

ELECTION

by Alexander Payne & JIM Taylor

Third Draft July 22,1997

Based on the novels by Tom Perotta

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EXT. MILLARD HIGH -- DAWN

The school stretches out before us, slumbering in the overcast morning air.

Along the front sidewalk, a lone JANITOR trundles a garbage bin filled with overstuffed hefty bags.

A weathered FORD ESCORT pulls into the empty PARKING LOT and comes to a stop near the athletic field.

TEENAGE GIRL'S VOICE -

TRACY (V.O.)

None of this would have happened if Mr. McAllister hadn't meddled the way he did. He should have just accepted things as they are instead of trying to interfere with destiny. You see, you can't interfere with destiny. That's why it's destiny. And if you try to interfere, the same thing's going to happen anyway, and you'll just suffer.

JIM MCALLISTER, a teacher in his mid to late-thirties, emerges from the car in running clothes and carrying a briefcase, gym bag, and coffee mug. On his way to the field, he crosses paths with the janitor.

JIM

Morning, Lowell

Lowell nods, hoists a bag and tosses it into a dumpster.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD -- DAWN

JIM CIRCLES THE TRACK, sweating and panting.

ON THE GROUND JIM DOES SIT UPS

JIM

Twenty-one... twenty-two.

He collapses onto his back. His head rolls to one side, and he glances past the fence at --

THE PARKING LOT

Where a second CAR is just arriving. JIM watches as TRACY FLICK, a junior, and her MOTHER get out.

The mother helps remove a CARD TABLE and a big plastic sack from the trunk before Tracy heads toward the school.

MOTHER
 (distant)
 Good luck!

JIM turns his gaze toward the sky, closes his eyes, sighs.

INT. BOYS' LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Naked in the showers, JIM pumps liquid soap from the wall-mounted metal dispenser.

INT. HILLARD HALL DAY

THE LEGS OF A CARD TABLE - as Tracy spreads them open and locks them into place.

STICKS OF GUM FROM A PLEN-T-PACK ARE EMPTIED INTO A FISHBOWL-

SCOTCH TAPE is wrapped around the end of a pen to attach a piece of string

INT. BOYS' LOCKER ROOM DAY

AT THE MIRROR

JIM adjusts the knot of his tie, notices a little shaving cream in his ear.

INT. MILLARD HALL DAY

FOUR CLIPBOARDS with pens and lined sheets of paper are being placed in a row like little soldiers. The top of every sheet reads "Tracy Flick for President: Official Nomination Signatures."

INT. FACULTY LOUNGE -- MORNING

AT THE REFRIGERATOR

JIM tries to place his lunch inside, but the shelves are too crammed with old take-out containers. He opens one and smells it. Disgusted, he drags a garbage can over and begins throwing things away.

Lowell appears in the doorway wheeling his squeaky maintenance cart and watches JIM conduct his purge as A CHINESE FOOD BOX misses the can and rolls on the floor.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

Tracy is seated behind her card table strategically placed near the school's main entrance. A sign taped to the wall behind her reads, TRACY FOR PREZ. SIGN UP FOR TOMORROW, TODAY! She checks her watch, readies herself.

JIM walks around the corner whistling vaguely.

TRACY

Good morning, Mr. McAllister.

JIM

Not wasting any time, are you, Tracy?

TRACY

(chirping)

You know what they say about the early bird.

JIM

Yes, I do.

An awkward moment passes between them.

JIM (CONT'D)

Well, good luck there, Tracy

TRACY

Thanks, Mr. M.

AS JIM turns and walks away, Tracy watches him. He stops and picks up some litter, tosses it in a nearby garbage can.

TRACY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No matter what he says, Mr. McAllister had it out for me from the start. Oh sure, he was all smiles and good wishes and everything, but underneath he was just as unfair and petty as anybody else.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM DAY

Alone in his room, JIM studies the Omaha World-Herald

TRACY (VO CONT'D)

He'll probably tell you how committed he was to teaching and democracy and integrity and all. Don't be fooled.

After laying the paper down to circle an article, JIM leans back in his chair and momentarily loses himself in thought.

JIM (V.O.)

It's hard to remember how the whole thing started, the whole election mess. What I do remember is that I loved my job. I was a teacher, an educator, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Suddenly a VOICE --

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Mr. M. Mr. M.!

JIM glances OUT THE WINDOW and sees a kid -- PAUL METZLER -- pointing at him. Paul walks with a LIMP. Behind him, other STUDENTS approach the school.

PAUL
Stop daydreaming! Get back to work!

JIM enjoys the affectionate joshing and gives the kid a wave. He returns to his newspaper, a contented man.

JIM (V.O.)
The students knew it wasn't just a job for me.

EXT. MILARD HIGH FOOTBALL STADIUM -- NIGHT

JIM sits in the bleachers, clapping his hands over his head.

JIM
C'mon, Wolverines! Defense! Let's hold 'em back!

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I got involved. And I cared.

INT. MILLARD GYM DAY

AT A PEP RALLY -

JIM is dressed as a WESTERN VILLAIN, and his black hat reads "Lincoln South." With a menacing grimace he approaches a group of FOOTBALL PLAYERS at a poker table.

JIM (VO CONT'D)
And I think I made a difference.

CORNER OF THE SCHOOL DAY

JIM has a comforting hand of the shoulder of a CRYING GIRL

JIM (CONT'D)
I knew I touched the students' lives during their difficult young adult years, and I took that responsibility seriously.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

JIM trots up the stairs to receive a plaque. He beams.

JIM
In the twelve years I taught U.S. History, Civics and Current Events at Millard, I was voted Teacher of the Year three times - a school record.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM -- DAY

Mr. McAllister reads aloud from the newspaper as he paces in front of his class of high school juniors, Tracy Flick among them. The seats are arranged in a SEMI-CIRCLE.

JIM

Standing in front of a room full of young people, trying to make them think that's how I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

JIM slaps the newspaper for emphasis and addresses the class

JIM (CONT'D)

So would this be an ethical situation or a moral situation? What's the difference between ethics and morals, anyway?

Tracy shoots her hand into the air. JIM notices but keeps looking around.

JIM (CONT'D)

Anybody?

Other hands rise tentatively.

JIM (CONT'D)

Derek.

DEREK

Uh, ethics is like when you, uh, do what society tells you is right and morals are like, uh...

JIM

You're on the right track, who can help him out?

DEREK

..morals are when...

Tracy's hand goes higher.

JIM

Michelle?

MICHELLE

Morals are like lessons, you know, like the moral of a story; it's what you learn from a story or a fable or something. . .

JIM

Or a life experience. Good. And ethics?

MICHELLE

That's more like, um... Ethics is how you use the morals... that you learn from a story?

JIM weighs the answer, tries to be encouraging.

JIM

Okay. But we're still missing something key here. What are we missing?

TRACY

(hand still raised)
I know.

JIM

(finally)
Tracy.

TRACY

Ethics are...

FREEZE FRAME on Tracy, her hand lowering, her mouth agape.

JIM (V.O.)

Tracy Flick. Tracy Flick. I've never met anyone quite like Tracy Flick.

INT. STUDENT COUNCIL ROOM -- DAY -- ONE YEAR PREVIOUS

JIM sits to one side, monitoring the student council MEETING about to convene. A younger Tracy enters briskly and, unlike her casual teen comrades, has made an attempt to dress for success. She takes a seat right up front and opens her backpack.

After preparing her notepad and pen, Tracy puts a MICROCASSETTE RECORDER on the table in front of her and pushes RECORD.

JIM

She first showed up in my life as a freshman delegate in student council. I'd seen a lot of ambitious students come and go over the years, but I could tell right away Tracy Flick was different.

JIM observes Tracy, trying to size her up.

ON TRACY -- putting all her little things in order, finally folding her hands to wait.

JIM (CONT'D)

It wasn't long before everyone knew who Tracy Flick was. She made sure of that. Her drive was astonishing. Even scary.

A FAST-PACED MONTAGE BEGINS UNDER TRACY'S VOICE-OVER:

INSERT HILLARD HIGH YEARBOOK It fans open to the INDEX.

PAN DOWN to Tracy's name followed by countless page references

TRACY

Some people say I'm an overachiever,
but I think they're just jealous.

A page number turns BOLD, and the other numbers drop away Suddenly we are on that page, and we PAN to a headline:
"Spanish Club says Oh La!"

PAN to the group shot and ZOOM in on Tracy smiling in a big SOMBRERO.

TRACY (CONT'D)

My Mom always tells me I'm different -- you know, special. And if you look at all the things I've accomplished so far, I think you'd have to agree.

We see Tracy on other pages too: "Yearbook Staff goes for it!" "Junior Achievers put on the dog!" "Student Council meets the challenge;" "Oklahoma's a hit!"

TRACY (CONT'D)

Here I am in Oklahoma.

The STILL of Tracy in Oklahoma suddenly COMES TO LIFE.

INT. MILLARD HIGH AUDITORIUM NIGHT

On stage, Tracy wears a cowgirl outfit and hams it up with exaggerated gestures.

TRACY

(off-key)
I'm just a girl who can't say no...

TV INSERT/INT. CAFETERIA DAY

It's the closed-circuit school NEWS BROADCAST. Tracy is delivering a stand-up report from the crowded cafeteria. Her dress and makeup are an obvious if lame emulation of a professional newswoman.

TRACY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And here I am on KMHS, our student-run TV station.

TRACY (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 ..that's why Principal Hendricks
 made the controversial announcement
 that the littering must stop. Tracy
 Flick reporting.

INT. STUDENT COUNCIL MEETING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

A Student Council meeting is underway led by the president,
 LARRY FOUCH. A girl, ASHLEY, is speaking. JIM observes
 from the side.

TRACY (V.O.)
 But it was in SGA, the Student
 Government Association, where I made
 my biggest mark. I never missed a
 meeting, and I volunteered for every
 committee as long as I could lead
 it.

Before Ashley can finish, Tracy STANDS UP.

TRACY (CONT'D)
 I agree with Ashley. We should rent
 the barrels at least a day beforehand.
 What happened last time was a
 travesty, I mean, we were --

LARRY FOUCH
 (trying to quiet her)
 Yeah, no, I know, Tracy. That's why
 we're -- Look, can we just take a
 vote on this?

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM DAY

BACK TO TRACY still frozen mid-sentence, waiting to finish
 her answer.

JIM (V.O.)
 Now at the end of her junior year,
 Tracy was poised to win the presidency
 of the student body. And so far she
 was running unopposed.

TRACY COMES BACK TO LIFE

TRACY
 ...the rules of conduct determined
 by a culture at a...

SHE FREEZES AGAIN

JIM (V.O.)
 Oh. There's one more thing about
 Tracy I think you should know.

INT. MILLARD STAFF-ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE ON DAVE NOVOTNY, another teacher in his mid-thirties

DAVE

Her pussy gets so wet you can't believe it.

WIDE -

Dave is leaning across his desk to speak with JIM at an adjacent work area. They eat sack lunches.

JIM (V.O.)

A few months before the election, she'd had an affair with my best friend Dave Novotny.

JIM (CONT'D)

Don't tell me that. I don't want to know that.

DAVE

She's incredible. Everything just gets soaked.

INT. JIM'S BASEMENT -- DAY

DUN-DUN-DUN... DUN-DUN-DUN

JIM and Dave are playing the opening notes of "Foxy Lady" through cheap, distorting amps. JIM plays bass. Dave plays guitar and sings into a microphone. They're bad. As in not good.

The basement is typical of a Midwest middle-class young couple -- half storage and laundry, half makeshift rec-room.

JIM (V.O.)

Dave came to Millard the year after I did, and we hit it off right away. We backed each other up in teachers' meetings and shared an interest in 60's music and micro-breweries.

CLOSE ON DAVE really getting into it, playing to an unseen stadium.

Behind him JIM is very careful with his chords.

JIM (CONT'D)

You could tell Dave was one of those guys who taught because they never wanted to leave high school in the first place, and that could get a little irritating sometimes, but basically he was a real good guy.

DAVE

(singing)

Foxy. . . Foxy. . . You know you're
a cute little heartbreaker... Foxy...
You know you're a sweet little love
maker...

CAMERA DRIFTS toward the stairs leading up.

INT. JIM'S KITCHEN

CAMERA DRIFTS from the open basement stairway door and toward DIANE MCALLISTER and SHERRY NOVOTNY seated at the kitchen table. They are fussing over little six-month-old DARRYL NOVOTNY in his highchair.

JIM (V.O.)

Our wives became best friends too.
And when Dave and Sherry's son Darryl
was born, they asked us to be
godparents.

At a particularly grating note from downstairs, Diane gets up and closes the basement door.

INT. GEOMETRY CLASS

AN ISOSCELES TRIANGLE is being drawn on the blackboard and bisected.

PULL OUT to reveal Dave explaining.

The class is taking notes, and we zero in on a younger Tracy.

TRACY

You probably think the worst - that
Mr. Novotny was just taking advantage
of one of his students, but it wasn't
like that at all. Our relationship
was based on mutual respect and
admiration. I mean, during my
sophomore year in geometry it was
strictly professional between us --
I mean, nothing.

EXT. GODFATHER'S PIZZA -- NIGHT

The parking lot, the neon lights, the promise of good times.

TRACY

It wasn't until junior year when we
worked together on the yearbook that
things got serious.

INT. GODFATHER'S PIZZA -- NIGHT

Dave and Tracy are at a booth along with six other students.

TWO KIDS DISSOLVE OUT OF FRAME,

and the others shift positions. Others continue to disappear in the same way, until only Dave and Tracy remain.

TRACY

One night he took us editors out to celebrate after a deadline. Eventually Dave and I were left alone and we got to talking - not like teacher and student, but like two adults.

DAVE

You know, Tracy... I don't know how to say this, but...

Dave's finger traces the rim of his frosty root beer mug.

TRACY

What?

DAVE

Well, I notice you don't seem to have any close friends at Millard. You seem to be kind of a loner.

TRACY

No, I'm not. I'm just really busy.

DAVE

I know. I know its not by choice. I just mean, well, being the kind of person you are, it must be really difficult to find someone you can talk to.

TRACY

What do you mean? What kind of person am I?

DAVE

What kind of person?

Dave looks directly into her eyes.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Tracy, I've been watching you for going on two years now, and I think you are one of the most talented, hard-working, sensitive, attractive, brilliant students -- no, human beings -- I have ever met. I mean, you're the real thing. Special.

TRACY

(embarrassed, low)
Thank you.

DAVE

And I know sometimes people like you
have to pay a price for their
greatness, and that price is
loneliness.

Tracy nods in quiet recognition.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong. But
it seems like you might need a friend.

INT. MILLARD YEARBOOK OFFICE -- DAY

A DOOR with cloudy glass and a stenciled sign: YEARBOOK
OFFICE.

DISSOLVE through the door and TRAVEL through an empty room
to discover another door with a sign that reads DARKROOM.

TRACY (V.O.)

Since I grew up without a dad, you
might assume psychologically I was
looking for a father figure.

DISSOLVE through the darkroom door to DAVE AND TRACY bathed
in red light. Tracy is sitting on Dave's lap as they make
out hungrily.

TRACY (CONT'D)

But that had nothing to do with it
at all. It was just that Dave was
so strong and made me feel so safe
and protected.

INT. DAVE'S CAR -- DAY

Dave drives. Tracy sits in the passenger seat.

TRACY

It was the first time somebody ever
saw the real me, the me that nobody
else knows.

DAVE

(looking around)
Here, get down.

EXT. NOVOTKY HOUSE - DAY

Dave wheels his car into the open garage. The automatic
door closes behind him.

INT. NOVOTHY LIVIMG ROOM

Dave stands up from his squat at the STEREO, and the sexy
sounds of Sade set the mood.

Tracy is seated awkwardly at one end of the sofa, a Diet Dr. Pepper in one hand. Dave walks slowly toward her, a sexy, knowing look in his eye. The music is sexy. Tracy is sexy. He's sexy. Keeping his eyes locked on Tracy's, he takes the pop can from her hand and takes a sip himself. Sexy.

INT. NOVOTHY STAIRCASE -- DAY

Dave and Tracy walk up the stairs and down the hall. Dave enters the bedroom first, while Tracy pauses in the hall. His arm reaches out and pulls her inside.

INT. NOVOTNY BEDROOM -- DAY

IN QUICK TIGHT CUTS we see Dave and Tracy DISROBING. Tracy's head and naked shoulders lay themselves on Dave's pillow. She looks toward the foot of the bed at -- DAVE, unable to believe his eyes. He looks at naked Tracy up and down, up and down, his breath quickening. Sade wafts up the stairs.

DAVE

Look at you.

He descends out of frame.

TRACY (V.O.)

When I think back on my relationship with Mr. Novotny, what I miss most, is our talks.

INT. DAVE'S BASEMENT -- DAY

JIM is riveted by Dave's story; he is both horrified and titillated

JIM

You did it at your house? Your own house?

DAVE

Look, Jim... Okay. I know it all seems crazy, and maybe it did start out, you know, for the... for the sex and the danger. But now it's different. Jim, what I'm trying to tell you is that Tracy and I are totally, totally in love.

JIM

In love?

DAVE

Yeah, it's serious. I mean she inspires me in ways Sherry never has. She even wants to read my novel.

JIM

But you haven't written your novel.

DAVE

That's the whole point. It's all in my head; it's right here. I just got to get it out there. Tracy wants me to write it so she can read it. It's beautiful.

JIM

Dave, I'm just saying this as your friend. What you're doing is really, really wrong, and you've got to stop.

Dave draws a heavy sigh and buries his head in his hands perhaps JIM has reached him. Perhaps not.

DAVE

You're not just jealous, are you? I mean, we both used to talk about her

JIM

(exploding)

That was just talk! Fantasy talk! What are you, nuts? We talk about girls all the time, but it doesn't mean anything. I would never. . . I mean, I take very seriously our strict moral code. The line you've crossed is... it's illegal and it's immoral.

DAVE

I don't need a lecture on ethics, Jim, okay? I know what --

JIM

I'm not talking about ethics. I'm talking about morals.

CLICK. SQUEAK. STEP STEP STEP.

SHERRY (O.S.)

Peek-a-boo!

Sherry comes down the basement stairs with Darryl in her arms.

DAVE

(to Jim, whispering)

Look, I appreciate your concern. I really do. But like I said, I got it under control.

As Sherry approaches them, Dave rises to take Darryl, the perfect father: hug, tickle, kiss.

JIM (V.O.)
I guess I don't have to tell you how
all this turned out.

INT. PRINCIPAL HENDRICK'S OFFICE -- DAY

CLOSE ON DAVE slumped in a chair. He is lost in agony: all he can do is look down and draw short, gasping breaths.

Principal Walt Hendricks is at his desk, examining a little BOOKLET.

JIM sits on the vinyl sofa.

CLOSE ON -- the small makeshift booklet whose cover reads, "There's a place for us" in overdone fancy cursive.

THE SECOND PAGE shows a cutout from a travel magazine of a swanky BEACHFRONT HOTEL. One room has been circled with the words "you and me" written next to it. Below: "A time and place for us." We HEAR Walt clearing his throat, swallowing.

THE THIRD PAGE HAS GLUED TO IT A POSTCARD SHOWING A COUPLE HAND-IN-

hand on the beach at sunset and reading, "Maui is for lovers." Below:

Take my hand and we'll soon be there.

THE LAST PAGE has a cutout of a bouquet of flowers. It reads, "Tracy, See you in paradise? Love, your 'teacher' David. P.S. I really, really need you now." The booklet is lowered.

DAVE
Tracy's Mom -- she doesn't understand.

WALT
No, I'd say she doesn't. I don't think I've ever seen a mother quite so upset. We're all very, very lucky she doesn't want this public.

Dave looks at JIM for help. JIM looks away. Dave's breaths grow more convulsive. Finally -

DAVE
But we're in love

WALT
Dave. Dave, look at me.

Dave looks slowly up.

WALT (CONT'D)
I want you to get some help.

INT. DAVE & SHERRY'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Sherry cradles Darryl while Dave grovels at her feet.

JIM (V.O.)

After Dave got fired, Sherry kicked him out of the house and filed for divorce.

SHERRY

Your novel? Are you fucking kidding me?

Dave follows Sherry as she takes the baby into their bedroom and slams the door in Dave's face. Dave pounds on the door, eventually sinking to his knees and crying.

DAVE

Sherry Sherry Sheerrry. ...

JIM (V.O.)

He ended up moving back to Milwaukee to live with his parents. I haven't heard from him in a long time. Poor guy. I warned him.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM -- DAY

Tracy, still frozen, THAWS OUT. Maybe now she can finish

TRACY

...certain time in history and...

RINGGGGG Maybe not.

At the bell, students instantly shut their textbooks and collect their things.

JIM

Okay. We'll pick up here next time.

Tracy is miffed as she puts her things away: slam, stuff, zip. She slings her backpack over her shoulder and heads toward the door. She looks back at --

MR. MCALLISTER who himself now FREEZES as he talks to a couple of students

TRACY (V.O.)

Now that I have more life experience, I feel sorry for Mr. McAllister.

CLOSE-UP FROZEN DETAILS - of Jim's appearance - his slightly frayed collar and bad tie; the heels of his old docksiders worn down at irritating angles; the faded impression his too-big wallet has made in his khakis; his growing bald spot; his ear hairs.

TRACY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I mean, anyone who's stuck in the same little room saying the exact same things year after year for his whole life, wearing the same stupid clothes, while his students go on to good colleges and move to big cities and do great things and make loads of money has got to be at least a little jealous. It's like my mom says - the weak always try to sabotage the strong.

Tracy turns and walks out the door.

INT. TRACY'S HOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE ON A SMILING LITTLE TRACY - in a Sears-style portrait. PAN across a wall full of other framed photos of Tracy accepting awards, dancing in a recital, poised to dive at a swim meet.

TRACY

One thing that's important to know about me is that I'm an only child. So my Mom is really devoted to me, and I love her so much. She wants me to do all the things she wanted to do in life but couldn't.

AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE

Tracy's mother, BARBARA FLICK, finishes a letter and puts it in an envelope.

TRACY (CONT'D)

See, Mom used to be a stewardess for Northwest and now works as a para-legal.

She likes to write letters to successful women like Janet Reno and Elizabeth Dole and ask them how they got to be where they are and what advice do they have for me, Tracy, her daughter.

CLOSE ON BARBARA'S TONGUE as the envelope flap slides across it.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

A politician's SMILE plastered to her face, Tracy is at her card table vigorously gathering signatures.

TRACY

Nine times out of ten they say you have to hold on to your dreams no
(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

matter what. The pressures women face mean you have to work twice as hard, and you can't let anything or anyone stand in your way.

A shabbily dressed BURNOUT -- DOUG SCHENKEN -- walks past and grabs a huge handful of gum.

TRACY (CONT'D)

One per person! Put those back I...

John just keeps on walking away, and his two BUDDIES take great delight in his nimble-witted, quick retort.

DOUG SCHENKEN

Eat me.

INT. HILLARD LIBRARY -- DAY

While other students sit in groups around her, Tracy sits apart at her own table, concentrated and alone. She is writing little numbers by her signatures.

TRACY

Ninety-seven.. .ninety-eight.

TRACY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But you know, winning isn't everything. If you play fair and follow all the rules thoroughly, you'll always come out ahead. Win or lose, ethical conduct is the most important thing. Just ask Mr. McAllister.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY CLOSE ON TRACY'S EXCITED FACE

TRACY

Mr. McAllister? Mr. McAllister! Wait up!

Jim, his tie loose and his sleeves rolled up, looks up from unlocking his car. Tracy runs toward him holding out a TERM PAPER FOLDER.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I got all my signatures. One hundred and fifty-eight -- way more than I need!

JIM

Hey, that's super.

TRACY

Here they are.

JIM

You can put those in my box. I'll look at them tomorrow.

TRACY

Could you approve them now? I'd like to kick off my campaign right away, you know, in the morning.

JIM

(resigned)
Right.

He cursorily flips through the bound pages and offers them back to Tracy.

JIM (CONT'D)

Looks good to me.

TRACY

Aren't you supposed to keep them?

JIM

No, that's fine.

TRACY

I thought you were supposed to keep them.

JIM

Okay, fine. Sure

JIM throws his briefcase and Tracy's folder into the backseat.

TRACY

Thanks for everything.

JIM

You bet.

Tracy stays put as JIM climbs in, shuts the door and fastens his seat belt.

TRACY

(cheery, awkward)
I can't wait to start campaigning.

JIM

Should be easy. So far no competition.

TRACY

Hell, you know, Coca-Cola's the world's number one soft drink, but they spend more money than anybody on advertising. I guess that's how come they stay number one.

JIM

Yeah. Okay. Well, good luck Tracy

They exchange a long, curious stare. There's a tone at once confrontational and vaguely sexual about this moment.

TRACY

You know, Mr. M., when I win the presidency, that means you and I are going to be spending a lot of time together next year. And I for one would like that time to be harmonious and productive. Wouldn't you?

JIM

Sure.

TRACY

Okay. That's good. I just wanted to make sure.

JIM

Good luck, Tracy.

JIM pulls away and heads for the parking lot exit.

INT.EXT. JIM'S CAR ON STREET -- DAY

JIM drives stone-faced, unblinking. Something about the music on the radio mocks him.

JIM (V.O.)

I don't blame Tracy for what happened with Dave. How could I? Dave was an adult more than twice her age.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- DAY

JIM pulls to a stop next to a giant DUMPSTER. Out of his window come yellowed newspapers, balled-up fast food bags, and other detritus. He speeds away.

JIM (V.O.)

Sure, she got on my nerves once in a while, but I admired Tracy. I really did.

INSIDE THE DUMPSTER we see Tracy's little bound book of signatures.

INT. MCALLISTER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

JIM and his wife Diane sit at their dining room table, eating chicken pot pies, baked potatoes with sour cream, salad with Lite Ranch dressing. Not a word passes between them.

JIM (V.O.)

Thank God for Diane. She was my best friend, my source of love and strength. Oh sure, we'd had our share of bumpy times, but we'd always seen them through. After nine years of marriage, we were closer than ever. And the secret? Good communication.

DIANE

Anything wrong?

JIM

Everything's fine. Just, you know, school.

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

JIM lies awake in bed while Diane snores beside him. Something seems to be echoing in his head.

TRACY'S VOICE

...You know, Coca-Cola's by far the number one soft drink... When I win the presidency we're going to be spending a lot of time together... a lot of time... lots and lots and lots of time... president and advisor. . .

CLOSE ON JIM'S EAR as Tracy's LIPS magically whisper into it.

TRACY

...harmonious and productive... close and special... you and I... so close... so intimate... together...

INT. MCALLISTER BASEMENT -- NIGHT

In the darkness a light pops on, and JIM quietly pads down the stairs.

He opens an old CEDAR TRUNK, lifts out a few blankets and a piece of cardboard to reveal a row of PORNO TAPES cleverly concealed in the bottom of the trunk.

ON THE TV SCREEN -

A FOOTBALL PLAYER in uniform and helmet filets a CHEERLEADER in a locker room.

JIM watches with detachment, as though watching the news. He sips a can of PEPSI. The football stud continues to bump and grind. Looking at his Pepsi can, JIM is suddenly inspired.

JIM
 (quietly)
 Paul.

EXT. SKI SLOPE (REAR PROJECTION) DAY

PAUL METZLER is SKIING in goggles and scarf. Behind him is a cheesy dated rear projection of other skiers. Suddenly Paul loses his balance and FALLS.

CLOSE ON PAUL writhing in the snow.

PAUL
 Why. . . ? Why. . . ?

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I was so mad at God when I broke my
 leg at Shadow Ridge over Christmas
 break.

INSERT X-RAY LIGHT BOX

CLOSE ON AN X-RAY of a multiple FRACTURE.

PAUL (VO CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 The doctors told me I'd have to quit
 sports for at least a couple years
 if not forever.

INSERT YEARBOOK PICTURE

Paul kneels in his FOOTBALL UNIFORM. The photograph erupts in flames.

Bonanza-style.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 ...which meant no first-string
 quarterback in the fall. It was like
 the end of my life!

EXT. MILLARD HIGH FRONT STEPS DAY

Paul stands talking to FRIENDS in a very typical high school tableau.

All wear backpacks or carry books. A GIRL kneels to sign his cast.

PAUL
 When I got back to school everybody
 was so supportive, and they all wanted
 to sign my cast and everything...

EXT. MISSOURI RIVER LOCKOUT -- DAY

Alone, PAUL leans on his crutches and watches the river

PAUL
 ... but I still couldn't shake the
 feeling that now my life had no
 purpose. What did God want from me?

THE VAST MISSOURI - always flowing, never stopping, no
 beginning, no end

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Why did I exist?

INT. LIBRARY DAY

Paul is sleeping slumped over a table, his head cradled on
 crossed arms. The Celestine Prophecy is open face down next
 to him.

PAUL
 Sometimes you can search everywhere
 for answers. Then one day destiny
 just taps you on the shoulder. I
 know, because it happened to me.

A FINGER reaches down and taps Paul's shoulder. Paul comes
 to and looks -- it's Mr. McAllister.

JIM
 Paul, could I talk to you for a
 minute?

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY - DAY

His arm on Paul's shoulder, JIM walks Paul down a deserted
 hall and into Jim's classroom. JIM picks up some scrap paper
 off the floor and puts it in the proper place.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Mr. McAllister changed my life. And
 no matter what they say he did or
 did not do, I believe he is a good
 man.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Paul sits in a chair, while JIM stands.

JIM
 Paul, I know you've been pretty down
 since your accident.

PAUL
 I wanted to play next year so bad I
 could taste it. And maybe go on
 to...

JIM

I know. I understand disappointment.
I really do.

PAUL

Yeah.

JIM

But you've got a big choice right now. You can choose to be depressed about it for the rest of your life. Or you can choose to see it for what it really is: an opportunity. I personally think you have a big future ahead of you, and I don't mean the fleeting glory of sports.

PAUL

What do you mean?

JIM

Let me give you a clue. You're a born leader. You're one of the most popular students at Millard. You're honest and straightforward. You don't choke under pressure, as we all saw in that amazing fourth quarter against Westside. The other kids look up to you. What does that spell?

Paul furrows his brow and looks around, searching for an answer. His lower lip is wet.

JIM (CONT'D)

Student... council... president.

It takes a moment for this to sink in. Finally

PAUL

Who, me? Nooo. I never... I don't know anything about that stuff, Mr. M. Besides, that's Tracy Flick's thing. She's always working so hard and --

JIM

Yeah, no, she's a go-getter, all right.

PAUL

And she's super-nice

JIM

Yeah. But one person assured of victory kind of undermines the whole idea of a democracy, doesn't it?

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)
That's more like a... well, like a dictatorship, like we studied. Paul, what's your favorite fruit?

PAUL
Huh? Oh. Uh... pears

JIM takes a piece of chalk from the lip of the blackboard.

JIM (CONT'D)
Okay, let's say

PAUL
No, wait -- apples. Apples.

JIM draws illustrative circles on the board as he speaks.

JIM
Fine. Let's say all you ever knew was apples. Apples, apples and more apples. You might think apples were pretty good, even if you occasionally got a rotten one. Then one day there's an orange. And now you can make a decision. Do you want an apple, or do you want an orange? That's democracy.

PAUL
I also like bananas.

JIM
Exactly. So what do you say? Maybe it's time to give a little something back.

INT. STUDENT COMMON AREA -- DAY

Tracy directs her friend ERIC OVERHOLDT on a ladder as he hangs a large POSTER high on a wall.

TRACY
The right side is too high. The right side. Just a smidge.

Suddenly she notices a small COMMOTION in the adjacent cafeteria and goes to investigate.

INT. CAFETERIA -- DAY

A small crowd of students compete to sign Paul's nomination petition taped to the wall.

GUY

(signing)

Hey Paul, you going over to Anthony's
on Friday, or what did you decide?

PAUL

I gotta talk to him first.

Tracy watches the hubbub, none too pleased, and pushes her
way to the front of the group.

TRACY

Who put you up to this?

PAUL

Huh? Oh, hi, Tracy

Tracy stares at him.

TRACY

Who put you up to this?

PAUL

What do you mean?

TRACY

You just woke up this morning and
suddenly decided to run for president?

PAUL

No. Uh... I just... you know, I
just thought --

TRACY

Thought what?

PAUL

Well, see, I was talking to Mr.
McAllister about my leg and
everything... and how I still want
to, you know, do something for the
school and --

TRACY

So Mr. McAllister asked you to run.

PAUL

Well, I mean, you know, I talked to
him and everything, but he just said
he thought it was a good idea... and
how there's all different kinds of
fruit and... It's nothing against
you, Tracy. You're the best. I
just thought --

TRACY

Okay, Mr. Popular. You're on.

With that Tracy turns and SIGNS Paul's sheet THE "I" IN "FLICK" is dotted with a STAR CLOSE ON TRACY'S FACE - as she walks away, Paul and his fans receding behind her

TRACY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You might think it upset me that Paul Metzler had decided to run against me, but nothing could be further from the truth. He was no competition for me: it was like apples and oranges. It just meant I had to work a little harder, that's all.

INT. TRACY'S BASEMENT NIGHT

CLOSE ON TRACY'S FACE --

in a xeroxed photograph. "Vote Tracy!" is written at the bottom.

Tracy is making campaign buttons with her BUTTON MACHINE. She manufactures her buttons with almost alarming intensity. PATRIOTIC MUSIC begins to rise.

TRACY

You see, I believe in the voters. They understand that elections aren't just popularity contests. They know this country was built by people just like me who work very hard and don't have everything handed to them on a silver spoon.

THE TRACY BUTTONS

drop one by one into a box. All the little round Tracys smile up at us.

EXT. MILLARD PARKING LOT -- DAY

Paul is in the driver's seat of his hitching big-wheeled PICKUP TRUCK.

His door is open, and his radio blasts a SONG carefully selected to boost soundtrack album sales. Various FRIENDS OF PAUL'S hang around.

Tracy watches the scene from her seat on the SCHOOL BUS.

TRACY

Not like some rich kids who everybody likes because their fathers own Metzler Cement and give them trucks on their sixteenth birthday and throw them big parties all the time. They don't ever have to work for anything.

The bus pulls away.

INT. TRACY'S LIVING ROOM AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON TRACY'S FACE -

staring into camera as she exercises on a NORDIC TRAC,
Drenched in sweat, she moves in a hypnotic frenzy.

TRACY

They think they can all of a sudden
one day out of the blue waltz right
in with no qualifications whatsoever
and try to take away what other people
have worked for very, very hard their
entire lives. No, it didn't bother
me at all.

INT. PAUL'S PICKUP -- DAY

Paul drives home, his stereo thumping. Silent, he appears
lost in thought, as though a little gopher idea were burrowing
its way to the surface. Oh, look -- there's its snout now.

PAUL

Paul... Paul... power... Paul...
Paul for President... progress...
promise... peanut... Paul-i-tics...
yeah... President Paul... Punt for
Paul! No.

EXT. METZLER HOME -- DAY

PAUL pulls into the driveway and hops out of his car.

INT. TAMMY METZLER'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Two GIRLS are kissing on the bed. They are TAMMY METZLER and
LISA FLANAGAN, fifteen and seventeen respectively. Lisa breaks
away. Tammy tries to kiss her again, but Lisa resists.

TAMMY

(softly)
What?

LISA

I told you ... I can't. I just -- It
doesn't feel right anymore, you know?

INT. METZLER KITCHEN -- DAY

Whistling a cheerful tune, Paul tosses his backpack on a
chair, grabs a banana, and opens the refrigerator.

INT. TAMMY METZLER'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Tammy is still trying to comfort Lisa.

TAMMY

If you could just get out of your head.

Tammy leans forward, puts her palm on Lisa's cheek. Lisa looks at Tammy as though at a stranger. Tammy leans forward and kisses Lisa's eyes. Lisa jerks her head out of Tammy's hands.

LISA

I said no!

Suddenly, there's a quick KNOCK at the door, and Paul enters. The girls rise quickly.

PAUL

Hey, Tammy, guess what happened today.

TAMMY

Don't you fucking knock?

PAUL

Yeah. So guess what happened. So Mr. McAllister, he --

(noticing Lisa)

Oh hi. Lisa.

TAMMY

Paul, get out!

PAUL

So Mr. M. calls me in and tells me --

LISA

I gotta go.

Lisa pushes her way past Paul and runs down the hall

TAMMY

(to Paul)

You dumbshit!

PAUL

What'd I do?

THE SCENE FREEZES.

TAMMY (V.O.)

You know how they say one day a big meteor might come and crash into the Earth and kill everybody? Well, I think that would be a good thing.

BACK TO LIFE - Tammy turns away from Paul in disgust and runs after LISA

INT. METZLER LIVING ROOM AND FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

Tammy finds the front door flung open and through it sees Lisa slamming the door of her beat-up Honda Civic and starting the engine.

TAMMY

Lisa!

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET CONTINUOUS

Tammy runs up to the car as it pulls away. She pounds on the window.

TAMMY

Stop! Wait!

Lisa stops the car, rolls down the window

TAMMY (CONT'D)

Where're you going?

LISA

I'm not like you.

TAMMY

What...?

LISA

I'm not a dyke, okay, and we're not in love. We were just... I was just experimenting.

Lisa speeds away, and we watch her car grow smaller and smaller.

CLOSE ON TAMMY'S FACE -

as we see the greatest disappointment of her short life break across her face.

TAMMY (V.O.)

How can something that seems so true turn out to be such a lie?

EXT. ELMWOOD PARK -- DAY

Lisa and Tammy are swinging synchronized on a swingset, smiling and laughing. The image is slightly OVEREXPOSED as though to suggest an ideal memory.

CLOSE ON TAMMY looking over at Lisa

TAMMY (V.O.)

I mean Lisa and I were destined to be together. It was so obvious. Of

TAMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 all the people on the planet who had
 ever lived, somehow we'd found each
 other.

CLOSE ON LISA

in SLOW MOTION, swinging next to us. She looks back, her
 face so happy.

TAMMY
 Lisa...

INT. TAMMY'S ROOM -- DAY

CHOMP-CHOMP-CHOMP Tammy eats an asparagus spear.

GNAW-GNAW-GNAW Lisa eats an asparagus spear TAMMY drinks a
 big glass of water. She giggles a little.

LISA drinks a big glass of water. She giggles too.

TAMMY
 I remember one time Lisa and I did
 an experiment with asparagus to see
 how long it takes your pee to smell.
 We peed a little every five minutes.

AN EGG TIMER: Ding! Tammy and Lisa, very serious now, smell
 little Dixie cups.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
 For her it took about fifteen minutes,
 and for me it was twenty.

INT. LIBRARY DAY

Lisa studies at a table, surrounded by other busy students.

TAMMY (V.O.)
 Everyday I found some new way to
 tell Lisa I loved her.

Suddenly Tammy walks by, drops a folded NOTE in front of
 Lisa, and walks on. Lisa opens it.

NOTE
 (Tammy's voice)
 If you died right now, I would throw
 myself into one of my Dad's cement
 trucks and get poured into your tomb.

Lisa looks over her shoulder at Tammy, who is now at the
 door of the library. Tammy nods at her with quiet loving
 reassurance.

TAMMY (V.O.)
 But it just seemed like the closer
 we got, the more she pulled away.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

Lisa watches Tammy open her locker and notices a four-frame
 PHOTO-

BOOTH PHOTOGRAPH taped to the inside of the door. In the
 photos Lisa and Tammy are clowning and smooching. Lisa
 reaches over and YANKS the photos off the door.

LISA
 Are you crazy?

TAMMY
 What?

LISA
 People can see this.

TAMMY
 So?

LISA
 These are private -- these are for
 us.

TAMMY
 I know.

LISA
 But other people can see them too.

TAMMY
 I don't care.

LISA
 Well, I do.

Lisa walks away with the photos.

EXT. ELMWOOD PARK DAY

CLOSE ON LISA SWINGING -- next to us, a final reprise of
 Tammy's favorite memory

TAMMY (V.O.)
 What did I do to make her change?
 What's wrong with me?

Lisa swings out of frame, and the swing returns EMPTY.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
 (a whisper)
 Lisa.

EXT. HILL ABOVE A POWER PLANT TWILIGHT

Tammy sits on a promontory overlooking an Omaha Public Power District station -- towers, wires, insulators, a loud HUM.

TAMMY

Sometimes when I'm sad, I sit and watch the power station.

Tammy lifts a pair of BINOCULARS to her eyes, sees THE POWER PLANT.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

They say if you lie between two of the main wires, your body just evaporates. You become a gas. I wonder what that would feel like.

TAMMY'S STREET -- EVENING

Lisa's car speeds away, growing smaller and smaller. We're back at the BREAK-UP. CLOSE ON TAMMY'S FACE as she stares down the street, unable to move. It starts to rain. Tears roll down her cheeks, mixing with the rain. very French, very sad.

TAMMY

I don't know what I did to make Lisa hate me so much, but somehow she decided to hurt me. And she knew exactly what to do.

INT. LISA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

CLOSE ON PAUL'S FACE --

matched in size to Tammy's. He is moaning, gasping.

FROM OVERHEAD --

Paul is sprawled on Lisa's bed, surrounded by stuffed animals. His legs dangle over the edge of the bed, and Lisa kneels between them, her head bobbing up and down.

PAUL (V.O.)

I sure was surprised the day Lisa Flanagan asked me for a ride home and ended up blowing me.

Lisa pauses and looks up at Paul.

LISA

I've wanted this for so long.

SHE RESUMES WITH RENEWED VIGOR

PAUL
Uhhh... teeth. Teeth.

LISA
Sorry.

INT. MILLARD HIGH CAFETERIA -- DAY

Paul and Lisa sit with some other friends at a lunch table. Paul has one arm around Lisa as he eats with his other hand.

PAUL (V.O.)
Life is so weird. First Lisa has a big fight with my sister, and the next thing you know she's my girlfriend.

Lisa turns around to look at TAMMY seated at another table directly behind them. She and Lisa lock eyes before they both turn around again.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DAY

Paul poses for a campaign photo in his football uniform. He freezes in position as though about to throw a pass. Lisa adjusts his position -- CLICK.

PAUL
Since Lisa knew all about public relations and stuff, she offered to help me with my campaign. We made a great team!

Tammy spies from underneath the bleachers

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY DAY

Paul is on all fours as Lisa stands on his back to hang a poster with Paul's football picture reading: "Paul Metzler You Bet-zler!"

PAUL
It seemed so natural, the two of us together. It was like destiny.

Tammy watches from a nearby classroom door, her nose and cheek pressed against the window.

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE DAY

Paul's truck pulls up, and Paul and Lisa get out

PAUL
That spring was perfect.
(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

My leg wasn't bugging me too much,
and the weather was so nice. And
every afternoon after school Lisa
and I would go to her house to fuck
and have a swim. It was like we
were in a world all our own.

Tammy emerges from behind a tree. She's on her bike. Angry
and fragile, she watches the couple enter Lisa's house.

EXT. LISA'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Tammy peeks OVER THE FENCE and sees --

LISA AND PAUL swimming. Paul dives off the board and
resurfaces right into Lisa's arms.

MOVE CLOSER TO TAMMY as she dies a thousand deaths.

TAMMY (V.O.)

I had to do something. I didn't
know what, but I had to do something.

FADE OUT

INT. SHERRY NOVOTNY'S BACKYARD -- DAY

A laughing BABY BOY is lowered into frame and pulled back up
again.

Then he swings across frame. It's little DARRYL NOVOTNY.

WIDE -

JIM has Darryl by the ankles and is swinging him between his
legs.

Diane and Sherry are setting the picnic table. Stacked
charcoal briquettes burn off in a nearby barbecue.

JIM (V.O.)

Around that time Diane and I were
hanging out a lot at Sherry Novotny's
house, giving her our love and support
and helping her make it through a
difficult time.

DIANE

Jim, don't. You're scaring him.

JIM

He likes it.

Darryl's laughter suddenly turns into CRYING

DIANE

Here. Give him to me.
 (as she takes Darryl)
 is little Darryl dizzy? That's it.
 . come here. . .

SHERRY

You got him?

DIANE

Yeah.

Sherry heads into the house. JIM watches her walk, then turns toward Diane and Darryl. It's as though Diane, not Sherry, were the infant's real mother, so loving and attentive is she, so swelled with maternal piety.

JIM (V.O.)

Diane really wanted to have kids -- and so did I -- but it seemed like there was always a reason to wait: she had to finish nursing school, I had to get my masters, we needed a new house, we needed more money. Finally we just decided to go for it...

INT. JIM'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A DIGITAL THERMOMETER reads 99.3. Behind it Diane lies in bed reading a copy of Self.

JIM (V.O.)

...but for over a year we hadn't had any luck. And Diane was getting desperate.

INT. JIM'S HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

At his desk, JIM studies a High Society magazine. He is naked.

JIM closes his eyes and bites his lip as though feeling something he wished not to leave him. He quickly replaces a stack of magazines in his desk and goes across the hall to --

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM LATER

JIM and Diane copulate. Although ostensibly near climax, JIM seems to be struggling. Diane's exhortations, once forbidden and exciting, now seem routine.

DIANE

You gonna do it? You gonna do it?

JIM

Yeah, uh, just a minute.

DIANE
Come on, doit. Doit. Fill me up.
Come on, fill me up.

JIM
Yeah, just --

DIANE
Do it!

JIM finally climaxes.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Okay!

With that JIM rolls off of her. Diane immediately hoists her knees to her chest.

CLOSE ON JIM - on his side of the bed facing away from Diane.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Could you hand me the remote?

EXT. NOVOTNY BACKYARD-AS BEFORE

JIM is snapped out of his reverie by Sherry's voice.

SHERRY
Say, Jim. Jim.

JIM looks. Sherry is walking out the patio door holding a big bottle of wine with a corkscrew sticking out of it.

SHERRY (CONT'D)
Could you get this? I can't.

JIM
Sure.

JIM takes the bottle. CLOSE ON the neck as the cork emerges:
POP!

INT. NOVOTNY KITCHEN -- DAY

Sherry stands at the base of a stepladder as JIM climbs up and points to a spot on the ceiling.

JIM (V.O.)
Without Dave around. Sherry needed a lot of help around the house.

JIM (CONT'D)
Here?

SHERRY
(indicating)
More this way.

JIM

Okay. Give me the drill.

JIM looks down at Sherry as she hands it up. Her blouse reveals a bit more than it should, and JIM pauses to get an extra glimpse.

THE POWER DRILL BIT penetrates the ceiling.

EXT. HOVOTHY FRONT YARD -- DAY

A shirtless JIM is MOWING the lawn on a hot day. He shuts it off as Sherry emerges from the house with lemonade. She wears culottes, a halter top, and flip-flops.

JIM

I'd always liked Sherry, but we'd never had a chance to spend any time alone together. Now with Dave out of the picture, I began to see what an incredibly sensitive and giving person she was.

JIM downs his glass in big thirsty gulps and hands her back the glass.

He watches her walk back to the house.

JIM (CONT'D)

Plus she had finally dropped all that weight from her pregnancy, and really she looked great.

THE RIPCORN of the lawnmower is pulled a couple of times until it starts.

INT. YONKERS DEPARTMENT STORE -- DAY

IN WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES -

Sherry looks at herself in the mirror modeling a colorful floppy hat.

She spins around for Jim's approval.

JIM (V.O.)

We got to be pretty good buddies. I even took her to the mall one time while her car was in the shop.

JIM smiles and nods. She puts on another. Sherry is like a young girl on a date. She grabs Jim's hand and pulls him in another direction.

AT THE MAKEUP COUNTER - Sherry spreads on lipstick.

SHERRY
What do you think?

It's clear what JIM thinks.

JIM
You look great.

INT. JIM'S CAR -- DAY

They're driving home. There are packages on Sherry's lap and in the backseat.

SHERRY
I can't afford this stuff right now.

JIM
Oh, come on. You've had a hard year, you're cooped up with the kid all the time. Let go; live a little.

SHERRY
You sure?

They come to a stop at a red light. Out one window JIM spots a MOTEL.

JIM
So what do you think? Should we get a room?

SHERRY
Should we get a what?

JIM points at the motel.

SHERRY
Oh.

Her smile fades, and she stares straight ahead. There's an icy, uncomfortable silence.

SHERRY (CONT'D)
(stiffly)
That's not funny.

The light changes. JIM swallows, accelerates

INT. JIM'S KITCHEN -- DAY

JIM walks in through the backdoor. Diane is loading the dishwasher.

They peck-kiss.

DIANE
How'd it go?

JIM

Fine. You know. We just went to
Crossroads.

DIANE

You guys have fun?

JIM picks an apple out of a bowl.

JIM

(between bites)

Yeah. No. I mean, you know.

DIANE

What?

JIM

Well, Sherry's great. But she can
be a little much sometimes.

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Diane lies face-down, and JIM is on top of her. JIM makes
spirited love with her.

DIANE

Oh, Jim! Oh, God!

SHERRY'S HEAD, like a cut-out from a tabloid cover, floats
in from off-screen and lands on the back of Diane's head. At
the right moment, her face COMES TO LIFE and vaguely mouths
the words that Diane is saying, like a badly-dubbed movie.

DIANE/SHERRY

Oh, God. Just like that. Oh yes.
Fill me up...

Jim's wicked desire increases with each movement Now TRACY
FLICK'S FACE floats over and replaces Sherry's. Tracy mouths
Diane's words.

DIANE/TRACY

Do it, Jim. Fuck me.

JIM is at once in deep-space ecstasy and surprised at himself.

Diane's voice now changes: it's Tracy's VOICE.

TRACY (O.S.)

Fuck me, Mr. McAllister

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK

JIM (V.O.)
 So like I was saying, things were
 going pretty well in my life.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

It's passing period, and hundreds of students clog the halls

JIM (V.O.)
 ... that is, until things started
 going all haywire with that damn
 election.

A distant DING-DING grows louder and louder. Everyone turns
 toward the source, far down the hall, and eventually TAMMY
 emerges wearing a makeshift SANDWICH BOARD that reads "Tammy
 Metzler For President."

Smiling a perverse smile, she rings a hand bell. Salvation
 Army style.

Paul is at his locker and watches Tammy go by.

PAUL
 Tammy? Tammy, what are you doing?

Tammy ignores her brother and keeps walking directly toward
 us, finally INTO CAMERA.

INT. MILLARD TEACHERS' OFFICES -- DAY Tracy sits opposite
 Mr. McAllister.

TRACY
 You're the advisor. You should stop
 her. She's not qualified. She's
 just a sophomore.

JIM
 Calm down, Tracy. Just calm down.

TRACY
 Are you sure all her signatures are
 real? It's not easy to get all those
 signatures.

JIM
 As far as I know, they--

Suddenly LISA AND PAUL are sitting where Tracy was.

PAUL
 We can't both run, can we? We're
 brother and sister. Can we?

LISA
 It's a conflict of interest. And
 Paul was first.

JIM

Anyone who gets signatures in on time can run. And she got in just under the wire. Nothing I can do.

Now TRACY replaces Lisa and Paul

TRACY

Let me see them. Let me see them

Sighing, JIM fishes in his drawer and hands Tracy some sheets

TRACY (CONT'D)

These are a bunch of burn-outs. And look at this one, I can't even read this one.

JIM

(taking the sheet)

Looks like Tim Kobza.

LISA AND PAUL AGAIN

LISA

She's doing this to get back at me

PAUL

For what?

LISA

I mean at you.

PAUL

For what?

LISA

I don't know. You're her brother you should know.

TRACY returns.

TRACY

Tim Kobza? Tim Kobza! Who's he? I've never heard of him!

JIM

Look, why don't we just forget about Tammy? We'll have the assembly tomorrow, everybody'll make their speeches, and I'm sure everything will be fine.

INT. MILLARD GYMNASIUM DAY

The entire student body is assembled on the bleachers. There is a palpable mood of boredom and apathy.

JERRY SLAVIN, a handicapped kid in a wheelchair, is at the microphone. His head lists to one side, and he takes long breaths as he speaks.

JERRY

I love Millard High, and I will be a dedicated Vice President. A vote for Jerry Slavin is a vote for good government. And even if I can't really stand up for you, I will.

(cracks himself up)

Thank you.

Jerry motors away amid scattered applause and coughs. JIM steps forward, clapping, and raises the mike.

JIM

Thank you, Jerry, and good luck. Again, Jerry is running unopposed for Vice President. So we'll move on now to the presidential race with three candidates running. The first in alphabetical order is Tracy Flick.

Tracy steps forward with a small stack of index cards. During her speech she flips the cards over one by one but rarely looks at them.

TRACY

Poet Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "I cannot make my days longer, so I strive to make them better." With this election, we here at Millard also have an opportunity to make our high school days better. During this campaign I have had the opportunity to speak with many of you about your concerns. I spoke with freshman Eliza Ramirez, who told me how alienated she feels from her own homeroom. I spoke with sophomore Reggie Banks, who said his mother works in a cafeteria and can't afford to buy him enough spiral notebooks for his classes. I won't bore you with long-winded promises about all the new and innovative things I will definitely achieve during the year in which it will be my honor and privilege to represent each and every one of you, but I can say that my years of experience on the student council have taught me the three most important attributes the president needs to possess; commitment -

DOUG SCHENKEN

Eat me.

DOUG'S BUDDY

Eat me raw!

There is scattered laughter. Tracy pauses, wait Hendricks bounds up and grabs the mike.

WALT

If you can't be adults and give these candidates the courtesy they deserve, then you don't deserve to be called adults but children! Because that's what children are. And you'll be treated like children. So let's all listen up.

Walt backs away to his seat. Tracy resumes

TRACY

The three most important attributes the president needs to possess are: commitment, qualifications, and experience. I'll add one more; caring. I care about Millard, and I care about each and every one of you, and together we can all make a difference. One of the things I would like to establish is a regular open forum where any student can come and voice their concern about issues we face here at Millard. I and the rest of the student council would then interface with the faculty and staff, so a continuous dialogue would exist.

Walt whispers to Jim.

WALT

I'd say she knows a thing or two about student-faculty dialogue.

JIM NODS SOLEMNLY

TRACY

When you cast your vote for Tracy Flick next week, you won't just be voting for me. You'll be voting for yourself and for every other student. Our days won't be any longer, but they can sure be better. Thank you.

Tracy smiles and walks back to her folding chair. There is polite applause and a few whistles. JIM comes back to the microphone.

Tracy takes her seat next to Paul and glances at him. Paul stares straight ahead, a fat bead of sweat on his forehead. One of his legs is jiggling.

JIM

The next candidate for student body president is Paul Metzler. Paul?

Paul awkwardly makes his way to the mike. Though by no means thunderous, his applause clearly exceeds Tracy's. A small cluster of jocks "woof" for him, shaking their fists in the air. Paul manages a weak grin for his buddies.

Tracy shifts in her chair, her smile stiff and forced. Lisa smiles and nods at Paul from the bleachers, giving him encouragement and a silent reminder to remember what they talked about.

Tammy's eyes dart between Lisa and Paul. She shows no emotion, reveals nothing.

The applause quickly dies, and after a moment Paul remembers to look at the white paper in his hand. He speaks in a barely audible monotone, never once glancing up.

PAUL

As many of you know I broke my leg pretty bad this year and the experience has made me reevaluate what I want to do with my life and that is help people when you think about it a school is more than a school it's our second home where we spend all our time and grow as individuals and a community but is our school everything it could be I want our school to reach its true potential that is why I am running for president.

JIM pinches the bridge of his nose, clearly pained. A few loud SOUND EFFECT SNORES saw through the air, and Walt points a stern finger at - you guessed it -- Doug Schenken.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I know what it is to fight hard and win like when we almost went to state last fall and I threw that fourth-quarter pass against Westside for the touchdown that won the game by three points I won't let you down like I didn't then I promise we can all score a winning
(big breath)
touchdown together. Vote Paul Metzler for president thank you.

Paul now gets considerably less applause, but his jock friends remain loyal.

JIM

Okay, Paul. Now our final candidate for President - another one of the Metzler clan -- sophomore Tammy Metzler.

Tammy approaches the mike. There are scattered mocking whistles and catcalls.

Tammy calmly looks over the crowd, waiting for the jeers to subside.

She makes eye contact with Lisa, who stares back.

WALT

People. People.

The room quiets down. Tammy puts her lips close to the mike,

TAMMY

Who cares about this stupid election?

NOW there's something worth listening to.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

We all know it doesn't matter who gets elected president of Millard. You think it's going to change anything around here, make one single person happier or smarter or nicer? The only person it matters to is the one who gets elected. The same pathetic charade happens every year, and everyone makes the same pathetic promises just so they can put it on their transcripts to get into college. So vote for me, because I don't even want to go to college, and I don't care, and as president I won't do anything. The only promise I make is that if elected I will immediately dismantle the student government, so that none of us will ever have to sit through one of these stupid assemblies again!

There is a sudden huge cathartic eruption of cheers and applause.

Tammy has set them free. Even cynical old Doug Schenken and his buddies join in.

STUDENTS

Tammy! Tammy! Tammy!

In total control, she steps back from the mike and CURTSIES.

Walt shoots an angry, confused look at Jim, who shrugs. Tracy is clearly upset, but her smile remains eerily fixed Paul just looks confused and ashamed. Jerry Slavin is convulsed in laughter and chants along with the multitude.

Tammy quickly grabs the mike for one final exhortation.

TAMMY

Oh don't vote for me I. Who cares?
Don't vote at all!

The students go nuts.

INT. WALT HENDRICK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dr. Hendricks is in a serious post-assembly discussion with JIM and

VICE-PRINCIPAL RON BELL.

WALT

That little bitch made a fool of us
I want her out of the election.
Getting everybody all riled up like
that. She's finished, you hear me?
Washed up.

JIM

Walt, we can't throw her out of the
election just because we don't like
her speech. That's not what student
government's about.

WALT

(grumbling)
Yeah... whatever. All I know is
she's a troublemaker. She's on my
list.

RON

All we need to do is send a message,
so maybe we should just suspend her.

WALT

Right. That's it. She's suspended
for a week!

To emphasize his point, Walt throws his STYROFOAM CUP at the wastepaper basket and misses. Lowell the janitor, passing by outside the door, notices the cup bouncing on the floor.

JIM

I think that's a little strong Walt.
Ron?

RON

We don't want to make a martyr out of her. Three days sounds right to me.

WALT

Okay. Three days. Take care of it.

EXT. STREETS -- DAY

Tammy rides her bike on this crisp sunny spring day. The music is buoyant. Tammy is all smiles.

TAMMY (V.O.)

Being suspended is like getting a paid vacation. Too bad it was only three days

EXT. 7-11 -- DAY

Tammy is hanging out by the entrance. A DUDE emerges from the store carrying a 12-pack of beer. En route to his car, he throws Tammy a pack of CIGARETTES.

DUDE

Here you go.

TAMMY LOOKS AT THE PACK

TAMMY

Hey -- I said lights I

EXT. SACRED HEART ACADEMY -- DAY

A cigarette hanging out of her mouth, Tammy rides by the front of this Catholic girls' school.

NOW AT THE ATHLETIC FIELD -

Tammy gets off her bike, goes to look through the surrounding fence at

GIRLS PLAYING LACROSSE

in their cleats, short skirts, jerseys. LITURGICAL MUSIC accompanies SLOW-MOTION close-ups of the girls in action.

TAMMY SEEMS TO BREATHE THEM IN

INT. TAMMY'S ROOM -- DAY

Wearing headphones. Tammy DANCES to music only she can hear. She happens to glance toward her door and notices a MANILA ENVELOPE sliding under it. She opens the door and finds a startled Paul.

TAMMY

What do you want?

PAUL

Oh. Hi, Tammy. I was just, you know, I went to all your teachers and got your assignments.

Tammy looks at him, picks up the packet.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I just thought, well, last time you got suspended you fell so behind and -

TAMMY

Okay, Paul. Thanks. Thanks a lot.

Paul smiles at the acknowledgment of his good deed.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

Now could you leave me alone?

PAUL

Yeah. Oh, one more thing. Tammy. You know, all this election stuff. 'Cause, you know, everyone is saying it's so weird that you're running against me, and, well, it is kind of weird, and you haven't really told me why you're doing it and didn't tell me in advance or anything. But that's okay, you know. I respect your privacy. I just want you to know that no matter who wins, if it's you or me, there's no hard feelings. We're still brother and sister. Okay? Cause... and I hope you feel the same.

TAMMY

Sure, Paul. No hard feelings.

PAUL

Okay. Great. I feel good.

Paul is about to leave again but

PAUL (CONT'D)

Oh. Oh. Yeah. Right. One other thing. Since you know Lisa so well, could you give me some advice? I want to get her something for helping me with the election. You know, something really special -- like flowers or candy or flowers and candy. Or is that too typical?

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
 I mean, can you think of something?
 Something really special? You know,
 something she'd really like?

Tammy looks as though she'd like to push the button on all the world's atomic bombs.

EXT. TRACY'S DRIVEWAY DAY

CLOSE ON A GIANT OUTLINED "0" --

drawn on white paper. A hand enters frame with a brush and begins to fill in the outline with blue tempera-paint.

Camera RISES to reveal the "0" as part of a giant banner. Tracy is working on some letters, while ERIC OVERHOLDT is working on others.

TRACY (V.O.)
 What happened at the speeches was an
 unconscienceable travesty. That little
 bitch Tammy Metzler wanted to make a
 fool out of me. Well, it wasn't going
 to work. People do care who wins.
 Things do matter.

Finally, we're high enough to read:

WHO CARES? I DO: VOTE TRACY!

TRACY (CONT'D)
 Eric, the "r" is supposed to be green,
 not blue.

ERIC
 Oh. Okay.

Eric carefully paints over his mistake, then works up some courage.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 So, Tracy, I was wondering if after
 we finish with these you'd like to
 go to a movie or something.

TRACY
 That's okay. I'm too busy.

Ouch.

INT. MILLARD YEARBOOK OFFICE -- NIGHT

A haggard TRACY sits alone at a computer monitor.

TRACY

People are so ungrateful. If all those students who cheered for Tammy Metzler only knew how hard I worked for Millard. Like all the late nights I spent at the yearbook office just to give them their memories.

THE MONITOR displays a DIGITIZED PHOTO of the Millard yearbook staff. DAVE NOVOTNY peers proudly from behind two of the taller students. A CURSOR in the shape of tiny SCISSORS makes a small circle around Dave's face.

Suddenly, the cursor turns into a tiny HAND and drags Dave's dislodged head into the TRASH.

Tracy concentrates as she deftly controls the mouse.

TRACY (CONT'D)

One of my duties was to clean up the group photos. It was a cinch with our new software.

THE COMPUTER MONITOR AGAIN --

as Tracy outlines a piece of the WALL and places it in the void where Dave used to be, blurring the edges for a perfect effect, voila!

Satisfied, Tracy taps on the keyboard.

TRACY (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Let's see... "save" is Command "S."
Okay.

INT. MILLARD HIGH HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Tracy is heading down the hall toward the exit when she rounds a corner and, suddenly deeply troubled, sees that HER NEW "WHO CARES?" BANNER has come loose on an upper corner and is drooping.

Tracy puts down her things and JUMPS up to slap the corner back into place. Satisfied, she turns away. But then - SHOOOP! The banner fights back, peeling even further from the wall. Tracy prepares for battle.

INT. YEARBOOK OFFICE NIGHT

Tracy enters and grabs a long aluminum STRAIGHT-EDGE.

INT. HALLWAY NIGHT

Standing on an overturned GARBAGE CAN and wielding the straight-edge, Tracy tries to smooth the banner. But she's not holding the ruler flat against the wall and -- RIP!

-- she slices the banner lengthwise. Now the plastic garbage can begins to buckle. Struggling to retain her balance, Tracy accidentally hooks the banner and as she TUMBLES yanks the whole thing down.

Overcome with anger and frustration, she thrashes around on the ground and TEARS UP what remains of her banner.

PAUL METZLER smiles down at Tracy from his poster across the hall.

Tracy looks up at it. Instantly she is on her feet, lunging for the poster. She jumps up, TEARS it down, and RIPS Paul's head into pieces.

Blood issues from a thin paper cut on one hand. Tracy regards it at first without comprehending, then raises it to her mouth. While sucking her wound, her gaze falls on --

ANOTHER SMILING PAUL mocking her pain.

ANGLE FROM WAY DOWN THE HALL

Hurricane Tracy begins a savage assault on the fragile coast of Millard High. Paul's campaign posters fill the air, shredded to pieces by the powerful winds of jealousy and rage.

TIME DISSOLVE --

to Tracy even farther down the hall, still jumping, still ripping.

TRACK FROM OVERHEAD - THE HALLWAY FLOOR - where a thousand bits of Paul lie scattered -- a grinning mouth here, an eye there.

TILT UP finally to Tracy, sweating, panting. She finishes ripping a poster and looks to find another. But there are no more Paul posters: she has destroyed them all. Tracy raises her hands and sees they are streaked with Blood.

INT. GIRLS ' BATHROOM NIGHT

Tracy is at the sink, washing away the blood. She pats her hands dry with paper towels. The gravity of what she's done now sinks in, and she panics.

TRACY

I didn't do this. I didn't do it.

She lifts the top off a garbage can, removes the PLASTIC LINER.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY NIGHT

With frantic haste, Tracy stuffs the evidence of her awful deed into the garbage bag.

EXT. BACK OF HILLARD HIGH -- NIGHT

Tracy's face is half-obscured by the bulging bag she carries down the sidewalk.

EXT. HILLARD PARKIMC LOT - NIGHT

Tracy opens her TRUNK and heaves the garbage bag inside slamming the trunk, she looks around - no one.

INT. TRACY'S CAR -- NIGHT

Tracy drives, sucking on a wounded hand. She glances frequently in the rear-view mirror.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Tracy's car drives down a REMOTE ROAD. There are no sidewalks here, and the surroundings consist of scrubby vegetation and industrial structures. In the background looms a POWER PLANT.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We now sense that Tracy has a plan. She throws the car into reverse,

BACKS UP AND TURNS ONTO -

EXT. A SMALL ACCESS ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

Tracy stop the car near an EMBANKMENT. She gets out and pulls the garbage bag from the trunk.

With a big shove Tracy sends the bag cartwheeling down the hill Breathing hard but clearly relieved, Tracy watches the evidence of her deed tumble into obscurity.

NOW THROUGH BINOCULARS Tracy's shadowy figure runs back to the car.

EXT. HILL ABOVE POWER PLANT -- NIGHT

Tammy momentarily drops her BINOCULARS before raising them again.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS - Tracy's car speeds away.

Tammy drops her binoculars and mounts her bike

EXT. EMBANKMENT -- NIGHT

Tammy skids to a stop, drops her bike, and heads down the embankment.

CLOSE ON THE HEFTY BAG

as Tammy draws near. She pauses at first, but intrepid curiosity conquers her fear. She unties the knot.

FROM INSIDE THE BAG we see Tammy's sudden look of HORROR
PAUL'S MANGLED FACE smiles up at her. Tammy raises it toward camera

INT. NOVOTWY BATHROOM -- MORNING

CLOSE ON A DRAIN

as a hand extracts a huge WAD OF HAIR -- stringy, mucousy. fetid.

JIM holds it up for Sherry, who stands behind him in her bathrobe.

JIM

There's your culprit

He examines it from different angles. Both scrunch their faces

JIM (CONT'D)

Shall we give it a name?

SHERRY

(not missing a beat)

Dave.

CLOSE ON AN OPEN TOILET - Plop! The hairwad joins several smaller stringy friends.

NOW AT THE SINK

JIM washes his hands. Sherry glances between JIM and the water running in the shower. It's getting steamy.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Did you know Dave's a bed wetter?

JIM

No, I... uh, didn't know that.

SHERRY

All his life. He's tried everything.

JIM

(about the shower)

Still clear?

SHERRY

Yep.

JIM

We'll let it run awhile JIM turns off the faucet and reaches for a towel. Sherry offers him another.

SHERRY

This one's clean.

JIM takes it and dries his hands. Sherry now stands very close to him. JIM sets the towel on the sink. It's a little awkward as they look into each other's eyes, standing so near.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

I guess you'd better get to work huh? You're going to be late.

She slowly wraps her arms around Jim's neck and pulls him to her, a hug of gratitude and warmth -- nothing sexual here, just the embrace of two people in need of shelter from the storm of life. No, nothing sexual at all.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Thank you, Jim.

Now sherry begins to cry a little, and things begin to change -- hands wander, cheek brushes cheek. Finally lips meet, tenderly at first.

And then it is a deluge.

INT. NOVOTNY LIVING ROOM -- DAY

JIM and Sherry stumble in from the hallway locked in an embrace. They rove around the room, barely able to keep their balance. Finally, they fall to the ground.

CLOSE ON LITTLE DARRYL

playing with his foot in the CRIB. Through the bars behind him we can discern the murky shape of Sherry and JIM rutting and grunting like wild boars.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY -- DAY

JIM starts his car. Sherry leans into his window. She looks around the neighborhood before kissing him firmly on the mouth.

SHERRY

Hey.

JIM

Yeah?

SHERRY

Take me to that motel. Like you wanted.

JIM

Right now?

SHERRY

Easy, tiger. Come by after school. I'll leave Darryl with the sitter.

JIM

Three twenty-five.

SHERRY

Three twenty-five.

EXT. HILLSIDE ROAD -- DAY

VROOM! JIM roars past us in his new RED FERRARI CONVERTIBLE

EXT. ITALIAN RIVIERA (REAR PROJECTION) CONTINUOUS

JIM wears a BLACK SUIT and hip WRAPAROUND SUNGLASSES as he drives. He lights a cigarette. Behind him is a cheesy dated REAR PROJECTION Of a curvy MOUNTAIN ROAD. Next Stop: portofino!

JIM (V.O.)

What had blossomed between Sherry and me was too real, too powerful to deny. For the first time in years, I felt free and alive!

EXT. MILLARD HIGH PARKING LOT -- DAY

JIM'S Ferrari heads up the driveway and into his assigned space He opens the Ferrari door.

JIM'S FOOT touches the pavement - not a shiny Salvatore Ferragamo loafer but a worn out Dexter.

WIDE -

JIM is back in his own clothes, and his car has reverted to a Ford Escort in need of a wash. He heads toward the school.

INT. HILLARD LIBRARY -- DAY

JIM enters the library, walks among the stacks.

JIM

So as you can imagine, my thoughts weren't on the election that Monday morning.

JIM takes a BOOK from the shelf

JIM (CONT'D)

My thoughts were only on Sherry, on how perfect she felt inside. There was a special poem I wanted to read to her later, at the motel, as she lay next to me.

Jim flips through the book and finds the poem he seeks. His lips move silently.

JIM'S VOICE (VO CONT'D)

Close, close the lovers keep. They stay together in their sleep. Close as two pages in a book That read each other in the dark..

Suddenly -- a grating VOICE from the loudspeakers.

VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. McAllister to the Principal's Office. Mr. McAllister to the Principal's office.

JIM SMACKS THE BOOK CLOSED

INT. WALT ' S OFFICE - DAY

LISA FLAMAGAN - her face streaked with tears from outrage and confusion.

LISA

It's not fair. It's not fair

Paul sits next to Lisa on the vinyl sofa. He wants to console her, but he doesn't know how.

PAUL

I just don't think anybody would do something like that on purpose. It must have been some kind of mistake. Like a maintenance thing.

JIM enters.

WALT

Jim, where the hell have you been?

JIM

Nowhere. I don't have class until second period.

WALT

Even tried you at home. We've got a situation here.

LISA

If Paul loses tomorrow, it's not fair. There has to be another election, with posters.

JIM

What's the problem?

LISA

Didn't you see?

WALT

Somebody tore down their posters.

LISA

Those posters cost a lot of money we don't have. There's no time to make any more posters, there's no --

WALT

We'll get to the bottom of it.

PAUL

(to Lisa)

We still have some extra ones, don't we? Maybe we can just --

LISA

It was Tammy. That's who it was.

PAUL

Oh, no, hey. Like I said. Tammy wouldn't... she...

WALT

Well, that speech she gave -- it was pretty, you know, pretty out there. But we'll get to the bottom of it. Don't you worry. Mr. McAllister is going to see to that. Right, Jim?

JIM

(his thoughts elsewhere)

Oh yeah, you bet.

LISA

She should be expelled. Or worse!

WALT

You two just go back and focus on your studies. Mr. McAllister's going to handle this.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM -- DAY

A BUNSEN BURNER --

as a VIAL containing blue liquid is held to the flame. The solution magically changes from blue to yellow.

Wearing goggles, Tracy holds the beaker with chemist's tongs. Her two LAB PARTNERS observe.

The classroom door and a STUDENT approaches the teacher, MR. BECKMAN, to deliver a note.

MR. BECKMAN

Tracy?

Tracy looks up through her goggles.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

LONG TRACKING SHOT of Tracy as she leaves the classroom. AS she walks through the .desolate halls and descends a flight of stairs, she holds her head high, suggesting a serene, almost regal confidence.

TRACY (V.O.)

When I arrived at school that morning, I was shocked to find that one of my key banners had been removed by vandals. I noticed that a few of my rival's posters had also been tampered with. Of course, I was outraged, but one day before the election is not the time to lose your head over a couple of posters. When you're in the public eye, attacks like that just come with the territory.

FINALLY SHE REACHES THE

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE

Upon seeing Tracy, MISS LINDA BEEDER, the "They 're-all-my-kids office administrator, points wordlessly to an open door of a conference room.

JIMd is inside.

JIM (CONT'D)

Tracy. Come on in. And shut the door behind you.

She goes in and closes the door in our face.

INT. LITTLE CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Tracy is seated in a chair. JIM hovers above her, alternately leaning on a desk and pacing.

JIM

I guess you know why you're here.

TRACY

If it's about the posters, I think it's so awful. It's a travesty.

JIM

A travesty. Huh. That's interesting, because I think you did it.

TRACY

Wait - are you accusing me? You're not serious.

(indignant)

I can't... Mr. McAllister, we have worked together on SGA for three solid years and... I mean, I can't believe it. I'm... I'm shocked!

JIM stares at her.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Mr. M., I am running on my qualifications. I would never need to resort to, you know, to vandalism like a, you know... Plus, my own best banner was torn down. Did I do that too?

JIM

Were you or were you not working in the Watchdog office over the weekend?

TRACY

I was. So? Mr. Pecharda let me in. As you know, with all my responsibilities I often come in on the weekend and have permission to do so. But I left very early, around 6:30.

JIM

6:30. How do you know what time the posters were torn down?

TRACY

I don't. I just know they were there when I left. I'm giving you helpful information is all. You know, instead of wasting time interrogating me, we should be out there trying to find out who did this.

JIM

Okay, Tracy, so who do you think did it? Whom should we "interrogate?"

TRACY

Well, I don't know. It could have been anybody. There are a lot of, you know, subversive elements around Millard. You know, like Rick Thieson and Kevin Speck and those burn-outs. Or Doug Schenken - what about him? Or what about Tammy Metzler? Her whole thing is being anti-this and anti-that.

JIM shifts gears.

JIM

You're a very intelligent girl, Tracy. You have many admirable qualities. But someday maybe you'll learn that being smart and always being on top and doing whatever you need to do to get ahead, and yes, stepping on people to get there, well, there's a lot more to life than that. And in the end, you're only cheating yourself.

TRACY

Why are you lecturing me?

JIM

This isn't the time or the place to get into it, but there is, for just one example, a certain former colleague of mine, who made a very big mistake, a life mistake. I think the lesson there is that, old and young, we all make mistakes, and we have to learn that our actions, all of them, can carry serious consequences. You're very young, Tracy underage, in fact -- but maybe one day you'll understand.

TRACY

I don't know what you're referring to, but I do know that if certain older and wiser people hadn't acted like such little babies and gotten all mushy, everything would be okay.

JIM

I agree. But I also think certain young and naive people need to thank their lucky stars and be very, very grateful the whole school didn't find out about certain indiscretions which could have ruined their reputations, and chances to win certain elections.

TRACY

And I think certain older persons like you and your "colleague" shouldn't be leaching after their students, especially when some of them can't even get their own wives pregnant. And they certainly shouldn't be running around making slanderous accusations. Especially when certain young, naive people's mothers are para-legal secretaries at the city's biggest law firm and have won many successful lawsuits. And if you want to keep questioning me like this, I won't continue without my attorney present.

JIM draws a long breath as he tries to control himself

JIM

Okay, Tracy. Have it your way.

There's a KNOCK. JIM and Tracy turn to see TAMMY METZLER timidly poking her head in.

TAMMY

You wanted to see me, Mr. M.?

JIM

Just wait outside. Tammy.

TAMMY

Okay. But is this about the posters?

JIM

Possibly. Please just wait outside.

TAMMY

Okay.

(looking at Tracy)

Because I know who did it. So..

I'll just be outside.

Tammy manages to squeeze in a naughty little smile before closing the door.

INT. OUTER OFFICE -- DAY

Tammy sits patiently in a chair, bobbing to an unheard song. The door opens, and Tracy emerges.

JIM

Tracy, don't go away. Come in, Tammy.

As Tammy and Tracy cross, Tracy speaks in a low voice but loud enough for JIM to hear.

TRACY

This ought to be good.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Tammy sits facing Jim, cradling her backpack.

JIM

So... what do you have to tell me?

TAMMY

Well, this is hard for me, but I think it's important to be honest. Don't you?

JIM

(impatient)

What is it. Tammy?

TAMMY

I'm the one. I did it. I tore down Paul's posters.

JIM looks at her skeptically, doesn't say a word.

TAMMY

I did it.

JIM

And when did you do it?

TAMMY

This weekend.

JIM

Exactly when?

TAMMY

I don't know. Yesterday. Sunday.

JIM

And how did you get in the school?

TAMMY

Door was open.

JIM

Which door?

TAMMY

I don't know. All I know is I did it I.

JIM

I don't believe you.

TAMMY

I have proof.

She burrows in her backpack.

INT. OUTER OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Tracy stands up from her seat and manages to PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW of the conference room. She sees TAMMY pulling out a handful of POSTER SHREDS from her backpack and handing them to Jim.

Tracy turns away and covers her mouth with one hand.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM CONTINUOUS

THE POSTER FRAGMENTS in Jim's hands. TILT UP to Tammy really hamming it up.

TAMMY

You don't know what it's like to grow up in the shadow of an older brother like Paul. It's always Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul. Never Tammy. I'm only Paul's little sister. You must be Paul's little sister. He's so perfect, and I'm so troubled. I hate him! I hate him! And I tore down his posters, It was a horrible, cowardly act, but I did it,.. I did it... I did it... And I'm not sorry...

JIM watches her performance until he can't take it anymore he's got other fish to fry.

JIM

I don't know what your problem is, but if that's the way you want it, that's the way it'll be. I don't have time. You're out of the election, and I'm turning you over to Dr. Hendricks.

He throws the door open.

JIM (CONT'D)

Tracy?

INT. OUTER OFFICE CONTINUOUS

Tracy is frightened but still plays the indignant victim.

TRACY

Yes?

JIM

Looks like today's your lucky day

What does he mean?

TRACY
What do you mean?

JIM
You're off the hook. Tammy here has
confessed.

It takes Tracy a second to figure out how to react. But once she's got it, she runs with it.

TRACY
I told you! I told you!
(pointing at Tammy)
You're going to pay for my banner!

JIM
That's enough, Tracy. Quit while
you're ahead, okay? I'll handle
this.
(to Hiss Seeder)
Could you ask Walt to come in?

INT. STAFFROOM -- DAY

JIM is feverishly TYPING.

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The rest of the day was unbearable.
I kept smelling Sherry on my clothes
and on my fingers and I just couldn't
wait to get out of there.

He yanks the paper out of the carriage and hurries away.

INT. XEROX ROOM -- DAY

A PHOTOCOPY COLLATOR in operation.

JIM pulls sheets out and stacks them.

JIM
I wanted everything to be perfect
that afternoon, so I decided to give
myself a little time to prepare during
eighth period.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM -- DAY

Students are settling into their seats. JIM breezes in, a sheaf of papers tucked under his arm.

JIM
Pop quiz, everybody

The class groans.

JIM (CONT'D)
 No whining. If you've done your
 reading, this is an easy one.

JIM peels off a stack of papers for each row.

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I'd have exactly forty-eight minutes
 to make all the arrangements.

JIM glances at the clock: 2:08

JIM (CONT'D)
 If you finish early, just sit quietly
 and check your work. I'll be right
 back.

POOF -- he's gone.

EXT. MILLARD HIGH -- DAY

TRACK WITH JIM as he SPRINTS toward the parking lot, fumbling
 for his keys.

EXT. WALGREEN'S -- DAY

JIM exits with a bouquet of flowers and a plastic bag.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL -- DAY

Jim's car speeds into the driveway and parks

INT. SAFARI MOTEL ROOM -- DAY

JIM opens the door, sets his things down, and gets to work.

THE SINK --

JIM dumps a bucketful of ICE and wedges in a bottle of cheap
 CHAMPAGNE.

THE BEDSIDE TABLE -

JIM props up his flowers in the ice bucket and puts a small
 box of Russell Stover's CANDY next to it. He unwraps the
 motel's plastic cups and places them just so. Perfect.

JIM'S BOOK OF POETRY -- open to that special poem. He marks
 it with a carnation.

UNDER THE BED --

Jim's face appears as he kneels down and slides the book
 into place, ready for that perfect moment.

THE BATHROOM -

Where JIM is NAKED now, squatting in the bathtub, frantically washing his undercarriage. He checks his watch.

EXT: SAFARI MOTEL ROOM -- DAY

JIM shuts the door and with jaunty confidence slips the key into his pocket.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL -- DAY

Jim's car speeds toward the street.

EXT. MILLARD HIGH PARKING LOT -- DAY

JIM gets out of his car and races back toward the school.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

JIM skids around a corner.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM -- DAY

With feigned coolness, he saunters into class just as the BELL RINGS.

JIM
Okay, everybody, pass them forward.
Stephanie, put down your pen.

The class begins to rise.

JIM (CONT'D)
I'll see you all on Wednesday. And
don't forget to vote tomorrow.

FROM BEHIND - Jim's back has a large vulva-shaped patch of SWEAT.

EXT. MILLARD HIGH PARKING LOT -- DAY

JIM hurries back to his car, weaving his way through students.

EXT. SHERRY'S HOUSE -- DAY

JIM pulls to a stop in Sherry's driveway.

INT. JIM'S CAR

JIM checks his watch: 3:24 turns into 3:25 Bingo

EXT. SHERRY ' S HOUSE -- DAY

JIM'S FINGER on the doorbell. DING-DONG.

JIM waits, rings again. No answer. He knocks. No one. He tries the door. Locked. Maybe she's out back. He walks around the house to --

EXT. SHERRY'S BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

It's a lovely little backyard. Springtime flowers bloom. Bees buzz among the peonies.

JIM opens the gate, approaches the back door, and knocks.

JIM

Sherry!

He rears back and aims his yell toward the second floor.

JIM (CONT'D)

Sherry. It's Jim!

No response. He tries the door. It's locked. JIM cranes his neck for a last look at the house. As he starts to leave, he calls out one final time, not really expecting a response.

JIM

SHERRY

Suddenly A WASP STINGS him above his right EYE

JIM

Oww! Fuck! Jesus fuck!

Cursing and holding his head, JIM stumbles out the gate

INT. SAFARI MOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Through the glass windows, we see Jim's car pull into the lot and park. JIM enters the lobby. His eye is puffy and red.

A MOTEL EMPLOYEE watches TV behind the counter

JIM

By any chance, has a woman shown up in the last half-hour or so? Maybe she was looking for me.

EMPLOYEE

Nobody's come in here looking for anybody. Just you.

JIM

Are you sure?

EMPLOYEE

(indicating Jim's eye)
You okay?

INT. SAFARI MOTEL ROOM -- DAY

THE TELEPHONE - as JIM punches in Sherry's number.

JIM holds the phone against his ear and the champagne bottle against his eye.

JIM

Sherry, it's me. Are you there?
Pick up. Okay, it's 4:32. I came
by at 3:25 like we said and waited,
but you weren't there. Anyway, I
hope you're okay -- I'm worried about
you. So now I'm just at the... at
the place we talked about. Suite
219. So I'm here. Everything's all
set. You can just come over. Can't
wait. Okay. Bye.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL -- DAY

TIME LAPSE - as the sky darkens, the motel's NEON SIGN turns on.

JIM now descends the motel stairway carrying his Walgreen's sack. He puts the key into the drop box and gets in his car.

INT. METZLER KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dick Metzler and his wife JO are at the breakfast table Tammy sits across from them, her eyes lowered.

DICK METZLER

I don't get it. What you have against
your mother and me, against your
brother Paul, is completely beyond
me. And your mother is extremely
upset, she's at the end of her rope.
Your behavior gets crazier and crazier
and wilder and wilder, and who knows
what the hell else you're doing out
there that we don't even know about?

TAMMY

Dad, I\...

DICK

(jabbing his finger)

Don't you smartass me! Don't you
dare smartass me! You just shut
your mouth.

(taking a breath)

Now your mother and I have had a
long talk with Walt Hendricks ---
we just got off the phone with him

(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)

at home. You know, he doesn't want you back at Millard. He's fed up with you. Fed up! And I don't blame him!

JO

Dick... Dick,...

DICK

What?

JO

(calmly)

Tammy, now we've come to a decision. We just think it would be best --

DICK

You're going to Catholic school next year. You're going to Sacred Heart. Maybe they'll straighten you out!

ANGLE FROM UNDER THE TABLE - Her head low. Tammy SMILES to herself

EXT. JIM'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

JIM'S car pulls into the driveway.

INT. JIM AND DIANE'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

JIM enters the back door and sets his satchel down in the usual place.

He opens the refrigerator, grabs a beer. As he closes the door, something catches his eye. He reaches inside and throws a plastic container away. Rooting around noisily, he finds other things to dispose of. Suddenly --

A BABY CRY stops him cold.

JIM stiffens, his good eye widening as the horrible truth sinks in.

He carefully closes the refrigerator and tiptoes toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jim's face slowly appears around the corner, bad eye first. Finally, he's able to see --

SHERRY AND DIANE together on the living room sofa, staring at him. Their eyes are red from crying. Little Darryl squirms in Sherry's lap.

Caught, JIM emerges from his hiding place. No one speaks. Finally, he looks down, sucks in air, blows it out again, nods a little.

JIM
(very softly)
Okay

He turns to leave, and nobody stops him.

EXT. JIM'S HOME -- NIGHT

JIM wanders out the front door and stands in his driveway, bewildered and alone. The camera slowly CRANES UP, eventually looking down on him from a great height.

JIM (V.O.)
As I walked out of my home that evening, unsure if I'd ever return, my entire life in question, I somehow discovered within myself a place of perfect peace. Oddly, in my solitude I felt more than ever a sense of communion with every human being - past, present and future. Because no matter what we tell ourselves, no matter what illusions of friendship and family we create, each of us is always and forever profoundly alone.

INT. TRACY'S BEDROOM NIGHT

FROM OVERHEAD - Tracy slides out of her bed and kneels beside it

TRACY
Dear Lord Jesus, I do not often speak with You and ask for things, but now I really must insist that You help me win the election tomorrow, because I deserve it and Paul Metzler doesn't, as You well know. I realize that it was Your divine hand that disqualified Tammy, and now I'm asking that You go that one last mile and make sure to put me in office where I belong, so that I may carry out Your will on Earth as it is in Heaven. If elected I promise that I will pray more often. Okay? Amen.

EXT. TAMMY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

FROM OVERHEAD --

Tammy wears a white t-shirt and underwear and kneels at her bedside.

TAMMY (V.O.)

Dear God, I know I don't believe in you, but since I'll be starting Catholic school soon, I thought I should practice. Let's see... what do I want? I want people to be nicer to each other. I want Lisa to realize what a bitch she has been and feel really bad and apologize for how she hurt me and know how much I still love her. In spite of everything, I still want Paul to win the election tomorrow, not that cunt Tracy. I also want a really expensive pair of leather pants... and someday I want to be really good friends with Madonna. Love, Tammy.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM

FROM OVERHEAD -- Paul lies in bed looking at the heavens beyond his ceiling,

PAUL (V.O.)

Dear God, thank You for all Your blessings. You have given me so many things, like good health, nice parents, a nice truck, and what I've been told is a large penis, and I'm very grateful. But I sure am worried about Tammy. In my heart I still can't believe she tore down my posters, but sometimes she does get so weird and angry. Please help her be a happier person, because she's so smart and sensitive, and I love her. Also, I'm nervous about the election tomorrow, and I guess I want to win and all, but I know that's totally up to You. You'll decide who the best person is, and I'll accept it. And forgive my sins, whatever they may be. Amen.

FADE OUT

INT. JIM'S CAR -- NIGHT

JIM sits parked outside of Sherry's house, a SLURPEE held against his now grotesquely swollen eye. He is so tired and pain-ridden that he practically gasps for breath.

JIM (V.O.)

Sherry never came home that night. I know, because I spent the entire night in her driveway.

INT. TRACY'S KITCHEN -- DAWN

Tracy and her mom are hard at work frosting cupcakes.

TRACY (V.O.)

Mom and I got up at five AM, and together we custom-iced three hundred and fifty cupcakes.

CLOSE ON A CUPCAKE - as "PICK FLICK" is written on it with a yellow icing tube.

MRS. Flick cheerfully performs her task. She hums.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I remember she was so happy, like there was nothing in the world she'd rather be doing. Besides me and her job, I guess my mom doesn't have much of a life. She hasn't dated anyone since Frank, and she hardly ever buys new clothes for herself or travels.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Mom?

MRS. FLICK

Hmmm?

TRACY

I think I'm going to lose today

MRS. FLICK

What are you talking about? This time tomorrow, you'll be president.

TRACY

You really think so?

Mrs. Flick puts an arm around her daughter

MRS. FLICK

Tracy Flick's a winner.

EXT. SHERRY'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Jim's car has not moved from its spot on the driveway. Its windows are now fogged. A LOUD GARBAGE TRUCK rumbles by.

INT. JIM'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Reclined in his car seat, mouth open as he sleeps, JIM is awakened by the truck. His breath steams. His eye has turned bluish. He tries to wipe the condensation from the windshield, but it's on the outside.

EXT. SHERRY'S DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

JIM opens the door and looks around -- no sign of Sherry's car. He stiffly walks to the side of the garage and unzips his pants to pee.

Now cradling his head on the roof of his car, JIM gathers what little strength he has, gets in, and tries to start the cold engine.

JIM (V.O.)

I had no choice but to go home. I needed to shower, get fresh clothes, explain what I could to Diane. But what was I going to say? That our marriage had become a charade? That making love with Sherry had given me a vision of a better life?

THE TAILPIPE finally coughs out a cloud of exhaust

INT./EXT. JIM'S CAR -- MORNING

JIM drives, bleary-eyed. He creeps along his tree-lined middle-class block.

JIM

Then again, maybe I could slip in and out without waking her up.

JIM slows to a stop, looks with dread at his homem.

EXT. JIM'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

On the front porch sits A GYM BAG. JIM approaches, stares numbly at the bag. Drawing a long breath, he bends over and picks it up.

Attached is a NOTE reading: "Don't come in."

EXT. MILLARD HIGH -- MORNING

At the foot of the main walk to the school, Tracy and her mother are setting up a CARD TABLE covered with little pink cakes.

Jim's Ford Escort chugs its way through the fog and comes to a stop.

Looking like a war refugee, JIM emerges from his car carrying the gym bag and heads toward school.

TRACY

(chirping)

Good morning, Mr. M.

JIM stops, turns slowly, regards mother and daughter with a crazed, one-eyed, uncomprehending stare.

TRACY (CONT'D)
 (holding one out)
 Looks like you could use a cupcake!

JIM takes it wordlessly. AS he heads up the walkway, he eats it in two huge bites, like a feral animal.

TRACY (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 What's wrong with your eye? Are you OK?

INT. BOYS' LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

IN THE SHOWERS JIM scrubs himself as if to wash his whole life away.

JIM (V.O.)
 Cupcakes. Jesus Christ. Cupcakes?
 My life was crumbling, and I was expected to care about these ungrateful kids and their pathetic little dreams. As if my only purpose in life were to serve them.
 (mocking)
 Mr. McAllister. Mr. McAllister. Somebody tore down my posters. It's not fair. It's not fair. Can I have an A? Can I have a recommendation? Can I? Can I?

AT THE MIRROR JIM adjusts his tie, tries to smooth his wrinkled shirt.

JIM (CONT'D)
 Well, fuck them. Didn't I have my own life? Didn't I have my own dreams?

He coughs up phlegm and spits it into the sink

JIM (CONT'D)
 Cupcakes.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

JIM exits the BOYS' LOCKER ROOM door and bumps into Mr. Beckman.

MR. BECKMAN
 Hey, Jim. Big day today

JIM
 (putting on a smile)
 Oh, yeah. Big day.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE -- DAY

MISS BEEDER of the school office is at the P.A. MICROPHONE. Walt is behind her. She looks over her shoulder, and Walt gives her the go-ahead.

MISS BEEDER
 Attention, everyone. We have an important announcement from our principal. Dr. Hendricks.

Walt gives Miss Beeder a courtesy smile and takes the mike

WALT
 Good morning, students. It, uh, behooves me to inform you of an important change in today's elections. Effective this morning...

INT. TEACHERS' OFFICES -- DAY

BALLOT AFTER BALLOT -- as a black magic marker crosses out Tammy's name.

JIM sits at his desk and carries out his absurd task. He stops and stares. His thoughts wander far, far away.

WALT (O.S.)
 Sophomore Tammy Metzler has been... Metzler has been determined ineligible - I repeat: ineligible -- for SGA president. You may not vote for Tammy Metzler. All other candidates are eligible. Now please pay attention to a very important, uh, audio-visual presentation.
 (irritated, thinking he's off)
 Linda, who typed this thing? I said I need all caps....

INT. TV AND MILLARD CLASSROOMS -- DAY

CLOSE ON A TV-- mounted in the corner. An educational video is just beginning. Host CLARK NAYLOR sits on the edge of a desk in a generic office set.

During the video, we cut to CLASSROOMS, where from the TV's point of view, we see the students watching: English class shop class, gym class, biology class.

CLARK (ON TV)

Hello, students, I'm Clark Naylor of Joslyn's Educational Resources. It's election day, and how you vote will make a big difference in the activities, events, and perhaps even the policies of your school. Over the past few days or weeks, you've heard candidates for the various offices make their speeches and tell you where they stand. You've probably seen their posters. Maybe you've even had a chance to speak with them personally.

CLOSE-UPS OF STUDENTS

Now replace the wider shots of classrooms. Photographed as though from a Soviet propaganda film, some students look up nobly and attentively, while others watch with dead eyes and open mouth, and still others goof off.

CLARK (ON TV CONT'D)

Well, today marks the end of campaigning, and now the spotlight turns to you. Voting is your privilege and your responsibility. Remember, no one needs to know for whom you've voted. That's between you. . . and you.

An AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEENAGER walks up to Clark.

CLARK (ON TV CONT'D)

Now I'd like to introduce you to Tony. Tony's going to show you how to cast your vote. Are you ready, Tony?

TONY (ON TV)

I think so.

CLARK

Good. Let's get started.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY NEAR OF-PICE -- DAY

JIM slinks down the hall and ducks into a PHONE BOOTH. He fishes change out of his pocket and dials. We hear the echo of the video emanating from all the classrooms.

SHERRY'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hi. You've reached the Novotnys. We're not around, but we'll call you back real soon. Have a nice day.

JIM

Are you there? Sherry, are you there?
It's Jim.

(suddenly angry)

Why did you do that? I trusted you.
Completely. You've ruined my life.
Do you know that? Do you realize
that? Huh? Do you? You've ruined
Diane's life. You ruined my life.
is that what you wanted?

(recovering)

I'm sorry. It's just... I'm going
nuts here. Okay, all right, so...
Really, I'm sorry. I just think we
should talk, okay? I love you.

INT. TEACHERS' OFFICES -- DAY

JIM crosses out more ballots, this time with perverse
intensity.

JIM (V.O.)

If only my own life could be corrected
so easily, with nice fat black lines
drawn neatly through my sins.

CLOSE ON TAMMY'S NAME -

as it is blackened. We WIPE with the motion of the magic
marker to:

INT. LITTLE SALLY ANN SHOP -- DAY

SWISH!

The curtain of the dressing room is drawn back, and there's
Tammy. She beams and walks toward a three pannel mirror where
she takes herself in, dressed in her new Catholic schoolgirl
UNIFORM.

The SALESLADY converses nearby with Jo Metzler.

SALESLADY

And Sacred Heart is such a good
school. Excellent school. The public
schools are going downhill, as far
as I'm concerned.

JO

Well, we've had good luck at Millard,
but for this one it's time for a
change.

Tammy spins and admires the flip of the skirt.

SALESLADY

So what do you think? Sacred Heart has the prettiest. They have that nice hint of purple.

TAMMY

(lying)
I hate it.

JO

You're just going to have to get used to it.

TAMMY

Please, mom. Please don't make me go to Sacred Heart. I beg you.

JO

(to saleslady)
We'll take two.

INT. MILLARD HIGH CAFETERIA -- DAY

Makeshift POLLING BOOTHS are set up just outside the cafeteria. Behind two tables sit TWO TEACHERS who cross out voters' names on big master computer lists. Tracy stands in line, not-so-patiently waiting her turn.

TRACY (V.O.)

When the time came to cast our votes, I stood in line just like everyone else.

She finally reaches the front of the line.

TEACHER

Hi, Tracy

TRACY

Tracy Enid Flick.

TEACHER

I know.

Tracy goes into a VOTING BOOTH and quickly scans her ballot. Sophomore PHIL CHOY stands nearby with his CAMERA.

TRACY

Phil you ready?

PHIL

Ready.

Tracy exits the booth and heads toward the BALLOT BOX. She inserts her ballot halfway and freezes, smiling. Phil snaps a picture, but -

PHIL (CONT'D)
Just a second. My flash.

Tracy remains perfectly still while Phil fiddles with his camera. A STUDENT stands behind her, waiting to put his ballot in the box.

STUDENT
Come on, Tracy.

TRACY
(through her smile)
Just wait.

FLASH! Phil gets his shot and Tracy drops her ballot in.

TRACY (CONT'D)
Thanks, Phil.

On her way out Tracy passes Paul at the end of the line. He gives her an enthusiastic THUMBS UP.

PAUL
Way to go, Tracy! Isn't this exciting?

TRACY
(awkward)
Yeah.

PAUL
Well, good luck!

TRACY
(reluctant)
Good luck to you too, Paul.

PAUL
Thanks!

INT. VOTING BOOTH -- DAY

Paul scans his ballot, struggles with his decision.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's so weird. Do people always just vote for themselves? 'Cause looking at my own name on the ballot, I just... I don't know, I just felt like it's not right to vote for yourself.

THE BALLOT - as Paul's pen puts an "X" next to the name "Tracy Flick

INT. MILLARD HALLWAYS -- DAY

THE BALLOT BOX is being carried through the halls and up some stairs by Larry Fouch and three other STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS. The music suggests the weighty importance of its contents and the sacred mission of its bearers.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM -- DAY

JIM is hunkered over his desk. He's a wreck: dark, dark circles under his eyes; his hair didn't dry right -- frizzy here, matted there.

And he's near tears.

Larry Fouch and his retinue enter cheerfully

LARRY

Okay, Mr. M.

Larry drops the ballot box on Jim's desk.

JIM

What? Right. So let's start counting.

LARRY

Well, I thought that... well, the way it always works is that SGA president does a count, then the SGA advisor, you know, for the two independent counts.

JIM

Fine. So do your count. Start with president, and I'll be right back.

LARRY

You have the key, Mr. McAllister.

JIM doesn't understand at first, then

JIM

Right. I know.

JIM proceeds to sort through his cluttered desk drawers but can't seem to find the key. The council members exchange concerned looks as Jim's search becomes frenzied.

LARRY

Are you okay, Mr. M.?

ANOTHER STUDENT

What happened to your eye?

JIM

I'm fine. It's just a bee sting, a simple little everyday bee sting. Some people, they get stung, it's no big deal. Me, I swell up. Okay?

JIM emerges from the drawer wielding a VISE GRIP. He goes to the box and TEARS the entire hardware assembly off. Holding the mangled lock, he turns to the students, who look back STUNNED.

JIM (CONT'D)

I just want to get this over with, so we can have the assembly and go home. We don't have much time until eighth period. I have other things going on, too, you know.

LARRY

Okay. Yeah. We know.

JIM

All right. I'll be back

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SCHOOL OFFICE -- DAY

JIM slinks up to a PAY PHONE, inserts a coin, dials

SHERRY'S VOICE

(cheery)

Hi. You've reached the Novotnys. We're not around, but we'll call you back real soon. Have a nice day.

JIM

It's me again. I'm sorry for all the calls. But Sherry, if I could just hear your voice, if you'd only acknowledge that I...

SHERRY (O.S.)

(picking up phone)

What do you want, Jim?

JIM

You're there.

SHERRY (O.S.)

Yeah. I'm here.

JIM

Sherry... I love you.

SHERRY (O.S.)

(loud exhale)

Don't say that. You know it's not true.

JIM
It's the only true thing I know
anymore.

SHERRY (O.S.)
We made a mistake. Let's not make
it worse.

JIM
A mistake? That was no mistake.

SHERRY (O.S.)
I was lonely. You took advantage.

JIM
Me? I took advantage of you? You
hugged me! You kissed me! You're
the one who --

CLICK.

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

It's PASSING PERIOD, and the halls are jammed with students
at their lockers and walking to class.

JIM is walking quickly back to his classroom. He passes Paul.

PAUL
Hey, Mr. M. Big day, huh?

Jim doesn't even hear.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Larry is just finishing his count. The ballots are on a
desk in front of him, neatly organized into three piles.
JIM enters.

JIM
(impatient)
What d'you got?

LARRY
I'm not supposed to tell. Not until
you've counted too. We're each
supposed to make an independent count.

JIM
You're kidding, right?

LARRY
I thought those were the rules, Mr.
McAllister. If they've changed in
any way --

JIM

Larry, we're not electing the fucking Pope here. Just tell me who won.

Jim's use of profanity scares Larry, and he responds reluctantly.

LARRY

It's a squeaker, Mr. M. I've got Tracy by a vote. Just one vote.

Jim, who hasn't cared about any of this today, suddenly takes note. He stares blankly at Larry as the news sinks in.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Mr. M.?

JIM

Huh. Okay. Well, I guess I'd better do my count.

Jim-scoops up the three piles of ballots and takes them to his desk.

INT. HISTORY CLASS -- DAY

CLOSE ON DALE -

a junior honors student. He is thinking. The wheels are turning, grinding. Finally --

DALE

Sputnik.

MR. FLAGG is lecturing, really trying to make history come alive.

Tracy takes notes, but she is noticeably distracted.

MR. FLAGG

Right. And what year was that?

DALE

1958?

MR. FLAGG

Almost. 1957. So the point here is when we found out about Sputnik, we got really scared. It seemed like no matter what we had and kept secret, they could develop it too. A-bombs, h-bombs, rocket ships. And this time we were behind them. So -- February 1961, Kennedy tells Congress and the American people he wants to go to the moon. May 1961, the Apollo program is announced...

Tracy just can't take it anymore. She abruptly stands up, takes the GIANT HALL PASS off the lip of the blackboard, and starts to leave.

Mr. Flagg gives her a small nod.

INT. RAILWAY -- DAY

Tracy nears a room, a special room. She slows down and peeks in the window of the door. She sees --

LARRY FOUCH sitting at the back of the classroom, staring front.

Tracy presses her face to see what Larry is staring at --

JIM at his desk counting ballots LARRY catches sight of Tracy in the window.

TRACY crosses her fingers by her ears and gives a questioning look LARRY sneaks a guilty look at Jim, absorbed in his counting. Then, against his better judgment flashes Tracy a quick, furtive double THUMBS-UP.

TRACY suddenly disappears from the window.

IN THE EMPTY HALLWAY - Tracy pogos with unbridled joy

TRACY (V.O.)

You know that moment when they announce the winner of a beauty pageant? When Miss Texas or whoever suddenly realizes she's Miss America, and all she can do is scream and weep and hug the losers? I had my moment in the hallway that Tuesday afternoon with no one to hug but myself.

She pulls herself together enough to peek through the window of the OTHER DOOR to Jim's classroom, the window behind which JIM is still busily doing his count.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM -- DAY

JIM counts out the last of the ballots, mouthing the numbers to himself.

JIM (V.O.)

I was at the end of my count when it happened. I'd come up with exactly the same numbers as Larry: Tracy had won the election by a single vote, 256 to 257. I was about to announce my tally when...

JIM looks up and sees TRACY in the window, her face exploding with joy. She FREEZES.

We move closer to Jim in SLOW-MOTION. What actually occurs in a split-second is suspended in time

JIM (CONT'D)

The sight of Tracy at that moment affected me in a way I can't fully explain. Part of it was that she was spying, but mostly it was her face. Looking at her, you might think she was a sweet, innocent teenage girl. But she wasn't sweet. And she wasn't innocent. She was selfish and cynical and ambitious and thought nothing of destroying the lives of others to get to the top. Who knew how high she would climb in life, how many people would suffer because of her? I had to stop her now.

Tracy UNFREEZES and darts out of sight. JIM glances at Larry. Larry is writing in a notebook.

JIM'S HAND creeps up from his lap and onto the pile of TRACY VOTES. His fingers nimbly count two ballots and pull them off the desk.

JIM coughs as beneath his desk he CRUMPLES THE BALLOTS into a ball and drops them into the wastepaper basket.

JIM

Larry?

LARRY

(looking up)

Yeah?

JIM

I think we've got a problem.

INT. WALT HENDRICKS'S OFFICE -- DAY

Walt is just finishing counting the ballots on his desk. Larry and JIM stand over him.

WALT

253... 254... 255. I get the same as you Jim. Looks like Paul's our president.

LARRY

No way. It doesn't make sense.

WALT

Sorry. My figures work out exactly the same as Jim's. 256 for Paul, 255 for Tracy.

LARRY

And 290 "disregards," right?

WALT

If you say so.

JIM

Mostly Tammy fans.

LARRY

See, it doesn't add up. There are only 801 ballots but 803 people voted. Two votes are missing. Check the register.

JIM

He's right. Two people must have pocketed their ballots. Usually it's more.

LARRY

But, they were there I counted 803 votes.

JIM

It happens, Larry. People make mistakes.

LARRY

I didn't make a mistake. Every vote was there when you sat down.

WALT

Whoa! Easy, Fouch. I don't like where you're going.

LARRY

I'm telling you. Dr. Hendricks, every vote was accounted for.

JIM

(stern)

Larry? We've got twenty-five minutes until the assembly, and we still have to do counts for VP, Treasurer and Secretary. Mr. Hendricks and I have both verified the numbers, and unless you can come up with the ballots you claim are missing -

LARRY

But, Mr. M. -

WALT

Fouch, that's enough! End of story.

INT. MILLARD HIGH GYMNASIUM -- DAY

AN ASSEMBLY - The students are taking their seats on the bleachers.

ON THE FLOOR

are all the candidates: three for secretary, two for treasurer, one for vice-president, two for president.

PAUL AND TRACY sit side-by-side. Paul seems a little overwhelmed by the whole thing. Tracy leans over and offers her hand.

TRACY

Paul, I just want you to know that no matter how this turns out, you've run a wonderful campaign. It's been fun competing with you.

PAUL

Yeah, you too, Tracy. I'm just glad it's over.

TRACY

Yeah.

CLOSE ON PAUL

PAUL (V.O.)

You know, I don't understand why everybody bad-mouthed Tracy all the time. She was always super-nice to me.

JIM approaches the microphone.

JIM

If we could get started. People! Once the winners are announced, we can all go home, okay?

The students quiet down.

JIM (CONT'D)

Some contests are so well fought that it seems unfair for someone to win and someone to lose. I think that's the case with all the candidates you see before you today. All of them are highly qualified and embody the, uh, the integrity we expect from our school leadership.

OS TRACY - Jim's voice momentarily recedes.

TRACY (V.O.)

Act surprised. Walk slowly to the podium. Be modest. Thank them for this incredible honor.

JIM

That said, the whole point of an election is to choose winners, and that you have done. We'll begin with president.

JIM pulls a folded paper from his back pocket

JIM (CONT'D)

Let me add that this was an extraordinarily close race. It's my pleasure to announce the next president of Millard High School.

Tracy just can't wait. Smiling, she STANDS UP.

JIM (CONT'D)

Paul Metzler!

The crowd breaks into applause -- and laughter ON TRACY - AS she sits, her smile belies her horror and humiliation Paul begins his acceptance speech. We cut alternately to a thrilled Lisa; a stunned Tracy, tears forming at the corners of her eyes; and to JIM, who watches the events with shifty eyes, his mouth dry and tasting of metal.

PAUL

Geez, you guys, thanks a lot. I mean, wow, thanks. I promise to do my best and really do a good job and be a good president. And I want to thank Lisa Flanagan for being a super campaign manager. And I just want to say that I think Tracy would have made a great president too and that she really deserves a big hand.

The auditorium erupts into applause and whistles, and JIM takes the microphone again.

JIM

And now, for vice-president.

EXT. COCO'S BAKERY/RESTAURANT DUSK

In the growing darkness, the restaurant radiates its distinctive orange glow. The parking lot is nearly empty.

INT. COCO'S BAKERY/RESTAURANT DUSK

JIM sits alone at a booth by the window, finishing a slice of berry pie. He gets the attention of a WAITRESS and holds up his coffee cup.

JIM
 Could I get a...?

As JIM gets his warm-up, in walk the Metziers: Paul, Dick and Jo. JIM notices them as they wait to be seated. He wishes he were invisible.

As a PERKY HOSTESS leads the family to a table, Paul spots Jim. Here it comes.

PAUL
 Wow! Mr. McAllister! This is so wild.
 We came to celebrate my victory, and
 I can't believe it. Here, these are
 my parents.

JIM stands up awkwardly.

DICK METZLER
 (extending his hand)
 Hi. Dick Metzler. My wife --

PAUL
 This is great.

JIM
 (extending his hand)
 Jim McAllister.

JO METZLER
 (extending her hand)
 Jo Metzler. You know, Paul just thinks
 the world of you. Oh, if you could
 just hear him...

DICK
 Yeah, say, apparently you've really
 come behind him, really helped him
 out there with the student council
 thing and all.

PAUL
 I never would have ran if it wasn't
 for Mr. M.

JIM
 Paul doesn't need any of my help.
 He's going places. You should be
 very proud.

JO

We are.

DICK

Having a problem with your eye there?

JO

Dick.

JIM

Just a bee sting.

DICK

You ought to get that looked at.
Shot of cortisone or something.

JIM

Thanks, I'll be fine.

DICK

Anyway, we're awful sorry about what
went on with our other one, you know,
our Tammy.

JO

We were mortified...

JIM

Oh, she's not a bad girl. She'll
come around.

JO

... but we've had some good talks,
and I think we're sorting things
out. We're starting her at Sacred
Heart in the fall.

JIM

Good school.

DICK

Say, you're all alone, why don't
you join us?

PAUL

Yeah!

JIM

Oh, no. No. I'm just finishing up
here, and I've got to get home.

PAUL

(to his parents)

Why don't you guys go sit down, okay?
I'll catch up in a minute? I want to
talk to Mr. M. about some important
stuff.

DICK
All right. Well, sure nice to meet
you.

JO
So nice.

JIM
You bet.

The Metziers go, and- Paul slides in across from Jim.

PAUL
So, Mr. M, I was starting to think
about ideas for next year. I was
thinking it would be cool to have,
like a carnival. With rides. And,
you know, it could be for, like,
Muscular Dystrophy.

JIM tries to smile and seem attentive, but we sense his
profound fatigue and his profound sadness.

PAUL (CONT'D)
And on Halloween we could have a
haunted house. But a really good
haunted house, not like those cheesy
bad ones. You know, more like the
radio station ones. This one would
be really scary. And for Homecoming --
well, you know how last year's theme
was -

JIM
Paul... Paul.... We'll have plenty
of time to get into all this later.
A whole year, in fact. Right now I
just need to finish my pie and get
home.

PAUL
Oh, okay. Yeah, sorry.

The wind out of his sails, Paul gets up and is about to go
when

PAUL (CONT'D)
Just one more thing. So, Mr. M.,
uh, do you think Tracy's going to be
okay? I saw her face after the
assembly, and I think she's taking
it pretty hard.

JIM
Don't worry about Tracy. She'll be
fine.

INT. TRACY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON TRACY -

her face drained and pallid, her eyes red and bleary: she is exhausted from crying.

TRACY

One vote... one vote

She falls again headlong again into the throes of despair. Her mouth contorts into a rictus of agony, and there issues an almost feral cry of pain. Her anguish grows convulsive.

Barbara Flick comes in and sits on the bed. She's carrying a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE and a glass of milk.

BARBARA

Why don't you take a couple of my pills, darling? You'll feel better.

Tracy takes the pills and sips the milk weakly. Her mother kisses her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Don ' t worry. .. don ' t worry. . .
sshhhh... that's it, baby... that's
it, darling. Everything's going to
be fine.

She lays Tracy on the bed, and Tracy begins to quiet. Barbara kisses her again and rises to leave. At the door she pauses to add a few final words of comfort.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Maybe you needed more posters, honey.
Or if you'd taken my suggestions
about your speech. I don't know.
We'll figure it out.

EXT. MCAILISTER HOME -- NIGHT

JIM stands at his own back door, beaten and ashamed. He lifts a hand and knocks. After a moment the door opens, and there is Diane.

JIM

Diane, I...

Diane looks at JIM in silence. Her face reveals nothing, but there is a deadness in her eyes. After a moment, she turns back inside, leaving the door open.

JIM follows his wife inside, closes the door. The camera moves to peek in the kitchen window, from where we watch JIM and Diane but cannot make out anything they say.

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I don't know how Diane and I made it through that night, but we did. Our marriage had gone right to the brink, but in the end I guess it was saved by one simple fact: we truly loved each other. So we made a commitment to begin the painful process of piecing our lives back together. The worst was over; the mistakes of the past were behind us.

INT. MILLARD HIGH JIM'S CLASSROOM -- NIGHT

A WASTE BASKET peeks out from under Jim's desk.

We hear a distinctive rhythmic squeak, and a shadowy head appears in the window. Keys jingle. The door opens, and Lowell turns on the lights. He approaches the waste basket and slides it out.

EXT. MILLARD HIGH TRACK -- DAY

FROM OVERHEAD - JIM circles the track.

ON THE GROUND -- JIM does pushups. Then sit-ups.

JIM (V.O.)

The next day held the promise of a new beginning. After all, what harm had really been done? No one was dead.

INT. MILLARD OFFICE -- DAY

Now all clean and refreshed and whistling a merry tune, JIM pops in to check his box, giving a wave to Miss Seeder.

JIM

Hi, Linda.

JIM continues to whistle as he looks through his mail.

JIM (CONT'D)

Life would go on, and I would certainly be a stronger and wiser person from the experience.

MISS BEEDER

Uh, Jim?

JIM

Hmm?

MISS BEEDER

Walt needs to see you.

JIM

Oh. Okay.

Still absorbed in his papers, JIM heads over to Walt's door.

INT. WALT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

JIM

You rang?

JIM stops cold. Walt is not alone. Barbara Flick and a bleary-eyed Tracy are there. So are Larry Fouch, Ron Bell, and Lowell the janitor.

Prominently displayed on Walt's desk are TWO CRINKLED BALLOTS. JIM takes an eternal few seconds to absorb what is happening.

WALT

Mr. McAllister, I hope you can help us clear something up.

BARBARA

Look at his face! He knows he's been caught. Look at his face!

(to Jim)

Your ass is grass, Mister!

LARRY

You said I was a liar. You're the liar, you're the --

WALT

Larry, you just take it easy

All turn and stare at Jim. Come to think of it, he does look awfully guilty.

INT. SPANISH CLASS -- DAY

MS. HOY leads the class in recitation. Paul responds along with his companeros.

MS. HOY

Yo --

CLASS

Pierdo.

MS. HOY

Tu

CLASS

Pierdes.

MS. HOY

El/ella -

CLASS

Pierde.

A STUDENT AIDE enters the classroom and hands a note to the teacher, who upon reading the note looks up at Paul.

MS. HOY

Senor presidente?

The class laughs fondly. Paul looks around, beaming with embarrassment and pride.

MS. HOY (CONT'D)

Quieren verte en la oficina.

PAUL

Huh?

INT. MILLARD HALLWAY -- DAY

Paul walks down the hall, a bounce in his step on this fine spring morning.

PAUL

Senor presidente. Yo soy senor presidente... El grande presidente...

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I don't know why, but finding out there was a mistake and I hadn't won the election after all didn't bother me that much. Winning had seemed kind of unreal anyway. I guess I should have voted for myself. Oh, well.

Paul reaches the --

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

and enters Walt's office. Everyone is there.

WALT

(standing up)

Take a seat, son. We've got something hard to tell you.

PAUL

Is Tammy okay?

WALT

She's okay. It's about the election.

Walt closes the door in our faces. We hold on the door.

JIM (V.O.)

After Paul got the bad news, Walt asked for a few minutes alone with me. It was very simple, really. I offered my resignation, and he accepted. Very quietly, it was all over for Jim McAllister at Millard High - twelve years of hard work down the drain.

The door opens revealing that only walt and JIM remain. The office staff is hushed as JIM the Zombie Cyclops emerges into the office and walks somberly toward Miss Boeder. His voice quavers at half-volume.

JIM (CONT'D)

Walt will be speaking with you about this, but I need you to find someone to take over my classes. The lesson plans for the rest of the year are in my top right drawer.

MISS BEEDER

Okay, Jim. I understand.

JIM

Thanks. Well. I'm going home now.

EXT. HILLARD HIGH (REAR PROJECTION) -- DAY

As JIM moves toward the parking lot, the school recedes in an odd REAR PROJECTION that suggests he is floating. The MUSIC here reinforces the gravity of the moment, the inevitability of his fate.

JIM stops walking, and a disembodied STEERING WHEEL floats into his hands. The scene behind changes to:

INT./EXT. JIM'S CAR REAR PROJECTION -- DAY

The city passing by outside is another strange REAR PROJECTION. JIM grips the floating steering wheel and makes turns wildly out-of-sync with the background.

JIM (V.O.)

I don't remember driving home, or much of anything that happened in the next few days.

JIM lets go of the steering wheel, and it drifts away. JIM turns his

BACK TO CAMERA TO FACE -

INT. MCALLISTER HOUSE (REAR PROJECTION) -- DAY

JIM drifts toward his house, and it absorbs him through the front door.

INT. MCALLISTER LIVING ROOM -- DAY

We're no longer in rear-projection land: reality has caught up with Jim. As he walks across the room, he strips off his shirt, shoes, socks, and finally pants. Left only in his underwear, he walks through the house and out into the -

EXT. MCALLISTER BACKYARD DAY AND FLOPS DOWN IN THE GRASS, FACING

the sky.

JIM

There were news stories in the paper and on television, former students calling with their support, endless hours of doing nothing, thinking nothing.

A shadow falls over Jim's face, and a hand offers him a glass of iced tea. Grateful, JIM takes it, and looks up at -

DIANE, her head blocking the sun.

JIM

Diane stood by me through the entire humiliating ordeal, in a way, it sort of evened things out between us.

Diane leaves. JIM looks up at the sky.

JIM (CONT'D)

Soon school was over, and summer stretched out in front of me as it always had. Funny how the rhythm of the school year remains ingrained in you for life. In mid-June we found out Diane was pregnant.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK we hear the opening bars of a bouncy TIJUANA BRASS SONG.

EXT. METZLER CEMENT PLANT NIGHT

PAUL IS DANCING, twisting to the music at a PARTY, a giant grin on his face, a big sombrero with tassels on his head.

Behind him we can see an enormous illuminated GRAVEL CONVEYOR. SUPER-IMPOSED: "ONE YEAR LATER."

PAUL (V.O.)

Senior year was great. Sure, I didn't get to play ball or be president, but I got elected homecoming king and prom king anyway. I got into Nebraska like I wanted and early-rushed Phi Delts. At the end of the year me and my buddies threw a bitching Mexican party down at the cement plant. Shit, that was a good party. That was a good party!

LATER --

Paul is at a KEG, pumping it up and serving himself a beer. He takes a sip, seems to grow pensive.

PAUL (CONT'D)

The only really bad thing about senior year was Lisa. Right before Christmas she dumped me. One minute she's totally in love with me and then boom she's going out with my football buddy Randy.

Paul looks over at LISA dancing suggestively with RANDY. Paul looks sad, takes another gulp, waves at unseen friends.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Sometimes I wonder what would've happened if I'd actually won the election. Maybe my whole life would be different. Like I might never have gone to Yosemite with Greg and Travis.

Paul takes a BIG GULP and looks into camera.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Or maybe I'd be dead.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK we hear a distinctive AIRY HISS.

INT. SACRED HEART BATHROOM -- DAY

Tammy takes a big toke off a JOINT.

TAMMY (V.O.)

Catholic school was great!

Tammy and JENNIFER, a Sacred Heart schoolmate, are jammed into a bathroom stall.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

I mean, the teachers kind of sucked,
and they were supposedly way more
strict, but you could get away with
murder.

Tammy hands off the doob to Jennifer, who takes a huge hit.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

The best thing about Sacred Heart
was meeting Jennifer.

Jennifer looks at Tammy. Tammy looks at Jennifer

JENNIFER MONTAGE -

accompanied by the early '70's song, "Jennifer." SUPER-8
style glimpses of Tammy and Jennifer in the Sacred Heart
hallways, Jennifer in the park, Jennifer dancing in Tammy's
room, and finally, Jennifer SWINGING.

TAMMY

All those feelings I had for Lisa
were just preparing me for the real
thing.

Jennifer and I are soul mates, and we're never, ever, ever
going to be apart.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK

we hear the MURMUR of a small crowd, interrupted by the BANG,
BANG, BANG of a GAVEL.

TRACY (V.O.)

Senior year was very productive for
me and full of personal achievement.

INT. STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICE -- DAY

Tracy officiates a MEETING. Next to her at the head table
is Jerry Raynor and other council members.

TRACY

Order. Order. Order. Can we vote
on this? Those in favor.

TRACY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

On top of a very successful student
council year, I got into Cornell
like I wanted, with scholarships,
and I was in the top 7th percentile
of my graduating class.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Approved.

EXT. PARK -- DAY

Tracy walks along the edge of a pond on this overcast day, Her arms are crossed, and she wears an oversized woolen sweater. Wind blows softly through her hair.

TRACY

But sometimes I got lonely, and I'd think about Dave. I missed our talks. Maybe it could have worked out between us. I don't know.

INT. REAL VALU HARDWARE -- DAY

Wearing the red vest and "Ask me" button of a Real Valu foot soldier, Dave stands above a case of SPRAY PAINT. He is stamping prices on every cap.

TRACY

I wonder what he's doing now. Maybe he finally finished his novel.

INT. MILLARD CAFETERIA - DAY

It's ANNUAL distribution time, and crowd of excited students are lined up to get their precious book of memories. Many have already received theirs and are crowded around dining tables, gleefully exchanging bans mots.

Tracy takes her annual and quickly opens it to the INDEX.

CLOSE ON TRACT'S NAME - followed by a whopping list of page references.

TRACY (V.O.)

When the yearbooks came out, I was on almost every page.

EXT. MILLARD PARKING LOT - DAY

Tracy walks outside hugging her yearbook and sees PAUL AT HIS TRUCK, surrounded by supplicants.

Tracy stops for a moment and watches. She gathers her courage and heads toward him. Paul doesn't even notice her, so occupied is he with his friends and admirers.

TRACY

Paul, will you sign my yearbook?

PAUL

Sure, Tracy.

Paul takes the book, efficiently finds the page with his picture, and goes to work.

TRACY

Can I sign yours too?

PAUL

Oh, yeah, sure.

(to a friend)

Hey Nolan, give my book to Tracy when you're done?

Nolan finishes and hands the book over. Tracy turns to the front pages and finds them completely filled, as are the end pages. Now she looks for her picture. When she finds it, it's almost completely obscured by part of some ASSWIPE 'S long, illegible, exclamation point-filled message. Finally, she locates an available space and begins to write.

TRACY (V.O.)

I thought very carefully about what to write. Because despite everything that had happened with the election, I really wished him well. I even signed it...

CLOSE ON - Tracy writing: "Love, Tracy" beneath her inscription Tracy takes Paul's book back to him. He's already working on another annual and barely looks up when he swaps with her.

PAUL

Thanks, Tracy.

Tracy starts to walk away and Paul stops her.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey, Tracy I..

SHE TURNS AROUND EXPECTANTLY

TRACY

Yes, Paul?

PAUL

Have a great summer. And good luck at college.

TRACY

(genuinely moved)

Thanks. You too. It was great working with you.

Tracy opens the book as she walks and stops when she finds AN ALMOST BLANK PAGE with Paul's puny inscription at the bottom:

Have a great Summer! Good luck at college Paul Metzler'

INT. TRACY'S ROOM -- DAY

Tracy looks at herself in a mirror, as though dispassionately assessing her own face. Then she begins to put on lipstick.

TRACY (V.O.)

After graduation, I don't know. I somehow felt empty inside. I guess high school just seemed so meaningless now and I couldn't wait to get out of Omaha. Next year I was going to make all new friends. Smarter, more ambitious friends. It was time to move on. There was nothing left for me here. I just had one more thing to take care of.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK comes the sound of a BUSY COMMERCIAL STREET.

JIM (V.O.)

After two months of sitting on my ass and two months helping out at my brother-in-law's travel agency...

EXT. GRIFFITH SATURN -- DAY

A standard-issue car dealership: banner-draped lot, glass enclosed showroom.

JIM

...I landed a position at a Saturn dealership.

INT. GRIFFITH SATURN -- DAY

All those cars and that new-car SMELL IN HIS CUBICLE JIM is typing at his desk across from a 55-ish MALE CUSTOMER.

JIM

I never thought I'd end up selling cars, but it's not so bad. I like the Saturn philosophy -- it really is a different kind of company.

A FRAMED SNAPSHOT on Jim's desk shows Diane and him with the LITTLE ONE.

JIM (CONT'D)

I'm just relieved to have a steady income now that there are three of us.

INT./EXT. GRIFFITH SATURN -- DAY

QUICK MONTAGE

OUTSIDE ON THE LOT JIM saunters toward a client reading stickers.

INSIDE THE DEALERSHIP JIM explains features of a CROSS-SECTIONED SATURN.

THE CLIENT IS IN A DRIVER'S SEAT while JIM leans in from the opposite window, pointing out dashboard features.

JIM (V.O.)

Actually, it wasn't so difficult making the transition from teaching to selling. It's like I tell my customers: my role is just to educate people so they can make informed decisions.

THE GLASS DOORS TO THE SHOWROOM OPEN, and JIM watches a satisfied customer drive slowly away in a new Saturn Twin Cam.

JIM (CONT'D)

When I send someone home with a new unit, I feel a genuine sense of pride.

INT. GRIFFITH SATURN EMPLOYEE BREAK ROOM -- DAY

The room consists of mismatched sofas and chairs around a coffee table. There's a TV that no one watches.

Sleeves rolled up and tie loosened, JIM eats a sandwich next to TWO OTHER SALESMEN and a FEMALE ACCOUNTANT who like him are eating lunch and watching TV. NO one speaks.

JIM

So that's about it. Maybe I'll get back to teaching someday, but for the time being, I guess I'm pretty happy where I'm at.

A SALESMAN pokes his head in the door.

SALESMAN

(to Jim)

Hey, Professor. There's a young gal out here asking for you.

JIM

Oh.

JIM chews quicker and wipes his mouth as he stands up, straightens his tie.

SALESMAN

(low, as JIM passes)
She's a real hot tamale.

INT. SHOWROOM -- DAY

JIM walks among the shiny new cars and sees the back of an attractive young woman in a red dress and heels. She turns around: it's Tracy.

JIM is truly surprised.

TRACY

Hello, Mr. M.

JIM

Hello, Tracy.

JIM waits for Tracy to lead the way, but she doesn't.

JIM (CONT'D)

So what brings you here?

TRACY

I'm looking at new cars.

JIM

Oh. New cars. I see. Well, you came to the right place.

TRACY

My mother's buying me a new car for college.

JIM

Huh. Right. College. Wow. Where are you going? Where 'd you get into?

TRACY

Well, I got in everywhere I applied, but Cornell is my first choice.

JIM

Good for you. Good for you.

An uncomfortable pause. JIM shifts gears.

JIM (CONT'D)

So, are you looking for something sporty or more practical?

TRACY

Sporty.

INT./EXT. THE SPORTY SATURN -- DAY

A test drive. JIM is in the passenger seat. Tracy nears the end of the dealership's driveway.

TRACY

Where to?

JIM

Anywhere you want.

(checks his watch)

Just so long as we're not gone more than a half-hour.

Tracy turns right. They drive a moment in silence.

JIM (CONT'D)

Handles pretty good, don't you think?

TRACY

Yeah.

JIM

Plenty of pep, too.

TRACY

Uh-huh.

JIM

And this model comes with ABS and dual air bags standard.

TRACY

That sounds good.

A silence.

JIM

So Tracy?

TRACY

Yes?

JIM

Why are you doing this?

TRACY

Doing what?

JIM

Coming to see me. Are you trying to . . . humiliate me?

TRACY

Nooo. I just thought... I mean, I am looking for a new car.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

But I just thought, well, I'm going away soon, and you'll be stuck here and, I don't know, I just think maybe if things had been different we might have been, well, friends. Real friends. And then things would be different. Don't you think?

JIM just looks at Tracy - it's so very odd.

JIM

Well, I... I... that's very nice of you.

TRACY

(excited)
I've got an idea.

Tracy suddenly signals and takes a right.

EXT. OMAHA STREET -- DAY

Tracy and JIM and the Saturn zoom by.

INT./EXT. SATURN -- DAY

Tracy takes a corner and pulls to a stop in front of a modest middle class house.

JIM

What's this?

TRACY

My house.

Tracy sets the parking brake. Jim's eyes register a suppressed panic.

JIM

I don't understand. What's the deal?

Tracy looks deeply into Jim's eyes.

TRACY

I want you to do something for me.

JIM swallows, unsure what heaven or hell awaits him.

TRACY

(getting out)
I just have to get something. I'll be right back.

Tracy heads toward the house. JIM sits and waits. He scans Tracy's house, notices the chipped and peeling paint, the rusting lawn furniture, the bowed porch steps.

NOW TRACY opens the door and gets in. She carries her YEARBOOK and gives it to Jim.

JIM

Oh, is this...?
(thumbing through it)
God. First one of these I haven't
been in for a long time.

TRACY

Would you sign it for me?

Tracy reaches over the parking brake and flips the yearbook to the blank pages at the beginning.

JIM

What a surprise.

TRACY

Take as much room as you want

JIM removes a pen from his breast pocket and uncaps it. He considers what to write.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I'm scared, Mr. M. I kind of don't
feel ready for college.

JIM

You'll be fine.

TRACY

I hope so.

JIM

You will.

CLOSE ON JIM

He looks at the yearbook. He looks at Tracy. He looks out the windshield. It's all so odd.

CLOSE ON THE BLANK PAGE JIM begins to write:

"Dear Tracy,"

END