

THE RANCHO

Written by

Michael O'Rourke

One-Hour Pilot

"Room Mother"

310 386-4922
IrishFive@mac.com

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - VARIOUS - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Dirty. Grimy. The real pre-dawn Hollywood. We'll only be here for a minute. For perspective.

ANGLE ON: A PROSTITUTE, about to call it a night, walks down Vine by the Capitol Records Tower eating a microwave burrito.

The HOLLYWOOD SIGN, in the b.g., frames the image in an ironic postcard.

We PUSH IN on the SIGN. All the way. Over the third "O", past the transmitter and over the hill, dropping down into --

EXT. BURBANK'S RANCHO AREA - CONTINUOUS

-- A different world. A sanctuary. Suburban bliss.

The sun rises over the bucolic, tree lined streets, pocket parks and upper middle class houses with pools and stables.

CLOSE ON: A CEMENT HORSE HEAD jutting from a STONE WALL. Bronze lettering welcomes us to the "RANCHO EQUESTRIAN NEIGHBORHOOD."

A RED CONVERSE ALL STAR, Size 13, comes to rest on the horse head so the laces can be double-tied.

WIDER: Tying the laces is REED BENDER, early 50s, preparing to jog for the third time in his life. Still handsome and relatively fit he is trying to stave off middle-age.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Reed jogs past an OLDER COUPLE on HORSEBACK and nods hello.

A GORGEOUS WOMAN jogs toward him. He sucks in his pre-gut.

Earbuds in, she is oblivious and jogs right by.

Reed cranes his head to check out her ass. It is to die for.

BONG. Reed SMACKS his face right into a light pole. Hard.

The Gorgeous Woman GIGGLES, turns around and heads back to check on him.

GORGEOUS WOMAN
You OK? How many fingers?

The Gorgeous Woman playfully holds up three fingers. Reed wishes the blow had rendered him unconscious. Or dead.

EXT. THE EQUESTRIAN CENTER - A SHORT TIME LATER

Jogging on a horse trail. Reed can't stop touching the bleeding corner of his mouth with his tongue.

REED (V.O.)
It's been a tough summer.

Reed jogs past a boarded up Mexican restaurant.

REED (V.O.)
I blew a huge chunk of our savings
on a "sure thing" restaurant
franchise opportunity.

EXT. STUDIO PARKING LOT - A FEW MONTHS EARLIER

A parking curb reading "REED BENDER" is being unceremoniously painted over with a roller brush.

REED (V.O.)
I lost my overall deal at the
studio --

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - A FEW MONTHS EARLIER

A NETWORK EXECUTIVE stares at a scheduling board.

REED (V.O.)
-- right after the show I was
writing was canceled.

Executive takes down a PINK CARD reading: "UP ON BLOCKS"
CREATED BY: BENDER" and tosses it toward a trash can.

NETWORK EXECUTIVE
(Ta da!)
Problem solved.

BACK ON REED'S SNEAKERS

The laces on his right sneaker have come untied again.

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE - A FEW MONTHS EARLIER

Reed is leaning over a cute ASSISTANT'S desk. Confident.

ASSISTANT
She'll see you now.

REED (V.O.)
My agent dropped me.

AGENT (O.C.)
Reed, come in. Have a seat.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET

Beautiful street of vintage San Fernando Valley homes. A few "FOR SALE" signs. Reed's pace slows to a walk.

REED (V.O.)
Did I mention the property taxes on the house I purchased in the Rancho eight years ago with an interest only loan have gone up every single year since I bought it? I check Zillow like an AIDS patient checks his T-cell count. And with the same zeal.

CLOSE ON: Reed's face.

REED (V.O.)
I feel like I'm leaving something out.

Reed steps on the loose lace and goes face down onto the pavement.

REED (V.O.)
(matter of fact)
Oh yeah, my wife died.

EXT. FOREST LAWN CEMETERY - THREE WEEKS AGO

Reed sits in an uncomfortable folding chair next to a tented grave site. Not devastated. Just melancholy.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Reed is jogging with his head down. He looks up to see --

REED'S POV

-- FIFTY CYCLISTS coming right at him. He Panics. Freezes. Arms up, he waits to be smashed into.

REED
Shit. Sorry. My bad. Really. Sorry.

The cyclists ZIP past him on either side.

CYCLIST

Get out of the bike lane, asshole.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - A SHORT TIME LATER

Reed limps up toward a suburban elementary school and starts fishing for something in his jogging shorts' pockets.

REED (V.O.)

We had a rainy day account; we didn't have a tsunami account.

Found it. Reed pulls out a lighter and a pack of cigarettes.

REED (V.O.)

So, we've had to cut back a little. Make some adjustments. Traded in the Mercedes for a Toyota. Switched from Hollywood Fitness to the Y.

Reed lights his cigarette and hooks his fingers in the chain link fence running along the sidewalk.

REED (V.O.)

And, starting today, my daughters no longer attend the Walthampton Academy in Encino. Starting today --

WIDER: The sign in front of the school reads "RANCHO ELEMENTARY, A CALIFORNIA DISTINGUISHED SCHOOL."

REED (V.O.)

-- my daughters go to public school.

Reed soaks it in. Takes a deep, life affirming drag on his smoke. Exhales. Maybe it won't be so bad.

AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS begin SPUTTERING to life.

The spray blasts Reed right in the face. He doesn't recoil. He has become accustomed to just "taking it."

EXT. THE BENDER HOME - A SHORT TIME LATER

An upper middle class Burbank Rancho classic. The grass is a little overgrown and the bushes need trimming.

A wet, bleeding Reed grabs the paper from the driveway.

INT. THE BENDER HOME - CONTINUOUS

Nice but disheveled. Last nights' dinner dishes clutter the counter. And the night before's. Reed pushes a stack of dirty dishes to the corner of the breakfast table.

REED (V.O.)
I cut the housekeeper down to once
a week. Then she quit.

MITZI, the cat, hops up on the counter with a mostly DEAD MOUSE in her mouth.

REED
Eww! Mitzi. No! Not again!

Reed grabs a dirty dish towel and SNAPS it at the cat. Mitzi drops the mouse on a dirty plate, leaps off the counter and out the doggy door.

EMILY (O.C.)
(Sleepily)
Daddy?

EMILY, six-years-old and adorable in her Peppa Pig pajamas, is standing in the hall rubbing her eyes. She is the light of his life.

REED
Hey, Baby.

Reed tosses the dish towel over the mouse and scoops up Emily in his arms.

REED (CONT'D)
You don't have to get up yet,
kiddo.

EMILY
I had a bad dream and you weren't
there.

REED
I'm sorry. Want me to kiss it away?

Reed presses his lips to Emily's forehead.

REED (CONT'D)
All gone.

INT. REED'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reed places her in the center of the king sized bed and, still holding her, lies down.

REED

You close your eyes, I'll make your lunch and, hey, what should we have for breakfast?

EMILY

I don't know.
(Suddenly)
Is my uniform clean?

REED

You don't need a uniform, Emmy. Remember? Your new school let's you dress any way you want.

EMILY

I like my old school.

REED

I know you do. But I bet you are going to like Rancho Elementary even better. Caitlin goes there. So does Madison. Maybe you guys will be in the same class.

That would be cool.

EMILY

OK.

Reed kisses her on the forehead again.

REED

Dream something good.

INT. BENDER KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

The dish towel wriggles a bit.

EXT. BACKYARD - SECONDS LATER

Reed bursts out the side door holding the plate at arms length, and drops the plate, dish towel and mostly dead mouse into the trash can. He shivers with the heebie jeebies.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Reed feverishly washing his hands in the kitchen sink.

INT. BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Reed carefully opens a bedroom door to peer in on his older twin daughters, KIMBERLY and CARLY, 13. Larger versions of Emily.

The room, like the girls who live in it, is in transition. Little girl things (doll house, stuffed animals) and older girl things (make-up on dresser, bra thrown over chair).

Confident they are still asleep in their bunk beds, Reed pulls the door shut.

REVERSE ANGLE: Carly is asleep in the lower bunk. In the upper bunk is Kimberly. Eyes open. Softly crying.

INT. KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

Reed carefully assembles the peanut butter and jelly and then pushes a gingerbread COOKIE CUTTER into the sandwich.

Perfect. He places the sandwich-man in a Ziploc and lovingly places it into the My Little Pony lunch box. He is a good dad.

REED (V.O.)

No doubt we have hit a few bumps in the road, us four. It happens.

Reed licks the peanut butter from the knife and places it in the sink.

The pool pump SWOOSHES to life in the back yard. Reed glances out the kitchen window...

EXT. BACKYARD - REED'S POV

... and sees Mitzi swatting at a flower by the pool.

REED (V.O.)

But I have a good feeling. A feeling that things are about to even out for us.

Suddenly, a COYOTE leaps over the back fence, grabs Mitzi in its teeth, leaps back over the fence and is gone.

EXT. KITCHEN WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN fast on Reed at the kitchen window. Did that just happen? Reed can't believe his eyes. Words fail him. Until...

REED

Holy fuck!

END OF TEASER.

INT. BENDER HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Emily is back asleep in the large bed. A cute back-to-school outfit is tossed onto the bed. Then socks. Then shoes.

REED (O.C.)
 OK, Emily. New outfit. Socks.
 Shoes. But for the life of me I
 can't find your underwear.

Emily stirs. Then sits up.

REED (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 Seriously, have you seen them? You
 can't go to school without
 underpants. Not on the first day.

Emily smiles and slaps her hand to her forehead in mock surprise. This is a regular routine.

EMILY
 I think I know where they are, Dad.

REVERSE ANGLE: Reed is wearing Emily's panties on his head.

REED
 Well, then tell me, because,
 seriously, we are going to be late.

EMILY
 Your head.

Reed slowly reaches up and touches the panties.

REED
 Now how did they get there?

EMILY
 (Joyful)
 Heaven knows?

REED
 Oh, I almost forgot. I have
 something for you.

Reed reaches into his pockets and pulls his hands back out with just his index fingers extended.

REED (CONT'D)
 Tickle sticks!!!

EMILY
 (Gleeful)
 No!

Reed begins tickling Emily with his fingers. She is laughing hysterically and rolling back and forth on the bed.

EXT. RANCHO STREET - LATER

Reed, with Emily on his shoulders and wearing her Olaf backpack, is walking his daughters to school. New clothes. New lunch boxes. New life.

Reed extends his hands out to Kimberly and Carly. For his sake, they take them.

REED

(Overselling)

Now isn't this better than being on the 134? Fresh air, girls. And the trees. Are those birds chirping?

CARLY

It's OK, Dad. A bunch of our friends go to Jordan.

REED

These aren't just any public schools. Burbank has its own school district. Not like L.A. Unified with metal detectors, drug sniffing dogs and gangs. Did you know the schools are nationally ranked?

KIMBERLY

(Sarcastic)

Whoopee.

EMILY

I liked my old school.

REED

I know you did, Muffin. But look how snazzy you are in these new clothes. And you get to take your lunch. How awesome is that?

Carly sees some friends on the corner.

CARLY

There's Giselle and Jennifer.

Kimberly and Carly each kiss Reed on the cheek.

REED

(Pleasantly surprised)

Hey, thanks, girls.

KIMBERLY

Well, it probably won't be an everyday thing.

CARLY

So don't get used to it.

Reed watches the Twins as they dash across the street to their friends, turn the corner and are gone.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A HUNDRED ELEMENTARY KIDS, most accompanied by at least one PARENT, are approaching the school gate from every direction.

A middle-aged MOM in a bright yellow safety vest is opening car doors for the KIDS being dropped off in the SAFETY ZONE.

There is excitement, apprehension, fear and separation anxiety in the air. There is also the sound of a CRAZY MAN man yelling through a BULLHORN.

BULLHORN VOICE (O.C.)

Welcome students, welcome to the best darn elementary school in the state of California. It is the first day of the best year of your life! It's going to be tremendous.

EXT. SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

A block from the school EDGAR, a sixty-year-old uniformed crossing guard stands post with his handheld stop sign.

Reed and Emily wait to cross.

EDGAR THE CROSSING GUARD

Well, good morning, Little Lady. I don't recognize you. Are you new?

EMILY

It's my first day here.

EDGAR THE CROSSING GUARD

Are you new to the area?

EMILY

No. We're cutting back.

EDGAR THE CROSSING GUARD

Welcome. And I see Dad's taking you to school today. Aren't you lucky?

Edgar gives Reed a "The-kids-really-dig-me" wink.

EMILY
 (Matter of fact)
 My mom died a few weeks ago so he's
 really all I have.

Reed tries to stop Emily after the fact. Too late. Awkward.

EDGAR THE CROSSING GUARD
 I am so sorry!

A flummoxed Edgar BLOWS his whistle and steps into the street to stop traffic for the two. As they cross...

EDGAR THE CROSSING GUARD (CONT'D)
 I'm Edgar.

EMILY
 I'm Emily.

EDGAR THE CROSSING GUARD
 It sure is nice to meet you, Emily.

EMILY
 Pleasure is all mine.

Reed smiles at his daughter's manners. His dead wife's doing.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

TWO MOMS are handing out RATTLES to the returning CHILDREN. One is AMANDA JENKINS. Quite sexy in tight jeans and a low cut T-shirt. You know, in a mom with three kids kind of way.

Reed and Emily have made it to the periphery of the school. Smiling and happy. Reed stops and views the pandemonium.

CAMERA PANS the arriving masses and finds kids and parents of every size, color and socioeconomic background.

A really FAT DAD is dropping off his really FAT KID. A DOTING MOTHER is taking her kids picture. Two EXTREME LESBIANS are escorting their SON to the gate.

A SHORT SCHOOL BUS lowers a WHEELCHAIR BOUND SECOND GRADER on a hydraulic lift. A MOM signs "Have a good day. I love you" to her HEARING IMPAIRED CHILD.

Lots of PARENTS walking their DOGS and pushing STROLLERS containing little brothers and sisters too young for school.

REED (V.O.)
 This is public school. No screening
 process. No tuition.
 (MORE)

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

Only requirement is that your address fall into a particular zone. "We take everybody."

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - SIMULTANEOUS

Coffee pot and bagels on a rickety table. Old furniture. Aphorism posters. Not the sanctuary the kids think it is.

A DOZEN TEACHERS mill about. A mix of young optimists, passionate educators and a few old burnouts.

DANA HUNT, 25, a second grade teacher, is gleefully taking pictures through the window with her iPhone.

DANA

Oh my God, they are so adorable. I could just eat them all up.

Fourth grade teacher, JEREMY ILKO, 30, sidles up behind Dana and subtly presses against her ass. She is not objecting.

JEREMY

You get the picture I sent you?

JIMMY MONTALVO, 29, doctors a cup of coffee. REGGIE WASHINGTON, an African-American Dwarf, can't reach the ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER packets.

REGGIE

Little help?

Jimmy gives his level best to seem like he gets artificial sweetener for Black dwarves all the time.

JIMMY

Sure, pink or blue?

REGGIE

Blue. That pink shit will stunt your growth.

Jimmy hands Reggie two Equal.

JIMMY

Bagel?

REGGIE

(Slightly sardonic)
Now is the good Hispanic liberal offering me a bagel because I am a dwarf or because I am Black? I don't see you offering any of the other teachers a bagel.

JIMMY

Well, the other teachers can reach.

Reggie's militant expression dissolves into a smile.

REGGIE

Reginald Washington. Second grade.
I used to teach fifth, but the
little bastards got taller than me.

JIMMY

Jimmy Montalvo. Third grade.

Jimmy reaches for the last blueberry bagel just as a FEMALE HAND grabs the same one.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, go ahead.

We follow the arm up to see MARCIA MCCRIMMON, 27, a super hot teacher dressed to the nines. Marcia gives Jimmy the once over and takes the bagel.

MARCIA

Nice tie. New third grade teacher?

JIMMY

Yes. Mr. Montalvo. I mean, Jimmy.

MARCIA

Nice to meet you, Mr. Montalvo-I-mean-Jimmy. Marcia McCrimmon. I mean, Miss McCrimmon. Fifth grade.

They hold each others gaze. Marcia is deciding whether to sleep with him or not. It's a pass.

MARCIA (CONT'D)

Enjoying yourself, Reggie?

REGGIE (O.C.)

Oh, yes!

REVEAL: Reggie has been standing between the two of them the entire time. His face is inches from Marcia's CROTCH.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

There are days when I am more than
happy the good Lord made me this
size.

(Beat; considering)

Thank you, Jesus.

Marcia holds her hand an inch above Reggie's head.

MARCIA

You must be at least this tall to
ride this ride. Too bad; so sad.
Guess you didn't grow over the
summer.

REGGIE

Yeah, well, I'm growing now.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - CONTINUOUS

A SUPER HOT, LARGE BREASTED MOM in a tight, low cut blouse is
holding a CHIHUAHUA at chest level. A gold SHAMROCK dangles
from a chain between her breasts. Several DADS are pretending
to be interested in the dog.

DAD #1

Can I touch?

SUPER HOT MOM

Sure. He was a rescue. Saved him
from the North Hollywood shelter.

SINGLE DAD #1

Well, bless you for that.

SINGLE DAD #2

You have a big heart. Huge.

Amanda and the Rattle Mom are watching the spectacle.

AMANDA

The smaller the dog the bigger the
bitch.

Amanda sees Reed across the yard. Notices he isn't wearing a
wedding ring. She heads over.

ANGLE ON REED not quite sure where to go. Amanda hands each
of them a rattle.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Here you go. And you too, Dad.

Emily takes the rattle and stares at it. It is a cheap
plastic rattlesnake rattle.

EMILY

A rattle?

AMANDA

A Rancho Rattler rattle. New, huh?

EMILY

Yes, ma'am.

AMANDA

(Surprised)

Ma'am? Well, I hope your manners
rub off on the other Rattlers.
What's your name?

EMILY

Emily. Why is that man on the roof?

We TILT UP to reveal PRINCIPAL WINKLER, 30, pacing back and forth on the roof like a college cheerleader. Bullhorn in one hand; a very large RATTLE SNAKE HEAD rattle in the other.

AMANDA

That is your principal.

EMILY

No way!

AMANDA

Way! His name is Principal Winkler
but everyone calls him "The Fonz."

PRINCIPAL WINKLER

(Through bullhorn)

All right, Rattlers, let's get
rattlin'.

On cue, everyone SHAKES their rattles and HISSES. Emily shakes her rattle and looks up at Reed. This is awesome. Reed isn't so sure.

REED

Where do we go?

AMANDA

(To Emily)

Well, you'll want to go over to
that yellow poster and see who your
teacher is.

Emily looks at Reed for approval. He nods. She runs to the wall with great enthusiasm.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

She's adorable.

REED

She is. She's my pal.

Emily uses her finger to scan the poster board for her name.

AMANDA

Just the one?

REED

I have twin daughters in middle school. At Jordan. You?

AMANDA

One here, one at Jordan and a tenth grader at Burroughs. The public school trifecta. Makes for a busy morning. All girls.

REED

Wow!

AMANDA

Wow? You are supposed to say, "You don't look old enough to have a high schooler." I'm Amanda.

REED

Reed.

Emily has been joined by MADISON, a friend from the neighborhood. They join hands and jump up and down with the excitement one only sees in second grade girls.

AMANDA

Will you look at that? I'd give anything to be able to get that excited again.

Amanda arches her back slightly giving a less than subtle hint that she is capable of getting that excited again.

REED

Me, too.

AMANDA

They grow up so fast.

REED

Yeah, I hate that. And being away from her all day. It sucks.

AMANDA

You should volunteer. The school is always looking for dads. There's a luncheon for new volunteers at noon. School's big on luncheons. I'll be there. I'll sign you up.

Emily comes running back to Reed, Madison in tow. She can hardly contain her excitement.

EMILY

Daddy, daddy, I am in Room Six and my teacher is Miss Paul. And, guess what? Guess what? Guess what?

REED

(Playing along)
What? What? What?

EMILY

Madison is in my class!

Emily holds up her hand for a Daddy high five.

REED

Awesome. Hello, Madison. Shall we?

Reed offers Emily his arm in mock formality.

EMILY

I'm just going to go in with Madison. Is that OK?

MADISON

We line up on the blacktop and then our teacher will come and get us.

Reed crouches down to Emily's eye level.

REED

You sure you don't want me to take you in? First day and all?

Emily lovingly places her hand on Reed's face.

EMILY

I'll be fine.

BULLHORN (O.S.)

Rancho Rattlers say --

Emily and Madison shake their rattles and "Hiss."

AMANDA

(In Reed's ear)
You can watch from the side fence.
(to Emily)
You have a great first day as a Rancho Rattler, Miss Emily!

EMILY

Yes, ma'am. I will.

AMANDA
Ma'am. I love that.

Amanda walks back toward a group of MOTHERS.

REED'S POV: Amanda's ass as she effortlessly works it.

EMILY
We're gonna go in. OK, Dad?

REED
Yeah, sure, honey. You and Madison
have a great day.

Emily kisses Reed on the lips. She's too young to be self-conscious and probably wouldn't care anyway. She loves him.

Reed watches as Emily goes through the gate, around the building and is gone. Surrounded by people, Reed feels alone.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND

The hardtop behind the school is teeming with STUDENTS of all ages lining up at their spots to wait for their teachers.

A large group of PARENTS stand on the other side of a chain link fence trying to spot their children among the masses.

CAMERA FINDS Reed in the middle of the parent pack trying to get a glimpse of Emily.

AMANDA (O.C.)
What's his story? Divorced?

ANGLE ON Amanda and the Rattle Mom putting the unclaimed rattles back into a box.

RATTLE MOM
Widowed. Wife was in that horrible
accident on the 405 a month ago.

AMANDA
(Not really sad)
How sad.

EXT. ROOF

Principal Winkler surveys the playground like General MacArthur reviewing the troops. His WALKIE scratches to life.

WALKIE TALKIE VOICE (O.C.)
OK, Fonz. All systems are go.

EXT. PORTABLE BUILDING

TEN DADS stand behind the building at the far opposite side of the playground. The LEAD DAD is holding a giant, menacing RATTLE SNAKE HEAD with FANGS. The nine others are holding a long piece of material. One holds an oversized SNAKE RATTLE.

LEAD DAD
Ready? Let's do it.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - WIDE

PRINCIPAL WINKLER
(Through Bullhorn)
Boys and girls. To kick off the
best year ever. I present --

Like a runaway train the ten Dads in the snake costume come out. It looks like a Dragon in a Chinese New Year parade.

PRINCIPAL WINKLER (CONT'D)
(Through Bullhorn)
-- your Rancho Rattler!!!

The snake rushes across the sports field grass, through the playground and onto the hardtop. Most of the KIDS shake their rattles, CHEER and JUMP.

CAMERA FINDS Emily, clapping her hands and loving every minute of it. This is like going to school at Disneyland.

ANGLE ON: The KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS, lined up on their SPOT, watching the snake with growing trepidation.

PRINCIPAL WINKLER (CONT'D)
Hey Kinders, looks like the rattler
is coming over to say hello.

WIDER: The Snake makes a beeline for the Kindergarten Class. The kids are frozen in place. Then

ECU: The CUTEST FIVE-YEAR-OLD BOY IN THE WORLD wide-eyed with terror. He SCREAMS.

This sets off a CHAIN REACTION. All of the Kindergarten students SCREAM and run from the snake like they are in the streets of Pamplona running from the bulls. Mass hysteria.

A Kindergarten GIRL runs to the chain link fence where the parents are standing and tries to climb it like Jimmy Pearsol in "Fear Strikes Out."

KINDERGARTEN GIRL
Mommy, save me.

Several parents climb the fence like it is the fall of Saigon. Reed, unable to see Emily, joins them.

INT. HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

The teachers are looking out the windows at the chaos.

JIMMY
Shouldn't we stop this?

Dana and Jeremy come out of their classroom. She is adjusting her dress having just "done it" in the supply closet.

JEREMY
The Fonz doesn't like us to go out
until he introduces us.

Jimmy bolts out the door.

BACK TO PLAYGROUND

The snake continues to serpentine at full speed.

SNAKE HEAD POV: Coming around and beginning to make another pass through the playground. Jimmy steps into FRAME.

JIMMY
STOP!

Swerving to avoid colliding with Jimmy, there is a sudden IMPACT and we go face first right into the ground.

WIDER: The Snake costume is in a heap with legs and arms sticking out from underneath.

LEAD DAD
(From inside snake head)
What the hell?

REVEAL: Reed getting up from having taken the snake out. The Dads from the costume are checking themselves for injury. Jimmy is sprawled on the ground as well.

JIMMY
Thank you. Nicely done.

Reed helps Jimmy to his feet.

REED
You set the screen. What the hell
kind of stunt is this?

JIMMY
I dunno. It's my first day.

REED
Ours too. Reed Bender.

JIMMY
Jimmy Montalvo. Welcome to Rancho
Elementary.

REED
Yeah, right back at ya.

The two men shake hands as parents console their crying
Kindergarten students.

An ANGRY MOM, holding her SOBBING KINDERGARTNER, glares up at
Principal Winkler.

ANGRY MOM
Are you insane?

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

The teachers are leading their students to their classrooms.

Jeremy and Dana pass each other and exchange lovers' winks.

The TWO FIFTH GRADE BOYS in the front of Marcia's line are
checking out her ass. Marcia smiles.

Emily, in line with her class is nervous but smiling. Hoping
it is going to be a good day.

A JANITOR carries the SNAKE HEAD COSTUME through the students
to a storage closet. Seeing it, one of the KINDERS WHIMPERS.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - A SHORT TIME LATER

The mothers are all in front of the school in their like-
minded groups. The HOTTIES, the SWEAT SUIT MAFIA, the ENCORE
MOMS, the MEXICAN MAMACITAS and so on.

Amanda is under a tree laughing and talking with her group:
They are the MILFS. The women scream with LAUGHTER.

ANGLE ON: Reed as he walks through the groups of women. Each
group quiets down as he comes near, then start WHISPERING
when they believe he is out of earshot.

We STAY on Reed as he self-consciously avoids eye contact.

REED (V.O.)
My dead wife is the elephant in the
room. People aren't sure what to
say. When it's a divorce it's easy.
(MORE)

REED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You were a prick or she was a
 bitch. People take sides. But when
 you are a widower you are
 practically canonized.

Reed crosses the street. Uneasy, he turns and looks back at the school. An odd place. And Emily is in there somewhere.

EXT. BURBANK STREET - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Reed, walking back home, pulls out his cell phone and dials.

REED
 (into phone)
 Yeah, could you give me the number
 of Burbank Animal Control?

Reed listens carefully.

REED (V.O.)
 They just assume it was a perfect
 union that would have gone right on
 being perfect forever --

Reed flips the phone shut, back open and dials again.

REED (V.O.)
 -- if it hadn't been cut short by a
 reckless teen driving her Daddy's
 SUV. But truth be told... my wife
 was a cunt.

INT. BENDER HOME - A SHORT TIME LATER

Reed enters through the front door and tosses a stack of MAIL onto a table already covered with stacks of mail. An envelope from the INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE catches his eye.

REED (V.O.)
 Know what I got three hours after
 identifying her body at the morgue?

SFX: OBNOXIOUS DOORBELL CHIME.

INT. BENDER HOME - SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER

Reed opens the door to see a PROCESS SERVER standing there.

PROCESS SERVER
 Reed Bender?

Reed looks the way someone looks after a trip to the morgue.

REED
That's right.

PROCESS SERVER
You, my friend, have been served.

The Process Server slaps a BLUE ENVELOPE on Reed's chest.

PROCESS SERVER (CONT'D)
Have a nice day.

Reed opens the document to see "DIVORCE" printed at the top.

INT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - ROOM SIX - MORNING

Two pieces of drawing paper are placed on Emily's desk.

MISS PAUL (O.C.)
I want you all to draw me a picture
of your family on one page and how
you spent your summer on the other.
And don't forget to draw yourself
because you are an important member
of your family.

Emily takes out a RED CRAYON and begins her masterpiece.

EXT. BENDER HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

Reed is sitting on the diving board staring at the IRS envelope. Reluctantly, he opens it. It is not good news.

REED (V.O.)
My wife and I stopped having sex
years ago. I'm not talking "we
rarely had sex" I'm talking
"never." The last time we had sex
was, let's see, how old is Emily?

A BLACK PLASTIC BAG comes flying over the fence. THUD.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER (O.C.)
Found it! Parts of it anyway.
Definitely a coyote.

A tough looking, female ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER climbs over.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER (CONT'D)
Kid's pet?

Reed nods as the Officer hands Reed a pink collar with a heart shaped tag.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER (CONT'D)

They come down from the hills when it gets dry. You want me to dispose of the carcass?

REED

(Duh!)

Uh, yeah.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

Well, some people like to keep it and have a backyard funeral. It can help kids learn to deal with death.

REED

I think we have that covered.

INT. BENDER HOME - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Reed, dressed for a meeting, crosses to his computer desk in the corner of the living room. Our view becomes obstructed by the FISH TANK. A DEAD GOLDFISH is floating belly up.

Reed's face suddenly appears on the other side of the tank.

REED (PRE-LAP)

I am starting to have some major fuckin' misgivings about this.

INT. TOYOTA CAROLLA - LATER

A new FISH is bouncing in its bag on the passenger seat next to Reed's CELL PHONE. Open. On SPEAKER.

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)

Misgivings? A gig's a gig.

WIDER: Reed is navigating the streets of Chatsworth. A GPS, held by a small white Teddy Bear, sits on the dash helping.

REED

Not even. I have three daughters for Christ's sake. Daugh-ters!

GPS VOICE

Turn right in point one miles.

Reed can't get over.

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)

Exactly. Three daughters that need food, clothing, a house to live in.

GPS VOICE
Recalculating.

REED
(regarding traffic)
Shit!

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
Any movement on "Up On Blocks?"

REED
NBC killed it. Fox is considering.
It's dead in the water. I'm dead in
the water. Some fucking provider.

GPS VOICE
Turn right; then turn left.

REED
We lose our health insurance next
month. The twins need braces.

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
Can't you COBRA? Or get Obamacare?

REED
I can. For One thousand five
hundred and eight-five
motherfuckin' dollars a month. I'm
going to wrap the girls in bubble
wrap and hope for the best.

Reed misses another turn.

GPS VOICE
Recalculating.

REED
God damnit!

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
How's my little Emily doing?

REED
You know, good. I think. She's the
main reason I just can't do --

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
She's the main reason you should.
Look, they loved your sample --

REED
I can't believe I wrote that shit.

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
 -- and they're looking to beef up
 the writing on their projects --

REED
 (laughable)
 Ha, "projects."

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
 Remember what you told me when I
 did that stupid ass clip show for
 Animal Planet? You said, "Never be
 ashamed of anything you do to
 support your family."

REED
 Where the hell am I?

CELL PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
 You're in Chatsworth, Baby. The
other entertainment capital of the
 world.

GPS VOICE
 Recalculating.

INT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - ROOM SIX

Finished with her artwork Emily is passing it forward with
 the others. Amanda and another MOM are in the doorway. They
 have cupcakes.

AMANDA
 Special treat! The Rancho Moms have
 cupcakes for you to take to recess.

The class erupts with a cheer.

CUPCAKE MOM
 Just a reminder that your mommies
 love you very, very much.

ANGLE ON EMILY who probably could have gone all day without
 that particular reminder.

EXT. CHATSWORTH INDUSTRIAL PARK

Reed is getting out of his car in front of a nondescript,
 industrial office park. On the building is a very unassuming
 sign reading: "AFTERGLOW PRODS." We hardly notice it.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - MOMENTS LATER

It could be the reception area for an accounting firm or a place that sells ceramic tile. Only it's not.

Reed enters. A young, attractive RECEPTIONIST greets him.

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning. Are you here to audition for "Benjamin Buttfuck?"

REED

(thrown)

Yeah, uh, no! No. No! No. No!

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - PLAYGROUND

Jimmy is supervising recess with Marcia, Reggie, and veteran teacher WANDA HUTCHINS, 60 but could pass for 70. Students are climbing monkey bars, jumping rope and so on. Three WOMEN IN YELLOW VESTS are playing with the kids.

REGGIE

So where were you before?

JIMMY

L.A. Unified. Two years at Edison and then three at Russell.

MARCIA

Gave up the combat pay?

JIMMY

It wasn't so bad. I finished up my masters at UCLA and wanted to get into Burbank Unified. Better pay. More parental involvement. You know, my first year at Edison only three parents came to Greet Night.

REGGIE

I had a hundred percent last year.

MARCIA

Yeah, but you have the freak factor in your corner. People do love a show.

Reggie turns to face her. Once again he is at crotch level.

REGGIE

(Sniffing)

New douche, Miss McCrimmon?

Jimmy notices Wanda clutching, almost protectively, a hardbound book to her chest.

JIMMY

(Reciting from memory)
*The two old, simple problems ever
 intertwined. Close home, elusive,
 present, baffled, grappled. By each
 successive age insoluble, pass'd
 on, to ours today--and we pass on
 the same.*

Wanda stares at him. In fact, they all do.

MARCIA

(That was weird)
 O.K.

JIMMY

"Leaves Of Grass."

ANGLE ON: WANDA'S BOOK. WALT WHITMAN'S "LEAVES OF GRASS."

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I wrote my thesis on Whitman. I
 keep a copy in my desk.

WANDA

I don't need any new friends.

Jimmy and Reggie share a LOOK. Reggie mouths "she drinks" and demonstrates with a hand gesture.

INT. AFTERGLOW PRODUCTIONS - A SHORT TIME LATER

We slowly PUSH down the hallway. We PEEK into the different rooms of Afterglow Productions. Edit bays where HARD-CORE SEX SCENES are being cut. A DUB KITCHEN with monitors filled with hi-speed sex being transferred. A GREEN ROOM where very naked ACTRESSES are doing their hair and looking over scripts.

The hallway is lined with several cabinet-style trophy cases filled with AVN trophies: the Academy Awards of porn.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

We did over two hundred titles last
 year. Won twenty-one AVN's.

ANGLE ON the trophy case. Sure enough, each statue is embossed with the categories he mentions and a lot more.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Best All-Girl Group, Best Anal-
 Themed Release, Best Anal Series,
 Best Double Penetration, Best
 Gonzo, Best Gang Bang, Best
 Spanking Release, Best Squirting
 Release, Best Squirting Series --

The list is just too long.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 We also won Most Outrageous Sex
 Scene. I'm particularly proud of
 that one. It is hard to surprise
 these days.

We have made it to the closed office door at the end of the
 hall. A plain nameplate reads: "NICHOLAS BAGNARSI: THE BOSS."

We DISSOLVE through the door and into...

INT. NICK BAGNARSI'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ornate. Lush. Could be the office of any highly paid CEO. But
 this one belongs to porn magnate, NICK BAGNARSI. Formerly
 handsome. Mid-fifties. Charismatic. You would actually like
 him, until you realized his profession. And maybe even then.

NICK
 Yet surprise them we do. Gotta stay
 innovative. How's this grab you? --

ANGLE ON Reed, sitting across from Nick, wishing he were
 anywhere else.

NICK (CONT'D)
 -- IMAX. Am I right? No one has
 ever done it. Balls the size of
 Volkswagon Bugs bouncing off an ass
 the size of a blue whale. I'm
 telling you. Huge.

Nick stares at Reed. Sizing him up.

NICK (CONT'D)
 I'm also thinking 3-D.

Nick extends his arm with a closed fist to simulate a penis.
 He jabs it in Reed's direction.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Coming at ya! Huh? Huh?

REED
Literally.

NICK
Ha! Literally. See. You get it.

Nick leans forward. About to share.

NICK (CONT'D)
It isn't enough to show people
fucking. You need to show why they
are fucking.
(BEAT; THEN)
Behind every cum shot, there is a
story.

This profound statement, left hanging in the air, is interrupted by the INTERCOM on Nick's desk.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
(filtered)
Final decision on leads for "MILF
Patrol?" Can't wait.

NICK
This'll only take a second. Can I
get you something? Coffee? Water?
Blow job? Just kidding.

REED
I'm good.

The door OPENS and FOUR HOT, NAKED WOMEN, in their thirties, enter flanked by the Receptionist.

Nick walks down the line of Naked Women. Inspecting them like he is buying a horse. Reed unsuccessfully tries to pretend being in a roomful of hot, naked women happens to him every god damn day of the week.

NICK
The sample vignette you wrote was
great. Funny. And smart.
(To Naked Woman)
I know you.

NAKED WOMAN
Hi, Nick.

Nick gestures with his hands.

NICK
May I?

NAKED WOMAN
 (giggling)
 Of course.

Nick bounces the Naked Woman's breasts in his open hands.

NICK
 I'm all about the writing, Reed.

Nick moves to the next Naked Woman. She seems familiar. She giggles as Nick bounces her breasts.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Now these are nice.

ANGLE ON: Bouncing breasts. We NOTICE a GOLD SHAMROCK dangling from a chain between them. This is the Chihuahua Mom from the school.

NICK (CONT'D)
 (to Reed)
 But first, I want another sample.
 Gotta see consistency. I'm talking
 to other writers but you're my
 frontrunner, Reed.
 (to Chihuahua Mom)
 You do anal?

CHIHUAHUA MOM
 No if's, and's or butts about it.

NICK
 We have a winner! Thank you ladies.

The Chihuahua Mom jumps up and down with glee as they EXIT.
 Nick casually returns to his desk.

NICK (CONT'D)
 This could be the beginning of a
 beautiful friendship. Casablanca.
 Great fuckin' movie. Did you know
 that originally it was supposed to
 be Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan?
 Jesus. I tell ya, Ingrid Bergman's
 tits. Am I right?

Reed, unsure of what to say, nods a "You're tellin' me?"

NICK (CONT'D)
 I pay by the script on the shorts.
 But I also want us to develop
 features together. That I'd give
 you a percentage on. Look at this.

Nick slides a thin script over to Reed. The title page reads:
 "THE SPURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTFUCK."

NICK (CONT'D)

Instead of getting younger his dick
 gets smaller. It's a comedy.
 Dialogue sucks. Jokes suck. It
 needs more than a polish. It needs
 a little of that Reed Bender touch.

If this isn't bottom... Reed can see it from here.

REED

I appreciate the kind words and all
 but my plate is pretty full.

NICK

Bullshit. I read the trades. I
 never discuss money out loud. The
 walls have ears. Here.

Nick writes a sum on a Post-It and hands it to Reed.

NICK (CONT'D)

I tell ya, Reed. Good writing is
 the future in this business.

Reed glances at the Post-It. Not a huge sum. Not his rate.

NICK (CONT'D)

Take the treatment home and see
 what you can do with it. And turn
 in another sample. I need quality
 and quantity. Three shorts a week.

SFX: INTERCOM BUZZER

NICK (CONT'D)

See, the walls do have ears.
 (Into Intercom)
 What?

RECEPTIONIST

(filtered)
 Flying monkeys?

NICK

Send them in. We're doing the
 "Wizard of Jizz." It's gonna be
 funny as shit. The wicked witch
 melts in a bukakke scene. Fuckin'
 hilarious. Am I right?

The door OPENS and SEVEN completely NAKED MEN enter. The Naked Men line up on either side of Reed.

REED
(sotto)
Oh boy!

ANGLE ON: Reed, not sure where to look, framed by two of the full-frontal Males. This is getting surreal.

REED (CONT'D)
(to naked men)
I'm not, uh, making you guys
uncomfortable am I?

SFX: Reed's cell phone RINGS.

Reed glances at the Caller ID: RANCHO ELEMENTARY.

NICK
OK, guys, you know the drill. Let's
see some wood.

The Naked Men begin stimulating themselves.

REED
Oh my god!!!

Reed stands to get out of there as fast as possible.

REED (CONT'D)
(flummoxed)
Nick, gentleman, it was a pleasure.
But, I gotta go. I gotta go.

NICK
Read the treatment. I swear, it's
gonna be bigger than *Forrest Hump*.

Reed grabs his stuff and makes his way through the naked men.

REED
Don't mind me. As you were.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - PLAYGROUND

On a cupcake sugar rush, Emily's classmates are enjoying recess with the reckless abandon of an A.D.D. placebo group.

CAM FINDS Emily sitting alone and unnoticed on a bench at the far side of the blacktop. Her cupcake sits uneaten next to her. Emily takes a long, deep stuttering breath. Trying not to cry, she is keeping her deepest emotion in check.

Madison sees Emily and joyfully runs over.

MADISON

Emily, wanna play with me and --

Madison stops short, slows to a walk and tentatively approaches Emily the way a child comes up on a wounded bird.

Emily looks away. Wipes her eyes with the back of her hand.

Madison slowly sits down next to Emily and, without saying a word, gingerly puts her arm around Emily.

WIDER: The two friends sit in silence.

INT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - FRONT OFFICE

GLADYS, the receptionist, is busily sorting first day paperwork. Reed enters as the Yellow Vest we saw earlier is taking the crying Third Grader into the Nurse's office.

GLADYS

(Without looking up)
Can I help you?

REED

My name is Reed Bender. Emily Bender's dad. I got a call to see the principal?

GLADYS

Vice-principal. Sign in please. And I will need to see some ID.

Reed simultaneously pulls out his wallet and signs the log. He opens his wallet and holds it out for inspection.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Take it out of the wallet, please. I need to make a photocopy.

REED

Want a strand of hair for DNA?

Gladys is not amused. She takes his ID to the copy machine.

GLADYS

(By rote)
Since you are new we don't have you in the system. In the paperwork packet sent home today you will find an FBI clearance form.

(MORE)

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Fill that out, you will be assigned a number and in future visits you will simply sign in and take your name badge. Should take two weeks. Until that time, we need to see ID every time to ensure your identity.

Gladys hands Reed his ID back.

REED

No one would want to be me. My life sort of sucks right now.

(suddenly remembering)

I think I might already be in the system. I was on the substitute teacher list about eight years ago.

GLADYS

You subbed?

REED

No, thank God. Just a backup plan.

Gladys takes offense as she bangs away on a keyboard.

GLADYS

Last four digits of your social?

REED

9021.

Gladys finds Reed on the computer.

GLADYS

(Surprised)

You're certified. And you have a teaching degree?

REED

Cal State Northridge. Class of '92.

INT. VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD'S OFFICE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

VICE PRINCIPAL LILLIAN WOOD -- 40, no nonsense, career administrator in a Republican business suit -- is sitting behind a large desk as Reed enters.

REED

I feel like I am in trouble. Am I in trouble?

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

Thank you for coming in so quickly, Mr. Bender. Have a seat.

Vice-Principal Wood adjusts some papers and folds her hands rather Vice-Principally.

REED
Principal still up on the roof?

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
I'm concerned about Emily.

REED
Why? What happened? Is she OK?

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
She's fine physically. I understand
Emily's mother recently passed.

REED
Yeah, less than a month ago.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
I see. I am so very sorry.

REED
Thanks.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
How has Emily been handling it
emotionally?

REED
She's coping. I mean, she's sad, of
course, but, she's an amazing kid.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
Has she been to grief counseling?

Reed scoffs.

REED
No. She has me. And her sisters.
She doesn't need to talk to a
stranger. Isn't that what you teach
them: *Stranger Danger. Stranger
danger!*

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
I want to show you something.

Vice-Principal Wood hands Reed two pieces of paper. They are
the finished assignments we saw Emily begin earlier.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD (CONT'D)

Emily was asked to draw a picture of her family and a picture of how she spent her summer.

ANGLE ON: The CRAYON ARTWORK. Not bad for a six-year-old.

One depicts a very tall Reed holding hands with two children and a smaller child on his shoulders. A headless angel is flying above them holding the head in her hands.

The second picture is of Reed and three children at a grave site. Dark clouds hang over head. On the tombstone is the word, "MOMMY." The three figures are all dressed in black. The three child figures are crying. Reed is not.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD (CONT'D)

What do those pictures say to you?

REED

Well, I'm not sure I would put them up on the fridge, but this is us and this is how we spent our summer.

(Beat)

We also went to Knott's Berry Farm.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

Do you know what my job is as Vice-Principal?

REED

Break tie votes at the PTA?

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

In addition to improving test scores -- which, I see by her transcript, Emily's are outstanding -- I am responsible for the psychological well being of our student body.

REED

In that order I bet.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

I see a child in pain here. The headless angel indicates she misses her mother's level headed influence. And the fact that the sole representation of her summer is her mother's funeral tells me she isn't over it yet.

Reed tries to contain his frustration. But just can't.

REED

Yeah, well, I'm not sure you ever get over losing your mother at six. And, frankly, you know, I'm sure the psychology department at Cal State Whatever would be pleased you are using your degree here --

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

USC. I went to USC.

REED

... but the fact that she drew her mother as an angel tells me two things: one, she loves her, and two, she didn't know her as well as I did. As far as the "level headed influence" goes: the angel is headless because her mother was decapitated in an accident. I tried to keep that tidbit from her but it was all over the news. Trust me, "Daddy, what does 'decapitated' mean?" was a conversation I was hoping to have with her when she was a little older. Or never.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

Mr. Bender --

Reed stands up to leave.

REED

No. And as far as the funeral drawing, well, that was the definitive event of our summer. Last year she drew a picture of all of us in Hawaii. The year before it was Epcot Center. Have you even met her? Or is she just good test scores and "cry-for-help" crayon pages for you to psychoanalyze?

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

You're upset.

REED

Not really. But I'm getting there. You know what these pictures tell me?

(MORE)

REED (CONT'D)

They show me a little girl -- an amazing little girl by the way -- who is coping. She's dealing with it. I think we're done here.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD

Mr. Bender, the drawings disturbed some of Emily's classmates.

REED

Perhaps you could get them some grief counseling?

INT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Reed leaves the Vice-Principal's office and is heading for the door. With purpose. Gladys hops up from her desk, grabbing an application packet marked Bender, to stop him.

GLADYS

Mr. Bender, wait. Mr. Bender.

REED

A strip search before I can leave?

GLADYS

I have something for you.
(confidentially)

The district has allocated funds for part time staffers this year in lieu of hiring additional teachers. More Yard Duties.

REED

Yard Duties?

GLADYS

The Yellow Vests. Mostly parents. They supervise recess, monitor the gates, morning and afternoon drop-offs. This year we will be using qualified Yard Duties as teaching assistants and, when necessary, substitute teachers.

REED

(not getting it)
Ah ha.

GLADYS

Priority is given to applicants with teaching backgrounds. You're already certified.

REED
 (getting it)
 Oh, no, no, no.

GLADYS
 It's only twenty hours a week. I know you probably don't need the money or the insurance -- but you'd be on campus with Emily.

REED
 Thanks but, you know, I have a lot on my plate right now and, well, I just -- did you say insurance?

INT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - LUNCHROOM

Emily is sitting with her CLASSMATES in the middle of the chaos that is an elementary school cafeteria.

There is a TRAFFIC SIGNAL on the wall. A Yellow Vested LUNCH ROOM MONITOR mother stands by the Traffic Signal controls.

LUNCH ROOM MONITOR
 (Loud)
 It is getting noisy in here so I am switching you to yellow light!

The light switches from GREEN to YELLOW. Above it is a poster board displaying the rules: "GREEN = SPEAK WITH AN INDOOR VOICE. YELLOW = WHISPER. RED = NO TALKING!"

EMILY
 She should use her indoor voice.

A BURST of laughter comes from Emily's table. She has Reed's wit which is not always a good thing.

LUNCH ROOM MONITOR
 That's it! Red light.

Silence.

Emily opens her lunch box and smiles at the sight of her gingerbread man shaped sandwich. Madison is impressed.

MADISON
 Hey, a sandwich man.

Emily holds up her sandwich and animates him like a puppet.

EMILY
 (Voicing her sandwich)
Hello there Madison. How are you?

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - FRONT STREET

Reed is on his cell phone leaning against the Corolla and rifling through the paperwork packet. He pulls out the page about insurance coverage.

REED

(into phone; irritated)

It's not funny. I'm serious. He's fondling them right in front of me. Then, these naked dudes come in. Naked. It was like an NBA locker room. Like I'm not already feeling inadequate enough, I'm suddenly surrounded by giant cocks --

Reed turns and sees Amanda standing close to him holding a box. Not sure how long she has been here.

AMANDA

You missed the luncheon.

REED

(into phone)

Let me call you back.

INT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - LUNCHROOM

Emily continues her PB&J man review. She is manipulating the sandwich man to make him dance.

LUNCH ROOM MONITOR (O.S.)

I'm hearing too much talking!

Emily bites the head off her sandwich and notices a note in her lunch box. She opens it and sees "**Emily, I love you very much! Daddy**" She smiles. It is good to be loved.

EXT. RANCHO ELEMENTARY - FRONT STREET

Reed and Amanda are both leaning up against the Corolla. She hands him back the application packet.

AMANDA

You should do it. I can tell you're good with kids.

REED

Based on what?

AMANDA

The way you are with Emily.

REED

Yeah, I'm good with my kids. Other people's? Not as much. I'm not even sure this place is right for Emily.

AMANDA

Based on what?

REED

I dunno. A vibe. The principal on the roof. The vice-principal's a nut case. That whole snake thing.

AMANDA

That's the administration. The teachers here are great. So's the school. Come on, let me give you the nickel tour. I think you'll find it surprisingly normal for a public school.

INT. CHOIR ROOM

BONNIE KUNKLE, the choir teacher, TAPS her baton on a music stand. The BLEACHERS are filled with SECOND GRADERS. Miss Kunkle SING-SONGS everything. Music is her life.

MISS KUNKLE

(Singing)

Good morning, class!

STUDENTS

Good morning, Miss Kunkle.

MISS KUNKLE

(Singing)

No, no, no, no! In choir we sing everything. I sing, "Good morning class." And then you sing..."

MISS KUNKLE AND STUDENTS

(Singing)

Good morning, Miss Kunkle.

INT. WANDA'S CLASSROOM

An ADORABLE FIRST GRADER is standing next to Wanda's desk squeezing his penis through his pants.

FIRST GRADER

Mrs. Hupkins, I gotta go to the baffroom really bad.

Wanda doesn't respond. On her desk we SEE "The Leaves Of Grass" on it's side, cap off. It is actually a FLASK.

INT.HALLWAY

Jeremy sticks his head out of his classroom. Coast is clear. With Dana by the hand, he tip-toes across the hall --

DANA
We shouldn't do this.

JEREMY
Mine are in choir; yours are at recess. We have twenty-minutes.

-- and into the Janitor's Closet and shuts the DOOR.

Amanda leads Reed down the hall. Like a proud tour guide she points out the trophy case and art on the walls.

MRS KUNKLE (O.C.)
(singing, of course)
Ready class? Let's sing big and loud. And, "Mairzy dotes and --

CHOIR (O.C.)
"-- dozy dotes and little lamsy divey. A kiddley divey, too. Wouldn't you?"

INT. CHOIR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Miss Kunkle enthusiastically leads her young tenors and sopranos. They are ADORABLE.

INT. VARIOUS CLASSROOMS - SIMULTANEOUS

Under MAIRZY DOTES we accompany Amanda and Reed as they peer in on several classes. They see:

Marcia doing a math problem on the board as her fifth grade boys leer at her ass.

Reggie's class sits on the floor in a semicircle as he reads "THE TEENIE TINY TEACHER" to them.

Jimmy makes a SMOKE CLOUD erupt as a science experiment.

BACK TO CHOIR ROOM

Miss Kunkle is really getting into it. CAM finds Emily on the second tier singing her heart out. Happy.

MISS KUNKLE, EMILY AND STUDENTS
*Now if the words sound queer, and
funny to your ear, a little bit
jumbled and jivey --*

INT. ROOM SIX - SIMULTANEOUS

Amanda and Reed peek into Emily's class to find it empty.
They enter and Reed soaks in Emily's environment.

AMANDA
They are in the choir room.

Reed finds the desk with Emily's name tag, runs his finger
across it and sits in her small desk chair. He looks in her
desk and smiles at all of her little things: scissors, glue
stick and so on. He slowly looks around the room. It's nice.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Our Adorable First Grader is coming out of the BOYS ROOM,
zipping up his fly and struggling with his belt. He looks up
and realizes he isn't really sure how to get back to his
class. A look of panic. He is lost.

We HEAR a RHYTHMIC THUMPING coming from the Janitor's closet.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE THE CHOIR ROOM

Amanda peers through the thin window of the choir room and
smiles. She nods for Reed to take a look.

REED'S POV: Through the window he sees Emily singing with
unbridled enthusiasm. Eyes sparkling and smiling. Happy.

REVERSE ANGLE: Through the window pane, Reed is relieved.
Touched. Maybe even content.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Amidst the Snake Costume, mops and cleansers, the two
teachers are having at it. Dana, skirt hiked up, is bracing
herself with her hands against the door while Jeremy, pants
around his ankles, clumsily squeezes her breasts from behind.
They are close.

DANA
Oh, God! Oh God! Oh God!

BACK ON CHOIR

Also building to a crescendo.

MISS KUNKLE AND CHOIR
A kiddly divey too, wouldn't you?

Miss Kunkle RAISES her BATON over her head for the children to hold that last "you."

DANA (O.C.)
 Oh! Fuck yes. YES!!!

MISS KUNKLE AND CHOIR (CONT'D)
 --*A kiddly divey do wouldn't you?"*

Miss Kunkle EXHALES deeply.

MISS KUNKLE
 That was wonderful!

DANA (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 That was wonderful!

Miss Kunkle looks just as FLUSH as we assume Dana does.

INT. HALLWAY

Reed and Amanda come upon The First Grader sitting against the wall, holding his knees and sobbing. Reed sits down next to him. Compassionate. Comforting. Dad instincts kick in.

REED
 Hey, buddy, are you alright?

FIRST GRADER
 (sobbing)
 I had to go to the *baffroom* and I got lost. I don't know where my classroom is. I'm gonna get in trouble with my teacher.

REED
 Oh man, I get lost a lot. Happens to everyone. Let's just hang out here for a second, get our wits about us and then we'll find your classroom together. Sound good?

The First Grader nods.

REED (CONT'D)
 And you aren't in trouble. I'll just tell your teacher I got lost and you were helping me out. How's that?

FIRST GRADER
 (much better)
 OK.

Amanda is moved. Reed is just what she thought.

AMANDA
Whose class are you in, Sweetie?

FIRST GRADER
Miss *Hupkins*.

REED
(to Amanda)
Go tell his teacher he's fine and
we'll be there in a minute.

INT. WANDA'S CLASSROOM

Amanda enters. The class is coloring.

AMANDA
We had a little scare but --

Amanda stops short.

HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Amanda steps out of the classroom and frantically looks up and down the hall. She sees Reed approaching holding the First Grader's hand.

REED
What's wrong?

AMANDA
We have a problem.

Reggie and Dana are in the hall. Amanda calls them over.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Come here. Mrs. Hutchins passed
out. She smells like a distillery.

REED
(to Amanda; playful)
"Surprisingly normal," you said?

INT. WANDA'S CLASSROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Wanda is sitting in her chair, head back, eyes half open. The four adults are standing by her desk. Reggie touches her.

REGGIE
Wanda?

Nothing. Reggie feels for a pulse.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 (Whispering)
 She's not drunk. This bitch's dead.

INT. JIMMY MONTALVO'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dana pops her head in.

DANA
 Can I borrow Mr. Montalvo for a
 second. Please!

INT. WANDA'S ROOM

Reggie is slowly wheeling the dead woman toward the door in her ROLLER CHAIR. He talks to the children in a calm voice.

REGGIE
 Just keep coloring kids. That's it.
 I need to take Mrs. Hutchins to the
 school nurse because she's just not
 feeling that well.

Reed and Jimmy are at the door.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 Oh, look. See. Everyone wants to
 take care of Mrs. Hutchins.
 (loud whisper)
 Little help here. I'm a little man.

Jimmy and Reed rush over. They speak in hushed tones.

JIMMY
 Why are you moving her?

REGGIE
 You can't leave a dead women in a
 roomful of six-year-olds.

REED
 Why didn't you just take the kids
 outside?

REGGIE
 Excuse the hell out of me. This is
 my first dead teacher.

At the doorway. Reggie turns the chair to face the class. He leans in as if Wanda is whispering to him.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
What's that, Mrs Hutchins? No
homework tonight. They should just
watch TV and eat candy. Okay.

The children CHEER. Reggie lifts the dead woman's arm and
WAVES to the class. He is pleased with himself.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
That way their last memory of her
will be a good one.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dana and Amanda walk-run toward the three men standing around
a dead woman in a chair. All are losing their heads except
Reed. He has become accustomed to things going weird.

AMANDA
Gladys called 911. The Fonz is
already on the roof and the vice-
principal is at district.

REGGIE
So what do we do? The bell rings in
ten minutes.

JIMMY
We can't have a dead woman in the
hall with 637 students walking by.

DANA
I need to get back to my class.

AMANDA
The parents are gonna freak out if
they see an ambulance in front of
the school at pick-up.

REED
Jesus Christ! I'd hate to see how
you handle a fire drill. Amanda,
call 911 and tell them it is a
school and to pick up the body on
the side of the building.

AMANDA
I don't have my cell.

DANA
Use mine.

Dana hands Amanda her iPhone displaying a naughty genitalia picture on the screen. It can't be what Amanda thinks it is. She turns her head sideways. Yep, it is what she thought.

AMANDA

Oh my God! Unique screen saver you have here, Miss Hunt.

No time for embarrassment, Dana hits a button on the screen so Amanda can dial.

REED

(to Dana)

You go back to your class and check in on their classes. Take them all to the playground.

(to Reggie)

You find something to cover her up with.

(to Jimmy)

You and I will take her out the side. Let's go.

Everyone goes to do Reed's bidding. Reed takes a long, measured breath and gets eye contact with Jimmy.

REED (CONT'D)

So how's your first day been?

JIMMY

Interesting. Yours?

REED

Well, it can't get any weirder.

Jimmy and Reed both look down the hall. Their expressions tell us it can get weirder.

REVEAL: Reggie coming toward them carrying the Rancho Rattler snake costume.

REED (CONT'D)

You're shitting me.

REGGIE

You said to get something to cover her up with.

EXT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Reed, Jimmy and Reggie are pushing Wanda down the hall toward the side exit. Yes, she has the Rancho Rattler snake head over hers. Good she didn't live to see this. Reed can't help but smile at the oddness of it all.

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Kindergartners from the Playground are lined up at the door waiting for the bell. Through the window in the door they see the Rancho Rattler Snake head go by in an office chair. Once again they are terrified and start SCREAMING.

EXT. SIDE STREET - A WHILE LATER

Emily, her Olaf backpack overflowing with FORMS, walks with Reed. She is talking a mile a minute.

EMILY

It was awesome, Dad. I sit right next to Megan. We have groups. It is me, Megan, Juwana and a boy named Roy. There's a turtle in the class and we get to name him. My teacher is super nice. And she let's us have a water bottle on our desk as long as it has a twist top. Can I get one?

REED

Sure.

EMILY

And we are going to learn about the solar system and the ecosystem.

REED

So you had a good day?

EMILY

(contemplating)

I got a little sad at recess. But Madison helped me through it. It's like you say, sometimes all you really need is a hug.

Reed extends his arms and Emily gives him a hug. Over his shoulder Emily notices the Corolla.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I thought we walked.

REED

We did. The big girls are staying after school for a meeting. Since it is just you and me, I thought we could go somewhere and hang out.

EMILY

Awesome.

Reed opens her car door and bows elegantly.

EMILY (CONT'D)
(Quite proper)
Why, thank you kind sir.

They both get in the car.

EMILY (CONT'D)
You know how you always tell me
girls can do anything boys can do?

REED
That's right.

EMILY
It works the same the other way,
right? Boys can do anything girls
can do. Right?

REED
Affirmative.

Cool. She thought he'd say that.

EMILY
Good. Because I told Miss Paul that
you'd be more than happy to be our
room mother.

Reed wasn't expecting that. Starts to protest, but then
glances over at her perfect face.

REED
You did?

EMILY
Yep. Roy said a boy couldn't be
room mother and I told him he was
full of beans. This way we will get
to spend more time together.

Emily takes Reed's hand.

REED
Room mother? I like that. Sure.

EMILY
I knew you would. Hey, how did your
meeting go? Did you get a new
writer job?

REED
No. It wasn't right for us.

EMILY

You should work at Disney Channel.
Write on "Doc McStuffins" or "Fancy
Nancy" or something I like.

Reed ponders. Porn is pretty far from "Fancy Nancy." Then:

REED

Hey, Em, let me ask you, how would
you feel about me maybe working at
your school part-time?

Emily sits up. That would almost be as good as Disney
Channel. Nope, it would be better.

EMILY

Seriously? As a Yard Duty?

REED

Yeah, Yard Duty. Teachers helper.

EMILY

What about your writer jobs?

REED

I think I can do both.

Emily takes Reed's hand in her tiny one.

EMILY

That would be awesome!

She squeezes his hand. Reed squeezes back.

REED

Since it is just the two of us, we
can go anywhere you want. You pick.

EMILY

(Really)
Anywhere?

INT. WANDA'S CLASSROOM - LATER

Reggie, Marcia, Dana, and Jeremy respectfully sit in the
CHILDREN'S DESKS closest to the front. Feels like church.

Jimmy walks behind Wanda's desk and eyes her copy of "The
Leaves Of Grass." He stoically places his hand on it. Then:

JIMMY

(quoting Whitman)

*"Has anyone supposed it lucky to be
born? I hasten to inform him or her
that it is just as lucky to die."*

A BEAT, then Jimmy picks up the book/flask and WHISKEY POURS out onto her desk.

CLOSE ON REED - LATER

Reed squints a bit into the SETTING SUN. A slight breeze ruffles his hair as he tries to hold back emotion. Jaw clenched. Sniffling a bit. Pursing lips. Tearing up.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to REVEAL Emily kneeling in the grass, sitting back on her heels. Eyes closed. Contemplative.

WIDER: Emily is kneeling on her mother's grave in Forest Lawn. Mount Hollywood is behind them, bathed in a surreal glow from the late afternoon sun.

Emily takes a piece of paper and places it at the base of the HEADSTONE reading: NATALIE SUZANN BENDER, LOVING MOTHER, March 5, 1976 - July 21, 2019.

Emily's tiny hands delicately smooth the paper and place rocks on the four corners so it won't blow away.

REVEAL: It is the crayon picture she drew in class of her mother as an angel carrying her head. Flying over the family.

A SINGLE DROP OF WATER splashes onto the picture.

REVERSE ANGLE: With a smile on her face, Emily is crying.

EMILY

(Very quiet)

We miss you, Mommy. And don't worry, Kimberly, Carly and I are taking good care of Daddy.

Reed starts crying. Not for any loss he feels, but because he hates that Emily has been robbed of a mother and he can't believe how truly special she is.

Reed kneels down toward Emily and gently places his hand on her back. She turns and sees him crying.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(Astonished)

You're crying. I've never seen you cry before.

REED
Yeah, well, I cry.

Emily throws her arms around Reed's neck.

EMILY
It'll be OK, Dad. I'll take care of you.

REED
I know you will, Cutie.

They hug each other a little tighter.

INT. WANDA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vice-Principal Wood leads a MAN, 45, into the room. He holds a box in his hand. Vice-Principal Wood is surprisingly compassionate.

VICE-PRINCIPAL WOOD
She had this room for thirty-three years so you may need a bigger box.

MAN
I haven't been here in years.

He crosses to her desk. We SEE the copy of "Leaves Of Grass."

MAN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
This was her favorite.

The Man picks up the BOOK and RIFLES through the PAGES.

INT. THE MONTALVO APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Modest. A teacher's apartment. Jimmy is in the kitchen. He places Wanda's "Leaves Of Grass" flask in the sink.

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)
(seductive)
How was your first day, Mr. Montalvo?

Jimmy turns to see MARIA, his very pretty and very pregnant wife wearing maternity lingerie. Her giant stomach is exposed between the black lace bra and panties.

JIMMY
About to get a whole lot better.

EXT. JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle School Students mill about. Kimberly and Carly walk to the Corolla and get in the back.

REED
How was it?

KIMBERLY & CARLY
Pretty awesome.

EMILY
We have a turtle in my class. And
guess who our room mother is?

KIMBERLY
Who?

EMILY
Dad.

CARLY
No way! Really?

EMILY
Yep. And guess what else? Dad is
going to be a Yard Duty and he'll
be at my school all the time. When
he's not doing his writer jobs.

CARLY
Really? So you like Emily's school?

REED
It is a very interesting place.

Reed pulls the Corolla back onto the road and heads for home.

INT. COROLLA - CONTINUOUS

Reed is driving down Riverside Drive. Happy. Optimistic. The
Twins are WHISPERING in the backseat. Then:

CARLY
Tell him or I will.

KIMBERLY
No. Later.

REED
Tell me what, girls?

CARLY

Kimberly auditioned for show choir after school and the teacher said she was fantastic. She made it.

REED

That is awesome, Kimberly. Right?

KIMBERLY

It's just... it is expensive. Costumes, entry fees, travel. She said to prepare you that it could be up to a couple thousand dollars.

REED

Per year?

KIMBERLY

Per semester. I know we are cutting back so I told her I probably couldn't do it. Right? It's OK, Dad, I'll try again next year.

Watching them in the rear view mirror Reed almost runs a red light but SLAMS on the breaks. Deep breath. Looks at the girls in the backseat. Then Emily. He is pissed at himself. At the situation. At life. Then, after a LONG BEAT:

REED

Tomorrow, first thing, you march into that choir room and tell them you can do it. You will do it.

KIMBERLY

Really, Dad? Are you sure?

REED

Positive. We'll make it work.

Reed looks at his three daughters all smiling and happy.

REED (V.O.)

Never be ashamed of anything you do to support your family.

(Beat)

Fuck it, I'll write porn.

EXT. THE RANCHO - EARLY EVENING

Joggers, People On Horseback, Dog Walkers all out and enjoying the summery late August Southern California evening.

The Corolla stops at a RED LIGHT by the RANCHO EQUESTRIAN STONE WALL. Almost home.

INT. COROLLA

Through the windshield we SEE an incredibly GORGEOUS WOMAN in really tight shorts jogging in place. Beautiful.

Emily's face lights up. She frantically rolls down the window.

EMILY

Miss Paul. That's my teacher.
(Yelling)
Miss Paul? Miss Paul? It's me
Emily. From school.

MISS PAUL removes her earbuds and heads over to the car.

MISS PAUL

Hello Emily.

EMILY

Hi, Miss Paul. Meet my Dad.

Miss Paul leans down into the window. Reed's smile fades.

REED'S POV: Leaning in the car window is the same woman he jogged into a pole over. She smiles.

MISS PAUL

Hello, Mr. Bender.

Cool. Maybe she doesn't remember.

MISS PAUL (CONT'D)

Emily said you would be our Room
Mother. Well, Room Father.

REED

Room Mother is cool with me.

MISS PAUL

Great. You'll be my first father.

REED

Well, good for me then.

MISS PAUL

Get a good nights rest, Emily. We
are going to do math tomorrow.

Miss Paul looks at Reed.

MISS PAUL (CONT'D)

Like, how many fingers?

Miss Paul playfully holds up three fingers exactly like she did this morning. With a million dollar smile.

EMILY

Three. That's easy.

MISS PAUL

Pleasure meeting you, Mr. Bender.
Goodbye Emily.

EMILY

Bye bye.

Miss Paul jogs away, smiling, working it without even trying. Well, maybe she is trying a little.

Reed watches her go, PULLS the Corolla into traffic.

REED

I think I am really going to like
being your room mother, Emily.

KIMBERLY

Why is there a dead fish in a bag
back here?

As the Corolla makes its way down Riverside Drive we PUSH IN on the CEMENT HORSE HEAD on the RANCHO EQUESTRIAN STONE WALL.

EXT. THE RANCHO - MORNING

MATCHING SHOT - THE CEMENT HORSE HEAD

A RED CONVERSE ALL STAR comes to rest on the horse head so the laces can be double-tied.

In a frame for frame recreation of the show open we see Reed jogging. Only difference are that the streets are empty.

Miss Paul jogs toward him. But this time, Miss Paul eyes him seductively as she jogs past.

Like before, Reed cranes his head to check out her perfect ass and SMACKS his face right into a light pole.

Miss Paul GIGGLES and heads back to check on him.

MISS PAUL

You OK? How many fingers?

Reed holds up three fingers. Miss Paul takes Reed's hand and licks his fingers.

MISS PAUL (CONT'D)

I think I know how to make you
forget about your boo boo.

Miss Paul places Reed's hand on her breast. Reed's other hand follows its lead. Miss Paul playfully bites Reed's lower lip.

Reed pulls her shirt off and buries his head between her breasts. His hand drops to her crotch. Miss Paul begins pulling down Reed's jogging shorts. It is getting hard-core.

INT. BENDER HOUSE - LATE AT NIGHT

Reed is sitting at his computer feverishly banging away on the keyboard. The clicking of the keys builds to a CRESCENDO.

ANGLE ON: COMPUTER SCREEN and we SEE the previous scene being written out.

Suddenly, he stops, reads over what he has just written. Smiles.

Reed picks up the completed Yard Duty application and places it in a manila envelope. He looks back at the screen. Smiles again. This might just work out for him. For them.

BACK ON COMPUTER SCREEN: Reed types the words "FADE OUT" and we do the same.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW