

BIRDY

By Sandy Kroopf and Jack Behr

From the novel by William Wharton

12/16/83

FADE IN.

1. Up against the sky. Gliding. Soaring. Through an endless expanse. Into darkening clouds. Then...

FALLING. Pulled down from under. Plummeting through bottomless blue until...

This tumbling sky is gradually framed by a barred window set into a white wall.

2. The strangely huddled figure of a young man, BIRDY, is crouched in a corner of this small military hospital room. He's staring out through the bars at the tiny patch of sky. Early morning shadows mask his features so they can barely be made out. He tilts his head down, away from the window. Then he blinks and gazes blankly ahead.

3. ANOTHER MILITARY HOSPITAL EARLY MORNING/INT.

The lights on the ceiling of a hospital corridor flash by. His face totally wrapped in bandages, AL COLUMBATO is staring up at them with drugged but frightened eyes. As he's pushed down the lonely hallway on a surgical gurney, he watches the uninterested faces of the Orderly and Nurse who are guiding him through the still slumbering hospital. Finally, they turn into a post-operative ward.

4. HOSPITAL WARD

Al manages to turn his head and glimpse the faces of the other wounded soldiers. Most of them are asleep. Some are hooked into a maze of tubes and life support machinery. All are very young.

Al is wheeled up next to his bed. The Nurse and Orderly lift him onto it and tuck him in tightly. Then they leave without a word. The ward is eerily quiet.

AL'S POV

Of a fellow victim beside him. The sleeping Soldier's face is an ugly patchwork of pieced together scar tissue. In the gray light from the window, his flesh looks like papier-mache.

AL

tentatively lifts one hand to his own cheek. Gently touching it, he slowly runs his fingers across his bandages. He explores the outline of his face as if to make sure it's still there.

5. A DOCTOR'S OFFICE DAY/INT.

A MILITARY DOCTOR finishes wrapping Al's face in fresh bandages. Only Al's eyes, mouth and the top of his forehead remain exposed.

DOCTOR

There, that should hold you.
How do you feel?

As the Doctor stands back to look at the dressing, Al gets a glimpse of himself in the glass of a cabinet. He tries to cover his fears.

AL

Like the Invisible Man...
How long do I wear these things?

DOCTOR

We should be able to take them
off when you come back from
seeing your friend.

AL

Then I get to see if you got
everything back in the right
place, huh Doc?

DOCTOR

(smiles)

I think the grafts are going to
be just fine, Al. After a while,
it's going to start itching, but
you can't scratch it, okay?

AL

(uneasy)

Okay.

DOCTOR

I'll see you when you get back.
And don't worry.

Al nods, then starts to leave. Clearly he's going to worry.

6. A MOVING TRAIN DAY/INT.

The door WHOOSHES open as Al, in full military uniform, steps from one car to another.

Passengers stare or turn away as Al moves down the aisle. He's trying to walk steadily, but the swaying motion of the speeding train makes it difficult.

6. CONTINUED

A sudden lurch knocks Al off his balance. He nearly falls into the lap of a Little Girl who's seated beside her Mother. The Little Girl looks up at Al's bandaged face with a start. Al helplessly holds her look for a moment. Then he smiles.

AL
(friendly)

Boo.

The Little Girl giggles. Al turns to her pretty young Mother and gives her his winning smile. She smiles back pleasantly, but Al can see pity in her eyes.

AL
Pardon me, ma'am.

Al moves down the aisle to a pair of empty seats. He's the center of a lot of unwelcome attention from the surrounding passengers. Avoiding their glances, he stares out the window.

7. AL'S POV - THROUGH THE TRAIN WINDOW

Snatched glimpses of the street life in a poor section of a city streak across Al's bandaged face. Al tries to lose himself in these images as his reflection stares back at him on the glass. After awhile, the CRACK of a bat solidly hitting a baseball can be heard.

DISSOLVE TO:

8. FLASHBACK - A BALLPARK IN SOUTH PHILADELPHIA DAY/EXT.

CLOSE ON the handsome, hopeful face of a teen-age Al. His hope inexplicably turns to dismay as he watches the ball he's just hit hook and soar over the left field fence.

AL
Shit...

Squatted behind Al in the catcher's position is his younger brother, MARIO.

MARIO
Way to go Al, now we'll never
get it back.

Al ignores him and marches determinedly to the left field fence. The other players follow.

9. AT THE FENCE

A cranky older woman, BIRDY'S MOTHER, is picking up Al's home run ball in her yard. She gives Al and the other boys a defiant glare.

BIRDY'S MOTHER

You stay out of my yard!

AL

Come on lady, it's our ball!
We don't have another one.
How are we gonna play?

BIRDY'S MOTHER

By not hitting it over my fence!

Birdy's Mother sticks the confiscated ball into her apron, then stomps up the back steps to her house.

Al is angry and frustrated. He's about to leave when something catches his eye. He peers up into the big tree that looms over the roof of the house.

AL'S POV - UP IN THE TREE

A skinny, dreamy faced teen-ager is perched high up on a branch. He's taking this whole scene in with curious eyes.

10. UNDER THE BLEACHERS OF AN ATHLETIC FIELD DAY/EXT.

Slashes of light pour through the open spaces of the run-down stands. Al is slowly charming his way beneath the fluffy, angora sweater of a sexy high school beauty, ROSANNE.

ROSANNE

... If I let you, can I have
your letter jacket to wear?

That's a tough one. Al's thinking it over when Mario's head pops into view upside-down just above the necking couple.

MARIO

Hey Al... Al...

AL

(looks up annoyed)
What?!

MARIO

He's just down the street.
The weird kid.

10. CONTINUED:

AL
(doesn't want to
hear about it)
Later, Mario.

MARIO
Come on, you promised!

11. THE STOOP OF AN ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING DAY/EXT.

Birdy is sitting on the stoop writing a note on a tiny piece of paper. Two scroungy looking pigeons watch him from inside their finely crafted cages.

Al and Mario step up to the stoop. Al is still wearing his wrestling letter jacket, but Rosanne's hanging in there. She leans up against a bashed-up Chevy and starts to file her bright red nails. Birdy is too intent on what he's doing to notice any of them.

AL
Hey you! Hey, birdboy!
(Birdy looks up)
Yeah, you. What's your name?

Birdy looks straight at Al but doesn't answer.

AL
(to Mario)
This is like talking to the air.
(to Birdy)
You got a knife I can borrow,
kid? Come on, I got a splinter.

Birdy warily pulls a folding knife from his pocket. Al grabs it.

AL
This it, Mario?

MARIO
Yeah, that's my knife.

Birdy steps onto the pavement and tries to grab the knife back. Al pushes him away.

AL
Hold on. My brother says this
is his knife.

Birdy goes for it again. Al shoves him harder. But Birdy won't quit. He keeps trying until Al gets tired of it and pushes him to the ground. Birdy gets right back up and stares hard at Al.

11. CONTINUED:

AL

Back off kid, you don't want
to mess with me.

The words are barely out of Al's mouth when Birdy snatches the knife with an incredibly quick move. Al grabs Birdy in a headlock, but Birdy slides right out of it. Al tries a bear hug, but Birdy slips away. Al goes to trip Birdy with a leg take down, but again Birdy's too fast.

Al is losing his temper. He throws a punch. It misses. He tries to tackle Birdy. But with a sidestep the elusive kid moves away and Al crashes to the ground.

ROSANNE

...Big wrestling champion...

She walks away. Al gives her a dirty look as she goes. Mario has been watching all this open-mouthed. Even Al, angry as he is, seems amazed at Birdy's agility. He gets up and starts to circle this unlikely opponent.

AL

Now you're in trouble.
(to Mario)
This really better be your
knife, Mario.

MARIO

It is. Zigenfuss stole it from
me.

Al stops circling and looks at his younger brother.

AL

I thought this guy stole it!

MARIO

No, I said he had it.

AL

Jesus, Mario...

Birdy suddenly walks over and holds out the knife to Mario. Al can't believe this.

BIRDY

I bought it from Zigenfuss, but
if he stole it from you, you
can have it.

AL

Don't touch that knife, Mario!

11. CONTINUED - 1:

MARIO
(taking it)
It's mine.

AL
I'll get you another.

Al grabs the knife from Mario, who isn't about to challenge his older brother. He gives it back to Birdy.

AL
Here.

BIRDY
(takes it)
Thanks.

AL
Where'd you learn all that stuff? You wrestle?

BIRDY
No.

AL
(walking away)
Yeah, well, you should.
(to Mario)
Come on, dumbo.

BIRDY
(calling after Al)
... You like pigeons?

Al looks at Birdy, then at his pigeons.

AL
What's to like?

BIRDY
They fly.

AL
They fly. So what?

BIRDY
That's enough... I'm training these to be carrier pigeons.

AL
Oh yeah? You mean with notes?
Like in a war?

Birdy nods. Al squats down by the two pigeons and looks them over skeptically.

11. CONTINUED - 2:

AL
Pretty ugly birds.

MARIO
(to Al)
If he really can train 'em to
carry notes, I'd buy one.

AL
You would?

MARIO
A lot of kids would.

Birdy has picked up his caged pigeons. He starts to walk away. Al thinks about it for a moment, then calls after Birdy.

AL
Hey!... How about if I help
you catch some?

Birdy turns around. He stares at Al, considering his offer.

12. UNDER THE 63RD STREET EL DAY/EXT.

A flock of pigeons fly up into the air as the el goes by.

Al and Birdy are straddling a steel girder just below the tracks of the el. From this perch, they watch the pigeons soar up into a big arc then come back down to their original roost a few yards away.

AL
(nervously)
You sure this is where the best
birds are?

BIRDY
(nods)
These have a much better feeling
for the sky.

Al thinks about that for a moment, but it's said with such certainty he doesn't question it. He and Birdy slowly inch along the girder toward the flock.

The pigeons don't seem to pay much attention. They're COOING and eating as they peck each other and strut about.

Birdy puts his hand on Al's shoulder. Al stops inching forward and looks back at his friend. Birdy points at the ugliest bird in the flock. Al sneers, but Birdy focuses his eyes on that particular bird as he begins a soft, strangely seductive incantation of TRILLS and WHISTLES.

12. CONTINUED:

As if drawn by his magic, the pigeon twists and looks over at Birdy. It starts a waddling walk toward the boys. When it reaches Al, the pigeon hops up on his lap, across his arm, and into Birdy's outstretched hand.

Al watches, amazed. Birdy gives him a wiggly-eyed look and smiles.

Al laughs as another el goes by and the rest of the flock soar up into the sky again.

13. THE PHILADELPHIA ITALIAN MARKET DAY/EXT.

Al and Birdy are each carrying four or five cages of pigeons as they bicycle over cobblestone streets through this active jumble of shoppers, jobbers, dollies and pushcarts. Small groups of old men warm their hands around trash can fires next to the meat and produce stands. A mixture of Italian and South Philly street talk almost sings in the air.

14. UNDER A BLIGHTED TREE IN A RAMSHACKLE LOT DAY/EXT.

A rope ladder drops down from the bottom of a clump of dying branches. Al catches it. As he climbs up the ladder, he can see the dilapidated, deserted house in the front of the lot. Behind it is Birdy's house and the baseball field beyond. As Al climbs up into the tree loft that the rope ladder came out of, he sees a pigeon fly through a small door rigged into one of the wood side walls.

15. INSIDE THE TREE LOFT

The walls are covered with complicated, Leonardo da Vinci-type drawings of disembodied wings and close up feathers. There are also several balsa wood and paper bird models. One whole side of the loft has been partitioned with chicken wire to create a coop. The coop is filled with pigeons of all kinds.

AL

Birdy!

(there's no response)

Hey Birdy, where are ya?

There still is no response. Al moves to the pigeon door in the side wall of the loft. He picks up the bird that just flew in and takes a note from its foot. He reads it. It says, "Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here."

AL

(smiles and shakes
his head)

Okay, very funny. You tricked
me. Now come on the hell out.

15. CONTINUED:

Birdy steps out of the shadows in one corner of the coop. He's wearing an old pair of long johns dyed dark blue. One half of the long johns is covered with pigeon feathers. Sewn on individually, the feathers work their way down in beautifully overlapping rows just like on a bird.

Several pigeons sit on Birdy's feathered shoulder. Al stares at him.

AL

(laughs)

What the hell is that?

BIRDY

It's a suit I'm making for you. This way the pigeons'll think you're one of them.

AL

I don't want the pigeons to think I'm one of them, Birdy.

BIRDY

Come on, Al. At least try it.

AL

No way would I even be caught dead in that.

16. A FIELD OF TALL GAS TANKS NIGHT/EXT.

A Night Watchman shines his flashlight along a chain link fence as he passes on his patrol.

AL AND BIRDY

are crouched commando-style in the shadows behind a nearby clump of bushes. When they see that the Watchman is gone, they race up to the fence. Birdy is carrying an armful of burlap sacks. Al is straggling behind in the pigeon suit.

AL

I feel ridiculous!

BIRDY

You look terrific. Come on!

They scramble over the fence and run across the dark field of towering gas tanks. The flickering flames of gas burn-off pipes light their way.

17. AT THE TALLEST TANK

Birdy begins to climb up the metal rungs that are built into one of the support legs of the tank. Al pauses.

17. CONTINUED:

AL
I want to go back and change.
I look stupid.

BIRDY
(looks down, smiles)
Not to a bird, Al...

Birdy climbs higher. Al lets out a frustrated sigh, then tentatively follows.

18. ON TOP OF THE GAS TANK TOWER

As Birdy then Al climb onto the sloped roof. Catching their breath, they look out over the fantastic view of Philadelphia's lights. Then they shimmy down the roof to the edge.

The faint COOING of roosting pigeons can be heard from under the eaves. Birdy quickly flops onto his stomach. Grabbing onto the edge, he hangs over the roof and looks under the eaves at the pigeons. After a moment, Al warily does the same. He's clearly not at ease with his near defiance of gravity.

Birdy extends his body out over the edge of the roof. The roosting pigeons under the eaves are still out of his grasp.

BIRDY
Hold my legs, will you Al?

AL
Okay.

Al pulls himself up and sits on the back of Birdy's ankles.

Birdy shimmies out even further over the edge. The pigeons COO in a fury of loud protest as Birdy reaches down and takes one into his hand. Without turning around, he holds the bird up behind his back.

Al takes the pigeon and puts it in one of the burlap bags he's positioned in his lap. After a couple more successful captures, Birdy shouts up from under the eaves.

BIRDY
How we doin'?

AL
(nervous)
Great.

18. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

I'm not getting the good ones.
Let's move down a little.

Al warily shimmies down the roof even further. Birdy is now hanging over the edge from his waist.

AL'S POV

of Birdy hanging over the edge.

BIRDY'S POV

of the flock of pigeons roosting under the eaves. He reaches down and barely manages to grab one.

AL

As Birdy tries to hand the pigeon back to him, Al stretches out to take it, but he can't quite make the reach.

AL

I can't reach it.

BIRDY

Hand me the bag.

Al's getting very nervous, but manages to hand the empty burlap bag down to Birdy.

BIRDY

captures a couple more pigeons and puts them in the bag.

AL

Are you okay?

BIRDY

Yeah, this is terrific.

AL

Suddenly, the pigeons in the bag on Al's lap escape. They FLAP up into his face. Panicking, Al throws his hands up to block them. When he does, Birdy's feet slip out from under him. They swing up in front of Al and disappear over the edge.

Another RUSH OF FLAPPING. Pigeons fly out from under the eaves. Al quickly slides on his stomach to the edge of the roof and looks down.

18. CONTINUED - 1:

BIRDY

is clinging to a narrow slit on the tank where the pigeons roost. His toes are jammed into another slit, but not far enough to support all his weight. The burlap sack is still hanging over his arm. He sees Al and gives him a loose smile.

BIRDY

Give me a hand up, Al.

AL AND BIRDY

as Al tries to reach for Birdy's hand, but it's just too far.

AL

Just hold on, Birdy! I'll go for help.

BIRDY

I can't hold on that long.

Shaking now, Al extends even further out over the edge. Stretching his hand as far as he can, he finally gets to where Birdy can make a grab for it.

BIRDY

When I count to three I'll let go and grab your hand. Okay?

AL

Okay.

BIRDY

...One...two...three...

Birdy lets go of the slit and reaches for Al's hand. Al catches him. He tries to pull Birdy up, but when he does he starts to slip perilously close to the edge. Al tries again and slips even closer.

Now they are just hanging in a tenuous balance. There's nothing Al can do. Inexplicably, Birdy starts laughing.

AL

What's so funny?

BIRDY

You. You look so serious.

AL

It is fuckin' serious!

Finally Birdy pulls himself together.

18. CONTINUED - 2:

BIRDY

I know... Look, this isn't going to work. Let go.

AL

What are you crazy?! You'll fall!

BIRDY

No, we'll start again.

AL

Can you make it back?

BIRDY

Sure. Let go.

Birdy lets go of Al's hand and grabs back onto the slit. Al is absolutely terrified. Birdy seems strangely composed. He glances down below.

BIRDY

I'll try to make it to that coal pile.

AL

What are you talking about, Birdy?!

Al looks over the edge.

AL'S POV

of a coal pile about fifty feet to the right and a hundred feet down. With one hand, Birdy is arranging the burlap sack in front of himself. It's clear he's going to jump.

AL

reaches out, but Birdy has already let go.

19. BIRDY

as he hovers for a second, turning himself around against the side of the tank. Then he leans forward and shoves off.

With his arms spread, he has the burlap sack stretched out in front of him. It seems to be working as an air foil. Birdy kicks his feet like a swimmer as he sails out across the night sky.

For one magnificent moment, it actually seems like Birdy is flying. His expression is ecstatic. But then gravity pulls him down. He plummets to the ground, curling himself into a ball just before he crashes onto the coal pile.

19. CONTINUED:

AL

looks down in horror.

AL'S POV

Birdy is just a white spot in the middle of the black coal pile. He doesn't move.

AL

scrambles across the rooftop to the ladder and quickly starts down.

20. THE COAL PILE

Birdy is lying still, staring up at the night sky. There's blood dripping from his nose and out of the corners of his mouth. He manages to sit up as Al rushes over to him. Birdy coughs and tries to talk, but the wind is knocked out of him.

AL

Are you all right?

BIRDY

(shaky)

I did it. It was beautiful. I flew.

AL

Yeah, you flew all right. Want me to go get somebody?

BIRDY

No, I'm fine.

Birdy tries to stand up, but he can't. Al catches him. He lowers Birdy back down.

The spotlight of an approaching security car pins Al and Birdy in its beam. Al holds his friend as they sit on the coal pile.

AL

God Birdy, don't ever do anything like that again...

21. PRESENT - MILITARY HOSPITAL CORRIDOR DAY/INT.

Al's bandaged face is reflected on the wire mesh glass that looks into a small white cell. Inside, Birdy is crouched on the floor wearing white hospital pajamas. Pale and thin, his eyes are vacant. Al watches him. It's as if he's seeing the ghost of his vital friend.

21. CONTINUED:

VOICE (O.S.)

What do you think, Sergeant?

Al turns to DR. WEISS, a flabby military psychiatrist who's practically breathing down his neck. He's staring at Al with sullen, razor-sharp eyes that belie his weak appearance. Al backs off. He sees the army brass beneath Weiss's white physician's frock. He's clearly wary of him.

AL

Sir?

WEISS

Your friend. How does he look to you?

AL

...It's hard to say. I mean, I'm not sure I understand your question.

WEISS

It's a simple question. How does he look?

AL

Are you his doctor?

WEISS

Yes.

AL

... Why are you asking me?

WEISS

Obviously because I want to hear what you have to say.

Al doesn't like this psychiatrist. He glances back in at Birdy.

AL

Well, he sure doesn't look good. Is that all he does, just sit there like that?

WEISS

For the most part.

AL

Was he wounded?

21. CONTINUED - 1:

WEISS

Yes, but his wounds were relatively minor. This isn't a physiological condition.

AL

Then how'd he get like this?

WEISS

All we know is that he was missing in action for a month. For a while we couldn't even figure out who he was...

AL

Does he know who he is?

WEISS

I don't know. He hasn't talked since he was found.

AL

(staring in at Birdy)

So you don't really know anything.

WEISS

(provoked)

I think I know some things, Sergeant... It was my idea to bring you here.

AL

Why am I here?

WEISS

The patient's mother thought you might be some help to him. Quite frankly, I'm willing to try anything.

AL

And I'm it?

WEISS

For now. When I found out about your condition...well, it seemed like it might be an interesting therapy.

That makes Al even more uncomfortable.

21. CONTINUED - 2:

WEISS

Come with me, Sergeant. There's something I want to show you.

Reluctantly, Al leaves Birdy and follows the psychiatrist.

22. WEISS'S OFFICE DAY/INT.

CLOSE ON A SERIES OF 8x10 PHOTOS of Birdy in various strange postures.

WEISS (O.S.)

... No, tuna salad, not chicken salad. Lotsa mayonnaise. And none of those little celery chunks. Two of them... You want anything?

Al flips over the last picture and pushes them away. Looking up at Weiss, he shakes his head.

WEISS

(into phone)

... Okay, that's it.

(hangs up and

looks at Al)

There's a pattern in those photos that I can't quite put my finger on... That strange jumping and twisting. At first, it was almost as if he were trying to escape...

AL

(interrupts)

I sure as hell can't blame him for that. I know for a fact he wouldn't like being cooped up here.

WEISS

You understand that no one is trying to blame anyone, don't you Sergeant?

AL

Yeah, sure.

WEISS

(an evaluative stare)

... Is there anything you can tell me that might explain the bizarre cringing positions he

(MORE)

22. CONTINUED:

WEISS (CONT.)
gets into?... Any psychological
problems before he was in the
military?

There's no way Al's going to tell this shrink anything about
Birdy. He launches into his sincerest bullshitting mode.

AL
Gee, he was always a pretty
normal kid, sir. Nothing I can
think of.

WEISS
Are you sure?

Al is stonewalling under Weiss's microscopic gaze. Weiss
keeps pushing.

WEISS
... There must be something
you remember that might help to
explain his present state.

AL
(can't resist)
Well...he got drafted.

Weiss bristles at this smart-ass dodge.

WEISS
All wars have their casualties,
Sergeant. But the army takes
care of its own.

Al's had it with being reminded of his rank. He says
"fuck you" to Weiss by saluting him.

AL
Yes sir, doctor.

WEISS
Major, Sergeant.

AL
Major, sir.

His authority asserted, Weiss tries to sympathize with Al.

WEISS
Listen, I know that this is
a difficult time for you.

(MORE)

22. CONTINUED - 1:

WEISS (CONT.)

You're undergoing a certain amount of change, and I know it's hard coming here like this... Tell me, how does your face feel?

AL

It's okay.

Weiss waits for more. Al isn't about to reveal any of his fears.

WEISS

No problems?

Al can see that he's going to have to jive this shrink to get out of here.

AL

Well, sir, the bandages are a little hard to get used to. You know, when the doctor -- the Major -- told me that one of the things they had to do was give me a steel jaw, I thought, great, I'll be the next LaMotta or something. Turns out a punch could knock the pins into my brain, so really it's worse than a glass jaw. Pretty funny, huh?

WEISS

A lot of people wouldn't think so. Aren't you concerned?

AL

Well, yeah, sure. Kind of.

Weiss gives Al a knowing smile, then looks at his watch.

WEISS

You know what I think might be a good idea now, Alfonso?

AL

(cringing at his proper name)

No.

WEISS

I think it would be helpful to you to see your friend now.

22. CONTINUED - 2:

AL
Helpful to me, sir?

WEISS
Perhaps. And hopefully to him.
It's important that I make
some progress soon.
(pushes an
intercom button)
Ronsky, send Renaldi in here...
(to Al)
You'll like Renaldi, Alfonso.
He's Italian too.

23. THE HOSPITAL GROUNDS DAY/EXT.

RENALDI, a short, goofy-looking orderly, is leading Al through a cluster of oppressively organized and labelled buildings.

AL
(muttering)
Alfonso...what an asshole!

RENALDI
Weiss?

AL
Yeah. I'll bet he tortured
goldfish when he was a kid.

RENALDI
Some guys are just mad at the
world 'cause of who they are.
(takes a deep breath)
...Nice day, huh? That's why
I'm taking you this way. I
could've taken you through
the wing but it's good to get
outside once in a while.

Al's beginning to wonder if this guy's for real.

AL
Yeah, right... What do you do
here, anyway?

RENALDI
Pretty much anything. Mostly
help take care of the patients.
You know, change their bedpans,
help move them around, stuff
like that.

23. CONTINUED:

AL
How'd you get stuck with that
shitty job -- they bust you or
something?

RENALDI
No. I'm not in the service.
I'm a conscientious
objector.

AL
An Italian conscientious
objector?

Renaldi nods as he stops and unlocks the door to a drab,
gray cement building.

AL
...You're faking, right?

RENALDI
(as if it never
occurred to him)
...No.

24. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Moving past a row of secured doors, Renaldi leads Al to the
door to Birdy's cell. He unlocks it.

RENALDI
I'll come back in a little while
and take you to your bunk.
They have you in with me.

Al is only half-listening. Now that he's about to see
Birdy face to face, he seems hesitant. He steps inside.

25. INSIDE BIRDY'S CELL

Birdy is crouched in the center of the floor. He doesn't
react at all to Al's presence. The door closes and CLICKS
locked behind Al. He glances back uneasily, then turns to
Birdy. He can only see his friend's profile. Al steps
around in front of Birdy and watches him closely.

AL
(after a moment)
Hey Birdy, is this for real or
what?If this is some act you
cooked up to get out of Nam, it
worked. You can stop now...

25. CONTINUED:

Birdy doesn't look like he hears Al's words. His head is cocked like a deer's when it senses something approaching. Al takes a chair and sits directly in front of Birdy. Birdy turns away. Al picks up the chair and sits in front of him again. He's having a hard time getting used to his silenced friend. He feels awkward.

AL

Come on Birdy, it's me under all these bandages, Al. How about letting your old buddy in on this game? Maybe I'll get into something crazy myself. Can't ya see it? -- "Neighborhood boy turned into lunatic by the horrors of war." All I'd have to do for a big pension is growl now and then or beat somebody up.

(no response from Birdy)

... Yeah, well, so much for that ... So listen, wanna hear about my new face? Seems like I lost some of my old face so the doctors took some skin from my ass and put on a new one. It's kind of a new angle on that old joke... "Got a match? Yeah, my ass and my face."

Al gives Birdy an almost vaudevillian smile. He wants to believe he can make his friend laugh. But Birdy's face is eerily blank. Al watches him for a moment, then looks around. There's the faint sound of DRIPPING WATER from the seatless toilet that squats in the corner of this stark, oppressive cell.

AL

...God, this place gives me the creeps.

(then, to Birdy)

Ya know, they keep saying I'll be fine. I keep hearing them - "Quit worrying how you look, Columbato." But I saw a guy at Dix who they also said would be fine, and he had a face like a medium rare cheeseburger... I'm a little scared I won't recognize who I'm shaving in the morning, ya know?

There still is no response from Birdy.

25. CONTINUED - 1:

Al looks closely at his friend. For a moment, he can't maintain this forced lightheartedness.

AL

Jesus Birdy, what happened to you?

Nothing registers in Birdy's eyes. In a moment, he turns away. Al watches him silently for a moment. He looks at the scar that runs down the back of Birdy's arm.

AL

... Ya know, that jerkoff shrink wants me to jog your brain by getting you to remember some of the things we did together... I don't trust that guy. Everything's too interesting to him... So, what do you want to talk about?

Birdy doesn't respond.

AL (cont.)

... Well, maybe we should talk about one of the 85 million times we tried to find where your mother hid the goddamn baseballs... Okay, you don't like that one... How about when you were in the hospital after you jumped off that gas tank? Remember your old lady coming in and giving us that 'these birds are setting a bad example' speech...?

(a beat)

I know, how about that old junkyard Buick we fixed up?... I still dream about that car -- putting the top down and tooling around the Shore someplace...

The CLICK of a door unlocking behind Al. He turns to see HANNAH ROURKE, a disheveled nurse in her mid-twenties. She's precariously balancing a tray of food in one hand as she tries to yank her key from the stuck lock with the other.

HANNAH

Shit.

AL

Need a hand?

The key pulls free as she looks over at Al.

25. CONTINUED - 2:

Her pinned-up hair is falling in her eyes. She looks more like a sexy, overworked cocktail waitress than Al's idea of a nurse. Taken back by Al's appearance, she seems to think he's a patient in the wrong room.

HANNAH

What are you doing here?

AL

I'm his friend. The doctor brought me here.

HANNAH

Oh, right... What's your name?

AL

Columbato...Al.

Shutting the door, she moves up close to Al.

HANNAH

(smiles)

Ya know, I'm not in the Army.
You can say your name frontways
if you want.

AL

(smiling back)

Yeah?

HANNAH

Yeah.

She sets up Birdy's tray. Al stares at the mushy food.

AL

He eats that?

HANNAH

Looks horrible, doesn't it?
But it's all he'll let me feed
him.

AL

You have to feed him? He
can't even feed himself?!

HANNAH

I don't know. He doesn't.
The orderlies are supposed to
do this, but he won't let them.
For some reason, he lets me.

Hannah doesn't seem too thrilled at the opportunity.

25. CONTINUED - 3:

Al glances at Birdy, who's staring out the window. Then he turns to Hannah.

AL

(flirting)

Shit, maybe I'll stop talkin'.

Hannah gives him a brief, sly smile. Then she turns back to Birdy and spoons up some food for him. Birdy turns away from her.

HANNAH

(a little exasperated)

Ya know, I like your friend,
but I wish he wouldn't do this.

She moves around in front of Birdy to try again. Al clearly doesn't want to watch.

AL

Listen, I'm gonna go...

HANNAH

You can stay if you want.

AL

No, I think I'll go bunk out
for a while.

HANNAH

Okay. See ya later.

Al leaves as Hannah puts the spoonful of food back up to Birdy's mouth. But Birdy doesn't want to eat. He turns toward the lone, high window. His eyes reach for the sky.

BIRDY'S POV

Moving slowly toward the open air. Held back by the barred window. Longing for the untrammelled blue of the sky.
THE BLUE SLOWLY FADES INTO A BLANK WHITE:

26. FLASHBACK - HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM IN PHILADELPHIA.

The curve of a wing in flight across a piece of white paper. A muffled jumble of VOICES in the background. A hand adds another line to the wing. As this impressionistic drawing is sketched in, Birdy's voice can be heard.

BIRDY (V.O.)

... In the sky, I feel how
locked in we are... Without
thought, with an effortless
flick of wings, a bird
defies all in an instant...
It would be worth everything
to learn this...

Birdy's thoughts are suddenly cut off as the white curtain of his enclosure is swept back by a harried Doctor. Birdy is sitting on a gurney with one arm in a sling and his ribs taped. Exposed, he glances up from his drawing.

Al is standing beside the Doctor, still wearing his pigeon suit.

27. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

CLOSE ON Birdy's eyes. He blinks and turns away from the window.

Hannah is gone now. The room is empty.

28. THE V.A. HOSPITAL GROUNDS DUSK/EXT.

It's chilly and gray. Al is sitting on a damp wooden bench with his hands tucked in the pockets of his heavy overcoat. He's lost in thought from his first visit with Birdy.

A lone Veteran from some earlier war hobbles by. Al doesn't notice. He looks straight ahead, staring across the grounds to a huge Sycamore tree.

DISSOLVE TO:

29. FLASHBACK - THE TREE IN THE RAMSHACKLE LOT DUSK/EXT.

Birdy is sitting on a limb amidst the remains of his tree loft. He's staring up into the darkening sky. Watching. Waiting.

AL (O.S.)

Come on down, will ya? You
can't stay up there all night!

Birdy glances down to where Al is standing at the foot of the tree. Then he looks back up into the sky without saying anything.

AL

We're outta the pigeon business,
Birdy. They're not coming back.

BIRDY

Sure they are. They were homed.

AL

Christsave, what kind of home is
it when your mom chops it up
for firewood and chases the birds
away with her famous broom?

BIRDY

It's home to them, Al. They
always come back.

Al is exasperated. He can see that Birdy's prepared to wait forever. He finally decides to tell him what he's been holding back.

AL

Listen Birdy, I gotta tell you
something but before I do you
have to promise not to go apeshit
on me.

BIRDY

What?

AL

Promise?

29. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

What?

AL

Well, some of those birds kept coming back, so your mom called Mr. Solari from the market.

BIRDY

...Mr. Solari the poultry guy?

AL

Yeah.

There's a long silence as this sinks in. Then, as if with sudden illumination, Birdy looks skyward.

BIRDY

That's it!

AL

Yeah, that's it. That guy'd dress his mother as a chicken if he thought he could get 69¢ a pound.

BIRDY

No, don't you get it, Al? Those blue-bars saw Solari hanging around and that's why they're not coming back! They'll never come back now. But at least it makes sense why not!

Al doesn't get how Birdy has reached this convoluted conclusion.

AL

...Listen, I got an idea for something else we can go partners on. Come on down and I'll tell you.

Birdy climbs down the tree. He looks at Al expectantly.

AL

Ya know that old Buick at the junkyard?

BIRDY

Yeah...okay.

(they start to walk away)

It's a good thing those blue-bars recognized Solari.

Al still doesn't believe this. Birdy picks up on it.

29. CONTINUED - 1:

BIRDY

...Pigeons aren't stupid, Al.

30. A GIGANTIC AUTO WRECKING YARD DAY/EXT.

Rusted and abandoned cars are piled high for acres. Birdy and Al can't take their eyes off a battered '49 Buick that is being carried in mid-air by a crane.

31. INSIDE THE WRECKING YARD OFFICE

Birdy and Al empty their pockets in front of a toothpick-chewing PROPRIETOR. He eyes the crumpled bills scattered with lint and birdseed on the counter. It's not enough. Birdy fishes inside the lining of one of his high top black sneakers and comes up with a grimy old two dollar bill. The Proprietor eyes it, wiggles his toothpick, then looks at Birdy. Finally, he nods. The car is theirs.

32. OUTSIDE AL'S HOUSE IN SOUTH PHILLY DAY/EXT.

A huge garbage truck SQUEALS to a stop in front of Al's house. AL'S FATHER, a scowling man with thick muscular arms, jumps down from the back carrying his lunch pail. He waves to the driver.

AL'S FATHER

See ya tomorrow, Vittorio.

He walks right by Al and Birdy, who are straining to push their battered Buick up to the garage. Not in a million years would he ever offer to help.

AL

Hey Dad, you said we could use the garage, right?

AL'S FATHER

Oh yeah, right.

Al's Father grudgingly unlocks the door. He pulls a sticky strip of lettuce from his sleeve as he watches Birdy and Al struggle to push their prized old car into the garage.

AL'S FATHER

(surveying the car)

That's some piece of shit.

He clomps off into the house, then pokes his head back out through the door.

AL'S FATHER

Just don't use any a my tools.

32. CONTINUED:

Al frowns after his Father's gone.

BIRDY

(deadpan)

...Ya know, I'm really
starting to like your dad.

Al can't help but smile at this.

33. AL'S GARAGE NIGHT/INT.

Birdy is rewiring the electrical system as Al sands a fender. Al's father walks in and looks over the nearly restored Buick. He grudgingly grunts his approval.

AL'S FATHER

Ya know, you're gonna have to
register this heap before you
can sell it.

BIRDY

How do we do that?

AL'S FATHER

You wait 'til you're old enough.

Al and Birdy look at each other. They hadn't thought of that.

AL'S FATHER

Don't worry, maybe I'll do it
for ya.

34. THE GARAGE DAY/INT.

Finally, the Buick is gleaming and absolutely cherry. Al and Birdy sit in the front seat with anxious anticipation.

BIRDY

Okay, do it.

Al takes the key and puts it into the ignition. He cranks her up and the whole garage vibrates with the resonant, deep purr of the engine. They look at each other and smile, then they just sit there.

BIRDY

...Maybe we shouldn't sell it.

AL

...Yeah, it'd be great to take
to the shore. I wish we had
our license.

34. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

I've never seen the ocean.

AL

You're kidding!?

BIRDY

No.

Al gives him a mischievous smile.

35. A BEACH IN ATLANTIC CITY DUSK/EXT.

CLOSE ON Birdy as he surfaces from beneath the waves with an ecstatic expression on his face.

BIRDY

Hey Al! This is great! It's like flying in thick air!

Al looks like he's been standing on the shore for quite a while. He's restless as he watches his enthusiastic friend bob up and down in the rough surf.

AL

Yeah, great. Come on, we gonna go pick up some girls or what?

BIRDY

Okay. Just once more.

Birdy takes a deep breath, then plunges beneath the water again.

36. A BOARDWALK SIDESHOW NIGHT/INT.

Birdy, Al and the two girls -- SHIRLEY and CLAIRE -- have their faces pressed up to the glass of an enormous water tank.

CLAIRE

Eewww, that's gross!

AL

It's a gyp. His legs are tied up behind him.

Inside the water tank, ZIMMY THE HUMAN FISH is smiling out at them as bubbles stream from his mouth to the surface. A fish-eyed man with a shaven head and a barrel chest, his legs appear to be amputated at the knee.

36. CONTINUED:

AN ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Isn't that amazing!! That's
Jimmy the Human Fish, folks!
Let's hear it for Jimmy!

Only Birdy claps.

BIRDY

(to Al)

How do you think he does it?

CLAIRE

Does what?

BIRDY

Hold his breath so long. I
have to keep coming up for air
too much.

Claire looks at Birdy as if she's wondering what rock he
crawled out from under.

37. AN AMUSEMENT PARK RIDE NIGHT/EXT.

Both Shirley and Claire throw their arms around Al as this
harrowing ride spins them faster and higher. Al's eating
it up. Birdy's sitting off to one side by himself. But
he doesn't seem to mind. He has a big smile on his face
as he's tossed against the night sky.

38. AMONG THE PILINGS OF A PIER NIGHT/EXT.

Claire is sitting in the sand staring morosely ahead at
the moonlit silhouette of Al and Shirley making out
passionately. Birdy is gazing out at the stars over the
distant horizon. Claire sighs peevishly and looks around
at him.

CLAIRE

So, you play on a team?

BIRDY

No...

CLAIRE

No. Of course not.

As if to make things worse, Shirley's passionate MOANS
grow louder in intensity.

BIRDY

Al and I throw the discus
sometimes. You know, just by
ourselves. To see how far
it'll go.

38. CONTINUED:

Claire looks at Birdy as if he's totally perverting the purpose of sports. Shirley cries out in ecstasy.

SHIRLEY

Al!

Claire gives them a brief moment before she calls out to Shirley.

CLAIRE

Are you finished?

(there's no answer)

I'm going.

Claire stands and angrily brushes the sand off herself. Al walks up zipping and buckling his pants. She gives him a withering look as she stomps out onto the beach. A moment later, Shirley races to catch up as she hastily rearranges her skirt.

SHIRLEY

Claire! Wait!

39. UNDER THE BOARDWALK NIGHT/EXT.

Late and quiet. The soft SOUNDS of waves and gulls. Al and Birdy have made a hidden nest down where the boardwalk is only about three feet higher than the sand. They're tucked in with a blanket and an enormous box of salt water taffy. They seem to be enjoying this silence as they continue to unpeel their meal.

BIRDY

Ya know, the feather's the thing we're up against.

AL

(his mouth filled
with taffy)

...It is?

BIRDY

Yeah. It's designed so that air can pass through it easily on the upstroke, but on the downstroke the air is forced down and around. Either I have to make something that does that or learn to do without it.

Al nods, still chewing. He clearly can't follow Birdy's thoughts, but he likes to listen to him.

39. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

...You ever noticed how a bird's in the air before it even moves its wings?

AL

Uh huh. What do you think that means?

BIRDY

I don't know. But I bet if you get close enough to a bird so you could feel what it's thinking, you could find out how it flies.

AL

Birdy, you're gonna kill yourself if you try another stunt like at the gas tower.

BIRDY

You can kill yourself falling off a curb if you don't know what you're doing. I'm still not entirely convinced that people can't fly.

AL

Birdy, if people could fly don't you think they would? I mean, look at all the money they'd save on gas.

(laughs)

Hell, we could dive bomb my old man's garbage truck.

Al extends his arms and makes the sound of an airplane as he looks below.

AL

So long, Vittorio! Later for you!

Birdy rolls back onto the blanket and laughs with Al. Al starts choking on salt water taffy. Finally he stops and catches his breath. He pushes the box of salt water taffy away.

AL

Shit, I think I'm gonna throw up...

39. CONTINUED - 1:

Suddenly, the beam of a flashlight invades their nest. It shines first on Al's face, then Birdy's. The two surprised boys immediately feel the ominous presence of TWO UNIFORMED COPS.

FIRST COP

I'd say they fit the description, wouldn't you?

SECOND COP

Sure would. You boys know anything about a stolen '49 Buick?

40. ATLANTIC CITY JAIL MORNING/INT.

A jam-packed drunk tank at the worst time of day. Somebody's throwing up in the open toilet. Others are snoring and coughing.

Birdy is pacing like crazy. He can't stand being confined like this. Al is sitting emotionless and looking very grim.

AL

Do you have to keep moving, Birdy? You're making me nervous.

BIRDY

I can't stand this. I hope your old man gets here pretty soon.

AL

I don't.

An outer door opens and Al's Father is escorted to the cell by a Policeman. His normally angry Sicilian eyes look downright deadly. It's clear why Al is terrified to see him.

AL

(a weak smile)

...Hi, Dad.

41. A PARKING LOT BEHIND THE JAIL MORNING/EXT.

Al's Father is holding the door open for a very tight-lipped and disappointed looking MRS. COLUMBATO. Birdy is getting in the back seat. Al's about to climb in next to him when his Father suddenly bashes him hard on the ear with the heel of his open palm. Al is knocked against the side of the car. His Father walks around and gets behind the wheel as if nothing happened.

41. CONTINUED:

Holding his throbbing ear, Al manages to climb in beside Birdy. He's too humiliated to look at his friend.

BIRDY

(sotto voce to Al)

Did ya ever wonder what our
lives down here must seem
like to a bird?

AL

(that makes him smile)

No.

AL'S FATHER

You two shutup back there! -

42. PRESENT - RENALDI'S ROOM NIGHT/INT.

Al is lying awake in bed. The headlights of cars passing outside throw moving shadows across the ceiling.

Across the room, Renaldi is sleeping like a baby. The shelf above his bed is filled with "build your own" ham radios and stereo amplifiers. His room could easily belong to some technically minded teenager.

Al rolls over and closes his eyes. But in a moment he opens them and stares into the darkness, unable to sleep.

43. BIRDY'S CELL NIGHT/INT.

Birdy is crouched in the middle of his cell staring up at the moonlight that shines through the bars of his lone, high window. After a moment, his eyelids flicker softly. Then he closes them.

44. FLASHBACK - BIRDY'S ROOM IN PHILADELPHIA NIGHT/INT.

Birdy seems to be pulling on a thin strand of air as he squats by one of the posts that hold up his lofted bed. The light that hangs from the bottom of the bed's platform is the only light in the room. Small bird perches dangle below it. The faint sound of next door's television wafts through the moonlit window, but Birdy doesn't seem to hear it. He's lost in his thoughts, intent on his work.

BIRDY (V.O.)

If I'm going to learn I'll have to
watch them closer. Be there when
they fly. I want them to be as
free as possible. Nobody wants to
be in a cage. It has to be almost
invisible...

44. CONTINUED

With a quick BANG of a hammer, Birdy fastens something to the wooden support post of his aviary. Only then can the fine piano wire he has enclosed himself in be seen.

45. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL

Birdy opens his eyes. He looks back up at the barred moonlit window. After a while, the sound of WINGS FLAPPING gradually fades in.

BIRDY'S POV - OF THE WINDOW

The blur of something passing by fast in flight. Then the soft murmur of COOING. Another RUSH OF MANY WINGS. The COOING melts into a bird's high song. Finally, the barred window starts to turn into an aviary. Tiny birds, their bright colors shimmering in the silvery light, flutter about. Slowly, one by one, they disappear.

46. THE HOSPITAL CORRIDOR DAY/INT.

Al seems to be getting used to his routine as he waits with his hands in his pockets for Renaldi to unlock Birdy's cell.

RENALDI

Good luck.

AL

Thanks.

47. INSIDE BIRDY'S CELL

As Al steps in, Renaldi locks the door behind him. It's clear that Al hasn't been able to get used to this. But he tries to ignore it as he turns to Birdy, who is squatting next to his bed giving Al his glazed sidelong stare. He looks like a skinny Hunchback of Notre Dame. Al stares back, then does an intentionally bad imitation of Birdy's voice.

AL

(imitating Birdy)

Hi Al, how are you?

(then in his own voice)

Pretty good Birdy, thanks.

(imitating Birdy)

Ya know Al, I'm glad you came to see me. I know we haven't seen each other in a while and there's a lot of water under the bridge, but it's good just to sit here and not talk with you.

(his own voice)

Yeah, it's a real blast, but you know... Ah hell, come on Birdy, talk to me!

47. CONTINUED:

Birdy turns away from Al.

AL

Okay, don't talk to me... You think I don't know what you're doing with all this squatting and sideways staring stuff?

So you're finally a bird, big deal. If Weiss finds out, he's gonna put you in a display case and write papers on you forever.

That doesn't get any rise out of Birdy. Al changes his tact.

AL

Ya know, you used to have a reason for doing what you did, no matter how weird it was... You doing this for a reason, Birdy?

(no hint of an answer)

Ruffle your feathers or something, would ya?!

(still nothing)

What's the matter, life's all of a sudden too tough and you're giving up?... Remember that year-long argument with our Geometry teacher when you kept saying that parallel lines had to converge somewhere? You didn't give up then... How about that time with my old man and the car? I couldn't believe that...

Birdy half turns his head toward Al.

AL

Hah! I got you. You heard that, didn't you? Come on Birdy, I know you're listening... Boy, this could get to be a real pain in the ass...

Al leans back and watches Birdy. He's not at all sure Birdy is listening.

DISSOLVE TO:

48. FLASHBACK - BIRDY'S GARAGE DAY/INT.

Birdy is working on his ornithopter -- a strange aluminum winged contraption he has set on a pair of carpenter's horses. He looks increasingly angry as he listens to Al.

AL

...I couldn't do anything about it, Birdy! He sold it before he ever told me about it...

Birdy just looks at Al.

AL

...At least we got what we paid for the car. I'll give you my share and we can use it for your ornithopter here...

BIRDY

I don't care about the money. It's the principle of the thing.

AL

The only principle is that my old man does whatever the hell he wants.

(Birdy stares hard at Al)

What do you want me to do, pin him? I wish I could but I can't!

BIRDY

I'm going to get it back.

AL

What are you crazy?! That's suicide! My old man doesn't even like you!

BIRDY

I don't care. It's our car.

Birdy starts determinedly past Al. Al stops him.

AL

You can't do this! You know what he's like. He'll kill you!

BIRDY

Jesus Al, sometimes you're so full of shit.

Birdy walks past Al out of the garage. Al calls after him.

48. CONTINUED:

AL

(shouting)

Okay, but you're on your own!

...I'm not going with you, Birdy!

...I don't want blood splattered

all over me!

(Birdy keeps going)

...Shit.

Al heads after his stubborn friend.

49. AL'S HOUSE DAY/INT.

As Al walks through the screened back porch and into his kitchen. His mother looks up from her ironing with a worried expression.

AL'S FATHER (O.S.)

Whatdaya mean you want your car back?! You got your money.

Al winces and moves slowly to the doorway. Birdy is fearlessly confronting his father.

BIRDY

You had no right to sell that car, Mr. Columbato. It's worth more than the money you gave us. It belongs to Al and me. We didn't want to sell it.

AL'S FATHER

That car was in my name. I can sell it to anybody I want. Go 'way, I'm trying to read my paper.

Al's Mother steps up beside Al in the doorway. They can see that Birdy's not moving. Al's Father is pretending not to see him by sticking the paper in front of his face. But his leg is jiggling. Al and his mother know this is a bad sign.

BIRDY

Mr. Columbato, would you tell me the name of the man who thinks he bought our car so that I can get it back?

Al's Mother leans toward her son. She speaks in Italian, warning Al to get his friend out of here.

AL'S FATHER

Get outta here or I'm gonna call the cops, kid.

49. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

Thank you, Mr. Columbato. I was
about to do that myself. I'm
going to report a stolen car.

Al's Father throws down his paper and jumps up. Al looks
panicky. Birdy doesn't back off an inch. Al's Father
starts to jab Birdy's chest hard with his index finger.

AL'S FATHER

You callin' me a crook in my own
house?!

(jab)

You sayin' I stole that junk heap!!

(jab)

Don't go threatenin' to embarrass
me with my friends!

BIRDY

(takes the jabs and
holds his ground)

You sold a car that wasn't yours,
Mr. Columbato. Just give me the
name of the man who thinks he bought
it and I'll tell him you made a
mistake.

AL'S FATHER

I'm tellin' ya, kid. It's already
done. A friend of my brother-in-law
Nicky bought it and he ain't ever
gonna give it back! You mess with
him and you'll wind up in a concrete
shirt at the bottom of the
Schuykill River! So back off!!

BIRDY

I don't want to go to the police,
Mr. Columbato. But Al and I have a
signed receipt of purchase from Mr.
Schwartz at the junkyard. It might
be in your name because you
registered it for us, but it's
legally our property and you have
no proof of purchase.

Al's Father steps back. He seems almost stunned by Birdy's
audacity. Al watches in amazement.

AL'S FATHER

Look kid, why do you wanna be such
a hard nose?

49. CONTINUED - 1:

Birdy doesn't answer.

AL'S FATHER

Don't you get it? It can't be done. I couldn't get the car back from that guy even if I wanted to.

BIRDY

If you'll just give me his name, I'll get it back.

Al's Father sees that Birdy isn't going to give up.

AL'S FATHER

I'll tell ya what. You're not worth goin' to the pen for murderin', so here's what I'll do.

(pulls money from his wallet)

Here. That's all I got for that heap. Now take it and get outta here. Leave me alone.

Birdy won't take the money. Al's Mother comes into the room. She takes the money from her husband, then leads Birdy into the kitchen by his arm. Birdy's face is drained and white. He looks at Al as Al's Mother pleads with him.

AL'S MOTHER

Please, you take the money boy. I'll get more from my brother if you want. But don't make no trouble.

She waits for Birdy to respond. Birdy finally takes the money. He hands it to Al.

BIRDY

Here. I don't want it.

AL

Half of it's yours. You deserve it.

BIRDY

I wanted the car, Al...

As Al watches Birdy head out the back door, his Father steps up behind him. Glaring at Al, he removes his thick leather belt.

50. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

Al is lost in his own thoughts as he sits across from Birdy.

AL

...I could never stand up to my old man like that...

(looks at Birdy)

Okay, so we didn't get the car back. Maybe life is shitty. Hell, I know it's shitty. That never used to stop us. ...Jesus, look at us, Birdy.

Al gets up and walks to the window.

AL

Ya know, sometimes when I think about how things used to be, I get worried because I don't know how they're gonna be now...

(watches Birdy for a moment)

...Maybe if you can't take it anymore it's okay to let people think you're crazy and take care of you... I'll tell ya something, Birdy. I'm not trying to pin life anymore. I don't even fucking understand it. I just want to make it through with some dignity like everybody else...

Al seems almost embarrassed by his confession. He tries to shrug it off.

AL

'Course if there was any real dignity then there wouldn't be any sex.

Al flashes his vaudevillian smile and waits for the laugh he knows isn't coming. Then he moves to Birdy.

AL

...Listen, I'll see you later, all right?

50. CONTINUED:

Al looks into Birdy's eyes for some sign of acknowledgment. Birdy's eyes dart from one side to the other, then he tilts his head down slightly.

AL
(leaning down to look
in Birdy's eyes again)
All right?

Birdy's eyes are glazed and unresponsive.

AL
(standing up)
Okay, but I'll be back.

Al goes to the door and tries to open it. It's locked. He BANGS on it.

AL
Hey Renaldi, lemme outta here!
(he BANGS on the
door again)
Hey!

Al waits for an answer. He's getting anxious when he hears the sound of MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS outside the door.

51. A DREAM

The FOOTSTEPS become LOUDER and quicker. Two pairs of combat boots can be seen running across a muddy jungle. Suddenly, a mine springs up out of the ground. It hovers in the air, then:

An EXPLOSION OF SILENCE as Al flees down an endless, nightmarishly distorted hospital corridor. Then Birdy's voice can be heard calling after him - "Al!... Hey Al!" Finally Al looks back toward the voice. His face is a blank, featureless sheath of flesh.

52. RENALDI'S ROOM NIGHT/INT.

Al wakes up with a start and a gasp. His bedclothes are soaked with sweat. Renaldi looks concerned as he moves over to him.

RENALDI
Are you okay?

52. CONTINUED:

AL
(trying to recover)
Yeah...

RENALDI
You scared me. You were moaning
like you were in pain or
something.

Renaldi touches his own face as if he could feel Al's pain.

AL
No, I'm okay. ...Listen, you
won't tell anybody about this,
will ya?

RENALDI
No, of course not.

53. DR. WEISS'S WAITING ROOM DAY/INT.

It has the feel of a high school principal's office. A ferret-faced military secretary, RONSKY, is talking on the phone with a sour look on his face. Al is sitting across from him leafing through magazines -- an odd mixture of "Stars and Stripes," "Readers Digest" and "Psychology Today." He's pretending not to listen as he finally finds a "Sports Illustrated."

RONSKY
(into phone)
...No sir, not yet... Yeah, he's
here right now... Okay. His file
came in this morning... Okay...

Al glances up at the mention of "his file." He watches Ronsky as the secretary hangs up the phone and retrieves a file from a nearby cabinet. Sitting back at his desk, Ronsky rolls a blue form in the typewriter, then opens the file. He eyeballs something closely. He still has a sour look on his face.

RONSKY
Is your serial number 4567388
or 4567383?

53. CONTINUED:

AL

383, why?

RONSKY

I wanna get it right. And it's
C-O-L-U-M-B-A-T-O, Sgt. Alfonso?

AL

Yeah, what is this? Am I being
taken prisoner or what?

RONSKY

(as he types, hunt and
peck, with one finger)
The Major just wants some more
information on you.

Ronsky finishes typing. His sour expression is getting even
more sour. He SPITS on the blue form he's typing and looks
back at the file. Al doesn't know how to react to this
strange behavior.

AL

Whadaya got there, my file?

As Ronsky continues typing, his sour look reappears. He
SPITS on the form again. This time it's louder and even
more pronounced.

RONSKY

(smiles)

Yeah... Everything about you.

Al can't believe what he's seeing. Ronsky types a little
more, then SPITS AGAIN. The SPITTING and TYPING sounds
alternate like hiccups.

RONSKY

(smiles at Al)

Okay...

(strikes two more
letters)

There we go...

(sour look appears
again)

Is there any history of insanity
in your family?

AL

No.

Ronsky SPITS as he types "No."

53. CONTINUED - 1:

AL (cont.)
...Why are you asking me?

RONSKY
(SPITS again)
Suicides?

AL
What?

RONSKY
Any suicides?

He SPITS once more.

AL
...Not yet.

Just then, Weiss steps into the room. Al looks up at him.

WEISS
(to Ronsky)
You can finish that later.
Just bring me what you have.
(to Al)
Come on in.

Al puts a wide space between himself and Ronsky as he follows Weiss into the psychiatrist's office.

54. WEISS'S OFFICE

Ronsky lays Al's file and the sopping blue form on Weiss's desk. Weiss quickly reads the form, then gingerly picks it up by its corners and moves it off to the side. As if nothing out of the ordinary were going on, Weiss proceeds to review Al's file. Ronsky leaves.

AL
Excuse me, Major. Is there something wrong with your secretary?

WEISS
Oh, you mean the spitting?
Ever since he was in combat he's had a bad taste in his mouth.

Al isn't sure if he's being put on. Weiss lets out a small smile.

WEISS
Don't worry, we're working on him. Have a seat.

54. CONTINUED:

Al sits and watches as Weiss peruses his file. He's getting extremely uncomfortable with the psychiatrist's silent study of his life.

AL

Why was he asking me all those questions? I'm not a patient here.

WEISS

I like to know who I'm dealing with.

(glancing back at file)

How do you think the Army's treated you, Sergeant?

AL

(wary)

...Not bad. Okay, I guess.

WEISS

I see here that you attacked a superior officer just after you arrived in Saigon.

AL

(as if it were
an explanation)

We were in a bar, sir...

(Weiss waits for more)

I just hit him.

WEISS

It says you knocked out four of his teeth and broke his nose.

AL

I hit him hard. He was dogging me.

WEISS

Do you think that you might have over-reacted?

AL

(begrudgingly)

Maybe... Listen, we all make mistakes, don't we sir?

WEISS

Of course. The important thing is that we learn from those mistakes, don't you think?

54. CONTINUED:

Al sits and watches as Weiss peruses his file. He's getting extremely uncomfortable with the psychiatrist's silent study of his life.

AL

Why was he asking me all those questions? I'm not a patient here.

WEISS

I like to know who I'm dealing with.

(glancing back at file)

How do you think the Army's treated you, Sergeant?

AL

(wary)

...Not bad. Okay, I guess.

WEISS

I see here that you attacked a superior officer just after you arrived in Saigon.

AL

(as if it were
an explanation)

We were in a bar, sir...

(Weiss waits for more)

I just hit him.

WEISS

It says you knocked out four of his teeth and broke his nose.

AL

I hit him hard. He was dogging me.

WEISS

Do you think that you might have over-reacted?

AL

(begrudgingly)

Maybe... Listen, we all make mistakes, don't we sir?

WEISS

Of course. The important thing is that we learn from those mistakes, don't you think?

54. CONTINUED - 1:

AL
Sir, shouldn't we be talking
about the patient here?

WEISS
(looks at Al's file)
Whose idea was it to steal that
car, yours or the patient's?

AL
(surprised)
...Steal a car?

WEISS
I believe it was in Atlantic City.

AL
Oh that. That was just a
misunderstanding. Ya see, my
father had it registered in
his name. We were just having
a good time. You know.

WEISS
Uhuh... Is that how your father
saw it?

AL
No, not exactly.

Weiss closes the file and stares at Al for a moment. He's
hit a nerve and he knows it.

WEISS
What'd he do?

AL
...He took away my allowance.

Weiss has had it with Al's evasiveness.

WEISS
Listen you little wiseguy,
how stupid do you think I am?
I have better things to do than
play games with you. I should
probably just send you back
where you came from.

AL
You don't have to do that.

54. CONTINUED - 2:

WEISS

Maybe you haven't noticed
what happens to the men like
your friend who aren't getting
such special attention.

AL

What do you mean? What
happens to them?

WEISS

They stay here for the rest
of their lives. They rot.
Sometimes they just die.

Weiss watches as he lets that sink in. He hopes his grim
assessment of Birdy's situation has shaken Al.

AL

Sir, I can reach him. Just
give me some more time.

WEISS

(his anger subsiding)
All right, Sergeant. But this
isn't an indefinite stay.

(Al starts to get up)

Oh, one more thing. Did you
or the patient resent your
father for that misunderstanding
about the car?

Although Weiss has gotten to him, Al still doesn't trust the
psychiatrist. He lies with absolute conviction.

AL

Oh, no sir. We both liked my
father.

55. BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

Hannah is feeding Birdy. As she holds out each spoonful, he
stretches out his neck, opens his mouth and takes the food
from below. There's a KNOCK on the door behind her. Al is
standing near the open entrance watching this feeding.

HANNAH

Come on in. Grab a chair.

Al walks over beside Hannah. He watches silently as Birdy
continues to take the food like a young bird. Between
bites, Birdy stares at Hannah's nurse's hat. It sweeps back
from the crown of her hastily pinned-up hair like wings.

55. CONTINUED:

AL

I think he likes your hat.

HANNAH

I know. I wish it'd work on
some other people I can think of.

AL

Why are you doing this, anyway?

HANNAH

I told ya, the orderlies are
supposed to feed him but...

AL

(interrupting)

No, I mean why are you a nurse?

HANNAH

'Cause it beat goin' to beauty
school and I lost my invitation
to Harvard. What are you gonna
do when you grow up and get out
of the army?

AL

I don't know. I hadn't thought
about it much. Some dumb
thing.

Hannah smiles. Al is strangely quiet for a moment as he
watches her feed Birdy.

AL

...So you've been workin' with
these guys for a while, huh?

HANNAH

Yeah.

AL

Some of them get better, don't
they?

Hannah is moved by Al's desperation. She drops her tough
demeanor for a moment. Without any bullshit or false hope,
she gives him a direct answer.

HANNAH

Yeah.

55. CONTINUED - 1:

Al holds her gaze for a moment. Then he notices Birdy is staring at him with a strange look.

AL

(to Birdy)

What the birdbrain doesn't realize is that Weiss is gonna keep him here forever if he doesn't quit this shit.

Hannah hasn't seen Al talking to Birdy this way. It surprises her.

HANNAH

You think that'll work?

AL

(still looking at Birdy)

I don't know. Maybe.

Hannah goes back to feeding Birdy, then turns to Al and offers him the spoon.

HANNAH

Why don't you try?

AL

To feed him?

HANNAH

Yeah.

AL

I can't do that.

HANNAH

Why not?

AL

I don't know. I've never fed anybody. I don't know how.

HANNAH

You just take the spoon and hold it out, Al. Believe me, it's not that complicated.

Al is still reluctant. Finally, he takes the spoon from Hannah. Holding it out awkwardly, he looks like he's feeding Birdy bad-tasting medicine.

55. CONTINUED - 2:

AL
(to Birdy)
If you don't eat this, I'm
gonna nail you.

Birdy takes the first bite. Hannah watches as Al feeds Birdy.

HANNAH
Not so bad, huh?

AL
No.

Al is clearly moved by this close contact with his friend. Birdy continues to take the food in his strangely slow, bird-like fashion.

HANNAH
(glances at watch)
Oh shit, I should be finished
with him by now. Could you
feed him while I go do something?

AL
Yeah, sure.

HANNAH
Thanks. I'll be right back.

Hannah leaves. Al turns back and feeds Birdy some more.

AL
I saw that cock-eyed look of
yours, Birdy. That look always
means something.
(Birdy just takes
another bite)
...You think I was hitting on her,
don't you? ...Think she likes me?

Al is holding out another spoonful of food. Birdy stares at it for a while, then slowly takes it.

AL
Ya know you really gotta quit it
with this crap. I gotta get outta
(MORE)

55. CONTINUED - 3:

AL (CONT.)

here. That shrink of yours is
givin' me the eye like I'm crazy.
It's not a great feeling. ...Not
that it ever seemed to bother you...

Al is holding out another spoonful of food. Birdy won't take it.

AL

Come on Birdy, eat it.
(Birdy just stares
at the food.)

This is ridiculous. If you could
see yourself squatting here with
me trying to shovel this crap
down your throat, you'd probably
laugh yourself to death.

Birdy isn't even looking at the food now. He's staring at Al.

AL

What?

Birdy just keeps staring. Al finally sets the spoon down.

AL

I'm not going to have another
talking to the wall conversation
with you, Birdy. Could ya decide
if you're listening or not?

Birdy shifts position and gives Al one of his blank sidelong
looks. Al leans back in his chair.

AL

Okay, let's do it your way.
We'll sit here and commune like
goddamn birds...

Al folds his arms and watches Birdy silently. After a while,
Birdy lifts his eyes toward the window.

THROUGH THE BARS OF THE WINDOW

As Birdy gazes outside, the sound of FLUTTERING WINGS slowly
fades in.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...I saw her the first day I sat
in the aviary. I like the way she
goes up into an almost stall, then
a loop down, then up to a stall and
down again...

DISSOLVE TO:

56. FLASHBACK - AN AVIARY

CLOSE ON PERTA, a bright yellow canary, as she stretches out her neck and scrutinizes a piece of food that dangles from a human hand.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...I keep going back just to watch her. She's the only one who flies around the upper part. It's what I'd do if I were a bird and lived in that aviary. She's like Tarzan swinging through the trees but without vines. She's so beautiful...

MRS. PREVOST, the older woman offering the food, leans down close to this canary. She speaks to her in a hushed sing-song voice.

MRS. PREVOST

You don't want to eat, deary?
You're not hungry? Maybe your little heart's broken because Ashley was mean to you. Now just take one bite and you can go.

(Perta doesn't bite)

...You're so difficult!

Mrs. Prevost turns to Birdy, who is watching this from the corner of the aviary. Perta flies to the top of this huge, room-size cage. She makes four or five high banked circles before she comes back down to the low perch.

Two cats are sitting outside the aviary on a fence. As they watch Perta fly, their heads turn back and forth like hungry tennis fans at Wimbledon.

MRS. PREVOST

(to Birdy)

You see, she just won't listen to me... And she's such a pretty one.

There must be a hundred birds in the aviary, but Birdy can't take his eyes off this yellow flyer. The others are just hopping from perch to perch with small flutters of their wings.

Mrs. Prevost prattles on as if her canaries were characters in some romantic movie or soap opera.

MRS. PREVOST

You should have seen her with the daddies the other day.

(MORE)

56. CONTINUED:

MRS. PREVOST (CONT.)

They were preening for her and singing to her and she just ignored them. She's so particular. I just don't know how I'm going to mate her. Why she's jilted almost every male I have, even Rhett, and you know who he's named after.

BIRDY

(still watching
the canary)

Mrs. Prevost, do you think I could try and feed her?

MRS. PREVOST

Now Birdy, don't get set on her just because she's a flyer.
(she gestures to
another canary)
Melanie here's just as pretty
and she's a proven breeder.

Birdy looks over at Melanie, a bird trained by Mrs. Prevost. The canary hops up and down a little ladder and rings a bell to get her food. He turns back to Perta.

BIRDY

Let me just try.

Mrs. Prevost nods her consent. Birdy slowly moves up close to Perta. He tentatively holds some food out to her.

The canary stares at him for a moment, then stretches her neck out and takes the food from Birdy's hand. Then she QUEEPS.

MRS. PREVOST

Ohhh, she likes you.

Birdy watches as Perta flies up to the high part of the aviary. She starts into her banked turns again.

BIRDY

She's the one I want.

Birdy holds out his finger and waits for his flying canary to land.

57. BIRDY'S ROOM DAY/INT.

Perta lands on Birdy's finger. He pulls her from the homemade cage that sits on his desk. Holding her close to his face, he examines her wings closely.

57. CONTINUED:

Perta ruffles her feathers. Birdy smooths his hand across her yellow plumage then sets the canary on the table. He makes a couple of modifications on a wing of the small model ornithopter he's making. Perta flies up onto his shoulder and QUEEPS.

BIRDY

You want to watch, huh? Okay.

Birdy continues to make adjustments on the model. Then he holds out his finger again. His canary hops on and Birdy pulls her close to his face. He produces a small sunflower seed from inside his cheek. Holding it between his teeth, he offers it to Perta. She takes it from Birdy's mouth.

58. BIRDY'S ROOM NIGHT/INT.

Birdy is in bed reading. He has a stack of books ranging from breeding canaries to advanced aerodynamics. Putting his book down, he leans over his lofted bunk.

In the 4'x6' aviary that Birdy has built under his bed, Perta is flying her small banked circles.

Birdy takes a small piece of string and dangles it through the top of his custom aviary.

Perta flies up and hovers almost upside down as she pulls playfully on the string.

Birdy studies the motion of her wings closely.

BIRDY

How are you doing that?

There's a KNOCK at the door. Birdy lets go of the string.

The door opens and BIRDY'S FATHER, a thin, fragile-looking man, enters. He looks worn and tired.

BIRDY'S FATHER

Your mother said enough for tonight. It's almost 3 o'clock in the morning, son.

BIRDY

But Dad...

Birdy's Mother pokes her angry face in the doorway.

BIRDY'S MOTHER

Enough's enough. We're supposed to be asleep!

(MORE)

58. CONTINUED:- 1:

BIRDY'S MOTHER (CONT.)

(to Birdy's Father)

You should have more sense!

Birdy's Father follows sheepishly as she SLAMS out the door. Birdy wishes he was somewhere else. He watches his canary as she flies around in her aviary.

59. A HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE CLASS DAY/INT.

Birdy's model ornithopter is flapping through the air as it circles over the heads of his classmates.

BIRDY (O.S.)

...Flying is much more than flapping wings... A bird can flap its wings without moving an inch. Then, when it wants to fly, the smallest flick of wings sends her up against the sky...

Birdy is standing in front of the class explaining his project. Everybody, Al included, is watching this flying contraption in astonishment.

BIRDY

...You have to feel that air has substance and can hold you up... It's mostly a matter of confidence...

Suddenly, there is a LOUD SNAP as the rubber band that is powering the ornithopter breaks. The model careens off course. Birdy ducks just in time as it crashes into the blackboard behind him. His classmates scream with LAUGHTER.

Only Al and DORIS ROBINSON, a too-brainy-for-South Philly-looking girl with thick glasses and large breasts, seem sympathetic to Birdy's embarrassment.

60. A DESERTED AREA NEAR THE HIGH SCHOOL DAY/EXT.

It's bone-cold and windy. Patches of snow are scattered around the railroad tracks that run through this derelict industrial wasteland.

Birdy looks dejected as he leans against a rusted, abandoned car. The high school looms behind him, but he's safely out of sight. Al slips through a hole in a cyclone fence and steps up to his friend. He offers him a cigarette from his pack of Camels. Birdy shakes his head. Al shrugs and lights one for himself.

60. CONTINUED:

AL

Fuck 'em. What do they know?
Anyway, did you see Doris
Robinson giving you the eye
in there? I think she's hot
for mad scientist types or
something. You oughta ask her
out.

BIRDY

To do what? I can't afford
to take her anywhere.

AL

The best things in life are
free, Birdy. What do ya think,
Cheryl's charging me for it?

Just then Al notices a group of their classmates kneeling
around the nearby railroad tracks. Suddenly, they jump
to their feet and come toward Al and Birdy.

AL

Hey, what are you guys doin'?

JIM MALONEY, a beady-eyed guy with a face like a hatchet,
smiles as if they've just pulled the crime of the century.

MALONEY

Puttin' pennies on the tracks.

AL

Why?

DANNY VOGEL points out what he thinks is obvious.

VOGEL

To squash 'em.

Al just nods. Maloney, Vogel, and their two friends --
CONNORS and OGLETHROPE -- all light up cigarettes. They
stand around smoking and shivering as they stare at the
tracks, waiting for the pennies to be squashed.

BIRDY

Did you guys know that if you
put your tongue onto a frozen
track that it'll stick?

They all look at Birdy as if he were totally out of it.

MALONEY

Bullshit. Why don't you fly
away, you little twerp?

60. CONTINUED - 1:

AL

Shutup, Maloney.

MALONEY

I ain't saying nothin' to you,
Columbato. I'm talkin' to
Tweety.

CONNORS

(to Maloney)

Maybe he's right.

MALONEY

Bullshit!

AL

If you think it's bullshit,
Maloney, why don't you put
your tongue on the line?

MALONEY

You think I won't?

AL

I know you won't.

Maloney is as predictable as he is stupid. He whirls and
marches to the railroad tracks. The others follow. Every-
body crowds around as Maloney makes a big show of his bravado.

MALONEY

Ya know, the problem with you
homos is you're all chickenshit.

Maloney sticks his tongue out as far as he can, then lays it
flat on the frozen track. Of course, it sticks. He tries
to pull it off, but it's really stuck.

Birdy isn't surprised. Vogel, Connors, and Oglethorpe
start to laugh. Maloney tries to threaten them, but his
angry words come out as grunts. This makes Al laugh too.

AL

This is it, Maloney. I think
we're going to have to amputate.

Maloney flails at Al, managing to kick him in the shins.
This only makes Al laugh harder. Connors manages to con-
tain his laughter for a moment.

CONNORS

...This is serious, guys, we
gotta get him outta this...

60. CONTINUED - 2:

AL

Why?

Al and Maloney's friends burst out laughing again. Birdy smiles uneasily. He's not enjoying this as much as the others.

BIRDY

The only thing that'll work .
is warm water.

OGLETHORPE

(grabbing his crotch)

I got some water right here!

Vogel starts running up and down the track, pounding on it with a stick to imitate the sound of an approaching train. Then he drops to his knees and stares in mock wide-eyed horror at Maloney.

VOGEL

Oh shit! A train's coming!

Oglethorpe waves his arms frantically as he pretends to flag down the train.

VOGEL

No, no stop!

Oglethorpe can barely contain himself as he makes a TOOTING sound. Vogel pounds harder and harder with the stick, sending the vibrations along the track directly to Maloney's tongue. Al joins Oglethorpe in trying to flag down the imaginary train.

AL

It won't stop! It won't stop!

Their comic pantomime is reaching a frenzied pitch when, suddenly, the HORN OF A REAL TRAIN BLASTS IN THE NEAR DISTANCE.

Everybody stops dead. They look at each other, not knowing what to do. Then they turn to Birdy.

BIRDY

Somebody's gotta get some warm
water.

Connors starts off toward the school. But he freezes when the TRAIN COMES INTO VIEW from around a bend. He turns to the others with panic in his eyes.

60. CONTINUED - 3:

VOGEL

Piss on him! Oglethorpe!

Oglethorpe unzips his fly but he can't deliver. He's scared pissless.

VOGEL

Come on, you guys! Somebody's gotta piss on him!

They all kneel around Maloney and unzip their flies.

CONNORS

(to Maloney)

Shit! I told you he was right...

Suddenly, Maloney leaps out from the center of the group. He's spitting and swearing as they all scatter away from the tracks.

MALONEY

Fuck you guys! Fuck all you guys!

The train sounds its HORN as it whips by.

61. OUTSIDE THE HIGH SCHOOL DAY/EXT.

The blast of a car's HORN. Everyone but Maloney dashes across the street and runs laughing toward the high school. Birdy pauses at the entrance as the others all go inside.

AL

Come on. I can't wait for somebody to ask me why Maloney's not at lunch.

BIRDY

You go ahead. I want to go down and talk to my dad about something.

62. HIGH SCHOOL BOILER ROOM DAY/INT.

Birdy's Father is eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in this dreary cell. His shabby surroundings are as tidy as could be. There's even a couple of pictures on the wall -- not beckoning pinup girls, but ersatz forests and snow-capped mountains that are straight from Woolworth's. Within the bowels of this stark institution, Birdy's Father has swept clean his corner of the world.

62. CONTINUED:

Birdy knocks, then opens the door.

BIRDY

...Dad?

Birdy's Father looks up. He's glad to see his son.

BIRDY'S FATHER

Come on in...

Birdy steps inside. He sits on an old wooden bench across from his Father.

BIRDY'S FATHER

You had lunch yet?

BIRDY

No. I'm not hungry.

BIRDY'S FATHER

Ya gotta eat...
(offering half
his sandwich)

...Here.

BIRDY

Okay, thanks.

They sit facing each other sharing different halves of the same peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

BIRDY

I wanted to ask you a favor,
Dad.

BIRDY'S FATHER

Shoot.

BIRDY

I want to get another canary.
A male, for mating. I thought
maybe you could talk to Mom
about it.

BIRDY'S FATHER

I don't know, we don't want to
antagonize her. I had a heck
of a time getting her to let
you build that aviary. She's
worried about what it must be
costing for the feed and the
lumber and whatnot.

62. CONTINUED - 1:

BIRDY

Tell her don't worry, birdseed's cheap and Al and I swiped the lumber.

BIRDY'S FATHER

(smiles)

I sure won't tell her that. Already she's convinced your friend is Al Capone.

BIRDY

...Yeah, I know...

Birdy tries to hide his frustration from his Father. But this sweet, broken man picks up on it.

BIRDY'S FATHER

Don't think your mother doesn't want what's best. She's just concerned that you develop interests and friends that'll help you, you know, fit in.

BIRDY

Fit in what?

BIRDY'S FATHER

You know. Whatever. Life.

BIRDY

She thinks I won't fit into life with Al or a canary?

BIRDY'S FATHER

No, it's not that. It's just, well...take me. I've always had an interest in wicker. When I met your mom, I could make a better wicker chair than any man in Philadelphia. I still could. But nobody cares about wicker anymore. So I don't fit into the scheme of things... You see what I'm saying? Your mother just wants you to wind up better than me...

For a moment, Birdy's Father loses himself in thoughts of his own failed life. Birdy looks at him silently. He'd like to ease his Father's pain, but he can't find the words.

62. CONTINUED - 2:

BIRDY'S FATHER
(as if he hadn't
paused)

...Every parent wants that...
I'm just saying you should be
interested in something practical
too.

BIRDY
I guess it's hard, being good
at something nobody wants.

BIRDY'S FATHER
Yeah...
(he studies his son)
...You really want this, don't
you?

BIRDY
Yeah.

BIRDY'S FATHER
Okay. I'll talk with your mom.

63. A GHETTO STREET IN PHILADELPHIA DAY/EXT.

Birdy emerges from a subway exit. He's carrying Perta in a cage. He seems oblivious to the fact that he looks totally out of place in this tough, black neighborhood. Moving down a crowded sidewalk, Birdy glances at the address he's written on a torn piece of paper.

64. THE STOOP OF A RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING

A gang of teen-agers are gathered around a BLASTING RADIO. As Birdy approaches, they eye him with hostility and suspicion. Birdy just moves past them as he steps up to the locked entrance. He presses a buzzer beneath one of the dilapidated mailboxes.

VOICE
(over intercom)
Yeah?

BIRDY
Mr. Lincoln?

VOICE
(over intercom)
What do you want?

BIRDY
I came about your bird.

64. CONTINUED:

VOICE
(over intercom)
There's no birds here.

BIRDY
Mrs. Prevost sent me. It's about
the green canary for mating.

The BUZZER sounds and Birdy pushes the door open.

65. INSIDE THE BUILDING

The muffled SOUNDS of crying babies and tv game shows.
Birdy looks up the dim staircase. The walls are coated
with that sickly institutional-green paint that seems to be
sprayed all over Eastern cities.

One flight up, an enormous bare-chested black man, MR.
LINCOLN, steps onto the landing. He looks down at Birdy..

MR. LINCOLN
You're not here to spy on me,
are you boy?

BIRDY
No.

Birdy starts up the stairs. Mr. Lincoln looks Birdy over
when he gets to the door. Then he leans down and examines
Perta.

MR. LINCOLN
Nice bird. Pretty.

BIRDY
Thanks.

MR. LINCOLN
The landlord don't allow pets.
That's why I thought you might be
spyin'.

BIRDY
No. Mrs. Prevost sent me.
Didn't she tell you?

Mr. Lincoln stands up straight and eyes Birdy.

MR. LINCOLN
So you're the boy who likes
the pesky ones...
(smiles)
I got a lulu for you.

66. MR. LINCOLN'S APARTMENT

As he and Birdy step into the small, neat living room. Three small cages of green canaries are hung in the corner.

BIRDY

Perta'll be the one to decide
if I take him. She's who'll have
to mate with him.

Birdy walks over to the small cages. He holds Perta up beside them.

BIRDY

What do you think, Perta?

MR. LINCOLN

It's none of those. I just got
them today. You see all that
green in 'em?

(Birdy nods)

They're the ones with the least
yellow. There's black under
there somewhere. By breedin'
'em with white birds, then takin'
the darker ones and breedin'
them, in a few generations they
get some black in 'em. That's
what I'm after. A pure black
canary.

BIRDY

How come?

MR. LINCOLN

They're better singers.

Birdy can't tell if he's being put on or not. Mr. Lincoln eyes him steadily.

MR. LINCOLN

'Cause us niggers are always
singin'. It's in the blood.

Mr. Lincoln continues to eye Birdy for a moment, then he roars with laughter.

MR. LINCOLN

Don't worry none. I'm a racist
for canaries, not people...

(MORE)

66. CONTINUED:

MR. LINCOLN (CONT.)
(reaching into
his pocket)
...Here, I want to show you
something.

Mr. Lincoln pulls out his wallet and takes a black feather
from it. Birdy examines it.

BIRDY
Looks like it's from a crow.

MR. LINCOLN
Or a blackbird. I found it in
front of the A&P two years ago.
When I breed a canary that black --
and I mean all that black, with no
yellow or green feathers at all --
can you imagine the tune that
bird'll carry? That's something
to live for, boy. When I can do
that I'll die a happy man.

Birdy looks at Mr. Lincoln as if he understands. Mr. Lincoln
regards him strangely for a moment, then his hard features
soften with a grin.

MR. LINCOLN
...Come on, let's see if we
can find your Perta a man.

Birdy follows Mr. Lincoln down a narrow hallway. Mr. Lincoln
opens a door. Birdy's eyes pop in amazement at the aviary
inside.

67. MR. LINCOLN'S AVIARY

Hundreds of canaries fill this room of the apartment. One
side is breeding cages and the other is flight cages. They
are all hand made and color-coded according to Mr. Lincoln's
breeding scheme.

BIRDY
This is great.

MR. LINCOLN
It's a good space, all right.
Smells a little strong 'cause
I can't open the window. One of
the neighbors might report me...

(MORE)

67. CONTINUED:

MR. LINCOLN (CONT.)
(leading Birdy across
the room)

This cage here is the strain
I'm gettin' rid of. Mean as
bumblebees, this bunch. They
were fightin' before they got
out of the nest.

Birdy holds Perta up to this cage of moss green canaries.
Three of the males fly over and immediately start to woo her.
Perta flits back and forth on her perch, eating up this
attention. A fierce, green canary with a flat head like a
hawk goes after the suitors.

Perta watches, crushed as her cheering squad is knocked
away one by one. The bully is giving her the eye, but she's
not sure about him at all.

MR. LINCOLN
That's the meanest of the lot.

BIRDY
You like him, Perta?

Perta looks at Birdy, then at the bully bird. Then she hops
around in circles on her perch.

BIRDY
She's not sure, Mr. Lincoln.
You think I could hold him on my
finger so we could get a closer
look?

MR. LINCOLN
That one'd sooner eat your
finger than sit on it, but
you're welcome to try.

As Mr. Lincoln begins to open the cage, Birdy smiles confidently

68. BIRDY'S BEDROOM DAY/INT.

The fierce green canary glares out from a small cage that
hangs suspended in Birdy's aviary. Perta circles the cage
as she flies around freely in the aviary. She lands on top
of it and peers inside, sizing this guy up. She looks out
of the aviary and QUEEPS.

Birdy looks up from where he's stretching a piece of fabric
across the aluminum skeleton of a huge wing. He QUEEPS
back at her a couple of times, trying to get the sound right.
Pausing from his work, Birdy walks over to the aviary and
speaks to Perta.

68. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

...I won't let him out 'til
you're sure about him, Perta.
But I wouldn't worry.

(to male canary)

I think he's a lot of bluff.
Aren't you?

Al walks into the room. Birdy turns toward him.

AL

How ya doin'?

(sees the new bird)

You got another one?

BIRDY

(smiles)

His name's Alfonso.

AL

What?

BIRDY

He likes to show off and fight
a lot.

AL

So you named him after me?
Thanks a lot.

BIRDY

It's not really his real name.

AL

What's his real name?

BIRDY

I don't know. I don't understand
canary yet.

Birdy smiles and gives Al his wiggly-eyed look.

AL

Yet?

BIRDY

Queeeeepppp?

AL

(laughs)

Ya know how weird this is getting,
don't you?

68. CONTINUED - 1:

BIRDY

Is it okay to use your name?
Just temporarily.

AL

Jesus... Okay, but you gotta
spell it with a "ph". I'm the
only Alfonso with an "f".

69. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

CLOSE ON Birdy. His eyelids flutter as Hannah steps into the cell.

HANNAH

Is he finished?

Al looks around at her from his seat in front of Birdy.

AL

Huh?... Oh, yeah.

Hannah comes over and gathers up the dishes.

HANNAH

Sorry it took so long.

AL

That's okay... Listen, would
it be okay if I stayed here
for a while more?

HANNAH

(thinks it over)

...Yeah. Why not?

AL

Without being locked in?

Hannah looks at Al. Clearly this is not something she's
supposed to do.

HANNAH

Okay... Take my key. Bring it
back to me when you're finished.

She hands Al the key.

AL

Thanks.

Hannah leaves. Al turns back toward Birdy, who's still
staring out the window. Al steps into his line of view.

69. CONTINUED

AL

What is this anyway, you think
you're gonna fly outta here?

Birdy just stares right through Al.

AL

Shit, you probably already have...

Al turns and gazes out the window himself. A FLAPPING
sound gradually fades in.

DISSOLVE TO:

70. FLASHBACK - BIRDY'S BACKYARD DAY/EXT.

Birdy is three feet off the ground flapping his arms as if
they were wings. He's suspended by a board set between two
saw horses. He has sandbag weights tied around each wrist.
The rope that secures these sandbags FLAPS against the board
with each stroke of Birdy's arms.

Al is watching this over the left field fence of the baseball
diamond. He hops the fence and walks toward Birdy.

Just then, Birdy's mother pops her head out the screened
porch door.

BIRDY'S MOTHER

Didn't I tell you to stop that!

BIRDY

I told you Mom, it's for gym.

BIRDY'S MOTHER

Well, it looks funny...

Al interrupts her with a wisecrack.

AL

Can I have my baseball back now?

Birdy's Mother scowls at Al, then ducks back into the house.

AL

I knew that'd get rid of her.
Ya know, I bet she buries them.
We just have to figure out where.

BIRDY

(as he flaps)

I think she burns them, Al.
They're gone for good.

70. CONTINUED:

AL
 (taking in the yard)
 Yeah, probably...

A timer BELL goes off. Birdy stops flapping. Sitting up on the board, he's hardly winded at all.

AL
 How long?

BIRDY
 The same, an hour. But I'm up to ten pounds now.

AL
 Jesus, with that and all the weight you lost, you could really clean up in wrestling.

BIRDY
 Al, that's forty pounds of flapping power.

AL
 (nods without understanding)
 ...Does that mean you're ready?

BIRDY
 Almost. All I need now is a tail.

71. A DUMP NEAR THE PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT DAY/EXT.

A low-flying jet ROARS overhead as it heads in for a runway of the nearby airport.

Birdy plants a long pole with an Argyle sock tied to the end of it. He watches as the Argyle fills with air, indicating the direction of the wind. Birdy seems satisfied. He looks over the forty foot drop at the edge of the dump hill. A small creek runs out from the bottom of it.

Birdy turns and paces off the length of the take-off path he's cleared amidst the rubbish.

His stride is limited by the silk material he's sewn between the legs of his pants to act as a flight tail. Kicking a couple of final tin cans out of the way, he steps up to Al.

Al is sitting on a bicycle that Birdy has rigged specially for this occasion. A platform juts from the front of the handlebars.

71. CONTINUED:

Birdy slips into the harness of his ornithopter. Its eight foot aluminum wings spread out from a rotating crankshaft contraption that Birdy buckles around his chest.

AL

You sure this is going to work?

BIRDY

Yeah, just make certain you stop at the edge. I don't want you or my bike going in the creek.

AL

How about you?

BIRDY

I've been practicing off my roof, Al. I can fall twenty feet without hurting myself.

AL

That's gotta be a forty foot drop out there, Birdy.

BIRDY

I know, but it's just a matter of weight versus density. At my weight, accelerating at thirty-two feet per second, my downward velocity isn't going to increase after I've fallen twenty feet or so.

AL

Birdy, what does that mean?

BIRDY

It means the worst thing that can happen is I get the wind knocked out of me.

AL

Yeah?

BIRDY

Sure, but it doesn't matter 'cause I'm going to fly anyway. Let's go.

Birdy climbs up onto the platform in front of the handle-bars. He test flaps the wings a couple of times. Looking straight ahead through the spread wings of the ornithopter, Al starts to laugh.

71. CONTINUED - 1:

AL
You look like a hood
ornament on some crazy
Rolls Royce or something.

Birdy smiles and does a few goofy test flaps.

BIRDY
Come on Al, let's get going
before my arms get cold.

AL
(stops laughing)
Yeah, it's freezing out here.
You set?

BIRDY
(readying himself)
Okay.

Al starts pedaling the bike like mad. Birdy crouches, ready to spring off.

72. AT THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF

Barreling at a breakneck pace, Al slams to a stop.

73. BIRDY

Wings outstretched, he springs off over the edge. Flapping like some gigantic silver bird, he soars straight out, his legs spread into a silk tail.

There isn't a trace of doubt on Birdy's face. He looks as if he's going to fly straight up toward the sun. But then he loses forward momentum and goes into a stall. Birdy begins to drop, feet first. He flaps his wings desperately, but it's no use. He falls from the sky and plummets into the creek.

AL

is already running down the side of the dump hill toward his fallen friend. Leaping and sliding through the rubbish, he trips on something and tumbles head over heels all the way down to the creek. He ends up face first in the muddy water.

74. IN THE CREEK

When Al finally pulls himself up, Birdy is already standing.

AL
Are you all right?

74. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

Yeah. I don't know what went wrong. ...You okay?

AL

Sure.

Waist deep in freezing water, Al watches Birdy unstrap his crumpled wings and search for a flaw in his design. Al SNEEZES

BIRDY

Gottzundheit!

75. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

Al is staring out the window.

AL

How come every time I tried to save your ass, I ended up getting sick?

Al turns toward his unresponsive friend. Birdy seems to be staring right through Al again. But now there is a strange, faint smile on his face.

AL

You thought that was funny, huh?... Who are you supposed to be, the Mona Lisa or what?
(he looks closer)
That is a smile, isn't it.

Al moves quickly toward the door.

76. WEISS'S OFFICE DAY/INT.

Al is sitting directly across from Dr. Weiss. He looks disappointed and confused.

AL

What do ya mean dissociative behavior? A smile's a smile!

WEISS

Not necessarily. It may simply have been an involuntary manifestation of some unconnected emotion. It would only be significant if it was reactive.

AL

He was reacting!

76. CONTINUED:

WEISS
To what?

AL
(wary)
...A joke.

WEISS
What joke?

AL
...Well, it was about how I
always used to get sick when he
was hurt...

WEISS
Hmmm. And you think he was
smiling at that?

AL
...Well, yeah... It's sort of
a private joke...

WEISS
Why don't you explain it to me?

AL
...I don't know if I can.
It's complicated...

Al is about to break through his reluctance to tell this
pigeon-holing psychiatrist about Birdy's flying. He's try-
ing to figure out exactly how to explain it when Weiss gets
impatient.

WEISS
I wish all this was giving me
some hope, but it's not
concrete progress. The
patient seemed to respond
more to the electroshock
therapy than he has to you.

AL
You gave him shock therapy!?

WEISS
It's a standard procedure in
cases like...

76. CONTINUED - 1:

AL

(bangs Weiss's desk
with his fist)
Goddammit! No wonder he can't
talk! Who the fuck do you
think you are anyway!?

WEISS

I'm his doctor, and your
superior officer. I'm
familiar with your anti-
authoritarian tendencies,
Sergeant, and I don't care
to see them here!

Al is trying to restrain himself. He's having a hard time.
Weiss watches this with scrutinizing eyes.

WEISS

Why do you think it's so
difficult for you to control
your violent impulses?

AL

It's not.

WEISS

Then why do they keep recurring?

Al feels trapped. He's hesitant.

WEISS

...Did your father ever beat
you excessively, Sergeant?

Al glances up at Weiss. He can't quite believe the psy-
chiatrist has seen through him so easily. He avoids the
question altogether.

AL

Look, I'm sorry. I'm
frustrated. I just want to
help my friend.

WEISS

I don't think you can.

AL

I can. I know it.

WEISS

I'm sorry, Sergeant. I just
don't see the point.

76. CONTINUED - 2:

Al desperately tries to think of some way to stall for more time.

AL

...Listen sir, I know you've wanted me to remember something about the patient's past that might help and, well, there's one thing, maybe it sounds crazy, but...

WEISS

What is it?

AL

Ya see, he lived just over the left field fence of our local baseball park and whenever anybody hit a homer, his mother would hide the balls. She wouldn't give them up for anything. It's weird, but it's almost like he felt guilty about it. I don't think a day went by when he wasn't apologizing to somebody and swearing he'd get their balls back. It was really kind of an obsession. He'd spend hours looking for those balls. Anyway, he never found them and I just thought, well, maybe it would do something if you could get her to send them here...

The strangeness of Al's story has intrigued Weiss.

WEISS

How long ago was this, Alfonso?

AL

(sure he's got him)
Just Al, sir. It went on all through high school. There must be an awful lot of baseballs in that collection.

Weiss writes something down, then gives Al his evaluative stare.

76. CONTINUED - 3:

WEISS

...Okay, we'll extend your
stay until I can find out
about getting the baseballs...
(looks hard at Al)
I hope they work.

AL

Yeah. Me too.

77. A GYM NIGHT/INT.

It's empty and eerily quiet. Ropes and rings dangle from the high ceiling. Lying on a bench, Al is hefting a barbell. He presses it a few times, but his concentration isn't there. He puts the barbell back on the rack and stares up at the dim, fluorescent lights.

Al hears VOICES as the door to the gym swings open. Looking across the room, he sees TWO VETERANS in wheel chairs. One of them has rolled his chair up beneath a climbing rope. As he pulls himself up the rope, Al can see that both of his legs are missing.

The still chairbound Vet spots Al. He calls over as his legless friend makes his way toward the ceiling.

VETERAN

How ya doin'?

AL

Hi.

Al watches the two Veterans for a moment, then he moves off.

AL (V.O.)

We didn't know what we were
getting into with this John
Wayne shit, did we?...

78. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NIGHT/INT.

Al is leaning his head against Birdy's observation window staring in at his friend.

AL

...Boy were we dumb... We
were always dumb... Before the
government it was some asshole
on a steet corner in Philly...
Remember with Sagessa and the
dogs, Birdy?

79. FLASHBACK - A STREET IN PHILADELPHIA DAY/EXT.

Birdy and Al are riding in the cab of a battered pick-up being driven by JOE SAGESSA, an incredibly fat South Philly hustler. An empty, preposterously makeshift cage is set on the bed of the truck.

SAGESSA

...So somebody buys a cute puppy for Christmas, then once they find out how much it eats and shits they dump it crosstown. Pretty soon ya got packs of wild dogs that are big, hungry, and not so cute. Some people are so upset that they're shootin' 'em.

BIRDY

How do you find homes for all these dogs?

SAGESSA

(gives him a sly look)
I tell ya that and you won't need ol' Joe Sagessa. You'll forget my dollar a day, dollar a dog proposition and go into business for yourselves, right?

AL

This ain't like you, Sagessa. Since when are you out to make the world a better place?

SAGESSA

(grins)
You ain't ever heard of 'lightened self-interest? The way I figure it, we can do a good deed and make a buck besides.

80. ANOTHER STREET IN PHILADELPHIA DAY/EXT.

CLOSE ON the narrow-eyed, heavy joweled Joe Sagessa as he turns his head back and forth searching for something. In an almost comically dim-witted double take, he finally spots it. Sagessa cries out as if he's sighted Moby Dick.

SAGESSA

There she is!

80. CONTINUED:

Birdy and Al are standing next to Sagessa as he readies his ridiculously huge hunting net. Tightly grasping the stubby handle of this four foot wide, webbed contraption, he warily begins to close in on his prey. Then he stops and holds up his hand to caution his young helpers.

SAGESSA

Okay now. Watch me. Slow and dangerous. Ya gotta let 'em know who you are.

Al rolls his eyes at Birdy as they watch the slow and dangerous, overweight Joe Sagessa fearlessly square off against his adversary -- a small mongrel Terrier. Joe approaches it as if he were Frank Buck stalking a ferocious lion.

The Terrier watches him quizzically, then lets out a questioning YIP. Joe responds to this mighty challenge by dropping down to his hands and knees like a dog and GROWLING fiercely.

The little Terrier YIPS again. Suddenly, a whole pack of dogs, some quite large, appear from around a corner. They all gather around the Terrier. Fear fills Joe's eyes as he slowly rises from his dog-like position. He never takes his eyes off the pack as he speaks his courageous words in trembling tones.

SAGESSA

Okay, we got 'em now.
(eyeing the
small Terrier)
I'll take this mean one.
He's the leader.

Al and Birdy begin to stretch out a cumbersome net between them. Sagessa dives for the Terrier. Missing by a mile, he falls flat on his face. The whole pack of dogs run over him as they charge around Al and Birdy's net. Trying to adjust the position of the trap, Birdy and Al only manage to entangle themselves. They fall to the ground laughing.

81. A SERIES OF STREETS AND ALLEYS DAY/EXT.

Birdy and Al look like urban gauchos as they hang on the runner of the truck with their dog nets. Sagessa is driving fast as they chase packs of mangy, misfit mongrels down narrow, garbage strewn streets.

82. SAGESSA'S TRUCK DUSK/EXT.

A full house of YELPING and WHINING DOGS are imprisoned in the makeshift cage.

82. CONTINUED:

No longer caught up in the chase, Al and Birdy look very unhappy as they sit in the cab. Al is eyeing the self-satisfied Sagessa as they move past the outskirts of the city. Birdy keeps turning back to look at the dogs.

AL

Where are we goin', anyway?

SAGESSA

I told ya, that's my department.
You guys wanna get out here or
what?

AL

Listen, Sagessa...

Al is interrupted by the persistent HONKS of a tank-like Plymouth that has sped up beside the truck. An irate older man, MR. KOHLER, is shaking his fist as he shouts up at the truck.

MR. KOHLER

You sons of bitches! You got
my dog!

Kohler swerves toward Sagessa's truck to try and force it to a stop. Sagessa veers onto the shoulder of the road, then steps on the gas and speeds ahead of the angry old man. He turns onto a deserted dirt road.

SAGESSA

Fuck! He's crazy!

BIRDY

Stop. We should give him his
dog.

SAGESSA

Bullshit! We're almost there!

AL

Where?!

83. AN OLD BARN AND STABLES DUSK/EXT.

Sagessa pulls to a stop in an old place at the rear of a stable. He jumps out of the cab. Birdy and Al quickly jump out after him. They practically gag at the nauseating smell that washes over them.

Birdy and Al watch Sagessa as he moves past a corral of old, spavined-looking horses and into a building.

83. CONTINUED:

AL

Hey!...

Then they see it. Inside the building, a group of men are standing in blood hacking at huge chunks of horse flesh. This is obviously a slaughterhouse. The whole place is swarming with big, blue flies.

Al and Birdy's horrified gaze fixes on a Man carrying an armful of freshly cut chunks of meat. He walks out to the side of the building and dumps them into what looks like a gigantic meat-grinder. Pulling on a cord, he starts its gasoline motor. The engine CLATTERS like a machine gun as thick clouds of smoke fill the air.

Suddenly, Mr. Kohler's Plymouth skids to a stop right next to Al and Birdy. Kohler leaps from the car just as all of the lights in the barn and stables DIM AND FLICKER. Al and Birdy don't understand what's happening.

AL

What's going on?

KOHLER

They're electrocuting them,
you little Nazis!

AL

We didn't know...

KOHLER

(cuts him off)

Where's my dog!?

Sagessa emerges from the building with two mean-looking Men wearing bloody aprons. They grab Kohler as he's moving toward Sagessa's truck.

KOHLER

Let go of me! I want my dog!

(pointing to truck)

There he is!

Al and Birdy try to help Kohler, but the Two Men knock them aside. Birdy is thrown against Sagessa's truck. Al falls into a stack of boxed cans. As he scrambles to get up, he notices the markings on the boxes.

AL

(to Sagessa)

You ass hole! You're killing
them to make dog food!

83. CONTINUED - 1:

SAGESSA

(with a sadistic smile)

Dogs gotta eat, don't they?

Sagessa's smile freezes when he hears the cage to his truck swing open. Birdy grabs Mr. Kohler's mutt as the other dogs scatter down the dirt road. Sagessa and his cohorts are quickly after them. Birdy, Al, Mr. Kohler and his mutt get into the Plymouth.

As they speed away, Al stares out the window at the receding slaughterhouse.

84. PRESENT - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NIGHT/INT.

Al is still staring in at Birdy.

AL

...I wonder whatever happened to those dogs... I bet they didn't get away...

Al watches Birdy for a moment, then walks down the corridor.

85. INSIDE BIRDY'S CELL

Birdy's head seems to cock a moment before he shifts his abstracted gaze to the observation window.

86. THE CELL DOOR WINDOW

It's empty. Al is gone. In a moment, a yellow canary FLUTTERS briefly behind the glass.

BIRDY (V.O.)

Looking at Perta, I wonder whether she's thinking when she flies or if she just knows...

DISSOLVE TO:

87. FLASHBACK - BIRDY'S BEDROOM DAY/INT.

Inside her aviary, Perta is staring at the blue sky beyond Birdy's closed window. Birdy is crouched on the floor fiddling with the pin of one of his ornithopter wings.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...I'm starting to worry that I'll never really fly the way I've been going... As scary as a bird's life must be, at least they have that. They can always fly away...

87. CONTINUED

Displeased with his findings, Birdy puts his ornithopter wing down and stares at it. Perta QUEEPS. He turns to her.

BIRDY

What?

(Perta QUEEPS again)

Alphonso won't sing to you, is that it?

Birdy lets out a high warbling WHISTLE. It's immediately mimicked and topped by the green male canary, which is now flying free in the aviary. Birdy smiles at this predictable showing-off. As he steps up to the aviary, the male canary stops singing and turns away from him. Perta looks out and QUEEPS.

BIRDY

Want to come out?

Birdy opens the door and holds out his finger for Perta to hop on. But his beautiful canary shoots by him and flies straight for the window.

Birdy starts to cry out, but his sound is choked by the SOUND of Perta hitting the glass in full flight. She falls fluttering to the floor.

Birdy dashes over to Perta. He carefully picks her up. Her eyes are closed by a pale, bluish, almost transparent lid. She's unconscious, limp in his cupped hands. Her neck is hanging loosely over the end of his fingers. It looks broken.

Birdy breathes warm air over her. He pets her softly. Still Perta doesn't move. His eyes swell with tears. He closes his hands and holds Perta softly. When he opens them, she starts breathing lightly. She opens her eyes, blinks, then slowly struggles up. She looks at Birdy and manages a QUEEP.

Tears are streaming down Birdy's face, but now he's smiling as his canary hops back and forth between the palms of his hands.

88. PRESENT - BACK IN BIRDY'S CELL NIGHT/INT.

Birdy is still crouched in front of the small cell door window. In the moonlight, a single tear glistens in the corner of his eye.

88. CONTINUED:

89. BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

It's quiet. Late afternoon light is pouring through the high drow of the cell. Al is standing near the bed staring at Birdy, who is leaning against the wall in his squatting position. He seems to be asleep. His chin rests against his bony chest. Al moves over to wake him up. Suddenly, Birdy jerks up. His eyes pop open.

Al is startled. But Birdy just watches him with empty eyes. Al meets his gaze.

AL

...Okay Birdy, I'm not giving up on you. Time's runnin' out here and I'm gonna get you to talk to me even if I have to punch you out.

Birdy only shifts his weight slightly. There's desperation in Al's voice.

AL

I'm not kiddin' around, Birdy. I can't hold Weiss off anymore. I almost told him about the flying yesterday.

(Birdy turns away)

Goddammit, listen to me! You wanna fly. He'll let you fly. He's gonna send you air freight to some giant cage in a fulltime nuthouse. Shit, he's probably gonna send me too. We'll have perches, feeding cups, the whole deal. Maybe your mom'll even dig up your old pigeon suit. Then Weiss can sell you to a sideshow in Atlantic City!

Birdy turns back toward Al. He looks almost angry for a brief moment. Al presses on for a reaction.

AL

All right Birdy, it's time to start flapping your wings and peeping... I don't believe it... Ya know, if you really want to spend the rest of your life as a bird, then at least be consistent. Look at you. You don't hop like a bird, you don't really sit like one. And you sure as hell can't fly like one!

89. CONTINUED:

Birdy is staring intensely at Al. His eyes are no longer empty.

AL
If you don't like what I'm
saying, Birdy, then why don't
you tell me to shut up?

Birdy just continues to stare hard at Al. Al glances over and sees Hannah standing in the doorway with Birdy's food. She's watching this disapprovingly. But Al turns back to Birdy before she can say anything.

AL
Here ya go, here comes Hannah
to feed you. You like that,
don't you?

HANNAH
What are you doing, Al?

AL
I'm gonna watch you feed him.
(back to Birdy)
It's fun watching Birdy get
fed. He's cute when he's fed!

HANNAH
Stop taunting him.

AL
Look, he's reacting to me!
He's giving me that pissed-
off look of his!
(to Birdy)
You're pissed, aren't you?!

HANNAH
(angry)
Will you stop it?! It isn't
working!

AL
How do you know?

HANNAH
It's obvious, isn't it?

Al looks at Birdy. He can see that the anger that was in Birdy's eyes has gone. They're blank again.

AL
You fucked it up! Why'd you
have to come in!?

89. CONTINUED - 1:

HANNAH
'Cause I work here. He's
part of my job.

AL
(hurting)
Yeah, well he's part of my
goddamn life!...

Hannah holds Al's glare. But there's pity mixed in with her anger. Al turns away, embarrassed by his vulnerability. He feels exposed.

AL
Ah, fuck it.

He storms out the door. After a moment, Hannah goes after him.

90. THE HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Al is walking quickly past a row of Patients in wheel chairs. Some are hooked into suspended I.V. bottles, others are strapped to the back of their chairs. They're in various states of stupor in front of their rooms. They look like somebody's rolled them into the hall to air out.

Hannah catches up to Al and tries to stop him.

HANNAH
Al...
(Al keeps going,
she grabs his arm)
Al, I want to talk to you.

AL
(doesn't want
to hear it)
What?

Hannah doesn't quite know how to put what she wants to say. She's searching for her words when one of the patients starts to WAIL louder and louder. It's as if he's picking up on Al's agitated state. An Orderly tries unsuccessfully to calm the Patient down.

HANNAH
...Shit...let's go in here.

She steps into a supply room. Al glances uneasily at the disturbed Patient. Then, reluctantly, he follows Hannah.

91. THE SUPPLY ROOM

It's wall to wall bottles and linens. Al and Hannah have to stand close in this small, enclosed space.

HANNAH

...Listen...back there...I
didn't mean to make you feel
worse... I know he means a
lot to you...

Al still feels too shaky and vulnerable to respond. Hannah's so close he can feel her breath. It's the nearest he's been to a woman in a long time. He looks away.

HANNAH

...Al?
(gently touches him)
...It's okay.

As Al allows her to turn his gaze to her, his defenses collapse. His hurt turns to raw need. When he meets Hannah's eyes, he can't stop himself. He moves to Hannah and holds onto her.

Hannah is a little taken back by Al's hungry need. She hangs on to him, waiting for it to subside. But it doesn't. Al starts to kiss her neck. Hannah is beginning to respond. When Al reaches for the warmth of her breasts, she pulls him to her. She instinctively starts to kiss Al's face. Suddenly, Al freezes. He backs off.

AL

I'm sorry.

HANNAH

Don't be.

AL

It's just, I haven't touched
anyone for a long time... I
didn't mean to grab you like
that.

HANNAH

It's okay, Al. Really.

Hannah's looking straight at him. Al can't hold her gaze.

AL

I gotta go.

92. RENALDI'S ROOM NIGHT/INT.

Al enters quietly. He looks at Renaldi, who is dead asleep in the other bunk. Then he walks into the bathroom.

93. INSIDE THE BATHROOM

Flicking on a light, Al stares at himself in the mirror over the sink for a moment. Then, he reaches up and starts to unfasten the bandage that covers his face. As he unravels it, he starts to reveal some of his ugly, painfully unhealed flesh. Stopping, he looks at it fearfully. Al quickly wraps the bandages back around his face.

94. BIRDY'S CELL NIGHT/INT.

Birdy, crouched on the floor, stares at the small, wire mesh window that is set into his door. A perfect D sharp note sings in the air.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...I'm beginning to understand something of canary. It isn't a language like ours with individual words, or words put into sentences...

95. FLASHBACK - THE AVIARY IN BIRDY'S BEDROOM NIGHT/INT.

The D sharp note continues for a moment, then turns into a joyous song. With his chest puffed out, the green male canary is serenading Perta like an opera singer.

Birdy is lying in bed with the lights off, listening to Alfonso's song.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...In the singing, you let your mind go, not think, and it comes to you clearer than words. It comes as if you'd thought it yourself. Canary is much more feeling, more abstract than any language... It's the song of someone who knows how to fly...

96. BIRDY'S BEDROOM MORNING/INT.

Birdy awakens slowly from a deep sleep. There is a stain on the sheets that are gathered around his waist. He's had a wet dream. Groggily, he gets out of bed and puts on a robe. Noticing that the birds in the aviary are also awake, he takes a pair of binoculars from a drawer. He pulls a chair up close to the aviary and gazes through them.

96. CONTINUED:

HIGHLY MAGNIFIED - PERTA

can be seen sitting peacefully on a small nest of eggs. Her eyes dart to Birdy.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...In a dream last night, I was trying to decide what I am. When I sleep I'm giving myself strength. I'm reaching out for the force to fly. I love Perta so, I want to be one with her. I feel all alone. She tells me the beginning egg is within her. She wants me to put my seed inside her and know it is buried warmly in her egg...

With a flicker of his wings, Alphonso dives down to a bowl of food at the bottom of the aviary. Returning to Perta, he lowers the food into her expectant mouth.

BIRDY

is becoming totally obsessed with his world. Without lowering his binoculars, he moves his chair closer to the aviary.

EVEN CLOSER - ON PERTA'S NEST

Focusing in on a movement in one of Perta's eggs. In a second, there is more movement. Then, suddenly, miraculously, the egg starts to crack from within. A tiny leg breaks through the shell, then another leg, then a wing. Finally, a fuzzy-fleshed baby canary struggles out of the shell.

BIRDY

lowers his binoculars. His eyes are glazed. He looks out the window. Night is turning into day as light begins to fill the room. He looks through the binoculars again.

CLOSE AGAIN - PERTA'S NEST

Now there are six baby canaries in the nest. They're beginning to prepare themselves for flight. Stretching and flapping their barely feathered wings, each one moves tentatively to the edge of the nest.

BIRDY (V.O.)

It occurs to me that all I did was put two birds in the aviary, some food and water and nothing else and now there are six of them. I know this is perfectly natural, it's one of the things

(MORE)

96. CONTINUED - 1:

BIRDY (V.O., CONT.)

life is all about. But to see
it happen in my bedroom, under
my own eyes, is magic...

The babies' determined efforts to fly are bravely comic. At first, they fall straight to the floor. But as their confidence grows, the short falls turn into fluttering, controlled crash landings. Then half-gliding bad landings. Finally, one of the baby canaries goes up instead of down. With a great deal of effort and frantic wing flapping, it somehow manages to make it up to the feeding perch near the cage door. Unfortunately, as soon as it lands, it teeters and falls off the other side.

BIRDY (V.O.)

All I want to do now is watch
the birds. I'm getting so I don't
care about the things that happen
in the outside world. I feel
turned upside down...

Undaunted, the little canary struggles up and tries again. This time, it manages to balance on the perch. Then, in a feat of reckless abandon and blind confidence, it takes its first wavering flight around the aviary.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...Somehow the babies seem to know
their place is in the air. It must
be the knowing, not the flapping of
wings... I'm at the edge of where
you make things happen or they
just happen to you...

BIRDY

is lost to the world as he watches through his binoculars.
A faint VOICE is trying to call him back.

VOICE

...Birdy?

It's Al. But Birdy barely hears him as he continues to gaze into this other world.

AL

Birdy, what are you doing?

Birdy finally comes out of it when Al steps up to him and touches his shoulder. Lowering the binoculars, he blinks up at Al. He has red circles around his eyes from pressing them into the binoculars.

AL

Where were you?

BIRDY

...Oh...just watching the birds.

96. CONTINUED - 3:

AL

Well come on, you can't just stay here all day again. Let's go do something.

BIRDY

(absently)

What?

AL

Let's find those baseballs. We could dig up the whole yard before your mom gets back.

BIRDY

(looks at the aviary)

I told you, Al. We won't find them.

AL

Okay, then let's try the ornithopter again.

BIRDY

(watching his birds)

I don't want to fly mechanically.

AL

What's that mean?

BIRDY

It won't work, Al.

AL

Don't start getting realistic on me, Birdy... Okay, I got another idea. Let's enlist.

BIRDY

Huh?

AL

Come on, they're gonna draft your ass anyway. Let's go together... Think of it. High adventure. Foreign intrigue. Exotic women.

BIRDY

You want to look at the birds through the binoculars, Al?

AL

Birdy, I can see the birds from here. What's going on with you?

96. CONTINUED - 4:

BIRDY

I've been working with the birds
a lot. Look, I want to show
you something.

(opens aviary)

Come on, Perta...

Perta hops on his finger. Moving to the open window, Birdy
looks back at Al.

BIRDY

Watch this...

Birdy takes Perta and tosses her into the air. His yellow
canary flies high up into the sky.

AL

(unimpressed)

Yeah, well, that's what birds
do all right. Fly.

BIRDY

No, watch...

In a moment Perta flies back into the room and lands on
Birdy's finger. He strokes her gently as he carries her back
to the aviary.

BIRDY

See? She comes back. Like a
pigeon.

AL

Great... Listen, I'm gonna go
play some ball. I don't suppose
you want to come, do you?

Birdy's involved with the canaries again.

BIRDY

No thanks.

AL

No, of course not...
(starts to leave, then)
Hey, I hear you're going to the
prom with Doris Robinson.

BIRDY

No I'm not.

AL

Your mom told my mom you were.

96. CONTINUED - 5:

BIRDY

Well I'm not.

AL

Why not? This'd be her first date all year. She's gotta be horny. Have you caught the tits on that girl? They're gigantic! You could probably get laid for the price of an orchid.

BIRDY

(watching his canaries)

She's just a small to medium size, reddish-colored cinnamon, Al. I can't imagine her flying.

AL

(looks at Birdy
in disbelief)

Jesus... I'll see you later, Birdy.

Al leaves. Birdy watches his canaries for a moment, then moves to the window. Picking up his binoculars, he looks outside.

OUTSIDE BIRDY'S WINDOW

Above the roofs and smokestacks of South Philadelphia, the sky turns from gray to blue. Fleecy clouds drift across its wide open space.

BIRDY

turns back toward his aviary. He walks across the room and takes his seat in front of it. Lifting the binoculars once again to his eyes, he peers inside.

THE AVIARY

CLOSE, intimate observations of the baby canaries as they flutter and fly about the aviary. With delicate wings, their flight is now effortless. They dive and swoop around Perta as she sits calmly perched in the center of the aviary. Their motion is hypnotic in its gracefulness.

As the WHISPER of these fluttering wings grows, SOMEONE STEPS INTO THE BINOCULARS' FIELD OF VISION. At first, only a hand is seen as Perta lights onto a finger. Then the back of a head comes slowly into view. The head turns.

It's BIRDY. He's standing in the aviary staring straight back at the binoculars.

97. BIRDY'S POV - FROM INSIDE THE AVIARY

As if in a dream, Birdy can see himself outside the aviary. He looks gigantic as he sits in his chair gazing through the artificial glass eyes of the binoculars.

Slowly, magically, the POV begins to float, then hover. It circles the aviary. The aviary door swings open by itself. The POV glides out the door and past Birdy's huge, seated human figure. It soars out the window and into the clouds.

FLYING. Rising as if being lifted from above. Through the whiteness. Into pure blue air. And HIGHER. Up against the sky. Touching nowhere.

98. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

Al steps in front of the white wall of Birdy's cell. He's holding a tray of food in his hand. He looks somewhat worn and ragged as he sets it down in front of Birdy.

AL

(softly)

Okay, here you go.

But Birdy doesn't even hear Al. He's staring far beyond his barred window into the sky. Al holds a spoonful of food up to Birdy's mouth.

AL

Come on Birdy, go ahead.
I'm sorry about before.

It's obvious from the anxious expectation on Al's face that he needs to feed Birdy. But Birdy's gone.

AL

Birdy...

Birdy doesn't move a muscle. It's as if Al weren't even there. Al's tone is almost pleading.

AL

Ya gotta eat.

Still nothing. Al puts the spoon back down.

AL

Okay, I'll just leave it here
for you...

Al rises and tentatively walks toward the door.

98. CONTINUED:

AL
(turning back to Birdy)
You gotta come back, Birdy...

Al leaves. After he closes the door, the FLUTTERING OF WINGS slowly fills the silence. Birdy continues to stare out the barred window.

99. BIRDY'S POV

DRIFTING THROUGH THE CLOUDS beyond the bars.

BIRDY (V.O.)
I don't know how long I was
dreaming the dream before I began
to know. It's hard to tell when
I'm dreaming unless I catch myself
doing it. I'm not sure why I
should. The things in my other life
are getting harder and harder to
believe...

There is the faint sound of a RINGING telephone. Then it stops.

100. FLASHBACK - BIRDY'S ROOM DAY/INT.

Suddenly, Birdy's Mother barges into the room. Birdy is still staring into the aviary through his binoculars.

BIRDY'S MOTHER
Doris Robinson is on the phone.
I want you to talk with her about
the prom.

Birdy is startled. He pulls the binoculars away from his eyes and blinks at his Mother. He has the glazed look of someone yanked abruptly into consciousness.

BIRDY'S MOTHER
Don't give me that look!

BIRDY
What?

BIRDY'S MOTHER
(looks disapprovingly
around the room)
I swear if you don't get out
of this room and go to that prom
like all the other kids, I'm
getting rid of these birds!
Every last one of them!

That gets Birdy's attention. His Mother SLAMS out the door.

101. THE PORCH OF DORIS ROBINSON'S HOUSE NIGHT/EXT.

Birdy looks like a penguin as he stands stiffly in his oversized tuxedo. He rings the doorbell.

MRS. ROBINSON, a large matronly woman, opens the door and appraises him.

MRS. ROBINSON

You must be Doris's young man.
Won't you come in?

102. THE ROBINSON HOUSE - NIGHT/INT.

Birdy is sitting uncomfortably in the dead silence of the huge house. When he HEARS the stiff crackling whisper of a crinoline petticoat, he looks up the long, curved staircase that winds down to the foyer.

Doris Robinson makes a grand, seemingly practiced entrance at the top of the staircase. It's as if she were trying her best to be Olivia DeHavilland in "Gone With The Wind." Coming five steps down, she pauses, bats her eyelashes, and smiles demurely at Birdy. Then she proceeds the rest of the way, twisting her hips back and forth while attempting to appear as if she's gliding.

DORIS

(shyly)

Hello.

BIRDY

(awkward)

Hi.

Mrs. Robinson comes in with a boxed orchid corsage.

MRS. ROBINSON

I'm glad I took the precaution of having an extra one of these around... I just took it out of the refrigerator so it's fresh. Doesn't it look divine?

102. CONTINUED:

Mrs. Robinson sticks it in front of Birdy's face. Doris nearly swoons at the sight. Birdy hates it.

DORIS

Would you pin it on me?

Mrs. Robinson shoves the corsage into Birdy's hands. Then she hands him a long pin. Birdy turns to pin it on Doris, but he can only stare at her ample, freckled cleavage. With the plunging neckline of her gown, there's no place to pin it except raw flesh.

BIRDY

...Where?

Mrs. Robinson starts to giggle. As Doris blushes, her freckles get darker. Embarrassed, Birdy doesn't know what to do.

MRS. ROBINSON

(taking the corsage)

...Here, I know.

103. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM NIGHT/INT.

Doris's corsage is perched on her wrist like some exotic bird. It's just beneath Birdy's nose as they dance to the BAND's mediocre rendition of that obligatory slow song, "Ebb Tide."

The Senior Prom is in full swing. Birdy and Doris are squeezed awkwardly close amidst a crunch of swaying, necking couples. Birdy closes his eyes as if he could shut it all out.

When he opens them, he's staring straight at Al, who has worked his way over to Birdy. Dancing cheek to cheek with a gorgeous Blonde, Al holds out his hands like he's supporting heavy breasts. Then he wiggles his eyebrows at Birdy and dances away.

DORIS

This is nice, isn't it?

Doris is trying for smalltalk. But she's so uncertain that it comes out sounding like a genuine question.

BIRDY

(weakly)

Yeah.

LATER - THE DANCE FLOOR

Doris is hopping and bopping without a trace of rhythm to "Rockin' Robin." Birdy's half-heartedly going along with her, but he'd rather be dead.

103. CONTINUED:

LATER - THE REFRESHMENT TABLE

Doris is sipping her punch and watching the dancers enthusiastically. A few of the graduating seniors are wearing military uniforms, having just enlisted. Jim Maloney seems particularly proud of his. He gives Birdy a dirty look. But Birdy doesn't notice. He's watching his Father, who is entering a crowded boys' bathroom with a mop and pail.

BIRDY

(to Doris)

I'll be right back.

Doris nods. Birdy makes his way across the crowded floor. He steps up to the bathroom just as his father is exiting.

BIRDY

Hi Dad.

BIRDY'S FATHER

Hello son.

(gestures to his
mop and bucket)

Kind of a mess in there with
all these boys drinking.

BIRDY

Yeah... I was looking for you
before...

BIRDY'S FATHER

Oh... Well, I didn't want to
embarrass you with your date.

He indicates his janitor's mop and bucket again.

BIRDY

You wouldn't embarrass me.

Birdy's Father smiles then looks away. He pulls a five dollar bill from his wallet. He holds it out to Birdy.

BIRDY'S FATHER

I wanted to give you this so
you could go someplace
afterwards... Your girl
there is real pretty.

BIRDY

(taking the five)

She's not really my girl, Dad.
But thanks.

103. CONTINUED - 1:

Birdy gives his father a smile then turns back toward Doris. The BAND is playing "Tears On My Pillow." As Birdy walks across the floor, Doris spots him. She waves to him. She wants to dance slow and close again. Birdy heads toward her like a man going to his own execution.

104. A NECKING HIDEAWAY - NIGHT/EXT.

Doris cruises past the parked cars of already necking couples. She pulls to a stop and looks over at Birdy.

DORIS

Well, here we are.

Birdy manages a nod. Doris extends her arm out for him to take off her corsage.

DORIS

I'd like to keep it as a souvenir.

Birdy helps her take it off. She places the corsage on the dashboard above the glowing radio. "Only You" croons softly as Doris gazes up at Birdy. Reaching back, she unzips her gown and reveals her large white breasts to a stunned Birdy.

DORIS

...I know you didn't want to take me tonight. But you've been very nice. Now you can have what you want...

Birdy just stares at Doris and her breasts. He's enticed but overwhelmed by her awkward gesture. He doesn't know what to do or say.

Doris didn't know what to expect, but it wasn't this. Suddenly embarrassed, she quickly pulls her gown back up.

DORIS

I'm sorry.

(starting to cry)

I'm not very good at this.

BIRDY

It's okay. It doesn't matter.

That seems to help a little. Doris chokes back her tears. She looks past Birdy to the other parked cars. Their windows are steamy, but it's clear what's going on inside.

DORIS

How do they do this?

104. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

I don't know.

DORIS

We better get back...

Doris straightens her gown again, then starts the car.

DORIS

...Will I see you again?

Birdy tries to be nice, but it comes out all wrong.

BIRDY

Sure. I'll see you in school
on Monday.

It's not what Doris wanted to hear. She starts crying softly as she drives away. Birdy feels helpless and totally out of his element. He can't wait to get back to his room.

105. BIRDY'S ROOM NIGHT/INT.

Birdy steps into his room, closing his door carefully as if to make sure it will seal him from the world. He loosens his tie and unbuttons the noose-like collar of his tuxedo. Then he walks over to his window and opens it.

As the warm night air washes over him, Birdy starts to take off the rest of his clothes. He does this at first slowly, almost unconsciously. But as the coat, then the shirt, then the pants are dropped to the floor, Birdy seems to gain some purpose. He wants to be free of the remnants of his earlier experience. Finally, he stands naked in front of the window. He looks out into the moonlit sky.

BIRDY (V.O.)

There's nothing in my life to
keep me here anymore. I wish
I could die and be born again
as a bird. I could live in
Perta's nest and be warmed
under her feathers and snuggle
with my brothers and sisters,
feeling my wings getting
stronger...

Birdy is yearning for the sky, but he can't reach it. Turning back to his room, he moves through the darkness to find his binoculars. But as he takes them from his chair, they slip from his grasp. There is the dull thud of solid glass CRACKING. Birdy picks up the binoculars and looks at them. One of the lenses is spider-webbed. He gazes through them at his aviary.

105. CONTINUED:

THROUGH THE SPIDER-WEBBED GLASS

A dark, distorted vision of fluttering shapes and colors.

BIRDY

puts down the binoculars and goes inside the aviary. He seems soothed by his birds as they flock around him. There are almost twenty canaries now, all QUEEPING and SINGING.

Stretching out on the floor, Birdy lies flat on his back. Perta lights gently upon him. He hugs her to his bare chest, then slowly strokes her feathers as he stares up into the aviary.

BIRDY'S POV

Flying canaries fill his whole vision.

BIRDY (V.O.)

The dream is as real to me now
as my waking life. I don't know
where one begins and the other
ends. I wish I could tell Al,
but I'm afraid to...

The canaries swoop in and out of the shadowy moonlight. After a moment, Birdy's POV floats upwards toward the birds. He's once again outside himself -- FLYING.

Down below, he can see himself lying on the floor with a glazed expression on his face.

106. The aviary doors open by themselves again. Birdy's POV glides out and across the room and through the open window. It soars into the moonlit sky.

BIRDY (V.O.)

...In my dreams, nothing holds
me down. Everything is out and
away...

The rumble of DISTANT THUNDER. A flash of lightning.

107. FLASHBACK - VIETNAM DAY/EXT.

A torrential downpour is falling from the sky. Al is crouched in the mud. A fatally wounded Soldier lies bleeding in his arms.

Al screams frantically for help, but his cries are strangely SILENT. Heavy mortar fire, also silent, explodes around his open position.

107. CONTINUED:

Two soldiers carrying an empty stretcher start to race across the field of fire toward Al.

They've almost reached him when one steps on a mine. The mine springs into the air.

Al watches for one brief, horrifying second before the mine EXPLODES. Its blast RESOUNDS as the Two Soldiers are instantly killed.

Al throws his hands up to his face. Blood pours through his fingers.

108. PRESENT - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NIGHT/INT.

CLOSE ON AL as he stares through the wire mesh glass of Birdy's observation window. His hands drop from his bandaged face. He cries out from his waking nightmare.

AL

Jesus Birdy... I'm losing it...

Al sits down on the floor against Birdy's door. He needs Birdy. He's there if Birdy needs him.

109. THE CORRIDOR MORNING/INT.

Al is dead asleep against Birdy's door. The sound of someone SINGING just down the hall wakes him. It's Renaldi. He's moving toward Al with a large, brown-wrapped package in his arms.

RENALDI

Here comes Santa Claus,
Here comes Santa Claus,
Riding down Santa Claus lane...

Renaldi steps up to Al and dumps the heavy package in Al's lap.

AL

What's this?

RENALDI

I don't know. Your friend's mother sent it to you.

AL

You're kidding?!

(Renaldi shakes his head)

Nah, it couldn't be...

110. INSIDE BIRDY'S CELL

Al can barely contain his excitement as he enters with the suitcase. Renaldi watches from the doorway.

AL

Okay Birdy, I got ya now!
Wait 'til ya see this!

Al lugs the suitcase over to Birdy. Laying it down so it will open right in front of his friend, Al emcees his presentation.

AL

And now, direct from their
endless engagement in South
Philadelphia, ya thought
you'd never see them but
here they are...

(opening the suitcase
with a flourish)

Ta da!

At least a hundred moldy, dirty baseballs are piled into the suitcase. A few of them roll out onto the floor around Birdy. But he doesn't even see them. He's still gazing out into the sky beyond his barred window.

AL

It's the baseballs! Your mom
sent them! Can you believe it?!

From the doorway, Renaldi can see that Birdy isn't going to respond. He can't bear to watch. He leaves. But Al doesn't give up.

AL

Come on, goddammit, this is
it! This is your last chance.
You gotta give me some kind of
reaction!

Al watches Birdy pleadingly. Suddenly, he slings the suitcase against the wall. Balls fly everywhere.

AL

(almost crying)

Come on, I need you. If Weiss
gets a look inside my head,
he's gonna lock me up too!

(MORE)

110. CONTINUED:

AL (CONT.)

(then, softly)

I'm scared, Birdy. I'm more scared now than I was in the war and I was more scared there than anybody I knew...

Al sees that Birdy doesn't hear him. He looks down at the baseballs that are spread out across the floor. Then he sits down among them.

AL

Talk to me again, Birdy...

111. FLASHBACK - BIRDY'S ROOM MORNING/INT.

Al peeks into the room and whispers.

AL

Birdy?

Entering, Al looks around. His prom tuxedo looks rumpled from a hard night.

AL

Birdy, where are you?

Finally, Al spots Birdy asleep on the floor of the aviary. The canaries are sitting all along his prone body. Perta is perched on his bare chest.

As Al steps up to the aviary, the canaries flutter into the air. Birdy wakes up. It takes him a moment to focus on Al.

AL

(laughs at his
naked friend)

What happened, you get so hot with Doris you forgot to put your clothes back on?... If your old lady saw you now she'd have a stroke!

Birdy slowly gets up and steps from the aviary. He begins to dress.

AL

Okay loverboy, tell me about Doris. With plenty of details.

BIRDY

There's nothing to tell.

111. CONTINUED:

AL

Uh huh. Don't give me this gentleman of honor crap. I wanna hear about last night.

BIRDY

(gazing out his window)

I'm not sure I could even explain it to you.

AL

I knew it! I knew she'd do it! Tell me what happened.

BIRDY

Not with her, Al. With me. I flew. I really know what it feels like...

AL

What are you talking about? What do you mean you flew? How?

BIRDY

I'm not sure. It's not something you can take apart. When I do it, it's like in a dream. Only it's not a dream... The thing is, Al, you can't really put it in words. You just have to feel it.

AL

You're telling me you can fly like a bird?

BIRDY

When I fly, I am a bird.

AL

This is getting too weird, Birdy. Ya gotta stop it with all this.

BIRDY

(hurt)

...I figured if anybody'd understand, it'd be you, Al.

AL

Well, I don't. I don't even want to hear about it anymore.

111. CONTINUED - 1:

BIRDY

Why?

AL

'Cause I'm tired of it. We used to have fun together. Now you're always off by yourself flying around inside your head or something... I hope your goddamn dream or whatever it is goes away. I think it's bullshit.

Birdy stares at Al. He's crushed.

112. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

Al is sitting across from Birdy.

AL

I shouldn't have said that, Birdy. I shouldn't have left you then...

Al looks away from his friend. He is unnerved by the sight of Weiss, who is watching them through the wire mesh observation window.

As Weiss starts to open the door, Al jumps up and steers him back into the corridor.

AL

(agitated)

It's working. I think he just needs a little more time.

WEISS

(firm)

I'm not blind, Sergeant. I'm sorry that these baseballs didn't work, but there's no sense in going on with this. His condition's deteriorating. He hardly moves anymore. He's stopped eating. I'm afraid we're going to have to put him on I.V.

AL

Listen, I could stay and...

112. CONTINUED:

WEISS

You should've been back to
your hospital a week ago.
There's nothing to keep you
here anymore.

Al sees that there is no way to change Weiss's mind.

AL

... I want to say goodbye to
him.

WEISS

Go ahead.

Weiss waits for Al to say goodbye.

AL

Alone.

WEISS

All right. But I'd like to
see you in my office
afterwards.

Weiss leaves abruptly. Al turns back toward Birdy. He
can't bring himself to go in this last time. He just
watches his friend from the doorway. Birdy is looking back
at him.

113. FLASHBACK - OUTSIDE BIRDY'S HOUSE. DAY/EXT.

Al is dressed in an army uniform as he pauses in front of
Birdy's house. But he can't go inside. He doesn't have it
in him to say goodbye. Al turns and walks away, fighting
back the tears.

114. BIRDY

is watching sadly from his second story bedroom window as
Al walks away.

Perta lands on his shoulder and QUEEPS softly to him. It's
almost as if she knows how he's feeling. But Birdy's too
devastated to even look up at her. Suddenly, Perta swoops
out the open lower portion of Birdy's window.

BIRDY

Perta!

115. PERTA'S FLYING POV

As she soars up into the sky, then arcs around and looks
down at the window.

115. CONTINUED:

BIRDY

Come back!

Perta dives toward Birdy at the window. Birdy holds his hands up against the glass, frantically trying to stop her.

BIRDY

No!

But it's too late. Perta's flying POV crashes full speed into the glass.

116. INSIDE BIRDY'S BEDROOM

The sound of SPLINTERING GLASS. Birdy is staring in horror at the spider-webbed glass. He looks down at Perta, who's lying dead on the sill. Then he gently picks her up in his hands. Her fragile body is broken at the neck. Birdy starts to cry.

The canaries in the aviary have gone into a frenzy. Their FLAPPING and CHITTERING grows louder and louder until it becomes...

117. A JUNGLE IN VIETNAM DAY/EXT.

...the panicked SHRIEKS AND CRIES of tropical birds. The metal carcass of a downed helicopter lies twisted and broken on the ground. The lifeless bodies of American Soldiers lie stewn around it. One of the Gunners MOANS as he goes through the final paroxysms of death.

Dressed in full combat gear, Birdy is slumped against the trunk of a tree with a torn and bloodied shoulder. He's barely at the edge of consciousness. His face is drained of color.

Perched on a limb in front of Birdy, a surreally colored tropical bird is staring straight at him with iridescent eyes. Birdy is looking back at the strange, exotic creature. After a moment, he painfully manages to reach out and hold his finger up to the bird.

But the bird doesn't trust Birdy enough to come to him. It makes a low CLICKING sound, then stiffens and falls silent. Suddenly, it takes to the sky. Other birds from the jungle join it. A moment later, there is the DEAFENING SCREAM OF LOW FLYING JETS.

Birdy looks to the sky. The flock of birds are climbing, trying to escape. But it's too late. A TUMBLING SHEET OF FLAMES descends from above. It engulfs the flock, incinerating the birds. For a moment, the whole world seems on fire.

117. CONTINUED:

Birdy is completely overwhelmed by this nightmarish sight. He tries to move, but he can't. Then, there is the ON-COMING WAIL of another airborne strike.

118. BIRDY'S POV

As he slowly begins to lift away from this madness and devastation. He's floating, looking back down at his wounded, earthbound self as he rises above the jungle.

He can see the conflagration from the first napalm strike. The WAIL of oncoming jets is now even louder. Climbing higher, trying to escape, Birdy is engulfed in a DEAFENING SCREAM.

119. PRESENT - BIRDY'S CELL DAY/INT.

Birdy shudders. Al moves over to his friend. Birdy stares up at him as tears pour down his face. He opens his mouth to speak, but words won't come out. Al sits down on the floor and puts his arm around Birdy.

AL

Don't worry Birdy, I'm not leaving you again...

Al cradles Birdy in his arms. As he rocks him slowly, tears well in his own eyes.

120. THE HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - LATER

Hannah is moving down the hallway toward Birdy's cell. Seeing the door wide open, she pauses and regards it curiously. Then she steps into the doorway.

121. INSIDE THE CELL

Al is still holding Birdy in his arms. He looks up at Hannah. He's drained from crying.

HANNAH

...Al?... Are you okay?

(Al doesn't respond)

...Dr. Weiss wanted me to come and get you...

AL

I'm not leaving him.

Hannah can see that Al is upset. She's slow and delicate with him.

121. CONTINUED:

HANNAH

...You can't stay here, Al...

AL

Why not?

HANNAH

Don't you have to go back to the hospital?

AL

I'm not going back.

HANNAH

...Why don't you come with me? We can talk.

AL

I don't want to talk! That's all I've done since I've been here. Nobody listens to anybody anyway. Even if they aren't crazy... Go tell Weiss I'm staying with my friend.

Hannah is taken back by Al's outburst. She's trying to think of what to say.

AL

Tell him!

Hannah leaves reluctantly. Al turns to Birdy, who is staring at him intently.

AL

Don't worry. It's okay.
...They can't make me leave...

Birdy's intent stare seems to question Al. Al glances away.

AL

I can't go out there.
I couldn't make it...

Al moves toward the cell window. Birdy follows him with his eyes.

AL

...They got the best of us, Birdy. We're totally screwed up. I mean, we haven't had anything to do with making our own lives... Fuck!

(MORE)

121. CONTINUED - 1:

AL (CONT.)

I was always so damned sure about being myself and how nobody was going to make me do anything I didn't want. Now, here I am... They finish ya off with a discharge or put you on a casualty list and it doesn't matter how special you are, or were...

(moves closer to Birdy)

...I feel like one of those dogs nobody wanted... Remember?

...Ya know when this happened to me, when that mine blew up in my face, I could smell burning flesh. And it was crazy, 'cause the smell was so familiar. Then I realized that it was my own skin that was frying... And I couldn't even touch the pain...

Al has to stop. Birdy watches as Al tries to choke back his anguish.

AL

...I don't even know what I look like anymore. I don't know if it's me under these bandages or what some Army meat-cutter thinks is me... Jesus, I don't want a patched up, instant pity excuse for a face. I want it to be Al under here, not some sewn together freak mask...

Birdy watches his fearful, defeated friend stare out the window.

AL

Shit, what's so great about their fuckin' world anyway? We'll just stay here and keep the hell out of it... I don't have to go get these bandages off... Ya see, I figured out what you're doing, Birdy. You're right, we should just hide out and not talk with anybody... Yeah, that's what we can do...

Al has almost convinced himself. Birdy watches him, then suddenly the words just spill out.

121. CONTINUED - 2:

BIRDY

Al, sometimes you're so full
of shit...

Al looks at Birdy as if he's hearing things.

AL

...Was that you?

For a moment, Birdy looks like he's going to try to talk
again. But he just nods. He begins to stretch his legs.

AL

It was you! You talked!
Say something else!

All Birdy can muster this time is his friend's name.

BIRDY

...Al...

AL

I can't believe it! It's
really you!

Birdy stands and slowly, at first stiffly, stretches his
muscles. He looks like he's testing himself to see if he
still works.

BIRDY

...I think it's me.

AL

How come you decided to talk?

BIRDY

I didn't decide. It just
happened. I don't know...
You needed me, didn't you?

AL

Yeah... They think we're both
crazy, ya know.

Weiss steps into the doorway. He looks at the baseballs
strewn across the floor, then at Al.

WEISS

What's going on here?

AL

He talked. Go on Birdy, say
something.

121. CONTINUED - 3:

WEISS

...Birdy?

Al is waiting anxiously for Birdy to say something. But Birdy just stares at Weiss.

AL

Come on, dammit! Talk!

(to Weiss)

He talked before.

WEISS

This isn't going to work,
Sergeant.

AL

I'm telling the truth! He did!

(to Birdy)

What are you doing?!

WEISS

(grabs Al's arm)

Come on. Let's go.

AL

(pushes him hard)

No!

Weiss is shoved backwards. Al glares at him with wild, defiant eyes. Weiss isn't about to wrestle with him. He heads into the corridor for reinforcements. When Weiss is gone, Al whirls back on Birdy.

AL

Birdy, this isn't a game
anymore! Why wouldn't you talk?

BIRDY

...I didn't have anything to
say to him.

Al just stares at Birdy, unable to believe this response.

AL

You dumb shit. Are you crazy?

Birdy just smiles. Al lets out a short laugh.

AL

...We gotta get out of here.

121. CONTINUED - 4:

Suddenly, Weiss charges into the cell with TWO BURLY ORDERLIES. One of them immediately grabs Al from behind. Al instinctively flips him with a classic wrestling move. Turning to Birdy, he sees that the other Orderly has his friend in a chokehold. Al goes wild.

AL

Get your hands off him!

Al starts to pull the Orderly off Birdy. The burly man takes a swing at him. Al blocks it and elbows the Orderly in the solar plexus. The man gasps and falls, his wind knocked out of him.

The Other Orderly is just about back on his feet. Al kicks his legs out from under him, then whirls on Weiss.

AL

(daring him)

Come on!

Weiss doesn't move. Al grabs Birdy and together they race out the door.

122. OUT IN THE CORRIDOR

Al and Birdy are running hard. Al's bandages have become loose in the struggle. The gauze is starting to unravel.

As they round a corner and head down another long corridor, they see TWO OTHER ORDERLIES standing between them and the main entrance. The Orderlies move toward them.

Birdy and Al start to retreat. But Weiss and the Burly Orderlies are hustling toward them from the other direction. Trapped, they dash for the only remaining exit -- the stairwell to the roof.

123. THE STAIRS

As Birdy and Al race up the steps for the roof. Their pursuers are not far behind them.

124. ON THE ROOF

Al and Birdy burst through the door. They start grabbing anything that's not bolted down to barricade it.

Al is pushing some derelict air conditioners in front of the door when he realizes that his bandages have almost completely unraveled. He touches his unhealed skin with his hand.

124. CONTINUED:

AL

My bandages came off.

Al starts to cover his face back up with the bandages.
Birdy stops him.

BIRDY

No, don't Al. You look fine.

Al watches Birdy looking at him. Al's face is still red
and swollen. An angry scar runs from his ear to his chin.

AL

I do?

BIRDY

Sure, you're no worse than
the rest of us. Come on.

They move to the edge of the roof. Al eyes the short drop
to the ground. He turns to Birdy as they hear BANGING
against the door of the roof.

AL

What do we do now?

BIRDY

The rest of our lives, Al.
(smiles)

We jump.

AL

I'm afraid.

BIRDY

So am I.

125. They take each other's hand. As they leap from the roof,
Al's bandages trail off behind them.

IN THE SLOWEST OF SLOW MOTION, Birdy and Al fly through the
air. Finally, they land on the ground and run away.

The End