

RIDING LIFE

"THE SERIES" PILOT

Written by

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Thirty children rode out, thirty adults came back.

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FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

Two of the ponchos beside each other wiggle like cocoons.

BARRY (O.S.)

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

JOHN (O.S.)

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

BARRY

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

CAPTION: *Based on their true story*

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. WASHINGTON DULLES AIRPORT TERMINAL - A MONTH EARLIER

Floor-to-ceiling angled-windows of D.C.'s suburban hub.

CAPTION: *Dulles International Airport, 1970*

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

BARRY WHITE, Caucasian, 15, pudgy, long red hair, wearing dress pants, shirt and tie, is carrying plastic luggage and following his mother, ALICE WHITE, late-40s Caucasian, a *Lucille Ball* redhead with a West Virginia accent. She wears a red summer dress with a shawl over her head and sunglasses.

ALICE

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

BARRY

I was just saying "good-bye" to a
friend?

Alice stops and hands a plane-ticket to Barry.

ALICE

You don't have any "friends," so
I'll just say --"good-bye!"
(storms away O.T.S.)
And if you miss your flight, you
can hitch-hike all the way there!

Barry stands dejected watching Alice exit, then holds out a thumb like he's hitch-hiking.

RETURNING SOLDIERS, mostly African-American, barely older than Barry, in various *U.S. Armed Forces* uniforms, some in wheelchairs, all with stoic stares, pass by him.

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

EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF DENVER AIRPORT - LATER SAME DAY

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

CAPTION: *Denver International Airport*

FADE CAPTION: *From above, its six runways form a swastika.*

INT. DENVER AIRPORT TERMINAL - LATER THAT DAY

Huge multi-level terminal with NEW PASSENGERS, men wearing jean-suits with cowboy hats and saddle-bags over shoulders; and young women wearing *Jackie Onassis* two-piece dresses.

Barry, in same clothes and carrying same suitcase, walks to a circular Information Desk. Its ATTENDANT, female, in a bell-bottom pant-suit speaks with a Western accent.

INFORMATION

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

BARRY

Close to the airport?

INFORMATION

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

BARRY

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

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

INFORMATION

Out front, mister not-funny bones.

EXT. NEARBY AIRPORT MOTEL ENTRANCE - LATER THAT DAY

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

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

A rental car pulls up and his best friend, JOHN BECKER, Caucasian, 15, spindly, long black hair, in bell bottoms and a fringed leather-shirt, jumps out. John's a ping pong in his parents life and has chosen a melancholy personality to deal with it so he always talks like *Marvin the Depressed Robot*.

JOHN

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

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

BARRY

Thought you were near the airport?!

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

BARRY

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

JOHN

Auntie "Em" throws us into the River Jordan in the morning!

John's mother, SUSANNAH BECKER, Caucasian, late 30s, uses too much make-up, has bouffant hair, and always wears crinoline under. She is a southern belle with appropriate drawl and prejudices. She angry fast-walks past them entering motel.

SUSANNAH

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

John and Barry bow to each other sweeping hands, *After you*. Both run to enter the doorway at the same time getting stuck.

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

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

Its driver is PHILONEUS ABLE, Caucasian, mid-40s, tall, rugged-fit, crew-cut, with a craggy tan-weathered face. He always wears worn leather gloves and speaks like the famous cartoon rooster character with same sage wisdom.

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

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

TWENTY-TWO "RIDERS," 10 Boys and 12 Girls, of various races and ethnics except African-America. All are 14-16 years old and dressed in different casual clothes. Boys hair is freshly-cut high-n-tight. Girls now have page cuts. None look happy as all play at their "missing" hair nostalgic with one hand while the other hand holds onto a slat for balance.

John and Barry stand in a corner by themselves and have to yell over the truck and wind *noise*. Barry rubs his bare head.

BARRY

Never said we were "joining up?!"

JOHN

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

Every time truck hits a bump, its shocks *squeak* to forewarn its trailer's bump is coming. The truck *squeaks*, then trailer hits same bump. All Riders hold on getting jostled.

BARRY

Oooof! Now I know, how horses feel!

Truck *squeaks*. All Riders hold on for dearly-departing life.

EXT. TRUCK AND HORSE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Philoneous hand-signals a turn out his window. Truck and trailer turn off paved-highway onto a dirt road. Riders hold onto trailer's slats with both hands peeking-out making the trailer look like prisoner-transport. Truck hits a pothole, it *squeaks*.

BARRY

They'll never take --!

Trailer now hits same bump, *squeak*.

ALL RIDERS

Our Freedommmmmmm!

EXT. C-BAR-C RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

Store your townie-bags in the Tack Room, you can re-pack 'em tomorrow.

BARRY

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

PHILONEUS

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

BARRY

You bring a C-Bar-C translator?

JOHN

*I'm sorry, did I say something? I
wasn't listening.*

PHILONEUS

Becker!

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

PHILONEUS

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

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

BARRY

Thank your dad, mine couldn't
afford one.
(scans the hillsides)
So what do you make of all this?

JOHN

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

BARRY

Ditto, kiddo, "Sooooooooooooo --

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

BARRY/JOHN

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

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

The Girl Riders follow to join-in skipping and singing also.

BARRY/JOHN/GIRLS

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

Rest of Boy Riders now join-in to sing.

ALL RIDERS

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

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

PHILONEUS

*They're more mixed-up than feathers
in a whirly-wind.*

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

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

JOHN

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

BARRY

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

JOHN

They probably "had to" get ...

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

JOHN

married. --What?!

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

BARRY/JOHN

Jesus!

PHILONEUS

Close enough. Get some sleep,
you're gonna' need it. And zip your
flap --all three of 'em.

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

JOHN

Could have warned me.

Barry goes to answer, but Philoneus interrupts from outside.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)
Lesson One, sound carries at night.
And no, we were high-school
sweethearts. Lesson Two --

EXT. JOHN'S TENT - IMMEDIATELY

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

PHILONEUS
Don't use twigs as stakes.

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

BARRY
What's up?

JOHN
Don't know, never been there.

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

Large foothills surround the ranch on three sides.

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

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

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

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

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

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

TODD
You must --

ROD
be Barry.

TODD
I'm Todd.

ROD
I'm Rod.

TODD
Mister Able wants you both --

ROD
to come down for a meeting.

TODD
Four others just arrived --

ROD
which includes us, of course.

TODD
Of course.

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

Barry slow-turns to John in epiphany.

BARRY
Their dad works with yours?
They're why I'm here, right?!

JOHN
It's the people I meet in his job
that really gets me down. They
always finish each other's
sentences, so the thought of being
stuck with just them for --

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

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

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

Note: C-Bar-C Adults always wear used leather work gloves.

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

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

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

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

EXT. OUTSIDE SAME WORKING CORRAL FENCE - SIMULTANEUS

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

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

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

Rules --has ta' be followed.

(counts on fingers)

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

--

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

PHILONEUS
or Drover Briggs --

Briggs nods his head once without looking up.

PHILONEUS
tells ya'. --Four ...

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

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

PHILONEUS
Mind pickin' that up --boy?

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

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

BLUMA
When's dinna'?

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

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

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

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

Philoneus throws bucket's water over Bluma drenching her.

PHILONEUS

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

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

PHILONEUS

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

Philoneus turns to the other Riders in a booming voice.

PHILONEUS

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

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

BLUMA

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

PHILONEUS

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

Barry hands Philoneus his hat while rubbing own butt.

PHILONEUS

After lunch, we'll go into town so
you can pick out some ridin' duds.
(no movement)
Skedaddle!!

The Riders climb over its fence into the Holding Corral.

BARRY

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

JOHN

Throw a saddle and yell "Fetch."

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

Now that's funnier!

EXT. INSIDE THE WORKING CORRAL FENCE - CONTINUOUS

John and Barry lean outside the fence watching Humana.

BRIGGS

Gotta' go check on something.

(to Barry)

Get over here and hold its head!

BARRY

(points at own chest)

Me?! I never --?

HUMANA

Never say never boy, till ya' try!

Briggs, give him the nose-noose.

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

BARRY

Doesn't that hurt?

HUMANA

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

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

HUMANA

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

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

BARRY

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

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

BARRY

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

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

BARRY

What's his name?

HUMANA

Toränädo, kinda' like a tor-nādo,
just his A's short --like my legs.

BARRY

You're doing fine, Toranado, you're
almost done, good boy.

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

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

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

BARRY

Wanna' help me pick out a horse?

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

HUMANA

Think he just done.

JOHN

What about me?

HUMANA

You're done, too.

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

HUMANA

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

JOHN

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

HUMANA

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

Briggs returns with a silly grin.

HUMANA

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

BRIGGS

Tether her to Jet?

HUMANA

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

BRIGGS

Surcingle --he's riding bareback?!

John grabs his chest like shot to stumble backwards.

HUMANA

Easy, son, we'll get her saddle-
ready by tomorrow.

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

HUMANA

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

TOLARRY

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

Humana smiles pleased walking to the house.

John is still in shock, his mouth is moving, but no words are
coming out.

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

Philoneus drives truck. Passengers are Briggs and Humana.

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

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

INT. HORSE TRAILER BEING PULLED BY TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

The 28 Riders have been joined by LEROY PHELPS, 18, football-
player build with a crew-cut who chews gum like tobacco and
snap-spits its juice through a gap in his front teeth. Leroy
wears a faded *C-Bar-C* outfit with leather gloves, cowboy hat,
and boots. He is from the deep South with attitude and accent
to match. He balances, arms-folded, like on a surf-board.

JOHN

Did you know I'm clairvoyant?

BARRY

You mean you can see into my mind?

JOHN

Amazes me how you manage to live in anything so small.

BARRY

Funny. Can your butt get callouses?
(self-answers)
Nah, our Fearful Leader said we only ride out for short day-trips.

LEROY

Not this year, we's ridin' --five hundred mile!

TODD

"Five --!"

ROD

Hundred?!"

BARRY

Says Who?

LEROY

Says me, Leroy, Rider-Drover. This'll be my fourth trip. Boss uses me as help so I don'ts have to pay. Yep, done seen his trail map, we're Long Riders for sure.

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

BARRY

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

LEROY

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

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

TODD

"Never left --?"

ROD

"the ranch?!"

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

EXT. DENVER WESTERN GOODS STORE - MOMENTS LATER

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

PHILONEUS

None of those cityfied got it, but
you will, so get to it.

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

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

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

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

TROOPER

Special Delivery.
(drives away laughing)
Have fun!

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

PHILONEUS

*Boy's as raw as a pound of wet
liver --probably just as sweet.*
(to Hari)
You overly attached to that lion
mane you got grownin'? Ever heard
of a bowl-cut?

Philoneus and Hari stare as poker players. Hari folds.

PHILONEUS

That's what I like not to hear.
(Drill Instructor to all)
Everybody In --Move it, Move it!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some Girl Riders *giggle* pointing at Hari.

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

Line Up, group shot!

BARRY

(whispers to John)
We carrying guns now?

PHILONEUS

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

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

JOHN

It, is --alive.

BARRY

What "is?"

JOHN

The real reason, you and I are here.

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

CALEB JACKSON, African-American, 15, short Afro, exits in same *C-Bar-C* outfit but with a colorful Mexican poncho. Caleb flips back a bottom corner of the poncho up over one shoulder to reach in shirt pocket and pull out a bubble-gum cigar. He bites an end off and spits it away, then holds the cigar between his front teeth and quotes a perfect *Clint Eastwood*.

CALEB

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

Caleb walks to rear of car wearing Spanish Spurs on boots.

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

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

His father, BRANDON JACKSON, African-American, 40s, bald, a brilliant computer engineer, turns off the engine which ends radio's music. He exits wearing jeans, cowboy shirt, boots, and hat.

BRANDON

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

Leroy drops the saddle he is carrying.

LEROY

Where, back to Africa?

PHILONEUS

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

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

Brandon goes to Philoneus and both shake, but Philoneus kept his gloves on.

Caleb watches as his father raises an eyebrow at Philoneus.

BRANDON

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

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - TWO MONTHS AGO

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

Front doorbell *rings*.

LEVI BECKER, John's father, Caucasian, early-40s, short hair and handsome, is a successful totalitarian businessman with a mistress on the side. He opens the front door.

Caleb, with a full Afro, stands in the same suit as Brandon.

Levi and Brandon do not shake hands.

BRANDON

He still here?

LEVI

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

Brandon and Caleb exit into living room.

LEVI

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

Levi exits down the hall shaking his head.

INT. LEVI'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

SUSANNAH

Thought we talked about this?

LEVI

No, you talked, I didn't listen.

SUSANNAH

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

LEVI

Don't use that word!

SUSANNAH

You "don't" need him.

LEVI

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

SUSANNAH

And raunchy rancho agreed?

LEVI

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

SUSANNAH

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

LEVI

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

BRANDON (O.S.)

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

RETURN TO.

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

Brandon hands a *Kodak Carousel* to Philoneus.

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

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

EXT. INSIDE THE HOLDING CORRAL - LATER THAT DAY

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

Philoneus inspects all saddles by pulling on its cinch strap.

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

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

PHILONEUS

You're thinkin' like a blind
lumberjack, son --doing a lot a'
choppin' but no chips is flyin'!
(yells to Other Riders)
Like ridin' the ground?! 'Cause
that's where you'll be 'lessen you
learn when your horse is "puffin'!"

Philoneus uprights the saddle, then *knees* Big John's belly who *Ooofs*. Philoneus pulls the saddle's cinch snug to lock its strap through its the double-rings.

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

Name's "Arthur," right? Let's see
if we can't improve your callsign.

Philoneus scans Arthur up and down, then *Knights* him.

PHILONEUS

You are now --"Art!"

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

Barry whispers to John as Philoneus walks away.

BARRY

Art --how about *Fart*?

PHILONEUS

I don't cotton to makin' fun of
other folk --here, or on the trail!

Philoneus glares at Barry who whispers to John.

BARRY

What's he got, Superman hearing?

Philoneus is now on other side of corral inspecting saddles.

PHILONEUS

"He Got!"

EXT. INSIDE HOLDING CORRAL NOW ON OTHER SIDE - CONTINUOUS

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

PHILONEUS

(pulls down on cinch)
Right tight there, Caleb, looks
like you done this before.

Brandon leans outside the fence watching Philoneus inspect.

BRANDON

Kind of a coincidence he has the
only all-white horse, huh?

PHILONEUS

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

CALEB

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

PHILONEUS

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

CALEB

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

PHILONEUS
 (sucks teeth to self)
*Boy's like a tattoo --really gets
 under your skin.*

Philoneus fake-smiles over-polite to Brandon.

PHILONEUS
 Stayin' fer supper?

BRANDON
 Love to thank you, but have to
 catch a flight back to D.C.

Caleb looks concerned at Brandon who smiles back fatherly.

EXT. THE SLEEPIN' PATCH - THAT NIGHT

Small tents of all types are scattered throughout the woods.

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

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

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

BARRY
 I prefer taste --over color.

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

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

Caleb pops his marshmallow in his mouth firing a finger-gun at Barry who looks at John, *Who is this guy?*

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

BRIGGS
 Not everyone gets to break their
 own horse, you know.

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

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

BARRY

Ow-ow-ow-ow --Owuuuuuu!

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

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

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

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

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

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

PHILONEUS

Ready?

JOHN

No.

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

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

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

HUMANA

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

JOHN

Stop?

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

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

Humana leads Aurora and Jet into the Working Corral.

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

PHILONEUS

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

BARRY/JOHN

Rake what out?

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

CALEB

"There are two kinds of people, my
friend. Those with loaded guns, and
those who dig.
(tosses imaginary match)
You, dig."

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

PHILONEUS

Over in that corner, pile it all.

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

"Pile it all?!"

PHILONEUS

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

Philoneus walks away chuckling. Caleb whispers.

CALEB

"Shit on a shingle" --perfect.

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

How many took ridin' lessons?

All Riders raise their hands except Bluma and Art.

BLUMA

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

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

PHILONEUS

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

Kevina pushes her boot against Bluma who falls off saddle.

PHILONEUS

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

Kevina demonstrates as Bluma gets back up on her horse.

PHILONEUS

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

Kevina demonstrates. Bluma nods.

PHILONEUS

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

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

PHILONEUS

Briggs, ride with Art. Leroy, take
Bluma. Humana, Kevina, watch 'em.

Philoneus leans forward and rides up through the trees.

Caleb spurs Midnight and races uphill to catch Philoneus.

Girl Riders follow cautious in pairs. Kevina watches them.

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

John lags back frightened. Barry rides to him.

BARRY

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

EXT. ON TOP OF THIRD FOOTHILL - SIMULTANEUS

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

PHILONEUS

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

Philoneus spits and yells downhill still looking at Caleb.

PHILONEUS

Good thinkin', Barry!

EXT. THINKIN' ROCK - NOW DUSK

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

BARRY

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

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

BARRY

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

CALEB (O.S.)

(as *Eastwood*)

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

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

CALEB

(in regular voice)

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

BARRY

(looks around worried)

Why, seen one?

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

CALEB

Well, there is this one Midnight.

Barry looks around more panicking.

BARRY

Where?!

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

BARRY

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

BARRY/JOHN/CALEB

A-holes!

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

TODD (O.S.)

What'cha doin' --

ROD (O.S.)

way up here?

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

CALEB

(in perfect *Eastwood*)

"Okay, you did two things wrong.

First, you asked a question and
second you asked another question."

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

BARRY

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

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

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

TODD

What's on --

ROD

our foots?

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

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

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

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

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

Humana gets in the truck to drive.

Barry overheard and whispers to John.

BARRY

Ten miles, that's all?

PHILONEUS

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

JOHN

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

BARRY

Okay --five.

JOHN

Wrong. --See?

BARRY

And yet, here we be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

(raises a gloved hand)
Hold Up!

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

BARRY

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

BLUMA

Feels like a hundred.

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

CALEB

What's he looking at?

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

KEVINA

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

TODD

"Forest --"

ROD

"Fire!"

BARRY

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

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

KEVINA

Borealis? Hopin' smokejumpers would get it under control --guess not.

TODD

We're not riding --?

ROD

in to that?!

BARRY

Stop "that."

KEVINA

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

ROD

What about our truck --

TODD

with our stuff?

KEVINA

(smells air, nods)

Won't rain tonight, but best get used to ridin' dirty. In High Country, the streams are snow-fed. They will --make you sing alto.

Kevina spurs to her father.

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

BLUMA

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

CALEB

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

JOHN

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

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

PHILONEUS

Change Direction!

JOHN

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

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

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT FIRST CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

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

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

BARRY

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

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

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

CALEB

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

Caleb zips his bag's breathing-screen closed.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT FIRST CAMPSITE - NEXT MORNING

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

PHILONEUS

BASEBALL!

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

BARRY

Who, what, when, where, why?!

PHILONEUS

'Cause you're Ridin' Range.

BARRY/JOHN

"Riding" what?!

PHILONEUS

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

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

JOHN

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

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

John and Barry stumble away to their tethered horses.

BARRY

Lucky we slept with our boots on.

JOHN

Probably die in mine.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

That's the spirit!

JOHN

Of the dead.

EXT. GRAZING MEADOW NEAR FIRST CAMPSITE - LATER SAME MORNING

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

JOHN
How Long?!

BARRY
Hour!

JOHN
Meant, Here!

BARRY
Five Days!

JOHN
"Five?!"
(drops head defeated)
I sit here, pain and misery my only
companions. Why stop now --
(raises head)
just when I'm hating it?

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

KEVINA
Both ride in for breakfast, you've
got five minutes!

John and Barry spur their horses back to camp.

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

KEVINA (O.S.)
Napoleon Bonaparte!

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

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

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

PHILONEUS
Hold Up!

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

RIDERS

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

John shuts his eyes tight covering his ears singing low.

JOHN

*Now I lay me down to sleep, trying
to count the stupid sheep. Sweet
dream wishes you can keep --*

(opens eyes)

'cause I hate this frickin' bleep!

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

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

JOHN

Black Death?

LEROY

Brown locust.

JOHN

(turns forlorn to Barry)

I only have to talk to somebody,
and they begin to hate me.

LEROY

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

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

EXT. BARRY UNDER SLEEPING BAG WITH TORONADO - MOMENTS LATER

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

BARRY

Easy boy, we'll get through this.

(yells)

"So good," John?!

(no response)

John?!

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

BARRY
What'd she say?!

JOHN (O.S.)
She hates me!

BARRY
Talk to Aurora, take your mind off things!

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

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

BARRY
Easy Torny, easy boy.

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

BARRY
Freaky-deaky.

Several grasshoppers get under and jump. Barry ignores them.

BARRY
Ignore them, talk to your horse!

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

Barry goes nose-to-nose with Tornado.

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

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

PHILONEUS (O.S.)
CLEAR!

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

RIDERS (O.S.)
Clear! ...Clear! ...etc.

Barry stands and puts his forehead against Toronado's.

BARRY

Good boy. Thanks --for picking me.

Barry pulls the sleeping bag off them.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AFTER APHID ARMAGEDDON - CONTINUOUS

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

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

Barry leads Tornado over to John. Aurora ran away.

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

Barry pulls the bag off John like unveiling a statue.

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

JOHN

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

BARRY

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

JOHN

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

BARRY

Come on, let's go get your horse.

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

BARRY

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

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

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

CALEB (O.C.)

(as *Eastwood*)

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

BARRY

(spins angry)

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

CALEB

Because I'm black!

BARRY

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

CALEB

If you plan for the worst --

BARRY

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

CALEB

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

BARRY

(pats his big belly)

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

Caleb tilts his head looking at Barry different now.

CALEB

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

BARRY

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

CALEB

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

BARRY

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

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

STILL CUT: John is frozen in mid-air in a funny pose.

EXT. SAME FIELD AFTER APHID ARMAGEDDON - LATER SAME DAY

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

BLUMA

What set off our Holocaust?

CALEB

Over-population, or food supply
gone, but probably climate change.

ALL look at Caleb, *WTF?*

CALEB

My bet, that forest fire drove them
to an Upsurge Outbreak.

JOHN

Are they coming back?

CALEB

Once in a lifetime experience.

TODD

Never wanted to experience that --

ROD

in any lifetime.

PHILONEUS

Boys, if everything in life is
coming your way --you're in the
wrong lane. This journey is all
about learning to handle challenge.

(waves a hand forward)

Move Out!

BARRY

Relax John, the worst is over.

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

PHILONEUS

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

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AT ANOTHER CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

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

BLUMA

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

BARRY

Definitely not found.

CALEB

Can always find your way with this.

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

CALEB

And that.

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

PHILONEUS

Where's Briggs?!

Todd and Rod both point into the trees.

PHILONEUS

Becker, White, latrine duty!

Philoneus exits into the dark woods searching for Briggs.

BARRY/JOHN

What, "duty?"

LEROY

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

KEVINA

Leave the land like you found it.

JOHN

I'd like to leave it, all together.

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

BARRY
Where's mine?

KEVINA
Stack a pile of large green leaves.

BARRY
"Leaves?!" --What for?

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

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

BARRY
No way, Josez --just like life,
we're all in one big crapper.

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

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

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

Plateau-lake with reflections of clouds in its still surface.
Riders single-file past the lake towards a distant mountain.
Barry is fascinated by sky's reflection in lake and points.

JOHN
It's rubbish.

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

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

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

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

CALEB
Mother Nature's mineral water.

Leroy rides over dismayed stab-pointing at Caleb.

LEROY

Don't fill your canteen downstream
from --that!

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

CALEB

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

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

Hold Up!

Riders call out as they stop in sequence.

RIDERS

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

PHILONEUS

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

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

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

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

BARRY

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

RIDERS

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

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

CALEB

HOLD UP! --Hold on, Barry!

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

CALEB

Come on Torny, pull him back up.

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

BARRY

Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

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

BARRY

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

CALEB

Least you kept your camera.

Barry examines the little camera clutched in his hand.

BARRY

Pretty sure I clicked the shutter
as I fell, that will tell a
thousand words.

JOHN

Move Out!

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

JOHN

"I got blisters on me fingers!"

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

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON FIRST MOUNTAINTOP - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

BARRY

Look!

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

BLUMA

What Bupkis put --?!

CALEB

Forest Service --we'll see more!

JOHN

(to Barry)

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

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

KEVINA

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

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

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

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

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

BARRY

We'll use this string next time.

CALEB

Good thing Philoneus has credit here --along with my dad.

Barry pulls out a candy bar.

CALEB

Thought you didn't have money?

BARRY

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

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

BARRY

You are welcome.

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

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

BARRY

For saving my fat ass.

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

CALEB

And you --for saving mine.

Bluma exits the store putting on new leather gloves.

BLUMA

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

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

BLUMA

Oh yeah, this is a chauvinistic survival school alright.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

C-Bar-C!

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

EXT. CLEARING BEHIND WESTERN SHOP - CONTINUOUS

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

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

PHILONEUS

Called a friend who owns a summer camp nearby. They have two empty cabins, so we'll be spending the night there. Give our truck a chance to catch up.

Philoneus waits for his accolades, smiling. None coming.

PHILONEUS

Bed, bath, and biscuits!

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

PHILONEUS

Busier than a centipede at a toe countin' contest.

Jet nods animated *snorting*.

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

Army barracks-type stark log cabin with handmade bunk-beds.

On the floor near the eight bunk-beds are Boy Riders dirty shirts, hats, boots, and gloves. One bed is empty.

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

BARRY

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

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

John points to them. Barry pulls his hand down.

HARI

Where's Leroy?

CALEB

(enters same behind)
Moved to the second cabin.

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

KEVINA

Dogs and musical fruit, boys!

Boy Riders, *Yahoo*, and exit running barefoot.

EXT. SUMMER CAMP'S CABIN PORCH - NEXT MORNING

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

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

BARRY

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

JOHN

Could walk outta' here, hitch away?

TODD

We'll --

ROD

tell!

HARI

No --you won't.

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

HARI

Boys, Juvee Hall makes this set-up look like a Hilton. Court said if I stay, get a clean record. So if I have to stay, every body stays.

Hari retrieves his knife glaring at Todd and Rod.

TODD

Sounds --

ROD

guuuuud!

Humana drives truck into camp. Horn *honks*. Riders run to it.

EXT. HUMANA'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

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

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

HARI
 Can I move in with Leroy?!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Humana opens an oak barrel's lid.

TODD
 With --?

ROD
 what?

HUMANA
 Yer hats.

BLUMA
 "Yer" kidding?

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

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

EXT. SUMMER CAMP'S CENTER GROUNDS - THAT NIGHT

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

Caleb stands off to the side writing in his diary.

John and Barry lean against a tree like seasoned cowboys.

BARRY

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

JOHN

(examines a daisy in hand)
Talked at great length today to a flower.

BARRY

What'd Bluma say?

JOHN

(crushes flower)
Don't know, it committed suicide.

Caleb sneaks up behind John and yells like Philoneus.

CALEB

Hold Up!

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

PHILONEUS

*Might be playin' with a full deck --
but they're shufflin' mighty slow.*

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

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

BARRY

Don't think this is a trail?

JOHN

I think, therefore I ache.

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

BLUMA

Pioneers?

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

CALEB

Of the 1940's.

(rides away O.T.S.)

Keep a tight rein, lot of low branches!

BARRY

What do low branches ...?

Something spooks Toranado who bolts between the trees.

BARRY

Whoa, Whoa --Noooooo!

Toranado gallops under a low branch knocking Barry off.

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

KEVINA

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

BARRY

You and your dad don't miss much.

KEVINA

Not enough to write home about. -- Seen Briggs?

BARRY

(stands brushing off)

Too busy taking a dirt nap.

This is the first time we see Kevina's feminine side as she laughs high-pitched "waving" him off.

KEVINA

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

Kevina spurs ahead.

John brings Toronado to Barry while searching the heavens.

JOHN

Death --from above?

Barry mounts Toronado becoming *Clint Eastwood* and spits.

BARRY

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

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

JOHN

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

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

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

PHILONEUS

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

LEROY

Boss, anybody but fart-boy!

PHILONEUS

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

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

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

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

BARRY

How'd real cowboys live like this?
(self-answers)
This can't be real, because we sure
ain't livin'. They'll probably find
our frozen corpses in the morning.

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

CALEB

Astronauts use, holds body-heat.

JOHN

The eyes of Texas --are upon us.

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

BLUMA

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

CALEB

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

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

BARRY/JOHN

Here, horsey-horsey.

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

RIDERS

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

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

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

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

BARRY

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

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

BARRY

Christ!

JOHN

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

BARRY

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

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

JOHN

"O death, where is thy sting?"

CALEB

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

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

BARRY

This is why --they died with them
on.

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

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

BARRY

What are those things floating by
down there?

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

CALEB

Clouds.

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

JOHN

"O grave, where is thy victory?"

BARRY

Don't we need oxygen this high?

CALEB

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

BARRY

Well then, never seeded me a cloud
before.

Barry walks closer to the ledge and unzips his fly.

CALEB

Uh, I wouldn't ...

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

PHILONEUS

You're real quick, boy --about
jumpin' to confusion.

(claps hands)

Break Camp! Breakfast down in the
valley, then we cross The Dee-vid!

BARRY/JOHN

A-gin?!

PHILONEUS

Which of you is Todd?

Philoneus rides away *guffawing*.

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

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

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

BLUMA

Momma Nature gonna' slap us again?

CALEB

Probably worse.

JOHN

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

TODD

What is --

ROD

The Divide?

BLUMA

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

CALEB

Correct --surprised you know that.

BLUMA

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

BARRY

You're Jewish?!

BLUMA

Yeah, got a problem with that?

Hari raises his hand.

BARRY

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

Bluma undoes her zipper.

GIRL RIDERS

We believe you!

CALEB

And you're from New York City?

BOY RIDERS

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

BLUMA

Close, Brooklyn.

CALEB

Okay then, name a Jewish gang.

BLUMA

Really? Fine, Yiddish Black Hand.

CALEB

Yeah, what are they into --suits?

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

BLUMA

Ice cream.

TODD

"Ice --

ROD

cream?!"

BLUMA

And seltzer.

Leroy walks past them pulling his pack burrow.

LEROY

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

Leroy smiles evil at Caleb as he walks on.

CALEB

Anyone know if he stole a white
sheet from that camp?

Girl Riders *nervous-laugh*.

Barry glares after Leroy.

BARRY

This is going to be quite the life
changing experience.

JOHN

Life --don't talk to me about life.

FADE OUT.