

Spring 61

Greg Brooker

© Greg Brooker
1319 S. Ridgeley Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
Gregbrooker@gmail.com

FADE IN TO:

1 EXT - FRONT LAWN - SUBURBIA - A SPRING DAY

1

Jamie Brown, a sweet 10-year-old in a yellow dress, leans back against the pull of the kite she is flying in old Mrs. Carlton's yard. Twenty feet above, the kite lists gaily against a robin's-egg blue sky.

You are in a place that is more a *suburbia* than your best memory of suburbia. It is 1961. The world is stained in Technicolor.

Down the street, a neighbor drags an aluminum trash can down his driveway, the silver canister coming into line with those up and down the street.

ANOTHER ANGLE reveals **Mrs. Carlton**, an old widow sitting in an upright lawn chair. Overweight, her almost incoherent babble pitiful in a way, she gently strokes Puss 'n Boots, the pudgy cat sitting in her lap.

MRS. CARLTON

(waves)

I love you, Jamie Brown. I love all you children, don't I Puss 'n Boots?

JAMIE

Okay. Thanks, Mrs. Carlton.

MRS. CARLTON

(to Puss 'n Boots)

I love Puss 'n Boots, too...yes, I do.

Jamie concentrates on her kite, a diamond shadow against the sky. We can hear its stretched paper crackle and snap in the wind.

MRS. CARLTON (cont'd)

I'll get you some lemonade...you'd like some lemonade, Jamie Brown.

Mrs. Carlton stands, the chair stuck to her hips until she pushes it off. Puss 'n Boots jumps away from her lap and ambles into the front yard.

JAMIE

Thanks, Mrs. Carlton.

Mrs. Carlton disappears into her house through the screen door.

Puss 'n Boots lazily licks his paws in the yard.

(CONTINUED)

The wind begins to gust. And gust and gust. With all her might, Jamie tries to control the kite, which begins to fishtail.

And then, with frightening speed, its tail whipping and slicing the air, the kite arcs and accelerates into a nose dive.

JAMIE (cont'd)
(gasping)
Puss 'n Boots! Puss 'n Boots!

Puss 'n Boots hears his name and raises his head just enough such that the deadly nose of the kite strikes him in the skull--dead on. Puss 'n Boots flops and twists violently in the grass. And then is still--dead.

Jamie holds the now impotent kite string in her hands, the murder weapon on its other end lying at Puss 'n Boots' side. She runs to Puss 'n Boots, puts her ear to his belly, looks up in panic (has anyone witnessed this tragedy?), looks towards Mrs. Carlton's screen door, bites her lip, takes up the lifeless cat in her arms, looks this way and that, confused...

MRS. CARLTON O.S.
(from within)
You'll like my special lemonade, Jamie Brown. I made it special for this first nice day of spring.

Panicked and not thinking clearly, Jamie hurries the dead cat to the trash can at the end of Mrs. Carlton's driveway, opens the lid and dumps him in--just as Mrs. Carlton appears at the door with a glass of lemonade.

MRS. CARLTON
Come here, Jamie. You want something mighty tasty, don't ya? So sweet it'll curl your teeth.

Trying to conceal her tears, Jamie runs across the yard to Mrs. Carlton.

A garbage truck rounds the corner and stops next door at Jamie's house. Mrs. Carlton hands Jamie the glass.

JAMIE
(eyes to the ground)
Thank you, Mrs. Carlton.

Jamie's hands shake and she spills lemonade over her fingers.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

MRS. CARLTON
Puss 'n Boots?

To Jamie's horror, the garbage truck pulls up to Mrs. Carlton's driveway now and a swell-looking **Garbage Man** dumps the garbage can into the crushing jaws of the truck.

The emptied can is neatly returned with the lid on. The truck drives off, dead Puss 'n Boots somewhere inside, no longer with any memory of sitting on Mrs. Carlton's lap this warm spring day mere minutes ago.

It's too late to change anything now. Shaking, Jamie spills lemonade on her dress, puts the glass down and runs in tears towards her house next door.

MRS. CARLTON (cont'd)
Don't forget your kite! You've got your kite in the yard!

But Jamie doesn't hear her. And Mrs. Carlton shields the sun from her eyes so she can better spot her beloved companion.

MRS. CARLTON (cont'd)
Puss 'n Boots?

She looks here and there as the garbage truck recedes down the street.

PRELAP: The sound of children in the distance, as if "below" us. Some talking, some yelling, some laughing.

DISSOLVE TO:

2 EXT - GRANDVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND SURROUNDING SUBURBIA - 2
MORNING

Below, spread before us like a faded map, the suburban geography of "modern" neighborhood 1961: a Technicolor dreamscape of rooftops and TV antennas, the veins of white cement course through the town and terminate in the driveways of new homes on the New Frontier.

NARRATOR
Springtime! And everyone everywhere is doing just fine!

ANOTHER ANGLE: Grandview Elementary is the center of activity just now, as a new day is just beginning.

Bus riders spill from the buses in front of the school and diffuse like molecules into the building.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (cont'd)
There's Grandview Elementary School
beginning a brand new day.

This "**NARRATOR**" is an unseen, ethereal presence. His is the commanding, conservative voice of middle-class America. Think of the voice of old newsreels, or the voice of the "*social engineering*" and "*Red scare*" films made in the 40s and 50s: how to duck and cover in case of an atomic attack, how to be popular among schoolmates, how to be honorable on the playground, how to groom properly, etc.

3 EXT - FRONT OF SCHOOL - MORNING

3

Children are stepping down from the double doors of the school bus.

Piper Smith, a 4th grader in a bright spring dress, bounces down from the bus. Her straight black hair swirls in the April wind.

NARRATOR
Why, there's Piper Smith. Whattia say,
Piper?!

Piper turns her gaze upwards, toward camera. She smiles, acknowledging the Narrator's presence.

PIPER
Being on time to school is a matter of
common courtesy.

NARRATOR
That's right. Atta girl, Piper!

4 EXT - GRANDVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

4

Don Jones (10), the biggest kid in the 4th grade, walks to school with **Billy Nelson (10)**, a frightened little guy, Don's friend by intimidation.

NARRATOR
Why say, there's Don Jones. Like every
American boy and girl, Don knows that an
atomic bomb could explode anytime,
anywhere, day or night. Say Don, whattia
know?!

Don and Billy both turn towards CAMERA.

DON
The only good Red is a dead Red.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR

Why sure. Help us out, Don. Whattia do
when the Reds send the H-bomb on its way?

Don looks puzzled. Billy helps him out.

BILLY

(into Don's ear)
Duck and cover.

DON

Duck and cover.

NARRATOR

Duck and cover! That's right! How about
a demonstration? It's a bomb, Don! Duck
and cover!

Don falls to the ground, his knees to his chest, and pulls
his wind-breaker up over his head to protect him from the H-
bomb's blast.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Atta boy, Don! Don knows that even a
thin jacket or newspaper can save him
from a bad burn in the event of an atomic
blast.

Don, the Narrator's favorite, gets up and smiles towards
CAMERA.

5 EXT - LONG SHOT - GRASS FIELD - MORNING

5

POV: The Narrator: **Oren Martin**, the most motley dressed kid
in the 4th grade, walks to school in tandem with **Dickie
Rogers**, the one and **only black child** at Grandview Elementary.
They are dwarfed against a wide stroke of green grass beneath
the high tension wires that run tower to tower.

We hear the long wind blow. Nothing more. We can *feel* the
Narrator's presence hovering over them--perhaps even his open
contempt for Oren and Dickie. Creepily, he only watches.

6 EXT - PLAYGROUND - DAY

6

Helen Heiser, a pretty young sprite in a light blue dress,
stands alone against the school wall waiting.

Helen's POV: as Oren and Dickie, cross the playground
blacktop.

Narrator's POV: below us Helen joins Oren and Dickie and the
three walk into the school.

7 INT - CLASSROOM - FOURTH GRADE - MORNING

7

The class begins the Pledge of Allegiance. All stand: Oren, Helen, Dickie, Don, Piper Smith and the rest of their class, right hand crossed over their chests, and face the flag hanging over the classroom door.

ALL

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the
United States of America and to the
Republic for which it stands, one Nation
under God, Indivisible, with Liberty and
Justice for all.

On **Miss Cook's** cue, their pretty young teacher, they all take their seats.

MISS COOK

Okay children, take your seats. It's
nice to see that no one is tardy or
truant today.

Already Oren is busy folding up a **note** to pass forward to Helen, who sits up straight in the desk in front of him.

Miss Cook (cont'd)

I have volunteer slips for any of your
mothers who want to chaperone this year's
field trip to the Grandview water
treatment plant. We'll need mothers who
can drive and who can stay with the class
all day. And I'll need the volunteer
slips returned no later than one week
before the field trip.

Billy raises his hand. Miss Cook turns and Oren takes the opportunity to pass his note.

Miss Cook (cont'd)

Yes, Billy?

BILLY

My mother is a clown. She'll be sure to
entertain us all.

MISS COOK

Well, okay. That's fine. Thank you,
Billy.

Helen glances down at Oren's note, smiles, and writes one of her own.

(CONTINUED)

Miss Cook (cont'd)
I thought it would be nice if we all made
kites for an art project and flew them at
the park on the field trip.

Everyone seems enthused about this idea except Jamie Brown.
She noticeably slouches in her chair at the announcement.

Miss Cook (cont'd)
What's the matter, Jamie Brown?

But Jamie's cheeks turn sallow and cold. She looks
mortified.

JAMIE
Nothing. Did you say a "kite?"

MISS COOK
That's right.

JAMIE
Oh. Okay. Sure.

Jamie casts down her eyes.

CLOSE ON: Piper's hand spread out palm down on a white piece
of construction paper. With a red crayon she slowly traces
the outline of her hand on the paper.

We pull back to reveal that the hand belongs to Piper Smith,
the delicate little girl we saw earlier stepping off the bus.
She examines her hands, then stashes the paper in her desk.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Helen passes her own note back to Oren. Oren
unfolds his note from Helen. It reads:

Oren,

Forever and always.

- Helen H.

Oren smiles as though all his days will be filled with
happiness.

Helen and several classmates jumping rope. Helen waits in
the middle of the rope.

9 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

Helen Heiser knows that jumping rope at recess builds strong bones and strong ties with the most popular girls in school.

The girls begin to twirl the rope and sing:

GIRLS

(singing)

"Take your money to the grave.
How many pennies can you save?:
One, two, three..."

The girls count for each time Helen jumps the rope.

NARRATOR

Nobody wants to be an outsider with the jump rope set.

Helen continues to jump, but looks up towards the Narrator with a wary eye.

For a split second in the corner of the frame, a kid slides down the slide wearing the **head of a jackass** (we will get to this later).

WIPE TO:

10 EXT - PLAYGROUND - DAY

10

Our class congregates at one end of the otherwise empty playground.

NARRATOR

In the warm air of Springtime, gym class moves to the fresh out-of-doors. Here, the fifty yard dash looks to be shaping up.

CLOSE-ON: the raised arm of the **Gym Teacher**.

In the background, exactly fifty yards away are four girls lined up, waiting to run.

HALF-SPEED: The girls crouch, ready to take off. A long, slow, warbled blow of the whistle. The arm begins its descent and the girls start to run.

Helen's checkered dress flounces, drifts in SLOW MOTION--her bright grace like an initiator of Spring itself.

FAST ACTION: she runs by in a whirl, the winner.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Why, it looks like Helen Heiser has an inside track on winning the fifty yard dash. That's a girl, Helen.

Helen twirls, barely winded.

Back at the starting line: Oren, his friend Dickie, Don and Billy get ready to run. The whistle blows. The four begin to race.

Dickie, wearing a tight, white sweater is a sleek running machine. Don is running a far second. Oren is third and Billy a lame fourth.

With true grace, Dickie crosses the finish line first. Don follows, a distant, *distant* second. Maybe 10 feet behind.

Oren is right behind. Third. Billy walks across, last. Dickie bends over himself, huffing, out of breath, sweating. Don, too, is out of breath.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Say, Don, congratulations! You won a tough race, champ.

Don looks up towards the Narrator a bit bewildered. Oren also looks towards camera.

DON

Huh?

NARRATOR

Why sure, congratulations are in order to Don Jones on his fine win. That's the way, Don. A future leader knows he must lead by example. Competing in and winning the 50 yard dash is one way to earn respect among classmates.

Oren, cheeks burning red from the run, sours.

OREN

But Dickie won.

Don looks at Oren. Dickie starts away as if oblivious to the situation.

NARRATOR

That's a way, champ. Don Jones, the 50 yard dash champ of the 4th grade!

Don looks at Oren, assured now of the "win." Sneers. Only Oren stands up for Dickie:

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

OREN

Dickie won. Everyone saw it.

But "everyone," his classmates, turn and walk away, choosing not to get involved. Only Helen remains, looking on admiringly at Oren.

DON

I won the race. I'm the fifty-yard-dash champ.

NARRATOR

That's the way to go, Don!

12 EXT - GRANDVIEW - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

12

Everyone safely tucked away in their little homes. Cars parked in the garage driveways. Warm lights on in living rooms, televisions and a movie for the late-night lonely. Someone barbecues hamburgers in a back yard. A smoke-stack in the distance. A church steeple.

NARRATOR

Grandview is a community that understands the practicality of stable, no-nonsense living.

A SQUAD CAR patrols the street like a shark.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

There's Grandview's men in blue on patrol. Their high profile sends a clear message to any drifter or undesirable who might have an eye on Grandview's public parks: Don't let the sun go down on you here!

13 INT - THE ROGERS' HOME - AT THE DINNER TABLE - EVENING

13

CLOSE ON: **Mr. Rogers (30)**, Dickie's father, a thin man with a sure presence.

MR. ROGERS

You ran as fast as you could, came out ahead of everyone, and still you came in second place?

Dickie nods his head.

We open up to reveal **Mrs. Rogers (30)** shaking her head. Dickie and Oren (Dickie's dinner guest) sit around a bony dinette set, eating.

(CONTINUED)

MR. ROGERS (cont'd)
And no one came in ahead of you?

DICKIE
No one.

MRS. ROGERS
Don't talk with your mouth full. You
think Oren wants to see that?

MR. ROGERS
Son, you can't run a fifty-yard dash and
come in first and second place at the
same time.

DICKIE
(shrugs his shoulders)
I did.

OREN
I saw him do it too.

Mr. Rogers shoots a look to Mrs. Rogers.

OREN (cont'd)
He won by a mile.

MR. ROGERS
Well then, if you won the race, you won
the race. Don't let anyone tell you
different. Come here.

Up from his chair, Dickie moves to his father's side. Mr.
Rogers draws him near and whispers something in his ear.
Dickie glances upwards and nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

14 EXT - GRANDVIEW - MORNING

14

Jamie Brown walks the sidewalk towards school. She's a girl
in a hurry, just brimming with excitement.

NARRATOR
Jamie Brown's no lazybones on her way to
school. Say Jamie, what's all the
excitement about?

JAMIE BROWN
I'm getting married! Don Jones and I are
announcing it today!

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

That's just fine, Jamie. It looks like
congratulations are in order to
Grandview's prettiest bride-to-be!

She continues to walk hurriedly towards school, books in one
hand, a stack of invitations in the other.

15 INT - SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING 15

The hallway is long, stark and empty except for the dark
figures of a **Truant Officer**, bespectacled Billy, and another
boy, a six-year-old, call him **Skipper**.

The Truant Officer leads the two children towards us, until
we can see them clearly in the light, until they turn from us
into a door labeled: PRINCIPAL.

16 INT - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE 16

The principal's pretty blond secretary, **Sally (20s)**, sits
behind a desk and accepts an invitation from Jamie.

SALLY

What do we have here?

JAMIE BROWN

I'm getting married. It's my
announcement.

SALLY

Wonderful. Congratulations, Jamie Brown.
I'll be sure to post it.

The Truant Officer enters behind Jamie with Billy and
Skipper. Skipper, a frightened little guy, takes a seat on a
vinyl couch.

TRUANT OFFICER

Morning, Sally.

SALLY

(throws Billy a "you naughty
boy" smile)
Got another one, huh?

TRUANT OFFICER

Billy and Skipper here thought they'd try
to skip school today. I caught them down
by the river.

SALLY

I'll tell Mr. White.

(CONTINUED)

Jamie turns to leave.

BILLY
(whispering to Jamie)
If you can't even hide at the river,
where can you hide?

Jamie shrugs her shoulders and skips off full of joy.

Principal White (50), a handsome man in a sharp suit pokes his head out of the office.

PRINCIPAL WHITE
Billy. In my office.

CLOSE ON: A man's hands tightening leather straps across Billy's back and buckling them tight.

PRINCIPAL WHITE (cont'd)
School, Billy, is an important phase in a
young man's life.

BILLY
Yes, sir.

We PULL OUT to reveal Principal White tightening the straps to the harness of the papier-mache **jackass head** now affixed over Billy's own head.

PRINCIPAL WHITE
Among other things, it teaches respect
for others. And school teaches you self-
worth...how and where to fit in with the
community.

Billy stares out from the opened jowls of the head. Behind him, on a shelf sit many more of these heads, all equipped with harnesses, all, we can assume, used to discipline truant students.

Mr. White tightens buckles the last buckle.

PRINCIPAL WHITE (cont'd)
How's that one fit?

BILLY
Fine, I guess.

PRINCIPAL WHITE
Good. You send Skipper in. He's next.

BILLY
Yes, sir.

17 INT - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

17

Billy shuffles down the long, lonely hallway. His sense of balance a bit wobbly under the burden of the jackass head.

We follow him until he is but a shadow in the windowless hallway. Finally, before the door to his classroom, he stops and leans against the wall.

NARRATOR

Say Billy, what's the matter with you?

BILLY

I don't feel so good.

NARRATOR

Why sure, that feeling you'll feel today among your classmates, that sick feeling in your stomach that today you're *different* from the others...that feeling, Billy, is called *humiliation*. It's a wonderful feeling. Once we feel it we never want to feel it again.

BILLY

Yeah, I guess that's it.

NARRATOR

We can all learn from Billy's mistake. Playing hooky just doesn't pay.

18 INT - CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

18

CLOSE ON: PIPER, as she outlines her hand in green crayon inside the previous outline of her hand. The second outline of her hand lies well *inside* the outline of the same hand from a few days ago, as if her hands were *shrinking*! She looks puzzled by this new development.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The children at their desks except for Jamie Brown who stands excitedly at Miss Cook's side. Her knees bob in a tiny, syncopated dance, a stack of invitations in her hands. Miss Cook smiles, sharing Jamie's excitement.

The class senses something special is about to happen. All perk up.

MISS COOK

Now, Jamie.

Jamie, all smiles and heart-silly, moves quickly down the first row of desks handing out the invitations, even handing one to Billy our "jackass" in the corner.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE
Billy, Susan, Helen, Oren...

MISS COOK
Class, Jamie's getting married in May.

Dickie Rogers opens his invitation.

DICKIE
"You are cordially invited to the wedding
of Miss Jamie Brown to Don Jones."

The class turns to Don who holds his head up high and smiles confidently. Jamie finishes handing out the invitations and looks to the class for a congratulatory reaction.

JAMIE
I'm going to be Mrs. Don Jones!

The class applauds graciously.

NARRATOR
The fathers of both the bride and groom
are town bankers and everyone in
Grandview knows that Don and Jamie Jones
will be a couple Grandview can bank on!

Helen passes Oren a note and Oren opens it:

Oren,

We will be married someday, too.

Love, Helen

ANOTHER ANGLE: Jamie Brown turns to Piper.

JAMIE
Piper, you're to be my maid of honor.

Piper gasps with surprise and quickly stashes her hand drawing in her desk and smiles.

PIPER
Oh, that'd be swell, Jamie.

Piper looks truly honored. The children give another round of applause.

Jamie Brown, our bride-to-be, sits down at her desk, glowing. Don, our groom to be, is one notch above indifferent. Oren passes a note to Helen. She reads it.

Helen,

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

Soon.

Oren

She smiles, and in the midst of all this excitement we:

DISSOLVE TO:

19 EXT - A STREET IN TOWN - DAY 19

Jamie skipping along Grandview's business district, happy as a lark. But when a kite display in the toy shop window catches her eye, she gasps, horrified,

JAMIE BROWN

Oh!

then buries her head in her hands and runs off crying.

NARRATOR

Say, Jamie Brown, slow down! Running away never solved any gal's problems.

But she doesn't slow down, and only recedes in the distance.

20 INT - THE BROWN'S KITCHEN - EVENING 20

The Brown family sits around a dinette set eating dinner: **Mr. and Mrs. Brown (30)** and Jamie, who sits with a sullen look on her face.

MR. BROWN

I tell you I don't know what's worse, sleeping in this humidity with the windows closed or listening to poor Mrs. Carlton weep and blubber and carry on all night long. I don't know how much longer I can put up with it.

MRS. BROWN

She's an old woman. That Puss 'n Boots was her only comfort in this world. Really, that cat is all she's got since Carl died. I tell her he'll be back. That nine days isn't so long for a cat to be gone. But she just cries.

MR. BROWN

All night. I tell ya, I can't sleep I'm gonna get a heart attack.

Jamie hangs her head, trapped in her deep, dark secret.

CUT TO:

21 INT - CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

21

All but Jamie Brown are busy constructing their home-made kites for the class field trip. Don picks up the long tail to Oren's kite and snips it in two. Helen turns to catch him.

HELEN

Don, just what are you trying to do?!

DON

(smirking)

I need a tail for my kite.

Oren spins around to discover the damage done. Sees his kite's tail in Don's hand.

DON (cont'd)

Thanks, I can use this.

Oren laughs.

OREN

That's okay. A rocket ship won't get
that piece of garbage off the ground.

True. Don's kite is truly a mess: the ham-fisted product of an idiot. And he knows it and for a moment he looks on Oren's brilliant kite with a kind of wistful jealousy.

DON

You're a piece of garbage.

Oren rolls his eyes--he and Helen share a laugh.

HELEN

Gee Don, you're a riot.

MISS COOK

Jamie, where is your kite?

JAMIE

I forgot it at home.

MISS COOK

Make sure you bring it tomorrow. In the meantime, open up your home economics book and write out a recipe plan to feed you and your husband Don for a week.

Jamie smiles. *This* she can do.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

ANOTHER ANGLE: As Piper outlines the new dimension of her hand with a red crayon, this third outline well inside the second outline.

She looks at the three outlines of her hand, each successively smaller, and then to her hands again, gasps, and again stashes the paper in her desk.

22 INT - GRANDVIEW CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

22

A harried-looking **Kate Black (30)** sits behind a messy desk, phone clenched between her neck and shoulder, cigarette in her mouth, a fan blowing papers and the calendar on the wall.

NARRATOR

Grandview is a-buzz with wedding plans and preparations.

KATE

Yes, yes, Mrs. Brown, you're locked in on the calendar. Oh, it's going to be a wonderful wedding and we're all looking forward to it.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

At several long tables, women are busy making decorations for the wedding: bunting, paper flowers, etc.

Minister Stevens (50s) approaches the table to inspect the decoration committee's progress.

COMMITTEE WOMAN

How's this, Pastor Stevens?

A young committee woman smiles and holds up a paper cut-out of brides and grooms labeled *Jamie* and *Don*.

MINISTER STEVENS

That's just fine. Just fine.

NARRATOR

It is typical for the women of this community to find joy in planning social and domestic affairs.

Several women smile towards camera, acknowledging the Narrator's presence.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

INT - SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP: Piper's tiny hand, as it lies inside the third, red crayon outline.

FLASH. ANOTHER FLASH

We pull back to find **Two Press Photographers** popping picture after picture.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Our own Piper Smith attracts media attention with the mystery of her shrinking hands.

PHOTOGRAPHER #1
Okay, honey. One more.

FLASH. He advances the film in his camera, takes another photo.

NARRATOR
All of Grandview agrees that shrinking hands...is no small "feat." Say, give us a look, Piper!

Piper holds up her hands towards camera, smiles uncomfortably. Her hands are now freakishly tiny.

A classmate, **Tina**, steals a look at Piper's hands, trying unsuccessfully not to stare. Tina smiles, like everything is okay. But Tina's good-natured smile belies her fear of her classmate's grotesque condition.

24 INT - SAME - LATER

24

The excitement of the press has given way to math period. The children sit around solving problems from their math books.

MISS COOK
Okay, children. Close up your arithmetic books. Since our field trip is tomorrow, I thought we'd take a little extra time to put the finishing touches on our kites today.

Everyone gives a cheer. And the children begin to work on their kites--except for Jamie.

(CONTINUED)

MISS COOK (cont'd)
Jamie, where is your kite today?

JAMIE
At home.

MISS COOK
You didn't bring it in yesterday. Or the day before. Why, I haven't seen it at all.

Jamie just bows her head and looks to the floor, her fishbowl eyes cast down behind her glasses.

MISS COOK (cont'd)
Everyone will be flying their kites tomorrow on the field trip. You'll bring your kite tomorrow or you'll be the only one without a kite and you wouldn't want to be the only one without a kite. Now go stand in the corner until art period is over.

Jamie continues to look down at the cold tile floor, navigating her way to the corner.

CLOSE UP: Jamie Brown's POV of the corner: painted cinder block.

MISS COOK (cont'd)
You're getting married soon, Jamie Brown. You have to learn to accept responsibilities.

25 EXT - PLAYGROUND - LATE AFTERNOON

25

School has just ended. Oren and Helen walk across the playground together.

OREN
I'm excited about flying our kites together tomorrow.

HELEN
Yours is the most beautiful kite I've ever seen.

Jamie Brown and Don walk by.

OREN
Say, Jamie, why haven't you been working on your kite?

Ashamed, Jamie Brown looks to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

DON

None of your business. Hey Helen, don't
you know that Oren's dad is a drunk?
Don't your parents know?

Oren stands up to defend his parents, though he knows he
could never take Don.

OREN

Shut your mouth!

NARRATOR

Say Oren, crude language never won the
debate. Especially when the other fella
has the straight facts.

Don gestures up to the Narrator.

DON

Yeah, that's right.

Helen takes Oren's hand in hers.

MISS COOK

Are you boys on your best behavior?

OREN

Yes, ma'am.

DON

If you call getting drunk every night
"best behavior"

A snide laugh from Don as he takes Jamie by the arm and
escorts her away.

Helen leans into Oren and whispers the following, aware that
the Narrator is listening.

HELEN

Everyone thinks that Don Jones is so
special.

Oren smiles. He takes her hand and they turn to walk home.

26 INT - OREN MARTIN'S HOME - EVENING

26

Oren is just getting home from school.

OREN

Mom?

27 INT - BEDROOM - CONT'D

27

Goody Martin (30s), Oren's mother, sits on the bed with a can of beer in her hand. She is talking on the phone, her fat fingers molded around the receiver, her bruised, elephantine arms swaying under a loose fitting muumuu as she takes a swig.

GOODY
(into phone)
Sammy's sick? Oh Buddy Buddy Buddy.
He's her kid, too...she can take care of
him tomorrow can't she?

She takes a cigarette from her cigarette purse and lights up.

GOODY (cont'd)
(into phone)
Maybe if you'd get a job, Buddy, you
wouldn't be stuck with Sammy...I'm sorry
Buddy...Buddy, I said I'm sorry...You've
got a point there...you get yourself a
job and we don't make our afternoon
rendezvous.

Oren appears at the bedroom doorway. Goody straightens up.
Whispers into the phone.

GOODY (cont'd)
(into phone)
Oren just came in. I've got to go. Take
care of you know what.

She hangs up.

OREN
Hi, mom.

GOODY
I'm starting dinner as soon as Ace gets
home.

OREN
Is he coming home late again?

GOODY
(exhaling a cloud of smoke)
Now you're only thinking of yourself
again, Oren.

Oren just stands there, an oddly distant space between him
and his mother.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

GOODY (cont'd)
I've decided to go along and chaperon
that field trip tomorrow after all.

OREN
But you had to sign the slip last week
saying you were going to be one of the
mothers.

GOODY
They can always use another mother.

Oren looks at her as if she just doesn't understand.

OREN
But you had to sign the slip.

DISSOLVE TO:

28 INT - JAMIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

28

In bed, a blanket pulled up to her chin, Jamie is balling to
herself and praying to God.

JAMIE BROWN
Please oh dear God, please don't make me
go on that field trip...I just can't...I just
can't. I won't make a kite. I won't
ever make a kite. I killed Puss 'n
Boots. I killed him and my kite was my
weapon, dear God, I promise I'll never
fly a kite again. I promise. Please
bless Puss 'n Boots... please bless him and
take him away from the garbage
dump...please dear God he doesn't deserve
to be buried under garbage. He doesn't
deserve it. He doesn't. And bless Mrs.
Carlton and make her stop crying, oh dear
God please please make Mrs. Carlton stop
feeling so sad, Oh dear God...

And the poor, tormented little lady just sobs and sobs.

29 EXT - A FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

29

Two Doctors (50s) in dark suits carrying black doctor's bags
arrive at the door and ring the doorbell.

30 INT - PIPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

30

The doorbell rings deep in the house. Piper sits in the dark
of her room, listening to the distant sounds of the visitors
being welcomed into her house.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

She jumps from her bed, hurries to door, cracks it and peeks down the hallway.

Piper's POV: The two Doctors have entered the living room and shake hands with her parents.

MR. SMITH
This is my wife, Veronica.

BOTH DOCTORS
How do you do? How do you do?

DR. WINTERS
I'm Dr. Winters. This is Dr. Cooper.

MRS. SMITH
It's a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for coming out tonight.

MR. SMITH
We appreciate it. You can imagine.

The Doctors nod their heads, smile politely, as they all move out of Piper's view. She quickly closes the door.

31

31

INT - DINING ROOM - SAME

Mr. and Mrs. Smith (30), Piper's parents, sit together on one side of the table. **Mr. Smith** is a handsome man's man, a nuts and bolts kind of guy--a large man who faces a large dilemma. **Mrs. Smith** is the picture of beauty and sexual ferocity--but equally fragile, as though she could shatter at any moment.

The doctors, **Winters and Cooper**, look more like undertakers than physicians.

DR. WINTERS
We understand how difficult this must be for you both.

Mrs. Smith takes a hard swallow of her coffee.

DR. WINTERS (cont'd)
I know that what we're about to discuss won't make it any easier.

MR. SMITH
We appreciate your concern.

MRS. SMITH
Have you figured out the cause of this shrinking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. COOPER

Not yet.

DR. WINTERS

Of course, you have to realize we
may...never know.

MRS. SMITH

Is this something going around at school?
It's hard to believe that Piper's the
only girl...

DR. WINTERS

We've seen nothing like it this year. A
few years ago, there was that business
with shrinking hands--two girls over at
Tell City and a little boy in Derby...

Mr. Smith rubs his whiskered face. Mrs. Smith is all nerves
and takes another swig of coffee.

DR. COOPER

(at a loss)
...but, not this year.

DR. WINTERS

(nods to Cooper)
Doctor?

32 Dr. Cooper produces his doctor's bag from his side and places32
it on the table.

INT - PIPER'S BEDROOM

Wedging her body between the bed and wall, Piper pushes the
bed away from the wall. She moves to her knees to put her
ear to a vent in the floor. With her tiny hands, she opens
up the vent and listens.

We can hear voices, warped but intelligible.

DR. COOPER O.S.

Sizes will change as she grows, of
course...

33 INT - THE DINING ROOM - CONT'D

33

Dr. Winters carefully takes out and presents a **stainless
steel prosthetic hand**, a simple hook really. The hook
glimmers in the bright dining room light. Mrs. Smith turns
away, horrified.

MRS. SMITH

I'll make more coffee.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

DR. WINTERS

Your larger hook on a small child has a tendency to attract attention. The right size makes all the difference.

Mr. Smith eyes the hook, trying to accept the reality of the situation.

MR. SMITH

I see.

Dr. Winters slowly lifts another style of hand hook from the case. This hook comes with a claw like feature, simulating the closing action of thumb and forefinger.

DR. WINTERS

Perhaps you'll find this style more suitable for your daughter.

Mrs. Smith crosses into the room as Dr. Winters moves the claw hook back and forth like a snapping lobster claw.

MRS. SMITH

Oh dear God!

She bursts into tears, sets down the coffee cups and saucers and hurries away down the dark hallway.

34 INT - PIPER'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

34

The shadow of Piper's despondent figure sits up against the wall, crying. The tiny shadows of her hands grabbing at the air as she cries look grotesque in proportion to the rest of her shadow.

INT. SMITH LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

Mr. Smith, heavy in thought, escorts Dr. Winters and Dr. Smith to the door.

MR. SMITH

Doctor?

DR. WINTERS

Yes?

MR. SMITH

I've always been sure that Vera and I did what we were supposed to do. What we were asked to do. But I can't help thinking maybe we did something wrong.

DR. WINTERS

You've been model citizens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. SMITH

I mean, is there something we can do?
Something extra? I'll do anything.

DR. WINTERS

I've been doctoring in this community for 30 years, Tom. It's a good life. And I've seen it all. We're born, we're married off at 10. Then there are the awkward teen years, of course. Then we're given a job and we do what's right and we have a family of our own. These things are all pre-ordained and well planned. Well planned. But when a grotesque malady like this is visited upon a good family like yours, I simply have to scratch my head.

MR. SMITH

(pleading)
Doctor?

DR. WINTERS

There's nothing you can do, Tom. You take care of your family the best you can. Good-night.

Mr. Smith sighs, Dr. Winters opens the door and he and Dr. Cooper start down the walkway.

MR. SMITH

Sure. Thank you, Doctor. Dr. Cooper.
Good night.

INT - OREN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen clock reads 9:15 p.m. Oren fixes himself a bowl of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. His dinner. We hear the front door open. **Ace** is home.

ACE O.S.

Hello, hello everybody!

he says, drunk.

DISSOLVE TO:

35 EXT - SCHOOL PARKING LOT - THE MORNING OF THE FIELD TRIP 35

Each kid in the class places his or her kite into the open back of a station wagon. Every kid that is, except for Jamie Brown. Jamie is absent.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

This year the spring field trip looks to be a high flying affair. Say Billy, how about a rundown on the day?

Billy turns to address the Narrator.

BILLY

First we drive to the Bank of America, to witness the daily goings-on at the bank. Then on to the Grandview Municipal Water Plant to see how we use water everyday. And then lunch in the park. After lunch, we all give our kites a try.

NARRATOR

Sounds fine, Billy, just fine. Certainly every child knows that a few tips on banking makes "cents."

Billy turns, his back to us again.

MISS COOK

Does anyone know where Jamie Brown is this morning? It would be a shame if she missed the field trip.

No one seems to know...but the Narrator knows:

36 EXT - A WIDE, CALM RIVER - MORNING

36

Across a meadow in the foreground we see Jamie trouncing through the high grass towards the river. She carries what seems to be a long **pole**.

NARRATOR

Why, *there's* Jamie Brown, heading for the river.

37 EXT - A DOCK JUTTING INTO THE SLOW RIVER

37

Just as if she were going to school, Jamie wears a stylish **pink and yellow dress**, saddle shoes, and white ankle-high socks.

It looks as if she's going fishing, except that the long pole-like object she holds is not a pole at all but a light plastic pipe, about six feet long and hollow.

NARRATOR

Say Jamie, playing hooky today?

Jamie looks towards us.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

JAMIE

I won't make a kite, understand? I just won't. And I can't go on the field trip without a kite.

She puts the long pipe to her mouth and blows into it with all her might. She then checks it, end to end, making sure it is clear of debris.

NARRATOR

Why sure, a kite can be something tricky all right. But playing hooky sure doesn't pay. And what about the truant officer?

JAMIE BROWN

Oh, he won't catch me. Not today.

she says, as she grabs hold of a dock post, puts one end of the long pipe into her mouth, points it upwards, and rolls off the dock into the river, dress, glasses, little saddle shoes and all.

NARRATOR

Well okay then. We'll say good luck to little Jamie Brown, just ten-years-old.

Her pink and yellow form submerges in the river, until she is gone, until one end of the pipe is but four inches above the water line, until we hear her slow, rhythmic inhale and exhale through the pipe. She'll be hiding in the river all day long.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Watch out for that current, Jamie Brown, and hang on tight!, it'll sweep ya clear into next Tuesday.

38 EXT - SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MORNING

38

At the nose of the station wagon, Miss Cook discusses plans with the volunteer field trip monitors: Goody Martin, Mrs. Rogers, two other mothers and Billy's mother, **Nickels Nelson (30)**, Billy's over-enthusiastic field-trip mother dressed in overalls as a hayseed clown.

Though, as a clown, Nickels comes off rather disadvantaged in her drab, make-shift make-up.

MISS COOK

Okay, everyone is assigned to a car. We'll first meet at the Bank of America.

(CONTINUED)

Oren's mother has parked her fat butt against a car away from the others. She is disinterested, lethargically heaving on a cigarette.

AT STATION WAGON:

Helen places her nicely executed kite onto the stack of kites. Oren waits behind her.

HELEN

Let's make sure our kites stay together.

Oren places his kite gently over hers. His kite is blue and decorated with a silver jet flying across its front.

OREN

Your kite's going to look like a beautiful green butterfly soaring through the sky.

Well that sounds about as wonderful as anything Helen can imagine--and in her eyes just now, and forever in her heart, she'll hold dear Oren's compliment.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

From the front of the station wagon we can see Billy placing his kite into the back. All kites are in. The kids begin to head towards their respective rides.

MISS COOK

Mrs. Martin, we have enough cars for the children. Oren, how about if you drive with your mother?

Goody throws down her cigarette in the parking lot and stamps it out.

GOODY

(indifferently)
We can do that.

Helen starts for Goody's car.

HELEN

I'll ride with Oren and Mrs. Martin.

But Miss Cook intercepts her.

MISS COOK

No, no, no. You must stick to the car you've been assigned Helen, you know that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS COOK (cont'd)

We must all keep order and stick to the plan if we're going to have safe and instructive field trip for everyone.

Don, in another station wagon, rolls down the window and sneers at Oren.

DON

Yeah Helen, you're in our car!

MISS COOK

Everybody in.

39 Sadly, Oren and Helen part, (who rides with whom is important39 to kids on these things) and Helen looks back, tries to throw a sympathetic glance Oren's way. But it's not enough: Oren's mother is lame and her mere presence has already fouled things up.

EXT - TOWN SQUARE - LONG SHOT - DAY

Grandview Town Square: two banks, the First Baptist Church of Grandview, a hardware and tackle store, and the Grandview Diner.

NARRATOR

It's a fine day for a field trip.
There's the Bank of America, the very heart of Grandview's commercial activity.

40 EXT - BANK OF AMERICA - DAY

40

The class stands outside the stark, sandstone and brick facade of the bank, a building commanding its own corner of town square.

Nickels, our mother/clown, holds open the door and the class files inside.

41 Oren and his mother are just parking the car and have to41 hustle to cross the street as the last of the class walks into the bank.

41

EXT - RIVER DOCK - DAY

The pipe, Jamie's lifeline, still holds above the waterline. We pause here long enough to hear her steady, rhythmic breathing.

42 INT - BANK OF AMERICA - CONT'D

42

The class has gathered to look inside the huge safe and examine its thick steel door.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

Piper raises her tiny hand to ask a question of **Mr. Jones (30s)**, bank manager and Don's father, our bank guide for the day. When he makes out Piper's extraordinarily small hand, he is deeply troubled.

MR. JONES

Yes?

PIPER

What if someone gets locked in the safe?

Mr. Jones, repelled, yet fascinated, tries to sneak a second look at Piper's hands.

MR. JONES

Uh, well, there's enough air to last several days...and of course a telephone. If that's the last question, then the tour is through... and...and...

MISS COOK

Class, let's all thank Don's father for the tour of his bank.

ALL

Thank you, Mr. Jones.

And as the class begins to move away from the safe, Mr. Jones catches another glimpse of Piper's hands and is struck in that place in the heart where we all keep our private notions of horror.

43 EXT - BANK - CONT'D

43

As the class leaves the bank:

NARRATOR

Everyone knows the more we work the more we secure the blessings of all that we cherish. And a trip to the Bank of America can be quite a learning experience. How about it Piper, what did you learn today?

Piper turns towards camera.

PIPER

A sound savings balance and a practical financial goal is the soul's life blood.

NARRATOR

Why sure, that's right! Piper Smith gets an atta girl A+!

44 EXT - A GRAVEL PARKING LOT, MUNICIPAL PARK - DAY

44

This elm shaded parking lot and open grass park is situated along the wide river that we sense moving beyond the picnic tables and charred public barbecue grills in the foreground. The class gathers itself in the parking lot.

MISS COOK

We're almost all here. We'll wait for Oren and his mother and then move along to the water treatment plant.

Nickels overhears and springs into action.

NICKELS

Okay, everybody!

The class turns. Nickels, center stage, takes a few quick strides and makes the lamest attempt at a cartwheel ever. Her legs scissor wildly and she pounds to the ground, her face grinding into the dirt.

Dizzy, Nickels stands to the confused, obligatory applause of the class. Oren and Goody pull up.

MISS COOK

Nickels be careful. You needn't entertain.

NICKELS

Of course. I just thought...for the kids.

Oren and Goody join Helen and Dickie and the rest of the group.

MISS COOK

Okay, well. Thank you, Nickels. We're all here now. Okay class, we'll walk single file along the river path and cross the bridge to the water plant. We can all fly our kites when we get back.

CLASS

Yeah!

Down river, on the other side of an iron bridge--Grandview's Municipal Water Plant. Steam rises from its brick smoke stack. The air is thick with the smell of sulfur.

45 EXT - RIVER DOCK - DAY

45

46 Where Jamie Brown's pipe should be, there is now only the dock, the sunshine, and the flowing the river.

46

(CONTINUED)

EXT - A PATH ALONG THE RIVER - DAY

The class walks single file along a dirt path towards the steel bridge and water plant in the near distance.

NARRATOR

A single file line keeps this adventure away from the classroom a safe and orderly affair.

Oren walks with Dickie and Helen. Miss Cook leads the file. Mrs. Rogers and Nickels walk alongside the class. Goody trails way behind, huffing on a cigarette.

Ahead of them, a man sits fishing on the river bank.

NARRATOR (CONT'D) (cont'd)

A field trip is often full of attractions. This unemployed fisherman, or *bum*, is surely an unexpected surprise.

MISS COOK

(approaching)

Everyone say 'hello' to the gentleman fishing.

ALL

Hello.

MISS COOK

Hello. Are they biting, today?

FISHING MAN

Just a few bluegill today.

As the class files past him, each says "Hello."

OREN

Hello.

HELEN

Hello.

FISHING MAN

How d'ya do? Glad to know ya.

DICKIE

Hello.

The class files on. Goody trails a ways back and is oblivious to the man fishing on the bank. The last of the class passes. Miss Cook turns to face the class and continues walking but backwards.

(CONTINUED)

MISS COOK

When we reach the plant, I want you all
to act like proper ladies and gentlemen
and pay attention to Mr. Stucky, the
plant supervisor.

Goody has now reached the spot where the man sits fishing.
She recognizes him. This is **Buddy**, her lying lover.

GOODY

Buddy!

BUDDY

Goody?

Suddenly, Goody jumps Buddy and begins to slap and beat his
head.

GOODY

Liar! Liar! Sammy's no sicker than me,
you God damn, liar! We had our
rendezvous!

Buddy retaliates with punches of his own, hitting Goody as if
she were a man.

BUDDY

Cut it out! Goody, cut it out!

GOODY

(her cigarette somehow still in
her mouth)
You didn't have to take care of no Sammy
today. We could have met up. I got
stuck on this field trip, damn you!

The class turns around, wide-eyed, aghast, watches Oren's mom
going at it with the fisherman. Oren starts to run to his
mother. But Helen and Miss Cook hold him back.

CLOSE UP: THE FIGHT. SCRATCHING, YELLING, ACCUSATIONS.

NARRATOR

Say!...Say!...Why stop for Christ's sake!
Stop!

Even the Narrator's plea goes unnoticed. The children are
stunned, but oddly anxious--a heightened sense of excitement
courses through the group.

Then,

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: (3)

HALF-SPEED: Nickels begins her heroic charge upon the warring two. She runs towards them, sprinting perhaps for the first time in years, determined to stop the fight.

MISS COOK

Nickaaaalllsss! Noooooooooooo!!

Behind Miss Cook, two or three children break from the nucleus of the class like errant electrons, loop in different directions then return to the mass of the class, then others break out, then return, like a dance, like entranced Haitians, a mob dynamic suddenly evolving among them.

And Nickels doesn't stop. Her arms pump wildly.

MISS COOK (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Nickaaaalllsss!!!.

But just as she gets to Goody and Buddy, she trips over the exposed root of a tree and takes a wild spill, hands first, then clown face sliding right across the dirt.

THEN, Oren breaks from Miss Cook's grasp and runs to his mother's aid. Dickie races after him.

DICKIE

Oren!

THEN, the entire class, in a crazed frenzy, charge like rioters to enter the fight.

FAST ACTION: Twenty children, neatly dressed, TEARING, PUNCHING, KICKING. A violent frenzy, so out of control that not only are they not breaking up the fight, they are contributing to it, fighting amongst themselves--their violent instincts ruling over each one of them:

Don picks up a fallen branch and tees off on Billy, cracking him in the chest and knocking him into the river.

NARRATOR

Cut it out there, Don. That's no way to pick up a vote!

One girl grabs one of Buddy's live fish and in her violent trance, whips the fish back and forth against the lip of the steel bucket until the fish is a bloody mass, blood staining her dress and hands.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Say, get a hold of yourselves! All of you!

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: (4)

The rest of the class swarms like crazed bees. Goody and Buddy in the center of it all.

A bloody fish hits Miss Cook in the neck.

Oren, meanwhile, tries to get to his mother who is under some pile of swinging arms and kicking feet. Billy, climbs out of the river and mud and makes a mad leap for the pile of violence.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Acting like those animals in the big city
is no way to behave! Stop for Christ's
sake! Stop!

But things are falling apart.

47 EXT - A ROWBOAT ON THE RIVER - DAY

47

In a rowboat sit two **Old Fishermen** smoking and rigging their lines.

FISHERMAN #1
They got one fella down there they gotta
keep in a cage.

Behind them, Jamie's pipe, still about four inches above the waterline, but now moving rapidly through the water from one end of the frame to the other.

AHHA, AHHA, AHHA, AHHA...goes the rhythm of her panicked, spasmodic gasps for air as she goes by. The current has swept her under, but still, she is hanging on!

FISHERMAN #2
Well...a fella like that...he probably
likes bein' in a cage.

The fisherman casts his line.

ANOTHER ANGLE: the pipe, and Jamie, somewhere under the river, are driven downstream, away from us, towards the recognizable steel bridge and the water plant in the near distance.

48 INT - MUNICIPAL WATER PLANT - DAY

48

The class: muddied, bloodied, yet calmed. All violence and troubles exercised, the children stand there in a group, civilized and ordered, in a semi-circle among a mass of pipes, dials and valves painted bright red.

Oren stands close to Helen and Dickie. Goody looks sour and distant, thinking of the Buddy fiasco.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

BILL STUCKY

Today we will see how water is used by
you and how it is treated once it has
been used by you.

Bill Stucky (50s), in a newly pressed white shirt and tie for
occasion. Still, the clothes can't hide his chipped teeth.
Years of beers, old stogies and pastrami—you can just smell
it him. Yesterday, secretly drunk, today, proud to be center
of attention at the plant.

49 EXT - WATER PLANT WATER CHANNELS - MOMENTS LATER

49

The class stands just outside the ugly plant in the bleak
sun. Water rushes in through channels controlled by a series
of gates.

BILL STUCKY

These channels bring in fresh water from
the river and help in the filtration of
the water coming from the sewage line.
The flood gates you see there control the
incoming water. We never close the gates
completely so we have a constant little
river running through here. No fishing
though.

He laughs lamely, his joke falling flat.

MISS COOK

(to the class)

Do you see how it all works?

BILL STUCKY

Yes...I, I do...I work here...

he says, then instantly realizes she wasn't asking him.

BILL STUCKY (cont'd)

Um, yes...the water we treat is then
pumped up to the Grandview water tower.
Grandview uses enough water everyday that
if we were to run it all backwards we
could completely flood the town. Imagine
that.

Notice that Goody is actually inside the plant, smoking a
cigarette. She looks on through a filmy safety window in the
big door behind the class.

NARRATOR

Say Oren, a field trip can be quite an
experience, especially when shared with
family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Oren turns glances upward, gives the voice a sour look. He is not too happy with the events of the day, his mother and Buddy. Helen turns towards us also. Protectively, she takes Oren's hand in hers.

50 EXT - RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

50

Jamie's long pipe SHOOTs out of the water and then floats, like a buoyant oar held deep under water and then released. Jamie will not be so buoyant. She will not resurface.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Jamie Brown learns that playing hooky doesn't pay.

51 EXT - WATER PLANT SLUDGE BEDS

51

The class and now even Goody Martin stand by the long, rectangular beds of sludge, the muddy junk filtered from the sewers. The class is a welcome burst of color against the bleakness of the ugly drying beds.

BILL STUCKY

These here are the sludge drying beds...

Bill is suddenly interrupted by an ominous **grinding** sound, the sound of gears or metal machinery grating. It stops.

STUCKY

...they dry out the sludge from the water filtered through the sedimentation tank from the sewage lines.

EMPLOYEE #1 O.S

Bill! Bill! Shut her down!

Stucky turns. A **Plant Engineer** is hanging out a door waving him near. **Another Engineer** is running from the channel gates.

RUSHING ENGINEER

Shut down the intake! Shut down the pumps!

BILL STUCKY

I'll be right with you folks. Get a good look at those sludge beds...

Stucky hurries into the plant and through the door we can see him reach for a **BIG RED LEVER** that controls the channel gates.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

The class, though, doesn't seem too concerned with the plant's mechanical problems. They just wait for Bill to come back. Billy innocently bends to touch the sludge.

NICKELS

Billy. Don't.

He retracts his hand and before you know it, Stucky has returned looking ashen.

BILL STUCKY

We're going to have to cut the tour short...ah...thanks for taking an interest your water and sewage plant...I'll have to ask you all to leave now.

On his words we dissolve to:

52 EXT - MUNICIPAL PARK - AFTERNOON

52

At a picnic table, Nickels sits among the remnants of lunch, open lunch boxes and wrinkled paper bags.

She is busy taking off her clown make-up. She has come to realize that as the day wore on, the whole clown thing was simply inappropriate. Only 30, Nickels looks like a sullen woman resigned to never have sex again.

Goody leans against a huge tree, smoking a cigarette. In the open grass, the kids are trying out their kites.

Billy yanks on his kite string tightly, and looks upwards.

NARRATOR

There's Billy trying out the wind. Say Billy, how about a report from a future rocket scientist.

Billy's kite is caught in a tree, but he keeps pulling at the string.

BILLY

Tree's got it.

Oren's kite is flying high. We can almost make out the soaring silver jet decorating the face of his kite. Dickie holds Helen's kite as she runs back to launch her kite into the sky. It ascends with grace.

ANOTHER ANGLE: DON

By the edge of the river, Don tries to launch his kite. It takes a quick, impotent nose dive.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR

A steady wind and a little patience leads
Don's kite to a successful flight.

His kite is pathetic, a complete miscarriage of the project.

DON

God dang it!

He sets up his kite rig again. He tries again. This time,
his kite nose dives right into the river. Frustrated, he
throws his spool of string into the river.

DON (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Forget this fucking shit!

Silence. Only the sound of the wind in the trees. Everyone
turns to look at Don who stands like a statue.

MISS COOK O.S.

Don Jones! Get over here! Right now!

With a sour face, Don walks towards us, Oren and Helen in the
foreground.

DON

If Oren didn't hog all the good space...

NARRATOR

Don is right. When we do our level best
to share, everyone is sure to fly high.

As Don walks by, he takes a quick tug at Oren's kite string.
But it's not enough to do any damage.

OREN

(to Don)

Oh boy! Look at her go!

He looks up at his kite. Helen smiles.

ON: the station wagon, where Miss Cook shuts Don into the
backseat. She walks out of frame as we look on at Don,
windows up.

NARRATOR

Say, Don, cursing never put a good man in
office.

Don looks up towards the voice and begins to roll down the
window as if to reply.

MISS COOK O.S.

Don, roll up that window!

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED: (2)

With a pout, he rolls up the window and defiantly faces the front of the car.

53 EXT - GRANDVIEW ELEMENTARY - PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON 53

Exhausted, the children and parents and Miss Cook pack up their belongings with a deadly silence as they put the trying day to bed.

The Narrator watches. His eerie reticence perhaps ominous.

54 INT - MR. AND MRS. SMITH BEDROOM - NIGHT 54

On the bed, in a sexy white slip (looking a little like a Elizabeth Taylor in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"), Mrs. Smith looks the picture of disappointment. The bedroom is stark, modern.

MR. SMITH

Vera, Piper's hands are getting very small.

A saucer and a cup of coffee sit on the night stand. The coffee gives off steam. Mr. Smith paces in boxer shorts and a tank-top undershirt. His body is thick.

He runs his hand through his hair as if taxed for answers.

MR. SMITH (cont'd)

Denying it...

But Mrs. Smith doesn't want to listen.

55 INT - PIPER'S BEDROOM 55

Piper is listening. She sits up in bed. The walls are thin.

MR. SMITH O.C.

...and pretending her hands aren't tinier
and tinier by the day, going along like
everything's the way it's always
been...doesn't make it so.

Piper pulls the blanket over her head, her small hands grasping the edges of the blanket.

56 BACK TO MR. AND MRS. SMITH 56

Mrs. Smith throws the pillow from her arms and sits up on her knees on the bed.

MRS. SMITH

You've got to do something.

(CONTINUED)

MR. SMITH

What can I do?

MRS. SMITH

Look at the Browns. Their Jamie is Piper's age. She's getting married in two weeks. You know damn well Piper is ready, too. I sure as hell won't let any daughter of mine walk the aisle with some kind of...steel hooks for hands. You know what they'll say! Sitting there in church. You know what they'll say!

Her lips jitter as she tries to express her worst fear.

MRS. SMITH (cont'd)

Crab! Crab! they'll say!

MR. SMITH

Vera...

MRS. SMITH

If they don't say it, they'll be thinking it. The whole dirty lot of them. Our Piper, our daughter humiliated in some sort of freakish ring exchange!

Boy, she has a point there. Mr. Smith has no retort to that.

MRS. SMITH (cont'd)

And what about this family? Where does that leave us?! Where?! And who will it be for Piper and these...hooks? Who will it be?

The phone **rings**. Mr. Smith crosses to answer it. Picks up the receiver.

MR. SMITH

Hello. Smith residence.

He listens intently, then suddenly looks mortified.

MR. SMITH (cont'd)

Oh no...oh that poor thing...yes...Uh huh...uh huh...I'll tell her. Thank you.

He hangs up and turns to his wife.

BEAT.

MR. SMITH (cont'd)

Jamie Brown is dead.

CLOSE UP: A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:

**JAMIE BROWN DROWNS
TO HAVE WED**

57 EXT - CEMETERY PARKING LOT - LONG SHOT ACROSS CEMETERY - DAY57

It is about to rain. Notice how the thin streaks of lightning scar the smooth gray complexion of the sky. Thunder.

Kids we recognize from the class and their parents, all dressed in black, emerge from cars and mill towards an open grave.

SUPERED IS: **THE NEXT TUESDAY**

58 INT - CEMETERY MAINTENANCE SHED 58

Two **Grave Diggers** in dirty work jumpers swig Cokes at the open door of the shed. One reads the newspaper.

GRAVE DIGGER #1
(reading newspaper)
Floated right into the water plant.
Never even found her dress.

POV: The Grave Diggers--scattered groups of kids and parents move towards the grave like black ghosts against the wind.

GRAVE DIGGER #2
Probably clear to Missouri by now.

59 They wheeze, trying to contain their laughter. 59

EXT - GRAVE SITE

Mrs. Brown weeps behind a black veil. Mr. Brown is gaunt and stands close to her.

Don stands next to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

A solemn Minister Stevens with nervous eyes holds an open Bible in his hands. He is no good at his job.

MINISTER STEVENS
(morose and monotone)
God's bread to the earth is man. In
death, He sews the earth with bread
caskets. Jamie Brown was God's bread.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

MINISTER STEVENS (cont'd)
And in Jamie's eternal bed made of wood,
brass, varnish, silk, hand carved by my
brother Walter, she rests, food for this
earth.

THUNDER

Heads are bowed. Only Don looks up. He is eyeing Helen. He
stares at her, a dull desire in his eyes. It begins to rain.
Black umbrellas pop open.

MINISTER STEVENS (cont'd)
Let none of us here eat the fruit of the
trees or bushes or the weeds and think
"Hallelujah, I am alive!" without
remembering where it is that we are
destined for...

LIGHTNING

The rain is pelting down so hard now that the mourners begin
to run back to their cars in the parking lot.

MINISTER STEVENS (cont'd)
We'll continue the service when the rain
lets up!

And everyone scrambles for shelter.

60 EXT - CEMETERY MAINTENANCE SHED

60

The two grave diggers stand in the doorway, out of the down
pour. A cheap transistor radio plays on a shelf behind them.

GRAVE DIGGER #2
Kate's working up at the community
center, you know. She says this one was
to be married in a two weeks, just before
school let out.

GRAVE DIGGER #1
Yeah? Imagine that. Things work out
funny sometimes.

POV: Grave Diggers--across the cemetery and through the
drizzle the mourners waiting out the rain in their cars.

GRAVE DIGGER #2
The queer thing is, Kate gets a call from
the groom's parents the day after. The
Jones' tell her to make sure that none of
the wedding plans are changed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: (2)

GRAVE DIGGER #2 (cont'd)
They still want the reception room at the
community center, the flowers,
decorations, the whole she-bang.

Grave Digger #1 just shrugs. Sounds like a mystery to him.

GRAVE DIGGER #1
A spring death can sure muddy the waters.

61 INT - THE MARTIN'S AUTOMOBILE - CEMETERY PARKING LOT 61

Ace and Goody in front. Oren in back. Goody's cigarette
smoke rolls out the open window and mixes with the rain. The
vinyl seats creak.

GOODY
I got pot pies in the freezer.

She takes a long drag on her cigarette.

GOODY (CONT'D) (cont'd)
If they don't come out in the next hour
we don't eat 'til eight.

Oren looks into the car at his right. Through the window, we
can make out Helen's blurry face in the back seat. She
turns to meet his gaze.

ACE
I got beers. You want beer?

GOODY
Rolling Rocks?

ACE
Yeah.

GOODY
Gimme a Rolling Rock, sure.

Ace opens his door, runs out into the rain and opens the
trunk of the car. He slams it shut. He returns, wet.
Bracing a bottle against the vinyl seat, the first of the
Rolling Rocks are opened.

62 INT - THE MARTIN'S CAR - PARKING LOT - LATER 62

On the front seat, between Goody and Ace, four or five
bottles of Rolling Rock beer sit empty. Even Oren holds an
empty bottle in his lap. Outside we hear voices. Oren rolls
down his window.

Between Helen's car and the car next to hers stand her
parents talking to **Don Jones' parents.**

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACE

We got sloppy joe leftovers?

GOODY

Sloppy Joes were gone two days ago, Ace.

Helen looks to Oren. She moves her head back and through her car we can see Don, in the back seat, two cars down, sneering at Oren (through Helen's car). Don is looking for a new bride.

63 EXT - GRAVE - HALF-HOUR LATER

63

Finally we get to the completion of the eulogy. In the background we can hear the minister eulogizing Jamie Brown.

MINISTER STEVENS

Today we remember Jamie Brown as a sweet girl who knew little of the world's pains...

We PAN across the faces looking into the sunken grave: all sullen and weepy.

And again, Don eyes Helen with possessive lust in his eyes.

Helen is crying. Oren lovingly puts his arm around her. She buries her face into his damp raincoat. He puts both arms around her and holds her tight.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE EDGE OF TOWN - HOUR LATER

One house, separated from the rest of Grandview, sits in a lot by itself. The house seems to have been imported from Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl. Whoever lives there, we get the idea that they have been exiled from the rest of Grandview.

INT - THE HOUSE - CONT'D

Seeking solace, Oren rests his head in the lap of his **Grandmother Hadley (71)**, who softly strokes his hair and stares out the window from "her chair."

HADLEY

Honey, some things can simply never be explained. That poor family...God bless them. They must be torn apart.

Hadley's hair is white and up in a bun, her skin as pale as a tea biscuit. But her eyes are as hopeful as those of young girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An old radio softly plays music from the 30s and 40s. We get the impression that she sits in this chair all day, staring out the window, waiting. Waiting.

OREN

But why Jamie? Jamie Brown was a fine girl and all. A real fine girl.

HADLEY

You can't control everything that goes on in this life. Terrible things are bound to happen to good people. Terrible things. Just look at your ol' grandma.

She laughs, a kind of wistful laugh, and Oren, comforted, smiles.

INT - CLASSROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON: Billy, his eyes reading from side to side (but slowly and staggered, like a beginning reader) behind his thick glasses.

BILLY

...and I have learned a valuable lesson.

Billy stops reading.

BILLY

And that's what Jamie Brown means to me.

ANOTHER ANGLE: WIDER, THE CLASSROOM

MISS COOK

Very good, Billy. Oren?

Billy sits down, Oren stands up. He too holds a paper in his hands and begins to read.

OREN

Jamie Brown's death means that no one ever knows when they're going to die or drown or clog up a sewage plant...But good things can happen too. You can't be afraid of dying or drowning in a river so much that you never do what you want to do or be what you want to be. Jamie Brown was a fine girl who drowned.

DISSOLVE TO:

65 EXT - A HILL OVERLOOKING THE RIVER - DAY

65

Oren and Helen lie on their backs looking at the sky. A jet appears and disappears in and out of the patchy clouds.

OREN

It's too bad about Jamie Brown.

HELEN

It's terrible.

OREN

Yeah.

PAUSE.

OREN (cont'd)

Did you see her dad at the funeral when her mother fell down crying?

HELEN

Poor, Jamie Brown. Poor Jamie Brown's mother.

OREN

They're going to have a tribute for her at Open House. I think I'll help clean up her desk. Make it nice for her parents.

ANGLE ON SKY: the jet is still arcing across the blue and white sky.

HELEN

Don's parents called the house last night.

OREN

Don Jones' parents? What for?

HELEN

I was sent to bed. Everyone was acting so strange. Don't you find that queer?

BEAT. Yes, it *is* queer.

OREN

We should get married soon.

HELEN

Wouldn't that be nice?

(CONTINUED)

And the white tail of the jet splits the sky in two.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HEISER HOME. NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Jones are wrapping up a special visit with Mr. and Mrs. Heiser. Mr. Jones and Mr. Heiser shake hands.

MR. JONES

We look forward to this new partnership,
Bob.

MR. HEISER

I suppose I'll be seeing you around some,
huh?

MR. JONES

Sure.

But Mr. Heiser doesn't look so enthusiastic.

MR. JONES (cont'd)

You stop by up at the bank. I'd like to
talk to you about building.

MR. HEISER

Building?

MR. JONES

Building.

MRS. JONES

Oh, I almost forgot. We had these
reprinted.

Mrs. Jones pulls out a stack of *envelopes* from her purse and hands them to Mrs. Heiser, who takes them and forces a smile.

MRS. HEISER

Of course. I suppose I'll tell Helen.
Excuse me.

Mrs. Heiser exits the room and Mr. Heiser pours himself a Scotch.

MR. HEISER

Scotch?

MR. JONES

You bet. Better make it a double.

He pours one for Mr. Jones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFF SCREEN we can hear Helen scream:

HELEN O.S.
 Noooo!!!! I can't! I won't! I won't!
 You can't make me! I'll kill
 myself!...I'll kill myself...!

And we can hear Helen scream and cry hysterically.

MRS. HEISER O.S.
 Helen, stop it! Be reasonable.

HELEN O.S.
 Get out of here! I just want to die! I
 just want to die!

And the poor girl cries and cries, her soul-torn wail a
 strange and heartbreaking over-score to the scene.

A resigned Mr. Heiser holds the drink to his lips.

MR. HEISER
 Well, it's been done. Nothing we can do
 now.

DISSOLVE TO:

66 INT - CLASSROOM - MORNING

66

We are only minutes before the beginning of class. The
 children settle into their desks.

Oren fidgets, waiting for Helen. She and Miss Cook are the
 only two absent.

The door opens. Silence. The children straighten
 themselves. Miss Cook escorts Helen into the room with a
 mothering demeanor, as if they've just had a long talk.

In her hand, Helen holds a ominous stack of white envelopes.
 She forces a smile as she begins to walk down the rows,
 handing out the envelopes. She begins in the row furthest
 from Oren.

NARRATOR
 Say, is there a wedding in the works?
 Why sure there is. And what is spring
 time without a wedding?

Oren looks lost, speechless.

MISS COOK
 Class, Helen has an announcement to make.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

Don smiles. Everyone turns to look at him.

DICKIE

(opens the invitation)

Oh no. Helen's going to marry Don Jones?

NARRATOR

Don Jones and Helen Heiser pair up as a sound investment in the future. Their fathers, a town banker and general contractor respectively, know that a promising future will be built squarely on the foundations of this new union.

ON OREN: this cannot be happening. Helen gets to Oren's desk, looks at him, her smile cracks, her eyelids flicker to hold back her tears. She's a brave girl and passes by without handing him an invitation.

Helen sits down at her desk, slowly hands an invitation back to Oren then puts her head in her hands.

Don beams with delight. Oren opens his invitation. Inside is a note.

I will never love Don Jones.

MISS COOK

Okay, children. Tomorrow is Open House. I'm looking forward to meeting all your parents tomorrow night. If you have any art projects you want to hang, you may do so now.

Everyone but Oren and Helen start from their desks.

68 EXT - FRONT OF SCHOOL - LATE AFTERNOON

68

Children spill from the front of the school. Only Helen stands in the way of the impatient crowd. She sluggishly plods along, as if drugged, her head lowered. Oren appears at a door and calls after her.

OREN

Helen! Helen!

She keeps walking and doesn't turn, her arms dangle lifelessly. Oren moves up behind her.

HELEN

I don't have a choice. You know that.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Mrs. Heiser waits in a car for Helen and **honks** her horn.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN (cont'd)
(she glances up towards the
sky)
It was decided and I cried and cried and
they just kept telling me over and over
this is the way it has to be.

Mrs. Heiser honks her horn again.

HELEN (cont'd)
I thought of running away, but I
remembered what happened to Jamie Brown.

DON O.S.
Hey, Oren!

Oren does not look up.

DON O.S. (cont'd)
Oren! Hey!

HELEN
Do you understand?

OREN
There's got to be something we can do.

MRS. HEISER
Helen! Right now!

A dirt clod explodes on the cement at Oren's feet. Helen
jumps. Oren doesn't move a muscle.

WIDE ANGLE - Don and friends run away laughing behind the
school.

HELEN
Oren, I better go.

69 EXT - GRASS FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

69

Oren slumps home from school, his back to us. Above him high
tension electric lines slope from one tower to the next. A
jet soars across the sky at ten thousand feet.

NARRATOR
Say, everyday our town bankers loan
capital to investors who supplement the
growth of Grandview.

Oren begins to run away, but the Narrator keeps up with him,
seeming to revel in Oren's defeat.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Nobody likes a gloomy Gus, Oren...why,
the bank plays an important role in our
daily lives. Don and Helen together,
that's money in the bank.

Oren waves off the Narrator to leave him alone.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Say, don't be sour.

70 EXT - FIELD - LATER

70

Oren walks home, his head hung low. Suddenly, Don and his
bully friends move into frame.

DON
Oren Martin, I want to get something
straight between you and me. You stay
away from Helen. Don't you ever even
think about looking at or talking to my
future wife. Or I'll fight you.

THUG #1
Don'll fight you right now. Are you
ready to fight?

OREN
Why don't you stay away from Helen!

DON
Because maybe I love her.

OREN
I thought you loved Jamie.

DON
I used to love Jamie but she drowned.
Now I love Helen and I'm going to marry
her. And you'll have nobody except your
own drunk self.

THUG #1
Yeah, drunk!

THUG #2
Oren's a drunk.

On that note, Oren throws two fierce punches into Don's face.
Don falls to the ground and Oren pounces on top of him.

Then, on cue, Don's friends join in--they pull Oren away from
Don, hold him up then take open punches at him. Don stands up
and throws his clenched fist into Oren's face.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

Oren drops to the ground, blood running from his cut mouth.

ANGLE ON: Black Converse All-Stars kicking Oren in the ribs.

DON (O.S.
(with a fierce kick)
Don't try it again, drunk.

THUG #1 (O.S.)
Yeah, drunk.

DON
Don't you look at her. Don't even talk
to her.

The kicking stops. The kids rush away. Oren pants and wheezes. In pain, his hand clenches clumps of grass and rips them out of the ground.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Oren, alone in the vast grass field, knotted close to the ground, the rag of himself.

NARRATOR
Oren finds that being the odd man out
just doesn't pay.

71 EXT - GRANDVIEW SUBURBIA - EVENING

71

A **Paper Boy** rides his bike down the sidewalk throwing papers door to door. We follow the flight of a newspaper to the porch where it lands.

The headlines read:

TOM SMITH DEMOTED TO SANITATION CLERK

Daughter's Hands Continue To Shrink

Below is a picture of Piper with her small hands and her father standing besides her.

CLOSE UP: a **doll** in Victorian garb sitting on a shelf. One hand wears a delicate lace glove. The other hand is bare. Then, entering frame are two tiny hands, one bare, one wearing the other tiny lace glove. Of course these are Piper's hands. Her tiny, tiny hands steal the second glove from the doll.

72 INT - OREN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

72

Oren sits at the coffee table talking to Helen on the phone, his face beaten and sad.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

HELEN
(filtered through phone)
Nothing can be done now. You know that.

INTERCUT:

OREN
Did you tell them how you feel?

HELEN
It doesn't matter anymore. Tonight the families are getting together for my wedding shower.

OREN
You can't, Helen. You just can't. There's got to be a way.

HELEN
Oren...I don't know what to say.

ON HELEN: despondent, having lost her only love. She holds the phone close to her ear.

HELEN (cont'd)
Oren...

OREN
We have to do something. We just have to.

PAUSE. There is nothing that can be done--this is the truth in Helen's sad epiphany and we can see it in her eyes.

HELEN
...I have wasted my life.

she says, then takes the phone from her ear and slowly hangs up.

BACK TO Oren: Stone-faced.

OREN
Helen? Helen?

But she is gone.

73

CUT TO:73

EXT - DON JONES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Through the large living room windows a rather semi-formal cocktail party/wedding shower is taking place: the men smartly dressed in suits, the women young and old in party dresses. Outside, on the lawn, Oren is watching them.

ON: Oren's finger as it moves to ring the doorbell.

INT. - JONES' HOME - SAME

The doorbell **rings**. Only Mrs. Jones seems to notice and excuses herself from the polite society of Mrs. Heiser and a few other ladies sipping colorful martinis.

EXT. - THE DOOR - CONT'D

Oren, in his little crumpled suit, watches the door open to Mrs. Jones' immediately souring face.

MRS. JONES

Now young man, I order you to go home.
Right this instant. This is no place for
you tonight.

Oren can just make out Helen inside, sitting alone on a chair in a blue party dress she makes look so sad. He bursts through the blocking arms of Mrs. Jones and into the living room. Everything stops. Men in suits, women in modest party dresses. Oren stands in the middle of them all. He is outnumbered and clearly doesn't belong.

OREN

I...I...

Nothing but blank, incredulous stares from all sides.

OREN (cont'd)

I want to marry Helen Heiser. I'm the
one.

His plea brings nothing but uncomfortable stares from all corners. It's all kind of heroic and pathetic at the same time. Getting no response, he pulls from his pocket his trump card: a note.

OREN (cont'd)

And I have a note. You see? It says right
here:

(reads)

"Helen, I love you. Do you love me?"

(reads the response)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OREN (cont'd)
*"Oren, I will love you forever." "We
 will be married soon."* Signed Helen
 Heiser. You see, it's there. On paper.

Well, you'd think that would just about do it, written proof and what-not. Oren turns his gaze on Helen sitting in the chair, who, of course, is sadly looking down at her shoes, which don't even reach the floor.

He stands there, his little plea complete with documentation drawing blank stares--until, suddenly, Don begins to **LAUGH**.

Then Don's father breaks into laughter. To Oren's horror, they all start laughing at him. Non-stop. But he stands in the middle of all of it. Bravely.

It's all so horrible. Helen cannot look up from her shoes.

A little guy can only take this kind of humiliating heartbreak and defeat for so long. Finally, Oren dashes out of the living room, OUT the front door--

And across the front lawn where we can see the laughter at his expense continuing through the large windows.

EXT - ELECTRICAL POWER GRID TOWER - NIGHT

Slumped at the metal tower's base, with the great rows of power lines humming above him, Oren buries his head in his knees, broken and very much alone.

NARRATOR
 Oren learns that a boy of uncertain origin, or *bastard*, has no place in the workings of a decent community.

CUT TO:

INT. OREN'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Oren sits in a chair facing Goody and Ace. Both are droopy-eyed and nursing beers and it's clear that Oren has called them to this "meeting."

OREN
 If you both dress up, sharper than ever, and show everyone at the open house that we're a good family and good-lookin' and well-behaved and part of a decent community and we know our manners and you can talk to Helen's parents and talk smart and everyone will see, they'll see and they'll do something and we can change everybody's minds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACE

Shoo, little buddy. You can count on us.
Serious.

GOODY

That's right. We'll show this town what-
for. I got just the right shoes for it
too I got up at Simpsons. We'll do that
for our little peanut.

OREN

And you've got to be on time to the
school. Punctual.

ACE

I'll set my watch.

GOODY

Hell, we'll be there early looking like a
million bucks. You can bet on it, honey.

Oren gets up from the chair and runs into his mother's arms
and holds on tight.

DISSOLVE TO:

74 EXT - SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - OPEN HOUSE NIGHT - DUSK 74

The classrooms are lit up like aquariums, parents and
children silently milling around inside.

NARRATOR

75 Open House gives parents the opportunity 75
to visit the classroom with their
children. All day students have prepared
their desks and arranged samples of their
academic endeavors.

INT - CLASSROOM - CONT'D

Oren sits on a table with Dickie. Oren waits patiently but
looks worried. He turns to Dickie.

OREN

They'll be here soon.

Looking around the room: Dickie's parents talk to Miss Cook.
Various art projects displayed on the wall.

Jamie Brown's desk is roped off with red velvet chains, an
homage to the deceased classmate. Flowers, ribbons and other
gifts adorn the desk, and add to this **a pie**, set down on the
desk by Billy's mother, Nickels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICKELS

Jamie Brown. Bless your heart.

Mrs. Rogers sets down a carrot cake in memory of Jamie.

ON: Mrs. Smith, as she opens Piper's desk. She is pleased. But her face suddenly sours as she pulls out the two doll-sized lace gloves.

MRS. SMITH

Oh, my sweet Piper.

When she sees Mr. and Mrs. Jones approaching she quickly stuffs the gloves into her purse and gathers herself.

MRS. SMITH (cont'd)

Oh, hello.

MR. JONES

Hello, Veronica. Nice to see you.

Mr. Jones gives his wife a look, smiles politely, then excuses himself.

MR. JONES (cont'd)

Excuse me, will you?

MRS. JONES

Veronica, we were talking and with all that's going on...with Piper...we don't want to burden you with all this wedding business.

MRS. SMITH

Oh, no. It's no burden at all. Oh, you should hear Piper. She's so excited to be the maid-of-honor. It reminds me of when I was her age and Tom and I learned we were to marry.

MRS. JONES

We just thought it would be best if she were relieved of her maid-of-honor duties. That way she can better concentrate on her affliction.

Mrs. Smith looks as though she's been struck by an arrow.

MRS. SMITH

Her *affliction*? Oh, no no. We expect a full recovery very soon. Surely her hands will grow back. The doctors said...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MRS. JONES

We spoke to the doctors. In the interest of Helen and Don, and for Piper's interests as well, we think it best she be excused from the wedding party. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Jones forces a smile and moves on, while Mrs. Smith calls up every ounce of strength in her being to keep her very soul from shattering.

But, there aren't enough ounces of that strength in her. She turns, spots Miss Cook near the door greeting newly arrived parents and charges towards her.

MRS. SMITH

You! You're in a position, aren't you?

Everyone stops to stare. Even Piper knows that she is at the center of what's about to happen.

MISS COOK

Excuse me?

MR. SMITH

Vera, let's go home.

MRS. SMITH

(to Miss Cook)

You see what happens. You hear things. You see what goes on and you let it happen. You let it happen right before your very eyes!

MR. SMITH

Vera!

MISS COOK

Mrs. Smith, I honestly don't know what you're talking about.

But she does.

MRS. SMITH

Look at our child! Look at her and tell me you don't know what's happening. What's happening to my family!

(to Mr. Smith)

Are you just going to stand there?

Mr. Smith grabs Vera by the arm to strong arm her into the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MR. SMITH

Yes, Vera. I am just going to stand here.

INT. HALLWAY. CONT'D

Mr. Smith has his wife practically pinned against the wall, his hand gripped tightly around her arm.

MR. SMITH

And I am not going to make a scene at this open house and you are not going to make a scene in front of your daughter and before the eyes of this town. Do you understand that?

Mrs. Smith nods, wincing under the pain of his arm-shaking grip.

MR. SMITH(cont'd)

You show weakness, Vera...you show weakness...and we don't recover. I accept this malady. I accept my demotion. I accept things as they are. I accept them and I will be dutiful to this family and this community. You will not make it worse for us, understand? Do you understand?!

Vera nods, willingly and with relief succumbing to her husband's strength.

MR. SMITH (cont'd)

Good. Now gather up Piper and let's go home.

INT. CLASSROOM - 15 MINUTES LATER

The drama over, the open house has returned to the sociable evening it was meant to be. Mr. & Mrs. Rogers stand over Dickie's desk.

MR. ROGERS

(to Dickie)

Okay son, let's see that desk. It better be spic 'n span.

DICKIE

Yes, sir.

MRS. ROGERS

Oren, are your parents coming up to the school tonight?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OREN
Oh, yes. They'll be here.

MRS. ROGERS
Sure they will. Do you have anything up
on the wall?

OREN
That plane picture is mine and the rabbit
with fangs and the Big Indian Chief.

Mrs. Rogers crosses to the wall.

CLOSE ON: a pretty good water color of an open field, kids
playing baseball and a tiny plane, far in the sky, seemingly
not the subject of the painting.

--a charcoal pencil sketch of a zany rabbit with fangs.
--and a construction paper cut-out of an Indian with a black
cotton beard and flat paper eyes. Under the Indian it reads:

"BIG INDIAN CHIEF"

MRS. ROGERS
Very nice, Oren. I especially like Big
Indian Chief.

OREN
Sure, thanks. I'd say he's my best.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - ONE HOUR LATER

Oren sits upon the table looking forlorn. Helen sits with
him. They have been waiting. Mr. and Mrs. Heiser, Helen's
parents, talk to a tired Miss Cook. Open House is winding
down.

HELEN
Maybe they got nervous.

OREN
No. They promised they'd be here. And
your parents just *have* to meet them.

MR. HEISER
Ready, Helen?

It doesn't look good at all as Mr. Heiser, a straight, clean
cut business type in a fine suit crosses and extends his arm
out to Oren.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HEISER (cont'd)
Nice meeting you, young man.

He shakes Oren's hand. Oren's arm jiggles lifelessly.
Everything is falling apart.

MISS COOK
Oren, I didn't see your folks come in.
Did I miss them earlier?

The general downward turn of disbelief on Oren's face says it all.

OREN
They said they'd be here.

Miss Cook
Oren, will you need a ride home?

OREN
They'll be here any minute. Honestly.

Well, Oren's situation looks rather hopeless it seems.

MISS COOK
The open house is over. It's gotten
pretty late.

MRS. HEISER
Yes, it has. Are we ready?

These five are the last Open House-goers left. And that's
it. It's over.

CUT TO:

76 EXT - FIELD - NIGHT

76

Oren, a dwarfed, beaten young man, walks home alone, his back
to us. The moon is out. The tiny lights of a jet glide
across the ceiling of the sky.

NARRATOR
Oren knows that an Open House isn't
complete without a visit from parents.
Say Oren, don't be sour. You can always
look forward to next year.

Oren keeps walking but turns to look up over his shoulder,
towards camera.

OREN
Why didn't they come?

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

He turns back and continues to walk. (Camera stops, Oren walks away, getting smaller against the backdrop of sky and the lights of suburbia across the field).

NARRATOR

Sometimes adults have other priorities
and children simply have to understand.
(as if humored)
Although, in this case, I cannot image
what those priorities might be.

INT - OREN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

No one home. On the refrigerator, a note:

Oren,

see you at open house.

He rips the note off the refrigerator and crushes it in his hand.

79 INT - SCHOOL HALLWAY - 1:00 A.M.

79

Though it is almost pitch black, we can make out two shapes staggering towards us, their feet shuffling drunkenly on the floor. Goody and Ace. They are twisted drunk.

ACE

(slurred, loud)

We're late for open house. I think we're late!

GOODY

Sshhhhhhhh! Quiet. Shhhhhh.

They stumble past.

ACE

Which little classroom is Oren's?

80 INT - OREN'S CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

80

Quiet. Empty. Peaceful. The desks are neatly arranged in the dark as they were earlier in the evening. The art projects hang on the wall. Jamie Brown's *homage* sits in the darkness, undisturbed.

CLICK. The door opens.

ACE

This is it. Oren? Oren you here?

(CONTINUED)

GOODY

I don't see anyone. You see the teacher?

They walk into the room and look around.

ACE

The teacher would be here if I saw the teacher.

GOODY

Here's Oren's desk, I think. I think this is it.

ACE

Look at these little desks.

She lifts up the desk top and looks inside. Ace has moved towards the wall where the art projects hang.

GOODY

Looks pretty clean.

ACE

What? What are you saying?

GOODY

Oren's desk is clean.

ACE

They clean 'em all day anyways look at this crazy kook.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Ace closely inspects "Big Indian Chief" hanging on the wall. And I have to say, Big Indian Chief is pretty well made with all that colored construction paper and that black cotton beard.

ACE (cont'd)

Look at that fella..."Big Indian Chief," he's called...he's got one crazy beard on him...You think Oren drew that?

To a drunk, I suppose a paper cut-out of an Indian Chief is a drawing. Goody does not respond. Ace contemplates the Big Indian Chief, doing the best he can. It is Open House after all.

THEN -

GOODY O.S.

Ace...there's pie.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (2)

Ace turns, hungrily.

CUT TO:

81 INT - OREN'S ROOM - VERY EARLY MORNING 81

Oren awakens. In his pajamas, he gets out of bed and exits his room. Camera follows.

Across the hall he checks his parents' bedroom: the door is open, the bed wildly unmade, an empty bottle of wine stands on the night stand. A wine glass lies on the bed, another is toppled on the night stand.

Moving down the hall, he checks every room carefully.

OREN

Mom?

82 Laundry room, bathroom, family room, living room, kitchen. 82
No one.

INT - SCHOOL HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING

83 Down the hallway, a **Custodian** opens a classroom door. Light 83
from the room flushes into the hallway. He crosses to the
other side of the hallway and opens another door. More
light fills into the hallway.

INT - OREN'S HOME - MORNING

Oren opens the door to the garage.

OREN (cont'd)

Mom? You guys here?

84 EXT - FRONT DOOR - CONT'D 84

The door opens and Oren steps outside. The sun is shining lightly. On the driveway, Oren looks up and down the quiet street. No one stirring.

NARRATOR

Say, there's Oren Martin greeting the new day.

Oren does not respond. He turns back towards the front door.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Good morning to you, Oren.

Oren goes into the house and shuts the front door.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Atta boy.

85 EXT - A NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - MORNING 85

Helen is walking to school.

NARRATOR
And there's Helen Heiser, Grandview's
prettiest bride-to-be. Say Helen, it's
too fine a morning and your future's too
bright for such a disagreeable face.

She rushes away, ignoring him.

CUT TO:

86 INT - CLASSROOM - MORNING 86

CLOSE UP - "Big Indian Chief" in morning light hanging on
the wall, his flat black eyes staring straight ahead into the
empty classroom. Silence.

The doorknob turns. A blurry figure in the frosted glass of
the door. The door opens and there stands the school
Custodian (50s), a balding, fat white man in his mid-fifties.
He wears blue overalls and a white T-shirt.

POV - Custodian: The classroom. Desks in a circle. Goody
and Ace sprawled in the center, passed out.

And pie everywhere: blueberry pie filling smudged on their
pudgy faces, fingers and hands, chunks on the floor besides
them, pie on their clothes--dead Jamie Brown's pie.

CUSTODIAN
(appalled)

87 Aw, for nuts' sake. 87

The Custodian gets on his knees and tries to waken Ace.
Goody is already up, hung over, dazed, sitting up against a
desk.

CUSTODIAN (cont'd)
Come on, fella. Come on. Let's go.

Ace comes to, smacks his lips, the aftertaste of pie is upon
the morning.

89 EXT - SCHOOL - MORNING 89

90 The first school bus of the day pulls up and kids begin to 90
unload. The bus driver steps off the bus for a smoke.

INT - HALLWAY - MORNING

91 The Custodian escorts Ace and Goody down the hall, which is, 91
by now, bustling with school children. The children stare
aghast and snicker at the sight of Oren's hung-over parents
smeared with pie.

EXT - SCHOOL - MORNING

Helen leans against the wall, waiting for Oren and Dickie who
are crossing the blacktop.

POV - Oren and Dickie, as Oren's parents emerge from the
school like two drunks staggering home after a night in the
alley.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Helen sees them now, gasps. Needless to say,
Oren is ashamed and embarrassed to the soul. He dashes away.
Dickie runs after him.

DICKIE
Oren, come back!

ACE
(pointing out Oren)
Hey, look at that little fella run. That
fella looks just like Oren.

Goody lights up an early morning smoke.

GOODY
I didn't see. Let's get home. You're
embarrassing me.

92 INT. GRANDMA HADLEY'S HOUSE. LATER 92

93 Oren and Dickie run up to this sad little house on this last 93
street at the edge of Grandview and enter.

INT - HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

In the loving arms of the old woman sitting in her chair by
the window, Oren is comforted.

HADLEY
There, there, sweetie. Helen is too good
for Don, I know.

OREN
Don never loved her. He doesn't now and
he never will.

Dickie stands in the middle of the living room. Stares at
the old woman giving solace to her grandson.

(CONTINUED)

HADLEY

Love doesn't count for much around here. So don't you go on about that. And look at your grandma. Look what this love business has done to me. I've been waiting here by this window for 61 years. Now that's okay for me. But it's no way to spend a life.

OREN

Grandma, there's got to be a way to stop this wedding. You must know a way.

HADLEY

I don't know a thing about it. Joe was the one who figured it out.

(to Dickie)

Joe was the only boy I ever loved. And Joe was in love with me, too, but everything had already been fixed. He was about your age and was set to marry Sue Dale.

DICKIE

Did Joe marry her?

HADLEY

No. Joe had the notion that if he could reverse the order of things, oh, switch off the sun, freeze the wind, turn the river on itself, folks around here would take it as a sign of bad things to come and call off the whole marriage. Everyone always thought that Joe was touched in the head. Maybe.

Dickie moves closer.

HADLEY (cont'd)

On the wedding day, Joe was nowhere to be found. Though a few said they'd seen him about in his tuxedo. Well, everyone gathered at the church and as they did, the sun turned black as tar--as if someone had simply shut it off. Everything turned black as night, blacker than black, sudden as murder right there in the middle of noon on Sunday. Some said the very air breached open and swallowed him upward. That's how it was done. Everyone was spooked, of course.

DICKIE

Was it an eclipse?

(CONTINUED)

HADLEY

No. Joe had somehow upset the natural order of things with a power. The power you get when you truly love someone. And that wedding was called off. And only a few weeks later, Susan married some other boy. That kind of power this town hadn't seen before and hasn't seen since. But it'll come again and when it does, it's gonna cleanse this town of all its rot, distortions and lies.

BEAT. She looks into Oren's eyes.

HADLEY (cont'd)

Except...yes...I think...Oren, you remind me of Joe. Yes you do.

DICKIE

You and Joe got married?

HADLEY

Oh no. No one ever saw Joe again. But a girl never forgets. And I will always belong to him. So here I wait for his return.

OREN

But how did he do it?

HADLEY

I don't know. But he believed he could do it. That counts for most of it, I guess. Still, most of what I know is that Joe never came back and since then drink's been my only husband and who your mama's daddy is there's no telling.

Hadley laughs softly, sadly looks out the window. Rain begins to touch the glass.

INT - CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

The class sits at attention. Oren looks to his left. He looks to his right. Everyone knows about his parents sleeping in the room and eating dead Jamie Brown's pie. Miss Cook walks into the room and sits at her desk.

MISS COOK

Dickie, I'll need a note from your parents excusing your absence yesterday.

DICKIE

Yes, Miss Cook.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS COOK
Oren, you needn't do the same.

A smattering of repressed snickers around the room.

Then, Don blurts out:

DON
Oren's drunk parents slept in our
classroom!

He laughs cruelly. Everyone but Helen and Dickie laugh.
Oren looks straight ahead, unflinching.

OREN
Shut up, you idiot.

MISS COOK
Don Jones you're paying a visit to the
principal's office! Some of us need to
learn a lesson in tact and compassion.

She points Don to the door.

MISS COOK (cont'd)
Out!

Don smiles devilishly as he gladly pays the price for the
laughter at Oren's expense.

NARRATOR
(chuckling along)
Don learns that telling it like it is can
sometimes get a fella into hot water!

Almost at the door, Don turns, laughs again. The class
chortles again. But Oren stares them down, defying anyone to
laugh or say anything more. The laughter dies.

MISS COOK
Oren! In the cloakroom. NOW!

The class OOHHS and giggles. Oren is in trouble now--he
sighs and reluctantly heads for the cloakroom where Miss Cook
is heading to meet him.

MISS COOK (cont'd)
Back to your projects, children.

INT. CLOAKROOM. MOMENTS LATER

It's dark in here--yellow rain coats and umbrellas hang on
hooks above little red rain boots lined up along with wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miss Cook looks like she means business and Oren braces for a real talking to. But she pauses, looks back. Looks around. Then takes Oren's arm rather lovingly and stoops down on her haunches and stares him in the eye.

MISS COOK

(in almost a whisper)

It has been determined that your life is to be painful and full of disappointment to the very end. It's been *decided*, understand? Now Oren, I tell you this to you at great personal risk. I had hoped for myself for the chance you had with Helen. But I was chosen for this. I see the injustice. I see it. You don't deserve what's been mapped out for you. Don't give up. That's all I wanted to tell you. Now don't speak to anyone of this conversation, understand?

Oren nods. He even smiles--he can't believe she's on his side. Miss Cook rises and raises her voice:

MISS COOK (cont'd)

Don't you ever provoke Don or Helen again! Now get back to your desk and stop disturbing the other children!

Miss Cook smiles and nods and Oren turns to make the walk of shame from the cloakroom to his desk--all the while facing the oooohs, ahhhhs and sneers of his classmates.

INT - CLASSROOM - LATER

Art period. Oren is putting the finishing touches on a watercolor painting of two stick figures labeled "Helen" and "Don" standing under a tree in a field. In the corner of the painting is a bright yellow sun.

With a huge clump of clay in his hand, he looks to Helen and Dickie. They nod, hoping for magic. He looks down at his picture, then blots out the sun with the clay.

NARRATOR

Oren is unaware that the town...

he begins to say, when a black cloud moves over the sun turning the room and everything outside to darkness. The kids gasp. The Narrator almost chokes on his words. Everyone looks up. The darkness is frightening. But the black cloud passes and restores the sun's light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (cont'd)

...Oren is unaware that the town whore's story is nothing but a myth, or fairy-tale. Say Oren, everybody knows that a union as sound as Don Jones and Helen Heiser can't be severed by the fancies of a gloomy old harlot.

Oren doesn't even turn to address The Narrator. He crumples up his watercolor.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

That's the spirit!

DISSOLVE TO:

96 EXT - CHURCH - WEDDING DAY - MORNING 96

A train of four or five cars decorated with crepe paper and flowers sit outside the church. A Florist rushes flowers into the church.

NARRATOR

97 Marriage is the glue that keeps Grandview a tight knit community and a decent place to live. And everyone everywhere is excited to pitch in. 97

INT - CHURCH - MORNING

98 The florists set up the flowers. The organist rehearses. 98
Fragments of chords echo in the empty church.

INT - OREN'S LIVING ROOM - WEDDING MORNING

Oren sits on a bare chair in the middle of the family room, his head and body slouching over himself. He wears a black tuxedo he has slept in. A flimsy Pop-Tart in his hand. "Huckleberry Hound" on TV.

A glance up at the Huckleberry Hound, who is trying to catch a shifty fish in an idyllic pond.

Having just rolled out of bed, Goody enters the room in her robe, her hair flying and matted.

GOODY

Better not be the last Pop-Tart, Oren.
Ace will have a hang-over. He likes his Pop-Tart first thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Goody stops at a table and picks up a jar. Her eyes stick to the "Huckleberry Hound" cartoon as she lifts her leg upon a chair and begins to spread leg cream up and down her fat thigh and calf.

GOODY (cont'd)

I sure was skeptical when I first bought this leg cream.

OREN

Mom, are you going to the church?

GOODY

Is that wedding today?

Oren shoots her a look of disbelief.

OREN

You sent the invitation saying you were going. It's in an hour.

GOODY

I can take you up there but I can't go in. You can find a ride back, can't you?

OREN

That's okay.

Oren puts down the Pop-tart on the coffee table, stands, and heads for the door.

OREN (cont'd)

I'm not going anyway. I'm going to try to flood the town. I may not be back. Ever.

But Goody isn't even listening. She's watching the cartoon on TV. She laughs:

GOODY

That fish is smarter than Huckleberry is!

INT - THE JONES HOME - WEDDING DAY

Don straightens his black bow tie.

FLASH FLASH

Mr. Jones takes pictures of the proud, smiling Don. Mrs. Jones fixes Don's carnation. Behind them stand more family: uncles, aunts, grandparents.

MRS. JONES

Doesn't he look sharp!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. JONES

Like a million bucks. Come here, Don.

Mr. Jones takes Don aside.

MR. JONES (cont'd)

It's your wedding day. How do you feel?

DON

Like a big man.

MR. JONES

Like a big man. You better believe it.
We're very proud of you, son.

Mr. Jones takes Don's hand and pads it with a wad of cash.

DON

Thanks, dad!

MR. JONES

(leans in, whispers)
You and your wife spend it on something
extravagant.

Don smiles. Life is swell. Mr. Jones extends his hand and
Don shakes his father's hand.

100 EXT - HELEN'S DRIVEWAY - WEDDING MORNING

100

Through the back window of the family car, we can make out
the back of Helen's fluffy veil as she sits in the back seat
of the car that begins to back out of the driveway.

The family poodle yelps and jumps wildly as the car pulls
away. He is at the absolute end of his chain, popping wildly
like a piece of popcorn.

HALF SPEED

An arm is slowly filling a fine, silk sleeve. The limp
material blooms as the ridge of a hand moves towards the
cuff. Then, from the delicate lace cuff, a perfect, shining
stainless steel hook emerges! Until the cuff fits tightly
around the black butt of the mounting.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

The second of Piper's new "hands" fits through the second
sleeve of her dress. Mr. Smith, in a black suit, bow tie
untied, stands behind her. Piper gazes at the hooks.

PIPER

I like 'em.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. SMITH
See, they're not so bad.

MRS. SMITH O.S.
Honey, help me zip up my dress.

101 AT MRS. SMITH'S VANITY - CONT'D

101

Mrs. Smith faces the mirror, trying her best not to crack.
Mr. Smith zips up her dress from he back.

MRS. SMITH
(putting on her best face)
A new job as a sanitation clerk and a
bridesmaid's alternate...what's next for
this family?

MR. SMITH
Honey, you should see the way Piper's
taken to those crazy hooks.

MRS. SMITH
(forcing a smile)
I can imagine. They're wonderful. I
wish I had some.

MR. SMITH
That's right. Everything will be just
fine.

But Mrs. Smith finally breaks down sobbing. Mr. Smith puts
his arms around her.

MR. SMITH (cont'd)
No no no. Vera, we don't let anyone see
us this way. Understand?

Mrs. Smith nods.

MRS. SMITH
I know.

MR. SMITH
Okay, okay. Your mascara's running, dear.

102 Gathering herself, Mrs. Smith turns to the mirror to check 102
her face. Carefully tamps a tissue against her cheek,
smiles, then breaks down again.

INT - CHURCH - DAY

The church is filling with guests. Dickie and Mr. and Mrs.
Rogers are being seated in the back of the church.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

DICKIE
I don't see Oren anywhere.

MRS. ROGERS
103 Weddings are either sad or joyous, 103
Dickie. This one's gonna be sad. No
need for that boy to be here.

INT - CHURCH - BRIDE'S ROOM

104 Though both terrified and forlorn, Helen stands on a dressing 104
pedestal looking like a real princess among her bridesmaids.

INT - GROOM'S ROOM

105 Don checks the cash in his tuxedo pocket and smiles to his 105
father and classmates who will stand as **Groomsmen**.

EXT - MUNICIPAL WATER PLANT - DAY

The Grandview Municipal Water Plant is operating smoothly.
Smoke and steam billow from the smoke stacks. The flat, clam-
colored sludge beds dry in the sun. Everything seems normal
until we spot Oren, climbing the high chain-link fence
surrounding the compound in his black tuxedo.

Along the fence, a curious **blue bird** watches him like a
sentinel.

He jumps to the ground and slinks along water channels, the
heavy iron gates open with an even rush of water flowing in
from the river.

106 INT - WATER PLANT - DAY 106

As almost everyone in town is at the wedding, Oren finds
himself alone among the heavy machinery of the plant. Oren
closes his eyes and mutters something to himself, almost like
a prayer.

Then, with no time to lose, he lunges for the huge RED LEVER
that controls the channel gates. He pulls with all his might.
But all his might is not enough. He can't pull it down.

107 EXT - WATER PLANT - MOMENTS LATER 107

Oren rushes from the plant desperate and determined. At the
channel gates the water is **rushing** in rapidly.

He looks down into the foaming water. He clasps his hands
together, closes his eyes, and mouths an inaudible prayer,
all the while the blue bird watching.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

Then, risking life and limb, jumps into the channel between the gates.

UNDERWATER: Oren flails wildly in the muddy carbonation of the river--pushing with all his might against the metal gate with a roar.

ABOVE: a kind of river lightening lights up the water below.

ON: The blue bird: a light, like a blue star-burst emanates from its very being, as though shrouded in a cosmic blue aurora.

The gate gives with a terrible **grinding screech**.

Oren raises up from the water, screaming in pain. His foot is caught in the gate's hinge. And he's going to lose it.

Bill Stuckey rushes out of the plant.

BILL STUCKEY
Hey, what's the big idea!?

ANGLE ON: Oren's leg sucked down further into the iron clutches of the gate.

BILL STUCKEY O.S.
Hey, get away from there!

With one sudden jerk to save his leg, Oren yanks it out of the gate with a scream.

His leg comes out shoe-less, bloody, his pants torn off at his knee.

Stucky grabs Oren by the arm, and Oren struggles to free himself from his grip.

BILL STUCKEY
Are you crazy kid?! You could have killed yourself.

OREN
Leave me alone! Leave me alone! Get off of me!

But Stuckey isn't listening. Rather, his face is frozen, his eyes wide as he stares at the rising water.

STUCKEY
What the hell did you do?

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (2)

THEN, to his utter shock, the rising water miraculously,
turns on itself and begins **FLOWING BACKWARDS.**

One gate to the next, the backwards flow crashes upon itself.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Oren sees Stuckey bearing down on him and
makes a dash for the fence. Water breaches the channel and
Oren just escapes Stuckey's grasp as he climbs over the
fence.

BILL STUCKEY
Come back here! What's the idea!?

But now, the backwards flowing water from the flood gates has
reached the main gate at the river,

and there, as if some blessed cause had taken the water in
its possession, **the river reverses direction** and begins to
RUN BACKWARDS!

ANGLE ON: RIVER BANK

Besides rolling backwards, the river rises rapidly before our
eyes and quickly breeches it banks.

108 EXT - GRANDVIEW - NEAR TOWN SQUARE

108

The backwards flowing river has jumped its confines and now
moves rapidly through the streets of Grandview, the head of
the flood moving like a SNAKE SEARCHING - SEARCHING...

Water a foot high rushes through the streets of town- swells
against the Bank of America- Post Office, up driveways,
across lawns, submerging the wheels of cars, etc...

And as if in a dream of a flood:

Water sheets down stairways.

A child's silver ball is swept away.

A black lawn jockey--swept away.

A bicycle spins in a whirlpool.

Two currents of the flood meet violently head on.

109 Loved ones hold onto each other on higher ground, the roofs 109
of houses and buildings.

EXT - THE CHURCH

Water surrounds the church and rises at the its open doors.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (3)

Then, atop the surging current--**Jamie Brown's pink and yellow dress**, as if offered back by the river, floats right up the church steps and through church doors!

110 INT - CHURCH - SECONDS LATER 110

CLOSE ON: SHOES: The feet of the wedding guests ankle deep in water.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Helen stands at the end of the aisle, looking at Don who waits for her in front of the pulpit.

Piper, her hooks dangling at her sides, anxiously awaits Helen's march down the aisle.

Helen looks down at her feet. The river water has snaked down the aisle towards the pulpit and risen over her shoes.

She looks back at Don, glares into his blank, nothing eyes.

111 **THEN:** To the wide-eyed horror of the minister and everyone 111 gathered here today, Jamie's dress flows down the aisle and right up to the pulpit.

EXT - RIVER BANK - SOMEWHERE IN GRANDVIEW

Oren, trapped, clings desperately to a tree trunk as the river rises and flows over him almost waist high.

NARRATOR

There's Oren Martin, down on his luck.
Say Oren, whattia know?

But Oren doesn't seem to hear him.

Then, in the distance, **wedding bells begin to toll.**

112 It has been done. 112

INT - GOODY'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Goody, a smoldering cigarette in mouth and a bag of potato chips in her hands, stands in several inches of water. She looks down.

GOODY

Well Hell's bells.

She takes a drag of her dead, wet cigarette and crushes it out in a sandbag ashtray.

ON: THE FLOOR: as the water begins to recede, reversing its course, slipping below Goody's shoes as the last of it quickly flows back out the kitchen door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Goody cannot believe her eyes.

Now the river retreats--seeking out the containment of its banks:

--the foot of water running through the back alleys of town reverses its course

--the surge against from the Bank of America recedes

--from the neighborhoods it recedes

--from the lawns, the driveways, the streets, the town it recedes.

113 EXT - THE CHURCH - DAY 113

The last of the current slips under the door and rolls PAST CAMERA, the undertow taking Jamie Brown's dress backwards into the deep conscience of the river.

114 EXT - RIVER BANK - DAY 114

Oren relaxes his grip on the tree as he is no longer in danger of being swept away. The water has taken its normal course again, as if nothing had ever happened. But the wedding bells continue to toll. Off he goes towards the steeple in the distance.

115 EXT - CHURCH - DAY 115

Townspeople spill out of the mouth of the church. Yet something is not right. Everyone looks stunned. Their silence eerie.

116 EXT - PLAYGROUND - DAY 116

Across the vast blacktop, Oren, in his soaked and torn up tuxedo runs as fast as he can towards the church in the distance.

NARRATOR

Say Oren, what do you know about a sharply dressed man?

Oren slows, out of breath.

NARRATOR (CONT'D) (cont'd)

A sharply dressed man is a proud man.

Oren hurries on though, having lost the only girl he will ever love.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Say, Oren, I said whattia know?

OREN
(out of breath, to himself)
Run faster. Run as fast as Dickie Rogers.

NARRATOR
Now that's no way to talk. Why, take
some pride in yourself.

On that, Oren finds a second wind and takes off again.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Come back here! A company won't take
stock in a fella with a rebellious
streak. Say, Oren, come back! Come back
I say!

117 But Oren cannot hear him and continues to run and gets 117
smaller and smaller as we stay with the Narrator's POV.

EXT - TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Even here, we can hear the church bells tolling. Grandview
is in its splendor.

NARRATOR
The sound of church bells means that...The
sound of church...Say?

He stops, his attention taken by something in the trees. Just
over there!

118 ON: A STAND OF TREES IN THE SQUARE 118

A strange, sudden profusion of **sunlight** arrests the leaves of
the trees.

The head of the most prominent tree turns opalescent. Then,
in a vibrato of yellow, as if Nature itself was having a self-
induced fit, the curtain of the air breaches to the other
that lies beyond and through the shaking yellow chasm,

as if borne upon the stepped, outstretched arms of the sun, a
MAN is delivered through the light and drops out of the
blazing canopy of the tree, tumbles through the branches, and
lands on the ground in a heap of smoke.

The open curtain of the air snaps closed, the fit ends and
the world as we perceive it returns.

The man is tall, thin and old. His tuxedo is a bit charred
and still smoking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

This is **Joe Mills (71)**, returned after 61 years.

119 The Narrator is watching...says nothing, but we know him enough
to *feel* that he has been foiled. 119

INT - HADLEY'S ROOM - DAY

Hadley sits in her chair by the window just as she always does.

Through the window, far in the distance, down the long suburban street that is her view, Joe Mills, her long lost love, is walking towards her.

Hadley slowly leans towards the window and parts the flimsy curtains aside. Joe is getting closer, his burnt rags still smoldering.

Hadley leans closer, her weak breaths barely spot the window. Her eyes squint then open wide and glassy. Her dry lips purse.

HADLEY

Joe.

she says, after all these years.

120

120

EXT - A LARGE SWATH OF GRASS BENEATH HIGH TENSION WIRES - DAY

Through the silvery standing water left in the wake of the flood that sits like a giant mirror on the grass, Helen runs barefoot in her soaked wedding dress. We follow her as she runs across the water towards the backs of the houses that flank the power-grid.

EXT - NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Oren runs along the sidewalk then cuts up through a side-yard between the houses.

CAMERA FOLLOWS: craning up over the rooftops to pick up OREN starting across the same silvery swath of mowed grass, his feet kicking up the sitting water.

When is almost to the top of the frame:

HELEN O.S.

Oren!

Oren stops, turns. Helen now enters the wide frame, running towards him across the water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Oren starts towards her--of course, we're pretty wide and it takes them awhile to reach each other. When they do, they stand before each other, and we stay wide.

OREN
Where's Don?

HELEN
(out of breath)
I don't know. The river broke right into the church. Jamie Brown's dress floated right down the aisle. Nobody knew what to do. There was bad feeling everywhere. I saw Don at the other end of the aisle. He had blackness in his eyes. I ran. And no one came after me.

OREN
Then, you're not married?

Helen shakes her head "no."

HELEN
I think he married Piper.

Their anguish over, they embrace, the rippled water sending up ceremonious brilliance all around them.

EXT - CHURCH - DAY

Piper's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Smith exit the church in a state of delight.

MRS. SMITH
Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! Our baby. Our sweet Piper.

A crowd, classmates and their parents, wave to a big baby blue sedan decked out with carnations and a "JUST MARRIED" sign. It begins to pull away. From a back seat window, a hand, Don's, waves back to the crowd. From the other side of the car, Piper's hook waves and sparkles in the sun.

And off they go, and everyone waves, throwing rice after the car.

DISSOLVE TO:

125 EXT - NIAGARA FALLS - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

125

This shot is a gem of a bright, 50s picture postcard, perhaps even stock footage: the white horseshoe falls thundering, the Maid Of The Mist making a run at the falls packed with tourists who are just bright, bright spots of yellow in their rain coats on her decks-

NARRATOR

Luxurious Niagara Falls! A natural wonder and America's most popular honeymoon hide-a-way. There's the world famous Maid Of The Mist heading towards the falls!

126 The blue water, blue sky, tourists walking the edges of the 126 park on the Canadian side in the distance.

INT - NIAGARA FALLS MOTEL ROOM

Don sits in a chair holding a bottle of Coca-Cola, in front of a TV where a bad movie shifts in black and white. He is the picture of disappointment.

On the television itself, an array of Niagara Falls souvenirs: a barrel mug, a gaudy Falls pennant, a fluorescent blue and orange key chain etc.

Piper stands at the window, barefoot, in a somewhat Victorian nightgown that sweeps to the floor. Through the window, in the distance, is a fine view of the Falls. Unlike Don, Piper looks genuinely happy to be here.

Don takes a swig of Coke. Although he stares at the TV, he is disinterested.

PIPER

Look at the falls, Don! They're beautiful.

But Don doesn't turn from the television.

PIPER (cont'd)

Look, you can see the Maid of the Mist from here. I could just stand here all day and watch all that water come down. Don, come to the window. I think you'd like it too.

PAUSE

She turns back towards Don for some reaction. She is smiling. He won't look at her.

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

DON
I like to have my neck rubbed.

127 he says, coldly, staring blankly into the TV. Piper's happy127
glow instantly dulls. She's been slapped in the face.
Scorned, Piper turns her gaze back towards the distant falls,
looking for solace, her hooks dangling at her sides.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MR. AND MRS. SMITH'S HOUSE. MORNING

The front door opens. Mr. and Mrs. Smith step out into the
light--they look up, cock their ears--mystified perhaps by
an *absence*.

Up and down the street neighbors one by one also emerge
from their houses--and look up to the sky.

EXT. GRAVE DIGGERS SHED. CEMETARY. MORNING

Our two grave diggers emerge from their shed. They glance
upward, the light of the new day upon them. The strange
silence.

INT. CHURCH. MORNING

Empty. Except for Minister Stevens, who moves to the
window and stares up to the sky. Whatever he's looking
for, it's gone.

EXT. MR. AND MRS. ROGERS HOUSE. MORNING

Mrs. Rogers stands in the doorway, looking befuddled.

MR. ROGERS
(from within)
What is it?

Beat. As the daylight studies her face, as she searches
from within to grasp this new feeling.

MRS. ROGERS
I don't know.

And how could she?

INT. MISS COOK'S CLASSROOM. MORNING

The classroom empty, Miss Cook stands at the window,
looking up. She too looks nearly unable to reconcile the
silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EXT - GRANDVIEW ELEMENTARY AND SURROUNDING - WIDE - FROM
ABOVE - MORNING

Kids are walking across the large grass field towards the school, exiting from the yellow buses in the front of the school.

NARRATOR

The last day of school for Grandview
Elementary and oh boy, there's excitement
in the air. Summer is here!

Billy, sans his buddy, Don, who is still on his honeymoon, marches up to the school.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Like every American boy, Billy just can't wait to enjoy the pleasures summer vacation offers a fellow. But the order and discipline Billy learned throughout the school year he will carry into summer, making his summer days more *enjoyable* and relaxing. For the whole community. Say, Billy, give us...

But before the Narrator can even finish, Billy walks into the school, as if the Narrator hadn't spoken to him at all. Actually, more like he didn't hear the Narrator at all.

Now a girl steps off the bus.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Say, Jesse, it's the last day of school
and...

But she, too, does not hear him and joins some friends with a playful laugh.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Whattia know? I said, say, whattia know?
You there!

128 EXT - THE LONG GRASS FIELD - MORNING

128

Oren and Dickie are walking to school. Oren, like always is sloppily dressed. Dickie is sharp.

OREN

Old Joe was a little burnt up. But he's okay. Grandma cried and cried.

NARRATOR'S POV:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR
(panicked now)
You! The both of you. Hear my voice!

BACK TO OREN AND DICKIE:

Both entirely unaware of the Narrator's presence.

DICKIE
After all that time.

OREN
My grandma says "waste your time and you
waste your life" and "don't listen to
nobody."

NARRATOR'S POV: as Oren and Dickie cross the playground
blacktop and walk towards Helen who waits for them in her
usual spot.

NARRATOR
Say there, Helen. Say there Oren,
whattia know?! Hear my voice. I said,
hear my voice!

But they do not hear him. Oren, Helen and Dickie arrive at
the back door of the school. Oren and Helen join hands and
enter the Grandview Elementary for the last time this year.

WE PULL back to a wide shot of the school and Grandview
itself.

NARRATOR (CONT'D) (cont'd)
HEAR MY VOICE, I say! HEAR MY VOICE!

Now as we hold wide, his voice disappears completely. All
sound drops out.

But SUBTITLES tell us he is still trying:

HEAR MY VOICE!
HEAR MY VOICE!
HEAR MY VOICE, YOU THERE!
YOU THERE!
YOU OUT THERE!

Then, not even subtitles.

CUT TO BLACK