

THE WHITE DIAMOND

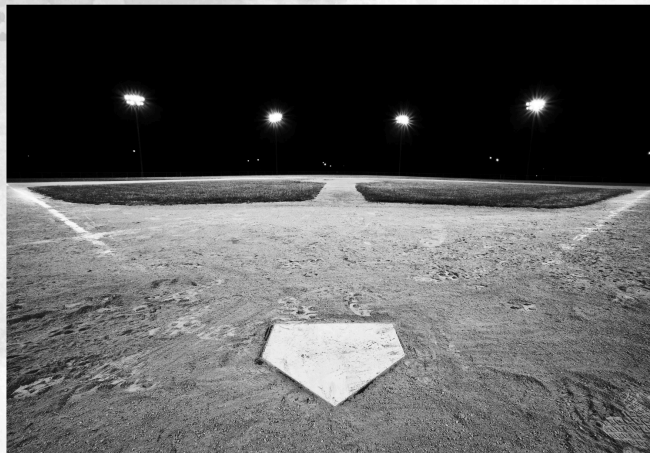
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EPIGRAPH

"On the field, blacks have been able to be super giants. But, once our playing days are over, this is the end of it and we go back to the back of the bus." Hank Aaron

*Friendship Defeats Racism*



THE WHITE DIAMOND

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME - NIGHT

The Astrodome is almost empty. HANK AARON walks off the field after an interview at the conclusion of the last game of the 1973 baseball season. The big screen shows 713. A WHITE ASTROS FAN stands above the dugout.

WHITE ASTROS FAN  
Hey nigger, you gonna get shot  
before you break the Babe's record.

Aaron ignores the fan and walks down the dugout steps.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUARTVILLE BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

A Babe Ruth youth baseball game. Field lights fill the sky. A vocal crowd watches the game. The sound of the crack of the ball off a wooden bat. The crowd stands, watching the action.

A player comes in hard to home plate, dirt and dust flies to obstruct the play's outcome.

FLASHBACK

EXT. OUTSIDE - AFTERNOON

The Jackson family rides into the small rural town of Stuartville, GA on a cool January day in their 1973 baby blue Oldsmobile LTD.

INT. JACKSON CAR - CONTINUOUS

Midnight Train to Georgia, by Gladys Knight plays on the radio. Thirty something, black man, CAPTAIN RAY JACKSON, turns up the tune. His thirty something black wife, CICELY JACKSON sings along. Fourteen year old black son, RJ JACKSON holds his hand out the window, as they pass baseball fields.

RJ  
Dad, nice ball fields at 3 O'clock.

RAY  
Roger that RJ. I can see you  
hitting a homer over that fence.

RJ smiles as they continue down the road. Ray turns into a middle class neighborhood with large yards.

RAY (CONT'D)

It's over here on the right.

They all look at the house. Ray turns into the long driveway. They see a Fifty-ish white man, DON WALKER walking out the front door toward the car - he stops suddenly. Ray parks the car.

EXT. JACKSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ray walks up to Don. Don has a perplexed expression.

DON

Can I help you?

RAY

I hope so, I'm renting this place.

DON

You're Captain Ray Jackson?

RAY

(Smiling and saluting)

At your service.

Don shuffles back and forth, turns to look at the house, then back to Ray.

DON

...You sounded different on the phone.

RAY

I assume the check cleared.

DON

Uh...yeah.

RAY

Great, I'll take the keys.

Ray holds out his hand. Don slowly drops the keys into Ray's hand. Don walks away.

RAY (CONT'D)

You may want to move your car. The moving truck is right behind us.

Don nods and walks slowly to his car, scratching his head. Don turns once more to see Ray, Cicely and RJ walking to the door. He shakes his head, gets into his truck.

INT. DON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Don backs down the driveway.

DON  
Well, shit.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

R&B music plays from a boom-box, as the Jacksons move into a house. Fifty-something black woman, BENITA, Cecily's mom, helps put things away in the kitchen.

EXT. JACKSON FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

RJ runs around the truck, throwing and kicking a football in the front yard.

INT. BERGER HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CORDELL BERGER, fourteen year old white kid across the street, watches out the window. His mother, JEANNIE BERGER, white, thirty-something dusts shelves, listening to country music playing on the radio.

CORDELL  
Mom, I'm going out.

JEANNIE  
Did you get your homework done?

CORDELL  
Yes ma'am.

JEANNIE  
Okay, but be back before 5.

CORDELL  
Yes ma'am.

EXT. JACKSON FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

Cordell takes off running across the street and then slows to a walk at the street. RJ sees a white kid walking over to his house. RJ stops kicking the ball and walks toward him.

CORDELL  
Y'all moving in?

RJ  
Yeah, just got here today.

CORDELL  
My name's Cordell. I live across  
the street.

RJ  
RJ Jackson.

CORDELL  
Where you from?

RJ  
Originally, Germany, but we moved  
here from California.

CORDELL  
Germany...cool.

RJ  
We move a lot.

CORDELL  
Cool. You want to throw the ball?

RJ  
You bet. Go deep.

RJ and Cordell play catch and kick the ball in the yard.  
Benita and Cicely walk outside and see the boys playing to-  
together.

CICELY  
Mama, I start at the hospital next  
week. You still good checking on  
RJ?

Benita is watching the boys play intensely and does not  
respond.

CICELY (CONT'D)  
Mama, you good?

BENITA  
...uh, yeah baby, I'm good with  
checking on RJ.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jeannie looks out the window and sees the Jacksons moving in and Cordell playing with the black boy.

EXT. BERGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jeannie steps outside the front door.

JEANNIE  
(Yelling)  
Cordell, time to come home.

Cordell stops playing. He looks back toward his house.

CORDELL  
Be home soon.

JEANNIE  
Now Cordell!

CORDELL  
Got to run, catch you at school  
tomorrow.

RJ  
Not if I catch you first.

Cordell jogs across the street toward his house. RJ kicks the ball and runs after it.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

RJ and his dad put together a new desk. Cicely and Benita stack dishes away in the cabinets.

BENITA  
RJ, who was that White boy you were  
playing with?

RJ  
His name is Cord or Cordell. He's  
in my grade!

CICELY  
Here only one day and you have a  
friend.

RAY  
Okay Hammer let's get this desk  
put together.

Ray and RJ leave the room.

BENITA  
Hammer?

CICELY  
Like Hammering Hank Aaron.

BENITA  
The one who's gonna break Ruth's  
homer record?

CICELY  
Yes. He's Ray's favorite ball  
player, so he nicknamed RJ Hammer.

BENITA  
And the boy has a butt just like  
him too.

Benita pokes her butt out and they both laugh.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL 8TH GRADE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

EDDIE STAUB, Forty+ white man and RJ walk into the room,  
everyone stares. Staub confers with the teacher, MS. SIBLEY,  
Black woman in her Forties, privately and Staub leaves the  
room, pats RJ's back.

MS. SIBLEY  
Room, we have a new student, RJ  
Jackson. Can we welcome him with a  
round of applause?

The student give half-hearted applause for RJ.

MS. SIBLEY (CONT'D)  
RJ, can you tell the room where you  
are from?

RJ looks around the room and spies Cord, who gives a smile.

RJ  
Madeira, California ma'am.

MS. SIBLEY  
Well that's a long ways.

CORDELL  
He was born in Germany!

MS. SIBLEY  
Is that right RJ?



RJ  
 Yes ma'am. My dad was stationed  
 there when I was born.

KID - IN CLASS  
 He don't look German.

Kids in the class laugh. RJ looks down.

MS. SIBLEY  
 Settle down class. Being born in  
 Germany, does not make you German.  
 Anyway, since Cordell knows you,  
 move to the seat next to him.

RJ settles into the seat, exchanging a glance at Cordell.  
 Muffled whispers and giggles continue in the room.

MS. SIBLEY (CONT'D)  
 Class, let's get back to where we  
 left off on Friday Geometry. RJ,  
 have you studied Geometry yet?

RJ  
 Yes Ma'am, a couple years ago.

MS. SIBLEY  
 Ok, we have a test next week.

Ms. Sibley turns to the chalk board.

EXT. - RECESS PLAYGROUND - DAY

Kids play on the playground or sit on bleacher. Cord and RJ  
 play in a pick-up football game. They back up to receive a  
 kickoff. Cordell catches the ball and laterals to RJ.

CORDELL  
 Show-em what you got.

RJ zig-zags across the field, cutting and feinting potential  
 tacklers, eventually scoring. RJ tosses the ball back to  
 Cordell.

RJ  
 Next time you run the ball.

CORDELL  
 I believe you might be faster than  
 me.

RJ  
 We'll test that someday.

They get back on side. Cordell kicks off to the other team.

EXT. JACKSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Ray moves the trash can out to the curb. He sees Lyle across the street, moving a trash can. Ray walks over to greet Lyle.

RAY  
Hey neighbor.

LYLE  
(Looks up, startled)  
Hey.

RAY  
Ray Jackson, we just moved in.

Ray extends his hand. Lyle looks at it, then slowly moves his hand to shake.

LYLE  
Lyle Berger.

RAY  
Our boys go to school together.

LYLE  
Yeah.

RAY  
Well, RJ and my wife will be here while I go overseas.

LYLE  
You in the military?

RAY  
I'm a Captain and a Weapons Controller in the Air Force.

LYLE  
Captain? I've never met a...uh...Weapons Controller before.

RAY  
...Now you have.

Lyle puffs out his chest.

LYLE  
I served in the army two tours in 'Nam, '66 through '68.

RAY  
Thank you for your service.

Lyle nods and turns back toward home.

RAY (CONT'D)  
See ya Lyle.

Lyle waves a hand while he walks back into the house. Ray turns and heads back home.

RAY (CONT'D)  
(Mutters to himself)  
Damned Cracker.

LYLE  
(Mutters to himself)  
Nigger neighbor.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ray packs his duffle bag, making sure everything fits. RJ walks into the room.

RJ  
Dad, I know you are packing, but  
can I ask you a favor?

RAY  
Sure son, what is it?

RJ  
Can you tutor me in geometry? I've  
got a test next week.

RAY  
You took geometry before?

RJ  
It's been a couple of years.

RAY  
Get the chalk board son and let's  
work on the math.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE RJ BEDROOM

RJ is marking on the chalk board. There are formulas and shapes on the board.

Cicely leans into the room.

CICELY  
Time to eat fellas.

RAY  
Where did the time go? OK Sugar.

Cicely walks out of the room. RJ puts down the chalk.

RAY (CONT'D)  
You got this son. Just make sure  
that you remember...

RJ  
Yeah Dad Pie are square, but  
cornbread are round.

Ray bursts out laughing, and RJ rolls his eyes.

EXT. JACKSON HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Ray stands with Cicely outside waiting for his ride. Rubbing  
the sleep out of his eyes, RJ walks outside in his pajamas.

RAY  
Good morning Hammer.

RJ  
What time is it?

RAY  
Zero dark thirty... or for you  
civilians about 5am.

CICELY  
I'll get your coffee, while you say  
bye to RJ.

Cicely strides back into the house. Ray walks over to his  
son with deliberation, putting his hand on RJ's shoulder.

RAY  
I'm going to miss you Hammer.

RJ  
I'll miss you to Dad.

RAY  
Do well in school, mind your mama  
and do what's right son - no matter  
what anyone else does.

RJ  
 (Yawning)  
 I will dad.

RAY  
 I love you son.

RJ  
 I love you too dad.

Cicely walks into the darkness outside and hands Ray his coffee. A car pulls up, illuminating the driveway. Ray hugs RJ and moves to Cicely.

RAY  
 Take care baby doll. I love you  
 from here to the moon.

CICELY  
 And I love you to the moon and  
 back.

The couple kiss. Ray grabs his bag, walks to the car, depositing his bag in the trunk. He turns with tears in his eyes and waves. Ray enters the back of the car. As the car backs away, tearful Cicely and RJ wave goodbye.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL MS. SIBLEY'S ROOM - DAY

MS. Sibley grades papers during lunch. RJ knocks and walks into the room.

RJ  
 Ms. Sibley, can I ask you a  
 question?

Ms. Sibley puts down the paper and pen.

MS. SIBLEY  
 Sure RJ, what's on your mind?

RJ  
 Have you graded the Geometry exams?

MS. SIBLEY  
 Are you worried?

RJ  
 A little, it's been awhile.

MS. SIBLEY  
 You made a 89.

RJ  
(Despondent)  
Ok.

MS. SIBLEY  
Do you usually make A's?

RJ  
Yes, I've never had a B before.

MS. SIBLEY  
That's remarkable RJ. Hey, let's  
take you down to the counselor's  
office for you to take an IQ test.

RJ  
You mean an intelligence test?

MS. SIBLEY  
Yes, we give it to all the smartest  
kids. I think you will qualify.

They walk out of the classroom together.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

The bell rings and Ms. Sibley's students leave the classroom.

MS. SIBLEY  
RJ can you stay for a moment.

CORDELL  
See you out there.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Another black boy in class, NANZA, a fifteen year old watches  
curiously watches. He stops outside the room to tie his shoe  
and listen to the conversation.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL MS.SIBLEY'S CLASS - CONTINUOUS

MS. SIBLEY  
I wanted to let you know that you  
did well on the IQ test and  
admitted to the gifted program.

RJ  
Thanks Ms. Sibley

MS. SIBLEY

You know this program is five years old and you are the only black kid to be admitted.

RJ

I didn't know that. Why am I the only black kid?

MS. SIBLEY

That's a good question. It might take a whole semester of history and civics to really explain it.

RJ scratches his head.

MS. SIBLEY (CONT'D)

Anyway, just know that this is important and I expect you to do your best and also be respectful.

RJ

Yes ma'am, I will.

MS. SIBLEY

Your first meeting is next week. For now, you can go out and enjoy recess.

RJ

Yes ma'am.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

RJ almost trips over Nanza, who is waiting outside the classroom. They exchange looks.

EXT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL - AFTER SCHOOL

Nanza's outside with three other black boys. RJ walks out of the building.

NANZA

Hey fellas, look it's the genius. You trying to be White, RJ?

RJ

What are you talking about?

NANZA

(Imitating RJ's speech)  
What are you talking about?

(MORE)

NANZA (CONT'D)

You joining that White kids in that smart class.

RJ

It's not just for White kids.

NANZA

Let me know how many brothers or sisters are in the class. Ain't none Holmes.

RJ

Well I guess that's changing.

(Inching closer and  
whispering)

I guess you too good for us. Wait until you find out that you're just another nigger.

Cordell sees the conversation and speeds over. RJ steps forward to Nanza.

RJ (CONT'D)

What did you call me?

Nanza steps closer, then sees Cordell approaching. Nanza steps back.

CORDELL

RJ, where you been?

RJ breaks his gaze and looks over, not responding.

NANZA

What up Cordell? Fellas, time to boogie.

Nanza and the other boys walk away. Cordell and RJ watch them.

CORDELL

What was that about?

RJ

I'm not sure, but I don't think he likes me.

CORDELL

Heck, I don't like you either.

Both boys laugh and then begin walking home.



## INT. BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

Cicely, Benita and RJ walk into a crowded church. Voices ring out and hands clap in rhythm to the music. RJ stumbles while staring at the scene. They find seats in a pew.

RJ

(Whispering to Cicely)

We don't usually go to church Mom,  
what are we doing here?

CICELY

(Whispers back to RJ)

I know baby, we can talk about it  
later. Look at it as a sociology  
experiment

Cicely gives RJ a wink. RJ turns back to the service.

MONTAGE - The minister, PREACHER EVANS, fifty something, large black man preaches. The choir sings. RJ quizzically looks at everything.

## EXT. BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH - AFTER SERVICE

Preacher Evans receives people in line. Benita pulls Cicely and RJ forward.

BENITA

Preacher Evans, you remember my  
daughter, Cicely.

PREACHER EVANS

Yes Ma'am and what a delight to see  
you after all these years.

CICELY

Nice to see you as well Brother  
Evans.

PREACHER EVANS

What brings you to town?

CICELY

(Pulling RJ over)

RJ and I are living here for a  
year, while my husband is serving  
oversees.

PREACHER EVANS

(He shakes RJ's hand)

Nice to meet you son. How did you  
enjoy church?

RJ  
 ...Sir, it was quite energetic.

PREACHER EVANS  
 (Laughs)  
 Well that's a good word for it.  
 Thank you. I hope to see you and  
 your mama again.

As they walk away from the Preacher, a fourteen year old Red-headed, demure black boy, RED, runs up to RJ and taps his arm.

RED  
 RJ, right?

RJ  
 Yes

RED  
 I'm in your class. I sit in the  
 back. My name is Terry, but  
 everyone calls me Red.

RJ  
 Oh Yeah, I remember.

RED  
 If you come back, you can sit with  
 me and my friends.

RJ  
 Thanks...Red.

RED  
 (Running away)  
 See ya at school.

BENITA  
 Already making friends at church,  
 that's real good. Let's go have  
 Sunday dinner.

They leave the church.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - WEEKS LATER

Cordell knocks on door and Cicely, still in her nursing uniform answers the door.

CORDELL  
 Can RJ come out and play catch?

CICELY

Come on in and you can ask him.

Cordell enters timidly, and RJ meets him in the living room.

RJ

What's up?

CORDELL

Do you wanna play some baseball?

RJ

Sure, let me grab my stuff. You want to see my room?

CORDELL

Sure.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE RJ BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boys walk into RJ's room. RJ digs out his glove, ball and bat from a locker.

Cordell studies the room, looking at the posters. Three posters on the wall - O.J. Simpson running with the football, Hank Aaron swinging at a pitch and Muhammad Ali hovering over Sonny Liston.

CORDELL

Cool posters. I've got one of Hank also...Which one is your favorite?

RJ

It depends on the time of year, so right now I guess Hank since baseball is around the corner. Also, my dad likes to call me Hammer.

CORDELL

Really?

RJ

Yeah, it's kinda cool and kind of embarrassing.

CORDELL

I get it. My dad calls me Hustle...after Charlie Hustle you know...

RJ/CORDELL  
(Say simultaneously)  
Pete Rose.

RJ  
Ok Hustle, lets go play ball.

CORDELL  
Ok Hammer.

EXT. JACKSON FRONT DOOR - DAY

Jeannie holds a plate. She knocks on the Jackson's front door. Cicely opens the door.

JEANNIE  
Mrs. Jackson, I'm Jeannie Berger,  
Cordell's mom.

CICELY  
Hi, I'm Cicely. Won't you come in?

JEANNIE  
(hesitates)  
Oh, sure. Here are some cookies as  
a welcome gift. I'm late on getting  
it over here.

CICELY  
Not at all, that's a thoughtful  
gift. RJ will really enjoy these.  
If you have a few minutes, perhaps  
you can sit and visit?

INT. JACKSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeannie sits down, looking around the living room.

JEANNIE  
You have a lovely home.

CICELY  
Thanks, still trying to make it  
homey for the time we will be here.

JEANNIE  
Cordell said your husband is  
oversees for a while.

CICELY

He'll be gone a year to Iceland.  
Then, we'll be stationed somewhere  
else after that.

JEANNIE

Is the moving around difficult?

CICELY

It's a challenge, but exciting too.  
I've got to see places that I  
thought I'd never would in my  
life...so it's worth the hassle.

JEANNIE

Where have you lived?

Cicely begins to answer, then the phone rings.

CICELY

Excuse me, while I answer this.

JEANNIE

No problem.

Jeannie looks around the living room as Cicely talks quietly on the phone. Suddenly, Cicely's voice rises. Jeannie turns her attention to Cicely.

CICELY

I don't understand what you're  
telling me. ... No, that cannot  
be true.

(Her voice cracks)

Dead, how? ... Training exercise?

Jeannie stands up, unsure what to do - she walks toward Cicely. Cicely turns to Jeannie.

CICELY (CONT'D)

Jeannie, Ray's dead. Can you get  
RJ?

JEANNIE

Oh my God! Yes, I'll get him.

Their shaking hands touch briefly. Jeannie darts out the door.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lyle puts fish in the freezer. Jeannie walks in the back door. She paces.

LYLE  
Where the hell were you?

JEANNIE  
Where's Cord?

LYLE  
Ain't no telling where that boy is.  
Probably out in the woods.

JEANNIE  
Have you seen RJ?

LYLE  
The black boy? No, why?

JEANNIE  
His daddy's dead.

Jeannie speeds out of the back door.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jeannie hurries into the woods, frantically calling.

JEANNIE  
Cordell! RJ! Cordell! RJ!

The boys arise from under the ground several feet from Jeannie. The lift up a chicken wire fence with pine straw over it, disguising their below ground fort.

CORDELL  
(Laughing)  
Hey mama!

Jeannie jumps, then runs over to the fort. RJ stands up next to Cordell.

JEANNIE  
(Trying to talk calmly)  
RJ, your mama wants you home right now.

CORDELL  
But mama...

JEANNIE  
No, right now - both of you home.

RJ  
Yes ma'am.

The boys get out and walk with Jeannie, feeling the tension of the silence. As they near home, Jeannie puts a hand on RJ.

JEANNIE

Tell your mama, I'll be over later.

RJ

Yes ma'am.

CORDELL

See ya RJ.

RJ

See ya Cord.

RJ sprints for his house.

INT. BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

RJ sits with Cicely and Benita in the front pew. The church - silent and still, except for rain outside. A closed casket sits in the front. Cordell and Jeannie sit toward the back. Cord tries to look around people to see RJ.

PREACHER EVANS

As we lay this fine man to rest,  
I'll invite the color guard to  
present the flag to Captain Ray  
Jackson's family.

There are four color guard air force guards in their dress blues slowly marching to the front of the church. They are followed by a drummer, tapping a beat. A bugler walks next to the drummer. All eyes watch the procession.

As they reach the front. The four guards begin to unravel an American flag. As the flag's unraveled, the guards beginning folding it again. Taps plays from the bugler.

One of the guards steps forward to present the flag to Cicely. Cicely and RJ stand, as the guard takes a knee and hands the flag to Cicely. The guard says something imperceptible. Cicely and RJ nod.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE KITCHEN

Cicely cleans a cluttered kitchen, left by church members after Ray's service. RJ sits at the table, staring out the window.

RJ  
 Mom, can we move back to  
 California?

Cicely stops working and sits at the table. She sighs, worn by the emotional and physical pain of loss. Cicely looks into RJ's puffy eyes.

CICELY  
 I don't know what we are going to  
 do yet RJ. Neither of us have  
 absorbed the loss of your father.

RJ looks away, holding back tears. He turns back shaking.

CICELY (CONT'D)  
 What's wrong RJ?

RJ  
 I hate it here.

CICELY  
 I thought you're good friends with  
 Cordell?

RJ  
 Yeah he and I are friends, but even  
 that is weird here. ... Some of  
 the black kids said I'm acting  
 white.

CICELY  
 That's ridiculous.

RJ  
 None of the black kids seem to want  
 to be friends, except Red. And no  
 white kids besides Cord are  
 friendly.

Cicely moves next to RJ, trying to hold him. RJ pulls away.

CICELY  
 I'm glad you told me RJ. I'm not  
 sure what we are going to do yet,  
 but I promise you, we will figure  
 it out together.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL - HONOR'S GROUP - DAY

A group of kids sit around a large table. The teacher - 20 something tall white woman, MS. KILLINGER, stands at the head of the table.



MS. KILLINGER

Group, we are going to do a study on military history for the next four weeks.

A heavy set fourteen year old boy, BRIAN, raises his hand quickly.

BRIAN

Are we doing The Civil War?

MS. KILLINGER

No Brian, not this time.

BRIAN

Darn.

MS. KILLINGER

We are going to study the end of World War II. Specifically, the reasoning behind the US dropping the atomic bomb. I'll want you to write a paper on whether you would have made the same decision and why. Also, you will need to present the paper to the class.

Ms. Killinger walks around the room, letting the assignment sink in for the students.

MS. KILLINGER (CONT'D)

Ok group, lets begin with a discussion on who may have been the greatest military leader of all time.

BRIAN

Ms. Killinger, it has to be General Robert E. Lee. The Confederate army was undersized and outgunned, but still kept the Yankees from winning for four years.

MS. KILLINGER

Brian, a respectable answer. Group, I'm talking about who conquered the largest amount of land in known history?

HELEN

(Raises her hand)  
Mark Anthony.

MS. KILLINGER  
Nice guess Helen, but no.

RJ raises his hand.

MS. KILLINGER (CONT'D)  
Yes, RJ?

RJ  
I believe it was Genghis Khan who  
led the Huns.

MS. KILLINGER  
Correct RJ, nice job!

Other students look surprised or upset at the answer by RJ.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS BATHROOM - DAY

RJ's in a stall. Red dries his hands. Three White boys, led  
by Brian walk in.

BRIAN  
Lookie here fellas, we got  
ourselves a Red-headed nigger  
(looking closely at Red's  
face)  
with poke-dot lips.

Red starts to leave and they block his way.

RED  
Let me get back to class.

BRIAN  
We just having some fun Red.  
(He starts singing)  
"Red-headed nigger with the poke-  
dot lips."

The other boys chime in on the singing. They stop singing  
when RJ flushes the toilet. The white boys move toward the  
stall. Red runs away. Brian shakes his head to the other boys  
to not follow Red. RJ opens the door and walks to the sink.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
Well if it isn't Mr. Uppity.

The boys move toward RJ. RJ dries off his hands and turns  
toward Brian who blocks his path to the door.

RJ  
 Brian, you still hurting that I'm  
 smarter than you?

BRIAN  
 There ain't no negro smarter than  
 me.

RJ stops drying his hands and turns toward Brian. RJ raises his fists, as his face twists into anger.

CUT:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Red runs into Cordell. Breathing hard, Red points to the bathroom.

RED  
 ...RJ...help

Cordell runs toward the restroom.

CUT TO:

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

RJ poised to strike and facing the white boys.

RJ  
 Do you need help or you ready to go  
 one-on-one?

BRIAN  
 Similar to General Lee, I like a  
 numbers superiority.

They boys move closer to RJ. RJ fakes right, then punches Brian in the nose with a left jab. The second boy grabs RJ, but RJ throws him down. The third boy pushes RJ back, stumbling RJ still gets a punch off to slow him down. The second boy gets behind RJ and holds his arms. Brian comes forward with his nose bleeding.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
 You are going to pay for that boy.

As Brian pulls back his fist, RJ raises his feet and kicks Brian in the chest. Brian stumbles back into Cordell. Cordell grabs Brian and throws him into the door. RJ shakes off the kid holding him. Cordell hits the third boy in the stomach, and he falls to his knees. Cordell and RJ make eye contact.

CORDELL  
You OK Hammer?

RJ  
Never better Hustle.

The principal, Eddie Staub enters the bathroom, seeing three boys on the floor.

STAUB  
Everybody in my office, now!

INT. STAUBS OFFICE - LATER

All the boys are sitting on benches outside Staub's office. Staub waves them into his office. The boys stand. Staub stands behind his desk.

STAUB  
First, nobody says another word. I should suspend all of you, but y'all aren't the troublemaking type.  
(handing out a slip of paper)  
You are going to get your parent to sign this and get it back to me tomorrow.

Brian starts for the door.

STAUB (CONT'D)  
Hold on there boys, there's one more thing  
(He raises his paddle)  
Three licks a piece.

One at a time they line up and bend over his desk for their licks from Mr. Staubs's paddle.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Cicely sits with RJ at the table. She looks over the principal's note.

CICELY  
I'm signing this. I don't condone fighting RJ.

RJ hangs his head.

CICELY (CONT'D)

I expect better and I know your father would too.

RJ raises his head and anger envelopes his face.

RJ

Actually, I think dad would have been proud that I kick some Cracker's ass today. You know what - it felt good!

CICELY

I don't want you talking like that son. Go to your room, cool off and we can discuss this later.

RJ gets up and speeds to his room, giving the door an extra boost to close.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL MS. SIBLEY'S CLASS - DAY

MS. SIBLEY

Class, Vietnam is a complicated war that is just now ending for the US. How many of you had relatives in the war?

Almost all the hands in the class are raised.

KENISHA

My dad was killed in the war. I was only seven.

MS. SIBLEY

I'm very sorry for you Kenisha, and for any others that lost love ones. Your assignment is to talk to someone involved in the Vietnam Conflict. Get their story and their reasoning why the US was there.

The bell rings. Kids leave the classroom.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Kids file out to the playground. Nanza follows RJ.

NANZA

Hey RJ.

RJ  
 (Turns around)  
 What do you want?

NANZA  
 I heard you kicked some white boy  
 ass the other day.

RJ  
 They were picking on Red.

NANZA  
 I guess I was wrong about you.

RJ  
 How's that?

NANZA  
 Maybe you ain't Uncle Tom.

RJ stands there looking at him. Nanza walks over to him and gives him some dap.

NANZA (CONT'D)  
 (Holds up his right fist)  
 Black power RJ.

RJ holds up his fist and runs out to the playground.

INT. STAUBS OFFICE - DAY

RJ walks into Principal Staubs office.

RJ  
 Mr. Staub, you wanted to see me?

Staub gets up.

STAUB  
 Yes, follow me RJ.

Staub exits his office. He stops by a vending machine in the corner of the office and purchases two bottles of coke. RJ curiously watches. Staub opens the bottles, handing one to RJ.

RJ  
 Mr. Staub, if this is about the  
 fight.

STAUB  
 Let's walk outside.

RJ follows Staub as he exits the building.

EXT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL FRONT STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Staub sits down on the steps. He pats the step beside him. RJ sits down. Staub takes a long drink of coke. RJ takes a drink.

STAUB  
Ah, that's good.

RJ nods his head.

STAUB (CONT'D)  
RJ, you're not in trouble.

RJ shows some relief. Staub takes another drink.

STAUB (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry about you losing your dad.

RJ  
Thanks Mr. Staub.

STAUB  
I know that's got to be hard.

RJ nods his head.

STAUB (CONT'D)  
I just want you to know that if you need to talk to someone...you can come to me.

RJ  
Yes sir.

Staub and RJ take another sip.

STAUB  
There may be things you want to say, that maybe you can't say to your mama. But, you can tell me - man to man.

RJ  
(A bit emotional)  
Yes sir. Thank you Mr. Staub.

STAUB  
So, what do you think about the  
Braves this year?

FADE TO:

INT. BERGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lyle at the kitchen table reviewing bills. Cordell walks into the kitchen.

CORDELL  
Dad, I was wondering if you can  
help me with a school assignment?

LYLE  
Doesn't your mama usually help you  
with that?

CORDELL  
Yeah, but this is about Vietnam.

Lyle looks up and cocks his head.

CORDELL (CONT'D)  
We are studying Vietnam and Ms.  
Sibley wants us to interview  
someone involved.

LYLE  
Damn, that's quite an ask for a 8th  
grader. What do you want to know?

CORDELL  
You've never talked much about it  
and so I figured you really didn't  
want to talk about it.

LYLE  
You figured right.

CORDELL  
So, you can answer as much as you  
want.

LYLE  
Planned on it.

CORDELL  
Ok, start with when and how you  
joined.



LYLE

I got drafted in '66. Not that I didn't like the military, I just wasn't so sure that this was a war worth fighting.

Cordell takes notes.

LYLE (CONT'D)

I was a foot soldier, carrying a M-16 rifle with the 1st Infantry Division, also called the Big Red One there's a Movie about WWII with the same name. Anyway, my job was to follow orders, go into battle and defeat the enemy.

CORDELL

I'm guessing that wasn't easy?

LYLE

Damn straight. Right away we are in a battle in something they called Operation Mastiff. 17 American boys died that day and so that woke me up right quick.

CORDELL

Were you scared?

LYLE

Scared shitless. I'd never been shot at or shot anyone...But you keep going, you know One foot in front of the other. The war becomes less about the enemy and more about keeping your brother soldiers alive.

CORDELL

I remember- meeting you at the airport when you got back. I didn't recognize you...You were so skinny and looked so sad.

LYLE

...War will do that to you son.  
...I was sad for what I'd seen and done over there...but I was glad to be home with you and your mama.

CORDELL

Can I ask a few more questions?

LYLE

Fire away. Oops, that's a bad pun.

They both laugh.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Cordell in bed, with the light off - but still awake. Lyle walks by his room.

CORDELL

Dad.

Lyle steps into Cordell's room.

INT. BERGER HOUSE CORDELL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LYLE

Yeah, son?

CORDELL

I'm sorry you had to go to war.

LYLE

Me too son...but I made it home in one piece, which is more than some.

Lyle exits the room with tears gleaming in his eyes.

INT. BERGER HOUSE AND JACKSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Split screen showing both households watching the Braves play the Reds.

Cordell sits on the floor. Lyle watches in his recliner.

CORDELL

Hank only needs two homers to get Ruth's record.

LYLE

It should have an asterisk.

CORDELL

Why's that dad?

LYLE

Look, Ruth did it in 152 games per season and has a much higher homers per season and per at bat.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

RJ's close to the TV, Cicely and Benita sit on the couch watching the game.

RJ  
Hey mom, the Braves have two men on  
and the Hammer is up to bat.

CICELY  
His next homer ties Babe, right?

RJ  
Yep.

SHOT: TV SCREEN OF THE GAME

ANNOUNCER  
On the first pitch, Aaron hits a  
three-run homer off The Reds' Jack  
Billingham.

INT. BERGER HOUSE VS. JACKSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SHOT: Split screen of both households.

RJ and Cicely jump up and hoot.

Lyle walks out of the room. Cordell continues watching TV.

CICELY  
This is history RJ. You'll remember  
it for the rest of your life.

RJ  
You're right mom, I just wished dad  
was here to see it.

CICELY  
I believe he saw it baby, from the  
upper deck.

RJ stands up, making a mock baseball swing. He points to the sky and starts to trot.

INT. STUARTVILLE SKATING RINK - NIGHT

Crowded, racial diverse skating rink. Kids laughing and dancing to rock music. RJ and Cordell lace their skates on a bench and sprint onto the floor. They skirt around the rink once, spinning into a turn around stop.

CORDELL

Not bad.

RJ

California skating baby.

RJ sprints back out and Cordell follows.

INT. SKATING RINK SNACK BAR - LATER

RJ and Cordell sipping cokes. Kenisha and Donna look at them slyly, but RJ and Cordell do not notice them. RJ and Cordell finish their drinks and head to the rink. Kenisha and Donna stand in their way.

KENISHA

Looks like it's Batman and Robin.

RJ

What's that?

DONNA

Your little tussle in the boys bathroom.

CORDELL

They deserved it.

KENISHA

The next couples skate, we are coming for y'all.

Kenisha and Donna skate away giggling. Cordell and RJ look at each other, shrug their shoulders and skate around one lap.

A slow rock song comes on with the DJ announcing a couples skate. RJ and Cordell skate off to the side. Kenisha grabs RJ's hand and pulls him on the rink. Donna does the same to Cordell. The couples are holding hands and skating.

KENISHA (CONT'D)

This is the first time I've seen you here.

RJ

I didn't even know there was a rink until last week.

KENISHA

You're pretty good.

RJ

Uh, thanks. You too.

KENISHA  
I'm sorry about your dad.

RJ  
Thanks.

KENISHA  
I lost my dad in the war.

RJ  
I remember you saying that in  
class. I'm sorry.

KENISHA  
Thanks. So, I know how you feel.

Kenisha gives RJ's hand a squeeze. RJ looks at her and gives  
a slight smile.

CUT TO:

Cordell looks ahead at RJ and Kenisha, while holding Donna's  
hand.

DONNA  
We've been in school together  
forever, but never really talked.

CORDELL  
Sure we have. In school.

DONNA  
Not school talk, real talk.

CORDELL  
Oh.

DONNA  
You and RJ became fast friends.

CORDELL  
Yeah.

DONNA  
Kinda unusual.

CORDELL  
It shouldn't be.

The song winds down and the couples separate with some  
unintelligible words exchanged. The boys continue on the  
rink, while the girls go to the snack bar.

DONNA  
Cordell's not a talker.

KENISHA  
Neither is RJ, but he is cute.

DONNA  
Yeah, he is.

KENISHA  
D checking out the black boy. Hey,  
that Cordell is fine too!

They both laugh. Cord and RJ skate by and the girls wave at them as they pass.

INT. BERGER HOUSE

Lyle and Cordell watch the Braves game against the Dodgers. Jeannie walks in with some tea.

JEANNIE  
When does Hank come up to bat?

CORDELL  
Pretty soon.

JEANNIE  
Think he'll do it tonight?

Cord looks at Lyle. Lyle sips on his tea.

CORDELL  
Probably.

JEANNIE  
Need anything Hon?

LYLE  
Nope.

Jeannie and Cord exchange glances. She exits to the kitchen.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - NIGHT

RJ, Cicely and Benita watch the Braves on national TV in a home game against the Dodgers. Aaron's on-deck for his first at bat.

BENITA  
Oh, I can't hardly watch.

Benita covers her eyes. RJ and Cicely giggle. Several pitches are delivered.

CICELY

The pitcher is being careful with Hank.

RJ

Shoot! He just walked him. Maybe next time.

CICELY

I'll make some popcorn.

Cicely walks into the kitchen.

INT. JACKSON LIVING ROOM - LATER

The TV broadcast of the Braves and Dodgers on with VIN SCULLY, Announcer casting the play by play. Benita and Cicely sit on the couch. RJ stands.

BENITA

This time I'll watch. Maybe it's better luck.

CICELY

Here we go.

VIN SCULLY

In the bottom of the 3rd Inning. There's the pitch, ball one by the pitcher.

RJ

He's going to walk him again.

VIN SCULLY

That one is hit well to left-center. It could be...YES, Aaron hits The 715th home run off Al Downing of the Dodgers on an 1-0 fastball.

RJ, Benita and Cicely are jumping up and down and screaming to celebrate as the TV plays.

INT. BERGER HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lyle and Cordell watch the TV and see the home run by Aaron. They hear the screaming from across the street.

Cordell's looks out the window, smiling. Lyle gets up, walks to the kitchen.

INT. BERGER KITCHEN

Lyle opens the back door. Jeannie washes dishes.

LYLE  
Going into town.

Jeannie looks over her shoulder as Lyle walks out. A smiling Cordell bounces into the kitchen.

CORDELL  
Aaron just broke Babe's record.

Cordell imitates a home run swing and rounding the bases. Jeannie looks at the back door.

INT. SHORTY'S WATER HOLE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The game on the TV shows the last inning of Braves/Dodgers. Lyle sits on a stool sipping a beer, with only a couple other patrons. SHORTY, fifty something short, stout white man turns to face Lyle.

SHORTY  
Hell of a night Lyle.

LYLE  
(Eyes still on the TV)  
He got the record.

SHORTY  
Yeah, at least he's a local boy.

LYLE  
Yeah.

SHORTY  
Braves have a good shot this year.

LYLE  
Yep. I better hit the road SHORTY.

Lyle throws down a \$10 bill and walks out of the bar.

INT. LYLE'S FORD MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

The car shakes, then a popping noise. Lyle grimaces, pulling the car over to a vacant parking lot.



EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lyle gets out of his car and looks at the blown tire.

LYLE  
I'll be damned.

Lyle opens the trunk and gets the jack and spare. He tries to untighten the lug nuts and they won't budge.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Sons of bitches.

A forty+ black man, JOHN, and his teenage son, JJ pull into the parking lot in their old pickup truck. John roll down there windows and slowly roll toward Lyle.

JOHN  
They got those suckers too tight,  
didn't they?

LYLE  
(A bit shocked)  
Yeah, damned tight.

JOHN  
I got a cheater bar in the back.  
JJ, go get that bar out of the back  
and give to this man.

JJ jumps out and retrieves the cheater bar and lays it down in front of Lyle. Lyle grabs it and fits it onto the crow-bar and moves the nut easily.

LYLE  
That did the trick.

JOHN  
You keep that one, I got plenty  
back at the house.

LYLE  
I'm much obliged to you mister.

JOHN  
The name is John and this is my boy  
JJ.

LYLE  
I'm Lyle Berger and I appreciate  
the help.

John and JJ wave and pull into the road. Lyle watches them go and gets back to the tire change.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Teenage boys sit on the bleachers for the annual Babe Ruth League baseball tryout. There are about ten black kids, the rest were white kids. RJ's next to Cordell.

League President BUTCH HUMBALL, forty something white man grabs a bull horn. Other white coaches are on the field.

BUTCH

Boys, it's that time again for try outs. Everyone will be drafted onto a team. There are 15 players per team, there are 4 Babe Ruth league teams and 4 Pony league teams. You will be contacted on Monday night and told what team you are assigned. Alright, boys line up along the fence.

Boys line up, while the coaches give each boy a number that they pin to their shirt. Cordell gets 20 and RJ is 21. Nanza walks toward RJ and leans in close.

NANZA

That white boy won't get you drafted.

RJ

What?

Nanza walks away, holding up his right fist.

BUTCH

OK boys, numbers 1-4 in the infield, 5-8 in the outfield. Boys 9-12 get in the dugout, you bat in order of your number. The rest of you stay put.

Boys grab gloves and hats and run out to the field. The boys watching, sit on the bleachers. Coaches position players in the field. Lyle pitches.

RJ

Your dad is pitching!

CORDELL

Yeah, he's pretty good. He'll move the ball around a little, but keep an eye on the inside corner.

RJ

Were up after this group.

CORDELL

Yep.

MONTAGE - kids playing baseball. Some good and bad plays.  
Coaches write in small notebooks.

EXT. ALLEN FIELD - LATER

Cordell steps into the batters box. RJ on deck. Cordell bats left-handed - similar stance to Pete Rose. He kicks at the dirt, spits into his hands rubbing them together and gets in the batters box. Lyle walks to the plate.

LYLE

Son, I'm not taking it easy on you.

CORDELL

I know dad, give me what you got.

Lyle walks back to the mound. He pitches Cord high and tight, which makes Cordell fall back out of the way. They sneer at each other. The next pitch is fouled to left. The left fielder gives chase, but gives up on it.

The next pitch travels up the middle for a base hit. A swing and a miss on the next. The last pitch is hit to left and Cordell runs it out. The left fielder gets it on a hop and throws Cordell out at second base.

RJ gets in the box and bats right-handed. He raises his bat high, pointing toward the sky, adjusts his shirt and settles into the box. Lyle holds the ball up to signal here comes the pitch. RJ nods.

RJ turns of an inside pitch. It's a long line drive to left that hits the bottom of the fence. RJ offers a bit of a smile. Lyle turns back to face him with a scowl.

The next pitch is fast and low, but RJ gets a piece of it and skirts it to second base. The next two pitches produce foul balls. RJ steps out of the box, taps his hat and then returns. RJ hits the next one to the right field fence.

LYLE

Run this one out.

RJ

Yes sir.

The pitch is hit between the shortstop and third baseman. RJ hums around the bases and gets to second standing. Several of the coaches are looking around at each other.

IN THE FIELD - LATER

RJ and Cordell are playing outfield. Nanza's hits a liner to left - RJ makes a running catch. Cordell takes the next ball hit by Nanza on the first hop and makes a great throw to second base.

LYLE

Run this one out.

NANZA

(under his breath)

Won't need to.

Nanza's crushes it to deep center, fifty feet over the fence. Nanza drops the bat and jogs around the bases.

LATER - RJ walks over the Nanza and sits down. They are watching other black kids make good plays.

RJ

Quite a hit you had.

NANZA

I could have hit more, but it don't matter.

RJ

What do you mean?

NANZA

No niggers gettin a call for Babe Ruth league.

RJ

What? You're one of the best.

NANZA

Don't matter.

(pointing to the coaches)

They don't want any black kid on their White diamond.

Nanza walks away. RJ looks at the field.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lyle works at the kitchen table on his roster. Cordell walks impatiently in and out of the area several times.

LYLE

Boy, you going to wear out the floor tiles.

CORDELL  
 Sorry dad. You got it figured out?

LYLE  
 Almost done.

Jeannie walks by the kitchen and stops behind the door to listen.

CORDELL  
 Any room for RJ on our team?

LYLE  
 Cordell, I know you are friends with this boy. He's got some talent...but the league ain't letting black kids play Babe Ruth.

CORDELL  
 Why?

LYLE  
 ...Son, you've seen this before, don't act like you haven't.

Cordell starts to say something, but keeps silent.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
 Listen, I know you're friends with that boy. Son, the blacks are taking over every sport, except baseball...and we'd like to leave it that way.

CORDELL  
 The majors has black players and have since Jackie Robinson played.

LYLE  
 It don't make it right.

CORDELL  
 What makes you right?

LYLE  
 (Loosing patience)  
 I'm not going to argue Cordell... Even if I could change it all the other coaches are against it.

CORDELL  
 It only takes one person to make a change.

LYLE  
Dammit, that's it. Head upstairs.

Cordell walks out and Jeannie walks into the kitchen.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
(Looking up)  
Not you too Sugar?

JEANNIE  
I haven't said a word.

LYLE  
I can tell when your wheels are spinning.

JEANNIE  
Our son is not from our generation.  
He goes to school with black kids  
and RJ is his good friend...so he  
sees things differently.

LYLE  
I see change coming.

JEANNIE  
Maybe change is for the better.

Jeannie walks out of the kitchen. Lyle watches her leave. He stands up looking out the back window for a few moments, then returns to his work at the table.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - LUNCHTIME

Cordell brings his lunch over to RJ's table. RJ eats his lunch. Most of the other kids have left for recess.

CORDELL  
(Opening his milk carton)  
How's it going?

RJ  
(Very little eye contact)  
Fine.

CORDELL  
Good.

BEAT...

RJ  
You on your dad's team?

CORDELL  
Yeah, the Braves.

RJ  
Babe Ruth team?

CORDELL  
Uh...Yeah.

BEAT...

CORDELL  
It ain't right RJ.

RJ  
What ain't right Cordell?

CORDELL  
Not allowing black kids in the  
league.

RJ  
Yeah, it ain't right. I'm on the  
Blue Jays Pony league team... and I  
know I'm as good as you.

CORDELL  
You're right.

RJ  
You playing?

CORDELL  
Uh, Yeah.

RJ  
(Gets up)  
I guess even though it's not right,  
you are going along with it.

CORDELL  
What am I supposed to do?

RJ  
Say something

CORDELL  
You mean stand up to my dad.

RJ  
Yeah, at least you have a dad.

Cordell stands there dumbfounded. RJ moves closer to Cordell.

RJ (CONT'D)

(Softly)

My dad said something to me before he died. He said, do the right thing, no matter what others do.

RJ walks away, while Cordell stands there.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL GIFTED HONORS CLASS - DAY

MS. KILLINGER

RJ, your presenting.

RJ gathers his note cards and two poster boards. He walks to the front of the class. He looks up, taking a deep breath.

RJ

The assignment was to discuss your opinion on whether the US should have used nuclear bombs on Japan to end WWII.

(He looks up briefly)

This was a difficult decision for the new President, Harry S. Truman. He was new to the nuclear program, so he consulted with his military chiefs of staff and cabinet members. The president wanted a comparison of ways to defeat the Japanese. His staff showed him these numbers.

RJ puts up the first poster on the chalk board and uses his pencil to explain the figures.

RJ (CONT'D)

According to his military advisors, a ground assault would take up to one year to defeat the enemy with over 250,000 killed for the US and allies, plus several million for the Japanese.

RJ points to the board.



RJ (CONT'D)

However, dropping a nuclear bomb would potentially keep the US and Allied casualties to zero, while drastically reducing the Japanese casualties. See this figure below. It would possibly end the war immediately, which it did.

The other kids are quiet. RJ looks at his teacher and she motions for him to continue.

RJ (CONT'D)

Before I state an opinion, I'd like to point out the actual casualties of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

RJ brings up the other poster and points to his figures.

RJ (CONT'D)

As you can see, the bomb killed approximately 125,000 immediately and possibly another 75,000 from radiation poisoning. Most of those killed were civilians... Now to the question. I think if I were in the president's shoes...I would have used the bomb, but on a military target. Another option may have been demonstrate the power of the bomb in an uninhabited area, to convince the Japanese to surrender.

The room falls silent with looks of amazement.

MS. KILLINGER

RJ, what if neither of those options worked?

RJ

...I would have used the bomb.

MS. KILLINGER

Thank you for that excellent presentation RJ. Let's give RJ a hand.

Kids applaud and look worried.

MS. KILLINGER (CONT'D)

Brian, are you ready to present?

BRIAN

Uh..No ma'am, I had planned for next week.

MS. KILLINGER

Anyone else ready to present?

Kids look around, but no one raises their hand.

MS. KILLINGER (CONT'D)

Clearly, RJ has raised the bar with his presentation. I expect everyone to be ready by next week.

Some of the kids are glare at RJ. RJ looks away, gathering his belongings.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The Bluejays practice on the adjacent diamond to the Braves team. RJ plays shortstop and Cordell plays second base. Batters for each team foul the ball off toward each others team.

CORDELL

Hey.

RJ does not respond. They pause for a moment looking at each other. Lyle looks over at Cord.

LYLE

Throw the ball in Cordell.

Cordell turns and throws the ball back to his dad on the mound. He looks back as RJ runs back to his field.

MONTAGE - scenes of the practice with RJ and Cordell glancing at each other during the practice. Practice ends earlier for RJ and then Lyle calls practice to a finish.

INTERIOR LYLE'S CAR - NIGHT

Lyle drives as Cordell looks out the passenger window. Lyle glances his way occasionally. Cordell daydreams of black baseball players.

DAYDREAM - Cordell sees baseball scenes in the window of the car. He sees black ballplayers: Joe Morgan, Hank Aaron, Vida Blue, Willie Mays.

LYLE

Pretty good practice today.

CORDELL  
(Looking out the window)  
Yeah, pretty good.

LYLE  
I think we have a shot at winning  
the league.

CORDELL  
Yeah, probably.

More silence in the car.

LYLE  
Something on your mind Cord?

CORDELL  
(Looks at his dad)  
I'm not playing dad.

LYLE  
What are you talking about son?

CORDELL  
I'm not playing baseball for your  
team.

Lyle pulls the car over to the side of the road and puts it  
in park.

LYLE  
What in the hell are you talking  
about boy?

Cordell gives Lyle an incredulous look.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
We talked about this son and I  
tried to explain about the blacks.

CORDELL  
It ain't right and I ain't playing.

LYLE  
We'll see about that.

Lyle kicks the car back in gear and heads toward home.

INT. BERGER HOME - NIGHT

Cordell comes sprinting through the door and to his room.  
Jeannie walks to the front door as Lyle comes in.

JEANNIE

What's going on Lyle?

LYLE

Your son has an idea to stop playing ball as a protest for RJ.

JEANNIE

Oh my goodness.

LYLE

I told him that if that's his decision, he can be grounded for the rest of the season.

JEANNIE

Oh boy.

LYLE

I'm going to clean up, so get my supper ready.

Lyle stomps to the bathroom.

INT. CORDELL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeannie knocks on the partially open door to Cordell's room.

JEANNIE

Can I come in?

Cordell waves her in and she closes the door.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Your dad told me what you're doing.

CORDELL

You trying to talk me out of it?

JEANNIE

(Sitting on his bed)

No. In fact, I'm proud of you... You are standing up for your friend, for your principles and standing up to your dad. That's a good thing in my book.

Cordell gives her a hug.

CORDELL

I don't care that I'm grounded. I'll miss stuff, but I know it's what I should do.

JEANNIE

That's good....With every choice,  
there is consequences. That  
includes sacrifice, which is what  
you are doing.

CORDELL

What about dad he's so mad at me?

JEANNIE

That's temporary. He loves you  
Cord. Lyle is a product of his  
upbringing and it may take him  
longer to come around, but I think  
he will.

Cordell sits with his mom on his bed.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

RJ's team practices adjacent to Cordell's team again. RJ  
looks over repeatedly for Cordell. Practice ends and RJ walks  
over to Lyle.

RJ

Mr. Berger, is Cordell ok?

LYLE

(Perturbed)

Cordell is no longer on the team  
and you'll have to talk to him  
about that.

Lyle walks off and gets in his car, while RJ still stands  
there stunned.

EXT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL RECESS PLAYGROUND - DAY

RJ walks over the Cordell.

RJ

Hey.

CORDELL

Hey.

RJ

Your dad said you aren't playing  
baseball.

CORDELL

Yeah.

RJ

Why?

Cord looks down, kicking the dirt, then looks at RJ.

CORDELL

It ain't right... You and the other black kids not being allowed to play Babe Ruth ball.

RJ

Yeah.

CORDELL

I thought about what your dad said. It's time to follow my conscience and do what is right.

RJ

Give me five.

Cordell gives him an enthusiastic double five.

RJ (CONT'D)

What about Hank's homer that broke the record?

CORDELL

Man, it was cool.  
(He imitates the swing)  
They both start running imaginary bases.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

RJ, Nanza and Red sit on the bench. COACH WATSON, thirty something heavy white man, looks over the line up card. He chews tobacco, spitting routinely.

COACH WATSON

OK team, let's win this one. Get a bat in your hand Terry. RJ's on deck and Nanza's in the hole.

Coach Watson walks over to coach third base. Nanza walks over to RJ, while Red puts a donut on an aluminum bat and practices swinging.

NANZA

I'm batting left-handed.

RJ

Why?

NANZA

At this level, batting right-handed  
is too easy.

RJ

Good luck with that.

UMPIRE

Play ball.

Red gets in the batters box. A pitch is delivered.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Inside, ball one.

COACH WATSON

(Clapping his hands)

Make him pitch to you Terry.

Red nods to the Coach. The pitcher delivers.

UMPIRE

High, ball two.

Red stands still. Next pitch delivered.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Strike one.

The crowd claps and sounds of parents cheering their kids on.  
Red steps out of the box briefly and re-adjusts his helmet.  
The next pitch delivered.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Low, ball three.

The catcher shakes his head that he disagrees with the  
Umpire.

COACH WATSON

Make sure this one's in the zone  
before you swing.

The pitch comes low and gets past the catcher. Terry runs to  
first base. The first base coach whispers something to Red.

RJ walks to the batters box - grabs some dirt and rubs it in  
his hands, raises his bat high and digs into the batters box.  
The pitcher snarls.

CICELY

Come on RJ, look for your pitch.

The first pitch - in the dirt.

UMPIRE

Ball one.

RJ hits the next pitch - a line drive up the middle and Red runs to second. The centerfielder makes and bad throw.

COACH WATSON

Run Terry.

Red makes it to third base standing up. As the ball is thrown to third base, RJ runs to second base.

BENITA

Way to go RJ.

CICELY

Good hit RJ.

Nanza walks up to the plate and steps over it to bat left-handed.

COACH WATSON

(Talking to Red)

I thought he was a righty.

RED

He can switch-hit coach.

COACH WATSON

Drive 'em in Nanza.

Nanza hits the first pitch off the right field fence, scoring Red and RJ. Nanza ends up with a double. He gives a black power fist to RJ. Coach Watson takes off his hat and scratches his head.

MONTAGE - The ballgame continues with a few great plays in the field and hits by RJ and Nanza.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD PARKING LOT - EARLY EVENING

Lyle takes his baseball gear from his truck. COACH FRED, forty something white man, stops him.

COACH FRED

Lyle.

LYLE

Fred, how's it hangin'?

COACH FRED

A little to the left.

(Chuckles)

(MORE)



COACH FRED (CONT'D)

I been meaning to ask you why I  
ain't seen Cordell playin'.

LYLE

I don't want to talk about it Fred.

COACH FRED

It just seems kinda funny.

LYLE

I said that I damn well don't want  
to talk about it!

COACH FRED

Sorry Lyle. Good luck on your game.

Lyle grunts and turns back to pick up the rest of his  
equipment and heads to the field.

EXT. ALLEN FIELD - AFTER GAME

Lyle grabs his equipment and walks toward his car. He stops  
when he hears the Announcer.

ANNOUNCER

Up to bat is the shortstop, RJ  
Jackson.

Lyle drops his bag and turns toward the game. RJ hits the  
first pitch with a one-hopper off the right-center fence and  
legs it out for an easy double.

Nanza steps into the box to bat right-handed and then  
remembers that he bats left-handed against this competition.

Nanza takes the first pitch for a strike. RJ, the coach and  
fans cheer for him. Nanza hits the next pitch to dead center,  
well over the fence. He begins his homer trot.

LYLE

Damn.

Fred walks by and stands by Lyle.

COACH FRED

Those nigger boys can sure  
hit...but not in our league.

Lyle turns around and walks away.

INT. BERGER HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lyle walks into the kitchen with a scowl. Jeannie cleans and Cordell eats. Lyle sees Cordell and grimaces.

LYLE

Boy, you need to finish the last of  
that steak.

Cordell looks at the steak and then at his dad. He takes the whole piece into his mouth. Lyle walks over to Jeannie at the sink.

LYLE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna clean up. Bring me a beer  
while I'm in the tub.

JEANNIE

Sure Lyle.

Lyle walks to the bathroom, Jeannie turns back to the sink.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Finish up Cordell.

Cordell chokes on his meat, he cannot make a noise. He gets up from his chair, staggers over to tap his mom. Jeannie turns around. She grabs him and slaps his back.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

(Frantic and screams)

Lyle!

Lyle turns off the tub and hurries to the kitchen. He sees Jeannie hitting Cordell on the back.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

He's choking!

Lyle grabs the boy, bends him forward to strike him on the back. He puts him over the chair, continuing to hit his back.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm getting Cicely!

Jeannie runs across the street and bangs on the door. Cicely comes to the door with RJ behind her.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Cordell's choking, come quick.

CICELY

Bring my bag RJ and hurry!

INT. BERGER HOUSE

Jeannie and Cicely run through the front door and see Lyle still shaking and hitting Cordell. RJ's behind them.

LYLE  
(Frantic)  
He's not breathing!

Cordell turns purple. RJ bursts in to see Cordell lifeless.

CICELY  
Call an ambulance and let me have  
him.

She takes Cordell and performs the Heimlich maneuver.  
Nothing. Cordell's limp.

CICELY (CONT'D)  
RJ, drop that bag on the table and  
open it.  
(Cicely breathing hard)  
If this doesn't work, I'll need to  
perform a Cricothyrotomy.

Jeannie dials the phone. Cicely continues to thrust.

LYLE  
Crico...?

CICELY  
Cut open his windpipe.

Lyle winces. RJ cringes.

CICELY (CONT'D)  
One more time.

Cicely gives one more thrust and the meat shoots out of his  
mouth. Jeannie returns to the kitchen.

JEANNIE  
Thank God, it's out!

Cicely lowers Cordell to the floor and bends down checking  
for breathing and a pulse.

CICELY  
He's not breathing. I'm starting  
CPR.

Cicely breathes and administers compression. The room is  
silent, everyone watches intently. Cicely continues CPR,  
then pauses. Cordell gasps.

JEANNIE  
He's breathing!

CICELY  
RJ, hand me my stethoscope.

RJ grabs it from the bag and hands it to her. She listens to his heart. She puts the stethoscope around her neck.

CICELY (CONT'D)  
Heart and lungs sound ok.

JEANNIE  
He's going to be ok?

CICELY  
He needs a doctor.

EXT. BERGER HOUSE - LATER

The ambulance arrives. Cicely waits for them outside. EMT, BILL - forty something white man gets out of the vehicle.

BILL  
What's going on?

CICELY  
I'm Cicely, a neighbor and nurse. Their son, Cordell choked on some meat. I got it dislodged, but he was unconscious and unresponsive. I started CPR and he was revived, but he's still unconscious.

Bill looks at the other EMT, who walks up to the door.

BILL  
Get the oxygen.

The other EMT walks back to the ambulance.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bill walks to the kitchen, as Cicely follows behind him. Bill kneels next to Cordell and checks his breathing and pulse.

BILL  
Folks, you need to move back while we work.

Lyle and Jeannie move back a few steps, but holding each others hand. The other EMT walks in and they hook Cordell up to the oxygen.

EXT. BERGER HOUSE - LATER

The EMT's load Cordell in the ambulance, with Jeannie and Lyle standing by. Bill steps out of the ambulance.

BILL

It's likely that black nurse saved  
your boy's life.

Lyle and Jeannie nod and squeeze each other's hand.

LYLE

Can we ride with him to the  
hospital?

BILL

Only one of you can.

JEANNIE

Go ahead. I'll ride with Cicely and  
meet you there.

They kiss and Lyle gets into the ambulance, as Jeannie walks over to Cicely and RJ. She hugs Cicely tight.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

(Whispering)

You saved Cordell's life.

CICELY

I did what I'm trained to do.

JEANNIE

Thank you.

They hug a little longer. Benita walks over. Jeannie pulls back seeing Benita.

BENITA

Mrs. Berger, sorry about Cordell.

JEANNIE

Your daughter is a hero. She saved  
his life.

BENITA

She's a great nurse.

CICELY  
Let's get you to the hospital.

BENITA  
RJ, you're going to the house with me.

RJ  
Mom, I want to go to the hospital to see Cord.

CICELY  
I know, but he needs his rest and so do you. I promise I'll take you tomorrow to see him.

RJ  
OK.

RJ hugs his mom. Jeannie surprises RJ and hugs him and Benita.

CICELY  
Jeannie, let's go.

INT. STUARTVILLE HOSPITAL - NEXT DAY

Benita gets off the elevator with RJ carrying a sack. They see Cicely and Jeannie sitting on the couch.

RJ  
How's Cord doing?

JEANNIE  
Fine, but they want to run some tests today just to make sure.

RJ  
Can I see him?

JEANNIE  
Of course.

CICELY  
Mom and I will stay here for now.

Jeannie grabs RJ's hand and walks him to Cordell's room.

INT. STUARTVILLE HOSPITAL CORDELL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lyle sleeps in a chair by his bed. Cordell hears a noise and wakes up.

CORDELL  
RJ! (Hoarse Voice)

RJ comes to the bed as Lyle wakes up. Lyle moves out of the way. They do their cool hand shake. Lyle and Jeannie retreat outside the room, but watch the boys.

RJ  
How you feeling Hustle?

CORDELL  
Tired and sore. Your mom did a number on my ribs.

Laughs and then holds his sore ribs.

RJ  
You gave everybody a scare.

CORDELL  
I guess so.

RJ  
I brought you some stuff.

CORDELL  
Thanks Hammer.

RJ  
(pulling stuff from a bag)  
New Sports Illustrated with Hank Aaron on the cover. Some M&M's, a coke, and this hand grip exerciser to get your strength back.

CORDELL  
Cool. Thanks man!

CUT TO:

INT. STUARTVILLE HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lyle and Jeannie walk over to Benita and Cicely.

LYLE  
(Coughs nervously)  
Mrs. Jackson...

CICELY  
Call me Cicely please.

LYLE  
Cicely, Cordell would not have made  
it without you.

Lyle chokes up. Cicely grabs his hands and he does not pull  
away.

CICELY  
I just happened to be the right  
person at the right place and at  
the right time.

BENITA  
All those years of schooling paid  
off Cissy.

They all laugh.

LYLE  
We are in your debt.

JEANNIE  
As soon as RJ gets through, you  
need to get Cissy home to rest.

CICELY  
Watch it with the Cissy. Yeah, I'm  
pretty tired.  
(yawning)  
Let me get RJ.

LYLE  
I'll get him.

CUT TO:

INT. CORDELL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cordell pretends to pitch and RJ pretends to hit.

LYLE  
(looking at RJ)  
OK boys, time to go. Cordell has  
some tests and your mama needs to  
get some sleep.

RJ  
Yes sir.

RJ walks to the bed and they do the handshake again.

CORDELL  
See you Hammer.



RJ  
See you Hustle.

Lyle pats RJ on the back as he walks back.

LYLE  
I saw you play a little yesterday.

RJ  
You did?

LYLE  
You are a good ballplayer.

RJ  
Thanks.

RJ jogs toward the waiting room. Lyle walks over to Cordell.

CORDELL  
Look what RJ brought me.

Lyle nods. He looks intensely at his son with tears in his eyes. Cordell sees him.

CORDELL (CONT'D)  
I'm ok dad, really.

LYLE  
We could have lost you.

CORDELL  
But you didn't.

LYLE  
Thank God... Son, what can I do for you?

CORDELL  
...Put RJ on our team.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD PARKING LOT - EVENING

Lyle packs up his equipment in his car. There are very few cars left in the parking lot and the field lights are fading. He sees Butch heading for his car. Lyle walks over to Butch.

BUTCH  
Hey, how's Cordell doing?

LYLE  
Pretty good. He got out of the hospital and seems fine.

BUTCH  
Maybe he'll play ball soon?

LYLE  
That's why I wanted to talk to you...I've got an open spots on my team and thinking of promoting a player from Pony League.

BUTCH  
That's certainly within the rules.

LYLE  
(Fidgeting)  
I wanted to bring up RJ Jackson.

BUTCH  
(Pausing to think)  
Wait a cotton-picking minute. Is that the black boy on the Expos?

LYLE  
It is.

BUTCH  
I thought we all had an understanding Lyle.

LYLE  
Times change Butch.

BUTCH  
I didn't take you for a nigger lover.

LYLE  
(Clinches his fists)  
I ain't, but we can't keep doing this...it ain't right.

BUTCH  
When did you get religion?

LYLE  
RJ'S mama saved my boy's life.

BUTCH  
Prid pro quo, eh?

LYLE  
Dammit, I'm doing it Butch. I just thought I'd let you know.

BUTCH  
 Alright Lyle, but you ain't gonna  
 be popular around here.

LYLE  
 Popularity never was my thing.

Lyle turns and walks back to his car.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - DAY

A knock on the backdoor. Cicely opens the door and sees Lyle.

LYLE  
 Cicely, I'm sorry to disturb you  
 but wanted to talk to you for a few  
 minutes.

CICELY  
 Sure, come on in Lyle and take a  
 seat. Can I get you a lemonade?

LYLE  
 That would be great. Thanks.

As Cicely gets the drink, she nods for Benita to take RJ out  
 of the room.

BENITA  
 Me and RJ will review his homework.

RJ  
 Granny, I don't have any...

BENITA  
 Hush child, show me that paper on  
 the A- bomb.

RJ and Benita walk to the back of the house as Cicely  
 delivers the lemonade to Lyle. Lyle's nervous.

LYLE  
 First, I want to apologize for not  
 attending your husband's funeral.  
 ... Also, I-I wanted to talk to  
 you about the baseball league. ...  
 You may have noticed that there are  
 no Black kids in the Ruth league.

CICELY  
 I noticed.

LYLE

(Taking another drink)  
Well, it's always been like that. I know that ain't right, but it's the way it is.

CICELY

OK.

LYLE

I want to bring up RJ to the big league - on my team.

CICELY

Hmm.

LYLE

But I didn't want to ask without your permission.

CICELY

How do you think folks will react?

LYLE

That's the tough part. I don't think folks will take it real well and I think RJ will catch some pardon my French, shit.

CICELY

How much...shit?

LYLE

I'd imagine name calling and booing at the games. He might get some jabs at school too.

CICELY

RJ already gotten his licks at school. It hasn't been easy, then Ray dies, then the baseball. It's been a lot.

LYLE

I see that more clearly now.

CICELY

Well, RJ is that age that he needs to make his own decisions. I'll go get him.

Lyle sits at the table. He downs the rest of his lemonade and looks around at the pictures on the walls. RJ, Cicely and Benita walk in. Cicely and RJ sit down. Benita stands.

CICELY (CONT'D)

RJ, Mr. Berger has something that he wants to talk with you about.

RJ

(Nervous tone)

Ok.

LYLE

RJ, I want to call you up to play for the Braves.

RJ

Wow.

BENITA

About damn time.

CICELY

Mama, hush - let the man speak.

LYLE

I was telling your mom that it's wrong to not let Black kids play in the Ruth league.

BENITA

Hmm.

Cicely gives her a look.

RJ

Why me?

LYLE

What do you mean?

RJ

There are other Black kids, some better than me. So, why me?

LYLE

Because, you are like the Hammer chasing the Babe's record you can handle the pressure.

RJ thinks about his answer and looks at his mom and granny.

RJ

What kind of pressure?

LYLE

Fans may boo or name call at the games or at school.

RJ  
I'm already used to the school  
crap.

LYLE  
What do you say?

RJ  
Will Cordell play on the team now?

LYLE  
I bet he will.

RJ  
Mama?

CICELY  
You make this decision RJ. I'll  
support you either way.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Lyle stands with his team past the fences. The kids sit with  
their backs to an approaching RJ and Cordell.

LYLE  
I've got a couple roster moves I've  
made. Cordell is joining the team  
and I've brought up RJ Jackson from  
the Expos.

He waves the boys to come in front of the group. Kids are  
murmuring, as RJ and Cordell stand in front of the team in  
their uniforms.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
I'll bring them off the bench  
tonight.

Lyle stands to leave

CORDELL  
Coach, I'd like to say something to  
the team alone, if that's ok?

LYLE  
Sure Cord. I'll see y'all in the  
dugout.

Cordell watches his dad walk away. He turns to the team.

CORDELL  
 Ya'll know this is a big change.  
 ... Any of you give my boy RJ a  
 hard time, I'll kick your ass.

The boys stay silent.

CORDELL (CONT'D)  
 Huddle up.

Boys huddle around.

CORDELL (CONT'D)  
 Braves on 3. 1, 2, 3.

The boys run to the dugout. RJ and Cordell stay behind.

RJ  
 You sure that was necessary?

CORDELL  
 I didn't want to leave any doubt  
 Hammer.

RJ and Cordell run to the dugout.

CUT TO:

The game's in the last inning. Lyle walks over to RJ and  
 Cordell on the bench.

LYLE  
 RJ, you are at short and Cordell is  
 at second.

RJ and Cordell grab their gloves and head out to the field.  
 Those fans who haven't already noticed, see RJ run out to the  
 field. WHITE FAN 1, fifty something white man stands up. The  
 OPPOSING COACH, thirty something white man walks toward the  
 UMPIRE.

WHITE FAN 1  
 What's that Coon doing out on the  
 field?

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 RJ Jackson is now at Shortstop and  
 Cordell Berger at second base.

OPPOSING COACH  
 Time out.

Lyle walks to the Umpire as well. They step back and begin a  
 conversation.

OPPOSING COACH (CONT'D)

Lyle, what in the holy hell are you doing?

UMPIRE

Yeah, what are you doing Lyle?

LYLE

I'm makin' a damn change at short and second. Let's get on with the game.

He turns and walks back to the dugout. The other Coach and Umpire look at each other and the Umpire shrugs.

UMPIRE

Play ball.

The next player comes up to bat and walks on four straight pitches. The pitcher, PETEY seems rattled. Cordell walks to the mound.

CORDELL

Time Ump.

Cordell signals for the infield to come into a huddle with the pitcher and catcher).

CORDELL (CONT'D)

Come on Petey, just grip it and rip it. We're here to back you up.

Petey nods. The catcher heads back. Petey takes a breath, looks at first, back to the catcher and throws a strike with the batter standing still.

UMPIRE

Strike One.

Braves players shout encouragement to Petey. He pitches again and the batter pops a foul. Caught by the catcher, who throws to second, with Cordell covering in case the runner tags at first.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

One out.

The other team's best batter, a fifteen year old white boy named BUBBA heads to the plate.

OPPOSING COACH

Let's go Bubba, knock the cover off that ball.



WHITE FAN 1

Bubba going to knock you back to Africa.

Several white fans laugh, which stirs Benita.

BENITA

Boy, you wouldn't know where Africa was if Tarzan led you there.

Both white and black fans laugh.

WHITE FAN 1

Huh?

Petey looks back at Cordell, who hits his glove and nods his head. The pitcher repeats his movements - looking to first and then throwing a strike that's hit hard to second.

Cordell dives and traps the ball on the first bounce. While on the ground, he throws to RJ.

RJ catches it, jumps over the sliding runner from first and throws a strike to first, a double play. Silence from the crowd initially, then the Braves fans applaud.

BENITA

Nice job RJ and Cordell.  
(Standing and pointing to the field)  
That African threw out that White boy!

White Fan 1 gets up and walks away. Benita and Cicely laugh. The Braves players have run to the dugout. RJ up to bat. The opposing coach holds the pitcher in the dugout.

OPPOSING COACH

Son, you hit that nigger with the first pitch and make it count.

BUBBA

But Coach...

OPPOSING COACH

No but's, do what I said.

Bubba throws five warm-up pitches right down the middle.

UMPIRE

Batter up.

RJ walks to the box, grabs some dirt, rubbing it in his hands and takes his stance. The first pitch goes over his head.

LYLE

Hang in there RJ, he's just trying to scare you.

The pitcher heaves another fastball that hit RJ in the middle of the back. RJ goes down on one knee, Lyle calls timeout and the other Coach comes out as well.

LYLE (CONT'D)

You ok RJ?

RJ

(Stands and twists)  
Yes sir.

RJ runs to first base and gives the pitcher a look of disdain.

LYLE

Ump, you know that was on purpose?

UMPIRE

I think the pitcher just let that one get away from him.

LYLE

Two pitches in a row from the best pitcher in the league, huh.

(Turning to the other Coach).

You just made a mistake, because RJ is going to score the winning run.

OPPOSING COACH

Bullshit.

CICELY

Mama, did you see that look that RJ gave the pitcher?

BENITA

Yeah, that pitcher just made a grave mistake.

Lyle stops Cordell as he walks to the plate.

LYLE

Son, don't swing unless its in there. I'm going to give RJ the steal sign.

Cordell nods and walks to the plate. Lyle gives RJ the steal sign. The pitcher looks at first, then pitches for a ball.

RJ steals second standing. Lyle gives RJ the steal sign again. The pitch a strike. RJ slides safely into third.

Lyle gives the bunt sign. They both nod toward Lyle. The next pitch Cordell bunts it down the first base line. The pitcher retrieves the ball and throws the ball home. RJ's in standing before the ball gets there, winning the game. RJ points to the sky and taps his heart.

Benita and Cicely break into cheers, as do some of the Braves fans. Lyle lines the team up to shake hands. The other Coach pulls his team back.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Told you that you made a mistake hitting RJ.

The other Coach walks away in a huff. Lyle walks his team to the bench.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Sore losers, I'd say. Good job team. Bring it in.

(All hands in the circle)

One, two, three Braves

They all join in to say Braves.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lyle and Jeannie in the living room.

JEANNIE

It's a good thing you did tonight Lyle.

LYLE

You think so?

JEANNIE

A little late, but a good thing.

Lyle raises an eyebrow, but does not respond.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

(Gathering courage)

This ain't been right for a long time and your son led you into doing the right thing, not the other way around.

LYLE

Now hold on there...

JEANNIE

(She stands up)

No, I've held my tongue for too long and it's time for me to speak my mind. You need to tell Cordell that you were wrong and that he is right.

(Lyle starts to speak and she raises a finger)

Sometimes a man has to admit fault to gain the respect of another.

LYLE

Alright, I'll do it after supper.

INT. CORDELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lyle knocks lightly on Cordell's door. Cordell puts down a book.

LYLE

Cordell, quite a game today.

CORDELL

Sure was dad.

LYLE

You glad that RJ is on the team.

CORDELL

Yes sir.

Lyle sits on the edge of the bed.

LYLE

Son, sometimes a man has to admit his mistakes. I've made many, but not playing the blacks was wrong.

CORDELL

I understand Dad. Thanks for putting RJ on the team.

LYLE

I'm proud of you son.

Lyle hugs Cordell.

CORDELL

I'm proud of you dad.

LYLE  
(Getting up)  
Get some shut eye Hustle, big games  
are coming.

CORDELL  
Goodnight dad.

EXT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL RECESS PLAYGROUND - DAY

Nanza walks over to RJ. He looks mad. RJ and Cordell are talking.

RJ  
Uh-oh, here comes Nanza.

NANZA  
I need a moment with my boy.

RJ nods to Cordell that it's ok to leave. Nanza waits for Cordell to leave.

NANZA (CONT'D)  
On the Braves team I hear.

RJ  
Yeah, I was going to tell you  
today.

NANZA  
How does it feel?

RJ  
Good I guess. I'm not sure why he  
chose me and not you.

NANZA  
(Staring intensely)  
They chose you because you a  
outsider.

RJ  
What does that matter?

NANZA  
You've lived in the White mans  
world, that's just the way you been  
brought up. I'm just a nigger in  
this small town.

RJ  
It's not right.

NANZA

Nah, it ain't right. You breaking that for all of us. They ain't ready for Nanza and all the black power shit I bring...but it will happen soon.

Nanza leans in for some dap with RJ, as Cordell watches from a distance. RJ runs over to Cordell.

RJ

Let's go play some ball.

They run out to the field to play.

INT. STUARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL MS. SIBLEY'S CLASS - DAY

MS. SIBLEY

Today, we start our presentations on Vietnam. Cordell, we are starting with you.

Cordell stands up with a garment bag and takes it to the front of the class. He unzips the bag and hangs the army uniform jacket on an empty chair. He places notes on a podium. RJ gives him a thumbs up and Cordell smiles just a bit.

CORDELL

My father is Corporal Lyle Cordell Berger and he served with the 1st Infantry Brigade in the Vietnam Conflict. The brigade is also called "The Big Red One," due to the Red number on the shoulder.

Cordell points to the number. Some kids get a closer to look at it.

MS. SIBLEY

Class, you can look, but don't touch.

CORDELL

My dad was drafted into Vietnam. In early 1967, he was in a bloody battle. They won the battle, but 17 US soldiers died.

KID - IN CLASS

Did your dad shoot anybody?

MS. SIBLEY

I don't think that's an appropriate question.

CORDELL

That's ok. He didn't say, but he was in several battles over there and I'm pretty sure that he shot the enemy.

MS. SIBLEY

Cordell, how do you think the war impacted him?

CORDELL

What do you mean, ma'am?

MS. SIBLEY

Did he view things differently, or did he get more involved with politics, things like that.

CORDELL

(Shifting back and forth)

Well, even though I was young when he left, I remember him laughing and having a good time. I think the war took some of that from him.

The room falls silent.

CORDELL (CONT'D)

Toward the end of his tour of duty, he was in a helicopter that was shot down. He was the only one of fifteen that survived. He was thrown clear of the crash with his gun still attached.

Gasps from the kids.

CORDELL (CONT'D (CONT'D)

He walked for seven days to find his outfit, while the enemy was tracking him. He had to threaten civilians to get food. Anyway, he finally found his battalion.

MS. SIBLEY

My goodness Cordell, what a gripping experience for your father...OK, class give Cordell a hand for his presentation.

The children applaud, as Cordell picks up his notes and uniform. RJ gives a thumbs up as Cordell walks back to his desk.

INT. BERGER HOUSE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Lyle arrives through the front door from work and walks to the kitchen. Jeannie reads magazines at the table.

LYLE  
Hey, good-lookin.

Lyle bends down and kisses her.

JEANNIE  
Nice entrance.

LYLE  
You bet. Baby, I got to get ready for a game, but be back about 8 o'clock. Can you fix me a sandwich?

JEANNIE  
Sure Hon.

LYLE  
Did Cordell say how his presentation went today?

JEANNIE  
He's in his room, so go ask him Corporal Berger.

Lyle salutes and walks to Cordell's room. Cordell reads a book on his bed. Lyle's uniform hangs on his closet door. Lyle knocks lightly and enters the room.

LYLE  
Hey Hustle, how did your presentation about your dad the war hero go today?

CORDELL  
It went good dad.

LYLE  
Great.

CORDELL  
They really enjoyed looking at your uniform.

Cordell gets up and hands the uniform to Lyle.



LYLE

That's nice...Why don't you keep  
this in your closet.

(Smiling and taking back  
the uniform)

Thanks dad.

Lyle nods and walks out of his room.

EXT. BERGER HOUSE - EVENING

Lyle cooks hamburgers on the grill. Jeannie talks with Benita  
and Cicely. RJ and Cordell chase fireflies.

LYLE

Burgers by Berger are ready!

Lyle brings a plate of burgers to the table outside.  
Everyone gathers to eat.

CICELY

If you don't mind, I'd like to say  
a prayer.

Everyone nods.

CICELY (CONT'D)

Lord, thank you for our neighbors.  
We appreciate their kindness,  
especially in difficult times.  
Father, I know that Ray is looking  
down to see what a wonderful boy he  
has...Please bless this food for  
the nourishment of our bodies,  
amen.

ALL

Amen.

A tearful group begins eating.

EXT. BERGER HOUSE - LATER

Lyle cleans the grill. Benita walks over to Lyle.

BENITA

Lyle, I want to thank you for  
putting RJ on the team.

LYLE

It was something I should have done  
a long time ago.

BENITA  
That's true, but it took guts.

LYLE  
These boys are the ones with real  
guts.

BENITA  
Ain't that the truth.

A truck accelerates down the street. TWO WHITE MEN in the truck bed. One facing the Jackson house and the other facing the Berger house. They both throw eggs, yelling.

TWO WHITE MEN  
Niggers, Nigger Lovers!

Ray and Benita run up the street.

BENITA  
Well, you Mother...

LYLE  
...Truckers.

JEANNIE  
What was that?

BENITA  
Damned Crackers.

RJ and Cordell walk out of the house.

CORDELL  
What's going on?

LYLE  
Just some Rednecks acting stupid.

CICELY  
Might be a good time to head home  
and rest up for the big game.

JEANNIE  
Alright boys, time to go home and  
rest.

RJ  
Oh man.

CORDELL  
See you on the flip side Hammer.

RJ

Not if I see you first Hustle.

They do their dap before heading home.

EXT. ALLEN BASEBALL FIELD PRESS BOX - DAY

In a small elevated box above the baseball diamond, an ANNOUNCER, white man in his thirties, flips on a microphone to the local radio station.

ANNOUNCER

The Stuartville Braves play the Forest Giants in the district Babe Ruth championship game today it should be a dandy.

Full stands segregated to team affiliation and by race. Cicely, Benita, Nanza and Red are in the stands. Jeannie at a different set of stands, but waves to Cicely.

Lyle meets the GIANTS COACH, forties white male and the Umpire to exchange lineups.

GIANTS COACH

Lyle, did you enjoy your eggs for breakfast?

Lyle pulls close to the Giants Coach.

LYLE

Today, we are going to whip your ass on the field and maybe tomorrow I'll whip you're sorry ass.

The Giants Coach walks back to his dugout and Lyle turns back to his dugout.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Alright boys, listen up. This is a tough team, but we are better. Keep a cool head, know the situation, so you make the right play. Communicate with each other and encourage each other. Can you do that team?

TEAM

Yes sir!

LYLE

Bring it in. RJ, you count it off.  
(Smiles as all boys put  
(MORE)

LYLE (CONT'D)  
 their hands in)  
 One, two, three Braves.

The Braves run into the field, while the other team gets ready to bat. RJ's at shortstop and Cordell at second base. They converge at second base.

CORDELL  
 For all the marbles Hammer.

RJ  
 You got it Hustle.

Cordell and RJ do their dap and take their position.

UMPIRE  
 Play ball.

The first batter for the other team comes up.

RJ  
 Come on Petey, you got this.

CORDELL  
 Hum baby.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER  
 Petey Waller is on the mound for the Braves today. He's a good pitcher, but he will have his hands full today with the Giants.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Petey winds and it's a hit to short and RJ fields the ball easily and throws out the runner at first base. He raises 1 finger to the infield and outfield.

Team members clap and praise him, plus encouraging Petey.

BENITA  
 Nice job RJ!

CICELY  
 Way to play son!

BENITA

Don't loose your voice, we got a long way to go.

Petey pitches to the second batter.

UMPIRE

Ball.

CORDELL

Come on Petey, rock and fire baby.

The second pitch - hit to left center. The center fielder picks it up and throws to second, where Cordell covers.

The throw's accurate and Cordell makes a nice tag for the second out.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

JIMBO ELDRIDGE, large white kid strides into the batters box.

ANNOUNCER

That's two down in the top of the first inning. Here comes the Giants best player, Jimbo Eldridge. This kid has got to be six-five and two hundred pounds. Anyone seen this kid's birth certificate?

Petey steps away from the mound for a moment and looks into the catcher, shaking his head in the affirmative.

He delivers a pitch and Jimbo hits it well over the fence, but in foul territory down the third base line. All the boys just stand and stare at where the ball went.

LYLE

Let's go Petey, just a foul ball.

Petey nods at Lyle and throws the next pitch. Jimbo hits the next ball deep and over the fence to center field for a homer. The opposing fans cheer. Cordell comes over to Petey.

CORDELL

That's just one run Petey. We just need an another out.

He runs back to second. Petey pitches a ball. The hitter dribbles a ball back to him and Petey throws the batter out at first to finish the inning.

The Braves run into the dugout, and the Giants take the field. RJ puts on his batting helmet and Lyle comes over.

LYLE

RJ I have you lead-off to use your speed as a weapon. I'd like to surprise these guys and have you lay down a bunt on this at bat.

RJ

Sure thing Coach.

RJ in the on deck circle watching Jimbo warm up and he throws some serious heat. People in the stands look on intensely.

CICELY

That pitcher is huge.

BENITA

I think he's got a five o'clock shadow.

UMPIRE

Batter up.

RJ strides to the mound with his usual routine of picking up dirt and rubbing his hands together and pointing the bat. The pitcher grins and throws a high hard one that backs RJ off the plate. RJ did not attempt to bunt that one.

LYLE

Wait for your pitch RJ.

The next pitch comes over the middle and RJ lays down a nice bunt toward third base. The pitcher grabs the ball and turns quickly and throws to first. RJ barely beat the throw, safe. The pitcher looks over and scowls at RJ.

RJ looks over at the bench and Lyle gives him the steal sign. Petey's up to bat with Cordell on deck. The pitcher looks into the catcher, back at RJ and delivers. It's a ball.

RJ gets a good jump for the steal, but it's a fastball. The catcher receives it and throws to second. RJ slides head first and barely beats the throw.

Petey bunts the next pitch towards first - the bunt's too hard and the pitcher grabs it bare-handed, tags Petey for one out and throws to third before RJ can make the bag. RJ stops and now in a rundown.

The third baseman runs at him as RJ heads toward second base, the third baseman throws to the second baseman.

RJ stops and runs toward third base again, while the second baseman runs at him. RJ anticipates the throw to third base and shifts his direction back toward second, not looking back anymore. The third baseman catches it and throws to the shortstop covering second, but RJ beats his tag.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

That was exciting sports fans. RJ was caught in the old hot box and managed to wiggle out. Man at second with one out and Cordell Berger up to bat.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Lyle pulls Cordell back to say something.

LYLE

Son, this kid throws hard, so anticipate and get ahead of the ball.

Jimbo looks at RJ, then focuses on the plate. He winds and pitches it in for a called strike. Cordell steps out for a moment with a practice swing. The next pitch comes in and Cordell swings and lines in foul into the backstop.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Come on Charlie Hustle!

Cordell chokes up on the bat and opens up his stance to try and just make contact. The pitch comes in and pops the ball just over the second baseman. RJ holds at second to make sure the ball's not caught and heads for third base.

The center fielder throws the ball to third and Cordell takes off for second. The third baseman catches the ball, throws to second to tag out Cordell. RJ scores easily. Cordell runs into the dugout dejected.

CORDELL

Sorry Dad.

LYLE

No, great move son we got a run. Today, runs will be scarce.

RJ and Cordell sit on the bench.

RJ  
These guys are really good.

CORDELL  
Damn straight.

RJ  
We are not going to be able to run  
on them, like we have with other  
teams.

As they finish talking, the batter strikes out. They grab  
their gloves and head out into the field.

MONTAGE - Scenes of the next few innings with lots of strike  
outs for the Braves and ground outs and pop flies for the  
Giants. Scenes showing that the Braves are walking Jimbo.

INT. PRESS BOX - LATER

ANNOUNCER  
This is the last inning sports fans  
with the game tied at 1-1 and one  
out and a man on second, with big  
Jimbo up to bat for the Giants.

LYLE  
Time, Ump.

Lyle runs out to the mound.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Petey, I want to hit this guy.

PETEY  
Sir?

LYLE  
I don't mean bean him in the head,  
but get him in the back or leg. I  
want him to be thinking about that  
when he's pitching again.

PETEY  
Ok.

LYLE  
After that, keep the ball low and  
see if we can turn a double play.  
OK boys, let's do it.



Jimbo stands in the box. The first pitch goes inside, but he avoids getting hit. The second pitch hits Jimbo in the back. He rubs his back as he walks over to first base.

GIANTS CROWD

Boo.

GIANTS COACH

Time Ump.

He jogs to the Umpire as another coach checks on Jimbo. Lyle joins the discussion at home plate

GIANTS COACH (CONT'D)

Umpire, that was a clear beanball at my player.

LYLE

I admit, I told Petey to pitch him inside and the pitch just got away from him.

GIANTS COACH

Bullshit.

UMPIRE

Cool it Coaches. I'm giving a warning to the pitcher.

Lyle feigns a protest, but he and the Giants Coach walk back to their dugouts. The Umpire steps out in front of the plate and gives the pitcher a warning.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

Folks, the Umpire has just warned the Braves pitcher about hitting that batter. If he hits another one, he may get tossed.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Petey sets himself for the next batter. The batter hits the ball to deep short. RJ fields it and throws to third for the out, then the third baseman fires to second, where Cordell lays down the tag to get Jimbo out.

Jimbo's momentum rolls him over Cordell. Cordell thrashes around in pain. RJ runs over to check on him as Jimbo stands over Cordell. RJ pushes Jimbo away and Jimbo steps forward and face to face with RJ.

JIMBO  
What you want punk?

RJ  
Your fat ass.

Lyle and the Giants Coach pull the players apart with words exchanged. The Umpire waves the players back. Lyle turns to Cordell, who gets up and walks back to second.

LYLE  
You ok son?

Cordell stretches his back.

CORDELL  
I'm fine Dad, let's finish this game.

Lyle heads back to the dugout. RJ walks over to Cordell.

RJ  
You ok Hustle?

CORDELL  
Never better Hammer.

RJ and Cordell tap gloves and return to the field.

INT. PRESS BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER  
That was exciting. It's getting a bit chippy out there. Stay tuned sports fans.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Petey gets the next batter to pop up to him for the third out. The Braves head into the dugout and the Giants into the field. Jeannie gets off her bleachers and walks over to where the Jacksons sit.

JEANNIE  
Can I sit with ya'll?

CICELY  
Sure you can.

Benita moves over. Jeannie sits by Cicely. Jeannie's the only white person sitting in those bleachers.

JEANNIE  
This is a real nail-biter.

CICELY  
Yes, I'm so nervous.

Lyle orders the team to sit on the bench.

LYLE  
Team, this is it. It's up to who wants it more. This is a tough team and it won't be easy to ... them, but you can do it. Put your hands in. Count it off Petey.

PETEY  
1,2,3 Braves

Lyle talks to his first batter. He turns back and motions for RJ.

LYLE  
RJ, you are next. You and Cordell are our best bets to score. I think we got in this pitcher's head. I want you to continue to tick him off and maybe he walks you or hits you. Either way, you're on base.

RJ  
Yes sir.

RJ steps into the on deck circle.

UMPIRE  
Strike three, you're out!

The batter walks back dejected, but RJ gives him "five." RJ follows his routine, but holds the bat at the pitcher more directly and longer. The pitcher scowls and throws it hard, but wild. In the stands, Benita stands up.

BENITA  
(Yells loudly)  
You got him scared RJ.

The White fans glare at Benita, as the black fans chuckle.

RJ repeats the same routine, but adds a wink to the pitcher. The pitcher's face gets red and his eyes narrow. He throws hard and inside. It hits RJ on the butt.

RJ's on first and tips his hat toward the pitcher. Lyle gives a bunt sign to Petey and RJ.

The pitch comes in and Petey gets a good bunt down the first base line. The catcher gets the bunt and his only play is to first base.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

Two down, a runner at second base and Cordell Berger at the plate. This may go into extra innings sports fans.

LYLE

Son, we need a hit out of the infield.

CORDELL

I hear you dad.

LYLE

Since he throws so hard, you'll likely have a late swing. Going to right field offers a better chance of scoring RJ.

CORDELL

Got it dad. I'll do my best.

LYLE

I know you will. I'm proud of you no matter how this game goes.

Cordell heads over to the plate.

JEANNIE

Let's go Cordell.

The pitch comes in for a ball that's high. The next pitch is a called strike. The pitcher checks RJ and pitchers Cordell swings and misses.

UMPIRE

Sti-rike two.

Cordell steps out of the box, takes a deep breath. The crowd claps - it's loud.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

Big pitch here. There's the windup and it's hit to right field.

FLASHBACK ENDS

CUT TO:

Cordell runs past first as the right fielder gets the ball on the first hop. Lyle wildly motioning RJ to go from third to home. RJ doesn't even look at the throw, but focuses on home plate.

The catcher has the plate blocked as the ball bounces on one-hop. The catcher lowers his glove to tag RJ. RJ lowers his torso, colliding with the catcher.

The catcher tumbles backwards, as RJ touches the plate. The Umpire's poised to call him out, but sees the ball come out of the catcher's mitt.

UMPIRE

Safe!

The Giants Coach runs out to protest. RJ gets up and points to the sky, tapping his heart. Cordell runs from first base, throwing off his batting helmet and raising his hands. The rest of the team runs out of the dugout.

GIANTS COACH

That's illegal.

UMPIRE

It's a legal play, the catcher was in front of the plate and the runner has the right to the path home. Game over.

The Giants Coach turns in a huff and signals his boys into the dugout. The Braves fans shout and jump for joy. Some of White fans are celebrate with black fans. The Braves players hop around and joyously yell.

LYLE

OK boys, let's line up for handshakes.

The boys get in line and the Giants face them. They move forward touching hands and saying "Good game" to each other. The two Coaches meet.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Good game Coach.

OPPOSING COACH

(Shaking hands)

You got lucky. We'll get you next year.

LYLE

(Turning to his team)

You boys have made me so proud.  
Y'all played your hearts out and  
now you are champions!

Boys whoop with joy.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Whoever can make it, let's meet at  
Dairy Queen to celebrate. Alright  
team, bring it in one more time.  
Cordell will lead us.

Boys put their hands in the huddle.

CORDELL

One, two, three Braves

The team dissembles, meeting and celebrating with family and friends. Benita, Jeannie, and Cicely come over and meet the boys at the third base area by the fence. Lyle carries the team equipment bags.

JEANNIE

(Hugging Cordell)

Great game Cordell Berger.

CORDELL

Thanks mom. It was a close one.

JEANNIE

(Hugs RJ)

You guys did it RJ and I'm proud of  
you.

Benita and Cicely hug Cordell, while Jeannie walks to Lyle.

BENITA

Grandson, you did it! You made all  
black people in this town so proud.

RJ

Thanks Granny. I appreciate all the  
support.

CICELY

Come here RJ.

He walks to her and they share a long hug, with tears in their eyes.

CICELY (CONT'D)

I couldn't ask for a better son in every way. Your daddy is so proud of you today. Mostly, because you handled the pressure and acted with dignity and respect.

Lyle walks up to both the boys and shakes their hands.

LYLE

Hammer and Hustle. You both lived up to those nicknames today. You earned this championship!

JEANNIE

Congratulations Coach! I'm so proud of what you have done and how you did it.

LYLE

Thanks baby. I couldn't have done it without you. You are my rock.

The boys run into Nanza and Red - you see them doing their dap handshake. As they turn to walk to the car, Kenisha and Donna run up and give them both hugs.

Benita turns and gives Cicely and Jeannie a funny look. Everyone laughs.

CORDELL

Hammer, we still haven't had that race?

RJ

(Pointing to the car)  
Ok, on three to the car.  
One, two, three, go!

RJ and Cordell run full speed toward the car and finish in a tie.

STILL SHOT RUNNING

FADE OUT.