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Available for reading in English and German.

Scene One

Simon Ives stands at a bus stop. Suddenly, a strong gust of wind hits him, a blown newspaper catches on his leg, and the whistling sound of a falling object is heard, getting closer and louder. He looks up and jumps aside, a pair of binoculars dropping from the sky and landing where he stood. He stares at them, confused. Beat.

The new kid Colin Gillespie arrives.

Colin: Hey.

Simon: Hey... Colin Gillespie.

Simon points at the binoculars. Colin nods. Beat.

Three more children rush in, a bus pulls up and all clamber on. Simon narrates, as chaos surrounds and he is jostled relentlessly.

Simon: When kids ride together at the start of a *way too full* school day – where I have to do about a million things, in about 400 minutes, which is about six and a half hours, which is about the half the time it'll take – different ones do different things.

Michael Haynes (who has way more facial hair than someone his age actually should) takes shots punching the new kid Colin Gillespie in the arm to make him flinch.

After a couple of silent hits...

Colin: Ow! *[Beat]* Didn't feel it.

Michael: ...You just said Ow.

Colin: I was imagining what it'd feel like *if* I had felt it – which I didn't.

Simon: Artie Monroe forces a headphone on me and plays some song he likes.

Artie: 'we are the Champions... We are ha-huhh-huhh. No Tiny Losers! 'Cause/

Simon: /'Tiny losers'?

Artie: Huh? Small losers, yeah – they're weird.

Simon: I don't think that's the lyri/ *[He is hit by Michael]* Ow! I'm not even playing!

Michael: Your arm is. Flinched.

Simon: Chloe Denunzio shows me a car magazine and imagines...

Chloe: ...one day attaching the spoiler from a Plymouth Superbird to the chassis of a Porsche 930 Turbo! Sa-weet.

Simon: And I, Simon Ives, take a deep breath.

Silence. Colin is punched.

Colin: Ow!

The five stand on a soccer-field, forming a wall. Simon narrates.

Simon: And when kids stand on a soccer-field – in the early hours of a Saturday morning, after you've already mowed the lawn, and helped Dad with the crossword (whether you want to or not), and practiced Chinese vowel sounds for your second language class – with loud parents cheering from the sidelines, and a big guy from Eighth Grade about to take a free kick, different ones do different things.

The new kid Colin Gillespie struggles to decide whether to protect his face or his privates... So he does both.

Colin: ...Can't see.

Simon: Artie Monroe blows a kiss to Alissa Martin, who has long flowy hair and knows more about horses than anyone in the world ever.

Artie: Guys. Hey guys. Maybe... carry me on your shoulders, yeah? Like I'm a... a sports hero guy.

Chloe: But... you're not.

Artie: Whatever. And make sure Alissa sees! If I just get up here and... *[He begins climbing onto the others, who resist]*

Simon: That's my/

Chloe: /What are you doing!?!/

Michael: /Get off me!

Colin: *[Still covering eyes]* What's that? Who's there... Is that a... ow!

Artie: *[Balanced precariously on others]* Hey Alissa! Alissa Martin! Look at me – I'm getting carried, yeah. This game's for you, Alissa Mar/

He falls, landing awkwardly.

Chloe: That's so lame (...would you go out with me?)

Artie: Horses rule!

Simon: Michael Haynes tries to psych out the kid taking the kick.

Michael: What's the matter, slow-stuff? Gonna take all day to kick the ball or what? I could have got, like, twenty goals by now! Do you want me to take it? Is that what you want? 'Cause I'm happy to – if that's what you want. So is it? Just give me the word, slow-stuff. Give me the word...

Simon: Chloe Denunzio blows hair out of her eyes and considers kicking Michael Haynes in the knee so he'll/

Chloe: /Shut up already.

Simon: And I, Simon Ives, take a deep breath – and hold it a while.

Michael: You're probably the worst free kicker I've ever see/

Colin (unaware behind protective hands) is hit by the ball.

Colin: Ow!

Simon, his parents and little brother Louie sit around a dinner table. Simon narrates.

Simon: And when it's dinner on a Thursday night, and you're tired after the most massive day ever – full of Math Club and spelling tests and handball battles – and the smell of Dad's lasagne hangs in the air/

Dad: /Douglas Ives' world famous lasagne. Voila!

Simon: And a song by some Irish lady Dad likes floats in from the next room, and everyone in my family is doing exactly what my family does best, which is 'talking-at-onceing'...

All begin. A cacophony of voices. Simon shouts over them.

Simon: Which they're so good at and could definitely win a gold medal for, if they had medals for that kind of thing, which they don't (luckily)... different ones do different things.

Dad tries telling a joke he heard at the botanic gardens where he works.

Dad: And then the vampire says to the swim team/
Mom: /Is this the vampire joke?
Dad: Yeah. So the vampire says/
Mom: /You can't tell them the vampire joke.
Dad: Yes I can. So the vampire says 'well how about I' ... oh no, you're right. I can't tell them that.
Mom: No.
Dad: No.
Louie: What's the vampire say, Dad?
Dad: ...Nothing. I can't remember. He... flies away and... that's the end.
Louie: ...Pretty much the worst joke I ever heard.
Simon: Mom (who's studying for her fifth degree and has so many letters after her name it's like a new name on top of the already there one) separates all the different layers of lasagne onto different parts of the plate, so none of them are touching.
Dad: It's so odd how you do that.
Simon: And my brother Louie does the same.
Louie: I don't think it's odd.

Mother and son share a conspiratorial smile.

Simon: And I, Simon Ives – aged twelve years and four months and ten days, not counting leap years (which I don't) – I sit in the middle of everything and feel overwhelmed. During music practice on Wednesday, and soccer on Saturday, and in the middle of Monday swim class, and at Tuesday tae kwon do. And all the way through homework every evening (which is crazy anyway, 'cause when you're twelve the words *home* and *work* shouldn't even go together). And around the super loud dinner table with Mom and Dad and Louie. And all through the million and one things that are my big, massive, too full, twelve and a bit year old life.

I take a deep breath... and try to feel calm.

Beat. Simon extends his arms while exhaling and knocks over his glass – the table explodes in very uncalm uproar.

Mom: /Every time, Simon!/
Dad: /What is wrong with your son!/
Louie: /I told you! I told you he would, dad! You owe me a dollar! I so told you!

Beat.

Simon: ...Sorry.