

"Little Man Tate"

by

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BLACK

FRED (V.O.)
It's really funny, cuz --I think--
I can even remember being born...

We hear the a capella voice of a female jazz/blues singer
OVER...

FADE IN: HOSPITAL ROOM - BIRDSEYE VIEW - DAY

A surreal looking, white room with a glass partition. The
GLOW of a TELEVISION comes in from the adjoining room...

Down below DEDE TATE, seventeen, is giving birth. From our
high vantage point we see a DOCTOR and a MIDWIFE working at
her bedside, frozen figures in the scene.

As the CAMERA CREEPS DOWN onto Dede, the JAZZ SONG FADES
and is replaced by the SOUND OF A BASEBALL GAME.

A moment later, we HEAR A BABY CRY followed by A HOME RUN,
then WHISTLING and APPLAUDING coming from the television.

FRED (V.O.)
For the first two weeks, I didn't
even have a name. Then she came
up with Fred...

The BABY is set down on Dede's chest.

FRED (V.O.)
Dede said that she'd never heard
of a little kid named Fred.

She smiles at him...

DEDE
God, what an ugly bastard.

The APPLAUSE O.S. turns to HISSES.

FRED (V.O.)
New York lost the series. And I
was a problem from the very
beginning.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Downtown grease spot. A NEWSPAPER on the table before her,
Dede -- dance tights and a faded t-shirt -- sits with Fred
at one of the tables.

DEDE
 I promise kid, someday, I'll be
 dancing once a week at Radio City
 and you can have chocolate ice
 cream as much as you want. But
 for right now, you gotta eat this
 shit.

Fred turns away as she tries to give him a spoonful of baby
 food. The food splats onto the JOB ADS...

DEDE
 Hey...

Fred picks up a plate and BANGS it down on the table.

FRED
 Koffer!

DEDE
 Look, if you think I'm gonna start
 saying things like "choo choo" or
 "Big Garage" to get you to open
 your mouth, you got another thing-

FRED
 (again)
 Koffer!

DEDE
 For chrissake...No koffer. That's
 a plate, Fred. Now c'mon and-

FRED
 Koffer! Koffer!

DEDE
 (eyes him a beat)
 What's with you today? Hm?

She takes the plate from him and holds it up.

DEDE
 This is a plate, Fred. A pl-
 (stares at the plate)
 Oh, Jesus...

Stamped on the back of the plate is "J. KOFFER PLATE CO."
 She slowly looks up at her smiling son as he reaches for
 the jar of baby food. We FREEZE...

FRAME DISSOLVES TO: A DRAWING

A pencil rendering of Fred and Dede in the coffee shop.

FRED (V.O.)
A person I really admire? That
would have to be Matt Montini.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Fred sits on the grass drawing. He looks up at MATT MONTINI, eight-years-old, scraggly hair, a tough kid. Montini and another CAPTAIN pick teams for kickball.

Fred's teacher, MISS NIMVEL, hair up in a sloppy bun, slip hanging down a full inch below her dress, blows into a chrome whistle and barks feebly at a kid...

MISS NIMVEL
Ned Newman, you pull your hand out
of there this instant!

FRED (V.O.)
Matt Montini is always kickball
team captain. Matt Montini always
has someone to eat lunch with.

One of Montini's teammates gestures to Fred sitting off by himself.

TEAMMATE
What about Fred?

MONTINI
Tate's a wuss.

Matt kicks the ball. It goes wide and smacks Fred in the chest, knocking him over.

FRED (V.O.)
I'm not sure, but I think there's
a relationship between Social
Competence and when you're picked
to play kickball.

Montini jogs over, casually steps over Fred, then runs the ball back to the game.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LUNCH TIME

Groups of kids are eating and talking among themselves. Fred sits off by himself reading "The Stranger."

Fred looks up as another BOY, BRACES on both his LEGS, slowly walks past and sits down a few feet away. He, too, begins eating his lunch by himself. Fred exchanges an uncomfortable glance with the boy, then returns to his book.

FRED (V.O.)

At first Miss Nimvel told Dede that I was a bad boy. That I never paid attention. That I was probably retarded and that I had a very limited future as a citizen of the United States. Then, a week later, she called back and told Dede that she read a magazine article that changed her mind. She said that I should probably skip second grade. Maybe even skip elementary school altogether.

Fred looks about the school yard at all the other children.

FRED (V.O.)

All I want is someone to eat lunch with.

BAD PIANO OVER...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A piano and lots of construction paper artwork. Some music is written on the blackboard. The class sits at desks, CARDBOARD KEYBOARDS in front of them.

Miss Nimvel sits up at the front playing the piano; a little GIRL plays beside her. The rest of the class plays along on their cardboard replicas.

MISS NIMVEL

(singing)

'What the world needs now...'

Bored out of his mind, Fred watches as the BOY next to him happily excavates his nose, wipes it on the GIRL next to him, then resumes banging on his keyboard like a moron.

MISS NIMVEL

'...is love, sweet love...'

Matt Montini sits in the back, leaning his chair back on two legs. His keyboard replica rests in his lap. Fred watches him as the little girl up at the front screws up the last note...

MISS NIMVEL

That's a C sharp, Trudy.

Fred puts his keyboard in his lap, then leans back and stares out the window...

MISS NIMVEL
 (singing, repeating
 the note)
 Love love love love love love...

FRED'S POV - THE PLAYGROUND

Dede, wearing a short leather jacket over a Chinese blue silk dress, walks across the yard toward the building. She jams a cigarette in her mouth...

ON MISS NIMVEL

As she turns and faces the class.

MISS NIMVEL
 All right. Let's settle down now.
 Who's next?

A LOUD CRASH as Fred falls over backwards in his chair.
 The class cracks up. Miss Nimvel shushes the class.

MISS NIMVEL
 Fred Tate? Will you be a good
 citizen and come up here?

Fred nods, picks himself up and slowly walks the gauntlet to the front of the room...

GIRL
 Freak.

A SPIT WAD hit him in the side of the face.

BOY #1
 Kiss ass.

Someone slaps a "Kick Me" sticker onto his back.

BOY #2
 Pussy.

A leg comes from out of nowhere and trips him. Fred stumbles forward, quickly sits down at the piano.

MISS NIMVEL
 All right. Let's all be good
 citizens and be very very very
 quiet for Fred.
 (to Fred)
 Ready?

Before he can answer, the door opens and Dede enters. A murmur goes through the class at the sight of her.

MISS NIMVEL

Miss Tate. How lovely to see you.
Fred and I were just getting ready
to play a little duet.

Dede strikes a match against the chalkboard, eyes the
class. They SHUT UP immediately.

DEDE

The kid's got a doctor's
appointment.

MISS NIMVEL

Then we'll just play one quickie
little verse... if that's okay
with you?

DEDE

Whatever.

They begin playing. Fred butchers the song, yet Miss
Nimvel sings along anyway. Dede leans against the wall and
lights her cigarette, exhaling into Boy #2's face.

EXT. SCHOOL - MINUTES LATER

Dede flicks her smoke aside as she and Fred walk out to the
street.

DEDE

You were playin' backwards again,
weren't ya kid?

FRED

It's a stupid song, Dede.

INT. BUS - DAY

Dede wrestles with Fred in the very back seat. Dede hoists
him up so he can swing from the overhead rail. Dede
tickles him and he drops. She looks up...

A WOMAN watches appalled as they start jabbing at each
other. Dede scoops up Fred and they fall back onto the
bench laughing. She lays her head down in his lap.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CLINIC - DAY

Dede and Fred emerge from the clinic and start up the
street. He looks up at her anxiously...

FRED

What'd the doctor say?

DEDE
You worry too much.

FRED
So?

DEDE
So knock it off.

He tugs at his crotch. She stops walking, frowns.

DEDE
What, now you gotta go? What was
wrong five minutes ago?

FRED
The little jar makes me nervous.

She shakes her head, walks on. He hurries after her.

FRED
We could mail it to 'em!

EXT. FRED & DEDE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Dede and Fred walk home through a neighborhood of storefronts and apartment buildings, all slowly committing suicide. Dede lugs several bags of groceries while Fred runs ahead, checks out everything: window displays, parking meters, bums. Dede has trouble keeping up with him. She calls ahead to him...

DEDE
You know what day Saturday is?

FRED
You get your period. I spend the
day alone in the park.

DEDE
It's your birthday, lame-o.

Fred pauses at a NEWSTAND, checks out the front page of the *Times*. Horrified, he scans the headlines...

FRED
Oh my God...

She steers him back on course. The VENDOR gives them both an odd look.

DEDE
Hey...

She pulls a stack of ORANGE CONSTRUCTION PAPER from one of the bags.

DEDE
Check it out. Thought we'd make
our own invitations.

FRED
Invitations to what?

They stop before a brick building with an old brown-palace
called "REED'S BOOKS" on the ground floor.

DEDE
To your birthday party.

He looks like he's been shot. She climbs the steps to the
apartment building. He then hurries after her...

INT. ENTRYWAY - SAME TIME

Dark. A row of mailboxes and several flights of stairs.
An old CHALK OUTLINE OF A BODY marks the landing. Fred
enters, looks off...

FRED
Dede, I don't want a-

Dede begins handing Fred the contents of their mailbox.

DEDE
The phone bill, the gas bill, the
water bill...

FRED
(indicates bill)
Throw this one away.

DEDE
Yeah?

FRED
Yeah. We left 'em a deposit.
They can just take it outta that.

DEDE
Fair enough.
(grabs a contest
envelope)
Hey, lookie here...

FRED
(looks)
Another three million dollars.

DEDE
 (hands it to him)
 Just in time.

They start up the stairs, walking on either side of the chalk outline.

VOICE (O.S.)
 That you, baby?

ROSE, once a beauty queen, now just perfectly made up, sits in her doorway on a lawn chair watching the stairs. A dozen CATS crawl all over her. Behind her, the walls of her apartment are COVERED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS of the same man.

FRED
 How long's he gone now, Rose?

ROSE
 One year. Six months. two days.
 Four hours...

Dede nudges him and we hear Fred giggle as they start up the next flight. Oblivious, Rose drones on...

ROSE
 Can you believe it, Dede? No warnin'. No nothin'...

Fred looks up at Dede and mouths the last line...

ROSE (O.S.)
 Just poof, and the big bastard was gone.

THE TOP LANDING

Dede puts her key in the lock.

FRED
 Dede, I don't want a birthday party.

DEDE
 Course you do. Every little kid wants a birthday party.

FRED
 Not this little kid.

He then turns the key for her and steps inside.

INT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

The first thing we notice is the battered piano with "KRAMER RENTS" stenciled on the side. It takes up most of the front room. The second thing we notice is the not quite finished mural of Munch's *The Scream* that covers one entire wall. The room is also crammed with junk and objects being used for things other than their intended use: a pair of old shoes are used as small planters... a hollowed out television makes a great bookcase... a framed print on cinderblock fills in for a coffee table and so on.

FRED

Why don't we just go to McDonalds like we did last year. That was fun.

Fred and Dede both kick their shoes off. Fred heads for the piano, tripping over a dismantled toaster on the way.

DEDE

I see you been "fixing" things again.

He just keeps playing the piano. She shakes her head and moves to the kitchen.

FRED

I'm not up to a party, Dede.

Fred looks out the window...

DEDE

Don't gimme that. The doctor said you're healthy as an ox. All you gotta do is stick to the diet...

FRED'S POV - THE STREET BELOW

As Matt Montini and a group of his friends race past on their bikes.

FRED

I wonder if oxen are aware of their reputation.

Unable to sit still, he slides off the piano bench and turns on the radio.

She attaches a can of soup to the electric can opener. He watches anxiously as the can turns maybe half a turn before the whole gadget falls apart on the counter. She frowns at him and he smiles guiltily...

FRED
 "Can't use the pump cuz the vandal
 took the handle."

DEDE
 Funny.

She listens as a loud bebop number comes on the radio...

DEDE
 Oh, this is great...

Fred reaches for the opener and accidentally knocks a glass
 off the counter. It shatters on the floor. He looks at
 her.

DEDE
 Better put your shoes on.

She merely kicks the glass aside, moves into the other room
 and turns up the radio. She listens, dances to it...

DEDE
 Hey, you...

Fred looks over at her. She holds out her hand.

DEDE
 Care to cut the rug a minute,
 handsome?

He looks at it a moment, then comes over and takes it. She
 pulls him off his feet, then swings him out and back. They
 both crack up...

DEDE
 Remember how I showed you.

We begin PULLING BACK as they start a routine they've
 obviously worked out together...

EXT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Theirs is the only light on. As we PULL BACK, Fred and
 Dede can be seen dancing in silhouette. We...

FADE TO BLACK.

A CLICK, followed by a slide of a BLONDE BOY-- fourteen-
 years-old, standing in front of a huge, ultra abstract
 mural-- fills the screen. We slowly begin PULLING BACK...

GARTH (O.S.)
 This one calls himself Joey X,
 though his real name is Joseph
 Zimmerman.

We CONTINUE PULLING BACK to reveal:

JANE GRIERSON'S OFFICE

Dark. GARTH, an academic type in his late twenties seen mostly in silhouette, sits with his feet up on a table...

GARTH
 Fourteen-years-old. Experimental painter. Mensa since he was four, he's got a canvas at MOMA that he allegedly painted with a small puppy instead of a paint brush. He's currently working on a two hundred thousand dollar commission for -

JANE GRIERSON, also seen in silhouette, sits across from him.

JANE
 What's he call the blob he's posing with?

GARTH
 "Irony."

JANE
 Write him down.

Next slide. A GIRL, followed by slides of her work.

GARTH
 Cherry Reynolds. Twelve-years-old. Mensa since last year, she's an assistant editor at Simon and Schuster. Cherry just published her own volume of feminist poetry called *Let My People Go*.

JANE
 Any relation to the poet, Dorthea Reynolds? They look alike.

GARTH
 She's her daughter.

JANE
 Write her down.

Next Slide. An ORIENTAL BOY.

GARTH

Robert E. Yee. Ten-years-old. A computer jock. He's been working for the last eighteen months at TRW on some defense project nobody's allowed to talk about. This little guy was also busted a year ago for backdooring the DMW computers in Sacramento. Not only did he get them to send his infant cousin a driver's license, he got his own father picked up on several false warrants, including Drunk Driving and Vehicular Manslaughter.

Jane laughs.

JANE

Whatever I pay you Garth, it's not enough.

Next slide. Fred looking awkward, posed. His school picture.

GARTH

Fred Tate. Seven-years-old, he's a second grader at Eisenhower Elementary School. When he was four, his kindergarten teacher used to yell at him for things like constantly talking in class, daydreaming, or pouring paint all over his desk...

JANE

All the signs.

EXT. FRED'S SCHOOL - DAY

Lunch time. A group of KIDS sit on a patch of lawn examining the BRIGHT ORANGE BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS Fred's just handed them.

FRED

It's next Saturday...at twelve o'clock. At my apartment.

Fred then walks away from the first group and hands out several more invitations.

GARTH (V.O.)
He writes poetry, paints in both
oils and water...

Fred then approaches another group and begins handing out
more invitations.

GARTH (V.O.)
Plays the piano at competition
level...

Fred hands out more to another group that includes Matt
Montini.

GARTH (V.O.)
...all while maintaining what
appear to be unlimited skills in
math and physics.

Fred looks around for other classmates. The BELL RINGS.
The kids run past Fred and line up on the playground.

Fred looks at the ground as something bright orange blows
past him...

Scattered about the ground where the kids were eating lunch
are a dozen or so of his party invitations.

Fred quickly begins gathering them all up. We FREEZE.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: INT. DARKENED ROOM

Fred's face now fills the screen.

GARTH
But the thing about this kid,
Jane, is not so much what he
knows, but what he understands...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Fred stands up into FRAME...

FRED
Death.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Fred stands at his desk reciting a poem.

FRED

"There stands death; a bluish
distillate/in a cup without a
saucer. Such a strange/place to
find a cup; standing on/the back
of a hand.

As Fred continues, the whole class stares at Fred like he's
got an ear growing out of his forehead. We hear Garth...

GARTH (V.O.)

Last year he wrote a novella
called "My Life by Nobody" that
he's currently setting to music.

FRED

"O shooting star/that fell into my
eyes and through my body--:/Not to
forget you. To endure.

Miss Nimvel scans the room as Fred slowly sits down.

MISS NIMVEL

Okay, who's next? Matt Montini.
Would you please tell us about one
of your favorite things?

Matt Montini shrugs, stands, and picks up a page full of
chicken scratch.

MONTINI

Clipper Ships. By Matt Montini.
Me and my dad make models of
clipper ships. I like clipper
ships because they are fast.
Clipper ships sail in the ocean.
Clipper ships never sail in rivers
or lakes. Clipper ships have lots
of sails and are made out of wood.

Montini looks up at the teacher, then sits back down.

MISS NIMVEL

Oh. Uh, thank you, Matt. That
was very nice.

INT. JANE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Jane watches as the slide changes to a DRAWING. It's a
FISH, it's mouth agape, eating a bunch of NUMBERS.

JANE

Has this boy been tested?

Then to a slide of a GIANT NUMBER dwarfing a small STICK FIGURE.

GARTH
That's the kicker. His tested
I.Q. is, are you ready? Forty.

JANE
Forty? That takes some doing.
There's obviously more to this.

Then to a slide of a GIANT HAND with HUMAN HEADS extending from each of the fingertips.

JANE
I mean, this certainly isn't the
work of a child with a forty I.Q.
Write him down.

GARTH
Teacher says his mother can be
difficult.

JANE
What about the father?

GARTH
There's just her. I don't know
what happened to him.

JANE
She probably doesn't either.
Stupid woman.

CUT TO: CLOSE-UP OF DEDE

DEDE
Mai. Tai. M-a-i. T-a-i.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: KARAOKE BAR - HAPPY HOUR

Dede, dressed in the blue oriental silk dress, stands at the bar talking to the thick-necked BARTENDER. She pushes a glass towards him.

DEDE
Did I say Marguerita? I don't
think so.

Dede shakes her head, turns to GINA, her overly made-up friend and coworker as she sets her tray on the bar.

DEDE
Kid's mind's just somewhere else.
I dunno. Maybe he's bored. He
hasn't said anything, but I can-

GINA
(to bartender)
Scotch rocks. Vodka tonic and a
greyhound.

DEDE
You heard a word I said?

Gina looks at Dede.

GINA
I heard you, Dede. I always hear
you. Today, your kid's bored.
Yesterday he was having funny
nightmares where he woke up inside
some painting I never heard of.
Day before that, he wrote you an
opera for Mother's Day. Jesus
Dede, anyone's bored, it's me.

DEDE
Am I that bad? Sorry.

Gina looks around, takes Dede aside.

GINA
Listen. I got a line on
something.
(lowers her voice)
Guy comes in here yesterday, owns
some big hotel in Orlando. Tells
me they do a show every night.

DEDE
So?

GINA
So he needs dancers.

DEDE
Dancers?

GINA
Look at this place...

Gina pulls a postcard from her apron and hands it to
Dede...

GINA

Got its own pool. About a minute from the beach...

DEDE

Gina, I haven't danced since I was nineteen. And even then, I wasn't so hot. Then, of course, there's the matter of my big fat ass...

GINA

So what? We're talking Orlando, not Vegas. Down there, if you can tap your feet, you're Madonna. I mean, Christ, Lucy Horsefall's been dancin' down there two years now. And we both know what a klutz she is.

Not so convinced, Dede eyes Gina a beat, looks over the postcard.

GINA

I say we go down for the summer. Make a vacation out of it. The kids would love it. Fred could play with Fenton and Valerie while you and I get a tan, meet some guys, make a few bucks.

The BARTENDER passes Dede a drink glares at the two of them...

BARTENDER

You two wanna blab, go work for the phone company!

DEDE

Take a pill, ape-shape. We'll be done in a second.

(eyes the postcard)

Looks nice... and Fred does like to swim...

BARTENDER

Let's go, Dede.

Dede eyes Gina, returns the postcard.

DEDE

I gotta think about it.

INT. REED'S BOOKS - DAY

One of those places that sells more tea than books. Jazz plays on the sound system. 8x10's of local literati adorn the walls.

FRED (O.S.)
Eighteen fifty and fifty is
nineteen and one is twenty.'

SAMMY REED, fifties, bearded, sits in a wheelchair watching television and eating from a package of Fig Newtons. A sleepy Fred counts out change for a CUSTOMER.

FRED
Have a nice day.
(yawns)
Night, I mean.

Fred turns to the television.

INSERT - TELEVISION

Host, WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY sits with a SOCIAL WORKER. A huge "LIVEWIRE" LOGO is on the wall behind him.

BUCKLEY
I disagree completely, Mrs. Montoya. Welfare is in fact bad for minorites. It's proved to be absolutely ruinous to job incentive in this country...

MYRA (O.S.)
Save me, Fred...

Fred looks over as, MYRA REED, black, forties, exits the stockroom carrying a stack of books. Fred quickly comes over and takes a few books from her.

MYRA
Thank you. Oooh, I'm pooped.
(sits down on the
stack)
Fig Newton?

FRED
Yes, please.

She pulls a package from her apron and smiles at him.

MYRA
Dede working late again?

FRED
Midnight.

Myra nods, exchanges a look with Sammy.

INT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fred sits at the table in his pajamas doing the SUNDAY CROSSWORD puzzle. He writes almost without stopping. A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Fred cuts a look toward Dede's room, then slips off the chair and moves to the door and opens it to the limits of the chain.

A MESSENGER stands there with a small, yellow envelope.

MESSENGER
I have a telegram for Dede Tate.

Fred looks back towards the bedroom again.

FRED
She's... busy.

MESSENGER
S'okay. You can give it to her.

Fred nods, signs for the telegram, then closes the door in the guy's face. He examines the yellow envelope.

INT. DEDE'S ROOM - DAY

Dede lies in bed asleep. Fred steps into the doorway.

FRED
Dede?

DEDE
Mm.

FRED
Wake up.

DEDE
What?

She stirs. Looks at him.

DEDE
What's wrong, kid? You sick?

She sits up, puts her face to his.

DEDE
You feel okay.

She falls back onto the pillow. He shakes her.

FRED
This is for you.

He hands her the envelope. She looks at it. Looks at him.

DEDE
Looks like somebody already opened
it.

She frowns, takes out the letter and reads it.

FRED
It's from the Grierson School.

DEDE
I can read, Fred.

She finishes reading, looks at him a moment, sets the
letter down.

FRED
They want to meet us.

DEDE
C'mon, Fred. I had a bad night.
Do me a favor and go get your
mother a coke.

He just looks at her.

DEDE
C'mon, I'd do it for you.

EXT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

Fred reads *The Mathemagician*. A picture of a 15-year-old
kid in a cape and make-up is on the cover. Dede folds the
laundry, eats from a bag of cherries.

DEDE
...this jerk's got his stuff
separated into white, off white,
white with stripes. I mean, the
guy had a dozen dryers just for
his underwear. So I go outside
and kick his car, y'know, to make
the alarm go off. Guy comes back
in, looks at me, goes "Hey, what
happened to my briefs?" I act
like I can't speak English.

Fred doesn't look up from his book as she then starts speaking Spanish sounding gibberish. Dede cracks herself up anyway. She eyes him a beat, sees that he's ignoring her. She leans over and spits a cherry pit onto the street below.

DEDE
I get anybody?

He raises his eyes from the book.

FRED
I'm trying to read.

She tips the book back, looks at the picture on the cover.

DEDE
Who's the fem in the bow tie?

FRED
His name is Damon Wells. He's the
Mathemagician.
(then)
It's Jane Grierson's new book.
Myra gave it to me.

DEDE
Myra. Great.

FRED
When Jane Grierson found him, he
was living in a foster home. Now
he can multiply two columns of
twenty digit numbers in five
minutes.

DEDE
Really.

FRED
Dr. Grierson is famous for helping
kids like him.

DEDE
Hmm.

FRED
She was a kid genius. She played
the flute for the Cleveland
Philharmonic when she was eleven.
She speaks five different
languages and has two Ph.D's.

DEDE
The book about her or the math
guy?

FRED
Myra told me.

He resumes reading. She eyes him a beat, then spits a pit
at the book. He brushes it away. She spits another one.
He brushes it away, glares at her from over the top of the
book...

FRED
Dede.

She looks at him, sighs, sets the bag aside.

EXT. GRIERSON INSTITUTE - DAY

A building that's at once part old, part new. Dede leads
Fred to the entrance. They both have ice cream cones.

INT. GRIERSON INSTITUTE - DAY

The entry hall is a large marble-walled space. Garth
crosses and extends his hand to Dede.

GARTH
Garth Emmerick. I'm Dr.
Grierson's assistant.

DEDE
Dede. Place is... big.

Fred looks about at all the student's work that covers one
wall. Essays. Paintings. Poetry. His ice cream cone,
long forgotten, begins to melt down his arm.

GARTH
All set, Fred?

Garth takes Fred by the hand. Dede starts to follow.
Garth looks back at her...

GARTH
Dr. Grierson first likes to meet
the children by themselves.

Dede stops walking.

GARTH
Feel free to walk around. The
interview should take a while.

Fred follows Garth's gaze to a glassed-in room where Jane sits at a table talking on the telephone.

FRED
Can't Dede come too?

DEDE
S'okay, Fred...

Dede takes Fred's ice cream, straightens his hair.

DEDE
I'll be right out here.

INT. GLASSED-IN ROOM - DAY

Jane looks up as Fred comes in, motions for him to sit.
She wraps her phone conversation...

JANE
I'm merely saying that I think
Jonathan should consider one of
the other Ivy league schools and
not get so attached to Yale. New
Haven's just not a good place for
a ten-year-old...

Fred notices a TEST BOOKLET sitting on the table in front of her. Printed on the cover is STANFORD BINET. Three newly sharpened pencils sit on top.

Fred cuts a look at Jane, then rolls the pencils aside to reveal the name FRED TATE typed at the top of the booklet.

She hangs up, smiles at Fred.

JANE
Hello, Fred. I'm Jane Grierson.

BENEATH THE TABLE

Fred's foot taps a mile a minute.

FRED
Hi.

JANE
Do you know why you're here?
(he nods)
How do you feel about all this?

FRED
Well. It's hot in here.

JANE
Fred, do you remember taking the
Stanford Binet test?

FRED
Yes.

JANE
And you do you know that you
scored rather low?

FRED
Maybe we should open a window.

JANE
Well, today, I'd like you take the
test for real.

He looks up at her.

INT. MAIN HALL - SAME TIME

Dede sits down on a bench and lights a cigarette. She
exhales, looks up and freezes...

DEDE'S POV - GLASSED-IN OFFICE

Jane is opening the test booklet for Fred. She hands Fred
a pencil. He takes it, looks at CAMERA.

DEDE

Watches him a moment, then smiles reassuringly.

FRED

Starts taking the test. Jane sits back in her chair.

DEDE

Watches him work. Her smile slowly fading. She finally
puts out her cigarette, and gets up.

INT. GRIERSON INSTITUTE CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Dede wanders the school by herself. We hear the faint
sounds of kids and teachers in the b.g. She peers inside a
room...

DEDE'S POV - A LANGUAGE LAB

Wearing headphones, kids sit at stations listening to a
tape. Out loud and in unison, they conjugate a Latin verb.

DEDE

Continues down the hall, peers into another room...

DEDE'S POV - CLASSROOM

The class watches intently as the teacher folds a piece of paper, then takes a pair of scissors and makes a series of cuts.

TEACHER

Now who can tell me what this is
going to look like?

A dozen hands shoot skyward.

INT. "FREE TIME ROOM" - SAME TIME

Kid Heaven. Tumbling equipment, stuff to climb on, etc.
Dede sticks her head in the door. Two older KIDS sit in
leather chairs playing mental chess...

KID #1

Kings knight three to queen's pawn
two. Check.

Dede enters the room, smiles at the kids, then falls back
onto a beanbag chair. Dede lies there staring up at the
ceiling.

KID #2

Queens bishop takes knight.

KID #1

What- I didn't even see that!

As she closes her eyes, we then...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: GLASSED-IN ROOM - DAY

Fred works away at the test. Jane finishes her coffee,
checks her watch.

JANE

Time.

Fred puts the pencil down, looks up.

JANE

Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

He yawns. His eyes fall on something behind her.

JANE

I understand you're quite a pianist. I was hoping you might play something for me.

He's still staring behind her.

JANE

Fred?

Jane turns around. A corner of what looks like a small painting sticks up from behind the cabinet. Jane gets up and grabs the MUSEUM CALENDER that has fallen from the wall above. Fred has been staring at the corner of a MIRO painting.

She says nothing, just sits down on the piano bench and deliberately flips through the calender. He gets up and walks over to her.

FRED

I wake up in his paintings sometimes.

She's looking at a page with Van Gogh's *Irises*.

JANE

Van Gogh?

She stares at the print a moment. Then...

JANE

Why do you suppose he painted only one iris white?

Now Fred stares at the picture a moment, then...

FRED

Because he was lonely.

JANE

(beat)

Take a look at June.

Fred flips to June. The painting is the same one Fred has on his wall. Several weeks have been "X'd" off. Written above the X's is, "ODYSSEY OF THE MIND."

JANE

I think I like Munch best of all.

She looks up, meets Fred's gaze.

INT. MAIN ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede wanders back in...

DEDE'S POV - GLASSED-IN ROOM

Fred plays the piano for Jane.

DEDE

Standing there, watching. We hear a BELL. Schools out. A moment later, all around her, the room begins to fill up with excited kids.

INT. GLASSED-IN ROOM

As Fred plays, Jane looks at her and Fred's reflection in the glass in front of her.

Fred finishes the piece, looks up and meets Jane's eyes in the glass.

JANE

That was lovely.

A knock at the door and Dede sticks her head in...

DEDE

Uh, Fred, I gotta go to work.

Fred nods, slides off the piano bench. Jane gets up and extends her hand.

JANE

Ms. Tate. Nice to meet you. Your son is very talented.

DEDE

Dede. Yeah, I know.

JANE

I don't how much Garth told you about our school, but we're very selective here. We get over seven hundred applications each year, yet we accept only a dozen new children.

DEDE

Just outta curiosity, how'd you find out about Fred? I mean, we never applied or-

JANE

I make it my business to know about children like Fred. I've always felt that in many ways the child with talents that go unfostered is as tragic as the child who goes hungry at night. That's why I started this school.

Dede doesn't say anything. Jane keeps working...

JANE

In fact, our program here is for the parents as much as for the kids. I'm sure there are many times when Fred's a bit of a puzzle to you.

DEDE

(eying Fred)

I dunno. I'm prob'ly more of a puzzle to him.

Jane smiles at Fred.

JANE

Fred, why don't you tell your mother about Odyssey of the Mind.

Dede looks at Fred. He looks at Jane. She continues.

JANE

Every year we take five students to Atlanta to compete in what's called Odyssey of the Mind. A mental Olympics, if you will.

Jane puts her arm around Fred, continues pontificating as if she's reciting from a pamphlet...

JANE

OM was begun to help gifted children develop lifelong skills of problem solving and team building while nurturing their creativity.

FRED

They're going to Disneyworld.

JANE

Well, actually, we're going to stop many places along the way including my ranch in Virginia. I try to pack as much learning experience into three weeks as I possibly can.

DEDE

Well. I'm gonna be late.
(to Jane)
It's been real.

Fred looks up at Dede.

JANE

I see that I haven't made myself clear. I'm inviting your son to come with us.

DEDE

Look, I don't mean to piss on anybody's high, but I don't even know you.

JANE

I see. Well. I'm sorry to have wasted your time.

Jane smiles at Fred as Dede opens the door.

JANE

Good-bye, Fred.

She gives him the calender.

JANE

You can keep this, since I won't be seeing you again. That way you can look at the Munch painting anytime you want to.

Dede drags Fred out the door. Jane steps into the doorway, calls out to her...

JANE

Just so you know, Ms. Tate, we do offer financial aid.

Self-conscious, Dede looks about at the other parents, then leads Fred out the door.

EXT. INSTITUTE - DAY

Dede drags Fred out of the building and past A BLACK LIMO. Smoke floats upward from a partially opened window. A BLACK CAPE sticks out a foot or so THROUGH THE DOORJAMB.

Fred shoots a look back at the cape, then up at Dede. He starts to cross the street. Dede yanks back as a car passes.

DEDE

Jesus, Fred. What the hell you think you're doing?

FRED

What? I was just-

DEDE

You were "just" gonna step out into the Goddamn street. That's what you were "just" gonna do! You know better than that! You always look first. You hear me?

She grabs his hand and drags him off. He nods, looks up at her. Wonders what she's really mad at.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Nimvel has written "1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10" on the blackboard.

MISS NIMVEL

Who can tell me how many of these numbers are divisible by two? Anybody?

Fred sits at his desk, looking over the calender Jane gave him.

MISS NIMVEL

Fred?

Fred looks up as the entire class turns to him.

FRED

Hm?

MISS NIMVEL

I know you can tell me how many of these numbers are divisible by two.

FRED

Um...

(looks at the board,
shrugs)
All of 'em.

Miss Nimvel looks confused. Fred goes back to the calender.

EXT. REED'S BOOKSHOP - DAY

Fred looks both ways, crosses the street to the store...

INT. REED'S BOOKSHOP - DAY

Dreamlike, we move through the stacks of books towards the back of the store...

JANE (V.O.)
Over the years scores of gifted youngsters have been hailed as geniuses.

We move to the section marked "PSYCHOLOGY," scan the subsections - ABNORMAL, PARA, PET, stopping at the section marked CHILD.

JANE (V.O.)
Of these how many have made good on their promise? How many are famous today?

An entire shelf is devoted to the works of JANE GRIERSON Ph.D. Titles such as *Raising the Gifted Child*, *Brains, Brilliance*, *Burnout*, *Raise With Praise*, and *Mind Matters* jump out at us.

JANE (V.O.)
Many gifted children go through some period of existential depression...

Fred sits on the floor, reading Brains, Brilliance, Burnout.

CUT TO: CLOSE UP OF FRED

Staring wide-eyed at the book...

JANE (V.O.)

...is some ground for belief that genius is touched with madness... schizoid traits... pain of the mind can often be worse than the pain of the body... physiques and emotions can't keep pace with their brains... the author has seen a six-year-old girl who looked thirteen due to an oversecretion of cortin...

As Fred looks at CAMERA and SCREAMS, we...

QUICKLY PULL BACK TO REVEAL: INT. FRED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Fred is sitting up in bed screaming. Light floods his face as the door opens and Dede rushes into FRAME...

DEDE

Freddy... Freddy...

He looks at her and recoils. She grabs him. Rocks him.

DEDE

Shhhh... it's just me, kid. It's just me.

He stops screaming, sits there breathing hard. She kisses him on the forehead, looks at him.

DEDE

You wake up in another painting?

FRED

Cortin.

DEDE

Hm. Don't know his work.

FRED

It's a secretion that comes from some gland. I forget which one.

Dede gives him an odd look. He clutches her arm.

FRED

It can turn a little kid into an old man, Dede.

DEDE

(peeking under the blanket)

Ah. Well, you don't seem to be secreting anything now...

He frowns at her, yanks the blanket down.

DEDE
...but tomorrow after your party,
we'll go to the library and look
it up. Okay? Now go to sleep.

He just looks at her.

DEDE
All right. We'll do shadows...

Dede looks around the room. The lights from the hall and from the street combine to form odd-shaped shadows on the walls. She points to one...

DEDE
Start with that one...

FRED
A man and a boy on a clipper ship.

DEDE
Hm.
(points to another)
And that one...

FRED
A whale on fire.

DEDE
We got an ocean thing happening in
this corner. How bout over there?

FRED
I don't want a birthday party,
Dede.

DEDE
Course you do. Every little kid
wants a birthday party.

He just looks at her. We hear PIANO MUSIC over...

INT. FRED AND DEDE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The clock reads 2:30. The place has been overdecorated with streamers and balloons. A "HAPPY B-DAY FREDDY" sign hangs over the window.

Fred, now dressed in a cheap suit and bow tie, sits at the piano playing the same music. An opened box of Legos sits on the floor. The cake sits still uncut on the table. Myra, Sammy, Gina, and Rose awkwardly stand around chatting. They've each had a few beers.

Dede walks over and starts to say something to him. He turns his back to her, grabs the CALENDER Jane gave him off the coffee table and walks away. Dede stands there, stranded in the middle of the room.

We hear a PHONE RINGING OVER, then...

JANE (V.O.)

Hello.

DEDE (V.O.)

Dr. Grierson?

JANE (V.O.)

Speaking.

DEDE (V.O.)

Dede Tate.

INT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A drink in her hand, Dede talks on the telephone.

JANE (V.O.)

Yes?

DEDE

Well, I've been thinking, y'know, about that trip you were talking about?

JANE (V.O.)

(beat)

Yes. What about it?

DEDE

It's only for a few weeks, right?

JANE (V.O.)

I'm very sorry, Ms. Tate, but I don't know if I still have-

DEDE

I don't know how much you know about Freddy, but the kid's amazing. He writes. He paints. I mean, you should see the mural he painted for me. It's incredible.

JANE (V.O.)
Why the sudden change of heart?

DEDE
Look, lady, you wanna make me work
for it, fine. But you and I both
know Freddy's a hundred times
smarter than any a the other
plateheads you got. You want him
or not?
(PAUSE)
Hello?

JANE (V.O.)
(beat)
Has he got a suitcase?

CUT TO: A BATTERED SUITCASE

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: STATION WAGON - DAY

Fred sits on top of the suitcase and the other luggage in
the very back. He stares out the back as the car pulls
away from CAMERA.

REVERSE - FRED'S POV - DEDE

Standing at the curb, waving, getting smaller and smaller
as the station wagon pulls away.

JANE (V.O.)
Of course every parent would like
to think of their child as gifted
in one way or another...

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Garth drives. Jane sits beside him scribbling on a LEGAL
PAD. Jane erases something then writes...

JANE (V.O.)
As gifted in some way...

Behind her, JOEY X, 14-years-old, looks like he's cut his
own hair; CHERRY REYNOLDS, 12-years-old, long hair, denim
jacket; and BOB YEE, 10-years-old, Chinese, suit and tie,
are wrestling with each other.

DAMON WELLS, red bow tie, black cape, sits in a seat by
himself, dozing. An unlit cigarette dangles from his lip.

Cherry and Joey poke each other, mess around. Jane turns
around and smiles.

JANE
How's everybody doing back there?

JOEY
Swell.

CHERRY
Splendide.

BOB
Didnelps.

Cherry looks at Bob. He cracks up.

CHERRY
Pardon me?

BOB
Em Nod-rap?

Again he cracks up.

CHERRY
Oh brother.

BOB
Ho Rehtorb.

CHERRY
(beat)
Stop it.

Fred stares at Damon. Damon opens an eye. Meets Fred's gaze.

DAMON
I got some kinda hellacious booger
hangin' outa my nose or something?
I mean, what're you starin' at?

FRED
You're "The Mathemagician."

DAMON
Go scrounge a pen. I'll sign your
forehead.

Garth looks up in the rearview mirror.

GARTH
Hey, Damon, how 'bout a game of
Magic Digit?

DAMON
(flips him off)
Check out this magic digit, Garth.

JANE
Damon, you're being hostile. Now
you promised everyone you'd work
on that.

DAMON
Well, scusez moi, Janey-poo, but
I've been working on a problem all
day. I haven't slept in a week
cuz a that Goddamn frog nightmare,
and I'm hungry. I get pissed off
when I'm hungry.

Fred reaches into his duffle...

FRED
Here. Have a fig newton.

Damon eyes Fred a beat, takes the cookie.

EXT. STATION WAGON - HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

As the station wagon speeds past, we see that Damon's CAPE
STICKS OUT THROUGH THE DOORJAMB.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Room service food is spread out everywhere. The kids all
jump up and down on the beds.

JANE (V.O.)
It's said the genius learns
without study...

INT. OBSERVATORY - DAY

The local Astronomer gives the kids a tour. Jane holds
Fred up to peer into the telescope. Cherry takes their
picture with a Minox.

A jealous Damon then shoves Joey aside to take the next
peek...

JANE (V.O.)
And knows without learning...

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Jane examines a map. Garth stands with his head under the hood. Fred, Joey, Bob, and Cherry get candy from a vending machine, chase each other around. DAMON'S CAPE STICKS OUT THE DOOR TO THE MEN'S ROOM.

JANE

Well, it's official. Garth has misnavigated and now we're lost.

The kids all stop and CHEER. Garth runs his hand along the dirt-caked windshield...

GARTH

We're also out of wiper fluid.

More CHEERS. Wanting to make the best out of this, Jane turns to the ATTENDANT, a sixty-year-old grease monkey wearing extra short coveralls.

JANE

Perhaps, sir, you could take a few minutes to show the children how an internal combustion engine works?

The guy spits something brown into the dust.

JANE (V.O.)

That he is eloquent without preparation...

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Jane faces the kids in back.

JANE (V.O.)

Exact without calculation. And profound without reflection.

JANE

So the four piston strokes are...?

(no response, she continues)

Intake, compression, power and exhaust. Well I, for one, never knew that.

Cherry yawns. Joey tries to shove his finger in her mouth. Jane smiles.

JANE

Who has a song?

DAMON
(trying to sleep)
How 'bout "Sounds of Silence."

JANE
When I was a girl, we used to sing
the Carmina Burana on long trips.

Jane starts to sing. The other kids just look at each other.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Damon and Fred each lie in bed asleep. Damon bolts upright and screams...

DAMON
No! I won't eat it!

Damon looks around disoriented. He notices Fred is staring at him.

DAMON
What're you lookin' at, Lepton?

JANE (V.O.)
Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls...

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Jane stands at a lecturn...

JANE
As this years honorary chairman,
it is with great pleasure that I
welcome you all to the eleventh
annual Odyssey of the Mind!

APPLAUSE and we...

CRANE UP AND BACK TO REVEAL:

CONVENTION HALL

Full of gifted kids. They all wear brightly colored sweatshirts bearing the name of their school. Behind them an array of booths are set up. The room cheers wildly.

INSIDE CONVENTION HALL - LATER

We follow Fred as wanders around trying to take it all in. Kids and their parents are everywhere. Fred watches them all, mesmerized.

He walks past a booth where a half dozen kids, paper and pencil before them, sit at a table listening to Jane...

JANE

You have been captured by Polyphemous and he is keeping you captive in his cave. You have one minute to write or draw graffiti pertaining to your situation...

She smiles notices Fred meandering around by himself.

MOCK COURT

Fred steps up to where a fake courtroom has been set up. Joey listens as a "judge" addresses the group.

JUDGE

Today, Goldilocks is on trial.
The charge is "Breaking and Entering."

(to Joey)

You're the prosecution.

(to a little girl)

And you're the defense...

ENGINEERING BOOTH

Bob Yee stands before two chairs placed twelve inches apart. Bob examines a 10-inch length of masking tape, fifteen drinking straws, and a pair of scissors...

LEADER

All right... begin. You have four minutes to make your bridge!

Fred walks up just as Bob sets to work making his "straw bridge." He loosens his tie. His expression is intense.

JANE

Watches as Fred heads for the door...

MOCK COURT

Fred hurries past just as Joey gets into his opening remarks...

JOEY

Just because I'm tired and hungry and blonde, doesn't mean I can simply waltz onto private property and make myself at home.

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Fred steps outside. Jane follows a moment later.

JANE
Fred? Fred, wait!

He stops, turns around. She crouches down in front of him.
He's upset.

JANE
Fred, it's okay if you don't know
all the answers. We're just here
to have fun.

He looks at her a moment. Then-

FRED
I know all the answers.

JANE
Now Fred, you don't have to-

FRED
I just don't want anyone to laugh
at me for saying 'em.

JANE
Laugh at you?

FRED
Like they do at school.

Suddenly, her entire demeanor softens. She smiles at Fred.

JANE
No one's going to laugh at you,
Fred. You can do anything you
want to. You're here to learn.
To have fun.

INT. CONVENTION HALL - MENTAL MATH BOOTH

A crowd has gathered around the cape-clad Damon. He sits,
calm, legs crossed, with several other older kids. The
problems are PROJECTED ON THE WALL BEHIND THE KIDS...

QUESTIONER
How many minutes are there in 48
years?

DAMON
(instantly)
25,228,800 minutes.

(then to other kids)
151,368,000 seconds.

The other kids as yet have not been able to answer one single question. Damon shrugs at them as if to say, "Hey, I can't help it if I'm so fucking brilliant."

QUESTIONER
How many factors are there of
3067?

Fred and Jane push their way to the front of the crowd.

DAMON
Oh, c'mon, my fine fellow, you
know that there are no factors of
3067. The number's prime.

APPLAUSE. Jane's expression hardens as Damon gets to his feet, grabs the questioner's microphone like a lounge singer...

DAMON
Somebody. For God's sake.
Challenge me.
(ruffles a little
girl's hair)
Hey, Punkin.

The Questioner frowns, flips to the back of his book.

QUESTIONER
Okay, how many times would a wheel
twelve feet in circumference turn
around in 256 miles?

DAMON
A hundred and twelve thousand, six
hundred and forty times.

APPLAUSE Damon bows deeply. He avoids Jane's gaze. A
PARENT in a hunting cap, stands holding his kid's hand.

PARENT
How do you do that, son?

DAMON
Let's you and me go elk hunting
some time and we'll talk about it.

Jane's livid.

QUESTIONER

Okay, how 'bout giving me a number
that when divided by the product
of its digits, the quotient is
three...

Fred watches trancelike as a series of NUMBERS FLOAT past
him...

QUESTIONER

And if you were to add eighteen to
this number, the digits would be
inverted.

FRED

(absently)
Twenty-four.

QUESTIONER

That's correct.

Realizing what he's done, Fred quickly covers his mouth.

DAMON

What's right? I didn't say
anything!

QUESTIONER

You said twenty-four.

DAMON

No, I didn't. I mean, I would
have, but...

When Fred looks up, Jane is looking at him.

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Everyone's piling into the cars. As Fred walks past a car,
Damon steps out flicks his cigarette and grabs Fred's by
the hair...

FRED

Ow!

DAMON

Open your mouth like that again,
diaper-dick and I'm gonna put my
foot in it.

FRED

It was an accident.

DAMON

I don't give a damn what it was.
Just don't let it happen again.

JANE

Damon!

Jane walks over. Damon quickly shoves Fred aside.

DAMON

Oh, hi, Jane. Fred and I were
just havin' a little chat.

JANE

I wouldn't call ripping his hair
out "chatting."

DAMON

I was rollin' in there, Jane. Til
the little twink stepped in and-

JANE

Contrary to what you might think,
Damon, this isn't Caesars Palace
and you're not Wayne Newton.

DAMON

Yeah, well you're not Freud. So
why don't you just give it a rest.

Damon turns to go. Fred kicks at him...

DAMON

Hey-

FRED

Creep!

Fred then rushes forward and shoves Damon. The older kid
falls onto his ass and into the side of a car.

FRED

Leave her alone!

Damon gets up and brushes himself off, keeping a careful
eye on Fred.

DAMON

Okay. Fine. I'm through. Let
the Lepton do the math.

He then walks to the station wagon, cuts off Joey just as
he's about to get in the front seat.

DAMON

Shotgun.

Damon gets in and closes the door. His cape sticks out through the jamb.

Jane looks down at Fred, half startled, half touched by what Fred just did for her. He smiles...

FRED

Are you okay?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Joey and Bob play chess. Cherry lies on the bed with a magazine.

CHERRY

What about Robert Lowell?

JOEY

Hack.

CHERRY

John Ashbury?

JOEY

Hack.

Fred talks on the phone.

FRED

...you could see all the way to Neptune. Then on Friday, we're goin' to Jane's ranch.

YEE

Who's he yappin' with?

JOEY

Mommykins. Check.

YEE

Damn...

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Dede sits on the back of the john, her feet resting on the rim, talking on the telephone. We become aware of a FAINT POUNDING in the b.g. She keeps her voice low.

DEDE

Sounds like you're having lots of fun, kid.

VOICE
I want the rent, Dede!

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Cherry sits up, points to a photograph in the magazine.

CHERRY
What about Pablo Neruda?

JOEY
The way hackiest. And you call
yourself a poet?

CHERRY
Oh, up yours.

JOEY
Okay. Up mine.

BOB
Enim pu.

He cracks himself up. Joey and Cherry exchange looks.

FRED
You sound funny. You okay?

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

The POUNDING GETS LOUDER as Dede opens the door a crack,
peers into the other room.

DEDE
It's nothing, kid. I uh, I just
got a cold or something. Nothing
to worry about. I'm okay.

VOICE
I know you're in there! I can
smell the Goddamn smoke!

We hear a LOUD ZZTZT as Dede quickly drops the cigarette
into the bowl. Then we hear a DRILL START UP O.S.

DEDE
I gotta go kid.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Fred covers one ear, wraps up his phone call as Joey and
Cherry beat up on Bob Yee.

FRED
Okay. Me too. See you next week.

Fred ducks as a pillow gets thrown across the room. He throws it back. Soon, they're all laughing and wrestling with each other. We hear APPLAUSE OVER...

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MENTAL MATH ARENA DAY

A huge crowd has gathered. CAMERA MOVES THROUGH THE CROWD.

FRED (O.S.)
One thousand, eight.

APPLAUSE. AS CAMERA PUSHES TO THE FRONT, we see Fred standing in the center of the arena with the other, older kids from the day before.

Jane watches, arms crossed, pleased, from the sideline. She motions the crowd to silence a moment. Projected on the wall is the problem "48 X 21."

JANE
How'd you do the problem, Fred?

FRED
I reversed the digits.

JANE
Reversed them, how?

FRED
I did 84 times 12 instead of 48 times 21.

A MURMUR, followed by APPLAUSE. Jane smiles, whispers something to the Garth.

QUESTIONER
So much for the easy ones. What number has the following peculiarity; that if its cube were added to five times its square, and from the result 42 times the number and 40 is subtracted, the remainder is nothing.

FRED
(instantly)
Five.

QUESTIONER
Correct.

The other kids just shake their heads.

DAMON

Coolly listens to the APPLAUSE, lights a cigarette. He stands away from the crowd.

QUESTIONER (O.S.)
Fred, what is the cube root of
3,796,466?

Damon thinks, but we hear immediately...

FRED (O.S.)
156.

QUESTIONER (O.S.)
Correct.

Damon looks off at the crowd, respectful and resentful at the same time.

FRED

Shifts about in his seat as the Questioner flips to the back of his book.

QUESTIONER
Last question. For one hundred
points.

Fred looks over at Jane. She smiles at him encouragingly.

QUESTIONER
If a grasshopper hops two feet,
three inches in every hop, how
many hops must it take to go
around the world, the
circumference being 25,020 miles.
And how long would it take the
insect to perform the journey
providing for one hop every one
and half seconds?

Fred looks at the other kids. They're looking at him.
Fred looks at all of the people staring at him. At Jane
and Garth. He counts on his fingers...

QUESTIONER
Shall I repeat the-

FRED
 (trancelike)
 The answer is fifty-eight million,
 seven hundred and thirteen
 thousand hops. And the grasshopper
 would take one year, three hundred
 and twenty-four days, thirteen
 hours and twenty minutes.

The Questioner closes the book and looks stupidly at Fred.

QUESTIONER
 Yeah. Correct.

HUGE APPLAUSE. The Questioner gets up and shakes Fred's
 hand. Jane crouches down and hugs Fred. He looks over her
 shoulder at all the smiling faces... and smiles back.

DAMON

Flicks his cigarette and walks off.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

We hear the kids singing *The Carmina Burana* as the station
 wagon zips past CAMERA...

EXT. JANE'S RANCH (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

Garth unpacks the station wagon while the kids run around,
 climb on fences, check out the horses, etc. Fred wanders
 through Jane's garden. He notices something, bends down...

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Lost among the deluge of books are dozens of old
 PHOTOGRAPHS of stoic, dignified looking people. Jane sits
 on a leather couch, looking over a file full of Fred's
 records.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

JANE
 Yes?

Fred opens the door, but remains in the doorway.

JANE
 Come on in, Fred.

Fred sits down across from her. He looks around the room
 at all of the photographs. She smiles at him.

JANE
 Having a good time?

Fred nods, cuts a look at the file in her lap.

JANE

The reason I wanted you to come on this trip was so you'd see that you're not alone. That you can have fun being smart. Using your mind.

He doesn't say anything. Looks around at the photographs.

JANE

And when you get home, you must tell your mother that things such as high test scores are nothing to be ashamed of.

Fred looks at the file, then gestures to the photographs.

FRED

Who are all these people?

She can see that he doesn't want to talk about it.

JANE

My parents.

FRED

Did they live here?

JANE

They spent holidays here.

Fred nods looks up at the wall...

FRED

How come you're not in any pictures?

JANE

(beat)

They liked to come up here alone.

Fred just looks at her. Jane cranes her head...

JANE

I'm sure I'm in a few of those pictures...

Fred turns back to the photographs, shakes his head.

FRED

No, you're not.

JANE

Well, my mother and father were very busy people, Fred. Like I said, they were both physicians. They lectured a lot. Travelled a lot. Sometimes they just needed to be alone.

FRED

If they travelled a lot, they were alone.

JANE

Well, perhaps I intimidated them a bit. I mean, we didn't have a lot in common. And they were really very poor listeners.

She's uncomfortable as Fred turns around and looks at her knowingly. She looks at her watch, gets up.

JANE

Well... time for bed.

Fred watches her walk out of the room.

INT. JANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jane washes her face at the sink. She rubs her face dry, walks out into the bedroom. She starts to turn away, then freezes.

A single WHITE IRIS sits on her pillow.

EXT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A ROOSTER begins to crow, but abruptly stops, and jumps off the fence as a rock is thrown at it.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: DAMON

As he walks past and heads for the stable.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: INT. KID'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Fred stands at the window watching.

INT. STABLES - LATER

Fred enters and walks along the row of stalls.

FRED

Damon?

ANGLE ON STALL

Damon brushes a large quarterhorse. Fred walks over and peers over the gate.

FRED
What're you doing?

DAMON
I'm waxing my Buick. What the hell does it look like I'm doing?

Damon notices his cape is stuck in the stall doorjamb. He yanks it free as he walks around the horse. Fred watches him a moment, then...

FRED
What are you so mad at?

Damon shoots a look at Fred, resumes brushing.

DAMON
I'm not mad.

FRED
What are you then?

Damon doesn't answer, just keeps brushing the horse. Fred starts to leave, when...

DAMON
I notice you and Jane are getting to be close as a coupla fingers.

Fred doesn't say anything.

DAMON
I bet back in the slum you got friends up the yin yang. Am I right or am I right?

FRED
No. I don't have any friends at home.

DAMON
Oh. Well, then boo hoo, Fred. I'm all... busted up inside. Really.

FRED
What about you?

DAMON
C'mon, wake up and face north,
twink. I'm an asshole. Assholes
don't have friends.

Damon tosses the brush into a bin.

DAMON
But then I don't really care.

FRED
You don't?

DAMON
"The reasonable man adapts himself
to the world around him. The
unreasonable man expects the world
to adapt to him. Therefore, all
progress is made by unreasonable
men."

FRED
George Bernard Shaw.

Damon looks at Fred a moment, then grabs a bridle.

DAMON
What don't you know?

FRED
I don't know about horses.

Damon looks over at Fred, slaps the horse on the neck.

DAMON
Well, then today's your lucky day.

FRED
(nervous)
Maybe we should ask Jane...

DAMON
Nothing to worry about, Fred. I'm
a pro.

Damon jumps back as the horse tries to kick him.

FRED
I dunno, Damon. That one looks
pretty big.

EXT. STABLE - DAY

Damon rides out of the stable on the horse he was grooming.
Fred follows a moment later on top of a small PONY.

EXT. RIDING TRAIL - DAY

Damon and a nervous Fred ride side by side. Fred, on the pony, is much lower than Damon. He has to keep looking up to talk to Damon.

DAMON

When I was a kid, the guy would grab me by the neck and shake me and say, "So, shithead, ya think you're smarter than your old man, eh?"

FRED

Were you?

DAMON

I'm smarter than everybody, Fred. Except Jane.

Damon stops his horse.

DAMON

She understands the parts of me nobody else does. Guys like me and maybe you, we're different. I mean, I hate to admit it, but without Jane, I'd be just another creep in a cape.

Fred thinks about this.

DAMON

The only drag is listening to her give the same stupid lectures over and over. If it weren't for The Game, I'd go crazy.

FRED

The game?

DAMON

See, sometimes instead of listening to her, I just count the words she says. Actually, I count everything. Buildings, dance steps, air space...

(gesturing)

Trees.

FRED

(looking around)

Wow.

FRED'S POV - TREES

Everywhere. NUMBERS float in front of them. It all becomes a blur as we move past.

DAMON

See, Fred, it's not the size of a guy's I.Q. that matters; it's how he uses it.

FRED

(considers, then)

I like you, Damon.

Damon looks at Fred a moment, then off towards the house.

DAMON

C'mon, I'll race you back.

Before Fred can even respond, Damon reaches down and whacks the pony on the ass. It takes off. Fred yells. Damon smiles, then takes off after him.

Fred rides along the trail, hanging onto the pony for dear life. Damon is coming up behind him.

ON DAMON

As he passes Fred. He looks back to yell something to Fred and gets clotheslined by an overhanging tree branch. Damon hits the ground behind his horse with a loud THUD.

Fred stops the pony and looks back. Damon lies face down on the ground. His horse grazes nearby.

FRED

Damon, are you okay?

(beat)

Damon?

EXT. RANCH - DAY

Two AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS load Damon, a huge bandage on his head, into the back of an ambulance. Jane holds up three fingers...

JANE

How many fingers, Damon?

DAMON

Orange.

Damon's eyes cross. Jane forces a smile.

JANE

Great.

Her smile fades as she steps back and lets the attendants hoist the stretcher.

EXT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jane hugs Fred goodbye beside the station wagon, then turns to get back inside. She pauses, looks off...

DEDE

Stands across the street. The two women stare at each other a moment. Neither knows what to say to the other. Jane finally gets back into the station wagon.

Fred waves and quickly crosses to Dede. She hugs him.

DEDE

Welcome home, kid. How was-

JANE

Fred!

Jane comes running over to them.

JANE

Fred, you forgot something...

Jane puts a MICKEY MOUSE HAT on his head. Dede eyes it. Jane smiles at her.

JANE

You would have been very proud of him.

DEDE

I always have been.

JANE

Well... bye again.

Dede watches as Jane rests a hand on Fred's shoulder, then hurries back to the car.

INT. ENTRYWAY - FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT

Fred and Dede enter the building together.

FRED

...for a second I thought he was dead. But Jane says it's just a really bad concussion. Jane knows CPR. She learned it when-

DEDE
Listen, kid, money's been kinda
tight lately, so I-

ROSE (O.S.)
That you, Dino?

Rose sticks her head out her door as they pass.

ROSE
(disappointed)
Oh.
(then)
He's still gone, Fred. No word,
nothin'. Just poof, and-

Fred cuts her off, forces a smile. He's no longer
interested.

FRED
That's nice, Rose.

We hear a DOOR SLAM.

INT. FRED AND DEDE'S APARTMENT - DAY

At first we think that Dede's cleaned the house up for
Fred's return. But then we realize that she's just gotten
rid of the rented piano.

She's painted a piano on the wall where the real one once
stood. The door opens. Fred enters, kicks off his shoes
and freezes. He looks up at her.

She heads for the kitchen.

DEDE
I'm gonna make your favorite
dinner. French toast and fried
apples.

He walks over and counts the keys on the painted piano.

FRED
You didn't paint the right number
of keys on here, Lepton.

DEDE
I ran outta paint.
(looks at him)
What'd you just call me?

FRED
Lepton.

DEDE
The hell's that?

FRED
You wouldn't understand.

DEDE
So speak slowly.

FRED
A lepton is a z-particle.

She doesn't say anything.

FRED
(impatient)
Do you know what protons and
electrons are?

DEDE
Yeah.

FRED
Okay. What are they?

DEDE
They're those teeny tiny things
that atoms are made of.

FRED
Well, Leptons are even smaller.

She takes a drag off her cigarette and looks at him.

FRED
So have you looked for a new job
yet?

She stares at him. The PHONE RINGS. Dede grabs it.

DEDE
Hello. Who? I'm sorry, but
there's no Derf Etat here...

Dede starts to hang up. Fred runs over.

FRED
Wait! That's Bob Yee!

He takes the phone from her...

FRED
Hi, Bob. What're you doing?
Really? Wow.

(then)
Nothing. Just sitting around.

Dede eyes him a beat, tosses her smoke in the sink and takes the pan off the stove while Fred drones on...

FRED
You talk to Jane yet? She said
she'd call. Jane says there's a
new show at the planetarium...

All Dede hears is Jane... Jane... Jane...

INT. JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Soft classical music plays in the b.g. Jane stands staring out the window. Garth sits at the desk.

GARTH
I read about the most incredible
child last week. A little German
boy who can not only recite all of
Paradise Lost from memory, he's
also got telekinetic powers...

Jane doesn't respond, keeps looking out the window.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Nimvel walks up and down the rows while the kids color at their desks. Fred is staring out the window. His paper is blank. The kid across the aisle tugs at his sleeve.

KID
Can I borrow a blue crayon?

FRED
Blue for the sky, or blue for the
sea?

KID
Blue for a face...

The kid holds up a scratchy drawing of what is probably a man with a partially blue face. Fred forces a smile, hands the kid a crayon.

INT. JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

JANE
I want to write a book about Fred.

As Jane turns away from the window, we see that Dede now sits across the desk.

JANE
About his formative experiences.
His life story if you will.

Dede looks around at the diplomas, the photographs of JANE AS A CHILD PRODIGY... the young Jane playing the flute with an orchestra... the young Jane at a podium and so on. She takes out her cigarettes.

DEDE
Gonna be a short book.

JANE
Ms. Tate, Over the years I've met many math and music prodigies Fred's age but, never one with the kind of acumen or awareness that Fred has. None with his... sagacity.

Jane waits to see if Dede asks what the word means. Dede just eyes Jane, lights up.

JANE
This summer, I've been asked to teach a course at Amherst. Actually, it's a grad seminar on "The Child in Dickens."

Dede forces a smile.

JANE
Anyway, I thought that I might use that time to observe Fred. I thought perhaps he could even take a few classes. In return, I would waive his tuition at the Institute for as long-

Dede sits up.

DEDE
You wanna take Fred to college?

JANE
Just for the summer.

DEDE
Why can't you just wait and "observe" him in the fall?

JANE
I won't have time. I'll busy running the school.

DEDE
Well forget it. He's just a
little kid.

JANE
He's a brilliant little kid. And
as I told Fred, that's nothing to
be ashamed of, Ms. Tate.

DEDE
Nobody's ashamed of anything. We
already got plans for the summer,
that's all.

Jane waits. Dede shrugs, goes on...

DEDE
(convincing herself)
Me and a friend a mine got jobs
dancing at this hotel in Orlando.
We're thinking of taking our kids
down there, making a big vacation
out've it. I mean, the place is
real nice. Got a big pool and
everything. It's nice.

Jane leans back and folds her hands in her lap.

JANE
A pool.

DEDE
So I guess that's that.

Jane sits back, inspects Dede a moment. Then...

JANE
Are you aware that your son scored
a forty the first time he took his
I.Q. test?

Dede looks up at Jane. She passes a file across the desk.

JANE
This is what he scored the second
time. When I gave him the test.

Dede looks down at the file, tries to contain her reaction.

JANE

Ms. Tate, I know how intelligence can be intimidating to those less, how shall I say? Blessed. But there's no reason for you to run from Fred's ability. I assure you, there are many children out there just like him.

DEDE

Yeah? How many of 'em are blessed with ulcers? How many of 'em go to bed at night worrying about the rain forests or the ozone layer or why innocent people get murdered all the time. Freddy worries about everything. He can't help himself. And you wanna take him to college? I mean, Jesus, you hear all the time about kids ten years older than him jumping out the window on account of they can't handle the pressure.

JANE

Let's not get hysterical. It would only be for the summer.

DEDE

I told you. We already got plans.
(then)
Why don't you get your own kid?

Jane takes a deep breath, sits up taller.

JANE

What you don't understand, Ms. Tate is that children like Fred have an... appetite for learning that demands to be sated. Right now your son is starving for challenge and stimulation. Things you alone simply cannot provide. That's why I started this school. Because I know from my own experience that to deny a child's potential is to smother his true self.

DEDE

Yeah, well Freddy doesn't give a shit about his potential. He just wants to be a normal little kid.

JANE
Well he's not. Thank God. And
you underestimate him greatly if
you think a summer by the pool
will ever be enough for him.
(then)
Fred wants to go to college. Ask
him.

INT. FRED AND DEDE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

A p.j. clad Fred lies on the floor scribbling on a legal
pad. He looks up as Dede comes out of her room with an
armful of clothes.

DEDE
What're you doin'?

FRED
Your resume. What're you doing?

She drops the clothes in a pile.

DEDE
Packing.

FRED
For what?

DEDE
Well, now that depends. Seems you
and Jane made some plans.

He looks up at her.

DEDE
Or were you just gonna sneak off
to college without saying
anything?

FRED
No.

DEDE
Do you wannna go to college? Jane
says you do.

FRED
I don't know.

DEDE
Sure sounds great to me.

She walks into his bedroom.

FRED'S ROOM

She opens a drawer, begins yanking out clothes.

DEDE

Of course, you know you're going to have to live with her. Which means you'd miss out on a summer vacation by the pool, with Gina and her kids. Then there's Disneyworld...

Dede looks off as we hear a SHREIKING OPERA SINGER O.S.

THE LIVING-ROOM

Fred stands by the stereo, looking at an album cover. Dede storms back in the room and yanks the record off.

DEDE

Are you listening to me?

FRED

Could you go too?

DEDE

What, to college? Nooo way. I'm goin' to Orlando. I'm gonna hang out by the pool. I'm gonna get myself a nice tan. So what's it gonna be?

FRED

I don't know... don't I get to think about it?

DEDE

What's to think about? You're the big genius. Make a decision! You wanna go to college or you wanna go to Disneyworld?!

FRED

I've already been to Disneyworld!

She glares at him. He glares right back.

DEDE

Fine. I'll go pack your stuff.

She marches off, leaving him stranded in the middle of the room.

INT. FRED'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede storm in and slams the door. She stands there a moment, breathing hard, then kicks the pile of clothes.

EXT. COLLEGE (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

A VW bus makes its way across campus. Mesmerized by the Gothic buildings, Fred keeps his face pressed to the window.

KIDS (V.O.)
(singing the wrong
words)
Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques,
Doomay Boo? Doomay Boo?

INT. VW BUS - SAME TIME

Gina drives. Her two kids, FENTON, a chubby twelve-year-old and VALERIE, a petite seven-year old sing along with her. A mangy-looking lap dog of questionable lineage sleeps in the back.

Dede, too, looks out at the campus. She looks at the buildings, the other students, then slowly turns and stares at Fred. He senses something, turns to look at her.

DEDE
You look crabby.

FRED
I'm not crabby.
(beat)
I'm pensive.

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE (COLLEGE) - DAY

A small eastern-styled house with symmetrical flower beds and well-trimmed hedges. The bus pulls to the curb and everybody spills out. Dede takes the place in. Jane steps out the door and waves. Fred suddenly becomes animated...

FRED
Hi, Jane!

Fred starts to run over to her, but Jane motions for him to stop...

JANE
Wait... just a second, Fred...

She fiddles with a VIDEO CAMERA, not quite sure how to operate it. She finally figures it out, raises it...

JANE

Okay, now.

Fred looks at Dede, she nods for him to go on.

FRED

Hi, Jane!

Dede cuts a look back at Gina.

DEDE

It'll be a few minutes. Why don't
you guys stretch your legs.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - DAY

The door bursts open and Jane and Fred enter. Dede lags
behind taking in the surroundings...

FRED

Wow...

Jane starts videotaping Fred as he looks around...

VIDEO CAMERA (SUBJECTIVE) POV - JANE'S HOUSE

As Fred looks around we PAN THE ROOM to show clean, white
furniture set among state of the art everything. A white
GRAND PIANO is off to one side of the room.

We can also see that Jane doesn't really know how to
operate the camera. Every now and then a finger will block
the lens, the date will flash on, or the focus will blur.

Dede enters and eyes a small box on the coffee table marked
"SUGGESTIONS." Fred runs past and we follow him into the-

GOURMET KITCHEN

Stuck to the refrigerator is a list of CHORES. Dede eyes
the list as she lights a cigarette. She casually opens the
fridge; it's stocked full.

JANE (O.S.)

Your room's back here.

CAMERA WHIP PANS to the hall... Fred runs ahead of us...

INT. FRED'S BEDROOM

We FOLLOW Fred as he discovers a wooden bunk bed, a map of
the world, a set of encyclopedias, a t.v., a chemistry set,
and a computer. All against a background of E=MC2
wallpaper. A new lacrosse racket sits on the dresser.

Fred picks up the racket and sits down on the bunk bed. He looks up and stares at CAMERA.

REVERSE ON DEDE

Standing behind Jane. She forces a smile at Fred. She looks at the mirror where a series of "Dymo" labels are stuck. They read "LIGHTS OFF?" "WINDOW LOCKED?" "BED MADE?" "SMILE!"

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Dede crouches down in front of Fred. Jane stands several feet away, taping the goodbye. Dede tugs at his pants.

DEDE
You need a belt, kid.

FRED
No, I don't. All I gotta do is tuck in my shirt.

DEDE
You need a belt.

He watches as the kids unload his boxes from the back of the bus, start dragging them up to the front door. She sees that he's uneasy.

DEDE
How 'bout if we just say, "See you tomorrow" instead of "Goodbye?"

FRED
Okay. See you tomor-

DEDE
Not now. I'm still talkin' to you.

She shakes her head, runs a hand through his hair.

DEDE
I don't know how it happened, but somehow somebody screwed up and gave me the best kid in the world.

FRED
You're leaving me here because I'm the best kid in the world?

DEDE
I'm not leaving you, per se.

FRED
You're not staying with me, per
se, either.

She looks up.

VIDEO CAMERA POV - FRED AND DEDE

As the CAMERA BEGINS TO MOVE IN CLOSER on the two of them.

DEDE
You mind?

REVERSE ANGLE - JANE

As she smiles, lowers the video camera.

JANE
Oh, of course not. I'm sorry.
I'll just be over here.

She waits for Jane to move out of earshot, then turns back to Fred.

DEDE
Listen to me, Fred. That lady
over there is gonna do it for you.
With her you're gonna go places.

He's almost crying. He can't listen to this.

FRED
Well, I've got a lot of unpacking
to do.

DEDE
Oh, right. Three boxes.

FRED'
(angry)
Three big boxes.

DEDE
I'm tryin' to say something here.

FRED
So say it.

DEDE
Every day I know you I admire you
just a little more. Every day I
think to myself, this little boy
is exactly the person I wanna be.

He looks away.

DEDE

I don't wanna hold you back. I don't want you to look back on your life and get pissed off I didn't do more.

(then)

Look, I love you. And I'm proud of you. Proud as hell. Okay?

FRED

But if I were the worst kid in the world and you weren't proud of me, you wouldn't be leaving me here, right?

Dede crouches down and hugs him.

DEDE

I'll see you on the fourth of July.

She quickly turns and walks over to the van. Jane opens the door for her.

DEDE

You might wanna keep an extra telephone around.

JANE

Excuse me?

DEDE

He likes to take 'em apart. Fact, he likes to take everything apart. And he can be a little clumsy, so don't let him sleep on the top bunk. And sometimes... sometimes-

Dede's looking at Fred. She turns to Jane and changes her tone.

DEDE

Look, if anything happens to him, Jane, anything at all, I'll kill you. And I don't mean that I'll just hurt you. I mean that I'll kill you.

JANE

He'll be fine, Dede.

The two women stare at each other a moment before Dede starts to get in the car.

FRED (O.S.)
See you tomorrow.

She pauses, looks back at him. He's not smiling.

DEDE
Yeah. See you tomorrow.

She quickly gets in the car. Fred watches her, gently rubbing his stomach. Jane comes over and takes his hand.

INT. VW BUS - DUSK

Gina gets in and starts the car. She looks at her, starts to say something when Dede cuts her off.

DEDE
C'mon. Go.

Tears in her eyes, Dede stares straight ahead as Gina pulls out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Fred watches as the bus moves down the street. He shifts his feet a bit as it gets smaller; tightens his hold on Jane as it finally disappears down the street.

FADE OUT.

We hear FOOTSTEPS OVER...

JANE (V.O.)
You've got all your books?

FRED (V.O.)
Feels like it.

FADE IN: INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Jane leads Fred down a long corridor, lab/classrooms on either side. Fred struggles with a backpack, that from the way he drags it on the floor, must weigh a ton. Fred peers excitedly into the labs...

JANE
I'll meet you out on the steps,
outside, right after class.

INT. PHYSICS LAB - DAY

A sloping room full of oddball equipment and posters advertising high tech companies we've never heard of ("NOBODY MAKES NUMBER 6 OSCILLATING GYROS BETTER THAN WINSTON DYNAMICS -- THE GYRO PEOPLE!")

The room quiets as Fred slowly starts down the side steps towards the front of the room. Fred looks around...

FRED'S POV - THE CLASS

Everyone looks at Fred. People start whispering to each other.

VOICE #1

How cute.

VOICE #2

Not too weird.

VOICE #3

Freak.

Fred turns around and bolts back up the aisle. He bumps smack into DR. MASTERS, a gruff, tired-looking man in a stained lab coat. Masters eyes Fred. Then without a word, he takes his hand, walks him down to the front...

MASTERS

Alright, let's all calm down and shut up so that we start getting Dad's money's worth.

Masters gestures to an empty seat, then drops his books down on his own desk with a loud thud.

MASTERS

Now for those of you who may be lost, the name of this class is Phys 105, Quantum Physics. Everybody in the right place?

Fred sits down, watches as almost the entire class gets up and leaves. Masters smiles at Fred, then...

MASTERS

All right, let's begin with a brief discussion of terms...

Fred quickly opens his notebook.

MR. HEARN (V.O.)

Goddamn college kids...

EXT. "EL TROPICO" HOTEL - DAY

Not quite as nice as the postcard Gina showed Dede. A few budget conscious TOURISTS sit scattered around the pool in rickety lawn chairs and chaise lounges. Fenton and Valerie splash about in the pool.

Dede and Gina walk into FRAME with MR. HEARN, the paunchy owner/manager of the place.

MR. HEARN
They come down here on vacation
and trash the place. It's not
their house, whatta they care?

They follow him inside...

INT. LOUNGE - SAME TIME

The place is a mess. Broken glass, tipped over tables, a trashed VW is parked on stage. Dede and Gina follow Mr. Hearn around as he rights chairs, picks up garbage...

MR. HEARN
Then on top a that, I got five
undercover ABC guys circulating.
Turns out half my clientele that
particular night is underage. How
was I supposed to know? Anyway,
my liquor license is now toilet
paper.

GINA
You sayin' you're not gonna do a
show?

Mr. Hearn sighs, rubs his chin and eyes them a moment.

MR. HEARN
You two got any waitressing
experience?

EXT. POOL - DAY

Fenton races past CAMERA and leaps into the pool as Dede and Gina step outside.

GINA
Fenton! Don't dive in the shallow
end!
(smiles at Dede)
Least they got water in the pool.

Dede just glares at her.

GINA
He did say it's only temporary.

DEDE
He said his lawyers are workin' on
it.

GINA
Come on, Dede. He's still giving
us the rooms for free. We can
still have a vacation. Like they
say, when life gives you lemons,
make lemonade.

Dede stops walking, gestures to the surroundings.

DEDE
This ain't lemons, Gina. This is
dogshit. I mean, Christ, if I
wanted to wait tables, I woulda
stayed in New York!

And with that, Dede storms off and sits in one of the
lounge chairs.

EXT. PHYSICS BUILDING - DAY

Fred is pushed along out of the building in a sea of
students. He looks around for Jane.

VOICE (O.S.)
Heads!

Fred looks up, then ducks as a frisbee misses him by a few
inches. Fred picks it up and tries to throw it back, but,
being unskilled at frisbee throwing, wings it way off to
one side instead.

FRED
Sorry.

No sign of Jane, Fred starts off across campus by himself.
The other students tower over him. Occasionally someone
will smile down at him. A GIRL crouches down in front of
him.

GIRL
Are you lost, sweetie?

Fred shakes his head, moves on. We hear FAINT APPLAUSE
O.S. Fred moves to it...

EXT. QUAD - DAY

A group of FRATERNITY GUYS stand in a line on a stage.
Above them a huge banner reads "KAPPA SLAVE-FOR-A-DAY
AUCTION." A FRAT GUY AUCTIONEER stands at a microphone,
gesturing to one of the guys...

AUCTIONEER
I hear fifty... do I hear sixty?

Fred looks over as the SORORITY GIRL next to him raises her hand.

SORORITY GIRL

Sixty!

AUCTIONEER

I have sixty! Do I hear seventy?
Come on people! It's for charity!
Do I hear-

SPLAT. A milk carton lands at the Auctioneer's feet.

INT. UPSTAIRS CLASSROOM - SAME TIME

EDDIE DRAKE sits by the window. He wears a battered leather jacket, way faded t-shirt, and an NRBLQ baseball hat.

EDDIE

Racist Frat Dicks...

The PROFESSOR, an elderly gentleman, paces the front of the room. Written on the chalk board behind him is "WHERE ID WAS, THERE SHALL EGO BE."

PROFESSOR

Freud says that in girls, the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking. That castration has already had its effect...

FRED

Looks around as the apple lands near his feet.

EDDIE

Grabs a GIANT MODEL OF A HUMAN BRAIN from the window sill, prepares to wing it, when-

PROFESSOR (O.S.)

Mr. Drake?

Eddie freezes, turns away from the window. The Prof smiles at Eddie.

PROFESSOR

What do you think Dr. Freud meant by such a statement?

EDDIE

Uh, personally, I think Freud was a fraud. I mean, I look at my mother and I think, "Yeah, she's cute, but... so what?"

The class chuckles. The Professor stares at him, then...

PROFESSOR

Mr. Drake, while I find your response mildly amusing, it would be even better if you actually knew the answer.

(to another student)

Ms. Kendall?

KENDAL

Freud is saying that repression or its effects may persist far into a woman's normal life...

As she blabs on. Eddie cuts an uncomfortable look at his friend, leans back and accidentally KNOCKS THE BRAIN OUT THE WINDOW...

EDDIE

Shit...

JANE

Waves as she hurries towards Fred. She pauses as she sees something falls from the upstairs window.

JANE

Fred!

Fred freezes, looks up...

FRED'S POV - A BRAIN

Just about to nail him on the head.

JANE

Watches as the tiny figure of Fred drops to the pavement.

JANE

Oh, my God...

EDDIE

Leans out the window...

EDDIE

Where'd he come from?

ON FRED

His bell rung, he lies there with his eyes closed. Several students run over to him...

STUDENT #1
Hey, kid, you okay?

JANE
He's not a kid! Get away from him!

Fred doesn't move.

THE CLASSROOM

Eddie's friend shakes his head...

FRIEND
Jesus, Eddie... you killed him.

INT. FRED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fred sits quietly on the bed as a DOCTOR sticks a tiny band aid on Fred's forehead. Jane paces nervously in the b.g..

JANE
I can't believe it. I was two minutes late. Two minutes. And on his first day, for God's sake.

The PHONE RINGS and Jane hurries out of the room. Fred picks up the blood pressure cuff and examines it.

FRED
This is called a sphygmomanometer.

DOCTOR
It is?

THE LIVING-ROOM

Jane enters and picks up the phone.

JANE
Hello?

INT. DEDE'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A bit of light seeps in around the drawn curtains. The phone cradled to her ear, Dede sits on the bed in the darkness, smoking a cigarette.

DEDE
Hey, Jane. Dede. Lemme talk to
Fred.

Outside, we can HEAR THE KIDS PLAYING IN THE POOL.

BEGIN INTERCUTTING JANE & DEDE:

JANE
(lowers her voice)
Dede. How are you?

DEDE
Just peachy. Where's Freddy?

DOCTOR (O.S.)
How many fingers?

Hearing the familiar phrase, Jane anxiously looks off
towards the back.

JANE
Uh, he can't talk right now.

DEDE
How come?

JANE
He's uh, he's taking a nap.

DEDE
So wake him up. I wanna hear
about his first day.

JANE
He's very tired, Dede.

DEDE
Cut the shit, Jane, and put him on
the goddamn phone.

Fred comes into the room.

JANE
Oh, here he is.

Jane covers the mouthpiece with her hand...

JANE
Now, Fred, there's no sense
getting your mother all upset for
nothing.

FRED
Okay.

Fred takes the phone.

FRED

Hi, Dede. Jane was late picking me up and I got hit on the head with a giant rubber brain.

Jane closes her eyes.

FRED

Talk to you later.

Dede cracks up. That's the funniest thing she's heard all day. MUSIC OVER...

INT. PHYSICS LAB - DAY

Fred takes copious notes as Masters paces about the room lecturing.

Meanwhile, the STUDENTS on either side of Fred keep looking over his shoulder at his paper, copying his notes. Fred cuts a look behind him...

Jane sits at the back of the room, observing.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Fred stands at the fridge looking over the list of "chores" for him to do.

JANE

These chores are your responsibilites, Fred.

The list is made up of the following incredibly strenuous tasks: "BRING IN PAPER. BRING IN MILK. BRING IN MAIL."

JANE

And for each week, that you do them correctly, we'll do something fun, like go to the symphony, or maybe rent a nice documentary.

Jane pulls open a drawer...

JANE

Now, these are your pens and your pencils.

Jane opens a cupboard, takes out a bowl...

JANE
This is a cereal bowl. This is
not.

We see that she's labled the shelves accordingly.

JANE
In life, Fred, organization is
essential.

INT. "EL TROPICO" RESTAURANT - DAY

Dede stands at the bar with Mr. Hearn. He holds a large
RED, SLUSHY DRINK in his hand.

MR. HEARN
They don't get the alcohol, but we
still gotta give 'em the umbrella.
They expect that.

Dede eyes him a beat, takes an umbrella, sticks it in the
drink and carries it off. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

INT. CAMPUS SNACKBAR - DAY

His books spread out in front of him, Fred sits by himself
eating lunch. He looks around at all the other students a
moment...

Eddie sits a few tables over. Next to him is a tall girl
with a pierced nose. Eddie whispers something to her,
points to Fred.

Fred, automatically thinking he's being pointed out as a
freak, quickly gets his things together and leaves.

INT. JANE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jane stands at the sink pouring a brackish, gooey-looking
mixture from the blender into one glass and one PLASTIC
CUP.

JANE
It's not your mother's fault. Most
parents are ignorant to the
benefits of Macrobiotics. Now if
your mother had started you on a
diet like this sooner, you might
never have gotten an ucler.

She hands the plastic cup to Fred who smells the mixture,
and winces. He holds the cup out...

FRED
Can I have a coke?

JANE
Absolutely not.

Fred takes one sip and immediately vomits onto the floor.

FRED
Sorry.

Jane forces a smile, wrestles with her own stomach.

JANE
It's all right. Everything that
comes from the body is natural.

FRED
(burps)
Can I have a coke now?

JANE
In the fridge.

She hurries out of the room.

INT. EL TROPICO RESTAURANT

Dede carries a couple plates across the restaurant. A hand reaches out and gooses her as she passes. She jumps, drops the plates on the floor. An ELDERLY MAN winks at her when she turns around.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jane interviews Fred at the kitchen table. A microcassette tape recorder sits between them.

JANE
Let's say you stumble upon
something you want to know more
about. Where do you go? Do you
ask your mother for help? Do you
go to the library?

FRED
(indicates recorder)
Is there really a microphone in
there? It's so small.

JANE

For example, when I was in first grade a geologist came to school and spoke to our class. He had all these different kinds of rocks. He lined them all up on my teacher's desk and asked if anybody knew their names.

He cuts a look at Jane, stares at the recorder.

JANE

Well, the whole class turned around and looked at me. As if I was supposed to know. But I didn't. How could I? So I went straight home and into my father's library and looked up geology in the encyclopedia. So that by Monday morning, I knew everything there was to know about rocks.

FRED

(beat)

So did you tell the other kids?

JANE

Well. I tried to, but by then... nobody cared anymore.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Fred walks across campus. He stops in front of the MUSIC BUILDING. He stares up at it a moment, then walks inside.

INT. MUSIC LAB - DAY

A few pianos, a drum set, a cello, some brass, etc. Fred enters, looks around and sits down at one of the pianos. He thinks a moment, then begins to play. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

EXT. EL TROPICO HOTEL POOL - DAY

Dede sits fully clothed, smoking a cigarette in a patio chair. We BEGIN PULLING BACK...

Fenton and Valerie splash about in the pool. WE CONTINUE PULLING BACK...

The small figure of Dede in the b.g., Gina floats through FRAME on a pool raft. We then FADE OUT.

FADE IN: CAMPUS SNACK BAR - DAY

Fred sits by himself, studying. Two GUYS in FRAT SWEATERS sit at the table next to him...

FRAT BOY #1

She let me take everything off,
but wouldn't let me close the
deal. You believe that?

FRAT BOY #2

Bitch.

Fred jumps as the BRAIN MODEL, now dented, is dropped onto his table. Eddie stands there smiling at him. The Frat guys look over at Fred, suddenly noticing him.

EDDIE

Hey. How's your head?

Fred doesn't answer. Eddie indicates the model.

EDDIE

This look familiar?

Fred still doesn't say anything. Eddie looks over at the two Frat Boys. Notices they're staring at Fred.

EDDIE

What're you lookin' at, Bifs?

They look away. Eddie sits down across from Fred.

EDDIE

There's even still a little blood
on it... see... right there... on
the craneum or whatever...

Eddie watches as Fred examines the model.

EDDIE

You go to school here?

Fred nods.

EDDIE

How old are you? Four?

FRED

Eight.

EDDIE

Oh, well, eight. That's no big
deal. What's your name?

FRED

Fred.

EDDIE

(extends his hand)

Eddie. And I'm sorry about the other day. It really was an accident. But if you want, I'll give you one free shot, y'know, to get even. Right now...

Eddie closes his eyes, leans forward so Fred can hit him. Fred finally smiles. Eddie opens his eyes, sees that did the trick.

EDDIE

You live in a dorm, Fred?

FRED

I live with Jane. She's a psychologist.

(then)

Where do you live?

EXT. DORMITORY - DAY

LOUD MUSIC OVER. Fred on the back, Eddie rides up on his moped.

INT. DORM CORRIDOR - DAY

Everybody knows Eddie. Eddie waves or says hello to various residents as he passes them...

EDDIE

Hey... how are ya... say hello to my son, Fred... no really...

ROXANNE, an older student sticks her head out a door marked Dorm Advisor.

ROXANNE

The guys in 211 complained again.

EDDIE

They're party poopers.

Eddie stops at a door and unlocks it. She calls after him.

ROXANNE

And tell Bernie I want that pool table put back in the game room!

EDDIE

What pool table?

(opens the door)
In ya go, Fred.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - DAY

The first thing we notice is the fore mentioned table. It takes up most of the room. BERNIE, Eddie's long haired, spaced out roommate lines up a shot. A cigarette with an impossibly long ash delicately hangs from his mouth.

EDDIE
Yo, Bernie, say hi to Fred.

BERNIE
Hi to Fred.

EDDIE
Now Fred, I bet you know the difference between a pool table and billiard table, dontcha?

Fred studies the table a moment, then...

FRED
No pockets.

EDDIE
Ever play?

Fred shakes his head.

EDDIE
The object is to bank the ball, so that you hit the other two balls in succession.

Fred watches as Bernie lines up a shot. We then see NUMBERS FLOATING as he then watches Bernie bank the ball for a perfect combo.

EDDIE
Just like that. Bernie plays twenty-four hours a day and still keeps a "B" average, and this is only his second year as a freshman.

Eddie notices that Fred's fascinated with the game.

EDDIE
Tell you what, maybe some time me an' Bernie'll take ya over to the Green Room and teach ya.

Fred looks around the mess of a room, examines some of Eddie's books.

FRED
What's your major?

EDDIE
What's my major?

Eddie exchanges a look with Bernie.

EDDIE
You're pickin' up some bad habits,
Fred.

Eddie falls back onto the bed, opens a beer. It partially
sprays Fred.

EDDIE
I started off as a Linguistics
major, but now I'm thinking of
Astro Physics or maybe Afro Am.
Depends on whatever Prof inspired
that week. See, I'm like a couch,
Fred.

FRED
A couch?

EDDIE
I bear the imprint of the last
asshole that sat on me.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Jane sits with Garth at the kitchen table. A partially
eaten, somewhat burned meatloaf sits before them. Jane
looks tired and strung out. She stares anxiously at Garth
as he tries a bite.

JANE
Well?

GARTH
(lies)
Mm. Good.

She smiles, shoves the plate closer.

JANE
Have more. There's plenty.

He reluctantly takes another piece.

JANE
It's funny, Garth, I'm
experiencing a whole new side of
me I've never seen before.

GARTH
It's just a meatloaf, Jane.

JANE
For me, it's a lot more than a
meatloaf. It's a milestone. I
mean, who'd have thought I'd ever
cook anything?

He eyes her a beat, pushes his food about the plate with
his fork.

GARTH
What do you want me to do about
"Livewire?"

JANE
What about it?

GARTH
Whatta you mean, "what about it?"
I talked to you about this for an
hour last week.

JANE
(eyes the meatloaf)
I've been busy.

GARTH
They're putting together a show on
Child Rearing and asked if you
wanted to-

JANE
I've been thinking of taking Fred
to Vermont this fall. To see the
fall colors. All those pretty
browns and oranges. He'd love
that.

Garth eyes her a beat, then takes a bite of meatloaf.

GARTH
What do you hear from his mother?

She looks at him. Then they both turn as Fred enters.
Jane checks her watch as he casually walks over to the
table.

JANE

Fred, where have you been? You smell like a brewery. And have you been smoking?

FRED

I was over at the dorm. I met this guy, Eddie...

Fred takes a CUE BALL out of his pocket and smiles.

FRED

He's gonna teach how to play billiards.

GARTH

Good game.

JANE

Shut up, Garth. Fred, do you know what time it is?

FRED

Seven-oh-three.

JANE

Do you remember what time I asked you to be home?

FRED

Five o'clock.

Fred smells something, walks over to the oven and peers inside as she goes on and on...

JANE

Fred, if I tell you to be home at five o'clock, you're to be home at five o'clock. Not six o'clock. Not seven o'clock. Not seven-oh-one. Not seven-oh-two and certainly not seven-oh-three.

Fred takes the meatloaf out of the oven.

FRED

Um, I can't eat this.

JANE

Of course you can't. It's cold.

FRED

No, my stomach-

JANE
Oh, God, that's right.

FRED
I can't have food like this-

JANE
Please don't whine, Fred.
(opens a cupboard)
There must be something around
here you can eat.

GARTH
I could go pick something up-

FRED
It's okay. I already ate.

Jane looks like she's been shot.

FRED
I had a sandwich with Eddie.

JANE
You ate without me?

FRED
We could have dessert.

JANE
No we cannot. A rule has been
broken. We don't reward that kind
of behavior.

Fred just stands there looking at her. She sighs, crouches
down in front of him.

JANE
Now Fred, when I scold you, it
doesn't mean that I don't care
about you. It just means that I'm
trying to correct your mistakes.

She sighs, opens her arms...

JANE
Now commere. Gimme a hug.

Fred obediently hugs her. Jane looks over his shoulder at
Garth and smiles.

EXT. CAMPUS - PHYSICS BUILDING - DAY

Students spew out of the building. Fred breaks away from
the crowd and takes off running across campus...

INT. SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

You can cut the lethargy with a knife in here as Jane paces about the small room lecturing to a dozen GRAD STUDENTS...

JANE

The question isn't whether or not William Dorrit was a good father. Any Dickensian scholar worth his salt will tell you that Arthur Clennam clearly filled that role, at least in the Freudian sense. No, the question I'm asking today is: Was Amy really immune to the those dispicable affectations of success, or-

Jane pauses, looks out the window...

JANE'S POV - FRED & EDDIE

Climbing a tree just beyond the window. They grab onto a branch and hang there a side by side.

Jane tries to get her lecture back on track.

JANE

Or was she faking it.

But she keeps looking out the window.

EXT. CAMPUS - THE TREE - SAME TIME

Fred and Eddie are still hanging side by side from a tree branch.

FRED

Eddie, my arms are getting longer.

EDDIE

That's the idea, Fred. It's good for you. Two more minutes.

Fred looks over at Eddie a moment.

FRED

Eddie?

EDDIE

Yeah?

FRED

You ever play kickball?

EDDIE
Sure. When I was a kid.

FRED
When were you picked?

EDDIE
When was I picked?

FRED
Yeah. When they picked teams.
When were you picked?

EDDIE
Oh. I wasn't.

FRED
Really?

EDDIE
No. I was always team captain.

Fred nods. Eddie turns to him.

EDDIE
So you still wanna learn how to
play billiards?

JANE (O.S.)
Fred!

They both look off and drop from the tree...

JANE

Exits the building and hurries and starts for the tree.
She watches Eddie says something to Fred, then takes off on
his moped. Jane comes up to Fred

JANE
Who was that?

FRED
My friend, Eddie.

JANE
(looking off)
Eddie who?

FRED
I dunno. Just Eddie.

Jane watches Eddie a moment, puts a hand on Fred's
shoulder.

JANE
Come inside with me.

FRED
You said I could play out here.

JANE
We're discussing *Little Dorrit*. I
thought you might like to join us.

He looks back over his shoulder as Jane drags him inside.

EXT. EL TROPICO HOTEL - POOL - DAY

Dede and Gina relax in chaise lounges when a dripping wet Fenton, Valerie and the dog come running over. Fenton hands Dede a quarter.

FENTON
Aunt Doodie, will you throw this
quarter in the pool so that me and
Valerie my sister can race to see
who finds it first?

DEDE
Sure, kid.
(holds up quarter)
Everybody ready?

The kids and dog prepare to race for the pool.

DEDE
Go!

Dede only pretends to throw the quarter, but Fenton and Valerie race to the pool anyway. The dog, however, remains staring up at Dede's hand.

GINA
Don't run! And, dammit, Fenton,
don't dive in the shallow end!

The kids leap into the pool and immediately begin searching for the quarter that isn't there. Dede smiles faintly, then leans back casually tossing the quarter up and down in one hand.

GINA
They're having such a good time.
Tell you the truth, I am, too.

DEDE
Yeah, well, I'm goin' nuts.

GINA

Come on, Dede. Fred'll be here in a week. You'll feel better then.

DEDE

I don't know, he's different now. Ever since he went on that trip with her. He just doesn't look at me the same anymore. I bug him.

Gina leans back in her chaise.

GINA

You need somebody in your life, Dede.

DEDE

I already got somebody, Gina.

GINA

You know what I mean. Come on, it would be good for Freddy, too. I mean, hasn't he ever asked about his father?

DEDE

Once. I told him he was the immaculate conception.

GINA

And he believed that?

DEDE

Why not? I haven't seen the guy since I was seventeen. Who his father is has nothing to do with anything. It's this Jane Grierson I gotta deal with.

Dede looks off. The kids are now on their hands and knees, searching the cement around the pool.

GINA

Well, once Fred gets down here, he won't wanna go back. You'll see.

Dede tosses the quarter into the pool. The DOG takes off BARKING. The kids leap back into the pool. Gina sits up.

GINA

Fenton! Don't dive in the shallow end!

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pencil poised, Fred sits with Jane at the kitchen table.

JANE

Ready?

He nods. She quickly flashes him a card with a pattern on it. He sees it for maybe a second before she turns it over face down on the table. To us it's a blur.

JANE

Go.

She watches as Fred, keeping his face close to the paper, sets to drawing.

FRED

Done.

He puts the pencil down and slides the paper to her. She turns over the card beside the drawing. They're identical. She smiles at him.

JANE

Isn't this fun?

He smiles halfheartedly, cuts a look at the clock. .

JANE

Let's try another one.

Fred stretches, forces a yawn.

FRED

I'm really tired, Jane.

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights go out. A moment later, Eddie rides up on his moped.

INT. FRED'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Fred lies in bed asleep. Jane opens the door and checks on him. She watches him a moment, smiles, then backs out of the room.

The second the door closes, Fred opens his eyes and whips the covers off. He's fully dressed. He climbs onto the top bunk and opens the window.

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Eddie sits below the window, waiting for Fred.

EDDIE
 Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your
 long hair!

FRED
 (sticks his head out)
 Shhh!

EXT. BILLIARD HALL - NIGHT

LOUD MUSIC INSIDE. Eddie's moped is parked out front.

INT. BILLIARD HALL - SAME TIME

The tables are all full of preppy looking couples. Eddie, Bernie sit with Fred at a table. The older guys share a pitcher of beer. Fred nurses a soda. Eddie surveys the crowd disdainfully.

EDDIE
 Why is it, sooner or later, all
 the best joints get overrun with
 these people? At this rate, we'll
 never get on a table.

FRED
 I don't mind waiting. I mean, if
 you don't.

EDDIE
 Beats studying.

Fred nods, just looks at him. Eddie notices, smiles...

EDDIE
 You want another Roy Rogers?
 Before you answer, remember,
 you're drivin' home...

FRED
 Why do you hang around with me?

EDDIE
 (beat)
 Good question.
 (thinks, then)
 You ever take a puppy to the
 beach, Fred?

FRED
 No.

EDDIE

Well, see, puppies have this magical power over women. Bring one to the beach and you're lookin' at a summer full of busy weekends.

FRED

Oh.

Eddie exchanges a look with Bernie as Fred thinks about that. Eddie pulls his backpack from underneath the table.

EDDIE

Bernie and I were talkin' earlier, about tonight, about you learnin' how to play billiards and all. And we were sayin' that we wish that we started playin' when we were four.

FRED

I'm eight.

EDDIE

Right. Well, anyway. We were also saying how important it is to have the proper equipment, so...

Eddie takes a long case out of his backpack.

EDDIE

I conned Bernie into letting me give this to you.

Fred opens the case. He looks at the two of them.

EDDIE

Go on.

INSERT - CASE

As Fred removes the sections of an old, beat up BILLIARD CUE.

EDDIE

It's a little used, but-

FRED

(moved)

I don't care. Thank you.

EDDIE

Don't thank me. Thank Bernie.

But Fred knows who to thank. He smiles at Eddie, then turns to Bernie.

FRED
Thanks, Bernie.

Bernie nods. He takes out a matchbook and scribbles something in it...

BERNIE
You ever need someone to talk to.
Someone to listen to. Call this
number.

Fred nods, takes the matchbook. He plays with the pool cue, looks around. This is probably the happiest moment of his life.

EDDIE
Here. Lemme show you how to put
it together.

Eddie assembles the cue, holds it up...

EDDIE
Okay, Fred, here ya-

VOICE
Hey, watch it.

Everybody looks up as Nikki pushes the pole aside and sits down in Eddie's lap.

NIKKI
You could poke somebody's eye out
with that thing.

They kiss for a moment, before Nikki finally notices Fred sitting there. He smiles at her.

FRED
Hi, Nikki. See what Eddie and
Bernie gave me?

NIKKI
I see. It's very nice, Fred.

Nikki lowers her voice to Eddie.

NIKKI
What's he still doing up? It's
midnight.

FRED
(yawns)
I'm okay.

Nikkie frowns at Eddie. He smiles at Fred...

EDDIE
We'll play tomorrow, Fred.

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Eddie stands on the front porch with a sleeping Fred in his arms. Nikki waits by the moped. Eddie turns to her...

EDDIE
Maybe we should just ring the
doorbell and leave.

The door opens. Jane stands there.

EDDIE
Hi.

She gives them each an icy look, then widens the door.

JANE
Bring him in.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Jane walks to the phone in the living room. The receiver dangles from the coffee table. She picks it up.

JANE
He's back, officer. Yes. Just
now. Thank you.

She hangs up. Starts down the hall.

JANE
Back here.

Nikki elbows Eddie. He follows her.

INT. FRED'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Jane watches from the doorway, arms folded across her chest as Eddie puts Fred down on the bed.

INT. LIVING-ROOM - SAME TIME

Nikki moves for the door as Eddie follows Jane back into the room.

EDDIE
Well, good-night.

Jane looks at him a moment, then walks to the door.

JANE
I certainly hope your grades are
up this semester. Mr. Drake.

Eddie reacts to the fact she knows his name. She opens the door.

JANE
Good-night.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Fred sits on the couch studying when the PHONE RINGS.

JANE
I'll get it...

Jane gets up and grabs it. Fred looks away as the receiver comes apart in her hands. She smiles...

JANE
Fred...

He gets up from the table.

FRED
I'll get it in your room...

She shakes her head as he takes off down the hall.

INT. JANE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Fred jumps on the bed and grabs the phone.

FRED
Hello?

INT. DEDE'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Valerie helps Gina put up a banner that reads "WELCOME TO ORLANDO FRED!" while Fenton struggles with a folding cot.

DEDE
Hi, kid. What's up?

BEGIN INTERCUTTING FRED & DEDE:

FRED
Nothing. What's up with you?

DEDE
I'm getting a tan.

FRED
Really?

DEDE
Actually, it's more of a burn.
But it'll fade into a tan.
(then)
So, Captain, you all set to fly on
the airplane by yourself?

FRED
Airplane?

DEDE
You're comin' to Orlando this
weekend, remember, lame-o?

Fred doesn't say anything for a moment.

DEDE
(joking)
Don't tell me you forgot?

FRED
I met this guy, Dede. His name's
Eddie. He's my best friend.

DEDE
Really? That's great.

FRED
Yeah. Anyway, he's teaching me
how to play billiards. And next
weekend, there's this big softball
game between his dorm and this
fraternity he hates.

DEDE
A softball game.

FRED
I also have this big test in
Physics the week after.

DEDE
Oh. Well. We'll just do it the
next weekend. I think we can
still exchange the tickets.

Gina looks over at Dede.

DEDE
And besides, the fourth is a
stupid holiday anyway.

FRED
The next weekend?

JANE (O.S.)
The next weekend is "Livewire,"
Fred.

Fred looks to where Jane stands in the doorway. Listening.

FRED
I'm gonna be on t.v. next weekend.

DEDE
T.v.?

FRED
Yeah. A show called "Livewire."
I'm gonna talk about bein' smart.

DEDE
Oh. Wow.

FRED
You you were right, Dede. This is
really good for me. Before I was
denying potential.

DEDE
(numb)
Well, I'll uh, I'll give you a
call in a few days then.

FRED
Okay. Bye, Dede.

INT. DEDE'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede hangs up. Doesn't look at Gina or the kids.

DEDE
He's not coming.

GINA
What? Whatta you mean he's not
coming?

Dede gets up and yanks down the banner...

DEDE

I mean, he's not coming. He's got a billiards game and he's learning how to play softball. He's busy.

EXT. PHYSICS BUILDING - DAY

Fred comes running out of the building and takes off running across campus. He carries the CUE CASE Eddie gave him.

EXT. DORMITORY - DAY

Fred hurries up the steps to the building...

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

A nude Eddie and Nikki lie entwined on the pool table.

EDDIE

Eight ball, corner pocket...

Nikki cracks up as he rolls onto her...

INT. DORM HALLWAY - DAY

Fred gets off the elevator, hurries down the hall. Roxanne sticks her head out the door. Fred yells out as he passes.

FRED

Hi, Roxanne!

She just watches him as he bounds down the hall. Knocks on Eddie's door. No answer. He puts an ear to the door, listens to the MUSIC...

FRED

Eddie?

He knocks again.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Nikki looks up.

NIKKI

Somebody knocking?

EDDIE

(deep voice)

Just the pounding of my heart, baby...

FRED (O.S.)
No it isn't. It's me.

A smiling Fred stands in the doorway.

FRED
Hi, Nikki.
(re: billiard table)
Bernie's gonna be mad you're
playing on there.

Nikki shrieks, rolls off the billiard table. Eddie sits up and looks wide-eyed at Fred.

EDDIE
Fred, what are you doing in here?

Fred holds up the case as Nikki grabs a blanket and covers herself.

FRED
We were gonna play billiards
today, remember?

EDDIE
Later, Fred! Now will ya get
outta here!

Fred stands there a moment, then drops the case and bolts out of there.

INT. HALL - SAME TIME

Roxanne watches as Fred comes running back up. She narrows her eyes, looks down towards Eddie's room.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Eddie and Nikki peer out the window as, below, Fred runs down the steps and takes off across campus. Nikki bends down and picks up the cue case. Eddie stares at it and falls back onto the bed.

EDDIE
Shit.

NIKKI
Eddie. You have to talk to him.

EXT. "EL TROPICO" HOTEL - POOL - DAY

Dede stands with Fenton and Valerie in the pool. Ellen crouches down at the side with a CAMERA...

ELLEN
Okay, everybody... say sex!

VALERIE
Sex!

Dede smiles halfheartedly. Fenton doesn't smile at all. Dede looks over and watches as his expression turns from intense concentration to total satisfaction. Valerie takes one look at him and immediately evacuates the pool...

VALERIE
Quit it!

Dede shakes her head.

INT. LIBRARY STUDY ROOM - DAY

Fred sits inside, studying by himself. Eddie and Nikki tap on the glass. Fred looks up as Eddie opens the door...

EDDIE
Studyin'?

FRED
I got a midterm.

Eddie nods, sits down. Nikki remains in the doorway.

EDDIE
Uh, look, Fred. I'm sorry I yelled at you, yesterday.

FRED
S'okay. We can play billiards another time. Maybe tomorrow. I don't have any class.

Eddie exchanges a fast look with Nikki.

EDDIE
Uh, actually, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. I uh, I don't think we'll be able to play billiards for a while, Fred.

FRED
How come?

EDDIE
How come? Well, I don't think uh, I don't think we should be hanging out with each other as much as we have been.

FRED

How come?

EDDIE

Well. Because. Uh...

FRED

You dont' wanna be friends?

EDDIE

No. No, that's not it. I mean,
we are friends, Fred. But
we're... we're special friends.
And see, special friends don't see
each other as much as regular
friends.

FRED

How come we can't be regular
friends?

EDDIE

Jesus, Fred, how come you always
gotta ask how come?

Fred shrugs. Eddie looks at Nikki, tries again...

EDDIE

Look, the thing is, Fred, I don't
wanna distract you. You have...
unique needs. And I'm not
qualified to deal with those. I
mean, a bad influence. Like
yesterday, if we'd played
billiards you might not a been
able to study for your midterm.
I don't wanna hold you back, Fred.

FRED

So you're going to Orlando?

EDDIE

What- no, I'm not goin' to
Orlando. I'm just saying we can't
hang out every day. I mean,
you're like a kid and I'm like a
grown up. We're not supposed to
be together all the time. That's
all. It's really no big deal,
Fred.

Fred looks up at Eddie a moment, then past him...

FRED'S POV - NIKKI

She's crying. Nikki and Fred stare at each other a moment.

FRED
I understand.
(looking at Nikki)
No big deal.

INT. LIBRARY - LOW ANGLE - DAY

Eddie and Nikki walk out of the study room and cross the main room. A moment later, Fred also leaves the study room. He looks dwarfed by the stacks and high ceiling.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Fred walks to a bench and sits down. Fred takes out his Physics book and a thermos with a SMILEY FACE STICKER on it. He eyes the sticker, opens the thermos and pours a gooey looking mixture into the cup. Jane packed his lunch.

He sets the cup down and looks about at all the other students. We HEAR A LOUD CLANKING O.S.

He looks up as a familiar-looking BOY his age, with braces on his legs, ENTERS FRAME and slowly walks by and sits down a few yards away. This is the boy from the first elementary school scene.

Fred looks at him a moment, then gets up, walks over and taps him on the shoulder.

FRED
Hi.

But when the boy turns around, we see that his face is Fred's face.

BOY/FRED
Hi.

INT. FRED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Fred wakes up with a start. Again we HEAR THE LOUD CLANKING as two legs with braces on them swing down from the top bunk. Fred/the boy leans over and smiles at Fred.

BOY/FRED
Hi.

INT. FRED'S ROOM - NIGHT

This time, Fred screams himself awake and falls out of bed with a THUD. He sits there on the floor, breathing hard.

INT. JANE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LOUD SYMPHONY MUSIC. Jane, wearing headphones, sits at the table typing as a p.j. clad Fred steps into the room. She spots him, tugs off her earphones.

JANE
Oh, Fred, what was the name of
that computer you raced in Dr.
Ellis' class?

FRED
Mike.

JANE
(typing away)
Mike. That's it.

She checks her watch, looks up at him.

JANE
Fred, it's two o'clock in the
morning. What're you doing up so
late?

FRED
I had a bad dream.

JANE
Oh. Well, why don't you go into
the kitchen and get yourself a
drink of water.

FRED
What for?

JANE
Don't you want a drink of water?

FRED
I'm not thirsty.

JANE
Well then leave the light on.
Turn on the radio. Something.
Just go back to bed. It's late.

Fred looks at her a moment, then turns and goes back to bed. Jane goes back to her typing.

INT. FRED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Light spills in from the hallway, throwing shadows on the walls. Fred lies in bed, looking at them.

FRED

A man waving goodbye. Two cats
fighting with each other. A
capsized boat. A dead body. A
tree with no leaves...

PIANO OVER...

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - DAY

Fred, dressed up in a suit and tie, sits at the piano playing a bit of Mozart. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

EXT. CAMPUS - FRED - PULLING BACK - DAY

Fred, arms above his head. As we continue PULLING BACK, we see that he's hanging from the tree just outside Jane's classroom.

We CONTINUE PULLING BACK... THROUGH THE WINDOW... As Jane walks past lecturing her students. She pauses, sees Fred and smiles. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - DAY

Fred at the piano, playing. An empty expression. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

INT. PHYSICS LAB - DAY

Masters sits at the front watching the class. Written on the blackboard behind him is "YOU CHEAT, YOU DIE."

Fred gets up and turns his blue book in to Masters. The professor nods. Fred returns the nod, then goes back to his desk and gets his stuff together.

Masters opens the blue book and his expression goes grave. He looks up as Fred slips out of the room. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - DAY

As Jane comes into FRAME and leans on the piano, watches Fred play. Rapt. He doesn't look up. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER...

EXT. DORMITORY - DAY

Eddie gets on his moped. Nikki gets on the back. They take off. Fred steps into FRAME as they pass. Watches them as they take off across campus.

INT. DR. MASTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Fred finishes the piece, looks up. Jane stands up, applauds. We hear MORE APPLAUSE O.S...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: A 4TH OF JULY PARTY

Fred's been entertaining the guests, made up of FACULTY MEMBERS and their SPOUSES. Jane kisses Fred, joins the other guests...

JANE
Isn't he wonderful...?

Fred stares after her. EVAN, a little boy Fred's age walks up to the piano and announces...

EVAN
I'm learning how to play the flute.

FRED
I like the flute.

EVAN
My Dad says you're real smart.

Evan gestures to Dr. Masters who stands several feet away, looking at Fred. Fred returns the look...

FRED
How recently did he say that?

EVAN
Do you like old pinball machines?

FRED
I don't know.

EVAN
We have one down in the basement.
You wanna play it with me?

Fred looks at this uncomplicated little kid. This kid who's everything he ever wanted to be. He nods, starts to slip off the bench when-

JANE
Fred, Dr. Milstein has asked if
you wouldn't do a quick problem
for him?

Fred stares at her a moment, then tugs at his pants...

FRED
I need a belt, Jane.

JANE
What?

FRED
I need a belt.

JANE
Oh. Just tuck in your shirt,
you'll be fine.
(to someone O.S.)
You know, he's cubing so much
faster these days...

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - DAY

A bit of THUNDER as Fred walks out and grabs the mail. He separates a letter from the bunch as he heads up the walk, rips it open and reads it...

INSERT - LETTER - POLAROID

A note that reads "DEAR FRED... HAVING A GREAT TIME IN ORLANDO WITH-" The rest of the note is covered with the snapshot of Dede, Fenton, and Valerie in the pool. A drop of RAIN hits the letter. Then another...

FRED

Thoughtful. Looks up from the picture. He closes his eyes and catches a few raindrops on his tongue...

JANE (V.O.)
How's that taste?

INT. POSH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Fred, dressed in a suit, sits across from Jane. She gives him a taste off her plate.

FRED
Okay.

He goes back to playing with his food. He's not hungry. Jane looks around and smiles.

JANE

It's been a while since I've been here. It's so elegant. It's just nice to really dine out once in a while, you know?

FRED

We "dine out" every night.

She ignores that, changes the subject...

JANE

Seems to me you had a midterm the other day.

He doesn't say anything.

JANE

How'd you think you scored?

FRED

I'm pretty sure I flunked it.

JANE

I'm sure you did splendidly.

FRED

No, I don't think so. I answered every math question "5" and every "why" question "why not?"

She sees that he's serious.

JANE

Why would you do something like that?

He shrugs.

JANE

Well, I'm sure Dr. Masters will let you take the test over. I'll call him as soon as we get home.

FRED

I don't wanna take it over.

JANE

Fred, you're behaving like a child.

He just looks at her.

JANE
Now, if you've learned any lesson
at all the last few months, it's-

FRED
How come you only ask me about
school?

JANE
What?

FRED
How come nobody ever comes over?
How come you don't have any kids
of your own?

She doesn't say anything.

FRED
And how come everything has to be
a "lesson?"

Jane sits there, frozen. He looks at her a moment longer,
then picks up his spoon and resumes playing with his soup.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The PHONE RINGS. Fred enters and takes off his jacket.
Still reeling from dinner, Jane looks at it, starts for the
bedroom.

JANE
Will you please get that? Tell
them I'm not here.

Fred watches her a moment, then picks up the phone, but
doesn't say anything.

INT. DEDE'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede lies back on the bed.

DEDE
Hello?

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Fred stiffens as he hears Dede's voice...

DEDE (PHONE)
(sing-song)
Hel-lo?

Fred hangs up.

INT. DEDE'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede sits up, stares at the dead reciever. She hangs up, dials again. BUSY SIGNAL.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

The phone sits off the hook in immediate f.g.. In the b.g., Fred turns off the light, walks out of the room.

MAKE-UP GIRL (V.O.)
Now remember sweetface, zillions
of people all over the world are
gonna be watching you...

INT. "LIVEWIRE" GREEN ROOM"

Fred sits in a chair getting attended to by a MAKE-UP GIRL. He stares at something O.S...

MAKE-UP GIRL
That means no farting, no picking
your nose, and no playin' with
little Mr. Peabody. Close your
eyes...

She pops Fred in the face with a powder puff. Jane sticks her head in the room and smiles at Fred.

JANE
You look very handsome.
(beat)
See you out there.

EXT. EL TROPICO HOTEL - POOL - DAY

Fenton and Valerie splash about in the pool. Dede, having just finished her shift, makes her way back to her room. Gina sticks her head out the door of her room.

GINA
Dede? I gotta work lunch. Will
you watch the kids for me?

A reluctant Dede cuts a look at the pool.

DEDE
Yeah. Sure.

INT. DEDE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede enters, kicks her shoes off and turns on the television.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY (T.V.)
 Welcome to "Livewire." I'm
 William F. Buckley. Today we're
 going to be asking the question,
 "Is your child gifted?"

EXT. HOTEL POOL - SAME TIME

Fenton and Valerie play a pool game where Valerie tries to tag Fenton by following the sound of his voice...

VALERIE
 Marco?!

FENTON
 Polo!

VALERIE
 Marco?!

INT. DEDE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede cuts a look out at the pool, then turns back to the set.

BUCKLEY (T.V.)
 With me here to answer that is a
 panel of distinguished
 psychologists, academics, and
 authors...

APPLAUSE.

INSERT - TELEVISION

Jane, Fred, several EXPERTS and several KIDS smile at camera.

BUCKLEY
 As well as some of the brightest
 young minds from around the
 country...

The SHOT CUTS TO FRED. He looks uncomfortable as Buckley first says hi to the other kids, then...

BUCKLEY
 Next is Fred Tate. Now Fred as I
 understand it, you're a poet, a
 painter, a musician, and what I
 guess one could call a "Mathlete."

Fred doesn't say anything.

BUCKLEY
 With such a broad range of
 interests, I must ask, what do you
 want to be when you grow up?

FRED
 (beat)
 A fireman.

Fred begins taking apart his microphone. Jane casually
 reaches over and stops him.

ON DEDE

She shakes her head.

DEDE
 You look like hell, kid.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - SAME TIME

Valerie and Fenton are still playing in the pool...

VALERIE
 Marco?!

FENTON
 Polo!

VALERIE
 Marco?!

Fenton sneaks out of the pool...

VALERIE
 Fish outa water!

We hear a LOUD SPLASH O.S..

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede looks off towards the pool and shakes her head.

BUCKLEY (T.V.)
 ...but if we take all the gifted
 kids out of public schools, that
 leaves a rather dim mixture of
 students for teachers to work
 with. Whereas, if gifted students
 were left in school, and were able
 to work with the other kids, it
 might help raise all test scores.

JANE (T.V.)
Perhaps. But the problem is right
now public schools aren't set up
to handle-

FRED
My mother's dead.

Everyone on the panel looks over at Fred. He stares
straight ahead.

DEDE

Stares at the set.

BUCKLEY

Clears his throat, regroups.

BUCKLEY (T.V.)
Uh, tell me, kids, do you read
books or watch television like
most children?

KID #1
I'm working on an experiment
involving lasers, sulphuric acid
and butterflies.

KID #2
I'm designing a summer house for
my parents.

FRED
I bring in the mail.

Jane, still recovering from the "she's dead" line, sits up,
smiles at Fred...

JANE
Now Fred, you know we do lots of
things together. We go to
museums. We went to the
observatory. You write letters to
your Romanian pen pal...

Dede is staring at the set. We begin PUSHING IN CLOSE...

BUCKLEY (T.V.)
Fred, I understand you're going to
play the piano for us. Then maybe
do a few quick calculations?

FRED
No.

ANGLE ON SET

As Jane looks down at him.

BUCKLEY
No?

JANE
Mr. Buckley, maybe Fred shouldn't-

FRED
I'd like to recite a poem.

Jane relaxes.

BUCKLEY (T.V.)
We'll be back with a poem by Fred
Tate, right after this.

ON DEDE

As she turns the sound down, sits there thinking a moment.
Suddenly, she looks out at the pool...

DEDE
Fenton? Valerie?

Strange quiet.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - SAME TIME

Valerie stands on the steps of the pool, shaking.

VALERIE
C'mon, Fenton, we're gonna get in
trouble.

A motionless Fenton floats face down in the pool.

INT. DEDE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Dede gets up and walks to the door.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - SAME TIME

As Dede steps outside.

DEDE
What're you guys up to out here?

Hands on hips, she surveys the situation. Fenton doesn't
move. A bit of blood begins to seep from his swim mask.

VALERIE
He just dove in, Aunt Doodie.

DEDE
What-

Dede runs down the steps into the pool and grabs Fenton. She carries him over to the side and gently removes the swim mask. She yells at Valerie...

DEDE
Go get your mother!

Valerie doesn't move as Dede starts giving Fenton mouth-to-mouth.

INT. "LIVEWIRE" SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Fred stands at the foot of the stage with Buckley.

BUCKLEY
Ladies and gentlemen, a poem by
Fred Tate.

Jane beams, applauds as Fred stands up and clears his throat.

FRED
Clipper Ships. By Fred Tate.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - SAME TIME

We hear only Fred's voice as Dede works on Fenton.

FRED (V.O.)
Me and my Dad make models of
clipper ships. I like clipper
ships because they are fast...

Dede rolls Fenton over onto his stomach.

INT. "LIVEWIRE" SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

FRED
Clipper ships sail in the ocean.
Clipper ships never sail in rivers
or lakes.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

Dede closes her eyes as she works on Fenton...

FRED (V.O.)
Clipper ships have lots of sails
and are made out of wood.

INT. "LIVEWIRE" SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Fred bows. The audience APPLAUDS POLITELY. Fred turns and walks off stage. Jane stands up...

JANE

Fred...

BACKSTAGE

Fred purposefully makes his way past staring CREW PEOPLE. He walks out the exit.

ANGLE ON TELEVISION

With the sound down, we hear nothing as Jane gets up and calls after Fred. She looks at CAMERA, then hurries after him.

We hear FENTON COUGH O.S....

EXT. HOTEL POOL - SAME TIME

Fenton rolls over and gags before starting to cry. Valerie joins him. Dede, exhausted and upset, holds onto him...

DEDE

You stupid, stupid kid.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Jane comes running out of the building. Runs first one way up the block, then the other. Fred's nowhere to be seen.

EXT. BUS STATION - DUSK

Fred checks his pockets for money. He comes up with some change and the MATCHBOOK Bernie gave him. He examines it a moment, then quickly goes to a payphone...

He dials. We HEAR RINGING, FOLLOWED BY...

SEXY FEMALE VOICE OVER

Hi, there. You've reached the
Singles Life Party Line. Wanna
talk to somebody? Press 1. Wanna
listen? Press 2...

A confused Fred looks at the phone, then hangs up as a Bus pulls into the station. He runs for it.

INT. JANE'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Jane, looking like she's been awake for a week, stares at the photographs of her as a child prodigy while Garth talks on the telephone.

GARTH (O.S.)

Yes, is Dede Tate there, please?

Jane looks at the photographs of the unsmiling little girl conducting an orchestra... the unsmiling little girl speaking at a podium... the unsmiling little girl getting an award...

GARTH (O.S.)

Where is she? Gone where? Nice to meet you again, Fenton.

The unsmiling little girl in front of her pony, and so on.

GARTH (O.S.)

When did Ms. Tate leave? Fenton, when did she leave? Hello? Hello?

Thoughtful, Jane turns away from the photographs and sits down. Garth hangs up.

GARTH

She's gone, but I couldn't find out where. The retarded boy answered the phone again.

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

The walls are covered with photographs of THE SAME MAN. Fred sits at the kitchen table eating a bowl of cereal, staring at the phone on the counter.

ROSE (O.S.)

I'm sorry, officer, but I haven't seen him. Probably just another one of those brainy brats who got famous for an hour, then fell off the face of the earth...

A DOOR CLOSING O.S. Rose, cat in her arms, walks back to the kitchen.

ROSE

So much for the cops.

FRED

Thanks for breakfast, Rose.

ROSE
Sure. I'll be around if you need anything.

He nods, walks out. Rose sighs, looks at the wall of photographs, touches one, says to one of her cats...

ROSE
You know, Dino was a genius. The bastard.

We hear THE DOOR CLOSE O.S.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Fred climbs the stairs to the old apartment.

INT. FRED AND DEDE'S OLD APARTMENT - DAY

The curtains are drawn. The place looks empty, spare, unlivd in. Fred enters and looks around. He stares up at his half-finished mural; at the piano Dede painted on the wall. We HEAR A FEW NOTES as he touches the painted keyboard. He turns away and trips over something.

He crouches down and opens his TOOLBOX. He rummages around inside, and comes up with a SCREWDRIVER. He looks around the room, spots the TELEPHONE and begins determinedly taking it apart.

CLOSE ON FRED

As he works on the phone. His eyes grow more and more intense until, finally, he begins to cry. The more he cries, the harder he works.

FOOTSTEPS O.S. and he freezes. He listens as the FOOTSTEPS GET LOUDER. He scurries across the room and hides behind a chair. SILENCE. Fred waits. Finally...

FRED
Go away, Jane.

A MATCH FLARES, revealing Dede, standing by the window, lighting a cigarette. He peers out from behind the chair.

DEDE
Hey, kid.

Daylight stream into the room as she throws open the curtains.

FRED
Dede.

Fred gets up and runs over to her. She crouches down to meet him. They remain still, holding onto each other for a moment. She looks over his shoulder and frowns.

DEDE

I see you fixed the phone.

SINGING KIDS (V.O.)

Happy birthday to you. Happy
birthday to you...

FADE TO WHITE:

We're looking at a CANDLE. PULLING BACK, we see that it's on top of a BIRTHDAY CAKE...

INT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The place is decorated for a birthday party. Gina, Rose, Sammy, Myra, Valerie, Cherry, Joey X, Bob Yee, and other kids from the Grierson Institute sing to Fred, then APPLAUD as he blows out the candles.

DEDE

Come here, birthday boy...

As they dance the routine they did earlier, we REVEAL JANE watching them. She gives Fred his BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

He takes it. Everybody watches as he unwraps it, removes your ordinary, kidlike, TOY TRUCK. He looks up at her...

FRED

Thanks, Jane.

JANE

You're welcome.

Fred smiles at Jane as Dede changes the record...

FRED

Cut the rug?

Jane smiles, waves him off. Dede looks over, then backs away from Fred.

DEDE

Dance with the kid, Jane.

Dede and Jane share a look. Jane walks over. Fred begins teaching her the dance. Dede then takes a shy Garth and begins dancing with him.

FRED (V.O.)
Well that pretty much sums up my
life story. Although Jane summed
it up a lot better...

Jane and Fred dance past Damon Wells as he reads a book
entitled, *Little Man Tate* by Jane Grierson Ph.D. Fred's
picture is on the cover. Damon sits with Fenton and
Valerie. Damon elbows Fenton.

DAMON
Hey, yak. Wanna play a game?

Fenton nods eagerly.

DAMON
Hold your breath until I say stop.

Fenton sucks in a mouthful of air. Damon smiles, pats him
on the head and gets up from the couch. Fred and Jane
dance past these two.

FRED (V.O.)
I see Jane every day at the
institute. And once in a while
even Dede invites her over.

Dede hands Jane an idiotic looking party hat...

DEDE
It's a party, Jane. Put on your
hat.

Jane does. She looks ridiculous. Dede exchanges a look
with Fred. To keep from cracking up, Fred looks out the
window... his smile fades.

FRED'S POV - MATT MONTINI

Standing on the street below, looking up at Fred's window.
Fred quietly heads for the door...

EXT. FRED & DEDE'S APARTMENT - DAY

We start TIGHT ON A BOUNCING BALL. BOUNCE... BOUNCE...
BOUNCE...

Then PULL BACK as Fred steps outside of the apartment.
Montini stands there in the middle of the street bouncing
the ball as Fred comes down the stairs. The two kids stand
there staring at each other. BOUNCE... BOUNCE... BOUNCE...
Fred finally turns to go back in. The BOUNCING STOPS.

MONTINI
Hey, Tate?

Fred turns around as Montini holds up the kickball.

MONTINI

Kick it.

Montini bends over and rolls the ball to Fred. Dreamlike, it seems to take forever. The two kids stare at each other as it comes. Closer. Closer. Suddenly, a MAN carrying a dozen roses runs up the steps behind Fred.

MAN

Rose! I'm home!

Hearing this, Fred looks over at the man just as he's about to kick the ball. He misses the ball entirely, falls flat on his ass.

Fred looks up stupidly as Matt Montini shakes his head, then grabs his ball and moves on down the street. Fred gets to his feet and brushes himself off.

FRED (V.O.)

A year later, a four-year-old boy named Roy Yamaguchi got into law school, and suddenly I wasn't such a big deal anymore. But I didn't care...

Dede hangs her head out the window.

DEDE

Fred! The hell you doing in the middle of the street? Get up here and cut your cake!

As Fred runs back up the steps to rejoin the party, we
CRANE UP AND BACK...

FRED (V.O.)

...because I was happy.

And then FADE OUT.