

Missing School
by
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FADE IN:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL, 13, scrawny, pensive, his chair pulled tight to the dining table, gnaws on a pencil.

A folded wheelchair sits close, in a corner.

In front of him is a textbook opened on a picture titled "MISSING SCHOOL", and a piece of paper. A single word written on the paper: ESSAY.

On the picture, a boy of about fifteen drags a tattered wooden boat towards water. He is dressed for winter, heavy rubber boots and a coat. His face, untimely withered, cringes as the boat seems heavy for his thin body.

Clanking of dishes comes from the kitchen.

BETTY (O.S.)
Michael, are you done?

MICHAEL
Not yet. Have it in my head though.

BETTY, 30s, a concerned mother, walks in, sets the table. She glances at a wall clock on her way out.

BETTY
Be quick. Miss Connor's too
punctual. She'll be here in... in
sixteen minutes.

Michael's brother, ROGER, 17, long hair and a permanent squint, barges in. Grabs a chair, turns it around, plops down across from Michael.

ROGER
Er, Missing School? I remember this
one.

He grabs a spoon, bangs it on the table.

ROGER
Mom, dinner's not gonna eat itself.

Michael's eyes light up as he watches Roger.

BETTY (O.S.)
You better help your brother with
his essay.

Roger's attention switches back to the picture. He pounds on it with his finger.

ROGER
This is a rebel. Gone fishing
during school. My kind.

Michael laughs.

BETTY (O.S.)
Stop putting ideas in Michael's
head.

Michael starts writing.

ROGER
Wow, but Mikey likes my ideas.

Michael reads from the paper and Roger frowns - it is definitely not what he just said:

MICHAEL
The boy became an adult early in
life. He has to fish for a living,
no school for him. School is for
more fortunate ones. ...all I have.

ROGER
What? Skips school to fish for a
living? Is that so?

Betty comes in with a bowl of soup. Peers at the picture.

BETTY
'Missing' here carries a whole other
meaning. He'd go to school but it's
Sunday, he's got nothing to do...

ROGER
That's some healthy thinking, Mom.
Healthy, healthy, healthy. Let us
be boys, huh.

Roger looks at Michael. Concern and sorrow registers.

ROGER
Look at Michael. Home schooled!
You're raising a girl out of him.

Betty smacks Roger on the head.

ROGER
He's gotta start living, go to a
real school--

BETTY

Comb that hair sometimes, will ya.
And shut up.

Roger snatches the bowl from her. Slurps his soup.

Michael scribbles on the paper. Roger stops eating for a moment, bends over to get a better look. Winces.

ROGER

Oh, come on. If I had a boat and a fishing net...

MICHAEL

Don't forget the lake. Unless you'd fish in a bathtub.

ROGER

Haha. Good one.

Roger cranes his neck as Michael scribbles some more. Skims through Michael's writing, shakes his head.

ROGER

This drawing here comes with a message. And the message is 'the beauty of going to real school is you get to skip it'. ...You can't skip Ms. Connor.

Michael raises his smiling eyes at Roger.

BETTY (O.S.)

Don't you dare--

ROGER

Okay. I'll zip it. Sorry Mom. Sorry Mikey. Bad Roger. Bad Roger.

Michael struggles not to titter. He does.

A doorbell interrupts them. Roger sprints towards the hall.

A screech of the front door.

ROGER (O.S.)

Rrrravishing as ever. Agrr!

Roger walks back in.

ROGER

(artistically)
Mademoiselle Connor has arrived.

Roger unfolds the wheelchair, helps Michael to it.

He rolls Michael out of the room. Incredibly patient.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ms. CONNOR, 20s, smiles and makes her way to a chair behind a desk.

Roger helps Michael out of the wheelchair, next to Ms. Connor.

ROGER

All set? ...I'd roll all the way to school in this wheelchair if I were you. What do you think, Ms. Ravishing? I mean Ms. Connor.

MS. CONNOR

Now Roger--

Michael grabs Roger's hand.

MICHAEL

Wanna stick around for the essay?
I'll only read a part of it.

Roger sprawls across a sofa - spending another minute with his brother wouldn't hurt.

Michael reads from the paper.

MICHAEL

I'd call this boy 'a cripple' and in a way he is. He is limited to his boat and the burden to provide for his family. I'm a true cripple, but I have the entire world. At my feet so to speak.

Michael takes his eyes off the paper.

MICHAEL

No offense, Ms. Connor and I'm sure Roger will miss you--

MS. CONNOR

Michael--

MICHAEL

I want to start school, Ms. Connor. Real school. I think Mom will understand.

Roger sprints, teenage happy.

ROGER

Woo hoo for Missing School!!! Oh,
but Ms. Connor... It's my loss
really.

Ms. Connor blushes and shoots Roger "the look".

MICHAEL

I'll go break the news to Mom.
Would you keep Ms. Connor company?

He winks to Roger and signals him to stay put as he hoists
himself into the wheelchair. All by himself.

...and he rolls himself out.

Roger watches, proud.

FADE OUT.