

INT. FRONT ROOM - SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Fade in on the interior side of a front door. Next to the door is are s few simple household items (a set of hooks with keys, a small carpet, etc.) Through a window, trees with green leaves can be seen. The door opens and ALEX (14), a young boy with kind eyes wearing a tee shirt and jeans, walks through. He holds his backpack in one hand and his keys in the other. He places the keys on the hook and carefully puts his backpack on the floor. His phone starts ringing and he takes it out, smiles, and answers.

ALEX

Hey man... How's it going?... That's good... No I haven't started it yet... Yeah of course I'll help, but I should probably finish my essay first... Hey, watch your language... Okay, yeah, I'll hurry up... No I can't, it's due tomorrow... Fine, okay, I'll be right there... Yeah, see you soon.

Alex hangs up and puts the phone away. He grabs his backpack and his keys again.

ALEX

Mom! I'm gonna head over to Tom's, okay?

ALEX'S MOM (O.S.)

Okay, Alex! Be back by 5!

ALEX

Sure thing, Mom.

Alex walks out the door in a shot similar to the one in which he entered.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Fade to same shot with slight differences in scenery. Alex, now 15, walks through the door. He's a bit taller now, but he still has a warm look. He puts his keys on the hook and tosses his backpack onto the floor. He carefully holds a tattered notebook and a few pencils, which he puts next to his backpack. He begins to walk to another room, but is interrupted by a phone call. He answers. While talking, he rummages through his backpack.

ALEX

Dude, I just saw you, what's up?...

No, I can't, I've got work to do... I know, I know, I'm sorry... I'll make it up to you, yeah... Hey are you gonna help out with the blood drive tomorrow?... Come on, maybe it'll help you, you know? Get you out of your comfort zone. Plus, we both need the volunteer hours... I know you don't like blood... Yeah, but we could hang out then... I'm sorry, I know, I shouldn't have said anything... I won't ask again, okay?... Hey wait no it's okay, it's okay, it was my fault, I shouldn't have asked... Hey, it's fine, it's fine, I don't hate you... Why would I? Come on, we've known each other for years, why would I have kept you around that long?... No no no, it was a joke, it... Yeah, I know, I'm sorry... You okay?... Yeah, of course... See you tomorrow, yeah...  
Bye.

Alex hangs up, defeated. He brings his hands to his face, as if disappointed with himself. He walks back over to his notebook, picks it up, and opens it. He grabs a pencil and begins drawing. The camera reveals the drawing to be that of a bird happily singing. Alex smiles faintly, grabs his backpack, and walks upstairs.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Fade to same opening shot, now night. Alex's set of keys is missing. His backpack leans against a chair. Hurried steps on a stair case are heard before Alex, now 16 and noticeably taller, comes rushing into frame. He wears a black jacket and a beanie. He speaks out of breath into his phone. As he does, he seems to be getting ready to leave. In the background, faint arguing between a man and a woman can be heard.

ALEX

Okay just stay where you are and don't do anything... I swear, Tom, I'm leaving right now, I'll be there soon... No of course I won't tell my parents, they've got enough going on now as is.

Alex looks over into the kitchen. The arguing has turned into shouting.

ALEX (CONT.)

Plus, they probably don't want me going to see you anyway... Please, just don't do anything you'll regret... Please don't do this to yourself... You are so loved, what do you mean?... Alright then, screw them... Hey hey hey, I'm here, I'm always here... Just try to calm down... Take deep breaths, I don't know... That's good, that's good... Yeah, I'm leaving right now... I, uh, no, I just think...

Alex trails off as he leaves through the door.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Fade to same opening shot. Outside, a car door is heard being shut before the car drives away. Alex enters through the door, wearing the same clothes as the last scene. He looks very tired. He sits down and holds his head in his hands.

ALEX'S MOM (O.S.)

This isn't healthy, you know?

Alex looks up. ALEX'S MOM is leaning against a wall, holding a glass of wine. She, too, looks tired.

ALEX

I don't wanna talk about it.

ALEX'S MOM

You don't have to. You just have to listen.

Alex's Mom takes another sip of wine. She sighs.

ALEX'S MOM

Your father cheated on me, you know? Back when you were seven. Do you remember when we stayed with Aunt Patty for a few months?

Alex nods solemnly.

ALEX'S MOM (CONT.)

The bastard decided it would be fun to sleep with some blonde from the office. As soon as I found out, I told him "I never want to see you again."

Of course, I put with him for another nine years. It wasn't healthy you know?

ALEX  
Is he gone now?

ALEX'S MOM  
Yes.

ALEX  
Is he coming back?

ALEX'S MOM  
I don't know.

Alex's Mom finishes her wine and begins to walk away.

ALEX'S MOM (O.S.)  
Go to bed. It's late.

Alex's Mom leaves Alex sitting there. He reaches into his backpack and pulls out his old notebook. He opens it up and stares at it. He then takes out some pencils and begins drawing. The camera reveals the drawing to be that same bird from before. Alex has drawn a cage around it. Fade to black.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Alex, now 17, sits on the edge of the porch. He still looks tired. He's lost the kind look in his eyes. He sits alone for a while. A figure walks up to him and sits down next to him.

FIGURE  
I missed you today.

ALEX  
I said I wasn't coming.

The camera shows the two. Alex is sitting next to TOM (17), a short boy wearing corduroy pants and a dark tee shirt.

TOM  
I know. I still missed you.

The two boys sit in silence for a while.

ALEX  
Do you know why I wasn't there today?

TOM

No.

ALEX

I was in court. I was in court watching my parents fight for custody.

TOM

I had no idea.

ALEX

Exactly. You never listened. Anytime I would try to tell you something you would just change the subject. Start complaining about yourself. Make me feel bad about my own issues. That's not what friends do.

TOM

I needed you, though.

ALEX

No, you didn't. I get that you have problems and I tried my best to help but you depended on me too much. It wasn't fair to me.

TOM

I'm sorry.

ALEX

It's too late for that.

Alex stands and looks down at Tom.

ALEX (CONT.)

You're leaning on me so hard that if I fall, you will crush me.

Alex begins to walk inside. He turns and looks at Tom one last time.

ALEX (CONT.)

I'm sorry.

Alex walks inside. Tom keeps sitting on the porch. Fade to black.

THE END