

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - THAILAND - DAY

The crystal blue waters that melt into the horizon beyond crash soothingly against the pristine, white sand beaches as ANGIE (26), a vision whose beauty even supersedes that of the paradise that surrounds, jogs up to her beach mat and towels off. She looks up and waves adoringly at us.

EXT. POOLSIDE BAR - DAY

PAUL ABRAMSON (29), a handsome young man with an aire of destiny about him, casually lifts his soda water in acknowledgment as a beautiful BLONDE adjusts her bikini top a few stools away, spying to see if he notices the overt act. She picks up her cigarette and takes a seductive drag.

BLONDE

So. Business or pleasure?

PAUL

Does it really matter here?

The Blonde laughs.

BLONDE

No, I guess not. It's all what you make of it I guess.

PAUL

You guess a lot.

BLONDE

That wouldn't be the only thing.

(a beat)

So what do you do?

PAUL

I'm in the music biz. I'm about to start up my own label.

BLONDE

Really? Wow, that's so cool. That scene is like, so... crazy ya know?

PAUL

Only to the sane.

She laughs again.

BLONDE

What does that make you?

PAUL

Perfectly suited for it.

BLONDE

Well, then, I'll just have to keep an eye on you, I guess.

(a beat)

Can I buy you a drink?

PAUL

Thanks, no. To paraphrase the age-old adage, 'Twas a woman who drove me to drink. 'Twas another who finally picked me up.

BLONDE

Oh, so are you, ya know, like with someone here or... I'm only asking because I've seen you around here a couple times and, ya know, you seem like you're kinda like...

Angie walks up behind Paul and puts her arms around him.

ANGIE

Brilliant? Funny? Handsome? Because he's all that and spoken for too.

BLONDE

Oh, I ah, I didn't mean to/

ANGIE

Oh, it's alright. It's this guy who should be apologizing. Gotta keep an eye on him all the time.

PAUL

So, I've been told.

Paul looks off the Blonde and stares into the distance.

EXT. NAI HARN MARKETPLACE - MORNING

Paul and Angie walk through the bustling marketplace, hand in hand.

ANGIE

Oh, hey, I wanted to check out this little handbag place here.

PAUL

Huh, that makes one of us then.

ANGIE

Oh, come on. It won't hurt.

PAUL

Who? How 'bout we meet by that fish place we went to yesterday? Will half-an-hour suffice?

ANGIE

I'd go ahead and order.

Angie kisses Paul and walks up to the store. Paul watches a moment and strolls away, his eye catching a vendor's cart that has an assortment of ornate diamond rings on it. Paul picks one up as the VENDOR takes notice.

VENDOR

Ah, for pretty girl?

The Vendor points towards Angie as she examines a handbag across the market.

PAUL

Oh, yeah. Maybe.

VENDOR

You no let girl like that go. Snatch her up and quick.

He grabs another ring and shows it to Paul.

VENDOR

This do it.

PAUL

Looks pricey.

Paul examines the ring.

VENDOR

Ahhhh, no can put price on love.

PAUL

Really? That's news to me.

Paul looks over at Angie and watches her as she gracefully explores the store. He pulls out his wallet.

INT. CABANA - NIGHT

Paul and Angie make love in the cozy, candlelit room.

TIMECUT:

Paul sits at the window morosely staring out on the night as Angie sleeps in the bed behind. Looking down at the ring as it sparkles in the moonlight in his hand, Paul grabs a bandless, gold watch that TICKS on the windowsill and holds them against one another. He stares at them for a moment as Angie begins to stir, feeling around the empty bed for him.

ANGIE

Paul?

PAUL

Yeah.

Paul casually slips the ring and watch into his robe.

ANGIE

What are you doing?

PAUL

Couldn't sleep.

Angie gets up and walks over to Paul, sitting behind him and putting her arms around his chest.

ANGIE

What's up?

PAUL

Nothing.

ANGIE

You sure?

PAUL

Yeah, I'm fine.

ANGIE

Paul, you know, you're gonna have to let me in here sometime. You get like this and I don't know if it's me or something I did or/

PAUL

It's not you. Okay? It's not you.

ANGIE

Then what is it?

PAUL

It's... I don't know. Nothing.

A moment as Angie works up her nerve.

ANGIE

You don't need to say anything back, okay, but I just... I love you, Paul. I love you so much and whenever you're ready to let me in, I'll be here for you. Whenever.

Paul places his hand on her arm and we move into the pocket of the robe where the watch TICKS on.

INT. BANGKOK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Paul uses a payphone as the other end picks up.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Hey, you've reached, Dan. I'm away inciting a riot or unconscious in a gutter somewhere, so just leave a message and I'll be sure to get back to you as soon as I get out of jail. BEEP.

PAUL

Hey, Dan, Paul here. Man, you were right, this place is something else. I's just calling to see how the trial went, you know, see how much money you managed to part from our *fool on the hill*. And how much of that is coming

my way, asshole. I figure I'm due at least half considering all the bullshit you put me through there. I'll be back in La Jolla tonight so give me a call when you can. Adios.

Paul hangs up the phone.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - DAY

Paul listens to a demo tape as his secretary, GRACE, brings in a stack of mail, laying it on the desk.

GRACE

Whoever that is, I'd sign them up asap.

PAUL

Doesn't sound like the kinda thing you'd go for, Grace.

GRACE

No, but my brain-dead kid does. As do his *delightful* little friends.

PAUL

Keeps me in business, God love 'em.

The phone RINGS and Paul picks it up.

GRACE

Well, someone needs to. Oh, and don't forget your 4 O'clock.

Grace points to the clock which reads 3:55.

PAUL

Van Richter Records.

PHONE

Paul, John Messina here.

PAUL

Oh, hey John. How'd the trial go?

JOHN (PHONE)

You haven't heard?

PAUL

No.

JOHN (PHONE)

Oh. Well that's why I'm calling.
We, ah, we lost it. The Wilson
people found a loophole and ah, well,
well anyway, I haven't heard from Dan
since. I've got some papers he needs
to sign for the appeal and was hoping
you knew where he's been.

PAUL

Ah, no. I just got back in the States
and was meaning to call, but...

JOHN

Huh. Well, if you do hear from him,
have him get in touch.

PAUL

Yeah, yeah, sure. Sure.

Hanging up, Paul looks at some pictures on the wall of Dan and he in a variety of places, Paul always cool and collected, Dan in a state of exuberance a thousand words could not express... save for one; a small black and white photo of the two of them as teens, glumly standing in front of the main entrance to the Wilson Center for Children.

Paul focuses on the photo. A beat. Suddenly, Paul jumps up and bolts from his office, wordlessly passing Grace and the BAND who'd just arrived.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - TWILIGHT

Paul briskly walks down the balcony of the 60's era courtyard apartment building and stops at Room 213. He KNOCKS on the door. A beat and he KNOCKS again.

PAUL

Dan. Hey Dan, it's Paul, you in
there?

Knocking again, Paul tests the knob - it's unlocked.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - TWILIGHT

Paul tentatively steps into the foyer, but stops, quickly covering his nose in disgust.

PAUL
Oh, man. Dan?

Carefully making his way down the darkened hallway, Paul stops at an overturned garbage can spilling from the kitchen. He examines the disaster within it as he rounds the corner into the den where Paul's knees buckle, his mouth dropping in silent testament to the horrific sight before him.

DAN (31) lies bloated and rotting on the floor, a needle sticking from his blackened arm. A cacophony of legal papers, medical records and photos from his days at the Wilson Center used during the case surround him. As well as a large quantity of heroin. Above Dan's head, scrawled on the wall in blood, the message - "CASE CLOSED."

Nearly heaving from the sight, Paul clumsily backs from the den and into the hallway where he maniacally scrambles for the door.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - TWILIGHT

Paul slams against the wall and takes in a deep breath of air as he slides down it, covering his eyes in the vain attempt to block out what he has just seen. But he can't block out what is within, what he's blocked out for so many years as a result of the incarceration by his parents at the Pritzker Center (Ages 5-10) and the Wilson Center For Children (Ages 14-18), two psychiatric facilities for minors.

BEGIN MONTAGE: The horrific visions, now released, cascade across the screen.

- ABBEY (16) angelically floats down the main stairway in a hospital gown, blood gushing from her open wrists which she smears down the walls.

- CHRIS (14) sticks his head into Paul's (14) darkened room at Wilson demonically hissing, "It won't be long now."

- A CREEPY ORDERLY at Pritzker silently places his finger to his lips and then across his neck as he climbs into the RETARDED BOY's bed next to Paul's (5), an erection visible through his scrubs.

- Paul's mother, JANE (40), an emaciated harpy with unblinking orbs for eyes, SHRIEKS at Paul (13) as she exits her bathroom, her blood stained hands demonically reaching out for him.

- Paul (5) desperately clings to the knee of his father, FLOYD (35), a giant of a man with the heart of snake and the countenance to match, in the sterile Pritzker Center lobby as an ORDERLY pulls him away.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - TWILIGHT

As Paul sobs uncontrollably into the encroaching darkness, his grief for his lost friend, but even more so for his lost past, reverberates through the courtyard and slowly draws the NEIGHBORS curiously from their doors.

EXT. CLIFF OVERLOOKING BLACK'S BEACH - TWILIGHT

Paul and Angie sit on the edge of the cliff as the sun sets in the distance, Angie affectionately rubbing Paul's back.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Paul opens his address book and dials a number on his phone.

PHONE

Hello?

PAUL

(a beat)

Dad?

FLOYD (PHONE)

Paul? What do you want?

PAUL

I ah, my friend Dan, Dad, he ahm...

FLOYD (PHONE)

What're you babbling on about?

PAUL

Ahm, Dan, from the Wilson Center...

I found him today. He'd killed himself.

Silence.

FLOYD (PHONE)

And?

PAUL

Christ, Dad, my friend is dead!

FLOYD (PHONE)

I'm sorry... who is this we're talking about?

PAUL

Dan, Dad. Dan Schwartz. Jesus I can't believe/

FLOYD (PHONE)

Never heard of him. Who was he?

PAUL

He was my fucking best friend, for Christ's sake!

FLOYD (PHONE)

Oh, well, uhm, huh. That's, ah, that's, well...

PAUL

I was hoping you could call his folks and let them know considering they stuck him in that hell-hole/

FLOYD (PHONE)

Yeah, I don't think that's such a good idea, Paul.

PAUL

Why, 'cause you did the same thing?

FLOYD (PHONE)

What do you mean? We paid good money to send you there for your/

PAUL

You paid good money to get rid of me, yeah, you did that alright. Do you have any idea what/

FLOYD (PHONE)

Okay, okay, Paul, listen, Paul, I've got to go. Goodnight.

The line goes dead. Paul holds onto the receiver as he blankly stares ahead.

BEGIN MONTAGE: Various images from his hellish upbringing cascade across the screen.

- The Creepy Orderly lustfully leers at Paul (5) as he hoses him down in the admittance showers at Pritzker.

- A Young Patient catatonically stands next to his bags beneath the lone lamp outside the gate to the Wilson Center as snow continues to gather on him in the frigid night.

- A VOICE malevolently whispers from the shadows of Paul's darkened room at Wilson "You're a dead man, Abramson."

END MONTAGE.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Paul stares at the TICKING gold watch in his hand as he slowly falls apart in time with it.

INT. JOHN MESSINA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Paul nervously taps his fingers on his chair as JOHN (45) looks on from behind his desk.

JOHN

Are you sure you want to do this? I mean, with everything that just happened with Dan/

PAUL

Exactly. If I don't do this now, I'm gonna end up just like him.

JOHN

Well, you obviously knew him better than I did, but the case had a real, and rather negative, impact on his life/

PAUL

My fucking parents have had a real and negative impact on my life. They incarcerated me in those shitholes for nine years, using the trust-fund money my Grandfather left for me to do it with and now, after my fucking best friend who I went through hell

and back with is dead because of it,
now someone's got to pay.

(a beat)

So are you gonna help me or do I need
to go somewhere else?

JOHN

Alright. Okay, we'll, uhm, well
I'll file the papers. But first, I
want you to see somebody. A
therapist. I won't do this unless
you've got someone behind you. Do
you know anyone or should I just
arrange for something?

PAUL

Yeah. I know someone.

JOHN

Good. Set up an appointment and have
them give me a call. Does she have
any records from the centers or
should I send them over as they come
in?

PAUL

No. She didn't need them. Before.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Paul, but I'm sure you can
understand where I'm coming from
here... all things considered.

PAUL

All things for sure.

EXT. STREET - TWILIGHT

Paul mindlessly walks along the littered sidewalk as night
descends upon him like the darkness that's beginning to set
within. He slows to a stop before a Liquor Store and looks
inside. He steps away but stops, turns and walks inside.

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul stands at the window of the eclectic office as DR. ROSS
(63), a kindly middle-aged woman with graying hair,
considerately looks on.

DR. ROSS

Paul?

PAUL

Huh?

DR. ROSS

You were saying.

PAUL

Just, I never noticed how beautiful it is here before. Everything's really grown in nicely.

DR. ROSS

Paul, I know we've been through all this before, and I know it's very difficult, but if you want to dig up the past, then that's where we're gonna have to start.

PAUL

I'm fine okay. You know, I'm only here so I can go ahead with the lawsuit. No offense, alright?

DR. ROSS

No, *offense* taken. I thought we'd gotten past all this.

PAUL

We had. I mean, we have. This's all just a formality.

Paul takes a seat on the chaise and begins nervously tapping his fingers again.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm fine. Really.

DR. ROSS

Why are you here, Paul? What's the real reason you've come back?

Paul helplessly looks at Dr. Ross as he sticks his hand in his pocket, stroking the TICKING watch within.

CUT TO:

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT

A NURSE CLICKS a TICKING stopwatch to rest as Jane (27) SHRIEKS in agony, Floyd (30) anxiously looking on.

NURSE

Two minutes. I think you're about ready, Mrs. Abramson.

JANE

I just want it out of me. Now!

NURSE

The Doctor will be with us any minute now.

JANE

Any *minute!* Floyd! Do something useful with yourself and find that son of a bitch. Now!

FLOYD

Now, Jane, I'm sure he's tending/

JANE

I don't care what he's up to. I want this thing out of me now! Now, now, Now NOW, NOOOOWWWWW!

FLOYD

Okay, Dear, okay. I'll see what I can do.

JANE

Oh, that's comforting.

(to Nurse)

Do you have any idea who my father is? He could have this whole hosp/

Floyd walks out of the Delivery Room and into the...

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

... where he bumps into DOCTOR CORN.

FLOYD

Oh, Doctor Corn. I think she's ready for you.

DOCTOR CORN

Yes, well I believe I'm ready for her
now as well.

FLOYD

Yeah, well, I hope so.

Floyd stands by as Doctor Corn enters the room, the door slowly
shutting behind him.

DOCTOR CORN

Well, is that little boy ready to/

JANE

You! Where have you been? You
know, my husband's a lawyer and while
he's certainly not up to the task, I'm
sure he knows a fine malpractice
attorney...

The door closes with a THUD as Floyd turns from it, somberly
glancing at his watch. The gold watch, the very one Paul
carries with him presently, reads 8:17 - TUES - AUG 5th.

Pulling out a cigarette, Floyd lights it. Casually pacing down
the hallway as he engulfs it, Floyd is suddenly grabbed by a
father who excitedly bursts from a door.

MAN

It's a boy! Thank God, it's a boy!
Dad, Dad, it worked, he's a boy!

The Man runs down the hallway as Floyd sadly looks on. Blowing
a plume of smoke his way, Floyd lifts his hand again.

TIMECUT:

The watch, which slowly brightens in the afternoon sunlight,
reads 12:43 - SUN - AUG 11th.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

Floyd, standing beside his adorable 2 year-old daughter, ANNE,
and her black nanny, TINA, impatiently looks up from his watch
as a YOUNG NURSE futilely attempts to hand Paul off to Jane who
rolls over in her bed away from him.

YOUNG NURSE

Are you sure you don't want to see him
before he goes home?

JANE
No. Just, just take him away.

YOUNG NURSE
But Mrs. Abramson, you haven't eve/

JANE
I said NO!

FLOYD
We'll just take him and go, ma'am.

The Young Nurse looks at Floyd oddly.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Floyd and Anne walk down the hall.

ANNE
Why's Mommy not coming, Daddy?

FLOYD
She needs her rest. Like after you
were born. But she'll be back home
in a couple of months.

Floyd grabs Anne's hand as Tina walks up beside them, Anne spying
the newborn suspiciously.

INT. ABRAMSON HOUSE - DAY

Floyd enters the coldly decorated suburban house as Paul begins
to CRY in Tina's arms. Floyd looks at them nervously.

FLOYD
I'll be in my study if you need me.

TINA
Yes, Mr. Abramson.

Floyd walks up the stairs as Anne totters off into the kitchen,
peering back from behind the doorjamb at Tina. As Floyd's
office door SHUTS upstairs, Tina quickly slaps Paul on his head
who begins WAILING even harder in her arms.

TINA

Shutup, you. We ain't gonna have any
a that shit now, ya hear?

Tina quickly crosses the living room, slapping Paul again.

TINA

You better not be wet, now, or Lordy
I do tell.

Watching from the kitchen, Anne's brow furrows as she slowly
slips from sight behind the doorjamb.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Tina vacuums the floor as Anne plays with her dolls in a corner
of the room, while in the other, a bassinet sits facing the wall.
When Tina turns off the vacuum, we hear Paul CRYING loudly from
it. Tina angrily walks over.

TINA

Watchoo crying 'bout now, stupid? I
already changed you this mornin' and
you ain't gettin' nothin' till I'm
good and fed myself, hear?

Tina grabs the bassinet and pounds it on the floor, sending Paul
into a fit. Quickly fetching the vacuum, Tina places it next
to the bassinet and turns it on, drowning Paul out. Confused,
Anne sadly looks on as Tina walks from the room.

Slowly rising to her feet, Anne makes her way over to the
bassinet where she peers down at her little brother, his bright
red face moist with tears. Anne nervously looks over to the
kitchen and then begins dragging the bassinet away.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Anne struggles to pull the bassinet inside the walk-in closet.
Closing the door, she turns on the light. Uncertain what to
do, Anne climbs in the bassinet and cuddles up with Paul,
stroking his head as she begins to sing.

ANNE

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I
wonder what you are. Up above the
world so high, like a diamond in the
sky. Twinkle, twinkle...

She continues to sing as Paul's crying slowly fades away.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - DAY

Anne giggles devilishly as she plays with Paul on the floor. Suddenly, Tina bursts in and reaches for Paul, but Anne defensively jumps between them.

TINA

Shoo, child. Your momma's on her way and I gots to get this babe changed and quick.

ANNE

I already did.

TINA

Outta the mouths of babes. Now get, I gotta/

As she snatches at Paul again, Anne grabs her arm and bites it, sending Tina reeling back in pain.

TINA

Damn you, you little... I aughta... oh, Good Lord, there they are. Your Momma's gonna hear 'bout this.

Tina walks from the room as Anne cuddles Paul.

TINA (O.S.)

How do, Ms. Abramson. So good to have you back.

JANE (O.S.)

Just take my bags upstairs. Where's my darling, Anne, at?

TINA (O.S.)

She's up in the baby's room. Little thing just bit me, she did. I's just reaching for the baby and next thing I knew...

JANE (O.S.)

Oh, really?

Anne's eyes widen with fear as FOOTSTEPS are heard on the stairs, leading up to the doorway. Slowly, the door opens and Jane peers inside. A beat.

JANE

Well. Aren't you gonna hug Mommy?

Anne jumps up and rushes into Jane's arms. They hug for a moment and then Anne looks up at Jane excitedly.

ANNE

Oh, Mommy, me and Paully-Wally, we've been having such a good time. I taught him to clap and he just claps and/

JANE

Ohhhhh, that's great, dear, but I don't think it's such a wise idea you should be tending to such a young baby like that. That's a parent's job, okay? Now, why don't you show me all the things you've been up to since I've been gone and Tina can take over here.

ANNE

But, Mommy, me and Paully have bee/

JANE

Okay, that's enough of that. Let's go unpack Mommy's things, alright.

Jane grabs Anne, leading her from the room as Anne sadly looks back, Paul ignorantly clapping at her as she goes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tina feeds Paul in his highchair as Jane looks over a magazine, one of many spread across the table. With each turn of a page, Jane glares up at Paul, the disdain in her eyes growing with each glance. Finally...

JANE

God, look at those ears. They're as big as Dumbo's.

TINA

Yes, I guess they are. Big enough gust a wind come along, he'd end up nigh over in Lake Michigan.

JANE

Yeesss. Well, I just can't live with that now.

Jane rises and opens a drawer, grabbing a Scotch tape dispenser. Pulling off a strip, Jane attaches it to Paul's ear and pulls it back tightly against his head as he WHINES in discomfort. Jane continues to add strips of tape to both ears as Floyd walks in with his briefcase.

FLOYD

What in God's name are you doing?

JANE

Taping his ears back. Maybe we can correct *this* deformity before it sticks.

FLOYD

What on earth for?

JANE

They remind me of Harley. And God knows I can't be reminded of that *loon* everyday of my life. Not in my house, Dearie.

She glares up at Floyd as she accentuates the fact. The air knocked from him, Floyd exits the kitchen as Paul begins to WAIL in pain again.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The WAILING continues from the bassinet as Paul (2), his ears still taped back, curiously toddles up to it and peers down at his newborn sister, AMY, who writhes about inside. Smiling at her, Paul begins to tickle Amy, who begins to quietly settle until Jane ominously storms up from behind.

JANE

Get your filthy hands out of there, you, you're bothering the baby.

Yanking Paul aside, she flings him to the floor and picks up Amy, who begins to WAIL once again.

JANE

Oh, look what you've done! How dare
you, you little ingrate!

Paul instinctively crawls for an end table, ducking under the
table throw just before Jane's outstretched arm reaches him.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Anne lifts the table throw where Paul (3) hides.

ANNE
You're it.

Paul climbs out as a clock chimes Noon in the b.g.

PAUL
I'm bored. And hungry.

ANNE
Wanna do something else?

PAUL
Like what?

ANNE
Let's play some records.

PAUL
No! Mommy's still sleeping.

ANNE
We'll be quiet.

Anne walks over to the stereo console, lifting the wooden lid
as Paul futilely stands on his tip-toes to see inside.

PAUL
Maybe you shouldn't/

ANNE
Shhhh. You'll wake her.

Anne puts the arm down and starts the player. The Beatles' "I
Want To Hold Your Hand" begins and Paul stands back wide-eyed
at the sound, looking at Anne in amazement. Anne turns up the
volume.

PAUL
No, no, Mommy's gonna/

The floor CREAKS upstairs, Paul nervously training his eyes on the ceiling. Suddenly, the CRACK of a door...

JANE (O.S.)
What's going on down there?

Anne quickly grabs the arm and yanks it off, scratching the record which skips over and over from the beginning. Before Anne can turn the player off, Jane storms down the stairs.

JANE
Stop right there!

Anne and Paul stand rigidly by the console as Jane rushes up.

ANNE
Mom, I didn't mean to/

JANE
Look what you've done to my record.
It's ruined! It's absolutely
ruined.

Jane snatches Paul and pulls him to a chair. Pulling down his pants, Jane begins viciously spanking him.

JANE
(in time with the spanking)
Do you know what it's like to finally
get to sleep and then be awakened like
this?

She pushes Paul off her knee and turns to Anne.

JANE
If only you had gotten to him in time,
he wouldn't be in this mess.
But you better watch out, dear, he's
just like the rest of them. We've
got to be strong and stick together
or else they'll have you just like
they had me, understand?

Jane grabs Anne and jerks her away as Paul looks on, defiantly wiping his tears away.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Paul (4) wipes his face as his friend, CLIFF (4), helps him up from an upturned Radio Flyer Wagon. Paul grabs at a hole in his bloodied knee.

CLIFF

Sorry, Paul. I didn't mean to.

PAUL

My Mommy's gonna kill me.

CLIFF

Really? How come?

PAUL

I ripped my pants.

CLIFF

Oh. Really?

PAUL

Hey, can I have yours?

CLIFF

No way! Are you crazy?

PAUL

No. What am I gonna do?

Uncertainly looking at Paul, Cliff notices a Postal Truck as it pulls up to a mailbox across the street.

CLIFF

Hey, I got an idea.

CUT TO:

Cliff and Paul stalk the Postal Truck with the Radio Flyer in tow. As the truck pulls away from the mailbox, the two race up and ransack it, yanking the letters and magazines out and plopping them in the wagon. Closing the lid, they move on.

EXT. ABRAMSON HOUSE - DAY

Cliff and Paul pull the wagon to a stop at the stoop, letters and flyers haphazardly marking their trail behind them.

PAUL

You think this's a good idea?

Cliff grabs a catalog.

CLIFF

Sure. Your Mom gets all kinds of these. Wouldn't she want more?

PAUL

I guess.

CLIFF

She'll probably be so happy, she'll forget all about your pants.

Paul looks at Cliff warily as he opens the door.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Paul and Cliff load the wagon into the foyer as Jane rounds the corner, their plunder spilling across the floor.

PAUL

Look what we got you, Mommy!

JANE

Oh, my God! Where'd you get those?

PAUL

From those boxes on the street. We oughta put more of 'em outside our/

Jane slaps Paul across the face.

JANE

What am I to do with you! And *you*, you get out of here this instant and don't you ever come back!

Cliff stumbles back in fear, running from the door and into Floyd who's just returned from work. Shocked, Floyd steps into the foyer as Jane assaults Paul.

FLOYD

What's going on here?

JANE

This little *thief* just stole all our neighbor's mail. I'm so embarrassed. How are we ever going to show our faces again?

Paul tries to slip away but Jane jerks him back.

JANE
You are going to get such a spank/

FLOYD
Jane calm down, calm down. Let him go. Release him, Jane! Paul, why don't you head up to your room?

Paul quickly runs up the stairs.

JANE
Are you going to let him get away with this?

FLOYD
Jane, he's just a kid, he doesn't know any better. We'll just have to go and return them, that's all.

JANE
I can't live like this, Floyd. I just can't. I can't. I can't live with that!

Jane wickedly points upstairs.

EXT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

Peeking around the corner at the foyer below, Paul slowly pulls back and buries his head in his chest.

MATCHCUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Paul (5) walks with Jane down the hallway, his chin heavy on his chest. Jane stops and turns to him, finger raised.

JANE
Just remember what I said. Don't embarrass me, now.

With that, a TEACHER rounds a corner and stops with a start before them.

TEACHER

Mrs. Abramson. So good to see you again. Is Paul ready for school?

JANE

Well, I wouldn't expect the same student you had with Anne. But, you're welcome to try your best.

TEACHER

Oh, ah, okay.

JANE

And if anything, *anything* happens, you be sure to call. He's a bit of a troublemaker. We've certainly had our share. Mind yourself now. Both of you.

Jane hands Paul to the Teacher and piously walks away as the Teacher uncomfortably looks down at Paul. The two make their way into the classroom where Cliff, playing with another BOY, furrows his brow at Paul and turns indignantly away.

INT. ABRAMSON HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Paul aimlessly mopes in the hall as Anne approaches.

PAUL

Wanna play?

ANNE

Nah, I'm going over to Janey's.

PAUL

Oh.

ANNE

Why don't you go over to Cliff's?

PAUL

He's not allowed to play with me anymore.

ANNE

Really?

PAUL

Yeah. Hey, have you ever been in there before?

Paul points to a door.

ANNE

Mommy's office? I wouldn't go in there. You'll get into a heap of trouble.

PAUL

What's new?

ANNE

Just don't, okay? I gotta go.

Anne steps down the stairs, leaving Paul by the door. After a beat, Paul reverently steps up to the door and opens it.

INT. JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul carefully steps inside the darkened office. The cluttered room, which appears as if it was decorated by Norman Bates, is filled with bookshelves lined with ornate, leather-bound books, stuffed animals that leer from their perches on the velveteen walls and cabinets loaded with embalming jars filled with preserved animal carcasses.

Intrigued, Paul walks up to a cabinet and opens it, pulling out a jar which contains a squid. Paul shakes it. He shakes it again but to no avail. Paul thinks a moment.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Standing on a stool at the sink, Paul pours the jar underneath the running water, poking the lifeless squid beneath it with a wooden spoon.

PAUL

C'mon lil' guy, you can breath now.

Suddenly, Tina walks in with an armful of grocery bags and goes to set them on the counter. But as she does, she looks in the sink and SHRIEKS at the top of her lungs, dropping the bags and SHATTERING the milk and eggs within.

TINA

Oooohhh, child. Come here, you!

Tina begins swatting Paul on his ass as Jane walks in.

JANE
What's going on here?

TINA
Oh, ma'am, I, I's scared near to death
with this... this *thing* Paul done put
in here.

Jane walks over to inspect it, her mouth dropping in ire.

PAUL
I was only trying to bring it back for
you, Mommy, I swear.

JANE
How many times have I told you to stay
out of my things? How many! How
dare you violate me like this!

Jane jerks Paul off the stool and leads him from the kitchen.

JANE
I'll take it from here, Tina.
(to Paul)
You give me one more reason and
there'll be no bringing you back,
that's for certain. Someone's just
going to have to keep an eye on you
all the time.

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Paul sits at a large round table coloring next to Cliff. As Paul reaches for a crayon, Cliff does as well and the two grab the blue one simultaneously.

PAUL
Hey, that's mine.

CLIFF
No it's not. I grabbed it first.

PAUL
Give it!

The two struggle for the crayon until Cliff reaches back and whacks Paul in the face, knocking him to the floor. As Cliff

returns to his coloring, Paul rises up, rage filling his watered eyes and rounds his chair, grabbing the crayon back.

As the two struggle, Paul pushes Cliff and his chair across the linoleum, where the back legs catch a seam in the floor. Unbeknownst to Paul, he continues pushing until the chair tips over and Cliff's head strikes the floor with a THUD, knocking him out.

Just as this happens, the Teacher returns from the hall and looks on in horror at what she believes she is seeing. The Teacher runs over to Cliff and scoops him up, all the while staring incredulously at Paul as he stands over him with a sense of disbelief, fear. The Teacher runs Cliff from the room, glancing back at Paul as he stands alone in the room, the blue crayon still clutched in his hand.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Jane jerks Paul down the walk towards Floyd's waiting car.

JANE

You've done it this time. Now you're father can finally see you for what you are - a sick, twisted, little sociopath.

PAUL

But, Mom, he hit me first.

JANE

And a liar, too. Get in there!

Jane throws Paul into the car and they speed off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Floyd pulls to a stop outside the entrance of the ominous looking *Pritzker Center For Children*. Frightened and confused, Paul studies the dilapidating Victorian facade as Jane hops from the car and rushes up the steps.

INT. HALLWAY - THE PRITZKER CENTER - DAY

Paul sits on a bench outside of an office as his parents speak to a man with a heavy Austrian-accent within. Nervously watching the strange adult Orderlies and the even stranger young Patients that walk by scrutinizing him even more closely, Paul

reflexively pulls his knees up to his chest which he buries his head within.

INT. DR. BETTLEHEIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Jane and Floyd sit across from the oversized desk of Dr. Bruno Bettelheim (DR. B (63)), an imposing Austrian as frightening as his name would suggest, who critically analyzes them as Jane presents her case.

JANE

It's just that simple. He's got a mental disorder. I know... I've read it in books.

Dr. B lightly chuckles to himself.

DR. B

Well, in all due respect, I would have to be the judge of that. But from all you've told me, I'm not so certain Paul is, well... Pritzker material.

JANE

Oh, I see. Well...

Jane pulls out her checkbook and begins writing in it.

JANE (CONT'D)

Considering the present state of this... "hospital," and owing to the questionable techniques used herein as reported in the Times, I think this might be more than enough "material" to work with. Wouldn't you say, Bruno?

Jane cuts the check and leans over the desk to hand it to Dr. B who becomes speechless on first glance at the figure.

JANE

Well, Floyd, maybe we should arrange to have Paul meet with Dr. Freeman who I've heard has achieved some remarkable success with his ice-pick lobotomies.

Jane snatches the check back.

FLOYD

Jane, now, we already discussed/

DR. B

No, no, Mrs. Abramson. Nothing that drastic is needed I am sure. On further reflection of your immense concern for the well-being of your child, I will do everything in my power to correct him.

JANE

Well, then. Should your methods fail and any further assistance is needed, for say Electroshock Therapy or the like, you just give us a call.

Checking his anger at the slight, Dr. B casually stands up and snatches the check back.

DR. B

Yes, well, I'm sure we won't need to resort to such measures. We have our own ways here, Mrs. Abramson. Very effective.

Nearly face to face over the desk, Jane smiles back.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Floyd walks towards the front entrance as Paul trots beside him, an ORDERLY following right behind.

PAUL

Dad, where's Mommy? Where's Mommy at, Dad?

FLOYD

She's out in the car already, son.

Floyd stops by the door and kneels down to Paul.

PAUL

I'm coming with you, right? We're going home, right?

FLOYD

Paul/

PAUL

No, Dad, don't leave me here! Don't
leave me here, please!

FLOYD

Paul, Paul, settle down. Settle
down, now. I'm just going to/

PAUL

You're leaving me here aren't you!
You're leaving me behind!

FLOYD

Now, Paul, Paul, look. Look.

Floyd removes his watch and holds it out to Paul.

FLOYD

Here. This is my good watch. Do you
know how to tell time?

Paul lightly shakes his head in the negative.

FLOYD

Okay, well, see, this little hand is
the hour arm. It moves very slowly,
circling the face once every hour.
And this longer one here is the minute
hand. There're 60 minutes in an
hour, and each number corresponds to
five of them. So, I'm going to step
outside to talk to your mother, but
I'll be back before this hand here
gets to the two. Just five minutes,
okay?

Paul unconvincingly nods as Floyd's eyes lightly mist over.

FLOYD

Okay, then?

Floyd stands and rubs Paul's head, but as soon as he turns, Paul
desperately clings to his leg.

PAUL

No, no, no, don't go, Daddy! Don't
leave me here!

FLOYD

Paul, let go. Let go! I'll be back
in five minutes! Sir, sir, can you
help me here?

The Orderly comes over and grabs Paul, pulling him from Floyd's
leg as Paul continues to cry out for his father. Floyd stops
at the door and looks back.

FLOYD

Just watch the watch, Paul. It won't
be long and I'll come back for it. I
promise.

Floyd steps through the door and it shuts with a resounding,
hollow CLANK. Paul slowly quiets, watching his father as he
disappears down the steps.

ORDERLY

Come on. We can wait over in
Processing. They got candy there.

Paul looks out the windows and watches as his father's car pulls
away from the building and vanishes behind a bush.

ORDERLY

It won't be so bad. You'll see.

The Orderly leads Paul down the hall as Paul glances down at
the watch, hopefully keeping time as they enter the bowels of
the foreboding hospital.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul stands in the corner of the room, staring mindlessly at
the wall before him as Dr. Ross looks up from a thick folder.

DR. ROSS

So, all you had at the time of your
admittance was a watch?

PAUL

And a blue crayon.

DR. ROSS

Dear God. Whatever happened to the
watch?

PAUL

Beats me.

DR. ROSS

Huh. So, what happened next?

Paul turns back to the corner and takes in a deep breath.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWERROOM - THE PRITZKER CENTER - NIGHT

Paul stands in his underwear in the cold and sterile shower room as a CREEPY ORDERLY grabs a hose, sizing him up.

CREEPY ORDERLY

Take it all off boy.

Paul nervously removes his underwear, cowering by the wall. The Creepy Orderly purses his lips lustfully and then opens a valve, dousing Paul in a painful torrent of frigid water.

CREEPY ORDERLY

There ain't no place to run, son.
You're just gonna have to learn to
take it like a man, here, boy.

Lost in his morbid pleasure, the Creepy Orderly doesn't notice as Paul MAELIN (22) walks up, turning the hose off.

MAELIN

Had enough, Joel? Why don't you
check the locks again, make sure
these kids are all safe and sound from
what lurks *outside* the walls.

CREEPY ORDERLY/JOEL

Get bent, Paul.
(to Paul)
Sweet dreams, kid.

Joel winks at Paul who cowers in a ball in the corner. Maelin hangs up the hose and grabs a towel.

MAELIN

Here. Let's get you dried up.

As Maelin towels him off, Paul subtly relaxes, sheepishly looking up at him.

PAUL

My name's Paul too.

MAELIN

Well, how about that. Ya know, we're in a pretty select group you and I, I mean there's Paul Cezanne, Paul Newman, Les Paul, St. Paul, Paul Bunyon, Paul Revere, ah...

PAUL

Paul McCartney?

Surprised, Maelin looks at him intriguingly.

MAELIN

Yeah. Paul McCartney.

Maelin rubs Paul's head with the towel playfully.

INT. BOY'S DORMITORY - NIGHT

Paul spies the strange room, his eyes just peeking over his bedspread as sneaker SQUEAK'S come to a halt in the b.g. The TINKLING of keys and the TURN OF A LOCK force Paul's eyes to widen as he slowly turns in bed where he's startled by Joel, his shoes dangling from his neck, as he pulls the sheets back on the Retarded Boy's bed next to his.

Noticing Paul, Joel places his finger to his lips and then ominously runs it across his neck. As Joel climbs on top of the defenseless child, Paul rolls over, tears welling in his eyes as the bedsprings begin to SQUEAK behind him.

EXT. DR. BETTLEHEIM'S OFFICE - MORNING

Paul sits on the waiting bench as Dr. B exits his office.

DR. B

So. You must be little Paul.

Dr. B warmly extends his hand.

DR. B (CONT'D)

Come. Let us show you the grounds.

Warily, Paul accepts his hand and slides off the bench.

INT. DAY ROOM - MORNING

Dr. B and Paul stroll through the sterile, crumbling solarium as three Children, scattered about in various states of chemical despondency, obliviously slump in their chairs. A fourth, rocking back and forth by the window, mumbles to himself until suddenly snapping his head at Paul, his penetrating glare pushing Paul closer to Dr. B.

DR. B

This is our activities room. As you can see, it offers a variety of diversions such as television, ping-pong, board games and puzzles...

They pass a Child seated before a puzzle, drool puddling from his mouth on the table below.

DR. B (CONT'D)

... for the ah, the actively engaged young mind. Like yours.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MORNING

Dr. B and Paul walk amongst the rusting playground equipment.

DR. B

But it is not only the mind we are engaged in here. Playtime and exercise are a cornerstone of our treatment. Not only for the self, but for our community as a whole. Because as iron sharpens iron...

He pushes down a teeter-totter which GROANS from inactivity.

DR. B (CONT'D)

... one child, sharpens another.

EXT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Dr. B points over Paul's shoulder into the half-filled room as children of various ages disinterestedly watch the teacher, EDI (23), compose a problem on the blackboard.

DR. B

You see, we all must work together in order to achieve true meaning and fulfillment in life. As the student

learns from the teacher, so the
teacher learns from the student.

TEACHER

Billy?

BILLY

Five plus five equals... five-five.

Edi hangs her head as Paul looks oddly up at Dr. B.

INT. DEAD-END HALLWAY - MORNING

Dr. B and Paul slowly approach the end of the dimly lit hallway, where an undersized, ominous looking door with a small smudged up window resides - the "Stinkhole."

DR. B

And so, it is what you offer to us here
that truly matters the most in your
treatment.

He opens the CREAKING door, revealing a padded room marked with blood and fecal stains as Paul pulls back in disgust.

DR. B (CONT'D)

If you play along and mind what we
tell you, you'll do just fine here.
If not...

Dr. B slams the door shut which loudly CLANGS on its metal frame. He glares at Paul, an eyebrow raising ominously.

INT. JERRY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Dr. B ushers Paul into the cramped office, where JERRY (32) jumps to attention from her half-dazed state.

JERRY

Dr. Bettleheim.

DR. B

Paul, this is Jerry. Jerry will help
you with whatever it is that is
troubling you, whenever you wish to
come see her. Okay?

Dr. B nods and exits the room, Jerry's vigor going with him.

JERRY

Well. Take a seat, I guess.

As Jerry turns away, Paul quickly snatches a box of tacks off her desk, sticking them in his pants as he sits down.

JERRY

So. This's called a Rorschach
tablet. It's kinda like a game.
I'll show you an ink blot and you/

Staring at a bowl full of "Bazooka" gum, Paul licks his lips.

JERRY

You want one? Take a handful.

Paul tentatively grabs one and opens it, revealing the comic within. Paul studies it.

JERRY

They can be sent in for prizes, you
know?

PAUL

Really?

JERRY

Yeah, my niece just got a cute little
record player. Of course, it took
her, like, 2,500 comics.

PAUL

2,500?

JERRY

It's a bunch. But don't worry,
you've got time.

Jerry flips the first ink blot as Paul sadly stares ahead.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Paul cautiously walks up to a group of kids, MIKEY (7), CHIP (6) and DEEK (6), playing marbles in the dirt. Casting his shadow across them, the three glare up at Paul in unison.

MIKEY

Whadda you want?

PAUL
Can I play?

MIKEY
Got any marbles?

PAUL
No.

MIKEY
Then get outta here, dummy!

Paul sulks away as Maelin watches from across the yard.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Paul watches as a Nurse flips off the lights and locks the door behind her. Waiting until she disappears down the hall, Paul springs up and pulls the box of tacks from under his mattress, sprinkling them on the floor around his bed.

INT. READING ROOM - DAY

As Dr. B reads *Cinderella* to his "captive" audience, Paul stares out the barred window at a group of kids playing stick-ball in the street. Suddenly...

DR. B
Mr. Abramson? Is our fairy-tale
therapy boring you?

Paul nervously eyes Dr. B as the rest of the children incredulously look over to Paul.

DR. B
Come. Front and center.

As Paul nervously stops before him, Dr. B quickly raises his hand and viciously slaps Paul across the face.

DR. B
When I am speaking, you will pay
attention!

Dr. B glances at Paul's groin as it darkens with urine.

DR. B
Look at you. You can't even keep
your urine to your bed. Sit down.

Shamefully, Paul hustles back to his seat as the other children gleefully snicker at him.

INT. DAY ROOM - DAY

The television cuts from a re-run of "Rawhide" to a commercial for the recently completed John Hancock building touting it's world class observation deck. A YOUNG GIRL in the ad turns from the observation binoculars to her mother and exclaims...

YOUNG GIRL (TV)

Wow, Mommy! I can see our house from here!

Watching from the windowsill he's perched on, Paul turns his attention outside, oblivious to the two Boys shooting spitwads at him. As the Boys prepare to launch another salvo, Maelin steps inbetween, glowering at them as they nervously drop their straws in shame. Turning to Paul...

MAELIN

Sure is a nice day out.

PAUL

Not a very good one *in* though.

MAELIN

Can't say that it is. But this might make it better.

Maelin pulls out a small canvas bag and hands it to Paul.

PAUL

What is it?

MAELIN

A bag of marbles. Every boy should have one. I think it's a law now.

PAUL

I don't know how to play.

MAELIN

Hmmm. Well, I'll just have to teach ya then.

PAUL

Now?

MAELIN

Nah, I gotta get over to doctor...

Paul dejectedly turns from him. Realizing what he's done, Maelin pulls a transistor radio from his pocket.

MAELIN

How 'bout tomorrow, huh? In the meantime, why don't you take a look at this. I think it's broken.

Paul looks up at him wide-eyed, grabbing the precious object. He turns it on and immediately dials in a station.

MAELIN

Hmmm. You must have the magic touch. Tomorrow, okay?

Maelin walks away as Paul holds the radio to his ear, losing himself in the freedom that pours from it.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Paul and Maelin crouch around a marble ring as Paul takes aim. Expertly knocking a marble from it, Paul snatches it as he turns up the radio.

PAUL

Yeah. You like Link Wray?

MAELIN

Link Wray? How d'you know about Link Wray?

PAUL

I dunno. He's the "father of the power chord" though.

MAELIN

The "father of the power chord"... Man, how'd you ever end up in here?

Paul aims again and shoots, knocking a marble from the ring (continuous through scene).

PAUL

I don't know. I'm bad I guess.

MAELIN

Who says that?

PAUL

My Mom. My Dad too, I 'spose. But he'll come back. He said so. And then I'll know I'm all better.

MAELIN

Hmmm. Well, I'm no doctor, but if they think that, they must be suffering from a real bad case of shitfer brains.

PAUL

Shitfer brains? That an illness?

MAELIN

Ya know, shitfer... *Shit For*...

Paul nervously stares at him for a moment, but then bursts out laughing. Gathering himself, Paul takes aim again.

PAUL

So how'd you end up in here? Got shitfer brains, yourself?

MAELIN

Maybe. Truth be told, I'm trying to wait out the war. But that truth's not to be told, ya dig?

PAUL

Yeah, I dig.

MAELIN

(winks)

Guess that makes us both bad, huh?

Paul leans down and knocks the last marble from the ring. Maelin, realizing he's been taken...

MAELIN

Wait a sec. I take that back.

INT. DAY ROOM - DAY

Parent's Day. Sitting by himself watching the other Children open presents and eat confectioneries with their Families, Paul suddenly realizes that the door is ajar. Slyly sneaking away,

Paul opens the door and makes a mad dash to the main entrance as the Orderlies scramble behind.

Finding the main door locked, Paul slips an Orderly's grasp and runs back into the Day Room, twisting around the Parents, toppling food covered tables and baffling the Orderlies attempts to corral him in a vain attempt for freedom as the Children wildly cheer him on.

Pinned in a corner, the Orderlies put Paul in a hammer-lock and drag him from the room as the Parents try to calm the now frenzied Children, the most notable of whom being Mikey.

INT. THE STINKHOLE - DAY

The door CREAKS opens as the Orderlies toss Paul in.

ORDERLY #1
Shit, it stinks in here!

ORDERLY #2
This aughta take the piss outta ya,
ya little bastard.

PAUL
No, no, no, don't leave me here!

ORDERLY #1
Enjoy your stay, Paulo, compliments
of ol' Brutal Bruno hisself.

Paul runs for the door as they SLAM it shut on him.

PAUL
Please! Please, I'll be good! I'll
be good, I'll be good.

Breaking down in tears, Paul backs into a corner where he slowly slumps to the ground, curling up into the fetal position. Staring into the wall, he notices the word *WHY* scrawled before him. In a colorless whisper, he sings the "Three Dog Night" song *Easy To Be Hard...*

PAUL
It's easy to be hard, Easy to be cold,
Easy to be proud, Easy to...

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MORNING

Paul steps out of the doorway, squinting his eyes in the bright, early morning sun. Crouched in his shadow again, Mikey, Chip and Deek look up from their game of marbles.

MIKEY

Hey, kid.

PAUL

Oh, hey, I'll move.

MIKEY

Wanna play?

PAUL

Me?

MIKEY

You got any marbles?

PAUL

Some.

MIKEY

Cool.

Paul walks over to them.

CHIP

They put you in the Stinkhole?

Paul nods.

MIKEY

Man, that was funny. I couldn't believe what I was seein'.

CHIP

You can't believe nothin' you see, Mikey.

MIKEY

Oh, yeah, well it beats having seizures, Shakey.

Chip shrinks at the comment.

MIKEY

So. You know how to play?

PAUL

Yeah.

DEEK

Winner keeps sooo d-don't get all-all
c-crazzzy if you llllose all your
m-m-marbles.

PAUL

Don't worry. I won't.

TIMECUT:

Paul lines up the last marble and shoots, knocking it from the ring. As Paul corrals his plunder, Deek begins to cry, forcing Mikey to punch him in the arm.

MIKEY

Quit your whinin', already. He took
'em fair and square.

Paul turns to leave, but unexpectedly stops and turns around.

PAUL

Wanna get 'em back?

The boys eagerly look up to him.

INT. JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Jerry shakes her head in disbelief as she empties a bag of Bazooka gum into her candy dish.

JERRY

Looks like I'm gonna have to go
shopping tonight.

Grabbing a handful of gum, Deek hustles from the office past a line of kids waiting to get in. Stopping at Paul, Deek exchanges the gum for one of his marbles.

JERRY (O.C.)

Cripes, are you a patient here too?

Devilishly eyeing his newfound riches, Paul's smile slowly fades as he notices a YOUNG BOY monotonously pounding his head against the wall down the hall.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Paul sits on the windowsill in the darkened dorm, his eyes trained on the street before the main entrance to Pritzker. As the watch TICKS in the b.g., a car similar to his father's approaches and Paul's eyes hopefully widen. But as the car passes, taking with it the momentary gleam in Paul's eyes, the TICKING suddenly stops.

Morosely staring at the now still watch, Paul disparagingly returns his gaze on the street. A moment passes and Paul winds it back up. As it begins to TICK again, Paul resumes his vigil on the streetfront below.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

As the TICKING of the watch grows louder, various shots of Paul flash as he grows up in Pritzker.

- Paul (6) gets a big hug from his teacher, Edi, after answering a question correctly on the classroom blackboard. As he dreamily returns to his seat, Mikey, Chip and Deek make "lovey-duv" faces at him, visibly embarrassing Paul.

- Paul (7) lovingly tends to a plant in the garden as Mikey and Deek begin to throw tomatoes at him. Squirted the hose on them and forcing them back, Paul playfully turns the hose on himself as he laughs in delight. Suddenly, Paul drops the hose and runs off-frame as Dr. B angrily storms after him.

- A black-eye fresh on his face, Paul (7) plays air-guitar with Maelin in the dorm beside his "Bazooka" record player.

- Paul (8) begins to dump his food in the cafeteria's trash when Dr. B grabs his tray, calling over two Orderlies who restrain him. Prying his mouth open on the ground, Dr. B shovels the food into his mouth.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

(a) An Orderly drives Paul (9) in the hospital wagon up to a large Brownstone in snowy, downtown Chicago.

(b) Tina opens the door and ushers Paul into the festively decorated home, highlighted by a large Christmas tree packed with presents beneath it. Before it stands his family in front of a PHOTOGRAPHER.

(c) Paul stands oddly before his father and beside his sisters, who pose as uncomfortably next to him, as the Photographer motions for Jane to switch sides. Jane hesitantly does so, but once before Paul, she becomes agitated and quickly switches back.

(d) The camera flashes, everyone putting on their best smile for the posterial moment except Paul who, shocked and confused by the charade, stares ahead wide-eyed. As the flash fades, the family slowly disperses, leaving Paul to himself before the tree.

(e) The Orderly drives Paul home, a small present resting on his lap. Paul stares dumbfounded at the ribbon as the TICKING of the watch morphs into a metallic CLACK-CLACK.

INT. JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY

As Paul rests his head on Jerry's desk, disinterestedly watching a Newton's Cradle CLICK-CLACK before him, Jerry flips the Rorschach tablet to a blot resembling the ribbon. Concertedly staring at the blot, Paul catches the swinging, metallic sphere silencing the toy.

JERRY

And this one?

PAUL

When'll I getta go home? For good?

JERRY

Well, when you get better, Paul.

PAUL

When's that?

JERRY

Only you know that answer, Paul.

Only you. So, this one?

As Paul hopelessly looks up at her, he releases the sphere which sends the cradle monotonously CLICK-CLACKING again.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Paul, Mikey, Chip, Deek and a few other Boys of less capable means sit around a large pile of playing cards, bazooka comics, toys, and candy on Paul's bed.

PAUL

Cripes Chip, you in or out?

DEEK

In-in-in or out offff w-w-w/

PAUL

The *hand*, you knucklehead?

DEEK (CONT'D)

W-w-w... Hand?

Paul incredulously pulls the candy cigarette from his mouth as RALPHIE (7) walks up to him.

RALPHIE

Paulo? Can I borrow 10 comics or Skeeter's gonna flush my teddy.

Paul grabs a handful of comics and hands them to Ralphie.

PAUL

Take 'em, but I want a cookie from the next batch your Mom sends.

RALPHIE

Gee, thanks, Paul.

PAUL

Okay, I call.

CHIP

You call what?

PAUL

I call the, you know, the ah... Just show 'em!

MIKEY

That's not how Maverick does it!

PAUL

Dang it, Mikey, do you see Maverick here?

Mikey sheepishly shrugs.

PAUL

Well either way, he ain't the one dealin', so I say show 'em.

The kids lay down their cards as Paul looks them over.

CHIP

I win.

Chip quickly reaches for the pot but Paul snatches his hand.

PAUL
Wait a minute. You got an Old Maid
in there for Christ's sake!

CHIP
Ah, it's a joker.

PAUL
A *joker*? Give me that.

Paul corrals the pile and dumps the toys in his overloaded nightstand, locking it. Puffing on his candy cigarette as if he were Clint Eastwood from "Rawhide".

PAUL
Alright, boys, let's 'head 'em up and
move 'em out.'

The boys slowly make their way to their beds.

MIKEY
Hey, can I have my squirtgun back? I
was gonna give it to Paul before he
leaves.

PAUL
Leaves where?

MIKEY
Leaves here.

Shocked, Paul stares bewilderedly at him.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Paul enters the room as Maelin empties his belongings into a duffel bag. Suddenly, Gary, a cross-eyed orderly who could have passed as a former patient himself, grabs Paul.

ORDERLY #3
The hell you think you're doin'?

Maelin closes his locker as Gary begins dragging Paul out.

MAELIN
Hey! Let him go.

Confounded, Gary glares at Maelin as he releases Paul.

PAUL

Where are you going?

MAELIN

I was gonna come see you. My Dad's sick and I gotta get back home to look after him now.

PAUL

But, but if you go... I'll be all alone again.

MAELIN

Hey, you'll be alright, kiddo. You made it this far, right?

PAUL

Not without you.

Maelin walks up to Paul and squats down before him.

MAELIN

No, you did it yourself. You'd be crazy to think otherwise.

Maelin winks at Paul who lunges at him, hugging him tightly.

MAELIN

Hey, I gotta catch a train. Don't worry, we'll keep in touch, friend.

Paul steps out into the hallway and watches Maelin as he walks away. Waving at Maelin as he steps outside, a locker SLAMS shut behind Paul. Turning, Paul sees Joel as he buttons up his scrubs, a creepy leer spread across his face.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Paul tosses and turns in his bed, every PINGING of the radiator, every BARK of a dog startling him awake. He looks at the watch - 2:15 AM. Training his eyes on the door, Paul fights to stay awake.

TIMECUT:

An agonized SHRIEK sends Paul up like a shot. Grabbing his flashlight, Paul aims it on Joel who rolls around beside his

bed grabbing his ankle, dozens of tacks sticking from the bloodied soles of his feet.

JOEL

You little bastard! Shit, I think I broke my fuckin' leg. Ahhhh, I'm gonna fuck you up you little shit!

Suddenly, Mikey jumps from his bed and runs out the open door, returning as quickly with the ward's fire hose.

JOEL

I ain't on fire you little shit!

Putting his finger to his lips and then across his neck, Mikey grips the hose firmly and proceeds to viciously whip Joel with the heavy brass nozzle. As Joel SHRIEKS in pain, blood begins to splatter from his head and hands.

Shocked, Paul grabs Mikey and wrestles the hose from him, pushing Mikey to the ground in the process. Suddenly, the lights go on, a NURSE standing by the door.

NURSE

What's going on in... Oh, my God!

Dumbfounded, Paul silently watches as the Nurse runs from the room, the bloody hose ominously dangling from his hand.

INT. THE STINKHOLE - NIGHT

Lifelessly curled in the corner of the fetid room, his clothes as filthy as the pads he lays on, Paul stirs to the sound of the CREAKING door. Squinting into the overpowering light, Paul recoils at the imposing outline of Dr. B.

DR. B

Comfortable? Good. Because if we continue to behave in this manner, the next place we'll stick you will make this place feel like a penthouse suite.

Paul tries to speak, but due to his weak-long isolation, his erratic mumblings are silenced by the SLAMMING of the door.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Strapped to his bed, Paul stares determinedly up at the window above. Suddenly, Mikey pops up beside him.

MIKEY

Hey, man. You okay?

PAUL

Whadda you think?

MIKEY

Jeez, thanks for not saying nothin' but I just had to give it to that son of a bitch like he gave it t/

PAUL

Shhhh. Hey, wanna get outta here?

MIKEY

Well, yeah, I guess.

PAUL

Loosen my straps.

MIKEY

What?

PAUL

Just do it. I think I know a way outta here.

MIKEY

I don't know. We'll get into/

PAUL

You owe me, man.

Hesitantly, Mikey loosens his straps and Paul jumps out of bed. Grabbing the watch, Paul runs over to the windows.

PAUL

Give me a boost.

Mikey walks over and lifts Paul up, who grabs a latch on a transom window, pulling it down. Paul pulls himself up and offers his hand to Mikey.

EXT. PRITZKER CENTER - NIGHT

Paul and Mikey shinny down a storm pipe and jump to the grass below. Paul begins to jog away.

MIKEY

Hey, where you goin'?

PAUL

There.

Paul points to the John Hancock Tower, the image resembling the one from the TV ad.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Maybe I can find my house.

Paul continues on, Mikey nervously following behind.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Paul and Mikey walk along a seedy sidewalk in their pajamas, Hookers and Whinos staring oddly back at them.

- Crossing a busy street, a car comes SCREECHING to a halt and nearly hits Mikey. As Paul pulls him away, the DRUNK DRIVER leans from his window, cursing the both of them.

- Cutting through an abandoned lot, Paul and Mikey cross by a group of Gang Members surrounding a barrel fire who begin to ominously approach the frightened young boys. Suddenly, a knife-fight breaks out by the barrel, distracting the gang-bangers long enough that the boys can safely scamper away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CITY STREET - NIGHT

Just blocks from the enormous building, Paul and Mikey continue on as a Police Cruiser passes by. Quickly pulling to a halt, two OFFICERS lumber out of the car.

OFFICER #1

Hey, what're you boys doing here?

MIKEY

He made me do it.

OFFICER #2

You lost?

PAUL

We're going to the Hancock Building
to find my parents.

OFFICER #1

Huh? Nah, they ain't there, it's
closed now. Where you two live at?

MIKEY

At Pritzker.

OFFICER #2

Ohhhhh. That's that place... ya
know? We aughta take 'em back.

The Officers lead Paul and Mikey to the cruiser as Paul
helplessly looks back at the Hancock Tower.

PAUL

But, I need to find my home.

(to Officer #2)

I need to find my mother.

As Officer #2 oddly looks down at him, Paul begins to struggle
to break free. Grabbing him like a sack of potatoes, Officer
#2 hauls Paul away as he kicks and screams.

PAUL

Let me go! Let me go! Every boy
should have a mother! Every boy
should have a mother!

Officer #2 throws Paul in the back of the cruiser and SLAMS the
door shut on him. Paul presses his face to the window as he
continues to scream through the glass. Slowly, Paul watches
in tears as they pull away, the reflection of the Hancock Tower
wiping across his face and out of frame.

INT. DR. BETTLEHEIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. B sheepishly sits before an obviously irritated Jane as
Floyd blankly looks on. Seated beside, with his chin on his
chest, Paul listens in.

JANE

What are we to think when we get a call
from the police saying he's out
roaming the streets at night? I'll
tell you what I think - that you're

as incompetent a caretaker as you are
a goddamn quack.

Dr. B bristles at the comment, the ire spilling from his
bespectacled eyes.

JANE (CONT'D)

For crying out loud, that's the main
reason we brought him here/

DR. B

Yes, well then, Mrs. Abramson, in
light of recent events, I can no
longer have Paul as a patient here.

JANE

Oh, now you understand how I feel.

DR. B

Ms. Abramson, Paul does not suffer
from anything medical science can
treat. It is my belief that he
simply suffers from a lack of love and
affection, obviously something I can
not offer him here.

JANE

Oh, I understand. What you're
saying is that now that you've got
this place all fixed up thanks to us,
you no longer need him.

DR. B

It is not I who no longer needs Paul.
It is Paul who now needs you. I
suggest you enlist the services of a
family therapist/

Jane, eyes wide, SCOFFS.

JANE

I'll have you know, we have a model
family. You saw our Christmas
cards, I presume. Besides, I don't
have time for such things. I have
therapy of my own to deal with.

DR. B

Yes. I wouldn't recommend
jeopardizing that.

Jane ignorantly nods her head in agreement at the slight.

INT. FLOYD'S CAR - DAY

As Jane and Floyd sit in tense silence before him, Paul pulls out the watch. Staring at it a moment, Paul looks up into the rearview mirror at his father. Blindly staring ahead, Floyd suddenly glances up into the mirror and makes eyes with Paul. Adjusting the mirror off Paul, Floyd unwittingly reveals his new watch which gleams in the afternoon sun. Squinting at its brilliance, Paul dejectedly returns the old watch to his pocket.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - TWILIGHT

Standing near the window, Paul stares down with moist eyes at the watch in his hand as Dr. Ross sadly looks on from behind.

DR. ROSS

Maybe we ought to break for the day,
Paul. It's been a long one.

Paul pockets the watch and turns to her.

PAUL

Just another one for me, though.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Paul, visibly drunk, slugs down another shot.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Paul staggers into the kitchen and stops at the fridge, ripping off a note taped to the handle - *Dinner's in the tupperware, hun. Love, Ang.* His face betraying the disappointment and anger within, he crumples the note, grabs a beer and stumbles off towards the bedroom.

Swaying in the doorjamb, Paul slowly pushes the door open to reveal Angie's angelic face resting peacefully on the pillow. Paul quietly clears his throat and Angie stirs, slowly rolling away from him. Torn, Paul takes a slug of the beer.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - TWILIGHT

Paul stands in the doorjamb of his barren room as Tina drops his luggage on the floor, turns and passes him by without a word. As Paul watches her walk away, he catches the eye of his sister, Anne, who spies him from a crack in her door. A moment passes in silence before Anne closes the door on him.

INT. 4TH FLOOR HALLWAY - MORNING

Wiping the sleep from his eyes, Paul steps into the hallway of the eerily silent house. Cautiously walking down to Anne and Amy's room, Paul peaks his head inside, his mouth dropping in awe at the splendor within. The beautifully furnished room, filled with every possible thing a child could possibly desire, encapsulates everything he'd lacked the past five years. Reverently, Paul closes the door.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

(a) Paul opens a closet stacked with boxes labeled "Paul's" which had never been unpacked from the move. (b)
Paul slides open the dumbwaiter door and tugs on the rope.
(c) Entering the well-appointed kitchen, Paul steps through it as if it were a minefield. (d)
Paul flips through an impressive record collection. (e)
Walking back up the stairs, Paul notices another, smaller kitchen down the hall.

INT. SMALLER KITCHEN - MORNING

Paul opens the refrigerator. Inside, an odd assortment of foods litter it, highlighted by a loaf of bread with only the crust picked from and a cake with merely the icing eaten. Grabbing the cake, Paul closes the door revealing Jane just behind it. She looms over him, her irate face inches from his as she grabs Paul by the neck.

JANE

How dare you come into my private
kitchen and steal my food!

Choking him, Paul drops the cake and it crashes on the floor.

JANE

Oh, look at the mess you made, dummy.
Clean it up. Clean It Up! CLEAN IT
UP!

Paul frantically drops to the floor, scooping the dish shards and cake into a pile as he begins crying, Jane mimicking him in a frightening display of her psychosis.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

As Paul reads a book on his bed, he notices music coming from down the hall. Rising, Paul curiously walks to his door.

INT. ANNE AND AMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paul peaks through a crack in the door as Anne listens to the "White" album, her homework spread before her. Suddenly, Anne whips her head up, eyeing Paul disdainfully.

ANNE

What're you doing there? MOM!

PAUL

You ever heard the backwards message?

ANNE

The what?

PAUL

If you play it backwards you can hear John say "Turn me on, dead man."

ANNE

That's not true. Is it?

Paul Walks in and replaces the stylus on the record. He slowly begins turning it backwards as Anne eyes him skeptically. Suddenly, her eyes shoot open.

ANNE

I heard something. Do it again.

As Paul continues, the phrase repeats itself and Anne jumps off her bed, rushing up to him.

ANNE

Wow. That's sooooo cool. Where'd you hear about this...

PAUL

Where d'you think?

ANNE

Oh. Yeah. Sorry.

PAUL
Hey, it's okay.

Anne begins poking at her things.

ANNE
You know, I locked myself in the
bathroom when they took you away.
They had to send a fireman over to get
me out.

PAUL
Really? I never heard that.

ANNE
Yeah, I guess not. Was it bad?

PAUL
Nah. Being locked up with the
criminally insane's a real character
builder.

Uncertain at first, Anne bursts into laughter and the two slowly
begin to catch up on the years past.

EXT. ANNE AND AMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Eavesdropping by the door, Jane's face tightens, the rage in
her burning eyes intensifying with each passing second.

INT. CLASSROOM - SCHOOL - MORNING

Paul stands next to his teacher, MS. ELMER, a bitter looking
old school marm, who impetuously straightens Paul's tie.

MS. ELMER
Now, students, this is your new
classmate, Paul Abramson. Randy,
back in your seat! Paul why don't
you tell the class a little bit about
yourself. RANDY!

Ms. Elmer returns to her desk as Paul looks out on the strange
new students before him, two boys, FRANK and TOMMY snickering
at him in the back. Paul stands in silence for a moment.

MS. ELMER

Paul. Please, it's very impolite
not to introduce yourself formally.
Now go on.

Paul looks at Ms. Elmer briefly and then lifelessly falls to
the floor. Ms. Elmer rushes to him, feeling his forehead.

MS. ELMER
I'll be right back, children.
Behave yourselves, now!

As Ms. Elmer leaves the class, the students crane forward
pie-eyed at Paul as he lies prone on the floor. Suddenly, Paul
opens his eyes sending them all back in their seats.

PAUL
Man, I thought she'd never leave.

Paul stands up as the confused Students begin to stir.

FRANK
Hey. Where're you from?

PAUL
Just a school across town.

FRANK
How come you're here now?

PAUL
I dunno. Couldn't *stand* it back
there either.

Paul unconsciously falls to the floor again, the Students
erupting in laughter. Returning with the School Nurse, Ms.
Elmer begins venomously scolding the Students.

INT. FOYER - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - DAY

Paul walks in with Anne enthusiastically re-enacting his first
day when they both stop dead in their tracks. Icily stepping
towards them, Jane points to the parlor where Gary from Pritzker
uncomfortably stands.

JANE
Oh, good, you're home. Anne, this's
Gary. He's a therapist from
Pritzker who'll be continuing Paul's

treatment after school and weekends
to help him with his sickness.

GARY

Yo.

JANE

Since, Paul will be unavailable until
dinnertime, I thought we'd take this
time to catch up on our needlepoint.

ANNE

But Mom, we were going to go listen
to some records.

JANE

Perhaps later. Right now, Paul
needs to attend to his therapy.

Jane grabs Anne and drags her upstairs as Paul and Gary stand
uneasily in the foyer.

GARY

Ah, hey, dude, you got somethin' to
eat? I'm starvin'.

Paul reluctantly leads Gary to the kitchen.

EXT. MARSHALL FIELD'S - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

As Jane and Paul (10) step out of the department store onto the
busy, ice-covered sidewalk, Paul slows, tugging at the itchy
new coat he wears. Jane continues on, flagging a cab.

JANE

Good lord, thank God that's over.
Why Tina's mother had to pick this
night to go to the hospital is beyond
me.

As a cab pulls up, Jane turns for Paul.

JANE

What are you doing? Get over here!

PAUL

It itches.

JANE

It's supposed to. Now come on, I've spent enough time on this already.

PAUL
But, I don't like it.

Jane storms over and grabs Paul, dragging him to the cab.

JANE
You are such a little ingrate, you know that? Come on.

Paul pulls back harder and slowly the coat slips from him as he does on the ice. Standing over him with the coat in her hand, Pedestrians looking on at the scene, Jane slams it on the ground beside him.

JANE
God, I hate you! I hate you so much you little bastard.

Glancing up at the crowd that has gathered around, Jane grabs Paul and yanks him into the cab, leaving the coat behind.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

As Paul cries into his pillow...

FLOYD (O.C.)
I'm just going to tuck the kids in, dear. I won't be long.

Paul furiously wipes the tears from his face as the stairs begin to CREAK. Running to his door, Paul begins to close it but stops. Peeking through the crack, Paul intently peers down the hall.

EXT. 4TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Floyd exits the stairs in his robe which he loosens the sash on, exposing himself. Knocking on the girls door...

FLOYD
Girls. Time to kiss Daddy
goodnight.

REVERSE ON PAUL

Tears forming again in his eyes, Paul slowly closes the door.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Paul stands before the classroom.

PAUL
Terrapin. T-E-R-R-A-P-I-N.
Terrapin.

Ms. Elmer stands up.

MS. ELMER
That's correct. Congratulations,
Paul, you've won. My, your parents
must really be working hard with you
at night.

Paul cynically shrugs his eyebrows in acknowledgment.

MS. ELMER
Let's have a hand for Paul everyone.

The class claps as Ms. Elmer hands Paul his certificate. As Paul walks back to his seat, Tommy and Frank lift him up and carry him, a prideful smile sneaking from Paul's lips.

INT. DINING ROOM - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

The family silently seated at the table, Jane enters from the kitchen with a platter of chicken. Placing a breast on Floyd's plate as he studies the Chicago Times sipping a Scotch, Jane walks to her setting and places two on hers.

JANE
Oh. Looks like we're a little short.

Jane sets the empty platter down, takes her seat, and the family begins "eating."

JANE
So, dear. How was your day?

FLOYD
Oh. You know. Busy, busy.

JANE
And how was school today, girls?

Anne and Amy indifferently shrug as they pick at their salad.

JANE

Hmmm. Well, I had a very interesting day myself. My professor was discussing Freud's/

PAUL

I won a spelling bee today.

JANE

I *happened* to be speaking. Or do you not understand etiquette too?

PAUL

Well, I just thought that since I did, and my birthday's coming up, maybe I could have a party and all with my friends. Dad?

FLOYD

Huh? Oh, I'm sorry I wasn't/

JANE

Well, that's out of the question. I've just got too much on my plate, Floyd, and we both know you're already over your head at the firm.

FLOYD

Yeah. Of course, dear.

PAUL

But Mom?

JANE

That's enough of that. So, Amy, how was school today, dear?

Amy shrugs again as she pushes her fork across her plate.

INT. VETERINARIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Anne and Amy wait by the desk as Jane, holding a small cage with a gerbil in it, struggles with Paul (11) by a bench. Slapping him, Jane plops the stunned Paul down.

JANE

I knew I should've left you in the car! When we get home you are in/

The VET walks in, suspiciously eyeing Jane.

VET
Can I help you?

JANE
Oh, yes. Our Gerbil's ill. He's
just not what he used to be.

Jane slams the cage on the counter before the Vet.

VET
Well, we can certainly take a look at
him. Have you been feeding/

ANNE
Oh, Mommy, look at the little doggy.

Behind the counter, a tiny Scottish Terrier pokes his nose
through a carrier cage.

VET
He's a cutie, isn't he?

ANNE
Mommy, I've just got to have him.

JANE
No. You've already got a pet.

ANNE
But Mommy/

JANE
Quit your whining. You think I want
some furball running around the
house? Not on your life.

The Vet angrily eyes Jane.

VET
Yeah, you wouldn't want that. He's
a rescue and really needs a *good*
home... a proper one that is.

Jane snaps her blazing eyes on the Vet as she pulls her checkbook
from her wallet.

JANE

Really. Well then, we'll take him
and the cage.

VET

I'm sorry, he's not for sale.

JANE

Really? Well my father, Sam Beber,
might have something to say about
that as well as the condition of
this... *business*.

(a beat)

So. Who should I make this out to?

VET

Anderson's Pet Clinic, ma'am.

INT. PARLOR - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Jane pushes Paul onto his knees in a corner as Anne and Amy cajole
the dog to come from his cage in the b.g. Her irate face stuck
in his ear...

JANE

I've never been so embarrassed in my
life. You think about what you did
back there and why you'll never do it
again. You hear me?

Jane storms off as Anne and Amy plead for the dog to come out
of the cage.

ANNE

Dumb dog. Maybe if we get some milk
he'll come out.

Anne and Amy walk from the room. As Paul kneels in silence,
the dog slowly pokes his head from the cage and looks over at
him. Hesitantly making his way across the room, the dog walks
up to Paul and tentatively begins licking his hand. Startled,
Paul turns to him as the dog cowers back.

Sharing a moment amongst themselves only the two of them would
understand, the dog slowly returns, licking Paul's hand
vigorously as Paul strokes his head with his other.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Paul, Tommy, and Frank toss a ball between each other as the dog, SHERMAN, chases after it.

TOMMY
Gee, look at him go.

PAUL
I know. He's pretty cool, isn't he?

FRANK
Here Sherman. Here boy.

Sherman runs across the room and jumps up to Frank's face who falls to the floor in a fit of laughter as he licks him. Suddenly, the front door bursts open and Jane hustles inside, locking the door as she peaks through the window outside.

PAUL
Mom?

JANE
They're following me.

PAUL
Who's following you?

JANE
They are. They were at the campus and then they followed me all the way home.

Paul walks to the window and looks outside. Seeing no one there, he looks strangely over at his Mom.

PAUL
I don't see anyone, Mom.

JANE
They're there I tell you, can't you... what're you doing home now?

PAUL
It was a half-day at school, remem/

JANE
And what are they doing here? And what's he doing out! I told you never to let him out of his cage unless Anne was around.

PAUL

But Mom/

Jane furiously slaps Paul sending him to the floor as she storms into the parlor.

JANE

Get out! Get Out! GET OUT!

Tommy and Frank make a bee line for the door which Jane runs up to and immediately locks behind them. Quickly grabbing Sherman, Paul runs for the kitchen, just steps ahead of Jane.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Paul opens the dumbwaiter and jumps out. Grabbing Sherman, he opens a closet door as...

JANE (O.C.)

PAAUUULLLL! DON'T MAKE ME COME FIND
YOU! DON'T MAKE ME COME/

Paul sneaks into the closet.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Paul pulls out a box and sneaks behind it, pushing it back in place to conceal a hide-out complete with his records and player. Jane still furiously screaming, Paul puts on his headphones and turns the player on, palliatively closing his eyes as he listens to "Communication Breakdown" and strokes Sherman in the comforting darkness.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paul, his ear to the floor next to Sherman, listens to the screaming match his parent's have in their bedroom below his.

FLOYD (O.C.)

Christ, Jane, he had the dog out.
What's the big deal?

JANE (O.C.)

And what about those hoodlums he was
with?

FLOYD (O.C.)

They're his classmates. Isn't he
supposed to have friends now too?

JANE (O.C.)

So, you're not going to do anything?

FLOYD (O.C.)

What am I supposed to do?

JANE (O.C.)

I see. Well, perhaps I should have a little talk with Daddy. I'm sure he could do something to resolve your lack of initiative. You know, it was I who convinced him to *hire* you in the first place.

FLOYD (O.C.)

Of course I do, Jane, you remind of it nearly everyday of my life.

JANE (O.C.)

Well, it certainly doesn't seem to be sticking.

FLOYD (O.C.)

Something's sticking, Jane. Something's sticking in my craw about the way you treat me and/

JANE (O.C.)

Perhaps, he'd be more interested in the rather unique way you "tuck" your girls in at night.

JANE (CONT'D) (O.C.)

Tuck being a loose approximation of the proper term, of course. But considering the blind eye he cast on Harley, the very one he cast on me as a child, perhaps I should simply turn to the blind eye of the law.

Silence. Then a door CREAKS open, followed by FOOTSTEPS on the stairway. Paul nervously stashes Sherman in a dresser drawer and jumps beneath his sheets as the FOOTSTEPS continue to approach. Slowly, Floyd opens Paul's door and steps into the room as he pulls his belt from his waist...

FLOYD

Your mother is very upset about what happened this afternoon.

He SNAPS the belt.

FLOYD (CONT'D)

We can't have your mother upset now.

Floyd reaches down and grabs Paul.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - MORNING

Paul (12) glumly watches from his window as the rest of his family make a snowman in the backyard. As Anne sticks a carrot in its nose, she looks up at Paul. Her smile fading, she meekly waves up at him which Paul returns in kind.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sitting at the table with his head in his arms, Paul morosely stares ahead as party favors WHIRL and RATTLE from the parlor. Suddenly, the kitchen door swings open and Gary steps in, two pieces of cake in his hands as we see an elaborate princess party for Amy taking place behind him.

GARY

Man, what a get-up. I managed to swipe you a piece, too.

PAUL

Thanks.

GARY

Man, they really pull out all the stops for you guys around here, don't they?

PAUL

What planet are you from?

GARY

(a beat)

Earth? Wait, that's a trick question, right?

Paul simply shakes his head as he cuts into the cake, offering Sherman a bite from his fork.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Paul walks in as Jane, Anne and Amy pour over brochures from fancy summer tennis camps. Anne points to the Rose Academy.

ANNE

Wow, this one has horses too! I wanna go here, Mommy, please, please, please!

JANE

Of course, dear. Whatever your heart desires.

PAUL

What're you looking at?

ANNE

(snotily)

Summer tennis camps. It's going to be sooooo amazing isn't it, Mommy?

PAUL

Am I going to one too?

JANE

Of course you're going to one. Three months of freedom are just what the doctor ordered. Three *blessed* months.

EXT. ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - MORNING

Paul watches from the porch as Floyd loads the girl's luggage into the car and hops in. As Jane closes her door, Anne looks up at Paul, who timidly waves at her. Scowling, Anne turns from Paul, the car slowly pulling away from the curb.

EXT. COURT KING'S TENNIS CAMP - MORNING

Paul incredulously stands at the curb with his luggage as Tina SCREECHES away behind him. Looking through the rusting fence, Paul stares at the tennis nets which sag in pools of dirty water on the cracked playing surface. He helplessly turns around and watches as Tina tears away down the drive.

INT. 4TH FLOOR HALLWAY - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - DAY

Struggling with his luggage to his door, Paul (13) opens it to find it redecorated and outfitted with Amy's belongings.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Paul steps from the stairway and bumps into Tina.

PAUL

What happened to my room?

TINA

Oh, that's Amy's now. You're down here. Right next to your Momma's new room.

PAUL

When'd this happen?

TINA

Few days back. Your Momma thought boys and girls shouldn't be sleeping so close to one another or some crazy shit like that.

Tina walks off as Paul opens the door to his new room, his things stuffed in a few boxes in the center of the barren room. Amongst them, Sherman apathetically lays in his cage, quietly WHINING for Paul.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Paul storms in as Jane, Anne and Amy frost a cake.

PAUL

How long's he been in there?

JANE

What're you talking about?

PAUL

You know what I'm talking about.

JANE

Oh, that. He's fine, it hasn't been that long.

PAUL

You're a monster, you know that? A sick, evil, twisted monster.

Jane begins to tear up.

JANE

How can I live like this? You're just such a little ingrate. I'm sorry girls.

Jane runs from the room as Anne scowls at Paul.

ANNE

God, there is something wrong with you, isn't there? Mommy! Mom!

Paul watches as Anne runs off for her mother, Amy nervously staring at him from the sink.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Paul plays four square with Tommy, Frank and Ralph as a line of Boys wait nearby for their turn. Suddenly, Anne storms up with a few of her Girlfriends in tow.

ANNE

Paul, did you take my protractor last night? I want it back.

PAUL

No. You probably lost it again.

ANNE

No I didn't.

PAUL

Anne, if your head wasn't attached to your shoulders, you'd probably lose that too.

The Boys laugh.

ANNE

You want to talk about losing your *head*? Looks like you didn't ever find yours at the looney bin.

PAUL

Hey, watch it, Anne.

TOMMY

Looney bin? What're you talking about?

ANNE

Before he came here, Paul was in a looney bin for kids. He's nuttier than a Snicker's bar.

The Girls begin to snicker and call Paul names as the Boys slowly distance themselves from him.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - MORNING

Drowsily walking from his room, Paul curiously glances down at the floor. Noticing a trail of blood leading from his mother's bedroom to the bathroom, Paul opens his mother's door and GASPS in horror at the sight before him. Inside the gilded bedroom, a pool of blood covers the mattress, bloody handprints frantically marking their way to the door.

Paul stands in stunned silence until Floyd exits his bedroom.

PAUL

Dad, what happened to Mom? What's wrong? Is she alright?

Floyd casually glances into the bedroom.

FLOYD

Your mother bleeds a lot.

Floyd walks away, leaving Paul more confused and afraid than before. As Paul peers back in at the bloody mess before him, the bathroom door opens behind, slowly revealing Jane's enraged, blood-smearing face in the process.

JANE

YOU! How dare you invade my privacy!
You have no right!

Paul nervously whirls around, shocked at the sight of her.

PAUL

Mom. Mom, I just thought you were sick/

JANE (CONT'D)

Oh, why have I been cursed like this,
why, oh God, why...

JANE

Why, Why, WHY, WHY, WHY, WHY!!!!

Jane lunges for Paul with her bony, blood-stained hands and begins slapping him across the face, Paul's cheeks reddening from her menstrual blood with each blow.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Paul walks alone outside the fence as he looks down at a paper, a large, red "D" marked atop it. Suddenly, Tommy and Frank begin throwing stones at him from inside the gate.

TOMMY

Hey, looney tunes! Looney, looney,
looney, looney!

FRANK

Maybe these'll knock some sense into
you, ya freak!

Paul helplessly scampers across the street.

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Paul (14) stands by a STEWARDESS as Floyd hands her his ticket.

FLOYD

Grandma Jean will be waiting for you
at the gate when you land. This
young lady here will make sure you get
there alright.

STEWARDESS

Certainly, Mr. Abramson, we'll have
Paul safe and sound in Los Angeles/

PAUL

But, I don't wanna fly to Grandma
Jeans, I wanna go with you.

Floyd grabs Paul's wrist and pulls him closely in.

FLOYD

(whispering)

You make a scene and I swear to God,
you'll never leave the house again,
let alone Chicago. Got it?

Floyd releases Paul and looks over at the Stewardess.

FLOYD

Flight-jitters. You know how it is.

Paul watches as Floyd walks up to the rest of his family who are boarding a plane nearby, Amy handing her ticket to the TICKET CLERK.

TICKET CLERK

And where're you off to little one?

AMY

The Bahamas!

ANNE

Yeah, the Four Seasons Resort, too.

TICKET CLERK

Wow. That sounds pretty swanky.

JANE

Oh, it is. But only the best will do for my family.

Paul sadly looks on as the Stewardess leads him away.

INT. GRANDMA JEAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Vacuuming the floor in the modest, 50's era tract house, Paul stops beside the couch as his pasty, overweight GRANDMA JEAN stares mindlessly at the TV. Paul turns off the machine.

GRANDMA JEAN

You ain't done yet.

PAUL

Dad said you'd take me to Disneyland while I was here and I've only got one day left/

GRANDMA JEAN

He never said nothin' to me 'bout no Disneyland. Besides, I got too much goin' on. Now get, my stories is about to start and I don't want you drownin' 'em out. Go on now.

Paul reluctantly fires up the vacuum.

EXT. O'HARE AIRPORT - BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT

Paul wearily exits the claim area with his bag and a bottle of soda, walking up to Floyd who waits by the station wagon.

FLOYD

Hurry it up, we've been waiting a half-an-hour.

PAUL

Sorry, the plane was late.

Floyd grabs Paul's bag and opens the passenger door. But before Paul can get in, Floyd drops the suitcase on the seat next to Anne and Amy who, deeply bronzed in their brand new island wear, giggle delightedly. Floyd shuts the door.

FLOYD

Get in the back.

Paul glances at the rear tailgate seat which is nearly filled with luggage.

PAUL

Why don't I just sit up here?

FLOYD

I said get in the back.

PAUL

No.

Floyd's eyes bulge and he quickly punches Paul in the stomach. Doubling over in pain, Paul drops the bottle which SHATTERS, catching the ear of a COP nearby.

COP

Hey! What's going on there?

The Cop suspiciously walks over to Paul and Floyd.

FLOYD

Oh, sorry Officer. We just had a little accident.

COP

Uh-huh. Hey, you okay, kid?

Tears in his eyes, Paul glances up at Floyd, Floyd's stern countenance portending the expected reply.

PAUL

Yeah. Just some stomach cramps.

COP

You sure, kid? I thought I/

FLOYD

Yeah, you know that airplane food.
Okay, let's get you home, son.

Floyd opens the tailgate and helps Paul into the rear seat. As the station wagon pulls away, Paul helplessly looks on at the Cop who looks back at him just the same.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Paul walks in, hand still clutched tight to his belly. Dropping his suitcase, he flops on the bed. As he lies in silence, Sherman pokes his head from under the bedskirt and begins licking Paul's dangling hand.

PAUL

Thanks, buddy. I owe you again.

Paul scratches Sherman's ear, smiling as he does.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - SCHOOL - DAY

Children stand in a circle taunting Paul as he fights with Tommy and Frank. A Teacher forces her way through the crowd and grabs Paul, scolding him as she drags him away.

INT. KITCHEN - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Paul, still disheveled from the fight earlier in the day, sits on a stool as Floyd speaks on the phone.

FLOYD

Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah. I
understand. Thank you.

Floyd hangs up the phone and takes a pull from his Scotch.

FLOYD

You've been expelled. They say your
grades have been dropping and you've
been involved in too many fights to
recall as of late.

Floyd turns to him, setting the drink on the counter.

FLOYD

Do you have any idea how this makes me look?

PAUL

But Dad, they started them/

FLOYD (CONT'D)

THEY NOTHING! I've got a reputation to uphold. I've got a family to raise. I've got a wife who'll have me...

Floyd begins to approach him, his fist clenching.

FLOYD (CONT'D)

I've got issues, boy, but *you* will not be one of them.

As Floyd raises his fist, Paul desperately lunges from the stool and takes Floyd by the waist, pushing him into the breakfast nook filled with wine cases which CRASH and SHATTER under their weight. Paul stands up, surprised at his sudden burst of courage as Floyd flounders to regain his balance.

FLOYD

My wine! My fucking wine!

Suddenly, the kitchen door bursts open and Anne and Amy walk in SCREAMING.

ANNE

Oh, my God, Daddy! He's gone crazy. He's gone nuts again.

PAUL

No, no, he attacked me, Annie!

Paul frantically tries to dissuade them, but convinced he's imbalanced, they fight him off until Floyd grabs Paul from behind and punches him square in the jaw.

FADE TO BLACK.

The SCREW of a cap, the CLINK of glass on glass, and the GLUG of liquid SPLASHING on ice.

FADE IN:

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Strewn across a leather armchair, Paul opens an eye, his other puffy and black, as Floyd screws the cap onto a bottle of Scotch. Floyd grabs the glass and looks over to Paul.

FLOYD

Your mother and I have decided - we're sending you away to school. It's for the best.

Floyd mindlessly drains the Scotch in one gulp.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BALCONY - PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Stoically seated on the porch, Paul pours himself another drink. Picking it up, he reaches down and scratches Sherman's head.

PAUL

It was always for the best, wasn't it Sherm?

Paul drains his drink as a coyote HOWLS in the distance.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Whadda ya think that made us then, buddy?

Paul looks down at Sherman who drowsily wags his tail at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - DAY

As he loads his luggage in the trunk, Paul looks up at the front door where Sherman HOWLS at the window, Tina struggling to keep him back on his leash.

PAUL

You are going to take care of Sherman, right?

FLOYD

Sherman will be taken care of. Now get in. We've got to be going.

PAUL
But why can't he come/

FLOYD
I said get in!

Paul reluctantly gets in the car. As they pull away, Paul notices a Dog Kennel Truck pulling up to their house. Turning around, Paul sees Tina dragging Sherman to the truck.

PAUL
Wait a minute... you're sticking him
in a kennel, aren't you? Ar/

Floyd raises his clenched fist.

FLOYD
He's being taken care of.

Paul looks back as the Driver grabs Sherman by the scruff of his neck and throws him in the back.

EXT. THE HILL ACADEMY - MORNING

Set in rural Pennsylvania, the all-boy student body crisscross the campus in their formal blue and gray attire. A couple of STUDENTS pass closely by Paul and Floyd as they stand next to the car.

STUDENT 1
So he totally, Hebe'd me, man.

STUDENT 2
Fuckin' Jew.

Floyd looks down at Paul.

FLOYD
I'm sorry, son. But this's for your
own good.

Floyd walks around to the driver's side as Paul impotently stands by. Turning to the campus, Paul notices a GROUP OF BOYS carrying a Freshman (Third Form) as they walk toward a pond known as The Dell, bellowing...

GROUP OF BOYS
Third formers are the future, They're
the kings in coming years!

But today we must remind you,
You're still wet behind the ears!

With that they throw the Freshman in the pond. Paul watches as the Group Of Boys clap in unison, helping the Freshman out of the pond.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Paul nervously stands before the student body as the CHANCELLOR quiets the boisterous crowd.

CHANCELLOR

Quiet, quiet please. Now. We have a new student joining us at the Hill Academy. I understand it is rather unusual to admit a student after term has begun, but we must extend to him the courtesy and graciousness that are the hallmarks of this proud institution. Paul, if you'd introduce yourself?

Paul tugs at his tie.

PAUL

Hi. My name's Paul Abramson and/

VOICE

A-Jew! A-Jew, A-Jew!

VOICE 2

Gesund-heil! Gesund-heil!

The student body erupts in laughter as the Chancellor lethargically attempts to quiet them.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Paul reads a textbook as his ROOMMATE listens to a record.

PAUL

Could you turn that down a little?

ROOMMATE

Sure.

The Roommate leans over and turns the volume up, smirking at Paul as he does. Suddenly, there's a loud BANGING on the door, startling Paul.

ROOMMATE

Well? Gonna get it or what?

Paul gets up and opens the door, only to find a small, yellow cardboard mock-up of the Ark of the Covenant on fire. Paul instinctively steps on it, only to discover it is filled with dog shit. Looking up, Paul notices the hallway filled with Boys laughing at him. On the wall across from him, a paper has been taped up which reads - *The 11th Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Step In Flaming Turds.*

Paul turns and hops back into his room, his Roommate rolling on his bed in a fit of hysterics.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Paul plays basketball with a group of Boys as the COACH watches from the sideline. As Paul defends ROGER, an older, larger boy then himself, he deftly steals the ball and passes it to a Teammate. As Paul runs ahead of Roger, Roger catches up and pushes Paul to the ground in front of the Coach.

COACH

C'mon, Goldilocks. Up and at 'em.

PAUL

But he fouled me!

COACH

I didn't see nothin'.

Paul pulls himself up and runs back into the game. Taking position next to Roger, Roger grabs a pass and pivots, intentionally ramming an elbow into Paul's nose which erupts in a fountain of blood as he falls to the floor. As the Coach stands idly by, Roger shoots and scores a basket.

Enraged, Paul leaps up and tackles Roger and the two begin to fight. Pulling Roger back, the Coach reaches down and grabs Paul, jerking him up on his feet.

COACH

Jesus Christ, Abramson, what is your problem?

PAUL

He hit me on purpose!

COACH

C'mon! The Dean'll deal with you.

The Coach drags Paul off the court.

COACH

You got a lot to learn, boy. You go and stick that honker of yours where it don't belong and it's gonna get knocked off.

The Boys snicker at the racial slur as Paul is led away.

INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul sits before his counselor, CARTER, as he waves Paul's growing file before him.

CARTER

Well, you're certainly going to set a record here one way or another.

PAUL

I just want to go home. I just want my dog back with me.

CARTER

Hey, I know how you feel. I was pretty homesick when I was third form, but I got used to it and in time, I came to really *loathe* the place.

Paul smiles.

CARTER

How 'bout you come by for dinner tonight? It may not be home, but it's a close fourth.

Paul smiles again and nods his head in approval.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Paul listens to his large portable headphones as he cleans up a pile of pots, pans and dishes. A STUDENT walks in and hands

the HEAD MISTRESS a note. She reads it and taps Paul on his shoulder.

HEAD MISTRESS
Hey, you gotta call from home.

PAUL
Really?

HEAD MISTRESS
Yeah. Make it snappy, we got alotta work left.

Paul quickly removes his apron and runs from the room.

INT. DORMITORY - MORNING

Paul rounds a corner and curiously slows as he approaches the dorm phone which is covered by an "OUT OF ORDER" sign. Instinctively turning, Paul sees the Group of Boys rushing him from behind. Paul makes a mad dash for the stairway.

EXT. STAIRWAY - THE HILL ACADEMY - MORNING

Paul bursts from the exit, Roger right on his tail.

ROGER
You gotta a date in hell with The Dell, Jew-Boy!

Paul vainly pushes on but is caught by Roger and dragged to the ground. Paul covers his head, trapping the headphones to his ears which play Jefferson Starship's "If You Only Believe in Miracles" as the Boys brutally beat him.

Lifting him by his clothes, the Boys bellow as they haul him to The Dell where they throw him in, headphones and all. The Boys devilishly laugh as they leave Paul in the muck.

INT. CLASSROOM - THE HILL ACADEMY - DAY

Slumping in his chair, Paul stares from the window as the PROCTOR lectures about Patrick Henry and his famous quote, "Give me liberty or give me death."

PROCTOR
And who do you think his call to arms was actually directed at, Mr. Abramson?

PAUL

Huh?

PROCTOR

Yes. And now we see why you are so capably failing this course.

PAUL

Well, had Mr. Henry been forced to sit through one of your lectures, I'm sure on further reflection of his call, he would've gladly chosen the latter.

PROCTOR

To the dean's office, Mr. Abramson!

EXT. DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul walks up to the glass door, making eyes with the stern DEAN within. Hesitating as he grabs the door knob, Paul turns and runs away, the Dean hollering at him from within.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Paul flips through a bin of records as the store owner, ED, suspiciously slides up to him.

ED

Shouldn't you be in school?

PAUL

Parent-Teacher day.

ED

Oh, but, ah/

PAUL

You got any Howlin' Wolf around?

ED

Yeah, over here. You gettin' something for your old man?

PAUL

No. Just for me.

ED

You into the blues?

PAUL

Yeah. It's pretty cool.

ED

Hmmm. Well, I'm headin' up a blues thing downtown tonight if you'd like to come. If your parents are okay with that of course.

PAUL

I'll bring my permission slip.

Ed smiles at Paul, who nervously smiles back.

EXT. ROSEY'S BLUES BAR - NIGHT

Paul waits behind a phonebooth as Ed approaches. Stepping from behind, Paul runs up to car whose DRIVER starts his engine and hands him a quarter.

PAUL

Hey. You dropped this.

Quickly running up to Ed, the Driver waves at Paul as he pulls away, Ed returning the gesture in kind.

INT. ROSEY'S BLUES BAR - NIGHT

Paul listens with delight to the jam session before him when suddenly, the Dean grabs him from behind and drags him out.

INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Carter closes the door as Paul takes his seat.

CARTER

Well, Paul, I tried my best, but the Dean's decided that this time you've gone too far. I'm sorry, but you've been expelled.

PAUL

No, I can do better/

CARTER

Paul, this's set in stone. I'll have to call your father and arrange for him to pick you up.

PAUL

No, no, don't do that. Can't we just find a new place I can go? Someplace I can have Sherman too?

CARTER

Well, that's up to your parents. I'm sure they're reasonable people and we can work something out for the best.

PAUL

Please don't. Please. Just let me go, I'll be able to get by.

CARTER

C'mon, Paul. It won't be that bad. Have a seat outside and I'll phone your Dad. You'll see.

Paul steps outside as the Secretary shows Paul to his seat.

TIMECUT:

Paul dejectedly waits on the bench as Carter penitently opens his door.

CARTER

Paul?

Paul walks into his office and takes a seat as Carter rounds his desk. Slumping into his chair, Carter contritely looks on at Paul for a moment and then...

CARTER

Well, after speaking with your father... Well, I think I managed to convince him to enroll you in a prep school up in Massachusetts where you can have your dog.

PAUL

Really? You mean it?

CARTER

Yes. But your father's going to take you. It was the only way he'd agree.

PAUL

Oh.

CARTER

We'll take you to Philadelphia International and then, well, then your father's to meet you there and take you up to Boston.

Paul looks away as Carter leans in.

CARTER

I'm sorry, Paul. I really hope it all works out for you.

Paul looks up at him.

PAUL

Yeah. Me too.

INT. PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TWILIGHT

Paul waits at the gate for the Chicago arrival as Floyd, his bleary, blood-shot eyes burning daggers at Paul, staggers his way through the exiting travellers.

PAUL

Where's Sherman a/

FLOYD

Come on.

Floyd clutches Paul's arm and drags him through the terminal. Passing the gate for the Boston departure...

PAUL

Wait, isn't that our gate?

FLOYD

Are you fucking kidding me? You think I'm gonna let a fucking dumbass failure like you get kicked out of another school I'll have to pull strings to get you in? C'mon!

Gripping Paul's arm even tighter, Floyd pulls him towards the gate leaving for Denver.

INT. DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Paul and Floyd exit the ramp where Jane coldly waits on a bench. Jumping to her feet, Jane turns her back to Paul.

JANE
Everything's arranged.

FLOYD
Great.

PAUL
Mom?

Jane begins walking ahead as Floyd jerks Paul into motion.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Silently driving through the night, Floyd pulls the car into a drive with a large sign - *The Lodge: A Youth Psychiatric Center*.

EXT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - THE LODGE - NIGHT

Paul waits on a bench in the cozy, cabin-esque lobby listening in on the conversation taking place inside.

INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The DIRECTOR, a caring, intelligent looking young man, leans on his desk as Floyd and Jane listen on in disgust.

JANE
Well, that's preposterous. I don't believe you.

DIRECTOR
I don't know how I can state it more plainly. On a review of Paul's records and through our initial meeting earlier tonight, I find nothing that warrants his admission to this facility. This place is for genuinely ill young men and women, Mrs. Abramson.

JANE
Oh, you're all the same. I see. You want to play hardball.
(pulls out checkbook)
Well then, what's it going to take to get you to admit Paul in here?

Appalled, the Director angrily leans into Jane.

DIRECTOR

This is not a used car lot, Mrs. Abramson. Nor should your son be treated like one. I would suggest the best thing for you and Paul would be family therapy/

Jane scoffs and grabs Floyd, pulling him from his seat.

JANE

Always with the family therapy. If you had any idea what this family was like, I'm certain you'd choke on those words. Come, Floyd.

Jane storms from the room, Floyd sheepishly following behind.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

As they pull from The Lodge's drive in silence, Jane tries to light a cigarette but her shaking hands prohibit it.

PAUL

Mom/

JANE

Christ, what do we do now? Where are we going to put him?

FLOYD

Maybe we can send him to Toby's for awhile. Give us some time to think about this.

PAUL

Aunt Toby's? Really/

FLOYD

Quiet, Paul. You've got nothing to do with this.

Paul sits back in the seat, the streetlamps flashing across his downtrodden face.

INT. AUNT TOBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul holds his kindly GRANDMA HELEN's hand, intently listening in as his AUNT TOBY talks on the phone with Jane.

AUNT TOBY

Jane, he can stay here. Really.
No, that's fine. Helen's here
and... Helen? Remember Helen, your
mother? No. No! Jane, he just
needs a fresh start... no, he just
needs... He needs a mother, Jane.

(a beat)

I'm sorry. Okay. Okay, yeah.

Aunt Toby hangs up the phone and looks sadly over at Paul.

AUNT TOBY

I'm sorry, Paul. She wants you on
the next flight to Minneapolis.

Paul hangs his head in fear.

AUNT TOBY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry too, Helen. You just got
here and this must be dreadful.

GRANDMA HELEN

Heaven's no. Anytime spent with
Paul is time well spent. And Lord
knows, I don't get much of it.

PAUL

Why can't I just live with you, Mi-Mi?

Grandma Helen puts her hand under his chin.

GRANDMA HELEN

Well, Paul, some things in life are
just out of your control. And some
people are as well. But it's what
you do with your life, in spite of it
all, that really matters.
Understand?

PAUL

Yeah. I guess.

GRANDMA HELEN

And I'm sure you'll do great things
with yours. In spite of it all.

Paul lunges up and hugs his Grandma, who tightly hugs him back.

EXT. MINNEAPOLIS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Floyd quickly escorts Paul into a waiting car, Jane coldly sitting in the front seat.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The car speeds on into the vast, open landscape.

EXT. WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - NIGHT

Floyd pulls into the dilapidating, former boarding school that now appears more like a concentration camp than a place to help the mentally ill.

INT. WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - NIGHT

Paul sits before DR. WILSON, a shorter, fatter version of Vincent Price in his well-appointed office, the one room in the whole of the dilapidating compound which could make that claim. Lighting a cigar, Dr. Wilson leans back in his chair.

DR. WILSON

Well, Paul. I'll tell you exactly what I told your parents so we're all on the same page here. You may not belong here, but we've got the room and we'll fix you up none-the-less. One way or another. So let's just make it the easy way, okay, kid?

Dr. Wilson blows a thick plume of smoke towards Paul which he begins to choke on.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

An Orderly brings in Paul and his luggage as Floyd rubs his shoe over a large burn mark in the middle of the floor.

ORDERLY #4

Oh, yeah. Last tenant was a pyro. No, worries, though. He's been moved down the hall.

As the Orderly leaves, Floyd turns to Paul and hands him a half-eaten bag of donut holes.

FLOYD

Well...

Floyd steps from the room as Paul oddly stares down into the bag. As the door shuts, Paul slams the bag into a corner and flops on his bed, turning out the light. As he stares incredulously at the ceiling, the door opens a crack and a DEMONIC FACE slowly peeks inside.

DEMONIC FACE

Welcome. It won't be long now.

Startled, Paul cowers in his bed.

VOICE 3 (O.C.)

Damn it, Chris, that ain't your room any more! Yo Hal, get over here.

Chris struggles to hold his position, but the two Orderlies pull him from the door. Paul leaps up and grabs a dresser, sliding it in front of the door as the struggle continues outside. Jumping back in his bed, Paul curls up in the sheets and begins crying into his pillow.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALCONY - PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - DAYBREAK

Paul sobs to himself as Angie walks out on the deck. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes...

ANGIE

Paul? Have you been out here all night?

PAUL

Maybe.

ANGIE

What's the matter, baby?

PAUL

Nothing.

ANGIE

Something's wrong. Why won't you/

PAUL

Just leave me alone.

ANGIE

Paul, please/

PAUL

For crying out loud go put on some makeup or something, you're making me sick for Christ's sake.

ANGIE

Fuck you, you know. Just go fuck yourself.

PAUL

My fuck of choice, bitch.

Paul pours himself another drink as the sun crests the horizon.

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - MORNING

Paul struggles to keep his blood-shot eyes open as Dr. Ross looks up at him from a file.

DR. ROSS

Paul? You sure you're alright?

PAUL

Let's just get this over with.

DR. ROSS

Well, I've been reviewing the Wilson Center files and can't seem to find anyone actually qualified to be a therapist there.

Paul chuckles.

DR. ROSS

What?

PAUL

No offense, doc, but we had a saying there - psychotherapy's just therapy from a psycho.

Dr. Ross looks unamusedly at Paul.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HALLWAY - WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - MORNING

A cute brunette, MARY (23) leads Paul to the Nurse's Station where a line of teenage zombies shuffle up and gulp their meds.

As Mary leans on the counter, Paul glances at her wrist which is covered in scars running from her hand up under her sleeve.

MARY

So, that about does it. Now, if you have any questions or need someone to talk to, you can reach me anytime you need. Anytime.

PAUL

So, are you like a therapist then?

MARY

Yeah, something like that.

Mary turns and knocks on a door. As she does, Paul looks across the lobby where an OLDER TEEN murmurs under his breath next to a caged PARROT.

PARROT

Arrrrr, fruit flies rule the world,
arrrrr, fruit flies rule the world.

The door opens and GEORGE, a younger more acidic version of Jerry, steps out.

MARY

Paul, this is George. He'll be your therapist while you're here.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - MORNING

George looks over a file as Paul diligently looks on.

GEORGE

Anti-social... Learning disabled...
Neurotic... Bed-wetter? Wow,
you've got the whole kit and caboodle
here, Paul.

PAUL

Yeah, I've been told. So, what's it
gonna take to get me outta here?

GEORGE

Whoa, whoa, whoa, we just met Paul.

PAUL

No, I mean, what do I need to do to prove that I'm okay.

GEORGE

Well, I can't tell you that.

PAUL

Figures.

GEORGE

I mean, you've got to find the answer, wise guy.

PAUL

And just what is that?

GEORGE

Only you know that, Paul, only you.

Paul hangs his head in frustration as George glumly looks on.

GEORGE

Just play the game, Paul. Who knows what might happen.

Paul glances up at George, incredulously staring through him.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Various shots of Paul as he "plays the game."

- Situated in the day room, Paul sits with his therapy group, an odd assortment of misfits and miscreants he patently stands out from, as Mary leads the discussion. Benignly raising his hand, the Patient seated next to Paul startles, cowering and convulsing in fright as he screams for help.

- Sitting at his desk, Paul concentrates on his homework. Suddenly, a drop of water falls on his text. Looking up in disbelief, Paul reaches down and grabs a half-filled pail from the center of the room and plops it on his desk.

- Sweeping up a pile of dust and emptying it, Paul approaches Dr. Wilson seated at his table in his lavish estate. As a "Chippendale" Waiter serves him his lunch on gold plates, Dr. Wilson pulls out two quarters and magnanimously places them in Paul's hand. Paul blankly stares at them as Dr. Wilson turns his attention back to the waiter. Jamming the quarters in his pocket, Paul incredulously slinks from the room.

- Paul (15) reads the Classifieds from a local paper and circles an ad from a "Penny Saver" paper looking for a paperboy. He drops the paper next to a series of others, each marked with circles around similar ads.

- Walking alone across the dying, patchwork lawn, Paul steps up to the rusty compound fence. Grabbing it, he looks out over the nearby creek on the setting sun that bathes the Minnesota countryside and the vibrant fall foliage sweeping across it in a deep, magenta hue. Sighing, he pulls the watch from his pocket and winds it up again.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paul tutors an older patient, WHITNEY, who stares at the text before him with a thousand yard stare, his jaw impotently drooped beneath. GRUNTING, Whitney pounds the desk.

PAUL

Alright. Okay, now, if X plus 1 equals two, and one plus one *also* equals two, then X must equal...

Frustrated, Whitney pulls his cap back to reveal a large, pink scar on his temporal lobe. Replacing the cap, Paul snaps his eyes back on Whitney's as they turn their lifeless gaze on him.

WHITNEY

X?

Embarrassed, Paul looks to a picture of Sherman propped on the desk before him.

PAUL

Yeah. Yeah, sure.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - MORNING

As Paul soundly sleeps in his bed, the door opens up and Dr. Wilson steps inside, a fresh group of Interns on his heels.

DR. WILSON

This is one of our most interesting patients...

Paul casually opens his eyes as Dr. Wilson indifferently pokes at his papers on his desk, the Interns studiously studying Paul like a caged animal as they jot down notes in their journals.

DR. WILSON (CONT'D)
... a classic case of conversion
disorder coupled with an Oedipusian
complex he's simply refused to
acknowledge.

PAUL
Well, that's *simply* because it's news
to me. Hi, I'm Paul.

A few of the Interns reply "Hi, Paul," as Dr. Wilson picks up
the picture of Sherman.

DR. WILSON
This's new. Whew, what a sightly
creature. Dog ain't so great
neither.

Dr. Wilson chortles as he blows a large plume of smoke at Paul
who coughs as he fans it away.

PAUL
Same time tomorrow, doc?

DR. WILSON
Rounds are rounds, Mr. Abramson.
So, our next patient...

Dr. Wilson splits the group and heads down the hall.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Paul mechanically rakes leaves as DAN (15), a shaggy haired,
bean pole with a mischievous look in his eyes, does the same.
The two slowly back into each other near the main walk as Dr.
Wilson hastily passes between them.

DR. WILSON
Ya missed one. You too. No, wait,
three.

Dr. Wilson chortles to himself as Paul and Dan turn
incredulously to each other. As they turn back to Dr. Wilson
and watch him as he struggles to climb the stairs to his palatial
estate on the hill, Dan begins singing.

DAN

Nobody wants to know him, They can see
that he's just a fool, And he never
gives an answer...

PAUL
But the fool on the hill!

DAN (CONT'D)
... But the fool on the hill!

The two break up with laughter.

DAN
Hey, I'm, Dan.

PAUL
Paul.

DAN
You must be new around here.

PAUL
Sorta.

DAN
I'm a lifer myself. At least until
I'm 18. So, whadda ya think?

PAUL
Whadda ya think?

DAN
It blows. Ah, but it could be worse.
Of course, that's probably the same
thing Nixon said to Dean.

PAUL
So what's the deal here, man?

DAN
There ain't no deal here. Ya play
the cards ya snuck in your sleeve.

PAUL
No really, man. What's up?

DAN
Okay. Well, the therapy's a joke,
the therapist's are all just a bunch

of college fucks bussed in from this shitburg school out in Ohio so "the fool" can save another buck while they're fucking all the patients in the meantime, who fuck each other, who fuck the orderlies, who'll fuck anything, and anything can be had for the right price. Half the patients are here are for the same reasons you and I are - they're trust-fund kids dumped off for reasons of convenience and the rest are inner-city hoodlums - wards of the state, thieves, rapists and murderers alike, that the state pays Wilson top-dollar to put up.

Dan looks at Paul unapologetically.

DAN
Ready for more?

PAUL
Maybe.

DAN
Cool. Well, our old boy Wilson there, he's a closet homo who runs around with a group of thugs living in the "out-patient" house over there, ironic as that may be, who are the true rulers of this roost. Cocks of the walk for lack of a worse pun.

Paul laughs at Dan.

DAN
No seriously, unless you're connected, they're not to be messed with. Especially Frank and Kline. Them.

Dan points near the stairway where, FRANK, a burly meathead, hops up the stairs with KLINE, his slimy toady.

DAN (CONT'D)
They'll fuck you up. Literally.

PAUL

Great.

DAN

And there's no getting out. Long as Wilson's got anything to do with it. This is his personal federal reserve mint.

As Dan says this, an Orderly drags a Younger Patient and his luggage between them. Paul looks at Dan.

PAUL

Looks like someone's making a withdrawal.

DAN

Apparently not his folks. They've probably run outta dough. Fuck this, let's get outta here.

Dan drops his rake and grabs Paul, leading him away as Paul watches the Orderly escort the Younger Patient from the gate, drop his bags, and then immediately lock him out.

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE - TWILIGHT

Dan leads Paul down the fence until coming to a section that is pulled back by a train trestle that spans a creek below. Dan slips beneath it to the other side and waits for Paul.

PAUL

You serious?

DAN

C'mon.

Paul slides under and the two walk towards the trestle where SUZY, KAREN, and ABBEY stand smoking cigarettes and chugging from the same bottle of booze. Suzy and Karen, both "wild-childs" who fit the Wilson Center stereotype, yuck it up as Abbey, who seems strangely out of place, tries to go along.

SUZY

Who's the stiff?

DAN

Just like you like it, huh, sweetheart?

Suzy sparks a joint and hands it to Dan who inhales deeply. Exhaling...

DAN

This's Paul. He's cool.

Dan hands the joint to Paul, who nervously takes a small drag, coughing up a lung in the process.

KAREN

Real cool, Paul. Frigid.

PAUL

Well, no more then your mother.

Dan and Suzy crack up, Abbey uncertainly joining.

DAN

Yeah, he's alright. He's A-O-Gay.

PAUL

Fuck you. Man, this's a pretty cool spot, but ah, ya know, we're out. What're we still doin' here?

DAN

Where you gonna go? Nothin' but podunk towns from here until tomorrow and Wilson's got eyes in every one. You'll be back before you know it and then there's some real shit to pay. Trust me.

PAUL

Oh. Well, here's to shit then.

Paul grabs the joint back and takes a hit.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

(a) A small fire before them, Paul chugs from the bottle as Suzy playfully punches him in the gathering darkness. (b) Dan and Paul duel with two flaming sticks. (c) The group drunkenly dances around the fire like primitive beasts, Abbey only half-heartedly joining in.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

Suzy hangs on Paul's neck, the two using one another to stay upright as snow begins to fall around them.

SUZY
Don't you like me, Paul? Don't you
wanna kiss me?

Suzy throws her head up to Paul's lips, Paul nervously pulling away.

PAUL
I gotta, I gotta go home, Suze.

Paul pulls away from her and trots up to the fence.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dan pushes Paul up into the window, Paul falling to the floor with a THUD.

DAN
You okay?

PAUL
No.

DAN
Man, Suzy digs you. Why didn't you
go for it?

PAUL
I did. I headed straight for the
fence.

Dan and Paul burst out in laughter.

DAN
She ain't that bad. But see, man,
told ya it wasn't so bad here. I'll
catch ya tomorrow.

Paul drunkenly smiles as he watches Dan run from the window, his smile fading as he looks out at the gate where the Young Patient still waits by his luggage beneath the lone lamp, snow slowly gathering on him.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - MORNING

Dr. Wilson opens the door and steps in, a fresh batch of Interns right on his heels.

DR. WILSON

And here's one you won't find in your textbooks, this patient...

Dr. Wilson stands dumbfounded before an empty bed. He looks around the room for a moment.

INTERN #1

Guess you won't find him in his bed either?

Dr. Wilson spies Intern #1 with malice, wiping the smirk from his face.

EXT. DELIVERY ENTRANCE - MORNING

Paul heaves behind the gate as a newspaper truck pulls up, a DELIVERY MAN in back tossing a bundle of newspapers on the drive. Paul looks up at the man who looks oddly down at him.

PAUL

They ain't known for their breakfast.

DELIVERY MAN

They ain't known for much.

PAUL

Pays the bills all the same.
(motioning to the papers)
But a little extra never hurts.

DELIVERY MAN

I hear that. Take it easy.

The Delivery Man pounds on the bed and the truck pulls away as Paul pretends to open the gate. Rounding a corner, Paul grabs the bundle and pulls it through the fence.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul dozes as George reads rotely from a notebook.

GEORGE

And so I feel like my mother's punishing me for the things that happened during her childhood, ahhh,

or whatever Uncle Harley and her Dad did to her, supposedly, and I don't know, she's a bitch.

George looks up at Paul who opens his eyes.

PAUL

Yep. That sounds just like what I told you ten minutes ago. You know, you aughta work in a court.

GEORGE

Paul, we can only get at the root of your problems by probing/

PAUL

Yeah, yeah, free association, Rorschach, masturbation, oh wait, least you get somewhere with that.

GEORGE

So. Do you masturbate a lot, Paul?

PAUL

Only in here.

GEORGE

Fine. Maybe we aught to call it a day, then?

PAUL

Great. But did you talk to Mr. Joenzen about the college preparatory text? He keeps blowing me off and I'm gonna really go nuts if I've gotta take another one of his fucking "tests."

GEORGE

I haven't, but considering your learning disability, Paul, I wouldn't hold out any hopes for college really.

Paul looks out the window and watches as Wilson, clad in leather on a Harley, tears down his steep driveway with Frank hanging on his back. Paul defiantly looks back at George.

PAUL

Yeah, well considering your
therapeutic disability, I'm not
holding out any hopes on leaving this
place on anything but a stretcher.
Really.

Paul storms out the door.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Head down, Paul bumps into Frank as he talks with KLINE and an
obviously GAY ORDERLY. Noticing who he's just struck...

PAUL

Ahhh, ahm, excuse me.

As Paul continues on, Frank and Kline turn in disbelief to one
another.

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE - WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - DAY

Paul blasts from the door and walks up to a tree where he bursts
into tears as Frank and Kline step out the door. Frank keenly
intent on Paul, Kline's eyes widen as he looks O.C. and he
suddenly stops, holding Frank back. Seeing what Kline sees,
the two turn and head back inside.

VOICE 4

You alright, son?

Paul straightens up, wiping the tears from his face.

PAUL

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine.

Walking into frame, a young, hip-looking man, GREG, steps up
to him.

VOICE 4/GREG

Shit, man, it's okay to let it out.
That's what these places are for. Or
supposed to be for that matter.

PAUL

Right.

GREG

At least that's what they told me.
So what's the matter? Come on.

PAUL
They won't give me any college prep
texts. They say that I've got thi/

GREG
Done. I'll have some sent over next
week. Next?

PAUL
Really?

GREG
Really. What else's bothering you?

PAUL
Well. I really miss my dog. They
say I can't have him but I'm really
worried about him back home. He's
kinda like my best friend.

GREG
Well, that's a little more difficult.
But you know what, they got a little
chicken coop out back they don't use
anymore, so maybe we can "coop" him
up back there. Our little secret.

PAUL
Really?

GREG
Sure. I'll have him sent over to my
house and then we'll sneak him in.
What the hell?

Overjoyed, Paul appears to want to hug Greg, but can't.

GREG
A handshake'll do.

Paul graciously grabs his hand and then suddenly hugs him as
Dan steps from the main door.

DAN
Greg! Shit, when'd you get back?

GREG

Just now. Come here, man.

Dan and Greg hug.

GREG

Hey, let's blow this popstand. Head over to Smitty's for a couple cold ones just like old times.

PAUL

You can do that?

DAN

Of course. He's the Activities Director.

GREG

(shrugging)

Drinking is an activity.

INT. SMITTY'S BAR - TWILIGHT

Paul, Dan and Greg sit at the tiny bar drinking beers as a few of the locals suspiciously glance their way. Noticing this, Paul turns to Greg.

PAUL

You sure we're okay here?

GREG

Don't sweat it. If Smitty says it's okay, then it's okay, ain't that right, Smitty?

SMITTY, a bald, burly man in a bow tie and apron, shrugs over his shoulder.

SMITTY

Just so long as you flush the john, I couldn't give a shit.

GREG

He's got a point there.

Smiling, Paul sips his beer, a sense of freedom and acceptance washing over him he hadn't felt in years. Paul turns his attention to the back of the bar where an ASIAN ORDERLY from Wilson leads a Man out the back-door, one of the Wilson Patients

nervously waiting nearby. Paul curiously looks on as the door closes.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Paul (15) pours dog food into Sherman's bowl in the chicken coop as Sherman jumps up on his leg in delight.

- Paul takes an exam in the classroom as his teacher, MR. JOENZEN, sternly looks over his shoulder. After a beat, Mr. Joenzen raises his eyebrows in disbelief.

- Paul (16), Dan, Suzy, Abbey, Karen, and Greg jovially interact with each other in the poolroom of Smitty's.

- Waiting in line for his food in the cafeteria, TRACY, a crazed inner-city teen, cuts in front of Paul. Mentioning something to her, Tracy drops her tray and viciously attacks Paul.

- Paul lies on his bed in his now well-appointed room listening to a record as he hesitantly opens a letter from his Grandma Jean, a photo falling from it of his family happily smiling with Mickey and Donald before the castle at Disneyland. As Paul enviously stares at the photo, his neighbor begins psychotically WAILING through the wall. Dropping the photo, Paul reaches over and turns the volume up. Closing his eyes, we FADE TO:

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE - NIGHT

Seated on stacks of newspapers that have been formed into chairs and a sofa, Paul and Dan share a joint, drinking from a bottle of whiskey. Abbey leans against a tree behind them.

DAN

Man, these papers're fucking comfy.

PAUL

Yeah, and don't forget who "delivered" them here.

DAN

Shit, the only papers you deliver are your checks to the commissary.

PAUL

Well, unlike you, my folks don't send me anything.

DAN

They have to. It's the only way they
can soothe their guilty consciences.

ABBEY

If they even have that.

Silence sets in as the fire CRACKS before them.

DAN

Man, I can't wait to get outta here.
I'll show 'em.

PAUL

Whadda you want to do?

DAN

I don't know. But I'll show 'em. Or
die tryin'.

Catching his meaning, Paul looks concernedly over at Dan.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - MORNING

Paul walks into the coop and stops in shock as Sherman, his hair
missing over a quarter of his singed body, cowers in the corner.
Paul runs to him. Grabbing him as he YIPS, Paul dabs at his
bleeding skin with a rag.

INT. DAY ROOM - MORNING

Paul storms up to a table where Chris sits and slugs him,
knocking him to the floor. Jumping on Chris, Paul begins
slugging him repeatedly.

PAUL

You want to burn someone, burn
yourself you sick fuck!

Two Orderlies rush over and drag Paul off Chris.

INT. ISOLATION CELL - NIGHT

The door opens and Greg slowly steps inside the room where Paul
is strapped on his stomach to a metal gurney, his head rising
from a pool of drool that pours from his mouth.

PAUL

He burnt him. He burnt him.

Greg takes Paul's shackled hand and wipes the drool from his face with a handkerchief.

GREG

I know. I know, Paul. I've got Sherman. He's safe and sound at my house. You can come over any time you want to see him, okay?

A tear forming in Paul's eye...

PAUL

He *burnt* him.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

As an Orderly stands behind Paul, Jane walks into the lobby. Searching the room, Paul stands up and Jane nervously locks eyes with him. Quickly walking towards him, Paul stands.

PAUL

Mom.

As Jane continues past Paul...

JANE

We better get in there. We're late for our reservation.

Shocked, Paul stands motionlessly as Jane enters the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jane skittishly glances at the menu as Paul stares at her over his.

JANE

Oh, this looks nice.

PAUL

Mom. I just can't take it anymore. After what they did to Sherman, Christ after what they've done to me, it's just too much. I want to come home. Can I just please come home?

Silence.

PAUL

You didn't come all the way up here for dinner did you? I mean, I'm surprised you came in the first place. Especially without, Dad.

JANE

Well, he doesn't know I'm here. I was just lucky I happened to get your phone call before he did. But that won't be a problem from now on as I've had the number blocked.

PAUL

Why?

JANE

Because we just can't be bothered with this nonsense any longer. It's just not conducive to a stable family dynamic.

PAUL

Stable family dynamic? Aren't I a part of that family?

JANE

No, Paul. Not after this. That's why I came. I felt you deserved to at least hear this in person.

PAUL

What?

JANE

That you're no longer welcome in this family.

The WAITER approaches the table.

WAITER

And are you ready this evening?

JANE

Yes. I'll have the veal, please. Paul, dear?

Paul stares dumbfounded at her as the Waiter turns his insincere grin on him.

INT. LOBBY - MORNING

Paul talks on the phone.

PAUL

Mi-Mi, you've got to at least talk to them.

GRANDMA HELEN (PHONE)

I've tried Pully. There's just no reasoning with her. I don't know what to do. They're still your parents and they call the shots.

PAUL

Well, I've got to get out of here for a while 'cause I think I really am going crazy. I've got a therapeutic leave of absence coming up and I can go anywhere as long as I'm with an adult. Can I come see you?

GRANDMA HELEN

Hmmm. I think I've got something even better, Pully.

EXT. POOL - HAIFA, ISRAEL - TWILIGHT

Grandma Helen rises from her chair, as Paul and his cousin, LAURA, sit at a table watching the sun set over the Mediterranean.

GRANDMA HELEN

Excuse me, I've got to use the ladies room.

Grandma Helen grabs Paul by the shoulders and leans down to his ear.

GRANDMA HELEN

Now. This is the kind of therapy you need. Being here with your ancestors, your family. Being here with me. *This* is therapeutic, no?

PAUL

It is Mi-Mi. It is.

Grandma Helen kisses him on the cheek as Laura watches her leave. Chewing on her straw, Laura turns her innocent gaze from Grandma Helen seductively onto Paul.

LAURA

So. You're a lot cooler than I thought you'd be.

PAUL

Oh, yeah. How?

LAURA

I don't know. Most of our cousins are dweebs, ya know? When we first met I was thinking you'd be some kook like Harley or something, but/

PAUL

You've met Uncle Harley?

LAURA

Nooooo. Isn't he still locked up at that place in Maryland?

PAUL

Place in Maryland?

LAURA

Yeah, this nuthouse, ahm, Chestnut Lodge. Isn't that hilarious? Chest-Nut Lodge.

PAUL

Yeah. Hilarious.

LAURA

So. Maybe after Grandma hits the hay, we can head down to the beach? I hear skinny dipping in the Med is like the grooviest thing ever.

PAUL

Yeah. Yeah, sounds groovy.

Paul looks off Laura and stares into the horizon.

INT. DEPARTURE GATE - JFK AIRPORT - MORNING

Grandma Helen hugs Paul as Laura skulks behind.

GRANDMA HELEN

Oh, I hate to see it end, Pully.
But... Now, you've got your ticket to
Minneapolis and this's for you.

Grandma Helen reaches into her purse and pulls out five
one-hundred dollar bills. Paul graciously accepts them.

GRANDMA HELEN

For whatever you need, honey.
Whatever. Well, we must be off.
Take care, dear. You'll make it.

Paul lunges at Grandma Helen and hugs her. The two embrace for
a moment and then Grandma Helen turns, tears in her eyes and
walks away. Paul watches for a beat and then looks back down
at the money.

INT. CHECK-IN COUNTER - JFK AIRPORT - MORNING

Paul lays two of the bills on the counter.

PAUL

One ticket to Baltimore, Maryland,
please.

The Ticketing Agent begins processing the request.

INT. CAB - TWILIGHT

The cab pulls into the Chestnut Lodge Drive as Paul cranes his
head at a Patient wandering across the magnanimous lawn.

INT. CHESTNUT LODGE - TWILIGHT

Paul waits in the visitor's lounge as an Orderly leads his UNCLE
HARLEY (49) in. A beaten man who looks older than his years,
Uncle Harley has a gentle demeanor about him and warmly, yet
uncertainly, smiles as he's sat before Paul.

PAUL

Ahm, hi. I'm Paul. I'm you're
nephew.

Uncle Harley's face lights up.

UNCLE HARLEY

Paul, yes, Paul, my goodness what are you doing here?

PAUL

I just had to see you. To...

UNCLE HARLEY

And good that you did. What brings you all the way... wait, your mother's not with you is she?

PAUL

No, she doesn't know.

UNCLE HARLEY

Good. Good.

PAUL

It's why I had to come. Why I had to see you. I've also been put in a place like this. By her.

UNCLE HARLEY

Yes, well, it's an old Beber tradition. One that'll surely go on as long as there is a Beber that doesn't fit the family mold. A tradition I'd not like to speak of.

PAUL

But/

UNCLE HARLEY

But nothing. We have but a short time so let us not dwell on matters that can no longer be remedied. We are what we are seen to be. So, tell me about yourself, Paul. What are you interested in?

PAUL

Well. I like music.

UNCLE HARLEY

Oh, yes. The only soothing agent of the savage beast as it were.

PAUL

Yeah. It's kinda like an escape from everything when I hear a great track. It takes me away.

UNCLE HARLEY

Ah. Like an asylum in the mind, eh? We all need one of those.

As he says this, Uncle Harley pulls down his lower eyelid and reveals the pink flesh within. Shocked, Paul nervously smiles back.

INT. DAY ROOM - THE WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - NIGHT

Paul glumly watches TV with a few of the other Patients, as he sporadically, unconsciously pulls his eyelid down. Coming to, Paul rises and walks to the water fountain. As he leans his head down, Paul stumbles back in horror. Walking down the steps before him, her raised arms sliced from wrist to elbow, Abbey helplessly stares at Paul as she smears her blood down the stairwell. Instinctively stepping back in shock, Paul bumps into a Nurse who SHRIEKS in horror at the sight.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Ross raises her glasses as Paul nervously paces the room.

DR. ROSS

It says here you received two Valium on the night of January 3rd, 1979. What happened?

PAUL

It's easy to be hard.

DR. ROSS

I'm not following.

PAUL

Just an old song I used to love. Used to need.

Sitting on the couch, Paul mindlessly winds the watch.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY ROOM - THE WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - MORNING

Mary takes her seat before the group therapy session as Paul watches a Janitor clean the blood from the stairway.

MARY

Okay. So we left off yesterday discussing Phil's car and/

DAVE, a Ned Flanders-esque idiot savant who constantly twitches his mustache leans forward, his mustache pausing momentarily as he launches into a robotic recitation.

DAVE

A 1969 SS Camaro, metallic blue paint with 12 bolt positraction, a 468 cubic inch engine coupled to a turbo 400 transmission, VIN number 123679N6615/

LARRY grabs Dave and pushes him back in his seat.

LARRY

Yeah, we've heard it Dave. We hear it everyday. How about we talk about somethin' that matters for a change?

Paul looks off the Janitor.

MARY

Okay. Well, how are you all dealing with the new cook? I really enjoyed our breakfast th/

PAUL

Are you fucking kidding me?

MARY

Paul!

PAUL

The janitor is over there as we speak cleaning up the blood of a friend of mine who realized the only way out of this nightmare is by killing herself! And you want to talk about breakfast!

MARY

Well, Paul, that's not a very pleasant topic to be talking/

Paul jumps up, his chair CRASHING behind as he storms off.

PAUL
Go to hell.

Paul heads for the main entrance as Mary motions to the Gay Orderly who tries to stop him. As the Gay Orderly grabs him, Paul wheels around and slugs him in the face, knocking him out. Frantically, Paul runs for the door.

EXT. STREET - FARIBAULT TOWNSHIP - MORNING

Paul dials on a payphone. He waits as it RINGS.

RECEPTIONIST (PHONE)
Beber, Fox, Hefter, Swibel & Levin

PAUL
Floyd Abramson, please.

RECEPTIONIST (PHONE)
One moment.

A beat.

FLOYD (PHONE)
Floyd Abramson here.

PAUL
Dad?

FLOYD
Paul. What's going on now?

PAUL
Dad, I want to come home. I've got to come home now since Abbey/

FLOYD
Paul, you and I both know you can't come home till you're better. And until we're told the same, there's no point in discussing it.

PAUL
But Dad!

FLOYD
I'm very busy, Paul. Bye.

Paul SLAMS the phone down. Uncertain where to go, Paul aimlessly wanders down the streets.

EXT. SMITTY'S BAR - NIGHT

Paul walks up to the window and sees Greg, Dan, Suzy and Karen inside. Stepping inside, Greg gives Paul a hug as Dan pours Paul a glass of beer. Raising their glasses, Greg says a few words and the group toasts the memory of Abbey.

INT. SMITTY'S BAR - LATER

Paul glumly stands next to Suzy as Dan attempts to balance a pool cue on his chin. Tripping over a chair, Dan and the pool cue go CRASHING across the floor as Suzy, Karen and Greg erupt in laughter. Paul looks on in disbelief.

PAUL
(to himself)
What are we doing here?

SUZY
Gettin' fucked up, Paully! Gettin'
really fucked up.

PAUL
Precisely. Look what happened to
Abbey.

Turning from Suzy as the gang looks confusedly, ashamedly on, Paul steps out the back door.

EXT. SMITTY'S - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Hiking his lapels up, Paul watches as the Asian Orderly escorts a new Patient to the back of a car where a Man eagerly waits, a pint of rum in one hand, a wad of cash in the other. Paul storms off into the frigid night.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - THE WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - NIGHT

Paul climbs into his window. As he shuts it, he stops, looking over his shoulder in the near black room.

VOICE 5
You're a dead man, Abramson.

Before he can react, Kline jumps him, slamming him onto his dresser. As Kline unbuttons his pants...

VOICE 5/KLINE

You think you can knock out my man and
get away with it? Uh-uh boy.
You've had this comin' a long time.

As Kline begins to undo Paul's pants, Paul instinctively kicks his leg up, knocking Kline square in the groin. As Kline falls back in pain, Paul grabs his stereo and slams it across Kline's face, knocking him unconscious across his bed. Frightened, Paul jumps from his window.

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE - NIGHT

Paul crawls up the angled portion of the trestle and makes his way to the center of the bridge. Looking down at the burbling brook some 70 feet below, Paul places his toes over the edge. As he begins to cry...

VOICE 6

Don't, Paul.

Paul snaps his head over to see Suzy as she makes her way onto the spanning beam. Suzy slowly edges over to Paul.

VOICE 6/SUZY

Don't let 'em win.

PAUL

I don't know what to do anymore.

SUZY

You can hold me. It's fucking
freezing out here.

Paul chuckles and turns to Suzy. The two embrace.

SUZY

Can we sit, I'm like totally afraid
of heights? And shitfaced to boot.

Paul and Suzy sit, their legs dangling over the burbling brook below. Silence.

PAUL

I'm sorry, but back at Smitty's, it
was just too much. I mean she...

SUZY

I know. But... for all the shit we've got to deal with here, good times like those are all we got.

PAUL

Yeah, I know, I just... I want more. I wanna be loved. I want my parents to come get me and then I'll know that I'm, that I'm lov...

Paul begins to tear up again. Suzy pulls him in tighter.

SUZY

Shit, Pully, you are. What else would I be doing here?

Paul looks over at Suzy and the two share a moment. Paul looks off her as Suzy rests her shoulder on his, the two staring at the harvest moon that rises over the treeline.

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE - MORNING

Paul wakes up next to Suzy on the couch. Slyly sliding from her, Paul takes the blanket and wraps it around her, Suzy shivering in the early morning cold.

INT. DINER - MORNING

Paul eats his breakfast at the counter as a COP walks up behind him and pokes him with his nightstick.

COP

Hey.

Paul nervously turns to him.

COP

What're you up to? You just bust outta Wilson or what?

Paul begins to stammer, but suddenly JIM steps up with his briefcase.

JIM

He's with me officer. We're meeting here to discuss his case.

The Cop looks at Jim suspiciously.

COP
That so? Well, just so I don't see
this fruitcake runnin' around town
later.

The Cop walks away as Paul looks uncertainly at Jim.

PAUL
Thanks.

JIM
Cops. So. He know you?

PAUL
They know us all. Wilson's got him
on the payroll.

JIM
What're you doing here?

PAUL
I don't know. Trying to sort some
things out. Tryin' to get outta
there.

JIM
Want some help?

PAUL
Really?

JIM
Sure. I know what it's like in
there. It's no place for a kid. Any
kid.

Paul's eyes brighten as Jim motions for him to leave.

INT. JIM'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jim speaks on the phone as Paul intently listens.

JIM
Dr. Wilson, please.
(a beat)
Yes, Dr. Wilson, Jim Martin, here.
The attorney, yes. Listen, I was
just speaking with my client, Paul
Abramson here, and I'm a little

confused as to why he's still in your care after, ah...

Jim nervously runs his fingers from one to five. Paul flashes four.

JIM (CONT'D)

... four years, now, wow that's some facility you got there, but ah, so what's the official diagnosis you are using to hold him there.

A moment.

JIM

Ahhhhhh, classic neurosis with borderline schizophrenia. Ahhhhh, perhaps I should get a second opinion. Perhaps all your patients could use one. Hello? Hello?

Jim hangs up the phone.

PAUL

Well, what happened?

JIM

What happened is that you're free to go.

PAUL

Really?

JIM

Pack your bags. He's got nothing on you and he certainly doesn't want to rock the gravy train.

Paul smiles in awe, shaking his head in disbelief.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - THE WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - DAY

Paul packs his belongings as Dr. Wilson walks in the door.

DR. WILSON

I see you're already on your way.

PAUL

Wild horses couldn't stop me.

Dr. Wilson grabs a chair and sits down before the bed.

DR. WILSON
Let's have a chat first.

Paul stops packing, but remains put. Dr. Wilson waits a moment, but realizing the futility in it, turns.

DR. WILSON
So, where you gonna go, Paul?

PAUL
I don't know. Home.

DR. WILSON
I just spoke with your parents.
That's not an option.

PAUL
Then I'll go somewhere else.

DR. WILSON
On what? You got any money? Looks
like you've spent all your "paper"
money on all these flashy goods.

(a beat)
Your parents would like it if we put
you up in an apartment in a town down
the way so you can finish your
schooling and so we can keep an eye
on you.

PAUL
So you can keep receiving checks?

DR. WILSON
Something like that. But all things
being said, it's probably the best
thing for you.

PAUL
Can Sherman stay with me? My dog?

DR. WILSON
Of course. What do you say?

PAUL
Anything to get me out of this
madhouse.

DR. WILSON
Fine, Paul, fine.

Paul returns to his packing as Dr. Wilson slinks from the room.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Paul (17) brings in his record player to the barren, modest studio and sets them on the counter as Sherman comes running in behind. Jumping up on Paul, the two fall to the floor and wrestle in glee.

INT. CLASSROOM - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Paul studiously jots down notes as the Students beside him blatantly ignore the Teacher's demonstration.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Paul opens a couple of beers and places them before two CUSTOMERS at the bar, scooping up the tip before them.

CUSTOMER #1
How old are you anyway?

PAUL
Old enough to get the job.

CUSTOMER #2
How old's that?

PAUL
About as old as your haircut.

Customer #1 spits his beer out as Customer #2 scowls at Paul.

INT. GYMNASIUM - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Paul, dressed in his graduation gown, steps up to the Principal as a family CLAPS and WHISTLES at the Student who proceeded him.

P.A.
And graduating with honors, Paul
Abramson.

Paul shakes the Principal's hand. As silence takes over in the gym, Paul scans the audience for his parents. Not seeing them, Paul removes his cap and steps off the stage.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Paul talks on the phone with his Dad.

PAUL

Yeah, I understand. Everybody else's parents were there, but you just had too much to do today.

FLOYD (PHONE)

Now, Paul, it's not like that.

PAUL

Please.

FLOYD (PHONE)

All right, Paul. Why don't you come back to Chicago and we'll set you up in a nice place nearby so you can start running for us down at the firm.

PAUL

Running, huh? Well, I had other plans. I was accepted to San Francisco State University and I/

FLOYD (PHONE)

Out of the question! That's too much money and you should be/

PAUL

Are you kidding me? Anne's going to Stanford for Christ's sake!

FLOYD (PHONE)

Well, that's different, Paul.

PAUL

Yeah, she's the *good* one, right?

FLOYD (PHONE)

Listen, Paul, we're leaving for Torch Lake, tomorrow. Why don't you come with us up there and we'll discuss your future then.

Paul grabs a Student Loan pamphlet and stares at it.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Well, I've got a couple more shifts to cover, but then I'll make my way out there.

FLOYD (CONT'D)

Fine. We'll leave the address behind. Goodbye.

The phone CLICKS dead as Paul opens the pamphlet.

PAUL

Goodbye, Dad.

EXT. ABRAMSON BROWNSTONE - DAY

Paul slinks low in his car which is hooked up to a U-Haul as he watches his family load into their car. Driving away, Paul pulls into their spot and gets out.

EXT. INTERSTATE 80 - MORNING

Paul's car cruises onto a ramp that reads: I-80 WEST - PORTLAND - SAN FRANCISCO.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - TWILIGHT

Looking at the final page of the large file, Dr. Ross reads aloud...

DR. ROSS

August fifth, 1979. Officially discharged. Last payment received. Final diagnosis: Inconclusive.

She looks up from the file as Paul looks down on her.

PAUL

Happy birthday.

DR. ROSS

I'm so sorry, Paul.

PAUL

Institutionalized for half my fucking life and for what? For nothing! You think I got a case now or what?

DR. ROSS

Well, that's beyond the point, Paul.
I'm just worried that if you go ahead
with this, and you lose, the hate
that's inspiring it could destroy
you.

Paul turns and walks to the door.

PAUL

The hate I feel now could destroy me
just as well.

Paul opens the door.

DR. ROSS

Please, Paul, let's not stop here.
Let's get to the bottom of this.

PAUL

I'm not sure I want to go that low.

Paul steps from the door and closes the door.

INT. BEDROOM - PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Paul mechanically makes love to Angie. Silently climaxing, he
rolls off her as if he was turning over to tan his other side.
After a moment of silence...

ANGIE

Wow. That was something.

PAUL

Oh, what now? Jesus, can't I even do
that right?

ANGIE

You don't get it do you? I want *you*,
Paul. I want what's up here, not
what's in your pants.

PAUL

I don't need this shit right now.

Paul jumps up out of bed and throws his robe on.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm in the middle of suing my fucking parents, shit's hitting the fan down at work and now this shit. Jesus Christ.

ANGIE

Paul, I just want you to open up to me. Is that so hard?

PAUL

What? So you can hurt me too? So you can call me stupid and crazy too? Is that what you want?

ANGIE

No, Paul, I love you and we can work through this together.

PAUL

Those are just words, Angie.

ANGIE

Yeah. Words you're too afraid to say.

PAUL

Oh, yeah? Oh, yeah! How about these words - get the fuck out! Looks like I ain't too afraid to say them.

ANGIE

Paul, listen I've got something/

PAUL

Don't you understand? Get the fuck out! I've had enough of this shit.

Angie begins to tear up, but too proud to sit and wallow, she jumps out of bed and begins grabbing her things.

TIMECUT:

Disheveled, Angie opens the door with an overnight bag in one hand, a cosmetic bag under the other as Paul steps into frame behind her holding a pair of slippers.

PAUL

Hey, you forgot these!

Angie SLAMS the door on him. Paul rushes up and opens it. Stepping out into the hall, he throws them at her.

ANGIE (O.C.)

Asshole!

PAUL

There's still a bunch of your shit in here you forgot!

Paul runs back into the house and begins grabbing an assortment of items. He runs to the balcony and steps outside, throwing them over the edge one at a time.

PAUL

This shit! This Shit! THIS SHIT!
Get this shit outta here!

Paul bursts into tears and falls to the floor. As he loudly sobs, Sherman saunters up, licking his leg.

PAUL

You understand, bud, don't you?
You're the only one who does.

Paul affectionately rubs Sherman as he wipes his tears away.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE: *7 Months Later*

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - DAY

Unshaven, Paul frantically scours his disheveled desk.

PAUL

Where's that damn contract at?

GRACE (O.S.)

I left it in your In-Box yesterday.

PAUL

Well, it ain't there now. Damn it/

The phone RINGS and Paul picks it up.

PAUL

Paul Abramson. No. No. Wait, you mean the thing for "Jesuscopter?" Oh, yeah "Black-Market-Fetus." Yeah, well you tell that asshole I sent it

over yesterday... the day before I mean. Oh. He's your fiance? Well tell him... Hello? Hello?

Paul hangs up, the phone RINGING immediately again.

PAUL

Goddamn it! After this one I'm in a meeting or some shit, okay?

(picking up phone)

Paul Abramson. John, hey, how's it going? You need it reviewed and signed? When. Now? Hang on.

Paul wheels over to his fax machine, phone still to ear and grabs the document. He quickly begins scanning it, reading aloud as he goes over a brief on the night he was nearly raped by Kline. Slowing, his voice growing dimmer...

SLAMCUT:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - THE WILSON CENTER FOR TEENS - NIGHT

Kline leans his greasy mouth next to Paul's ear as he unbuckles his pants.

KLINE

Uh-uh boy. You've had this comin' a long time.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - DAY

Paul, his eyes glassy and dilated, coldly stares off the fax.

JOHN

Paul? Paul, you there? Paul?

Paul drops the phone as John continues to call for him.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Sitting in his darkened living room, a half-empty bottle of whiskey beside the watch which reads 3:47 AM, Paul silently sings along to *Suffer the Children* on the "Tears For Fears" album, *The Hurting*.

PAUL

And it seems so strange, That at the
end of the day, Making love can be so
good, But the pain of birth,
What is it worth, When it don't turn
out the way it should.

Paul presses the back-track button on his remote and the song begins again as he drains his glass.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - TWILIGHT

Grace grabs her purse and steps into Paul's doorway as Paul intently scrutinizes yet another legal document.

GRACE

Well, I'm gonna call it a day, boss.
Why don't you too? Looks like you
could use a few winks.

PAUL

Ahhhhh, can't seem to get any right
now anyway. See you tomorrow.

As Grace steps from the front door, Paul pulls out a bottle of whiskey from his desk and pours himself a drink.

TIMECUT:

Editing a legal dossier, Paul crosses out certain items and scribbles in notes next to them. Turning the page, a series of photos of the "administrators" at Wilson show up, including Dr. Wilson's. Paul angrily stares at them and then begins crossing them off with his pen, each stroke digging deeper into the page until he begins violently stabbing Dr. Wilson's photo with the pen.

PAUL

Son of a bitch! You lousy, sleazy
goddamn son of a bitch!

Breaking the pen in half, Paul stops, his breath heavy in the silent office. Suddenly, he realizes that he's cut himself. Sucking at the wound, Paul rises and heads for the bathroom.

Rounding the corner, Paul's knees buckle in shock as he "sees" Dan before him at the end of the hallway, lifelessly propped up against the wall, the words "Case Closed" written above him

in blood. Rubbing his eyes in disbelief, Paul opens them to find the hallway empty.

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - MORNING

Paul nervously fidgets as Dr. Ross takes her seat.

PAUL

Thanks for seeing me.

DR. ROSS

Of course. I'm glad you came back.

PAUL

It's just... I think I'm going mad. Shit, I probably always have been.

DR. ROSS

That's nonsense, Paul and you know it. What happened?

PAUL

I saw Dan the other night. He was in my office, but dead, just like I'd found him.

DR. ROSS

What do you think it means?

PAUL

I think it means I'm going bonkers.

DR. ROSS

Paul. Maybe you were just trying to tell yourself something. Maybe, deep down inside, you know that this lawsuit's only going to bring/

PAUL

Oh, that's bullshit. I'm doing this because of him.

DR. ROSS

Precisely. And look where it got him.

PAUL

That's cold.

DR. ROSS

Paul. You've got many issues with your past that we've just begun to really delve into now that we're both up to speed on what really happened to you as a child. But knowing all that, I still stand behind the advice I gave you when you first came to me from San Francisco. Move on. And we can do that together and help you help yourself out of this horrible position you've been put in. But you can't do it in a courtroom. No matter what that judge rules, you can never move on from what really eats at your soul.

PAUL

Move on? How the fuck can I ever move on? Everytime I look at a fucking calendar on Anne or Amy's birthday and know I'm not part of their life, everytime Stanford's on TV and I remember the time I visited Anne and she wouldn't even see me. Everytime I put on a belt and think of my old man coming in to whip me because my mother hated my ass? Or the fact that not once have my parents ever recognized any of my successes even after everything I had to fucking go through to get to this point?! How can I forget about that now?

DR. ROSS

We'll find a way, Paul. Together.

PAUL

I think I've found one. But like the rest of my life, I'm probably gonna have to do this on my own.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - DAY

Paul talks on the phone with John.

PAUL

What do you mean they want more money?
Christ, isn't that what a retainer's
for in the first place?

JOHN (PHONE)

I think they're scared. Your father
and grandfather are very powerful men
in Chicago and these guys have to work
in that system. They don't want to
burn bridges.

PAUL

Fine. Fuck 'em. I'll handle it
from here.

JOHN (PHONE)

I wouldn't recommend that Paul.

PAUL

I'm not one for recommendations,
John. Just send me over the files
and I'll call with any questions.

Paul SLAMS the phone down.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - MORNING

Grace enters the office as Paul, still wearing the same clothes
he had on the night before, yells into the phone.

PAUL

No, ma'am, I want to submit the brief.
No, they're not handling my case any
longer. Can you just tell me what I
need to do here? No, no, no don't put
me on hold again/

Paul angrily SLAMS the phone down as Grace picks up hers.
Exhaustedly dropping his head in his hands...

GRACE (O.C.)

Van Richter Records. Oh, I...
well... no, he's in, well let me
check, he may have stepped out.

Grace covers the receiver and steps into Paul's office.

GRACE

It's Rick Eubanks. He said you forgot to book their rooms again last night and he's going on about breach of contract and all that. Are you able to take this or do you want me to tell him you're out?

Determinedly rising to his feet, Paul staggers over to Grace.

PAUL

Just let 'em go. Send over the papers and let 'em go.

GRACE

But, Paul...

PAUL

I gotta get outta here.

Paul steps out the front door.

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - MORNING

His eyelids heavy, Paul begins to nod off.

DR. ROSS

Paul?

PAUL

Hmmm? Oh, I don't know. I just feel that they've, you know, that it's like, they're still in control of me. And I'm just trying to do the right thing here, and it's like somehow they still have this evil, omnipotent power that's gonna destroy my business and take away the one thing I truly love in life.

DR. ROSS

Music?

PAUL

Yeah.

DR. ROSS

You know, as important as music is to you, true love, what you truly long for, can only come from another

person, Paul. It's a two-way street, filled with many hazards and roadblocks, but also filled with energy and excitement, wonder and freedom, but ultimately, pure joy. And that's what Angie's offering you.

Paul ironically chortles.

PAUL

We broke up. Ain't no joy in that.

DR. ROSS

Oh, I'm so sorry, Paul. What happened?

PAUL

I don't want to get into it.

DR. ROSS

Well, I do. This's as important as anything else right now.

PAUL

It has nothing do with anything now.

DR. ROSS

She can't mean nothing to you. There must have been something that drew you two together.

Paul stares off, his eyes misting as his face brightens.

PAUL

A flat tire.

DR. ROSS

Pardon?

PAUL

I blew a tire one morning out on Torrey Pines overlooking Black's Beach. And there she was, just taking in the view. God, she was beautiful. And then she came over and changed my tire. I didn't have a fucking clue how, and she just did it. I just knew...

DR. ROSS
Knew what, Paul?

Paul snaps out of his dreamy state.

PAUL
I knew I should've known. You know, you just can't trust anyone. She met me at this goth show one night, ya know. I was really jazzed about this band and ended up singing them and all, but she left me, saying how she didn't like it at all and just up and left before the set ended. It's just like...

DR. ROSS
It's just like what? Your mother?

Paul defiantly turns his head.

DR. ROSS
They're both the same, Paul, in their own way. They're human and they both have needs and wants, things they like and things they don't. I'm not saying they're morally equivalent, but I am saying that you are the only one who can make a difference in their lives. That can open up to them so that they may open up to you. They may be as scared of you as you are of them. But until you do so, until you try, you'll never know what you can have. Unless you find the courage in your heart and take the chance.

Paul looks up at her, the power of her words seeping from his assenting eyes.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Paul dials his phone. A beat.

ANGIE (PHONE)
Hi, you've reached Angie. I'm not in right now, but if you leave/

Paul hangs up. Taking a drink from his cocktail, he pulls the watch from his pocket, rubbing it contemplatively.

INT. LAX TERMINAL - DAY

Paul boards a plane bound for Chicago.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Paul walks up to Jane and Floyd who are being served their meals by a Waiter. Seeing Paul, Jane GASPS.

FLOYD

Paul? The hell you think you're doing here?

Paul pulls out a chair and takes a seat.

PAUL

I know a lot of things have come between us in the past, things that have led us to where we are now. But I don't want this. I never did. All I ever wanted was for us to be a family and be... happy. I'm willing to drop the case and forgive you for everything you put me through, every miserable moment of it, as long as you just tell me you lo... as long as you just tell me you're sorry.

Paul openly, expectantly looks his parents in the eyes as the tense silence is finally broken by his father.

FLOYD

I don't know what your mother is thinking right now, so, speaking for myself, Paul, you've got a lot of nerve coming here tonight and demanding that we forgive you for what you've done to us. You opened up the gates of Hades with this lawsuit and son, I can assure you, you'll be tasting the flesh of the damned before it's said and done.

Shocked, Paul helplessly looks to his mother.

JANE

All I know is, all I really care about in life now is having some grandchildren I can love and dote on as I did you and your sisters. But owing to the career paths they've chosen and my failing health, I'm not sure that'll happen before I go. But mark my words, any child you may ever spawn will be dead to me, because you, you my son, are dead to me as well. Now get out.

Stunned, Paul rises from his chair and exits the building.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Paul morosely walks into his foyer with his luggage. Setting it down...

PAUL

Sherman? Hey, Sherman. Come here boy.

Concerned, Paul walks into the townhouse where Grace sadly kneels on the floor.

GRACE

I'm so sorry, Paul.

Paul continues in, his face melting upon the sight of Sherman, lifeless, at Grace's knees.

GRACE

I just came over to feed him and...

Paul rushes over to Sherman. Picking him up, he begins to sob uncontrollably into his chest.

PAUL

Oh, God no. Oh, God no, Sherman I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry friend. Oh, God noooooo!

Paul crumples onto the floor, lost in his grief.

EXT. BLACK'S BEACH - TWILIGHT

Paul takes Sherman's urn and pours it over the edge of the cliff, the ashes washing into the amber sunset before him. Looking at the rocky beach below, Paul inches his toes to the edge. Contemplatively staring below, Paul falls to the ground and begins sobbing once again.

INT. DR. ROSS'S OFFICE - MORNING

His eyes black from lack of sleep, Paul tries to control his emotions.

PAUL

You know, he was my best friend, the only friend I had left, my only family, and I wasn't there when he needed me most. I failed him.

DR. ROSS

Paul, I'm so sorry about your loss. Nothing can be said to make things right. But, I'm afraid you are using Sherman, like you always have in the past, as a crutch...

Paul leans up from the couch, incredulously staring at her.

DR. ROSS

... to avoid committing to any meaningful adult relationship that will ultimately serve you better in your life to come.

PAUL

How dare you. How dare you belittle his death and what it means to me! I hope you rot in hell.

Paul stands up and storms out of the office.

INT. BAR - DAY

Paul flags the BARTENDER down.

PAUL

One more.

BARTENDER

Hey, man, haven't you had enough?

PAUL

Yeah. Yeah, I have. And I need one more to help me get over it.

The Bartender looks at Paul oddly, sadly, and then pours him another drink.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Paul steps around the piles of clothes, garbage and whiskey bottles on his floor as he frantically talks on the phone.

PAUL

No, no, I'm talking about the deposition. Not his, mine! Yeah, for their countersuit. Well I know that. No. Just get it done.

Paul clicks the cordless phone off and sits down at his computer. As he begins to type, the phone RINGS again.

PAUL

What? Grace, I don't have the time for it now. Just tell him I'll call Thursday. The fucking trial's tomorrow! I, I, I... just figure it out yourself.

Paul SLAMS the phone down and it RINGS again. Irate, Paul grabs the phone cradle and rips it from the wall, slinging it into the fireplace. Spent, Paul plops on the couch.

As Paul stares glassy eyed at the floor, Dr. Ross enters through the open front door.

DR. ROSS

Paul?

Paul glances over at her, returning it to the floor. Dr. Ross makes her way over to him. Crouching...

DR. ROSS

I'm sorry, Paul. I couldn't leave it the way it was and I just felt I had to come over.

PAUL

Thanks.

DR. ROSS

But there are some unresolved issues we need to get at. And by the looks of things, soon.

PAUL

What more's there to talk about?

DR. ROSS

Paul. Why'd you really bring up this lawsuit?

PAUL

Because. They deserved it.

DR. ROSS

They deserve far worse than any monetary figure you may get out of them, a sum which is probably a pittance in their eyes anyway.

PAUL

But it'll mean something to me.

DR. ROSS

What? What'll it mean.

PAUL

Just what I said.

DR. ROSS

No. I think you brought this lawsuit up so your parents might finally be forced to own up to what they did to you and admit to you that they loved you, so that you could finally move on with your life and find the true love that you so desperately crave.

PAUL

Are you fucking serious? I could fucking care less about that. I just want revenge. Revenge for Dan and Abbey's sake. And everything they ever did to me. I want them to be judged by their peers and proven to be everything they've always said they aren't. I want revenge for all

those years I lost in those fucking
nut houses they put me in so I can
prove to the world that I'm normal.
That I'm not crazy.

DR. ROSS
What you really want to do is to prove
that to yourself. Isn't that it?

PAUL
(defensively)
No!

DR. ROSS
You're not, Paul. You're not crazy,
you know?

PAUL
I know.

DR. ROSS
Paul. You're not crazy.

PAUL
I know that!

DR. ROSS
Look at me, Paul.

A beat and then Paul nervously looks at Dr. Ross.

DR. ROSS
You're not crazy.

Paul breaks down in tears, leaning forward into Dr. Ross's arms.
As he sobs into her shoulder...

DR. ROSS
You're not, Paul. Trust me, I know.

The two continue to embrace, rocking back and forth.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - VAN RICHTER RECORDS - MORNING

Paul walks into his office with his briefcase as the phone begins
to RING. Paul picks it up.

PAUL
Paul Abramson.

JOHN (PHONE)

Hey, Paul, it's John.

PAUL

Geez, John, that was quick.

JOHN (PHONE)

Yeah, well the Judge has granted your parent's attorneys a dismissal of the lawsuit due to the statute of limitations in Illinois for injury cases such as this.

Paul nearly drops the phone, his eyes glazed over.

JOHN (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Apparently, even though the suit was filed within the time frame after you were disclosed of the offenses, since you were released from Wilson when you turned 18, the statute had already run its course years ago. Now, we have the right to appeal the decision/

Paul drops the phone and emotionlessly makes his way to the door, Grace trying to get his attention as he passes by.

EXT. CLIFF OVERLOOKING BLACK'S BEACH - MORNING

Paul stands near the edge of the cliff, his toes creeping over the edge as he looks down.

PAUL

Case closed, huh? Case closed.

Closing his eyes, Paul's face tightens in fear at the thoughts that cross his mind when suddenly...

ANGIE (O.C.)

Paul?

Paul whips his head around, shocked by the sight of Angie approaching.

ANGIE

I've been looking for you and thought maybe I'd try here. I'm glad I did,

because there's something I've got to tell you.

PAUL

Oh yeah, what? That you've found someone new and he's soooo much better than me...

ANGIE

No, it's just/

PAUL (CONT'D)

... because he's not crazy like me/

ANGIE

No, Paul you're a...

PAUL

A what? A loser? A fucking nutcase who's been locked up/

ANGIE

No, Paul, you're a father!

Paul startles at the word.

PAUL

A what? Are you fucking with me?

ANGIE

I was going to tell you, but after that night and everything leading up to it... and how bad you hurt me, I thought it might be best for us if we just moved on.

PAUL

So, you just came here to tell me that? You just wanted to rub tha/

ANGIE

He's in the fucking ICU, Paul. And it doesn't look good. I just thought you aughta be able to see him while he's still...

Angie begins to tear up.

ANGIE

I'm sorry, Paul. I'll just go.

Paul watches Angie as she begins to walk away. Suddenly...

PAUL

Angie!

INT. NEO-NATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - DAY

Paul and Angie, dressed in scrubs, step into the room where a Nurse attends to a child in an incubator. Noticing them, the Nurse motions them over. Paul and Angie step up to the incubator and look down on their sickly child, ERIK, IV's and a respirator strapped to his tiny pink body that squirms about in pain.

Paul looks down in helpless awe as a single tear falls from his eye. WE FOLLOW the tear down Paul's face and continue down his arm as Paul's hand slowly reaches over and grabs Angie's.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Paul tries to stay awake next to the incubator, guardedly watching over his newborn

- Angie brings a rattle into the N.N.I.C.U. and shakes it with Paul over the incubator. Noticing the sound, ERIK momentarily opens his eyes. Smiling at one another, Paul and Angie kiss.

- Paul brings ERIK into their nursery at home, Angie popping a confetti cracker in the beautifully decorated room, a sign - *WELCOME HOME ERIK* - strung behind her.

- On a blanket overlooking Black's Beach, Angie makes sandwich's as Paul nuzzles Erik's belly, Erik smiling in pure delight. As does Paul.

INT. PAUL'S TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Paul cradles the phone between his shoulder and his ear as he feeds Erik on his desk.

PAUL

Great, great, we'll have the papers over tomorrow. Oh, no, I can't then, I've got a Kindermusik class then. No, no, it's for my kid. Trust me, things'll be better this time. "Black-Market-Fetus" has a whole new

respect in my mind now. Okay, talk to you soon.

Paul hangs up the phone as he wipes some food from Erik's mouth.

PAUL

Hey, buddy. Daddy just resigned a band. Yeah, yeah, we're doing alright now. Everything's alright, now, kid.

Erik suddenly looks up at Paul as Angie walks in the door.

ERIK

Da-da. Da-da Da-da.

Paul stands up, a cacophony of emotion washing over his face as his eyes well with tears.

ANGIE

Did he just say what I think he said?

PAUL

I've heard some of the most beautiful, amazing music in my life, but that's the sweetest sound I've ever heard.

Paul proudly picks up Erik and walks him over to Angie. The two lovingly kiss one another.

EXT. CHURCH WEDDING - DAY

Paul stands at the bottom of the stairway as Floyd, Jane, Anne and Amy exit the vestibule. Rummaging through her purse as she steps down the stairs, Jane looks up and suddenly stops, her family following suit as they notice Paul before them.

FLOYD

The hell are you doing here?

PAUL

I'm just back speaking at a music conference downtown, well more accurately, I'm the keynote speaker, but...

FLOYD

What do you want?

PAUL

Just thought while I was here, I'd stop by and return something of yours.

Paul pulls out Floyd's watch. The memory returning with a vengeance, Floyd sadly looks up at Paul.

PAUL

In case you'd forgotten, this was the watch you gave me when you left me at the Pritzker Center. You told me you'd be back for it in five minutes and then...

Paul stares at the timepiece.

FLOYD

Paul, I/

PAUL

And looking down on it now, I realize, I never really thought about the nature of the word, watch, until this very moment and the fact that I'd been watching this cold, lifeless hunk of metal for 28 years waiting for you to come back and reclaim it. To reclaim me.

Dumbfounded, the family looks on as Paul hands Floyd the watch who stands in stoic, penitent silence.

PAUL

I just don't have the time anymore to waste on such a pathetic relic. I've got something infinitely more important, infinitely more full of life that I must watch over now.

As Paul turns to leave, Jane suddenly springs to life.

PAUL

Wait a minute. What do you mean full of life? Paul? Paul, I'm talking to you!

As Jane steps towards him, Anne and Amy pull her back.

ANNE

Mom! Is this true? What did he mean there?

AMY

Dad? Dad, is that true?

Floyd rigidly stands, impervious to her question as Anne and Jane begin to scream at one another, the exiting congregation looking down on the scene uncomfortably.

EXT. CAR - DAY

As Paul steps up to the convertible Jaguar across the street, Angie looks curiously on at the scene as she nurses Erik. Oddly turning to Paul as he starts the engine...

ANGIE

Who were those people, hun?

Paul looks at her with a shrug as he affectionately rubs Erik's head.

PAUL

I don't know, sweetie. Just some crazy people, I guess.

Paul throws the car in gear and pulls out into the Lake Shore Drive traffic, speeding away towards Lake Michigan and its golden waters ahead.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE:

Overcoming all odds, Paul Abramson went on to found Van Richter Records in 1993, one of the first "Indie" Labels to strike a digital partnership with Apple's Itunes and has become one of the major figures in the modern music scene.

And despite the horrific example set for him, Paul, Angie and Erik continue to thrive in the Southern California area to this day. Together.

THE END.