respect the hell out what you do, to make a living.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
Take this from a guy who has been  
behind a desk for his career. You  
work hard man.

Greg is covered in dirt and sweating profusely in the hot sun.

Greg looks at Jack visibly moved.

Justin looks at Jack.

Greg and Jack shake hands.

GREG  
Thank you. I greatly appreciate  
what you said.

JACK  
Hope to see you again. Sooner than  
five years.

GREG  
I am a phone call away man.

JACK  
You know what. I will call you,  
lets have a beer sometime.

GREG  
You got it.

They shake hands again.

GREG (CONT'D)  
As far as hugging, I would not  
recommend it, I am a mess right  
now. Who is this kid?

JACK  
He is a student at the school I  
guidance council at. This is  
Justin.

GREG  
Nice to meet you Justin.

Justin and Greg shake hands.

JACK  
See you soon man.

GREG  
Yes, for sure.

Justin and Jack walk to the SUV and get inside.

JACK

Greg is a friend from high school.  
A long time ago. He works  
construction and works his ass off  
every day.

JUSTIN

Why did you kiss his ass?

JACK

What? What the fuck did you say to  
me?

JUSTIN

Why did you kiss his ass?

JACK

I showed a hard working, good and  
decent human being who is trying to  
raise a family some fucking respect  
after decades of hard work.

Respect. Something from what I know  
about you, you have no idea what  
respect is.

People like Greg, build this  
country from the ground up. Sweat  
and hard work, every single day.

The way you are going, you would be  
lucky to ever have a job and the  
respect that Greg has. Don't you  
ever talk to me like that again.  
Do you understand me? Do you  
understand me?

Justin nods.

JUSTIN

I understand.

**INT. ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL. DAY.**

Three hours later.

Jack is sitting in a principals office with Justin.

JACK

I can only hope, based on what has  
happened so far.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

That you are learning something. I am trying to save your 13 year old life.

JUSTIN

So that kid in the bar, he was a plant?

JACK

What if he was?

JUSTIN

Sick thing to do.

JACK

You call that sick, but it will teach you how to be a human being, rather than an animal who terrorizes young boys who are smaller than you.

JUSTIN

Whatever.

JACK

You are a tough sell kid.

ALAN TAYLOR, 70, high school principal walks into his office.

ALAN

Thanks for waiting.

JACK

No problem, it was only a few minutes.

ALAN

And who might this be?

JACK

He is a colleague trying to learn this new business.

ALAN

Nice to meet you young man.

JUSTIN

You too.

ALAN

What is your name?

JUSTIN

Justin.

ALAN

Age?

JUSTIN

In 2 days I am 13.

ALAN

Happy birthday.

Alan looks at Jack.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I got your emails. The good and bad news is that we sure need your help. The unfortunate news is that we probably will not have the money in the budget until the next semester.

JACK

How bad is your situation?

ALAN

We had leveled off on bullying, the same number of incidents for going on five years. Then this last year, we had a 20% increase.

JACK

Why?

ALAN

A sudden influx of some very bad kids who transferred from another school. One girl who is great at trashing girls on social media. Parents calling, one attempted suicide, some 14 year old girl.

JACK

Sorry to hear. Over the years trying to study this problem, I have been amazed at the damage just one kid can cause in a school. It seems to encourage the same behavior with other kids.

ALAN

It has been difficult to manage. Parent teacher meetings, emergency meetings in my office far too often. Several suspensions. One permanent. One boy belongs in reform school.

JACK

Once a child goes into reform school, their odds of life success, that include avoiding prison time, goes way down.

ALAN

I have read the research. Another reason why horrendous problem has to be addressed by all of us. I appreciate you starting a business like this.

JACK

It has not been easy, but in each case there has always been measurable improvement.

ALAN

You write a lot about empathy.

JACK

My first tool. Few people have empathy or can fully define what empathy is.

ALAN

Son, can you define empathy and compassion?

JUSTIN

Empathy is feeling exactly what another person is feeling. Compassion is empathy plus wanting to help that person.

Jack looks at Justin with an amazed look.

ALAN

Very good son. Where did you learn that?

JUSTIN

ChatGPT.

ALAN

I am impressed.

JACK

I am too.

Jack smiles at Justin.

ALAN

We will let you know about our budget and plans for the next quarter.

JACK

I would be very happy to improve your situation.

Jack hands Alan his business card.

JACK (CONT'D)

You can call these numbers on the back for feedback and recommendations.

We have been in business for almost two years, and while far from fixing this problem, we have made progress. My website is at the bottom.

ALAN

I hope we will have the budget for the next quarter. Thanks for coming by today.

Jack and Justin stand up and shake hands with Alan. They turn and walk down the main hallway and out of the building.

JACK

You made points with me today. Maybe there is hope for you yet.

Justin looks at Jack as they walk down the hallway.

**EXT. LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL. DAY.**

Jack and Justin are sitting in his car.

JACK

Are you actually learning something, or was that definition about empathy bullshit?

JUSTIN

A little of both.

JACK

Your education right now is life and death. Unless you like the idea of prison or dying at twenty.

JUSTIN

How many schools have you signed up so far?

JACK

In a year and a half, almost 10.

JUSTIN

What do you do?

JACK

Road trips like this with the worst bullies like you. Some classroom education and conferences. Talking to bullies and their victims. Teaching empathy.

JUSTIN

Money?

JACK

Its not about the money. So far this is not a viable business.

I have more than enough from my years as an IT consultant.

JUSTIN

IT?

JACK

Information Technology. Design and development for both windows and browser applications. I was a contractor, so I was paid much more for my time. Without contracting, I am not retired.

JUSTIN

I have interest in computers.

JACK

That is good to know. Something to focus on rather than terrorizing young kids.

JUSTIN

Looks like you have a one track mind.

JACK

We are here, because of your one track mind.

(MORE)



JACK (CONT'D)

Grow up and learn to appreciate other people and you will not spend your life in jail or working in the hot sun all day, digging ditches, homeless.

By the way.

JUSTIN

What?

JACK

There are bullies in jail. Bigger than you, and far tougher than you.

That is a life that not worth living. Many kill themselves in prison to avoid living that life.

What do you want out of life? Do you have a career in mind? There is no money in terrorizing people who are smaller than you.

JUSTIN

I know.

JACK

You know? You are headed out of school, permanently. What is left for you? Its time to wake up, before its too late.

JUSTIN

I know.

JACK

Am I getting through?

JUSTIN

You are.

JACK

Prove it.

JUSTIN

What the hell do you want me to say?

JACK

Would you be willing to apologize to all the kids you terrorized? Starting with Ray?

JUSTIN

I don't know. That would be  
admitting I did something wrong.

Justin looks away from Jack.

JACK

You called together a congregation  
of rotten kids like you, to watch  
you beat up a smaller and terrified  
new kid in school. What did he do  
to you? LOOK AT ME!

JUSTIN

I didn't like his face. He was  
doing well. My life was.

JACK

What?

JUSTIN

Over! Shit! I am stupid! Everybody  
thinks so!

JACK

You're 13 years old. You have had  
some tough things happen to you.  
Your life is not over. You can turn  
this around. You have no way of  
knowing that other people think you  
are stupid. You can turn things  
around!

JUSTIN

How the fuck do I do that?

Jack's cell phone buzzes and he reads the text.

JACK

I got a text from the prosecutor.  
Very good news. They are dropping  
your fathers case. He is being  
released.

JUSTIN

How?

JACK

Turns out his boss is a real creep  
who provoked the fight. There were  
witnesses. Your father was just  
defending himself.

JUSTIN

He is still a damn drunk.

JACK

This just might be what he needs to turn his life around. Sometimes when a person is shaken and escapes a disaster, the shock can turn them around.

You both are hurting badly because of your mother. This is a time for both of you to heal.

Justin looks like he is about to cry.

JACK (CONT'D)

We are heading back home. If I feel that you have learned something to make yourself better and apologize to the young people you terrorized.

Then I will try and convince the principal to take you back in the school on a trial basis.

Otherwise, its permanent expulsion. This is your choice, your life.

Justin nods his head.

**EXT. CROSSING STREET OUTSIDE WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL. DAY.**

Two weeks later.

Ray is walking down the street with David and Richard on either side of him.

RAY

What do you guys want?

DAVID

Just walking.

RICHARD

Have a problem with us walking?

RAY

No.

David shoves Ray into Richard and Richard responds by shoving Ray into David.

RAY (CONT'D)  
A new stupid game you guys  
invented?

DAVID  
Like it?

RAY  
Its always two against one with you  
two assholes.

DAVID  
You called me an asshole?

RAY  
No asshole. I called both of you  
assholes. An accurate statement!

David shoves Ray, and Ray immediate lands a left jab right  
into the center of David's face.

DAVID  
Hey!

David falls backwards to the ground. Richard tries to grab  
Ray, and Ray lands another left jab to the center of his  
face, knocking him over.

RICHARD  
What? Who the hell are you hitting  
man?

Are you even more stupid then I thought you were?

Richard and David get up, facing Ray, who immediately lands  
two jabs and a right cross, knocking them both to the ground  
with almost no effort. David and Richard, sit on the ground  
holding their faces. Ray's fists are cut and bloody.

RAY  
So very easy. I wish I would have  
done this months ago.

I arrive at a new school, and I  
have to deal with two sick lowlife  
like you two, every day. Looks like  
you fucked with the wrong kid.

Some advice. Stay the hell away  
from me. Next time will be worse.

Ray walks away smiling, then he starts to run.

Ray looks back at the two boys sitting on the ground holding their faces. Ray bounds his way home.

**INT. RAYS HOME. FAMILY RANCH HOUSE. SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NJ. DAY.**

Twenty minutes later.

Ray walks into his living room and sees his father watching TV.

His father Bill stands up to greet Ray. Bill notices Ray's knuckles have broken skin and some blood.

Ray and his father stand for a few seconds looking at each other. Ray's face is flush red with a tear in his eye.

Ray walks up to his father and hugs him. Bill hugs back and they stand in the living room hugging.

BILL

I think I know what happened Ray. I am proud for you.

You are a man now. No fear.

We don't believe in violence in this family, but sometimes when given no choice, there is only one solution.

Bill has a tear in his eye. Ray cries into his fathers arms.

**INT. PRINCIPALS OFFICE WILLIAMS SCHOOL. DAY.**

Two months later.

Dan is sitting at his desk, with Jack and Debra.

DEBRA

His father said he is dropping him off, right around now.

DAN

What is the latest on Justin's father?

DEBRA

He is doing much better. It seems after getting out of jail, he has changed. No more drinking. Doing fine in his job.

JACK

The human brain is remarkable.  
Sometimes people change when  
something like a bolt of lightning  
hits them. It knocks them out of  
the bad cycle they were in.

DAN

As of last Tuesday, Justin has  
completed his 2 months in military  
school. According to his  
instructors, he is a new person.

JACK

I hope so for his sake.

Justin and his father Jonathan walk into the Principals  
office.

DAN

Hello gentlemen, have a seat  
please.

Justin and Jonathan sit on chairs next to Jack and Debra.

JACK

Nice seeing you again son. You look  
good.

Justin shakes hands with Jack.

JUSTIN

You too. Thanks.

DAN

This meeting is about reinstating  
Justin back into this school, so he  
resume here and one day, receive  
his high school diploma.

I have read all the reports from  
the military academy and you have  
been released early, due to your  
good progress.

JONATHAN

He has worked hard.

DAN

From what I have heard, so have you  
sir. You have turned your life  
around. Congratulations.

JONATHAN

I sat in a prison cell, for days,  
thinking that my life was over.

Then a miracle happened, and I  
realized what I was doing to  
myself.

My wife died of Cancer. She died  
for two years. I lived through it  
all with her. I almost died along  
with her.

I realized that my wife was looking  
down on me ashamed. No more  
drinking.

As far as jail, I could not believe  
that the people who I worked with  
told the truth, about my horrible  
and abusive boss. He was finally  
fired by the company.

DAN

You are back to your normal self at  
work. Great for you and your son  
sir.

JONATHAN

I want my son back to normal. Going  
to school again like a regular kid.

JACK

Your son and I have a deal.

JONATHAN

What deal?

JUSTIN

He wants me to apologize to the  
kids I bullied.

JONATHAN

You did not tell me about that. Is  
this a deal breaker?

DAN

It is not a deal breaker with me.  
Its a deal breaker with Jack.

JUSTIN

I will do it. I will apologize.

DAN

Why son?

JUSTIN

I will do it for Jack. He saved my life.

JACK

The inviting other boys from other schools to witness your bullying of a nice kid was an outrage.

Apologize to clean your soul. Not for me.

Justin and Jack stand up and hug.

JACK (CONT'D)

As far as I can see, you are a changed young man. It is now time to concentrate on your future and succeed. Your past does not equal your future.

JUSTIN

When is the apology?

JACK

I will arrange something when you start school next week.

DAN

Welcome back.

Dan stands and shakes hands with Jonathan and Justin.

DAN (CONT'D)

Our meeting for Justin to apologize is a week from today.

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM WILLIAMS SCHOOL. DAY.**

One week later.

The Vice Principal and Principal, Debra and Dan are sitting at the head of the large conference room table. Jack walks in and sits next to Dan.

JACK

Hello. Glad you all could make it.



DAN

Great job based on what you have done so far. There has been a 20 percent drop in bullying since you arrived 6 months ago. This meeting today, is another step in the right direction.

JACK

Thank you sir. That means a great deal.

Justin walks into the conference room, followed by his father Jonathan.

DAN

Welcome. Have a seat.

DEBRA

Good to see both of you again.

JONATHAN

You too.

DAN

We are still waiting on Ray and his father and mother. Another young man and his mother are also coming.

JACK

I want to thank you both for attending. This is an important step in your progress Justin.

JUSTIN

I now think my Dad and I can get through anything.

DAN

That is good to hear.

Ray, his mother Maureen and his father Bill, walk into the conference room and sit at the conference room table across from Dan and Debra.

DAN (CONT'D)

Thank you for attending.

BILL

Looking forward to it.

DEBRA

We have another student coming. Oh here they are.

ARNOLD WAGNER, 11, and his mother ANN WAGER, 49, enter the conference room.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Welcome.

ANN

Thank you.

Ann and her son Arnold sit next to Ray and his father.

DAN

OK I think we can begin.

Unfortunately, bullying is a huge problem in too many schools. To my left is Jack Nodari. He has been a valued member of our school for six months.

Jack has started a unique business to help schools with bullying. So far, it has been effective in reducing the bullying within this school.

JACK

My theory is based on my own personal experiences, including my former career in the IT field. My solution is about teaching empathy to students. Teaching the bully what it feels like to be terrorized.

ANN

How long have you been doing this?

JACK

Almost two years. I have been working with ten schools in various capacities.

ANN

Is this a profitable business for you?

JACK

This business is not about the money. I help kids.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

During one of my last contracts with a large department of education software application, I was amazed at how prevalent bullying is.

So many reports. Calls to parents, guns, knives and other weapons. Suicides, were all represented in this huge application.

After that contract ended, I decided that I wanted to devote some of my retirement towards helping kids.

JONATHAN

I want to personally thank you for what you have done for my son sir.

JACK

It was my pleasure. Justin was headed for some dark days.

Bill starts to talk directly to Jonathan and Justin.

BILL

What about the life of my son? Traumatized like this.

Ray developed a stuttering problem after he was attacked and turned into a side show for some sadistic kid. Your son, invited many other boys from other schools to witness this evil.

RAY

Dad. My stuttering problem is almost gone.

JUSTIN

I sincerely apologize. I was sick sir. My mother had recently died. I am OK now.

BILL

Really?

JONATHAN

This was all my fault. When my wife died of Cancer, all I did was drink.

(MORE)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

My son had no parents for months. I was either drunk or sleeping all the time. I have no idea how I held onto my job.

From the bottom of both of our hearts. I apologize to you, your wife and your son. We are both so very sorry.

BILL

My son, is no longer a victim. He knows Karate and happens to be quite good. What happened last time, will never happen again. Is that understood?

JUSTIN

Yes, I understand.

BILL

What you tried to do to an 11 year old boy who did nothing to you, but try to attend a new school and live his life is unconscionable. Is that clear to you?

JUSTIN

Yes it is.

BILL

Is it?

JUSTIN

Yes. I understand now. I have changed.

BILL

For your sake and the sake of some other young child you might try to ruin, I hope that is true.

JONATHAN

My son has already said he changed and has apologized.

BILL

For the sake of everybody in this room, I wanted to make sure, he fully understands the damage of what he did to God knows how many children!

Bill looks at Dan.

BILL (CONT'D)

Dan, how many young boys did he bully? Over how long a period of time?

DAN

Its about 20 incidents over a period of a year.

BILL

Are you going to apologize to all of them?

JUSTIN

If they were here, I would sir.

JONATHAN

My son has changed his ways, and paid some heavy dues.

BILL

Has he?

MAUREEN

Bill, lets not escalate this. Enough damage has been done.

BILL

That's for damn sure. My son still has a stuttering problem.

JUSTIN

So sorry about that.

BILL

For your sake. It better go away.

JONATHAN

What does that mean?

BILL

It means what it sounds like.

JONATHAN

Are you threatening my son?

DAN

GUYS! Enough of this back and forth. This is not the point of this meeting! We are to heal and move on! Please. For the sake of everyone.

JACK

Violence can be a satisfying thought and can seem like a solution for a short time. Long term however, violence can ruin an entire lifetime. Keep that in mind as we try to make this school better!

MAUREEN

I agree. Lets all move on.

Jonathan and Bill glare at each other. They both look close to fighting.

Ray and Justin look at each other. Justin makes a very subtle evil smile that both Bill and Ray notice.

DAN

We have another victim here today, Arnold Wagner. The incidents with Arnold are not as bad as with Ray.

JUSTIN

I apologize to you man. I knocked over your books and pushed you in the cafeteria. My mother just died. I wanted to die myself. I am so sorry, I am not that person anymore.

ARNOLD

Under circumstances like those, I accept your apology.

ANN

As Arnold's mother, I accept your apology, as long as none of this ever happens again.

JUSTIN

Thank you. Thanks to Jack Nodari, my life is changed forever. I am no longer a bully.

Jack smiles at Justin. Dan looks over at Bill and Jonathan who are still glaring at each other.

DAN

Hey guys, this glaring at each other has progressed far enough. We are about to end this meeting. I hope we have all learned something.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

When a bully tries to make himself feel better by destroying someone else, all he is doing is destroying himself. Justin is this what you have learned?

JUSTIN

Yes sir. I will never be a bully again.

DAN

Good. This is for your sake and the sake of other boys in this school.

BILL

So we all sit here and believe whatever he says. Things are OK now, after traumatizing God knows how many kids.

DAN

That is where we are right now sir. We cannot go back in time and undo an injustice.

Realize that things have changed drastically since 6 months ago. For all of us. There was the death from Cancer of a good woman and the grief that followed.

JONATHAN

We have apologized all we can. Its time we all move on. I am still not able to sleep, I think about my wife all the time. She was my wife for 15 years and now she is gone.

DEBRA

Our sincerest apologies for your loss. Cancer is the scourge of humanity for far too long.

Jonathan and Justin, stand up and start to leave the conference room. Followed by Dan, Jack and Debra. Bill and Ray stand up and they all head for the exits.

DAN

Overall, I think this was a productive meeting. Thanks again to Jack and his work with our school.

JACK

Thank you for all your help sir.

As they all leave the conference room, Bill and Jonathan still stare at each other, almost about to exchange blows. Dan walks in between them.

DAN

Guys, not the point of this meeting. Lets please move on.

Jonathan and Bill part ways down the hallway, walking with their sons.

BILL

Ray, lets go to the cafeteria. I don't want to walk to our car with those two.

RAY

Don't you think Justin is cured now?

BILL

What people say when they want something, is almost always different than what they are really thinking.

This kid is dangerous and damaged. As your mother and I have both said, avoid him when he returns to school.

Ray and Bill walk down the hallway to the cafeteria. Justin and his father can be seen walking in the high school parking lot to their car in the large cafeteria window.

BILL (CONT'D)

You let my mother or me know if anything, even a bad look happens with this kid. The terrorism stops today.

I hope I never see either one of those two again.

RAY

Justin starts back at school this coming Wednesday.

BILL

I do not believe he has changed his ways.



RAY  
I know Karate now. Big difference  
from last time.

BILL  
He is still much bigger than you  
son, also older. Confidence is  
good, but caution is better.

If you are backed into a corner.  
You know what to do.

RAY  
That I do.

BILL  
I could not be more proud of you.

Ray has a tear in his eye, looking at his father.

**INT. PRINCIPALS OFFICE WILLIAMS SCHOOL. DAY.**

Debra is in Dan's office for a meeting.

DAN  
So today we sign the papers to  
allow Justin back into this school.

DEBRA  
We both have reservations.

DAN  
He is one hell of an actor if all  
he has said and done to get back in  
this school is a lie.

DEBRA  
We have the recommendation from the  
military school and SS has sent  
their approval. We are required to  
give this a try.

DAN  
He is on trial here for at least 3  
months. One single incident and he  
is gone.

DEBRA  
I will send out the paperwork and  
an email his father.

DAN  
Thank you.

**EXT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL MAIN SPORTS FIELD. DAY.**

Two weeks later.

Justin and Fred are standing by the fence looking at the gym class play dodge ball.

JUSTIN

Well here we are again. Nothing but daily mindless bullshit.

FRED

I see that Ray seems to be back to his normal pussy self.

JUSTIN

Feel sorry for that kid. So pathetic.

As Fred laughs, Mr. Burns comes over to them.

MR. BURNS

You are back for over a week now. Plan to be a member of this class at some point?

JUSTIN

Still thinking about it.

Mr. Burns looks at Fred.

MR. BURNS

I remind you both again. This class provides a grade to your overall student GPA. How about you?

FRED

How about me?

MR. BURNS

You plan to be a member of this class?

FRED

Like him. Don't know. Really don't care.

Mr. Burns walks away shaking his head. He dials his cell phone calling the Principal.

MR. BURNS

Hi Dan.

DAN

Hello Bob.

MR. BURNS

As we talked about on Monday.  
Justin is still just standing  
around in gym class, refusing to do  
anything. Same with his dangerous  
looking friend Fred.

Both of these fucking kids look  
like they are about to burn this  
place down.

DAN

Any other incidents? Anything with  
Ray?

MR. BURNS

Nothing that I have seen or  
overheard. They are always looking  
at him. He seems to be handling it  
OK, so far.

DAN

I will be calling both Fred and  
Justin into my office about this  
gym issue. This is not a good sign.

MR. BURNS

Two boys opting out of gym because  
they don't feel like it?

DAN

I will talk to both of them.

MR. BURNS

Thanks.

DAN

Thank you.

They hang up.

Dan dials his cell phone to call Jack Nodari.

DAN (CONT'D)

Jack its Dan.

JACK

Hi. How are you?

DAN

Where are you?

JACK

I am at Weston Canal middle school,  
about an hour away.

DAN

Can you get back here before end of  
day?

JACK

Sure, why?

DAN

Issues with Justin and his  
continued refusal to attend gym,  
with his friend Fred.

JACK

That surprises me. He did that last  
time. Fred is a bad influence on  
Justin.

DAN

How bad a sign is this?

JACK

He might be reverting back to self  
destructive behavior. I will have  
to talk to him to find out where he  
is.

DAN

He is already on thin ice after two  
weeks. So much for thinking he  
turned the corner.

JACK

I will drive there and talk to him.  
Any word about his father?

DAN

As far as I have heard, he is doing  
well at work. No news about  
drinking. Justin will know better  
than anyone.

JACK

I will ask him. Give me a few  
hours, I will call you tonight. OK?

DAN

OK. Thanks for your help sir.

JACK

Thank you for letting me know.

They hang up.

**EXT. JUSTIN DUTTON'S HOUSE. SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NJ. DAY.**

Some three hours later.

Jack gets out of his SUV, and knocks on the front door of the Dutton residence. No answer, Jack knocks again and rings the doorbell.

JACK

Hello!

The door suddenly opens with Justin standing at the front door.

JUSTIN

Why are you here?

JACK

To check on you.

JUSTIN

Why?

JACK

To make sure you are moving in the right direction, with school, and the rest of your life.

JUSTIN

Its all fine. Who said otherwise?

JACK

Your gym teacher and the Principal.

JUSTIN

They are wrong.

JACK

May I come in? Is your father home?

JUSTIN

He is. You and I is all we need.

Jack walks into the living room, this time, the house is much neater with no signs of drinking.

JACK

Things do look better. Can we talk in the living room?

Justin sits on the couch, and Jack sits across from him on a large chair.

JUSTIN

The gym teacher does not like me.

JACK

He says you refuse to participate.

JUSTIN

I hate gym, its mostly bullshit.

JACK

Refusing to participate in gym  
might ruin your GPA.

JUSTIN

Whatever man. Burns has said that  
so many times and I do not care.

JACK

We all thought you had turned a  
corner. Your attitude is back the  
way it was before those two months  
in military school.

JUSTIN

No attitude. I just hate gym. Can't  
we just say that I have a medical  
exception?

JACK

But you don't have a medical  
exception.

JUSTIN

So what?

JACK

I will not lie for you. In this  
life there are so many things you  
are going to hate doing.

Ever hear of paying taxes? A long  
horrible commute every single day  
to a job you hate with a passion?  
Working for a boss you hate? Like  
your father had to!

JUSTIN

Add you being here now, to the long  
list.

JACK

More bad attitude. What the hell is wrong with you? Did something happen? Your father?

JUSTIN

My father is better, but he drinks. This time, he hides it better.

JACK

How much improved from before?

JUSTIN

Maybe fifty percent.

JACK

OK at work?

JUSTIN

I don't know, he never said anything.

JACK

Is he depressed?

JUSTIN

I don't think he will ever get over her. He almost never sleeps.

JACK

Justin, you cannot let what your father is feeling ruin your future.

JUSTIN

I am always depressed.

JACK

I could recommend counseling for you and your father, which means you would attend sessions together.

Jonathan, walks into the living room.

JONATHAN

I was not told you would be coming over.

JACK

Our fault. I was called in by the principal and drove over.

JONATHAN

What do you want?

JACK

Just checking in. Your son does not want to take gym.

JONATHAN

He hates gym, so what? He does not care about that GPA bullshit. Neither do I.

JACK

It should not count. But it does count. That's the problem.

JONATHAN

Anything else?

JACK

How are you doing?

JONATHAN

You are here for my son, I am not part of your business.

JACK

You guys need each other, so, if you are willing, I would like to recommend you for father son counseling with the therapist at school.

JONATHAN

No way. Anything else?

JACK

This is for both of you and its free.

JONATHAN

Just don't want to. I think its time for you go.

JACK

I am required to report my findings to the Principal.

You two are in control of your own lives. It is now up to.

JONATHAN

Again, time to leave and right now if you don't mind.

Jack walks out the front door and Jonathan slams the door behind him. Jack takes out his cell phone and dials.



JACK

Dan.

DAN

Good news?

JACK

No. Can I drive over now? I am about 5 minutes out. This is not good.

DAN

Sorry to hear that. I will be here with Debra.

**INT. WILLIAMS SCHOOL. PRINCIPALS OFFICE. DAY.**

Thirty minutes later.

Jack is sitting next to Debra, facing the Principal who is at his desk.

JACK

This is not good news guys.

DAN

Are these two people the long lost acting students of Meryl Streep? They convinced the hell out of me, that they have both turned a corner.

DEBRA

I was completely convinced.

JACK

His father looks like he is drinking again, not as heavily as before. Justin has a very bad attitude, he is reverting back to his old angry revengeful self.

DAN

Are we worried about Ray?

JACK

I am, however things have changed drastically since last time.

DAN

Justin is taller, heavier and older.

JACK

Karate is all about using someone's size against them.

DEBRA

What should we do? We cannot go back to the way things were. Do we wait for the next incident?

JACK

That is a good question.

DAN

We do not have enough to expel Justin. In my opinion he is probably better off not living with his father and should be under strict supervision. Back to the military school.

We will increase our level of monitoring Justin's behavior, with all of his teachers.

JACK

Ultimately, Justin's own life is in his own hands. You cannot force someone to save their own life.

If he does not care about anything after all of this, we can do nothing more.

DEBRA

I agree.

DAN

I will keep you guys informed.

JACK

Ray has been informed about what is going on.

This kid Fred is always with Justin, he is a bad influence. Its two against one with those two. I will call Bill today after this meeting.

DAN

Let me know how that goes. The incidents of bullying are still at the recent low of a month ago. Some good news.

Dan shakes hands with Jack, and Jack shakes hands with Debra.

**INT. GYM CLASS LOCKER ROOM. DAY.**

Mr. Burns walks over to Justin who is changing.

MR. BURNS

What is this, my secretary tells me  
you want to try to be in gym today.  
Why the change?

JUSTIN

I figure why not. I should try this  
once.

MR. BURNS

OK. If you complete a full week of  
classes, I will consider fixing  
your grade. What about Fred?

JUSTIN

What about Fred? He still hates  
gym. Go ask him, he is outside.

MR. BURNS

I am about to throw him out of this  
class. It makes no sense, with two  
students just standing around  
during gym class.

JUSTIN

Talk to him. He is not my problem.

MR. BURNS

You are on thin ice yourself kid.

JUSTIN

As you have told me, too many  
times.

Mr. Burns and walks away, shaking his head. He calls the  
Principal.

MR. BURNS

Hi Dan. Justin has decided to take  
gym class today.

DAN

He is running scared.

MR. BURNS

He still has a horrible attitude.

DAN  
Thanks for keeping me updated.

MR. BURNS  
No problem.

**EXT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL MAIN SPORTS FIELD. DAY.**

Mr. Burns is standing in front of the class.

Justin is with the other boys in the class and Fred is standing by the fence.

MR. BURNS  
Nice to have you join us today  
Justin.

JUSTIN  
No problem man.

MR. BURNS  
I am Mr. Burns, not man.

JUSTIN  
OK.

MR. BURNS  
Today is dodge ball, with a twist.

If you are hit by the ball, you have a choice of dropping out of the game or running around the field, and checking back in. The team with the most players after 20 minutes wins. Everybody understands the rules?

Nobody answers. Several nod their heads.

MR. BURNS (CONT'D)  
Loving the enthusiasm. Red team on this side, black team on this side.

Ray is on the red team, Justin on the black team.

There are 12 boys on each team, and two balls being thrown back and forth. Immediately one boy is hit on the legs and decides to run around the field.

Justin is aiming for Ray's face, throwing the ball violently.

MR. BURNS (CONT'D)  
Time out! Mr. Dutton. This is dodge  
ball. Not attempted murder  
Jeopardy. One of the rules of this  
game is not the head or the face.  
Are we all on the same page?

Dutton nods.

MR. BURNS (CONT'D)  
OK. Continue.

Ray dodges several throws. One from Dutton, he retaliates and  
hits Justin in the center of the chest. Dutton glares at Ray  
and just stands there staring.

MR. BURNS (CONT'D)  
Mr. Dutton. Either leave the game  
or start running. Your choice.

Justin decides to leave the game. Which is now down to 6  
players on either side, including Ray.

Justin and Fred watch the dodgeball game. Ray manages to  
dodge several balls, and 10 minutes later he is the last one  
standing opposing a boy on the other team. Ray throws the  
ball and hits the other boy on his leg. Ray's team wins.

FRED  
Oh look. Ray boy wimp won.

JUSTIN  
Hard to believe. Can't believe this  
kids luck.

FRED  
Me either. What a wimp though.

JUSTIN  
I hear he learned Karate. Care to  
give those skills a run through?

FRED  
Sounds good to me.

JUSTIN  
After gym. Lets wait in the parking  
lot, like last time.

**EXT. WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL PARKING LOT.**

30 minutes later. Ray exits the gym locker room, heading for  
the parking lot.

Justin and Fred are waiting for him.

RAY  
So much for you changing your life  
around. Still a bully scumbag?

JUSTIN  
Watch your mouth. Heard you know  
Karate. Care to try out the  
training?

Ray looks at Fred, who is 4 inches taller.

RAY  
Two against one?

JUSTIN  
No man. Just me. Lets see what you  
got.

RAY  
So I should trust you? Its just you  
and me?

Justin smiles.

JUSTIN  
Sure.

Ray turns to his left and kicks Fred in the center of his  
groin. Fred collapses to the ground, groaning.

RAY  
Just bought some insurance on that  
one-on-one promise asshole.

JUSTIN  
Fuck you. You just called me an  
asshole?

RAY  
If I were you I would get my  
fucking hands up.

JUSTIN  
That is how you fight. Kicking  
someone in the balls?

Ray jabs Justin in the face. Once. Twice. Like pistons,  
jabbing Justin's forehead and nose. Justin tries to retaliate  
and Ray steps aside and hits him in the stomach with a solid  
right, then trips Justin as he falls to the ground.

RAY

Were those your balls? Looks like  
that ugly face of yours is  
bleeding.

Justin tries to get up. As he does, Ray decks him again, two more jabs and an uppercut, just about knocking Justin out.

There is a half empty plastic bottle of water resting on a car. Ray grabs the water and pours it on Justin's face, waking him up.

RAY (CONT'D)

My money is on you staying the fuck  
down. Welcome to the new ballgame.

Too bad you didn't invite the whole  
world to watch you getting your ass  
kicked this time. And so easily.

Justin turns over, trying to get up and Ray kicks him in the rear end as Justin falls to the ground again.

RAY (CONT'D)

How does that feel you lying scum?  
Kicked in the as, like you did to  
me. Going to bother me ever again?  
How about your fat friend Fred?

Ray kicks Justin in the ass again, as about 5 boys come over to watch, including Davis and four of his friends.

DAVIS

Hey Ray. Looks like that fucking  
creep finally got what he deserved.  
How long have we all put up with  
this shithead kid?

FRIEND #1

Looks like he can't even stand up.  
You knock him out?

RAY

That is what the water bottle was  
for.

FRIEND #2

I thought he pissed himself.

Several laugh.

FRIEND #3

What about Fred over there?

RAY

He was out of the picture pretty fast, I kicked him in the balls.

FRIEND #4

Looks like he is about to stand up.

Davis kicks Fred in the balls as he tries to stand up.

Fred falls over again, holding his groin in pain, groaning.

DAVIS

He may be taller, but he still has balls. Another lowlife kid who should not be in this school.

They all laugh and high five.

RAY

Well, I hope this is the last we hear from these two scumbags. The end of school terrorism, as far as these two lowlife are concerned.

DAVIS

Glad we have turned a page.

They all walk away, as Justin and Fred lay on the parking lot, holding their face and groin.

**INT. JUSTIN DUTTON'S HOUSE. SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY. NIGHT.**

Six hours later. 9 PM.

Justin's cell phone rings. He answers the phone.

JUSTIN

Hello?

JACK

Hello. Its Jack.

JUSTIN

What do you want?

JACK

More attitude. You know what?

JUSTIN

What?



JACK

The ass kicking you took today  
would happen to you daily, weekly  
and even hourly if you were in  
prison.

I spoke with your Principal. He has  
agreed, due to your getting your  
ass kicked, to give you one last  
chance to become a human being. Do  
you want this shot?

JUSTIN

Yes.

JACK

Now. This time around you must  
fully understand what empathy is.

You give any kid a bad time or even  
a bad look, and you are gone. I  
will also wash my hands of you.

I have given you all I can. Now  
your life is up to you.

JUSTIN

I will not cause any more problems.

JACK

Your father?

JUSTIN

Better. Not drinking for a week.

JACK

Good news. You have my number kid.

JUSTIN

I do.

JACK

Call me if you need me.

JUSTIN

I will.

JACK

How is your face?

JUSTIN

It still works.

JACK  
The best lessons in life are those  
that come the hard way. I wish life  
were easier, but it is not. Not for  
anyone. Hopefully you finally  
understand this.

Jack hangs up.

**INT. WILLIAMS SCHOOL. PRINCIPALS OFFICE. DAY.**

One day later.

Ray is sitting with his father, waiting for the Principal to  
arrive. Ray's fists are bandaged.

BILL  
Do your hands feel better?

RAY  
A little better.

Dan walks into his office with Jack.

DAN  
Hello.

BILL  
Hi.

RAY  
Hello.

JACK  
Hello.

DAN  
Obviously I heard about the fight,  
and from the witnesses I have  
talked to so far. You were ambushed  
after leaving gym in the parking  
lot by both Justin and Fred.

You were defending yourself. From  
what I heard you defended yourself  
extremely well.

RAY  
Thank you sir.

DAN

We do not condone violence in this school, but any person has the right to defend themselves.

Unfortunately Justin Dutton and his father did a good job in fooling all of us weeks ago.

BILL

Is he out of the school for good?

DAN

We are giving him one last chance, in the hope that he learned from what happened with Ray.

JACK

Justin has now experienced empathy first hand. In my experience this will have a positive effect.

Justin's father has stopped drinking which might be another turning point.

DAN

One misstep and he is out of this school and onto whatever Social Services or his father can come up with. The safety of our students is always our first priority.

BILL

Ordinarily I would disagree with your decision, but my son is now someone who has confidence and can defend himself extremely well.

He has rose to the top of his Karate class. I also care about other victims of Justin's bullying, but for now I will accept your decision.

Dan notices someone in the hallway.

DAN

Come in Jay.

Jay Henderson walks into Dan's office.

DAN (CONT'D)  
One last thing, I wanted to introduce you to our new Vice Principal, Jay Henderson. He will be sharing the job with Debra for a few months while she dealing with a minor medical issue.

Jay attended this school 40 years ago.

Jay shakes hands with Dan, Jack, Bill and Ray.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Ray, meet Jay.

RAY  
Nice to meet you.

JAY  
You too son.

Jay and Ray look at each other for a long time. They sit down.

JAY (CONT'D)  
For some odd reason, I feel I know you Ray.

RAY  
I feel the same about you.

JAY  
I went here 40 years ago when I was exactly your age.

RAY  
Wow.

JAY  
I heard about what happened with Justin. Same kind of thing happened to me.

RAY  
Really?

JAY  
His name was Jeffrey, a very bad kid. Wound up getting arrested and died in prison when he was 30.

BILL  
Sorry you had to go through that.

JAY

Its a part of life that just should  
not exist.

Jay looks at Jack.

JAY (CONT'D)

I appreciate what you are trying to  
do Jack, I am very impressed. Where  
were you 40 years ago?

JACK

This is all still a work in  
progress.

JAY

Your business. Trying to save so  
many kids, is long overdue.

DAN

I can second that.

JACK

Thank you sir.

JAY

Thank you.

Jay and Jack stand up and shake hands.

**THE END.**