FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

It’s a peaceful summer day. The wind blows through the leafy limbs of the large maple and sycamore trees in every yard. The houses are older but well-kept.

A BOY (8), black hair and blue eyes, bounds down the sidewalk. He wears a red cape tied around his neck and a blue T-shirt and blue jeans.

A cat meows and he jumps to a halt, trying to find it. The cat meows again and he looks up into the branches of a nearby tree. The cat’s way up there.

He inspects the branches and his hands. After a moment, he attempts to climb the tree when...

GIRL (O.S.)
Help! These guys won’t leave me alone!

The boy quickly scans the area for the girl. Nothing’s out of the ordinary, except--MEOW. He looks back up at the cat, which is secure on the branch for the moment.

GIRL
Please hurry!

The boy finds the direction of her voice, checks the cat one last time, then bolts down the sidewalk, around the corner.

ALLEY

The alley is a dirt and gravel drive behind the houses lined by brick walls, shrubs, and wooden fences.

THREE BULLIES (all 11), all in t-shirts and jeans, swat at a GIRL (10), who’s wearing a school uniform and carrying a book bag. As the boys harass her, papers and pencils fall out of the bag.

The boy stands at the end of the alley, fists on hips, staring them down.

BOY
Leave her alone.

Bully #1 walks away from the girl to address his challenger face-to-face, even though he’s a bit shorter.
BULLY #1

No.

Bully #1 looks the boy over, head to toe. The boy doesn’t break his gaze into the bully’s eyes. The bully psychs the boy with a fake punch to the stomach. The boy doesn’t flinch. The bully does it again, this time to the nose. No reaction.

BULLY #1

Ain’t ya scared, punk?

The boy folds his arms across his chest, defiant and confident. The bully feigns walking away, but spins around and throws a punch at the boy’s head. The boy dodges it, arms still crossed.

The bully takes another swing. Another miss. He tries it two more times with two more misses, backing the boy against a brick wall. The bully winds up for the KO. He hurls it. The boy slips away. CRACK! The fist smashes into the wall.

The bully SCREAMS in pain, like a child a quarter of his age, doubled over and cradling his limp wrist.

The other bullies turn from the girl to see their comrade’s agony, shortly before POW! They both sail through the air, landing in the dust, on their backs.

They look at each other, dumbfounded. They look up. The boy stands over them.

BOY

Why don’t you pick on someone with your own IQ?

The grounded bullies are riled at these words, but they see their buddy sneaking up behind the boy. The boy sees this, turns around and WHOOSH!

FADE TO BLACK.

TREE

The cat’s still stuck in the tree, meowing for help.

The three bullies come around the corner, running for their lives—except for Bully #3, who power-limps. All of them sport bloodied noses, bruised cheeks, and black eyes.

BULLY #1 (O.S.)

Who the hell was that kid?
BULLY #2

I dunno, but we beat ourselves up more than he did! That kid’s fast!

They keep running down the street into one of the houses.

Around the corner walks the boy with the girl. The boy carries her book bag, zipped up, with the dirt brushed off. As they walk, she studies her short hero.

As they pass the tree, the cat meows. The boy stops and puts the book bag down. He starts to climb the trunk when the cat jumps off the branch, onto his head.

He stumbles and falls to the ground, on his back. The cat lands on its feet and scurries into the house. The girl stoops down to check on the boy.

GIRL
Did he scratch you?

He pats his neck and face while she inspects him.

BOY
(shakes head)
Not really. Just scared me some.

He picks up the book bag and hands it to her. She pulls him up and does nothing but blush and stare into those boyish, deep blue eyes of his.

GIRL
This is my house.
(pauses)
Thanks...again.

They part. He starts down the sidewalk, she towards the house. After a few steps, she turns around.

GIRL
Who...who are you?

The boy turns around and smiles.

BOY
A friend.

He turns back around and leaps into the air, fist forward. Down the street he bounds! Awe-struck, she enters the house.

FADE OUT.