

# HIGHWAY OF THE FULLER'S FIELD

by

Phil b

HIGHWAY OF THE FULLER'S FIELD

FADE IN:

Super: North Florida - 1970s.

MONTAGE OF COLORED HOME MOVIES - HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD EVENTS - COLOR GUARDS PARADE DOWN THE TRACK WITH THE RIVALING TEAMS JOINING RANK.

EXT. TERRY PARKER HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM - DAY

RUNNERS fire off the starting blocks in preparation for the 120-yard high hurdles.

OFFICIAL

Okay, listen up. You'll hear runners on your marks - set and then the sound of the gun. Understand?

The Runners acknowledge.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Good luck.

PAUL JOHNSON is a lean muscular high school sophomore track star sporting an all-American crew cut. He looks up into the viewing stands and does a double take when he recognizes his former sweetheart, EVA GOLDBERG.

OFFICIAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Runners on your marks.

Paul positions his fingers on the track behind the starting line and settles his feet in the blocks.

OFFICIAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Set.

Head down, Paul slightly raises his hips above shoulder level and inhales.

POP!

Eva flinches.

Paul fires off the blocks and blows away the competition to the home team's cheers.

He runs off the track and circles back towards the viewing stand. Eva avoids him, quickly leaving the stadium and vanishing into the crowd.

PAUL  
Eva!

FADE OUT.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul immersed in a BOY'S LIFE magazine article, Olympian Gold Medalist/hurdler Rod Milburn.

A TROPHY TABLE is spilling over with track and field ACCOLADES and MEMORABILIA. On a bedroom wall hangs a poster - XXth OLYMPIAD - MUNICH.

The phone RINGS from the kitchen.

MOM (O.S.)  
Paul!

PAUL  
Who is it?!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MOM covers the phone.

MOM  
It's that sorrowful song again.

BEGIN MUSIC CUE: Brenda Lee - "My Coloring Book."

Paul takes the phone.

MUSIC (V.O.)  
These are the eyes that watched him  
walk by - color them gray.

PAUL  
(on the phone)  
Eva?

MUSIC (V.O.)  
This is the heart that thought he  
would always be true - color it  
blue.

Paul hands the phone back.

PAUL  
Keep her on the line.

MUSIC (V.O.)  
These are the beads I wore until  
she came between - color them  
green. These are the arms that held  
him and touched him, then lost him  
somehow. Color them empty now.

Click.

MOM  
She hung up!

PAUL (O.S.)  
Call back. Get her mother. Hurry!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul bolts out with a coat and motorcycle helmet.

MOM  
It's busy!

PAUL (O.S.)  
Try again! Keep trying!

CUT TO:

INT. EVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eva sits in a shadowed corner, pitching back and forth.

MUSIC (V.O.)  
This is the room I sleep in and  
walk in and weep in and hide in  
that nobody sees - color it lonely,  
please.

EXT. UPSCALE GOLDBERG'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

A deluge. Paul skids to a stop as his Honda motorcycle loses control on the wet lawn. He performs a forced crash by laying the bike down and hopping off. He bolts to the front door.

PAUL  
Mrs. Goldberg! Open up!

INT. GOLDBERG'S FOYER - CONTINUOUS

MRS. GOLDBERG  
Paul?

He sprints past and up the staircase.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Where's the Judge's gun?

MRS. GOLDBERG  
Oh, God, no! Eva?!

A forced entry.

CRASH!

PAUL (O.S.)  
NO! NO!

POP!

FADE TO BLACK.

MUSIC (V.O.)  
This is the boy whose love I  
depended on - color him gone.

END MUSIC CUE:

Super: One year later.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

The Trophy table is DUST-COVERED and TATTERED, and the wall poster is torn. Now wearing shoulder-length hair, Paul lies in bed looking at a PHOTO ALBUM. A COUNTER CARD spills out.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. EVA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Eva's scurrying around the bedroom. She looks under the bed.

PAUL  
You've looked there.

EVA  
Give me a clue.

She moves to the closet.

PAUL  
You're getting warmer.

She looks through her extensive shoe rack.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
You're hot now.

She finds a card hidden behind leather boots.

EVA  
Found it!

PAUL  
Happy Valentine's Day.

She runs to his arms.

EVA  
When did you get in here?

PAUL  
While you were showering.

EVA  
Now yours.

She opens her dresser and hands him a Valentine card you would receive as a third-grader - his name crayoned on the envelope. He opens it and smiles.

END OF FLASHBACK:

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colored inside - "I Love You!"

Mom gingerly opens the door and sticks her head inside.

MOM  
It's nearly two.

PAUL  
I'm up.

MOM  
Can I make you a fried baloney sandwich?

PAUL  
Sure. Would you cut it triangularly?

MOM

You bet.

INT. BARBARA JEAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul enters baby sister BARBARA JEAN's room, who's feeding her gerbils.

PAUL

More pups?

BARBARA JEAN

Gerbils are very social and interactive rodents.

Paul gives the patriarch a piece of baloney sandwich.

PAUL

How old is Big Daddy?

BARBARA JEAN

He just turned five.

PAUL

Not typical for gerbils to live that long.

BARBARA JEAN

Whatever.

PAUL

What's eating you?

BARBARA JEAN

Everyone's asking why you are in my homeroom class when you're supposed to be a grade ahead. It's embarrassing.

PAUL

I'll make up the credits by summer.

BARBARA JEAN

But you won't walk with your graduating class.

PAUL

The milks in the bag.

BARBARA JEAN

So you say. You're out all night drinking and tom-catting with your creepy friends, sleeping until noon, and cutting classes. You've gone cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs.

PAUL

I don't need psychotherapy from you.

Paul turns to leave.

BARBARA JEAN

Take your sandwich.

(beat)

Momma's missing her good silk stockings. Tell me you're not holdin' up liquor stores.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul sneaks out the front door.

BARBARA JEAN

Are we to wait for the other shoe to drop?

PAUL

Lock up. Back to bed.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

LEE, age 17, clean, neat, and single, comes out of the shadows and sidles up to Paul.

LEE

Bug-A-Boo!

PAUL

A guy could get shot.

LEE

He's late.

CORKY, a rebel yell 19-year-old with a horseshoe mustache, chugs up the street in his 1968 Volkswagen Bug, kills the engine, and glides up. He turns to Paul.



CORKY  
(nods to Lee)  
Who invited the bashful Barbie Boy?

INT. VW BUG/STREET - CONTINUOUS

The Boys case a house.

CORKY  
Do you see the VW Wagon parked out  
front?

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The Boys lay a lug wrench, bumper jack, and blanket on the ground before covering their faces with Lady Berkshire stockings.

LEE  
Are these thigh-highs?

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

CLICK - TICK - CLICK - TICK.

PAUL  
(whispers to Lee)  
Ground's wet. Hand me the blanket.

CORKY  
Shhhhh.

Paul removes the rear tire. Lee wheels it out.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A light illuminates the front porch. Footsteps.

Paul moves under the Wagon to get a glimpse out the other side. Lee notices the bumper jack listing on the wet ground.

LEE  
Psst. Get out.

Paul shushes him.

Lee quickly pulls Paul out from underneath just before the bumper jack collapses - THUD!

Hurried footsteps.

CORKY  
Cut and shuck!

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The Boys bolt for the car. Lee shallow dives into the front seat as Paul slips and falls off the running board, landing in the street and losing a sneaker. Homeowner, JAKE, is gunning for him.

EXT. SEVERAL BLOCKS AWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jake is pacing himself in a rhythmic pattern like a seasoned long-distance runner. Paul picks up the pace for several blocks with Jake breathing down his neck.

Paul makes a sharp divergence off the street and toward the four-foot manicured ficus hedge groves. He clears the first with perfect form while Jake jumps high and falls, tumbling to the ground.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Paul hides in the shrubs. We hear Jake a few blocks away.

JAKE (O.S.)  
I got your shoe! I'll find you!

Paul looks down at his tattered sock.

PAUL  
Damn Converse.

The VW drives past. Paul WHISTLES and sprints up to the car.

CORKY  
Hot Lips O'Houlihan just saved you  
from a two-ton slab.

FADE OUT.

INT. VW BUG - NIGHT

CORKY  
Let's go to Skippin' Jenny's for  
that two-dollar Negro breakfast.

PAUL  
We got something better that won't  
cost you a dime.

CUT TO:

INT. VW BUG - FORD RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Lee writes:

PLEASE LEAVE TWO EXTRA HALF GALLONS OF CHOCOLATE MILK AND  
YOUR TASTY DONUTS. THANK YOU, MRS. FORD.

PAUL  
He writes with a hand that is  
copperplate.

CORKY  
An entry in his heart-shaped diary?

LEE  
And now for the piece de  
resistance.

PAUL  
And what would that be,  
Mademoiselle?

Lee pulls lipstick from his pocket and applies it to his  
lips. He kisses the note - the lip print smiles back.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Ooh, la la. Fantastique!

CORKY  
Freak me running.

LEE  
(to Paul)  
Go ahead.

PAUL  
I'm one shoe shy.

LEE  
Go on. Get.

Paul exits the VW to plant the note in Ford's milk box. Corky  
watches Lee from the rearview mirror.

CORKY  
French twink. Don't try anything  
funny.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORD RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

The Skinner's Dairy MILKMAN hops out of his truck with two milk bottles. He reads the note and then scratches his head. He two-steps it back to the truck to procure the extra order.

CUT TO:

EXT. VW BUG - NIGHT

Paul exits the VW and chucks the empty milk bottles.

PAUL  
Smell you later.

LEE  
May I get a ride home?

CORKY  
The hell you will. Get. Take the  
Max Factor - leave the donuts.

EXT. PAUL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Paul taps on the bedroom window.

PAUL  
Barbara Jean. Let me in.

FADE OUT.

EXT. LEE'S CARPORT - NIGHT

MR. BURGER, Lee's father, hands Paul the car keys.

MR. BURGER  
Only you.

PAUL  
Yes, sir.

MR. BURGER  
Not even him.

LEE

Daddy, I'm flesh and bone.

MR. BURGER

I found empty beer cans under the seat last week. I don't drink Falstaff.

LEE

Isn't that William Shakespeare's fat, boasting, cowardly knight? "If I tell thee a lie, spit in my face, call me a horse."

MR. BURGER

Don't play me for a fool, son.

Mr. Burger swings open the tailgate to his 1972 Ford LTD Country Squire. He lifts a neatly folded blanket and removes a 38-caliber handgun underneath.

LEE

And you're concerned about a few empty beer cans?

MR. BURGER

Have you forgotten, son? I'm a divorce lawyer in America.  
(to Paul)  
No drinking.

PAUL

Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. JAX LIQUORS DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

Paul is alone at the wheel of the Ford Country Squire.

INT. FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE/JAX LIQUORS DRIVE-IN - CONTINUOUS

He pulls through the drive-in activating the customer signal bell. A middle-aged, curbside store clerk, GEORGY, greets him wearing a Santa outfit.

PAUL

Hey there, Georgy Girl.

GEORGY

How you doin', Paul?

PAUL  
Fair-to-middlin'. Falstaff's on  
sale. Load up two cases of that  
natty daddy.

Rolls her eyes.

GEORGY  
Let's see some ID.

He hands her the fake ID.

PAUL  
Read it and weep.

She lowers her reading glasses.

GEORGY  
William Paul Johnson, January 27,  
1951. That makes you twenty-one.

She shakes her head.

GEORGY (CONT'D)  
If you weren't so wet behind the  
ears.

PAUL  
I was a grunt in Nam, Georgy.

GEORGY  
I've seen that thousand-yard stare  
often passing through this drive-in  
- but not you; you're too dewy-  
eyed.

She hands back the ID.

GEORGY (CONT'D)  
I had my firstborn at sixteen, and  
he was twenty-one. Talk about  
robbin' the cradle.

PAUL  
How old is your youngin' now?

GEORGY  
Huh-uh. Good try, sugar.

She leaves to fetch the beer.

EXT. JAX LIQUORS DRIVE-IN - CONTINUOUS

Georgy returns, pulling a hand truck.

PAUL  
Stand back; It's a man-size job.

Paul gets out of the car. Curbside lighting reveals Georgy's Maybelline concealed black eye.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Why do you let him beat you like  
Balaam's mule? Thrice smitten and  
you end up dead.

GEORGY  
He's gone to Kissimmee. It's all  
but over for him.

PAUL  
You said that before and here we  
are again. Let me hold that pen.

Paul writes his phone number on the beer receipt.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Before it comes to blows next time -  
get out and call me. Do you hear?

GEORGY  
There won't be the next time, I  
promise.  
(beat)  
I'm off after 2 am if you need some  
willing ears.

He gives her Santa outfit a once-over.

PAUL  
He's making a list and checking it  
twice.

EXT. WINN-DIXIE/PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lee and another friend, PETE, 17, a stoner musical savant,  
tumble inside the car.

LEE  
What took you so long? Was Mrs.  
Robinson seducing you again?

PAUL  
The shoe was on the other foot.

Pete pulls out a joint and lights up.

PETE  
Tennessee red top. I like my fries  
extra crispy.

LEE  
Not in my Dad's car, dumbass.

CUT TO:

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul, Lee, and Pete enter a ROCKIN' CHRISTMAS party with all the trimmings - JOCKS, STONERS, JESUS FREAKS, MEAN GIRLS, and a GARAGE BAND.

HOST CAROL  
Park the beer in the kitchen.

MARIA, 19, tipsy, walks up to Paul.

MARIA  
Paul?

PAUL  
Maria.

MARIA  
Look at you - your hair. You look  
like Gregg Allman.

PAUL  
Are you home for the holidays?

MARIA  
Until the first, then I'm back in  
Gainesville.

PAUL  
I never saw you drink before.

MARIA  
Something I picked up in college.

PAUL  
Where's Ronnie?

MARIA  
Who's Ronnie?

PAUL  
Your fiance.



MARIA

You know we're more tumultuous than  
Liz Taylor and Richard Burton -  
it's becoming toxic.

Paul notices RONNIE in the kitchen nibbling on ANOTHER GIRL'S  
earlobe.

Maria starts sobbing.

PAUL

Do you need a ride home?

MARIA

Paul, I can't get it out of my  
head. Eva was my best friend; she  
was bright, like her daddy. We were  
going to Berkeley together and  
becoming ACLU lawyers.

PAUL

Always the activists.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Paul makes his way inside with WELDON, age 16, an AFRICAN-  
AMERICAN - All-Conference High School, split-end.

WELDON

She's spirited and quick-tempered.  
Her Papa's a judge - a get-out-of-  
jail-free card.

PAUL

No blind date, bro.

INT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Paul nods to the restaurant's rear table, decked out with the  
STAINLESS BANNER-SYMBOL OF THE CONFEDERACY.

PAUL

Pappy's dining tonight.

WELDON

(Johnny Carson like)  
I did not know that.

EXT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

A train of '57 Chevy's - adorned with rally-ready Rebel Flags arrives, followed by an Opel Blitz - closed-canopy truck.

CREWCUTS IN FLANNEL SHIRTS exit the vehicles and set up a perimeter around the client's car while others remove a STONEWALL JACKSON statue from the canopy truck, placing it in front of the restaurant.

CORPORAL RANDOLPH SCOTT HAWTHORNE, a.k.a., PAPPY, AGE 125, exits the Chevy Bel Air. He's known to be the oldest surviving civil war veteran.

V.O.

(singing)

"Go down, Moses. Way down in Egypt  
land. Tell old Pharaoh to let my  
people go."

Pappy peers over to a crowd - Beret and leather-clad BLACK PANTHERS.

EVA

(raised clenched fist)

Power to the People!

EVA GOLDBERG, age 17, high yellow, and FEM PANTHER, age 20, are sporting 1970s Diana Ross vintage Afros.

PAPPY

I thank you for your greeting of  
the faithful at the Pearly Gates,  
and now if you would kindly let us  
mosey on by and as you colored  
folks would say, "to collor a hot."

FEM PANTHER (O.S.)

Listen to this dumb cracker!  
"Collor a hot."

V.O.

(singing)

"Tell old Pharaoh to let my people  
go."

CUT TO:

INT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Pappy smiles at Weldon, inhaling the aroma.

PAPPY

I can smell that bar-da-cious fried chicken and those flaky, light biscuits.

WELDON

Their cream peas are to die for, Pappy.

He comes closer to a friendly huddle.

PAPPY

Son, there wasn't a single significant battle waged in Ohio during the war of Yankee aggression. Why in God's green earth would you carry the colors up there? Florida Gators are on a streak.

PAUL

He's also courting the folks from Clarke County, Georgia, Pappy.

PAPPY

If that boy had an idea, he would die of loneliness.

CUT TO:

INT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN - TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Pappy begins the soliloquy.

PAPPY

Gettysburg, 1863. I was General William Barksdale's color guard. Mississippi's finest. Just sixteen - knee-high to a grasshopper. Anchored near the Peach Orchard. Objective - Cemetery Ridge. Yankee General Dan Sickles, as pigheaded as arrogant, broke rank with General Meade's defense leaving his flanks opened to wedge straight to Washington and Lincoln's unjust wicked war. We toe the mark until Bobby Lee's order - good ole boys. We hit 'em Yankees like a ton of bricks. Charge 'em, boys! Give 'em hell!

EVA (O.S.)  
 With unity and justice for all, no  
 ungodly force will block our march  
 against bigotry and racism!

PAPPY  
 What in tarnation is she jabbering?

EVA  
 We will tear down Silent Sam from  
 Lexington, Virginia, to sea to  
 shining sea!

PAPPY  
 Can a man finish his biscuit and  
 gravy? I don't understand you  
 folks. When we tell you praying  
 Negroes to sit in the colored  
 balcony, you don't. When we ask you  
 not to sit in the front pews, you  
 do what you oughtn't to do.

FEM PANTHER  
 This ain't no "Nigger Heaven."

EVA  
 Right on, sister! One of these  
 days, for the grace of God and the  
 force of truth, we will elect our  
 Negro President to this United  
 States of America.

FEM PANTHER  
 And you will pay reparations to  
 atone for the sins of your fathers,  
 and we will sit any damn place we,  
 please!

Pappy stands and feints a heart attack like Fred "Sanford and Son."

PAPPY  
 Oh, oh, oh, this is the big one!  
 You hear that, Elizabeth? I'm  
 coming to join you.

EVA  
 Die, you creepy-ass corn-cracker!

He collapses dead to the CHEERS of the Activists.

BEAT:

Suddenly Pappy revives.

CREWCUTS

Lazarus!

He rises to face Eva.

PAPPY

Shut your face, you nappy-head  
horse-whipped half-breed!  
(the rebel yell)  
Yelp! Yelp, yelp!

GRISWOLD AND GUNNISON - BOOM!

Pandemonium, tables topsy-turvy - chicken-a-flyin' - food fight.

CREWCUTS (O.S.)

Yelp! Yelp, yelp!

PAUL

(incidentally to the  
waitress)  
Mind wrapping up these chicken wings?

EXT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The Panthers stampede outside.

A '65 Pontiac Bonneville peels off, trailing Stonewall from its rear bumper to a rope.

Crewcuts unleash the Opel Blitz tailgate replacing the hijacked Stonewall with a duplicate inside.

INT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The INFERNO spreads into the Dining Hall - flames lick around Pappy lapping up the oxygen.

PAPPY

(to camera)  
You're always gonna have Pappy.

EXT. BEACH ROAD CHICKEN DINNERS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The POLICE AND FIRE arrive.

INT. POLICE WAGON - NIGHT

The Police Wagon is chocked full of Activists. Paul sits dumbfounded, clutching his doggy bag.

EVA

When will these Dixiecrats ever  
learn that if the Negro fails,  
America fails with it?

WELDON

Eva, please meet my friend, Paul.

EVA

Hey Paul. Why do you look so  
gloomy? My father will have us out  
within the hour.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

PAUL

Maria, stop your crying. Let me  
have Ronnie get you some coffee.

MARIA

You've always been so sweet - the  
trustworthy boy scout.

PAUL

I was kicked out of Webelos.

MARIA

May I make a Christmas wish?

PAUL

Sure thing.

Under the mistletoe, she gives Paul a friendly kiss on the cheek. Ronnie bolts over.

RONNIE

Get an earful?

PAUL

About as much as you did. With all  
the time spent in the kitchen,  
you'd think you'd bring the lady  
some coffee.

RONNIE  
Screw you and your righteous  
indignation!

WELDON (O.S.)  
Ha! Ha!

Weldon is an audience to Paul and Ronnie's spat. Pete turns to Weldon while burning a roach.

PETE  
The ability to laugh heartily is,  
in part, the salvation of the  
American Negro, and it does much to  
keep him from going the way of the  
Indian.

WELDON  
"The common curse of mankind -  
folly, and ignorance, be thine in  
great revenue." - Willy Shakes.

PETE  
I'm hip.

Pete walks off, burning his lips on the roach. Paul joins Weldon.

WELDON  
Pillow talk with Cleopatra?

PAUL  
No. Nothing like that. She's a good  
kid.

PEARL, a Rubenesque white cheerleader, gives Weldon a big smile.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
James Weldon, you've just colored  
up as if caught leaving a dead  
raccoon on a porch.

WELDON  
She's on the lookout for Negro  
stuff.

PAUL  
Watch yourself. A single spark  
could start a prairie fire.

WELDON

You got to ease into the situation,  
push it to the front burner, and  
then put it on a low-country boil.

PAUL

That's your take on race mixing?  
Sounds like cookin' Momma's  
Frogmore stew.

WELDON

Come on, Mannish boy. Let's make a  
beer run - it's high time we jaw.

Weldon turns to Pearl and mouths: "Be right back."

CUT TO:

INT. 1968 PLYMOUTH FURY - NIGHT

Weldon opens the glove compartment revealing a 38-caliber  
handgun.

PAUL

Expecting trouble?

WELDON

I'm a black man living in the dirty-  
south. That's the stink of truth.

PAUL

Ohio State is considering you as  
their future split-end. Doesn't  
that give you a safe haven north of  
the Mason-Dixon line?

WELDON

(smug)  
Georgia Bulldogs have an interest  
too.

PAUL

And the Gators?

WELDON

They ain't calling.

PAUL

The hell they won't. You Benedict  
Arnold. If that's your intention,  
you might as well load a round in  
the chamber and finish it right  
here and now.



POP - the engine backfires.

CUT TO:

INT. 1968 PLYMOUTH FURY - CONTINUOUS

WELDON

You've run-a-muck.

PAUL

How's that?

WELDON

You're like the self-indulgent prodigal son. What are you rebelling against?

PAUL

Whatcha got?

WELDON

You're in baby sister's homeroom.

PAUL

I'll make up the credits by summer.

WELDON

But you won't walk with your graduating class.

PAUL

Since when have you become my guidance counselor?

WELDON

The day you turned on, tuned in, and dropped out. It's time you dust off your dreams and get your shit together.

PAUL

Did Coach Don put you up to this? You know he calls me Betsy because of my hair.

WELDON

You were an all-state champ, 120-high hurdles. That Negro from Raines, Messala, is getting a full scholarship to Florida and can't even spell his name right. What's your future?

PAUL

Not much. Going to quit cutting -  
make it to class more often. I'm a  
pretty good speller.

WELDON

You would have sailed through your  
senior year with those college  
scouts nipping at your heels.

PAUL

You're a lamp of knowledge with  
your cottonfield philosophy.

Weldon stops the car at the side of the road.

WELDON

Can I be brutally honest with you?  
Negro to Negro?

Beat.

PAUL

The suspense is killing me.

WELDON

There's nothing you can do to bring  
her back.

PAUL

I miss her, Weldon. It comes in  
waves like an ache in my heart - it  
cuts me to the bone. I can't sleep  
at night.

Weldon gives a sympathetic nod.

WELDON

I hear you. Only one woman can do  
me like that.

He puts on an eight-track tape.

WELDON (CONT'D)

Sarah Vaughan.

BEGIN MUSIC CUE: SARAH VAUGHAN - A LOVER'S CONCERTO.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. EVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

PAUL  
What is it?

EVA  
I'm on fire. I'm crying hot tears,  
Paul. It's like a shock straight to  
my head. It balances everything.

He gently caresses her face.

EVA (CONT'D)  
When we cuddle, I can smell your  
neck, my breasts warm against your  
back my nipples seduce you. I was a  
good girl when I met you, a clean  
girl. But you make me feel  
different, soft. You wouldn't leave  
me, Paul, would you? Tell me you  
love me.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. 1968 PLYMOUTH FURY - CONTINUOUS

Paul stares out the window.

PAUL  
(under his breath)  
I love you.

He turns to Weldon, immersed in the music, balling like a  
baby.

They pull off the main street and drive up a dirt road to a  
Liquor store and a large lit sign.

KELLY AIN'T MAD AT NOBODY - CEPT DAN.

END MUSIC CUE:

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

PAUL  
Uncle Kelly got any of that  
Smokestack Lightnin'?

WELDON  
He's not some boondocks Negro.

INT. SCREENED-IN AREA/LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Two pearly teeth JOCKS exit carrying cases of beer.

JOCK

Hey, soul brother. I heard you might play for the Buckeyes. It's so cold up there your nipples will cut glass.

PAUL

He's also courting the folks in Athens, Georgia.

JOCK

What's with the daffy blonde?

WELDON

Pay Betsy no mind.

UNCLE KELLY, African-American, Mid 40's, and Weldon embrace.

WELDON (CONT'D)

Uncle Kelly. Look what the hound dragged in.

UNCLE KELLY

If it isn't Goldilocks.

WELDON

And wantin' everything "just right."

PAUL

I came for a taste Uncle Kelly.

UNCLE KELLY

I don't want no high sheriff driving up my road kicking up dust, busting up mason jars and gallon jugs. I'm already skirting the law by selling three-two beer to these college-bound rich kids. Are you playing any ball?

WELDON

Girl's slow pitch.

Paul gives Weldon a friendly punch.

A THUNDEROUS ROAR of a muscle car is screaming up the main road.

WELDON (CONT'D)  
1971 Pontiac GTO. I can smell a  
rebel yell.

Uncle Kelly quickly runs inside.

WELDON (CONT'D)  
I suggest we duck!

WHITE MALE VOICES (O.S.)  
COUNTRY COONS! CAKEWALK THIS!

POP, POP, POP. They SHOOT up the store sign.

PAUL  
PECKERWOODS!

Uncle Kelly comes flying out the front door with a cocked 12-  
gauge shotgun loaded for bear.

UNCLE KELLY  
So you want to play rough? Say  
hello to grapeshot and canister!

BOOM!

SOUNDS of shattered glass as the GTO SCREAMS off.

WELDON  
(to Uncle Kelly)  
Are you crazy?! Do you want twenty-  
to-life in a phosphate mine in  
Starke, Florida?

UNCLE KELLY  
I winged those young bucks.

He turns to Paul.

UNCLE KELLY (CONT'D)  
Peckerwood? Are you from  
Mississippi? I haven't heard that  
said in years.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Paul, Weldon, and Uncle Kelly drink moonshine in the store's  
rear while watching the front through a two-way mirror. A  
YOUNG, BLACK WOMAN manages the register.

PAUL  
This stuff's shit wicked.

UNCLE KELLY  
Williston's finest.

PAUL  
Uncle Kelly? Your sign out front -  
the one that just got shot up - why  
are you mad at Dan?

WELDON  
Why are you mad at life?

Paul gives Weldon another friendly punch.

UNCLE KELLY  
Dan was like a brother. He sang  
like the late Otis Redding. You had  
to hear him play that old cottage  
organ. It was a rapturous pleasure.  
After Korea, Dan and I were seeking  
a better field. We were going to  
open a Negro cemetery. Negroes die  
and get buried too. But no, not  
Dan. So we agreed on a liquor  
store. We put on our Sunday best  
and shopped a business plan for the  
downtown banks. The White ex-  
masters tightened up on the scale  
of "10" on the pucker factor. They  
don't want Negroes selling liquor,  
let alone drinking, unless they  
sold it. They want to eat the last  
biscuit in the house. You know how  
they do. To hell with them. We took  
it to the brothers. We ended up  
puttin' together enough money to  
open up a small shop. We bribed a  
city dude to get the liquor  
license. He made Jim Crow  
accommodations setting us up in  
Springfield - "Niggertown," he  
said. So here we is.

PAUL  
Bootstrapping at its finest.

WELDON  
A Virginia pig farmer once said,  
"We select the black litter members  
for raising, as they alone have a  
good chance of living." -  
"On the Origin of the Species."

PAUL  
So what happened, Uncle Kelly?

UNCLE KELLY

The fire of '66. Dan was a galloping horse junkie and would have sold his momma for a fix. Someone paid him to torch the place. He lep me high and dry.

PAUL

You got insurance.

UNCLE KELLY

No insurance company would touch us with a ten-foot pole. I had to start all over again. I put my hands to the plow and haven't looked back.

PAUL

How do you know Dan done it?

WELDON

He had third-degree burns on his arms and hands. Luckily he wasn't kilt. They sent him to Raiford for five years, Bradford County.

KELLY AIN'T MAD AT NOBODY - CEPT DAN.

CUT TO:

EXT. 1968 PLYMOUTH FURY - STREET - NIGHT

Weldon picks up tail light shards and shell casings scattered on the road.

WELDON

Let's blood trail this buck.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Weldon matches the pieces to a parked PONTIAC GTO with a shattered tail light.

WELDON

Flesh wound.

Paul nods to the party house.

PAUL

Entrer.

WELDON

Aprés toi.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

THE FAB FIVE, the Varsity linemen of the high school football team, has set up the line of scrimmage in Carol's living room. All are legless with liquor. They shift formation revealing All-State quarterback RICHARD "DICK" DEKKER, wearing skewed Christmas antlers.

WELDON

Just as I thought. An eight-point whitetail.

DEKKER

SET HUT!

Dekker drops back and fires at Weldon. Weldon catches the ball, saving a Scully & Scully floor vase.

HOST CAROL

Phew! Family heirloom.

INT. PARTY HOUSE/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul enters the bathroom. MARY, a Bible-saturated Jesus Freak, is kneeling with RALPH, who's drunk and shallow diving into the toilet.

PAUL

If it isn't, Faith, Hope, and Charity down in the trenches tonight.

MARY

They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

PAUL

And the beat goes on. I'm Paul.

MARY

Mary Melchizedek.

PAUL

Polish?



MARY  
It's Hebrew.

RALPH  
BARF!

PAUL  
Watch my shoes, Rookie.

Paul glimpses at Mary's gold cross pendant that takes refuge in Abraham's bosom.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Nature calls Mary.

MARY  
Ralph, let me help you up to the sink.

Ralph staggers to stand.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Jesus loves you, Ralph.

PAUL  
Yeah, Ralph. He wound the universe, got it in motion, and stepped away like an absentee landlord.

RALPH  
BARF!

MARY  
Not the God I serve.  
(to Ralph)  
I'll be right outside.

She steps out. Paul relieves himself. He has second thoughts before washing his hands in the soiled sink. He gingerly steps out.

PAUL  
I think Ralph's ready for that cup of self-righteousness.

MARY  
Jesus loves you too, Paul.

PAUL  
Not tonight. Gotta go. I left something on the stove.

RALPH (O.S.)  
No food! BARF!

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

JENS, a German exchange student, reads English off an index card.

JENS  
(English with a strong  
German accent)  
"We have ways of making you talk."

Dekker and the Fab Five crack up laughing.

DEKKER  
Go ahead. Read the "Great Escape."

JENS (O.S.)  
"Twenty-days isolation. The  
cooler!"

More laughter.

DEKKER  
Sargent Schultz, Hogan's Heroes -  
go on.

JENS  
"I see nothing, I was not here. I  
did not even get up this morning."

DEKKER  
Freakin' Kraut.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Pete douses his joint with pinched saliva and places it in his shirt pocket. He opens a leather case, takes out his flute, lowers his lips over the edge of the mouth hole, and belts out - CROSS-EYED MARY.

TOOTLE, TOOTLE, TOOT, TRILL, TRILL, TRILL.

DEKKER  
Freakin' A! Tull!

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

LYNN and BRENDA arrive. They are the attractive/WASPY new girls in town.

DEKKER  
Hot damn. Bumper sweet.

Dekker stiff-arms his way over.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Brenda is reading the room.

BRENDA

This party's lame. I haven't seen a single Blue, Black, or High Yella yet.

LYNN

Moon-time tardiness - colored-people-time.

Dekker sidles up to Lynn.

DEKKER

Tickle your ass with a feather?

LYNN

Pardon?

DEKKER

Particularly nasty weather.

LYNN

Yes, and it's about to get colder.

DEKKER

Dick Dekker. You're new in town.

LYNN

My father was reassigned to Mayport from the U.S. Naval Activities in London.

DEKKER

Is it true what they say about military brats?

LYNN

That we know the metric system?

DEKKER

That they cut loose and go with the devil.

LYNN

That's a nice story, but in what chapter do you shut the freak up?

A BAND MEMBER tosses Dekker a microphone.

DEKKER  
 (mimicking a Navy recruitment Ad)  
 Dawn launch, Sea of Japan.

A guitar riff.

DEKKER (CONT'D)  
 See your recruiter or call toll-free. The Navy - It's not just a job; it's an adventure.

Lynn forces a smile. Dekker turns to leave and gives her a once over.

DEKKER (CONT'D)  
 Madame Onassis got nothin' on you.

BRENDA  
 Do you know who that was?

LYNN  
 Some jerk with a feather fetish.

CUT TO:

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Paul meets significant glances with Lynn.

BRENDA  
 What does he want?

PAUL  
 (to Lynn nodding toward Dekker)  
 He's a Dick.

BRENDA  
 So you say. Four hundred eighty-three attempts, three hundred and twenty-seven completions, fifty-one touchdowns, and five interceptions. That's a Dick with a future. You look the type who bum cigarettes.

PAUL  
 You're so delightful. Tell me why.

He turns back to Lynn.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 That's where I've seen you, Elsberry's science class. I'm Paul.

LYNN

I'm Lynn.

They shake hands - ZAP.

PAUL

A love connection?

BRENDA

Okay, break huddle. If you made it to class more often, you would know that static electricity is frequent during the colder season and drier air.

PAUL

You're tougher than a two-dollar steak.

Brenda pulls Lynn away.

BRENDA

To the little girl's room.

PAUL

Watch your step inside.

Pete walks up.

PETE

Rumor has it she's a Navy Brat with seafaring prowess, if you catch my drift.

Lynn turns and gives Paul a playful smile. Dekker sneers as he looks on.

PAUL

Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary sings as Pete accompanies her on the guitar. Dekker and his Cronies continue to cut up. Paul turns to them.

PAUL

Let the lady sing!

FADE OUT.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - MIDNIGHT

Weldon and Pearl command the microphones.

WELDON

Darkness - where the beast of the  
forest creeps forth. Feel the funk.

BEGIN MUSIC CUE: Chakachas - "Jungle Fever."

Guitar riff - sax.

PEARL

The witching hour.

Enter - an Ebony mass of KOOL KATS Electric-Slide in making  
up the Soul Train dance line. Lynn gleans from a Christmas  
box of Russell Stovers while Brenda is like a kid in a candy  
store checking out the Talent.

BRENDA

Save the Darks for me.

WELDON

(singing)  
Suave, suave, suave.

PEARL

(moaning)  
No, no, no, ay, ay.

Mean drunk Dekker sits alone, stewing.

DEKKER

The musk of slave quarters.

PEARL

(more moans)  
"No, no, no, ay, ay..."

WELDON

(heavy breathing)

PEARL

(heavy breathing)

MUSIC CUE ENDS: Trombone - a pedal tone F.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lynn and Brenda leave with a couple of Kool Kats. Pearl is all over Weldon like a leather trench. Dekker reels and staggers up.

DEKKER

Suppose it isn't the patriarch  
uncle of the old slave regime. What  
wouldn't you give to be a white  
man?

WELDON

I'd have to think that one over.  
But at any rate, I am sure that I  
wouldn't give anything to be like  
you. No, I'd lose too much.

Pearl laughs.

DEKKER

Do you find that funny, Big Pearl?  
(to Weldon)  
You're one slick rascal Buckceaser -  
an ebony cane tipped with a ball of  
ivory.

PAUL

Chill out, man.

DEKKER

Who asked you to chime in? Maybe  
that stuck-up Navy Brat would find  
it interesting knowing that your  
loopy EX blew her brains out.

Paul lurches toward Dekker. Weldon and The Fab Five have to restrain the two.

FADE OUT.

EXT. APARTMENT FOYER - NIGHT

Paul's holding two Falstaffs from a six-pack plastic ring. He knocks.

Georgy opens the door, still wearing her Santa outfit.

GEORGY

Come rest your coat. Want me to  
cook you up something?

PAUL  
No, thank you kindly.

INT. GEORGY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

GEORGY  
You look a little down in the  
dumps.

PAUL  
Just one of those nights.

GEORGY  
Let me get out of these.

She exits for the bedroom.

It's a simple apartment with a kitchen table and chairs. An Amish Hickory Armoire of some value is too large for the one-bedroom apartment - probably inherited or a hand-me-down.

Georgy returns wearing a halter top and cutoffs.

She brings over a bottle of Jack Daniels and a couple of glasses.

GEORGY (CONT'D)  
Tennessee whiskey?

They down a shot.

PAUL  
Clean as a hound's tooth.

GEORGY  
Speaking of hounds, I know this  
fellow curb-side - Lovie McCoy.

PAUL  
I hope there's something funny in  
this.

GEORGY  
Let me finish the story - you'll  
find the humor.

Paul nods.

GEORGY (CONT'D)  
On Thanksgiving day, Lovie had a no-  
holds-barred with his honored wife,  
whom I'll call the Real McCoy;  
(MORE)



GEORGY (CONT'D)

when she stabbed him with such  
"hell hath no fury," she was  
considered induction to the Blade  
Magazine Cutlery Hall of Fame.

PAUL

You playing me?

GEORGY

Maybe the Hall of Fame stuff, but  
the rest of the story is in good  
faith.

PAUL

Continue.

GEORGY

It was no secret that Lovie was  
flirting with the Westside ladies.  
His last fling was with a cute  
British exchange student from  
Stratford-upon-Avon, the cashier  
who worked at Firestone Tires off  
Lem Turner.

PAUL

I bought momma some Wide Oval  
Radials there.

GEORGY

He brought her by the liquor store  
several times. I figured she wasn't  
the Mrs.

She pours another glass.

GEORGY (CONT'D)

Lovie had an earlier festive dinner  
with her. At the same time, the  
Real McCoy was laboring behind the  
oven with a fourteen-pounder  
complete with all the trimmings,  
cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes,  
gravy, and homemade pumpkin pie.

PAUL

So, it all came down to a simple  
balancing act.

GEORGY

Could think but didn't. Real McCoy  
was ready to sit down when Lovie  
had the stupids to tell her he had  
just "et."

PAUL  
Et. Commonly said in the English  
Midlands.

BAM, BAM, BAM!

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Who's hammering this late?

STANLEY, fit as a butcher's dog kicks the door open.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Has anyone ever taught you how to  
knock, Hoss?

STANLEY  
Who's the long-haired faggot  
drinking my whiskey?

GEORGY  
Stanley, you got no business here!

PAUL  
So you must be the cowardly woman  
beater from Mickey Mouse world.

STANLEY  
(to Georgy)  
You slapjaw bitch!

Stanley moves to hit her when Paul pounces, breaking a chair  
over his head. He grabs Paul and rams him headfirst into the  
Amish Hickory Armoire.

PAUL  
Help me, babe.

CLICK!

GEORGY  
Back off! I'll shoot you dead!

STANLEY  
Where did you get that peashooter?

GEORGY  
You're done beating up folks. Now  
get out!

Stanley smirks as he looks at Paul.

GEORGY (CONT'D)  
Leave him be! Now go!

He snatches the whiskey bottle and leaves.

Paul gingerly rises from the hickory heap. They return to the table, double down on another whiskey bottle, and pick up where they left off.

GEORGY (CONT'D)

So, as I was saying, the Real McCoy went the Big Ape. She threw the turkey in Lovie's face, and he slapped her and put her in one of those Great Malenko wrestling holds you see at the coliseum. She broke free, grabbed the carving knife, and stabbed him dead to rights.

PAUL

She killed him?

GEORGY

No. He survived. Wouldn't press charges. He told the police it was a big misunderstanding - that she had mistaken him for a turkey.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGY'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgy grimaces as she dabs Paul's cuts with peroxide.

PAUL

You should see the other guy.

GEORGY

If I recall, correct me if I'm wrong, he hightailed out unscathed other than his pride.

PAUL

Ouch!

Beat:

GEORGY

Your head broke up my chifferobe real good.

PAUL

(coy)

So where's my nickel, Miss. Mayella?

GEORGY  
(flirtatious)  
Don't got no nickel.

PAUL  
Halter top and cutoffs - this will  
surely be the end of me.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

Paul sits on his motorcycle, staring at Eva's house a block away.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. EVA'S HOUSE DAY

EVA  
I'm a maidenhead when it comes to  
motorcycles.

PAUL  
A few ground rules, Milady. You  
want to follow my lead. When I  
lean, you lean with me. You look  
this side or that side, but not  
straight because we'll bump heads.

Paul places a helmet on her head.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Careful now; watch your ears. There  
we go. Now watch the mufflers;  
they're hot. Put your left foot on  
the peg and use it to boost  
yourself to the other side. Watch  
my tail-

Eva swings over her leg, kicking the tail-light.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
No problem. It been known to  
happen.

He starts the Honda, and they drive off.

END FLASHBACK:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Goldberg pulls out of the driveway. Paul hurries off before being seen.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lee deals with a deck of cards.

PAUL

Hit me.

Corky nods to Paul's facial cuts.

CORKY

Need a gun?

PAUL

Don't need no gun.

LEE

It's better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.

PAUL

It had more to do with falling headlong with a code of conduct.

PETE

Chivalry. Poor bastard.

CORKY

Sure you don't need a gun?

PETE

So what teacher would you sleep with?

PAUL

I'd say, Mrs. Primm, English Lit. I love her British accent.

(mimicking her)

"Paul, where are you summering?"

LEE

I have never once seen her smile.

PETE

She's not getting laid.

LEE

What's your excuse?

Pete pops Lee upside the head.

PAUL

I helped her load some books into her car last week. She has a pretty smile. You know her husband is sick.

PETE

Proves my point.

LEE

So Paul is Lady Chatterley's Lover.

CORKY

(to Paul)

Is he talking about that curbside liquor lady you balling?

Lee shakes his head and rolls his eyes.

PAUL

Last hand. I can't miss fifth period - we're reviewing for Friday's test. Empty the ashtrays and put the key in the washer when you leave.

PETE

I have to see a man about a horse.

INT. BARBARA JEAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pete watches Big Daddy through the glass tank.

PETE

Stop gnawing, you yellow-teeth desert rat.

The portly gerbil playfully jumps into the wire-meshed exercise wheel.

PETE (CONT'D)

You freakin' me out. Don't get caught up in the rat race. It's an endless, pointless pursuit - more energy than it's worth.

Pete feeds Big Daddy a small piece of quaalude.

PETE (CONT'D)  
Gnaw on this - chill.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Paul parks the motorcycle and bolts to class.

COACH DON  
Betsy, why aren't you in the  
classroom?!

The bell RINGS.

INT. CLASSROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul passes WHOPPER, a Fab Five. He grabs Paul by his shirt  
and slams him against the wall.

WHOPPER  
Long-haired sissy.

PAUL  
Hands off the threads creep!

Paul bolts off. MRS. PRIMM, 40ish, passes Paul bursting into  
a smile.

MRS. PRIMM  
Hello, Paul. Don't be late for  
fifth period.

PAUL  
Yes, Mrs. Primm.

She admonishes a group of FEMALE STUDENTS gossiping in the  
hall in the same breath but with a different temperament.

MRS. PRIMM  
Get to class!

FEMALE STUDENTS  
Yes, Mrs. Primm.

CUT TO:

EXT. GYM HALLWAY - DAY

"FOUND - SHOE."

Jake set up a Lost and Found display with Paul's forsaken CONVERSE. He's having MALE STUDENTS try the shoe on for size.

Paul sees him and ducks into Woodshop. He finds the YOUTH FOR CHRIST Bible group staging inside with several leashed dogs.

INT. WOODSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Mary hands Paul a small DOG.

MARY

This is Jofi. You'll be his handler.

PAUL

What?

MARY

Pet therapy. We were loading up for the drive downtown to the Bold New City Convalescent home.

PAUL

No, no, no. I just wanted to stick my head in and say hey.

MARY

Oh, what a disappointment. Are you sure you can't come along?

He returns Jofi.

PAUL

No, I'm sorry, but thanks. It sounds like a worthy cause, but I can't right now.

MARY

Something on the stove again?

PAUL

Touche'.

Paul starts to exit when he sees Jake snooping directly outside.

MARY

He's been out there all day - a strange bird. He's having the boys try on a lost tennis shoe - Cinderellaishly.



PAUL  
You know Mary, on second thought -  
I've taken a liken to Jofi.

MARY  
That's wonderful. God works in  
mysterious ways.

PAUL  
That he does.

She passes Jofi back to Paul, who licks him in the face.

MARY  
There's a passenger van waiting for  
us in the back.

PAUL  
(under his breath)  
The perfect getaway.

Paul holds Jofi up to shield his face as he makes a bee-line  
for the van.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH VAN - DAY

Paul and Mary sit together.

MARY  
Animal therapy dates back to the  
18th century in England. Doctors  
would put mentally ill patients in  
a large room to socialize with  
domesticated animals. In the '30s,  
Sigmund Freud used his family dog  
during his psychotherapy sessions.  
He believed dogs had a unique sense  
of determining a patient's stress  
level.

Ralph comes over and sits in front of Paul. He turns.

RALPH  
Hi Mary.  
(to Paul)  
Hi.

PAUL  
Ralph.

RALPH  
Have we met?

PAUL  
Carol's party.

RALPH  
I don't remember much about Carol's party, nor do I want to, but I'm glad you could join us.

MARY  
(to Paul)  
Ralph stopped drinking when he gave his life to Christ. The church is helping him with his Christian walk, but it won't be easy - alcoholism is a serious teen problem.

PAUL  
Is that the cup of righteousness you've been talking about?

MARY  
Paul, why be so hurtful?

PAUL  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOLD NEW CITY CONVALESCENT HOME - DAY

The church van arrives. The convalescent home is downtown - nothing Bold New city about it - a ward of poverty and crime. Ralph peers across the street at the neon sign/liquor store. Bad weather starts to move in as the Christian Group brings the Dogs inside.

MAN (O.S.)  
(British accent)  
Mary! Look behind you - look behind you - the weather - the weather!

Mary turns toward the dark, forbidding clouds.

DELIRIOUS STREET WOMAN  
You all run here! Somebody run here, lady's dead! She's dead now!

Mary speaks to a couple of CHRISTIAN BROTHERS.

MARY  
See if you can help her.  
(to the rest of the group)  
Come on, let's get the dogs inside  
before the rain.

DELIRIOUS STREET WOMAN (O.S.)  
Run here now. She's dead!

INT. BOLD NEW CITY CONVALESCENT HOME - CONTINUOUS

The senior home is clean and cozy and hosts AFRICAN AMERICAN PATIENTS. RUTH, late 70's, perks up once Mary enters.

RUTH  
Who's your new beau?

MARY  
Oh, no. This is Paul - he's  
volunteering today.

PAUL  
Hi Ruth.

RUTH  
I see you're holdin' Jofi. Well,  
you can park him right here for a  
spell.

Ruth waves Paul closer.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
Mary's a God-fearing young lady.  
And can she cook. The young girls  
nowadays - uh-huh. Mary makes a  
mean Frogmore stew.

PAUL  
You be kidding me? My momma makes  
Frogmore stew.

RUTH  
A match made in heaven. Praise the  
Lord - hear that, Mary? His momma  
makes Frogmore stew just like you.

Mary is blushing fifty shades of red.

INT. BOLD NEW CITY CONVALESCENT HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Pet therapy group is packing up to leave.

MARY  
Have you seen Ralph?

PAUL  
I thought he was with you.

EXT. MEAN STREET - LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

A steady drizzle. Ralph stands outside the liquor store entrance.

Mary gives Ralph his space. Paul keeps his distance.

RALPH  
I used to steal my daddy's liquor.  
I had to find out how something so  
sweet-tasting, smooth, with a hint  
of maple and vanilla, could make  
him so vile. I'd hide in my closet,  
listening to the cries of momma  
beaten in the next room. Alcohol is  
a deceiver.

Ralph turns to Mary with his rain-drenched face.

RALPH (CONT'D)  
I'm here where the poison flows  
like milk and honey. And once in my  
wretched life, my pain's gone.

Beat:

RALPH (CONT'D)  
He touched me.

Mary embraces Ralph as they make their way to the van.

Paul looks on dumbfounded.

DELIRIOUS STREET WOMAN  
You all run here! Somebody run  
here; lady's dead! She dead now!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. EVA'S HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A deluge. RAISED VOICES from inside the car.

INT. 1972 MONTE CARLO - CONTINUOUS

Eva rips off a green-jade necklace.

EVA

I can't even wear this anymore. How dare you. She was my best friend.

PAUL

I don't know what to say.

EVA

I do. That you are a cheat and a liar, go on! Get out! I can't stand to look at you.

PAUL

Eva?

EVA

Get out!

EXT. EVA'S HOME - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul steps out into the rain and starts walking.

INT. 1972 MONTE CARLO - CONTINUOUS

Eva opens the glove box, reaches for a gun, and exits the car.

EXT. EVA'S HOME - FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

She nearly slips and falls on the wet lawn.

EXT. EVA'S HOME - STREET - CONTINUOUS

She points the gun.

PAUL

Go ahead.

END OF FLASHBACK:

EXT. MEAN STREET - LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

DELIRIOUS STREET WOMAN

Lady's dead! She dead now!

MARY

Paul. Come out of the rain.

FADE OUT.

INT. PAUL'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul enters.

BARBARA JEAN

Murderer! Murderer!

PAUL

What in Sam Hill are you talking about?!

INT. BARBARA JEAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Big Daddy is slumped over the exercise wheel, rigor mortis setting in - foam at the mouth.

PAUL

I had nothing to do with it. I swear to you.

BARBARA JEAN

I'm done covering for you. I'm telling mom everything. Big Daddy wouldn't hurt a fly - he just ran and played in his wheel to make people happy.

PAUL

Barbara Jean, now wait. I loved Big Daddy too. You know that. What can I do to have you believe me? Anything.

BARBARA JEAN

Anything?

PAUL

You name it - anything.

She blows her nose.

BARBARA JEAN

I want a decent burial for Big Daddy. A real one.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLASSROOM HALLWAY - WOODSHOP - DAY

MARY  
A gerbil?

PAUL  
We loved him like family.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAUL'S BACKYARD - MEMORIAL SERVICE - DAY

We see Big Daddy's PHOTO PRINTS used as bookends to the WOOD LECTERN. MOURNERS have gathered and are seated.

Mary plays the acoustics guitar while DAN WILLIAMS, in the mid-40s, is on the piano, an African American, paroled ex-con/prison ministry.

DAN  
(singing)  
"Bless the Lord oh my soul Oh my  
soul Worship His Holy name."

Pete looks agitated.

PAUL  
What's your problem?

PETE  
The photos are freakin' me out. Big  
Daddy is following my every move -  
like the Mona Lisa.

LEE  
It's light, shadow, and  
perspective, you dumbass.

PAUL  
Why don't you go ahead and take a  
seat?

Pete walks off in the wrong direction.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Pete?

PETE  
It's unsettling.

Paul notices Weldon peering at the pianist.

DAN  
(singing)  
"The sun comes up it's a new day  
dawning It's time to sing Your song  
again..."

PAUL  
Do you know him?

WELDON  
Nah, it's nothing.

DAN'S ARMS AND HANDS HAVE NOTICEABLE BURN SCAR CONTRACTURES.

Weldon approaches Dan between the music.

WELDON (CONT'D)  
When did you get out?

DAN  
Bout a year ago.

WELDON  
How do you know these good folks?  
What's your side hustle?

DAN  
Ain't none. I met Mary through the  
prison ministry - been drug-free  
ever since. Now I'm just playing  
the good Lawd's music. How's Kelly  
doing?

WELDON  
Kelly dead.

EXT. PAUL'S BACKYARD - MEMORIAL SERVICE - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC:

MARY  
(singing)  
"Going home, going home, I'm just  
going home. Quiet light, some still  
day I'm just going home..."

The Pallbearers, Pete and Ralph, place the pint-size coffin  
on the mortuary lift. Pete removes Big Daddy's blankie from  
the coffin and presents it to Barbara Jean.

PETE  
I am sorry for your loss.



The coffin starts descending to the depths of the earth.

BARBARA JEAN  
(primal scream)  
NO! NO! NO!

CUT TO:

EXT. WINN-DIXIE/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Paul drives up in the Ford Country Squire. Weldon, Lee, and Pete tumble inside.

CUT TO:

INT. FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE - CONTINUOUS

With palm facing up, Pete reveals purple pills.

PETE  
Who's up?

PAUL  
What about this beer?

WELDON  
I'm game.

PAUL  
(to Weldon)  
Are you kidding me?

LEE  
Count me in.

PAUL  
You too? I don't want anything to do with that poison. I'll stick with the beer.

PETE  
Who are you fooling?

He dishes out the pills.

PETE (CONT'D)  
(to Paul)  
That leaves you the odd man out. So you're our anchor if anything goes wrong.

WELDON  
What could go wrong?

PETE  
A bad trip. But don't worry; we're  
strong in numbers. Put it under  
your tongue, and let it dissolve.

CUT TO:

EXT. FULLER'S FIELD BEACH - NIGHT

Paul drives the Ford Country Squire to a clearing on the  
beach. Dekker and the Fab Five huddle near a RANGING BONFIRE,  
shooting SPARKS and EMBERS upwards in the sky.

WELDON/LEE/PETE  
(tripping - watching the  
bonfire)  
WHOOA!

EXT. FULLER'S FIELD BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Corky arrives in his VW BUG.

CORKY  
Who invited Dekker?

PAUL  
They were here first.

CORKY  
They have a game tomorrow.

LEE  
You're in the matrix of nocturnal  
rainbow from heaven, sending  
messages of love and peace.

CORKY  
(turns to Paul)  
What the?

PAUL  
Pete's poison.

Weldon holds a felled tree branch and raises it to the sky.

WELDON  
Let my people go!

CORKY  
Weldon too?

PAUL  
Like herding cats.

CUT TO:

EXT. FULLER'S FIELD BEACH - CORKY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

PAUL  
Pete, offer Dekker an olive branch.  
Tell him we have plenty of beer.  
Are you listening?

PETE  
Wow! You sound exactly like Herman  
Munster. "Lily, darn, darn, darn."  
Far out!

Pete walks off in the wrong direction.

PAUL  
Pete?!

PETE  
It's unsettling, man.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Whopper peers inside the car.

WHOPPER  
Send me in, coach!

Dekker exits.

PETE  
Dekker!

DEKKER  
Pete? What are you doing out here?

PETE  
We got tons of beer.

DEKKER  
The man of the hour. Come on over.  
I got something for you, too.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

DEKKER (CONT'D)

Whopper, Cherokee pitch. Pete gets the ball.

WHOPPER

You just called an audible.

Pete cautiously walks up to the car and peers inside. The car's interior is a makeshift satanic shrine.

PETE

Hail Mary, full of grace!

Pete bolts off into the wooded area.

DEKKER

You afraid of pussy?!

EXT. FULLER'S FIELD - DARK FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Pete runs for his life.

PETE

Bad trip, bad trip! You're freakin' out! Keep calm. Get it together. You got to get it together.

EXT. FULLER'S FIELD BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Pete emerges from the forest, bloodied from briers cuts.

PETE

Ahhh!

PAUL

What happened?!

Corky fetches his gun.

PETE

Its horns and cloven hooves. They're unyielding in criminal satanic intercourse.

PAUL

What?!

PETE

Skullduggery - a blood pentagram. They drugged her, man! They drugged her!

PAUL  
Drugged who?!

PETE  
In the car! She's in the car!

Paul bolts off.

EXT. PARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Paul RIPS OPEN the car door and pulls Whopper out breech birth.

WHOPPER  
No cuts! No butts!

INT. PARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

PAUL  
Oh, no!

MARY  
(slurring)  
Lem meh alonne.

PAUL  
Mary! Lee, get the blanket!

LEE  
It's my dad's.

PAUL  
Get the freakin' blanket!!

Paul finds Mary's broken cross pendant on the car floor.

WHOPPER  
It's time to get the train back on  
the rails!

Corky places his gun at Whopper's head.

CORKY  
Stand down, Whopper!

WHOPPER  
(amenable)  
Have it your way.

Lee returns with the blanket. Paul and Corky help Mary out of the car. Dekker and the Fab Five stand menacing between the Ford Country Squire.

DEKKER  
Our sacrificial virgin stands  
without blemish or blight.

PAUL  
It's time to strike the tent. The  
party's over.

DEKKER  
You're funnier than a Negro pie-  
eating contest.

GRISWOLD AND GUNNISON - BOOM!

LEE/WELDON  
(watching the muzzle  
flash)  
Whoa!

CORKY  
Back off, Dekker!

DEKKER  
What if that relic misfires when we  
red-dog you?

WELDON  
Behold His mighty arm...

BOOM!

LEE/WELDON  
Whoa!

CORKY  
Don't tempt providence, or you'll  
be the only Class AAA - south-paw  
less an index finger.

DEKKER  
(a yelp)  
Ah!

Dekker shields his left hand behind his back. The Fab Five  
break ranks as Paul slowly moves everyone into the Ford  
Country Squire. Weldon wanders off into the forest.

PAUL  
Moses! In the car!

CUT TO:

INT. FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE - NIGHT

Bites, burns, and bruises violate Mary's neck and shoulders.

LEE

Dekker and the wrecking crew  
invited Mary on the pretense of a  
prayer session before tomorrow's  
game. They spiked her coffee and  
brought her to Fuller's Field.

PAUL

Some folks think nobody cares, and  
they're just about right.

Paul nods reassurance to Mary as he places an object in her  
hand. She slowly uncurls her fingers, revealing her gold  
cross pendant.

INT. FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE - MARY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

PAUL

Can you drive?

LEE

Yeah.

PAUL

Weldon, walk Mary to the door with  
me.

EXT. MARY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

PAUL

Do you have your keys?

Trembling like a leaf, she tries unlocking the door.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Let me.

LEE (O.S.)

Don't forget the blanket!

The door creaks open. Waiting for spectre-like at the  
entryway is Mary's father, MR. MELCHIZEDEK.

MR. MELCHIZEDEK

What have you done?

MARY

Daddy?

He steps out into the moonlight, illuminating his pale, impassive face. He draws a handgun. Weldon falls backward, stepping on Paul's foot - which loses a shoe.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
DADDY NO!!

POP, POP.

Paul and Weldon shallow dive inside the car through the open windows as Lee peels off.

SKREEEECH - POP, POP, POP, POP.

The rear windshield rains down the glass like fiery hail.

INT. FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE - CONTINUOUS

PETE  
He's crazy!

PAUL  
Weldon, you hit?

WELDON  
I'm cool.

LEE  
Did you get the blanket?

PAUL  
Forget the freakin' blanket, man.  
Your dad's car got shot up like  
Bonnie and Clyde's.

LEE  
I'm dead meat.

Paul looks down at his tattered sock.

PAUL  
Damn, Weejun.

EXT. FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lee pulls off at the side of the road; as Paul gets out opens Pete's back door and starts pummeling him.



PAUL  
This is all your fault. You killed  
Big Daddy!

CUT TO:

EXT. LEE'S CARPORT - DAWN

Mr. Burger, dressed in his sleepwear, opens the Ford  
tailgate. Shards of windshield fall to the ground.

MR. BURGER  
Where's the blanket?

LEE  
Daddy, we were nearly killed.

MR. BURGER  
My car got shot up. You better have  
a good reason why.

LEE  
We were in Springfield, and these  
Hoppin' Johns bumped against us in  
their country Cadillac shouting  
profanities and opening upon us  
like a turkey shoot. We were lucky  
we got out with our lives.

Mr. Burger notices Paul shaking his head.

MR. BURGER  
(to Paul)  
Son, tell me what really happened.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY'S HOME - DAY

Mary is escorted to the Ambulance by EMT.

PAUL  
How is she?

MR. MELCHIZEDEK  
She's going to be okay. I'm sorry  
about last night. Thanks for  
helping her out of a bad situation.

Paul makes eye contact with Mary and smiles.

EXT. DEKKER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

POLICE OFFICERS arrest Dekker. Paul, Lee, and Mr. Burger watch from inside the car.

DEKKER  
Darkness is the power of the soul!

LEE  
From hero to sabbatic goat.

FADE OUT.

INT. MARY'S HOME - DEN - DAY

THREE FEMALE FRIENDS visit Mary while her younger SISTER eavesdrops in the next room.

FRIEND #1  
Everyone sins. Admit it. God must have been punishing you for yours.

FRIEND #2  
If you sin, you suffer. God is all-powerful, might is right.

FRIEND #3  
You can't argue with God, so you must have sinned unconsciously. God is aware of your sins even if you're not.

MARY  
Enough. You're doctors of no value. Now go.

They file out. Mary's Sister walks in.

SISTER  
What do they know? You can't blame God for your sufferings - he's having you mend your ways.

MARY  
You too! Out!

Paul enters.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Hi, Paul. I'm setting up the return to the convalescent home on Tuesday.  
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

And on Saturday, I'm traveling to Raiford for our prison ministry.

PAUL

After what just happened?

MARY

What do you mean?

PAUL

You act as if nothing has changed.

MARY

No one said being a Christian is easy. In the world, you will have tribulation but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

PAUL

So where was God when you were drugged and alone?

MARY

Don't be so smug. I've given my life not to a dead Christ but to a living Savior. My faith is not built with second-hand bricks, nor is my walk with God turned on a whim. The worth of a soldier is never known in a time of peace.

PAUL

I'm sick of the parables.

MRS. MELCHIZEDEK

I brought you two some hot cocoa.

MARY

Mother, not now!

Mother pivots and leaves.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'm torn, Paul. I've been praying about us for weeks. I think it would be best if we stopped seeing each other. I will not be unequally yoked.

PAUL

Mary, wait.

MARY

No. It would be best. Let me leave you with this. My Popo recently attended his fiftieth high school reunion. In his time, like you, he drove a motorcycle. Many young girls lost their innocence to his endless conquests. One such girl was Anne. A good girl, a clean girl. He was surprised to see her standing with high school alums boasting over shared photos of their grandchildren. She was now silver-haired, but that sweet dimpled smile hadn't changed. He walked up and said, "One of the best memories was the summer we spent together." She looked up, adjusted her glasses to see his name tag, and answered, "Never been on a motorcycle since," and closed that chapter forever. Popo stood there with egg on his face. That summer, nothing more than fainting memories of disdain. How many others had he hurt? How had they remembered him?

She starts to leave the room.

MARY (CONT'D)

I need to return a few things to you.

Beat:

She returns with Mr. Burger's blanket and Paul's lost shoe.

MARY (CONT'D)

I had the blanket dry-cleaned. Would you mind trying the shoe on for size?

PAUL

It's mine.

MARY

Please. Humor me.

Paul sits and kicks off his sneaker. Mary places the Weejun loafer on his foot.

PAUL

A perfect fit.

MARY  
I wish it weren't.

She rushes out of the room.

FADE OUT.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The kitchen phone rings.

INT. PAUL'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

PAUL  
(whispers)  
Yeah?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(distraught)  
Paul?

PAUL  
Who is it?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
I'm hurt.

PAUL  
Mary?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
I'm hurt really bad.

PAUL  
Georgy?!

INT. PAUL'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul bolts out with a coat and helmet. Barbara Jean watches - shaking her head.

CUT TO:

EXT. DERBY HOUSE ALL-NIGHT DINER - NIGHT

Paul rushes inside.

INT. DERBY HOUSE ALL-NIGHT DINER - CONTINUOUS

Georgy sits alone in the rear, wearing a "Jackie O" headscarf and sunglasses - she removes the glasses.

GEORGY

He beat me to the draw.

PAUL

Ahh, no. I need to get you to the hospital.

GEORGY

No. No hospital. Please.

PAUL

My friend's mom's a nurse. I'm taking you there.

CUT TO:

EXT. NELSON'S BAR - NIGHT

Legless with liquor, Stanley staggers out to his car.

EXT. BAR STREET - CONTINUOUS

Corky kills the VW Bug and glides up behind him. Paul and Lee have concealed their faces with Lady Berkshires and are standing menacing on the VW's running board, clutching forged iron lug wrenches. Stanley senses a calamity and turns as the two hurl their hand tools, hitting him square in his square head. Paul commences beating him to jelly while Lee tries to stop him.

LEE

You're killing him!

Paul straddles the maimed woman-beater with Griswold & Gunnison. He cocks the trigger.

CORKY

Finish it!

CLICK - the pistol misfires.

CORKY (CONT'D)

That's a first!

(to Stanley)

You're damn fool lucky.

Paul puts the gun in his mouth.

CORKY/LEE

NO!

CLICK.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Barbara Jean opens the front door.

BARBARA JEAN

You have blood on your hands.

Paul bolts back outside.

CUT TO:

INT. STANLEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Stanley is deadheading south on US ROUTE 1. He's bloodied and drinking from a whiskey bottle. He nods off, crossing the median into oncoming traffic, crashing into a wooded area, hitting a tree, and BURSTING in flames.

FADE OUT.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - DAWN

MRS. MELCHIZEDEK

Mary, wake up.

MARY

What is it?

MRS. MELCHIZEDEK

Paul's out front.

MARY

What time is it?

MRS. MELCHIZEDEK

Just after six - I was getting the paper. I think he's in trouble.

EXT. MARY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

MARY

Paul, come inside.

PAUL  
I killed the love of my life. Could  
you help me?

INT. MARY'S HOME - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Mary is kneeling with Paul in prayer.

MARY  
The prayer of faith shall save the  
sick, and the Lord shall raise him  
up...

CUT TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) INT. PRISON CELL - DAY - Dekker huddles in a shadowed corner, reflecting his suicidal thoughts in the polished metal mirror. Mary, Ralph, and Dan enter. Dekker turns, recognizing her; his hopes sweep over him - he mouths, "MARY!"

B) EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY - Dan Williams anxiously peers at the store's sign - Mary encourages him to go inside.

C) INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY - Dan speaks to the CASHIER as Kelly appears. The two size up each other before stepping closer, embracing.

END MONTAGE

INT. MARY'S HOME - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Mary places her gold cross pendant in Paul's hands.

FADE OUT.

EXT. TERRY PARKER HIGH SCHOOL - TRACK AND FIELD AREA - DAY

Paul and four home team RUNNERS sprint past. Coach Don clicks the stopwatch.

COACH DON  
Damn it! Raines is going to eat our  
lunch. Let's go! Again! Betsy, get  
over here!



Paul runs up sporting a closely cropped haircut, 3-stripes track pants, an athletic shirt, and spiked running shoes.

COACH DON (CONT'D)  
You're going mano-a-mano with  
Messala - the next Rod Milburn.  
Every college scout and television  
station will converge at this  
stadium next week. So get with the  
program if you're going to beat  
this pompous ass.

PAUL  
Sure thing, Coach!

Paul sprints off.

COACH DON  
Let's go! Do it again!

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S HOME - DEN - DAY

MARY  
Your haircut - you look like Ryan  
O'Neal. Are you ready for Friday?

PAUL  
Yes. Thank you for all your help. I  
hope we can always remain friends.

MARY  
Sure, Paul - the best of friends.

PAUL  
Are you coming?

MARY  
Absolutely. You've fought the good  
fight, finished the race, and kept  
the faith.

Paul leaves. Mary peers out the window, crying.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - DAY

RAINES LEGIONNAIRES' MARCHING BAND (an all-black school)  
performs.

Straight out of 6th Century BC, The Raines' MASCOT enters the field, CIRCUS MAXIMUS, in a TWO-HORSE ROMAN CHARIOT. Standing passenger is MESSALA JEFFERSON, All-State record holder, 120-yard high hurdles. He's dressed as a Roman Emperor and wearing the Corona Radiata, greeting the CHEERING VISITING TEAM with a royal wave - while rebuking Terry Parker hometeam's hurled insults and profanities. MEDIA and TRACK TALENT SCOUTS swarm the procession.

COACH DON  
Pompous ass.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

RAINES SPRINTERS take first, second and third in the 100-yard dash. Terry Parker falls behind at a distant fourth.

COACH DON  
They're killing us!

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)  
Next event - 120-yard high hurdles.

COACH DON  
Betsy!

PAUL  
Yes, Coach.

COACH DON  
It would be great to finish today with an ounce of dignity, so I'm counting on you. You've worked hard enough. Good luck, Son.

PAUL  
Thanks, Coach.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM VIEWING STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Weldon joins a group of RAINES and TERRY PARKER STUDENTS wagering with Bookmaker, JACKPOT, and his boon companion, KITTY POOL.

KITTY POOL  
(to Weldon)  
Lookie here at this draped-down Sugar Hill Negro.

WELDON  
I appreciate your Chesterfieldian politeness, Kitty Pool.

JACKPOT  
(to Kitty Pool)  
You gator-face fool! You carry no  
respect. What got into you, man?

Jackpot wipes off a bleacher area and places a Raines seat  
cushion for Weldon to sit.

JACKPOT (CONT'D)  
Get comfortable, my Brother. What  
can I do you for?

WELDON  
A wager, Jackpot.

JACKPOT  
No doubt. Just like old times.  
Who's your pony?

WELDON  
Terry Parker's Great White Hope  
against Raines' Undefeated Black.

JACKPOT  
Against Marsalla Jefferson? Quit  
beatin' your gums, hauling against  
Marsalla Jefferson? Who's your  
savior?

WELDON  
Lane three.

The Brothers peer over.

PAUL IS WARMING UP AND STRETCHING.

They all start laughing.

JACKPOT  
Lane three? Come on, man. Marsalla  
Jefferson against good-hair Mr.  
Charlie? Sheeeit. You're spending  
too much time with Big Pearl -  
she's messin' with your nut.

WELDON  
What's on the rail for the lizard?

JACKPOT  
Say what? You want odds? Ha, ha.  
Let me take another look-see.

Jackpot squints as he sizes up Paul a second time.

JACKPOT (CONT'D)

Mr. Charlie. It's your money, fool -  
four to one. Go knock yourself out.  
Now pay the Kitty.

Weldon peels off five-hundred-dollar bills.

KITTY POOL

Five Benjamins?  
(to Jackpot)  
He's jawin' a nickel bag.

JACKPOT

A lot of sound and fury, my  
brother.

WELDON

Too loud for your taste?

JACKPOT

Don't insult me like some park ape  
Negro.  
(to Kitty Pool)  
Take the Brother's money and give  
him his four-to-one odds - the  
difference between a Mandingo and a  
blue-eyed devil.

KITTY POOL

(to Weldon)  
- or a Tom.

WELDON

"Most friendship is feigning, most  
loving mere folly." Willy Shakes.

KITTY POOL

Willy Shakes? You talkin' bout that  
bug-eyed, motorhead, smutty black  
Negro from Valdosta?

WELDON

Could be.

Weldon leaves.

JACKPOT

Post-time. No more bets.  
(to Kitty Pool)  
Somethin' ain't right. I smell  
swamp cabbage and sorry meats.  
Let's take a closer look at this no-  
count.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Pete sits in the opponents' grandstand - a white marble in a sea of black gems. He notices that Raines' Two-Horse Roman Chariot is unattended.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Paul, Messala, and the other RUNNERS have removed their sweats and stand by their starting blocks.

MESSALA  
(to Paul)  
Who you?

PAUL  
Lane three.

MESSALA  
Faggot!

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

OFFICIAL  
Okay, get into position. You'll  
hear runners on your marks - set  
and then the sound of the gun.  
Understand?

The Runners acknowledge.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)  
Good luck.

Paul looks up into the viewing stands and sees Mary. He places his fingers on the ground behind the starting line.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)  
Runners on your MARKS.

He settles his feet in the starting blocks and focuses on the track.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)  
SET.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. EVA'S GRAVESITE - DAY

Paul lays flowers by the gravestone.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Paul is on his motorcycle in a deluge.

EXT. GOLDBERG'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

He skids to a stop and performs a forced crash by laying the bike down and hopping off.

PAUL  
Mrs. Goldberg! Mrs. Goldberg!

INT. GOLDBERG'S FOYER - CONTINUOUS

The door opens. He sprints past and up the staircase.

PAUL  
Where's the Judge's gun?!

INT. GOLDBERG'S FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Paul KICKS open the bedroom door.

INT. EVA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eva points the gun at her head.

PAUL  
NO! NO!

POP!

THEY'RE OFF!

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - DAY

Paul and Messala fire off the blocks racing neck-to-neck for the first three hurdles until Paul finds his stride accelerating, pulling away, and bolting across the finish line. Coach Don snaps the stopwatch.

COACH DON  
Holy cow!

Weldon lights up a cigar.

WELDON  
They he is. They he go.

Raines is shocked - silenced. The TERRY PARKER MARCHING BAND belts a victory anthem.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Pete has commandeered the Raines' chariot and picks up Paul alongside the track. Weldon and Lee run over to join them. Lee picks up a bullhorn.

LEE

Render to Caesar the things that  
are Caesar's and unto God the  
things that are God's.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

The STUDENT BODY, MEDIA, and TALENT SCOUTS rush the track chasing the chariot.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

The RAINES COACH gets an earful from the former record holder.

MESSALA

Who-he?! Who-he?! Who-the-mutta-  
fukka-he?! Who-the-mutta-fukka-he?!

EXT. TERRY PARKER VIEWING STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Mary and her Three Friends watch the antics.

MARY

They're so silly.

FRIEND #1

They're circling back.

The chariot comes closer, dropping Paul off directly below Mary's row of seats. Paul bolts up the bleachers with the Media and Talent Scouts hot on his heels.

FRIEND #3

He's coming up.

Paul makes eye contact with Mary. She nervously shakes her hands in anticipation.

PAUL

Mary!

MARY

Paul!

They EMBRACE with a KISS. The viewing stand explodes with CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

FRIEND #2

I knew there was something fishy.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - DAY

Paul walks Mary to the car. A MAN stands, waiting.

POPO

You must be Paul.

MARY

Paul, this is Popo.

PAUL

Hello, sir. It's a pleasure.

POPO

That was some race, son. I'm sure those talent scouts have big plans for you.

PAUL

I hope so.

MARY

See you tonight?

PAUL

You bet.

Popo is all smiles as they leave.

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

From the viewing stands, something catches Paul's eye.

PAUL

(beaming ear to ear)  
Georgy Girl.

GEORGY

(dumbfounded)  
Paul? Land of Goshen.



Georgy's with her new Beau, GILMER.

GEORGY (CONT'D)

Paul, I want you to meet Gilmer -  
Gilmer; this is Paul.

GILMER

That was some race. He's the one to  
beat, and you did it without all  
the pomp and circumstance.

PAUL

Thanks you, sir.

GEORGY

Hon, would you mind getting me one  
of those cherry snow cones?

GILMER

Sure. Care for one?

PAUL

No thanks.

Gilmer leaves. Georgy sighs.

GEORGY

Tell me you're at least a senior.

PAUL

Well, technically.

GEORGY

Oh, lordy, I'm going to burn in  
hell.

PAUL

Tell me about Gilmer.

GEORGY

He's a good catch. He was in  
Vietnam, for real - a Green Beret -  
tough as nails but gentle. He's  
smart - he owns several filling  
stations up and down the coast and  
wants me to move to Savannah with  
him.

PAUL

I'm so happy for you. I will miss  
you, Georgy - you will always have  
a sweet spot in my heart.

GEORGY

I'm going to miss you too.

PAUL

Georgy, fifty years from now, when I'm old and gray, how will I be regarded?

GEORGY

I'll never forget what you've done for me.

Gilmer returns with the snow cone.

GILMER

Here you are, sweetheart.

PAUL

I need to get back. It was good meeting you, Gilmer. Goodbye, Georgy.

GILMER

Son, you got another minute? I've been doing a little pokin' around lately. Let me rephrase that. What I mean is that I grew up with three elder sisters. It wasn't easy - we spat, bickered, and locked horns. But if any of their boyfriends got out of hand - little brother could get ugly, fast. I figure you are the type to have sisters, too.

PAUL

Yeah, got one - but she's the trouble of three.

GILMER

God love 'em. I just wanted you to know that from here on out, I'll keep an eye on things if you know what I mean.

Gilmer gives him a wink.

PAUL

Loud and clear.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY PARKER STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Paul turns and is face-to-face with Jake, holding Paul's lost converse. Jake sizes him up.

JAKE  
His hair was longer.

Paul nods and turns to walk away. He's jumped from behind.

BARBARA JEAN  
You're the best, Paul - you got me  
a new pup. He jumped inside the  
wheel and went around and around,  
making me happy just like Big Daddy  
did.

PAUL  
Come on, Sis. Let's go home and  
give him a whirl.

FADE OUT.

INT. TERRY PARKER GYMNASIUM - DAY

Mrs. Primm monitors the make-up testing session as Paul and a group of STUDENTS quietly sit a distance apart. We hear raucous speeches coming from the adjacent auditorium's graduation ceremonies.

Mrs. Primm looks down on Paul's multiple-choice template as he readies to select an answer - he peers up at her as she gives a slight tilt of the head. As he makes another choice, she smiles and walks off.

INT. TERRY PARKER GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Primm finishes correcting Paul's test.

MRS. PRIMM  
Congratulations Paul. It's  
unfortunate; that you couldn't walk  
with your graduating class.

PAUL  
At least it's finally over.

MRS. PRIMM  
You look very smart sporting your  
new Steve McQueen haircut.

PAUL

It's easier to care for, wash,  
rinse, and repeat.

MRS. PRIMM

Where are you summering?

PAUL

I'm driving to Key West on my  
motorcycle to visit my aunt. Have  
you made any plans?

MRS. PRIMM

I'm going to Miami Beach, staying  
at the Fontainebleau Hotel. You  
know, it's only a hop, skip and  
jump on your way to Key West.

A Mrs. Robinson moment.

PAUL

May I ask if your husband's joining  
you?

MRS. PRIMM

I'm afraid not - he's still under  
the weather. I'm going solo.

PAUL

But is he able to travel?

Mrs. Primm turns a shade of red.

MRS. PRIMM

He could, yes. He's able. Why do  
you ask?

PAUL

Why don't you bring him along? I'm  
sure spending some quality time  
together would lift his spirits.

MRS. PRIMM

You might be right. I might do  
that. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL

Goodbye, Mrs. Primm.

MRS. PRIMM

Goodbye, Paul.

EXT. TERRY PARKER GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS

Paul walks toward his motorcycle. Mary is waiting wearing a purple graduation cap and gown.

PAUL  
I'm a bona fide high school  
graduate with ten track and field  
scholarship offers.

She takes off her cap, tassel, and gown and dresses him. She steps back for a look.

MARY  
College ready, Paul Johnson, summa  
cum laude. I'm so proud of you.

She applauds, and then they hug. She peers at the Honda and turns to Paul with her hand out.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Keys. Okay, a few ground rules. You  
want to follow my lead. When I  
lean, you lean with me. You look  
this side or that side, but not  
straight because we'll bump heads.

She places the helmet on his head.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Watch your ears. Careful for the  
mufflers. They get hot. Put your  
left foot on the peg and use it to  
boost yourself to the other side.  
Watch the tail-

Paul swings his leg over, kicking the tail light.

MARY (CONT'D)  
It been known to happen.

PAUL  
Where do my arms go?

MARY  
Around my waist.

PAUL  
Aren't you the cheeky one?

Mary presses the electric start and puts the Honda in gear as they cruise off. Mrs. Primm peers out from the gymnasium window.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END