

WONDERBOYS

A Screenplay by Steve Kloves

Based on a Novel by Michael Chabon

INT. BOOTH - COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT (LATER)

The remains of a FRIED CLAM SANDWICH sits before James as he turns his attention to a GIANT PIECE OF LEMON MERINGUE PIE. Grady sips only coffee, stealing glances at the cars that whip by on the high way beyond the window.

JAMES LEER

Want a bite?

GRADY

No thanks.

JAMES LEER

That's why you're having them.
Your spells.

GRADY

Spells? Jesus, James, you make it sound like we're in a Tennessee Williams play. I don't get spells.

JAMES LEER

What would you call them then?

GRADY

I don't know... 'Episodes.'

James shrugs, spears a fluffy chunk of pie.

Grady watches a pair of headlights approach...

JAMES LEER

(mouth full, garbled)

I just worry about you, that's all.

... then pass. James's words finally register. Grady looks at him.

GRADY

You just worry about yourself,
okay?

JAMES LEER

Okay.

Just then, a long, pale WAND of LIGHT splinters against the coffee shop windows and a CAR sweeps into the parking lot. Grady follows it with his eyes, rises.

JAMES LEER

Where you going?

GRADY

Nowhere. You just sit here and... eat.

INT. BOOTH - COFFEE SHOP

James is glowering at the parking lot as Grady returns.

JAMES LEER

I'm not going with them.

GRADY

James. Listen. Things -- things are a little weird with me right now.

JAMES LEER

Things are weird with me too.

GRADY

I know, but I've got my editor in town, I've got to finish my book, there are some extenuating circumstances --

JAMES LEER

I won't bother you. I won't even talk to you.

GRADY

James, like it or not, those people out there are your parents.

JAMES LEER

They're not my parents.

GRADY

What?

JAMES LEER

They're my grandparents. My parents are dead.

Grady stares at James, then glances toward the parking lot, studies the contours of Fred Leer's face.

GRADY

James, come on. That man is obviously your father. You look just like him.

James takes a deep breath and speaks in a voice heavy with implication.

JAMES LEER

There's a reason for that.

Grady's addled brain grapples with this dark little riddle, finally deciphers what James is suggesting.

GRADY

Get out of here.

JAMES LEER

That's why she hates me. That's why she makes me sleep in the basement.

GRADY

In the crawl space. With the rats and the casks of Amontillado. Come on. Up.

James doesn't move.

JAMES LEER

It's true. They treat me like a freak.

GRADY

You are a freak, James. Welcome to the club.

James looks up for the first time, then away, staring distantly at the highway.

JAMES LEER

You don't understand. You don't know what it's like.

James voice trails off softly, once again heavy with the freight of insinuation and an unmistakable thread of self-pity. But his time, Grady's eyes harden.

GRADY

You're right. I don't. But don't expect me to feel sorry for you because I don't know who you are. Let me ask you something, James. In the past 36 hours, have you told me one thing that's true? One thing that comes from you?

JAMES LEER

I just want to... stay with you. For a little while. That's all.

Grady studies James' downcast face, moved by it in some way, but not enough.

GRADY

I'm a teacher, James, not a Holiday Inn.