

AFTER SCHOOL

by

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&

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FADE IN

CLOSE ON - A VERTICAL BLACK STRIPE - DAY

leaning to the left, about eighty degrees. With a CLICK, it moves up to eighty-two degrees. PULL BACK TO REVEAL a CLOCK that's just ticked to 7:54. Moving farther back, we see it's hanging outside, on a building wall above:

WEAVER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

which it overlooks like a J.V. Big Ben. Below are various cliques and clusters of student-life. As we ROLL CREDITS and MOVE through this milieu we notice a sign: WEAVER HIGH SCHOOL. We pass

SOME COOL KIDS

dressed fairly trendy, like Sean 'n Madonn', hangin' out. Right now they're listening to a TALL GIRL:

TALL GIRL

I'm not kiddin'...I heard he put a coach in the hospital at Jefferson... Brain damage.

On sober nods we keep moving and come to:

THE CHESS CLUB

kids sitting on the grass, wooden squares between them. Chessmen are furiously moved to the rapid turning and re-turning of two-minute hour-glasses. As they play, a kid with COKEBOTTLE glasses talks quickly.

COKEBOTTLE

Anyway, I don't think this principal's gonna walk again...

SECOND KID

Principals shouldn't be allowed to walk. Anyway, I heard it was a coach.

COKEBOTTLE

That was the school he went to before.

Continuing on through the moving mass of young lives, we see the occasional teacher, traversing the campus with watchful eyes. Around a bank of lockers is a cluster of

LETTERMEN

whose conversation fades in as they stand cocky under two-tone jackets; striking classic jock poses. A HUGE BLOND JOCK is holding court. Nodding with confidence.

BLOND JOCK

Guy also supposedly faked his way into the Marines when he was thirteen. Total animal...you piss him off...you're scar tissue. No lie.

(beat)

I tell ya I know a dude works at a Seven-Eleven he held up?

The Blond Jock spits significantly. A couple jock-faces turn more boyish than tough at this remark. And we weave on through the throng to

A PAIR OF OBVIOUS "C-MINUS" STUDENTS

kind of doofy, with holes in their jeans and elastic underwear bands visible above drooping waistlines. T-shirts with illustrations from heavy metal album covers. One of these is a kid named MARK BOJEEKUS....

BOJEEKUS

...grossest thing without absolutely any doubt, was this board he used on the dude had like a nail in it...or a tent stake or something, y'know? It was like, one thump, and now the victim sits and watches cable all day.

✓ And from here we MOVE UP a short flight of stairs to a small walk-up window attached to the ADMINISTRATION BUILDING. Above the window is a sign reading: STUDENT STORE. Above that

ANOTHER WALL CLOCK

reads 7:56. From this we PAN DOWN to

THE WINDOW

in which JERRY MITCHELL rests his chin on his hands, watching the world go by. He's an average fifteen-year-old. Nice family, decent clothes, well-combed hair. Still a virgin. Biggest hope in life: getting into U.C. Santa Barbara. Career ambition: corporate communications. And he doesn't

think that's boring yet. That's how straight he is. A small plaque in a corner of the window reads "JERRY MITCHELL - STUDENT MGR."

BREI (O.S.)

Jerry...

Jerry looks up as we ADJUST ANGLE TO INCLUDE BREI MITCHELL, Jerry's little sister. She's cute, knows how to drive him nuts, and is a freshman. She talks fast and doesn't understand the concept of the pause.

JERRY

Hi, Brei....

BREI

Hi. Hear about the new kid? Jessica said he was transferring in today and he used to have a Harley or something but it got all wrecked up on the freeway on the center divider and the guy barely even got thrashed or anything and at his last school he got thrown off the football team cause he broke some kid's neck in practice and the kid died or something?

JERRY

(unimpressed)

Rumors....

Just now, Jerry fixes his gaze on something which approaches as he and Brei continue "her" conversation.

JERRY

...What grade?

We INTERCUT them talking with the approach of:

JERRY'S POV - KAREN CLARKE AND TWO OTHER GIRLS

neither of the other two can play in the same physical league as KAREN. She's enough to put an exclamation point after the entire feminine gender. Brei can see Jerry's only half paying attention.

BREI

Senior, I think. Anyway, he got transferred to Jefferson, you know? 'Cause everybody was scared of him? Then, at Jefferson he gets in this
(MORE)

BREI (Cont'd)

fight with five guys and kicked their asses, so they put him in continuation.

JERRY

Brei, don't cuss.

(beat)

He came here from continuation?

From Jerry's appreciative perspective, Karen is coming closer, in SLOW-MOTION: perfection at fewer frames per second.

BREI

That's why they call it continuation. So you can continue maiming people and still graduate.

(pops gum)

Jessica says teachers in continuation carry guns.

JERRY

Jessica's full of it.

BREI

No way.

JERRY

And she looks like Ted Koppel.

Right about now, Karen arrives at the window and smiles at Jerry, who's all nerves. Brei realizes she's lost Jerry's attention, and makes a face.

JERRY

Hi, Karen. Get you something?
Pens? Book covers? A limo?

He smiles a little too winningly. Karen thinks he's kind of cute; harmless. She reaches out with a dollar and drops it into a large glass JAR just inside the window. On the jar is painted a large pink lung; and the words "JIMMY ALEXANDER LUNG FUND -- HELP PATCH JIMMY UP!" She smiles. Jerry hands her a BUTTON that says "I'M A JIMMY-PATCHER!" in block letters around a small, pink lung.

JERRY

Thanks for doing your part.

Karen pins it on her chest, unaware of the effect this has on Jerry, who's transfixed.

KAREN

Sure. How 'bout some paper?

JERRY
 (too sincere)
 Great choice! Good for you...

Off reactions, he moves quickly for some paper, bumping into a chair and pretending it didn't hurt. It did. Karen keeps from laughing, but her eyes are amused. The two girls with her ignore all this. Brei thinks all three are twinkies.

FIRST GIRL
 He's supposed to be definitely the meanest kid at every school he goes to.

SECOND GIRL
 So how many is that?

FIRST GIRL
 What am I, the World Book?

BREI
 My guess would be no.
 (precocious)
 Actually, Weaver's his sixth. There's six in the district and now he's been to all of 'em. I'm available to field any other questions throughout the day.

They just look at her. She's younger. Not a "woman." She feels the ostracism. Meanwhile, Jerry hands Karen her paper; she hands over money.

JERRY
 Thanks.

He puts it in the drawer.

KAREN
 I...think I gave you a five.

He realizes. Quickly makes change, gives it to her. Red-faced.

JERRY
 Sorry...really...
 (covers)
 ...exhausting weekend. You date a forty year-old woman, her kids just don't leave you alone...

She just gives an uncomfortable smile and leads her friends off. He lifts a food-poisoned smile, waves.

BREI

Forty, eh? Well, I guess I'd feel worse if you were a homo. You're not anymore, are you?

JERRY

Thank you, Brei. I have never - as you are well aware - been a homo. Shouldn't you be getting to class?

BREI

Did you hear anything I said about that guy, Buddy Revell?

THE STUDENT STORE CLOCK

clicks to 7:55. The pre-class, warning bell RINGS.

RESUME - JERRY AND BREI

reacting. Jerry pulls his name-plate from the window, opens the register, starts to count. Just now his counselor, MR. RICE, opens the door behind Jerry: the student store is off a larger office area. Rice is in his early forties. Good guy, but kind of goofy.

RICE

Jer...listen, you wouldn't happen to have any Berol Boldliner Medium tip black felts, would you?

JERRY

We didn't last week, and nothing new has come in, Mr. Rice.

Rice accepts this with resignation.

RICE

Couple Lindys?

Jerry nods, grabs a couple pens.

JERRY

Black okay?
(off nod)
One sixty-four.

RICE

(takes pens)
Start me a tab, Jer. I'll take care of these when those Berol medium felts show.

JERRY

Ah, Mr. Rice...your rule.

(off look; quotes rule)

"Pay as you go...or just go."

(beat)

I really can't let you have em
unless you pay in cash, sir. It is
the best way.

Rice realizes he's right, and with slight embarrassment,
reaches for his wallet. As he takes out some money, he
notices:

THE LUNG FUND JAR

jammed with money.

RESUME - SCENE

Rice whistles.

RICE

Looks like we've collected enough to
buy Jimmy a new lung, let alone
patch the old one.

JERRY

Five hundred and fifteen, last
count. People care, Mr. Rice.

RICE

Told ya those buttons'd put us over
the top.

Jerry smiles, nods. Holds up his own jacket. There's a
button just like the one he sold Karen. Rice thinks.

RICE

Y'know...with all that "dinero" in
there, probably wouldn't be a bad
idea keeping it in my office under
lock and key.

He puts his pen money down, picks up the jar.

RICE

Catch ya later, guy. Gotta chalk
sidelines for the JV game this
afternoon....

And he's gone, closing the door behind him. Brei has watched all this.

BREI

I heard Jimmy's lung went 'cause he sucked a lit roach down his throat.

JERRY

Beats me. I don't even know the guy.

Brei sees somebody o.s., approaching the store. She makes a face.

BREI

The "Poetess of Death" nears...

JERRY

Franny?

BREI

How many other vampires go to Weaver?

JERRY

She's just sensitive.

(beat)

Maybe I should hide. Tell her I'm not here.

BREI

No way.

JERRY

Brei...you're my sister. I count on you.

BREI

We live in an age of limits. Gotta get to class.

Brei moves away. At the same moment he sees:

FRANNY PERRINS

a pretty, iconoclastic girl dressed in black. Intelligence and nervous energy make her a moody poetess with an antenna for melodrama. With a face of serious urgency, Franny zooms-in close to the student store window. She places the palm of one hand against Jerry's cheek and speaks softly, meaningfully to him.

FRANNY

Meet me in the darkroom right before class.

JERRY

...it's already just about time for the National Anthem...

FRANNY

(intensely)

This is more important. I'll be waiting.

Before he can reply, she's gone like a Kafka-wind. He sighs.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK OF LOCKERS - JERRY

walks to his, opens it. As he takes a book or two out, a chubby, calculating FACE rises up from behind his open locker door. This is VINCENT CALUSSO. Jerry's good friend. Editor of the school newspaper. Subscriber to CHIC. Food abuser. He stares, unblinking.

VINCENT

I take it you've heard?

JERRY

That's a little general, Vincent.

VINCENT

Buddy Revell, Geraldo. Every guy and gal member of our peer group is talking about him. Weaver is abuzz.

Jerry shuts his locker; they start walking together.

VINCENT

He has never lost a fight. Perfect record, all comers.

JERRY

I'm sure....

VINCENT

Totally reliable sources. Way I hear it, the guy puts his Camels out on his knuckles. For fun.

JERRY

True or not, I guarantee you one thing. I'm never gonna find out.

As they walk, Mark Bojeekus falls in with them, stoney and happy.

BOJEEKUS

Hey Jerry, what'd we do yesterday in History, man?

JERRY

Yesterday was Sunday, Mark. And I'm not in your History class.

(beat)

Listen, we'll talk to you later, huh? Gotta get to first period.

BOJEEKUS

Wanna hear my band? I'll walk with you.

Not waiting for an answer, Mark clicks on the portable cassette recorder he's carrying. It's basic punk NOISE. Jerry and Vincent nod and listen politely, swapping looks as we MOVE with them, starting across campus.

BOJEEKUS

You can hear the words okay, can't you?

VINCENT

Didn't know you guys did ballads...

Bojeekus smiles as if to say a sincere "Thanks, Dude." The BELL RINGS and the NATIONAL ANTHEM encroaches from the loudspeakers placed on various buildings.

CUT TO:

A CLOCK

it reads 8:05 as we BURN-IN: FIRST PERIOD - JOURNALISM.
PAN DOWN to see the class standing for the anthem. Jerry is missing. Franny, too.

CUT TO:

*lose
Bojeekus*

INT. JOURNALISM DARKROOM - RED LIGHT

the only illumination. We're on the BULB as we HEAR faint strains of the ongoing anthem. PULL BACK TO REVEAL Franny and Jerry. Franny's reading one of her nihilistic masterpieces just now with whispered feeling.

FRANNY

"I hang hooked, like freezer meat.
My tears fall. Tears, mother, that
you left me. Tears, father, you
never stop to see. I wait to be
filleted. Maybe then you'll notice
little pieces of your daughter.
Put them all together. Know how
many pillowcases swam with tears and
cheap mascara that the cleaning lady
Margarita washed away on Tuesdays
when she came. I am punished, you
are punished, I will never produce
children. Go ahead, take your
secretary off the Greece."

Franny, full of feeling, looks now into Jerry's eyes; the two of them bathed in red light. She sets the handwritten piece of paper down on the metal counter. Stares at him, awaiting reaction.

JERRY

It's good.

FRANNY

I know it's good. How does it make
you feel?

JERRY

Ah...I dunno. I mean, it's real
deep.

FRANNY

I titled it "Hell for Breakfast."

JERRY

Your dad really takes his secretary
to Greece like that?

FRANNY

(right at him)
Twice a year.

JERRY

(beat)
...I think the pledge is probably
over out there...

FRANNY

Jerry, this is the most vivid time of our lives. I'm communicating with you. Why're you worrying about being late to class?

He thinks it over. Offers a reasonable conjecture:

JERRY

So...we don't get yelled at?

Suddenly

THE DARKROOM DOOR

opens, spilling light from the outer room. In the doorway is MRS. ADELLE PHILLIPS, Journalism teacher. Loves being an "adult" and does a fairly convincing job.

PHILLIPS

Is this what Mister Bob Guccione's journalism teacher dealt with, Jerry?

JERRY

We were just...

PHILLIPS

How 'bout you get your tails into class with everybody else.

INT. JOURNALISM CLASS

as Jerry and Franny walk to seats. Jerry sits beside Vincent.

MRS. PHILLIPS

takes her place. Announcements end and she reads from a list she holds.

MRS. PHILLIPS

All right, reporter assignments. We've got a new student on campus today...

(checks paper)

Mr....Robert Revell...and in keeping with our tradition here at the Trumpet, we'll be doing a "welcome aboard" interview. And the by-line goes to...

(checks notes)

...Jerry Mitchell.

The entire class reacts in fear for Jerry. He's stunned.

JERRY
...Mrs. Phillips?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Yes?

JERRY
Could I maybe do....something else?

MRS. PHILLIPS
I'm confused, Jerry. Vincent told
me you wanted to do a "welcome
aboard" piece. *I think ~~it's~~ important
you do this*

Jerry looks at Vincent without appreciation. Or comprehension.

JERRY
No. Actually I have no interest in
doing that. I think you'd better
put somebody else on it.

She shakes her head. No way. He licks dry lips. Considers:

JERRY
Then...could I go to the bathroom
please?

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAYS - JERRY - DAY

walking to the bathroom, deeply troubled.

INT. BOY'S RESTROOM - JERRY - DAY

Moves to a urinal, unzips, starts to pee. There are a pair of Reebok-clad FEET visible under one of the stalls tapping to unheard music. As Jerry pees, he HEARS the bathroom door open. Sunlight plunges in. He hears Paul Bunyan-weight footsteps as someone enters. Jerry senses something unusual. He's unsure at first, and cautiously, slowly lets his eyes check as the guy approaches. We see in quick glances from Jerry's P.O.V.:

HEAVY ENGINEER WORK BOOTS

those steel-tipped, Frankenstein numbers bikers wear. They've been through all kinds of hell.

A HUGE, LEATHER MOTORCYCLE JACKET

over a massive, brutish torso.

ZOOMING TIGHT - A NAME PATCH ON A GAS STATION SHIRT

the name "BUDDY" is stitched in handwriting script...

ZOOMING TIGHT - A ZIPPER POCKET ON THE LEATHER JACKET SLEEVE

it's open and a pack of CAMELS peeks out.

ZOOMING TIGHT - BUDDY REVELL'S PROFILE

as he docks in the urinal next to Jerry's. Tough looking, unshaven, menacing as hell with cigarette dangling from his mouth. Sunglasses over the eyes. He towers over Jerry, a brick wall in Levi's, staring ahead into the tile.

JERRY'S POV - BUDDY'S ENORMOUS HAND

resting on the metal hardware atop the urinal. On the knuckles are lumpy cigarette-burn scars!

JERRY

reacts. There can't be any doubt. His own pee stream has stopped. He looks down, realizes. He's thinking fast, nervous. Decides to go for it. Clears his throat.

JERRY

Ah...s'cuse me...?

ANGLE - THE TWO

No reaction. Jerry doesn't give up.

JERRY

(continuing)

...hi...I'm Jerry Mitchell? I'm on the school paper? The Trumpet?

Jerry holds out his right (unused) hand to shake. Buddy ignores it. No answer. The eyes look straight ahead. Jerry laughs a nervous little one.

JERRY

(continuing)

I know...I know...this is a little weird...me asking who you are, standing right here side by side in front of the urinals...

Buddy slowly removes the sunglasses. Killer-whale eyes.

BUDDY

If you're a fag...

Jerry's horrified. Tries to lower his voice.

JERRY

Oh, god. Me? Oh, no way...See, I have this assignment for the paper, right? I'm like, supposed to talk to you cause you're the new kid on campus, y'know?

BUDDY

If you're not a fag, how come you stopped peeing?

JERRY

(reacts)

Ah...

(nervous laugh)

Well...I don't really know why that is, but I always have this...tough time peeing in public restrooms? You know? Like when somebody stands right next to me, ~~you know?~~

Buddy just looks at him. Jerry zips up, steps away from the urinal. Buddy hasn't moved yet. He probably hasn't stopped pissing yet, either.

JERRY

Anyway, what I'm trying to find out is...you are Buddy Revell, right?

Now Buddy has finished pissing. He zips up, flushes the urinal. Turns toward Jerry.

BUDDY

You a narc?

JERRY

No! I told you...school paper.

BUDDY

What'd'ya want, man? I just got to
this faggot school.

The toilet's flushing in that stall where the Reeboks have
been....

JERRY

I don't really want anything...I
mean, all I want to do is talk to
you. Okay? I mean, they told me to
write this stupid little piece,
right?

BUDDY

(advancing on Jerry)
You're gonna do a stupid little
piece on me? Why would I wanna look
stupid?

As Jerry backs up, the kid in the stall, a thin, red-headed
hall messenger named KEVIN, comes out just in time to hear:

JERRY

(backing up)
No, no...you won't look stupid...
and incidentally, just so you know,
I couldn't care less if you do all
kinds of dope and shit... I am not
anybody's narc, okay?

That was bad. He can see Buddy didn't take well to the
implication he does dope and shit. Buddy notices Kevin.

BUDDY

What're you lookin' at?

KEVIN

Me? Nothin'.
(holds up papers)
Hall monitor.
(scared smile)
Well, gotta go.

Buddy turns back to Jerry as Kevin edges toward the door, but
goes slowly so he can see what happens.

JERRY

Look...I didn't mean to imply that I
think you do dope or anything like
that, I mean...
(beat)
Oh, shit...

(MORE)

JERRY (Cont'd)

(beat)

Look, could we try taking this from the top, Buddy?

BUDDY

Didn't say you could call me Buddy.

JERRY

Mr. Revell...

BUDDY

You're a sarcastic little asshole. I don't need this shit off anybody... Jerry.

JERRY

(sick smile)

Hey...you wanna call me Jerry? You go right ahead.

BUDDY

I don't wanna call you shit.

Buddy grabs Jerry's shirt and, with one hand, pulls him roughly toward the urinals. Jerry is terrified.

JERRY

...listen, I'm really sorry....

He's shoved against the urinal he just used: shoved forward so the front of his pants is way in there, right up against the porcelain. Real uncomfortable. Buddy holds him there with one hand pressed against his back and reaches up with the other hand to flush the urinal. Jerry closes his eyes, making a face as the water drenches the front of his pants.

BUDDY

Startin' to feel a little more like pissing?

He flushes it again. More drench-city. Jerry keeps quiet, scared to death. Buddy pulls him away from the urinal and shoves him over to the sinks. Jerry has his back to the sinks and mirrors. He looks up at big Buddy, wondering if this is where he parts company with his teeth. Kevin's poised by the door unseen; forgotten. Eyes wide.

JERRY

Is this gonna get worse?

BUDDY

It is later.

JERRY

Later?

Buddy pulls Jerry close, so they're nose-to-nose.

BUDDY

Yeah. But first I want you to understand something, Jerry.

Jerry's nodding. Buddy looks awful mad. He grabs Jerry by the shirt front again, this time with both hands. Lifts him right up off the ground, sitting him down on the metal shelf that everybody puts their books on in front of the mirrors while they wash their hands. The shelf bends slightly, but doesn't come down. Jerry's seated there, shaking.

BUDDY

You've made me mad. I'm gonna have to do something to work it off now.

JERRY

Whattya mean?

BUDDY

You and me are gonna have a fight. Today. After school.

JERRY

...today? Wait a min...

BUDDY

(puts a hand over
Jerry's mouth)

Three o'clock, sharp. You know the teacher's parking lot?

(Jerry nods)

You try to leave, it's gonna get worse. You sneak home, I'll be under your bed.

(beat)

You and me. After school.

✓ Kevin goes out the door now, bursting with the news. Buddy just stares, at close range, right into Jerry's eyes for several seconds as we play the moment. Then he takes the hand away and exits. Jerry stares, not moving and we

CUT TO:

EXT. BATHROOM - JERRY

✓ comes out. Dazed; preoccupied with the impending fight. As he walks slowly, unaware of what's around him, toward Journalism Class we:

INTERCUT - WITH KEVIN THE MESSENGER

going into a class with the usual morning memo stuff. He stops and whispers something M.O.S. to one of the kids in class. The kid reacts to hot news. Kevin goes on.

ANOTHER MESSENGER

encounters Kevin in the hallway. Kevin stops him, tells him M.O.S. This kid reacts, hurries elsewhere on campus with the news.

JERRY

still walking through the halls, contemplating pain; humiliation.

A CLASSROOM FULL OF KIDS

sees Jerry passing outside, as the second messenger leaves. It's a science class and everybody's at lab-tables. They all stop what they're doing, watch Jerry, whisper excitedly. Guys shake their heads, thankful it's not them. Girls giggle, fearful; thrilled.

VARIOUS SHOTS

students pass the word. They watch Jerry going by like a morose headline. He's oblivious to his own fame.

MORE MESSENGERS

trading the scoop, sprint off to spread it.

INT. JOURNALISM CLASS - A MESSENGER

talks M.O.S. to several kids, including Vincent and Franny, among a group working at a paste-up table. As the messenger turns to exit, he runs right into

JERRY

at the door. He looks bad.

VINCENT AND FRANNY

react.

FRANNY

Oh, my God....

JERRY

stands in the doorway, pants soaked, eyes wild, pale.

THE CLASS

stopped dead by his arrival. By now everyone knows what's going on. Except:

MRS. PHILLIPS

Jerry?

He doesn't answer, in something of a phobic trance.

MRS. PHILLIPS

You all right?

JERRY

(mumbles)

Fine...

He crosses to the paste-up table and sits next to Vincent.

JERRY

Vincent...I met somebody in the bathroom....

VINCENT

I know. It's all over school.

JERRY

Vincent...I'm gonna kill you.

He looks up at:

THE CLOCK

8:54. All SOUND falls away and we ZOOM TIGHT as the clock TICKS thunderously to 8:55...and

A BELL

RINGS jarringly.

JERRY

expression doomed.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY - LOCKERS - JERRY AND VINCENT - DAY

walk amid the flow of students. Something's changed. Quite a few passing kids take long, pitying looks.

VINCENT

You've gotta try and relax, Jerry.
We're gonna get you out of this.

No response.

VINCENT

You're never gonna forgive me.

JERRY

Right. Never.

VINCENT

Jerry...who usually writes the
character pieces for the paper?

(no response)

Me, right? Only if I had to write
the Buddy Revell piece, I'd be a
Jumbo Jack.

Jerry is finally prodded out of his silent fury by this flimsy rationale.

JERRY

But it's better for me to be one?
You're insane, Vincent. They should
lock you up.

VINCENT

Look at the facts. I'm this brainy,
fat kid who's three feet shorter
than him.

JERRY

You'd still fit in a urinal.

VINCENT

Guys like him never hate guys like
you as much as they hate guys like
me. Fact of life.

This stops Jerry, who looks at Vincent for a long beat. Vincent is plainly being more honest than usual about fears and feelings.

JERRY

You really think that.

VINCENT

(grabs roll of
bellyfat)

Done a lot of research.

JERRY

You really screwed me up with this,
Vincent.

VINCENT

I swear I never thought he'd choose
you off. You're normal.

(sees something o.s.)

Oh, shit.

Jerry, who's a bit skittish by now, turns and they see:

BUDDY REVELL

a prowling juggernaut, coming down the hallway at them. He moves to his locker, which is a short distance away.

JERRY AND VINCENT

Jerry starts toward him. Vincent grabs his arm.

VINCENT

You crazy?

(Jerry keeps walking)

...what're you doin'?

JERRY

I've gotta talk to him, that's all.
If I just reason with the guy...

VINCENT

Bad choice. Real bad, Jer....

JERRY

It's just an absurd misunderstanding.
Why would a guy like that want to kick
around a wimp like me?

Vincent breaks it to him:

VINCENT

'Cause it's fun, Jer.

They've reached Buddy, who's looking at a locker assignment slip, complete with combination. He's working the dial, totally unaware and uninterested in Jerry's presence.

JERRY

...s'cuse me....

Buddy keeps doing the locker. As he does:

VINCENT

gets an idea; closely peers at:

THE LOCK

as Buddy's immense, scarred fingers take it from 33, all the way round to 48, which

VINCENT

mouths: "33...48..." then: "9" as

BUDDY

opens the locker, like Kong swinging-open the gate to the village.

RESUME - SCENE

Vincent's pleased. Jerry intent on getting Buddy's attention.

JERRY

S'cuse me again...remember me from
the bathroom? Jerry Mitchell?

Buddy won't visually acknowledge him. *Even more pissed to be spoken to.*

BUDDY

I don't deal with you 'til after
school.

Every kid in the area can hear what Buddy says. Jerry reflexively talks more softly.

JERRY

Well...that was kinda what I wanted to talk about.

(beat)

I may not be able to make it.

Now Buddy looks at him. *Dend eyes.*

BUDDY

You'll make it.

Jerry sets himself.

JERRY

Look, Mr. Revell...we have to talk. I really think we got off on the wrong foot. I didn't mean to piss you off. So I'd like to make a suggestion.

(no reaction)

How 'bout we forget this whole misunderstanding...which is what it is, you have to admit...and start fresh? I'll write that article about you and make you look great. Whattya say?

✓
Revell moves in face-to-face with Jerry. Grabs his shirt front. Speaks in a chilling whisper.

BUDDY

Don't ever try and make deals with me fuckhead...

Jerry tries his level best not to look utterly terrified. Suddenly.

A SCHOOL BELL

RINGS jarringly.

THE HALLWAY

kids react to the Pavlovian stimulus and head for class. Buddy unhands Jerry, shuts his locker and walks off. Jerry stands watching him with Vincent, then leans hard against the bank of lockers. He's broken out in a cold sweat.

VINCENT

I've got an idea.

JERRY
(holds up a hand)

No...

VINCENT
Give me til next period. All I
need's one thing and we'll have this
guy's ass.

JERRY
Vincent...don't.

Vincent exits and nods, not really listening. HOLD ON Jerry,
as the nightmare stabs him deeper and:

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM - ON A MOVIE PROJECTOR - DAY

we're tight on the inner workings; The hinged outer housing of
the gizmo is open and we see HANDS making sure the film's
properly threaded.

SCOTT (V.O.)
Damn...Projector twenty-six.
(beat)

Don't know why I always get to
hassle ol' twenty-six. It's an
antique, man. Why doesn't this
school go state-of-the-art and
join the human race?

ANOTHER ANGLE

SCOTT CRANSTON is hovering over Projector 26, side by
side with BRUCE CAHOW, his AV club partner. We BURN-IN:
SECOND PERIOD - BIOLOGY, as these two are absorbed in the
mechanism of the projector. And all things filmic. They
fancy themselves Spielberg and Coppola, though it's closer to
Heckle and Jeckle. Scott has a button hanging limply from his
sweater that says "A.V. SEX GOD."

SCOTT
Don't force it, douchebag.

BRUCE
Bite me, Chalmer.

SCOTT
Scott.

BRUCE

It's Chalmer. Scott's your bullshit
nickname cause you don't like
Chalmer Cranston the third.

At the front of the class, the bemused and generally cool
teacher Mr. MEDVED, is coming out from the back-room, which is
a lab. Medved scans his motley audience. He knows ninety-
nine percent of them would rather be anywhere else but makes
the best of it.

MEDVED

Okay, okay, let's try and keep it to
a low roar in here, scientists. We
didn't get the exact film we
expected, which deals with the
information in Chapter three about
Rhizopus Nigrecians, or black bread-
mold and other related growths. So
instead, we've got a film that
corresponds to chapter eight, which
is about insect reproduction...

This gets a few "all-rights" from the class, and there is
general sniggering. Medved spots an empty seat near the front
and moves toward it as he keeps talking.

MEDVED

(continuing)

So...if the celluloid twins're about
ready, let's watch some bugs.

As he sits down he throws a questioning smile to Scott and
Bruce, who both look back at him:

SCOTT

I just wish we didn't have number
twenty-six, sir...This thing sets
film back fifty years.

MEDVED

Try, gentlemen. I have great faith
in you.

Scott nods dubiously. The room goes dark as Bruce hits the
light; old twenty-six gives a fitful start, Scott gingerly
coaxes the reels so the film doesn't break. As it rolls, the
screen fills with:

SCREEN

"THE FABULOUS WORLD OF INSECTS -- PART NINE -- REPRODUCTION."
Beside it.

THE DOOR TO THE CLASS

opens and light pours in, obliterating the on-screen picture; a series of insect montages while credits roll and irritating NATURE MUSIC pops and crackles through the ancient projector. Into class, late, comes Jerry. Everybody turns to see him, and for a moment before the door closes and darkness resumes, he can see the looks -- like the crowd sizing-up the doomed man before he mounts the gallows. The door closes and Jerry stands for a moment, letting his eyes adjust to the dark. As he does, Bruce the AV monitor leans in (he was right there turning out the light). They whisper.

BRUCE

Heard about the problem, Mitchell.

JERRY

Sorry to wreck your life, Bruce, but there's not gonna be a fight.

BRUCE

Whatever.

(beat)

Just want you to know, I've got the way to make something bad into something good.

(off look)

You've heard, I'm sure, I'm planning to attend the film school at Cal Arts.

(off Jerry's stare)

Well, I think we can help each other.

JERRY

What're you talking about?

From the darkness, Scott wafts near.

BRUCE

A documentary about your fight. The hours leading up to it...what you're feeling...your courage...friends deserting you.

SCOTT

It's perfect, Mitchell. Sorta like "High Noon." You kinda look like Gary Cooper. We'll do alot of profile shots.

JERRY

Lemme get this straight. You guys wanna follow me around with a camera

(MORE)

JERRY (Cont'd)
the rest of the day and then film
Buddy Revell kicking my ass?

BRUCE
Exactly. But no schlock. Classy
angles. Feelings. Private moments.

SCOTT
We're gonna do it on half-inch.
It'll look just like the Zapruder
film, but with better production
values.

BRUCE
We'll have a release for you to sign
by next period.

JERRY
No.

BRUCE
You saying no?

JERRY
Yes.

BRUCE
Jerry, we could get a cable sale.

Jerry is about to lose his cool as Mr. Medved's face joins
them in the faint, deflected light from the projector and
screen.

MEDVED
There are some conservative
educators who still feel students
should participate in class. I hope
you gentlemen aren't offended by
that concept.

JERRY
Sorry I'm late, Mr. Medved.

MEDVED
Sit.

BRUCE
Think about it, Mitchell.

Jerry shoots a final scowl at Scott and Bruce, and moves
quickly to a seat. Medved moves away from them, too. We STAY
with Scott and Bruce for a moment, bathed in the projector's
flicker.

BRUCE

If he won't do it, my movie bites it. Cal-Arts blows me off.

SCOTT

You're completely douched-out, Cahow. Just do it anyway.

ANGLE - JERRY

ducking under the beam of the bug film, directly above his seat. He settles in to watch the movie.

ON THE SCREEN

absurd mantis foreplay.

JERRY

reacting to this, bored. After a beat, he looks to his left. There, sitting next to him is:

KAREN CLARKE

every bit as heart-stopping as when she bought paper at the student store. She's one of those girls who took advanced classes in body, sexuality, eyes, lips. She need not do anything but sit there, paying attention to the screen. The light catches the "Pepsi-spot" quality of her profile perfectly.

INTERCUT - JERRY AND KAREN

she's watching the movie; he's watching her. ADJUST TO the SCREEN, where a couple insects do some sort of mating polka around each other.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The mating ritual is as old as life itself.

Jerry's checking Karen out. She becomes aware of it. Looks shyly over at him. Smiles. He's amazed. Cannot believe this. She whispers:

KAREN

✓ I heard you're gonna fight Revell.
↻ Jerry doesn't know what to say.

KAREN

I sure hope you win. I think it's very brave.

She looks back at the screen. Jerry is floored.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(continuing)

Responding to an ancient code imprinted on his very genes, the male goes-through considerable and intricate choreography to capture the female's attention...

(amused aside)

And hopefully her affections as well.

✓ Karen looks over at Jerry again and, with those mind-fogging eyes, doe-innocent, licks her lips, then looks back at the screen. Jerry appears to suffer some sort of paralysis. On-screen the bugs are tentatively trying to get together.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

There is no instinct, no force in nature...as powerful and essential as the primal drive to reproduce the species...

Jerry's eyes register the truth of this as there are "Whoas!" from the back of the class. We HEAR Medved's "Shh!" Jerry stares at Karen who now seems intent only on watching the film.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The male, fool that he is, will forget and ignore almost any clear and present danger to approach the female...

Jerry hunkers a little lower in the chair, still looking at Karen. From this position:

ANGLE - PAST JERRY AND TOWARD KAREN

what he can see, far more prominently than the screen is the slight, classic bend of Karen's stockinged knee. She's wearing a shortish dress, and the light from the screen seems to make her legs glow: an agonizingly perfect piece of natural design.

CLOSE - KAREN'S FACE

watching the screen, finger-tip unconsciously placed between perfect, glossed lips.

CLOSE - JERRY'S FACE

captivated, lust-fogged.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

In this case, danger lurks in the form of a far larger, far more deadly adversary.

Jerry looks up at the screen, where:

THE BUG-MOVIE

a larger, fur-covered, tarantula-type bug moves in on the stupid little male bug.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is one date the smaller male should never have made. He's no match for this huge outsider!

And the Big Bug moves in, grotesque features working, mouth hungry and frightening. Jerry watches in sympathetic horror.

JERRY

Oh, no....

He looks neurotically up at:

THE CLOCK

which just now advances one more minute.

JERRY

another minute lost. He sits back in his chair.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Finally, the inevitable can no longer be avoided....

ANGLE - TO INCLUDE JERRY AND SCREEN

✓ as he ~~opens his eyes to see~~ the Big "Buddy" Bug take the little "Jerry" bug into its clutches! Jerry is highly anxious at this image and stands up quickly, his face coming directly into the projected beam of light just as the larger bug bites-off the head of the smaller one, and

JERRY'S HEAD

is superimposed over the smaller bug's head! Or rather, where it used to be. Jerry peeps a query to Medved:

JERRY

Sir? Could I...go to the restroom?

✓ On ~~his bug-eyed~~ ^{his} look we:

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - VINCENT - DAY

leaning back behind a desk, alone in the office. He's "Student Clerk" this period; left in charge by some all-too-trusting soul. He's reading an issue of Bon Appetit as Jerry enters. Vincent looks calm -- a sharp contrast to Jerry's anxiety.

JERRY

Something's gotta be done now! You said you had a plan.

VINCENT

Jerry, I'm on office duty.

Jerry rips the magazine in two. Vincent reacts.

VINCENT

Let's talk about my plan.

CUT TO:

✓ EXT. HALLWAY CLOCK ~~9:42~~

just as it TICKS to 9:43. ADJUST to reveal Jerry and Vincent in the hallway, coming to the same bank of lockers we saw earlier. It's where Buddy's locker is. Jerry is getting very worked up. Vincent is slipping-on gloves.

JERRY

I don't like this. It's gonna make everything worse to try and get him expelled.

(realizes)

I feel sick. I'll bet it's an ulcer... A bleeding ulcer.

VINCENT

Keep cool. Things can't get worse.
(off reaction)

Besides, you underestimate the food processor this guy's gonna get dropped into. People with illegal items in their lockers? Bad scene, big guy.

JERRY

OKay...let's see it.

Vincent smiles, stopping as they reach Buddy's locker. He removes something from his pocket with a gloved hand.

INSERT - VINCENT'S GLOVED HAND

SNAP -- a switchblade he's grasping opens and gleams menacingly before Jerry's eyes.

JERRY *Wow*

Jesus...Vincent! Put ~~that~~ away! We can't go through with this! It's insane!

RESUME - SCENE

As Vincent steps up to the locker and puts his hand on the tumblers. Jerry's at high tide, mind filling with ugly possibilities.

JERRY

Is this a felony? It's a felony isn't it?

VINCENT

(unfazed)

Deadly weapon? Definitely. Now listen,...I already dropped off an anonymous tip-off to O'Rourke's office. Way I figure it, they'll come check this locker, find Sammy Switchblade...Revell spends a great

(MORE)

VINCENT (Cont'd)
deal of time at the local police
station.

(smiles)
No fight. You're happy. I'm happy.

JERRY
Can't you go any faster?

VINCENT
I think this thing is stuck. Maybe
he hocked a loogie on it or
something.
(worries)
Let's see...is it 33-48-9, or
48-33-9...?

JERRY
What?' Are you kidding?! Don't do
this to me...

Jerry looks up at the wall clock which advances again.

JERRY
(continuing)
Vincent, do you know what time it
is? This period's ten minutes
shorter 'cause of the pep rally.
The bell's gonna ring!
(beat)
I think I'm getting a rash. I feel
itchy all over. Maybe it's a
stroke.

VINCENT
Don't melt on me. We're not done
here.

JERRY
Come on, come on! The bell's
gonna...

THE HALLWAY BELL

RINGS loudly! Suddenly

CLASSROOM DOORS

open. Kids pour out.

THE HALLWAY - LONG ANGLE

a teen flood gushes. Amid all this, still in their illicit pose at Buddy's locker, are Jerry and Vincent. Jerry's about to bail out; eyes jumping with fear as Vincent finally gets the locker open.

JERRY

Could we do this and get out of here, please? I'm supposed to be in class!

Vincent throws the switchblade into the locker and slams the door shut. He and Jerry trade looks, then calmly walk away in different directions, Vincent peeling gloves. Nobody has noticed anything odd...they hope.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. MEDVED'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Jerry re-enters; still between classes. He moves to get his books, but comes face-to-face with Medved.

MEDVED

Okay, Mitchell?

Jerry looks down at himself, still semi-soaked from the bathroom.

JERRY

You know how it is in adolescence, sir. The body's a rapidly changing place.

He's picked up his books and started for the door. Medved watches him go.

MEDVED

(wistfully)
...great age.

ANGLE - DOORWAY

Jerry exits the class, relief on his face. As he walks, we FADE-UP a disturbing, primal beat coming from somewhere near...as if headhunters with skin-drums are dancing around a ~~pot~~ ^{pot} missionaries. And go to:

CLOSE ON - A LARGE CLOCK

it ticks to become 9:49 A.M. The primal, jungle beat becomes more oppressive and we PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. WEAVER GYMNASIUM - PEP RALLY - JERRY AND BREI

entering amid the flow of other students. We BURN-IN: PEP RALLY. The Band's playing, drummers pounding on bass drums and tom-toms. Cheerleaders and yell-kings with megaphones and sewn-on smiles jump and pom-pom: lots of noise, color, and excitement. And in Jerry's current mood, it's dissonant roar is somewhat surreal; purgatorial. Like the Emerald Forest with bleachers. The incessant drum beat is driving him mad. Weaving in and out of everything are Scott and Bruce, the "vidiots" from Medved's class...taping everything...completing the hellish atmosphere for Jerry.

BREI

(to Jerry)

Don't be an asshole. Just ditch.
Go. Leave.

JERRY

This is me. If I ditch I flunk.
And don't call me names.

BREI

I'm not trying to call you names,
I'm trying to save you a lifetime of
needless humiliation. And being
flunked beats having the self-image
of a "butt."

JERRY

It's always good to talk to you,
Brei....

BREI

Hey, I know what I'm talking about.
Flunking is nothing. Jessica had
this class where they wanted her to
cut this dead frog into little
pieces and everything and she's
all...

JERRY

(interrupts)

I think it's called biology.

BREI

Jessica said the way the thing
smelled when it just laid there like
this...

(MORE)

BREI (Cont'd)
 (does an imitation)
 ...was enough to make her Ralph. I
 mean here's this croaker, right? So
 she told the teacher look, my mom
 pays good money to buy this cologne?
 And she wears Opium, right? Cause
 her dad's like a pediatrician?

JERRY
 Brei? The point?

BREI
 ...so anyhow, she says
 (imitates Jessica's
 low voice)
 "Now you want me to stick my hands
 into the lower or large intestines
 of this grotesque reptile, here?"

JERRY
 Amphibian.

BREI
 ...and she just said no way! So
 they flunked her. So, she's not an
untouchable or anything.

JERRY
 (humorless)
 She was dealing with her teacher.
 I'm dealing with the Night Crawler.
 (staring)
 Do you see the difference? Because
 there's a difference. Don't you see
 that?

FRANNY (V.O.)
 Jerry...your siren calls you.

He turns to face Franny, who's in the second row and indicates
 a place for him to sit. He returns her smile, remembering how
 much, amid all this other crap, he does like her, despite
 how...odd she is.

JERRY
 (to Brei)
 Wanna sit with me and Franny?

BREI
 Pass.
 (beat)
 If she decides to slash her wrists
 you can come sit with me and
 Jessica.

Brei exits and Jerry joins Franny. Through the first of this, he's trying to watch the pep rally rather than get too involved with Franny. The "Vidiots" loom up for a moment, scope-in on them with their lens, then waft away after Jerry shoots them a cold look.

FRANNY

It's been quite a morning, Jerry.

JERRY

You could say that...

FRANNY

(looks at him
meaningfully)

Quite a morning.

(beat)

I've spoken with Ethan.

JERRY

Yeah? How's he doin'?

FRANNY

He had a lot on his mind.

JERRY

Don't we all.

FRANNY

Jerry, look at me.

He does.

FRANNY

(continuing)

Ethan's very concerned about you.

JERRY

Franny, if he's your guardian
angel...

FRANNY

Spirit guide.

As they talk there's more noise, band music, cheerleader chants. Jerry is becoming pre-anxiety-attack tense, the noise, driving beat and swelling crowd getting to him.

JERRY

Whatever. He's yours. How does he
know about me?

FRANNY

He feels your pain through me. But don't worry. He says you're a warrior, and you'll emerge from this challenge stronger.

Jerry just stares at her, then tries to change the subject. His forehead is glazing. His neatly combed hair is beginning to fray around the edges.

JERRY

Some pep rally, huh?

She takes his hand. He feels encroached-upon.

FRANNY

Ethan told me something else, too. About us.

(now he looks at her)

It's time for us, Jerry.

JERRY

Time?

(off nod)

Well, that's great, but look...I don't really have time to get married...I've got a paper due.

FRANNY

Ethan wasn't talking about marriage. He was talking about womanhood. Manhood.

The drums. The crowd. Franny's sensual grip. Jerry seeks escape.

JERRY

Listen, I'll be right back...just gonna get a drink of water...

FRANNY

(holds tighter)

Jerry, this is no joke. It's time for you and I to bond.

JERRY

Ethan wants us to fuck?

A couple people notice. Giggle. Franny nods.

FRANNY

Today.

JERRY

Ethan's timing ~~isn't~~ ^{is} bad, Franny.
I'm gonna get hurt. Hurt and
humiliated.

(checks the gym clock)

And it's gonna happen in five hours
and five minutes.

FRANNY

Our concept of time is not as
important as Ethan's. I'll find a
perfect place. You don't have to
worry about a thing.

JERRY

This is really kind of odd for me
right now...

FRANNY

What're your lunch plans?

JERRY

I don't know. I don't have any. I
don't feel like eating.

FRANNY

You know how you get when you don't
eat.

JERRY

I'm not hungry....

FRANNY

Hypo-glycemia, Jerry. Very serious.
Potential for death... read the
medical journals.

(off look)

At Ethan's suggestion, I'm writing
you a poem. For us. It's about
feelings. Emotions.

(beat)

I've titled it... "Oh, Evil Serpent."
Just listen to the first line...

(beat)

"The snake who lives in my skull
spits blood and sings my name. His
puking resentment..."

JERRY

(quickly)

Franny...maybe I could hear this
later, huh?

She starts to answer, but he doesn't hear. He's looking o.s.
with a startled expression, seeing:

ANGLE - GYM ENTRANCE

framed in the doorway, light pouring from behind, is a menacing form. It steps into the gym, leather jacket soaking up sunlight, contemptuous expression suffocating all life that approaches. Buddy Revell, radiating Anti-Christ danger, watches the absurd pandemonium. He stretches, and when his leather jacket rises, the switchblade Vincent and Jerry put in his locker can be seen protruding from his pants pocket.

ZOOMING TIGHT - JERRY

reacting; instant dry-mouth. The pounding of a HEARTBEAT is heard. Jerry's. Fast. Crazy. He looks over at

ZOOMING TIGHT - FRANNY

still talking at him. But we can't HEAR. All we HEAR is

THE BAND

blasting at brain-washing levels, as we seem to creep nightmarishly right into the bells of tubas and trombones. Then back to:

BUDDY REVELL

darkly surveying the inanity. He finally spots the

CHEERLEADERS

and we single out Karen, pom-pomming. MOVE AROUND HER to reveal Revell keeping his eye on her. KEEP MOVING until we see Jerry and Franny in the stands...only Jerry's still watching Buddy.

JERRY - CLOSE

feeling himself in a Boschian nightmare. He finally looks up at the clock, his guts gone to taffy and

THE CLOCK

all SOUND seems to fall away into an echoey waste-bin, resonating. Then, the massive minute hand of the big gym clock advances to 9:57 with a THUNDEROUS CRASHING BOOM that sounds like a Howitzer going off in an elevator shaft. Jerry is a minute closer to doom. As this BOOM CONTINUES OVER:

RESUME JERRY

looking at Buddy; at the straight-jacket intensity of the Pep Rally. And finally at Franny, who looks at him strangely as SOUND returns to normal....

FRANNY

Jerry? Jerry have you heard one word I've been saying here?

JERRY

I could really use a drink of water, Franny.

He starts down from the grandstands, leaving her perplexed and impatient. He moves past the crowd, which raahs, cheers, pom-watches. He's heading toward the:

CUT TO:

BOYS' GYMNASIUM BATHROOM - JERRY

in the gym lobby. He enters. Traumatized.

INT. BOYS' GYM BATHROOM - A STALL DOOR

slamming shut. Jerry's standing inside, overwrought. The BOOMING Pep Rally can be heard through the walls, from the gym outside, like a cannibal wedding. Jerry locks the latch hard, sits on the metal flusher, putting his feet up on the toilet seat, staring straight ahead at the stall door. He tries to calm down. Shuts his eyes. Rubs his face with his hands, when

THE BOYS' BATHROOM DOOR

swings open, light and "raw" gym sound pouring in. It shuts.

JERRY

in the stall, frozen. Listening intently. He does not breathe. His eyes are infested with fear.

ENGINEER BOOTS

play the tension as they proceed forward.

SUBJECTIVE POV - BOOT LEVEL

moving closer to Jerry's stall...

INT. STALL - JERRY

not breathing. Scared shitless. Staring down at:

JERRY'S POINT OF VIEW - THE BOOTS

which have stopped in front of the stall door, pointing toward him.

INTERCUT - JERRY AND THE INTRUDER BOOTS

intense. The BOOMING of the BASS DRUM from the gym punctuates each CUT, as we get CLOSER to Jerry's face and are finally on his EYEBALL. Suddenly, we HEAR:

DEEP MALE VOICE
(from outside stall)
Out, or I come in, Mitchell.

Jerry's huge eyeball watches, blinks.

CLOSE ON - THE BOOTS

waiting.

JERRY - CLOSE

white. Finally, knowing he has no choice, he reaches and slowly opens the latch. Swings the door fearfully open and comes face to face with:

HIS POV - A VIDEO CAMERA LENS

staring him in the eye. Bruce clicks on the bright light and hits the trigger.

ANGLE - JERRY AND BRUCE

Jerry realizes he's been had, slams the door shut.

JERRY
Shit! Goddamn it, you guys! This
is not a movie! This is my ass
we're talking about!

INT. BOYS' BATHROOM - BRUCE

exiting, carrying the video camera. As he does:

BRUCE

Bite me, Mitchell! Let somebody get something out of this.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM LOBBY - OUTSIDE BOYS' BATHROOM - SCOTT

waits as Bruce comes out.

BRUCE

Righteous tension, Chalmer! He's snapping in there! This thing's gonna edit together great!

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - ON BOYS' BATHROOM DOOR - JERRY

comes tentatively out. He moves along the wall; scans the gym like a prison escapee.

HIS POINT OF VIEW - VARIOUS

Franny, sitting by herself, staring off. Then there's the cheerleaders, including Karen, she of luminous dimensions and shiny-perfect skin. She's shaking her pom-poms as if a mating ritual.

JERRY

reacts to Karen. The mixture of fear and lust is torturous; almost exquisite. But so is the terror when he looks to see:

HIS POINT OF VIEW - BUDDY REVELL

standing by the front row of the bleachers before Karen. Jerry's POV works its way up the grandstand from Buddy, who doesn't see him. Jerry spots Brei, who is deep in conversation with a girlfriend, who faces away from CAMERA.

JERRY

gets a thought. Counts the rows to see how high in the stands Brei sits. Ten. He looks at Buddy again, knows he can't walk

near or past him. Checks around to make sure nobody's spotted him. It's clear! He moves quickly along the wall to the grandstands, slips under them, into an even more boomy, creepy realm.

UNDER THE GRANDSTANDS

Jerry looks up, looks around to gauge where he is under the bleachers. Counts the rows above him. Ten. He looks around making sure nothing's sneaking up in this shadowy underworld. Then, starts to climb -- upside down. Like scaling a sheer rock cliff that points outward. He goes hand over hand, foot over foot, clinging to the underside of the stands like a housefly. He counts to himself, to ten, as he scales. Finally, he's right under Brei and whispers loudly:

JERRY

Hey! Brei!

BREI AND HER FRIEND

sitting in the stands. Her friend, we now see, is Jessica. They hear Jerry's voice and react. Jessica does, there's no denying, look somewhat like Ted Koppel. Short, wavy red hair, parted on the side. Alfred E. Neumann features. It's weird.

JERRY (O.S.)

Brei! Down here!

Brei makes a 'what-the-hell' face, and looks down through the slats in the stands. Sure enough,

BREI'S POV - JERRY

smiles up at her, though he's straining to hang on.

BREI

Jerry...everybody in here sitting upside down or is it you?

JERRY

I just wanted to let you know I'm taking your advice. I'm ditching. You'll have to get some other ride home.

JESSICA

(low voice for a girl)
What's he doing down there?

BREI

Beats me.

And at this moment, we HEAR the piercing SOUND of a neck-whistle. He gets an instant nerve overload and falls to the floor.

JESSICA

(to Brei)

Guess he had to go.

JERRY - UNDER THE GRANDSTANDS

flat on his back, looking-up at:

HIS POV - A MALE TEACHER

probably a coach, based on the golf-style t-shirt and whistle around his neck. Right now, from Jerry's angle, the guy's immense, upside-down nostrils stare down mulishly.

TEACHER

What were you doin up there, son?

JERRY

...just...testing...bleacher strength...

He gets up and slaps a brace.

JERRY

Damn well built, sir. Damn well.
Really solid.

(beat)

Sir, am I bleeding?

The coach-guy says nothing, just staring. Jerry tries to cover.

JERRY

Anyway, everything's fine.
Appreciate the concern, sir.

TEACHER

Got a seat?

JERRY

Yes sir...at the other end....

He points.

TEACHER

Don't let me catch you under here
again.

Jerry nods, grateful, and heads off toward the far end of the gym, traveling under the grandstand.

"BAND" END OF GYM

they're seated in formation and as they blast out behind the undulating cheerleaders, ADJUST to Jerry coming from under the grandstand near them. He sees

HIS POV - BEYOND THE BAND

an EXIT sign. It's above a temptingly OPEN door. Beyond the door is the STUDENT PARKING LOT, full of cars. Including his; an escape vehicle. Life. But he also sees, standing within ten feet, with his back to Jerry, Buddy Revell.

JERRY

reacts with determination. Moving carefully to avoid attracting Revell's attention, he creeps along the wall to the band, which is so overpoweringly loud he winces.

DOWN THE ROWS OF THE BAND

your brass, your winds, your drummers, your guys playing little bells. Loud enough to cook a turkey. They're surprised as

JERRY - AMID THE BAND

crawls along the brass row of the band on all fours, heading for the door to the parking lot. He reacts to the blast from a 'bone' and barely avoids getting clipped in the nose by curved brass tubing that jabs at him. It's as if the whole world has gone fish-eye as he peers up at the gleaming instruments, which look like tools of torture to him right now. Ahead more trombonists jerk their arms into his path: a snorting musical gauntlet. He slips between two horn players and now finds himself on DRUM row. He readies himself, preparing to shoot these percussive rapids. He sees:

A FAT MALLET

pounding a brass drum. Total hell.

JERRY

reacts, shuddering.

A SNARE

sounding like John Rambo mowing down a village.

JERRY

feels it penetrate his skull. He looks up at

ZOOMING TIGHT - A SNARE DRUMMER

with an almost demonic look. Sticks like inquisitor's prongs.

JERRY

peeks up over the band from in front of crashing cymbals and looks out at:

HIS POINT OF VIEW - THE GYM

everything about it is now monstrous, encroaching. The CLOCK SLAMS out another TICK to read 10:00 A.M. It seems to hit Jerry's consciousness like a bomb. Faces of teachers, cheerleaders, jocks, everybody, become elongated; monstrous.

JERRY

The SOUND melds into a horrid cacophony as the scene accelerates. RAPID CUTS bring Buddy Revell, Franny, Brei, Karen, the coach who caught him under the stands...and of course the clock...together into a blend of perfect madness and we

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GYM DOOR - JERRY - DAY

bursts into sunlight on a dead run, leaving the hell palace behind. He runs wildly into the parking lot. We FOLLOW him to

HIS CAR - A TOYOTA COROLLA

clean, well-kept. He flies into the driver's seat. Puts key into ignition, turns it. Nothing happens.

ANGLE - THROUGH WINDSHIELD - JERRY

reacts. Tries again. Same result. He pounds the wheel, pulls the hood latch, flies out of the car. Finally raises the hood, desperate. Stops cold:

HIS POV - THE ENGINE - THE DISTRIBUTOR CAP
gone. A note is in its place.

JERRY

~~peers down at where it should be.~~ We HEAR his breathing, as if amplified thousands of times. He reaches for the note, hand shaking. Unfolds it. Scrawled is:

I TOLD YOU YOU COULDN'T GET AWAY FROM ME

JERRY

freaks.

JERRY

(yells)

SSSSHHHHIIIIIT!

He starts to SLAM the hood and we:

SMASH CUT TO:

VINCENT'S LOCKER

slamming SHUT. Vincent turns. There's Jerry. A study in tension. He speaks in a hollow whisper.

JERRY

He took my distributor cap. I'm trapped.

VINCENT

(impressed)

Clever. The essence of any engine. This guy is like...I don't know... Manson or something. His ideas fascinate me.

JERRY

Vincent!

VINCENT

✓
 Sorry. Look, it's still no sweat,
~~man~~ I got that note onto
 O'Rourke's desk during the pep
 rally. Revell won't survive next
 period.

JERRY

I saw the switchblade on ^{him} ~~Revell~~ a
 few minutes ago.

VINCENT

No way.

JERRY

I saw it.

VINCENT

You're gettin' paranoid.

JERRY

I saw it!

✓
 As Vincent tries to deal with Jerry's mood, Mark Bojeekus
 approaches, happy, ~~and~~ filled with resin. That sluggish,
 zig-zag voice:

BOJEEKUS

Jerry...?

JERRY

Listen, Mark, I'm a little busy
 right now...I'm kinda having a
 nervous breakdown.

BOJEEKUS

Yeah, I know. The fight'n every-
 thing. But I was just wondering if
 you could help me....

JERRY

Help you...what're you talkin about?

BOJEEKUS

Well, see, there's these pools we
 can get into? The guys in the
 Accounting Club started 'em? And I
 was wondering if you could try and
 maybe keep the fight going longer
 than five minutes? You know, if you
 did a lot of footwork and shit?

(beat)

Maybe if you just ran or something?

(MORE)

BOJEEKUS (Cont'd)

(Jerry stares)

Cause, see...my bet's you'll last
six or more minutes with him... I
believe in ya, man. I think you're
solid.

JERRY

What?! What did you say?!

(to Vincent)

People are betting on my
destruction! Taking odds! That
is...obscene!

VINCENT

That's why you need my help.

(quietly, to Mark)

Wouldn't make that bet.

JERRY

You bet you wouldn't. 'Cause
there's not gonna be a fight, all
right? Say it! I wanna hear you
say it!

BOJEEKUS

Y'mean you're just gonna let him hit
you?

JERRY

No, that's not what I mean...

(confused)

I don't know. Maybe I will. Don't
pressure me.

VINCENT

Second opinion? Take a dive. Make
some dough, save face.

BOJEEKUS

Jerry...do you cut easily? Cause
there's good odds in the stitches
category.

JERRY

I don't believe this. All of a
sudden I'm the World Series....

VINCENT

Stitches is a new one. Amazing.

BOJEEKUS

Accounting Club made it up for this
fight. I mean...considering who's
in it....

(MORE)

BOJEEKUS (Cont'd)
 (off looks)
 You bet on how many it'll take to
 fix Jerry's face.

On Jerry's face

CUT TO:

INT. MR. RICE'S OFFICE - RICE AND JERRY - DAY

Rice is behind his desk, Jerry in a visitor's chair. The Jimmy Alexander Lung Fund jar is in a locked cabinet, behind glass.

RICE
 Glad you came to me, Jer. But
 there's not a damn thing I can do
 for you.

JERRY
 Mr. Rice, don't you like me? I'm
 gonna get the shit kicked out of me.

RICE
 Let's call your parents.

JERRY
 They're in the air right now from
 Fort Lauderdale. It's a five hour
 flight. By the time they get home
 I'll be in surgery!

RICE
 (a shrug)
 My hands are tied. Partially,
 anyway.

JERRY
 Which part?

RICE
 The part that responds to Buddy's
 father.
 (beat)
 The Superintendent of this school
 district.
 (beat)
 Which is not for public consumption.

JERRY
 His dad is Superintendent Revell?
 You gotta be kidding...

RICE

Which is why until Buddy does something to you, we can't take any action against him.

JERRY

What about my pants? Look what he did to them! Look at me, for God's sake? I'm a wreck! Isn't this something?

RICE

Not enough to throw a boy out of school. Especially the son of a superintendent.

JERRY

So, y'mean I'm a political pawn like the hostages in Iran? Nothing can be done until blood is spilled?

RICE

A little melodramatic, Jer. And if you want my personal opinion, I don't think Buddy's gonna touch you.
(beat)

See, Weaver's the fifth school he's been to this year. No matter who his father is, one more expulsion and it's over. He's running on borrowed time.

(opens drawer)

Potato chips?

JERRY

(shakes "no")

Look, Mr. Rice, just to be safe, I'd really like to go home for the rest of the day anyway.

(beat)

I promise to read the whole time.

Rice chomps Laura Scudders.

RICE

I'm not trying to be a hardnose, Jer, but I can't send you home. I just really don't think that's a good idea.

(beat)

But I will talk to Buddy. Now I suggest you get back to class. There's still half the day left. Don't worry. Everything's gonna be fine. That's a promise.

On Jerry's uneasy reaction:

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

We BURN-IN: THIRD PERIOD - WOOD SHOP. The WALL CLOCK reads 10:15. Sawdust everywhere. Amid the noise of lathes, bandsaws and hammering stands a fiftyish guy named MR. VAN DYKE. He's the shop teacher and wears Mengele goggles which prevent errant shavings from rendering him blind. At this moment he comes up behind a goggled Jerry, who's trying to wire-brush/gloss a wooden fruit bowl he's recently varnished. Jerry looks bad and coughs now and again as Van Dyke watches him work.

VAN DYKE

Jerry?

Jerry keeps buffing.

VAN DYKE

Jerry?!

He taps Jerry harder and Jerry spins, expecting Buddy. He realizes it's Van Dyke and smiles nervously.

VAN DYKE

Just wanted to say good job. Don't let me interrupt.

(beat)

Something wrong, son?

JERRY

...just an allergy, sir.

VAN DYKE

(nods)

Buffin' right up.

He pats Jerry on the shoulder, patronizing-adult-style, but he's already looking toward his office. Jerry looks too, as we ADJUST to include the glassed-in cubicle. There, admit slip in hand, stands Buddy Revell. Van Dyke approaches him, takes the slip, signs it and motions for Buddy to follow him to a tool rack a couple feet from Jerry. Buddy sees Jerry and glares at him.

INTERCUT - WITH JERRY

buffing the bowl he's working on -- to the point of thrashing it with the sander, as he watches Buddy.

BUDDY AND VAN DYKE

the teacher fishes for tools to equip his new pupil. It seems like everything he gives Buddy is a sharp object. Different kinds of files, rasps, planers, chisels, etc.

JERRY

reacts to each one as if it's already embedded in his flesh. He can't take any more, and turns back to his work. Trying to lose himself in it.

BUDDY AND VAN DYKE

Van Dyke fishes for another item.

BUDDY

Be back in a minute.

Van Dyke nods. Buddy comes over to Jerry, who doesn't notice, trying to drown his tension by working on the bowl. He wire-brushes it so much, it's nearly gone.

THE TWO

play the tension as Buddy invades Jerry's space for a few moments and Jerry doesn't know he's there.

AROUND THE CLASS

there's not a kid in the place who isn't noticing what's happening. Van Dyke continues to plumb drawers full of various grades of sandpaper.

RESUME - JERRY AND BUDDY

as Buddy, deliberate and slow, reaches into his jacket pocket and withdraws something we don't see.

JERRY

reacts as a gleaming switchblade SNAPS INTO FRAME, appearing to split his goggled face at a rude angle.

BUDDY

never taking his eyes off Jerry's. He plunges the knife into what remains of Jerry's bowl. Jerry thinks faster than the biggest computer IBM makes. Smiles falsely.

JERRY

Hey! I'm in this class too! I guess we both are! Small world, huh? Remember me? From the bathroom? Jerry Mitchell? Nice knife. Gonna be doing some carving? Something for your mom?

Jerry tries to talk more but Buddy places a hand over his mouth.

BUDDY

You tried to set me up.

Jerry talks through Buddy's hand for the next few lines, though we can make out his words. His goggle lenses fog more and more as he talks; getting steamy with fear.

JERRY

I can see you're upset. But maybe we could talk about it and work it out like...men. See, I'd like that because...well...actually I just really don't wanna get hurt. See I really need my health right now 'cause I'm trying to get into U.C. Santa Barbara and I've gotta take my PSAT's...

BUDDY

Your what?

JERRY

Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Tests? Verbal? Mathematical? Tests how smart you are?

BUDDY

You're stupid as shit. Anybody who'd try and set me up would have to be.

(leans in)

It didn't work and now you've really pissed me off. I deal with you after school. Twice as bad. You got that?

JERRY

Well look, that was kinda what I wanted to discuss. I may not be able to make it.

BUDDY

You'll make it.

Jerry coughs. Buddy pulls his hand away from Jerry's mouth. Jerry coughs again 'cause some sawdust has just flared up from somewhere in the room. The goggles are now slightly more steamed. Buddy looks at him with contempt, then turns and steps to a drill-press. Looking hard at Jerry, he grabs a plank and puts it under the press. He begins drilling large, wicked holes in the plank, over and over, as if boring into Jerry's temples.

JERRY

gets the message.

BUDDY

looks up at the clock.

JERRY

does the same:

CLOCK

10:25.

JERRY

looks back at Buddy, who's looking right at him. Buddy drills more. Jerry can only watch this ferocious, methodical display as we

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY - JERRY - DAY

by now everybody who sees him has some reaction. Some give him a 'thumbs up' and a "Way to go, Mitchell!" greeting. Girls look at him with new respect; as if there's some mystery there they'd like to plumb. But Jerry's looking straight ahead, hair more askew, shirt-tail half out. He's ignoring all, walking fast right up to:

VINCENT

who stops when he sees his friend coming.

JERRY
(intensely)
New rules.

VINCENT
Name it.

JERRY
Get me out of Schumacher's History
Class and find out where Craig
Mattey is.
(beat)
I don't know why I didn't think of
this sooner.

CUT TO:

A CLASSROOM CLOCK

11:10.

JERRY

sitting in class as we BURN-IN: FOURTH PERIOD - HISTORY. The
teacher, MR. SCHUMACHER, a chalk drone with ugly shoes,
patrols the front of the room and lectures.

SCHUMACHER
Why is history important?
(faces them)
Because it happened.

This elicits less than moved reactions and Jerry glances at
the clock. Schumacher continues pacing and stares at a wall
map as if it were highly meaningful to him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY - VINCENT

in a secluded corner, on a bench. He's got:

INSERT - A HALL PASS

and works to forge it. Under STUDENT NAME we see Jerry
Mitchell hand-printed in. Vincent strains to sign the name:
Adelle H. Phillips convincingly.

VINCENT

looks down at his handiwork, frowns, wads the form up and tosses it away. He's got another, trying it again. The going's tough, but this time he likes the results better. He nods approval, starts out of FRAME and we

CUT TO:

INT. SCHUMACHER'S HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Schumacher is still holding forth importantly. Jerry fidgets watching the clock.

SCHUMACHER

Today is tomorrow's yesterday...,
this year is next year's last
year...this century is next
century's last century...and so
history is born, whether it likes it
or not. The forceps of human kind
gently encircle its head and pull it
into the human drama.

Jerry shuts his eyes going into a Schumacher stupor. As he does, the DOOR is heard OPENING. His eyes pop back open and there's Vincent, walking in with all the legitimacy he can muster. Schumacher takes the hall-slip and looks at it. He looks at Jerry, who's watching, then back at Vincent.

SCHUMACHER

He stays.

VINCENT

But sir....

SCHUMACHER

This is an obvious forgery.
(to Vincent)
Yours?

VINCENT

I found it. Looked phony to me,
too. But I thought you should see
it.

(beat)

How could you tell?

SCHUMACHER

Sweat marks.

Jerry winces.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY - VINCENT - DAY

walking, hands thrust in pockets, not knowing what the hell to do. He paces. Looks out at the kids having first lunch, looks back toward the windows of the classroom in which Jerry sits, a prisoner. Then something catches his eye and we SLOWLY PAN around Vincent to see what he's seeing:

A FIRE ALARM

break the glass, break up class...

VINCENT

weighs options, possibilities, consequences.

ANGLE - FROM INSIDE FIRE ALARM BOX

looking out at Vincent. The letters MRALA ERIF are imprinted on his porcine face.

CUT TO:

WEAVER FIRE ALARMS

RING-RING-RING.

CLASSROOM DOORS

open. Kids file out.

JERRY

among them. He glances to make sure Schumacher isn't looking, walks off quickly.

CUT TO:

A DOORKNOB

in a darkened room. We still HEAR the FIRE ALARM BELLS going crazy. The knob turns, the door swings open slightly. Jerry peers in, slips inside. Guilty. Scared. We're in the unlit

OFFICE OF MR. RICE

Jerry, anxious, forces himself to move quickly, biting his lower lip. He moves across the room to the glass-fronted cabinet. Inside is the large LUNG FUND jar. Jerry dreads what he must do.

JERRY

Oh, God....

He tries the cabinet: locked. Grabs a stapler from Rice's desk. Breaks the glass. Opens the cabinet, grabs Jimmy's breathing money. Jerry removes every last dollar from the well-stuffed jar. Jams them into pockets. Screws the lid back on. Looks guilty.

JERRY

Hold off on the jogging for a day or so, Jim.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS - FIRE DRILL

the place is mildly chaotic, crawling with every kid in school. The bells finally stop and everyone stands around. Jerry runs behind large groups of kids so teachers won't spot him. Ahead, he encounters

VINCENT

who sees him. Jerry doesn't slow his run.

JERRY

Where is he?

VINCENT

Track.

On Jerry's nod:

CUT TO:

CLOSE-ON - CRAIG MATTEY'S HUGE RED FACE

staring at CAMERA as he puffs around the school track. He's got one of those square heads that looks like a Chevy engine with hair. PULL BACK TO INCLUDE Jerry, in his street clothes, running to catch-up. In b.g. a bunch of other beef-boys from the varsity team are running, pumping, stretching. Jerry is now side by side with Craig, who runs with wrist and leg weights.

JERRY

Hi, Craig. Jerry Mitchell.

(no answer)

Remember me? We talked once at a drinking fountain?

CRAIG

Oh...yeah. I guess.

JERRY

Well I was thinking you and I oughta get to know each other. Because I really enjoyed that talk.

Craig turns more red, running harder; faster. Jerry struggles to keep up. Craig stares ahead through maybe fifty pounds of neck and face muscle. He looks frightening.

CRAIG

Okay.

Jerry is almost surprised as Craig extends a giant mitt to shake as they run. Jerry takes it and smiles. Craig nods back like some gentle centaur in sweats.

CRAIG

So, you wanna learn how to play football or something?

JERRY

No.

(beat)

Listen Craig, how'd you like to make a lot of money?

CRAIG

For what?

JERRY

I need you to beat up a guy for me.

Craig punches air with huge fists. Jerry's starting to sweat pretty good.

CRAIG

Who?

JERRY

Buddy Revell.

Craig knows the name.

CRAIG

You on his shit list?

JERRY

I am his shit list. He wants to kick my ass after school.

Craig checks him out. Spits. Runs harder. Jerry's sweating.

CRAIG

He'd cripple you.

JERRY

See, and I've got big problems. If Revell kills me, I won't be able to go to U.C. Santa Barbara and I've gotta go there. My dad went there and everything and he's real steeped in tradition. I really need your help, Craig. I'm prepared to offer you...a mutually agreed upon figure.

Craig keeps running. Face red, muscles displacing airspace. Craig finally stops and walks. Jerry beside him. Craig sniffs, spits. For several moments, he thinks it over and Jerry's concerned it isn't going to work out.

CRAIG

How much?

JERRY

Five hundred and fifteen dollars.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUNCHTIME ON CAMPUS - PANNING - DAY

CAMERA takes in the normal panorama of student dining -- kids sprawled on the grass or seated on flesh-colored bench-tables. Still more hang out and talk. As we SWEEP across the Weaver commons area, we HEAR:

VINCENT (V.O.)

Mattey said he'd fix it so he and Revell'd fight on the football field
(MORE)

VINCENT (V.O.) (Cont'd)
at lunch? Just like that? I'm
blown, Jer.

JERRY (V.O.)
I know.

VINCENT (V.O.)
Oughta be starting down there any
minute.

The CAMERA comes to rest on a

SECOND FLOOR CLASSROOM WINDOW

Jerry and Vincent look out.

THEIR POINT OF VIEW - IN THE DISTANCE - THE FOOTBALL FIELD

from this window you can see the bleachers on either side of
the field, several hundred yards away. A tiny figure is
visible, walking onto the field.

VINCENT (V.O.)
Looks like Revell....

JERRY (V.O.)
I...don't know....

INT. CLASSROOM - JERRY AND VINCENT - DAY

The room's empty during second lunch. They're alone at the
window, looking out.

JERRY
...hard to tell.

VINCENT
(brightens)
Hey...there's Matthey! Coming from
the other side; this is just like a
puppet show...

JERRY
(angrily)
My life is not a puppet show!

VINCENT
Sorry.

JERRY

It's okay.

And they turn back to:

THEIR POV - THE FIELD - THE TWO FIGURES

silhouettes in the distance. They approach one another...one in a black jacket, the other a white t-shirt.

JERRY (V.O.)

Wish I could get a closer look....

The two figures are face to face. There are angry gestures.

INTERCUT - WITH VINCENT AND JERRY'S REACTIONS....

THE FIGHT - IN THE DISTANCE

begins; a tiny pantomime. One belts the other, then again. One falls: the one in the black jacket.

JERRY

He got him!

VINCENT

Who?

JERRY

Mattey knocked him down! I can see Revell's jacket!

As Jerry's excitement mounts, the prone black jacketed figure gets up, and knocked down again. Back up! Immediately slugged onto his ass again! Jerry has lottery-winner eyes, yelling, fists balled excitedly.

JERRY

Goddamn! Got him again! This is no contest! It's a slaughter!

(realizing)

I'm gonna be okay!

And with a last, stunning blow, the perennial black-jacketed victim is decked for the final time. He's had enough.

JERRY AND VINCENT

whoop and dash for the door.

JERRY

Did you believe that?! Incredible!!

And they're out of the class-room.

EXT. STAIRS - JERRY AND VINCENT - DAY

running down. A passing Mark Bojeekus sees them.

BOJEEKUS

What's happenin', man?

VINCENT

Mattey kicked Revell's ass on the football field! C'mon!

BOJEEKUS

No shit? Excellent!

He follows. Several other kids, who overheard join.

VARIOUS

the growing crowd rushes for the football field, word spreading fast.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

there's a pretty good-sized group out there even before Jerry and Vincent arrive. Kids who'd been closer to the action rushed over on their own.

JERRY

pushes his way through the gawking crowd, HEARS ad libbed "Man, I don't believe this," remarks all around. He's loving it. Finally gets through the crush and stops dead when he sees:

HIS POV - CRAIG MATTEY

sitting on the ground, exhausted, wearing a black warm-up jacket. Thoroughly trashed; bruised, bloody. He looks at Jerry, then behind him.

RESUME - JERRY

who feels a presence he knows he won't like. He turns to see Buddy Revell, wearing a t-shirt and donning his leather

jacket. Glaring hatefully. Bruce and Scott, the vidiots have also arrived. They're excitedly rolling tape. Buddy advances on Jerry.

BUDDY

Good warm up, pussy.

(beat)

Something for you.

He hands Jerry a piece of crudely folded paper, then walks through the crowd, which readily parts for him. The video camera moves-in close. Jerry glares at it. Talks with disturbed quiet.

JERRY

Get that thing out of my face.

BRUCE

Bite me, Mitchell.

The camera moves on, getting coverage of the crowd reactions. Jerry stands stunned as Craig's friends help the felled giant back up. One of them, a JOCK, comes up to Jerry and discreetly holds out a handful of money.

JOCK

Craig asked me to give it back,
Mitchell.

Jerry looks sick as Craig is being led off. He stares at the money, then quickly takes it, out of fear it'll be taped.

JERRY

Is he...okay?

JOCK

He's hurtin. Said to tell you he
was really sorry.

(beat, shrug)

Said he thought you should try and
take advantage of Revell's left.
Says it's weak.

Jerry looks at the Jock in disbelief, then just watches after Craig, who coughs and spits something that SOUNDS like it's got blood in it. They get that on tape. The Jock walks away to rejoin his buddies. Vincent steps up behind Jerry, as Jerry unfolds Revell's note and reads it, eyes widening in fear.

VINCENT

Jer?

Jerry is in dazed realization, watching Matthey leave. He allows his arm to drop, still holding the note.

JERRY
I'm not gonna get out of this,
Vincent....

Jerry looks more than slightly freaked. He's got a wild quality in his eyes. He holds up the note.

JERRY
It's a list of stuff Revell's gonna do to me.

VINCENT
What'd he say?

JERRY
He's gonna break everything I've got.

Vincent is analytical. Strategic.

VINCENT
Does he specifically say what he's gonna do?

JERRY
In great detail.
(reflecting)
I'm gonna be a paraplegic.

VINCENT
So, he's premeditated the whole thing with harassment and threats.
(takes note, reads)
Hate to break it to you pal, but you may have a legal position.

Jerry takes a long beat.

JERRY
Vincent, what're you talking about?

VINCENT
(smiles)
My brother, Burt.

On Jerry's expression:

CUT TO:

INT. WEAVER CAFETERIA - DAY

kids are lined up with trays, seated at long tables. The SOUNDS of eating and CONVERSATION are a constant. It's 12:45 by the CLOCK.

BURT (V.O.)

Jerry, let me ask you a question...
what part of your anatomy did he
threaten to stomp first?

ADJUST to include Jerry, Vincent and Vincent's older brother,
BURT. He's about thirty; geeky but well dressed. Like
Gilligan if he were trying to get laid. The curly hair is a
little thinner than he'd like, but combed for coverage. His
suit and jewelry are definitely shooting for a successful
image. He's taking everything down in his notes. Vincent
eats throughout with great energy, eyes darting back and forth
from Jerry to Burt, fascinated with the drama.

JERRY

(helpful)

My balls.

BURT

Anything specific about them?

Jerry thinks while toying with the tray of food he's not
really eating from. Answers, flatly.

JERRY

Yeah. Both of 'em.

BURT

(writing)

Great, great. We can definitely use
that.

Jerry and Vincent exchange looks. Vincent nods reassuringly.

BURT

Great.

JERRY

There's more.

BURT

Fire away.

JERRY

Well...he said he was gonna break
my face and watch me bleed.

BURT

Guy's a real sicko. You're a brave
kid facin' up to him like this,
Jerry. It's gonna be a pleasure to
put this guy outta commission.

JERRY

So...what can we do to stop...

BURT

(interrupting)

Lemme think, Jerry.

Long pause. Vincent and Jerry look at each other. Burt looks off, thinking. Vincent speaks privately to Jerry.

VINCENT

(aside)

Don't worry. He's a brain. You're in excellent hands. Got a full scholarship to Leo's Law.

JERRY

Leo's Law?

VINCENT

Like Oxford. Only it's in Mexico.

JERRY

"Leo?"

Burt is done thinking.

BURT

Jerry...tell you what...

(off Jerry's hopeful look)

...first thing tomorrow, I'll call you.

JERRY

Tomorrow? He wants to fight me today. I gotta do something now.

VINCENT

Burt...this guy's gonna trash him in a coupla hours. Don't kid around.

BURT

Tomorrow's best I can do. I got a Contracts test in forty-five minutes. This was just a first meeting. Tonight I'll go home and hit the books.

Jerry stares. Pieces are falling into place and he's afraid of what it means.

JERRY

Books? Tests?

(beat)

Aren't you a lawyer?

BURT

Law student. Same difference.
Anyhow, I'll call you tomorrow.

JERRY

Wait a minute, I need help now!
Can't you pull strings? Call
somebody?

BURT

Nope. There's really nothing I can
do to stop the fight. But there
might be a way to make it work for
us.

JERRY

(trying to think
positive)

Like what?

BURT

What I'm thinking, Jerry, is a
lawsuit. If this kid Revell really
punishes you, you and your folks
could get hit with big bills. I'd
like to sue for full hospitaliza-
tion, emergency room, whatever...
all included in the damages. I'd be
willing to handle it on a
contingency basis for your family.
(beat)

Assuming my graduation, which is no
big sweat since this whole mess
wouldn't get to court for years.
How's that sound?

JERRY

But what about me?

BURT

(one-track)

If we're gonna get this lawsuit
going, what I'm gonna suggest is
getting some witnesses at your
fight.

JERRY

But I don't want to fight.

BURT

Let me finish. You'll need to know
a few specifics. Maybe you should
write this down. Vince, give Jerry
a pen.

Vincent produces one. Jerry writes on a napkin, reluctant but trapped. Burt looks off, getting into it.

BURT

(continuing)

These witnesses, they can be anybody: friends from school, teachers...whatever. As the fight occurs, have them take notes. Describe what they see. You got a camera?

JERRY

(hating this)

I...might be able to get it on video tape.

BURT

Now you are thinking law. Important thing I want is close-ups. Jurors hate to squint. I want ripped clothing, cuts, pained expressions. Make us feel like we were there. Jury will eat it up. Personal injury suits... it's all in the evidence...trust me, I'm very familiar with this stuff.

JERRY

Look. Mister Calusso, thanks for your time but I don't think this is gonna work. I don't wanna be in any fight.

BURT

Understood, Jerry. Who likes violence? But even more to the point...who likes being taken advantage of financially. Am I right?

Jerry just stares.

CUT TO:

SCHOOL HALL - JERRY AND VINCENT - DURING LUNCH - DAY

VINCENT

I don't know why you're being like this man. I mean, if the fight happens, you're gonna need Burt.

JERRY

The fight isn't gonna happen.

VINCENT

You're turning your back on an expert legal mind.

JERRY

I'm turning my back on a guy who's going to Leo's Law.

VINCENT

I tell you he might be repping a serial killer when he graduates? Dude snuffed three hundred people in Northern California.

(beat)

Burt figures he can get himself the cover of PEOPLE if he gets the guy off.

(beat)

Says the guy's pretty okay, too. Weird, huh?

Jerry looks off, philosophically troubled by his own dilemma.

JERRY

Y'know...it's just not fair.

(beat)

...I've done everything right. Everything I was supposed to...my whole life. And nothing's coming my way. That's not supposed to happen. What'd I do wrong?

VINCENT

You were just there. Sometimes the only mistake required is to show up.

(pointedly)

You're never even tardy.

JERRY

God has a twisted sense of humor.

VINCENT

Yeah. Hey, you need Burt's address?

JERRY

For what?

VINCENT

To send him his money.

Jerry just chuckles at this.

VINCENT

Gettin' cranky, Jer'. Noticed you
didn't eat any of your lunch.
Hypoglycemia's actin' up.
(real concern)
Maybe you oughta get a snack.

JERRY

Vincent, leave me alone. All right?

VINCENT

Okay, okay...but anyway, no
bullshit. Burt charges by the hour.
Gets a hundred and ten, plus travel
to come down here.

(off look)

If he doesn't get his prices now,
what's he gonna have to build on
when his practice gets started?
Besides, you're getting a break
'cause you're my friend. So you
only owe him a hundred and fifty.

JERRY

You're not serious...

VINCENT

Look, don't get pissed. You needed
help. He's help. I brought a
service and a need together, that's
all. You're making me feel like a
pimp.

JERRY

That's the word. That's exactly the
word.

VINCENT

Jerry...I'm hurt.

JERRY

Sure.

VINCENT

(hurt voice)

Believe what you want.

ANOTHER ANGLE - TO INCLUDE BREI

walking up to join them....

BREI

So, how's the hate object?

JERRY
(re: her joke)

Funny.

BREI
I was just checking up 'cause I had
the impression someone had left
school. A little voice under the
bleachers spoke to me.

JERRY
(caustic)
Things change.

BREI
(peers analytically)
Boy...touchy...Jerry...did you...eat
lunch?

JERRY
Yeah, yeah.

Vincent is shaking his head: no, no. Brei sees it, gets a
look that would be maternal if it wasn't sisterly.

BREI
Your face looks like the Monterey
Jack Cheese mom buys. You're lying.

JERRY
I'm fine.

But now she's really looking at him closely, realizing:

BREI
You're not fine. You're a wreck.
You're not out of trouble with Buddy
Revell, are you?

Jerry sighs; sags.

VINCENT
You're great at honest, Jer. But as
a liar you suck.

JERRY
(determined)
Vincent, I am gonna get out of this
fight.
(thinks)
It's not that hard if you make the
sacrifice.

BREI

This is starting to sound like
you've got a plan, and it's a bad
one.

Jerry is starting to really like his plan; confidence growing.

JERRY

In the old west, how did you avoid
having to shoot it out with the
deadliest gunslinger?

They just stare for a beat.

JERRY

Well?

BREI

Jerry, get something to eat.

JERRY

Don't you get it? You avoid the
shoot-out by getting yourself thrown
in jail.

(knowing smile)

Detention.

On reactions:

CUT TO:

INT. JERRY'S ENGLISH CLASS - ON MISS FARMER - DAY

We see the CLOCK behind her. As it ticks off another minute,
it's now 1:05. MISS FARMER steps in front of the class,
replacing the clock's face with her own. She's the English
teacher, and all-in-all a pretty reasonable woman. Not
unattractive, but fairly repressed. We BURN-IN: FIFTH
PERIOD - ENGLISH.

FARMER

Okay, we're gonna try and get
through as many book reports today
as we can. Volunteers?

Jerry has reached into the purse of the girl beside him,
though we don't see what he takes out. With a self-satisfied
"cool guy" smile, he raises his right arm and points to the
sky with a swaggering gesture.

JERRY

Yo.

FARMER

(a bit surprised)

...Jerry...all right, go ahead.

Jerry, with a somewhat cocky smile, gets to his feet. He's chewing gum, his sleeves are even rolled to bicep level. He moves to the front of the class, nonchalantly spits the gum into Miss Farmer's waste basket, tough-guy style. It CLANGS. So does Farmer's glare: she's surprised at him. He stares at the class, points an accusatory finger, takes a beat. Then; in an angry tone:

JERRY

Lemme ask you a question.

(looks around)

Why am I standin' here? I mean, the whole point of books is...you read 'em. The minute you start telling people about 'em, that means they don't read 'em. That means book reports are contributing to illiteracy. Part of the problem.

FARMER

Jerry, did you actually read a book?

JERRY

Will you gimme a break...

FARMER

Well, could we...

JERRY

Hey! I'm trying to make a point here.

The class is amazed; attentive. Jerry paces, eyes them contemptuously.

JERRY

(continuing)

Second hand information. Second hand experience. Y'know what I am up here? A patch cord...a jumper cable to a bunch of dead batteries staring at me trying to taste life...

FARMER

Jerry...

JERRY

(really peeved)

Lemme finish. You think I couldn't stand here and tell you about the book I read? Is that what you think?

He bursts into insane laughter, then fixes Farmer with a stare.

FARMER

Jerry. The book.

JERRY

Fine. The book.

(beat)

"Honey Goes to Hollywood."

Without any fanfare, he reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a pack of cigarettes; what he stole from the girl's purse. The class is agape as he takes one out, hangs it in his mouth. Lights it, Phil Marlowe style. Farmer just watches, her mouth a thin line, more fascinated than furious.

JERRY

A good read. Fast. Angry. Sexual. I was thinking about the syntax and how it affected the overall mood, particularly during the more expository passages in the fifth chapter...when Honey meets an Australian soccer team.

(stops, looks over
at Farmer, smiles,
blows smoke)

Hey, mama.

ANGLE - VINCENT AND MARK BOJEEKUS

Agape.

BOJEEKUS

Outrageous! What is he doin'?

VINCENT

Gunning for detention...both barrels.

RESUME - JERRY - IN FRONT OF CLASS

FARMER

Jerry, this had better be going somewhere.

Jerry smiles, puffing, and can't restrain a cough from the smoke. He looks green, but tries to maintain. Blinks.

JERRY

Yeah. It's going somewhere.

He steps toward her. As he does, tension thickens in the class. He drops his cigarette into Farmer's Coffee Cup. It HISSES. Just now the CLOCK TICKS; the only SOUND in the silent classroom. EVERYBODY hears it as Jerry steps even closer toward Farmer, like some predatory Valentino.

ON VINCENT

reacting.

VINCENT

Jesus...

RESUME SCENE

as Jerry moves still closer to Farmer. She stands up, a bit wary.

FARMER

What're you doing?

JERRY

What's your favorite book, Miss Farmer?

FARMER

The joke's over, Jerry. I'm sending you to the office for detention right now.

JERRY

C'mon, what's your favorite book?

FARMER

(backing up)

What's the difference?

JERRY

(looking crazy)

It's important to me!

FARMER

(yells back)

Turn of The Screw!

This stops him. He smiles lewdly, raising one eyebrow. Looks at her. Looks at the class. Then back at her.

JERRY

What a coincidence.

and with that Jerry reaches down to:

EXTREME CLOSE-UP - HIS FLY - SLOW MOTION

so large, each tooth of the zipper looks like a garage door. As it begins to be lowered by his huge FINGERS, each separating tooth sounds like a Dresden blockbuster.

THE CLASS - VARIOUS

shock, horror, amusement. We continue to HEAR the deafening SOUND of JERRY'S FLY opening, one BOOM at a time....

JERRY'S FACE

smiles, knowing detention is in the bag. Then, suddenly, he looks woozy.

FARMER

horrified, as we HEAR SCREAMS from the girls in class and:

JERRY

keels over, passing out cold from the hypoglycemia. As his head hits the floor with a CLONK:

VINCENT AND BOJEEKUS

amazed...it's like a hit of pure sinsemilla for Mark.

BOJEEKUS

God damn! That's what I call a book report.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

We HEAR RANDOM SOUNDS...a school CLOCK ticking, FOOTSTEPS across a linoleum floor, maybe a door opening and closing... all getting clearer and clearer. Finally something as unmistakable as a PHONE BUZZING. Then, faintly:

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Nurse's office, Nurse Palmer.

And then, as if our eyes had suddenly opened, there's a flood of light and we are staring at:

JERRY'S POV - THE CEILING - WEAVER HIGH NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

from the bed on which he's stretched-out. A slow but methodical review reveals we're in a small "resting room" for sick students. The sounds emanate from the outer Nurse's Office.

JERRY

on one of the two beds, coming-to when he hears:

NURSE PALMER

entering the room with a wet, rolled towel in one hand, a small plate of cherry cobbler in the other. The lady's working on chin number three, a moustache and her white nurse shoes SQUOOSH distractingly under their wide load.

NURSE PALMER
Feeling a little more like
ourselves, Mr. Mitchell?

ADJUST TO INCLUDE Jerry, trying to focus.

NURSE PALMER
Your buddies tell me you managed to
avoid lunch. Not very smart for
someone hypoglycemic.

JERRY
Guess I'm just a rebel, huh Nurse
Palmer?

NURSE PALMER
Let's hope that's not a career
choice.

She holds out the plate of red, high school cherry cobbler. It looks like something a psychic surgeon would jerk from your abdomen.

JERRY

(re: cobbler)

Did that come out of me?

NURSE PALMER

Let's try and get your blood sugar up, huh? Eat this. I'll run over to the cafeteria and get you some kind of lunch...

She starts to go.

JERRY

Nurse Palmer?

(off look)

Did I get...detention?

NURSE PALMER

No. But I heard about what you did in there. It's lucky for you Miss Farmer knows how serious hypoglycemia can be.

(beat)

Now hit the cobbler, soldier.

And she's gone. Jerry looks at the cobbler. Sets it aside.

JERRY

Great.

There's the SOUND of the outer DOOR opening again. Jerry looks over. Vincent pokes his head in.

VINCENT

How's the "hose"?

JERRY

Got cobbler. Can't complain.

VINCENT

Also got a few girls who wanna date you, now. More on that later.

Vincent comes into the room.

VINCENT

(continuing)

Incidentally, not to bum you or anything, but you're in colossally deep shit.

JERRY

I know. I didn't get detention.
And all I wanted was to get
detention.

VINCENT

...and guess who figured that out?

JERRY

Buddy?

VINCENT

(a nod)

Gonna eat your cobbler?

Jerry, looking glum, hands Vincent the cobbler. Vincent starts eating; not the most graceful of sights. Red goosh and crumbs.

VINCENT

(continuing; innocent)

By the way, you hear Rice had a
detective out here?

The first teeny alarm goes off in Jerry's mind.

JERRY

What for?

VINCENT

You won't believe it. Somebody made
tracks with the Jimmy Alexander Lung
Fund.

(laughs)

This cop was a real hardass. 'Said
whoever took that money's gonna hang
in a bad wind. Can you believe it?

JERRY

(looking at ceiling)

...wonderful.

VINCENT

'Said with modern crime-fighting
methods you're talking just a matter
of time 'til they catch 'em.

(beat)

Exciting, huh?

(puts cobbler plate down)

Well, gotta go....

Jerry says nothing. *though inside he's screaming.*

CUT TO:

EXT. NURSE'S OFFICE - JERRY - DAY

just exiting, closing the door and giving Nurse Palmer a wave good-bye; a "good little gentleman's" smile on his face as the door closes. Then the miserable expression returns: the real world of school before him. He starts down the corridor, coming to a corner.

THE CORNER

Jerry stops, seeing:

HIS POINT OF VIEW - KAREN CLARKE AND OTHER CHEERLEADERS

talking among themselves, working on a large paper banner that says MANGLE THE MATADORS.

CHEERLEADER #1

Jennifer? Can I use some of your paint? I'm out...

JERRY

watching, as yet unseen. Intimidated by them, fascinated by this strange rite. He could be observing creatures from another world...is, actually.

CHEERLEADER #2 (O.S.)

All I've got's this jar...

CHEERLEADER #1 (O.S.)

(upset)

Are you kidding? We still have to underline 'Matadors.'

RESUME - SCENE

Jerry watching from the sidelines.

KAREN

Maybe I can get a pass and run down to "Paint City" for s'more....

Jerry approaches.

JERRY

Ah...

They all look surprised.

JERRY

...we've...got some paint in the student store.

Karen is looking at him. He swallows. Speaks from a little place, far down in his throat.

JERRY

If you need some...I mean.

KAREN

I didn't think it was open right now. Is it?

She knows damn well he'd open the tomb of Cheops with toenail clippers for her. Seeing an opening, he smiles, cool and confident.

JERRY

Hey...no problemo.

He looks aside, feeling dumb for saying it that way. Karen is pleased.

KAREN

...that's really nice of you....

(idea)

...you going to the game?

JERRY

...I really don't know if I'm gonna...be able to make it or not...

KAREN

Be great if you could.

(beat)

Y'know, I think it's pretty major the way you're gonna stand up to Buddy Revell and everything.

(beat)

I really admire that.

(smiles)

By the way, I was gonna have this kinda small party at my house? After the game?

He just stares. What on earth is she saying? Is she inviting him?

KAREN

I'd really like you to be there.

(centerfold smile)

Really.

This is too weird. In fact, he doesn't really even believe it.

JERRY

Ah...sure...great.

Jerry's troubled; he's got to ask.

JERRY

Look...Karen...you inviting me to this party and everything...I mean considering you've never said more than a few words to me before today...it wouldn't be...because I'm supposed to have this fight, would it? It's...really more just cause you like me for who I am, right?

KAREN

(unconvincing)

Sure....

Jerry knew it. Her subtext gives it away. But he's polite about it; doesn't bust her.

JERRY

Well...guess I oughta get you that paint.

Karen, a bit off balance, nods. She's a little turned-off by his honesty. But impressed, too. He walks quickly toward the student store. Looks up at a

HALLWAY CLOCK

1:50.

CUT TO:

A DOORKNOB

in the dark. It turns and the door opens. Jerry enters the tiny confines of the student store, closes the door, shuts it securely, heaves a deep sigh. Stands with eyes shut, trying to relax. Then he HEARS something and his eyes pop open. He stands in the dark, holding his breath. Could it possibly be Buddy?

A CIGARETTE LIGHTER FLAME

flicks and catches. The flame momentarily obliterates all else...then as the eye adjusts, it's brought close to the face of...

FRANNY

(husky)

Hi.

JERRY

amazed. Trying to stay calm.

JERRY

Franny...

THE TWO

she begins lighting the four or five candles she's positioned around the student store. Smiles, horned-out aggression glinting in her eyes.

FRANNY

Glad to see you, Jerry. Come in here to dodge Buddy Revell?

(ethereal smile)

Ethan says he's no problem. It's behind you.

JERRY

It's not behind me. It's after me.

(beat)

What're you doin' in here?

FRANNY

I can get out of class anytime I want, Jerry. I'm four-point-oh, remember? I came because I know this is where you always come after school. I wanted to be waiting here...for us.

JERRY

(wary)

We're talking about Ethan's plan, aren't we?

FRANNY

As long as you're hiding, may as well make use of the time....

JERRY

Look, Franny, I am really...
distracted right now, okay? I don't
know if you heard what happened in
English, but I haven't exactly been
myself.

FRANNY

That's not what I heard. I heard
you were all there.

(sudden, bawdy laugh)

Jerry...if you're here with me,
you're safe. That door's locked.
What could possibly happen?

At this moment, there's the SOUND of a KEY in the lock of the
door! They both freeze, staring at the KNOB. It turns and
the door swings open. A hand comes out, hits the light
switch, and our two store-crossed lovers are face to face
with:

MR. RICE AND POLICE DETECTIVE BROWN

BROWN'S in his forties, wears a suit, trusts nobody. Probably
checks his mom for weapons. Rice reacts to Jerry and Franny
who react to him. Brown looks suspicious, eyeing Jerry.

RICE

Jerry...Franny...what're you doing
here?

Franny doesn't miss a beat. It's like she's working off
cue-cards.

FRANNY

(re: Jerry)

He's been very depressed about it
since he heard, sir. He needed some
quiet time.

(beat)

But depression is more a state of
the heart than of the mind...don't
you think?

Jerry is impressed by her improvisational poise, watching
her, unsure where it's going.

RICE

What are you talking about?

FRANNY

The money that was stolen out of
your office, Mr. Rice. Heard about
it on the grapevine.

(MORE)

FRANNY (Cont'd)
("sincere")
When I think of that poor kid
breathing with one lung...

Jerry is being stared at by Brown. Tries to break the ice.

JERRY
(extends hand)
Hi. Jerry Mitchell.

BROWN
(no shake)
Lieutenant Brown. Why were the
lights out?

Jerry doesn't answer. Looks down. Can't think of an answer.

RICE
Jerry? The Lieutenant asked a
question.

Still nothing. His brain searches at light-speed. Then,
finally getting an idea, Jerry turns to face them, looking
ready to cry. Falsely.

JERRY
I was in here...crying, okay?
(glares)
Jimmy's getting half as much air as
you and me and now his money's gone!
It just got to me, that's all! I'm
sure you think that's real funny,
but he's a friend of mine!

After looking hard at them, Jerry impulsively storms out.
Franny shakes her head, sadly.

FRANNY
If men could cry, he wouldn't've had
to hide.

Letting that sink in, Franny then goes after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAYS - NEAR STUDENT STORE - JERRY AND FRANNY

pause for a moment.

JERRY
(shakes head)
It's a nightmare...a living,
breathing nightmare.

FRANNY

Ethan wouldn't let us falter.

JERRY

(beat)

I gotta get to class....

FRANNY

I look forward to seeing you.

On her sexual tone, Jerry walks off.

VARIOUS KIDS

watch him, size him up.

JERRY

feels the stares, keeps eyes front, keeps walking. He looks even worse: hair ruffled and wild, shirttail all the way out; sweat-stains under the arms. The good citizen look has been cremated by stress. As he passes, ADJUST to REVEAL even more students stopping to watch him go. They watch in silence and he walks on.

CUT TO:

INT. MATH CLASS - DAY

BURN-IN SIXTH PERIOD - ALGEBRA II. Jerry enters. Students in class watch him. He knows it, ignores it. Maybe says hi to somebody he likes. The teacher, MR. DRYDEN, is busy writing equations on the chalkboard. Dryden is an unusually short, hirsute man. More kids show up and settle in. Right about now

THE CLOCK

is 2:00, straight up. The bell RINGS.

JERRY

looks at it, scared. The day's almost gone. A SMUG KID leans over from behind. He's wearing one of those neck-harness orthodontic beauties. His smile is a road-map of his diet for the last week.

SMUG KID

How's it goin' Mitchell?

As if an answer, Buddy Revell comes into class, admit slip in hand. He walks to Dryden, who's finishing the lower half of the chalkboard. Beside Buddy, Dryden looks like a hairy Jerry Mahoney.

DRYDEN

(reads slip)

Mr. Revell...

(looks out over class)

...how about right over there?

Dryden points to the empty seat beside Jerry, who sinks. The smug kid loves it. Every eye in class is on the "loaded" moment when Buddy takes a seat next to Jerry, one hour before they're scheduled to have the hottest fight Weaver's ever seen. Dryden, of course, has no idea. For Jerry all SOUND drops away. Dryden paces and talks indicating the quiz on the chalkboard, but we don't HEAR him. Jerry glances strickenly at Buddy, then at:

THE CLOCK

2:02.

JERRY

feels faint. Sweats. Realizes the class is whipping out papers and pencils; a quiz about to commence.

JERRY AND BUDDY

side-by-side in adjacent rows. Jerry reaches for paper; Revell has none. He sees what Jerry's doing, taps his arm. Jerry reacts; Revell points to paper. Jerry looks incredulous; tears off a piece, hands it over. Buddy doesn't thank him. Just takes out a pencil and peers at the chalkboard.

JERRY

still reacting, settles in to take the quiz. SCAN the room to see the class taking the quiz while Dryden sits at his desk. Finally we move-up to the CLOCK: 2:04.

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

THE CLOCK

2:30. Move down and back to Jerry and Buddy. Buddy has nothing on paper. He just stares at Jerry.

JERRY

looks over. There's his nemesis, looking through him. Buddy's eyes shift to Jerry's paper. Stay there. Jerry thinks about this, can't believe it's happening. Gets an idea. A flicker of hope. He subtly moves the paper so Buddy can get a better look. Buddy discreetly starts copying answers. Jerry, working on the other half of the paper, feverishly hurries to complete the other problems, checking to be sure Revell continues copying. Jerry's face is filling with hope. Especially when

BUDDY

actually looks over; tough-guy-nods. ADJUST to Jerry who can't believe it. He's nodding, too. Flying through this test! A willing, enthusiastic cheater.

JERRY'S PENCIL

scampers across his paper!

BUDDY'S PENCIL

lumbers awkwardly but relentlessly across his.

JERRY

grinning now, finishing up. He suddenly looks horrified when:

HANDS

grab the back of his neck. Then Buddy's.

ANGLE - FROM DOWN THE AISLE BETWEEN JERRY AND BUDDY

heads turn to see Dryden with both boys in his grip. He snuck up behind them. On the stunned classroom faces, and especially Jerry's as he feels himself falling further into a black hole:

CUT TO:

EXT. A DOOR - DAY

on the door are the imprinted words: F.B. O'ROURKE,
PRINCIPAL. From behind the door, we HEAR O'Rourke's stern voice.

O'ROURKE (V.O.)
Alright...which one of you gentlemen
wants to try and explain this?

CUT TO:

INT. O'ROURKE'S OFFICE - JERRY, BUDDY, O'ROURKE - DAY

O'ROURKE'S face is stern as he tries to piece together the situation. He's fifty, looks a lot like Ed McMahon. This is one of those classically uncomfortable moments; a lot of staring and silence. O'Rourke faintly shakes his head in judgment. He lights a pipe and eyes the two through a cloudfront of Cherry Blend.

O'ROURKE
You put him up to this, Buddy? You
make him cheat?

Buddy won't talk.

O'ROURKE
Jerry?

Buddy snaps the pencil he's been carrying since he was yanked from his seat in Math. Jerry jerks at the sound, thinks better of answering.

JERRY
Misunderstanding, Mr. O'Rourke.

O'ROURKE
Misunderstanding? Mr. Dryden caught
Mr. Revell here staring at your
page, copying down all your answers.
Some misunderstanding.

JERRY
It was.

O'Rourke paces, gets warmed up. Pensive, puffing.

O'ROURKE
(to Buddy)
You've been at Weaver for exactly...
(checks watch)
Six hours and thirty minutes,
Robert. And you're already facing
the exit.

BUDDY
Hey, you heard what Mitchell said.
It was a misunderstanding. Not some
federal case.

O'Rourke keeps pacing. Buddy stares forward, cold as ice.

O'ROURKE

...I know you two think I'm some old bag of gas standing here to give you a bad time...but have you considered maybe I'm the best friend you're ever gonna have?

BUDDY

I'm getting sick. Your pipe stinks.

O'ROURKE

(reasonable)

You know, Buddy, I get the feeling everything makes you sick. Maybe you need to start giving things a chance...be more positive.

O'Rourke likes the sound of that, paces more before his view window.

O'ROURKE

It's like when my wife and I have to decide where we're gonna go every year for our vacation. Hey, it's a big globe. Nothing but options.

(reflects)

Will it be Mazatlan...or will it be...well, who knows?

Buddy and Jerry are wishing they were elsewhere.

O'ROURKE

(continuing)

Life is a big marriage between you and everybody else. You have to cooperate. You're married to the world, Buddy. You see Mitchell here? That guy you were taking advantage of? That guy is your wife.

(beat)

Would you hit your wife 'cause she wanted to go to Mazatlan and you wanted to go somewhere else?

BUDDY

Yeah. I might....

O'ROURKE

Point I'm making is everyone isn't your enemy.

BUDDY

(bored)

Right.

O'Rourke hardens. The bull evaporates:

O'ROURKE

I'm trying to give you a chance.
But I won't have you behaving in my
school the way you did in all the
others. I don't care who your
father is.

Buddy glares. O'Rourke puffs more, smoke pluming intensely.
Buddy turns his head. O'Rourke moves closer.

O'ROURKE

I've got my limits.

Buddy looks up at him: tell me about it.

O'ROURKE

That's my message.

(beat)

And it's for real, son.

Revell gives him a look.

O'ROURKE

Jerry, I want you to be able to tell
me if there's anything else going
on...don't feel intimidated by
Robert here. He's not gonna hurt
you.

Jerry is getting an idea. And it seems to begin with playing
dumb.

JERRY

Anything else? Like...what, sir.

O'ROURKE

Like if anything's wrong. Anything
you'd be afraid to say if he was
here...and I wasn't.

Jerry reacts, covers instantly, knowing this is his cue.

JERRY

Look Mister O'Rourke...there's
something I should tell you. About
what was really going on in there...

Buddy tenses. Jerry milks the moment. Then:

JERRY
("sincere")
I was cheating off his paper.

Buddy reacts: this is strange. O'Rourke is all ears.

O'ROURKE
Is this true, Buddy?

BUDDY
I...gave Mitchell a few tips and
stuff, sure. Something wrong with
that?

JERRY
(laughs)
"Few tips"? He's being modest, Mr.
O'Rourke.
(beat)
I hate to admit it, but the fact is I
was lost on that quiz. I should've
known better than to cheat. But I'm
under a lot of family pressure to get
into U.C. Santa Barbara.
(beat)
I was up 'til all hours studying
History last night and I fell asleep
before I did the rest of my homework.
It's my fault. Not Buddy's.

Buddy looks at them both. We can't read his expression.
O'Rourke puts his pipe down on a tartan sandbag pipe-holder.

O'ROURKE
Y'hear that Buddy? Guy wants to
give you a break when everybody else
was blaming you. I think you've got
yourself a friend.
(happy)
If it was me, I'd shake his hand.

After an awkward beat, they shake. Reluctantly, from Buddy's
end.

O'ROURKE
(continuing)
Feels good, doesn't it?

The two hands shake with Buddy's tightening just a shade
harder. Is it intentional? Impossible to tell.

BUDDY
(flat)
I love it.

CUT TO:

EXT. MR. O'ROURKE'S OFFICE - BUDDY AND JERRY

The campus is empty, everyone in class. Jerry walks next to Buddy but Buddy quickly walks ahead, putting distance between them.

JERRY
Talk to you a minute?

Buddy keeps walking.

JERRY
(continuing)
Something I wanna tell you.
(following)
What I wanted to say was I'm sorry
we had to deal with that guy...I
know he's a butt and everything.
(tries for a joke)
He gives Hitler a good name.

Buddy keeps walking. Picks up a rock, throws it. It hits the school flag pole. CLANG.

JERRY
Good one.

Buddy doesn't acknowledge the comment.

JERRY
(continuing)
Look, I was thinking...since we
sorta looked-out for each other in
there and everything, maybe we could
just...forget the fight?

Buddy stops. Dead in his tracks. Just stands there. Doesn't move. Jerry knows something's wrong. Buddy turns, walks toward Jerry. No expression. Jerry isn't sure what's happening. Talks faster.

JERRY
(continuing)
I mean...the whole point is I never
meant to make you mad in the first
place...and now that you're not
mad anymore after the whole thing
(MORE)

JERRY (Cont'd)
in Math and then in O'Rourke's
office...

(beat)
Look, truth is...in spite of
everything, I could get to like you,
Buddy. If we could start over,
maybe we could be friends.

Jerry smiles sincerely, extends a hand. Buddy stares at him.
He considers, then suddenly shoves Jerry onto his ass. Jerry
is stunned. Buddy stares down at him; flammable, unblinking.

JERRY
We shook hands.

BUDDY
The guy was gonna bust my ass.

JERRY
I covered for you in there. I took
the whole rap. I coulda told him.

Buddy stares contemptuously, slowly shakes his head from side
to side.

BUDDY
No, you couldn't.

Jerry looks hurt, angry, afraid.

JERRY
We can't be friends? We can't...try?

Buddy likes that. He leans in close, shakes his head "no."
He starts to walk away and Jerry yells after him.

JERRY
Hey!
(gets up)
Wait! I can't fight with you.
(voice breaks)
I don't know how to fight somebody
like you.

Buddy keeps walking. Jerry is scared, anew.

JERRY
(continuing)
Didn't you hear me? I can't do it!

Buddy spits, walks on.

JERRY
(continuing)
Look...
(thinks)
What if I pay you? Will you back
off then?

Buddy stops. Faces ahead. Jerry fishes into his pocket and pulls out the five hundred and fifteen.

JERRY
Here. Five hundred and fifteen
dollars. Yours if you leave me
alone.

Buddy turns, walks closer. Looks at the money. Jerry offers it up as if a sacrifice.

BUDDY
O'Rourke put you up to this to get
me thrown out?

JERRY
O'Rourke's got nothing to do with
it.

BUDDY
(re: money)
Just to call off this fight?
(off nod)
No catches?

JERRY
(upset)
No!

Buddy is jolted by the quick response. They look at each other. Buddy takes the money. Counts it.

JERRY
No fight?

Buddy finishes counting.

BUDDY
Okay...you're alive.

JERRY
Swear to God? You won't...trash me?

Buddy shakes his head "no," zips the money into his leather jacket.

BUDDY

But you know what, Mitchell? You're
the biggest pussy I ever met. You
didn't even try.

(beat)

How's that feel?

He walks away, leaving Jerry thinking, watching. Jerry looks
deeply troubled by what he's done, knowing he's sold himself
out. It's a painful revelation. The worst moment of his
life.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WEAVER CAMPUS - JERRY

walking. Depressed. Still reeling from what Buddy said to
him. Knowing it's true. He catches:

HIS REFLECTION

in a classroom window. Walks to it, interested. He walks
closer, peers analytically at his expression, plainly
disliking it.

INT. THE CLASSROOM HE'S LOOKING INTO-CLASS

seeing him, beginning to crack-up at this idiot, who's running
an open palm over his own cheeks and examining his expression.
The teacher finally notices, too. The class is taking a test
and he shushes them.

TEACHER

Okay, okay, we can all see it,
people. You have a test to finish.

The teacher heads for the door.

RESUME JERRY

shaking his head disgustedly at his reflection.

TEACHER

(opens door)

Son, what are you doing?

Jerry looks embarrassed and moves on; face a feeble apology.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WEAVER FOOTBALL FIELD - BLEACHERS - DAY

sitting alone in the top row, in a far corner, is Jerry. A girls gym class is in session on the grass.

JERRY

squinting in the sunshine and breeze. We feel his self-disgust and isolation.

BREI (O.S.)

Since when does your math class meet here?

He looks up. ADJUST to Brei in her standard issue gym clothes -- white shorts, pale blue sweat-shirt. They hang on her beanpole lines. She's climbed the bleachers unnoticed. Jerry looks at her, shakes his head, looks down again.

JERRY

Long story.

She sits beside him, going into high-speed mode.

BREI

Well, tell me. I mean, it's not like we never met and I don't know all your worst junk anyway, so what's one more, right? C'mon...
(tugs at his sleeve)
Je-er....

JERRY

I've never felt like such a complete coward in my whole life.
(beat)
I stole the Jimmy Alexander Lung Fund, and used it to pay Buddy to leave me alone.

There's a long beat of silence. Brei is looking at him, thinking.

BREI

So you weinered-out.

JERRY

(nods)
For the rest of my life...I gotta live with that.

BREI

There are other options. Maybe you should go for it. Fight him.

JERRY

He'll beat the crap out of me.

BREI

If you don't show, that's exactly
what you'll do to yourself...for
your whole life.

(beat)

Or longer.

He looks at her. She's right. He understands.

JERRY

Getting beat-up once isn't so bad if
I can respect myself after.

BREI

Well...to be completely objective...
how bad would have a lot to do with
it.

JERRY

Buddy Revell is just a guy

BREI

More like two guys...but he's not
the Devil or something.

Jerry looks off, thinking. Brei senses it's time to just let
him, and stays quiet.

JERRY

I'm gonna get that money back, Brei.
And if he wants to slug me, he can
take his best shot. Sometimes you
gotta think of the future. Even if
it involves pain.

BREI

It's really weird when you talk like
this, Jerry. Even if it is my idea.

JERRY

It's even weirder when I feel like
this.

(beat)

Gotta go.

BREI

Jer?

(off look)

I think you're doin' the right
thing. But I could be completely
wrong.

JERRY

Close enough for me.

And with that he moves by her and starts down the bleachers. She watches as:

ANGLE - ACROSS THE EMPTY FOOTBALL FIELD - JERRY

walks faster and faster, more and more purposefully, finally breaking into a run toward the main campus.

BETWEEN BUILDINGS - JERRY

sprinting for all he's worth, passing startled students who're out with hall passes. His face is a study in determination. Finally, after this mini-marathon; he reaches.

BUDDY REVELL'S LOCKER

as Buddy gets a pack of cigarettes from the carton he's got in there. He SLAMS the locker and standing on the other side of the locker door (which blocked him from view) is Jerry; incredibly determined; ready for action. He stares at Buddy, unafraid. But the voice still trembles.

JERRY

I want my money back.

BUDDY

No refunds.

JERRY

I'm not kidding, man. I want it back. Now.

Buddy is amused.

BUDDY

Or what?

Jerry just glares into Buddy's eyes.

JERRY

I'm not a pussy. And you're on... after school!!

He storms off, slamming his fist on lockers as he goes; an exclamation point. Buddy watches, and we can't read his expression. HOLD ON IT and

CUT TO:

JERRY

marching away from the lockers. Looking better than we've seen him. Strong, self-defined. Although it suddenly hits him how much his hand hurts from whacking the lockers. He walks to a water fountain, douses the hand. As he does, he looks up at:

AN OUTDOOR WALL CLOCK

2:59.

JERRY

looks at it, calmer than we've seen him in a while. Full of purpose, running his hand under the fountain.

HIS POV - THE CLOCK - SLOW MOTION

CLICKS. Straight-up; three o'clock.

JERRY

behind him, out of focus, classroom doors open. Students pour forth. One by one, they notice him. Heads turn to look. He realizes it. Takes a breath. Starts walking toward the faculty parking lot. Without a word, every kid follows. It's the end of the school-day and halls teem with life. Everybody moves to keep track of Jerry who's at the front of a large group which follows him to his fate. Jerry looks straight ahead. Everyone stops to look at him as he passes.

HIS LOCKER

Jerry opens it, puts all his stuff inside. Closes it. Moves on, the crowd right with him. Now it starts:

A KID

Way to go, Mitchell...

ANOTHER KID

Don't let him psyche you, Jer....

ANOTHER

We're with you, man.

Jerry keeps walking....

VINCENT

falls in beside Jerry, very excited. A conspiratorial gleam.

VINCENT

News flash. It only takes thirty-two pounds of pressure to pop a god-damn knee. Read it in Omni.

JERRY

(flat)

Don't have a tire gauge.

VINCENT

You can do it easy. That doesn't work, go for the eyes. If you can gouge em out, might throw him off.

Jerry makes no indication he's heard this. He's walking across campus, eyes ahead. ADJUST TO REVEAL:

EXT. FACULTY PARKING LOT - DAY

dead ahead. Jerry and the mass of anxious brawl-fans move into it. There, alone and ready to do battle, is Buddy Revell; leaning, smoking. Brooding. Jerry pauses, eyes locked with Buddy's. Then, as Jerry starts moving forward again the unexpected occurs:

O'ROURKE

suddenly steps out between them. He's pissed and ready to exercise authority.

O'ROURKE

All right...people. Faculty Parking is off limits to anyone but faculty. Everyone else, go home!

(beat)

No more warnings. Just suspensions.

There is grudging, tentative exodus. Not too rushed. O'Rourke is more concerned that neither Revell nor Jerry have moved.

BUDDY

You and me were supposed to be gettin' together after school. Remember, Jer?

JERRY

Here I am.

O'ROURKE
Gentlemen...move.

Kids have heard this. They're slowing down...

O'ROURKE
(to Jerry)
I'm driving you home.
(points to Buick Regal)
That's my car...get in and wait for
me.

Jerry winces: the principal driving you home. Humiliation. Wimpdom. Putting you in his own car for protection. There are reactions from the other kids. Mocking. O'Rourke doesn't care; turns to Buddy.

O'ROURKE
Revell...my office. I'll be back.

BUDDY
(cups an ear)
Couldn't quite hear you, Mr. O'Rourke.

O'Rourke's getting pissed, but he's still an adult.

O'ROURKE
You're on thin ice. Get your butt
back to my office.

Buddy walks up to O'Rourke's Buick Regal, pulls a switchblade, pops it and runs the blade over the door. Paint corkscrews.

BUDDY
Make me.

O'Rourke sees the knife, freaks over the damage. Weighs the moment. Jerry is all eyes. The kids are hypnotized.

O'ROURKE
Just bought yourself an expulsion,
Mr. Revell. Let's have the knife.

Buddy keeps scraping paint. O'Rourke isn't prepared to try and stop him. Buddy finishes a long scrape and holds-out a handful of '82 Buick Regal paint that sits on his palm; a tiny, red mountain. O'Rourke finally cracks and lunges for him. The knife skitters over the pavement and the two wrestle over the car's hood and onto the ground. Jerry is totally blown-away by what's going down.

O'ROURKE AND BUDDY

O'Rourke gets in a couple real good hits, but it's not enough
Buddy pulls back and gives him a sack of muscled fingers right
to the chin. O'Rourke goes down; out cold.

JERRY

stunned.

THE KIDS CROWD

Silent. Now what? Among them, Scott and Bruce are in a
taping-frenzy, and get a close-up of a very nailed
Mr. O'Rourke.

BUDDY

walks to Jerry, grabs him by the collar. The vidiots move in
behind, close as they dare; getting the following:

BUDDY

Told you there's no way to get away
from me.

JERRY

(re: O'Rourke)

We gotta call an ambulance or
something. Look at him. He could
be dead.

BUDDY

Fuck him. We do it now.
(pointedly)
It's after school.

JERRY

Yeah but...

BUDDY

Thought you said you wanted your
money.

He shoves Jerry down onto the pavement. Jerry gets his shirt
into a grease stain.

BUDDY

One-time offer, asshole.

Jerry thinks that one over.

VINCENT, BREI, BOJEEKUS

watching in the crowd, each fretting for their own reasons.

RESUME - JERRY AND BUDDY

BUDDY

Get up.

Jerry knows there's no way out, slowly rises to his feet. Buddy removes his leather jacket, exposing huge muscles. Holds out the five hundred and fifteen dollars.

BUDDY

Come get it.

Buddy throws his leather Jacket aside. Pokes Jerry in the chest a few times with fingers the size of Pepsi cans. Jerry doesn't like it and gets red.

JERRY

Cut it out.

BUDDY

(pokes more)

Make me.

Buddy pushes Jerry to the pavement, and Jerry scrapes an elbow. Licks dry lips. Gets back to his feet and Buddy pushes him down again.

BUDDY

I said, make me.

Jerry looks at the assembled kids and sees Craig Matthey among the onlookers. Matthey mouths: "His left!" Jerry remembers, nods, gets up. He approaches Buddy, takes a fake swing from the right. When Buddy counters, Jerry makes contact with him, taking advantage of the weak left. Gets a solid slug to Buddy's chin and is amazed! Buddy is slightly thrown by it. A damn good first punch. From Jerry's reaction, it hurt his hand at least as much as Buddy's face. It also inspires a reaction: Buddy gets a fast punch in and Jerry goes down, bleeding from the mouth. He's up again and the two circle each other. Buddy gets a couple good ones in, making Jerry bleed more. He's down. Jerry is totally out of his league.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Buddy walks to pounce on him, Jerry kicks up and connects with Buddy's knee, hard, causing the huge bully to buckle sideways for a moment, eyes white with pain.

VINCENT

All right!

But all it's done is transform Buddy from a controlled fighter into a towering rage. He comes racing toward Jerry and as he's about to lunge, a shrieking GIRL'S VOICE interrupts.

FRANNY'S VOICE

NO! NO! YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE, YOU
MANIAC!

ADJUST TO INCLUDE FRANNY

racing into the parking lot, moving to stand protectively between Buddy and Jerry.

BUDDY

(to Franny)

Beat it, bitch.

FRANNY

(standing before Jerry)

You want him, you go through me, you
goddamn animal! You hear me? You
just go ahead and go through me.

VINCENT

(to Brei)

Not too shabby. Not even Revell'd
hit a girl...

At that exact moment, Buddy decks Franny and down she goes! Out cold! From this ANGLE, we can see she and O'Rourke in the same SHOT. O'Rourke is starting to come-to and get to his feet.

ANOTHER ANGLE - O'ROURKE

jumping onto Buddy's back, trying to bring him down. But O'Rourke is still pretty punch drunk and Buddy easily throws him off. Bojeekus and Vincent are next. Jumping onto Buddy's back, getting thrown off. When O'Rourke comes at Buddy once again, Buddy flattens him. Then he flattens Vincent. Throws Bojeekus over a car. Nobody left to help.

BREI

looks at Buddy's jacket and sees something. She reacts and starts toward it as:

BUDDY AND JERRY

Buddy stalks closer and with a punch sends him flying. Jerry lays on the ground, mouth bleeding. He moans.

BUDDY

Your friends can't help you,
Mitchell. It's you and me.

Jerry just lays there, too weak to get up, knowing there's no point. As he does

BREI

runs close and hovers over him. Crying phony tears, she slips something into his hand:

INSERT - BUDDY'S BRASS KNUCKLES

which she wraps Jerry's fingers around.

RESUME JERRY AND BREI

as she whispers.

BREI

They fell out of Buddy's jacket.
Cripple the ~~disk~~ *finger*

Brei gives him a private wink of confidence. Moves to the sidelines. Jerry considers, stands and secrets the brass knuckles in his hand. Gets it ready for the big punch. Gets up, circles Buddy; killing time. ADJUST TO INCLUDE his injured friends cheering him on:

VINCE

Come on, Jer... kill him.

BOJEEKUS

Rip his head off, man.

They quiet down, tense, watching.

VINCENT

I wonder what Jer's thinkin...right now? What the little voice in his heads sayin'?

O'Rourke is suddenly propped-up on an elbow, back from the dead. He screams.

O'ROURKE

Don't fuck this up, Mitchell!

BOJEEKUS

That's what it's saying...

At this second, Jerry bluffs with his left, causing Buddy to go for it, then comes in with the right--brass knuckle and all--and swings into Buddy's jaw.

ANGLE - ALL

as Buddy freezes and starts to weave. Jerry punches him again. This time in the solar plexus. Buddy gasps, goes down! Everyone cheers. But he's up again. And this time, he's bleeding from the mouth, ready to tear Jerry's head off. He stumbles toward Jerry and is about to go for him. Jerry decides to remove the brass knuckles. Strikes with a well-aimed SLOW-MOTION punch. Waits for the results, also in SLOW-MOTION.

RESUME - REGULAR SPEED - ALL

As Buddy goes down for the last time and everybody, including O'Rourke, races to Jerry's side to shake his hand, kiss him, or raise him up on shoulders! Even the camera and microphone the vidiots jam in his face are no bother:

SCOTT

Jerry? How's it feel to be a hero?
Talk to me.

Jerry looks at the camera a beat, sorting it out.

JERRY

C'mon, Scott, cut it out. I'm just
glad to be alive.

SCOTT

C'mon, Jerry, tell us about it...
this is your big moment.

Jerry thinks, gets an idea and stares right into the lens. Everyone falls respectfully silent. Jerry wipes a little blood from his lip. Fixes a new, mature look into camera. Points an advising finger into lens, to whoever might see the video. Talking to them.

JERRY

Okay, you wanna know?
(beat)

I'll tell you something I just found
out.

(MORE)

JERRY (Cont'd)

(thinks)

...a guy's whole world can change in one day.

(points at lens)

One day.

(beat)

Think about it.

And as friends, supporters and groupies cheer explosively, leading Jerry away from the fight scene, Franny comes up and gives him a passionate first kiss.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as they disengage, it's obvious Jerry under-rated this girl. He wouldn't mind coming back for a repeat performance. But there's no time because

KAREN CLARKE

approaches. Jerry stops a moment. She's staring meaningfully.

KAREN

You were great.

She gives him a big hug. Tight. Intimate. Franny isn't sure what she thinks of this. But she's got nothing to worry about, because when the hug ends, Jerry has no desire to pursue it. Where before a mere handshake would've devastated him, Karen's impact has been suddenly outgrown. Maybe it was the fight. Maybe the kiss. Maybe the way Franny's looking at him and Karen doesn't know how. But when he takes Franny's hand, even Karen knows who's most important.

JERRY

(to Karen)

See ya.

And with Franny, he starts moving through the noisy crowd, that still wants to celebrate its champion. Vincent steps from the throng to shake Jerry's hand:

VINCENT

Told ya the knee would work.

(beat)

Still pissed?

Jerry just smiles. The look says it: they're still friends. Much back slapping and whooping from the crowd resumes as

JERRY

is again lifted onto shoulders; bounced. He's loving it but from this vantage, something distracts from his big moment.

HIS POV - BUDDY

still slumped, seated on the ground. A bit bloody. He looks truly defeated. More than just a fight lost; an era ended.

RESUME - JERRY

atop celebrants. A serious expression settles. He calls down to them.

JERRY

Hold it...
 (they don't hear)
 I said wait a minute....
 (now they do)
 Let me down.

They sense something important. Do as he asks. Fall silent as he walks to Buddy. ~~The two eye one-another, roles reversed.~~ ADJUST TO INCLUDE O'Rourke, who is about to make Buddy's life a lot worse. But he stops; also allowing the moment to happen. No one utters a sound; the crowd rapt.

JERRY AND BUDDY

they regard each other without expression, trying to divine ~~the~~ ~~each~~ others thoughts. Then, finally, Jerry holds out a hand to help Buddy up. Buddy's surprised. But the look he gives Jerry isn't pain, humiliation, or anger. It's respect. After much soul searching, he takes the hand and Jerry pulls him up.

ANOTHER ANGLE - JERRY AND BUDDY - STANDING

face-to-face. For the first time ever, we see Buddy Revell smile; the supremely protected boy. Jerry looks directly at his former adversary, and finally smiles back; the long-awaited man, On ~~these heartfelt expressions~~

this moment or passage

FREEZE FRAME
 FADE OUT

THE END.

*now fully
 on his
 feet.*

{inside, taking a chance.