

"LUCAS"

by

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"LUCUS"

FADE IN

EXT. SUBURBAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

1

September in the Midwest; a pastoral portrait where nothing moves. The air is still, the heat shimmers, the continual whine of locusts passes for silence; the world is the color of hay. Our field of vision extends for miles; half trees, half ryegrass, cleaved by an abandoned railroad trestle that traces an imperfect line across the otherwise perfect terrain.

The figure of a TEEN-AGED BOY appears in the distance, moving slowly, somewhat unevenly, along the tracks.

BEGIN TITLES.

CLOSER ANGLE - THE BOY

not just walking, but stalking -- his every cell on the alert for the slightest movement in the shoulder-high grass. His name is LUCAS BLYE, he is fifteen years old, a budding naturalist. He is bare to the waist, his T-shirt tied about his hips, his slightness of stature accentuated by oversized shorts and high-topped black tennis shoes. He wears glasses, carries a makeshift butterfly net fashioned from broomhandle, coat hanger, and pillowcase; he is slick with sweat and so disciplined in the art of stalking that he barely flinches at the flies that swarm about him, occasionally landing on his face. And he is capable of "freezing" mid-motion -- as he does just NOW -- so as not to frighten his quarry away.

CLOSE ANGLE ON HIS FACE

undergoing a subtle change of expression -- CAMERA MOVING WITH HIM as he sinks downward, easing back on his heels to examine the treasure before his eyes.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

an insect undergoing a miraculous change. It is a seventeen-year locust, shedding the skin of its "earthbound" form, emerging, wet and pink, as a creature of flight. It is laborious, rhythmic process, like the contractions of birth, the vulnerable pupae arching backwards as it cracks the shell that once dictated its shape, unfolding wings, delicate as cellophane, that glisten and tremble in the warming sun.

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

breathless. A treasure-seeker gazing upon the pearl of India.

DISSOLVING TO:

EXT. ABANDONED RAILROAD STATION - SAME

2

No more than a shed, really; its windows broken, door half off, one corner sunken and falling apart at the seams. A sign above it, hanging sideways, reads:

"DEERPARK, ILL. - ALL-AMERICAN CITY"

CAMERA PANNING TO REVEAL the figure of Lucas approaching, with a degree of caution -- checking through a broken window to make sure no one's inside.

TITLES CONTINUE.

CUT TO:

INT. RAILROAD STATION - SAME

3

As he ENTERS, setting his net down, CROSSING to a bench where he sits, taking respite from the sun. He is comfortable in the stillness; the demeanor of someone accustomed to being alone. Reaching into a crack in the wallboards, he withdraws a backpack, from which he pulls an apple, a napkin, and a beat-up radio cassette player, setting it out before him and snapping on the cassette; classical music transforms the humble environment into the habitat of a civilized man. To the accompaniment of Stravinsky, he chews his apple, getting to his feet to survey the surrounding walls.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

graffiti, the usual stuff: dirty words, obscene drawings, hearts with names etched within.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

studying it with the dispassionate eye of a museum-goer until his eye falls on something across the room. Suddenly, MOVEMENT CEASES; he slips into "stalk" mode, slinking toward.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

a magnificent SPIDER'S WEB, its architect dead center in the bull's-eye, filling the space where a window used to be.

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

"wowed." He blows on it, just slightly; the spider tenses. The moment of contact brings pleasure to Lucas' eyes.

ANOTHER ANGLE

He turns, focusing on the corner of the building that's cracked open to daylight, crossing to it, unzipping his fly as he "nosses" in.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD SHED - SAME

4

To the strains of Stravinsky, a sun-glinting stream of URINE arcs from the corner of the building into the weeds outside.

TITLES END.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - LATER

5

The sun casting long shadows as the lone figure of Lucas is seen heading away from us, classical music barely audible, wafting from his backpack, the butterfly net carried behind him, locked through his elbows, his posture signaling the end of the day.

CLOSER ON HIM

as he becomes aware of intrusive SOUNDS. Rock music and a chorus of young men's VOICES, grunting with exertion as they chant "eat-meat!", "eat-meat!" -- CAMERA SHIFTING TO REVEAL he is directly behind the HIGH SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD. Silencing his classical music, he snaps into a crouch, moving to a lower elevation where he can see without being seen.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

the high school FOOTBALL TEAM, pushing the season, their prematurity indicated by incomplete uniforms; just helmets and shoulder pads over T-shirts and shorts, looking like someone's pulled their pants off, as they do callisthenics, and engage in body contact, plowing into each other with "oof's" and "uuugghs," urging aggression with "way to hustle!" and "atta-baby!" -- the vernacular of supermen.

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

a spy from another planet -- as ANOTHER SOUND wafts toward him from somewhere off to the side where the rock music is playing. It's a girl's voice, SHOUTING:

GIRL'S VOICE

(to the rhythm
of the music)

Butt-bump! Hip-pump! Fanny-waggle,
in-and-out!

Lucas hones in on it, showing an ever-greater interest than he did in the Football Players his posture slips into "stealth mode" and he slides through the tall grass in a low-strided crouch -- something between Groucho Marx and a combat soldier -- stopping when he gets as close as he dares, head held low, peeking through the grass.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

teenage erotica. Cheerleaders in skimpy practice togs, creating a disco routine, their fannies wagging into formation where they strike the stance of gymnasts, attempting to climb into a pyramid.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

his eyes traveling upward.

ANGLE ON THE CHEERLEADERS

as one of them makes it to the top, trying to stand as the entire foundation sways and shakes beneath her, SUDDENLY SPOTTING Lucas and SHOUTING:

CHEERLEADER

(alarmed)

There's somebody out there!

And it all comes tumbling down.

CHEERLEADER

There! In the field!

CLOSE ON LUCAS

panicked. A WHISTLE SOUNDS and he TAKES OFF, the CAMERA RACING ALONGSIDE him as VOICES of Cheerleaders and Football Players to the rescue RING OUT behind him.

Cont.

VOICES

He had a gun or something! Where?
Right there! Fuckin' pervert!

CLOSE ON LUCAS

a hunted animal, crashing through the underbrush and making it to the safety of a stand of trees. Glancing fearfully over his shoulder, he pushes onward -- slowing to catch his breath only when he is convinced no one has followed.

EXT. NEW TENNIS COURTS - DAY

6

ANOTHER ANGLE

shaken, he pauses to collect himself, gazing with apprehension toward a clearing ahead. We HEAR the SOUND of a tennis ball in play. Lucas' breath has quieted; he moves toward.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as he stops at the edge of the trees, focusing on the SOURCE OF THE SOUND.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

a teen-aged girl (MAGGIE) alone on a practice court, hitting a tennis ball against a wall. She is petite, with a tight, athletic body, clad in spanking fresh black-and-white tennis outfit; she clearly knows how to play the game. She hits with power and speed, but one gets away from her and she turns, SPOTTING Lucas -- as the ball bounces toward him in the grass.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

gun shy; ready to bolt.

MAGGIE

(re the ball)

Would you mind...?

A beat: he drops his butterfly net and gets the ball.

MAGGIE

Thanks. Toss.

He does. A lousy toss. She has to scramble for it; holds it up and smiles a reiterated "thanks."

MAGGIE

(hopeful)

You play?

Cont.

LUCAS
No.

MAGGIE
(re the butterfly
net in grass)
Isn't that a racquet?

LUCAS
No.

MAGGIE
What is it?

LUCAS
(reluctant)
Oh. That? That's a net.
Insects.

MAGGIE
Oh. You collect them?

LUCAS
Look at'm.

MAGGIE
Ah. That's neat.

Heads bob; tight smiles. Nothing left to say. But he's not about to leave. Hesitantly, she turns and resumes play.

ANGLES ON

him watching, her playing -- he becoming deeply fascinated, and moving closer. Reaching across his back, as if to scratch an itch, he turns on his classical music; CAMERA MOVING IN CLOSE ON HIS FACE.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

as, in his "mind's eye," her movements DECELERATE to SLOW MOTION, becoming, with the classical music, a kind of ballet. Her athletic spins become languid and sensuous, the black-and-white skirt twirling upward TO REVEAL the promised land.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

transfixed -- as the ball hits STOP. He flicks off his music.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

Cont.

self-consciously bouncing her ball on the ground.

LUCAS

You're very good.

MAGGIE

Not so much when people are
watching me.

LUCAS

(getting the
message)

Oh. I'm sorry...

MAGGIE

That's okay. I should go home.

She grabs a towel, gathering her stuff.

LUCAS

You on the team?

MAGGIE

(a headshake)
Just moved here.

LUCAS

Yeah?

MAGGIE

Is there a team?

LUCAS

At school.

MAGGIE

Park High?

LUCAS

Yeah.

MAGGIE

You go there?

LUCAS

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Is it hard?

LUCAS

I don't know. Nah. For some,
maybe.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Yeah. For me.

She laughs. He, too, but isn't sure why; spots a stray ball and dashes off to fetch it, running it back -- pure puppy-dog.

MAGGIE

(bit amazed
at service)

Thanks.

LUCAS

Where'd you move from?

MAGGIE

Phoenix.

LUCAS

How come?

MAGGIE

Did I move?

(evasive)

I don't know, my mom wanted to.
She's going back to college.

LUCAS

Ah.

She's tied a sweater around her neck; a last glance to make sure nothing's left behind.

LUCAS

If you need a lift, I've got
my bike.

MAGGIE

Thanks. I've got my mom's car.

LUCAS

(taken aback)
You drive?

MAGGIE

Yeah.

LUCAS

Wow.

MAGGIE

Just got my license.

Cont.

LUCAS
(meaning it)
Happy birthday.

MAGGIE
(a laugh,
re his enthusiasm)
Thanks.

LUCAS
Which way do you drive?

MAGGIE
(a shrug)
Just the regular way.

LUCAS
No, I mean what direction.

MAGGIE
Oh.
(embarrassed laugh)
Up St. Johns.

LUCAS
Me, too.

MAGGIE
You live up there?

LUCAS
Yeh.

MAGGIE
What's your name?

LUCAS
Lucas.

MAGGIE
I'm Maggie.

LUCAS
(a beat;
evaluating it)
'Maggie.'

MAGGIE
Right.

A decisive nod. He likes the name.

Cont.

LUCAS

Listen. If you pass me, wave.
My bike's got a flat tire.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

getting the message.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT OF PLAYING FIELD - SAME

7

Lucas walking his flat-tired bike beside Maggie as they head toward her car. The Football Team and Cheerleaders can be seen on the playing field going through their paces; the sky is turning amber; and Lucas is EXCITED.

LUCAS

The whole trick is knowing just one person, see, and you already know me. So, when school starts, you'll have one good friend. That's all anybody needs as far as I'm concerned. Do you think people need more than just one good friend?

MAGGIE

Well. Yeah.

LUCAS

So, I'm perfect, see, 'cause I've got a lot of friends. I can introduce you to people.

(looks up,
shouts toward
playing field)

Hey, guys! What's happenin'?!
(aside; confidential)

Bunch of lamers, but they try.
(another shout)

Hey, Cappie! How's it hangin'?!
(points)

ANGLE ON THE PLAYING FIELD

one of the players (number "42") looks up and waves, vaguely, in their direction.

LUCAS

That's Cappie Roew, good buddy of mine.

(points)

That's his girlfriend, Alise, cheerleading. Both in eleventh. Been going together about three years now.

MAGGIE

(dubious)

You really know these guys?

They've reached her car, a convertible; she pops the trunk.

LUCAS

Me? Hell, yeah. I mean, we don't hang out or anything...

(struggling to get
bike and butterfly
net in)

...Y'know, either you're an athlete or you're not an athlete. And uh... I actually am. But I think it's superficial. I've suppressed my athletic tendencies so I don't get caught up in all that stuff. Don't you think it's superficial? You know, 'football hero' 'cheerleaders' 'parties'...I'd be willing to play football if all that other junk didn't go along with it. Don't you think it's superficial?

MAGGIE

I never thought about it.

LUCAS

You should think about it.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

taking the moment to consider.

LUCAS

I really think you should.

A nod. She's impressed with him.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGGIE'S CONVERTIBLE - ON THE MOVE - SAME

8

Wind blowing Maggie's hair as she drives through a residential section; Lucas listening intently.

MAGGIE

(animated)

So, she's this teeny bopper modeling blue jeans, and he's the account executive for the ad agency, and my mom is all, 'Gee, he's spending a lot of nights at work lately,' and my dad is all, 'Gee, I have to work late again, honey...'

LUCAS
Listen, it happens.

MAGGIE
But not with a girl who's nineteen.

LUCAS
(philosophical)
Age difference can be good. You have
to have an open mind. Like I'm
fifteen, you're sixteen...

MAGGIE
Can you see me with a man
thirty-eight or something?

LUCAS
No, but with someone fifteen...

MAGGIE
Would your father do something like
that?

LUCAS
Mine?

MAGGIE
Of course he wouldn't.

LUCAS
(stopped)
Well. He's got other kinds of
problems.

MAGGIE
Like what?

LUCAS
Like being a workaholic. Like being
caught in the system. Both my
parents. Completely caught in the
system. Parties, social status...

MAGGIE
That's bad.

LUCAS
Superficial.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Terrible.

LUCAS

That's what I meant about
football players. And cheerleaders.
Superficiality and the system.
Once you're caught in it...

MAGGIE

Absolutely.

LUCAS

See? I like the way you're
thinking now.

A glance at him; she's pleased that he approves.

MAGGIE

Where's your house?

LUCAS

We passed it.

She slams on the brakes.

MAGGIE

Which one?

LUCAS

(opening the door)
I need the exercise...

MAGGIE

I'll take you there...

LUCAS

No problem. Really.

MAGGIE

(nonplussed)
Okay.

LUCAS

(heading for
the trunk)
Tell you the truth, my house
kind of embarrasses me. This whole
neighborhood does.

He's struggling to get his bike out; catches her
questioning eyes.

Cont.

LUCAS

I mean, with half the world living in poverty, don't you think this is kind of a materialistic display?

MAGGIE

Are you a Communist?

LUCAS

No, but I keep an open mind. That's what you have to do. About a lot of things. Your father's girlfriend? Keep an open mind. She might turn out to be a great mother to you.

MAGGIE

She's two years older than me.

LUCAS

Don't get so hung up with tradition. Tradition is superficial. It's just a hang-up. Haven't you ever realized that?

MAGGIE

No.

LUCAS

Maybe you should.

MAGGIE

(serious)

Maybe.

He's got his bike out -- slams the trunk -- wheeling up alongside her.

MAGGIE

Good-bye, Lucas.

LUCAS

(a beat)

It's perfect that your name is Maggie.

MAGGIE

Why?

LUCAS

Because a magpie is black and white.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Oh.

She laughs -- dismayed at him; he laughs, too.

LUCAS

Perfect.

Another giggle; she pulls away.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

watching her go.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPULENT ESTATE - ANOTHER DAY

9

Two POWER MOWERS crisscrossing the massive lawn of a sumptuous estate behind wrought-iron gates, one mower manned by Lucas, the other by an Oriental landscaper whose truck is parked in the driveway. Maggie's CONVERTIBLE STREAKS BY -- SCREECHES TO A HALT -- BACKS UP INTO FRAME.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

registering amazement -- cutting the power and bounding toward the gates.

MAGGIE

(overjoyed)

Hi.

LUCAS

(pushing through
the gates)

Hi.

MAGGIE

I can't believe I found you.

LUCAS

Here I am.

MAGGIE

Is this your house?

LUCAS

Yeh.

Cont.

MAGGIE
(assessing it)
Whoa.

LUCAS
(glance at it)
Disgusting, right?

MAGGIE
No. Beautiful.

LUCAS
Did you know the front lawns of this
neighborhood could feed half of Asia?

MAGGIE
(amazed)
Is that true?

LUCAS
I wouldn't be surprised.

MAGGIE
Want to play tennis?

LUCAS
Don't know how.

MAGGIE
I'll teach you.

LUCAS
I got this lawn...

MAGGIE
(sudden shriek
of fear)
Oh, God!
(re his shoulder)
Get it off!

LUCAS
(laughing)
It's a locust.

ANGLE ON HIS SHOULDER

a huge insect clinging to his shirt.

LUCAS
(reaching for it)
I didn't want to run over it with
the mower.

MAGGIE
(cringing)
Uh-uh. Get it away!

Cont.

LUCAS
It won't hurt you...
(picks it up)
...look.

MAGGIE
(lurching away)
Please...!

LUCAS
It's just shed its skin. It's
waiting for its wings to dry.

MAGGIE
(revulsed)
Uuuchh!

LUCAS
You should take a look. You
won't see one again for
seventeen years.

She does. But just barely.

MAGGIE
You can't play tennis, right?

Reminded, he glances behind him -- spotting the gardener,
who's watching.

LUCAS
(quickly)
No. I gotta go. I promised
the gardener I'd help him.
Thanks anyway, okay?

He backs off, starting away.

MAGGIE
What's your number?

LUCAS
(stopped)
Why?

MAGGIE
To call you.

LUCAS
It's unlisted. My parents don't
like me to give it out.

Cont.

MAGGIE
(stopped)
Oh. Well. Okay. I'll stop
by sometime, then.

LUCAS
They don't like people to stop by.

MAGGIE
(deflated)
Oh.

LUCAS
(a beat; he
brightens)
I can meet you there, okay?

MAGGIE
Where?

LUCAS
The tennis court.

MAGGIE
When?

LUCAS
Three o'clock.

MAGGIE
Today?

LUCAS
Every day.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

10

Maggie hitting balls against the wall -- CAMERA
SWINGING TO REVEAL the distant figure of Lucas, on his
bike, near bouncing off as he charges, like cavalry to
the rescue, across the field.

LUCAS
(shouting)
Hey, Magpie!

She turns, brightening.

Cont.

LUCAS

It's me!

CUT TO:

MUSICAL MONTAGE

11

of Lucas, attempting to learn tennis. In his oversized shorts and black high-tops, he looks like Buster Keaton as he fans the air, Maggie infinitely patient, but at times bursting into LAUGHTER.

LUCAS

(clowning)

You think I can't serve? I can serve! Watch this!

(holding three balls

on his racquet, like

an hors d'oeuvre tray)

Care for some balls? They're delicious.

MAGGIE

(impatient)

You want to learn this, Lucas?

CUT TO:

MORE TENNIS HIJINKS

Lucas bent over a "dead" ball, SHOUTING at it.

LUCAS

(entreating)

Get up! Get up! You've simply got to do better than this!

MAGGIE

(exasperated)

Lucas...!

CUT TO:

Lucas BOUNDING about the court, swatting at an invisible ball, as if in a Swan Lake tennis ballet, as Maggie gasps with laughter.

ANGLE ON an adult couple, waiting to get on the courts; UNAMUSED.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - ANOTHER DAY

12

Maggie on the back of Lucas' bike as it BOUNCES CROSS-COUNTRY, squealing and hanging on for dear life as Lucas crests a hill and heads downward, picking up speed...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF TOWN - DAY

13

Lucas behind the wheel of Maggie's CAR, fending off her attempts to rescue the weaving vehicle as he reassures her he knows what he's doing; street people in the b.g., watching -- appalled.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM - DAY

14

Lucas, bare to the waist, up to his ankles in muddy water, lecturing excitedly as he applies mud and leaves to his scrawny chest.

LUCAS

They're called 'leaf people,'
'cause that's all they wear on
their bodies is leaves, 'cause
that's the only way to survive
in the jungle, see, it's to hide.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD OF CLOVER - DAY

15

An idyllic setting where, high on a plateau overlooking the town, Lucas and Maggie stroll beneath a cloud-flecked sky. We don't hear their words, just classical music, but their attention to one another is intense, indicating "heavy" subject matter; Lucas, as always, the teacher -- Maggie, as always, enrapt.

DISSOLVING TO:

INT. SEWER SYSTEM - NIGHT

16

The two seen only as silhouettes as they pick their way through a darkened utilities tunnel, their footsteps echoing as they follow a flashlight's beam.

MAGGIE

This is creepy, Lucas...

Cont.

LUCAS
Don't worry...

MAGGIE
What if we get lost?

LUCAS
(stops)
Sssshhh. Hear it?

They stop and listen. We HEAR water dripping -- and, somewhere in the distance, the SOUND of a SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PLAYING.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

amazed. Lucas motions; she follows.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as they pick their way through the tunnel -- the music coming stronger as they move.

LUCAS
(hushed)
You want front seats, or
back in the grass?

MAGGIE
Will they catch us?

LUCAS
I've been doing this for years.

MAGGIE
Front seats.

LUCAS
This way.

Following the flashlight's beam, they pick their way forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANDSHELL - SAME

17

A full SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, playing; CAMERA PANNING TO THE AUDIENCE -- and SEROING IN ON a MANHOLE COVER beneath the feet of an elegant COUPLE seated in the front row. It begins to TURN and JIGGLE.

Cont.

ANGLE ON the Couple exchanging a sudden glance.

ANGLE FROM THEIR P.O.V.

the MANHOLE COVER sliding back a few inches to reveal
TWO PAIRS OF EYES STARING up at them.

LUCAS
(pushing his mouth
to the opening)
We're from the Chicago Conservatory.
Do you mind if we listen?

COUPLE
(at a loss)
No. Not at all.

LUCAS
Thank you very much.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER - SAME MOMENT

18

A giggle; Lucas brushes off a concrete shelf directly
beneath a manhole, helps Maggie up and slides close to
her. They exchange a glance; he pokes his mouth back
up to the opening.

LUCAS
Do you have a program?

One is fed down to them; she laughs out loud -- he
stifles it.

LUCAS
(re program; a
whisper)
Whoa. Mahler. Heavy night.

They read it by flashlight -- and find each other's
eyes. A moment of self-consciousness; the light snaps
out.

ANGLE ON BOTH

Silhouettes; close beside each other. The glint of his
eyes, caught in a faint shaft of light, betrays the
depth of his feeling as he stares at her, studying every
inch of her profile, in the romantic, music-filled dark.

Cont.

LUCAS
(a whisper)
Maggie...?

MAGGIE
Yes.

LUCAS
Is your name Margret...?

MAGGIE
Yes.

A silence passes. Just MUSIC -- and the vague SOUND
of dripping.

LUCAS
(a whisper)
Margret.

MAGGIE
Yes?

LUCAS
Just saying it.

MAGGIE
Oh.

More silence. More music.

LUCAS
Did you think we'd be such
good friends? When we first met?

MAGGIE
I don't know.

LUCAS
What did you think of me?

MAGGIE
(a beat)
I thought you were interesting.

Silence.

LUCAS
I thought you were beautiful.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

not daring to look at her.

Cont.

LUCAS

Do you still?

MAGGIE

What?

LUCAS

Think I'm interesting.

MAGGIE

Yes.

A long pause: then, heartfelt:

LUCAS

Me, too.

ANGLE ON BOTH

catching each other's eyes; a moment of profound
"warmth." But Lucas' eyes are filled with pain.

MAGGIE

Is something wrong, Lucas?

CLOSE ON LUCAS

in distress.

LUCAS

I just wish...that school would
never start.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

19

A SCHOOL BELL -- the kind that propels horses from their
starting gates -- PIERCES THE AIR.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - SAME

20

A teen-aged Ellis Island; bodies tangling and
intermingling in an attempt to follow instructions from
teachers who shout from behind long tables about what
part of the alphabet they're handling and what grade-year
should line up where. Above them, a sign that once read
ORIENTATION DAY has been defaced to read DISORIENTATION
DAY -- and in frightened eyes and anxious faces, we SEE
that it's true. In the midst of the jostling crowd, a
pretty young thing is crying, being consoled by friends;
in a corner, a boy and girl are kissing. A fight has

Cont.

broken out near the door, being mediated by a teacher who's smaller than either of the bruisers he's trying to placate; a custodian is on a ladder attempting to rehang a sign that advertises "DRUG PROGRAM" (it too has been defaced, the word "program" replaced with the word ("festival")); teachers hawk special activities at individual booths marked "STUDENT GOVERNMENT," "VIDEO CLUB," and "CHEER SQUAD," handing out leaflets to all who pass by.

TEACHERS AT BOOTHS

...Nominations for student reps are happening when classes officially start on Monday...locker assignments listed alphabetically according to class beside Mr. Kaiser's office... Cheer squad's still got eight places to fill...

CAMERA FINDING Maggie; lost and frightened, out of place in conservative attire, trying to catch bits and pieces of information that float by.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

unable to see over the heads of his peers, LEAPING straight up in search of Maggie; distracted by a eunuch-like VOICE ringing out from the crowd.

HIGH-PITCHED VOICE (BEN)

Blye! Hey, Luka-duke!

ANGLE ON AN OBESE KID, BEN JAGLOM, clearing a path with his bulk, a video camera perched on his shoulder, which he persists in operating throughout the scene.

LUCAS

Hey, Ben.

BEN

How's your summer?

LUCAS

(re camera)

What are you doing?

BEN

Recruiting for the video club.
Want to come out?

LUCAS

What about band?

Cont.

BEN

I might quit. You should think about it, too. They say the guy who's taking over is a real Nazi. He taught band at Joliet State Prison.

LUCAS

(confused)

What are you talking about?

BEN

You didn't hear about Triechel? He's dead.

LUCAS

(jolted)

What...?

BEN

Yeah, he killed himself. You didn't know?

CLOSE ON LUCAS

(through Ben's videotape camera), STUNNED..

GIRL'S VOICE (RINA)

Hi, Lucas.

SWISH-PAN (through the videotape camera) TO REVEAL a diminutive girl, perhaps the only one shorter than Lucas in the entire class, pushing through. Her name is RINA PRADO, she is not attractive, but soulful, and plainly thinks that Lucas is special; their two profiles line up like a Peanuts cartoon.

RINA

How was your summer?

BEN

(from behind
his camera)

Hi, Rina. Will you turn a little this way?

RINA

Notice anything?

(no answer)

I'm taller.

LUCAS

(still shocked)

Did you hear about Triechel?

Cont.

RINA
Yeah, isn't it awful? He blew a
blood vessel playing the trumpet.

BEN
He committed suicide, Rina.

RINA
He did not, he had a stroke.

ANOTHER KID (TONY)
Who, Triechel?

ANGLE ON TONY KARETZO

tall and thin, th posture of a praying mantis. (NOTE:
coverage of this scene utilizes Ben's video camera
P.O.V. whenever desirable.)

TONY
He blew his head off.

RINA
Playing the trumpet, right?

TONY
Playing the revolver.

BEN
Like I said.

RINA
(taken aback)
Jesus.

LUCAS
(incredulous)
Why'd he do it?

TONY
He was in love with a dental
technician over at the Reese Clinic.
She wouldn't give him a shot.

BEN
So he gave himself a shot.

LUCAS
(dumbfounded)
Triechel...?

TONY
(to Ben)
What's with the camera?

Cont.

BEN
(trained on
Rina's bust)
This is amazing! It sees
right through silk!

TONY
(grabbing for it)
Lemme see...

PRINCIPAL'S VOICE
(shouting)
Could I have your attention,
please...?

BEN
(re camera)
I gotta bring it back.

He backs away, videotaping, engulfed by the crowd;
Lucas, still stunned -- catching Rina's eye.

LUCAS
(re Triechel)
He didn't seem like the type.

PRINCIPAL
(shouting)
I'm tempted to say 'shut up'
here...but I won't say that...
so can we just calm down, please...?

ANGLE ON THE Principal standing atop a table with hands
raised, looking far too harassed for this to be just the
first day of school; VOICES, taking advantage of the
anonymity heckle ("Tell'm, Gordo!", "Give'm hell!")
from the crowd.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

still looking for Maggie as the crowd tightens, Rina
taking advantage of the opportunity to sidle up close.

RINA
See what I mean, Lucas?
She's so close he has trouble looking at her.

Cont.

RINA

Last year I was up to your chin.
This year I'm up to your ear. I
bet next year I'll be the same
size as you.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

blank faced re the implications -- his eyes wandering --
suddenly focusing on Maggie.

PRINCIPAL

We're running about ninety minutes
late with this, so we're going to
pick it up on Monday...

ANGEL FROM HIS P.O.V. - MAGGIE

her face barely visible in a far corner of the room.

RINA

(to Lucas)

Want to go to the movies tonight?

But he's off -- PLUNGING INTO THE CROWD; CAMERA
FOLLOWING as he fights against shoulders and elbows,
creating a commotion -- ABRUPTLY STOPPED by a HAND IN
THE FACE that forcefully thrusts him backwards.

TOUGH KID

Watch it, wimp!

Shaken, Lucas looks up into the snarling face of a
BLACK LEATHER JACKET-TYPE (TOUGH KID).

TOUGH KID

What do you think you're doin'?

LUCAS

I'm with the principal. He wants
to know if people can hear back here.

TOUGH KID

We hear fine.

LUCAS

I'll tell him.

He spins, pushing back in the direction he came.

Cont.

PRINCIPAL

...so if you'll all proceed to the auditorium in an orderly fashion, we're going to have a short program, and then we can all go home...!

CHEERS GO UP and the mass begins to move, Lucas swept along, a drowning man, losing sight of Maggie in the sea of bobbing heads.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME

21

The CHEERLEADERS ONSTAGE, with POM-PONS FLASHING, leading the student body in a rousing CHEER.

CHEERLEADERS

Alle-veevo! Alle-vievo!
Alle-veevo-vievo-yum!

CAMERA PANNING the AUDIENCE -- kids of all sizes, shapes, and styles, responding with varying degrees of enthusiasm -- ENDING ON Lucas and Ben: "0" on the school spirit scale. Lucas is frustrated, still searching for Maggie, Ben is reading VIDEO literature; the CHEER ENDS, many in the audience rising, with whistles and applause.

COACH'S VOICE

(through P.A. system)
I want to introduce you to the
Little Giants, right now...

The Audience ERUPTS with CHEERS and cries of "YOW"!

BEN

(dead faced)
Do we puke now or later?

CLOSE ON LUCAS

stiffening. He's SPOTTED her.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

Maggie, toward the front of the auditorium, on the aisle -- with an EMPTY SEAT beside her -- APPLAUDING.

Cont.

COACH'S VOICE

You know them by name...and you
know them by number...

ANGLE ON LUCAS

a mongoose with the cobra in sight -- slipping out of
his seat.

BEN

What are you doin'?

COACH'S VOICE

Let's get'm up here!

Big Audience applause.

BEN

Luke!

ANGLE ON LUCAS

unaware that the auditorium is beginning to stir with the
movement -- the football players leaving their seats and
heading in the same direction he is.

COACH'S VOICE

Come on up, boys. Let everyone
see your faces....!

KID IN AUDIENCE

(shouting as Lucas passes)
All right, Luke!

ANGLES ON various "jocks" -- big bruisers with names
like BRUNO, CAPPIE, TONTO, SPIKE -- slapping hands as
they converge in the AISLES, the APPLAUSE GROWING
around them as they become more visible, heading toward
the stage.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

hitting the aisle at the same time; caught in the
traffic.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE

(laughing)
Atta-way, Lucas!

Cont.

COACH'S VOICE
(urging them on)
These are the men whose names
are going to spell VICTORY.

ANOTHER AUDIENCE VOICE
Hey, Luke! What are you? The
football??

He suddenly realizes what's going on and tries to "duck."
But one of the jocks, a mountainous pile named Bruno,
grabs him.

BRUNO
(a mindless gorilla)
Hey, look who's comin' out! It's
Luke-a-plakia!

COACH'S VOICE
Come on up, boys...

BRUNO
(laughing; hanging on)
Come on, Luke...!

LUCAS
(resisting; quietly)
Cut it out, okay?

AUDIENCE VOICE
Bring him up!

BRUNO
Yeah, let's go, Luke!
(struggling with
him)
Let's go!

VOICE IN AUDIENCE
Let's go, Luke.

ANOTHER VOICE
Let's go, Luke.

OTHER VOICES
(picking it up)
Let's-go-Luke!
(rhythmic)
Let's-go-Luke!

The chant catches on and spreads, changing to a straight
"Luke-Luke-Luke-Luke..." ringing throughout the hall.

Cont.

BRUNO
(dragging him)
Hey, Cappie! Your buddy's
comin' out for the team!

LUCAS
(trying his best)
Don't do this, okay?

VOICES
(chanting)
Luke-Luke-Luke-Luke...!

With the crowd egging him on, Bruno sweeps the struggling Lucas off his feet and over his shoulder, carrying him up the aisle.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

shocked to see Lucas pass.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

though helpless, giving her a wave.

ANGLE ON the Coach and Principal; confused by the laughter and the chant, as the players take to the state -- ending with Bruno carrying LUCAS, setting him down to a response of big audience applause.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

mortified, but trying to save face; acknowledges the applause with a little wave. It gets a response -- so does it again, with a fist this time; like proclaiming himself "champ." It gets laughter -- and, struck by impulse -- he imitates Richard Nixon, holding up the "V" signs and wagging his jowls. Big laughs. He's surprised. He does Hitler. It's boffo.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

amazed.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

doing a little dance step -- sort of flamenco. The place is getting out of hand.

Cont.

COACH
(trying to
restore order)
If we can get serious here...
I'd like to introduce you to
the men who really belong on
this stage...

Lucas makes a gesture like "get him" -- and it gets a
HUGE GAFFAW

ANGLE ON Ben, gasping with laughter.

COACH
(unamused)
Would you get off the stage, son?

The place begins to quiet; Lucas sort of "bobs" backward.

COACH
(an order; off-mike)
The stairs.

He turns foolishly -- but no one's laughing now; all
eyes are on him, because the Coach is waiting for him
to leave.

ANOTHER ANGLE

he finds the stairs.

CLOSE ON THE COACH

following his progress with his eyes. Finally satisfied,
he turns to the microphone and cries:

COACH
Captain of the team that's going
to beat Braeside in our first
game two weeks from now, number
forty-two...Cappie Roew!

CHEERLEADERS
(spinning into formation)
Forty-two! Forty-two! Forty two!
Forty-two...!

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

her eyes following Lucas as he scuttles along the far
wall, like a roach running from light. A beat; she
grabs her books -- heading after.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM OUTER LOBBY - SAME

As Maggie pushes through the door SPOTTING Lucas,
already OUTSIDE, heading fast away. She hurries after.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL STEPS - SAME

as Maggie races out.

MAGGIE

Lucas!

LUCAS

(stops; turns
abruptly)

Yeah.

(a forced smile)

Hi!

MAGGIE

Are you all right?

LUCAS

Me? Sure. Why?

(a laugh)

Was that great? That was
planned.

(another laugh)

Those guys....!

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

unconvinced.

LUCAS

So. You playing tennis today?

MAGGIE

Going shopping. I'm dressed
all wrong.

LUCAS

Yeah? Well. Maybe over the
weekend...

MAGGIE

My father's visiting.

LUCAS

Hey. Great.

Cont.

MAGGIE

I hope he doesn't bring his
girl friend.

LUCAS

Well. Keep an open mind.

Lucas turns.

MAGGIE

Luke! Are your parents going
to this?

(pulls out a
leaflet)

'Parents Night'? I thought
maybe my mom could...maybe we
could introduce them or something.
She doesn't know anybody...

LUCAS

No.

MAGGIE

...No?

LUCAS

They don't do that.

MAGGIE

Oh.

LUCAS

(irritated)

I told you, didn't I?
They're superficial, didn't I
tell you that?

MAGGIE

(calmly)

Yes, Lucas.

LUCAS

Okay, then.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

taking it.

MAGGIE

You know who else you told me
was superficial?

Cont.

MAGGIE

(gently)

Football players. You were right,
Lucas. If they think you're
someone to make fun of.

He's hurting. And angry at himself for showing it.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

her heart going out to him.

MAGGIE

Listen. I heard they're showing
something funny at the movies tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

24

Mobbed with squealing kids, their voices near drowned
out by a VROOMING MOTORCYCLE that's causing a traffic
jam, car horns honking, the SOUND of video games wafting
from the theater lobby beneath a marquee that reads
"GIDGET REVIVAL" -- CAMERA PANNING TO FIND Rina Prado
dressed like a collision between Lolita and Flashdance,
ARGUING WITH FRIENDS.

RINA

(protesting)

...but I don't want to get in
for half! I'm fifteen years old!

PANNING TO A KID being "helped" outward by an USHER.

KID BEING EJECTED

It was an accident! I can't spell!

USHER

There's a picture of a GIRL on the
GIRL'S ROOM.

KID BEING EJECTED

So I made a mistake! You never
heard of Boy George?

The Usher TOSSES HIM OUT -- announcing to the crowd:

USHER

Movie starts in five minutes!
Let's go! Let's go!

Cont.

KID'S VOICE
(re the marquee)
What the hell's a Gidget?!

PANNING TO Ben Jaglom in line.

BEN
(calling out)
Hey, Blye! You want me to get
your tickets?!

ANGLE ON LUCAS

at the curb -- ANXIOUS -- as a CAR HORN HONKS bringing
relief. It's her. He runs across the street to join her.

LUCAS
(urgent)
It's almost starting.

MAGGIE
(irritated; trying
to park)
Sorry, my mom was all weirding out
about my driving at night.

LUCAS
How come?

MAGGIE
Do I know?

She HITS THE PARKING METER, which brings her to an
ABRUPT STOP -- about to get out when two CARS DESCEND
with a SQUEAL OF TIRES and the rumble of no-muffler
exhaust, kids jumping out windows and doors, swarming
in an exchange of money and instructions. It's the
FOOTBALL PLAYERS and their girlfriends; they hit the
streets like they own them.

THEIR VOICES
(overlapping)
Someone pay for me...Who's got
the bread...? Tonto, get my
tickets...You can't leave the
fuckin' car here! Who the fuck
says I can't leave the fuckin' car
here?!

ANGLE ON LUCAS

a minnow, hoping the sharks won't notice.

Cont.

BRUNO
Hey...! Luke-a-playkia!

No such luck. Bruno's on them -- a beer can in hand;
he strikes a gorrilla-like stance.

BRUNO
(chanting)
Luke-Luke-Luke-Luke...!

Lucas and Maggie exchange a glance, turning to cross the
street.

BRUNO
...Get-that-ball-away-and-puke!

Gasping laughter.

ANOTHER CAR PULLS UP -- an old Caddie convertible --
BLOCKING THEIR PATH. It's driven by a good-looking kid
who flashes a friendly smile; his name is Cappie Roew.
His girlfriend, ALISE, equally good-looking, is beside
him, a half dozen OTHERS spilling out the back as he
STOPS.

CAPPIE
(warmly)
Hi, Luke.

LUCAS
(trapped)
Hi.

CAPPIE
How was your summer?

LUCAS
Fine.

ALISE
You were a good sport today, Lucas.

LUCAS
Thanks.
(holds up tickets)
Got my tickets.

BRUNO
(from the b.g.)
Luke-Luke-Luke-Luke!

Cont.

OTHERS
(overlapping)
Will you shut up...? Hey, my
car's steamin'! Shit! I think
the movie started...Let the
fuckin' thing steam!

ANGLE ON

Lucas and Maggie scurrying toward the safety of the
theater.

CUTTING TO:

INT. THEATER LOBBY - SAME

25

As Lucas and Maggie enter; stopped by Ben's high-pitched
VOICE calling out from the popcorn line.

BEN
Lucas! You want something?!

A glance to Maggie: she nods.

BEN
(waving them over)
Come here!

OTHERS IN LINE
(objecting)
No cuts! Hey, the line's back
here!

BEN
(defying all)
Shut up, assholes!

MAGGIE
(backing off)
I don't need anything...

BEN
(insisting)
Fuck them! Get in front of me.

LUCAS
Nah, we'll go in...

BRUNO'S VOICE
(from the door)
Luke-Luke-Luke-Luke!
Get that ball away and puke!

Cont.

ANGLE ON BRUNO

and the group entering, Bruno unrelenting.

BRUNO
(chanting)
Ben and Luke! I'm gonna puke!

BEN
(a glance;
under his breath)
What a gimp.

LUCAS
Let's go.

BEN
Don't let him scare you away.

LUCAS
(incredulous at
the suggestion)
Scare me away...?

BEN
Yeah. Just tell him to eat shit.

BRUNO
(striding forward)
So, what do you guys say? You
comin' out for football or not?
(to Ben)
We're trying to find a jersey for
you, Jaglom, but they're all out
of pup tents.

Bruno gasps with laughter.

BEN
You should talk, shit-breath.

ANGLE ON BRUNO

his laughter ebbs; all around them turn to stone.

BRUNO
What'd you say?

BEN
You heard me.

Cont.

BRUNO
No, I don't think I did.

CAPPIE
(spotting it)
What's goin' on?

BRUNO
This kid's mouthin' off to me.

CAPPIE
(takes him by arm)
Come on, let's go...

BRUNO
(wrestling away)
Wait a second...!

CAPPIE
Hey, what's the point...?

BRUNO
...I'm kiddin' around, and this
fuckin' marshmallow opens his
mouth to me...

CAPPIE
Let's go, okay?
(firm)
Let's go watch a movie.

A tenuous moment; Bruno closes in.

BRUNO
(pointing a finger)
You better watch your mouth, fat
boy. Learn to be like Lucas, here.
He's smart. Not like you.

BEN
He's scared, not like me.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

stung.

BRUNO
(rising to it)
Oh, yea?

BEN
(defying)
Yeah...

Cont.

BRUNO
(nose to nose)
Y'know you're askin' for it...?

LUCAS
(piping up)
So are you.

FOCUS turns to Lucas: his ferocious expression betrayed by a "gulp."

BRUNO
(incredulous)
What did you say?

LUCAS
(holding his
ground)
You heard me.

BRUNO
Maybe you two boys'd like to step
outside...

ANGIE (HIS GIRLFRIEND)
(pulling on him)
Let's go, Bruno...

BRUNO
(pulling away)
No, I think I have to clear this
up.

ANGIE
Well, I came to see a movie.

CAPPIE
So did I.

LUCAS
(pointedly)
But no King Kong.

BEN
(a laugh)
Yeah.

BRUNO
(fuming)
Oh, man...!

ANGIE
(grabbing him)
Let's go. No fights. I mean it.

Cont.

CLOSE ON BRUNO

dangerous.

BRUNO

If I was you, I wouldn't stay to see this movie. You understand me, Luke-a-playkia? I'm gonna be lookin' for you guys after.

CAPPIE

(casually)

No he won't.

BRUNO

The hell I won't.

CAPPIE

They'll be with me after.

BRUNO

Yeah?

CAPPIE

Yeah. We're goin' out to eat.

CLOSE ON BRUNO

glaring.

CLOSE ON CAPPIE

unafraid.

BRUNO

What're you always stickin' up for this wimp for?!

ANGIE

(pulling on Bruno)

Come on, Bruno. It's started.

(another yank)

Let's go.

He reluctantly allows Angie to pull him away, his eyes trained menacingly on the group until he disappears.

ANGLE ON THE GROUP

shaken.

MAGGIE

(upset; to Lucas)

Maybe we should leave.

Cont.

BEN
(huffing)
I'm not afraid of that shit-bag.

CAPPIE
Don't worry, we'll go out after.

BEN
I can't. My mom's pickin' me up.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - SAME

26

An innocent beach party movie bringing howls of derision
-- CAMERA FINDING Lucas and Maggie, sober faced, eyes
fixed on the screen. Ben is nearby, guzzling popcorn;
Bruno and Angie can be seen, menacing figures, far back
against the wall.

MAGGIE
(a whisper)
Why does he call you Luke-a-playkia?

No answer.

MAGGIE
Does it mean something?

LUCAS
Leukaplakia is cancer of the mouth.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

distressed, turning, apprehensively, to look behind her
-- her expression undergoing a subtle change.

ANGLE FROM HER P.O.V.

a view of Cappie and Alise locked in an embrace. As the
movie sound track utters virginal banalities, these two
are into serious precoital kissing.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

watching.

CLOSE ON CAPPIE

An eye popping open and locking with Maggie's; caught in
the untenable position of being kissed passionately
while eye-locked with an observer.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERTED ROAD - NIGHT

27

Cappie's Convertible brimming over with kids, their voices raised over the din of rock music as they speed through the night.

VOICES

(re the movie)

Oh, man, so fuckin' lame...Can you believe that chick...She's all, like, 'Oh, Frankie, I get this funny feeling when you look at me...!'

Laughter; imitations of "Oh, Frankie...!"

CLOSER ANGLE

REVEALING Lucas and Maggie, out of their element, crushed beneath the tangle of bodies.

KIDS

(overlapping)

So where we goin'?...Let's go to Highwood...How 'bout the Metro? Let's score some beers. Fuck beers, let's get some bandeleros. What are bandeleros? I don't know, this guy told me he can get some great bandeleros...

CAPPIE

(calling for order)

Wait a second, can we get organized here...?

He TURNS DOWN the music; someone turns it UP -- FULL BLAST.

CAPPIE

(trying to reach
for it; they
fight him off)

Goddammit...!

But there's no stopping them. They begin clapping in rhythm and singing, dancing where they sit.

Cappie gives up -- CAMERA RAISING TO AN OVERVIEW of the car, an island of chaos in an otherwise silent night, zooming along the open road toward a stretch covered with trees.

ANGLE ON CAPPIE

at the wheel, pulling Alise close, taking his eyes off the road to give her an open-mouthed KISS.

Cont.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE AND LUCAS

watching.

ANGLE FROM THEIR P.O.V.

Cappie and Alise silhouetted against the windshield...
as it is SUDDENLY HIT with something large that SPLATTERS.

CAPPIE
(startled)

WHOA!

Then, a SUDDEN ONSLAUGHT -- objects hitting with the
rapid IMPACT of a machine gun fire. The kids SCREAM,
DIVING FOR COVER -- AS THE CAR GOES INTO A SKID, SPINNING
as though it's on an ICE SLICK, at sixty miles an hour!

VOICES
(screams)
Oh God! Shit! Help...!

ANGLE ON CAPPIE

struggling with the wheel as the car CAREENS out of
control -- CAMERA SWINGING FORWARD where the headlights
illuminate a roadway littered with something that GLISTENS.

ANOTHER ANGLE, THE CAR

SPINNING like a carnival ride -- eventually coming to
rest, with a "bump" against a fence post just beyond the
trees.

Cappie cuts the motor. A moment of stunned silence.

CAPPIE
Is everyone all right?

ALISE
(a gasp of relief)
Oh God...!

TONTO
I don't fuckin' believe it! Do
you believe it?

ANOTHER KID
Holy shit!

Someone starts laughing: they all laugh; hysterically
-- and it fades. The doors open, and they stumble out
of the car.

Cont.

MARIE

What was it?

CAPPIE

I don't know.

ALISE

(shaken)

It was bugs.

LUCAS

It was locusts. Listen.

They fall silent: the air is thick with their hum.

LUCAS

They're hatching in the trees.

ALISE

(frightened)

Let's get out of here!

LUCAS

They can't hurt you...

ALISE

(alarmed)

Cappie! Get me out of here!

LUCAS

In Africa, people eat them.

ALISE

(a shriek)

Ucchh!!!

OTHER KIDS

(laughing)

Gross! Gag me! Get the mustard!

ALISE

(becoming hysterical)

Please! Please!

TONTTO

Don't look now, Alise, but there's something in your hair.

There is -- and she starts SCREAMING: going wild -- really wild -- Cappie grabbing for her, Maggie too, pulling the insect from her hair as Cappie struggles to calm her.

Cont.

CAPPIE
It's out! It's okay!

MAGGIE
(holding it)
See? It's out!

Alise hurls herself against Cappie, gasping -- as Maggie and Cappie's eyes meet...seeming for the first time to notice each other.

CAPPIE
Thanks.

MAGGIE
(re the insect)
I don't mind them.

Their eyes hold; she is suddenly aware that Lucas is beside them.

MAGGIE
Lucas knows all about them.

LUCAS
Let me see it.

Maggie opens her hand; Lucas gently takes it.

TONTO
(gazing over
Lucas' shoulder)
Let's see.

OTHERS
(crowding around)
Yeah...let's see. I can't see it.

MARIE
Turn on the headlights.

They turn, following Lucas toward the car, leaving Maggie with Cappie -- and the trembling Alise.

CAPPIE
(calling after
them)
Put the top up, okay? So we can
put Alise in there...?

ALISE
(whimpering)
I'm sorry, Cappie...

Cont.

CAPPIE

It's okay...

Headlights SWITCH ON: we HEAR "ooh's" and "aah's,"
wisecracks ("It does look delicious...!") and laughter.

CLOSE ANGLE - THE INSECT

translucent in front of the headlights, held in Lucas'
open palm -- FACES hovering from all sides, like doctors
over an operation.

MARIE

(awed)

It's not even trying to get away.

LUCAS

It can't. Its wings are still wet.
It's totally vulnerable.

MARIE

Does it bite?

LUCAS

Doesn't even have a mouth. All it
lives for is to mate.

TONTTO

Hey! Like me!

Laughter all around.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

beside Cappie, who's holding Alise in a protective embrace
-- as the VOICES and LAUGHTER of the others ring out
in the night.

MAGGIE

(a bit uncomfortable)

He loves bugs.

CAPPIE

He's a great kid.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

finding his eyes.

MAGGIE

Thanks for sticking up for him.

Cont.

CAPPIE
I like him.

MAGGIE
I'm glad.

CAPPIE
He did somethin' for me once.

MAGGIE
Did he?

CAPPIE
Yeh.

There is something between them -- that "thing" that makes two people unaware that they've stopped talking and are just looking at each other. Alise picks it up.

MAGGIE
...What did he do?

ALISE
Can we get out of here, Cappie?
Right now, please?

Without hesitation he moves, Alise under his wing, toward the car...leaving Maggie gazing after them.

CAPPIE
(o.s.; angered)
I told you to put the top up.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

on his knees in front of the car as Tonto's hand reaches in and SLAPS UPWARD, propelling the bug into his face; creating SQUEALS OF PANIC and STUMBLING as they all lurch away, SHRIEKING as the insect bounces underfoot.

TONTO
Step on it. Step on it!

LUCAS
No!

A foot smacks.

Cont.

MARIE
(primal scream)
I got it! Oh my God! I can't
believe I did this!

CLOSE ON LUCAS

rendered immobile.

MARIE
(with revulsion)
Ooohhh, gross! It's like a HUGE
M&M!

CLOSE ON THE CAR TOP

MOANING as it goes up -- covering Alise and Cappie within.

ANGLE ON CAPPIE

behind the wheel: his eyes on Maggie -- captured in the
outer periphery of his headlights.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

staring at the squashed locust.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

in the darkness -- gazing on.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BANDROOM - CLOSE ON A TUBA - DAY

28

Doing an "oom-pah" SOLO, CAMERA WIDENING TO REVEAL it's
being played by Ben, who is surrounded by the ENTIRE BAND,
instruments at the ready, as the BAND TEACHER (MR. ROACH)
waves his baton in front of Ben's face alone. Ben
finishes.

ROACH
(moving on)
...and French horn, same bar...your
name is...
(checking his chart)
...Lucas Blue?

All laugh.

LUCAS
Lucas Flye.

Cont.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

French horn in hand -- Rina Prado, with a clarinet,
seated behind him.

ROACH

You're the only French horn?

Lucas nods.

ROACH

Don't get sick during football
season, Blye.

(re the music)

Bar A.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

playing the same bar that Ben did; not great.

ROACH

(cueing others
to join in)

And...clarinets...

ANGLE ON RINA

and two girls beside her, JOINING IN.

ROACH

(summoning)

And saxophones!

ANGLE ON TONY KARETZO

and others joining in. It's beginning to sound real
terrible now.

ROACH

And...everybody!

ANGLE ON OTHERS

picking up their instruments and joining in.

ROACH

(waving it off)

Hold it! Hold it! This is
terrible!

Silence.

Cont.

BEN
Why do you think Triechel killed
himself?

Huge LAUGHTER.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME EC CLASSROOM - SAME

29

A good-natured and robust WOMAN TEACHER (MRS. CARNOWER),
using Cappie Roew to help her demonstrate in front of
the class; her repartee fast-paced and energetic as they
slice fruit and put it into a blender.

CARNOWER
...and the reason I'm using a big,
strong, handsome man to help me is
because the bigger and stronger they
are, the more helpless they claim
to be in the kitchen.
(to Cappie)
But you don't seem helpless.

CAPPIE
No, ma'am.

CARNOWER
You seem very confident.

CAPPIE
Yes, ma'am.

CARNOWER
You've broken a banana very well.

CAPPIE
*Something passed down from my
ancestors.*

Class LAUGHTER; he glances out at someone.

CARNOWER
Your family tree, you might say.

CAPPIE
Might say.

ANGLE ON

that "someone" -- Maggie; aware he's playing to her --
and eating it up.

Cont.

CARNOWER
Are you ready to make a drink now?

CAPPIE
Yes, I am.

CARNOWER
Now, you're sure you're capable of
doing this?

CAPPIE
Oh, yes.

CARNOWER
Even though you've never used a
blender before.

CAPPIE
That's right.

CARNOWER
Nothing to it?

CAPPIE
Nothing to it.

CARNOWER
Nothing else you want to add to
this?

CAPPIE
No ma'am.

CARNOWER
Nothing at all you've overlooked.

CAPPIE
No.

CARNOWER
So, you're ready to blend.

CAPPIE
Ready to blend.

CARNOWER
(points)
Blend away.

He glances at Maggie and PUSHES THE BUTTON -- suddenly
made aware of what he forgot. The top. It SPLASHES
all over his face and shirt -- the class erupting in
applause and laughter.

Cont.

CARNOWER

(laughing)

Who will show this big, strong
man how to use a washer-dryer...?

Maggie's hand SHOOTs UP.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - CLOSE ON A SHIRT - SAME

30

being tossed into a wash machine; detergent sprinkled
on top; CAMERA STAYING with MAGGIE'S HAND as WE HEAR:

MAGGIE

(o.s.)

...I think there's a gizmo to put
this in, but I just sprinkle it on
top...

(switches a dial)

... 'mini-cycle' ... and ... that's it.

The top CLOSES, a button is PUSHED: We HEAR water
spraying as the ANGLE WIDENS to reveal MAGGIE and
CAPPIE alone in a huge, empty room. It's a basement.
Damp. Like a dungeon. A row of washer-dryers is
stacked with towels, abandoned mid-folding; storage
closets line the walls. CAPPIE is bare to the waist,
with a towel around his shoulders, shivering slightly
in the chill -- and they are uncomfortable in each
other's presence; not knowing what to say.

MAGGIE

So.

(checks her watch)

I hope it gets done in time.

CAPPIE

(re the exit)

You want to...?

MAGGIE

Well.

(hesitant)

You might not know how to...

CAPPIE

...I can do it. What do I do?

MAGGIE

I have fifteen minutes.

Cont.

SILENCE. He "blows" to see if he can see his breath; not that he wants to, just that he can't think of anything else to do. The word "awkward" was invented for this. He spots some folding chairs stacked against the wall and gets two, plunking them down in front of the machine. The machine changes cycles, starting to vibrate violently.

CAPPIE

My God. It's tryin; to get out!

She laughs -- he offers a seat; both sit. And watch the machine. Like a TV.

ANGLES ON BOTH

stuck for anything to say.

CAPPIE

Boring.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

CAPPIE

I think the dryer's gonna be much better.

She laughs. Silence again. He reaches into his pocket (tight jeans -- not easy) and produces a stick of gum that looks like it's been sat on for about four years. Offers her half.

CAPPIE

(urging)

It's good for you.

MAGGIE

Really?

CAPPIE

(a shrug; a laugh)

Sure.

She laughs -- and takes it. Both chew. The machine changes cycles again, pumping water into a sink.

CAPPIE

(enthusiastic; re
the machine)

All right...!

She giggles again, they make eye contact. It doesn't help much.

MAGGIE
(finally)
I like Alise.

He nods.

MAGGIE
She's so pretty.

CAPPIE
Yeah.

MAGGIE
You guys been going together a long
time?

He nods.

MAGGIE
Real serious, huh?

CAPPIE
(reluctant)
Well.
(debating)
Serious. Y'know.
(a pause)
I don't know about this gum.

MAGGIE
(a laugh)
I didn't want to say anything...!

They both take it out of their mouths, wadding it up --
he looks for a place to toss it, she holds out her hand.
He is reluctant; she insists. He puts it in her hand.
She closes her hand around it. He is unnerved by it.

CAPPIE
(re the gum)
Some people would be grossed out by
that. Alice would.

MAGGIE
Not me.

CAPPIE
She's easily grossed out.

Cont.

MAGGIE
I'm not. Well. Except for certain things.

CAPPIE
Like...?

MAGGIE
Like...

CAPPIE
...what?

MAGGIE
Like phlegm or something. If it
flies out of a handkerchief.
(re his expression)
Well, you asked...

She bursts out laughing; he, too.

CAPPIE
(through his laughter)
...or how about when people blow
their nose at a dinner table,
'specially breakfast.

MAGGIE
Oooooooh!

CAPPIE
And then they look at it.

MAGGIE
(excited)
Or if somebody throws up, like a
stranger or something, on your shoe.

CAPPIE
Ooooucch...!

MAGGIE
That happened to me...

CAPPIE
...kidding...!

MAGGIE
Honest to God, on an airplane. We
were going to Orlando.

Cont.

CAPPIE
Oh no....!

MAGGIE
Loafers. No socks.

CAPPIE
(a groan)
Oooooohhhh.

MAGGIE
...And I have, like, two hours left
on this flight...!

CAPPIE
That's very gross.

MAGGIE
Very gross, try washing your feet
in those little sinks...!

CAPPIE
Whooaaa!

MAGGIE
Very gross.

CAPPIE
Very.

Like a steam engine that revved and died -- the
conversation suddenly ends. Chuckles of reiteration;
both search the walls as if something might be written
there to say.

MAGGIE
Orlando was fantastic.

CAPPIE
(quickly)
I'm going to travel someday.

MAGGIE
Me, too.

The silences come without warning. Here's another.

CAPPIE
Get it off your shoes?

MAGGIE
Threw'm away. My Mother almost
killed me.

Cont.

The wash machine starts "whirring". Their eyes catch -- the glance lingers.

CAPPIE
What about you and Lucas?
(falters)
I mean...

MAGGIE
We're just friends.

CAPPIE
Ah.

MAGGIE
Y'know.

CAPPIE
Yeah.

MAGGIE
He's very nice.

CAPPIE
The best.

MAGGIE
And very bright.

CAPPIE
(profound agreement)
Tell me about it.

MAGGIE
I mean, it's nice to know somebody
who has, y'know...really 'heavy'
thoughts.

CAPPIE
Absolutely.

MAGGIE
Do you?

CAPPIE
Yep.

MAGGIE
Have heavy thoughts?

Cont.

CAPPIE
Absolutely. All the time.
(a pause; laughing)
I can't think of one right now,
though.

MAGGIE
(laughter)
It's hard.

CAPPIE
(playing it)
Gimme time...!

She gets up to check the machine -- aware of his eyes
on her and enjoying it; begins folding towels.

MAGGIE
(without looking
at him)
What did he do for you?
(no answer)
You said he helped you once?

CAPPIE
(a beat; to refocus)
Oh. Yeah. With my work. I was out
for two months with hepatitis, and
he brought my stuff home for me
every day, and helped me with it.
(musing)
I still don't know why.

MAGGIE
Because you're nice to him.

CAPPIE
I wasn't then. I just made fun of
him like everybody else.

MAGGIE
(upset)
Why do people do that?

CAPPIE
I don't know. 'Cause he's weird, I
guess. Last year he even walked
strange. Said it had to do with
gravity. And the way he mouths off
in class sometimes...that's how
'leukaplakia' got started.

Cont.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

her eyes finding his as he crosses to her -- both falling silent as they assess each other.

CAPPIE

Anyway. I owe a lot to him.

ANGLES ON EACH

held by the other's eyes. The silence is different now; not isolating, but filled with something that binds them. Both feel it, and it is disconcerting. Even their breathing is altered.

CAPPIE

...And I like him.

MAGGIE

Yeah...I do, too.

CAPPIE

So, I try to keep him from gettin' hurt.

MAGGIE

Yeh.

A pause: studying each other's faces.

CAPPIE

And...there's Alise.

MAGGIE

Right.

CAPPIE

I mean...she likes him, too.

MAGGIE

That's nice.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

locked into his eyes.

Cont.

CAPPIE
She thinks you're pretty.

MAGGIE
Really?

CAPPIE
Yeh.

MAGGIE
...She say that?

CAPPIE
(a nod)
I think she's jealous.

MAGGIE
Of me? Why?

No answer. Their eyes are locked, the atmosphere
"tingling" around them. A shudder goes through her.

CAPPIE
...cold?

She shakes her head; he sweeps the towel off his
shoulders and, in the same motion, loops it around
hers. It takes her breath away. He is rendered
speechless, too.

Breaking the moment, he turns away and, just for
something to do, crosses to one of the storage closets,
pulling open its doors. Volleyballs spill out. At
least a dozen. Just what the doctor ordered.

CAPPIE
(elated)
Hey!

And he begins KICKING them. ALL of them; the room
ECHOING with bombardment as they careen off walls,
shooting back at him from all directions, while he
"whoops" and kicks, letting off pent-up steam.

CAPPIE
(yowling)
Wheew! Yee-haaa!

Cont.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

quite amazed, and a little perplexed at the spectacle -- as he suddenly STOPS; the sounds of the bouncing balls dribbling off to nothing -- leaving just his panting breath.

ANGLES ON BOTH

looking at each other.

CAPPIE

(breathless)

I told Alise I thought you should try out for cheerleading. That's why she got jealous.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

no response.

CAPPIE

She gets jealous a lot. I still think you should.

SUDDENLY, THE BELL. Down here in the empty basement, it's DEAFENING. They have to COVER THEIR EARS.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNCHROOM - LATER

31

The BELL ~~transforming~~ it into instant CHAOS -- kids pouring in as though FLOODGATES have been opened. They dive for tables, grabbing seats, tossing lunch bags -- claiming turf.

BEN'S VOICE

Luke! Hey, Lucas Blue!

ANGLE ON BEN

staking out a table with TONY KARETZO and some other "out-of-it" types.

BEN

(waiting)

We're over here!

Cont.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

the French horn mouthpiece still imprinted on his lips, and a brown bag in hand -- waving them off as he PUSHES through the crowds and STEPS UP ON A CHAIR to get an overview.

RINA

(o.s.)

Hi, Lucas.

ANGLE ON RINA

beneath him, adoring as always, a tray in hand.

RINA

Want to sit with me?

LUCAS

(preoccupied)

Uh...thanks. I'm lookin' for
someone...

He pops down, continuing his search.

RINA

(calling after him)

Did you know there's a dance next
week?

But he's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - SAME

32

Overrun with kids taking "lunch" outdoors -- some eating, most letting off steam, playing Frisbee or basketball or soccer -- CAMERA FINDING LUCAS ENTERING by way of a heavy metal door, shading his eyes from the sun.

BRUNO

(o.s.)

Hey, Puke! They don't let midgets
out here.

Bruno's on a ledge above him with Tonto, eating. Lucas ignores them, moving into the crowd.

Cont.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as he moves through, passing a long "PUNKER" -- a girl with her head shaved, save for a pink bristle on top -- looking terribly alone. Lucas stops; amazed.

PUNKER
Hi.

LUCAS
Hello.

PUNKER
It's me. Barbara.

LUCAS
(totally
taken
aback)
Barbara. What happened to
you?!

PUNKER
I spent the summer in California.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

speechless.

PUNKER
Is it that bad?

LUCAS
(emphatic)
No.

PUNKER
Should I get a wig?

LUCAS
(equally emphatic)
Yes.

PUNKER
(desolate)
Right.
(sadly, turns)
See y'later.

Cont.

He watches her go: a headshake of disbelief -- then he SPOTS SOMETHING AHEAD.

ANGLE ON GROUP

of girls seated beneath a tree, in the grass at the edge of a volleyball field.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

approaching.

CLOSER ON THE GIRLS

about fifteen of them, most eating lunch as they listen to ALISE (CAPPIE'S girl friend) and MARIE (TONTO'S girl friend) and ANGIE (BRUNO'S girl friend), conducting some kind of business -- ALISE doing most of the talking.

ALISE

...So it's like an 'honor' to represent the school, and it looks real good on college applications.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

seated at the outer edge of the circle, DISTRACTED by LUCAS who "hisses", then crawls in.

ALISE

And anybody can join, even boys, because the Supreme Court says anybody who tries out for a school team has to be given a chance.

LUCAS

(a whisper)
What's goin' on?

She gestures "sshhh"; he persists.

LUCAS

What're you doin'?

MAGGIE

(irritated)
Listening.

LUCAS

Can you meet me after school?
(no response)
I can get you an 'A' in biology.

MAGGIE
(exasperated)
Sssshhh!

He flashes a quick "sshhh" to indicate obedience -- turning his attention to the front.

ALISE
We have eight places to fill, and we practice every afternoon, and take busses with the guys to the away games...

MARIE
(coy)
Which means, like, major party time...

Crowd titters.

MARIE
...'Specially on the way back, when certain bus drivers don't care what goes on in the back of the bus...

ANGIE
...or what beverages might be consumed...
(quick)
...but don't say you heard it here...

GROUP LAUGHTER -- CAMERA MOVING IN ON LUCAS as what's going on sinks in.

ALISE
(wrapping it up)
So, anyone who wants to should take one of these applications and report to the playing field right after school.

A smattering of applause; the gathering breaks up, LUCAS watching, dumbfounded, as Maggie hurries to the application table with the rest, returning with a form in her hand, studying it as they begin to walk.

LUCAS
(hesitant)
You...have a change of clothes here?

MAGGIE
Why?

Cont.

LUCAS

I was going to tell you, if you come
down to the stream with me and
collect stuff for Karlson's terrarium...

(having trouble
getting her attention)

...I did it last year. I'm sure he'll
give you an 'A'.

(not sure she's
heard)

Maggie?

MAGGIE

(looks up; she has)

When?

LUCAS

Today.

MAGGIE

I think I'm gonna do this today.

He stops: incredulous.

LUCAS

Cheerleading?

MAGGIE

Well. Check it out.

LUCAS

What for?

MAGGIE

'Cause I might want to do it.

LUCAS

(taken aback)

Be a cheerleader?

MAGGIE

I don't know.

(stopped: re his
expression)

Is that all right, Lucas?

LUCAS

Me? Hey...

MAGGIE

(irritated)

Well, the way you're looking at me...

LUCAS

(at a loss)

Hey. You know. Whatever. I can
wait 'til tomorrow to collect
tadpoles.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Well, if I like it, I'll be doing it tomorrow, too. They practice every day.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

staring at her in DISMAY.

MAGGIE

(trying to 'reach' him)
It sounds like fun, Lucas.

LUCAS

Yeah?

MAGGIE

Didn't you hear what she said? Away games and busses...

LUCAS

Well. Listen. I guess everybody has their own idea of fun. Y'know. Some people go to football games...other people do...less...'superficial' things.

MAGGIE

(getting pissed)
Look, Lucas. Just because you don't approve of something doesn't mean other people don't have a right to enjoy it.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

stung by her tone.

MAGGIE

You're in the band, aren't you?

LUCAS

(defensive)

Yeah?

MAGGIE

So?

LUCAS

So?

MAGGIE

The band goes to football games.

LUCAS

Totally different.

MAGGIE

Why?

LUCAS

(proudly)

The band doesn't have fun there.

MAGGIE

(raising her voice)

Then why do they do it?!

LUCAS

I don't know.

MAGGIE

Well, figure it out! And in the
meantime, don't call people
'superficial' just because they
want to have fun!

He is ROCKED by her ANGER; at a loss for words.

MAGGIE

(near tears)

I'm new here. I don't know anybody.
Why can't you be helpful and
understanding about that?!!

Aware of other kids gawking at them, she turns,
storming away.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

gazing after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - AFTER SCHOOL - DAY

33

ROCK and ROLL played on a ghetto blaster, as the eight
"regular" cheerleaders do their stuff for the group of
new recruits gathered, cross-legged in the grass --
CAMERA PANNING AWAY to REVEAL, on the other side of
the playing field (separated by chain link), the
FOOTBALL PLAYERS at scrimmage, CAPPIE snatching a pass
from the sky, BRUNO knocking invisible enemies asunder
as he clears a path for him to the end zone where both
stagger to a halt, pausing to gaze through the fence
at the cheerleaders on the other side.

Cont.

ANGLE FROM THEIR P.O.V.

half the prancing girls snap into handstands, the other stabilizing them by grabbing their legs.

CLOSE ON BRUNO

looking like a pound dog at feeding time.

BRUNO

Cheerleaders without underpants.

CLOSE ON CAPPIE

BRUNO

That's my dream.

ANGLE FROM CAPPIE'S P.O.V.

ZEROING IN on MAGGIE, among the audience of newcomers; she catches his eye -- gives a secret wave.

CLOSE ON CAPPIE

returning the signal.

COACH

(spotting them;
angered)

Let's go, pussies! You like the cheer squad so much, I'll put you the hell on it, if you don't stay away!

They spin fast, hustling off -- CAMERA MOVING UPWARD to an overview of the PLAYING FIELD -- chain link separating football players from cheerleaders -- CAMERA PANNING AWAY toward a forested area in the fields beyond.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORESTED AREA - SAME

34

LUCAS, knee-deep in mud, dressed in the baggy shorts and high-topped black tennis shoes he was wearing when we first met him, sloshes through the stream, clearly DEPRESSED. Classical music is playing from his backpack on the ground -- but the batteries of his cassette player are running low; he takes a listless swipe with his net, capturing something -- CAMERA FOLLOWING HIM as he wades to shore.

Cont.

CLOSE ON HIS HAND

dropping a tadpole into a jelly jar; it scurries downward, disappearing into a mass of wriggling tails.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

sitting down in the mud -- miserable. He becomes aware of something, a movement, nearby -- and FREEZES. Just his eyes move, like a lizard's. Then, a sudden LUNGE; he's prostrate in the mud -- but he's got it -- and brings it close to his face for examination.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

a FROG -- its throat pulsating, its dopey eyes staring out from between Lucas' fingers.

ANOTHER ANGLE

their two faces pointed at one another's long enough to understand they are kindred spirits; princes unkissed. Or just plain frogs.

The batteries in Lucas' cassette player give out -- his mood plummeting.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CHORUS ROOM - DAY

35

Kids assembled on three-tiered risers, singing their hearts out, being led by a WOMAN MUSIC TEACHER whose hands flutter like butterflies; a sort of female Ichabod Crane. The song is "No Man is an Island" and, as they sing, the CAMERA SURVEYS FACES, capturing a cross-current of unrequited love. Diminutive RINA PRADO is gazing longingly at LUCAS; he doesn't know she exists. Instead, he's gazing balefully at MAGGIE, whose eyes are on CAPPIE, expressing the same kind of pain. CAPPIE, trying not to be caught by ALISE, glances furtively at MAGGIE -- but ALISE is aware of it; stoic, trying to maintain her dignity in the face of what's going on.

RANDOM SHOTS

BEN JAGLOM, singing with the sopranos; TONY KARETZO hovering over the basses; the STUDENT ACCOMPANIST, a kid without a chin; PANNING TO RINA PRADO who, on cue, steps forward as though to take a solo; but everything SUDDENLY ENDS with the JARRING SOUND of the BELL. The choir of angels turns instantly into a stampeding herd.

Cont.

TEACHER

(shouting to be heard)
Don't forget to memorize this, and
the Glory Hymn, I don't want to see
anybody faking words! Alise, Heather,
Norah, could I see you...?

ANGLE ON LUCAS

eyes on MAGGIE, hurriedly grabbing, along with his
books, a leaking CHINESE TAKE-OUT CARTON, unaware that
it's dripping as he dives into the crowd.

ANGLE ON RINA

trying to keep him in her sightline, pushing after.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CHORUS ROOM - SAME

36

Making it through the door, ELATED to see MAGGIE
WAITING FOR HIM, she beams and returns his wave.

LUCAS

(heading toward)
Hi! Thanks for waiting for me.
I've got to talk to you.

But as he approaches, he sees that her sightline, and
smile, is beamed over his head. He turns to see
CAPPIE emerging.

LUCAS

(to Maggie)
Listen, I've been thinking a lot
about what you said about needing to
meet people, and my not being very
understanding about that...

She's not looking at him.

LUCAS

...Maggie?

CAPPIE

(approaching)
Hi.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Hi.

CAPPIE

How'd you like cheerleading?

MAGGIE

I loved it.

CAPPIE

I hear you're good.

They turn and begin walking, LUCAS pausing for a moment, then HUSTLING TO CATCH UP, his Chinese take-out carton dripping as he shuffles alongside.

LUCAS

(to Maggie)

See, what I thought was, that maybe Cappie could give us a ride next Friday. That okay, Cappie?

CAPPIE

(not understanding)

Hmm?

MAGGIE

What are you talking about, Lucas?

LUCAS

There's a dance on Friday. If you and Alise could take Maggie and me, that'd be good, 'cause she needs to meet people. See, she has a strong need for acceptance...

MAGGIE

(mortified)

It's really quite all right, Lucas.

LUCAS

It's okay, Cappie won't mind.

(to Cappie)

See, she's got this 'peer group' thing, and I hate to see her getting desperate.

MAGGIE

(through her teeth)

Jesus, Lucas.

Cont.

CAPPIE
I'll take you. That's fine.

ALISE
(from behind)
Cappie...?

The ring of authority stops them; Maggie rolling her eyes with mortification as Alise comes up alongside.

CAPPIE
We're gonna take Luke and Maggie to the dance on Friday, that okay?

ALISE
Hey, you guys are going out?
(poisonous)
You make a neat couple. That's great.

LUCAS
(to Cappie)
Should we dress up? Like wear a tux or something?

ALISE
You might get it all wrinkled if you come up on the hill with us afterward.

LUCAS
Right. The hill.

ALISE
(to Maggie)
It's a comfortable back seat. I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

She physically turns Cappie, he throwing a helpless glance over his shoulder as he is led away.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

seeing, by MAGGIE's flushed-red face, that he's done something terribly wrong.

LUCAS
(re the carton)
I brought you some tadpoles. They need a change of water.

Cont.

MAGGIE
(through a
locked jaw)
Did I say I was going to any dance
with you, Lucas?

LUCAS
No. Would you?

MAGGIE
(a hiss)
Honestly, Lucas.

Near tears, she turns on her heel, hurrying into the
GIRL'S ROOM -- leaving LUCAS dismayed.

RINA
Hi, Lucas.

ANGLE ON RINA

obviously having looked for him -- stopping a
respectable distance away.

LUCAS
(barely able
to speak)
Hi.

RINA
There's a dance on Friday. Did
you know?

LUCAS
Yes.

RINA
Want to go?

LUCAS
I have a date.

She reddens with ~~embarrassment~~.

RINA
Your lunch is leaking.

Cont.

Turning on his heel, he heads for the BOYS' ROOM, banging through the door.

ANGLE ON RITA

wishing the ground would swallow her up -- heading fast for the GIRLS' ROOM, BANGING through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' ROOM - SAME MOMENT

37

As Rina ENTERS, stopping short; tensed with humiliation.

DOWN ANGLE

OUR VIEW INCLUDING one of the STALLS, where Maggie stands, equally immobile -- her feelings exactly the same.

CUT TO:

INT. BOY'S ROOM - SAME MOMENT

38

Lucas against a wall; fists clenched; fighting the same anguish. He looks into the take-out carton; emitting a "moan" -- rushing to the sink.

ANGLE ON THE TADPOLES

near death, wiggling on wet cardboard -- as we HEAR the water tap SPRAY ON.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT BESIDE THE PLAYING FIELD - DAY

39

The band wheezing an off-key rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever" as they practice MARCHING FORMATIONS under the direction of Mr. Roach, the new band teacher who stands atop a ladder waving his arms like Alexander Haig. CAMERA FINDS Rina tooting her clarinet, Tony Karetzo blowing his sax, Ben puffing his TUBA, and Lucas, eyes straining, as he plays his French Horn, to see something off to the side.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

A rollicking good time being had by the Football Players and Cheerleaders who have gathered, during a break, at a communal drinking fountain; water being spit and sprayed at the girls, who squeal demurely, but keep coming back for more.

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

eyes bulging to the side, BUMPING SMACK into Ben,
THE COLLISION OF instruments sounding like a car wreck,
both staggering backward, clutching their mouths in
pain.

ROACH

(a lion tamer)

Pick'm up! Back in line!

CUT TO:

INT. FIELD HOUSE SAME MOMENT

40

Where the head Cheerleaders and their FACULTY ADVISOR
debate uniform selection from samples laid out on a table.

CAMERA FINDS Alise, apart from the rest, watching what
Lucas was watching, through a window.

CHEERLEADERS

(voices overlapping)

...but the high-cuts are sexier...I
like the one-piece...God, are you
kidding, it looks like my mother
would wear it...!

ANGLE FROM ALISE'S P.O.V.

MOVING IN ON ONE FOOTBALL PLAYER and ONE CHEERLEADER,
in particular. It's Cappie and Maggie: apart from the
rest, on a little stroll, he with his helmet under his
arm, she with a sweater tied around her neck -- their
stride in unison -- a picture of synchronicity.

CLOSE ON ALISE

cold eyed.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNCH ROOM - DAY

41

The usual NOISE and CHAOS -- CAMERA FINDING the "punk"
girl eating alone -- PANNING TO Lucas, tray in hand --
STOPPING as he SPOTS SOMETHING AHEAD.

Cont.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V. - THE JOCKS' TABLE

A mecca of laughter and fun, where Maggie has found a place, albeit at the end of the table, the FOOTBALL PLAYERS engaged in a test of strength, stripped down to their T-shirts, squeezing oranges in their biceps, grossing out the girls with juice and pith squishing down their arms.

BEN'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Lukie! Mr. Blue!

ANGLE ON BEN

waving Lucas over. He's "king" of his table, surrounded by sober-faced mandarins -- to tall, too pimply, too bespectacled, too serious -- Tony Karetzo and Rina among them.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

resigned to his destiny, heading over.

BEN

(pushing others
aside to make room
for Lucas)

Sit down. We're tryin' to figure out how to get rid of this asshole band teacher. I hate the fucker's guts.

Lucas SITS -- his eyes still on Maggie's table where there is a sudden outburst of LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE. Bruno's in the contest now, juice squirting from his armpit as he squeezes one under his arm. CAMERA CATCHES Alise glancing furtively at Maggie, whose every utterance is in the hope of catching Cappie's eye.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

grim.

TONY

(o.s.; beside
Lucas)

If only Triechel hadn't killed himself.

Cont.

BEN

(mouthful)

Yeah, why the fuck'd he
have to kill himself and leave
us with this asshole for?

TONY

Pussy-crazed, that's why.

RINA

(defending)

He wasn't pussy-crazed, he was
in love.

TONY

(incredulous)

With a dental technician?

RINA

Not everyone has to be glamorous
to have someone fall in love with
them.

TONY

You don't kill yourself over a
dental technician.

RINA

Never heard of Romeo and Juliet?

TONY

Was she a dental technician?

RINA

No, but people do kill themselves
when they can't have who they love.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

becoming aware of the conversation around him.

ANOTHER KID (BILLIE)

I thought he had a heart attack.

TONY

(eating; a headshake)

Blew his brains out in his bedroom.
With a book of poetry open and a
rose on the page. My mom works
at the hospital. Said half his
head was gone.

BILLIE

(wincing)

Wow...

Cont.

RINA

I think it's kinda beautiful. The poetry, I mean. It was probably by Keats. Or Shelley.

TONY

(strikes a pose)

Roses are red. Violets are blue.
I got a dental problem. Can I
fuck you.

Laughter all around -- but Lucas isn't laughing; his eyes on the Jocks' table where Cappie has now joined in, his neck muscles bulging as he attempts to squeeze an orange under his chin, his EYES ON Maggie who's urging him on.

CLOSE ON ALISE

deadly.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

pained so much that he looks away -- his eyes falling on a copy of the SCHOOL NEWSPAPER resting on Tony's books beside him. The entire FOOTBALL TEAM is posed on the cover. They look like supermen.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAND SHELL - NIGHT

42

The SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA we SAW EARLIER, PLAYING with fervor -- CAMERA MOVING TOWARD THE AUDIENCE, and DOWN TO the feet of a couple in the front row. The manhole cover at their feet is slightly askew.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UTILITIES TUNNEL - SAME

43

Lucas, alone in the dark -- his lack of expression eloquently expressing his pain -- as the exquisite music drifts down into his lonely cave.

CLOSER ANGLE

his saddened eyes drift toward the darkness, focusing on something deeper in the cavernous tunnel, a distance away. CAMERA HOLDS as he edges off his "perch" and moves quietly toward it; whatever it is is about a foot-and-a-half over his head. He paused beneath it, speculating.

Cont.

CLOSER ANGLE

REVEALS it's a WATER PIPE; leaking. Lucas gingerly tests the temperature of the water, then the temperature of the pipe -- then, with a look of grim determination, REACHES UP WITH BOTH HANDS and FIRMLY GRABS HOLD.

ANGLE ON HIS LEGS

bending at his knee, his body lowering until he hangs suspended off the ground.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE

swelling with strain, arms shaking -- as he struggles to PULL HIMSELF UPWARD, managing, with superhuman effort, to get his CHIN OVER THE PIPE. He pauses, gasping but triumphant, then does it again. And again. He's doing chin-ups.

LONG SHOT DOWN DARKENED TUNNEL

symphonic music echoing through bare cement corridors as, in the distance, the figure of a boy lurches and kicks, moving determinedly between ceiling and floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

44

The symphonic music replaced by TOP FORTIES coming from Cappie's car radio as the CAR approaches the HOUSE and swings into the driveway, stopping beneath an overhanging canopy of trees. Headlights go out, the motor cuts to silence -- the music, too; then we hear the WHEEZE of hydraulics as the convertible top comes down -- REVEALING Cappie and Alise, their faces bathed in moonlight.

CLOSER ANGLE

REVEALS their is tension; Cappie uncomfortable, Alise's eyes etched with distress -- a troubled silence between them.

CAPPIE

(apprehensive)

If you won't talk about why
you're upset, I don't know
what I can do. If you won't
tell me what you're thinking...

His voice fades to silence; she's fighting to keep
the lid of her emotions on.

Cont.

ALISE
(with difficulty)
I like to think of myself as a
good person, that's why I
won't tell you what I'm thinking.

CLOSE ON CAPPIE

not knowing how to respond.

ALISE
I'm thinking I hate someone so
much, I wish she were dead,
that's why I won't tell you
what I'm thinking.

CLOSE ON HER FACE

anguished.

ALISE
Why are you doing it?!

CAPPIE
Doing what?

ALISE
Don't pretend you're not doing
anything...

CAPPIE
(protesting)
I'm just bein' nice to her...

ALISE
(fevered)
Do you know how many people you
could hurt with this?! Do you
care about them at all? My parents,
who love you? My little sister?
I've counted nine people in all
-- am I being silly? I've even
counted three children who'll
never be born...!
(tears have
started to fall)
You wanted to know what I was
thinking...!

CAPPIE
I'm just bein' nice to her...

Cont.

ALISE

(fervent)

Stop being nice to her, please
 stop being nice to her, please.

Cappie makes a gesture of helplessness; it fires
 her anger. She sniffs back her tears.

ALISE

All right, then, if you won't, I
will. I won't have her in this
 car on Friday. I'm not going to
 any dance with her, she can put her
 fat ass on the back of Lucas'
 bicycle where it goddamn well
 belongs.

(getting out;
 fast)

And don't try to change my mind,
 'cause it won't change! I'm not
 giving you any more chances to show
 off for her, and I'm not giving
 her any goddamn ride!

(getting hysterical)

And I don't even care if I'm a
 goddamn good person or not
 anymore! I hate her to hell!
 I hate her guts!!

CAPPIE

Alise...

Crying, she races into her house, SLAMMING THE DOOR
 -- CAMERA MOVING IN ON Cappie, throwing his hands up,
 then SMASHING A FIST into the CAR DOOR -- sitting,
 dumbfounded, in the night. From the canopy of trees,
 high above his head, the WHINE of a solitary LOCUST,
 looking for a mate, RISES -- then FALLS TO SILENCE,
 leaving Cappie, gazing, anguished, at the moon.

CUT TO:

INT. MENS' STORE - DAY

45

Busy with Saturday shoppers -- CAMERA PANNING PAST a
 grouping of male mannekins, posed, in TUXEDO'S TO
 G.Q. perfection -- ENDING ON Lucas, at a counter, his
 fist full of dollars, eyes eager, picking out accessories.

SALESMAN

I'll tell you, it's nice to see
 a young man taking an interest
 in his appearance for a change...

Cont.

LUCAS
(re a bow tie)
How 'bout that one? Is that
good?

SALESMAN
The Wayne Newton? I'm afraid
it's not for rent. It's for
sale.

LUCAS
How much?

SALESMAN
Too much. Do you need one that
good?

LUCAS
(adamant)
Yeah. I do.

SALESMAN
Special girl friend, eh?

LUCAS
(hesitant)
Yeah. Well. After tonight
she will be. I mean, with
the way I'm gonna look, who could
resist?

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

46

The street silent and deserted, the stillness broken
by the SOUND of a SQUEEING BICYCLE coming toward --
Lucas ENTERING FRAME -- looking a bit bizarre. The
TUX is oversized, its prodigious trouser-cuffs rolled
up to keep them from fouling in the bicycle chain,
his hair is slicked back, his "Wayne Newton" is HUGE
-- but in his manner, there is a certain savior-faire.
He dismounts with panache, "jumping" to get his
pant-legs down, pauses to straighten his tie;
Woody Allen imitating Cary Grant couldn't have done
it better. He notices that Cappie's CAR is already
there; it stops him for a moment -- but only a
moment. He pulls himself together, heading jauntily
for the door.

Cont.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as he hops onto the doorstep -- and RINGS THE BELL.
A DOG BARKS -- sounds like a big one -- causing him
to back off a pace or two. There is a flowering
bush beside the door -- he impulsively tries to
pick one; the whole plant pulls out. Instant panic.
He attempts to replant it, but when his hands hit
the dirt, he recoils. He's stuck his hand into
dogshit. Desperate, he runs into the grass,
attempting to wipe off his hand while still holding
the bush -- but THE DOOR OPENS. It's Maggie's mom.

MAGGIE'S MOM

Hello?

LUCAS

Hi. I thought this bush would
look better over here.

MAGGIE'S MOM

Really?

LUCAS

Yeah, I don't think it was getting
enough sun.

MAGGIE'S MOM

You must be Lucas.

LUCAS

(approaching)

Yeh.

MAGGIE'S MOM

Come in.

Reaching the doorstep, he extends his hand --
remembering the dog poop, withdraws it fast.

MAGGIE'S MOM

Why don't you leave the bush outside?

LUCAS

Right.

He discards the bush and follows her in, a big DOG
racing to him and sniffing his hand.

MAGGIE'S MOM

(grabbing for dog)

Get away, Roger!

Cont.

LUCAS

No, that's okay, he can lick
my hand, I like it. Here, Roger...

MAGGIE'S MOM

I'll get Margret.
(calling out)
Margret?

CAMERA MOVES WITH HER TO a partial view of the
LIVING ROOM and SUN ROOM, REVEALING Maggie, rising
from a couch, heading toward.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

getting his hand washed by Roger as Maggie rounds the
corner. He sees -- INSTANTLY that something is wrong.

LUCAS

(hesitant)
Hi.

MAGGIE

(troubled)
Hi, Lucas.

LUCAS

They here?

She glances at her mother, who takes her cue.

MAGGIE'S MOM

I'll be upstairs.
(calling dog)
Here, Roger.

The dog obliges; Maggie waits until they are alone.

MAGGIE

(apologetic)
You look so nice, Lucas.

LUCAS

You, too.

MAGGIE

(re the tux)
Did you rent that?

LUCAS

What. The tux? Yeah. Not the
tie. I bought it.

Cont.

MAGGIE

I'll pay you back for it, if it was a lot.

LUCAS

(a nervous laugh)

No. That's fine.

MAGGIE

I don't think we can go.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

taken aback.

LUCAS

(not knowing
what to say)

Oh.

MAGGIE

Cappie and Alsie broke up tonight.

LUCAS

(confused)

But...

(re the car;
living room)

...Aren't they...

MAGGIE

Cappie's here. He's very upset. I mean, like really upset. She was jealous. Or doesn't like me. Or something. She said she'd break up with him if he went through with it. The date. She didn't want to go with us.

LUCAS

Oh.

MAGGIE

And you know how loyal Cappie is. When he says he'll do something...

LUCAS

Yeh.

Cont.

MAGGIE

So, I think we have to call it off.

LUCAS

Ah.

He nods -- almost "profoundly" -- to mask his devastation, but Maggie feels his pain.

MAGGIE

I just don't think he's in any shape.

LUCAS

(quick)

Right.

MAGGIE

He kind of needs someone with tonight. Do you mind, terribly...?

LUCAS

No, listen.

(a beat)

Should we get a pizza?

MAGGIE

Well. I don't think he wants to go out.

LUCAS

Oh. Well. Okay, I can get it and bring it back.

MAGGIE

(with difficulty)

I think he needs, like... just one person with him.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

as the full weight of it hits him.

LUCAS

Oh.

MAGGIE

Y'know, too many people...

LUCAS

Right.

Cont.

MAGGIE

So.

He's paralyzed.

MAGGIE

You look so great, why don't you
go to the dance?

With difficulty, he nods.

MAGGIE

Listen, maybe we'll come later.
If he's feeling better, maybe
I can get him there.

Nothing left to say -- or do. But he's just standing
there.

LUCAS

Could I see him?

MAGGIE

(a headshake)
He's been crying, Luke. Can you
believe it? That big strong guy,
'crying?'

The words "big strong guy" impact punishingly; he
turns moving to the door. But he doesn't open it.

MAGGIE

You okay?

LUCAS

Ever heard of Romeo and Juliet?

MAGGIE

Sure.

LUCAS

I'm reading it.

MAGGIE

Is it sad?

LUCAS

Haven't finished.

She smiles, uncomfortably; eager to get back to
Cappie. But he doesn't leave.

Cont.

LUCAS

Say good-bye to your mom. You
look like her.

MAGGIE

I look like my dad.

LUCAS

Yeah?

MAGGIE

People say so.

LUCAS

I don't know him.

Nothing left to say.

MAGGIE

'Bye, Lucas.

LUCAS

(barely able)

'Bye.

He manages to make it out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

47

Shadows of dancing kids gyrating against steamy windows; car traffic encircling the building; rock music that blasts right through the Recreation Center's brick walls: the signs and symptoms that a dance is in progress -- CAMERA PANNING AWAY TO REVEAL the LONE FIGURE of Lucas seated on a curb across the street, his pant legs rolled up, shoes off, feet in the water that's running down the gutter, a HALF-FILLED beer bottle held loosely in his hand.

CLOSER ANGLE

as a CAR stops nearby, DEPOSITING Rina and a friend (HEATHER), both dressed to the nines, heading toward the action when Rina SPOTS Lucas -- stopping.

RINA

Lucas...?

No response.

Cont.

RINA

Is that you?

He glances up, but that's the extent of his acknowledgement; she sends her friend on ahead and moves toward him, clickety-clacking in stiletto heels, wearing a low-cut glitter dress and vivid lipstick: she looks like a tiny Puerto Rican whore.

RINA

What're you doing?

LUCAS

(after a long pause)

Nothin' much.

RINA

(concerned)

You're drinking beer?

A headshake; he holds the bottle up to her.

LUCAS

Dragonfly Nymph. Found it right here in the gutter.

RINA

(fascinated)

Kidding...!

(takes and examines it)

Whooooaa...

CLOSE ON THE BOTTLE

A nightmarish creature floating around within.

RINA

(a laugh)

Glad its not bigger than me...!

LUCAS

It turns into something very beautiful.

RINA

Is that possible...?

LUCAS

Yeah. Can you imagine that? Waking up one morning and seeing you've turned from something ugly into something beautiful.

Cont.

RINA
(a laugh)
No, I frankly can't.
(laughter fades
to silence)
Gonna bring it to Karlson?

After musing a moment, he up-ends the bottle; it
washes down the stream -- she beginning to puzzle
over his mood.

RINA
Thought you had a date.

LUCAS
Nah.

RINA
Goin' in?

He shakes his head.

RINA
Why not?

LUCAS
Thinking.

RINA
What about?

LUCAS
Romeo and Juliet.

RINA
Really? How come?

LUCAS
How old were they? Do you know?

RINA
She was thirteen. I suppose he
was about the same. Why?

LUCAS
Two different worlds, huh?

Cont.

RINA
Romeo and Juliet? Yeah.

LUCAS
That can be a problem.

CLOSE ON RINA

studying him.

RINA
Are you all right, Lucas?

LUCAS
Why?

RINA
'Cause you're acting weird.
I'm worried about you.

LUCAS
I'm just thinking about something,
Rina. There's something I've
got to decide.

HEATHER
(o.s.; from
across street)
Rina!

RINA
A minute!

LUCAS
Go ahead.

RINA
No.

LUCAS
I've gotta go, anyway.

He gets up, taking his bike from the nearby bushes
-- starting away.

RINA
(calling after
him)
What're you deciding?

Cont.

LUCAS
You'll find out tommorow.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

48

Darkened; Cappie's car is gone -- as Lucas pulls up in front; he gets off -- goes to the door.

CLOSER ANGLE

He rings. The dog barks, silenced by a voice; lights turn on and footsteps are "felt" approaching. The door opens -- just a crack, to keep the dog in; it's Maggie's mom. She's been sleeping.

MAGGIE'S MOM
(surprised)
Lucas...?

LUCAS
(with difficulty)
I'm sorry. Is Maggie awake?

MAGGIE'S MOM
They went out.
(a glance at
her watch)
My goodness. They said they'd be
back by eleven.
(upset)
That's not like Margret.

LUCAS
Well. Don't worry. I'm sure
they're okay. Cappie's a good man.
He's a good friend of mine.

MAGGIE'S MOM
(a beat to assess
him)
Right.

LUCAS
Well.
(uncomfortable)
'Night.

He waves -- backs off -- and is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

Moonlight illuminating a GRASSY PLATEAU that overlooks the town; a place where we once saw Lucas and Maggie lying in the grass and looking up into the heavens, as they discussed "life" during their summer friendship. It is SILENT now, save for the SQUEAKING SOUND of a bicycle approaching, and the labored breathing of its rider. Lucas' FACE comes INTO FRAME, stopping. His eyes scan the darkness...and stop.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

Cappie's car -- parked in the field. Its top down; there are two figures inside. Necking.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

frozen. The distant sound of a GIGGLE reaches his ears, and he slips off his bike, easing it into a stand of bushes.

ANOTHER ANGLE

he holds in place, girding himself -- then sinks into a crouch, creeping stealthily forward.

LOW DOWN ANGLE

OUR VIEW ENCOMPASSING the parked car, two silhouettes entwined within, and the figure of Lucas, creeping, ever closer. A GIGGLE from the car; Lucas FREEZES -- then proceeds on his stomach -- like a guerrilla infiltrator approaching enemy lines.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE

as he crawls -- PAUSING with each SOUND from the car: a laugh, a word here and there -- the RUSTLE of bodies shifting.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as he reaches the rear bumper, and stops -- slowly raising his head to see.

ANGLE FROM HIS P.O.V.

OUR VIEW SLOWLY RISING, as though in an ascending elevator -- CATCHING Maggie and Cappie in a sudden wave of PASSION; the kind of kiss reserved for movies, nesting pigeons, or teen-agers who mean business.

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

weakened, lowering himself back down to the ground.

ANOTHER ANGLE

he settles into a sitting position, dazed -- then lays back, staring into the stars. A NOISE from the car prompts him to move into concealment; he edges under the car, leaving just his head visible, exposed to the moonlit night. It is a bright moon, lighting the landscape in every detail.

LONG DOWN ANGLE

on the scene -- somewhat bizarre. Two teen-agers necking in a car. A face sticking out from beneath the rear bumper.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

He's crying.

CUT TO:

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

50

The band wheezing and squeeking under the direction of Mr. Roach -- suddenly SILENCED by the SIGHT OF Ben RUNNING IN, sputtering -- his face white with disbelief.

BEN

(in shock)

Did you hear about Lucas?

TONY

What about him?

BEN

It's suicide!

RINA

(standing)

What do you mean?!

BEN

He's gone out for the football team!

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - DAY

51

The Football Team doing their JUMPING JACKS: CAMERA
PANNING their ranks as they SHOUT:

FOOTBALL PLAYERS

Eat-meat! Eat-meat! Eat-meat!
Eat-meat!

CAMERA FINDING Lucas dwarfed by his shoulder pads and
helmet, looking like a Lilliputian compared to the
hulking bruisers around him, but doing his damndest and
SHOUTING:

LUCAS

Eat-meat! Eat-meat!

ANGLE ON THE FIELD HOUSE

as the Coach, whom we recognize as the man who ordered
Lucas off the stage during the pep rally at Orientation
Day -- EXITS, looking none too pleased. His eyes
narrowed with anger, he heads across some Tarmac,
his spiked shoes clacking, like Rommel heading into
battle.

ANGLE ON THE FIELD

the Team Members at the BLOCKING DUMMIES, each in turn
SPRINGING FROM A CROUCH and hitting it with all his
might, the IMPACT moving the massive apparatus backwards.

ASSISTANT COACH

(urging each, in turn)

Hit'm!

(another)

Smash'm!

(another)

Kill'm!

It's Lucas' TURN -- and he HITS THE DUMMY -- like a
sparrow hitting a brick wall -- bouncing off, dazed.
We can almost hear "tweet-tweet."

COACH

(o.s.; tough)

Son.

Dazed, Lucas looks up to see the Coach.

COACH

You. Runt. Come over here. The
rest of you hit the tires!

Cont.

Lucas obeys.

COACH

What the hell you think you're doing?

LUCAS

Excuse me?

COACH

Who suited you up?

LUCAS

I'd like to speak to you about that.
This equipment doesn't fit.

COACH

No, that's not the problem. It's
you that don't fit. Now go turn
it in.

LUCAS

Excuse me, Sir. I can run very
fast when I concentrate on it.

COACH

I said turn it in. Get off the
field!

(blows his whistle)

Inside for chalk talk! Shower
up first! Let's go!

He heads away.

LUCAS

(his hip pads
flapping as he hustles
alongside)

You're making a mistake, I'll
be very good at this. I can
lower my center of gravity,
see? Look.

He assumes a strange posture and sort of "scoots" around
the Coach's legs.

ANGLE ON THE CHEERLEADERS

laughing as they watch through the chain link fence --
Maggie among them, HORRIFIED.

Cont.

CHEERLEADERS

(laughing)

He looks like a little robot or something...he looks like a cockroach...he's gonna get squished!

BACK TO THE COACH

incredulous.

LUCAS

(proudly)

See? And my size...

(a laugh)

Hey. I gotta run fast, 'cause if they catch me, I'm dead!

COACH

(casually grabs his shirt)

Listen, my little friend. We got our first game on Saturday against Braeside, and I don't have time to dick around with you.

LUCAS

I'm afraid you'll have to, Sir. Dick around with me. The Supreme Court, by virtue of the sexual discrimination act, says that anyone who tries out for a team sport has to be given the same chance as everyone else. Now, if you wish to cut me based on my performance, that's your right, but I'll take you to court if you try it before.

COACH

(reviled)

...What's this shit??!

LUCAS

I looked it up. My family's in law.

CLOSE ON THE COACH

dismayed -- as Lucas TURNS, trotting off to the showers.

CUT TO:

INT. FIELD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

52

CAMERA PANNING the activity as Players strip and unwrap taped ankles, some already in the showers -- CAMERA PASSING Tonto laid out on a table, his leg muscle being massaged by an assistant TRAINER.

TONTO
(desperate)
No-no! Don't put that shit
on me! It burns like shit!

TRAINER
It's supposed to burn like shit.
It's the only way to get into
that sore muscle.

Slaps it on despite Tonto's trying to fend him off.

TRAINER
...Now, that doesn't hurt...

TONTO
No, but just wait a few seconds.
(it starts)
Oh, shit! Get it off!

CAMERA CONTINUING ITS PAN -- to the Coach, ENTERING;
plenty sour.

COACH
Hurry up and shower! We gotta
talk about our first game.

PLAYER'S VOICE
You mean, our first win!

OTHER VOICES
(overlapping)
Yeah! Fuck Braeside!

ANGLE ON LUCAS

stripping down in front of a locker; joining in.

LUCAS
Yeah! Fuck Braeside!

He creates instant silence around him; glancing up to
see Cappie approaching.

Cont.

CAPPIE
Luke, could I talk to you? I
think I know why you're doing this.

LUCAS
(avoiding his eyes)
No. You can't talk to me.

When he turns to Cappie, we SEE the depth of hurt in his eyes. Cappie does, too -- and is impacted by it.

CAPPIE
She wasn't your girl friend, Luke.

LUCAS
Sorry, I don't have time to dick
around with you.

He TURNS, heading for the showers.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER - SAME

53

An inferno of hissing steam -- as Lucas ENTERS, searching for a spigot, finding one -- closing his eyes and letting the soothing water wash over him. But a VOICE, echoing low in the tile enclosure, chills him to the bone.

BRUNO
(darkly)
Hey...Luka-play-kia...

Lucas' eyes open to find Bruno, every inch the mountain gorilla, beneath the spigot directly opposite him.

BRUNO
They got a jockstrap to fit you?

Lucas tries to ignore him, closing his eyes.

BRUNO
(to the rest)
Maybe one of you guys should
stop by in sewing class
tomorrow and bring in a thimble.
Lucas needs a jockstrap!

Cont.

Big GUFFAW -- others laughing, too; Lucas taking it.

BRUNO
(cracking himself up)
Or maybe a thimble's too big!
Somebody got a contact lens!
A contact lens and a
Band-Aid...!

Bruno is gasping with laughter.

LUCAS
(had it)
You're referring to the size
of my penis?

CLOSE ON BRUNO

taken off guard by his serious tone.

BRUNO
Yeah. I am.

LUCAS
With a flacid penis, it's the
number of folds that count.

The laughter quiets.

LUCAS
And anyway, I don't get semierect
around other males, like some of
you fellows do.

CLOSE ON BRUNO

stopped.

BRUNO
What'd you say?

LUCAS
It's a study done by the
University of Illinois. You
can tell the fags in a warm
shower by who's got the longest
dong.
(pointing)
Look. Yours seems to be growing
even now. You probably have a
problem.

Cont.

BRUNO
(apprehensive)
The hell it is.

Seeing Lucas has gotten his goat, OTHERS begin to LAUGH.

LUCAS
Yes, it is.
(pointing)
Look.

OTHERS
It is! He's gettin' a hard-on!
Watch out! Nobody bend over to
pick up the soap!

BRUNO
You little shit...!

LUCAS
(perfectly serious)
Physical violence, of course,
is an expression of sexual feeling...

He's miscalculated: Bruno LUNGES FOR HIM!

LUCAS
(panicked)
Oh, shit!

But it's too late. Bruno's after him; laughing as Lucas
slips and slides, trying to escape.

LUCAS
Cut it out!

BRUNO
(to others)
Grab him!

INT. LOCKER ROOM - FAST CUTS - DAY

54

Lucas dodging, hands grabbing, Lucas slipping and falling
-- trapped; seized and carried into the LOCKER ROOM to a
chorus of LAUGHTER and SHOUTS of:

VOICES
What do we do with him...? Throw
him out...! Open the door...!

Cont.

LUCAS
Okay...very funny...

CAPPIE
(trying to see)
What's goin' on...?

BRUNO
Wait! He needs a rubdown!

ANGLE ON BRUNO

SLINGING Lucas onto a RUBDOWN TABLE and PINNING HIM as
he reaches for the ANALGESIC BALM.

TONTO
(seeing it coming)
Oh, Jesus...

CAPPIE
(trying to push
through)
Let him up!

BRUNO
Spread eagle!

LUCAS
(desperate)
Hey, come on!

And in a SUDDEN FLURRY of struggling arms and legs,
Bruno slaps a palmful of ANALGESIC BALM home.

LUCAS
(alarmed)
Don't!

CAPPIE
Let him up!

Bruno does -- LAUGHING as he PUSHES Lucas toward the door.

LUCAS
(re his groin)
What is it?

BRUNO
It'll make your dick grow!

Cont.

CAPPIE
(throws him a
towel; fast)
Wipe it off, Luke!

TONTO
It doesn't come off!

ANOTHER VOICE
Toss him out!

CAPPIE
(grabbing for Bruno)
Let him alone, goddamn you!

BRUNO
(whirls and
gives him a push)
Back the fuck off!

They LUNGE FOR EACH OTHER -- RESTRAINED BY TEAMMATES:
Bruno breaks away and GRABS Lucas -- pushing him out
the door and SLAMMING IT: bursting into LAUGHTER.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOCKER ROOM AND PLAYING FIELD - SAME MOMENT

55

The marching band high-stepping onto the field,
instruments raised in a rousing rendition of the
Deerpark High "Fight Song," as Lucas, naked save for
a towel around his waist, POUNDS on the LOCKED DOOR.

LUCAS
Okay, guys...Joke's over...
(no answer)
Guys...?

He raises his fist to knock again -- but stops,
mid-motion. Aware of something. A "sensation" below
the belt. And what's worse -- he spots Maggie running
across the field, quickly HEADING TOWARD. With a
sudden URGENCY he HURLS himself against the door.

LUCAS
(desperate)
Guys...!

Cont.

MAGGIE
(running toward)
Lucas!

He spins, looking for sanctuary -- but there's nowhere to go!

MAGGIE
Do you mind telling me what
you're doing?!

LUCAS
(a desperate smile;
beginning to hop)
These guys...are they great...?!

MAGGIE
(demanding)
Why are you doing this?

LUCAS
I just like to jump.

MAGGIE
I mean going out for the team.

His BALLS are starting to COOK: he WHIRLS and POUNDS
ON THE DOOR.

MAGGIE
It won't do you any good to avoid
me, Lucas.

LUCAS
(dancing fast)
Oh, boy...

MAGGIE
What's wrong with you?!

LUCAS
(jumping)
Gotta dance!
(violent moves)
Pretty good, huh? Travolta!!
(a leap; a spin)
Wheeeew!

Maggie's EYES shift to a window, jammed with LAUGHING
FACES, the entire team HOWLING over Luke's gyrations --
which are getting more BIZARRE by the moment.

Cont.

MAGGIE
(bewildered)
Lucas...?

But he can't take it anymore. With a MORTAL CRY OF AGONY, he GRABS HIS CROTCH and TAKES OFF -- heading helter-skelter across the field.

ANGLE ON THE BAND

tooting and high-stepping as the ball clutching, towel clad figure DASHES TOWARD THEM, running, jumping, spinning, DARTING DIRECTLY INTO THEM, CAUSING CHAOS -- screams and laughter -- as the music splinters and the formation falls apart, except for a few, unaware of what's happening, who continue to march and follow their leader's exhortation.

BANDLEADER (MR. ROACH)
Keep playing, goddamnit! Eyes front!

But the MUSIC ABORTS, the entire band howling with laughter as Lucas BREAKS THROUGH, darting like a rabbit on the run, toward the CHAIN LINK FENCE on the other side.

CLOSE ON RINA

clarinet in hand; open mouthed.

ANGLES ON BEN JAGLOM AND TONY KARETZO

likewise amazed.

ANGLE ON THE CHEERLEADERS

on the other side of the CHAIN LINK becoming aware of the commotion -- spotting Lucas as he reaches the fence, RUNNING alongside.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

catching their eyes, marshalling SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH to stop -- and walk with constraint and dignity.

LUCAS
(manic cheerfulness)
Hi! Doing a few laps here! They
tell us to hold our genitals.
(a sudden leap
into the air)
Weeeeyooooo!

Cont.

And HE'S OFF again -- HOWLING -- as he races the length of the chain link toward the WATER FOUNTAIN -- which he LEAPS UPON -- like Roy Rogers doing a FLYING MOUNT -- the towel covering his bottom half as he grapples for the handle and manages to turn the water on.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE

as he emits a series of whimpers...followed by a LOW GROAN of blessed relief -- his eyes roaming to see that the entire world is laughing at him. The band. The Cheerleaders. The Football Players, now gathered outside the field house. All in absolute CONVULSIONS.

ANGLE ON THE FOOTBALL PLAYERS, COACH INCLUDED

laughing -- Maggie among them, anguished -- Cappie beside her, his lip curled with anger.

ANGLE ON THE CHEERLEADERS

laughing -- CAMERA MOVING IN ON Alise, in the background -- her eyes on Cappie and Maggie -- devastated.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

perched atop the fountain, surveying all -- and raising a fist of bitter DEFIANCE.

LUCAS

(shouting)

I won't quit! You fuckers!
No way you can make me!

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - DAY

56

Signs and banners reading "BEAT BRAESIDE" all over the place -- CAMERA PANNING TO Lucas in the lunch line, his eyes burning with the fierce determination of a Freedom Rider about to claim his place at the front of the bus. He TURNS, tray in hand, sights set on the JOCK'S TABLE, deciding to go for it.

ANGLE ON BEN, RINA AND TONY KARETZO

as he passes right by them.

Cont.

BEN
(getting the
picture)
All right, Luke!

TONY
(cheering him on)
Go for it.

RINA
(firmly)
Luke.

Her tone demands attention; he stops and turns.

RINA
You're making an ass of yourself.

It has the bite of truth, because her anger is born of love, but, gritting his teeth, he FORGES ON to the enemy lines.

ANOTHER ANGLE

the Jocks see him coming and, with nothing more than eye contact, formulate a defense. It's lunch time musical chairs; bodies sliding, bench space opening, then "slamming shut," each time Lucas goes for it.

Moved continually down the line, he's finally left with a single "inch" of bench at the very end -- but DAUNTLESSLY TAKES IT, perching on the miniscule ledge and opening his napkin with a flourish, signaling to Ben and Tony that everything is just "A-OKAY."

ANGLE ON BEN AND TONY

apprehensive.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

about to eat his soup -- when the Jocks suddenly SLIDE OVER, BUMPING HIM OFF -- his tray, catapulted by his elbow, flying into the air.

CLOSE ON RINA

closing her eyes.

Cont.

ANGLE ON THE ACTION REVEALING

the food landing square in the middle of the BLACK LEATHER JACKET CROWD, the yogurt having made a direct hit in the hair of the Tough Kid who pushed Lucas' face in during Orientation Day, and he PUSHES BACK -- ready for battle!

ANGLES ON RINA, AGHAST, LUCAS

being grabbed, Ben running to his rescue, the BLACK JACKETS mobilizing as Cappie gets into it trying to defend Lucas, who refuses to be defended by him, the Jocks RISING IN Cappie's defense as he's pushed by one of the BLACK LEATHER CROWD, chairs scraping back, girls shouting for them to stop it, bodies beginning to push and shove as a BELL RINGS -- and two brawny FACULTY TYPES wade in, amazed to find Lucas in the middle.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

57

Lucas on the carpet (in a chair, actually; it's a high polished wood floor); TENSE as he faces the Principal, Mr. Kaiser, a reasonable and concerned man, who strolls back and forth trying to understand.

KAISER

You've dropped out of band, you've lost interest in Mr. Karlson's terrarium, you're picking fist fights in the lunchroom...

LUCAS

(quick)

That's not accurate.

KAISER

Well, the point is, these are all serious distress signals. And this crazy idea about joining the football team...?

LUCAS

(defensive)

What's so crazy about it?

KAISER

(a beat)

Are you using drugs, Luke?

Cont.

LUCAS

(a laugh
of dismay)

'Cause I want to join the football
team?

KAISER

Well, it's not a very realistic
thing to do...

LUCAS

(demanding)

Why not?

KAISER

Because it's dangerous for a boy
like you.

LUCAS

(defiant)

You have no right to stop me.

KAISER

(trying to reason)

They'll never put you in a game.

LUCAS

(firm)

I disagree.

CLOSE ON KAISER

stopped.

KAISER

Do your parents know about this?

Lucas falters.

KAISER

Going out for the football team?

LUCAS

(adamant)

Yes.

KAISER

I'd like them to come in and see
me.

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

panicking.

LUCAS

That's not...possible. I mean,
that's not...I mean, my father's
too busy.

(quick)

Besides, he's completely on my
side, see, he's a civil rights
lawyer, you've prob'bly seen him
on television! I mean, if you
think he's going to agree with you,
he's going to sue this school if
you bring him in here, and, I'm
telling you, I'd hate to see that
happen. I mean, I like you,
Mr. Kaiser, I'd hate to see you
lose your job.

CLOSE ON KAISER

assessing him.

KAISER

Just the same, Luke. I'm instructing
the coach not to let you near that
field until your parents have come in
to see me.

It's final. Lucas, STUNNED, rises to leave.

KAISER

And by the way, Luke. In case it
helps any...I too was a very
unathletic child. And the girls
weren't exactly beating down my
door, either.

It was meant in kindness; but it kills. Unable to respond,
Lucas EXITS.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

58

The FINAL BELL SOUNDS, kids bursting out the front doors
and down the stairs, Lucas pushing through, desperate
to get away, Maggie TRYING TO CATCH UP TO HIM.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Luke...!

ANOTHER ANGLE

he pours on the speed, she, books in her arms, running hard, managing to make it almost alongside.

MAGGIE

Stop for a minute!

LUCAS

Go 'way.

He grabs his bike from a bike rack, hopping on and CUTTING ACROSS A FIELD, she pausing in frustration, then RUNNING TO HER CAR parked across the street, its TIRES SQUEALING as she CHASES AFTER.

EXT. STREET NEAR SCHOOL - ANGLE ON LUCAS - DAY

59

Peddalling hard, his reddened eyes fixed straight ahead -- as Maggie's CAR APPEARS, moving smoothly alongside. They exchange a glance, both continuing to MOVE.

MAGGIE

Have you been crying?

LUCAS

Sure. Wimps do that, didn't you know? All the time.

MAGGIE

Will you please stop and talk to me?

LUCAS

What for?

MAGGIE

Because I'm worried about you.

LUCAS

That's a joke.

MAGGIE

What do you want from me, Lucas?!
What am I supposed to do?

LUCAS

Just keep doing what you're doing.
Go marry him. Go to bed with him.

Cont.

MAGGIE

That's not fair! I can't help the things that happen. I like you as a friend, is there something wrong with that?!

Lucas STOPS; SHE, TOO, abruptly. They're in the shelter of an underpass, the train trestle above them; his voice echoes as she looks back at him.

LUCAS

Why?

MAGGIE

Why what?

LUCAS

(plaintive)

As a friend. Why just as a friend?

MAGGIE

(a helpless moan)

I don't know, Lucas. There are certain people you like in a certain way, and others you just like as a friend. I don't know why. You know about science. Do you know why?

LUCAS

Yeah. I do.

Grim faced, he lets his bike fall beneath him, moving up alongside her. Silence, as he gazes into her eyes.

LUCAS

...It's the process of natural selection. The males who demonstrate physical prowess are the most attractive to the females. By breeding with the strongest males, the females ensure survival of the species.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

flushed with the sudden memory of what it's like to talk to Lucas; overwhelmed with admiration.

MAGGIE

(heartfelt)

Do you know how wonderful you are?

Cont.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

embittered.

LUCAS

But it doesn't turn you on,
does it.

She hangs her head with exasperation, then looks into his eyes.

MAGGIE

I admire and respect you, Lucas.
Can't you be my friend?

ANGLES ON BOTH

their eyes locked in sadness -- as the SOUND of a TRAIN approaches -- and PASSES OVERHEAD -- its rumble filling the void, the momentum of it blowing their hair and swirling leaves on the street around them. It leaves SILENCE -- their eyes still riveted to each other's. And Lucas moves closer. Is it a kiss he intends? It couldn't be. But it is. She moves back. The moment is utterly awful.

MAGGIE

(on a breath
of despair)

What are we gonna do about you?

LUCAS

(eyes on ground)

G'bye. Go.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

helpless to help him -- PULLING AWAY.

LONG SHOT

Lucas; just a silhouette in the shadows of the underpass. Utterly alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - THE DAY OF THE BIG GAME

60

It's IN PROGRESS: CROWDS CHEERING, HORNS BLOWING, the TOTE BOARD telling us we're deep into the 2ND HALF and the VISITING TEAM is running away.

Cont.

HOME TEAM
0

VISITORS
17

The field is MUDDY -- the sky an ominous grey -- the COACH IS PACING and SWEARING, SHOUTING AT THE TEAM; the OPPOSING TEAM is made up entirely of BLACK DUDES -- BIG and TOUGH; the CHEERLEADERS, both "ours" and "theirs," are doing their thing at once.

OUR CHEERLEADERS
Cappie-Tonto-Bruno-Mike!
Get-that-ball-away-and-hike!

THEIR CHEERLEADERS (HIP AND BLACK)
Kick-that-ball!
Run-that-pass!
Knock-these-honkies
On-their-ass!

ANGLE ON BEN

wearing a VIDEO CLUB JACKET (of which we'll see several on the field, and whose black and white coverage we'll use) TAPING THE BLACK CHEERLEADERS and HOWLING WITH LAUGHTER.

BEN
I love it! I love it!

ANGLE ON THE ACTION

OUR PLAYERS -- Cappie, Bruno, Tonto, et al -- breaking their huddle and snapping into formation -- the BALL BEING HIKED to the quarterback (Tonto), who fades back, Cappie going out for it, Bruno attempting to BLOCK for Tonto but getting faked out by an agile black dude who dances like O.J. and NAILS Tonto on the SPOT. The CROWD ROARS -- a HORN gives them the "raspberries."

COACH
(furious)
You dumb asses! Time!
(signals)
TIME!

REFEREE
(calling to him)
It's your last time out.

Cont.

COACH

I want it!
 (to the team)
 Get over here, assholes!

The BAND STRIKES UP -- we SEE all the familiar faces (except for Ben, who's made his choice for VIDEO) -- the TEAM STRAGGLING off the field to be verbally beaten up by the Coach -- even their own grandstands are hooting at them ("Come on, y'lame asses!", "get the load out of your pants!") as the SKY RUMBLES with DISTANT THUNDER.

ANGLES ON

BAND PLAYING; CHEERLEADERS CHEERING (Alise and Maggie shooting dagger-eyes as they do their routine); CROWDS JEERING, THE FOOTBALL TEAM TAKING THE COACH'S ABUSE.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CONFINES OF THE PLAYING FIELD - SAME 61

The FACE OF...Lucas. Headed straight toward us on his bike; his eyes firmly set -- his jaw gripped with GRIM DETERMINATION.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - SAME 62

OUR TEAM, back on the field, putting the ball in play -- Tonto FIRING OFF A PASS -- that gets intercepted!

COACH

(holding his head)

Oh no...no...!

Yes...yes...it's a TOUCHDOWN! The CROWD'S UP IN ARMS.

COACH

(stomping around)

Oh, no! Oh, shit!

ANGLE ON THE TOTE BOARD 63

registering:

HOME TEAM
 0

VISITORS
 24

CUT TO:

INT. FIELD HOUSE - SAME

64

Lucas behind the "cage," methodically picking out equipment, suiting up with the cold-eyes purpose of a kamikaze pilot. From outside we HEAR the CROWDS and HORNS. Lucas tries on helmets -- so outsized he looks like a spaceman.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - SAME

65

The BLACK CHEERLEADERS doing a spectacular BREAKDANCE ROUTINE; OUR CHEERLEADERS standing in dumb-faced amazement, completely outclassed; SWISH-PAN TO the FIELD, our Football Team the same. The BALL has been PUTTED, CAMERA FOLLOWING its end-over-end descent into the arms of Bruno -- whose eyes widen as he sees what's coming toward him -- FLATTENED by an OPPOSING PLAYER TWICE HIS SIZE.

CLOSE ON BEN

laughing as he videotapes.

BEN
(with glee)
It's a slaughter!

ANGLE ON RINA

clarinet in hand, bored with the game -- her eyes listlessly roving -- STUNNED by what she sees.

ANGLE FROM HER P.O.V.

Lucas EMERGING FROM THE FIELD HOUSE -- like a mouse in armor -- his helmet bobbing, oversized cleats clacking on Tarmac as he heads for the field!

ANOTHER ANGLE

he makes it past the bleachers, the guardrails, across the track to the benches where the action is hot and heavy, making a beeline to the Coach, who's ranting and raving on the SIDELINES, having a shitfit, yelling at the team.

COACH
You dumb fuckin' bozos! Where's
the plays?! Where's the brains!

He TURNS FAST, BUMPING SMACK INTO Lucas; unable to believe his eyes.

Cont.

LUCAS

I'm ready to go in. I can run fast. I can win this game.

COACH

Get outta here!

The Coach pushes past him.

LUCAS

(hustling after)

Just give me a chance! One play!
I can run between their legs,
they'll never see me!

COACH

(spins; near
tripping on him
again)

Get outta here, I said. Get off
the field!

LUCAS

(right on his
heels)

I'll make a deal! You've got
nothing to lose! They're whipping
your ass, anyway!

COACH

(fed up; grabs
him by the shirt)

Listen, you...

LUCAS

(desperate)

Put me in, and I'll never come back!
I swear it! Let me play today, and
I'll quit the team. You've got
nothing to lose! Just let me in!

The Coach PULLS HIM CLOSE: nose to nose through the face
mask.

COACH

(lethal)

Hear me good, piss-ant, 'cause this
is the last time I'm gonna tell you.

Cont.

LUCAS
Don't you call me that.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

seen beneath his face guard; GOING FOR IT.

LUCAS
You have no right to call me
piss-ant, you dumb, fucking jock.

COACH
(incredulous)
What'd you say?

On the field, WHISTLES ARE BLOWING, CROWDS ROARING, but
the Coach's eyes are only on Lucas, his face swollen with
rage.

LUCAS
(all the way)
You heard me, plywood-head. Who
we kidding here? I mean in the
cosmic view of things, who's the
piss-ant? A second-rate coach of
a third-rate team? Or me?

CLOSE ON THE COACH

near trembling with rage.

COACH
What's your name?

LUCAS
Lucas.

COACH
Last name.

LUCAS
Blye.

COACH
(through his teeth)
You're right, Blye. I got nothin'
to lose by sending you in.

LUCAS
(elated)
Yes, Sir.

Cont.

The Coach STANDS -- and SHOUTS:

COACH
Karger out! Blye in!

LUCAS
(frantic)
What position?

COACH
Prone.

A kid (Karger) RUNS OUT -- Lucas RUNS IN; he is actually on the field! The TEAM breaks their huddle, snapping into FORMATION.

ANOTHER ANGLE

66

the ball being SNAPPED -- Lucas not knowing what the hell he's doing or where he's supposed to be, cringing, like a kitten caught in traffic as TRUCK-SIZED BODIES whiz by, the breeze alone almost knocking him over. Tonto's gotten a pass off to Cappie, who gets BROUGHT DOWN in the mud. But he pops up fast, up in arms, as they all are, about Lucas being on the field.

PLAYERS
What's he doin' out here...!
Get him out...
(to Coach)
...What're you doin'?!

COACH
Play ball!

ANGLE ON RINA

aghast. SWISH-PAN TO Ben, taking his video camera from his eye to make sure what he's seeing is real.

BEN
Holy shit...!

ANGLE ON A BLACK PLAYER

likewise incredulous.

BLACK PLAYER
What d'they got a midget out here?

Cont.

ANGLE ON THE GRANDSTANDS

people pointing and laughing -- CAMERA MOVING IN ON THE PRINCIPAL: he quickly RISES, pushing his way out as, on the field, the TEAM has gone into HUDDLE.

ANGLE INSIDE THE HUDDLE

consternation all 'round.

CAPPIE

What the hell you doin', Lucas?!

LUCAS

(eager)

Pass it to me! I'll get a
touchdown!

OTHERS

Oh, man...this is fucked.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as they BREAK out of the HUDDLE, falling into formation, Lucas trying to imitate what everyone else is doing, taking a position in the wrong place, the guys yelling at him and pointing where he should go.

ANGLE ON THE COACH

smiling.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

CAMERA MOVING IN ON HER FACE: incredulous.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

spotting her and RISING TO WAVE just as the BALL IS HIKED
-- GETTING HIT so hard the HELMET FLIES OFF HIS HEAD
-- then getting TRAMPLED as the HERD runs over him.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

holding her eyes; SWISH-PAN TO Rina, too; PAN TO Ben.

BEN

(videotaping)

Oh, shit. A documentary about
death.

The PLAY has ended, Cappie running to help Lucas to his feet; he looks dazed -- his nose bloodied.

Cont.

COACH

Okay, Blye. Had enough? Come
on out!

LUCAS

No way!

COACH

Get him out!
(signaling)
Time!

REFEREE

You've used your timeouts.

COACH

Karger get in! Blye out!

Karger, the kid who came out, RUNS BACK in -- BUT Lucas refuses to leave the field, a FRACAS BUILDING, with the opposing team and their coach objecting to the time wasting, shouting "PLAY BALL!" Bruno tries to grab Lucas, but Lucas evades him, Bruno chasing him around -- the CROWDS IN THE GRANDSTAND ARE HOWLING.

REFEREE

Play ball! Forfeit this game, or
play ball!
(blowing his whistle)
Too many men on the field! Someone
get off! Get off!

Confused by the shouting, Karger STEPS OUT -- the WHISTLE BLOWS.

TONTTO

(shouting)
Let's go! Play ball!

ANGLE ON THE COACH

MORTIFIED, shouting "Wait a second...!", but it's too late. The team has SNAPPED INTO A HUDDLE, locking Lucas OUT, the CROWDS again HOWLING WITH LAUGHTER as he scuttles around the periphery, attempting to burrow in.

ANGLE ON RINA

near tears -- SWISH-PAN TO Maggie; incredulous.

Cont.

CLOSE ON BEN

gasping with laughter as he videotapes.

ANGLE ON THE TEAM

breaking out of the huddle, Lucas LOST as they run by him and snap into formation, left kind of "jumping around" in the back field near Tonto as the BALL is HIKED and all HELL BREAKS LOOSE around him.

TWO BRUISERS have broken through the defensive line, CHASING Tonto before he's had a chance to fire off the ball -- and Lucas is the only one anywhere near him.

LUCAS

(excited; running
alongside)

Throw it! Throw it!

In desperation, Tonto DOES. Lucas HAS IT! The crowd screams. But he doesn't know what to do with it. The Bruisers have TURNED, coming back at him.

TONTO

Throw it back!

He DOES. Tonto's got it. The crowd ROARS; Lucas raises his arms in triumph and, flushed with success, turns -- in an odd "crouch" -- scrambling off into the depths of the field.

ANGLES ON TONTO

still being chased; desperate for a receiver; Cappie, way the hell downfield, screaming for attention, but SMOTHERED by OPPOSING PLAYERS.

BEN

(shouting)

Lucas! Throw it to Lucas.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

alone and ignored -- completely in the clear -- heading toward the goal line.

RINA

(spotting him)

Throw it to Lucas!

THE ENTIRE BAND

Throw it to Lucas!

MAGGIE

Throw it to Lucas!

CLOSE ON TONTO

up against it, with the Bruisers CLOSING IN -- SPOTTING Lucas -- the only man in the clear.

TONTO

Oh...shit....!

No choice; he FIRES IT TO HIM -- CAMERA ASCENDING with it as it SAILS HIGH, and FAR, down the field.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

paralyzed.

ANGLE ON THE COACH

the same.

ANGLE ON THE BALL (IN SLOW MOTION)

DRIFTING DOWNWARD.

ANGLE ON LUCAS (SLOW MOTION)

"calling" for it, the way a baseball player calls for a pop fly, FLIPPING OFF HIS HELMET so he can SEE -- as the ball LANDS -- SQUARELY IN HIS ARMS!

ANGLE ON THE CROWDS IN THE GRANDSTANDS (SLOW MOTION)

LEAPING UP IN JUBILATION -- THEN SUDDENLY RECOILING IN FEAR.

ANGLE ON LUCAS (SLOW MOTION)

losing his grip, the ball BOUNCING UPWARD, out of his arms, his HANDS GRAPPLING FOR IT, RETRIEVING IT -- but only for a second.

ANGLE ON THE SIDELINES (SLOW MOTION)

teammates gyrating in fear.

ANGLE ON LUCAS (SLOW MOTION)

as it BOBBLES AGAIN, and, all around him, BODIES CONVERGE, like sharks going for flesh -- trying to snatch it away. They COLLIDE in SLOW MOTION, like HIPPOS in a water ballet; the BALL has ESCAPED --

* Cont.

spinning upwards, end over end, across outstretched hands, BOUNCING INTO A HELMET and PROPELLED BACKWARD -- INTO THE HANDS of the OPPOSING TEAM!

ANGLE ON THE CHEERLEADERS (SLOW MOTION)

writhing in agony.

ANGLE ON THE COACH

smacking hands to his head.

ANGLE ON THE BALL CARRIER

a humongous BLACK DUDE, TURNING, in SLOW MOTION, to RUN ...AS Lucas LEAPS UPON HIM, CLINGING TO HIS LEG! The BEHEMOTH CONTINUES, but BEGINS TO FALL, SLAMMED INTO FROM THE FRONT and LURCHING BACKWARDS, Lucas, without a helmet, SEEN for only a split second, attempting to guard against the 250 pound mountain that caves in on him -- followed by a punishing PILE OF BODIES that comes CRASHING DOWN after.

Silence.

CLOSE ON BEN

stopping his videotape.

BEN

(a gulp)

Holy shit.

A WHISTLE BLOWS; people begin to run from the sidelines; SWISH PAN to Maggie -- frightened, catching Alise's eye.

ALISE

(venemous)

You did that. You did that to him.

ANGLE ON RINA

moving fast, with others, from the bandstand.

ANGLE ON THE FIELD

PEOPLE RUNNING toward the "pile" of bodies, the Coach and Referees already there, roughly pulling players off, like earthquake debris, in an attempt to get to the bottom -- CAMERA MOVING IN as the Giant Kid who carried the ball is UNCOVERED, flat on his back -- Lucas seen only as the back of a head and an outstretched hand, squished like a fly beneath him.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

running up -- RECOILING.

MAGGIE

(a gasp)

Oh, God.

ANGLE FROM HER P.O.V. - THE BALL CARRIER

rolling over TO REVEAL Lucas, unconscious -- a
gash in the side of his head.

KAISER

Dear Jesus.

MAGGIE BURSTS INTO TEARS.

COACH

(shouting)

Doctor! Somebody get a doctor!

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - LATER

67

The once-festive atmosphere turned deadly somber;
it's started to drizzle -- the crowds parting as
an AMBULANCE PUSHES THROUGH.

ANGLE ON LUCAS

unconscious; on a stretcher, being lifted in.

ANGLE ON THE CROWD

gazing on. Ben is there, Tony, Rina and Bruno...but
most visibly shaken is Maggie -- held in Cappie's
arms. We HEAR the SLAM of doors, the low growl of a
siren: the AMBULANCE PULLS AWAY -- Maggie bursting
into tears, Cappie trying, futilely, to comfort.

MAGGIE

It's my fault...

CAPPIE

No. It's mine.

BRUNO

(anguished)

It's my fault.

Cont.

BEN
Did someone call his parents?

MAGGIE
Their phone's not listed.

CAPPIE
Let's go. We'll go tell them.

RINA
Can I come?

CAPPIE
You bet.

BEN
I'll go to the hospital.

BRUNO
Me, too.

They move off in different directions -- the crowd
disbursing in the rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUCAS' HOUSE - SAME

68

The RAIN continuing as CAPPIE'S CAR appears, pulling
to a stop.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAR - SAME

69

Cappie, Maggie and Rina within, gazing out into the
rain.

CAPPIE
This one?

MAGGIE
With the gates.

RINA
(puzzled)
Lucas doesn't live here.

MAGGIE
Yes he does.

Cont.

RINA
(a headshake)
He lives in a trailer park.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

bewildered.

MAGGIE
(insisting)
He lives here. I've seen him
here.

RINA
This is one of the houses he works
at. He works for a gardener.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

incredulous. She quickly gets out -- Cappie heading
after.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

70

Maggie, in the downpour, pulling open the front gates
and RUNNING up the walk, Cappie close behind her.

ANOTHER ANGLE

She reaches the doorstep and rings; exchanging a look
of utter disbelief with Cappie as he reaches her side.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR

opening -- just a crack; an ELDERLY WOMAN peers
out from within.

MAGGIE
Does Lucas Blye live here?

ELDERLY WOMAN
...Who?

MAGGIE
A boy...named Lucas...?

ELDERLY WOMAN
No. I'm sorry.

She shuts the door; Maggie completely at a loss --
as the THUNDER RUMBLES OVERHEAD and the RAIN comes
harder.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILER PARK - SAME

71

Cappie's car pulled up in front of a dilapidated trailer; the Three Kids on its doorstep -- knocking. It's darkened inside; obviously empty. They give up, turning to gaze out into the rain.

MAGGIE

(bereft, to Rina)

...Have you ever...met them?

RINA

Just the father. I don't know if there is a mother. He came to school once and embarrassed Lucas. He's kind of...'alcoholic'.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

anguished.

CAPPIE

Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

72

The circular driveway jammed with cars -- many of which are adorned with dripping crepe paper and deflated balloons, the BAND BUS is there, too, its "BEAT BRAESIDE" sign about to fall off in the rain.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - SAME

73

Filled with kids seated on every available surface, including the floor, many still in their various uniforms of band, cheerleader, or football player; an apprehensive silence in the air.

ANGLES ON KIDS' FACES

CAMERA SLOWLY MOVING to a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE", which opens, causing a stir among the waiting crowd. The school PRINCIPAL appears, doing his best to project an air of reassurance.

KAISER

...If I could have your attention...
The hospital would like us all to go home. Lucas' father is with him...
it's a head injury, and we really won't know much for several hours, or perhaps days.

KAISER (Cont.)
 (voice thickening)
 I'm sure he'll...be fine.

CLOSE ON THE KIDS

unmoving. Most not about to.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NEAR DAWN

74

Only a few cars left in the circular driveway; Cappie's among them.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - SAME

75

Rina, Maggie, Tony, Cappie, Ben, and Bruno. Rina and Ben are both asleep; Cappie is visible down a corridor at a coffee machine; Bruno is seated on a window sill, where the first light of morning can be seen behind him, his head in his hands.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

on a bench, glassy-eyed, staring into space -- distracted by the SOUND of an opening door. CAMERA FOLLOWS HER GAZE TO REVEAL a MAN exiting the "NO ADMITTANCE" doors, heading, in a state of exhaustion, toward the elevators. Nothing in his manner or dress would indicate any connection with Lucas. He is rough hewn, with long, unkept hair -- wearing dirty overalls; but there is a decided resemblance in the facial features.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

watching him -- rising.

ANGLE ON THE MAN

at the elevators, pushing the button -- as Maggie approaches. A long look.

MAGGIE
 Are you...Lucas' father?

MAN
 Yeh.

MAGGIE
 I'm his friend.

MAN

Hi.

MAGGIE

Is he...?

MAN

(with difficulty)

He hasn't woke up yet. The doctor
said he'd call me.

The elevator comes; he gets in; his face a mixture
of grief and incredulity.

MAN

(nonplussed)

...playin' football?

A nurse exits the opened elevator, pushing some
equipment -- Alise steps out behind her; the elevator
doors close -- a moment of silence as Alise and
Maggie gaze at each other.

ALISE

Forgive me for saying what I said.
It's been hard for me not to hate
you.

Her eyes are misted; Maggie extends her hand -- the
two falling into each other's arms -- both crying.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

76

It's after school, filled with kids again. There is
talk going on about miscellaneous things; a ball is
being bounced against a wall at the far end of the hall
-- CAMERA PANNING TO Alise, alone in a corner, her
eyes on Cappie, who's at the window, his back to her.

ANGLE ON MAGGIE

grim faced. Rina is beside her -- holding her hand.

RINA

(a glance to her
watch; reluctant)

I gotta go. Will you call me?
(hesitant)

If anything...?

A long look; Maggie nods. .

DISSOLVING TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - CLOSE ON MAGGIE - NIGHT

77

Seemingly unmoved since we last saw her; her expression unchanged. The room is dark now, and nearly empty. Just Cappie, stretched out, asleep, on a bench, and BRUNO. There are tears in his eyes. Unable to hold it in any longer, he bursts out crying. It awakens Cappie; he and Maggie just look at him, unable to comfort.

BRUNO

(through tears)

...the crazy thing is...I liked him.
I don't know why I did that shit...
I really like him...

His entire body shakes with agony; he is a mountain of remorse.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATE NIGHT

78

Maggie out front, alone, gazing into a bright, starlit sky.

CLOSE ON HER EYES

alive with a memory -- her gaze shifting toward the now-barren trees. There is a SOUND. DOORS OPENING
She TURNS to see Cappie and Bruno approaching.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as they reach her; she holds her breath for fear of what they might say.

CAPPIE

I'm gonna run Bruno home. I think
I should go home, too.

Silence; she nods.

CAPPIE

I think you should, too.

MAGGIE

My mom's picking me up later.

CAPPIE

Want me to come back?

MAGGIE

(a headshake)

It's okay.

Cont.

A brief exchange of nods, half gestures; Cappie and Bruno move off toward the parking lot, and away.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

gazing after them -- then slowly lifting her eyes toward the hospital -- focusing in on Lucas' window .

CUT TO:

INT. LUCAS' HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

79

Darkened and silent: Lucas visible only as a silhouette against the white sheets of the bed, a NURSE, a white uniform against the dark, asleep in a chair beside him. The door edges open and another figure appears; Maggie -- stealing quietly inward, but KICKING A STOOL in the dark, STARTLING the Nurse into wakefulness.

MAGGIE

(a gasp)

I'm sorry.

NURSE

I didn't hear you...

MAGGIE

(a whisper)

Is it okay to come in?

NURSE

(a beat; to get her bearings)

Yeah.

(a pause)

Could you watch him for a minute?

Maggie nods; a magazine falls from the Nurse's lap as she gets up.

NURSE

(a whisper)

Be right back.

She leaves, closing the door behind her -- Maggie left standing in the darkness. She girds herself, moving slowly toward the bed.

CLOSE ON HER FACE

as she approaches, and stops. Her expression changes. She's surprised -- but uncertain. Looks closer, straining to see in the dark.

CLOSE ON LUCAS

his eyes open -- issuing a weak smile.

MAGGIE
(stunned; a whisper)
Are you awake?

LUCAS
(a whisper)
Yeah.

MAGGIE
I thought you were unconscious.'

LUCAS
I don't think so.

MAGGIE
Are you okay...?

LUCAS
Yeah..

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

OVERWHELMED with EMOTION.

MAGGIE
(on a breath)
Oh, Luke...!

CLOSE ON LUCAS

offering a reassuring smile

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

eyes filling with tears.

MAGGIE
(a gentle reprimand)
How could you have done that...?!

LUCAS
...Just...a 'natural athlete', I
guess.

She half laughs, fighting her tears.

LUCAS
Did we win?

Cont.

MAGGIE

No way.

LUCAS

(after a long pause)

Boy. They were big.

She smiles -- then BURSTS OUT CRYING; taking his hand, feeling foolish that she's unable to stop.

LUCAS

Hey...I'm okay...

MAGGIE

(through tears)

Yeah...I'm sorry. I've just been so worried...

LUCAS

Just a little football injury.

MAGGIE

(sternly)

I don't want you ever playing again.

LUCAS

Okay.

Simple as that. She laughs; he, too. It falls to silence. Just the sound of Maggie sniffing and, as her tears ebb, catching her breath.

ANGLES ON BOTH

eyes locked in the dark.

MAGGIE

(lovingly)

You.

LUCAS

Magpie.

MAGGIE

(a beat)

Locust.

They laugh again; but his laughter comes with some effort -- and she cautions him to quiet. He does. Her tears have abated, but her eyes still glisten as she gazes at him.

Cont.

MAGGIE

They're all gone. The locusts. I was just outside. They aren't making any noise anymore.

LUCAS

Not for seventeen years.

She nods, then pulls herself onto the bed, sitting beside him, maternally reaching up to brush the hair from his eyes.

LUCAS

I'm sorry for doing this.

MAGGIE

I guess you had to.

LUCAS

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Survival of the species, and all...

More silence -- their eyes trained on each other's.

MAGGIE

What are you thinking?

LUCAS

Wondering where we'll be when they come back.

MAGGIE

Who?

LUCAS

The locusts.

MAGGIE

(a pause)

Gosh. I don't know.

LUCAS

You'll be thirty three.

MAGGIE

Wow.

LUCAS

I'll be thirty two and a half.

Cont.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

LUCAS

I wonder if we'll still know each other.

CLOSE ON MAGGIE

her glistening eyes trained on his.

MAGGIE

I don't know.

LUCAS

I hope so.

MAGGIE

(heartfelt)

Oh. Me, too.

ANGLE ON BOTH

beaming at each other; the atmosphere tingling with emotion.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

80

CARS parked at every inch of curb space surrounding the school, indicating something is going on within -- as, from the far distance, we HEAR the HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS SINGING:

CHORUS

(voice over; distant)

...No man is an island, No man stands alone...

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - SAME

81

Where the CHORUS, assembled on five-tiered risers, SINGS with spirit and conviction to a packed house. Within the chorus are all those we know and love, and OUR CAMERA SINGLES THEM OUT, dwelling on each face before moving on to the next. We SEE Ben Jaglom singing with the sopranos, but doing it with great dignity; Tony Karetzo hovering like a praying mantis over the basses; Maggie is next to Alise, both singing their hearts out; Cappie and Bruno are side by side with Lucas -- strong, healthy, and happy -- between them.

We SEE the CHORUS TEACHER in front of them, wavering fluttering hands with fervor; Maggie's mom in the audience, grinning with pride; Lucas' father standing in the back near the door, pleasure in his eyes as he gazes at the stage.

THE MUSIC QUIETS, CAMERA PANNING TO diminutive Rina Prado as she STEPS FORWARD on cue and, quite miraculously, takes a SOLO. Her voice is bell clear; the voice of an angel. All eyes are on her as she SINGS her verse to completion, stepping back and becoming OVERWHELMED, in voice and body, by the ENTIRE CHORUS as it REENTERS for the final refrain.

CAMERA MOVES TO Lucas and HOLDS ON him for a last moment as he joins in, SINGING with GUSTO.

And the CAMERA BEGINS ITS FINAL PULL BACK...as we HEAR:

CHORUS

(singing)

We need one another,
So I will defend...
Each man as my brother,
Each man as my friend!

FADE OUT

THE END