

RIDING LIFE

Written by
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Thirty children rode out, thirty adults came back.

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FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DAY

Black rain clouds cover their peaks. Thunder *booms* so loud it hurts. Its following lightening bolts flash like science fiction ray guns. Gales drive this armageddon at 15,000 feet.

EXT. SIDE OF ONE MOUNTAIN AT ITS TREE LINE - MOMENTS LATER

At 12,000 feet, its line of trees mark the barren rocky terrain above them like a field half plowed. Huddled under swaying 100' high Douglas-Fir limbs are multiple scattered plastic lumps. Leather bridle reins lead out from each bump to drenched saddled horses of every type who stand miserable.

Sideways rain is now replaced by hail the size of marbles. All horses *whinny* and try to bolt as their reigns are held tight under their attached Army-green ponchos. The frozen ice balls *thud* on them like soaking wet socks hitting a boulder.

As quickly as it started, this *Devil Storm* ends. Clouds and thunder are blown away by high winds. Huge water drops fall from pine needles *plopping* on both wet vinyl and horsehair.

Two of the ponchos beside each other wiggle like cocoons.

BARRY (O.S.)

How the gladiola did I let you talk
me into this nightmare?

JOHN (O.S.)

"A nightmare is only a dream, and
when it is worst, you wake up."

BARRY

Yeah? Well, tell Laura Ingalls to
stay in her own little house on the
f'n prairie. I'm stuck on this one!

CAPTION: *Based on the true story*

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF WASHINGTON DC - AT DUSK FOUR MONTHS AGO

Montage of Washington Monument, Lincoln Monument, The White House, U.S. Capitol, etc. Suddenly all their lights come on.

CAPTION: *Hippies and Vietnam rule all conversations in 1970*

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. SUBURBAN HOME - NOW SUNSET

The upper-class three-story Colonial house has a beautiful landscaped yard. In its semi-circular driveway sits an old station-wagon next to a pristine 1969 *Bathtub* Porsche.

A scooter parks between them. BARRY WHITE, Caucasian, 15, pudgy, long red hair, wearing jeans and yellow *Easy Rider* sunglasses, hangs his helmet on a mirror. He *rings* doorbell.

JOHN BECKER, Caucasian, 15, spindly, long black hair, in bell bottoms and a fringed leather-shirt, opens the door. He always talks with melancholy like *Marvin the Depressed Robot*.

JOHN

Here I am, brain the size of a planet, and all they tell me is to bring you along.

LEVI BECKER, John's father, Caucasian, early-40s, short hair and handsome, yells totalitarian from their living room.

LEVI (O.S.)

Both of you get in here!

John obeys and shuffle-walks stooped over as if to his own gallows. Barry follows behind as his second.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

1970 Spanish-modern matching furniture. Curtains are drawn with lights off and a bright-lit movie-screen at one end.

PHILONEUS ABLE, Caucasian, mid-40s, tall, rugged-fit, crew-cut, with a craggy tan-weathered face, offers his hand to Barry. They shake, but Philoneus squeezes forcing Barry down to his knees on the shag carpeting. He always speaks like the famous cartoon rooster character with its same sage wisdom.

PHILONEUS

Boy, I say boy, what you doin' way down there? Herdin' shag?

Philoneus goes back to his movie-screen *laughing* hearty.

Barry stands shaking hand, *Ow*, and looks at John who points to his own hand then down to rug.

PHILONEUS

As I was as sayin', our storms are as subtle as a hand grenade in a barrel a' mush. For instance, last year, it never rained once.

Philoneus remote-advances his *Kodak Carousel* to a slide of THIRTY BOYS and GIRLS, all Caucasian teens, who smile forced in pristine C-Bar-C blue jean shirts and blue jean pants with white plastic cowboy hats.

Barry and John step to it like moths to a flame open-mouthed staring at the thirty *Children of the Corn* with frozen grins.

JOHN

We sleep --?

BARRY

with girls?

Philoneus uses two knuckles to *thwack* both boys on the head.

Barry and John grab their topknots, *Ow?!*

PHILONEUS

Only in your dreams. My daughter tends to 'em, knuckleheads.

BARRY

Your daughter --

JOHN

rides with us?

PHILONEUS

She do. I reckon a might sight better than you two ever will.

VERLY WHITE, Barry's father, Caucasian, mid-40s, obese, in a suit with a string tie and *Stetson* cowboy hat, raises a hand.

PHILONEUS

School's out, so just spit 'er out.

VERLY

How much more do we have to spend?

PHILONEUS

Other than on ridin' lessons? Just like the Army, send them as is.

LEVI

It's in the brochure, Verly. His fee includes a clothing allowance. He takes them shopping once there.

PHILONEUS

Yep. Parents send me protesting pups, and I "return to sender" cowboy cherubs.

SUSANNAH BECKER, John's mother, Caucasian, late 30s, too much make-up, bouffant hair, wears a dress with crinoline under. She is a southern belle with appropriate drawl and thinking.

SUSANNAH

Genesis, chapter three. God created
two realms, the skies as His space
--and the earth for a human place.

PHILONEUS

Yes ma'am. But when you're standin'
on a mountaintop at thirteen thou,
one tends to see both as one.

ALICE WHITE, Barry's mother, Caucasian, late-40s, a *Lucille Ball* redhead with a West Virginia accent, wears a red summer dress. She sits next to Verly and waves a hand animated.

ALICE

Mista' Able, Mista' Able!

PHILONEUS

Name's Philoneus, I works for a
livin', ma'am.

ALICE

Mista' Philoneus, you said your
campers always lose weight, right?

PHILONEUS

Right as rain, ma'am. But we call
them "Riders." And don't fret none,
lard-ass loafers lose all blubber.

Verly looks at Barry and gives double *thumbs-up*. Barry looks at John who sticks both thumbs in his ears closing his eyes.

SUSANNAH

Mista' Able, I believe we can all
agree that your, uh --now what
funny lil' name did you call it?

PHILONEUS

Trail Ranch, ma'am. We're rated
third toughest survival school in
all these here united states.

SUSANNAH

Oh, a trail ranch, yes, how lovely.
So you teach boys to become men?

PHILONEUS

Or die tryin'.

BARRY

You or us?

All look at Barry, then Husbands *laugh* as Wives *giggle*.

SUSANNAH

Then your rancho is just what our
lil' ole' psychiatrist ordered.

PHILONEUS

Well alrighty then. I'll shut up
while you two sign up.

The two Husbands begin signing coffee-table contracts.

VERLY

And "The Release?"

Philoneus nods. Barry leans to John. Both whisper.

BARRY

"Release from what?"

JOHN

No refunds.

PHILONEUS

That's right, son. Come home early
cryin' to momma, and your pappy'll
be cryin' all the way to his bank.

ALICE

But you guarantee Barry won't
return to us a fatso?

PHILONEUS

On the trail, we use dehydrated
meals only. He'll sweat out
whatever water we feeds him.

Alice looks at Verly and nods. Levi stands rubbing hands.

LEVI

Martinis everyone?

BARRY

Make mine a double.

All look at Barry in shock, then break out in *guffaws* except
Philoneus who gives Barry the stink-eye as he mutters.

PHILONEUS

*Boy's got a mouth like a cannon.
Always shootin' it off.*

INT. JOHN'S DECORATED FINISHED BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Large paneled *Rec Room* with a full bar and a professional pool table. A mosaic-light hanging over the table comes on.

John, followed by Barry, run down the carpeted stairs then both imitate Philoneous perfect.

BARRY

Don't cotton to formality, boy.

JOHN

So just spit 'er out then.

Both go hands-on-hips turning heads to dry-spit, *Ptooeey*.

John opens bathroom door and his pointer with thumb to lips suggest smoking something. Barry runs to bathroom. Both get stuck in its doorframe like *The Three Stooges* minus one.

INT. JOHN'S BASEMENT POOL TABLE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Barry and John play pool very serious. Upstairs door opens.

SUSANNAH (O.S.)

You boys good down there?

JOHN

Yeah mom, we're "so good!"

John flips *Double Birds* at her unseen voice.

SUSANNAH (O.S.)

Well alrighty then. Come on up and say "Adios" to Mista' Able. And make it snappy, smarty-pants!

Door closes. Barry and John run to the couch to put pillows over their faces to stifle *guffaws*. They recover winded.

JOHN

I've got mouthwash and aftershave under the sink. Mom says I smell "so good" when I come up. She knows I smoke weed. It's all such a sham.

BARRY

(imitates Philoneus)

Well then, giddy-yap, boy. Let's get us to smellin' --"so good."

Both perform in sync the classic *Monte Python's "The Ministry of Silly Walks"* into the bathroom.

INT. DULLES AIRPORT TERMINAL - ONE MONTH LATER

60' high angled-windows 1,240' long for 1.1 million square feet of floor space as D.C.'s second suburban hub. Dulles is 15 times larger than National Airport (*Ronald Reagan*).

PASSENGERS of both sexes, older men in three-piece suits, young men in leisure-suits, with young women in *Charlie's Angels* pants-suits. All carry suitcases and scurry about.

CAPTION: *Dulles Airport, one of the world's largest*

Alice, in dress and shawl, walks angry-fast. Barry, in dress pants, shirt, tie, carries *American Tourister* luggage behind.

ALICE

Just wait till I tell your father!
One hour, one hour you kept me
waiting. Good thing John and his
mother already flew out there.
They'll meet you at Denver airport.

BARRY

Just saying "good-bye" to a friend?

Alice stops and hands a plane-ticket to Barry.

ALICE

You don't have any "friends." So
I'll just say "good-bye!"
(storms away)
Don't miss your flight, or you can
hitch-hike all the way there!

Barry stands dejected watching Alice exit then holds out a thumb like hitch-hiking. Passengers give him a wide berth.

RETURNING SOLDIERS, mostly African-American, 18 to 20, in various *U.S. Armed Forces* uniforms, on crutches or in pushed wheelchairs, all with shell-shocked stares, pass by Barry.

PROTESTERS, Caucasian females nearer Barry's age, in hippy headbands, attire, and jewelry, spit at Returning Soldiers.

EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF DENVER AIRPORT - FOUR HOURS LATER

A jetliner banks, flies between two mountain peaks, and lands on 16R/34L, the longest commercial runway in North America.

CAPTION: *Denver International Airport*

FADE CAPTION: *Overhead, its six runways look like a swastika.*

INT. DENVER AIRPORT TERMINAL - LATER THAT DAY

Huge multi-level terminal. Now NEW PASSENGERS, Men wearing jean-suits with cowboy hats and saddle-bags over shoulders, with Young Women wearing *Jackie Onassis* two-piece dresses.

Barry, in same clothes and carrying same suitcase, stops to watch a wall-mounted television showing Barry's luggage commercial of a fierce gorilla throwing his around its cage.

ANNOUNCER (FILTERED)

"To all butter-fingered luggage
handlers all over the world, have
we got a suitcase for you."

Barry tilts his head, sticks his tongue up under his top lip, hunches over, then makes "ape" sounds swinging his suitcase.

New Passengers give him a wider berth with worried looks.

He limps to a circular Information Desk. ATTENDANT, female, in a bell-bottom pant-suit, speaks with a Western accent.

INFORMATION

Paged them three times, suga'. Do
ya' know where they're stayin'?

BARRY

"Close to the airport?"

INFORMATION

Must be that new fancy motel. Want
me to call you a cab?

BARRY

Been called a lot of things but
never a ...

She picks-up her rotary-phone with a piqued look and *dials* while pointing other arm straight to the outside.

INFORMATION

Out front, mister not-funny bones.

EXT. "CLOSE TO AIRPORT" MOTEL ENTRANCE - LATER THAT DAY

A new two-story motel has a pool in front with SWIMMERS, Women sunning in two-pieces with sun-hats, and Men in long trunks with cigars who sexist google-eye the females.

Barry sits arms-folded on a wooden bench near entrance doors. His suitcase is beside him with an empty juice bottle on top.

A rental car pulls up and John jumps out. Susannah parks car.

JOHN

Drove up to Pike's Peak, got stuck
up there. You okay?

Barry has to yell over jet-engines at *full-thrust* overhead.

BARRY

Thought you were near the airport?!

John is confused and points up to the jetliner taking off
overhead. Barry looks up, then shakes his head *laughing*.

BARRY

Cabbie drove me around for forty
minutes! I'm such a rube!

JOHN

Let's go swimming, my mom throws us
to the River Jordan in the morning!

Susannah angry fast-walks past them entering motel.

Both follow her imitating stilted ram-rod speed-walking.

EXT. C-BAR-C TRUCK WITH HORSE TRAILER - NEXT MORNING

Long four-horse trailer is pulled by a 1/2-ton pick-up truck.
Both have *C-Bar-C* logos painted on sides. Philoneus drives.

INT. HORSE TRAILER PULLED BY PICK-UP - MOMENTS LATER

Spaced wooden side-slats with cross rails and hay on floor.

TWENTY-TWO "RIDERS" are Caucasian, 10 Boys and 12 Girls, of
various ethnicities. No African-America. All are 14-16 years
old and dressed in different casual clothes. Boys now have
high-n-tight haircuts. Girls have *Dorothy Hamill* wedges. None
look happy as all play at their "missing" hair nostalgic with
one hand, while the other hand holds onto a slat for balance.

John and Barry stand in a corner by themselves yelling over
the truck and wind noise. Barry rubs his now "G.I." head.

BARRY

Never said we were "joining up?!"

JOHN

I could calculate your chance of
survival, but you won't like it!

Every time truck hits a pothole, its shocks *squeak* to warn its trailer's bump is coming. Truck *squeaks*, then trailer hits same hole, hard. All Riders hold on getting jostled.

BARRY

Now I know how horses feel!

EXT. TRUCK AND HORSE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Philoneous hand-signals "turn" out his window. Truck and trailer pull off paved-highway onto a dirt road. Riders hold trailer's slats with both hands peeking-out. Trailer looks like a prisoner-transport. Truck hits a pothole. It *squeaks*.

JOHN

They'll never take --!

Trailer now slams into same hole, *SQUEAK*.

ALL RIDERS

Our Freedommmmmmmmm!

EXT. C-BAR-C RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Truck and trailer drive under *C-Bar-C* wood sign then past a large horse corral with THIRTY-FIVE HORSES and TWO BURROWS.

Truck parks by a single-story brick Rambler with a dirt yard and scrub-grass. Three large hills with trees are in its background. A small building is at the foot of center hill.

Philoneus exits truck to unlock trailer's rear gate. It falls as a ramp, *boom*. All Riders exit shading their eyes like just-released prisoners. Each carries a different type of luggage.

PHILONEUS

Store your townie-bags in the Tack Room! You can unpack them tomorrow!

BARRY

(whispers to John)
What's a towney bag?

PHILONEUS

Stretch your legs! Walk around the ranch! Go on top of that hill --
(points to left hill)
and pick yourself out a sleepin' patch! You pups bring a pup tent?!

BARRY

Where's a C-Bar-C interpreter?

JOHN

I'm sorry. Did I say something? I wasn't listening.

PHILONEUS

Becker!

John turns just as Philoneus javelin-throws him a huge long cardboard tube-package that bowls John over.

PHILONEUS

Gotta', I say gotta', stay on your toes, boy! All ten of them that is.

Barry helps John stand. Both unwrap tube's plastic covering. A compact rolled two-man tent with two rolled sleeping bags fall out. John kicks one of the bags over to Barry.

BARRY

Thank your dad. Thought I was gonna have to sleep on the ground.
(scans everything)
So what do you make of all this?

JOHN

Wish you'd just tell me rather than try to engage my enthusiasm because at this point, I haven't any.

BARRY

Sooooooooooooo --?

Barry picks up his suitcase and the two sleeping bags. John picks up his suitcase and tent. Both *sing* the movie classic.

BARRY/JOHN

"We'rrrrre off to see the Wizard,
the Wonderful Wizard of Oz. We hear
he is a whiz of a wiz if ever a wiz
there was."

Barry and John start side-skipping as they continue to *sing*.

Girl Riders follow and join-in skipping and *singing*.

BARRY/JOHN/GIRLS

"Because, because, because,
because, beeeeecaussssse, because
of the wonderful things he does."

Rest of Boy Riders now join-in *singing*.

ALL RIDERS

"Bah whopee'd-duu, dee-duu!"

Philoneus watches all with mouth open, then *snaps* teeth shut.

PHILONEUS

*These young'ins are more mixed-up
than feathers in a whirly-wind.*

INT. JOHN'S TENT IN "THE SLEEPIN PATCH" - LATER THAT NIGHT

Tent is barely wide enough for two and not high enough to sit up in. John and Barry lie constricted in their sleeping bags.

JOHN

I think you ought to know, I'm
feeling very depressed.

BARRY

His wife must have been pretty
young to have a kid our age.

JOHN

They probably "had to" get --

Barry hears *footsteps* outside their tent and *elbows* John.

JOHN

married. What?!

Front flap of their tent flies open and Philoneus jams his head in. Barry and John scrunch-scoot to the back of tent.

BARRY/JOHN

Jesus!

PHILONEUS

Close e'nuff. Get some sleep.
You're gonna' need it. And zip your
flap, all three of 'em.

Philoneus is gone *zipping*-up their tent. John whispers.

JOHN

Could have warned me.

Barry goes to answer, but Philoneus interrupts from outside.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

Lesson One, sound carries at night.
And no, we were high-school
sweethearts. Lesson Two --.

EXT. JOHN'S TENT - IMMEDIATELY

Philoneus steps on their tent's back tie-out "stake" breaking it off as he walks away.

PHILONEUS

Don't use twigs as stakes.

Tent's string releases tension and their tent deflates like a parachute. Its nylon fabric is so thin, it falls silhouetting their faces. Their cloth-covered mouths move like puppets.

BARRY

What's up?

JOHN

Don't know, never been there.

EXT. MIDDLE HILLTOP BEHIND C-BAR-C RANCH - NEXT MORNING

Large foothills surround the ranch on three sides.

John and Barry sit far up on the only huge rock formation in the middle hill.

BARRY

Why did God make ground so hard?
I had to curl around *gotcha' rocks*.

JOHN

In the beginning, the Universe was created. This been widely regarded as a bad move.

BARRY

My dad loves everything cowboy. He had to work as a kid growing up, so I think he wants to relive his childhood through mine. Do you really think we can do this?

JOHN

I have a million ideas, they all point to certain death.

John and Barry look down the hill to see climbing up to them TODD CHAMBERLAIN, 15, tubby, wearing a rawhide fringed-jacket and *Australian* hat with one brim folded-up against its crown. ROD CHAMBERLAIN, his brother, 14, chubby, is dressed same.

TODD

You must --

ROD
be Barry.

TODD
I'm Todd.

ROD
I'm Rod.

TODD
Mister Able wants you both --

ROD
to come down for a meeting.

TODD
Four others just arrived --

ROD
which includes us, of course.

TODD
Of course.

Todd and Rod spin in perfect sync to walk down the hill.

BARRY
(slow turns to John)
Their dad works with yours?
(no response, epiphany)
They're why I'm really here!

JOHN
It's the people I meet in his job
that really get me down. Those two
always finish each other's
sentences. Just the thought of
being alone with them for two ...

BARRY
(snaps fingers)
That's it! We'll call this place
"Thinkin' Rock" and won't let
anyone else sit here with us.
(stands offering hand)
It's just you and me now --Dorothy.

John reaches for his hand, but Barry yanks it away to run
over his hair. John falls back, then stands, *Very funny.*

EXT. INSIDE C-BAR-C WORKING CORRAL FENCE - MOMENTS LATER

C-Bar-C Adults now always wear used leather work gloves.

A small *Working Corral* has a gate to a larger *Holding Corral*.

TORONADO (Tor-ä-nä-do), a five-year old bay horse with *C-Bar-C* brand, stands with its front legs hobbled while having rear hooves shod.

DEREK HUMANA, 30s, paunch, balding, short, in worn faded jeans and denim shirt with *C-Bar-C* logo, cowboy hat, and boots, has more weathered facial wrinkles than Philoneus. He is filing down a hoof held backwards between his knees.

JIM BRIGGS, 20s, tall, skinny, with black-rimmed glasses, in a new *C-Bar-C* outfit, holds Toronado's head. He speaks educated, but is only one generation away from white trash.

EXT. OUTSIDE WORKING CORRAL FENCE - SIMULTANEUS

Standing with trailer's original Twenty-Two Riders are now;

BLUMA ROMANO, Jewish-Italian girl, 14, short but muscular, olive skin, black page cut, wearing purple jeans and a paisley shirt who speaks with a heavy Brooklyn accent, and

ARTHUR JACOBS, 13, obese-fat, whose pants always hang down too far off his hips. He walks slow and deliberate like a sloth. His only talent is picking his nose and scratching his butt at the same time while tripping. He never talks.

Todd, Rod, John, and Barry, join to now make TWENTY EIGHT RIDERS who form a standing semi-circle around Philoneus and,

KEVINA ABLE, his daughter, 14, ponytail tucked under her cowboy hat, who wears a *C-Bar-C* denim logo shirt with a full vest to cover her budding breasts. She also wears blue jeans, leather chaps, and worn work-gloves just like her dad. She has his same keen hearing and very dry sarcastic wit.

PHILONEUS

Rules --has ta' be followed!

(counts on fingers)

One, don't go in my house 'lessen invited. Two, do whatever I say whenever I says it. Three, if I ain't around, do what Drover Humana

Humana raises gloved-hand to wave once with his back to them.

PHILONEUS

or Drover Briggs

Briggs nods his head once without looking up.

PHILONEUS
tells ya'. Four ...

BARRY
(smart-aleck)
"Don't use twigs as stakes."

Philoneus takes off his hat to drop it flat on the ground.

PHILONEUS
Mind pickin' that up, boy?

Barry bends over and Philoneus kicks his butt. Barry flies.

PHILONEUS
Boy's as sharp as a bowlin' ball.
(holds up four fingers)
Four! This be my daughter, Kevina.
She knows more about horses and
where we're goin' than all your
tender feets stompin' together. I
strongly suggests you listen when
she yells at ya'. Question?!

BLUMA
When's dinna'?

PHILONEUS
(fingers form a fist)
Five. You eat when you hear its
triangle, so don't ask.

BLUMA
Yo, I only asks because, you see,
back in New York, my mom got me
used to eatin' at a certain time.

While Bluma continues to pontificate, Philoneus reaches
through the fencing to get a wooden bucket of water.

BLUMA
So I kind of need to stay on the
same schedule, you know, so's when
I gets back home, it's not such a
shock to my delicate constitution.

Philoneus throws bucket's water over Bluma drenching her.

PHILONEUS
You must be a G. I. --A Gibberin'
Idiot that is.

Philoneus tosses empty bucket to Bluma who tries to catch,
but misses and kicks it further away trying to pick it up.

PHILONEUS

Gotta' keep your eye on the ball,
girl. Eye, ball, get it? That's a
joke. Only you ain't laughin'.

Philoneus turns to Other Riders in a booming voice.

PHILONEUS

Six! You can not "sleep-in" ever!
Baseball! On the third call-out, a
bucket of water will be thrown in
on you real sudden-like!

Bluma picks up the empty bucket with her back to Philoneus.

BLUMA

*He who laughs last, didn't think it
was funny in the first place.*

PHILONEUS

Now that's funny! Fill it up girl
and give to Humana. All of you go
in the holding corral and pick out
your own "personal conveyance."

Barry hands Philoneus his hat while rubbing own butt.

PHILONEUS

After lunch, we'll go into town to
get your only ridin' duds.
(no response)
Move it, Move it, Move it!

Riders climb over fence into Holding Corral except two.

BARRY

Good thing your dad paid for us to
have riding lessons.
(tilts head at horses)
Exactly how does one "pick out" a
horse?

JOHN

Throw a saddle and yell "Fetch?"

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

Now that's funniest!

EXT. THE WORKING CORRAL - CONTINUOUS

John and Barry lean outside its fence watching Humana.

BRIGGS

Gotta' go check something.
(to Barry)
Get over here and hold its head!

BARRY

(points to own chest)
Me?! I never --?

HUMANA

Never say never boy, till ya' try!
Briggs, give him the nose-noose.

Briggs picks up a thick wooden dowel rod with rope looped and nailed to either side of one end. He pulls some of Toranado's lower lip through the rope then twists the handle until it tightens. Briggs hand-motions to Barry who climbs over fence.

BARRY

Doesn't that hurt?

HUMANA

Just like life, boy. If it hurts,
makes you stay put.

Briggs hands rod to Barry and exits. Toranado backs up.

HUMANA

What are you, weak North of the
ears?! Hold Him!

Barry rubs side of Toranado's neck and talks soothing.

BARRY

Easy boy. I know it's scary when
you can't see what's happening to
you. Hang in there. You'll be okay.

Barry loosens the noose talking kind as he rubs its neck.

BARRY

Easy, boy. Easier if you learn to
trust. Haven't figured out how to
do that myself yet, but you can.

Barry rubs Toranado's neck more while removing the noose,
then stands the rod out of a back pocket.

BARRY

What's his name?

HUMANA

Toränädo. Kinda' like a tor-nādo,
only his A's is short like my legs.

BARRY

You're doing fine, Toranado. You're almost done. Good boy.

Barry uses his free hand to rub Toranado between the eyes.

Humana finishes nailing on last shoe, then un-hobbles it.

Barry pats Toronado's neck like a new best friend.

BARRY

Wanna' help me pick out a horse?

Humana pulls the noose-rod out of Barry's back pocket.

HUMANA

Think you just done.

JOHN

What about me?

HUMANA

You're done, too.

Humana points. All Riders have chosen their horses except AURORA an Appaloosa, and WHITEY a white horse. Both are 5.

HUMANA

Appaloosa's yours, name's Aurora. They tend to be a might "head shy." But don't worry, she ain't got no ear infection and teeth don't need filin'. So probably just weren't handled right weaned. Course, could also be 'cause --she ain't broke.

JOHN

"Broke?" Broken! I know I can't ...

HUMANA

Don't know what you don't know till you know it, boy.

Briggs returns with a silly grin.

HUMANA

Get "The Trainer." Tenderfoot here is gonna' get his feet wet.

BRIGGS

Tether her to Jet?

HUMANA

Nah, use the leather *Roller* first.
Get her used to saddle-weight.

BRIGGS

Surcingle? He's riding bareback?!

John grabs his chest like shot stumbling backwards.

HUMANA

Stand easy, son. We'll get her
saddle-ready by tomorrow.

Meal-triangle at the house *rings*. Briggs sprints to it.

HUMANA

Uh, whatever your name is, release
it into the corral, then go on up.

TOLARRY

Name's Barry. Think I'll stay with
"Torny" and feed him some hay.

Humana smiles nodding and walks to the house.

John's in shock. His mouth moves, but no words come out.

EXT. TRUCK WITH HORSE TRAILER ON HIGHWAY - LATER SAME DAY

Philoneus drives truck. Passengers are Briggs and Humana.

John, Barry, and all Other Riders, still in street clothes,
stand bouncing in the trailer holding onto slats looking out.

Cars driving by take pictures of the trailer's "convicts."

INT. HORSE TRAILER BEING PULLED BY TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

28 Riders are joined by LEROY PHELPS. Football Lineman huge,
18, crew-cut, who chews gum like tobacco and *spits* its juice
through a gap in his front teeth. Leroy wears a faded *C-Bar-C*
outfit with worn leather gloves, cowboy hat, and boots. He is
from the Deep South with attitude and accent to match. He
balances, arms-folded, like on a surf-board, scowling all.

JOHN

It is --alive.

BARRY

Can you read my thoughts?

JOHN

Yes. It amazes me how you manage to live in anything so small.

BARRY

Hey, can your butt get callouses?

JOHN

How? Our "Fearful Leader" said we only ride out for short day-trips.

LEROY

Not this year! We's ridin' five hundred mile!

TODD

"Five --!"

ROD

Hundred?!"

BARRY

Says who?!

LEROY

Says me! Leroy! Rider-Drover!
This'll be my fourth trip. Boss uses me as help so I don'ts have to pay none. Yep. Done seen his trail map. We're Long Riders for sure.

Leroy offers hand to John to shake and squeezes putting John on his knees then offers same hand to Barry who holds his up.

BARRY

Been there, don't wanna' go back.
Where we riding that far?

LEROY

Grand Junction, where he'll sell our horses at ride's end.
(shoots juice out teeth)
Had a bunch a' pansies last year.
Never left the ranch once.

Truck stops, trailer jerks. All Riders have to catch balance.

TODD

"Never left --?"

ROD

"the ranch?!"

Barry glares at John who is trying to escape through slats.

EXT. DENVER WESTERN GOODS STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Rear gate drops, *boom*. Philoneus stands with hands-on-hips.

PHILONEUS

None of those cityfied sissies got
it, but you will. So get to it!

Riders step down onto the sidewalk cautious like it's ice.

A State Police Cruiser pulls up to their curb. STATE TROOPER, uniformed, exits driver's door and opens back passenger door.

HARUTO "HARI" MAUTHE, Japanese-American, 15, tall, lean, with very long black hair, wears dress pants and a wide-collar silk shirt. He exits like an Asian *James Dean* squinting mean and scanning the area with same desperate signature look.

Trooper opens his trunk to remove a rucksack of clothes and a sleeping bag, then tosses both to Hari who catches glaring. Trooper acknowledge-waves Philoneous as he re-enters cruiser.

TROOPER

Special Delivery.
(drives away *laughing*)
Have fun!

Philoneus eyes Hari up and down, then shakes head mumbling.

PHILONEUS

*Boy's as raw as a pound of wet
liver. Probably just as sweet.*
(to Hari)
You overly attached to that lion
mane you got overgrown out?
(no response)
Ever hear of a bowl-cut?
(no response, smiles)
That's what I like not to hear.
(Drill Instructor)
Everybody In! Move It, Move It!

Philoneus herds his now TWENTY-NINE RIDERS into the store.

EXT. OUTSIDE C-BAR-C HOLDING CORRAL FENCE - LATER THAT DAY

Truck and trailer park beside the corral. Philoneus, Humana, and Briggs exit the truck wearing new hats and winter coats.

Philoneus drops trailer's ramp, *boom*. Thick dust rises.

Leroy exits in his old *C-Bar-C* clothes, but now with new boots and cowboy hat carrying his used ones like old friends.

The 28 Riders exit in new denim *C-Bar-C* outfits; jean shirts, blue jeans, cowboy boots, and straw cowboy hats. Only Todd and Rod still wear their Australian hats. All carry surplus *U.S. Army* duffle-bags with their old street clothes inside.

Hari exits last, dressed same, but now with a *Prince Valiant* "bowl" haircut. He is not a "happy camper" and looks like it.

PHILONEUS

Tent, duffle, and sleepin' bag are only personals on this trip! So go in the Tack Room and say good-bye to what you once was! Then stay for "How to pick a saddle!" After, get in the holding corral for "How to put your saddle on a G.D. horse!"

Philoneus gives a high-shrill *tongue-whistle*.

Kevina exits their house with a *Polaroid Instamatic* camera.

PHILONEUS

Line Up! Group Shot!

BARRY

(whispers to John)
We carrying guns, too?

PHILONEUS

Wit is like a match, son. Have to keep it dry to set the world on fire. And no, on this ride, I'm the only critter packin'.

Everyone looks to the sound of a black Mercedes-Benz *bouncing* up their dirt road. It parks, then trunk *pops-open* automatic.

JOHN

It, is, alive --colorized.

BARRY

What "is?"

Theme music from "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly" plays from car's radio as its passenger door opens.

CALEB JACKSON, African-American, 15, short Afro, exits in same *C-Bar-C* outfit and a colorful Mexican poncho. He flips back bottom corner of the poncho up and over one shoulder to reach in a shirt pocket and pull out a bubble-gum cigar. He bites an end off and spits away, then holds cigar between his side teeth imitating *Clint Eastwood* as *Eli Wallach's* "Tuco."

CALEB

"There are two kinds of spurs, my friends. Those that come in by the door, and those that come in by the window. Take off your belts."

Caleb walks to rear of car with Spanish Spurs on his boots.

All Riders tilt their heads as one at his *jingle-jingling*.

Caleb opens trunk to pull out their same *Army* duffle-bag with a new sleeping bag and a one-man tent, then *slams* lid.

Driver turns off engine which stops radio's music and exits as his father, BRANDON JACKSON, African-American, 40s, bald, wearing brand new jeans, cowboy shirt, boots, and hat.

BRANDON

Mister Able! Just missed you at the store. Here he is, ready to go.

Leroy drops the saddle he is carrying.

LEROY

Where, back to Africa?

PHILONEUS

In the house, now! I'll be in to talk at ya' shortly.

Leroy throws saddle over a top-rail and exits glancing back.

Brandon goes to Philoneus. Both shake, but Philoneus keeps his gloves on.

Caleb watches as his father raises an eyebrow at Philoneus.

BRANDON

This isn't going to be a problem, is it?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT FIRST NIGHT

Barry, his Parents, and Philoneus are now gone. John is not present. Doorbell *rings*.

Levi opens the front door. Brandon and Caleb enter wearing matching business suits. They do not shake hands.

BRANDON

Still here?

LEVI

Had an early flight. But left his
slide presentation. Go in to the
living room and get comfortable.

Brandon and Caleb exit into living room.

LEVI

I'll get some ice-tea, then start
the show. The panoramas are quite
breath-taking.

INT. LEVI'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mustard-yellow walls with brown-yellow-pattern linoleum.

Levi enters. Susannah stands hands-on-hips. Both whisper.

SUSANNAH

We talked about this?

LEVI

You talked. I didn't listen.

SUSANNAH

*I don't care how smart he is, he's
still a nig ...*

LEVI

Do not, use that word!

SUSANNAH

You "do not" need him.

LEVI

*"We" do. Top of his class. His data
entry concepts are years ahead of
the curve. His only stipulation to
joining us was his son tag along.*

SUSANNAH

And the raunchy ranchero agreed?

LEVI

*Once I explained it was five paid-
up or none, he agreed. Besides,
with his "No Refund" policy, not my
fault if the son quits.*

SUSANNAH

*That's right. I heard "they" don't
have coordination to ride a horse.*

LEVI

*I swear, if I had known what your
views were beforehand, I ...*

BRANDON (O.S.)

This isn't going to a problem, is
it?!

RETURN TO.

EXT. OUTSIDE C-BAR-C HOLDING CORRAL FENCE - PRESENT DAY

Brandon hands the earlier *Kodak Carousel* to Philoneus.

PHILONEUS

No, no problemo. --Yet.
(examines carousel)
*Which makes as much sense as
playin' horseshoes in a hurricane.*

Philoneus hand-motions for Caleb to join the 29 Riders.

Kevina takes a group shot, pulls the *Instax* picture out through its rollers, fans it waiting for it to develop, then separates the developed negative from its positive sheet.

STILL-CUT: Picture reveals SOME RIDERS have stepped away from Caleb on both sides with Hari covering his face with his hat.

EXT. INSIDE THE HOLDING CORRAL - LATER THAT DAY

Aurora wears a surcingle. The Other Horses are saddled with their bridle-reigns tied to fence rails.

Philoneus inspects all saddles by pulling on the cinch strap.

Arthur stands looking like a homeless cowboy beside his BIG JOHN, a huge Palomino wearing a *big-and-tall* man's saddle.

Philoneus pushes on Arthur's saddle horn and entire saddle slides around underneath Big John's chest. Philoneus pushes Arthur so he falls backwards onto his butt.

PHILONEUS

You're thinkin' like a blind
lumberjack, boy. Doing a lot a'
choppin' but no chips is flyin'.

Philoneus uprights saddle, knees Big John's belly, then pulls saddle's cinch snug locking strap through its double-rings.

PHILONEUS

We's crossin' the Continental Dee-
Vide! The Forest Service cut trails
some no wider than a hair-part. All
you city-snickers go back and knee
your horse like I just done.

Riders start kneeing their horses. Sounds like a retirement
home *wheezing*. And yes, ALL Riders re-tighten their cinches.

Arthur stands having fallen in manure so rear of his pants
are now stained.

PHILONEUS

Name's "Arthur," right? Let's see
if we can't improve your callsign.
(scans up and down)
You are now --"Art!"

ART "poots" like baby popcorn popping. Girl Riders *giggle*.

BARRY

Art? --*How about Fart?*

PHILONEUS

I don't cotton to makin' fun of
other folk. Here, or on the trail.

BARRY

(to John)
What's he got, Superman hearing?

Philoneus is now on other side of corral inspecting saddles.

PHILONEUS

"He Got!"

EXT. INSIDE HOLDING CORRAL NOW ON OTHER SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Philoneus, still shaking head, inspects Caleb's saddle.

PHILONEUS

Right tight there, Caleb. Looks
like you done this before.

Brandon leans outside the fence watching Philoneus inspect.

BRANDON

Kind of a coincidence my son has
the only all-white horse.

PHILONEUS

No coinkydink. It were born a Grey
that grew out white, so we named
her Whitey. You know, as a joke.
Like, What do you call a female
horse who loves to ride at night?
Nightmare. Get it?

CALEB

Got it. Okay if I rename him,
MIDNIGHT? You know, as a more,
"color-full" joke.

PHILONEUS

Midnight's fine. Blackberry for all
I care. Just as long as it's a name
that sticks so we all knows it.

CALEB

Then Midnight it is. That way, I
won't be offended, when someone
yells it my way.

PHILONEUS

(sucks teeth, to self)
*This boy's like a tattoo. Really
gets under your skin.*
(to Brandon)
Stayin' fer supper?

BRANDON

Love to, thank you. But I have to
catch a flight back to D.C.

Caleb looks concerned at Brandon who smiles back fatherly.

EXT. THE SLEEPIN' PATCH - THAT NIGHT

Small tents of all types are scattered throughout the woods.

A large campfire is in its clearing with rocks and logs as
seats. Now THIRTY RIDERS, Girl Riders and Boy Riders have
self-segregated in same-sex groups. All sit with long sticks
in the fire roasting marshmallows.

Caleb sits by himself and sets his marshmallow on fire
burning its outside black.

Barry raises an eyebrow at Caleb's briquet, then admires his
own toasted-to-perfection lightly-browned marshmallow.

BARRY

I prefer taste --over color.

Caleb becomes *Eastwood* again mumbling as only *Clint* can.

CALEB

"When you have to shoot, shoot.
Don't talk."

Caleb pops his marshmallow in his mouth firing a finger-gun.

Briggs exits out of the trees with a huge silly grin *tuning* a guitar and sits next to John strumming it.

BRIGGS

Not everyone gets to break their
own horse.

JOHN

(clutches at heart)
Don't say "break!"

Barry smiles and pops his whole marshmallow in. His face turns bright red as he fans his open and now burning mouth. He spits it out, *Yeowing*, that turns it into a wolf howl.

BARRY

Ow-ow-ow-ow --Owuuuuuu!

Girl Riders throw their marshmallows at Barry *laughing*. Some stick on him making him jump up trying to "dance" them off. Boy Riders start *clapping* and *stomping* their boots in time. It's a Barry Jamboree as Boy Riders join in with wolf *howls*.

EXT. INSIDE C-BAR-C HOLDING CORRAL - NEXT MORNING

Horses, in halters only, are tethered outside the corral.

Briggs, Leroy, and Thirty Riders sit around on top rails.

Humana leans against fence in the corral with arms folded. Standing beside him are three stuck-in-ground pitchforks.

John sits saddled on Aurora who's head is tied to JET, 8, a huge black stallion. Philoneus holds Jet's head.

PHILONEUS

Jet'll steady her. Roll your thighs
forward and pinch in. Push your
heels down. Hold on the reigns and
saddle-horn. Make this horse yours.

Philoneus walks Jet with Aurora around the corral. At first, she is calm, then starts to buck. Riders *yell* encouragement. John holds on. Aurora settles down. Riders wave hats *yelling* fortitude. Philoneus unties Aurora from Jet, but holds on.

PHILONEUS

Ready?

JOHN

No.

PHILONEUS

Yes you are, just don't know it --
(releases Aurora)
yet!

John walks Aurora around the ring slow. She is calm.

Riders throw hats in the air *cheering*. Now, Aurora bucks.

John drops his reins to hold onto saddle-horn for dear life.

Humana grabs either side of Aurora's bit. She rears and lifts his feet up off the ground. He yanks down so she sets down.

HUMANA

Don't never let go a' your reins,
boy! Talk to her, gentile-like.

JOHN

Stop?

Aurora stops. John dismounts by falling off to the ground.

Breakfast-triangle *rings*. Leroy, Briggs, and Twenty-Seven Riders swing legs around to jump off top-rails and run to the house. Caleb stays smirking. Barry goes to help John stand.

Humana leads Aurora and Jet into the Working Corral.

Philoneus tosses two pitchforks to John and Barry who stand stunned. The pitchforks fly past them.

PHILONEUS

While our horses are out, you two
can rake it out.

BARRY/JOHN

Rake what out?

Caleb puts another bubble-gum cigar in his mouth and pretends to strike a match off his boot-sole to light it as *Eastwood*.

CALEB

"There are two kinds of people, my
friends. Those with loaded guns,
and those who dig. You, dig."

Caleb shakes his hand like putting out his imaginary match.

Philoneus grabs the third pitch fork and jabs its tongs at a 45° angle into dirt, then uses his boot to push it in like a shovel. He pushes down on handle and four inches of compacted manure lift up. Philoneus flips manure over, then tosses the third pitchfork to Caleb and points to corral's far corner.

PHILONEUS

Over in that corner, pile it all.

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

"All?!"

PHILONEUS

But don't fret none, we'll save you
a little chipped-beef on toast.

Philoneus walks away chuckling. Caleb whispers.

CALEB

"Shit on a shingle." Perfect.

PHILONEUS

'Cept yours might not smell so
"perfect" after you all is done!

Philoneus exits corral *guffawing*. Caleb mumbles obscenities. Philoneus, now near the house, spins to glare at Caleb.

Caleb is surprised and turns to John who points at his own ears, then at Philoneus putting a finger to own lips, *Shhhh*.

EXT. C-BAR-C'S THIRD FOOTHILL - LATER SAME DAY

Thirty Riders and Five Drovers are mounted on their saddled horses at the base of the molehill which is the most steep.

PHILONEUS

How many took ridin' lessons?

All Riders raise their hands except Bluma and Art.

BLUMA

Central Park Mountie wouldn't let
me "borrow" his. I tried though.

Philoneus looks at Kevina who rides over next to Bluma and lifts one boot up showing its sole to her.

PHILONEUS

There's a reason cowboy boots is
shaped like they be.

Kevina pushes her boot against Bluma who falls off saddle.

PHILONEUS

That ain't it. We'll be travelin'
over mountains. Going Up, lean over
your saddle horn and push out
backwards on your stirrups. Keep
them in the arch of your boot.

Kevina demonstrates as Bluma gets back up on her horse.

PHILONEUS

Going Down, lean back and push out
forward on your stirrups. Again,
keep your heels down and locked-in.

Kevina demonstrates. Bluma nods.

PHILONEUS

Your job as rider is not to
interfere with the horse's balance.
Help them, help you. Question?

Bluma lifts a hand. Kevina lifts a boot. Bluma lowers hand.

PHILONEUS

Briggs, ride with Art. Leroy, take
Bluma. Humana, Kevina, in groups.

Philoneus leans forward and rides fast up through the trees.

Caleb spurs Midnight and races uphill to catch Philoneus.

Girl Riders follow cautious in pairs. Kevina watches them.

Boy riders spur ahead. Some fall off. Humana rides to them.

John lags back frightened. Barry rides to him.

BARRY

How about I ride behind you going
up, then in front of you going
down, like I did in Driver's Ed?

EXT. ON TOP OF THIRD FOOTHILL - SIMULTANEUS

Philoneus sits on Jet staring at Caleb who is smiling smug.

PHILONEUS

*Boy's got more nerve than a bum
tooth.*

(yells looking at Caleb)

That's usin' your noggin', Barry!

EXT. THINKIN' ROCK - NOW DUSK

Now on their personal crest, John and Barry lay back on both elbows watching the most beautiful multi-colored sunset.

BARRY

Didn't know the sky could be so
blue or clouds so white. They
almost look like, cotton.

John sets a world record for the longest drawn out *sigh*.

BARRY

"We" have to do this, sooooo, we
have to. God's on our side.

CALEB (O.S.)

(as *Eastwood*)

"God is not on our side, because he
hates, idiots."

John and Barry sit up. Caleb climbs uphill towards them.

CALEB

(in regular voice)

Look, I'm pretty sure John is cool
with me being here, but I should
ask, You got a problem with Negros?

BARRY

(looks around worried)

Why, seen one?

Caleb *laughs* and extends a hand. Barry shakes.

CALEB

Well, there is this one Midnight.

Barry looks around more panicking.

BARRY

Where?!

Caleb and Barry *laugh* as Caleb sits. John *sighs* again.

BARRY

Don't know how, but the only good
thing I learned from my parents was
to treat all people the same.

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

A-holes!

All Three *laugh*. This is the first and last time John does.

TODD (O.S.)
Whatcha doin' --

ROD (O.S.)
way up here?

Todd and Rod climb up toward them. The Three stop laughing.

CALEB
(in perfect *Eastwood*)
"Okay, you did two things wrong.
First, you asked a question, and
second you asked another question."

Barry stands indignant, brushes himself off, then *Harrumphs* speaking with a British accent.

BARRY
Come along, my dear Mycroft.
Watson, there's something afoot!

Caleb and John stand doing same. The Three walk downhill.

Todd and Rod each lift a boot to look at their soles.

TODD
What's on --

ROD
our foots?

EXT. OUTSIDE OF C-BAR-C HOLDING CORRAL - NEXT MORNING

All Thirty Riders sit in *C-Bar-C* outfits on saddled horses now with sleeping bags tied to their saddle's back-housing. Aluminum fishing-rod tubes stick out of the center of some sleeping bags including John and Caleb's.

Kevina sits same, now wearing chaps and a sheepskin vest.

Leroy and Briggs sit same holding the halters of the Two Burrows now with cross-packs of water, food, and supplies.

Philoneous sits on Jet, dressed same, but also wearing a tan leather slicker with a *Winchester* rifle in his saddle-sling. A bullwhip is coiled around the rifle. He rides to the truck now without its trailer.

Humana is tying down a tarp over the Rider's thirty duffle-bags in bed which have *Magic Marker* names on their outside. Two large Oat Barrels are also tied-down in truck's bed.

PHILONEUS

Trails marked on your map. Meet us around sunset at the first red circle. If not there, double-back to the blue one. "They" might not make it ten mile the first day.

Humana gets in the truck to drive.

Barry overheard and whispers to John.

BARRY

Ten miles, that's all?

PHILONEUS

By the end of today, ten mile will feel like a hundred! Move Out!

JOHN

I am roughly thirty billion times more intelligent than you. Let me give you an example. Think of a number, any number.

BARRY

Okay --five.

JOHN

Wrong. See?

BARRY

And yet, here "we" be.

John fires a finger-gun into his temple, then at Barry who grabs at chest to lean back over his bedroll like shot.

The Thirty Riders spur their horses to follow Kevina and Philoneus. At the rear, Leroy and Briggs pull pack-burrows.

Behind the queue, Humana drives turning on his truck's radio. It is playing the 1970 hit Mungo Jerry's *"In The Summertime."*

Riders and their horses sway in unison to the music as they ride over a hill. Humana's truck stays on the dirt road.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL IN LOW ROLLING HILLS - LATER SAME DAY

Truck is now gone. ALL ride through lush grass lowlands.

PHILONEUS

(raises a gloved hand)

Hold Up!

Riders stop. John, Barry, Caleb, Bluma, Rod, and Todd, are bunched-up at the end of "The Line."

BARRY

No wonder it takes all day to get
nowhere. How far have we gone?

BLUMA

Feels like a hundred.

Philoneus takes out binoculars to scan a burnt-orange sky.

CALEB

What's he looking at?

Kevina rides up beside them and points at the smoky sky.

KEVINA

We've gone four miles. My Dad's
concerned about the forest fire.

TODD

"Forest --"

ROD

"Fire!"

BARRY

Thought the sky was just changing
colors like an Aurora ...

Aurora walks forward. John pulls back on reins. She stops.

KEVINA

Borealis? We hoped smokejumpers get
it under control. Guess not.

TODD

We're not riding --?

ROD

in to that?!

BARRY

Stop "that!"

KEVINA

Nah, probably make camp South-
Southwest a' here.

ROD

What about our truck --

TODD
with all our stuff?

KEVINA
(smells air, nods)
Won't rain tonight. Best get used
to ridin' dirty. In High Country,
streams are snow-fed. They will,
make you cry out alto.

Kevina spurs to her father.

Barry gets his *Brownie* camera out of a saddlebag and takes
pictures of the "burning" sky.

BLUMA
No clean clothes, no solid food,
sleeping on rocks, my butt hurts,
and now a forest fire. Makes the
Bronx look like Brooklyn.

CALEB
Look on the bright side, "Flower,"
at least your butt's not on fire.

JOHN
Yeah, okay, so you know Bluma is
Yiddish for "flower." But --
(shifts in pain on saddle)
what's next, pestilence?

Philoneus raises a glove, points, then turns Jet same way.

PHILONEUS
Change Direction!

JOHN
(whispers to self)
*I'd like to change direction --all
the way back home.*

Philoneus glares back at John who points to Barry. Barry
looks around clueless, *What?*

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT FIRST CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

Thick forest has a small area cleared down to dirt. Their
campfire burns in center with no tents. Riders are scattered
around just in sleeping bags *snoring* the sleep of the dead.

John and Barry slow-crawl on all-fours trying to push leaves
under their sleeping bags.

BARRY

Riding through everyone else's dust
all day is nuts. I'm filthy, you?
(no response)
John?

Barry looks. John is face down asleep on his bag with his head in leaves. Barry nods and passes-out face-down same.

Caleb is watching from inside his top-of-the-line sleeping bag and spits out his bubble-gum wad as *Eastwood*.

CALEB

"Way I figure, really not too much
of a future with sawed-off runts
like you two."

Caleb zips his bag's breathing-screen closed.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT FIRST CAMPSITE - NEXT MORNING

John and Barry sleep back-to-back in fetal position on bags.

PHILONEUS

BASEBALL!

John and Barry startle-awake to see Philoneus holding a leather-bucket of water over them. Barry jumps up.

BARRY

Who, what, when, where, why?!

PHILONEUS

You're both Ridin' Range.

BARRY/JOHN

"Riding" what?!

PHILONEUS

Boys, every morning our horses need
to meadow-feed. Gotta be watched.

John stands stretching. His back *cracks* like plywood. He stoops over like a hundred years old.

JOHN

*And then, of course, I've got this
terrible pain down my left side.*

Philoneus *snort-chuckles* slapping John hard on the back standing him upright, but also knocking him forward.

John and Barry stumble away to their tethered horses.

BARRY

Lucky we slept with our boots on.

JOHN

I'll probably die in mine.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

That's the spirit!

JOHN

*Of the dead.***EXT. GRAZING MEADOW NEAR FIRST CAMPSITE - LATER SAME MORNING**

John and Barry sit on saddled horses at opposite ends of the meadow watching their herd. They have to yell back and forth.

JOHN

How Long?!

BARRY

Hour!

JOHN

Meant, Here!

BARRY

Five Day!

JOHN

"Five?!"

(drops head defeated)

I sit here, with pain and misery my only companions. Why stop now?

(raises head, fake smiles)

Just when I'm hating it?

Kevina rides to John as he *sighs* in agonizing agony.

KEVINA

Both ride in for breakfast! You've got five minutes!

John and Barry spur their horses back to camp.

JOHN

"The reason I beat the Austrians is, they did not know the value of five minutes!"

KEVINA (O.S.)

Napoleon Bonaparte!

EXT. ON THE TRAIL IN TALL GRASS - LATER THAT DAY

Riders single-file through a huge field of hip-high grass in the middle of nowhere with loud summer-insect *sounds*.

John, Barry, Caleb, Todd, and Rod, ride at the back of *The Line* with Leroy and Briggs pulling their Two Burrows.

PHILONEUS

Hold Up!

Command is repeated down *The Line* as All Riders stop.

RIDERS

Hold up! ...Hold up! ...etc.

John shuts his eyes tight covering his ears singing low.

JOHN

*Now I lay me down to sleep, trying
to count the stupid sheep. Sweet
dream wishes you can keep --
(opens eyes angry)
'cause I hate this frickin' bleep!*

Philoneus looks through his binoculars at a large black cloud approaching then gives the military sign overhead, *Circle Up*.

Leroy and Briggs hand their burrow-leads to Barry and John, then ride hard with Kevina to Philoneus. The Four talk, then turn and ride back to Riders. Philoneus talks to front group, Kevina the second, and Briggs to third group. Leroy takes back both burrow reins as he talks to his fourth group.

JOHN

Black Death?

LEROY

Close. Brown locust.

JOHN

(turns forlorn to Barry)
I only have to talk to somebody,
and they begin to hate me.

PHILONEUS

Open your sleeping bags, drape them
over your horse's head, then get
under and hold on tight to both!

Organized chaos as everyone dismounts to open their sleeping bags and pull over their horse's head then squat underneath.

EXT. BARRY UNDER SLEEPING BAG WITH TORONADO - MOMENTS LATER

Barry squats under Toranado's head holding sleeping bag and reins tight. Insect sounds *stop*, then a high *wind* approaches.

BARRY
Easy boy, we'll get through this.
(yells)
"So good" John?!
(no response)
John?!

JOHN (O.S.)
Talking to Mother Nature!

BARRY
What'd she say?!

JOHN (O.S.)
She hates me!

BARRY
Talk to Aurora, take your mind off things!

JOHN (O.S.)
Won't work, I have an exceptionally large mind!

Barry hears the front line-horses *whinny* as Swarm hits. Toranado tries to bolt. Barry pulls down on his reins.

BARRY
Easy Torny, easy boy.

Loud *hissing* sound. Barry can feel grasshoppers hit his back.

BARRY
Freaky-deaky.

Several grasshoppers get under and jump. Barry ignores them.

BARRY
Ignore them, talk to your horse!

JOHN (O.S.)
She won't enjoy me, I don't!

Barry goes nose-to-nose with Tornado.

BARRY
Easy Torny, easy boy. You're doing fine. I'm not, you are.

Moments pass, then *hissing* fades until all is quiet.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

CLEAR!

Call is repeated down *The Line* muffled under sleeping bags.

RIDERS (O.S.)

Clear! ...Clear! ...etc.

Barry stands and puts his forehead against Toronado's.

BARRY

Good boy. Thanks --for picking me.

Barry pulls the sleeping bag off them.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AFTER APHID ARMAGEDDON - CONTINUOUS

Field now scalped down to grass-stubble in eerie silence.

Some Riders lost their horses and sit crying. Leroy lost both burrows. Stray horses and burrows run away in the distance.

Barry leads Tornado over to John. Aurora ran away.

John's sleeping bag is draped over him like a small tent.

Barry pulls the bag off John like unveiling a statue.

John squats as "The Thinker," chin on fist, elbow on knee.

JOHN

My capacity for happiness you
could fit into a matchbox, without
taking out the matches.

BARRY

Come on, cheer up. Did you ever
think we'd experience anything like
this? It was fan-freakin-tastic!

JOHN

It gives me a headache, just trying
to think down to your level.

BARRY

Come on, let's go get your horse.

John stands holding his trailing sleeping bag and sucking his thumb like *Charlie Brown's "Linus."*

BARRY

Shake out your sleeping bag,
Charlie Brown. We don't want any
illegal "aliens" moving in.

John *whip-snaps* his sleeping bag. Grasshoppers fly out onto him. He drops his bag to run off high-pitched *screaming*.

Barry tilts his head sideways watching John panic-running, brushing at his hair, hopping wild, and flailing both arms.

CALEB (O.C.)

(as *Eastwood*)

"When things look bad, like you're
not gonna make it, you gotta get
mean. I mean plumb mad-dog mean."

BARRY

(spins angry)

Enough with "no name" metaphors!
Why are you acting like this?
(no response, realizes)
Oh my God, you are "acting." Why?

CALEB

Because I'm black!

BARRY

And put up a false facade because,
what? You don't like what you see?

CALEB

If you plan for the worst --.

BARRY

Then you can't be disappointed when
people treat you that way? Been
there, done that, don't work.

CALEB

Doesn't matter how much I succeed
in the classroom or athletics, I'm
still looked down on as inferior,
called names, cursed at, sometimes
spit on.

BARRY

(pats his big belly)

Try being called "fatso" all your
life, especially by your own mom.

Caleb tilts his head looking at Barry different now.

CALEB

Appreciate the attempt, but not the same. My dad says parents teach values to their children. Kids just pass on what they're taught.

BARRY

Yeah, but parents can be mean, too. No, I'll never experience what you have. But then, you'll never know what I've had to go through.

CALEB

(reasons, then nods)
So to become a strong person, you what? First have to acknowledge your own weakness?

BARRY

Your Black, I'm fat.
(holds out a hand)
Welcome to the party, pal.

They shake hands, then turn to watch John still hop-running in panic figure-eights. Barry takes John's picture.

STILL CUT: John is frozen in mid-air in an unnatural pose.

EXT. SAME FIELD AFTER APHID ARMAGEDDON - LATER SAME DAY

Horses and burrows are now retrieved. Riders sit mounted with sleeping bags tied behind while circled around Philoneus.

BLUMA

What set off our Holocaust?

CALEB

Over-population or food supply gone, but probably climate change.
(stunned silent response)
My bet, that forest fire drove them to an Upsurge Outbreak.

JOHN

"The comeback is always stronger than the setback."

CALEB

Once in a lifetime experience.

TODD

Never wanted to experience that --

ROD
in any lifetime.

PHILONEUS
Boys, if everything in life is
coming your way, you're in the
wrong lane. This journey is all
about learning to handle challenge.
(waves a hand forward)
Move Out!

BARRY
Relax John, the worst is over.

Philoneus takes lead. ALL fall-in behind him in single file.

PHILONEUS
*That boy's so dumb, could throw
himself on the ground, and miss.*

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT ANOTHER CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

Thick forest with horses tethered throughout. A dirt area was
cleared for their large campfire. Riders sit around it.

BLUMA
Second night, no truck, no tents,
no toilet paper. Think we're lost?

BARRY
Definitely not found.

CALEB
Can always find your way with this.

Caleb holds up a pocket compass and points up at *North Star*.

CALEB
And that.

Riders look up. Philoneus enters campfire's light searching.

PHILONEUS
Where's Briggs?!

Todd and Rod both point into the trees.

PHILONEUS
Becker, White, latrine duty!

Philoneus exits into the dark woods searching for Briggs.

BARRY/JOHN

"Duty?"

LEROY

Duty-duty. Every night we dig a
poop-hole, then bury it next morn.

KEVINA

Leave the land like you found it.

JOHN

I'd like to leave it, all together.

Kevina opens and tosses an Army-shovel to John who catches.

BARRY

Where's mine?

KEVINA

Stack a pile of large green leaves.

BARRY

"Leaves?!" What for?

Kevina stares. Barry "gets it," then gets disgusted.

LEROY

With no bumps! And make sure to dig
two holes, like I did last night.

BARRY

No way, Josez. Just like life,
we're all in one big crapper.

Girl Riders *chuckle*. Leroy glares. Caleb talks to himself.

CALEB

*How about that, white-folk doing
colored work? I need a diary.*

EXT. ON THE TRAIL BY A HUGE LAKE - NEXT DAY

Plateau-lake with reflections of clouds in its still surface.

Riders single-file past the lake towards a distant mountain.

Barry is fascinated by sky's reflection in lake and points.

JOHN

It's all rubbish.

BARRY

Lighten up, man. Look around,
nature here is just so --beautiful.

Barry rides to an inches-wide snow-runoff trickle-creek and dismounts holding onto reins. He lies down flat and drinks.

BARRY

Never drank water so good, it
quenches your thirst, first sip.

Caleb rides over, dismounts and drinks. Barry fills canteen.

CALEB

Mother Nature's mineral water.

Leroy rides over dismayed stab-pointing at Caleb.

LEROY

Don't fill your canteen downstream
from that!

Caleb mounts by stepping up on a boulder into his saddle.

CALEB

Saw this frog once, tried to jump
out of the way of a car coming down
our street. It got so focused on
what the driver looked like, jumped
right under a tire, big black one.

Barry offers his full canteen to Leroy who spurs away mad.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL NEAR LAKE'S MOUNTAIN BASE - LATER THAT DAY

Riders come to a worn trail in scrub-grass. Philoneus stops.

PHILONEUS

Hold Up!

Riders call out as they stop in sequence.

RIDERS

Hold up! ...Hold up! ...etc.

PHILONEUS

Today we cross, "The Dee-Vide!"
Best gets your mind ready! Weather
up there is more tempestuous than a
tornado in a trailer park!

Philoneus, Briggs, Kevina, and Leroy, use their bandanas as hat tie-ons. Caleb and Girl Riders do same. Their hats now look like bonnets. John and Barry don't tie theirs down.

PHILONEUS

So hang onto your hats, 'cause,
she's gonna' be singin'. Move Out!

John and Barry, *Pshaw*. Philoneus rides out. ALL follow.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL NEAR FIRST MOUNTAINTOP - LATER SAME DAY

Riders walk single-file leading their horses along a cliff trail four feet wide with a thousand-foot sheer drop off.

BARRY

Don't get it? Beautiful blue sky,
no clouds, what's all the fuss?

RIDERS

Hold up! ...Hold up! ...etc.

Riders stop. Barry gets his camera to take pictures. *The Line* starts up. Toronado follows and pushes on Barry's back who falls over cliff, grabs a stirrup one-handed, and dangles.

CALEB

HOLD UP! Hold on, Barry!

Caleb drops his reins, runs to Toronado's, grabs, and pulls.

CALEB

Come on Torny, pull him back up.

Toronado pulls Barry up over edge who rolls to other side.

BARRY

Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

Barry stands wobbly, then offers hand to Caleb. Both shake.

BARRY

Thanks man, owe you.
(wags finger to Toronado)
You on the other hand.

CALEB

Least you held onto your camera.

BARRY

Pretty sure I clicked the shutter
as I fell. That will add a thousand
words to my story.

JOHN

Move Out!

Caleb and Barry look at John surprised. John looks at his gloveless-hands to quote "The Beatles" Ringo with accent.

JOHN

"I got blisters on me fingers!"

The Line starts moving. ALL grab their reins and follow.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON FIRST MOUNTAINTOP - MOMENTS LATER

John and Barry step around the cliff-wall onto a plateau fifty feet wide running the length of entire mountain range.

Snow, rain, hail, and high multidirectional winds, all hit them at once. They grab for their hats, too late, both sail away. All Riders have to yell over their weather's *din*.

BARRY

Look!

Barry points to a hand-made burn-etched wooden sign attached to a pressure-treated wooden post. The sign reads *9,130 ft*.

BLUMA

What Bupkis put --?!

CALEB

Forest Service! We'll see more!

JOHN

(to Barry)

Do you want me to sit in a corner
and cry or just fall apart where
I'm standing?! Wait, there're no
corners here!

Kevina rides up pointing to Riders who also lost their hats.

KEVINA

Happens every trip! Trail crosses
down in the valley through a town!
You can buy a new one! Move Out!

Riders mount their horses and ride off onto the other side.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT A TOWN'S WESTERN SHOP - NEXT DAY

Caleb is now wearing new gloves and stands beside a Wooden Indian in front of a log-cabin shop with cowboy hats in its window. He is writing in the pages of his just-bought diary.

John and Barry exit same shop wearing new hats and gloves carrying some string.

BARRY

We'll use this string next time.

CALEB

Good thing Philoneus has credit here, along with my dad by wire. You're welcome.

Barry pulls out a candy bar.

CALEB

Thought you didn't have any money?

BARRY

Didn't, still don't. Went back and traded my first hat for a cheaper one. Took the difference in candy.

Barry pulls out a second candy bar and gives it to John *clicking* his boot-heels with a German accent.

BARRY

You are velcome.

John rips the bar open and devours it like a cannibal.

Barry pulls out a third bar and tosses it to Caleb.

BARRY

For saving my fat ass.

Caleb rips open package, takes a bite, and smiles orgasmic.

CALEB

Now you --for saving mine.

Bluma exits the store putting on new leather gloves.

BLUMA

Three days! No truck, no shower, no clean clothes, no privacy.

She sees the Other Three eating their candy and *harrumphs*.

BLUMA

Where's mine, mashuganas?

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

C-Bar-C!

Bluma takes off. John, Barry, and Caleb, jam down the rest of their candy bars, then jog in sync behind the store.

EXT. CLEARING BEHIND WESTERN SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Philoneus, Kevina, Leroy, and Briggs, stand corralling horses that munch on grass.

Riders who needed them bought new hats. All Riders bought new leather work-gloves and now always wear them.

PHILONEUS

Called a friend who owns a summer camp nearby. They have two empty cabins. We'll spend tonight there. Give our truck a chance to catch up.

(no response)

Bed, bath, and biscuits, boys!

All Riders explode into *cheers*. Horses are startled and bolt in bedlam. Riders race to catch their own. Philoneus pats Jet, who stands calm, as both watch the wild west circus.

PHILONEUS

Busier than centipedes at a toe countin' contest, 'eh boy?

Jet nods animated *snorting*.

INT. SUMMER CAMP'S LOG CABIN - LATER SAME DAY

Army barracks-type stark with handmade eight bunk-beds. All but one have dirty hats, boots, shirts, and gloves by them.

John and Barry enter wet in same jeans, but no shirt while toweling their hair. Barry lost weight. They're getting fit.

BARRY

Don't know how dirty you were, till you're clean.

Hari enters same, but with long scars across chest and back.

John points to them. Barry pulls John's hand down.

HARI
Where's Leroy?

CALEB
(enters same behind)
Moved to the second cabin.

Kevina dressed in same clothes sticks her head in the door.

KEVINA
Dogs and musical fruit, boys!

All Boy Riders, Yahoo, and exit running barefoot.

EXT. SUMMER CAMP'S CABIN PORCH - NEXT MORNING

Boy Riders, in their dusty dirty sweaty C-Bar-C clothes, sit or lay around rivaling infamous *Blazing Saddles* "Bean Scene."

John, Barry, and Caleb, sit on a half-log hand-carved bench. Barry pulls a splinter from log and picks his teeth with it.

BARRY
Hot food and plenty of it. Soft
bed, running water, and no riding.

JOHN
Could walk outta' here? Hitch away?

TODD
We'll --

ROD
tell!

HARI
Shizuka ni!

Hari throws his knife sticking into wall near Todd and Rod.

HARI
No, you won't.
(retrieves his knife)
Boys, Juvee Hall makes this set-up
look like a Hilton. Court said if I
stay, I get a clean record. So if I
have to stay, every body stays.

TODD
Sounds --

ROD
guuuuud!

Humana drives truck into camp. *Honks* horn. Riders run to it.

EXT. HUMANA'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Riders surround the truck's bed. Humana stands in it reading names and tossing duffle bags to owners. Philoneus arrives.

PHILONEUS

Listen, Up! Camp's letting us use
their machines. Pair Up! You and a
buddy do laundry together.

LEROY

(points at Caleb)
Just as long as I wash before him!

Hari waves a hand high like a schoolboy with wrong answer.

HARI

Can I move in with Leroy?!

RACIST RIDERS raise hands. Philoneus *palms* truck's hood.

PHILONEUS

Only one Boss on this trail! And
you're pissin' him off. It's my way
(points out of camp)
or there's your highway!

John raises both arms in front of him and fakes sleep-walking towards the camp's gate. Barry pulls John back by his belt.

BARRY

Well shoot, if that's all that's
holding things up. I'll wash with
Caleb. My jeans are fading anyway.

Most Riders *laugh*. Leroy doesn't. Philoneus nods at Barry.

PHILONEUS

Camp's havin' a big barbecue as a
send off. We leave at dawn, so
check your gear. But now that our
truck is here, feed your horses!

Humana opens an oak barrel's lid.

TODD

With --?

ROD

what?

HUMANA

Yer hats.

BLUMA

"Yer" kidding?

All Riders line-up at the truck with their hats upside down.

Humana uses a metal scoop to fill each hat with oats.

EXT. SUMMER CAMP'S CENTER GROUNDS - THAT NIGHT

Huge bonfire. Briggs *plays* guitar. GIRL and BOY CAMPERS mingle with All Riders who stand singing around the fire.

Caleb stands off to the side writing in his diary.

John and Barry lean against a tree like seasoned cowboys.

BARRY

Haven't been to a Kumbaya since church camp. You looking forward to headin' out tomorrow?

JOHN

Talked at great length today to a flower.

BARRY

What'd she say?

JOHN

Don't know. Committed suicide.

Caleb sneaks up behind John and yells like Philoneus.

CALEB

Hold Up!

John jumps ten feet away *screaming*. Barry and Caleb fall against each other *laughing*. Philoneus watches them.

PHILONEUS

*Might be playin' with a full deck,
but shufflin' mighty slow.*

EXT. ON THE TRAIL IN A THICK FOREST - NEXT DAY

Riders, in single-file, work their way through tall trees.

BARRY

Don't think this is a trail?

JOHN

I think, therefore I ache.

Both ride beside the burned remains of an old log cabin with only its rock-chimney still standing.

BARRY

Pioneers?

Caleb rides up to point at barb-wire now grown into a tree.

CALEB

Of the 1940's maybe.

(rides away)

Keep a tight rein, lot of low branches!

BARRY

What do low branches ...?

Something spooks Toranado who bolts between the trees.

BARRY

Whoa, Whoa, Noooooo --!

Toranado gallops under a low branch knocking Barry off.

Kevina rides over to stare down at him, then sucks her teeth.

KEVINA

If you can't take a joke, son,
don't look in the mirror. Next
time, lean back over your saddle as
you go under. You know how, I saw
you do it back at the ranch when we
rode out.

BARRY

You and your dad don't miss much.

KEVINA

Not enough to write home about.
Seen Briggs?

BARRY

(stands brushing off)
Too busy taking a dirt nap.

First time we see Kevina's feminine side as she smiles.

KEVINA

Lot of dead trees here so listen up
for "snags" breaking. A dead
treetop, can fall like a spear.

Kevina spurs ahead.

John brings Toronado to Barry while searching the heavens.

JOHN

Death, from above now?

Barry mounts Toronado becoming *Clint Eastwood* and spits.

BARRY

"You're smart enough to know,
talking won't save you."

They spur to Other Riders by laying back over their bedrolls as both horses go under low limbs. Animal and human, are learning about each other. John philosophizes while bouncing.

JOHN

Life, loathe it or ignore it, you
can't like it-t-t-t-t-t-t!

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON A SECOND MOUNTAINTOP - THAT NIGHT

Riders now on top of a new mountain with no trees, just patches of grass and large rocks. Philoneus gives *Circle-up*.

PHILONEUS

Too dark to read trail, have to
camp here. We're above Tree Line,
so need Night Riders. Becker,
White, take first two-hour watch.
Katzenjammer Kids, take second
shift. Phelps, Jacobs, take ...

LEROY

Please Boss, anybody but fart-boy!

PHILONEUS

For better or worse, son. We're all
in this together. Set Camp!

All Riders except Barry and John dismount to remove their horse-tack and set saddle blankets on the ground using their saddles as pillows. Horses now walk freely throughout camp.

EXT. JOHN AND BARRY'S SLEEPING BAGS - LATER SAME NIGHT

Full moon. John and Barry drop their saddles as pillows, pull off boots, crawl inside their sleeping bags, and collapse.

BARRY

How'd real cowboys live like this?

JOHN

Buckaroo, cowpoke, drover, gaucho,
vaquero, wrangler. All the same for
livin' really stupid.

BARRY

This can't be real, because we sure
ain't livin'. They'll probably find
our frozen corpses in the morning.

A small silver-foil pouch flies through air and lands on him.

CALEB

Astronauts use, holds in body-heat.

JOHN

The eyes of Texas --are upon us.

All look. Horses eyes glow devil-red in the full moonlight.

BARRY

That's Ichabod Crane stuff.
What if they step on us in our
sleep?

CALEB

Then you'd be injured, have to be
sent back home.

Barry and John look at each other, then lay still and begin
making *tick-tick-tick* tongue-sounds.

BARRY/JOHN

Here, horsey-horsey.

Riders who overheard, now lay flat making same *tick* sounds.

RIDERS

Tick-tick, tick-tick, tick-tick.

Philoneous and Kevina watch their "troops" from a mound.

PHILONEUS

What has four legs and ticks?

KEVINA

A mutt.

EXT. JOHN AND BARRY'S SLEEPING BAGS - NEXT MORNING

John and Barry sleep back-to-back under Caleb's foil blanket.

Toronado stands above Barry looking down at him. Barry wakes, stretches, then looks up and is startled.

BARRY

Jesus! Thought waking up to John's face was bad enough.

Toronado backs up. Barry sits up, grabs a boot, puts it on.

BARRY

Christ!

JOHN

"Verily, I say unto you," it ain't Sunday, so go back to sleep.

BARRY

At least then we'd be saved. Check out your boots. They're frozen!

John sits up, tries on a boot, then drops it shocked.

JOHN

"O death, where is thy sting?"

CALEB

Sleep with them inside your bag, warms up the leather.

Barry and John pull boots inside and zip-up sleeping bags.

BARRY

This is why they died with them on.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON SECOND MOUNTAIN'S CLIFF - MOMENTS LATER

Caleb, John, and Barry, now dressed with boots on, walk to the mountain's edge and peer over. Barry points down.

BARRY

What are those things floating by down there?

Caleb points to a Forest Service sign. It reads *13,490 ft.*

CALEB

Clouds.

John and Barry look over the edge again to watch the clouds.

JOHN

"O grave, where is thy victory?"

BARRY

Don't we need oxygen this high?

CALEB

Why do you think they call Denver a
"Mile-High City?" Our bodies have
been acclimating since we got here.

BARRY

(turns Redneck)

Well okie-dokie then, done never
seeded me a cloud before.

Barry walks closer to the ledge and unzips his fly.

CALEB

Uh, I wouldn't ...

Updraft blows Barry's stream up into a fine spray over him.
Barry jumps back repeatedly spitting. Philoneus rides over.

PHILONEUS

You're real quick, boy. --About
jumpin' to confusion. You spit in
the wind, too?

(claps hands)

Break Camp! Breakfast down in the
valley! Then we cross The Dee-vide!

BARRY/JOHN

A'gin?!

PHILONEUS

Which of you is Todd?

Philoneus rides away *guffawing*.

John and Barry push on each other's shoulders taunting, *You are, Am not, Yes you are*, etc.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON THIRD MOUNTAIN SLOPE - LATER SAME DAY

Riders walk single-file leading their horses along a narrow
cliff's trail. Beautiful sunny day, blue sky, no clouds.

BARRY

Momma Nature gonna' slap us again?

CALEB

Probably worse.

JOHN

"Worse?!" Would you like me to go
stick my head in a bucket of water?
I'm sure they've got one ready.

TODD

What is --

ROD

The Divide?

BLUMA

Name comes from Divide, Montana,
where it enters out of Alaska. It's
where our two continental plates
converge. Water on either side
flows down to either coast. Goes
all the way down to Meh-hee-ko.

CALEB

Correct. Surprised you know that.

BLUMA

Careful, your prejudice is showing.
Lot of gangs in my neighborhood so
I stay home. Read a lot. Also I'm
Jewish, another reason to stay in.

BARRY

You're Jewish?

BLUMA

Yeah, got a problem with that?

Hari raises his hand in the back.

BARRY

No, just that, you don't look it.

Bluma undoes her pant's zipper.

GIRL RIDERS

We believe you!

CALEB

And you're from New York City?

BOY RIDERS

(like in their commercial)
"New, York, City?!"

BLUMA

Close. Brooklyn.

CALEB

Okay then, name a Jewish gang.

BLUMA

Really? Fine, Yiddish Black Hand.

CALEB

Yeah, what are they into --suits?

Caleb nerd *snort-laugh*s. It is very unique.

BLUMA

Ice cream.

TODD

"Ice --

ROD

cream?!"

BLUMA

And seltzer.

Leroy walks past them pulling his pack burrow.

LEROY

Kikes, Dykes, Wops, Spades. All the same to me. As for my "gang," we go nigger-stompin' every Saturday night. Bunch of us put on combat boots and drive through Nigger Town till we spot a loner, then stomp him good. Lotta' fun.

Leroy smiles evil at Caleb as he walks by. When gone...

CALEB

Anyone see him steal a white sheet from that summer camp?

Girl Riders *nervous-laugh*. Barry glares after Leroy.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON THIRD MOUNTAINTOP - LATER SAME DAY

John and Barry step up onto a huge plateau with hats now tied down by the string. They're hit hard by rain blowing sideways with gale-force wind. Some Riders lose their hats as huge hail pummel their horses who spook. Sheer pandemonium.

PHILONEUS

RIDE, OFF!

Philoneus mounts Jet. All Riders mount and spur to follow.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF THIRD MOUNTAINTOP - MOMENTS LATER

John and Barry dismount with others to lead horses down off mountaintop onto a trail. Again, it's a beautiful sunny day.

BARRY
(in perfect *Rod Serling*)
"You're next stop, the Twilight
Zone."

Big John trots down by himself following the Two Burrows.

BLUMA
Speaking of, where's Fart?

Caleb at rear, mounts Midnight and spurs back up the crest.

EXT. ON TOP OF THIRD MOUNTAIN AGAIN - CONTINUOUS

Caleb rides up and searches. The swirling winds seem worse.

Art is sitting and crying in the middle of the plateau swaying back and forth being pummeled by hail and high winds.

Caleb pushes Art up onto Midnight, then runs pulling their reigns back down to the other side.

EXT. ON OTHER SIDE OF THIRD MOUNTAIN AGAIN - MOMENTS LATER

Caleb jogs down the mountain trail leading Midnight and Art.

Non-racist RIGHTEOUS RIDERS give standing ovation.

PHILONEUS
Good job, son. Move Out!

Art falls off Midnight. Caleb pulls Big John's reins to Art then Caleb walks away pulling Midnight. Art wipes away his tears, then waddle-follows all pulling Big John.

Bluma and Barry tilt their heads looking at Art's butt.

BLUMA
Are his pants full of --?

BARRY
Yep. His backside, be a-bustin'.

Horseflies now always buzz around Art's rear (*true*).

EXT. VALLEY ON OTHER SIDE OF THIRD MOUNTAIN - LATER SAME DAY

Thick trees and a wide fast-running stream with rocks.

Riders dismount near the stream.

PHILONEUS

Pull your saddles, water your
horses! Let 'em graze! Peanut
Butter n' jelly sandwiches tonight
when we meet the truck!

ALL RIDERS

(half-hearted, exhausted)

Yay.

Barry and John pull their saddles and tack directly to the
ground then fall back flat on their saddles as pillows.

BARRY

There is a point, where you just go
numb to the unreal reality of life.

JOHN

Life, don't talk to me about life.

Both close their eyes to dream of better days.

Philoneus rides up and stares down at them.

PHILONEUS

You boy's are as useless as the
back pocket on a t-shirt.

Philoneus nudges Jet who kicks the bottom of their boots.

BARRY/JOHN

(eyes snap open)

Hey!

PHILONEUS

Is for horses --and water. Your
horses eat first. Take care of
them, so they take care of you.

Philoneus trots away on Jet.

BARRY

Mine sure ain't doin' his part.

Barry and John use bridles as make-shift halters to lead
their horses to the creek, then lay on stomachs to drink.

BARRY

This water tastes --salty?

Barry and John snap up onto their knees to see Art peeing upstream with his hat still tied-down with string so it looks like a bonnet. Barry and John are frozen in time.

Philoneus on Jet, rides behind Art and pushes him with a boot so he falls into the creek. The water around Art turns brown.

PHILONEUS

Never wee-wee where we drink, boy!
Any of this filtering through that
straw bonnet you call a bonehead?

Barry and John jump up spitting furiously. All Riders *laugh*.

Art stays sitting in his brown-water and starts to *cry*.

Philoneus leans down over his saddle to offer a hand.

PHILONEUS

Supposed to catch a joke, son. You
missed it. It flew right by ya'.

Art *slaps* away his glove then *slaps* top of water like in a swimming pool. Riders *laugh* more. Art looks, then *slaps* water harder smiling. Riders laugh *harder*. Art keeps doing both.

CALEB

Been there, done that. Don't work.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT ANOTHER CAMPSITE - LATER THAT NIGHT

New camp is off a dirt *Forest Service* road. Truck is parked.

Tents are set up throughout the trees. Horses are unsaddled and tethered together. Art and Hari ride Overwatch. Rest of Riders sit by the campfire eating sandwiches.

BARRY

Never knew P, B, n' J, could taste
"so good."

BLUMA

Wish I had a joint.

Barry finishes sandwich, licks finger-tips, then tilts head at a loud commotion back in the woods. Philoneus is *yelling*.

CALEB

Who's he yelling at now?

Briggs enters campfire's light being pushed from behind by a furious Philoneus.

PHILONEUS

Hightail it outta here in the morn!
(stabs finger angry)
Ride with Humana. He'll take you to
the state highway. You can hitch
your way back to Denver!

BRIGGS

At least let me ride my horse back!

PHILONEUS

No will do "Wild Bill" hick! We'll
use it as a pack horse.
(to Riders)
We leave at first light! Turn In!

Briggs slinks away to his tent. Philoneus *stomps* away. Riders stand and go to their tents. Leroy walks out of the woods.

BARRY

What the hell did Briggs do?

LEROY

He was datin' Mary Jane.

BLUMA

"Mary --?" Grass? Briggs has weed?!

LEROY

Had. Big ole bag. Boss threw it in
the creek.

John grabs his head as if in pain then jogs towards creek.

BARRY

Where you going?

JOHN

"I offer only thirst, forced
marches, and death!"

BLUMA

(runs to follow John)
Giuseppe Garibaldi!

Barry *chuckles*, then gets serious with Leroy.

BARRY

Leroy. One question, please. Was
all that true what you said
earlier?

LEROY

About nigger stompin'? Yep. F, u, n
--rhymes with g, u, n!

BARRY

And you don't see anything wrong
with doing that to another person?

LEROY

Why, you some sorta' nigger-lover?

BARRY

Don't know, never loved one. I'm
just saying, that don't seem right.

Leroy grabs Barry's lapels and pulls him up threatening.

LEROY

Back home, I'd adjust your attitude
with a crowbar for talkin' that
equal-trash trash!

Leroy throws Barry backwards onto ground and *stomps* away.

BARRY

Now I'm talkin' about, white-trash.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL NEAR A FOURTH MOUNTAIN RANGE - NEXT DAY

Lush forest with a white-water river fed by a high waterfall.

Truck is gone again. Briggs is now gone permanently.

Kevina pulls Briggs's packhorse with two oat-barrels hanging
from a wooden pack saddle over its sides. Leroy and Hari
still pull the Two pack-Burrows.

Philoneus stops at bottom of sparkling cascading waterfall.
Its water's rainbow arcs over him. He is, *The Marlboro Man*.

PHILONEUS

Dis-Mount!

All dismount. Riders look up the tall wall of water.

BARRY

I ain't no frickin' Salmon.

Philoneus *chuckles* then walks *The Line* like a General.

PHILONEUS

Check all is secure! Pull cinches
tight! Watch where you step!

Kevina points at the steep terrain beside the waterfall.

KEVINA

A steep climb up that side, then we
traverse over it!

BARRY

"Over?!" As in, cross over it?

LEROY

That's not the half of "it." See
that tallest peak way up there?

Leroy points at a huge snow-capped mountain overshadowing all
the others. It is impressively intimidating.

LEROY

Highest mountain on The Divide.
Boss means to cross it.

PHILONEUS

Move Out! Walking!

Riders follow on foot in a single-file pulling their horses.

BARRY

Thought we joined the calvary?

Philoneus is far ahead and *chuckles*.

PHILONEUS

Boy's got a mind like a steel trap
--always rusted shut.

EXT. RIVERTOP OVER THE WATERFALL'S CREST - LATER THAT DAY

River runs white, inches-deep, over huge flat-rock formations
forming a natural, but slippery foot-bridge across the river.
A small worn trail is off either bank. The rapids are *noisy*.

Riders walk out of the trees on the trail with their horses.
All have to yell over din of *rushing* waters.

BARRY

Imagine getting paid to cut all
these trails!

BLUMA

Imagine our folks paying, for us to
cut through them!

PHILONEUS

FORDING!

Philoneus hands one end of his lariat to Kevina who ties it to a tree. Philoneus, pulling the pack-horse, rides Jet to other side of river. He dismounts and ties his end of the rope taught to another tree. He cups both gloves and yells.

PHILONEUS

Pair Up! Boy, Girl! Cross one pair
at-a-time! Upstream side of the
rope! Slide your gloves along the
rope holding on! Help each other!
Anything goes wrong, forget your
horse, grab on to hold on!

BLUMA

It's not a job --!

BARRY

(imitating *Elmer Fudd*)
It's a' ad-wen-ture. Heh, heh, heh!

Philoneus, still across the river, *chuckles* shaking head.

PHILONEUS

That boy makes more noise than a
skeleton dancin' on the tin roof.

Riders pair up to cross with military efficiency. They're a unit now, gender doesn't matter, only survival.

EXT. ON PHILONEUS' SIDE OF WATERFALL - LATER THAT DAY

Thirty Riders are now on the same side with Philoneus.

Kevina and Leroy wait with the Two Burrows still on far side of river. Leroy crosses pulling his burrow. Burrow slips on rock. Leroy's strength pulls it steady. All make it across.

PHILONEUS

Take your time! Free-rein! Let your
horse pick its own footing!

Kevina unties her rope's end from tree and re-ties it to her saddles-horn. She starts to cross. Her burrow fights.

PHILONEUS

I can buy another ass!

BARRY

There's a joke in there.

Philoneus unties now sagging rope from his tree but leaves it wrapped around trunk and hands its free-end to Barry.

PHILONEUS

All of you get on this and keep her
rope taught! Anything goes wrong --

ALL RIDERS

Grab On, Hold On!

Riders pull tug-of-war on rope to help Kevina cross. Her
burrow bolts. Kevina lets it go and crosses. Philoneus grabs
bullwhip and whips so *Lash* locks around burrow's pack-frame.

Caleb hops across river-rocks to grab Burrow's lead, then
pulls it across the river and hands to Kevina. Both stare.

KEVINA

You expecting an attaboy, boy?

Kevina *slaps* his back so hard Caleb is knocked forward.

KEVINA

'Cause you just got one!

Philoneus chuckles coiling bullwhip then *slaps* thigh with it.

PHILONEUS

Good job, men. Move Out!

Philoneus mounts Jet and pulls pack-horse going up the trail.

BLUMA

Did he just call us "men?"

BARRY

Mazal tov.

BLUMA

Thought you didn't know Jewish?

BARRY

Don't. Why --?!
(scans nervous)
Seen one go by?

Racist Riders and Righteous Riders of both sexes are now
distinguished by their different *laughs*. Mean, or funny.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL NEAR A FIFTH MOUNTAIN - LATER SAME DAY

Riders approach Mount Elbert's base. Philoneus dismounts.

PHILONEUS

Horses eat first!

Riders dismount *moaning*, take off their hats, and go to the packhorse. Kevina scoops some oats into each Rider's hat.

BARRY

Never heard a girl named "Kevina."

KEVINA

Dad always wanted a boy, so gave the hospital "Kevin" in advance.

(no response, explains)

Mom said when I came out, the doctor asked dad again and he just stood there gawkin', "Aaaaaah --?"

BARRY

Kevin-ă, got it.

(looks at oats in his hat)

What's in these?

KEVINA

Raw oats soaked in sorghum.

BARRY

"Sorghum" --as in molasses?

KEVINA

Yeah, but don't swallow them, they'll hurt your stomach.

Barry's hat is full of oats. He walks Toronado into woods. John follows with Aurora. Barry scoops oats into his mouth and sucks. His eyes go wide and he grabs another handful.

BARRY

Put it in your mouth and suck.

JOHN

"Sometimes a joke is not intended to make you laugh."

Barry motions to the oats. John takes a mouthful. Both suck *mmmming* and nodding, then spit out the husks.

BARRY

Not bad.

JOHN

Same joke.

Both suck on a second handful as their horses *whinny*. Barry offers rest of hat to Toronado. John offers hat to Aurora.

All Four enjoy their oats taking in the breathtaking view.

EXT. BASE OF MOUNT ELBERT - LATER THAT DAY

All Riders now sit mounted and circled around Philoneus.

PHILONEUS

Mount Elbert be the meanest
mountain in the Rockies. Almost
fifteen thou high. Never been up
her. Expect she's a handful. So I
has to ask each of you, Yes or No?

LEROY

Boss, don't think we can make it
over in one day and I sure don't
relish spending the night on her.

KEVINA

Know you wanna' go over it, dad.
Don't know if this be the time.

PHILONEUS

Long Riders?!

Riders *murmur* worry. Barry raises a hand. Philoneus nods.

BARRY

Sir. I've taken on everything you
and the trail's thrown at me. But
don't feel right, taking this on.

PHILONEUS

Never start what you won't finish.
We'll push on before crossing The
Dee-vidé a'gin.

BLUMA

"A'gin?!"

PHILONEUS

It winds around, nummy. But
compared to that --
(points up at Elbert)
The Dee-vidé's nuthin'. Move Out!

BLUMA

(whispers to Barry)
*Thanks man, I was starting to wig
out.*

JOHN

"Peculiar travel suggestions are
dancing lessons from God."

Philoneus smiles. Kurt Vonnegut is his favorite author.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL NEAR A SIXTH MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAYS LATER

Their Forest Service trail is a worn two-foot wide strip through thick forest angling 30° up.

Riders are in single-file with heads bobbing as their horses *clop* along. Riders are silent. Everyone is on automatic.

Barry rides behind Art. Something is wrong? Art and his saddle are sliding around Big John's chest with each step.

BARRY

What the --? Uh, Art?

Art sits in his saddle, now fifteen degrees angled over.

BARRY

Yo! Artsy Fartsy.

Art and his saddle are now thirty degrees sliding around.

BARRY

(imitates Philoneus)

Your saddle's slippin' sloppy!

Art now hangs in saddle 90° horizontal to Big John's chest.

BARRY

That's impossible?

Art falls out of saddle as it slides under horse's belly. Big John keeps walking. Barry looks down. Art curls up asleep.

BARRY

Hold Up!

All Riders stop. Philoneus and Kevina ride back to see Art.

PHILONEUS

Water Break! Five Minutes!

Philoneus dismounts and nudges Art with his boot's tip.

PHILONEUS

*We're too far north of the border
to take a siesta, son. What'ya
think you are, a wet back?*

Sound of a long wet fart from Art.

KEVINA

Is now.

This really happened exactly as described.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON SIDE OF SIXTH MOUNTAIN - LATER SAME DAY

Riders now single-file along an unused dirt mining road ten feet wide above tree line. Above them are cliffs of various size rocks. Below them is a steep drop off of scrub-grass.

Kevina trots at the end of the line with her "Girls."

BLUMA

Where are we?

KEVINA

Old mining road, hasn't been used
in years.

Philoneus holds up a fist, *Stop*. "The Line" stops. Philoneus looks back at Kevina pointing to large rocks lying ahead across the road. Philoneus waves hand down flat, puts pointer-finger to lips, and dismounts. Kevina nods and dismounts, then walks her horse forward telling All Riders.

KEVINA

*Girls, hang back. Boys, walk
quickly but quietly. nN talking.*

BARRY

What's up?

KEVINA

*(points at rocks above)
They are. But don't know for how
long. We walked into a slide area.*

Girl Riders dismount to hang back.

Boy Riders dismount to walk their horses silent weaving through the web of fallen rocks.

Art walks with Big John, stops, makes a funny face, then lets out a huge explosive *sneeze*. John and Barry are behind Art and look up at the *rumbling* sound from above.

PHILONEUS

RIDE!

Philoneus pulls pack-horse to side waving Boy Riders past.

PHILONEUS

GO, GO, GO! KEVINA, STAY!

Small rocks fall and roll across the road showing landslide.

Kevina swings onto her saddle and gallops jumping over rocks back to her stationary Girl Riders.

Boy Riders mount and spur ahead.

Big John only has one speed, so trots with Art bouncing in his saddle like a bobble-head.

Hari and Leroy mount, let go of Two Burrows, and spur ahead.

BARRY

Move it or lose it, boys!

Boy Riders spur to full gallop except Caleb who rides to disappear into the dust-cloud of falling rocks.

Riders make it across as a wall of boulders slides down across the road behind. Boy Riders and horses stop *panting*.

Dirt cloud is so thick, can't see, then Caleb rides out of it pulling One Burrow. Leroy angry-yanks the lead away from Caleb. Philoneus tips his hat to Caleb. ALL glare at Art.

BARRY

Gesundheit.

Tension broken. Boy Riders *laugh* relieved. Philoneus smiles.

PHILONEUS

Every king, needs a jester.

Philoneus climbs onto a boulder and yells back to Kevina.

PHILONEUS

Everyone alright?!

From the other side of now impassable road Kevina yells back.

KEVINA

Yes! We have the food burrow!

PHILONEUS

This is what I trained you for!

KEVINA

Race ya!

PHILONEUS

NO! Go where you're lookin' and
look where you're goin'! Take your
time! Meet up at North Fork!

Father and Daughter stare across the sea of stone. Both want to speak their love for each other, but don't. Both nod, then turn to their own duties. Philoneus barks at his Boy Riders.

PHILONEUS

This is why I told some of you to
bring fishing tubes. Move Out!

Boy Riders mount to fall back into their now shorter "Line."

Philoneus glances back at the rock-slide, then to Kevina who
is giving instructions to her Girl Riders circled around her.

PHILONEUS

Gently, girl --gently.
(looks straight up)
If'n you're not busy, sure do
appreciate lookin' after her.

Philoneus spurs to the head of Boy's Line. Leaving his only
daughter behind, is the hardest thing he's ever had to do.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF ROCK SLIDE - MOMENTS LATER

All Girl Riders stand holding their horses circled around
Kevina who has finished her talk. Some Girls tear up.

BLUMA

Knock off the waterworks! Don't you
realize what this is? It's an
opportunity. It's the opportunity!
All our lives we've been told only
men can take on hardship. Bet none
of them could take the pain of
childbirth without becoming ballin'
babies themselves!

Kevina nods. Other Girls begin nodding.

BLUMA

What say all, we show those boys we
can take on whatever they can and
do it better. Who's with me?!

Kevina holds out a hand. All Girl Riders lay a hand on hers.

KEVINA

We are strong! We are determined!
We are resourceful!

BLUMA

We are the women --men warned us
about!

All hands go down then up breaking apart. They will succeed.

EXT. NEAR A SEVENTH MOUNTAIN RANGE LAKE - ONE WEEK LATER

The Boys "Line" is riding single-file next to a huge lake. All Boy Riders are now tan, lean, and stronger.

John, Caleb, and Barry, have their sleeves rolled up, their biceps bulge. Barry has lost twenty pounds and his hair has turned blondish. He takes off his new hat to examine it.

BARRY

Five times. Five times we crossed
The Dee-vid. Lost a hat each time.
(points to John)
Lost your tent the last time.

JOHN

(looks straight up)
"If God is pleased in making you
sick and unhappy, I hate God."

CALEB

Ernestine Rose, 1810 to 1892.

JOHN

(still looking up)
"Then I say our claims do not rest
upon a book written no one knows
when or by whom."

Barry looks up surveying the sky like a seasoned trail-hand.

BARRY

Half a bad truth, is often a good
lie. --Sky's dry, won't rain.

PHILONEUS

Make camp!

All Boy Riders dismount. Hari and Leroy high-five.

CALEB

Noticed how pally-wally Hari and
Leroy have become? One's a punk,
the other a Redneck. Brothers by a
different mother.

BARRY

Everyone's pretty much paired-up.

Art waddles by with horseflies *buzzing* around his butt.

BARRY

Except Fart.

(to Caleb)

Thought you two hooked up?

CALEB

He likes to keep to himself. Plus my tent is a one-man Air Force pilot survival prototype.

BARRY

Thought it looked different. Yeah, shame about Art being so, uh -- different. I can't figure him out?

CALEB

Something's wrong for sure, but I'm too busy moving onward.

BARRY

You mean, forward?

JOHN

Means, "The best thing about the future, is that it comes one day at a time."

CALEB

Abraham Lincoln.

BARRY

Come on John, you've gotta' admit, never imagined we could do all the things we have. Remember when he brought us live chickens?

CALEB

Bought them from some farmer.

(in perfect Philoneus)

"Here ya' go, boys. Enjoy catchin' yer supper!"

BARRY

Didn't know they could run that fast, especially with no head.

Barry, John, and Caleb, lead their horses to the lake's edge to water them. There's a loud *slap* out on the water.

BARRY

Sounds like someone slapping a board on water?

A second loud *slap* near a mound of sticks in center of lake.

Philoneus walks up carrying something.

PHILONEUS

Beaver Lodge. They slap their flat
tails on the water as a danger
warning to others. Here --

He hands Barry an aluminum foil square and bouillon cube.

PHILONEUS

Enjoy, catchin' yer supper.

CALEB

We might as well move in with 'em.

JOHN

"Guests, like fish, begin to smell
after three days."

PHILONEUS

Benjamin Franklin. Good one, boy.

Philoneus *laughs* as he goes to Hari and Leroy's campsite.

A loud "slap" from out on the lake.

BARRY

Don't just stand there lookin'
beaver-stupid, dig me a worm.

John and Caleb bend their wrists and arms up pulling their
top lips back *sucking* their front teeth like a beaver.

EXT. LAKESIDE ON SEVENTH MOUNTAIN RANGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Their campfire burns bright in a ring of rocks. Cooked fish-
head, fish bones, and browned fish-skin, are on now burnt and
wrinkled used tinfoil.

Barry, John, and Caleb, lean back on their saddles with their
boots off licking their fingers.

BARRY

That crushed Bouillon cube baked
inside made it taste --
(*burp*)
"so good."

Leroy walks up and points at their fish-head. They don't
understand. Leroy picks it up, pops out its eyeballs with
thumbs, eats them, then throws fish-head into the lake.

LEROY

City-boys. Ha! You can't see fine
eatin', even when it's bug-eyed
staring you in the face.

Leroy walks to the next campfire *belching*.

CALEB

Bet he thinks possum is, "The Other
White Meat."

Barry picks up a small stick with its end on fire and holds
it like a cigar while imitating *Groucho Marx*.

BARRY

"That's about the most disturbin'
thing I've ever seen." --'Ey Chico?

Caleb turns his hat sideways to imitate *Chico Marx*.

CALEB

"I'da lika the West better, if'n it
were in the East." --'Ey Harpo?

John wades into the lake *honking* like Harpo's horn.

JOHN

Honk-honk, honk-honk, etc.

Caleb and Barry look at each other shocked.

BARRY

But it ain't Friday night?

CALEB

Ain't Saturday night neither?

Both shrug, then run into the lake after John still *honking*.

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

Honk-honk, honk-honk, etc.

All Three freeze motionless in funny positions, then sprint
out of the water high-pitched *screaming* while stripping.

BARRY

Brain-freeze!

John reaches down inside his pants and is frightened.

JOHN

Brit Milah!

Beavers *slap* their tails louder all around the lake.

EXT. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF SIXTH MOUNTAIN RANGE - SIMULTANEUS

Kevina and her Girl Riders are bedding down for the night.

KEVINA

No shortage of freeze-dried food.
Wonder what the boys are eating?

BLUMA

Do we really care?

KEVINA

Not really.

All Girl Riders laugh.

BLUMA

How long before we meet up?

KEVINA

Should be on the other side of this
range, so --? One, maybe two days.
(stands and yells)
Anyone care when we rejoin the
boys?!

GIRL RIDERS

NO!

KEVINA

(re-sits smiling)
There ya' go.

EXT. LAKESIDE OF SIXTH MOUNTAIN RANGE- NEXT MORNING

John, Barry, and Caleb, are asleep in bags. Clothes are dry hanging on branches stuck in the ground by their smoldering fire. Philoneus yells in the distance. All Three stir awake.

BARRY

Somebody turn off the G.D. T.V.

Philoneous enters nearby carrying the water-filled leather bucket and a rope halter tied in a hangman's noose. He booms.

PHILONEUS

WHERE'S HARI THE HORSE KILLER?!

Leroy's arm sticks out of his bag to point to bag beside him.

PHILONEUS

Front n' center, boy! Now!

No response. Philoneus douses Hari's sleeping bag with water.

PHILONEUS

Face me like a man --boy!

No response. Philoneus grabs sleeping bag's end, raises it high, and shakes it until Hari falls out. Philoneus puts the noose around Hari's neck and pulls him to his feet by it.

PHILONEUS

Why'd you tether your horse in a
hangman's noose?!

HARI

(gagging, choking)
Teach it --a lesson. --Gets loose.

Philoneus throws rope's other end over a branch.

PHILONEUS

"Lesson?!" Pop Quiz, bad boy!

Philoneus pulls on rope yanking Hari up onto his bare feet.

PHILONEUS

Pay attention, son! I'm not just
yellin' to hear my head explode!

Philoneus pulls down on rope more. Hari goes tippy-toes.

PHILONEUS

Learned your "lesson" --yet?

Hari makes *gurgling* sounds.

Barry jumps out of his bag to dress in record time.

BARRY

Ridin' Range!

Barry grabs tack and gear running to their tethered horses.

Caleb and John follow same. All saddle and ride away fast.

EXT. LAKE'S MEADOW WITH GRAZING HORSES - LATER SAME MORNING

Barry, John, and Caleb, sit mounted spread out across the field watching the grazing horses.

BARRY

J.F.C., that was scary!

CALEB

Try watching a lynching on my side
of the woods!

Philoneus rides up. The Three "check" the sky for rain.

PHILONEUS

Thanks for Riding Range, boys!
Things got a little outta hand!

BARRY

Don't mind riding longer. Do we,
boys?!

CALEB/JOHN

(over-enthusiastic)
Happy to! ...No problemo!

PHILONEUS

Came on Hari's horse with front leg
caught in the noose pulling its
head down. It was having trouble
breathing, could have been like
that all night. Ride in for
breakfast, you earned it!

John, Barry, and Caleb ride in. Philoneus tips his hat after
them, then looks straight up.

PHILONEUS

*Sorry 'bout that. Hope you
understands my upsetness.*

EXT. STATE HIGHWAY IN MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - LATER THAT DAY

Boy Riders single-file along shoulder of a two-lane road.
Truck follows behind slow with its hazard lights blinking.

Caleb leads Hari's horse now with a burrow-pack on it while
Hari rides its Burrow bareback. Philoneus changes direction.
Riders follow him to top of a flat hill overlooking highway.

PHILONEUS

Make Camp!

BARRY

Short day.

CALEB

*Everyone's still a little --
"short."*

ALL dismount to begin their night routine for making camp.

EXT. CAMPSITE OFF STATE HIGHWAY - THAT NIGHT

Barry, John, and Caleb, lie in their sleeping bags arms behind their heads staring up at the night sky.

BARRY

Think he'll really do it?

CALEB

If he "do," all his time going through this was wasted.

BARRY

Only reason I don't, is because my Dad would disown me. John does.

CALEB

His decision. Nothing we can do about it. Night, John-boy.

BARRY

Night, John-boy.

BOY RIDERS

NIGHT, JOHN-BOY!

JOHN

Huh, what, I was asleep?

EXT. CAMPSITE OFF STATE HIGHWAY - NEXT MORNING

Boy Riders, dressed, sit by the campfire eating breakfast.

Philoneus is down at road talking to Trooper by his cruiser.

BARRY

Anybody hear anything last night?

CALEB

Nope. Wonder if he made it?

Philoneus shakes Trooper's hand who exits in his cruiser, then walks to campfire. Boy Riders ignore him on purpose.

PHILONEUS

Hari's gone, tried hitchin', but Highway Patrol picked him up.

Philly's coming for him.

(kicks at fire)

Anybody else wanna' bail?

Art holds up a hand. Flies buzz around it. John's moves.

PHILONEUS

Fine! Ride with Humana in the truck. Call your dad from town. Be sure to remind him, no refund.

Art lowers his hand brushing away flies. John scratches head.

PHILONEUS

Go rinse dishes in the creek. Use lots of bottom-sand to sanitize 'em. Leroy, take the Sumpter. John, Barry, you two up to pulling the burrows? Get extra vittles.

BARRY

Extra food?! Guess so, but give mine to John, he needs to grow.

Boy Riders stand with mess-kits *laughing*, see something, then start *banging* their utensils on their metal kits.

Kevina and her Girl Riders are riding up the state road.

Barry turns to tell Philoneus who now has his back to them.

BARRY

What's wrong, boss?

PHILONEUS

(tearing up)

Damn fire. Gots an ember in my eye.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON SEVENTH MOUNTAINTOP - WEEKS LATER

All Boy and Girl Riders come up over the mountaintop on horseback then stop amazed at their view. As far as the eye can see is an endless sea of mountains.

Barry rides up over the same crest pulling a burrow. He's lost ten more pounds with skin now leather-tan. He also lost another new hat, so his hair has become sun-bleached blonde.

John rides up pulling second burrow with shirt tied around his waist. He's strong, tanned, with sun-faded brown hair. He has a new lariat hanging off his saddle-horn. He sees the vista ahead and drops his head.

JOHN

"Is there no end to this escalation of desire?"

CALEB

Marya Mannes. --Mister martyr.

PHILONEUS

We'll camp down in the valley!
Be in Grand Junction by next week!

All Riders *cheer* tired, then All trot down the other side.

BARRY

Guess you won't have to use your
new lariat your dad sent after all.

John tilts his head sideways with tongue hanging out and free
hand above like he's hanging himself.

JOHN

*"True hope is swift and flies with
swallow's wings."*

BARRY

Shake it --Shakespeare.

John and Barry exit over the crest pulling their Two Burrows.

EXT. NOW ON AN EIGHTH MOUNTAINTOP - NEXT DAY

Riders ride up upon a huge ten-foot thick snow-field.

PHILONEUS

Hold Up!

(turns Jet around)

Listen Up! We have to ride through
this! Snow's so deep, farmers have
to jack up their cows to milk 'em!

(stands in stirrups)

Stone holds heat, snow melts, which
means keep your horses away from
big rocks! Single file, follow me,
watch their footing!

ALL ride slow across the snow-field until a horse *cries* out.

ALL look. Leroy led his packhorse too close to a boulder. Its
rear legs have slid down into the soft snow around it.

Philoneus gallops to the trapped horse and fast-dismounts.

PHILONEUS

Kevina, hold his head, keep him
calm! Half you get over here and
dig the snow out from around his
back legs! Other half, hold the
others horses!

Leroy has backed away not knowing what to do.

PHILONEUS (CONT'D)
Leroy! Take off the packs, but
leave its saddle frame on! Go!

All Riders work with exact precision following their orders,
but the Girl Riders seem a little more focused and organized.

EXT. STILL ON EIGHTH MOUNTAIN'S SNOWFIELD - LATER SAME DAY

Packhorse's trapped legs are dug out. Its snow is piled high.

Some Boy Riders took shirts off sweating. Girl Riders tied
theirs around waists. John and Barry take a water break.

BARRY
If its leg's broken, he'll have to
shoot it.

PHILONEUS
John, bring your lariat!

John runs to get his lariat, then to Philoneus who ties it to
one side of the packhorse's frame, then ties Kevina's rope to
the other side of its frame.

PHILONEUS
Two Lines, everyone pull steady!
(points behind horse)
You in the back, watch yourselves
when it jumps free!

Riders pull on ropes, others push from rock. Horse jumps out.

Philoneus checks its legs and gives thumbs-up. Riders cheer.

KEVINA
Dad!

ALL look at Kevina pointing to Art who stands near the outer
edge of snow-field pointing downhill like a silent bird-dog.

EXT. ON EIGHTH MOUNTAIN'S SNOWFIELD EDGE - NOW DUSK

Riders stand holding horses. Philoneus is down in high bushes
examining something, then lifts up a large piece of metal.

CALEB
My father was in the Air Force,
that's a rudder!

BARRY
A plane crashed?

KEVINA

Easy, boys. We've found wreckage before. We'll mark it on our map, write down its tail number, then give it to Park Rangers down-trail.

Philoneus walks up to them shaking his head.

PHILONEUS

Move out.

CALEB

Whoa, that's it? No survivors?

PHILONEUS

Nothing we can do for them. I got their wallets and plane number.

BARRY

We can't just leave them?!

PHILONEUS

(stomps on frozen ground)
You got a flame thrower, boy?!
(recovers fatherly)
Everything happens for a reason.
Hari leaving us so his horse could fall here. Art finding them. All of it, or we'd ridden right by. We'll head to town soon as we can and notify the authorities.

KEVINA

We should say --something?

Philoneus nods. ALL remove their hats and bow heads.

PHILONEUS

Death is part of life. How we die is not important, how we live it is. Lord, these young folk decided to be strong enough to ride up here, so those down there's kin can have peace.

Philoneus raises head and puts on his hat. Riders do, too.

PHILONEUS

You all did real good today, but night's comin' on fast. So get out your furies, ladies, we're sleepin' in High Country!

EXT. NEW CLEARING FURTHER DOWN EIGHTH MOUNTAIN - NOW SUNSET

An angled plateau part-way down the mountain is mostly grass with some trees. A sheer cliff rises on one side with a ledge dropping off its other. Higher mountains are all around it.

Camp is set. A fire burns with a cast-iron pot cooking as Kevina stirs contents with a huge spoon. Leroy holds injured horse's head as Philoneus rubs liniment on its back legs.

Barry stands near the edge of the clearing taking pictures.

BARRY

John, over here!

John goes to him. Barry points far up to a mountain face.

BARRY

Up where the setting sun reflects.

John now sees snow-water pouring out of a cave below the top of a mountain creating a long waterfall down into its valley. The falling water sparkles creating a gleaming kaleidoscope.

BARRY

Only way to see that is to be
standing precisely here, at this
exact time of day. Beautiful.

John *raspberries*. Barry shakes his head, then sniffs air.

BARRY

Get our ponchos and your lariat,
I'll borrow the shovel.

Barry walks to Kevina. John goes to get their gear.

EXT. ON EIGHTH MOUNTAIN'S PLATEAU - THAT NIGHT

Riders have built small fires near their sleeping areas.

John's lariat is strung between two trees by the cliff wall.

Two Army ponchos with grommets snapped together on one side hang over the rope with bottom edges staked down creating a tent. End away from cliff has a third Army poncho covering it. Barry digs a trench around it's base. Caleb walks up.

CALEB

Why a ditch, digger?

BARRY

Trench, runoff-trench. My dad took us camping and taught me to dig a moat for the tent's water to flow away from, not under.

CALEB

Good idea, John Robinson.

BARRY

Who?

CALEB

Whom. Circus term for a bad storm, worst we've seen yet.

(no response, explains)

My dad, gave me a weather station with a barometer and hydrometer. I had to build my own rain-gauge.

BARRY

My dad gave me one, too! I was into it for awhile, sounds like you still are. You gonna be okay?

CALEB

My tent is blizzard-tough. I'll sleep warm and cozy.

Barry finishes trench and hands shovel to Caleb.

BARRY

Just in case, you don't want to float away "warm and cozy."

PHILONEUS

White, Becker, Night Riders!

(yells to all)

Everyone hobble good, it's gonna' get bad!

Caleb takes the shovel to his tent. John gets their tack. Barry surveys the sky like a mountain-man, then *spits*.

BARRY

Bring it, Sky Chief.

EXT. ON EIGHTH MOUNTAIN'S PLATEAU - LATER SAME NIGHT

Barry rides in darkness. Toronado stops and won't budge. Barry back-kicks with his heels hard. Torny won't move.

BARRY

Look numb-nuts, oh yeah, that's
what you got --not. Let's go.

Barry spurs. Toranado is rigid. Barry thinks, dismounts.

BARRY

You're pretty smart. I'm not. So
what aren't you telling me?

Barry can't see, so runs both hands down Toranado's front
legs. He finds a strand of barbed-wire across one leg.

BARRY

Only piece of barbed-wire in a
hundred mile, and you find it.

Barry puts his shoulder into Toronado's chest under his neck
and pushes, then talks to Toronado to get him to back up.

BARRY

Come on, boy, back up. That's it.
Sorry about calling you numb-nuts,
you can grow them back if you want.

Toronado backs up. Barry clears the wire from Toronado's leg,
then keeps pulling same wire out of the ground. He wraps
wired around his glove, then puts both it his saddlebag.

BARRY

We'll bury that in the morning.
(pats Torny's neck)
Best horse around. Here.

Barry reaches in a pocket and pulls out a handful of oats.

BARRY

Was saving these for a late night
snack but you earned them. And
thanks again, for not throwing me.

Toranado rubs his forehead against Allen's shoulder. They've
bonded.

Thunder shakes ground startling both. Barry holds on reigns.

BARRY

Easy, boy. I found a safe tree for
you right outside our tent.

Both walk towards their tent. A blinding lightening flash
illuminates the entire ground for seconds. It is literally
daylight. Barry sees John and yells in perfect Philoneus.

BARRY

Answer that, boy! Somebody, I say
somebody is a-knockin' at our door!

Complete darkness again, then *thunder*. Barry *chuckles*.

BARRY (O.S.)

Smile, son.

Brighter lightening flash. Barry is now closer to John.

BARRY

God's takin' pictures.

JOHN

(hands on hips disgusted)
"God is Light, not darkness."

Complete darkness. *Thunder*, then another sun-burst lightening flash reveals Barry, arms now wide open, is almost to John.

BARRY

Come on, Mahatma, enjoy it! We're
never gonna' see anything like this
again for the rest of our lives.

Darkness. *Thunder*, followed by a sun-flash lightening burst.

Barry hobbles Toranado next to Aurora at a tree near their tent. John pushes Barry with his saddle inside their tent.

JOHN

Life's bad enough as is without
wanting to invent more of it.

Rain pours putting their fire out. *Thunder* shakes the ground.

INT. JOHN AND BARRY'S TENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Rain beats on their poncho-tent as Barry and John sit dry on their tack and sleeping bags playing cards with flashlights.

Bluma jumps in soaking wet flinging water on John and Barry.

BLUMA

People are drowning out there. Some
started building an Ark. I knew
youse guys would be dry.

BARRY/JOHN

(wiping off her droplets)
Were.

Bluma sits cross-legged. She was never one to be shy.

BLUMA

What's your first meal when we get back home?

All Three *sigh*, this is the most popular conversation topic.

BARRY

Beef stroganoff, mashed potatoes and gravy, dinner rolls, and Rice Krispie Treats with lots of milk.

JOHN

Shrimp cocktail, lobster tails, scalloped potatoes, Baked Alaska -- washed down with Tommyknocker.

Bluma pulls out a candy bar. John and Barry's eyes get big.

BLUMA

Let's play, "Merchant of Venice."

BARRY

It's wet enough. So you want to sleep in our tent for free and make us pay for the privilege?

BLUMA

No, no, no. I'd never do that to friends. I'm talking deep discount.

John and Barry point to tent's exit.

BLUMA

But just for you --family rate.

Barry *shuffles* cards like a riverboat gambler.

BARRY

How 'bout, we cut cards for it?

BLUMA

You wouldn't be trying to take advantage of our friendship?

BARRY/JOHN

(fake sincerity)

No! ...Of course not ...Never, etc.

BLUMA

Good, because it's how we live our lives that counts, right?

Barry pulls an Ace out of his sleeve to put back into deck.
Art now jumps inside the tent shaking water off like a dog.

BARRY/JOHN/BLUMA

Hey-aaa!

Art is frantic, he repeatedly points outside. All Four exit.

EXT. JOHN AND BARRY'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Blowing rain with booming *thunder* then a lightening flash.

Art is now seen running away. Total darkness.

BARRY (O.S.)

Just like Fart to run away!

BLUMA (O.S.)

Bet he's in our dry tent!

BARRY/JOHN (O.S.)

"Our?!"

Thunder, then bright *Lightening*. Now they see Art pointing.

Caleb is standing with his back to the plateau's outer ledge.

Leroy and Racist Riders encircle Caleb with taunting slurs.

Caleb calmly finger-points to Leroy and each Racist Rider while counting as *Eastwood* again.

CALEB

...and, ten. "Perfect number!"

LEROY

Three supposed to be the perfect number, darkee!

CALEB

"Yeah, but I've got ten fingers!"

Caleb makes fists *cracking* all ten knuckles, then Complete Darkness.

LEROY (O.S.)

Midnight Hour, Midnight!

Thunder booms, then a *Lightening* flash.

A rock hits Leroy in the back of his head. He spins to see Bluma, Barry, and John, who all hold rocks.

LEROY
Who Threw That?!

Bluma, Barry, and John, all point to each other. Darkness.

BLUMA (O.S.)
Know the thing about bullies?

BARRY (O.S.)
There's always someone bigger.

Thunder boom, then a brighter Lightening flash. It's a Colorado Stand-off as each group glares at the other.

LEROY
Not tonight, not here!

Leroy pushes Caleb who falls backwards off the cliff.

BARRY
Nooooooooo --!

Darkness, then Thunder booms, followed by Lightening flash.

Leroy stands hands-on-hips triumphant, but Art now stands in front of him and uppercut punches. Leroy falls down on butt.

ART
Bad Man!

Art also brought Righteous Riders who now stand beside Bluma, Barry, and John. All Racist Riders step forward for a brawl.

Darkness, then Thunder booms. Brightest Lightening flash yet as its bolt strikes a tree near Leroy splitting it in two. Bolt's energy conducts through wet ground to knock ALL down.

Darkness, then Thunder booms. A long bright Lightening flash.

All Riders moan as they recover to stand.

Barry runs to look over cliff's edge to see Caleb clinging to a rock from the cliff's face. Barry turns barking commands.

BARRY
Bluma, John, each grab my legs!
Rest of you, grab theirs!

Barry lays down to crawl over the edge. Bluma, John, and all Righteous Riders lay down forming a "V" pyramid-chain holding onto each other's legs with ankles under arm-pit.

Darkness, then Thunder booms. Bright Lightening Flash.

EXT. PLATEAU'S PRECIPICE - IMMEDIATELY

Barry now hangs upside-down being lower over the ledge with his legs held. He stretches a hand down. Caleb looks up.

CALEB
Negro-Lover!

BARRY
Where?!

Caleb reaches up for Larry's hand. Darkness. Thunder *booms*.

EXT. EDGE OF PLATEAU'S CLIFF - MOMENTS LATER

Lightening flash show Racist Riders, except Leroy, now stand in back row holding the legs of laying Righteous Riders.

BARRY (O.S.)
PULL!

Racist Riders move backwards as one pulling Righteous Riders.

Barry, then Caleb, are pulled up over the ledge.

Darkness, then Thunder *booms*. Lightening flash.

Barry and Caleb stand shaking hands. Art points. ALL look.

Leroy still sits dazed as most of the ground current went into him. He now has a *Lichtenberg* tattoo branching up one side of his face where the blood vessels burst. Darkness.

BLUMA (O.S.)
Yahweh said, "Hello!"

Thunder *booms*, then its Lightening flash shows Leroy standing up wobbly. Art goes to him. Darkness.

CALEB (O.S.)
Leroy slashed my tent, that's what started this! Can I sleep with you?

BARRY (O.S.)
Lucky for you they just passed the Fair Housing Act!

Thunder *booms*, then Lightening flash. Leroy now has an arm over Art's back as Art leads Leroy who stumbles like drunk.

ALL Riders head back to their tents as Bluma pulls out a clear plastic bag with candy bars inside.

BLUMA

Goin' outta' business, boys!

Caleb and Barry *laugh* each taking a candy bar.

CALEB

Wait, she's sleeping with us?!

Total darkness.

BLUMA (O.S.)

Also called, the Civil Rights Act!

Thunder *booms*, then Lightening shows area is now deserted.

Philoneus steps out of the shadows with his bullwhip. Next to him is Kevina twirling low her lariat.

PHILONEUS

Now --"they" are one.

Philoneus *snaps* his bullwhip at Leroy's fallen knife flicking it over the ledge. Kevina smiles. Darkness.**EXT. PHILONEUS' GRAND JUNCTION HOME - DAY - A WEEK LATER**

Riders single-file along the shoulder of a well-used state road followed by Humana driving the truck with flashers on.

All look bedraggled, but healthy. Philoneus points, *Change Direction*. Riders enter a dirt driveway past a single-floor Rambler home to a small corral in backyard with an open gate.

PHILONEUS

Water and feed your horses, store
your gear in the Tack Room, then
set camp on the side of the house.

Riders enter corral, dismount and pull gear to carry into Tack Room. Riders exit carrying sleeping bags with saddlebags over a shoulder and stand robotic waiting for any command.

PHILONEUS

You look like two miles of bad
road, but --that's it, cowboys!

Riders stunned, then drop everything to yell throwing their hats in the air. Girl Riders hug. Boy Riders high-five, low-five, back-five, all the sports moves, except no fanny pats.

Caleb nods smiling self-satisfied. Art holds open arms to Barry who, *What the hell*, hugs him. John drops onto knees holding prayer-hands in rapture. Bluma pumps an arm, *Yeah!*

Leroy stands alone with bruise-tattoo now a permanent black.

EXT. PHILONEUS' GRAND JUNCTION HOME - LATER THAT DAY

Sleeping bags are now laid out on grassy area beside house.

Kevina wears a Chef's Hat cooking hamburgers and hotdogs on a homemade brick barbecue. Some Girl Riders help her.

A hand-made picnic-table has large soda bottles, cups, and chips. Humana sits there eating from three full paper plates.

JANE ANNE ABLE, early-40s, long hair, country-pretty, in a checkered summer dress, exits house with a tray of Jello-cups and begins serving Riders. Her voice is soft almost siren-like. Each Rider tips their hat in respect as taught.

JANE ANNE

Come on, boys and girls, eat up.
Plenty more where that came from.

BOY RIDERS

Yes, ma'am.

BLUMA

Who you callin' a "girl" --girl?

All Girl Riders now stand feet apart, hands on hips, then knock back their hats with a bent-knuckle and *spit* as one.

JANE ANNE

Sorry. Cow-girls.

BLUMA

Well alrighty then.

Jane Anne goes to John and Barry smiling appreciative.

JANE ANNE

My husband has nothing but good things to say about you two. Said you helped steady the others by making them laugh. Thank you.

Embarrassed, both feign tipping imaginary hats.

PHILONEUS

Gather 'round, Riders!

All Riders gather around Philoneus. Leroy hangs back.

PHILONEUS

First off, thank my missus for
fillin' your ten-gallon tummies.

ALL RIDERS

(tip "hats" in unison)
Thank you, Mrs. Able.

PHILONEUS

Second, I got a full day a' horse
tradin' tomorrow, so Mister Humana
will be driving you into town for
some sightseein' and lunchin'.

ALL RIDERS

Yeaaaaa!

PHILONEUS

Third, it's a four-hour drive back
to our Denver based ranch.

John bows head. This is the first time he gives true thanks.

KEVINA

Or seven weeks by horseback.

Johns head snaps upright in fear.

ALL RIDERS

Boooooo!

PHILONEUS

Once there, we'll finish our time
together by having our very own,
row-dey-o!

(stunned silent response)

So put your feed bag on, rest up,
and for God's sake, Wash Up! You
all smell like a bag a' wet mice.

ALL RIDERS

(chanting)

C Bar C! ...C Bar C! ...etc.

Barry and John go to shake hands, but pull back to wipe their
hair instead, then hug hard laughing, almost crying...almost.

EXT. PHILONEUS' GRAND JUNCTION HOME - THAT NIGHT

Riders are now bedded down. Caleb leans on the picket fence
across the front yard drawing in his diary. Barry arrives.

BARRY

Trying to forget?

CALEB

Trying to remember.

Caleb points to a vertical sheer-drop ridge across from them running the length of the entire flat horizon. Barry looks.

Its beautiful vivid-color layers of strata run horizontal through its walls. Crystals in it sparkle in the setting sun. It is the most breath-taking sunset they will ever see.

BARRY

It's like a horizontal rainbow.
Wow, all these great memories. I
hope they stay with us forever.

Caleb pulls off his glove and offers his hand. Barry pulls off his glove. Both shake as "soul brothers."

INT. NOW BACK AT C-BAR-C DENVER HOME - DAYS LATER

Great Room with plank walls, hardwood floors, and a large brick fireplace. Furniture is against the walls to open the room up. Everyone stands around the room's three walls.

Riders, now in clean C-Bar-C uniforms, stand with THEIR PARENTS. John, Barry, Bluma's, and Leroy's, are not present.

Kevina wears a country dress with her long hair now down. It shines healthy. Her chest is growing. She is quite striking.

Philoneus acts as M.C. standing on his long fireplace hearth and holds up a small gold statue of a saddled-horse.

PHILONEUS

Each year we recognize our Top
Rider and Top Camper. Our ride and
rodeo showed who the best wrangler
is, so now I'll present the trophy
to this years's --Top Cowboy!
(holds up trophy)
Caleb Jackson, come on up here!

Audience *claps*. Caleb shakes hands, receives his gold award, then shows it to Brandon who beams.

PHILONEUS

And to the young man who showed us
that laughter is just another way
of surviving --our Top Camper!

Barry steps forward. Philoneus holds up his second trophy, a small statue of a gold tent.

PHILONEUS

John Becker! Get on up here, boy!

Riders *clap*. Barry's mouth falls open. John receives award stunned and goes back to Barry who tries to take it. They slap-fight like an *Abbott and Costello* pantomime routine.

PHILONEUS

Were a great ride folks! Your kids were real troopers. So that's it for this year! Any questions?

Barry holds up a hand.

PHILONEUS

Yes --jester?

Barry motions for Caleb to come stand with them who does.

BARRY

In appreciation for all you did, both "for" and "to" us, we wrote a camp song.

The Three step up on hearth shooing Philoneus off. They turn their backs to the audience, make adjustments, then turn around. Barry now has a paper black-mustache and eyebrows taped on. Caleb wears a large paper-cone hat. John has stuck hay under his hat to look like blonde hair.

BARRY

Impression of our learning experience, "out on the trail."
(now as *Groucho Marx*)
"Suppose you were out horseback riding when you came upon a stream and wanted to ford over it?"

CALEB

(as *Chico Marx*)
"Why you wanna' Ford, if you gotta' horse?"

BARRY

(still as *Groucho*)
"I see. So here's a tougher one.
Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?"

John shakes head animated, shrugs shoulders high, then pulls out a bicycle horn and squeezes its bulb *honking*.

Audience *laughs*. The Three pull off costumes harmonizing while hand-motioning for Bluma to join them who does.

All Four sing their song to the tune of *Jimmy Crack Corn*.

BARRY/JOHN/BLUMA/CALEB

And if you find that you must gooo,
you simply say whoa-ho-ho, and get
off by the side of the roaaaad --
and go behind a tree I'm told.

Audience *laughs* and now *claps* in time.

BARRY/JOHN/BLUMA/CALEB

C Bar C we love thee, C Bar C as
tough as can be, on the trail you
can seeeee --for miles and miles
and miles. *Dum-Dum*.

Audience gives *ovation*. Kevina grabs her camera.

PHILONEUS

Group Shot!

Barry, John, and Caleb dive for cover. ALL *laugh*.

INT. ABLE'S KITCHEN - LATER SAME EVENING

Small country kitchen with after-signs of holding a party.

Barry enters with dirty dishes and puts them in sink. Kevina enters and does same. Awkward moment. Barry extends a hand.

Kevina grabs Barry's lapels and pulls him in planting a big wet-one on his lips, then throws him away.

KEVINA

The say the first one is the
toughest. Thanks.

Kevina exits. Barry stands frozen, then stutter-speaks. His high-pitched puberty-voice finally breaks.

BARRY

You're --
(voice goes deep)
welcome.

EXT. ON THINKIN' ROCK - NEXT MORNING

John, Barry, and Caleb, lean back on their elbows now wearing their original city clothes.

CALEB

This all looks so familiar, but
soon, it won't.

BARRY

Think anyone will believe our
stories about --

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

(in perfect Philoneus)

"The Dee-Vide!"

The Three shake their heads lost in their own memories.

BARRY

Remember our first day up here? No
idea what was coming down the road.

CALEB

If we had, would we have stayed?

John, Barry, and Caleb look at each other.

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

No way! ...Uh, uh! ...Nope!

Barry breaks a long stalk of grass off to chew on its end.

BARRY

But it was, a life changing event.

TODD

Can we --

ROD

sit with you?

The Three see Todd and Rod climbing up the hill now in their
city clothes. The Three start to stand, then sit back down.

JOHN

"I would rather walk with a friend
in the dark, than alone in light."

ROD

Helen --

TODD

Keller.

Todd and Rod sit. Art is now seen waddling along the base of
their hill also in street clothes so no more flies. Caleb
gives a two-finger *whistle*. Art looks up. All Six wave to
come up and join them. Art smiles for the first time.

EXT. DULLES AIRPORT - LATE THAT DAY

John and Barry's jetliner lands on a runway. A Mobil Lounge drives out to unload the passengers.

INT. DULLES AIRPORT TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

John and Barry with sleeping bags under an arm, carry their suitcases. Both walk with a bow-legged strut, in-shape, faces wrinkled-tan, with sun-bleached hair. They are now, cowboys.

BARRY

Can you believe we're finally back?
That was a magical place.

JOHN

Did it have mountains?

BARRY

You bet, great, wide, rolling ones.

JOHN

I hate mountains.

Barry and John see their Mothers walking to them and stop.

Both Mothers walk past them not recognizing their own sons.

BARRY/JOHN

(both turn)

Mom?

ALICE

(spins shocked)

Barry? --Barry!

SUSANNAH

(spins shocked more)

John? --Johnny!

Mothers run to Sons, hug, then step back inspecting them.

SUSANNAH

You're --?

ALICE

men?

John offers his hand to Barry, both go to shake, then pull hands up and away to run-over their short hair *laughing*.

All Four exit as Mothers ask Sons incessant questions. Their Sons aren't listening, they're lost thinking of "The Feast."

EXT. DULLES AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

AIRPORT MOMS say good-bye to their own PASSENGER SONS and DAUGHTERS leaving on their own life-changing trips.

John and Barry with Both Mothers still machine-gun asking questions, exit out to the parking lot.

Bluma narrates over airport's traffic, commotion, and noise.

BLUMA (V.O.)

John and Barry became roommates in college, graduated together, and remained best friends. Leroy went to prison. His face became very "popular." Caleb became a T.V. meteorologist. You may have read his book about us, "Riding Life." There's even talk of making it into a movie. You've probably seen my deep-discount commercials. Kevina took over the ranch and it still exists today. We lost touch with each other over the years as survivors often do, and none of us ever rode a horse again. We didn't need to, we all bought Fords.

FADE TO BLACK.

CAPTION: *The Continental Divide still has wilderness paths.*

FADE OUT.

DEDICATION: *To the real John who died during The Pandemic. He is my best friend still. If film is forever, now he is, too.*

SUGGESTED END CREDIT SIDE-BAR

Real pictures from the actual 1968 ride including the last picture of the real John hugging a burrow wearing his hat.