

REV. FINAL DRAFT

August 28, 1978

THE GREAT SANTINI

Screenplay by
Lewis John Carlino

From the novel by
Pat Conroy

1 EXT. SKY - DAY

1

Silent. Empty save for a layer of billowy clouds stretching into the infinity of blue space. CAMERA HOLDS on this for a long moment, then, suddenly, the silence is shattered by the THUNDER OF JET ENGINES as two Navy F-4's appear from the LOWER CORNER OF RIGHT FRAME and head straight AWAY FROM CAMERA, then dive and disappear into clouds. Silence again for a moment more, then from the EDGE OF RIGHT FRAME, three Marine F-4's follow in pursuit, one after the other, flying on EDGE. They move CENTER SCREEN and AWAY FROM CAMERA, the plane on CAMERA RIGHT doing a roll. (This is Bull Meechum's plane.) We HEAR Bull's VOICE and LAUGHTER.

BULL (V.O.)

Watch out, you guys. I am hot today! Wahooooo!

TITLE: THE GREAT SANTINI

The planes level to normal horizontal flight. CREDITS CONTINUE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE. Also, through this sequence, we HEAR CROSSTALK BETWEEN PILOTS and RIO's as well as TRANSMISSION BETWEEN PLANES.

MULLINAX (V.O.)

Okay, girls, let's not get too anxious here. This is Marines against Navy, one V one. Try not to shoot down your wingie.

LAUGHTER over the phones. Mullinax's plane separates from the other two and moves to a slightly higher altitude. CAMERA PLANE DRIFTS IN CLOSER to Mullinax's plane.

2 INT. MULLINAX'S PLANE - DAY

2

MULLINAX

I have boggy's bearing three zero zero, ten miles. Come starboard thirty degrees. Go spread.

3 EXT. SKY - DAY

3

The three planes execute a thirty degree turn to the right, Mullinax moving further away from the two other planes on the turn.

- 4 INT. MULLINAX'S PLANE - DAY 4
Mullinax looks down and to his right.
- 5 EXT. SKY - MULLINAX'S POV - DAY 5
He sees the two Navy F-4's ahead and below of the two Marine planes, going in the same direction. All planes are moving in an either straight ahead or right to left direction.
- 6 INT. MULLINAX'S PLANE - DAY 6
MULLINAX
Leader has a tally. Right one o'clock.
- 6A INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 6A
He looks down at the planes.
BULL
Preacher has tally.
- 6B EXT. SKY - BULL'S POV - DAY 6B
of the Navy planes in fighting wing.
- 6C INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 6C
He looks to see that the other plane is on his wing.
(Shooting across Bull onto Sammy's plane)
BULL
Got 'em, Sammy?
- 6D INT. SAMMY'S PLANE - DAY 6D
SAMMY
Affirmative, Preach.
- 6E INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 6E
BULL
(to his RIO)
Ace, you got 'em?

(CONTINUED)

6E CONTINUED:

6E

ACE

Affirmative.

MULLINAX (V.O.)

Okay, fight's on! Get 'em,
Preacher.

7 EXT. SKY - DAY

7

Bull and Sammy's planes now move from left to right, in pursuit of the Navy planes. Bull goes into a hard nose dive while Sammy climbs up and OUT OF FRAME.

BULL (V.O.)

I am engaged!

8 EXT. SKY - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

8

Bull's plane dives on the Navy plane and follows, both planes twisting and turning in chase and evasion tactics. We HEAR BULL'S LAUGHTER as we SEE his plane execute a series of spectacular maneuvers. He is a wild man, not to be denied, thirsting for the kill. During the entire dogfight, we HEAR the VOICES of the OTHER PILOTS as well.

BULL (V.O.)

Five o'clock and crossing to
the inside.

As the planes pull heavy "G's", we HEAR the STRAIN in the PILOTS' VOICES, and their HEAVY BREATHING.

9 INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY

9

BULL

You watching this, leader?

MULLINAX (V.O.)

Got you eyeballed all the way.

10 EXT. SKY - DAY

10

The Navy plane continues to try to evade, but Bull sticks with it. Another set of maneuvers. The Navy plane dives for the water, Bull follows closely.

10A INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 10A

BULL
Okay, sucker, try it.

10B EXT. SKY AND WATER - DAY 10B

The Navy plane pulls out of its steep dive and races across the water, flying very low. Bull follows.

10C INT. BULL'S PLANE - CLOSE ON BULL - DAY 10C

as he concentrates on the plane ahead of him.

10D EXT. NAVY PLANE - BULL'S POV - DAY 10D

THROUGH THE CANOPY. The water rushes by.

10E EXT. BULL'S PLANE AND NAVY PLANE - DAY 10E

The Navy plane goes into a steep climb, Bull follows.

10F INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 10F

as he follows the Navy plane up in a steep climb.
He leans forward lining the Navy plane up in his sight.

10G INSERT - SIGHT 10G

as Bull lines up the shot on the Navy plane.

10H INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 10H

BULL
Okay... I take a shot righttttt,
there!

11 EXT. BULL'S PLANE AND NAVY PLANE - DAY 11

Both still climbing. Bull's plane lined up directly behind the Navy plane. We HEAR BULL'S LAUGHTER OVER

11A INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 11A

BULL
Right up your six, rustpicker!

12 EXT. SKY - DAY 12

Bull's plane veers away, doing a victory roll.

BULL (V.O.)
How about that, leader?

MULLINAX (V.O.)
That's a kill, Preacher.

12A INT. SAMMY'S PLANE - DAY 12A

SAMMY
I got this guy nailed.

12B EXT. NAVY PLANE - SAMMY'S POV - DAY 12B

THROUGH THE CANOPY.

MULLINAX (V.O.)
Get 'em, sharkbait.

12C EXT. SKY - DAY 12C

Sammy and the Navy plane engaged in a series of maneuvers.

SAMMY (V.O.)
I am engaged.

MULLINAX (V.O.)
Take it to the outside. Keep pulling. Stay with him. Stay with him.

12D INT. SAMMY'S PLANE - DAY 12D

Sammy speaks to his RIO, Leroy.

SAMMY
How's our six, Leroy?

LEROY
(checking behind him)
Clear, keep pressing.

Sammy leans forward, lining up the shot.

12E INSERT - NAVY PLANE BEING LINED UP IN THE SIGHT 12E

12F INT. SAMMY'S PLANE - DAY 12F

SAMMY
Coming up for the shot,
annnnnd righttttt there!

12G EXT. SKY - DAY 12G

MULLINAX (V.O.)
Splash! Beautiful. That's a
kill.

Sammy's plane veers off, and does a victory roll.

12H INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 12H

as he watches Sammy.

BULL
Looked good, sweetheart.

12I EXT. SKY - DAY 12I

Bull's plane moves alongside Sammy's. Bull does a
roll-over, over Sammy's plane. Sammy then executes a
roll-over over Bull's plane.

12J INT. MULLINAX'S PLANE - DAY 12J

MULLINAX
Okay, okay, you clowns. Knock
it off. Fight's over. Join on me.

12K EXT. SKY - DAY 12K

Mullinax's plane moves into the empty sky from the
CENTER of the LOWER FRAME, moving AWAY FROM CAMERA.
Bull and Sammy follow, doing roll-overs on each side
of Mullinax, until they come alongside him and slightly
to his rear, forming a V with Mullinax at the point.

12L INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 12L

Bull "ta tas" the Marine Corps hymn at the top of his
lungs. He is joined by Sammy, Leroy and Ace.

12M INT. MULLINAX'S PLANE - DAY 12M

Mullinax shakes his head at their antics.

12N EXT. SKY - DAY

12N

The three planes bank sharply to the right and head for home, their voices trailing off into the distance.

13 INT. PRIVATE PARTY ROOM - CORDOVA HOTEL, BARCELONA - NIGHT

13

CAMERA CLOSE on the sweating face of a flamenco singer-dancer just finishing her number. A great crescendo of CLAPPING, SINGING, and TAPPING, the guitar player behind her, busting loose as well. As the CAMERA PULLS BACK, we SEE Bull Meechum and the pilots of his squadron, who are assembled celebrating their victory and Bull's reassignment. The fireplace is rapidly filling with broken glasses, a signature to the many toasts of the afternoon. There is also some broken furniture around to attest to the pitch of the celebration. Mullinax, the Commander of the squadron, has passed out and is resting in a beatific position on a table in the center of the room, his hands folded across his chest, a bouquet of lilies carefully placed in his open fly. As the flamenco dancer finishes her number, Marines cheer and clap. Some throw flowers at her from the arrangements on the tables. The dancer throws kisses and she and the guitarist exit. Sammy lifts his glass in a toast.

SAMMY

To the greatest Marine fighter pilot that ever crapped between two shoes.

BULL

Thank you... thank you...

Boos and applause.

SAMMY

Some of you know him by his nom de guerre, The Great Santini, others by names too foul to be repeated anywhere outside of this august company.

Boos... cheers.

SAMMY

(continuing)

To our victory today over Navv and to his new assignment as commander of the 312 squadron, I give you Bull Meechum!

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

Hisses, jeers, boos, cheers. The men drink. PEDRO, the maitre d', enters and puts his hands on his head, surveying the wreckage.

PEDRO

Ay... ay, señores, por favor!
The noise is making too much.
Please! The guest complain...
(looking at the
broken glasses in
the fireplace)
... Ay... mis vasos!

BULL

Oh, dearie, you mean they don't
like to hear us throw glasses?

PEDRO

No, señor.

Bull lifts his glass, giving a signal to the other
pilots.

BULL

Marines?

They raise their glasses.

BULL

(continuing)
Tora, Tora, Tora!

They all drink and toss their glasses into the fire-
place amid shouts and laughter. Pedro runs from the
room.

PEDRO

Ay, dios, dios mio...

The men rush to refill their glasses, a scramble of
pushing and shoving.

CAPT. BROOKOUT

(to Bull)

Maybe we'd better hold it down.
Hate for you to get into trouble
your last night in Spain.

BULL

Oh, that would be just awful,
wouldn't it?

He lifts his glass.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (2)

13

BULL

(continuing)

Hogs! To the Corps Elite.
To that special breed of sky
devil known and feared throughout
the world: the Marine dogfighter.
To the bravest fighting men that
ever lived. There is not a force
that can defeat us in battle, deny
us victory or interrupt our destiny.
Marines...

He drinks and throws his glass into the fireplace. The
other Marines follow suit, shouting "Tora, tora, tora!"

Pedro enters smiling triumphantly, accompanied by a
very annoyed NAVY CAPTAIN. Marines quiet down.

NAVY CAPTAIN

Who's in charge here?

BULL

(pointing to Mullinax)

He is, sir.

NAVY CAPTAIN

Identify yourself, Colonel.

BULL

Lieutenant Colonel W.P. Meechum,
sir.

NAVY CAPTAIN

(pointing to Mullinax)

What's wrong with that man?

BULL

He's had the flu, sir. It's
weakened him.

NAVY CAPTAIN

Don't get smart with me, Colonel.
Now, my wife and I and the other
people out there would like to
have a quiet, pleasant dinner and
we would appreciate your clearing
out and taking your ungentlemanly
conduct elsewhere.

BULL

Sir, this is a going away party
for me.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (3)

13

NAVY CAPTAIN

Then I suggest you drink up and get moving.

BULL

Yes, sir. Oh, could we take one last drink at the bar, Captain, if we promise to behave?

NAVY CAPTAIN

One. And then I don't want to see you anywhere near the area.

The Navy Captain and Pedro exit. A silence. Bull looks at Sammy, his face breaking into a grin.

BULL

(addressing the
squadron)

Okay, you sweet young things. Now I want you to go on out to the bar and act like perfect gentlemen. You're gonna see a floor show, the likes of which is gonna make Marine Corps history! Go on, now.

The men file out.

14 INT. BAR - DINING ROOM - HOTEL CORDOVA - NIGHT

14

The room is filled with guests having supper. Among them; about ten Naval couples, including the Navy Captain and his WIFE. The squadron is at the bar behaving themselves, drinking, whispering like conspirators. A small palm court group of musicians is playing. Sammy opens a can of mushroom soup and hands it to Bull who puts it into his shirt pocket. He winks at Ace and Sammy, then drains his martini. The squadron watches as Bull gets off his stool unsteadily and staggers toward the empty stage. In a moment, all eyes in the dining room are on him. The Naval officers shake their heads condescendingly. The wives watch fascinated, expecting Bull to fall any moment. Bull reaches the stage. The tension in the room mounts. No one is eating now. Bull gets onto the stage, still fully lit, and falls on one knee. Suddenly, his body contorts. He throws his head forward violently and pretends to vomit. Every fork in the restaurant is dropped. Bull retches again and the mushroom soup spills out of his pocket onto his chin, then onto the stage.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

CAPTAIN'S WIFE

My God!

She rushes from the table, holding her hand against her mouth. As Bull continues his antics, the Captain's wife is joined by other wives. Bull is lost in the virtuosity of his performance. The dining room is going wild with shouts from the squadron. Bull staggers to his feet and stands, looking at the people, as if not comprehending what is going on. Ace and Sammy now run from the bar to the stage, holding up their spoons. Their faces are twisted hideously. They dive onto the stage and begin spooning soup into their mouths, then begin fighting.

SAMMY

Dammit, Ace, that ain't fair!
You're getting all the meat!

ACE

(grappling with
him and fighting
to continue the
spooning)

Get away... get away! You're
hogging it all!

Bull staggers around the stage, still smiling, a happy drunk seemingly unaware of what's happening. The dining room is in chaos. Musicians fall backwards, off their chairs. A cello becomes a casualty.

15 EXT. SMYTHE FIELD NAVAL AIR STATION - DAY

15

LILLIAN MEECHUM and her four children, BEN, MARY ANNE, KAREN and MATTHEW: 17, 15, 13 and 11, respectively, stand on the all but deserted field, near the control tower. The field and the hangar give the feeling of not being used very much. Nearby, mechanics poke about in the remains of antique jets. A battered wind sock flutters at the end of the runway. Lillian is a woman of 37, beautiful, with long, red hair. Ben is big, like his dad, and so is Mary Anne, who casts jaundiced eyes at the world from behind thick glasses. Her face is covered with large freckles. Karen takes after her mother; very pretty with a bright, ready smile. Matthew is small for his age and resents it. Ben suffers pimples and is very self-conscious about it. The family is in the process of finishing a Hail Mary, in unison.

(CONTINUED)

THE FAMILY

*

...The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus... Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

A great sigh of relief from the kids.

LILLIAN

There! If Dad's plane crashed we'd never forgive ourselves for not saying that extra Hail Mary. Stop slouching, Ben. Shoulders back.

KAREN

I don't want to leave Atlanta.
I want to stay here.

LILLIAN

We'll come back for visits.

MARY ANNE

That's what you told Karen when we left Cherry Point.

LILLIAN

We'll get back to Cherry Point as well...

MARY ANNE

That's what you said when we left Camp Lejeune.

LILLIAN

Don't spread dissension, Mary Anne. I want Dad's homecoming perfect.

MATT

Want me to punch her, Mom?

MARY ANNE

You do and they'll be burying you in a match box, runt.

MATT

Mom... you hear...?

LILLIAN

Mary Anne. stop that.

MARY ANNE

I don't know what Matthew's so sensitive about. He's practically a giant for a midget.

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

LILLIAN

I mean it, now!

BEN

(to Mary Anne)

Let's take a walk.

LILLIAN

Splendid idea, Ben.

Mary Anne and Matt exchange hideous faces, then she and Ben walk off. Both watch the sky for a sign of the plane.

MARY ANNE

See anything yet?

BEN

(pointing)

Uh huh. Right there! A squadron of Messerschmitts, the charge of the light brigade. A horde of Mongols. And a partridge in a pear tree.

MARY ANNE

Not bad for your limited powers of spontaneous thought. You'll never beat me, though. Mind against mind, I maul you every time.

BEN

Yeah? Just remember I can knock every tooth out of your head anytime I want and there's nothing you can do about it.

MARY ANNE

Big, brave jock. So what? I'd get you back.

BEN

How?

MARY ANNE

I'd sneak into the bathroom and steal your Clearasil. Your pimples would multiply so fast you'd be dead within forty-eight hours.

BEN

Oh, yeah...?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (3)

15

We HEAR the SOUND of a PLANE approaching. Ben looks up and spots a military transport, taxiing toward them.

BEN

(continuing)

There it is!

They race back toward Lillian, shouting.

BEN

(continuing)

Hey, Mom...

LILLIAN

I see it, sugah. I see it.

Ben and Mary Anne reach their mother. A nervous excitement through the group as the transport gets closer.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Stand up straight, Ben. Matthew, let me comb your hair.

(she combs)

Girls, check your makeup. When he gets off, we'll all walk to meet him. I'll go first, then the girls, then the boys. Understand?

Nods.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

I'll give him a big juicy. Then the girls'll give him big juicys. Boys shake hands firmly. Very firmly. Like men. Then say 'Welcome home, Colonel.'

MARY ANNE

We better get a chair for Matt to stand on, if he's gonna shake hands.

MATT

Mama...!

LILLIAN

(sternly)

Mary Anne!

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (4)

15

MARY ANNE

Yes, ma'am.

Their eyes follow the plane as it taxis toward the control tower. Tension mounting. Dry throats. Frozen, exaggerated smiles. The door of the plane opens and Bull climbs out. He spots his family and bellows:

BULL

(smiling)

Stand by for a fighter pilot!

BEN

Yahoooooo.

Lillian's instructions come to naught. A mad, disorderly dash and the family assaults Bull in a tangle of arms and legs; embraces, missed kisses, and big juicys on target. CAMERA IN LONG SHOT of the family on the field. Loud laughter and indistinguishable banter as they all speak at the same time.

16 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

16

Bull and Lillian lying in bed. Both are glistening with the effort of their lovemaking. They lie silently for a long moment, listening to the SOUND of the night BIRDS. Faint, blissful, postcoital smiles. On Bull's left arm, the tattoo of a red cobra, fanged, ready to strike.

LILLIAN

Mmmmm. Nice.

She stretches languidly. Bull draws her to him and kisses her long and sensually.

BULL

Missed you, Lil'.

LILLIAN

(kissing him lightly
on the shoulder)

Me, too. The worst times were in the morning, before the kids woke up. Just lyin' here, listening to the quiet, staring at the ceiling, aching for the feel of you...

Bull puts his finger to her lips, interrupting her.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

BULL

We've got a lot of catching up to do, lady.

LILLIAN

Colonel, suh, I'm at your disposal.

They kiss again, then Lillian buries her head on his chest, nuzzling. A silence.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

You've waited a long time for this command.

BULL

Too long.

LILLIAN

I'm so proud of you...

She begins kissing him once more, playfully. Gradually, the kisses grow more lingering, more sensual.

LILLIAN

(continuing; in her coquette Southern belle voice)

Colonel, honey, you think we try a little more of that catchin' up now?

BULL

(laughing, hugging her tightly, mimicking her)

Why honey-sugah-dumplin', Bull Meechum don't try nothin'! He just do!

Lillian laughs. They grapple. Suddenly the alarm goes off.

LILLIAN

Oh, no!

Bull jumps out of bed, slips on his shorts, and does push-ups.

BULL

C'mon, Lil'. Up and at 'em. I want to be at the Base by 1600.

Lillian covers her head with a pillow. Bull exits.

LILLIAN

Nonono. No!

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (2)

16

BULL (V.O.)

(shouting)

Moving day. Let's go, hogs.
 Breaking camp. Everybody at the
 car in five minutes. Move it...
 move it.

GROANS... SHOUTS of PROTEST from the CHILDREN... OPEN-
 ING AND SLAMMING DOORS. The SOUND of Okra, their dog,
 BARKING.

17 OMITTED

17

&

&

18

18

19 EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

19

The lone car moves quickly through the night. OVER the
 SHOT we HEAR the family SINGING.

FAMILY (V.O.)

'First to fight for right and freedom,
 And to keep our honor clean.
 We are proud to claim the title
 Of United States Marines.'

CHEERS. YELLS. APPLAUSE.

20 INT. CAR - NIGHT

20

Okra is curled up in Matt's lap.

BULL

What's the next song, sports fans?

KAREN

Dixie.

BULL

What a horseshit song.

LILLIAN

Watch your language, Bull.

THE KIDS

Yeah.

BULL

Dixie's a loser's song. Let's
 sing something else.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

THE KIDS (overlapping with
No. Dixie! varied dialogue)

BULL
Okay, you sing Dixie and I'll sing
Battle Hymn of the Republic.
(he laughs)
I'll sing a winner's song and you
sing a loser's song.

21 EXT. CAR - NIGHT

21

moving down the deserted highway. BULL'S VOICE STRUGGLING
UNSUCCESSFULLY to be HEARD as the KIDS and LILLIAN DROWN HIM
OUT. OKRA joins them, BARKING. LAUGHTER.

MATT (V.O.)
That's it, Okra!

DISSOLVE TO:

22 INT. CAR - NIGHT

22

The family is asleep. Bull reaches over the back of the driver's
seat and shakes Ben: *

BULL
Ben, Ben, come on. Wake up! Don't
pretend you're asleep. *

BEN
I was asleep. *

BULL
Let's talk. *

BEN
What do you want to talk about? *

BULL
The White Sox won today. *

BEN
That's
(pause)
Dad, are you ever afraid when fly? *

BULL
Hell, yes. That's what makes me so
damn good. You'll know what I mean
when you're a Marine pilot. *

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED:

BLN

What if I decide not to go into
the Corps?

BULL

You're going in! Four years, right
after college. If you want out after
that, well, it's your choice, but
you're going in.

*

A silence.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

BEN

Would you like to be killed in
action?

BULL

It's better than dying of
piles.

BEN

It would have to be a great
pilot who shot you down, wouldn't
it?

BULL

(winking at Ben)

Inhuman, son. The bastard
would have to be inhuman. Get
some sleep.

Ben moves back. CAMERA CLOSE on his face. The con-
versation has had a disturbing effect.

BEN

Good night, Dad.

BULL

Good night, sports fans.

CAMERA CLOSE on Bull's face. His eyes narrow on the
ribbon of white ahead of him. He, too, has been dis-
turbed by the conversation about dying. He wipes
his hand over his face as if to erase the feeling
along with his fatigue.

DISSOLVE TO:

23 OMITTED

23

24 EXT. CAR - DAY

24

The highway is still deserted except for a truck or
two.

25 INT. CAR - DAY

25

MATT

I gotta go number one real bad.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

BULL

You should have gone when we stopped.

MATT

I didn't have to go then.

LILLIAN

Cross your legs, darlin'.

BEN

God, this'll be my fourth high school in three years.

BULL

Tough toenails.

LILLIAN

But think of the wonderful part of it, dumplin'. You learn how to meet people, see new places...

A chorus of groans from the children. Bull throws back his head and laughs.

BEN

When do y'all think we'll get there?

BULL

'Y'all?' Jesus, I go overseas for a year and they're all talking like grits. I'm surrounded by grits. Grits, grits, grits!
Yaaaaa!

LILLIAN

(smiling)

'Y'all' is perfect grammar, sugah. I think it sounds cultivated.

BULL

(honking horn in defiance)

Yaaaaa! Grits!

KAREN

What's our ETA, Colonel?

BULL

Almost there, hogs.

26 EXT. HIGHWAY/BRIDGE - DAY 26

The car moves past a sign reading "Beaufort, 5 miles.
USMCAS."

DISSOLVE TO:

26A EXT./INT. CAR - SHANTY TOWN - DAY 26A

The car moves through a section of old shacks and houses on the outskirts of town. The population in this area is mostly black. CAMERA INTERCUTS from the family's POV to their reactions.

DISSOLVE TO:

27 EXT./INT. CAR - MILITARY HOUSING - DAY 27

The car moves past rows of run-down bungalows, housing Marine personnel. CAMERA INTERCUTS the family's POV with their reactions. They've all seen this before and it hurts. Bull seems oblivious to all of this.

DISSOLVE TO:

28 EXT./INT. CAR - APPROACH AND MAIN ST. OF BEAUFORT - DAY 28

CAMERA INTERCUTTING the faces of the family and their POV of the town. Tears roll down Mary Anne's cheeks. Beaufort is a one-main-street military town, with the usual bars, pawn shops, etc. Okra hangs out the window. CAMERA CLOSE on Mary Anne.

MARY ANNE

I hate this place.

LILLIAN

Sugah, you have to open yourself to a town. You've been in the Corps long enough to know that.

MARY ANNE

I am not in the Corps!

MATT

Says you.

MARY ANNE

(putting her hand
to her ear)

Was that a voice? A tiny insect voice, coming from a human body? Sounded almost human.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

MATT

You're gonna die real young if
you keep teasing me, four eyes.

MARY ANNE

The only way you could kill me,
little one, would be to enter
my bloodstream.

BULL

Shut your yaps! This is it,
sports fans, Beaufort, S.C.!

MARY ANNE

And to think, I mistook it for
Paris, France.

DISSOLVE TO:

29 EXT. STREET - DAY

29

They turn a corner and head down a street lined with large white houses sporting white columns and graceful verandas. Live oaks, festooned with Spanish moss create a magical tunnel effect. They pass a house where a black man is in the process of collecting up bunches of wild flowers in bouquets from the back of a mule-drawn wagon. This is TOOMER and he sings in a kind of chant.

TOOMER

O be the wildflower. O come the
wildflower.
Come the rose, come sweet daffodil.
Come the good honey, come ripe berry.
Come the wildflower.

A black maid comes out of the house and Toomer moves to her with the flowers.

30 INT. CAR - CLOSE ON LILLIAN - DAY

30

looking at the houses.

KAREN

(pointing to
large house)

Look at that one, Mama.

LILLIAN

(smiling)

That is a true southern mansion.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

MATT

I still have to go.

MARY ANNE

Matt's turning yellow. Hey,
Matt, I think you look good yellow.

BULL

See if 'y'all' can guess which
house The Great Santini has rented
for his family.

LILLIAN

Since the Great Santini has the
worst taste in the free world,
this should be easy.

BULL

Has the Great Santini ever let
his family down?

THE FAMILY

(shouting)

Yes!

BULL

You do not trust the Great
Santini?

THE FAMILY

(shouting)

No!

BULL

Then have a look at this!

He pulls into the driveway of a large, old house, of
graceful line and proportions. Lillian is stunned as
are the children. Bull beams proudly. Matt is out of
the car before it stops and races for the bushes at the
far side of the house. Okra follows. Laughter...

LILLIAN

(leaning over and
kissing him)

Oh, Bull...

*

BULL

Just like you always wanted. Got
a cheap lease from a rich colonel
who got nailed with a Far East
assignment and needed a classy
tenant. I probably reminded him
of Rhett Butler.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (2)

30

MARY ANNE

I'm sure.

BULL

(to Lillian)

Care to have a look, Scarlett?

LILLIAN

(heavy on the accent)

I'd be charmed, sir.

MARY ANNE

Yick.

They get out of the car and walk toward the house,
Ben, Mary Anne, and Karen running up the steps, ahead
of them.

31 INT. HOUSE - DAY

31

Bull and Lillian move through the empty room. O.S.
SOUNDS of the CHILDREN LAUGHING and CALLING to each
other as they explore. Okra follows them, BARKING.

BULL

Don't build 'em like this
anymore.

MATT (O.S.)

Karen... hey... look what I
found. It's a secret panel...

BEN (O.S.)

Hey, Mary Anne. The cellar's
like a dungeon.

MARY ANNE (O.S.)

I'm taking the front bedroom.

LILLIAN

You've outdone yourself. Give us
a big juicy.

They kiss.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Welcome home.

Articles from the top of the station wagon have been unloaded to the ground. Among them is a basketball hoop with net. The children are seated stiffly on the porch steps, with Okra. Bull paces up and down in front of them. He is in his Class A uniform and carries a swagger stick which he slaps against his palm from time to time for punctuation. Lillian observes from the veranda above.

BULL

Okay, hogs. I've listened to you bellyache about moving to this new town. This said bellyaching will end as of 1530 hours, and will not affect the morale of the squadron henceforth. Do I make myself clear?

THE CHILDREN

Yes, sir!

Okra barks. Matt suppresses a giggle.

BULL

(continuing)

Now I know it's rough to leave your friends and move every year, but you are Marine kids and can chew nails while other kids are sucking cotton candy. And you are Meechums. A Meechum is a thoroughbred, a winner all the way. He gets the best grades, wins the most awards, and excels in sports. A Meechum never gives up. I want you hogs to let this burg know you're here. I want these crackers to wake up and wonder what the hell blew into town. And one more thing. Just because a Meechum has more raw talent than anyone else, that doesn't prevent him from thinking about the Man Upstairs every once in a while. Don't be too proud too ask for His help.

The SOUND of a HORN HONKING turns him around. A moving van approaches the house. Bull looks at his watch.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

BULL

(continuing)

Right on time. Okay, hogs, by
 nightfall I want this camp in
 inspection order. Do you read
me loud and clear?

THE CHILDREN

Yes, sir!

BULL

(to Ben)

Sergeant, dismiss the troops.

(indicating the
 basketball hoop)

And get that up.

Ben walks to his father, salutes him, turns and shouts.

BEN

Dis-missed!

Bull walks to the car and gets in. Lillian shakes her
 head, and enters the house. The children relax and
 watch as Bull drives off in the station wagon. Silence
 for a moment. Mary Anne shakes her head.

MARY ANNE

He does remind me of someone from
 the movies, but it's not Rhett Butler.

KAREN

Who?

MARY ANNE

Godzilla.

BEN

(shaking his head)

He's just too much.

MARY ANNE

Why don't you tell him so, big
 balls?

33 EXT. GATE OF BEAUFORT AIR STATION - DAY

33

Bull salutes the gate guard and is about to drive
 through when he hears the SOUND of a JET TAKING OFF.
 He leans his head out the window and looks skyward.
 CAMERA to HIS POV of an F-4 Phantom lifting off the
 field and kicking on its afterburner, dumping a
 white cloud. The plane banks, then fades like a
 sliver of light into the blue sky. Bull smiles. He
 drives onto the base.

34 INT. COLONEL HEDGEPATH'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY 34

A hairless SERGEANT, with stiff mechanical bearing, looks up from his typewriter. Bull enters.

BULL

Where's Colonel Hedgepath?

SERGEANT

He's indisposed at the moment, sir.

BULL

I asked you where he was, Sergeant, not for your mastery of the English language.

SERGEANT

I think he's in the head down the hall, sir.

Bull exits the office.

35 INT. HEAD - DAY 35

There are two stalls. A pair of shoes gleam in the stall next to the door. Bull enters the empty stall.

36 INT. STALL - DAY 36

Bull makes noise as if undoing his buckle, then sits on the seat. A moment, then the man in the next stall flushes and stands. A pair of hands appear as he reaches down to pull up his pants. In this instant, Bull reaches under the partition, grabs the pants and pulls. A scream and a SPLASH as the man's arm goes into the toilet. Bull grabs the man's ankles and pulls him into his stall, holding him upside down. The men wrestle as Bull tries to stuff the other man's head into his toilet.

BULL

Gotchagotchagotcha!

ATCHLEY

Goddamn it, let go! Sonofabitch!
Let go!

Bull suddenly notices a pair of Corporal's chevrons. This is obviously not Colonel Hedgepath. Bull opens the door to his stall and drags the corporal out.

37 INT. HEAD - DAY

37

Bull stands back, arms folded and watches as the corporal pulls up his pants and cocks a fist, only to see that his attacker outranks him. A moment of indecisive silence, broken by Bull.

BULL

Corporal, you're probably wondering why I attacked you. Right?

ATCHLEY

Yes, sir.

BULL

What's your name, son?

ATCHLEY

Atchley, sir.

BULL

Atchley, do you realize that several Marines were killed by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor while taking craps? A fighting man must be vigilant to surprise attack no matter where he is. Our nation's survival is dependent on the readiness of Marines, all over the world. Also, and more important, do you realize you only wiped yourself twice? Grossly insufficient! Do you realize the number of germs that can breed in the human asshole? Right now, at this very moment, germs with names you can't even pronounce are preparing to launch a devastating attack that will render you helpless in the defense of your country. Do you read me?

ATCHLEY

(incredulous)

Yes, sir.

BULL

Good man. Now, I'm Jones; Colonel John J. Jones. I'm only here for the day. I fly around the country testing... the readiness of troops for combat. This is a strictly confidential test and classified top secret.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

BULL (CONT'D)

Tell no one, Atchley. And if
you ever attack a senior officer
again, I'll have you courtmartialed.

ATCHLEY

But you attacked me!

BULL

Dis-missed! Good luck in your
career. Be proud, Atchley, proud
of yourself and proud of the Corps.
Out!

Atchley exits like a zombie. Bull smiles, turns and
looks at himself in the mirror, straightening his hair.
He whistles.

BULL

(continuing)

You silver-tongued bastard. Shame
on you.

He exits the latrine.

A38 INT. CORRIDOR - BULL'S POV - DAY

A38

of Atchley as he exits Hedgepath's office, crosses
the corridor, and exits the building.

B38 INT. CORRIDOR - ON BULL - DAY

B38

He smiles and enters Hedgepath's office.

38 INT. HEDGEPATH'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

38

SERGEANT

He's back, sir. I'll see if he
can receive you.

He starts to move to the door.

BULL

Relax, Jocko. This is a surprise.

Bull puts a finger to his lips and tiptoes to the door.
He leans against the door, his ear pressed against it,
listening. Suddenly, the door opens. Bull stumbles
forward while a hand catches him by the neck and a
foot trips him.

39 INT. COL. HEDGEPATH'S OFFICE - DAY

39

Bull falls sprawling, to the carpet. COLONEL VIRGIL HEDGEPATH is on Bull's back in a flash, twisting his arm behind him in a lock.

VIRGIL

Repeat after me, Colonel, 'Bull Meechum has menstrual cramps.'

BULL

(bellowing)

Kiss me where the skin turns pink, you worthless scum.

VIRGIL

What kind of man assaults corporals with their pants down?

They both break up laughing uncontrollably, tears coming to eyes. Finally Virgil gives Bull a hand up.

BULL

How are you, Virgil?

VIRGIL

Welcome aboard, Bull.

BULL

Thanks, but would you please tell me who put me in Varney's group? He hates my guts.

Virgil sits behind his desk, opens a drawer, takes out two cigars, throws Bull one. Both men light up.

VIRGIL

The squadron's had trouble. It used to be one of the best, but the past two C.O.'s have let it slip. Varney's got a good chance for a star, but he's smart enough to know that if he's going to make general, he's going to have to shape up the 312. Simple.

BULL

You heard I got passed over?

VIRGIL

Passed over? Hell, you're lucky you haven't been busted.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

I heard about that mushroom soup stunt.

Bull grins.

VIRGIL

(continuing)

Go on and grin, dummy, but I'm telling you, you better watch your six from now on. Look... you've got your squadron, now just try to keep your nose clean for a change.

BULL

Yes, sir.

VIRGIL

And don't go raping any more corporals in the latrine, Colonel Jones.

Bull grins. Virgil can't help himself. He grins as well.

VIRGIL

(continuing)

Jesus Christ, you never change.

They laugh.

A40 INT. COLONEL VARNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

A40

VARNEY is a full colonel with steel gray eyes that betray no emotion. He sits at his desk studying some papers, while Bull stands in front of his desk, at attention. On the wall behind Varney is a picture of a squadron assembled in front of their Corsairs. The moment protracts. Varney is obviously making Bull sweat it. Finally, Varney leans back and stares at Bull.

VARNEY

What are you thinking, Colonel?

BULL

Nothing, sir.

(CONTINUED)

A40 CONTINUED:

A40

VARNEY

Yes, you are, Wilbur. You're thinking, 'Why doesn't that sonofabitch quit reading those damn papers and welcome me aboard this base.' Isn't that what you were thinking?

BULL

Yes, sir. That's exactly what I was thinking, sir.

VARNEY

Sit down.

Bull sits.

VARNEY

Okay. Now understand this: The only reason I picked you for this job, despite the fact that you're a disgrace to the Corps and well on your way to being an alcoholic, is because you're a fair leader and a crackerjack pilot.

BULL

(smiling)

Thank you, sir.

VARNEY

Just sit there and shut up. Cuba is hot. Very hot. If it pops, we'll be right in the middle of it. Now I want you to start getting these pilots into shape. Much as I need this job done, it won't break my heart if you fall on your ass again. That way I can end your career with a poor fitness report. You read me?

BULL

Yes, sir.

VARNEY

That's all. Dismissed.

(CONTINUED)

A40 CONTINUED: (2)

A40

Bull stands, salutes and turns to leave.

VARNEY

(continuing)

And get your pants pressed,
Colonel.

BULL

Yes, sir.

He exits.

40 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

40

Bull moves from his bedroom down the hall, opening-
doors and singing his reveille bugle call.

BULL

Ta, ta, tatata. Ta, ta, tatata.
It's time to get up in the
morning.

He opens the door to Mary Anne and Karen's room.

40A INT. MARY ANNE AND KAREN'S ROOM - BULL'S POV - DAY

40A

Assorted groans and protests from Karen and Mary
Anne.

BULL

Rise and shine, splittails.
At 0900 hours your commanding
officer will conduct inspection
of quarters. 0900!

40B INT. HALL - DAY

40B

Bull moves to Ben's room and opens the door.

40C INT. BEN'S ROOM - BULL'S POV - DAY

40C

of Ben in bed, asleep.

BULL

Haul it out, hog. Inspection!
At 0900!

(CONTINUED)

40C CONTINUED:

40C

Ben groans, rolls over and puts the pillow over his head.

40D INT. HALLWAY - DAY

40D

Bull moves to Matt's room.

BULL
Lillian, I'm hungry!

He opens the door to Matt's room.

BULL
(continuing)
Rise and shine.
(his eyes widen)
Jesus!

Matt screams.

BULL
(continuing)
Lillian... hey, Lillian,
the little homo's sleeping naked!

He shakes his head and slams the door.

41 EXT. PORCH - DAY

41

Bull exits from the house and picks up the paper. Standing at the foot of the stairs, watching him, is a thick grandly muscled black woman, barely over five feet tall, with thick, knotted biceps and threaded forearms. She has the appearance of a displaced, bespectacled Sumo wrestler. This is ARRABELLE SMALLS. Bull and Arrabelle stare at each other. A long silence. Finally, out of embarrassment, Bull bellows:

BULL
Stand by for a fighter pilot!

ARRABELLE
What you say, Cap'n?

BULL
(beating one fist
against his chest)
I am The Great Santini!

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

ARRABELLE

Ize Arrabelle Smalls, your new girl; I never work for no Eyetalian before.

BULL

Pure Irish. You, madam, are a solid looking woman.

ARRABELLE

(smiling)

I can punch hard as a man. You wanna punch my shoulder?

BULL

This is a Marine you're talking to. I might cause internal bleeding, or...

ARRABELLE

Shoot, man. You go on an' hit Arrabelle's shoulder. Come on down here.

Bull moves to her. Ben is watching from the upstairs porch.

BULL

Okay, lady. Watch out.

He makes a fist and pulls his punch.

BULL

(continuing)

Hey, you're solid as a rock.

ARRABELLE

Now it's my turn.

Arrabelle spits on her right fist, rubs it, cocks it to her chin, takes a couple of steps and a hop and lands her punch on Bull's shoulder bone where it meets the arm. Bull is all but paralyzed by the shock wave of pain. He fights for breath, trying not to show the effect of the punch.

BULL

Ha! You call that punching?

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: (2)

41

ARRABELLE

Let me do it again.

BULL

Hell, no. If you hurt your hand,
I'm gonna have to pay the doctor
bills.

BEN

(laughing)

Go on. Let her, Dad.

BULL

You get your butt working, hog.

Ben enters the house. Lillian appears on the porch
in a robe.

LILLIAN

What's going on out here? Oh,
you must be Mrs. Smalls.

ARRABELLE

I is.

LILLIAN

Well, I'm Lillian Meechum, and
this is Lieutenant Colonel Bull
Meechum, my husband. Earline
Grantham spoke very highly of
you.

BULL

Yeah, she told us you spent
a few years in jail for stealing
silver out of nice houses.

ARRABELLE

Miss Earline don't put that
kinda trash mouth on me, Cap'n.

Bull laughs and walks into the house with his paper.

LILLIAN

You'll get used to his teasing,
Arrabelle. Or else you won't.
But it'll be there, one way or
the other.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: (3)

41

BULL (O.S.)

Lillian, I want chow... chow! It is I, Santini. The Great Santini, beast of Beaufort and Minister of Death wants his breakfast! Eat! Eat!

LILLIAN

I hope you like children. We've got four.

ARRABELLE

Seem like chill'in is the only perfec' people they is.

BULL (O.S.)

Castro, you bearded fag. I'd like to chase you down the main street of Havana with my F-4. De Gaulle! De Gaulle! Oh, God, why did you put so many jerks in the world at the same time?

ARRABELLE

Kinda peculiar, ain' he?

LILLIAN

(forcing a smile)

He's just reading his paper. Come on in.

They enter the house.

42 OMITTED

42

&
43

&
43

44 EXT. MEECHUM HOUSE - DAY

44

The basketball goal has been erected over the garage door. Ben has assembled the dining room chairs in a straight line, about three feet apart, and is practicing his dribbling. He moves with exceptional grace and skill through the chairs toward the goal, eluding his imaginary opponents. He leaps and drops one through the hoop, neatly. Okra, nearby, begins barking. Ben turns to see Toomer in his wagon turn the corner and move to the house. Toomer is short and powerful, like his mother, about twenty-five, with a darkly brooding nobility in his face. He wears a corrective shoe on one foot.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

BEN

Hush, Okra.

Toomer pulls the wagon up. A moment of silence as they appraise each other. Toomer smiles and points to Okra. He speaks with a stutter.

TOOMER

That's about the ugliest c-c-cat
I ever did see, white boy.

BEN

And that's about the ugliest
looking cow pulling that wagon
I ever did see.

TOOMER

Cow? This h-here is Mano-o-War,
winner of the Ken-tucky Derby.

BEN

(indicating Okra)

And this here is Rin-Tin-Tin,
star of stage, screen and TV.

Toomer laughs. Arrabelle and Lillian exit from the house, and walk to the wagon.

ARRABELLE

Hey, Toomer. Mrs. Meechum, this
here's my boy, Toomer.

LILLIAN

It's a pleasure, Toomer.

TOOMER

How you, ma'am?

He takes some cut flowers wrapped in Spanish moss from the back of the wagon and hands them to Lillian.

TOOMER

(continuing)

These for you.

LILLIAN

Why, how lovely. Bless your heart.

ARRABELLE

Where you headin', son?

TOOMER

Might do some fishin'.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: (2)

44

ARRABELLE

You bring me back some nice
flounder I can fix up for this
family. You ever been fishin'
much, Ben?

BEN

Not in salt water.

ARRABELLE

Whyin chu go 'long?

TOOMER

(smiling)

You want to go, dribblin' man?
We be out all night.

BEN

Could I, Mom?

LILLIAN

Sure. Get yourself a jacket and
some blankets.

BEN

Right with you.

He races to the chairs, picks up two and carries them
into the house.

LILLIAN

(to Toomer)

That poor boy's been living on
bases and in cities so long he's
never really tasted the South.
Thank you, Toomer. I'm gonna
fix you some sweet apple pie
this weekend.

CAMERA CLOSE on Toomer as he smiles embarrassedly.

45 EXT. FOLEY'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

45

Toomer and Ben in the wagon as it moves past the
store. A teenage boy with bright red hair sits on
the Coca Cola box. This is RED PETTUS.

RED

Hey, T-t-t-toomer. H-h-how you
doin'?

Toomer shakes the reins, urging the mule on faster.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

BEN

Who was that?

TOOMER

He ain' nobody. Name's Red Pettus.
 Him and his fambly hate a black
 m-m-man just for bein' black.
 They's shrimp folk. Ol' Red, you
 c-c-can't talk to him. He's mean
 'cause that's all he ever know.

The wagon turns the corner of the store and heads down
 a dirt road.

DISSOLVE TO:

A46 EXT. COFFIN POINT ROAD - DAY

A46

About a mile of road, dappled in sunlight. Enormous
 overhanging oaks line it on both sides. The wagon,
 carrying Toomer and Ben, makes its way slowly down
 the road through the magical light.

DISSOLVE TO:

B46 EXT. CLARENDON CAUSEWAY - DAY

B46

The wagon moves down a narrow causeway. On one side,
 salt marsh, on the other, a deep fresh-water pond.
 Water birds nest in the trees around its edge.

DISSOLVE TO:

46 EXT. TOOMER'S COMPOUND - DAY

46

It is situated on the end of causeway. A row of three
 beehives lines the road on either side. An old school
 bus, stripped of its wheels, its axles set on cinder
 blocks, rests under a large oak. The bus has been
 whitewashed but the logo of the State of Carolina still
 bleeds through. A short distance away is a field of
 wild flowers. Large oaks line the edge of the compound
 at the salt marsh. As the wagon moves near the bus,
 Ben and Toomer are surrounded by a pack of large dogs.
 From the cover of nearby trees, other dogs bark at them.

BEN

Wow, how many dogs you got here?

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

TOOMER

Don't rightly know. Twelve...
fourteen... Maybe more. Some of
'em comes and goes.

He stops the wagon.

BEN

(indicating the bus)
That where you live?

TOOMER

(smiling)
Home sweet home. Git down. You
gotta make friends with the Gray.

They get down from the wagon. Toomer tears the top
off a bag of dog food in the wagon.

BEN

Who's the Gray?

TOOMER

See him?

He points to the edge of the wood where a huge, lean
dog fixes a cold green eye on Ben. He growls deeply,
his lips curled back over his teeth.

BEN

What's he mad about?

TOOMER

He don't like white folk much.
(to the dog)
Come here, dog.

Gradually the Gray approaches, keeping a wary eye on
Ben. He reaches Toomer and rears on his hind legs.
Toomer laughs and scratches him behind the ear.
Toomer takes a biscuit from the bag in the wagon and
hands it to Ben.

TOOMER

(continuing)
Here, man. F-f-feed him this.

Ben holds out the biscuit tentatively.

TOOMER

(continuing;
laughing)
You ack like you feedin' an
alligator, boy.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED: (2)

46

BEN

He sure looks mean.

The Gray takes the biscuit, then returns to Toomer, licking his face.

TOOMER

What you talkin' about, m-m-mean?
He's not mean. He's just prejudiced.

Ben smiles, still keeping his distance from the animal.

DISSOLVE TO:

A47 EXT. NARROW CREEK - DAY

A47

Toomer and Ben in a bateau. Toomer poles the small boat down a still backwater overhung with Spanish moss. CAMERA INTERCUTS the boat moving with Ben's POV of deep green forest lining the channel, the patterns of lacy moss overhead, backlit by splintering sunlight. Ben smiles and leans back in the boat, breathing it all into his soul.

DISSOLVE TO:

B47 EXT. SALT MARSH - DAY

B47

Ben and Toomer pass a shrimp boat headed back to port. Ben waves to a deck hand who waves back. Toomer is rowing now.

DISSOLVE TO:

C47 EXT. RIVER LEADING TO THE OCEAN - TWILIGHT

C47

The boat moves down the river. In the distance, we can see waves breaking on a sandy point. Ben is rowing. Toomer points a direction.

47 OMITTED

47

&

&

48

48

49 EXT. DUNES - NIGHT

49

Toomer and Ben watch a large turtle laying her eggs in the sand.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

BEN
(whispering)
That is the biggest turtle I've
ever seen.

Toomer stoops down and catches four eggs as they drop
into the hole the turtle has dug.

TOOMER
Four for us to eat. Let Mama
have the rest.

Ben studies the turtle. A discharge comes from its
eyes.

BEN
She's crying.

TOOMER
You ever see a woman have a baby,
boy? It hurt. Let's leave her
be now.

They move down the beach.

50 EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

50

Toomer has built a fire and is cooking coffee, grits,
bacon and the turtle eggs they've collected. A ring
of stones surrounds the flames. Ben is on his back,
looking up at the stars in the clear night sky.

BEN
You know what, Toomer? This is
terrific.

Toomer smiles.

BEN
(continuing)
There's a shooting star!

TOOMER
(looking up)
Ain't no star, boy. That's tear
of Infant Jesus fallin' on account
of a sinful, hateful world.

He stirs the coffee, then leans back against a log.
A silence as he stares into the flames, Ben watching
him. He turns and smiles at Ben.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

TOOMER

(continuing)

Ain't this one fine night, white boy?

BEN

(smiling)

Yep, this is one fine night, Toomer.

51 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

51

Lillian, Mary Anne, Karen, Okra and Matt are seated on the back porch, watching Ben and Bull playing basketball. Bull wears a sweatshirt with "United States Marine Corps" printed on it. Ben shoots an arching set shot that swishes through the net. Cheers from the family. Boos from Karen.

BEN

The reason I'm gonna beat you, Dad, is because you're getting old.

BULL

Says you.

Bull dribbles toward the basket, holding his butt to Ben. Ben tries to swat the ball, but Bull holds him off with his free arm. Encouragement to Ben from the sidelines. Bull pivots, then hooks a shot that caroms off the backboard and into the basket. Boos from all but Karen who cheers her father.

BULL

(continuing)

How about that, sports fans?

Ben takes the ball behind the foul line, then makes a lightning quick move for the basket. Bull is caught off balance. He pokes Ben in the stomach as he leaves the ground, but the ball goes in.

LILLIAN

Foul! Foul! He's starting to cheat.

BEN

(smiling)

One to one.

52 ANGLE - DAY (LATER)

52

Bull moves easily.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

He sets himself and launches a two-hander toward the rim, that misses. Ben takes the ball, changing the direction of his dribble twice, gives Bull a head fake, a stutter step, then drives for the basket recklessly. He sinks a beauty. Cheers from the family.

BEN

Five four.

53 ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY (LATER)

53

Sweat pours down the faces of the two players. Ben's game is to wear out Bull with speed. Bull's game is a steady tactic of brute forward-moving force, making the most of his points with still set shots. If he does dribble, he does it cautiously, with Ben waving hands in front of him to throw the shot off. Bull goes for a hook shot. Ben tries to block it and receives an elbow in the eye. The shot is good. Cheers from Karen, boos from the rest of the family. Shouts of "Foull"

BULL

(cheering himself)

Eight six, hog! You're finished!

BEN

(taking the ball)

Says you.

54 ANGLE - DAY (LATER)

54

Ben lunges past his father, changing speeds, sweeping past him, fooling him with lightning-like maneuvers. Bull is beginning to slow down. He is no longer fast enough to be able to drive around Ben. Ben presses his advantage. Dribbling with both hands, he suddenly breaks, rushes down the court, and sinks a beauty. Cheers. Boos from Karen. Things are getting very serious now.

BEN

Nine nine. Don't worry, Colonel,
you can always get a disability
pension.

Bull takes the ball. He is breathing heavily, his lips are flecked with dried saliva. Sweat is pouring off his body. He makes two half-hearted feints toward the basket hoping to catch Ben off balance for a set shot, but Ben stays close to him, his chest almost against his father's.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

BULL

Last shot of the game, Jocko.
Give up?

BEN

Ha ha.

LILLIAN

Keep your hands up, Ben!

Bull snaps a look of irritation at Lillian. In an instant Ben slaps Bull on the left buttock, then sweeps low around his right side. Bull reflexively looks to his left side switching the ball to his right hand, which is exactly as Ben has planned it. He slaps the ball out of Bull's hand. Ben stands grinning, dribbling the ball. The family is cheering.

MATT

Whip his fanny, Ben.

Ben, taunting Bull, trying to get him into the open court where he knows he can drive around him.

BEN

It is I, The Great Bentini!

The family cheers. Bull's face is blood red with anger. His eyes have narrowed into a cold killing edge of personal fury.

MARY ANNE

(seeing the
expression on
Bull's face)

Watch it, Ben... he's getting
that look.

Ben moves toward his father, changing hands with each dribble, hoping to catch Bull with his weight shifted in the wrong direction.

BEN

Do you know, Dad, not one of us
has ever beaten you in a single
game. Not checkers, not dominoes,
not softball? Nothing!

BULL

Come on. Come on over here
to Daddy Bull.

BEN

It's all over, Colonel.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

54

Ben makes a sudden lunge, leaving his feet for a jump shot. As the ball leaves his hands, Bull lunges forward, driving his shoulder into Ben's stomach, knocking him down. The ball goes in neatly. He has beaten Bull for the first time in life. The family is wild with excitement. They descend on Ben as he gets to his feet, hugging and cheering him, forgetting the sweating, red-faced Bull who looks on with mute anger. Mary Anne moves to Bull.

MARY ANNE

You played a good game, Dad.

BULL

Get out of here before I knock every freckle off your face.

MARY ANNE

(her eyes filling
with tears)

That's mean. Just plain mean...

She runs into the house.

BULL

(to Ben)

Hey, Jocko. You gotta win by two baskets.

BEN

You said one!

BULL

Changed my mind. Let's go.

He picks up the ball.

LILLIAN

(marching toward him)

Oh, no. You're not going to cheat the boy out of his victory.

BULL

Who the hell asked you anything?

BEN

I'll play him, Mama.

LILLIAN

No, you won't!

(to Bull)

He beat you and it was beautiful!

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (3)

54

BULL
Lillian, get in the house before
I kick your butt.

LILLIAN
Just beautiful!

BULL
I mean it!

Bull starts for Lillian. Ben moves quickly, getting
between them, facing Bull.

BEN
Leave her alone.

KAREN
(screaming)
Don't you hurt Mama!

BULL
(to Lillian)
You better move, woman!

Lillian rushes around to the front of the house, crying. Matt and Karen stare at Bull and Ben who are now squared off to each other, face to face. Ben is trembling slightly.

BEN
You kinda like winning, don't you,
Dad?

Bull moves closer to Ben until they are almost nose to nose. He pokes Ben's chin with his forefinger.

BULL
Get smart with me, jocko, and
I'll kick your butt. Now guard
me. You gotta win by two.

BEN
(trying to keep
from crying; his
voice almost
breaking)
I'm not gonna guard you. I won.

BULL
Mama's boy.

55 EXT./INT. HOUSE - DAY

55

He throws the basketball into Ben's forehead. Ben turns and walks toward the house, but Bull follows him, throwing the basketball against his head, at intervals.

BULL
Mama's boy. I bet he's gonna cry.

Ben enters the house. Bull follows.

Ben holds a grip on himself, determined not to cry. Bull follows him up the stairs, continuing to bounce the ball off the back of Ben's head.

BULL
(continuing)
Come on, Mama's boy, Let's see you cry.

They arrive at Ben's room. Ben is fast losing control.

BULL
(continuing)
You're my favorite daughter, Ben. I swear to God. You're my sweetest little girl.

Ben whips around facing his father, his face wet with tears. His jaw tight with anger and humiliation.

BEN
Yeah, Colonel, and this little girl just whipped your ass, good!

He turns, enters his room and slams the door behind him.

56 INT. BEN'S ROOM - DAY

56

Ben rushes to the bed and covers his head with a pillow, trying desperately to stifle the sobs now finding voice.

DISSOLVE TO:

57 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

57

It is raining. Ben is fully dressed, asleep, with his face to the wall.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

From outside, at the garage we HEAR the SOUND of a BASKETBALL being thrown at the goal. Ben wakes, listens a moment to the sound, then gets up and walks to the window and looks out. CAMERA TO HIS POV of Bull shooting baskets beneath the night light. The rest of the house is silent. Ben continues to watch. Lillian enters the room and comes up behind him. Ben acknowledges her presence and they both watch silently.

LILLIAN

How you feelin', sugah?

BEN

I'm okay, Mama. How're you?

LILLIAN

I'll live through the night.

She moves from the window, sits on his bed and lights a Lucky Strike. Ben sits on his desk, puts his feet on a chair and begins tying and untying his gym shoes, thoughtlessly; a nervous mannerism that has long worried Lillian. A silence, then Ben finally speaks.

BEN

Know what I was thinking?

Lillian shakes her head.

BEN

(continuing)

I was praying we'd go to war, so King Kong out there could fight somebody besides me.

LILLIAN

Shame on you. That's a terrible thing to say. Your father loves you very much.

BEN

Ha! He's got a fabulous way of showing it.

A silence, as he continues to tie and untie his laces.

LILLIAN

You're going to cut off all your circulation doing that.

*

BEN

Do you love him?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

LILLIAN

Of course.

BEN

I think he treats you crappy.

LILLIAN

(forcing a smile)

Harsh words were never fatal to anyone.

BEN

What about harsh kicks, Mama?
He would have...

LILLIAN

But he didn't. Ben, your father has never hit me during our entire married life. Oh, Ben, what happened today won't make any difference in five years. He does what he does because he loves you and he just wants you to be the best.

BEN

(dancing around the
room, throwing
punches)Oh sure. 'I love you, Ben.' Punch!
'I want you to be the best, Ben.'
Kick! 'I think you're great, Ben.'
Bounce a basket ball off my head. *

Lillian smiles and shakes her head.

LILLIAN

Come here.

She takes Ben to the window. With their arms around each other's waist, they look down at Bull who continues to practice; CAMERA INTERCUTS their faces and their POV of Bull, as he doggedly continues shooting.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Do you know why he's down there now?

BEN

No, ma'am.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:- (2)

57

LILLIAN

He's admitting to you that the gap is closing, that he has to practice if he's going to beat you from now on. He's admitting he's getting older. That's the hardest thing in the world for a man like Bull.

BEN

Mama, that doesn't change anything!

LILLIAN

It should. He knows you're up here, watching him. You've got a strange father, Ben. It's the only way he knows how to say, 'I'm sorry, son.

*

She walks to the door and turns.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

There isn't another person in God's good world he'd do that for, Benjy. Try to think of that when you feel he doesn't love you.

She exits. Ben turns to the window and looks down at Bull. CAMERA INTERCUTTING his face and his POV of Bull. CAMERA MOVES CLOSE IN on Ben's face as he studies his father, trying to make some sense out of the man.

58 INT. READY ROOM, 312 SQUADRON - DAY

58

The pilots of the 312th are assembled, waiting for the arrival of Bull. The room buzzes with nervous anticipation. On the walls of the room are pictures of planes and squadron members of bygone days. The men are dressed in their flight suits. High up, near the ceiling, behind the rostrum at the end of the room, is a large plaque. On it, a picture of a grotesque werewolf with its fangs dripping blood. Above the face: the number "312," below it, a motto: "Come to fight. Come to win." Bull and his first sergeant enter. The room goes silent immediately. Bull acknowledges this sign of respect and takes his place behind the rostrum. He is dressed in a flying suit over which he wears his tattered, leather flight jacket. The pilots settle into their chairs. Finally, Bull begins to speak, his eyes hard, not a trace of a smile.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

BULL

Good morning. You men now have the privilege of serving under the meanest, toughest, screamingest, squadron commander in the Marine Corps. Me! In the next couple of months you're going to get so good at flying the F-4, you're gonna forget your wives and kids, your homes, and the fact that the White Sox are going to win the American League pennant. Now I don't want you to consider me as just your commanding officer. I want you to look on me like I was... well... God. If I say something you pretend it's coming from the burning bush. We are members of the proudest, most elite group of fighting men in the world. We are Marines! Marine Corps fighter pilots! We have no other function. That is our mission and you are either going to hack it or pack it. Do you read me? Now, I want obedience and devotion to duty, but there is one kind of Marine I hate, I don't want nobody sniffin' my farts. I hate fart sniffers worse than I hate all the Russians in the Kremlin.

*

*

*

The men sit transfixed. There is no coughing or shuffling.

BULL (continuing)

Within thirty days I am going to lead the toughest, flyingest, sons-of-bitches in the world. The 312 Werewolf Squadron is going to make history, or it will die trying. You're flying with Bull Meechum now and I kid you not, this is the eye of the storm. Welcome aboard.

He exits. The men remain frozen in the chairs, afraid to move for some moments.

59 EXT. READY ROOM - FLIGHT LINE - DAY

59

Bull, walking away from the building, smiles to himself in the reflection of a window.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

BULL
(to himself)
Um-um! The silver-tongued devil
strikes again!

He walks toward the flight line where two F-4's are going through pre-flight inspection.

60 EXT. BREEZEWAY - BEAUFORT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

60

The school is a red brick building. A breezeway parallel to the main structure connects two wings. Ben and Mary Anne walk down the breezeway, loaded with books. Both are nervous and feel all the other students' eyes are on them.

MARY ANNE
God, they're all staring at us
like we're freaks or something.

BEN
They're not! Look, why don't you
pick someone out and go up to them
and say, 'Hi, I'm Mary Anne Meechum.
I'm new here and I'd like you for a
friend.' Just like that.

MARY ANNE
Why don't you?

BEN
Look... look at that.

He indicates ANSLEY MATTHEWS and JIM DON COOPER approaching, their arms around each other. They are archetypes; Ansley, a golden-skinned, golden-haired cheerleader and Jim Don the football team's Adonis. Ben can't take his eyes off Ansley.

BEN
(continuing)
That's Ansley Matthews and Jim Don
Cooper, the varsity fullback.

MARY ANNE
So what?

BEN
Jesus, I'm in love.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

MARY ANNE
Have you told him yet?

BEN
Funny. Very funny.

MARY ANNE
(enviously)
Mr. and Mrs. Neanderthal. Cute.

61 OMITTED

61

&

&

62

62

63 EXT. MEECHUM GARAGE - DAY

63

Bull and Ben shooting baskets. Bull has the ball and is driving for the basket. Ben is covering him. Matt watches from the porch.

BULL
That's no defense, hog. Closer... closer! I ain't gonna get in your pants. That's it! Stick to me. How the hell you gonna make the team if you chicken out on my drive?

Ben deftly knocks the ball out of Bull's hand, dribbles it away.

BULL
(continuing)
Sonofabitch! That's it, that's it! Lemme have it again.

Ben passes him the ball and the game begins again with Bull driving hard and Ben defending.

BULL
(continuing)
Keep your hands up, blind me, blind me. That's it. Butterflies all over. When I go for it, hit me!

Bull drives for the basket. He leaps. Ben dives into him as he leaves the ground. Bull makes the basket, but lands in a heap, his legs knocked out from under him.

MATT
Foul!

BULL
'Foul,' hell! That's survival!
(to Ben)
That's it. Now you're getting the knack.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

CAMERA CLOSE ON Lillian at the kitchen window shaking her head, seeing what Ben is becoming under Bull's instruction.

64 EXT. SKY - DAY

64

Two of Bull's squadron of F-4's are engaged in simulated combat maneuvers, while Bull watches from his plane. The two planes are turning in a wide arc, the lead plane exposing its belly.

BULL (V.O.)

Nonono! You idiot! What's the matter with you, Milkman?

64A INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY

64A

BULL

Watch your belly!

64B EXT. SKY - DAY

64B

The lead plane suddenly flips over.

BULL (V.O.)

That's it. Now take him into the sun.

MILKMAN (V.O.)

Roger.

Milkman begins his climb, the chase plane, Red Ryder, following closely.

64C INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY

64C

BULL

Turn... turn!

64D EXT. SKY - DAY

64D

Milkman does not turn. The chase plane lines up on his tail.

(CONTINUED)

64D CONTINUED: 64D

RED RYDER (V.O.)
I'll take a shot... right there!

64E INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 64E

BULL
Fox two. Red Ryder. You're dead,
Milkman. Go lay down and die.
Dummy! I told you, watch your
six!

Bull turns and looks to his right. His eyes go wide
with shock.

64F EXT. SKY - BULL'S POV - DAY 64F

Two F-4's are headed straight for him, closing canopy
to canopy... almost touching.

65 INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 65

BULL
Jesus! Heads up! Heads up!

66 EXT. SKY - DAY 66

At the last moment the planes pull apart and cross each
other going in opposite directions, narrowly missing
each other and Bull as well.

67 INT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 67

BULL
Oh, my God. Wake up! You're
supposed to kill the bogy not
each other, and not your leader.
Now settle down. Bleed the
bogy! One engaged, one covering.
And kill! Kill!

68 EXT. BULL'S PLANE - DAY 68

He does a sharp left turn and noses down to where
another pair of planes is engaged.

69 OMITTED 69

70 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

70

Ben is asleep. The clock on the nightstand reads four. Bull enters carrying a large gift-wrapped package, moves to the bed and shakes Ben awake.

BULL

(whispering)

Hey, shake it out, hog.

BEN

What's the matter?

(looks at the clock)

God, Dad, it's four o'clock!

BULL

(putting the package
on Ben's chest)

Happy birthday, boy.

BEN

You woke me up at four in the morning to give me my birthday present?

BULL

Uh-huh.

BEN

What is it?

BULL

It's a training bra. Open it.
I've been saving it for you for
eighteen years.

Ben rips the package open and takes out Bull's old leather flight jacket, with a fur collar and the patch of the Red Cobra squadron on the sleeve.

BEN

Wow!

Ben puts the jacket on.

BULL

(pauses, smiling)

Looks good. That was my first.
I wore it in WW Two when I flew
with the Cobras.

Ben puts the jacket on and rubs the old leather with his hands. The jacket is much too big for him.

BEN

It's great, Dad. Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

BULL

Don't make 'em like that anymore.
Part of the old corps.

A moment of embarrassed silence.

BULL

(continuing)

Christ, you're eighteen, Ben. I
woke up thinking about the day
you were born. I was on a hop.
All I heard when I landed was
that your mother was in the
hospital. I went crazy. Hit
a hundred miles an hour getting
there... with the MP's chasing
me.

(he laughs)

I was knocking nurses out of the
way, running over small children,
crashing into patients on their
way to the operating room...

He and Ben laugh.

BULL

(continuing)

You were screaming your head off.
I'm banging on the window, trying
to get your attention, bragging
to everybody who'd listen that
the toughest little fighter pilot
in the world had been born. Then
I ran down to see your mother,
expecting her to look like
horseshit from hell after punching
you out of her system. Hell, she
was sitting up, looking prettier
than I'd ever seen her.

(a silence)

Eighteen years ago. Eighteen
years ago today. I was twenty-
three.

A silence as he looks at Ben.

BEN

I've got to register for the draft
in the next ten days.

BULL

(nodding)

I'll take you down.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

70

BULL (CONT'D)
(he looks at his
watch)

I gotta get to the base. Hey, I
want you to meet me at the club
at 1700 for a little celebration,
okay?

BEN

Okay.

BULL

Tell your mama we'll be home for
supper and the cake cutting at
1830. And wear a coat and tie,
sportsfans.

BEN

Yes, sir.

Bull exits.

CAMERA CLOSE ON Ben. He smiles, shakes his head, then
leans back against the pillows. His hands move, feel-
ing the leather of the old jacket. He nuzzles into
the fur collar, smelling deeply of his father and the
past.

71 OMITTED
thru
86

71
thru
86

87 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

87

PINKIE is doing irreparable damage to the French
language, reading "The Necklace" by de Maupassant.
Ben opens a letter and puts it inside his French book
and reads. The VOICE of Pinkie FADES as Lillian's
VOICE COMES UP.

LILLIAN (V.O.)
'My dear son, my dear Ben, my
friend who becomes a man
today. I wanted to write you
a letter about being a man and
what that means in the fullest
sense. I wanted to tell you
that gentleness is the quality
I have come to admire most in men, but
then I remembered how gentle
you were.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

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

So I decided to write something else. It's just this; I want you to know that whatever you do or wherever you go, you walk with my blessings and love.'

Her VOICE CONTINUES as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

88 EXT. PATH ALONG THE MARSH - DAY

88

Ben walks reading the letter. The backlight on the marsh grass and water sparkles magically. He carries his school books. He is alone in this moment.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

'I've had my regrets and many sadnesses, but I will never regret the night you were born. I thought I knew about love and the boundaries of love until I raised you for these past eighteen years. I knew nothing about love. This has been your gift to me. Happy birthday. Mama.'

CAMERA CLOSE ON Ben's face as he looks up from the letter. Tears well in the corners of his eyes. He is smiling.

89 INT. OFFICERS' CLUB - DAY

89

Various pilots sitting around the bar. The talk and laughter are loud. This is the happy hour. Men only. Ben, dressed in a blue suit, wearing a tie, is seated at a table with Bull and Virgil. His hair is combed into a moderately-high pompadour and has the slick appearance of an overgenerous application of Wildroot Creme Oil. There are white traces on the back of his head where he hasn't rubbed it in fully. He is grinning from ear to ear.

BULL

What the hell you grinnin' about?

BEN

This is really my day. I made the varsity team this afternoon.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

BULL

'Course you did! You only had
the greatest coach in the world.

VIRGIL

(shaking Ben's hand)
Congratulations, Ben. And
congratulations on your
eighteenth.

BEN

Thanks, Colonel.

BULL

What'll you have?

BEN

Coke, Dad.

BULL

I didn't bring you over here to
drink soda pop. You're old
enough to drink now.

BEN

Mom will get mad, Dad. Besides,
I'm in training now.

VIRGIL

If the boy doesn't want to drink...

BULL

Well, Ben, there's those that
got 'em and those that don't.

BEN

What?

BULL

Gonads, son. Big brass ones.

Ben rises to the challenge. He signals the WAITER.

BEN

Waiter, I'll have a double
martini on the rocks with a
twist of lemon.

The Waiter nods and moves to the bar.

BULL

You know what a double martini
is?

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: (2)

89

BEN

Sure!

BULL

What?

VIRGIL

Leave him alone.

BEN

It's made out of liquor.

The Waiter arrives with the drink and puts it on the table.

WAITER

You got an I.D., son?

BEN

(in his toughest
voice)

Sure I got an I.D.

He takes the card from his wallet and hands it to the Waiter. The Waiter studies it for a moment.

WAITER

Is this the eleventh?

BEN

All day.

WAITER

(loud enough for the
whole room to hear)

Happy birthday, kid.

Ben picks up his glass. Bull rises to his feet, lifting his own glass and speaking to the other Marines in the bar.

BULL

Gentlemen, I would like you to join me in a toast to my oldest son, who is eighteen today. He has just ordered his first drink and before he begins drinking it, I would like to wish him a long life, a wife as fine as his mother, and a son as fine as he has been. To my son!

The Marines cheer.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: (3)

89

Ben clinks his glass against Bull's, then Virgil's,
then downs the drink in one pass.

BULL
(continuing)
How is it, big man?

BEN
(trying to hide
his reaction)
I've tasted better, but it's fit
to drink. Let's have another.
Waiter!

DISSOLVE TO:

90 OMITTED
thru
92

90
thru
92

93 SAME - LATER

93

Ben obviously pissed. Bull and Virgil watching the
effects. Ben drinks. There are three empty glasses
in front of him.

VIRGIL
I'd slow down a bit, Ben. That's
an alligator of a drink.

BEN
(with great swagger)
That's why I ordered it, Virgil.

BULL
That's Colonel Hedgepath to you,
mister.

BEN
Sorry. Hey, this is great, really
great.

He empties his glass.

BULL
Waiter, another drink for my son.

VIRGIL
Lillian'll scalp you, Bull.

The Waiter arrives with the drink.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

Ben quickly picks it up and begins drinking. He puts his arm around Virgil.

BEN

Heck, Virge. I don't even have a buzz on. Hey, this is great, Dad, really great.

BULL

You like it, huh?

BEN

(taking a second drink)

Know what I think, Dad?

BULL

No, what?

BEN

I think it's great. I think it's really great. Just sitting here drinking with the Marines. I think it's great. I think it's really great. Have another drink, Dad. You, too, Virge. This one's on me.

He drains his glass.

94 INT. MEECHUM DINING ROOM - NIGHT

94

Presents piled on chairs. The table arranged with a large cake and party favors. Bull's CAR ENTERS the DRIVE. Okra barks.

MARY ANNE

Here they are!

LILLIAN

Turn out the light.

The SOUND of the CAR DOOR OPENING and CLOSING. Lillian lights the candles.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Remember now. Soon as I say 'now,' Mary Anne, on with the lights and then we start singing. Right?

The children nod. From outside, the SOUND of STEPS on the porch.

95 ANGLE ON DOOR

95

The door opens and the shadowed figures of Ben and Bull enter.

LILLIAN

Now!

Mary Anne flicks on the lights, and the family begins to sing at the top of their voices. Voices that gradually fade as they behold the spectacle entering the kitchen. Bull carries Ben, dead drunk, and passed out, on his back. Silence.

BULL

On behalf of my illustrious though somewhat smashed son, I thank you for this joyous display. However, as the hour is late and seeing as how Ben has made the varsity basketball team today, he is in training and badly in need of rest. Therefore, I will take him to bed where he can partake of same straightaway. We thank you all and we love you.

He carries Ben up the stairs. CAMERA ON the shocked faces of the family. Mary Anne is nodding her head with her familiar "I knew it" gesture. Lillian sits at the table and shakes her head. Mary Anne stares at the cake and sings the end of the song.

MARY ANNE

Happy birthday, son of Santini,
Happy birthday to you.

She sticks her hand into the cake, grabs out a great lump and sticks it into her mouth. Karen and Matthew giggle.

96 INT. BULL AND LILLIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

96

Lillian is turned to the wall, away from Bull, awake. Bull is smoking a cigar and staring at the ceiling. A long silence, as Bull blows smoke rings.

BULL

You know, Lil, he's got it all.
He's fast. He's got balance.
He's got smarts... but... but
you know what I think, Lil?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

BULL (CONT'D)

I think you gentled him too much.
It screws up his timing, his
instincts. If there's one gift
I want to give my sons, it's the
gift of fury, Lil. Yep, that's
right. Fury. I want them to
gobble up the world. Eat life,
or it'll eat them. Lil? Lillian...?

CAMERA CLOSE ON her face, still turned away from him,
to the wall. She closes her eyes pretending to be
asleep. Bull continues to smoke, staring at the
ceiling. The house is silent around them.

DISSOLVE TO:

97 EXT. CREEK - SUNSET

97

Toomer poles the bateau while Ben fishes. It is a
magical moment; the water redolent with the last rays
of the setting sun, the trees hanging heavily over
the creek, garlanded with Spanish moss. Water birds
nest in the trees. Silence, except for the dripping
of water off Toomer's pole.

BEN (V.O.)

They're just not biting, Toomer.

TOOMER (V.O.)

What you got in there?

BEN (V.O.)

That shrimp we had left over.

TOOMER (V.O.)

(shaking his head
doubtfully)

Mr. Catfish, he kinda finicky
'bout supper. If you had a
ball of chicken guts down there,
this ol' boat be full of catfish.

(now obviously
putting Ben on)

An' after Mr. Catfish been caught,
we jest leave them ol' guts inside
an' fry 'em all together. Um-um!
Thass the best fishchicken you
ever et. Li'l flour, li'l bacon
grease in the pan...

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED:

97

BEN (V.O.)

Toomer, you are the most boldfaced
natural born liar...

TOOMER (V.O.)

(grinning)

Hush, now. You scarin' the fish.

Ben shakes his head. Toomer laughs softly. CAMERA TO
A LONG SHOT of the two of them, gliding slowly down
the creek in the soft light. Ben is now laughing as
well. Some of the birds fly off.

DISSOLVE TO:

98 EXT. FLOWER FIELD - DAY

98

Ben and Toomer move through the field, cutting flowers.
Ben is somewhat apprehensive about the bees flying
around him.

He ducks back and forth from time to time to avoid them.
Toomer spots his antics and laughs.

TOOMER

What you dancin' like that for?
Bee ain' gonna mess with you.
He just doin' his job. Bee's like
the preacher man. He go from the
girl flower to the boy flower, an'
every place he touch, they be
married an' they say, 'Thank you,
preacher bee, have some honey for
pay.' That's the perfec' way of
it.

BEN

(grinning)

Toomer, you're a poet, you know
that?

TOOMER

Ain' every natural born liar?

They laugh and continue through the field, cutting
flowers.

DISSOLVE TO:

99 INT. MEECHUM KITCHEN - DAY

99

Bull is seated at the kitchen counter, reading the paper. Arrabelle is finishing the dishes. Lillian is cutting the crusts from several pies. Ben comes in, takes a carton of milk from the refrigerator and drinks from it. Matt is opening a can of peaches. The RADIO is ON; BALL SCORES FOLLOWED BY MUSIC.

ARRABELLE

(wiping her hands
and putting on her
coat)

Well, I see you folks with the
sun. Good luck, Ben.

BEN

Thanks, Arrabelle.

BULL

(without looking up
from his paper;
to Lillian)

Better check her purse for silver
before she leaves.

Arrabelle laughs.

ARRABELLE

'Bye, Miz Meechum.

LILLIAN

'Bye, Arrabelle. See you tomorrow.

ARRABELLE

'Bye, Captain.

Bull does not look up. Arrabelle exits. Ben, out of nervousness, begins taking imaginary jump shots against the kitchen wall.

BULL

Get off your feet. Go take a
nap.

BEN

This helps me relax.

BULL

Well, it doesn't help me relax.
Scram.

As Ben exits, Mary Anne enters.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

MARY ANNE

(with pointed
exaggeration)

I couldn't sleep last night. I
was so worried about the big game.
I woke up with a cold sweat and
fever. And three different types
of cancer. And a touch of rabies.

Ben makes a face at her and exits. Karen enters,
carrying a term paper.

KAREN

Daddy, I got an A on my English
theme. Would you like to read
it?

BULL

I'm reading the paper.

MATT

Dad, I can eat a whole can
of peaches in less than sixty
seconds. Wanna bet me?

Bull, annoyed, looks at Lillian, then exits to the
porch.

LILLIAN

You two go do your homework
so you'll have it done by the
time we leave for the game.
Off with you now.

Karen and Matt exit.

LILLIAN

(continuing;
to Mary Anne)

Your father's very nervous
about the game. Now you've
got to interpret the signals
he gives off.

MARY ANNE

No problem. He always gives
off the signals of a psychopathic
killer, so it really doesn't
matter how you interpret them.

LILLIAN

Shame on you.

Mary Anne takes an apple from the bowl on the table
and exits to the porch with a Saturday Evening Post.

100 EXT. PORCH - DAY

100

Bull is reading the paper. Mary Anne arrives, picks a spot directly across from Bull and begins thumbing through the pages of her magazine.

MARY ANNE

Hey, Dad, why do you love me more than your other children?

BULL

Beat it. I'm reading the sports page.

No response from behind the paper.

MARY ANNE

Let's have a conversation, Dad. Let's bare our souls and get to know one another.

BULL

I don't want you to get to know me. I like being an enigma. Like a chink. Now scram.

MARY ANNE

Am I a Meechum, Dad? Can girls be real Meechums? Girls without jump shots? Or am I a simple form of Meechum? Like in biology. Mary Anne: the one-celled Meechum.

BULL

Mary Anne, scram. I'm starting to lose my temper. Lillian?

Mary Anne kneels at Bull's feet and puts her arms around his legs.

MARY ANNE

Dad, I'm pregnant.

Bull doesn't respond.

MARY ANNE

(continuing)

I'm pregnant by a Negro, Daddy. His name is Rufus. Daddy? I didn't want to tell you, but since we're baring our souls to each other... Rufus is a pacifist, Daddy. A pacifist homosexual.

Bull throws down the paper.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

BULL

Jesus H. Christ! Lillian, I'm
going to the club! I'll see
y'all at the game. I can't stand
it around here.

He walks to the car. Mary Anne follows him.

MARY ANNE

But you'll get to like him after
a while, Dad. Dwarfs are easy
to like. Especially when they're
bald. And crosseyed. Dad? Dad?

Bull drives off. Mary Anne shrugs.

MARY ANNE

(continuing)

I just love these heart-to-hearts.

She exits.

101 OMITTED

101

102 INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

102

Ben ties and unties his shoes nervously. ART is stand-
ing in front of the mirror combing his hair. Pinkie is
rubbing balm on his knee. A TRANSISTOR is TUNED to the
Big Ape. MUSIC and DISC JOCKEY BLARE through the
locker room. Jim Don is nervously banging a basketball
against a locker. Art is drinking water in large gulps.
MUMFORD is checking himself in the mirror, making sure
his jersey is just right. Another BOY is reading a
comic book. Beyond the locker room, from the gym,
the SOUND of the high school BAND and the VOICES of
the CROWD.

PINKIE

Jim Don, I hear Lou Ellen Alston's
got the hot uterus for you.

MUMFORD

What's good about that? She's
peanut butter. Spreads smooth
and easy.

PINKIE

Hell, she's only been screwed
twice that I know of. Once by
the football team and once by
the band.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

Laughter.

JIM DON

(to Pinkie)

T.C. says he can take your Ford
any day of the week and twice
on Saturday.

PINKIE

Bullshit. I got more horses
under that hood than a John
Wayne movie.

JIM DON

Meechum, you shine tonight with
some of them city moves, I might
let you have a taste of Ansley.
I seen you lookin' at her like
a hound at hamburger.

Laughter and jeering from the boys.

BEN

That's crazy! I never...

Bull enters. He is red-faced, somewhat drunk. He is
wearing civilian clothes.

BULL

Hey, Ben, there are scouts
from four different colleges
out there tonight!

BEN

(utterly embarrassed)

Dad, I'm trying to get ready.

BILL

We want forty big ones tonight
at least.

PINKIE

We'll help him get 'em,
Colonel.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: (2)

102

BULL

Remember, a great ballplayer has
his best games against the best
teams.

BEN

I will, Dad. Thanks.

Bull weaves out. A silence.

BEN

(continuing;
an embarrassed
smile)

He gets excited at times like
this.

ART

You think he's excited. My dad
hasn't taken a crap for three
days.

JIM DON

Boy, he's really tanked up.

BEN

Naw, he's just excited.

JIM DON

Shit. I know a drunk when I see
one.

COACH SPINKS enters. He's a big man. He carries a
bottle of RC in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

SPINKS

Okay, pay attention. I want you
boys to hit that court hungry.
I want you starving! I want us
to win, and win big. I want us
to make our school proud.

(roaring)

I want us to make our parents
proud, our grandparents proud,
our first and second cousins
proud, our poontang proud and
ourselves proud. Do y'all hear
what I'm sayin'?

THE TEAM

(thunderously)

Yes, sir!

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: (3)

102

A loud BUZZER.

SPINKS

Okay, get out there and eat
'em up!

The boys race out of the locker room.

THE TEAM

Yeah, yeah, yeah!

Spinks follows.

103 INT. GYM - NIGHT

103

The boys break through the double doors and crash through a paper hoop that Ansley and another CHEER-LEADER are holding. The team is greeted by four hundred voices. They break for the far end of the court, form two lines, and begin warming up with lay-ups. Mr. Dacus is at the scorer's table with another MAN. Matt and Karen wave at Ben, frantically trying to get his attention with no success. Sammy waves as well with the same result. Bull and Lillian, in the fourth row above the scorer's table, sit with Virgil and several other pilots from the squadron. Mary Ann sits apart from them, a sour look on her face.

At the jump center a boy from the West Charleston team, PEANUT ABBOT, grabs Ben by the belt, from behind.

ABBOT

You ain't going to score single
point tonight, Meechum, 'cause
I'm gonna be on you like stink
on shit.

BEN

(smiling)

Stink is the word.

A WHISTLE BLOWS. The boys position themselves. SAUNDERS, the West Charleston center, and Art, move to the circle. Another WHISTLE. The ball is tossed. Saunders tips it to Abbot, but Ben intercepts, breaks for the bucket. Abbot stays beside him, but at the last minute, Ben reverse dribbles and lays up the first two points of the game. The crowd erupts. The scoreboard reads "Home two, Visitors zero." Abbot takes the ball out, angry and embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

A Charleston GUARD motions for the ball as the players are moving toward the opposite end of the court. The ball leaves Abbot's hands. Ben cuts between two guards, intercepts the ball once more, and scores the second lay-up in less than the first twelve seconds of the game. The crowd goes wild. Bull is screaming at the top of his lungs.

104 SAME - LATER

104

CAMERA ON the scoreboard. It reads, "Home eight, Visitors ten." CAMERA now TO Saunders who works the pivot with grace and pure instinct. He scores beautifully with a turnaround jump shot. The scoreboard goes to "Visitors: twelve." Ben shakes his head. The West Charleston section is cheering loudly and applauding. Bull bangs his feet against the bench and shouts:

BULL

Defense, Meechum, you bum! Defense!

Ben throws a glance at Bull, then turns back to the game, his teeth clenched.

105 OMITTED
thru
107

105
thru
107

108 SAME - LATER

108

Saunders fakes Art, wheels around him and soars up for a high dunk shot. The West Charleston section cheers loudly.

109 SAME - LATER

109

Coming down court, Ben gets by Abbot and drives straight at Saunders, who moves to stuff the lay-up. Ben slides the ball to Art, who scores with a clear lay-up. The scoreboard reads, "Home, eighteen; Visitors, twenty." The Beaufort section cheers loudly. The band plays.

110 SAME - LATER

110

Ben drives for the basket, jumps, makes the shot, but is fouled by Abbot.

(CONTINUED)

- 110 CONTINUED: 110
- Jeers, boos... reprimand by the referee.
- BULL
(screaming, his
hands cupped
over his lips)
Foul!... Foul!... Foul!
- 111 OMITTED 111
- 112 SAME - LATER 112
- Ben drives savagely down the court and sinks a beauty. The antagonism grows between Ben and Abbot, Abbot pressing Ben as much as he can.
- 113 OMITTED 113
- 114 SAME - LATER 114
- Saunders scores with a beautiful long shot. Ben shakes his head and smiles.
- 115 SAME - LATER 115
- Passing between Ben, Art and Pinkie, finally the ball is passed to Ben who drives for the basket. He leaps, is fouled by Abbot and misses the shot. The crowd jeers. The referee signals foul.
- BULL
Look... Look at that sonofabitch!
- Lillian is obviously embarrassed. Ben picks himself up and as he does so, Saunders pats him on the behind in a gesture of brotherhood. Ben nods and smiles.
- 116 SAME - LATER 116
- A SERIES of SLOW MOTION SHOTS of Ben and Saunders, MATCHING SHOT FOR SHOT as they make baskets. A ballet of pure lyric movement and grace. The game is really between the two of them. Through the sequence, the scoreboard reads: "Second half. Home, forty-two; Visitors, forty-four."

- 110 CONTINUED: 110
- Jeers, boos... reprimand by the referee.
- BULL
(screaming, his
hands cupped
over his lips)
Foul!... Foul!... Foul!
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of pure lyric movement and grace. The game is really
between the two of them. Through the sequence, the
scoreboard reads: "Second half. Home, forty-two;
Visitors, forty-four."

117 SAME - LATER

117

Ben dribbling. Abbot close on him.

ABBOT

Meechum, I'm takin' you outta
the game, bulldozer style.

BEN

It's a shame the rest of you
doesn't work as good as your
mouth.

He passes to Jim Don, then breaks for the basket. Jim Don's pass is long and Ben has to spring for it. He catches the ball and shoots at the same instant, his forward movement taking him out of bounds. The ball rolls around the rim and drops out. Ben falls into a photographer and some band members at the end of the court.

Abbot follows and cracks into the back of his head with his forearm, an obviously intentional move.

Chaos! The crowd is screaming, jeering. Bull moves to Ben. One of the referees is keeping Jim Don from swinging at Abbot. The noise is deafening. A referee is lifting Ben from the wreckage. Ben tries to clear his head. He sees Bull coming toward him from out of the stands. Ben's teammates move in and help him up. The referee signals two foul shots for an intentional foul.

ART

You okay?

BEN

(still trying to
clear his head)

Sure.

PINKIE

He did that on purpose.

SPINKS

Okay, Meechum?

BEN

Sure. I'm... I'm fine, coach.

Spinks signals time. Bull reaches Ben.

BULL

Get that punk! Put him on the
deck!

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

SPINKS

You all right, poot?

BEN

Sure, I'm fine.

BULL

Get him. Or I'm gonna get you!

A WHISTLE is BLOWN and the game resumes. Ben walks to the foul line, takes his two shots and misses them both. The players are now in motion.

BULL

(continuing)

Get him, or don't come home!

Bull keeps shouting at him. CAMERA INTERCUTS this action with Lillian's reaction. Saunders scores. Pinkie takes the ball out of bounds and passes it to Ben.

BULL

(continuing)

Get him!

Ben's eyes narrow on Abbot. He dribbles toward him. As he nears him, he suddenly stops and flips the ball directly into Abbot's hands, then with a flourish of his arm offers Abbot the whole court and an easy lay-up. Controlling his initial surprise, Abbot breaks for the basket. Ben trails him. Abbot jumps for his shot. At the apex of his jump, Ben cuts Abbot's feet from under him. Abbot somersaults wildly, dangerously out of control. He comes down hard, his arm hitting the floor first, then his head. The crack of a broken bone shoots through the gym. Ben is tackled by one of the Charleston forwards who flails him with both fists. WHISTLES BLOW. Benches empty. Coaches sprint to the action. Spinks wrestles Jim Don to the floor. Bull cheers. The PA VOICE SHOUTS:

P.A. VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, please
remain in your seats. Please!

118 OMITTED

118

119 INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

119

Ben is seated on the locker room bench, arms folded on his thighs, head buried in his arms, weeping silently.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

Spinks enters and moves to him.

SPINKS

Abbot's got a broken arm, pissant.

BEN

(between his
choked sobs)

I'm sorry... Oh, God, I'm so sorry.

SPINKS

You messed up bad, boy.

BEN

I know.

SPINKS

This team had a chance tonight
against a school that's been
crappin' on us for ten years.
Then along comes this idiot who
doesn't have the guts to tell
his father to take a flying jump
when that father is just about
as wrong as he can be. What do
you think I ought to do about it?

BEN

Kill me.

SPINKS

How about if I just dump you from
the team for the rest of the season?
You think that's fair?

BEN

Yes, sir.

SPINKS

Well, I don't. I don't think it's
a fair exchange for a broken arm.
But we'll just leave it at that.

BEN

Yes, sir.

Spinks walks to the door, then turns. He is smiling.

SPINKS

Damn shame, you're really good,
Ben. See you in school, pissant.
This isn't the end of the world.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (2)

119

He exits. Ben stares at the number on his shirt, then suddenly tears it off. From the gym, the SOUND of the game resuming. CHEERS, SHOUTS...

120 EXT. LANDING - NIGHT

120

Ben is leaning over the railing looking down into the water, losing himself in the patterns and reflections of light. He hears a NOISE behind him and turns. Lillian moves to him down the long boardwalk. She forces a smile, puts her arm around him. They both turn and look out over the vast expanse of marsh. A silence.

BEN

You know, Mom, I keep having this fantasy. I go into the corps and I become a fighter pilot. I join Dad's squadron, and we have dogfights at thirty thousand feet. Little by little, I get better. And then one day I end up on his tail, coming down on him from the sun. He knows I've got him. He's finished. He's right there in my sights. ... then... then... I just smile and let him go.

*

*

Lillian, tears running down her cheeks, puts her finger to his lips.

LILLIAN

Oh, Ben... Hush, sugah.

She strokes his hair. She shakes her head. A gesture of helplessness. Ben turns to the water once more. They are both at a loss for words.

121 INT. SHRIMP HEADING SHED - DAY

121

This shed sits at the end of Hobie Simms' shrimp boat landing. Twelve blacks stand on each side of the shrimp heading table, taking shrimp from the center of the table, heading them with their fingers and throwing the headed shrimp into buckets.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

They are joking with each other and speaking Gulla. Hobie Simms spreads the shrimp on the table for the headers. Through the opening we can SEE shrimp boats at dock. At the end of the landing four men are loading bushels of shrimp onto a push cart. Red Pettus is one of the men. Alongside the shed, running the length of the landing leading to the heading shed, three men mend nets. Toomer backs his wagon against the concrete landing of the ice house just to the left of the heading shed. Some of the men at the table call to him. Toomer smiles and acknowledges their greetings in Gulla.

122 EXT. LANDING - HEADING SHED - DAY

122

Toomer lifts the lid of the ice box on the wagon, just behind the seat. He then gets down from the wagon and limps to the shed. Red and the men pushing the cart come up alongside him, moving with him to the shed.

RED

Hey, Toomer, how you doin'?

Toomer doesn't answer. He limps into the shed, the cart following.

123 INT. HEADING SHED - DAY

123

SIMMS

Morning, Toomer.

TOOMER

Mr. Simms. I need two b-b-bushels today.

Simms indicates a row of shrimp-filled bushels against the wall of the shed.

SIMMS

Right there.

TOOMER

I brung you four honey.

SIMMS

Just put 'em 'gainst the ice house.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

Toomer picks up a bushel and walks toward his wagon. Red follows while the cart men unload their bushels onto the heading table.

RED
I ain't never heard of a
b-b-bushel before. Is that
a new word?

Some of the whites laugh.

123A EXT. HEADING SHED - DAY

123A

Red continues to follow Toomer as Toomer moves to his wagon and unloads the shrimp into the ice box.

RED
Hey, I hear your friend, Meechum,
got kicked off the team last
night. For good!
(he laughs)
Where is he, anyway? You two been
tight as ticks. Must be love.

Red gets up on the wagon and picks up two jars of honey.

RED
(continuing)
Here, ol' buddy, let me help you.

TOOMER
(moving back
toward the
shed)
I d-d-don't need no help from you.

RED
You d-d-d-don't? Okay, then, I
won't help you.

123B INT. HEADING SHED - DAY

123B

Toomer has entered the shed. Through the opening we can SEE Red on the concrete ice house landing. He drops the jars of honey. They SHATTER. The blacks on the table suddenly grow quiet. A tension building.

(CONTINUED)

123B CONTINUED:

123B

SIMMS
Red, you horse's...

TOOMER
(handing Simms
some bills)
They's two more jars. Here's
the difference.

From behind him, he hears the SOUND of two more JARS SHATTERING against the concrete. Toomer does not turn. He and Simms exchange a look. Toomer adds a bill to what he has already given to Simms.

SIMMS
Let it go, Toomer. It just
ain' worth it.

Toomer picks up his other bushel of shrimp and walks to the wagon.

124 EXT. HEADING SHED - DAY

124

Toomer loads the bushel into the ice box, then closes the lid. Red comes down the steps of the ice house.

RED
Damn, that was clumsy of me.
Just tryin' ta be a good neighbor,
Toomer.

Toomer moves back to the shed with the empty bushel. Red moves with him, limping, imitating Toomer's walk.

RED
(continuing)
T-t-t-t-toomer. I h-h-h-hope
y-y-you n-n-n-not m-m-mad at
m-m-m-me.

Suddenly, Toomer whirls and grabs Red by the throat with one hand and twists his arm behind his back with the other. Red screams. Toomer pulls him, screaming and gagging, toward the wagon. He trips Red with his bad leg, then pushes Red's neck over the rubber truck tire of the wagon so that any movement of the wagon forward will squeeze Red's neck between the tire and the bottom of the wagon. The blacks have stopped working and stand at the door of the shed, watching. Some of the whites move toward Toomer.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED:

124

TOOMER

You move, Red, and I'm gonna tell
M-m-man O' War here to get gone
and s-s-she'll take your head with
her.

1ST MAN

(advancing
menacingly)

Hey, nigger...

RED

No! No! Don't touch him. He'll
do it.

Simms moves to Toomer. He speaks softly.

SIMMS

Let him go, Toomer.

A silence, as Toomer studies the faces of the men.

SIMMS

(continuing)

Just do it, son. None of these
boys gonna hurt you. Every one
of 'em like you better'n Red,
anyway.

Slowly Toomer releases his grip. Red scrambles away,
rubbing his neck. Toomer climbs on his wagon, shakes
the reins and moves away, slowly. The silence protracts
for a moment, then Red screams at Toomer, shaking his
fist.

RED

You gimp nigger, I'll get you!
I'll get you! Y'hear me? Y'hear
me?

Toomer does not turn. The wagon moves on, slowly.
Red turns and looks at the faces of the men, enraged
at their smirks.

SIMMS

You make me sick, Pettus.

Fogel and the men move back into the store. CAMERA
CLOSE on Red, his eyes narrowed on Toomer. He is
trembling with rage.

125 EXT. MEECHUM HOUSE - NIGHT

125

Pinkie's car drives up. Ben gets out.

PINKIE

See ya.

BEN

Thanks a lot.

The car backs out. Ben turns to the house. As he starts up the stairs, Arrabelle and Mary Anne come rushing out onto the porch. Something is very wrong.

MARY ANNE

Ben! Ben! Hurry!!

Ben runs up the steps.

BEN

What's the matter?

MARY ANNE

It's Toomer.

ARRABELLE

He grab holt of Red Pettus today and make him holler. Erlene hear them Pettus boys runnin' their mouths about payin' Toomer back tonight for what he done. Now you know with them dogs, they ain't going out there empty-handed, neither. You got to go get him, Ben, an' bring him to my house. Please!

*

Ben glances at the station wagon in the drive.

BEN

(to Mary Anne)

Mom home?

MARY ANNE

Uh uh. Gone to novena with Mrs. Grantham.

BEN

Where's Dad?

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

MARY-ANNE

At the base.

BEN

I better call him and let him
know... Just in case I run into
some trouble.

They start into the house.

126 INT. BULL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

126

Bull screams into the phone.

BULL

Negative! Negative! Negative!

127 INT. MEECHUM KITCHEN - NIGHT

127

Ben on the phone. Mary Anne and Arrabelle listen
anxiously.

BEN

But they might have guns. I can
take Mama's car...

128 INT. BULL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

128

BULL

No! I don't want you getting
between the niggers and the grits
when they go for each other.

129 INT. MEECHUM KITCHEN - NIGHT

129

BEN

Dad, I've got to...

130 INT. BULL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

130

BULL

Toomer can take care of himself.
Don't leave that goddamn house!
Acknowledge!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

BULL (CONT'D)

(a silence)

I gave you a direct order, hog.
Acknowledge!

131 INT. MEECHUM KITCHEN - NIGHT

131

Ben stares into the phone. Bull's voice, shouting,
 over:

BULL (V.O.)

Ben... Ben!

Ben looks at Mary Anne and Arrabelle, then puts the
 phone to his mouth.

BEN

Over and out, Colonel.

He hangs up. Then, to Mary Anne:

BEN

(continuing)

Don't answer if he calls back.

(to Arrabelle)

I'm going. Don't you worry. I'll
 get him.

He grabs the car keys from a hook by the door, picks
 up his flight jacket, and rushes out. Mary Anne moves
 to Arrabelle who sinks into a chair, shaking her head,
 tears running down her cheeks. The PHONE begins to
 RING. Mary Anne looks at it, but doesn't move.

132 INT. BULL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

132

Bull on the PHONE. It continues to RING. He slams
 it down.

BULL

Sonofabitch!

133 OMITTED

133

134 EXT. ROAD LEADING TO TOOMER'S BUS - NIGHT

134

Red Pettus, his brother, MAC and TWO COUSINS, move
 from their parked cars, down the dirt road toward
 Toomer's bus.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

A bottle of Rebel Yell is passed back and forth, until Red drains the last swallow and flings the bottle into the woods. Red carries a thirty-eight revolver; one of the other men, a repeating shotgun.

1ST COUSIN

Where's them damn dogs?

2ND COUSIN

Thought they'd be all over us by now.

MAC

(to Red)

You just remember, Daddy said youze just ta scare him.

RED

I'm gonna scare him, all right.

135 INT. TOOMER'S BUS - NIGHT

135

Toomer has gathered all the dogs inside the bus. Their BARKING is deafening on the outside near the clearing. Toomer is seated on the bottom step of the bus, holding a rope that leads outside through the slightly ajar door.

136 EXT. BUS AND CLEARING - NIGHT

136

Red and his cohorts move closer to the bus. They catch sight of the dogs and move closer now, to a position between the rows of hives along the road.

137 INT. BUS - NIGHT

137

The dogs are going wild; throwing themselves against the windows. Toomer watches the men closely. He sees they are in the right position. With all his might, he pulls on the rope.

138 EXT. BUS AND CLEARING - NIGHT

138

We SEE two of the hives affixed to the rope topple on each side of the men. In an instant the bees are on the gang. The men begin screaming and slapping at the bees.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

MAC
Sonofabitch! Let's get the hell
outa here!

Mac and the Two Cousins run back down the road toward the car. Red drops his gun and takes a flying leap into the creek.

139 INT. BUS - NIGHT

139

The dogs continue to bark. Toomer is laughing, and petting the dogs.

TOOMER
No, sir. Ain't gonna let that
trash hurt my chillun...

140 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

140

Red surfaces. One of his eyes is closed and the other partially so. He is pulling stingers out of his face, and cursing under his breath. Mac comes down the road in a car and pulls up alongside the creek.

MAC
This is plain dumb, Red. Get
the hell outa there and let's go
home.

RED
I got business here. Y'all
chickenshits wanna go? Go! Just
leave my car.

2ND COUSIN
Come on, Red.

1ST COUSIN
Come on, will ya?

RED
I ain't leavin' till I kick that
sonofabitch's ass.

MAC
Well, do it on your own, then.
I'm tired a' fightin' your fights.

RED
Go ta hell!

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

MAC
An' the same to ya, brother.

Mac pulls away in a cloud of dust.

141 INT. BUS - NIGHT

141

The dogs are still barking. Toomer is trying to calm them.

TOOMER
Hush, now, hush. They gone.
Don't wanna mess with Mr. Bee...
no, suh. Hush, you hear?

He rubs the shoulders of the big gray who stands, hair
bristling, still looking out of the window.

TOOMER
(continuing)
Oh, cool yourself. They's gone
now.

142 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

142

Red emerges slowly, painfully, from the creek. His
face and body swollen badly. He crawls up onto the
bank, finds his gun, then stands and walks slowly
toward the bus.

143 INT. BUS - NIGHT

143

Toomer has just succeeded in calming the dogs, when
they sense something outside and begin barking once
more. Toomer peers out the window, but with the light
of the lamp can only see his own reflection.

TOOMER
Ain't nobody out there. They's
gone, I tol' you.

Suddenly, Red steps into the ring of light in the
clearing.

144 EXT. BUS - NIGHT

144

RED
(shouting)
I got to hurt you, Toomer.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

RED (CONT'D)
Just like you hurt me. Even Steven.

TOOMER
(through a crack
in the window)
Get on n-now, Red, f-fore somethin'
happen.

RED
You made everybody laugh at me.
I'm gonna teach you a lesson.

Red lifts his gun and aims it at one of the dogs
mounted on a small kitchen table inside the bus. He
FIRES.

145 INT, BUS - NIGHT

145

The dog is hit and killed.

TOOMER
No!

He moves to the dog, examines it slowly, shaking his
head, then looks back out at Red. The rest of the dogs
are barking wildly, throwing themselves against the
windows.

TOOMER
(continuing)
I'm gonna get you. I gonna hurt
you for that, Red.

146 EXT. BUS - NIGHT

146

RED
You ain't never gonna do nothin'
to me again, nigger.

He sees the big gray at the window and raises his gun
once more, taking aim.

147 INT. BUS - NIGHT

147

Toomer sees Red raise his gun and rushes to the dog
to pull him away from the window.

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

147

TOOMER

Get away from...

Red FIRES. Toomer is shot in the stomach. Toomer and Red stare at each other in a moment of horror and incredulity.

148 EXT. BUS - NIGHT

148

RED

Jesus, Toomer! I didn't mean to hit you. It was the dog! Oh, God, I didn't mean to get you! Toomer... Toomer?

149 INT. BUS - NIGHT

149

The dogs are going wild. Toomer stumbles toward the front of the bus, trying to keep the blood in his body with his two hands, weaving through the dogs. He falls, then gets up once more, desperately reaching for the door handle.

TOOMER

Okay, Red... even Steven...

He reaches for the handle, turns it. The door opens and the dogs, with the Gray in the lead, pour out of the bus and head for Red.

150 EXT. BUS - NIGHT

150

Red is running for his life down the road toward his car, about a hundred yards ahead of him. He is about a hundred yards from the bus when the dogs reach him. The Gray clamps onto Red's heel. Red screams. With a powerful squeeze of the Gray's jaws, Red is hamstrung. He falls to the ground, screaming, fighting for his life. The other dogs swarm over him. He kicks the dog away from his ear, then touches his head and finds he has no ear. Dogs are going for his face, his groin, his throat. The forest fills with the SOUND of RED'S SCREAMS which gradually fade until all we HEAR are the SOUNDS of the DOGS' CONTINUED ATTACK.

151 INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

151

He heads down the road leading to the bus. CAMERA to his POV as he passes Red's empty car. Ben steps hard on the accelerator.

152 EXT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

152

It crashes and bounces down the road, and approaches the circle of dogs.

153 INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

153

Ben slows down. He lowers the window as he approaches. He pulls up alongside Red's torn body to get a better look. Suddenly, the Gray leaps and comes halfway through the window, biting into Ben's arm and tearing the sleeve of the flight jacket. Ben punches at the dog with his fist, and speeds off, the Gray falling off from the sudden acceleration.

154 EXT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

154

Ben drives to the bus and stops. He jumps out of the car and runs toward the bus.

BEN

Toomer! Toomer!

CAMERA to Ben's POV as he suddenly sees Toomer lying on his back, his hands clamped over his stomach. Ben rushes to him.

TOOMER

Hey, Ben. L-l-looks like we
c-c-can't go shrimp'n' on
F-friday.

BEN

Sure we can, Toomer. You promised.

TOOMER

(forcing a smile)

Dead men don't make too good a
fishermen.

BEN

Horseshit. I'm takin' you to the
hospital. Doc Tatteree's gonna
fix you right up.

He ties his flight jacket around Toomer's stomach, then reaches under Toomer's arms and begins pulling him toward the car. Toomer screams with pain.

BEN

(continuing)

I'm sorry. God, I'm sorry. Jesus,
you've lost a lot of blood.

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED:

154

TOOMER

I hurt. Gawd, I hurt, Ben...

BEN

I can't help it. I'm trying to
be careful... honest, Toomer...

Sweating and struggling, Ben finally gets Toomer to the car and into the front seat. He props him up, goes around the other side of the car and gets in.

155 INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

155

He starts the car.

BEN

We'll be at the hospital in no
time, Toomer. Toomer?

He turns and looks at Toomer and suddenly realizes he is staring into the face of a dead man. Ben fumbles for his pulse, his heartbeat. A moment of measureless agony. Toomer is dead, irrevocably dead. There is nothing to hurry for now. Ben turns the car around and slowly moves back down the road. He continues on steadily, slowly, his eyes filled with tears, glancing at Toomer from time to time.

156 EXT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

156

It approaches the crossroads. Another car approaches from the opposite direction.

157 INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

157

The headlights of the other car all but blind him. In front of him is the silhouette of a large man. Suddenly, Ben recognizes the figure. He opens the door and rushes out of the car.

158 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

158

BEN

Dad, Dad! Toomer...

(CONTINUED)

158 CONTINUED:

158

Before he can say another word, Bull lashes out, slapping him across the face.

BULL

You disobeyed a direct order, hog.
A direct order from your commanding officer.

BEN

Yes, sir.

BULL

You knew you'd catch hell for it.

BEN

Yes, sir.

BULL

Yet you went right ahead and did it. I wanna know why.

BEN

I promised Arrabelle. I thought Toomer might be in trouble... and...

BULL

And what?

BEN

And because I was your son.

BULL

What the hell's that got to do with it?

BEN

Because you would have done it. Santini would have done it.

BULL

Goddamn it, we're not talking about me! We're talking about you!

BEN

(crying)

Oh, sure!

(reciting)

I am a Meechum. A Meechum is a thoroughbred, a winner all the way. He chews nails while the other kids eat cotton candy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

158 CONTINUED: (2)

158

BEN (CONT'D)

A Meechum never gives up, never
surrenders and never, never loses
and never, never, never, never....

*

BULL

(screaming)

You disobeyed a direct order!

BEN

(shouting as well)

I thought Toomer might be in
trouble.

BULL

I told you he can take care of
himself.

BEN

Yes, sir. That's what you told
me.

Bull looks toward the car for the first time.

BULL

Is that him in the car?

BEN

Yes, sir. Go say hello.

Bull goes to the car, and opens the door.

BULL

Hey, Toomer, how you doin',
sports fan?

CAMERA TO Bull's POV of Toomer's body. The lower
half of it covered with blood. The flight jacket
soaked red.

BULL

(continuing)

Jesus H. Christ. He's dead.

BEN

Yes, sir. And ... I think Red is too...
down the road.

*

(CONTINUED)

158 CONTINUED: (3)

158

BULL

(suddenly at a loss
for words, he stares
at Toomer)

That... that's a good way to ruin
a flight jacket. You better take
him to the hospital. I'll go get
the sheriff and tell Arrabelle.
Christ, why didn't you tell me?
Why didn't you say something?

Ben has stopped crying. He is strangely calm.

BEN

Nobody can tell you, anything, Dad.
Ever.

*

He moves to the car, gets in and drives off. CAMERA
CLOSE ON Bull's face. His expression, for the first
time, is deeply troubled and confused.

159 INT. OFFICERS' CLUB - NIGHT

159

It's late. A few officers scattered through the club
and at the bar. Bull sits at a table smoking a cigar
and drinking double whiskeys. He drains his glass,
places it in a row of six empties arranged in front
of him, then picks up another filled glass and drains
half of it. He hunches over, staring at the empty
glasses, his expression dark, tortured.

VIRGIL (O.S.)

Mind if I join you?

Bull looks up. CAMERA INCLUDES Virgil Hedgepath.

BULL

Damn right, I mind!

VIRGIL

(sitting)

That's not very social.

BULL

Not a social animal.

A silence.

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED:

159

VIRGIL

Took a lot of guts for him to
go out there tonight. You should
be proud...

BULL

(interrupting him
loudly)

Virge, if you're gonna drink with
me, okay. But skip the bilge,
huh?

VIRGIL

Okay, okay. Waiter?
(he points to
Bull's drink)
The same.

A long silence. Virgil watches Bull as Bull continues
to brood, staring at the empty glasses in front of
him. Finally Bull speaks.

BULL

Ol' buddy, I've recently observed
that for certain throw-backs of the
species, certain gung-ho dinosaurs,
of which I proudly number myself
as one, being a warrior without
a war has its problems. Don't you
think it's astute of me to observe
that?

VIRGIL

Is that what's wrong, Bull?

BULL

What's wrong is...
(he checks himself,
then drains his
glass)
I'm out of a drink.

He bangs his glass on the table several times.

BULL

(continuing)

Waiter! Waiter!

160 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

160

Ben is asleep.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

160

From the kitchen below we HEAR the SOUNDS of a growing ARGUMENT between Bull and Lillian. Chairs fall. We can't distinguish the words; only the terrible emotion of the sounds. Suddenly the SOUND of GLASS BREAKING. The VOICES grow louder. Ben wakes, listens a moment, then jumps out of bed and exits the room.

160A INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

160A

As Ben comes out of his room, Mary Anne and Karen are coming out of theirs. Karen closes the door to her room.

KAREN

Stay there, Okra.

Ben and Mary Anne exchange a look and head for the stairs, followed by Karen. Matt comes out of his room sleepily and follows as well.

161 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

161

Bull is roaring drunk. He has Lillian pinned against the wall, holding onto her by the shoulders. His eyes are wild. The dragon is loose.

LILLIAN

What he did was right! You've absolutely no concern for human life! You don't feel anything do you?

BULL

Shut up, Lillian, just...

LILLIAN

Do you?

Bull shakes her.

BULL

A fighter pilot isn't supposed to feel things! Don't you understand that? How long is it gonna take you to understand that's what I am?

He continues to shake her. Ben appears at the kitchen doorway, followed by Mary Anne, Karen and Matt.

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

161

BEN

Get your hands off her!

Bull lets go of Lillian and turns to face Ben. Ben charges at him, head down and drives into Bull's stomach. Bull stumbles back as Ben drives him into the kitchen cabinets. Doors open. DISHES spill out CRASHING to the floor.

BULL

(suddenly realizing
what's happening)

So you wanna play, huh? Think
you're big enough, huh? Come on.
Come on, then...

Bull's laughter continues through the following scene. Ben makes another attack, but this time Bull grabs him and lifts him off the floor.

LILLIAN

(on the attack)

Get him! Get him! Get him!

The children join the attack. Lillian pulls on one of Bull's arms while Mary Anne bites the other wrist, trying to get Bull to release his grip on Ben. Matt is holding onto Bull's leg, trying to lift it from the floor and trip him. Karen is hitting Bull in the back with her fist. The family's VOICES overlap.

MARY ANNE

Stop it, Daddy! Let go! Let
him go!

KAREN

Papa, Papa, Papa...!

MATTHEW

(simultaneously)

Daddy...Stop...Daddy!

LILLIAN

Don't you touch him!

They strike him, bite, kick with all their mastered fury. Bull suddenly becomes aware of what's happening. He lets go of Ben and looks at the family as if seeing them for the first time. The dragon melts out of his eyes. He stands there, arms at his sides as Lillian and the children continue to strike and kick him. Ben moves to him and cocks his fist, ready to smash it into Bull's face, but the expression he sees there stops him.

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED: (2)

161

The family gradually stops their attack and stares at Bull. Karen, Matt, and Mary Anne are weeping softly. A look of confusion on Bull's face. He turns slowly, walks to the door and exits. Now the children sink to the floor, weeping loudly, Lillian trying to comfort them. The weeping goes on for some moments. Mary Anne finally lifts her tear-stained face from her hands.

MARY ANNE

Who's the biggest jerk of all?

Lillian and the children look at her, uncomprehendingly.

MARY ANNE

(continuing)

I said who's the biggest jerk of them all?

MATTHEW AND KAREN

(understanding)

The Great Santini!

MARY ANNE

And who stinks the worst? Who's a big dope? Who's made out of puke and fish feces?

*

THE CHILDREN

(except Ben)

The Great Santini!

MARY ANNE

Who wears a brassiere and women's panties all the time?

Now their laughter; giving them the catharsis they so badly need. Ben does not join in.

THE CHILDREN

The Great Santini!

They hug each other, laughing.

162 EXT. UPPER PORCH - NIGHT

162

Ben stands looking out at the marsh. Lillian comes out of the house onto the porch.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

LILLIAN

I'm getting worried.

BEN

I hope he dies out there with
the rest of the snakes.

LILLIAN

I want you to go look for him.

BEN

Give me a gun and I might oblige
you.

LILLIAN

I want you to go bring your father
home, Ben.

BEN

I'm not going to do it, Mama.

LILLIAN

Yes you are. Please. Now, before
the sun comes up and somebody finds
him.

She stares at him for a moment. Finally, Ben nods.

163 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

163

Ben walks away from CAMERA down the oak-lined street,
calling.

BEN

Dad... Dad...

163A EXT. EDGE OF WATER - NIGHT

163A

Ben walks along continuing the search for his father.

163B EXT. BAR - NIGHT

163B

Ben tries the door to the bar. It's locked. A black
man carrying a garbage can to the sidewalk startles
him. They exchange a look. Ben moves on.

164 EXT. BAY STREET - NIGHT

164

Ben enters the main street of the town from a side street, crosses it and moves TOWARD CAMERA.

BEN

Dad...

He moves past an alley, hears the NOISE of a BOTTLE HITTING CONCRETE, and retraces his steps to the alley.

165 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

165

Ben enters the alley and sees Bull propped against the wall, drunk. An empty bottle at his feet. He is mumbling to himself. Ben moves closer and listens to Bull. Bull attempts a drunken salute. His words are barely understandable. CAMERA INTERCUTS between Ben and Bull during this speech.

BULL

Yessiryessiryessir. Colonel W.P. Meechum reporting, as ordered... as ordered. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Benjy. Happy birthday... Nononono! Lil', honey, you just don't understand. It's dangerous out there. You've gentled him too much... too much. He won't make it.

(he tries his
salute once more)

Colonel W.P. Meechum, serial number 032233, terror of the skies, father, daddy, papa and... and... Hey... hey, you guys. Hey, Lil', kids, tell you what? You do my caring for me. Deal? Deal! Watch out, Ben! Watch out. The bogys'll get you. You gotta be fast, kid. Defense... defense! Work that defense. Guard me... watch your six, Ben... watch...

He falls over. A moment, then Ben walks to him and looks down at him. Bull has begun to snore. Ben kneels to him and shakes him.

BEN

Dad.

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED:

165

BULL

(waking)

I'm sick. Jesus... I'm sick, boy...

BEN

Let's go home, Dad. Come on.

He helps Bull to his hands and knees, then hooks
Bull's arm around his neck.

BEN

(continuing)

Okay, I've got you.

They rise shakily and begin to stagger off, out of the
alley.

165A EXT. BAY STREET - NIGHT

165A

Ben and Bull move through the empty street.

DISSOLVE TO:

166 EXT. THE GREEN - NIGHT

166

Ben and Bull continue on silently.

BEN

Dad... I think I understand now.
Dad...?

Bull nods, hardly hearing.

Some moments pass, Ben continuing to assist Bull. They
stagger forward in an erratic line. Ben studies Bull
as they walk.

BEN

(continuing)

I love you, Dad.

Bull, as if unhearing, now increases the tempo of his
lurch.

BEN

(continuing)

You hear me? I said 'I love you.'

(CONTINUED)

166 CONTINUED:

166

Bull suddenly pulls away from Ben and begins running down the street. He weaves, stumbles, falls, then is on his feet, running slowly, to escape what's been spoken. Ben pursues him. He catches up with his father and runs along beside him.

BEN
(continuing)
Did you hear me?

Bull, his head lowered, continues refusing to acknowledge Ben's presence. It is the first time Ben has felt a power over Bull. He slaps his father on the rump, pushes him, turning him.

BEN
(continuing)
Hey, Santini!
(chanting)
I love you! I love you, Dad.
I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU, I LOVE
YOU!

Bull falls, exhausted, breathing heavily, his head down, on his knees. Ben looks at him smiling, liberated, enjoying his new-found weapon. He moves to Bull, hooks his arm around him once more and lifts him.

BEN
(continuing)
Come on. Let's go home.

DISSOLVE TO:

167 EXT. TOOMER'S BUS - DAY

167

The Meechum station wagon is pulled up in front of the bus. Ben emerges from the bus with some of Toomer's personal gear; some pots, a portable radio, blankets, and loads them in the wagon. He looks toward the field of flowers. Arrabelle stands in the middle of the field, looking off into space, crying silently. Ben looks at her, the CAMERA INTERCUTTING between them. Then Arrabelle turns and looks at Ben. Their eyes lock and exchange the silent pain.

DISSOLVE TO:

168 OMITTED

168

169 EXT. BEACH - DAY

Ben, alone, at the spot where Toomer first showed him the great sea turtle. Remains of fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

170 OMITTED

170

171 EXT. EDGE OF MARSH - EVENING

171

Ben stands at the edge of the marsh, looking seaward, watching the shrimp boats returning to port, followed by clouds of veering SEAGULLS, their CRIES filling the otherwise silent evening. He looks at Toomer's Bateau, then turns and walks toward the house. The lights are on. The RADIO is GOING. Mary Anne and Matt are having an argument, upstairs. From the living room, the SOUND of Bull and Lillian's LAUGHTER. Ben stops and stares at the house for a long moment as if somehow trying to fix the moment and all of its sensations into his mind.

Ben's POV of house.

*

MATTHEW (VO)

*

Mom.

*

KAREN (VO)

*

It's mine!

MATTHEW (VO)

*

You gave it to me!

KAREN (VO)

*

I'm taking it back!

MATTHEW (VO)

*

Mom-m-m.

*

BULL (VO)

*

Lillian, would you turn that grit music off? It's giving me hemorrhoids!

Lillian laughs, Bull joins her in laughter.

*

MARY ANNE (VO)

*

God, God, God, -- I'm living among The Philistines! What would Emily Dickenson have done? Yaaaa!

DISSOLVE TO:

169 EXT. BEACH - DAY 169

Ben, alone, at the spot where Toomer first showed him the great sea turtle. Remains of fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

170 OMITTED 170

171 EXT. EDGE OF MARSH - EVENING 171

Ben stands at the edge of the marsh, looking seaward, watching the shrimp boats returning to port, followed by clouds of veering SEAGULLS, their CRIES filling the otherwise silent evening. He looks at Toomer's Ba-teau, then turns and walks toward the house. The lights are on. The RADIO is GOING. Mary Anne and Matt are having an argument, upstairs. From the living room, the SOUND of Bull and Lillian's LAUGHTER. Ben stops and stares at the house for a long moment as if somehow trying to fix the moment and all of its sensations into his mind.

DISSOLVE TO:

172 EXT. PORCH - NIGHT 172

Bull, Lillian and Karen are watching TV. Bull is dressed in his flight suit, smoking a cigar. Okra chews a bone. Ben exits from the house wearing a tuxedo and carrying an orchid. He walks in front of his father and clicks his heels. Bull smiles. Lillian turns OFF the TV.

KAREN

Wow!

BULL

Lookin' good, sports fans. Where's Mary Anne?

BEN

Getting dressed.

BULL

She's been getting dressed for about three days.

BEN

She really likes the gown you bought her, Dad.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

LILLIAN

Way too expensive...

BULL

Only the best for my hogs. Go
over to your mother there so she
can complete the inspection.

Ben walks to Lillian.

BEN

How do I look?

LILLIAN

Like a prince. Turn around.

Ben spins around, pretending to dance. Lillian laughs
and gets up.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Let's practice those steps once
more.

Ben puts the orchid on the table. They dance, Lillian
humming Tennessee Waltz. Ben and Karen join in hum-
ming. Bull watches, smiling.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

No, look up here, to me, not
at your feet.

(she smiles)

Any girl would be proud to go
to the prom with you.

BEN

Mary Anne acts like she's mad I
asked her.

Suddenly Bull lets out a long wolf whistle. They all
turn and look.

Mary Anne comes out onto the porch. She is dressed in
a blue gown with white ruffles at the shoulder, a
string of pearls around her neck and long white gloves
to the elbows on her hands. She is not wearing her
glasses.

LILLIAN

You look absolutely stunning,
sugah.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (2)

172

Matt comes out behind her.

BULL

I didn't know you were so
stacked, sports fans.

LILLIAN

(glancing at Matt
and Karen)

Hush, Bull. My God.

MARY ANNE

How sicko-sexual can you get?

Ben moves to her and pins an orchid corsage on her.

LILLIAN

(moving inside)

Wait while I get my Kodak.

KAREN

You look beautiful, Mary Anne.

MARY ANNE

Thank you, Karen. Oh, I'm so
tired of people admiring my
beauty. Being homecoming queen
for two years in a row...

MATT

You? Homecoming queen? Ha.

MARY ANNE

Go find a toadstool to sit under,
grub.

MATT

(to Bull)

Dad, ol' four eyes gets a knuckle
sandwich for that one.

BULL

Shut your yap.

Lillian comes out with camera.

LILLIAN

All right, now. Hold still.

Ben and Mary Anne move close together.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (3)

172

KAREN

Where are your glasses?

MARY ANNE

They detract from my heavenly beauty.

MATT

Yick!

LILLIAN

Smile.

Mary Anne and Ben force smiles. Lillian takes the picture.

BULL

(looking at
his watch)

You better hurry. Your reservations
at the club are at 1900, on the
button.

BEN

You got duty?

BULL

(shaking his head)

Just my four-hour night flight.

(he smiles)

See you at breakfast, sports fans.

LILLIAN

Off with you. Now, give me a
kiss, both of you.

She kisses Mary Anne, then Ben.

BEN

'Bye.

LILLIAN

'Bye.

Ben and Mary Anne get into the wagon, then turn and
look back to the porch. CAMERA to their POV of
Karen, and Lillian and Bull, who stand with their
arms around each other. Ben starts the car.

MATT

Mary Anne?

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (4)

172

MARY ANNE

What?

MATT

You... you look nice.

He turns quickly and runs back into the house. Mary Anne smiles, shakes her head, and they drive off. CAMERA TO Bull and Lillian, smiling, holding each other around the waist, watching the car move down the street.

BULL

(shouting)

Have fun, sports fans!

173 OMITTED
thru
175

173
thru
175

176 INT. OFFICERS' CLUB - NIGHT

176

Ben and Mary Anne having supper.

A WAITER approaches and hands Mary Anne a box of roses, with a card affixed.

WAITER

For you, Miss.

He moves off. Mary Anne stares at the box, shocked.

MARY ANNE

Who could have sent them?

BEN

Read the card.

MARY ANNE

I can't read it and you know it!

Ben shakes his head, takes the card, holds it near the candle and reads.

BEN

'Here's twelve roses for the prettiest girl at the hop. Don't tell Mama, or she'll jawbone me to death about the cost. Have a good time. The Great Santini.'

(CONTINUED)

176 CONTINUED:

176

Mary Anne lifts the lid and looks at the flowers. She is deeply touched, but tries to hide it.

MARY ANNE

Dad is so childishly sentimental sometimes. Isn't this ridiculous?

A silence as they continue to eat.

BEN

Hey, you know, I've been thinking. Next year I'll be in college and this'll be the last time we ever go out like this and anyway I'm going to miss you and you've been my best friend and... aw, who cares anyway!

MARY ANNE

I think I'll kill myself.

BEN

Good.

MARY ANNE

No, I mean really.

BEN

How are you going to do it?

MARY ANNE

Painlessly. That's very important. And no blood. I will not tolerate a bloody corpse. I want to be lovely in death.

BEN

How about if you die on the operating table, while having a nose job?

(he looks at his
watch)

Hurry up, sports fans, we've got a date in Paris.

177 INT. BEAUFORT GYM - NIGHT

177

The theme of the dance is Gaité Parisienne. In one corner is a cardboard replica of the Eiffel Tower. In the other Notre Dame.

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED:

177

A band dressed as Apache dancers plays "Moon River." Some of the female teachers are in can-can outfits. Ben is dancing with Mary Anne. Art, Sammy, Pinkie, Jim Don, Mumford, Mr. Spinks, Ansley are among the students.

DISSOLVE TO:

178 SAME - LATER

178

Mary Anne is dancing with Mr. Spinks. Ben with another girl. Ben glances at Ansley as she dances with Jim Don.

DISSOLVE TO:

179 SAME - LATER

179

Ben, in his glory, is dancing with Ansley. Mary Anne is dancing with Pinkie, who nuzzles her cheek. Mary Anne can't believe it's happening to her: somebody's making a pass. The band is playing "Good Night Sweetheart."

180 EXT. SKY - NIGHT

180

A pale moon hangs above silver clouds in a surreal, eloquent balance of light, form, and silence. Suddenly, the serenity of the scene is ripped open by a thundering ROAR as Bull's Phantom emerges from the clouds, heading straight for the moon in a vertical climb. The plane wings over into a series of spectacular rolls and dives. We HEAR BULL'S LAUGHTER, V.O.

181 INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT

181

Flying upside down. Bull is smiling; exulting in his prowess, in the movement of the plane, the feel of its power, the silver moonlight on the wings.

BULL

I am Santini, the Great Santini!
I come at night, from the moon,
from behind the clouds, unannounced...
out of the black... watch out... watch
out...

He laughs.

182 EXT. SKY - NIGHT 182

The plane climbs straight up, afterburners on, exploding a great white cloud behind the plane. We HEAR BULL'S LAUGHTER, V.O.

183 EXT. UPPER VERANDA PORCH - NIGHT 183

Ben and Mary Anne are asleep, Ben on a cot, Mary Anne in a hammock. A thick fog surrounds the house. A DOG BARKS somewhere in the distance. Ben wakes, shivering. He gets up, walks into the house, then returns with two heavy blankets. He puts one over Mary Anne, then gets back into the cot and covers himself with the other. He lies wide awake, listening to the NIGHT BIRDS, the BARKING... and in the very distance, the distant THUNDER of a JET.

184 INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT 184

BULL
Beaufort approach. Werewolf One inbound. Sand Dollar intersection for Tacan approach. Flight level three-two-zero.

185 INT. BEAUFORT RADAR ROOM - NIGHT 185

There are three SERGEANTS on duty, two at radar consoles and one with a mike.

1ST SERGEANT
Roger, Werewolf One. Descend and maintain flight level two-four-zero. You're cleared Tacan penetration.

186 EXT. SKY - NIGHT 186

Bull's plane banks sharply and drops into clouds to make its approach, its speed brakes coming out.

187 INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT 187

Bull smiles, yawns, then suddenly his body stiffens. CAMERA TO HIS POV of the instrument panel. A red light marked "FIRE" has come on. CAMERA TO BULL.

(CONTINUED)

187 CONTINUED:

187

BULL

Beaufort approach, this is
Werewolf One. I have a fire
warning light and am declaring
an emergency. Request immediate
penetration.

He takes his mask off and smells for smoke.

1ST SERGEANT (V.O.)

Roger. Turn right to three-three-
zero. Clear to two thousand.

Bull studies the gauges. His eyes flick back and forth
rapidly as he tries to ascertain the problem.

BULL

Approach control, Werewolf One
steady on heading three-three-zero.
Request GCA pickup. What're the tops
of the overcast?

188 INT. RADAR ROOM - NIGHT

188

CAMERA ON the radar screen. An alert pattern flashes.
CAMERA TO the personnel in the room. A mounting
tension.

1ST SERGEANT

Werewolf One, tops reported at
twelve thousand feet.

He and one of the Sergeants at the radar console
exchange a look. CAMERA TO the radar screen. The
emergency pattern continues flashing.

189 INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT

189

The plane is now in the overcast. The needles on the
temp gauges are beginning to climb.

BULL

Come on, some on, sweetheart.
Settle down. Don't do this to me.

Suddenly the second fire light comes on and the plane
begins to vibrate.

BULL

(continuing)

Mayday! Mayday! Werewolf One.
I'm on fire!

190 INT. RADAR ROOM - NIGHT

190

The Sergeants are watching the screen. A tense moment of silence.

BULL (V.O.)

Skip the GCA. I'm coming straight in!

191 INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT

191

moving through the overcast. The vibration has worsened.

BULL

Come on, baby. Just a few more minutes.

Smoke pours into the cockpit. The plane is vibrating wildly. Suddenly, a series of EXPLOSIONS, aft. The cockpit lights go dead.

BULL

(continuing)

This thing's coming apart. I gotta get out.

191A INT. RADAR ROOM - NIGHT

191A

CAMERA CLOSE on the face of the Sergeant at the radar screen. CAMERA TO radar screen. The emergency pattern flashes. CAMERA TO Sergeant.

2ND SERGEANT

(to himself)

Punch out... punch...

191B INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT

191B

He is trying to see through the overcast. A startled reaction. CAMERA TO HIS POV.

191C EXT. BEAUFORT - NIGHT

191C

FROM BULL'S POV. The overcast breaks and we SEE the lights of the town below.

191D INT. BULL'S PLANE - NIGHT

191D

BULL
Damn! Forget it. I'm over the
 town. I'll try to get this heap to
 the water.

192 INT. RADAR ROOM - NIGHT

192

1ST SERGEANT
 Roger, Werewolf One.

192A INSERT OF RADAR SCREEN

192A

The emergency pattern suddenly disappears.

192B BACK TO SCENE

192B

2ND SERGEANT
 I've lost your boy, Gunny.

1ST SERGEANT
 (into a phone)
 Tower, any fires near the runway?

TOWER VOICE (V.O.)
 Negative.

1ST SERGEANT
 (picking up the
 emergency phone)
 Angel five! Angel five! We have
 an aircraft down five miles east
 of runway thirty-two.

193 EXT. UPPER VERANDA PORCH - DAY

193

Ben is awakened by the SOUND of a CAR DOOR CLOSING.
 He glances to the drive. CAMERA TO HIS POV of
 Virgil Hedgepath, the base Chaplain, and Varney ap-
 proaching the house. Ben rushes into the house.

194 OMITTED

194

195 INT. LILLIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

195

Lillian asleep. Ben knocks on her door.

(CONTINUED)

195 CONTINUED:

195

BEN

Mom... Mom...

LILLIAN

Come in, sugah.

She sits up. Ben enters. From below the SOUND of the DOORBELL RINGING. Okra barks. Lillian sits up rubbing her eyes.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Why you up so early?

BEN

I... I think something's happened to Dad. Colonel Hedgepath, the Chaplain and Colonel Varney are downstairs.

Lillian leaps out of bed, throws a robe on, and rushes out of the room.

195A INT. HALLWAY - DAY

195A

Ben follows out after her. He moves to the top of the stairs and listens to the SOUNDS from below. Lillian opens the front door.

LOW VOICES, then suddenly, a SCREAM, then SOBS. Ben sits on the step and puts his face in his hands. Some moments pass. The SOBBING FADES... LOW VOICES... Then Lillian comes to the foot of the stairs.

LILLIAN

Ben?

BEN

Yes, Mama?

LILLIAN

Go wake the children and have them come down here. I have something to tell y'all about your their daddy. Go on, now.

BEN

Yes, ma'am.

CAMERA INTERCUTS their look to each other. Ben gets up and walks down the hall to the children's rooms.

196 OMITTED

196

197 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

197

The children are assembled on the couch and chairs opposite Bull's casket. Their eyes are swollen from crying. Matt holds Okra in his lap. Lillian enters and sits near the casket. A long moment of silence.

LILLIAN
(as she studies
the children's
faces)

Now I want to say something.
Tomorrow will be
very hard on all of us, but the
Meechum family will conduct itself
honorably at the funeral. We will
not cry in public. Bull would
not have liked it. He would want
us to be strong. Our grief will
be private. If you wish to cry,
cry now. Cry here at the house.
Cry with each other and with our
friends, but tomorrow, at the
funeral, there will be no tears.
You will remember at all times
that you are the children of Bull
Meechum and will act accordingly.

*

Karen and Matt are weeping softly.

MARY ANNE
Can't I just sniffle once or
twice?

LILLIAN
Don't you dare smart mouth me at
a time like this, Mary Anne.
Now you and Ben take the
children upstairs so I can say
my prayers in peace.

BEN
Yes, ma'am. Come on, you guys...

Ben herds Matt and Karen out of the living room. Mary Anne follows. Lillian turns and stares at the casket.

198 SAME - LATER

198

The mantel clock reads two-thirty. Lillian continues her vigil, saying her rosary silently. Ben enters the room.

(CONTINUED)

198 CONTINUED:

198

BEN

Mama, ain't you goin' to bed?

LILLIAN

In a while, sugah. In a while.
Can't you sleep?

Ben shakes his head.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

Come sit.

She pats the couch. Ben sits on the couch next to her. Together they stare at the casket for some long moments.

BEN

Mama, I gotta tell you something.

LILLIAN

Yes, darlin'?

BEN

I... I used to pray for his plane to crash. I really did. And I just keep thinking that one of those prayers was up there, floating around, and that he accidentally ran into it. God... Mama, I feel so terrible he had to die for me to be free of him. I just...

LILLIAN

(putting her arm
around him)

No, sugah. It wasn't his dyin'. You were free the night you went to help Toomer. Look at me, now.

She holds her chin in his hands and looks into his eyes.

LILLIAN

(continuing)

You know that's true, don't you?

Slowly the realization comes to him. He smiles and nods. Tears well up in his eyes. He leans his head against his mother's shoulder, finding comfort there. Lillian puts her hand to his cheek and holds him close against her. They both stare at the casket. Lillian's lips move silently as the rosary slips through her fingers. The house is silent around them.

199 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

199

Lillian and the children stand, dry-eyed, dressed in black, listening to Virgil Hedgepath deliver the eulogy. Bull's casket is positioned over the grave, resting on a lowering device, a flag draped over it. A Priest stands to Virgil's left. Behind them is a Marine Honor Guard holding rifles. A Bugler stands to one side. Some of Bull's squadron are here, in full dress, as are pilots from other squadrons. Spinks, Arrabelle, Varney, the Two Sergeants from Beaufort Control Tower and other townspeople are here as well.

VIRGIL

... and the long and short of it
simply is that he died because
he stayed with his plane until
he was clear of the town...
because he was a true Marine...
and because he cared.

Ben looks at Lillian. Their eyes meet. CAMERA now INTERCUTS between Virgil, Ben and Lillian as Virgil continues. He looks at his watch, then addresses the Meechum family.

VIRGIL

(continuing)

I want to tell you Ben, Mary Anne,
Matthew, Karen, and Lillian that
I will like the world less without
Bull. It will be a duller, more
colorless place. I want to cry
but I can't. That is one of the
things wrong with fighter pilots.
(to the family)

I'm sure you know that. We'll
all remember him and honor that
memory.

He nods to the SERGEANT in charge of the Honor Guard.

SERGEANT

Ten-shun! Present arms!

They lift their rifles.

SERGEANT

(continuing)

Ready! Aim! Fire!

They FIRE.

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED:

199

SERGEANT

(continuing)

Ready! Aim! Fire!

They FIRE.

SERGEANT

(continuing)

Ready! Aim! Fire!

They FIRE.

SERGEANT

(continuing)

Order arms!

The rifles are returned to the rest. The Sergeant nods to the Bugler who begins playing Taps. The Sergeant then moves to the coffin and folds the flag into a triangle. He hands the flag to Virgil who moves to Lillian and hands it to her. As Taps continues, the coffin is lowered into the grave. Suddenly, overhead, out of the clouds, the EXPLOSION of a formation of Phantom jets; Bull's funeral cortege. There is a strange misalignment to the formation; an empty space where a plane should be -- Bull's space. Matt whispers to Ben.

MATT

There's one missing.

BEN

(nodding and putting
his hand on Matt's
head)

That's where Papa should be.

Matt nods. The formation climbs, makes a turn, dives then passes once more over the graveyard as the Bugler continues to play Taps. Bull's casket disappears into the grave. The Meechum children remain dry-eyed.

199A EXT. ROAD NEAR GRAVESITE - DAY

199A

The funeral is over. Lillian, Matthew, Karen and Mary Anne get into the lead car. Ben is about to enter when he is approached by Varney.

VARNEY

Ben?

(CONTINUED)

199A CONTINUED:

199A

BEN

Yes, Colonel?

VARNEY

Son, there's just something I want to say to you. There never was much love lost between your dad and me. He just wasn't my kind of Marine. I guess it was his style. But he was the best man I've ever known at his job. Watching you and your family today I think maybe the good he left outweighs the bad. I don't know if that helps much right now, but I wanted you to know how I felt.

BEN

Thank you, sir.

VARNEY

Goodbye, son.

BEN

Goodbye, Colonel.

Varney walks away. Ben looks after him for a moment, tears welling in the corners of his eyes. He smiles and gets into the car.

200 INT. MEECHUM LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

200

The room is bare to the walls. Lillian surveys the room as if to fix in her mind all that has happened here. She sees a broom in the corner and moves to it. Ben enters from the kitchen. He is dressed in Bull's flight jacket. The sleeve has been sewn.

LILLIAN

The movers left the broom.

BEN

I can put it on top of the wagon, Mama.

Lillian nods. They both stand in the empty room, savoring, prolonging the moment of departure.

From O.S., the SOUND of a CAR HORN.

LILLIAN

Let's go. 'Bye, house. 'Bye, Beaufort.

They take one last look, turn out the light and exit.

201 EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

201

Lillian closes the door, making sure it's locked. Ben puts his arm around her and they walk to the loaded car. The children are inside the car, waiting impatiently. Ben ties the basketball hoop to the luggage rack.

BEN

Matt, did Okra go to the bathroom?

MATT

How would I know?

BEN

Did you all go to the bathroom?

MARY ANNE

You want an affidavit, feces face?

BEN

I'm not gonna be stopping every fifteen seconds.

KAREN

Why do we always have to leave at three in the morning?

BEN

Because there's no traffic and we make better time. Stop complaining.

Ben and Lillian get in the car.

202 INT. CAR - NIGHT

202

Ben starts the engine and they pull slowly out of the drive. The children stare at the house, CAMERA INTERCUTTING their faces with their POV of the house.

KAREN

I'll never see Mary Helen and Alice again.

LILLIAN

We'll be back, sugah. We'll come back to visit.

KAREN

That's what you said about Cherry Point and New River.

(CONTINUED)

202 CONTINUED:

202

LILLIAN
Hush now and let me say my rosary.

DISSOLVE TO:

203 EXT. BAY STREET - NIGHT

203

The car moves through the deserted street out of town, toward the highway.

KAREN (V.O.)
I really was getting to like it here.

MARY ANNE (V.O.)
What's to like? Nothing but grits.

BEN (V.O.)
You're a grit.

LILLIAN (V.O.)
And don't you forget it.

DISSOLVE TO:

204 EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

204

The car continues on.

MATT (V.O.)
I really like moving. I wish we weren't going back to Atlanta. I'd like to go somewhere completely new.

MARY ANNE (V.O.)
How about up Ben's sphincter?

MATT (V.O.)
Maaaaa!

LILLIAN (V.O.)
Young lady, you watch your mouth. Now hush up all of you so I can say my rosary in peace.

BEN (V.O.)
Let's sing.

MARY ANNE (V.O.)
Dumb.

(CONTINUED)

204 CONTINUED:

204

KAREN (V.O.)

Yick.

MATT (V.O.)

Dog do.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

I would like to say my rosary.

DISSOLVE TO:

205 EXT. HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

205

The car moves over a bridge and into the countryside. BEN begins softly SINGING THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC. The KIDS begin BOOING him, which, of course, makes Ben SING LOUDER. MARY ANNE, KAREN and MATT CONTINUE TO YELL and BOO trying to drown out BEN, who CONTINUES, undaunted.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

(trying to
establish order)

Children, children... please...

The DIN GROWS to such proportions that LILLIAN begins to LAUGH. Now MARY ANNE begins SINGING DIXIE, trying to drown Ben out. After a few lines, KAREN and MATT join her and the contest is on. Ben struggles to keep the volume up. We HEAR LILLIAN'S LAUGHTER, then her VOICE as she joins Mary Anne, Karen and Matt in singing Dixie. Strangely her VOICE seems to be LOUDEST of all. CAMERA MOVES UP, WIDENING ANGLE as the car moves down the highway and away. The LAUGHTER and SINGING CONTINUES, GROWING FAINTER as the car moves away FROM US. CAMERA MOVES STILL HIGHER until the car is only a tiny dot on the highway, moving through forests of pines. The ANGLE INCREASES until we are FRAMING a vast, magical mosaic of land, trees and water.

END CREDITS OVER:

FADE OUT.

THE END