

DISTURBING BEHAVIOR

written by

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**FOR EDUCATIONAL  
PURPOSES ONLY**

"Forgotten children, conform a new faith,  
Avidity and lust controlled by hate  
Never ending search for your shattered sanity,  
Souls of Damnation in their own reality..."

--- Slayer

"Youth is wholly experimental..."

--- Robert Louis Stevenson

FADE IN:

A pair of brown water RATS cavort in a storm drain nearby --

EXT. THE BLUFF - CRADLE BAY ISLAND - NIGHT

A line of black fir trees on a hill brow, overlooking CRADLE BAY, the large body of water which gives this small bedroom community its name.

From up here, we can see the last FERRY of the day chuffing it for the mainland...

The Bluff is a popular make-out spot for the local high schoolers and, indeed, a solitary

CHRYSLER LEBARON

which screams "Daddy's car," does the requisite lurching and rocking of amped hormones as...

ANDY EFFENSON, 17

raw-boned and athletic, wrestles with freshman find, MARY JO COPELAND, although it appears Mary Jo is doing all the work. Andy remains passive, stolid... Mary Jo breaks it... Retreats to her side of the car...

MARY JO

What is your deal -- ?

ANDY

Big game Friday. It's no good. I need my fluids...

MARY JO

Your fluids...

She pouts. Puts her feet on the dash, exposing ANKLES.

ANDY

I'm curious. Why would you do that?

He points. To her ankle. To the

TATTOO

there. The Tasmanian Devil - in perpetual sneer - and the initials "M.J.C." scrawled beneath...

MARY JO

Why not?

ANDY

It's self-mutilation, really --

Mary Jo stares at him. What a turd he turned out to be! Then a slow smile spreads across her face...

MARY JO  
Self-mutilate this, fluid guy --

And her head disappears. Into his lap.

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Fronting the bluff. The paws of an excited LABRADOR crash through the thicket, followed by the scuffed Doc Martens of GAVIN STRICK, 17

slightly overweight, faded denim jacket, black Anthrax concert tee, baggy Army fatigue cargo pants. Gavin tugs at a joint, Walkman headphones over his stocking cap, cranking Metallica's "Master of Puppets" at a cochlea-crashing volume.

GAVIN  
(singing)  
"Master of puppets I'm pulling your  
strings/Twisting your mind smashing  
your dreams/Blinded by me you can't see  
a thing/Just call my name, 'cause I'll  
hear you scream..."

He pauses to air guitar the bleeding Kirk Hammett solo --

His black lab, HYSTERIA, darts ahead --

GAVIN (CONT.)  
Hysteria! C'mere, girl --

Hysteria stops at the lip of the woods, at the RETAINING WALL overlooking the bluff. Gavin sees the Chrysler below --

GAVIN (CONT.)  
Andy Effenson. The Toast With The  
Most.

(sportscaster voice; into  
hand mike)  
You gotta like this kid, Effenson, Bob:  
the star QB prospect out of Cradle Bay  
High. He can throw a pass without  
interception...

CLOSE ON the fogged-up windows of the LeBaron --

GAVIN (CONT.)  
...and make one without rejection.  
(beat)  
You gotta admit, Bob, they make an odd  
couple. Mary Jo Copeland, she of the  
(MORE)

GAVIN (CONT.) (cont'd)

(CONT.)

Tas tattco and an affinity for pills  
and poetry - and Andy E. the 90s  
prototype of jock-strap meathead --

Gavin puffs his joint. Pets Hysteria. Then:

BLUE AND RED LIGHTS stain the air. A POLICE CRUISER pulls up to  
The Bluff.

GAVIN (CONT.)

Looks like Effenson's about to be  
sacked --

EXT. THE BLUFF - NIGHT

Two PATROLMEN get out of the car. OFFICERS COX and KRAMER. Cox  
taps at the window of the Chrysler.

After a beat, time enough for clothing to be reconfigured, the  
window rolls down --

OFFICER COX

Hey, Andy --

ANDY

Hey, Coxy... Mitch --

Officer Cox leans down, clocks Mary Jo. He grins at Andy.

OFFICER COX

You wanna step out for a minute, Andy -

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Gavin watches as Andy steps from the car and walks a few paces  
with the cops. Gavin loves it. Still the commentator:

GAVIN

Oh, no. Thrown for a loss --

EXT. THE BLUFF - NIGHT

The cops confer with Andy.

OFFICER COX

You like your chances against Knight's  
Ridge, Friday -- ?

ANDY

We should do fine --

OFFICER KRAMER  
listen, pal -- you can't stay here.  
The whole Bluff has been off-limits  
since the first, you know that --

Andy looks back at the Chrysler and the sulky Mary Jo.

ANDY  
Arrright. Rules're rules --

Andy turns to go, when suddenly --

He stops. A tic in his cheek dances. He pinches at his nose, grimacing in pain, as if he's got the mother of all migraines coming on.

He turns back to the cops and --

-- grabs the gun from Officer Kramer's holster!!! Aiming it dead at the two men --

OFFICER KRAMER  
Andy, what the hell -- ?

Andy pulls back the hammer of the service revolver.

OFFICER COX  
Easy, Eff. Easy, buddy...

ANDY  
Need my fluids...

OFFICER KRAMER  
What's wrong with him, Coxy -- ?

OFFICER COX  
Shut-up... I can handle this... Easy,  
Eff... Just re--

BLAM! Andy fires -- punching a sizzling hole out of Officer Kramer's chest --

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

The gun's report echoes. Gavin recoils, wide-eyed --

GAVIN  
Jesus fuck -- !

EXT. THE BLUFF - NIGHT

Andy is frozen in his firing stance...

Officer Kramer lies dead on the ground --

Officer Cox is a statue, poised --

MARY JO (O.S.)

Andy, what are --

She is at the car window. Andy turns to her --

-- and FIRES. A crimson star burst appears on Mary Jo's forehead. She sags over the car door --

And, as quickly as the rage erupted, it subsides -- Andy, drained, stares at the carnage he's engendered.

ANDY

Whew.

Officer Cox approaches him. "Warily" is an understatement. He takes the warm gun from the boy --

A beat. Then:

OFFICER COX

Get out of here, Eff --

Andy looks at the policeman. Beat. He nods.

FROM GAVIN'S POV:

Andy walks over to his car. Opens the door. Mary Jo's body flops to the ground. Andy climbs in. Starts it up.

GAVIN

You gotta be fucking kidding me --

EXT. THE BLUFF - NIGHT

The LeBaron drives off. Leaving Officer Cox with the two bodies. He reaches into the cruiser, takes the police mike.

OFFICER COX

Hey, Clarice, it's Coxy. We got a wet one out to The Bluff. Soaking wet.

He clicks off. He fires up a Winston. Clocks the bodies.

OFFICER COX (CONT.)

Shit --

From the woods, a DOG BARKS. Cox looks up after it. He moves to the retaining wall... There are steel RUNGS embedded into the wall... Cox climbs halfway up them... Looks around --

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Gavin runs off, deep into the copse. Hysteria chases after him, still roaring, the loud BARKS taking us into the --

-- OPENING DOG BARKS of Jane's Addiction's "Been Caught Stealing" as the...

CREDITS ROLL

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - BUFFALO GROVE, ILLINOIS - DAY

A suburb of Chicago. Nuclear families created by a fusion of big, comfortable homes and elm-lined streets.

A MOVING VAN

ramped and loaded, in front of the house.

RAPID SHOTS - CONTINUE MUSIC / CREDITS

From the house, the MOVERS haul out couches, box springs, a desk, bubble-wrapped lithos --

NATHAN CLARK

40s, sweater-vested, professorial, oversees the movers.

- IN THE KITCHEN: his wife, CYNTHIA, assembly-lines ham sandwiches with daughter, LINDSAY, 9 --

- ON THE WALKWAY: a Mover carries a badly-taped CARTON. The bottom splits and a collection of BOOKS burst to the ground -

Nathan Clark helps the Mover collect the books. He notes the titles. MUSIC DOWN FOR:

NATHAN CLARK

(calling)

Steve -- ! Hey, Steve -- !

And, from around back, carrying a stereo speaker, comes

STEVE CLARK, 17

with the terminal attitude of unchallenged youth - though something about Steve radiates a determination that somehow presages a boy whose stand will soon turn him into a man.

STEVE

What -- ?

NATHAN CLARK

(re: books)

What are these?

Note the titles: a lot of Henry Miller, Rimbaud, Nietzsche, Aleister Crowley, Burroughs...

STEVE

Books -- ?



NATHAN CLARK  
You're not taking these --

STEVE  
Why not?

NATHAN CLARK  
Jesus Christ, Steve... I would think  
these would be the last thing you'd  
want to take...

STEVE  
No. The last thing I'd want to take  
would be your Perry Como records...

NATHAN CLARK  
I thought we agreed about this stuff...

STEVE  
I'll put them back  
(beat)  
I wouldn't want them to give me any  
crazy ideas --

Beat. Father and son share a cold one. Stare, that is.

Steve takes the carton of books and heads into the house -  
passing Cynthia, who gives her husband a disapproving look.

MUSIC UP AS

Steve treks through the house, and we see how truly empty it is.  
Cleared out. Except for

ONE BEDROOM

still intact. A boy's bedroom. Chicago Black Hawks and Bulls  
banners; posters: Soundgarden, Kurt Cobain, Jerry Garcia --

Steve sets the books on the floor. He sits on the bed, lies  
back, studies the room, committing it to memory --

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - DAY

Nathan and Cynthia in a Jeep Cherokee... Steve drives a Honda,  
Lindsay beside him... The moving van follows...

EXT. ROUTE 80 - DAY - CONTINUE MUSIC / CREDITS

As the Clark family hit the highway. The moving van follows.

SEVERAL TRAVELING SHOTS

Rest stops, Motel 6's, roadside Stuckeys. The climate is getting  
more and more Northern. More and more western --

At last the "Welcome to Washington" sign --

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Cynthia has a magazine on her lap. Its cover proudly proclaims:  
"THE TEN BEST TOWNS TO RAISE A FAMILY."

CYNTHIA CLARK

(to Lindsay)

Want to read about your new home, babe?

LINDSAY

Okay --

She takes the magazine. Steve stares out the window, Walkman on

EXT. SECONDARY ROADS - DAY

Off the highway, the terrain is rural, suburban. Bucolic.

Then the sign: "Cradle Bay Island Township, pop. 4,456."

EXT. CRADLE BAY FERRY LAUNCH - DAY

Under a gun-metal sky, they pull onto the FERRY... Park the cars... Come up to the deck...

EXT. FERRY

As the ferry shoves off... Heading to the large telephone receiver-shaped island of

CRADLE BAY

an place where the Ice Age left traces of its passage - sharply rolling with a series of wooded hills and drumlins - in the center of this expansive BAY.

They watch as the mainland recedes in the distance... Lindsay climbs onto Steve's lap...

LINDSAY

Are you excited -- ?

STEVE

About what?

LINDSAY

New school. New house. New town. New everything.

STEVE

New everything...

LINDSAY  
I think it's thrilling. We're gonna be  
better. We are.

Steve looks at her... Lindsay smiles...

LINDSAY (CONT.)  
We are.

EXT. CRADLE BAY FERRY LAUNCH

The ferry unloads its passengers... Including the Clarks... They  
Drive off...

And as Jane's FADES FROM TRACK, we are outside...

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - CRADLE BAY ISLAND - DAY

Almost a replica of the home they left in Chicago.

The moving van waits out front. Ramped and unloading.

INT. CLARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Nathan plays "Go Fish" with Lindsay at the dining room table.

INT. CLARK HOUSE - STEVE'S BEDROOM

Steve unpacks books onto the desk hutch. Cynthia passes.

CYNTHIA CLARK  
Hello there --

STEVE  
Hey --

CYNTHIA CLARK  
You all right?

STEVE  
Yeah. Just trying to put some of this  
stuff away...

CYNTHIA CLARK  
Nervous?

STEVE  
Nah.

She clocks the BOOKS in his hand. Frowns. She kisses him on  
the cheek --

CYNTHIA CLARK  
Good night --

Cynthia leaves the room.

Steve regards the books in his hand: Henry Miller, Rimbaud, Nietzsche, Aleister Crowley, Burroughs...

He smiles. So we'll END CREDITS...

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - DAY

KIDS and cars are scattered about this public school, erected in the early 1930s. Brick and bramble and clinging ivy.

VOICE (O.S.)

"...but the village was very peaceful and quiet, and the light mists solemnly rising, as if to show me the world..."

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - CORRIDORS - DAY

Swarming with kids late for class. A banner on the wall says: "GO FORWARD! BE THE BEST -- JOIN THE BLUE RIBBON CLUB!"

Steve tries to decipher his "Student Map & Schedule" --

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. ROONEY'S first period English. Mr. Rooney is bald and personable and slightly effeminate --

A student - TRENT WHALEN - blonde, handsome, chin so strong you could rest your feet up on it, reads aloud:

TRENT (CONT.)

"...and I had been so innocent and little there, and all beyond was so unknown and great..."

MR. ROONEY

Very good, Trent. To wit: when Pip says this, Dickens is speaking of the joy of discovery, of newness, of change  
(beat)

Mr. Clark, perhaps you can relate --

ANGLE: STEVE. Situated in the midst of the classroom --

MR. ROONEY (CONT.)

Mr. Clark is new to us from Chicago. Do they read Dickens in Chicago -- ?

But, before Steve can answer, the door opens and in walks

DICKIE ATKINSON

leather jacket, motorcycle boots, soiled GTO baseball cap --

MR. ROONEY (CONT.)  
Dickie Atkinson. Welcome. Tell us why  
you're late. Trouble with a camshaft?

DICKIE ATKINSON  
Like you know what one is --

Mr. Rooney feigns hurt.

MR. ROONEY  
Someone woke up on the wrong side of  
the carburetor this morning --

DICKIE ATKINSON  
What a peckerhead --

Snickers from the class. Steve notices, across the room, GAVIN  
STRICK, the heavy metal kid from our OPENING. Gavin, still  
wearing his stocking cap and denim, stares at Steve.

MR. ROONEY  
"Peckerhead!" Once again, I find  
myself stymied by Mr. Atkinson's  
considerably arcane patois. What is -  
if I may be so forthright in displaying  
my ignorance - a "peckerhead?"

More titters. Trent wears a tight smile. Dickie glowers --

DICKIE ATKINSON  
What are you laughing at, Whalen -- ?

TRENT  
Nothing, nothing, Richard. I was just  
thinking that ignorance kills...

DICKIE ATKINSON  
What does that mean?

TRENT  
Exactly...

Trent chuckles... sharing it with his friend, ROBBY STEWART, a  
handsome, African-American boy.

DICKIE ATKINSON  
You ass-kissing little fuck --

Dickie lunges for Trent, taking him to the ground -- but before  
it gets nasty, other KIDS wrest him away --

MR. ROONEY  
Perhaps, Mr. Atkinson, another trip to  
the Principal would serve you well --

Dickie gives the evil eyeball to Trent --

DICKIE ATKINSON

You wanna know what a peckerhead is?  
 (pointing to Trent)  
 That's a peckerhead --

MR. ROONEY

Thank-you for the clarification.  
 Please send Principal Weathers our  
 hosannas --

Dickie leaves. Trent smiles to Robby. Robby nods. Nice work.  
 Steve looks over to Gavin, who still gazes at him --

Then Steve notices - and as we GO CLOSER to Gavin, we do too -  
 underneath his stocking cap: GAVIN HAS HIS WALKMAN ON.

And, faintly, tinny, we can hear it: a little Iron Maiden to get  
 through Rooney's English.

Gavin sees that Steve has caught him. Gavin winks. Puts an  
 index fingers to his lips. Ssshh.

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - CORRIDOR - DAY

Steve walks the corridor toward his locker...

He passes a GIRL, 17. She is striking: too much lips and too  
 much eyes; hasn't slept in weeks; silver NOSE RING. Yet there  
 is something ethereal at work here. Something lovely.

She catches him staring. Was that a smile or a scowl? Tough to  
 tell. But before Steve can determine this, he's --

KNOCKED INTO A BUCKET

of soapy water. Belonging to the MAN mopping the floor. He is  
 tall and gaunt, mid-50s, with an arthritic hitch of the hip.  
 This is DORIAN NEWBERRY, the custodian.

Some of the water splashes over.

STEVE

Sorry 'bout that --

Newberry grunts, rheumy eyes looking at Steve, as he slops the  
 soapy water. Steve looks back for the girl, but she's gone.

Steve nears his locker, coming upon Trent Whalen and Robby  
 Stewart, who have a BOY - DRIP STILWELL - cornered and appear to  
 be menacing him... Drip is the 90-pound-weakling from the comic  
 ads come to life -

Upon seeing Steve, Trent and Robby desist.

Steve spins the combination on his locker.

TRENT  
Hello, Steve.

STEVE  
Trent.

TRENT  
Making your way okay?

STEVE  
Everything's cool...

TRENT  
Good, good.

And he and Robby walk away... Steve looks at a slightly  
disheveled Drip Stilwell...

DRIP  
Thank-you...

And Drip's gone. And Steve looks after him. What'd I do?

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - CAFETERIA - DAY

Lunch. Thick with KIDS. Steve eats alone.

GAVIN (O.S.)  
These seats taken -- ?

Steve looks up. Gavin Strick is there. With him is a  
diminutive ALBINO BOY, similarly clad in torn jeans, black  
Slayer concert tee, long, white hair. This is EDWARD VAUGHN,  
but they call him "U.V."

STEVE  
No. Go ahead --

GAVIN  
I'm Gavin. This is U.V.

STEVE  
I'm Steve --

COACH BOB, the trim, peripatetic GYM TEACHER, bounds by their  
table, moving with the energized bounce that comes from a  
lifetime in shorts and sneaks.

COACH BOB  
Strick!

GAVIN  
Yes, Coach Bob --

COACH BOB

I wanna see you try-out for the wrestling team, this year. Big guy like you, could make it all the way to the Sectionals --

GAVIN

Thank you, Coach Bob, sir. But I would rather feast on the blistered skin of a half-dozen A-Bomb victims --

COACH BOB

(hasn't heard him)

That's the spirit -- !

Coach Bob skips off... Gavin shrugs to Steve. Steve laughs.

Gavin takes an enormous, greasy hero sandwich from a brown bag. He hands U.V. a green apple. Off Steve's look:

GAVIN

Munchies. U.V. here has some primo weed. We burned a fatty after gym. Check him out -- he looks almost tan don't he -- ?

U.V. sniggers into his Granny Smith. A BUXOM GIRL walks by. When Gavin sees her, he pauses, mid-chew. Calls out to her:

GAVIN (CONT.)

Hello, Lorna --

She looks his way, her nose crinkling as if she'd just found her shrimp salad seething with maggots --

GAVIN (CONT.)

How are you today, my dear -- ?

LORNA

Drop dead --

Lorna walks on by. Gavin pumps his fists in victory --

GAVIN

Contact --

STEVE

Who's that -- ?

GAVIN

That -- that, my boy, is Lorna "Love-Itis" Longley. My italics. Fire of my loins. Purveyor of my every masturbatory fantasy. The entire female gender is separated into two

(MORE)



GAVIN (cont'd)  
 groups, Stevie Boy: Lorna Longley  
 comprises one group -- and all the rest  
 of women kind comprise the other --

STEVE  
 You ever take her out -- ?

U.V. giggles. Gavin shoots him a lot --

GAVIN  
 Alas, Lorna is largely untouchable for  
 someone of my social standing --

STEVE  
 What do you mean -- ?

GAVIN  
 It's a class system here at C.B. high,  
 Stevie Boy. A shocking class system.  
 Check it out:

ANGLE: 7 guys in leather jackets and workboots and tattoos.

GAVIN (CONT.)  
 There you got your Motorheads. Car  
 Jocks. All the world's a gasket and a  
 lube job and a pack of Luckys. Music  
 of choice: Posi-traction overdrive.  
 And Classic Rock: Skynyrd, The Allmans,  
 Bruuuuce. Drug of choice: beer.  
 Miller Genuine Draft. Keggers can't be  
 choosers. Freaks who fix leaks --

(beat)

Ah, now over there --

ANGLE: another TABLE. BOOKISH YOUTHS eat peanut butter  
 sandwiches and confer. Drip Stilwell is here...

GAVIN (CONT.)  
 The Microgeeks. Drip Stilwell and  
 various other bottom feeders. If your  
 books get dumped at least three times a  
 day -- chances are you're a Microgeek.  
 Music of Choice: the sound of an Apple  
 PC being booted up. Drug of choice:  
 Stephen Hawking's "A Brief History of  
 Time" and a cup of jasmine tea on a  
 Saturday night. Freaks who squeak --

ANGLE: A few KIDS in baggies and tees carrying skateboards --

GAVIN (CONT.)

There you got your Skaters, rippin'-ragin' dudes and their ramp tramps. Baggy pants, Dickie wools, doin' 50-50 Grinds with an Ollie Grab finish at a homemade halfpipe in the woods. Music of Choice: "Cobain died for our sins, dude...!" Drug of choice: Humboldt County bud. The Kin'. Freaks in sneaks --

A pair of hippie-like GIRLS walk by in flower-print dresses and sandals --

GAVIN (CONT.)

There's your earthy-crunchy-hippy-fleabags. Flowers dresses and tie-dye and stankin' of patchouli 'cause bathing is a no-no. Music of Choice: The Dead. Barefoot vixens worshipping a deceased fat guy with a white beard. Maybe I should grow one, huh? Drug of choice: blotter acid. Sheets of it. Freaks who reek --

ANGLE: Lorna "Love-Itis" Longley, chatting with a GROUP of kids several tables down -- we recognize Trent Whalen, Andy Effenson, Robby Stewart --

GAVIN (CONT.)

But here's where it gets really nasty: Lorna runs with that bunch over there. Call them Jocks; call them Normals; call them The Popular Crowd. They're "Blue Ribbons" --

STEVE

What's that -- ?

GAVIN

Community group. Good kids. Have bake sales and car washes and kiss a lot of adult sphincter --

U.V.

"Blue Robots -- "

GAVIN

Here, here. Those three guys? Cradle Bay's answer to Eichmann, Himmler and Goebbels. Trent Whalen, Robby Stewart, Andy Effenson. Bet you didn't know toast came in three flavors --

ANGLE: A pretty GIRL in an Ann Taylor outfit.

GAVIN (CONT.)

That's Randi Sklar, Trent's woman,  
Lorna's best friend. Puts the itch  
in "bitch". This group's music of  
choice: The hum of perfection, the buzz  
of ambition. Drug of choice: Life.  
And the pursuit of clean-living. At  
the expense of all who sniffle at the  
hem of their gowns. Freaks so chic --

(beat)

Then you got kids like me and U.V.  
here. Lames who like their metal heavy  
and their Marlboros Light. Music of  
choice.

Gavin and U.V. headbang a metal riff --

GAVIN / U.V.

(sing)

"Harvester of Sorrow / Language of the  
mad..."

GAVIN

Or any reasonable facsimile thereof.  
Drug of choice: whatta ya got? Freaks  
allllll week --

(beat)

That's it. Lesson over. Class  
dismembered --

STEVE

Wow --

GAVIN

Welcome to Cradle Bay High, Stevie Boy.  
Welcome to my nightmare --

INT. CLARK HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinner. Lindsay's new friend, SHANNON, a pretty 9-year-old,  
joins them. Cynthia serves the food.

LINDSAY

... and we're having a Spelling Bee  
against Hessel Elementary. And Shannon  
and I made it to First Team...

SHANNON

They always get me on "phlegm." I just  
can't ever remember "phlegm."

LINDSAY

My brother, Allen, was the best speller

Nathan and Cynthia look like they've been electrocuted...  
Shannon turns to Steve...

SHANNON

I thought your name was Steve -- ?

STEVE

It is.

LINDSAY

Steve's my other brother. Allen is my brother who's dead...

SHANNON

Oh. I have a grandfather who's dead.

Beat... It's amazing how the tension has soaked into this meal. And it disgusts Steve...

STEVE

Tell me, Shannon: do you get yelled at if you talk about your dead grandfather?

NATHAN CLARK

Steve...

STEVE

Cause around here, people go crazy if we talk about our dead brother --

And Nathan pounds the table with a fist, rattling dishes...

Beat.. Then: Steve gets up. Knocking over a pitcher of water and sailing out the door. Lindsay shrugs to Shannon.

EXT. CRADLE BAY CENTER - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Perhaps five square blocks of storefront businesses, a fire station, town hall, and a half-dozen churches.

Steve walks along, hands jammed in his jean pockets --

EXT. ROSCOE'S YOGURT SHOPPE

Brightly-lit, wrought-iron stools before a formica counter, like the malt shops of yore...

The booths are occupied with HIGH SCHOOLERS wearing nylon jackets with "Blue Ribbon Club" stitched on the back and "Go Forward!" below that. Trent, Robby, Andy, etc. are here.

Steve watches them. Debating on whether or not to go inside.

He chooses against. Walking away, down the silent street.

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - DAY

Randi Sklar walks the path with a coterie of soph GIRLS.

RANDI

...and now what they're saying is that Mary Jo ran away with the cop... that he just up and left his wife and ran away with her -- a fifteen year old fleabag freshman... I heard Mexico...

The girls gasp and giggle... and walk right past --  
-- a hedgerow... Behind which Gavin and U.V. share a joint.

U.V.

You hear that?

GAVIN

Yeah...

U.V.

(holds in the hit)

That's not what you said happened.

Gavin glares at him. A cumulonimbus of SMOKE leaks out of every one of U.V.'s orifices...

Gavin takes the blunt... Tokes long and deep...

GAVIN

Who you gonna believe? Me or Randi Sklar?

Gavin COUGHS a ragged, choking, smoke-filled hack... After it subsides.

U.V.

You, you, you, bud... Definitely you...

INT. PRINCIPAL WEATHERS' OFFICE - CRADLE BAY HIGH - DAY

Steve sits before PRINCIPAL WEATHERS, mid-60s and Guidance Counselor MISS PERKINS, early 30s. A third chair is empty --

PRINCIPAL WEATHERS

We like to conduct an incoming interview with all new students, Steve. Standard procedure. And, as soon as Doctor Caldicott arrives, we can begin. Everything okay, so far?

STEVE

Everything's fine --

MISS PERKINS

How are you finding your classes?

STEVE

Fine --

Seat. Mr. Weathers fidgets with his pen. Miss Perkins studies her cuticles. The door opens and School Psychiatrist

DOCTOR EDGAR CALDICOTT

steps in. Mid-40s, smooth and solicitous in Italian suit and 60 dollar haircut; charm so thick it can be spread on bread.

CALDICOTT

Sorry, folks. Sorry. Edgar Caldicott, School Psychiatrist. Nice to finally meet you --

Steve nods.

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

Everything okay?

STEVE

Fine.

CALDICOTT

Made any friends yet?

STEVE

Yeah. I dunno --

MISS PERKINS

You might want to consider joining The Blue Ribbon Club. I don't know if anyone mentioned it to you. It's a student group, run by Dr. Caldicott. A great way to make friends and help the community. They do wonderful things --

Nothing from Steve.

MISS PERKINS (CONT.)

...They help each other study and practice... It's a team effort. A motivational workshop, if you will. Blue Ribbon kids are truly making the grade and doing wonderful things on the playing field...

Still nothing from Steve. The educators exchange glances --

PRINCIPAL WEATHERS

Steve, all of us here are aware of the trouble back in Chicago and we want you to know that --

STEVE

(as if strung)  
I said everything's fine --

Beat. Caldicott smiles...

CALDICOTT

My family moved around quite a bit when I was your age. It's hard. Especially entering in the middle of the school year... Makes you feel younger than you realize...

In spite of himself, Steve nods...

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

We're here if you need us, Steve. That's all this meeting is about. Whether or not you choose to join The Blue Ribbons... We're here as a resource for you... Just like the library. The A.V. room. The microfiche. That's all. Think of us as human microfiche. Okay?

STEVE

Okay --

CALDICOTT

Good. Now, get outta here. Have fun.

EXT. PRINCIPAL WEATHERS' OFFICE

Steve walks out. Andy Effenson (from our opening) sits on the waiting room couch. Steve glances at the big kid, but Andy's in his own world...

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - PARKING LOT - DAY

Steve walks from the school.

ROCK MUSIC cranks from an old, battered PICK-UP TRUCK. In the bed of the truck --

-- it is the nose-ring GIRL, from the corridor. She wears torn jeans and an oversized cable knit sweater, and is dancing and singing with the music: Cinderella's "Coming Home" ("I took a walk down a road/It's the road I was meant to stay...")

GAVIN (O.S.)

You like that?

Steve turns. Gavin is behind him, wearing a t-shirt that reads "Sick Of It All."

STEVE

What is it?

GAVIN

My buddy, Rachel. Cook's Ridge trash.  
Great chick, don't get me wrong. But  
Cook's Ridge trash --

Steve looks back at the girl. If that's trash, get me a job  
with the sanitation department --

They walk to the truck, where the girl, RACHEL, boogies on --

GAVIN

Rachel, this is Stevie Boy. Good man.  
Stevie Boy, this is Rachel. Cook's  
Ridge trash --

RACHEL

Fuck you --  
(to Steve)  
Hey --

STEVE

Hey --

Beat. Steve and Rachel size each other up...

GAVIN

Woo-hoo! Appropriate sparks are  
flying! The sexual tension's so thick,  
I think I just sprung wood --

RACHEL

Fail to be a tumor, Gavin --

Gavin lights a cigarette. Lights one for Rachel.

GAVIN

What do you say we cruise town, chase a  
case, hit The Bluff and drink some  
beer... Consecrate Stevie Boy's arrival  
to this pathetic tank town... You down?

RACHEL

Sounds razor --

GAVIN

Stevie Boy -- ?

Steve looks at Rachel. She smiles. He returns it.

STEVE

Sure --

GAVIN

Woo-hoo! Appropriate sparks! Somebody  
cue the power ballad -- !



Gavin leaps into the pick-up. Rachel shrugs to Steve. They get in, Rachel behind the wheel. Rachel neutral-drops and the truck tears off.

STEREO / CINDERELLA (O.S.)

"So are you tough enough for my love?  
Just close your eyes to the heaven  
above/I'm coming home/ I'm coming home"

EXT. CRADLE BAY CENTER - DAY

A GRASSY PARK in which perhaps a dozen earthy-crunchy TEENS, in tie-dye and Birkenstocks, hover around a bench. A boom box cranks The Dead classic "St. Stephen." A FRISBEE is tossed...

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Across from the park. Steve and Rachel sit on the tail-gate of the pick-up truck, watching the Deadheads.

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN walks from his car to the market. Gavin steps out from behind some shopping carts, says something to the man. The man shakes his head, disappearing through the market's electronic doors. Gavin wanders back to the pick-up...

GAVIN (CONT.)

The problem with America, as we lurch ever-so-closely to the dawn of the 21st century, is mankind's abject unwillingness to contribute to the delinquency of minors --

A strapping BOY, 16, in a football jersey, walks past them. This is CHUG ROMAN...

CHUG

Hello, Rachel --

RACHEL

Chug --

CHUG

What are you doing?

RACHEL

Chasin'... Nobody's willin'...

Chug nods... Looks at Steve, at Gavin...

GAVIN

Hello, Charles. Cycle any anabolic goodies, lately?

CHUG

You're funny, Strick --

GAVIN  
Thank you, thank you. Here all week --

CHUG  
Fat faggot --

GAVIN  
Perfectly-proportioned pea-brain --

Beat. Chug and Gavin hold the glare. Then, to Rachel.

CHUG  
Some of us'll be at The Yogurt Shoppe  
later on, if you wanna come by --

GAVIN  
The Yogurt Shoppe! You wanna make an  
"active culture" joke, Stevie Boy -- or  
should I handle this one?

They eyeball each other for a beat. Then:

CHUG  
See ya, Rachel --

RACHEL  
Bye --

She gives him a hot summer night smile and Chug walks off,  
bumping Steve as he goes. Gavin and Steve look at Rachel.

RACHEL (CONT.)  
What?

GAVIN  
What. You are actually flattered that  
barn door has a thing for you --

RACHEL  
Bullshit...

GAVIN  
I heard -- on account of his bein' on  
the steroids -- his testicles are the  
size of corn niblets --

Gavin gnaws on an invisible ear of corn --

INT. SUPERMARKET

Chug enters... He casts looks out the window... At Rachel... At  
the way she runs her hand through her hair... At the way her  
midriff blouse rises up to reveal the rig in her belly-button...

And fat beads of perspiration boil up on Chug's forehead...

EXT. SUPERMARKET

Gavin and Rachel search for another potential beer-buyer... When O.S., from inside the market, comes a SCREAM... And various CRASHING sounds --

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Chug Roman, face in full twitch and pinch agony, is TEARING APART the pickles/sauces/juices aisles...

Hurling bottles, tossing shopping carts, swinging at Shoppers --

The MANAGER tries to stop him... Chug grabs the man by the neck and FORCE-FEEDS him a jar of Vlasic Kosher Spears... Chug, now covered in foodstuff, turns on his heels, BARRELING up the aisle, in a dead charge for the MEAT COUNTER --

He makes a linebacker lunge for the glass case --

KEE-RASH!

-- Head first into the glass, his bloody face smashed up in between a glistening pastrami and a handsome brisket...

The shoppers are horrified, Steve, Gavin and Rachel among them.

STEVE

What was that all about?

RACHEL

Toxic Jock Syndrome --

But Gavin looks genuinely frightened. Officer Cox enters --

OFFICER COX

Okay, people... Calm down...  
Everything's all right --

He sees Gavin. A look. Then is back to the business at hand.

ANGLE -- The meat case. Cox and a few others remove Chug from the beef display...

INT. RACHEL'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Rachel drives, talking to Steve. Gavin stares silently out the passenger window, still edgy...

STEVE

What the hell would make the kid freak like that -- ?

RACHEL

It's gotta be a steroid thing. All those jockos are into it. Kelly Connor said she saw Andy Effenson bite the head off a kitten in a fit of rage.

STEVE

No way...

RACHEL

Serious. I think it's bullshit though.

GAVIN

It's not bullshit. And it's not steroids.

RACHEL

Here we go...

STEVE

What?

RACHEL

Gavin thinks there's some sinister force taking over the Cradle Bay meatheads...

STEVE

Some sinister force?

RACHEL

You know: Evil. Nowhere to turn. No one to trust. Altogether ooky...

GAVIN

Fail to be a bimmy bitch, Rachel...

RACHEL

Fail to be a pucker-ass, Gav...

She blows him a KISS... Gavin snatches it out of the air and crushes it like a bug... Steve smiles...

INT. CLARK HOME - DAY - LATER

P.O.V through the upstairs window. Rachel's truck pulls up...

NEW ANGLE -- It's Cynthia's POV, watching from the window. Seeing Rachel. Seeing Gavin. And not liking what she sees.

CUT TO:

A PAIR OF BOLT-CUTTERS

making neat work of a chain-link fence.

EXT. SALVAGE YARD - NIGHT

Three square miles of junked autos and car parts, piled high.  
An elephant graveyard of sheet steel and glass.

DICKIE ATKINSON

is the man behind the bolt-cutters. He has cut himself an  
entry-way. He turns on a flashlight... Begins snooping about,  
looking for parts...

He thinks he hears a noise behind him. Flashes his light.

Nothing.

He goes back to his scavenger work. Another noise. Another  
turn. Another nothing.

He finds a "Le Mans" emblem fixed to a bondo-encrusted rear  
quarter panel. He takes out a screwdriver. Begins to pry it  
loose...

Noise from up above. He flashes his beam. Movement to the  
left. He whirls the light. Noise to the right. Whirls it  
again --

At last, standing above him, is

TRENT WHALEN

A malefic look smeared across his pretty-boy features.

TRENT

I do believe I spy a junkyard dog...

Trent is joined by Robby Stewart...

ROBBY

Look how dirty he is...

TRENT

There's no shame in getting dirty, Rob.  
Only shame in staying dirty.

ROBBY

The uglier the menu, the better the  
food...

DICKIE ATKINSON

What do you want -- ?

TRENT

You, sweet Dickie --

And now there's movement to the left... Dickie flashes his  
light... Coming towards him are Andy Effenson and a few other

RIBBONS... And to the right, here comes Chug and some OTHERS.

Robby calls from above:

ROBBY

We've got it for you, Richard. We've got your hub-cap diamond-star halo.

DICKIE ATKINSON

I'll crush you faggots --

As they move for him, Dickie picks up a twisted FENDER and, as they come closer... Closer... He starts to swing it around.

DICKIE ATKINSON (CONT.)

C'mon... C'mon...

But they are everywhere... Slipping out of nooks and crannies in the salvage yard. There are at least two dozen. Dickie swings.

And they carry CAR AERIALS... And Dickie swings at them... But they WHIP AT HIM WITH THE AERIALS...

And soon he is overpowered... And he goes down... And they converge on him... Like hungry rats...

SLAM CUT TO:

DICKIE ATKINSON

CLOSE ON - HIS FACE. In some kind of HARNESS. Clenched in fear. He screams. HIS RIGHT EYE. A METALLIC WHIRRING.

A DRILL BIT-LIKE NEEDLE. Spinning. Spinning for Dickie's EYE. OFF HIS TORTURED, AGONIZED SCREAMS WE

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. CRADLE BAY HOSPITAL / REAR WING - MORGUE - DAY

A SCHOOL BUS is parked outside --

INT. REAR WING - MORGUE - DAY

Coach Bob has brought his class on a field trip to the morgue.

COACH BOB

While instances of drunk driving have rapidly decreased in Cradle Bay, one can never overstate its evils...

The class is assembled in a CUTTING ROOM, with its walls of refrigerator drawers. They stand around a GURNEY, upon which rests a CADAVER, its chest opened like a cornucopia --

The CORONER removes vital organs, displays them to the class. Steve and Gavin are here as well. Trent and Robby, also.

COACH BOB (CONT.)

Mr. Gray, here, was considerably boomed when his car ran into a telephone pole...

CORONER

Not only that -- but he was a 3-pack-a-day man. Unfiltered Luckys --

He holds up a blackened LUNG. Ughs from the students. Trent and Robby look enthralled. Gavin goes green.

GAVIN

Excuse me --

And he heads for the exits.

INT. THE MORGUE - SECOND CUTTING ROOM - DAY

Gavin lights a smoke. He paces, jittery.

More stainless steel tables with double sinks and gut gutters along the sides. A scale is suspended above each table.

He hears SOUNDS OF A SCUFFLE from beyond one wall... Something CRASHES... Then, silence...

Gavin leans back against one trolley, then jumps, startled, as he realizes there's a sheet-covered BODY upon it.

GAVIN

Jesus --

The sheet covers the corpse, all except for the FEET, which stick out at the end. Women's feet. The red toe-nail polish somehow obscene against the fish-white flesh of the feet.

Gavin goes wide-eyed, as he sees, on the cadaver's left ankle...

A TATTOO

of the Tasmanian Devil, with the initials "M.J.C." scrolled beneath. Mary Jo Copeland. Gavin gasps. He reaches out gingerly for the TOE TAG, which reads: "JANE DOE."

Gavin goes to the other end of the gurney. He is about to lift the sheet away from the face, when --

MISS PERKINS (O.S.)

Gavin Strick -- !

Miss Marsh is there, hands on hips, glaring at him --

MISS PERKINS (CONT.)

What are you doing in here? Do you have any idea the chemicals they keep? And you're smoking! Put that out and get back into the other room, young man. You're getting written up --

Gavin glances back at the shape under the sheet, and walks past Miss Perkins and out of the room.

Miss Perkins gives the room a cursory once-over and, satisfied nothing's been tampered with, she leaves the room, shutting off the light as she goes.

Leaving the body on the gurney in the dark.

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - EASEMENT - DAY

Boilers clank and rumble. Pumps and pressurizing equipment. Somehow managing to be dank and musty at the same time.

GAVIN

They say she ran away. I saw her get shot. Now, I can prove it --

STEVE

Why didn't you go to the police?

GAVIN

The police were there, man... The cop didn't do shit...

Gavin goes to a remote CORNER of the boiler room.

GAVIN (CONT.)

"Cancer Corner." Best place in the school, by far, to sneak a smoke --

Gavin reaches up into a pipe joint, taking a hidden pack of Marlboros from a stash-spot...

Gavin lights a cigarette. Steve glances around the tenebrous environs... There is a CRASHING SOUND from further down...

GAVIN (CONT.)

Shit! Come on --

Gavin yanks Steve back into the shadows of a furnace --

-- just as Dorian Newberry, the janitor, shuffles into view.

NEWBERRY

Gnaw, gnaw, gnaw. Rattus rattus... Ah-ha! Excreta! And dragmarks... The dragmarks of rat-tails...



Newberry carries a jar of bacon fat, which he smears on the triggers of several SPRING TRAPS...

Newberry begins sniffing at the air... moist eyes scanning the boiler room when, suddenly, he lashes out, hauling Steve and Gavin from their hiding space...

NEWBERRY

What are you doing here, shitbirds?

GAVIN

Relax, Mr. Newberry. Relax --

NEWBERRY

You ain't supposed to be down here --

GAVIN

I was just showing my friend, Steve, around. Steve's new to The Bay --

NEWBERRY

New to The Bay? Hmmm. New to The Bay.

GAVIN

Mr. Newberry is the school janitor. And he's got the full-on Boo-Radley-village-idiot-Quasimodo thing going. Don't you, Mr. Newberry?

NEWBERRY

Hmph.

GAVIN

How goes the war against the rodent population of C.B., Mr. Newberry?

Newberry begins to paint a pasty yellow rodenticide over the baseboards...

NEWBERRY

Gotta fight 'em... Gotta fight. Rats from The Bay. Rattus rattus. The carrier of the plague. Black death. There are forty rats born in America each second... That's a lotta plague.

Newberry cackles and continues spreading his poisons...

EXT. CRADLE BAY PUBLIC LIBRARY - PARKING LOT - DAY

Steve and Gavin walk from the school, passing the library.

GAVIN

Newberry's out of his tits, but he's harmless --

They come across U.V. standing near the library PARKING LOT.

GAVIN (CONT.)

What's up, man?

U.V. points --

In the parking lot, a CAR WASH is being held. Two dozen KIDS using soapy sponges and hoses. We recognize a few of the kids: Trent, Robby, Lorna Longley, et al. Blue Ribbons.

Indeed, a sign says: "Blue Ribbon Car Wash: \$1.00 Per Car."

Blue Ribbons cavort... Trent and Robby, shirts off, display chiseled limbs, ripped abs... Herb Ritts wet dreams...

Lorna and Randi and some other GIRLS... Barefoot and lithe... Young, high, breasts years away from gravity's humbling...

They frolic... Water jets out of hoses in SLO-MO streams... Soapy suds glisten off toned teen torsos.

U.V.

Beautiful, huh? A Prozac Moment --

GAVIN

A Day At the Master Races --

U.V.

Check that out --

They see one KID in particular. A stocky kid, Armoralling Caddy hubcaps. He wears wide-whale cords and a Stanford University sweatshirt. And brand new Reeboks.

It is Dickie Atkinson.

GAVIN

Dickie -- ?

Gavin is very shaken.

U.V.

He's one of them now. A Blue Robot --

ANGLE - perhaps 30 yards from where they stand. A primer-gray CAMARO is parked. Standing around it, a few MOTORHEAD KIDS. Watching the car wash. Watching Dickie.

GAVIN

Look at 'em. The fuckin' grape apes. They have no idea why Dickie's hangin' with the Jocks and Jerks --

STEVE

Why is he -- ?

GAVIN

He hates those creeps. They're  
"peckerheads." Now he's scrubbing  
fenders with 'em? Look at those  
clothes --

U.V.

Maybe he turned over a new leaf --

GAVIN

You got that right. I'd like to own  
the new leaf concession here in Cradle  
Bay.

STEVE

What are you saying?

U.V.

Did you tell Steve about the body -- ?

GAVIN

Steve's a disbeliever --

STEVE

I just don't know what you're getting  
at --

GAVIN

(to U.V.)

This is where he accuses me of being  
paranoid --

U.V.

"Denial" ain't just a river in Italy --

STEVE

You should stop smoking pot, Gav. I  
hear it makes you neurotic --

GAVIN

You are beige boy --

STEVE

I'm outta here --

GAVIN

Fail to be a be a toast --

STEVE

I'm not being a toast. I just don't  
know what you're getting at. I don't  
see the problem and I don't see how it  
concerns us. And I do gotta go --

They watch him go, miserable. Then they look back to the car  
wash. Where Trent and Dickie are having a spirited water fight.

INT. ROSCOE'S YOGURT SHOPPE - NIGHT

Blue Ribbons everywhere.

Steve enters. Eyes are on him. He goes to the counter.

ROSCOE, paper hat and bad teeth, approaches --

ROSCOE

Help you -- ?

A hand slaps Steve on the back. Trent Whalen.

TRENT

Steven -- Good to see you,  
brother --

STEVE

Hey, Trent --

TRENT

Come sit down --

Trent leads Steve over to a booth, where Andy Effenson, Dickie Atkinson, Randi Sklar, a bruised Chug, Robby, Lorna, sit.

TRENT (CONT.)

Steven, this is Andy, Dickie, Randi,  
Lorna, Chug, you know Robby. This is  
Steven. He's new to the Bay. From  
Chicago --

RANDI

Do you like it here -- ?

STEVE

It's all right --

LORNA

You had a lot of friends in Chicago --

STEVE

Yeah --

DICKIE ATKINSON

You can have a lot of friends here --

Beat. They smile. Steve looks at Trent and Dickie --

STEVE

Didn't you guys get into a fight in  
English -- ?

TRENT

We've made peace, Steven. It's what  
separates us from the animals --

LORNA  
Uh-ch. Dirtbag Alert --

She gestures to the front of the shop, to where...

GAVIN

has entered, looking slightly horrified at Steve's position in the midst of the enemy --

GAVIN  
Stevie Boy! I gotta talk to you --

TRENT  
Easy, slim. Steven's relaxing --

GAVIN  
Look at this place -- The Yogurt Shoppe? The Yogurt "Shuppy"? What the fuck is a "Shuppy" anyway? What's wrong with just "Shop?" What the "e" on the end for?

RANDI  
Why don't you make like a tree and leave.

GAVIN  
Clever girl.  
(turns to Chug)  
What happened to you, Charles? Too much red meat?

CHUG  
You want a piece of me, Strick?

GAVIN  
Yeah, the piece that dribbled down your daddy's thigh --

Chug moves for him... Gavin withdraws a steel PIPE from his sleeve... Raises it at Chug...

GAVIN (CONT.)  
C'mon, Chug! I hit you with this, you'll be out so long, when you wake-up you'll need a haircut -- !

Chug backs off. Gavin turns to Steve...

GAVIN (CONT.)  
What are you doing here, Stevie Boy? We get in one argument and you go bond with the bad guys?

Beat. Gavin's eyes imploring. Steve goes to him --

Robby Stewart's hand is around Steve's wrist. Tight.

ROBBY

You don't have to go anywhere,  
Steven --

Steve looks at him. Robby's words are filled with querulous reproach, yet his face is calm, smiling in fact.

Steve studies the Ribbons for a beat. Then:

STEVE

I want to go --

The others look surprised.

TRENT

Why do you want to go -- ?

STEVE

What's the big--

TRENT

--the big deal, Steven, is that you're sitting with us. The Big Names. In our booths. And he comes in. And you abandon us? Why? Why, why, why?

But Steve and Gavin have headed for the door. They leave.

The Blue Ribbons stare at each other. Silent. Betrayed.

INT. RACHEL'S TRUCK - MOVING - LATER - NIGHT

Gavin drives. Steve besides him. Gavin is on edge. He smokes a cigarette and fiddles with the radio...

STEVE

Where's Rachel?

GAVIN

Studying. She's a degenerate studier. Big on raising herself out of the dregs; burying her white trash roots; make the lambs stop screaming, you know

STEVE

Okay. Here I am. Spill it. What, in your opinion, is the matter with them?

GAVIN

They're hypnotized --

STEVE

You're stoned --

GAVIN  
What has that got to do with anything?

STEVE  
It makes you paranoid.

GAVIN  
So does seeing the quarterback blow  
away a cop and a babe --

STEVE  
Right, right. The mysterious  
disappearance of Mary Jo Copeland and  
Officer Kramer. "Hypnotized." Please.

GAVIN  
Maybe not hypnotized. Brainwashed.  
Lobotomized. Programmed. You want  
proof? Here's proof --

Gavin takes something from his jacket... Hands it to Steve. It  
is a PHOTOGRAPH. Gavin flicks on the DOME LIGHT...

GAVIN (CONT.)  
You see: Robby Stewart used to be my  
bud --

ANGLE -- PHOTO -- Gavin and Robby, denim jackets, Tesla concert  
tees, before a 4-foot BONG, partying hard. Robby looks totally  
different from the one we know --

STEVE  
This doesn't prove shit. Maybe he just  
got sick of your rap... I can relate...

GAVIN  
Okay. Fine. I thought you'd say that.  
That's the purpose of tonight's  
excursion. After tonight, you will  
strap a hog on and be a man...

Gavin flashes a maniacal grin and cranks the stereo, wailing  
along in tortured falsetto with a Nine Inch Nails tune... Steve  
looks back at the photo...

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - NIGHT

Gavin pulls the truck into the darkened lot, perhaps a dozen  
CARS are scattered about. They get out --

Gavin slips through a big, blue fire door. Steve follows --

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The KA-CHUNG, KA-CHUNG of the V-belt drives. Luminescent  
machine dials cast a greenish glow over everything.

Gavin goes to the HOT AIR FURNACE, removing the metal casing of the FLENUM, which opens onto the shaft of a MAIN AIR DISTRIBUTION DUCT, disappearing into the wall --

Gavin climbs into the shaft. Steve hesitates --

-- and reluctantly follows Gavin into the ventilation shaft.

INT. SHAFT - NIGHT

Four feet by four feet of galvanized mild sheet steel, thrumming with the noise of aerofoil fans and suction ports.

They crawl on hands and knees to negotiate their way through.

STEVE

What are we doing -- ?

GAVIN

Sssshhh. Voices carry --

INT. BRANCH DUCT - NIGHT

They scurry along, the warm airflow bringing them to a sweat.

At last, they come to a dead end. To a square mesh and bar GRILLE in the wall. Gavin peers through --

GAVIN

C'mere --

Steve goes to the small register, peeks out into --

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The outlet they look through is HIGH UP ON THE WALL, allowing them a perfect vantage point to watch the...

BLUE RIBBON MEETING

in progress. Perhaps 30 adults in attendance. We recognize Principal Weathers, Coach Bob, Officer Cox, and, of course...

DOCTOR EDGAR CALDICOTT

who chairs the meeting. Miss Perkins takes the minutes --

INT. VENTILATION SHAFT - NIGHT

Steve and Gavin crouch there --

GAVIN

(whispered)

Blue Ribbon Meeting. First Monday of every month. This is where the shit goes down... Listen --



ANGLE -- the classroom. From their P.O.V.:

CALDICOTT

...and by conducting the bake sale in conjunction with the pep rally, we can be selling cakes and cookies at a time when school spirit is at its optimum level --

Steve looks at Gavin --

STEVE

(whispered)  
I had no idea the evil was this pervasive --

INT. CLASSROOM

An attractive WOMAN in her early 40s - JUDY EFFENSON - stands after a moment's hesitation.

JUDY EFFENSON

Uh... This may sound strange -- but, although we couldn't be more pleased with Andrew's improved studies, he's become somewhat, oh, different, since returning from your weekend seminar.

CALDICOTT

Different how?

JUDY EFFENSON

He's become somewhat... cruel.

CALDICOTT

Cruel?

JUDY EFFENSON

Yes. For example: Andy's best friend was a boy named Gordon Stilwell... Now, he won't give Gordon the time of day. And I find him to be short-tempered with his sisters...

Some of the other PARENTS seem to be nodding in agreement...

CALDICOTT

I can understand that... But what you have to realize is your children have been helped. They've been improved. We taught them things at the seminar that has set them on a path to excellence. And if, for some reason, they may be a little impatient with those who do not see things as

(MORE)

CALDICOTT (cont'd)

clearly... Well... When you soar with the eagles, the pigeons below tend to look just a little fat and dirty.

Judy nods in acceptance. Caldicott clears his throat, shares a look with Principal Weathers... And shuffles his papers.

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

A new candidate has been nominated for this month by Coach Bob Holland. Parents evaluated, contacted, counseled, apprised that membership is binding --

(reading)

Male. 17 years old. Suspended four times last school year, written up on a dozen occasions this year; parents claim he spent winter break using drugs, alcohol, nicotine. Parents feel candidate is depressed, spends too much time listening to rock music and masturbating --

INT. VENTILATION SHAFT

Steve and Gavin listen --

STEVE

(whispered)

Poor sap --

CALDICOTT

Candidate has a history of truancy, substance abuse, apathy and general lack of direction/ambition; is a C-student with, Miss Perkins informs us, A-potentiality. He is highly intelligent, yet emotionally clumsy, and covers his inadequacies with verbal cleverness and a condescension toward the more robust individuals surrounding him. Parents enthusiastic, signed Hold Harmless and Form 341, wish "training" to begin ASAP.

(beat)

All in favor --

A chorus of "ayes" fill the room --

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

All against --

Silence.

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

October candidate confirmed. So noted.  
Colleen, if you'll bring in the parents

Miss Perkins steps outside the door to the classroom --

Steve and Gavin watch expectantly --

Miss Perkins is back, followed by a COUPLE in their early 40s.

A small moan escapes Gavin. He capers back slowly --

STEVE

What -- ?

But Gavin is gone, clambering in retreat through the duct --

Steve peeks back into the classroom, in time to catch --

CALDICOTT

Into our circle of friends, we hope to  
soon welcome, Ernest and Lucille Strick

And then it hits Steve: they are GAVIN'S PARENTS -- !

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

A FIRE DOOR BURSTS OPEN, Gavin emerges... Steve behind him...  
Gavin fires up a smoke with trembling hands...

GAVIN

What do I do? I can't go home.  
"Training to begin ASAP." You believe  
this shit -- ?

STEVE

I think you're overreacting --

GAVIN

They're gonna be waiting for me --

STEVE

So they want you to join their club.  
Big deal. You shine 'em on. Blow 'em  
off. What can they do -- ?

GAVIN

You still don't get it. You still  
think this is about bake sales and  
blood drives --

STEVE

Right, right. I keep forgetting. It's  
about brainwashing not car washing --

GAVIN

You are so fuckin' beige it's unreal --

Gavin chain-lights a fresh cig with the butt of his old one.

STEVE

I'm going home now, Gavin --

GAVIN

I don't think you are --

Gavin reaches into the truck. Pulls out a PISTOL.

STEVE

What the hell is that?

GAVIN

It's a knife.

STEVE

Where'd you get it?

GAVIN

It belongs to that fuck I call "Dad."  
Now, let's go --

STEVE

Put the gun away, Gavin.

Gavin starts to protest. Steve is as serious as we've seen him.

STEVE (CONT.)

Put the damn gun away, Gavin. I'll go  
with you. Just put that thing away --Gavin stares at him. Blinks. Struck a nerve. Gavin pockets  
the gun. And --

DARKNESS. Then: the TINKLING of a window being broken.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Steve and Gavin drop into the morgue. Gavin holds a flashlight.  
It is silent as a crypt. Just so.

STEVE (CONT.)

You are one sick puppy --

Gavin gestures for Steve to move into the second cutting room.

INT. CUTTING ROOM - NIGHT

We can almost smell the thick, fummy vapors of formaldehyde.

The high-pitched electrical WHIRR of refrigerator motors HUM.

STEVE (CONT.)

(whispered)

What makes you think she's even gonna still be here?

Gavin is perspiring. He goes to the wall of DRAWERS. Opens one. A MAN, his skin a waxy, yellow pallor, stares back with unseeing eyes. Gavin shivers, closes the drawer, opens another: an ELDERLY WOMAN, gray and emaciated. Gavin reels.

GAVIN

Jesus. Jesus, Jesus. There's got to be an easier way --

STEVE

They're labeled --

GAVIN

What -- ?

STEVE

They're labeled. See?

Steve flashes the light. And, indeed, each drawer has a little plastic LABEL with the decedent's name written on it.

STEVE (CONT.)

Isn't that handy -- ?

Gavin scans the labels. He becomes panicked.

GAVIN

She's not here.

STEVE

Maybe she got up and walked out. The Re-Animation Of The Dead is the only horror staple you've yet to incorporate in your paranoid theories --

Gavin goes over to where a SURGICAL CART has been placed against one wall... He moves the cart... Another series of DRAWERS... He sees a drawer labeled "JANE DOE".

GAVIN

As they say in the church:  
BING-FUCKING-GO -- !

Gavin opens the drawer - A LUMPEN SHAPE is beneath the sheet --

Gavin makes to pull back the sheet... but...

GAVIN (CONT.)

I can't --

STEVE  
What?

GAVIN  
I can't. Fuck it, man. Let's bail --

Gavin leans back against the wall, hyperventilating --

STEVE  
Oh, no. We're here. Let's end this.  
Once and for all --

At the front of the drawer, Steve pulls back the sheet to see  
THE HEADLESS CADAVER

laryngeal cartilage winking out of a tub of feminine neck

STEVE (CONT.)  
Oh, God --

Steve gags. Gavin approaches. He gives a soft groan --

GAVIN  
Where's her head, Steve?

Steve rips off the sheet. The body has been badly MANGLED - one  
couldn't tell if she'd been shot or pureed. Steve lifts up her  
hand; the FINGERTIPS all smashed, as if by a hammer --

GAVIN (CONT.)  
Those bastards --

Gavin goes to the feet. To the left ankle. And, where the  
tattoo had been, there is now a...

MISSING SWATCH OF EPIDERMIS

and somehow this is worst of all. Gavin SHRIEKS, stumbling  
away, smashing into a huge TUB OF FORMALIN, inside which a  
diseased STOMACH gurgles away --

Tub, stomach, and formalin CRASH to the floor. Gavin falls into  
some shelves, which topple, crashing more pickled organs and  
appendages onto the floor, onto Gavin --

Gavin continues to scream, a tangle of sheets and guts. Until  
one HAND is there. A living hand. Steve's hand.

Steve helps Gavin up. Up and out.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER - NIGHT

Where Steve and Gavin must part ways --

GAVIN  
You can't leave me here --

Gavin takes out his pipe and a bag of weed. Packs the bowl

STEVE  
Maybe you should lay off that --

GAVIN  
Maybe you should eat me --

Gavin fires up the bowl --

GAVIN (CONT.)  
This is huge, Steve. It's huge --

STEVE  
It doesn't necessarily prove anything --

GAVIN  
You're right. Now that I think about  
it - I remember reading about a girl in  
Springfield who fell into her garbage  
disposal, carrying a jar of sulfuric  
acid and four live piranhas. I'll bet  
that's her body in the morgue -- !

STEVE  
Gavin --

GAVIN  
Stop. Just stop it --  
(big toke)  
Fuckers ripped off her tattoo --

Suddenly, Gavin grabs Steve in a beseeching embrace --

GAVIN (CONT.)  
Lemme stay at your place, Stevie Boy --

STEVE  
Go home, Gavin. You'll be fine. I'll  
see you tomorrow --

Steve walks off in the direction of his house.

GAVIN  
Okay. Fine. But if I get there and  
they're waiting for me. I'll tell you  
what happens.

Gavin reaches into his waistband. Pulls out the PISTOL.

GAVIN (CONT.)  
I smoke 'em all, that's what. Whalen,  
Robby, Caldicott. Even my olds. I'll  
fuck 'em up. I'll smoke 'em all --

Gavin Fed-grips the gun, taking aim. Steve grabs the gun from  
Gavin --

STEVE  
You know what - I'll take this...

GAVIN  
Stevie Boy --

STEVE  
No. You're losing it, Gav. You'll  
wind-up shooting the paper boy. Just  
go home. Just... Go... Home.

GAVIN  
Gimme the gun, man --

STEVE  
G'night, Gavin --

And Steve walks off... And Gavin is alone.

He shadowboxes, fighting unseen enemies. The night is quiet,  
reflected orange in the glow of street lamps and the flaxen  
moon.

GAVIN  
I woulda smoked 'em all --

EXT. STRICK HOME - NIGHT

Gavin stands across the street, surveying his darkened house.

ANGLE: From a block away. It's Steve. He's followed Gavin.

Gavin crosses the street. He tip-toes up onto the porch.

He goes to the front door, opening it --

STEVE

watches Gavin enter. He smiles to himself. Everything's cool.  
Steve walks back up the street, to his neighborhood.

INT. GAVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gavin enters. There's a CREAK --

GAVIN  
Hysteria -- ?



Stepping in --

GAVIN (CONT.)

Smoked 'em...

The lights FLICK ON --

We STAY WITH Gavin --

GAVIN (CONT.)

...all.

And, in PRE-LAP, making us spill our popcorn...

A SCHOOL BELL SCREAMS

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - ROONEY'S ENGLISH - DAY

Mr. Rooney walks the aisles, passing back term papers --

MR. ROONEY

Very nice; very ugly; very mediocre.

Steve enters. Late. Rooney offers him a disapproving glance. He gives Steve his term paper, handling it like it was a live scorpion...

MR. ROONEY (CONT.)

Very awful...

Steve sits down. Rooney continues to hand out the papers. He pauses. The class looks up --

Rooney is standing before Dickie Atkinson --

MR. ROONEY (CONT.)

Pray tell, Mr. Atkinson - have you found God? Or a crack term paper service? This report is not only beyond exceptional, it's beyond belief!

DICKIE ATKINSON

Thank-you, sir --

Rooney eyes him suspiciously. Steve looks over at Gavin --

-- whose seat is, of course, empty.

EXT. STRICK HOME - DAY

Mrs. Strick comes to the door. Steve is there.

STEVE

Hello. My name is Steve Clark. I'm a friend of Gavin's. He around?

MRS. STRICK  
He's at school. Why aren't you?

STEVE  
I'm in a class of his. He wasn't there  
and I, uh, thought maybe he was sick --

MRS. STRICK  
Gavin's fine. I think you'd be best to  
leave us alone. Gavin's a good boy  
now. He doesn't need bad influences.  
And that's what you are. You and that  
slut from the projects. And that pink  
boy. Bad influences, the lot of you.

STEVE  
I'm not sure what you're talking about.

MRS. STRICK  
You're the new kid --

STEVE  
I moved here six weeks ago --

MRS. STRICK  
And my Gavin was the first friend you  
made. Your parents must be very proud.

And with that, Mrs. Strick SLAMS the door closed. Steve walks  
down the path. And then starts back for the house when --

RACHEL (O.S.)  
He's not home --

Steve turns. Rachel stands near the bushes on the side of the  
house. Hysteria is with her.

STEVE  
You know where he is?

RACHEL  
Nope. I'm just a slut from the  
projects. Do you?

STEVE  
I was with him last night. He was  
pretty crazed. He got elected into  
that Blue Ribbon thing...

RACHEL  
Really? Shit. I bet he bailed. Left  
town. Guaranteed.

STEVE  
That's what I'm thinking.

RACHEL

Shit.

EXT. THE BLUFF - NIGHT

Steve, Rachel and U.V. sit in the back of the pick-up, sharing a 40 oz.

U.V.

He'll show up... He's gotta run out of weed sometime... And when he does... He'll come home... He'll come right home to me... I'm his weed connection. Weed... A guy's gotta have weed...

Steve and Rachel share a look...

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - BOILER ROOM - DAY

Dorian Newberry sits amidst the furnace and velometers, eating lunch --

Steve enters the boiler room. Newberry glowers at him...

NEWBERRY

What do you want?

STEVE

You seen Gavin around?

NEWBERRY

Gavin who?

STEVE

I was with him the other day...

NEWBERRY

Nothin' down here but me and the vermin. And the vermin down here come in all kindsa colors...

Newberry cackles and wolfs into his sandwich...

And, as the OPENING LICKS of Marilyn Manson's "The Beautiful People" burst onto the TRACK we

CUT TO:

A PAIR OF SHOES

Brand new Sperry topsiders... Walking... Down a corridor... TILTING UP... We take in the beige chinos...

They walk down the corridor...

And we are in a SUBJECTIVE P.O.V.: lots of stares. From lots of KIDS. Some stifled laughter. Mostly shocked faces.

We arrive at the RAMP leading into --

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

CONTINUE MUSIC. The caf is crowded.

Lorna and some of the other Blue Ribbon GIRLS are having a BAKE SALE, selling baked goods at a side table.

At The Blue Ribbon table, Robby looks up to the ramp, turns to Trent --

ROBBY

Show time --

ANGLE - Steve and Rachel and U.V. sit alone. Rachel looks up.

RACHEL

Who put the acid in my spam -- ?

Steve and U.V. follows her gaze --

To the ramp. Because --

-- GAVIN STRICK HAS ARRIVED --

At the top of the ramp. He's cut his hair and wears a pressed Oxford shirt and those chinos. The Doc Martens traded-in for the boat shoes. He also wears that beatific Blue Ribbon grin.

The caf becomes silent. All eyes on Gavin as he descends --

Gavin passes our trio's table. Marching right over to the Blue Ribbons, where he's given a hero's welcome --

Rachel gets up, heading for Gavin...

STEVE

Rachel --

She ignores him. Walking up to Gavin --

RACHEL

Gavin -- ?

GAVIN

Hello, Rae --

RACHEL

What's up with this?

GAVIN  
I just want to apply myself. I think  
I'll get better results on this side of  
the caf --

He smiles that smile again.

RACHEL  
Gavin... shit, man --

ROBBY  
Why don't you beat it, honey... This is  
rarefied turf. Sluts need not apply --

RACHEL  
Fuck you --  
(to Gavin)  
Gavin --

GAVIN  
Later, Rae --

Gavin goes to his new "friends." Leaving her standing there.

Rachel wanders back and sits down hard next to Steve and U.V.  
Marilyn Manson CRANKS...

Steve watches as Gavin walks over to the bake sale --

Gavin approaches the table. Selects a wedge of carrot cake.

GAVIN  
What do I owe you -- ?

Lorna gives him a smile that could grill onions --

LORNA  
On the house --

Gavin smiles back --

LORNA (CONT.)  
And, if you're not doing anything after  
the game... I could be available for a  
yogurt...

They share a long look laden with concupiscent promise...

GAVIN  
Indeed...

Steve walks toward the bake sale. When he is GRABBED --

ANDY EFFENSON

stands over him, florid --

ANDY  
Where you going -- ?

STEVE  
To talk to Gavin --

ANDY  
You're not wanted... Leave him be...

Andy shoves Steve to the ground. U.V. is there...

U.V.  
C'mon, man --

Andy hurls U.V. onto a caf table...

RACHEL  
What the fuck is your maladjustment,  
Effenson -- ?

Steve throws himself into Andy, tackling him -- the two boys  
falling to the ground --

Steve gets in a few punches, but Andy is all muscle, and soon  
he's kicking the shit out of the smaller Steve --

A CROWD gathers, forming a circle around the combatants, keeping  
Rachel out... She tries to penetrate, but it's futile.

Andy finishes Steve off with one last, powerhouse haymaker.

Steve lies on the floor, bloody and beat.

The circle is broken. Gavin Strick stands there, above Steve.  
A beat. Then Gavin offers Steve a hand --

Andy glares at Gavin --

Steve clutches at Gavin, getting slowly to his feet. Steve  
whispers to Gavin --

STEVE  
I'm sorry, man. I shoulda believe  
you --

Gavin gives him a sad smile. They walk a few paces...

GAVIN  
No problem, Stevie. We Shall Overcome.

Steve looks at Gavin. Gavin winks.

STEVE  
You're okay -- ?

Gavin nods.

STEVE (CONT.)

Aw, man. Fantastic --

Gavin smiles. Whispers:

GAVIN

You wanna know what it's all about?  
This whole thing? What it's all about?

Steve nods. The crowd is heating up --

STEVE

What?

GAVIN

Bake sales and blood drives, baby --

And Gavin SNAP-KNEES Steve in the stomach!!

Steve collapses back onto the mud --

Dorian Newberry watches through a window outside --

As Gavin turns back to his table --

And Andy high-fives him on the way --

And the crowd dissipates, Rachel flung to the ground in their yahoo exodus --

From the top of the ramp, Edgar Caldicott watches it all --

Steve is left there, in the dirt --

Rachel, on hands and knees, crawls over --

She reaches out to him --

Only Steve shrugs her off... Getting to his feet...

Walking away --

Rachel looks after him --

And still the Marilyn Manson CRANKS --

MARILYN MANSON (O.S.)

"I don't want you and I don't need you/  
Don't bother to resist I'll beat you/  
It's not your fault you're always  
wrong/The weak ones are there to  
justify the strong/The Beautiful  
People/The Beautiful People... "

And we --

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN STREETS - CRADLE BAY - DAY

A blanket of snow covers the towering pines and once-verdant hills of the island. A LONE FIGURE walks the streets, a black DOG yipping at his side. All is silent in that surreal, dead of winter way --

The dog is Hysteria. The figure is Steve. And he's changed. A little more disheveled, a little more slouch. The white plumes that eddy from his mouth are not from the frigid temperatures as we might have assumed. Steve smokes now.

Small CHILDREN frolic about in snowdrifts... There's an ICE HOCKEY game down on the frozen-over QUARRY...

Steve comes to a CROSSWALK. Randi Sklar passes by, actually helping an OLD LADY cross the street. She grins at Steve.

Steve walks by Roscoe's Yogurt Shoppe... which is now overflowing with BLUE RIBBONS... Every booth taken... Roscoe busting ass to fill the nonfat orders...

IN THE PARK: There are only 3 or 4 Deadheads now... The Frisbee tossed... The boom box lamenting "Ripple."

INT. BOILER ROOM - DAY

Steve sits amidst the furnaces and velometers, eating lunch.

Dorian Newberry enters the boiler room. Glowers at Steve.

NEWBERRY

You ain't supposed to be down here --

STEVE

I hate the caf --

NEWBERRY

Ever'body hates the caf --

Newberry takes out his own lunch. They eat in silence, Steve watching the janitor --

STEVE

You think the kids around here are odd?

NEWBERRY

Sure. But like I always say: Christ was a child prodigy. But so was Jackie Coogan. And he became Uncle Fester --



INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Rachel passes the gym. Wrestling practice is in session. She pauses to watch Gavin Strick grapple with another WRESTLER.

Rachel looks across the gym, at the other exit, to where Steve watches Gavin's exhibition. Rachel tries to get his attention.

But Steve watches Gavin. Watches him perform a particularly vicious "grapevine" on his opponent...

Steve looks disgusted at his friend's savagery. He walks away. Rachel follows after him...

INT. CORRIDOR

Steve walks... Rachel appears down the hall behind him...

RACHEL

STEVE -- :

He keeps walking... She chases him down... Grabs him... Spins him around... He looks at her, his face blank...

STEVE

What do you want, Rachel?

RACHEL

Oh, I dunno. A returned phone call? An answered locker-note? A fucking break?

STEVE

I got nothing to say --

RACHEL

Why are you blaming any of this on me and U.V.?

STEVE

This isn't about blame... I'm just keeping to myself. It's better that way.

She stares at him... He's so serious...

RACHEL

Squirt some chocolate syrup in your Coke, man --

Steve walks away from her... She calls after him...

RACHEL (CONT.)

There's a Blue Ribbon meeting tonight. You want to hit the vents? Steve?

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT.) (cont'd)

CONT

Hello? Ground control to Major Tom -- ?

Steve stops. Whirls on her.

STEVE

What do you want?

RACHEL

You wanna hit the ven--

STEVE

No. No I don't want to "hit the vents." I don't want to do anything. I just want to be left alone. You want to continue Gavin's crap, you do that. I just want to walk.

And he does. Away from her. She watches him go --

RACHEL

Have a shit hemorrhage, why don't you -

NEW ANGLE - From further down the hall. Around the corner. Robby Stewart watches them... All smiles...

INT. CLARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve enters. To find his sister, Lindsay, and her friend, Shannon, playing "Candyland" with Lorna "Love-Itis" Longley --

STEVE

What are you doing here?

LINDSAY

Lorna's baby-sitting... She helped us prepare for the spelling bee against Casterville --

Lorna smiles sweetly at Steve...

LORNA

Shannon is having a devil of a time with the word "phlegm." It's like she has a mental block --

STEVE

Where's Mom and Dad --

LINDSAY

They're at some meeting --

LORNA

Yes. At the school. Some meeting.

Lorna smiles at Steve...

STEVE

You can go now --

LINDSAY

Steve, we're playing...

STEVE

She can go now. I'm home. I'll play  
with you guys...

LINDSAY

No you won't.

STEVE

You can go now.

LORNA

Steve's right, Linds. He's home.  
He'll take care of you. We'll play  
another time...

She tousles the girls' hair... Gathers her things... Smiles  
again to Steve... And is gone...

LINDSAY

What color do you want to be?

STEVE

What color what?

LINDSAY

You said you'd play with us...

STEVE

I lied. That's what older brothers do.

He heads outside...

LINDSAY

Not all of them...

He comes back in...

STEVE

What did you say?

LINDSAY

Nothing. I didn't say nothing.

He looks at her for a beat...

STEVE

I'll be right back --

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - NIGHT

Steve bikes up to the school... A scattering of parked cars...

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - CLASSROOM - BLUE RIBBON MEETING - NIGHT

Caldicott stands before the assembly - which has INCREASED, noticeably, in number...

We scan the crowd... Steve's parents are not here... We GO TO THE VENTILATION REGISTER, up on the wall. We GO UP TO THE VENT - and THROUGH IT, into the DUCT --

-- to where Steve is huddled, watching. He looks most relieved.

CALDICOTT

on a more somber note: December candidate Gordon Stilwell, who goes by the unfortunate sobriquet - "Drip". The committee felt that Stilwell, as the #1 ranked student in the senior class, and therefore valedictorian, should be a member... However, his parents, after being evaluated and contacted, rejected our offer...

As buzz of disbelief sounds from those assembled...

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

F.Y.I. The #2 ranked senior classman... The vice-valedictorian, if you will, is our own Trent Whalen...

ANGLE - STEVE. Watching...

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Drip Stilwell heads into the school. When Steve appears...

STEVE

Hey, Gordon --

DRIP

Hullo.

STEVE

How ya doing?

DRIP

Okay. I'm late for class.

STEVE

You, uh... Doing anything after school?

Drip eyes him suspiciously...

DRIP  
Why?

STEVE  
Wanna hang out?

DRIP  
No...

STEVE  
We can rent a movie or something. My dad just got the whole surround-sound thing... It's cool as shit...

DRIP  
No. I gotta go.

And he walks off, nervously... Steve frowns...

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - BOILER ROOM - DAY

Steve enters the boiler room with his bag lunch, surprising Newberry, sitting in the corner reading a paperback copy of ANNA KARENINA, which he promptly ditches. Steve retrieves it.

STEVE  
Tolstoy --

Newberry munches an oatmeal cookie, looks around --

NEWBERRY  
The rats...

STEVE  
Forget the rats. It's an act, isn't it?

Nothing from Newberry --

STEVE (CONT.)  
Doesn't it bother you that everyone treats you like an idiot -- ?

Newberry blows his nose into a soiled dew-rag --

STEVE (CONT.)  
Kind of a pathetic way to go through life --

Newberry looks at him for a beat. As if deciding. Then, his voice bereft of its moron cadence:

NEWBERRY  
Not only does it not bother me -- I encourage it. I'll drool for the  
(MORE)

NEWBERRY cont'd)

masses, as long as they don't impinge on my privacy. This allows me to lie back, rest the scars of my life - Korea, losing my first wife to cancer and my second to diabetes; a dysfunctional rapport with my three married daughters; and play out my string in relative obscurity. I got no problem wearing bells on my hat and floppy shoes, dancing for the King. Just so's the members of the empire leave me the fuck alone...

Newberry nibbles some more cookie. Steve is a bit stunned. Newberry lapses back into character, looking around.

NEWBERRY

The rats are everywhere. Gnaw, gnaw --

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - LATER - DAY

Drip walks out of school. Up ahead, he sees Steve... Waiting for him...

STEVE

Hey, Gordo --

DRIP

Please. Just... leave me alone...

And Drip trots away...

STEVE

Shit.

EXT. THE QUARRY - DAY

A POND really. Surrounded on all sides by stone.

An ICE HOCKEY game underway, over the pond's frozen surface.

A sign reads "SKATE AT YOUR OWN RISK."

We know the hockey players, tricked-out in full pads: Trent, Robby, Dickie, et al --

EXT. MAIN STREET - DOWNTOWN - DAY

Drip walks along... Steve still trailing him... Drip is panicking now...

Andy Effenson is up ahead. He stops and talks to Drip. Steve slips into a store to watch:

Not bullying, Andy actually says something that makes the nerd laugh...

Drip looks around for Steve. He doesn't see him.

And Steve watches as Drip leaves with Andy...

EXT. THE POND - HOCKEY GAME

Play has stopped. For, at the quarry entrance, Andy Effenson has arrived. With Drip, looking goofy in ancient Sonia Henig skates.

ANDY

Does everybody know Gordon Stilwell? I saw him uptown and asked him if he wanted to play --

TRENT

Hello, Gordon --

DRIP

H-hello...

Various "hellos" and "let's play!" from the others.

Andy slaps Drip on the back --

ANDY

Let's skate, brother --

Steve has arrived. He walks to the edge of the frozen pond.

Drip sees him. Drip stares at him.

As Drip follows the others out onto the ice --

EXT. THE POND

The game continues, intense. Blue Ribbons competing furiously -

Robby controls the puck, skating swiftly, weaving and dodging --

Dickie slashes for Robby, throwing a lethal cross-body check --

Robby passes the puck to a cutting Trent Whalen --

Trent slows to a stop. With careful aim, he sends a perfect wrist-pass over to Drip. But it is too long, sliding across the ice...

... To a PATCH at the perimeter of the pond...

Drip skates to shag it --

The Blue Ribbons skate to a stop. Watch. Wait --

ANGLE - STEVE. Watching...

Drip goes to the puck. Gets his stick on it. When --

THE ICE AROUND HIM BEGINS TO BREAK --

Spiderweb CRACKS radiating out from where he stands --

Drip looks down, terrified --

AND THE ICE GIVES!!!

Drip Stilwell crashes through the frozen pond, into the frigid water below -- he thrashes and screams --

The Blue Ribbons skate over to Drip. Slowly.

Steve dashes toward him, but is KNOCKED OVER by a zipping Andy Effenson. Steve's head hits the ice...

The Blue Ribbons stand at the fresh hole. Circling. Watching Drip flail. They EXTEND HANDS to him. And every time Drip reaches for them, they withdraw. And giggle.

Steve fights to get in through the circle. But The Ribbons don't allow him to penetrate --

STEVE  
HE'S GOING TO DROWN -- !

The Ribbons laugh. At last, they allow Steve into the circle --

ROBBY  
Drop, Drip, drop --

-- in time for him to witness Drip Stilwell go under.

For good.

TRENT  
Maybe we should dial 911 --

ROBBY  
But there's nothing left of him --

TRENT  
Then maybe we should just dial 9 --

Laughter from the group... Except Steve DIVES INTO THE HOLE... INTO THE POND...

They stare after him... Long beat... Then...

TRENT  
Somebody's bucking for sainthood.



And, finally, Steve bursts through the surface, with Drip Stillwell... His skin has gone blue...

Steve attempts to resuscitate Drip... Pounds on his chest... Mouth-to-mouth... It's no use... Drip is gone...

Steve looks at The Blue Ribbons --

STEVE

People are going to hear about this.  
You won't get away with it.

They regard him for a beat... Blink, as if concerned. Then:

TRENT

Look! It's Randi and Lorna. And they've brought cookies and hot chocolate!

They skate away from the hole, toward the just-arrived Lorna and Randi, armed with tins of sweets and Thermoses of cocoa --

Steve sprawls on the ice, shivering, out of breath... He looks at Drip...

... whose unseeing eyes stare up at the sky...

INT. CRADLE BAY POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Slight pandemonium. OFFICERS escort WITNESSES in and out...

INT. CHIEF ROMAN'S OFFICE

Steve, huddled in a blanket, sits before CHIEF LOUIS ROMAN, 50s, the recipe for sour mash spread over his ruddy face in connect-the-dot capillaries.

CHIEF ROMAN

... and I appreciate everything you're saying. But understand this: the notion that the best kids in town, just watched as a classmate drowned. That's a bit tough to swallow...

STEVE

I overheard something the other night.  
A meeting at the high school --

A RAP on the door. CLARICE, the secretary, pops her head in.

CLARICE

Sorry, Lou. Edgar Caldicott is on line 4. Says he'd like to put together a support group for the accident witnesses --

CHIEF ROMAN  
Tell'im fine. Tell'im that'd be swell.

Clarice leaves. The Chief turns back to Steve.

CHIEF ROMAN (CONT.)  
You were sayin' you overheard somethin'

But something has caught Steve's eye --

STEVE  
Is that a picture of your son, sir?

CHIEF ROMAN  
That's right. You know my boy?

Steve goes the color of cream cheese --

STEVE  
Not really --

CHIEF ROMAN  
So what's this you overheard?

STEVE  
Now that I think about it, sir, it's probably nothing. I'll leave now --

CHIEF ROMAN  
But what about --

STEVE  
Goodbye, sir. Sorry to bother you --

Steve walks out of the office. Chief Roman watches him go --

We linger, long enough to get a look at the stand-up FRAMED PICTURE on the Chief's desk:

ANGLE: THE PICTURE -- a photograph. Of The Chief, in fishing gear, with a big ass bluefish, and his son, Charles.

Also known as Chug. Chug Roman.

INT. POLICE STATION

Steve walks out of Roman's office. Shaken. Officer Cox approaches...

OFFICER COX  
Chief wants me to give you a ride home.

STEVE  
That's okay --

OFFICER COX  
Chief wants me to. So I will.

INT. POLICE CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Cox drives... Steve beside him... Both casting sidelong glances at each other... After a few beats of silence...

OFFICER COX (CONT.)  
Terrible about the Stilwell kid.

Nothing from Steve...

OFFICER COX (CONT.)  
Brave a you to go in after him...

Still nothing. Cox takes a sharp left turn...

STEVE  
This is not the way to my house.

Cox looks at him. Darkly...

OFFICER COX  
Short-cut.

And Cox drives on. And it seems a most circuitous route. Fewer homes. Fewer street lamps... Steve turns to Cox...

STEVE  
Did you know Officer Kramer?

OFFICER COX  
He was my partner --

STEVE  
He ran off with some girl?

OFFICER COX  
Mary Jo. She was a little wild thing. Krames loved the little wild things...

STEVE  
She hot?

OFFICER COX  
She was hot. But me... I thought his wife was even hotter...

STEVE  
Kramer's wife...

OFFICER COX  
Damn straight. Hot wife. But like they say: our favorite breakfast can  
(MORE)

OFFICER COX (cont'd)  
 be cereal, till our neighbor's eatin' a  
 bagel...

Steve looks at him...

STEVE  
 "They" say that -- ?

OFFICER COX  
 Uh-huh.

And they have come to a stop outside the Clark house...

OFFICER COX  
 See? Short-cut...

STEVE  
 Thanks...

Steve gets out of the car... And Cox watches him go...

CUT TO:

A T.V. SCREEN

A BOY, 18, long hair, hoop earring, N.W.A. t-shirt, walks through the house carrying two Cokes. He sees the CAMERA. The IMAGE is shaky, hand-held, home-movieish. The boy is ALLEN CLARK. He's handsome, alive, too cool for school and rules.

ALLEN  
 Hey, what are you doing, dipshit?

We HEAR Steve's VOICE. He is running the camera --

STEVE (O.S.)  
 Say a few words, Mr. Clark.

Allen heads upstairs. Camera tracks him down the hall...

ALLEN  
 A few words? Okay: fuck 'em all and sleep till noon. How's that?

STEVE (O.S.)  
 Very profound.

ALLEN  
 Oh, you wanted profound? Okay. How about: don't worry about the snakes in the garden, when the spiders are in your bed... You like?

STEVE  
 Oh, yeah.

ALLEN

Thank-you. Do your viewers care to enter The Cave Of The Lovers and meet the sweet Iseult -- ?

STEVE (O.S.)

They'd love to --

And we enter Allen's BEDROOM. It's the room with the posters of the Chicago Bulls and Soundgarden and Jerry Garcia we'd seen earlier back at the Clark house in Chicago. Metallica's "One" plays on the stereo...

And, sitting there on the bed, is maybe the most beautiful girl any of us have ever laid eyes on. Her name is ABBEY.

STEVE (O.S.)

Hey, Abbey --

ABBHEY

Hey, Steve --

ALLEN (O.S.)

Not Abbey, you ragged pilgrim. This is but sweet Iseult. As I am Tristan. And love drives her ancient plough for us. And gives us an abundant store of all those things that go to make heaven here on earth...

(beat)

Wanna Coke, babe?

And she takes it, laughing... And he lies beside her... And they are quite a couple...

INT. CLARK HOME - DEN - NIGHT

The room is dark. Steve watches the videotape alone. A sad smile on his face --

The LIGHTS FLICK ON. Nathan Clark comes into the den --

NATHAN CLARK

Steve -- ?

Steve hits the remote. The images of Allen Clark and Abbey vanish.

NATHAN CLARK (CONT.)

You okay?

STEVE

Yeah --

Nathan clocks the TV. The Weather Channel. Some vacuous HAIRCUT talking about cold fronts --

STEVE (CONT.)

I'm fine.

Nathan looks dubious)

I'm fine --

And Nathan leaves, troubled. And Steve hits the remote. Rewind. Play. And there's Allen again. And Allen says:

ALLEN

... don't worry about the snakes in the garden, when the spiders are in your bed...

Steve hits rewind again. Play.

ALLEN (CONT.)

... when the spiders are in your bed...

And again...

ALLEN (CONT.)

... spiders are in your bed...

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Rachel and U.V. eat lunch at an empty table --

A BANNER is raised by Coach Bob and Miss Perkins: "GRADUATION LOOMS -- ORDER YOUR CAPS AND GOWNS NOW!"

QUICK SHOTS

Around the caf. The cliques Gavin documented all those pages ago. They have shrunken considerably. Only a few Motorheads, a trio of Microgeeks, a couple of Skaters, etc.

But the Blue Ribbon tables have flourished. Until they occupy very nearly half the caf...

RACHEL

You wanna grab a smoke -- ?

U.V.

Naw... I gotta sell some bud... I got like two customers left... This keeps up... I'm 7-11 guy...

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - BOILER ROOM - DAY

Rachel enters. She goes to "Cancer Corner" and reaches up into Gavin's hiding place for the pack of butts...

But her hand finds something else -- a VIDEOTAPE...

A NOISE and she retreats behind the furnace...

Only this time it's not Dorian Newberry...

This time it's Chug.

CHUG

Come out, come out, wherever you are --

He looks around for her --

CHUG (CONT.)

I saw you down here... I saw the look  
of a tried-and-true nic fit on your  
face... Come out, Rachel.

Rachel shrinks further into the darkness --

Only Chug is there.

RACHEL

NO -- !

He corners her. She has no place to run...

RACHEL (CONT.)

I'll scream --

CHUG

What do you think will happen if you  
do? I'm a Blue Ribbon. You're one  
notch above being spread-eagled on a  
pool-table pulling a ten-sailor train.

RACHEL

Jesus...

ANGLE - Dorian Newberry has entered the basement. He hunkers  
down in a far corner --

A pair of RATS shriek and disappear through a ventilation grid.

CHUG

Besides. I ain't gonna go banana pie  
on you, baby. I just want to know  
if... And me askin'... My friends'd  
not... Uh... Rachel, will you go to the  
prom with me -- ?

He looks almost contrite. She stares at him...

RACHEL

You're kidding, right?

CHUG

Will you?

RACHEL  
No, Chug. No, I won't.

CHUG  
Why not?

RACHEL  
How about that - you couldn't repulse me any more if you were made out of equal parts shit and maggots -- ?

He grabs for her, shoving her against the wall --

CHUG  
C'mon, baby. Give up the plate... Give up the plate for ol' Chug --

His gnarled, three-point-stance hands are on her breasts; his cafeteria-meatloaf breath is hot on her face --

RACHEL  
No -- !

CHUG  
Just 'cos I'm a Blue Ribbon, doesn't mean I don't have needs --

He undoes her jeans... and his own... his eyes aglow with the fires of his hormones... Crushing her, choking her... When --

-- Chug's HEAD SNAPS BACK. He turns on his heels. And walks across the boiler room, in something of a docile TRANCE.

He stands there. Gazing dolefully at the banded steel belly of the boilers... Eyes blank. Expression slack.

Rachel takes one last look and, still clutching the videotape, flees the basement...

Newberry steps out from his hiding spot. He's seen the whole thing. He walks over to the glazed Chug. Waves a hand over Chug's face. Nothing.

And something catches Newberry's eye:

A BLACK BOX

about the size of a portable television set. Tethered to a tangle of pipes behind the boilers --

A RED LIGHT on the box's face glows intermittently -- a high-pitched, barely-discernible squeal accompanies the glow.

Newberry approaches the box... Rubs at his whiskered chin...

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY



They call this section, The Heights. The fancier section of Cradle Bay. The circular drive/three car garage section.

Steve knocks on the door to one home, which opens to...

JULIE KRAMER

a pretty, if uptight, 34 year-old woman --

STEVE

Mrs. Kramer -- ?

JULIE KRAMER

Yes.

STEVE

Could I have a word with you?

JULIE KRAMER

No, I don't think so --

STEVE

It's about your husband --

This gets a reaction, though it's a slight one --

She allows him passage. He goes into the house. Julie scans the street, making sure no one's about. She closes the door.

INT. KRAMER HOUSE - DAY

As elegant as it is outside, the inside is a shabby mess: dirty sheets cover the furniture; the walls are rotting plaster. The drapes are drawn and, in the few shafts of sunlight that manage to penetrate, motes of dust hovers...

Trash is strewn about the floors, providing ample amusement for the dozen or so CATS that roam about.

JULIE KRAMER

I'm one of those cat people. I love cats. You like cats -- ?

STEVE

I hate cats --

Julie Kramer giggles and makes a drink from the cluttered bar.

JULIE KRAMER

Cocktail -- ?

STEVE

It's 9:30 in the morning --

Julie squints at him, as if trying to figure out the significance of his words...

JULIE KRAMER

You want to talk to me about Mitch.  
What about Mitch?

STEVE

Do you know how he died?

JULIE KRAMER

I was unaware he was dead --

STEVE

Where did you think he was?

JULIE KRAMER

I mean, I was aware he was dead.  
Intrinsically. But, common thought and  
rumor, is that he left me. He ran off.  
With a young girl. A young school girl

STEVE

Mary Jo Copeland --

JULIE KRAMER

So you're well-versed in common thought  
and rumor --

Julie Kramer takes a long draught of her drink.

JULIE KRAMER (CONT.)

I hate cats too, really. They're a  
lousy substitute for children.  
Especially when teaching them to  
read --

STEVE

Why don't you believe he ran off?

JULIE KRAMER

There are people who repair the damage.  
Who fix things. Mitch had suspicions.  
There were too many incidents. But the  
thing these people neglected to see,  
was that Mitch and I were insane in  
love... insane in love. He would no  
sooner run off with some little girl,  
than I could pull a chicken out of my  
ear. But these, these nefarious types.  
They don't get that; that human heart  
stuff. It's beyond them --

STEVE

Caldicott --

JULIE KRAMER

I think I'd like you to leave now --

STEVE

Why did you let them get away with it?

She opens the front door. Fixes Steve with a wounded stare. Her words are quiet:

JULIE KRAMER

What am I supposed to do? My man is gone. This town sucks for heroes. You looking to be the first -- ?

A CAT slips through the open door... slinks out...

EXT. JULIE KRAMER'S HOUSE - ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

Julie's cat bounds across the street... and up the steps of a HOUSE... into the lap of...

RANDI SKLAR

sitting on a porch swing in a pretty sun dress, nibbling from a tin of mixed biscuits...

Randi strokes the cat and watches Steve leaves the Kramer house. She hums.

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - FIELD HOUSE - DAY

The field house overlooks the various playing fields surrounding the high school. Two BOYS -- Dickie Atkinson and another BLUE RIBBON, toss a baseball nearby...

INT. FIELD HOUSE - DAY

Filthy windows overlook the field. The field house is crowded with lawn mowers, gardening tools, rusted tackling dummies.

Steve is here. With Dorian Newberry. And Newberry has a BLACK BOX - like the one in the basement - on his work bench...

STEVE

What is that thing?

NEWBERRY

Sound generator. Emits high frequency sound waves that are supposed to control rats. Some jokers sold a bunch of 'em to the town council a few years back -- on account of the rats from the Bay had become a problem...

Newberry spins the knob on the face of the box. An ear-splitting FREQUENCY HUM shrieks stridently...

Steve, startled, backs into a shelf, knocking over a jar of penny nails...

Steve gathers the nails, the box still squalling...

He stands up. And YELPS -- double-startled...

ANGLE REVEALS: At the dirty windows, their noses pressed up flat, their eyes dull: are Dickie Atkinson and his friend from the field...

Both boys gaze at the black box and its screaming squeal.

Newberry chuckles.

NEWBERRY

See?

STEVE

What is it doing to them?

NEWBERRY

Whatever makes 'em the way they are - smart and nasty and all - this, when activated, it draws 'em to it...

STEVE

Shouldn't we tell someone?

NEWBERRY

Tell 'em what? Who's gonna believe us? I'm the village idiot and you're some new kid having assimilation troubles. I'm staying the way I am -- ain't sayin' dick -- and you should too --

Newberry reaches out and tweaks the knob, killing the noise.

Dickie and the boy come out of their trance. They stare at Newberry and Steve, confused, blinking, disoriented...

DICKIE ATKINSON

Hello, shit-for-brains...

They giggle cruelly and walk away from the field house. Resume their catch.

Newberry and Steve watch them go. They regard the black box.

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - DAY

Steve walks by himself. PEOPLE pass him, wearing those smiles. Some of the ARCHETYPES Gavin pointed out in his caf speech (a skater; a hippy, etc.) are now clad in cardigans and goofy grins...

As if to reinforce this, a sign says: "GO FORWARD! GET READY FOR SENIOR WEEK" With a COUNTDOWN CALENDAR which reads: "ONLY 1 DAY TILL THE PROM... 2 DAYS TILL GRADUATION!!!"

Randi tears the number sheets... so it now reads: "ONLY 0 DAYS TILL THE PROM... 1 DAYS TILL GRADUATION!!!"

Steve turns up the collar of his jacket and walks on, ignoring their looks, their jeers, their wicked, wicked eyes.

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - DAY

Steve walks away from the school. A HORN HONKS, startling him.

Rachel pulls up in her pick-up. Opens the passenger door:

Hop in --  
RACHEL

No thanks --  
STEVE

She hits the brakes. Jumps from the truck. Comes around, opens the passenger door, and basically THROWS HIM INTO the cab. Slamming the door after him. She climbs behind the wheel. Peels off.

Like I said: hop in --  
RACHEL

INT. RACHEL'S PICK-UP - DAY - MOVING

Rachel drives, Steve beside her...

The Rebel-Without-A-Friend shit is getting old, Clark --  
RACHEL

He looks at her. She drives on. Beat. Then:

Where we going?  
STEVE

My place. You need to see something --  
RACHEL

EXT. RACHEL'S APARTMENT HOUSE - COOK'S RIDGE - DAY

Cook's Ridge is the government-subsized low income housing section of Cradle Bay. Pre-fab duplexes are surrounded by numbered parking spaces and shrubs and trees of the same height.

INT. RACHEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cramped and squalid. Her mother, DETRICE, 40, faded blue, like a woman in a Roy Orbison song, watches TV and smokes --

RACHEL

Detrice, this is Steve. Steve, this is Detrice. She works nights. Afternoons are for relaxing. Right, Dee?

DETRICE

You got it, baby. Steve's cute --

RACHEL

Not your type. No tattoos --

DETRICE

We can fix that --

She tries a sultry smile on Steve... One that used to work in the old days... Steve nods...

DETRICE (CONT.)

Shouldn't you kids be in school?

But the kids have vanished into Rachel's room. Detrice shrugs and looks at the TV --

DETRICE (CONT.)

(to the TV)

Buy a vowel, you salad bar --

INT. RACHEL'S ROOM - DAY

Overflowing with tapes and CDs and magazines, but also a COMPUTER SET-UP and neatly arranged notebooks, textbooks, diskette files and stacks of paper. Rachel closes the door. She clocks Steve clocking the papers --

RACHEL

College applications. I'm outta here. Cook's Ridge, Cradle Bay, Detrice, Blue Ribbons, kiss my ass goodbye --

She drops to her knees, reaches behind the desk, to a hiding place there. Her hand comes out holding the videotape --

RACHEL (CONT.)

I found this in Cancer Corner --

Rachel pops it into her VCR, turns on the TV --

ANGLE - the TV. Snow. Then:

GAVIN STRICK

in his darkened basement, camcording himself. Tool's "Stinkfist" thumping in the b.g. Gavin smokes a cigarette, speaks into the camera --

GAVIN

(on TV)

Hey, Rae. Gavin Strick, here, live and unplugged. I guess if you've found this and I've tossed my Rage records and joined the wrestling team... then you know. Am I'm hangin' with Trent and Robby and the rest of The Robots? Am I capable only of straight A's and sadism? God, I hope not. But if I am - check out a town up north. Bishop Flats. The Mad Doctor, Edgar Caldicott's last stomping grounds. Check out the hospital on 235 Belknap. Go to the building in the back. It'll look deserted. It's not. I discovered it in my investigations. I'm gonna go up there one of these days... But this is in case I don't make it. They call them "The Bishop Flats Eleven." Whatever that means. Wait till nightfall. Bring the new kid, Stevie Boy. It'll convince him, if he's still not convinced. Don't go it alone.

(beat)

I think what I'll miss the most are Eddie Van Halen's guitar solos --

(he wails one; beat)

I gotta split. My smoke's down to the filter, and I gotta go get paranoid. See ya, baby. Hope you graduate. Love ya. This is Gavin Strick, reporting live from The Reconstruction...

The picture goes back to snow. Tears stand in Rachel's eyes --

RACHEL

I really miss that fat bastard --

STEVE

Bishop Flats --

RACHEL

It's a four hour drive --

STEVE

Were you planning on going to the prom tonight -- ?

RACHEL

Yeah, right. You down -- ?

STEVE

Let's go --

Steve's expression is set. He's practically smoldering.

RACHEL

Razor --

And, in PRE-LAP, Eddie Van Halen's ripping INTRO to "Poundcake" walls --

EXT. PACIFIC NORTHWEST ROAD / INT. RACHEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Rachel drives, Steve beside her. Van Halen on the tapedeck.

RACHEL

Detrice is mostly cool, but we don't talk too much. I mean, she's not exactly a role model --

She drives on. The highway flanked with thunderous forests of redwoods and sequoias --

RACHEL (CONT.)

Remember the PEANUTS cartoons -- how all the teachers, the store owners, the parents, all spoke in that voice?

(imitating voice)

Waaa-waa-waa-waa... remember?

STEVE

Yeah --

RACHEL

I mean, all my life, that's how they sounded to me. Like what fuckin' language are you guys speaking anyways?

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - ROONEY'S ENGLISH - DAY

Rooney takes attendance...

MR. ROONEY

Steve Clark? Has anyone seen Steve Clark?

Nothing from the class. Rooney tsk tsks. Trent and Robby and Gavin share a baleful look...

EXT. HIGHWAY ACCESS ROAD - DAY

It winds along the spine of these mountains, the road hugging the ridge, twisting with the cold, clear creeks --

HIKERS hump the dells and canyons along trails on either side.

They pass through sleepy VILLAGES, with their antique shops, souvenir stands, bed and breakfasts, etc.

They cross a BRIDGE and, there, sown into a valley carved wide enough to hold the small village is...



BISHOP FLATS

They exchange a look and motor down Main Street, into town --  
Bishop Flats seems peaceful enough, as they pass a columned  
courthouse and matching Congregational Church and town hall.  
Smoke chuffs from brick chimneys, as the church bells RING --

RACHEL  
Seems nice enough --

EXT. 235 BELKNAP ROAD

It is a large, hospital-looking sprawl of mauve buildings and  
lush landscape. A sign says "Rossmore House." Yes, it looks  
like a sanitarium...

They drive to the back... To an old brick 3-story, circled by a  
stand of majestic maples --

RACHEL  
Now what do we do?

STEVE  
We wait. You heard the man.  
Nightfall.

RACHEL  
Razor --

INT. CLARK HOME - DAY

Cynthia makes up Steve's bed. Tucking in the bottom sheet - she  
feels something beneath the mattress... Removes it...

It is Gavin's GUN... Cynthia stares at the oily weapon. The  
look on her face is one of supreme agony...

EXT. BELKNAP ROAD / INT. RACHEL'S TRUCK - NIGHT - LATER

Rachel's truck is parked there. Steve and Rachel inside.

STEVE  
... he was wild, no doubt. But he was  
also brilliant. I mean, on another  
wavelength. If he'd made it through  
his teens, he would've been something  
amazing --

Steve fiddles with the radio.

STEVE (CONT.)  
And Abbey was incredible. To meet her  
was to fall in love with her. But  
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT.) (cont'd)

CONT.)

nobody wanted them together. Not my folks. Certainly not hers. Not her ex-boyfriend. Or her brothers. Or his old girlfriends. Everyone thought she was bad for him. And he was bad for her. I dunno. I never met two people more good for each other. But they're being together caused so many people so much pain. You know the story of Tristan and Iseult? The whole thing deals with the helplessness of lovers. That part of love that is, you know, destroys. Boy, they really glommed onto that whole legend. Which is amazing when you hear how they ended...

Steve coughs... Clears his throat... Struggles to go on:

STEVE (CONT.)

Allen couldn't take it anymore. All the people angling to break them up. So they planned to run away. Go to California or something. The plan was to meet at this playground by school. And take off. Abbey was going to tell her parents, even though Allen never told mine. But she wanted to make a clean break. So she told 'em. And they freaked. And locked her in her room. And Abbey's brother - this shitball named Frank - he drove to the playground. And Frank told Allen that Abbey wasn't coming. That she decided to stay. But he should go on himself. Allen freaked out. He couldn't believe it. He sat at that playground for hours. Till it got dark. Till the bottle of Jack Daniels was drained. And then he did it. He had a gun. I don't know from where. And he shot himself. And Abbey finally forced her way out of her house. And made it to the playground. And she found him.

STEVE

And she picked up the gun. And she did it to herself... Just like that... Just like Tristan and Iseult...

Steve mists with the memory --

STEVE (CONT.)

And six months to the day they died - on what would have been Allen's 19th birthday - Dad told us we were moving. My parents are prime candidates for the doctor's cures. They probably only wish they'd met him sooner. They probably figure if they had, Allen'd still be alive. Running track and banging blue blood babes in the Ivy League or something. Maybe they're right. Maybe he would be...

Beat. Steve shrugs. He offers her a strained smile.

STEVE (CONT.)

And on that note --

He gets out of the truck. Rachel wipes her eyes and follows.

EXT. BELKNAP ROAD - NIGHT

They crouch-run to the rear of the hospital and its darkened windows --

They creep to the door --

RACHEL

(whispered)

Maybe this isn't such a good idea --

STEVE

(whispered)

Think of it as our first date --

He offers her a grin. And pushes open the door which, naturally, goes with a CREAK --

INT. ROSSMORE HOUSE

Wide corridors... Bad buzzing fluorescents cast it in a mealy glow... TV NOISE from further down one dark hall --

RACHEL

What's that smell -- ?

They tip-toe into the shadows, when suddenly --

A FIGURE lurches at them... A YOUNG MAN in a dirty bathrobe... Rachel stifles a shriek...

The young man is working furiously at his MOUTH -- which is BLEEDING PROFUSELY... We soon realize what he is doing: He is FLOSSING HIS TEETH. Flossing his teeth with an insane fervor.

The young man KEENS and scampers down the hall, out of sight.

Steve takes Rachel's hand, leading her down the corridor... into the

TELEVISION ROOM --

Rachel chokes back a gasp. Steve staggers, as our --

REVERSE ANGLE REVEALS --

Here, in this cozy family room are

TEN PEOPLE

in their early 20s, sitting in a careful arrangement of EASY CHAIRS... all before a WIDE SCREEN TV --

They all wear those GRINS, their eyes dull...

And they are all engaged in some manner of obsessive behavior.

-- One BOY makes and remakes his TIE over and over again...

-- A GIRL applies MAKEUP with her compact, though she already has two inches of the stuff caked to her...

-- Another BOY COMBS his thick hair furiously...

-- A GIRL KNITS, trance-like... working on a SCARF that is already puddled below her, 25 feet long --

And all of them watch the TV, eyes glued to it... The TV broadcasting...

THE HOME SHOPPING NETWORK

Now pitching a diamond and emerald pendant -- the big FINGER with the long, red-painted nail stroking it to give it scale; the unctuous, cloying voice of the female HAWKER...

But the inhabitants of the living room watch the TV, rapt, like it was a broadcast of Dealey Plaza, circa November '63.

They pay no mind to the intruders, though one BOY, incessantly BRUSHING HIS TEETH, turns to them, face smeared with Crest and drool.

He gives them an idiot's grin and blows Rachel a drippy kiss.

Rachel has backed away... Backed into a

PRIVATE ROOM

where a GIRL sits. She is perhaps 26. Long blonde hair. A clear, expressionless face. She could be beautiful. But something's not right...

She sits in a chair. In a pretty flannel robe. She gazes dully at a spot on the wall. She rocks back and forth.

GIRL

Meet the musical little creatures that hide among the flowers...

RACHEL

What?

GIRL

Meet the musical little creatures that hide among the flowers. Meet the musical little creatures that hide among the flowers. Meet the musical little creatures that hide among the flowers...

Over and over she repeats these ten words. Over and over and over. In a chirpy little sunshine voice that belies the zombie mojo...

Steve joins Rachel. And they watch the girl as she chants... And then:

RACHEL

Steve --

And he looks at her. And she's pointing. To a NAME-PLATE on the DOOR to the girl's room. And it reads:

BETTY CALDICOTT

EXT. THE ROSSMORE HOUSE - NIGHT

Rachel BURSTS OUT THE REAR DOOR and drops to her knees, freaked. When she opens her eyes, Steve is there... He looks grim...

STEVE

C'mon --

And they head for the truck...

ANGLE - a second-story WINDOW. A WOMAN - in nurse's whites - watches the two kids run into the darkness...

EXT. RACHEL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Tears off, spraying gravel as it heads out of town --

INT. RACHEL'S TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Steve drives, Rachel watches their wake. The moon glows above.

RACHEL

How can nobody not know there's something fully fucked-up in Bishop Flats?

STEVE

Figure the townspeople keep the secret. Figure Caldicott cruises through here, tries out his stuff - but there are still a few bugs - so he regroups and moves on. Leaving the good citizens of Bishop Flats to take care of the mess -

RACHEL

But his daughter. His own daughter.

They share a look. No shit. This dude's all bad.

CUT TO:

A MIRRORED BALL

revolving from the ceiling.

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - GYMNASIUM - SENIOR PROM - NIGHT

The ball throws little parameciums of light over everything.

The BAND, "The Midwich Cuckoos," are a rag tag bunch of rockers, jamming a pretty awesome cover of Kiss' prom-night staple "Rock And Roll All Night."

During the solo, the lead SINGER goes over to the BASSIST --

SINGER

What's up with this? Do we suck or somethin'?

The bassist shrugs and a...

REVERSE ANGLE: allows us to see the crowd for the first time: glittering, shimmering, a sea of tuxes and gowns.

Only they stand there. Hovering. Buzzing around in little clusters. Huddled in little groups. Trent, Randi, Andy, Lorna et al.

Gargoyles in evening wear. Won't dance. Don't ask 'em...

EXT. CRADLE BAY FERRY - MOVING - NIGHT

The ferry is fairly empty. Dark. Rachel's truck is the only one in the carport. They sit in the truck, blowing smoke-rings.

RACHEL

This is just how I pictured my prom  
would be...

STEVE

Sorry...

RACHEL

Please.

(she looks about)

I was deflowered in this room. Terry  
Nolan's Chevy Bel-Air. He was older --

STEVE

Leave it to you to lose your virginity  
in a floating parking garage --

RACHEL

I remember the song. Poison. "Every  
Rose Has Its Thorn."

Steve looks startled --

RACHEL (CONT.)

You, too -- ?

STEVE

Yeah --

Beat.

RACHEL

I'm scared, man. Tell me you got the  
full-on razor plan, Stevie Boy... Just  
tell me that...

A look. He can't. Beat. So he leans into her. His mouth  
finding hers. Her arms around his neck.

They go slow down... Down, down down...

This is urgent, desperate, necessary lovemaking. Somebody cue  
the power ballad...

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

Rachel drops Steve off in front of his dark house. They sit in  
silence for a minute...

STEVE

You okay -- ?

RACHEL

Oh, yeah. Sex on a ferry. That's the  
cure that's never failed me... No...  
No, I'm not okay --

STEVE

There must be something we can do tonight... We need proof... Proof of what he's doing here in town...

RACHEL

You can do whatever you want. I'm gonna go home, burn a serious blunt - and try to forget The Bishop Flats Eleven... at least, for now. Tomorrow, I'll graduate. And then...

She shrugs. She moves for him. They kiss.

And, just as things are cooking up again...

The OUTSIDE LIGHT GOES on...

And Cynthia Clark is at the front door...

CYNTHIA CLARK

Steve -- ?

They separate.

RACHEL

Momms interruptus...

STEVE

I should get in --

RACHEL

Right.

Beat. Steve nods and gets out. Rachel watches him go... Then drives off.

Steve's mother has left the front door open for him. He can hear his parents ARGUING inside.

Steve stops before the door. He doesn't go in. Rather, he goes to the garage. Climbs on his bike. Peddles off...

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - FRONT CORRIDORS - NIGHT

A door is JIMMIED OPEN... It is Steve, penlight in hand...

The corridors are dark... creepy... Steve makes his way down their length...

INT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - EDGAR CALDICOTT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Steve BURSTS into the darkened office. Penlight in his teeth, he goes to the file cabinets, begins scanning files... taking in their facts and figures, when --



-- THE LIGHTS ARE SWITCHED ON -- !!

Edgar Caldicott is in the doorway... Cruel smile on his lips.

CALDICOTT

You're becoming quite the second-story man, aren't you, Steven --

STEVE

I've been to Bishop Flats --

CALDICOTT

Is that up north? I have yet to adequately explore the Pacific Northwest. I'm an East Coast boy, you know --

STEVE

You fucked-up there --

CALDICOTT

Watch your language.

STEVE

I saw the Bishop Flats Eleven --

CALDICOTT

Nice name. Makes them sound somehow mythical. Notorious. Like a radical Sixties group. The Bishop Flats Eleven... Although now, I suppose, one would have to call them The Bishop Flats Zero. Thanks to your meddling, they had to be -- what's a good, mythical word? Eliminated? Eradicated? Erased?

STEVE

Your daughter --

CALDICOTT

Yes. She'll be spared. Moved.

STEVE

You used her like a guinea pig.

CALDICOTT

I used her as the basis for all my work. She was a troubled girl. A bad girl. She couldn't function without drugs and boys and alcohol...

STEVE

She's sure functioning now --

CALDICOTT

A lot of people died so Jonas Salk  
could find the cure to polio; so Chain  
and Florey could discover penicillin --

STEVE

You're comparing yourself to them?

CALDICOTT

Science is God, Steven --

Steve thrusts a file into Caldicott's face --

STEVE

Robby Stewart was a D student. Then he  
became a Blue Ribbon. Now he's  
straight A. The same with Effenson,  
Roman, Atkinson. All down the line --

CALDICOTT

What's the problem with that?

STEVE

They're not the same people --

CALDICOTT

You're right. They're better --

STEVE

The Blue Ribbons are evil. They commit  
murder...

CALDICOTT

A glitch. A bug. We're looking into  
it. You want to cure cancer, you've  
got to kill a few white mice...

STEVE

That's a fucked-up metaphor. Even for  
you --

CALDICOTT

Again with the swear words...

STEVE

Drip Stilwell's parents didn't want him  
in your club - so Drip died...

CALDICOTT

Drip Stilwell fell through the ice.  
You're going to blame that on us?

STEVE

People need to know --

CALDICOTT

People do know. S.A.T. scores have risen thirty-seven percent in the past two years; the mean GPA has risen forty-three percent; the applicant-to-acceptance ratio among CB High kids to Ivy League schools is the best on the West Coast since my arrival; both the football team and the basketball team have made it to the State finals. People know, Steven. Maybe you too, once you accept this, will leave mediocrity behind and climb up on the bus --

STEVE

Your own fucking daughter --

CALDICOTT

Watch your language, fellow --

(beat)

If we've learned anything from the scientific revolution - it's that you can't stop progress --

(leans into Steve; voice  
a hiss)

And if you break into my office again, you little fuck, you'll be power-flossing in a Bishop Flats basement before you can say "Pavlov's Dog" --

And Caldicott moves for him... And Steve ducks and fades and PUNCHES Caldicott in the solar plexus... Caldicott goes down with a huff... And Steve is out of there...

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

Steve bikes up to his now-dark house...

INT. CLARK HOUSE - STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve begins dialing the phone... His parents appear...

CYNTHIA CLARK

What are you doing?

STEVE

Calling Rachel. Why are you still up?

NATHAN CLARK

This came today --

Nathan holds a piece of PAPER --

NATHAN CLARK (CONT.)

Your grades, Steven --

STEVE

I assume I didn't do so hot --

NATHAN CLARK

No, you did not.

STEVE

Whatever --

Steve brushes past them, heading downstairs... Nathan screams after him --

NATHAN CLARK

GODDAMMIT, YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO US!

Steve turns... Looks at them for the first time...

STEVE

Do what to you -- ?

NATHAN CLARK

We're not going to live through it again, Steven. We're not -- !

STEVE

Where's Lindsay?

HEADLIGHTS from outside. Cars pulling up --

CYNTHIA CLARK

Everything we do, Steve -- we do for you --

STEVE

What are you talking about? Where's my sister?

More headlights --

And, from out of the kitchen, steps Trent, Gavin, Robby, still in their TUXES --

GAVIN

May I have this dance, Stevie Boy?

Steve backs up - into Lorna and Randi, in gowns and corsages --

ROBBY

The Blue Ribbon Mother Ship has landed --

STEVE

What do you want?

GAVIN

(Jim Morrison)

We want the world and we want it now!

And here comes Andy Effenson... And Dickie...

ANDY

March or die, Stevie Boy...

DICKIE ATKINSON

Zombie see, zombie do --

STEVE

Dad --

NATHAN CLARK

Relax, son. This is a good thing --

STEVE

Where's Lindsay?

ROBBY

The Struggle Within, Steven. You wear  
it well --

TRENT

Go forward --

LORNA

Move ahead --

ANDY

Be excellent --

They close in. Steve backs up slowly --

GAVIN

Ice, ice, baby --

And Steve makes a dread break for the back of the house.  
Hurtling forward, he DIVES out of the dining room WINDOW --

The Blue Ribbons are dumbstruck. They stare at the window.

TRENT

Fudge.

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Blue Ribbons beat the woods in their tuxes and gowns --

Steve runs through the thickly-settled forest --

The Ribbons call his name --

Steve runs on --

A FIGURE leaps out from behind a tree, tackling him --

It is Chug --

They roll about on the ground --

At last, Steve introduces Chug's skull to a tree stump. Steve runs off...

A CHASE ENSUES. The woods swarming with tireless Blue Ribbons in formal wear...

Steve runs faster. Harder. Eventually receding into the night.

EXT. COOK'S RIDGE - NIGHT

A breathless Steve arrives at the entrance to Cook's Ridge, Rachel's housing development --

Only Officer Cox is there, in his cruiser, standing guard... Eyes peeled...

And before Steve can make a plan, NOISES from behind him...

As the Blue Ribbons continue their search like the tuxedoed Terminators they are...

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Steve sleeps in a tree-shrouded culvert. He stirs. Gets to his feet... Walks...

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - DAY

The phone RINGS. Detrice answers. It is Steve.

STEVE

Rachel there -- ?

DETRICE

No. She's gone to graduation. I'm on the way myself... Who's this?

But Steve has hung up...

EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

U.V. pedals his bike, scrawny legs pumping --

QUICK TRAVELING SHOTS

We follow U.V.'s journey, seeing a very different Cradle Bay than we'd noticed previously --

COP CARS scour the streets --

Blue Ribbons walk through the center of town -- window shopping, eating yogurt, talking -- all the while their eyes watchful, their mouths pinched, searching --

There are NO Deadheads frolicking about the park... The bench is empty... Only the Frisbee remains... Abandoned. Forgotten.

At the Cradle Bay Ferry Launch, a SENTRY has been posted: Officer Cox questions cars that wish to cross --

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The school FIELD is being prepped for Graduation Ceremonies.

Caldicott stands at the lectern, going through some papers --

Dorian Newberry sets up the mike nearby. He bumps into the lectern, knocking over Caldicott's papers --

CALDICOTT

Goddamnit, Newberry! How can one man be such a moron -- ?

Newberry gathers the fallen papers. Caldicott shoves him --

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

I'll do it. Go away --

Trent and Andy arrive at the field. Caldicott looks at them.

Trent shakes his head. No.

Caldicott fumes. Trent and Andy begin unfolding chairs.

EXT. THE HEIGHTS - JULIE KRAMER'S HOUSE - DAY

Steve walks up to the house. RINGS the bell.

The door opens to Julie Kramer. She scowls at Steve's filthy clothes and cuts and contusions...

STEVE

Hello, Mrs. Kramer. I was here last week? About your husband?

JULIE KRAMER

Yes.

STEVE

Could I talk to you? I've found proof of what's going on. And I could sure use a place to hide out until--

She retreats into her house. Steve frowns. Follows her in.

INT. KRAMER HOUSE - DAY

Uh-oh. If it was a bomb site before, it's a hermetically-sealed petri dish now. The dirty sheets have been removed, revealing lovely brocade furniture. The place has been dusted, shined, polished, waxed.

Julie Kramer turns to him...

STEVE

Where are the cats?

JULIE KRAMER

I tired of them... They're so darn feline, do you know what I mean? Secretive. Sinister. Dare-I-say-it? Catty...!

She giggles into one frilly-handkerchiefed hand...

Steve swallows. A look of dread asserting itself...

STEVE

Could I have a drink, Mrs. Kramer? Maybe some whiskey?

JULIE KRAMER

No. I'm afraid not. I have no alcohol in the house. No cats, no alcohol. I've replaced them both --

STEVE

With what -- ?

JULIE KRAMER

With these...

She goes to a large plastic fish tank...

JULIE KRAMER (CONT.)

Sea Monkeys! Amazing instant pets. What a hobby. Just add water and the fun begins.

Her voice is a drone. Her grin completes the picture...

STEVE

They got to you...

JULIE KRAMER

This is my Micro-Vue Aquarium, with its patented Aero-Vent Cover.

STEVE

Mrs. Kramer --



JULIE KRAMER  
The fate of a small world is in my  
hands --

STEVE  
Jesus --

JULIE KRAMER  
Look at them. They do tricks. They  
play baseball --

Steve goes to her, grabs her, shakes her.

STEVE  
What did they do to you? What did they  
do?

JULIE KRAMER  
Absolutely Guaranteed To Live --

Steve releases her. Julie giggles and leans down to examine the  
tiny particles dancing and twirling in the aquarium.

JULIE KRAMER (CONT.)  
They do tricks. They play baseball...

SMASH CUT TO:

STEVE

running like a wild man through the woods...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

... at last, he comes to a stop. Catching his breath.

All appears quiet. Birds chirp in the trees.

When suddenly, a CRY splits the silence. The agonized SCREECH  
of an animal.

Steve comes to a clearing in the woods. And there, sitting on  
the ground, is

SHANNON

Lindsay's little friend. And there is a black CAT in her lap.

AND SHANNON IS STRANGLING THE CAT!!!

And she looks up. Her eyes vacant. And we know that smile...

Steve watches, horrified... And we HEAR O.S.

## PRINCIPAL WEATHERS (O.S.)

It gives me great pleasure to introduce today's commencement speaker: our own Doctor Edgar Caldicott. Doctor -- ?

And Steve runs off into the brush --

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The field is packed with PEOPLE sitting in white folding chairs set up before a long, lectern-topped riser... We GLIDE ALONG the faces of the graduating SENIORS, seeing all those grins below all those mortarboards.

Caldicott, in his best cotton-and-viscose Hugo Boss summer suit, takes the lectern --

## CALDICOTT

Thank-you. Thank-you. I had a patient once, many years ago, who told me he suffered from a delusion - he thought he was a volcano. He felt that, at any given time, he may erupt. He did not know how that eruption would manifest itself, but he was quite sure it would occur. I told him this was not a curse, not a suffering, but rather a splendid thing; that this was, in effect, humanity's sacred essence...

ANGLE -- The faces of graduating Blue Ribbons (Trent, Andy, Randi, etc.) below their caps -- looking truly inspired --

## CALDICOTT (CONT.)

I, myself, was a peaceful man, working at a university in Boston, studying pharmacotherapy and its applications in areas of neurology. I had a beautiful daughter, who was troubled. Tempted by the wicked vagaries of adolescence. In working with her, in helping her to come through it, unscathed, I discovered the great resource that is the human mind. That is the pillar of higher wisdom we need to support healthy, rich lives...

ANGLE - Blue Ribbons, moved to near-tears...

## CALDICOTT (CONT.)

Bad children turn into bad adults. Good children, like those I see before me, turn into good adults. A credit to their generation.

ANGLE - Dorian Newberry. At the back of the crowd. Listening to the speech -- disgust showing through his craggy features.

CALDICOTT (CONT.)

As the Rabbi of Nazareth said: "You did not choose me; no, I chose you." Indeed, young people of Cradle Bay. I implore you: go forward. Answer your cosmic calling. Go out. Be the volcanoes. Erupt. Erupt. Erupt. You have been given entitlement to a great adventure. Seize it. Choose it. Go forward. You are the musical little creatures that hide among the flowers. And remember: the most wonderful thing about tomorrow, is that it holds all the promise of today. Thank-you...

And the crowd thunders its approval, the Blue Ribbons leaping to their feet in applause --

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - UPPER PARKING LOT - DAY

Overlooking the field. Rachel's TRUCK is parked. Steve is here. He approaches the truck --

The driver's door is wide open. The KEYS are in the ignition.

Steve is looking about in the truck, when he is TAPPED ON THE SHOULDER --

-- he whirls, fists bunched. But it is only U.V.

U.V.

Jeez, man. Chill. Where ya been?

STEVE

You seen Rachel? She left her door open and the keys in the ignition...

U.V.

She's just pumped, man. To graduate and bail The Bay... What's going on?

But Steve moves to the fence, giving them a good vantage point from which to watch the ceremony --

EXT. LECTERN - DAY

Principal Weathers reads the names and STUDENTS come up the riser, shakes his hand, accept their diploma, and stand down.

PRINCIPAL WEATHERS

(into mike)

Nancy Wade...

EXT. UPPER PARKING LOT - DAY

Steve scans the crowd for Rachel --

STEVE

They're on the ws. She should be coming up --

EXT. LECTERN

Principal Weathers shakes another student's hand. Into mike:

PRINCIPAL WEATHERS

Rachel Wagner --

EXT. UPPER PARKING LOT

Steve watches, waits.

But no one stands from the senior section.

PRINCIPAL WEATHERS

Rachel Wagner --

Steve begins to panic --

STEVE

Where is she -- ?

EXT. LECTERN

Principal Weathers shrugs into his mike --

PRINCIPAL WEATHERS

Oh, well. Can't blame a guy for trying.

(crowd laughter)

Uh -- Jeremy Wallace --

And JEREMY stands to collect his prize.

EXT. UPPER PARKING LOT

Steve is aghast.

STEVE

Where is she, U.V.?

U.V.

I -- I dunno, man --

Steve picks up a softball-sized rock... He skirts the fence...

U.V. (CONT.)

What are you doing -- ?

Steve begins to walk quickly down to the ceremony --

U.V. CONT.

Steve -- Don't --

But Steve is gone. Walking from the parking lot to the field. He's toned. Furious eyes fixed on Caldicott --

STEVE

Where is she...?

ANGLE - The Blue Ribbons. Trent taps Andy. Points.

Newberry sees Steve, sees his terrified look. Follows him.

Robby, Dickie, Chug, start after Steve... who seems headed for the riser. For Caldicott.

A few PEOPLE begin to stand... Newberry can no longer see Steve.

Steve is nearing the riser... Nearing Caldicott... He's like an assassin... The Blue Ribbons are the Secret Service... Caldicott is the President... They are all converging, when --

-- EVERYONE STANDS... For the ceremonies are over. The class has been graduated...

The seniors CHEER... MORTARBOARDS are hurled into the air...

U.V. is lost in the tangle of celebration...

Caldicott gives us a smug smirk from his place on the riser...

STEVE

fights the crowd...

He is jarred from behind, by a hypodermic-wielding Robby...

ROBBY

It's time to graduate, Stevie Boy --

DICKIE ATKINSON

Off to an institute of higher learning.

Steve sags into Dickie's arms...

ROBBY

You ain't seen nuthin' till you're down on the muffin...

The cheers.. The pomp and circumstance... The last thing Steve sees are all those FLOATING MORTARBOARDS, sailing through the sky in glorious SLO-MO...

TO BLACK:

FADE UP:

STÉVE

comes to. Strapped to a gurney. Wheeled down a white corridor, banks of fluorescents driving away all shadows --

Through swinging double doors. Into...

INT. TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Huge, like an operating theater. Formica, stainless steel, banks of lights, gurneys, work tables and, at the back --

A ROW OF CHAIRS

like La-Z-Boys, vast and bulky

Steve is dragged over to a single chair --

Things are fuzzy, but he can make out the CHAIRS on either side, and vaguely, their OCCUPANTS: in one chair is A KID (maybe a skater or hippy we remember from Gavin's lecture). And next to him, is a GIRL.

And it is RACHEL --

She is hooked up to a myriad of EQUIPMENT. I.V. trees around her, tubes dripping into her arms, face partially obscured by some kind of ELECTRONIC HELMET, covering her eyes and ears.

Tubes and wires from Rachel's arm and neck lead to an input box near a biofeedback monitor --

A lab-coated MAN (who we recognize as the CORONER from the morgue scene) hooks up Steve to the same equipment in another chair --

Dickie stands by the Skater's chair --

DICKIE ATKINSON

It isn't like you think, Stevie Boy. It's a new kind of cool. You become better, freer. I can't explain it, but I've never felt so alive in my life --

ROBBY

"Humanity's sacred essence -- "

The I.V. tubes are fixed to Steve's right arm --

DICKIE ATKINSON

"A pillar of higher wisdom -- "

A machine BEEPS. And the Coroner switches on a whirring SURGICAL PRESS before the Skater's RIGHT EYE. Steve watches.

ROBBY

A new and finer age --

The PRESS HUMS as a huge diamond-tipped HYPODERMIC needle is revealed. Its dazzling POINT, inches from the Skater's EYEBALL, has a pointed CHIP attached to its TIP.

DICKIE ATKINSON

-- which no lapse in human character  
can ever make obsolete --

The needle is THRUST FORWARD, PUNCTURING THE EYE... It plunges into the brain... The Skater's body shakes and shudders...

ROBBY

Control yourself --

DICKIE ATKINSON

Go forward --

ROBBY

Be the ball --

The hypo is RETRACTED from the Skater's eye -- coated with GLOTS OF VISCERA -- the POINTED CHIP TIP now conspicuously ABSENT. The Skater's body goes SLACK...

EXT. WHALEN HOME - GRADUATION PARTY - NIGHT

A tent has been set up in the backyard and the GUESTS are beginning to arrive. A BAND plays on the gazebo. Blue Ribbons revel in this, the dawn of their futures...

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - AUTO SHOP - NIGHT

Empty. But for a single car - an EL CAMINO - backed in.

Dorian Newberry uses the shop WINCH to load a huge OBJECT, covered with a blanket, into the bed of the car.

INT. THE LAB - TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Edgar Caldicott has arrived. Robby hands him a clipboard... He peruses the charts and notations...

ROBBY

Weinstock's done. Puncture complete.  
The girl is in her seventh hour of  
prep. And Steven is just under way --

Caldicott goes to Steve... Grabs him by the hair... Steve is woozy, but retains some of his fight --

CALDICOTT

Who've you told -- ?

STEVE  
Everyone --

CALDICOTT  
Who've you told -- ?

He wrenches Steve around by the hair...

STEVE  
Let the girl go --

CALDICOTT  
Who've you told -- ?

STEVE  
The fuckin' world. Mike Wallace should  
be here any minute.

Caldicott leans into Steve's ear... Spits:

CALDICOTT  
When you're done? When you're a Blue  
Ribbon? You're going to come work for  
me. You're going to be my bitch. And  
I'm going to make you do things you  
never knew human beings were capable  
of...

But, before Steve can react, the HELMET is snapped down over his  
head... and he begins to go under...

ROBBY  
See you in twenty and twenty --

DICKIE ATKINSON  
Yeah: in twenty hours - and twenty  
times more capable of achieving all  
that you are --

STEVE'S POV - BLACKNESS. But for a single amber PULSE. A  
light. Beeping on/off, somewhere in the deep, somber pitch.

CALDICOTT (O.S.)  
Have you engaged his "H8 Red?"

ROBBY (O.S.)  
Not yet --

CALDICOTT  
Do it. It's a good one. I programmed  
it myself. With his parents' help --

Robby speaks into a microphone --

ROBBY  
Engage Unit 3's "H8 Red" --



Caldicott smiles at Robby and Dickie, as we go back into:

STEVE'S POV:

Steve finds himself in --

INT. A HOUSE - DAY

-- A BOY, 18, long hair, hoop earring, N.W.A. t-shirt walks by us (We are seeing all of this as if we/CAMERA are Steve -- though it has the slightly flat, two-dimensionality consistent with VIRTUAL REALITY)...

It is ALLEN CLARK. Our brother. And then we recognize it: for this is Steve's VIDEO. Only it has been electronically-altered and sampled and re-dubbed to approximate a different scene...

ALLEN

Hey, what are you doing, dipshit?

He says to US. And he heads upstairs. And we follow...

ALLEN (CONT.)

Do your viewers care to enter The Cave of The Lovers and meet the sweet Iseult?

STEVE / US

They'd love to --

And we enter Allen's BEDROOM... Metallica's "One" on the stereo... And there is Abbey, on the bed... And Abbey has something in her hand...

And it is A PISTOL - a snub-nosed .22 caliber automatic... She raises it, puts it under her chin... BLAM! Abbey's face is a smudge of pulp...

ALLEN

Sweet Iseult. Sweet Iseult has become face pizza...

Allen turns to Steve/Us... He puts the gun under his own chin... He howls, gleeful:

ALLEN

Par-tayyyyyyy!!!

BLAM! Allen shoots himself...

Blood everywhere. Brain tissue and gray matter spattered about the walls and posters like a grisly Jackson Pollock...

INT. TREATMENT ROOM - STEVE'S FACE

visibly shocked, features contorted in horror --

Caldicott and the others chuckle their approval --

CALDICOTT

Good, good. I'll see you boys at the party --

And he leaves... And we return to --

INT. ALLEN'S ROOM - STEVE'S P.O.V.

WE go over to the body on the floor --

Allen lay there, gun in hand, back of his head blown away --

STEVE / US

Allen --

And then, inexplicably, Allen TURNS AND LOOKS AT US, grinning, his head a mass of torn flesh --

ALLEN

Hey, dude. Go forward --

It becomes dark... Hazy... A phantom diorama... Faces come at us from the dark... Ghoulish, gristle-encrusted faces... Faces that have been pulverized by bullets...

Abbey's face... Broken, gooey teeth... Excoriated flesh...

Allen's face... Blackened... A foul miasma... They try to speak through the thick sludgy remnants of their tongues:

ABBEY

Meet the musical little creatures that hide among the flowers -- !

And they begin to GIGGLE, high and sweet and scary as hell, their shattered mouths barely able to contain their drool...

And, as Allen RAISES THE PISTOL, its bore glistening with gore, and he AIMS IT AT US, pulling the hammer back --

-- there is a CRACKLE of STATIC. Of SNOW. And the horror-Allen is momentarily replaced by the live Allen, who says:

ALLEN (CONT.)

Don't worry about the snakes in the garden, when the spiders are in your bed -- !

And the image and the words repeat themselves... Over and over... As if there's a short in the tape...

STEVE'S EYES

as he fights his way through whatever drugs they've pumped into his body, urged on by his brother's words...

CLOSE ON - ALLEN. Although it's the videotaped image we'd seen earlier, he seems somehow imploring... Urging...

And, at last, Steve RIPS THE HELMET OFF HIS HEAD... He grabs a nearby IV tree... Swinging it into a surprised Robby Stewart...

Robby goes down... Steve looks wildly about... There's no one else here... Steve moves to Rachel's chair...

EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

Silent. No cars about. Except for a single El Camino, which prowls the neighborhoods, its mysterious cargo in the bed.

INT. LAB - TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Steve begins to unhook her tubes and wires, not knowing what he's doing - but doing it anyway.

He lifts the helmet from her head --

Rachel opens her eyes. Blinks. Looks at him. He helps her up. She is slow, woozy, unsure in her movements.

STEVE

C'mon, Rae --

He puts an arm around her. But --

DICKIE ATKINSON

stands in the doorway, barring their exit --

Dickie walks towards them. Steve grabs the I.V. tree, wielding it like a spear --

STEVE

Dickie --

Dickie charges. Steve raises the I.V. tree, two hands on it --

THUTCHHH!!

Dickie has run right into the I.V. tree. Impaling himself. Dickie falls to the ground. Piked. Dead.

Steve & Rachel book it down. Past the body of Robby Stewart --

-- WHO REACHES OUT AND GRABS RACHEL AROUND THE ANKLE!!

Rachel shrieks. Steve jumps on the grinning Robby, unclenching the death grip from Rachel's ankle --

Steve and Robby roll around on the floor... Steve's sluggish, but he puts up a good fight... Rachel lolls against one wall.

At last, Steve chokes Robby into submission --

-- except a door at the end of the hall opens. And Chug Roman is there... With a half-dozen other BLUE RIBBONS...

Steve grabs Rachel. And they run in the other direction...

The Blue Ribbons give chase...

Steve and Rachel come to another DOOR... They open it and enter some kind of

TUNNEL

dark and sepulchral... They grope their way blindly down it's length... They can hear the Ribbons behind them.

They come to another DOOR. Steve opens it, revealing --

A STAIRWAY

Leading up. They climb it, bursting through yet one more door, into bright lights, they realize they are in...

INT. THE MORGUE

The lab occupying the expansive basement beneath the hospital.

The Blue Ribbons are in hot pursuit. So they high-tail it out of there --

EXT. HOSPITAL / MORGUE - NIGHT

They emerge from the hospital. SIRENS wail in the distance --

HEADLIGHTS flash to the right of them. A truck pulls up.

Rachel's truck. U.V. at the wheel, Hysteria beside him --

Steve helps Rachel into the truck and gets in himself --

U.V.

You guys okay? You Blue Robots yet?

STEVE

Not yet...

U.V. studies them, suspicious...

U.V.

Okay. Then what's the capital of North Dakota?

Steve and Rachel look at each other... Shrug... They have no idea. U.V. smiles.

U.V.

Okay... You're cool... Hop in...

Steve and Rachel get into the truck...

U.V. (CONT.)

We should get the hell off this island

STEVE

I gotta do something first --

EXT. - WHALEN BACKYARD PARTY - NIGHT

The party in full swing. Caldicott takes a phone call. He listens, eyes cold. He hangs up. He approaches Officer Cox.

CALDICOTT

We had a little problem at the lab.  
The Clark boy...

OFFICER COX

What do you want to do?

CALDICOTT

We can't let him get to the mainland

INT. CLARK HOME - NATHAN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Cynthia is looking out the window --

CYNTHIA CLARK

Nathan, there's someone here --

Nathan sees the truck parked outside.

He opens the door to his study. In time to see Steve coming down the stairs, a sleepy Lindsay in his arms --

NATHAN CLARK

Steve! What are you doing -- ?

STEVE

Taking my sister away from here --

Cynthia throws her arms around Steve, weeping.

CYNTHIA CLARK

Steve! God. Where have you been?

STEVE

At Dr. Caldicott's. Getting my mind fucked --

He heads for the door --

CYNTHIA CLARK

Where are you going -- ?

STEVE

Home. We're going home...

NATHAN CLARK

Steve --

STEVE

I don't want to ever see either of you again. You want to see Lindsay... you better do a lot of thinking...

NATHAN CLARK

Steve, this was not for me or your mother. This was for you. For you not to be like Al --

STEVE

Hate to be the bearer of bad news, folks. But the only thing wrong with Al - was you...

And he's gone. Out the door. Carrying Lindsay with him.

Cynthia whirls on her husband --

CYNTHIA CLARK

We have to do something -- !

But Nathan Clark sits down on the foyer chair --

NATHAN CLARK

God help us... we already have --

EXT. CLARK HOME - RACHEL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

U.V. hops in the bed with Hysteria. Steve puts Lindsay in the front with Rachel and drives off --

EXT. CRADLE BAY - QUICK SHOTS

of the Blue Ribbons... Tearing through town like Gestapo storm-troopers... Searching shops and restaurants... Questioning RESIDENTS... Roughing-up KIDS...

EXT. CRADLE BAY HIGH - NIGHT

Caldicott emerges from the school, carrying several banker's boxes full of notes and files... He opens the trunk of the Volvo. Deposits the boxes...

He gets behind the wheel. Tears off. Caldicott's on the run.

INT. CALDICOTT'S VOLVO - MOVING - NIGHT

Caldicott's on the cellular...

CALDICOTT

I'm on my way out. We've been compromised. We may have to shut-down and cover. That's all well and good, sir, but we were close this time. Real close... I understand...

EXT. CRADLE BAY STREETS - RACHEL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Steve drives... They crest the rise, they can see the FERRY LAUNCH in the distance...

STEVE

Razor...

And he aims the car down the hill... Except that suddenly there are BLINDING LIGHTS streaming through their windshield... Steve hits the brakes... For they have come upon

A ROAD BLOCK

Blue Ribbon-style. Officer Cox is here... With Trent, Andy, Chug, Randi, Robby, and a number of the others... Their cars parked nose to nose along the road...

Steve rips the wheel, spinning the truck in a 180... Only a half-dozen CARS have pulled up behind them... They're trapped.

TRENT

It's over, Steven. Your way of praying is over...

And they are PULLED FROM THE TRUCK... And tossed in a heap...

And Cox has his GUN pulled...

OFFICER COX

Okay, now... We're all just gonna go back to the lab... Everything's gonna be--

HEADLIGHTS

appear from around the curve in the fire road, around the bend, momentarily blinding Officer Cox --

As the El Camino glides slowly by - Dorian Newberry, smiling, at the wheel --

NEWBERRY

Rattus rattus. Gnaw, gnaw -- !

He cackles... And the car is heading for Officer Cox... And Officer Cox raises his GUN... And FIRES... Shattering the windshield...

But still the El Camino rolls on... Rolls past...

And as it passes, Steve/we can see just what it is in the bed of the El Camino:

AN ULTRASONIC SOUND GENERATOR

only the biggest goddamn one ever to spook a rat. Homemade, and huge, it's red light blinks incessantly, emitting the high-frequency sound waves that draw the Blue Ribbons like the children of Hamelin --

Indeed, they fall in behind it... Trent, Andy, and all the rest. Plodding slowly after the El Camino, leaving Steve and the rest behind...

Newberry slows to allow them to catch up a bit...

Until it is only Officer Cox standing there with our heroes, watching after them...

STEVE (O.S.)

Officer Cox -- ?

And Cox turns... And Steve holds a TREE BRANCH the size of a trombone...

And he solos with Officer Cox's squash...

EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

Newberry's El Camino rolls on slowly. Followed now by at least twenty-five Blue Ribbons: Trent, Andy, Randi leading the pack --

Steve follows alongside them, out of harm's way of the churning multitude --

They watch, as the procession winds its way down the road --

Steve sees, amidst the marching mob --

JULIE KRAMER

walking with the others...

STEVE

Oh, shit... Wait here --

And he jumps out of the truck... And runs after them --

U.V.

STEVE -- :



NEWBERRY

steers the El Camino down the narrow, foliage-flanked Pathway leading to...

THE BLUFF

Overlooking the bay. The Blue Ribbons follow. Marching in a kind of dazed procession now. Double-file...

Steve runs up ahead of them... To the slow-moving El Camino... To Newberry...

STEVE

Don't do this -- !

NEWBERRY

Lunchboy! You like my handiwork? Point, Village Idiot. Can't very well have the shitbirds graduating and going out into the world now, can we -- ?

STEVE

They can be helped...

NEWBERRY

No they can't. And either can I --

And Steve sees the BLOOD soaking Newberry's shirt... He's been shot...

Newberry pulls the car up to the slight incline facing the wooden parapet - scarce protection for the 150 foot drop into the bay below --

STEVE

Don't --

NEWBERRY

"And it's whispered that soon/If we all call the tune/Then the piper will lead us to reason/And a new day will dawn for those who stand long/And the forests will echo with laughter..."

Newberry cackles... And the car BEGINS TO ROLL... And it hits the rampart, SMASHING THROUGH --

It rolls off the edge of the Bluff, careening down --

STEVE

runs to the front of the procession...

STEVE

Stop! Please! Don't!

They ignore him... Walking right by... He tries to grab hold of their clothes, their limbs... But they are indomitable...

TRENT, ANDY, RANDI

are the first to the parapet. And, without hesitation, they leap from the bluff, floating through the air, dropping into the inky blackness like the lemmings they are --

THE COLUMN OF BLUE RIBBONS

follow their comrades, leaping after the sounds, three at a time

STEVE

goes to Julie Kramer, grabbing her, shaking her...

STEVE

Mrs. Kramer! Don't...!

He tries to restrain her. But the mob pulses forward... Sweeping them along...

STEVE (CONT.)

NO -- !

And, at the last moment, he loses his grasp on her...

And she walks right over the edge...

Steve grabs for the STEEL RUNGS EMBEDDED INTO THE RETAINING WALL...

... as the procession passes below, on into the void... More than half of the Blue Ribbons are gone --

Steve climbs onto the retaining wall... Landing at the feet of

EDGAR CALDICOTT

who watches from up here...

CALDICOTT

Impressive display of previously- unsuspected leadership potential, Steven... You really crumbed my deal, here... Are you happy?

STEVE

It's finished, man --

CALDICOTT

Finished? There are always other towns. Other towns, other troubled teens, other worried parents.

(MORE)

CALDICOTT (cont'd)

Finished? Why, Steven, it hasn't even begun --

Caldicott smiles...

STEVE

Sounds like a plan. But you know what you have to do first, Doc?

CALDICOTT

What's that, Steven -- ?

STEVE

You have to Go Forward --

AND STEVE GRABS CALDICOTT BY THE JACKET --

-- AND HURLS HIM OFF THE RETAINING WALL, sending him SPRAWLING onto the remaining Blue Ribbons facing the parapet --

Caldicott is carried atop the throng. Try as he might to extricate himself, the mob carries him like a victorious football hero --

CALDICOTT

No... don't... nooooooo -- !

Caldicott stares up at Steve, terrified... As he is carried OVER THE BLUFF AND INTO THE AIR --

And Steve watches as the last of the Blue Ribbons disappear into the mystic --

EXT. FIRE ROAD - RACHEL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Rachel and U.V. and Lindsay, horrified, from the embankment...

Steve comes back from The Bluff and gets into the truck without a word. Steve turns to Rachel --

STEVE

You okay?

RACHEL

I dunno. You?

STEVE

I dunno --

Steve starts the truck down the embankment --

EXT. CRADLE BAY FERRY LAUNCH - NIGHT

The FERRY waits there... A low fog skims the wild black water, along the pilings and races...

Rachel's pick-up approaches...

U.V.

Steve - check it out --

U.V. points. There, in front of the launch ticket booth, lies Lorna "Love-Itis" Longley -

U.V. jumps from the truck --

STEVE

Careful --

U.V. goes to the girl's body, bends over it --

U.V.

She's been shot. She's gone --

STEVE

C'mon, let's go --

U.V. heads back for the truck, when Hysteria begins to GROWL. And, from the ticket booth,

GAVIN STRICK

steps out, brandishing a rifle - sticking it into U.V.'s face.

GAVIN

I killed her. I shot my baby down. Believe that action? You pine your whole life for a certain vixen. You finally get her, and then you gun her down for no good reason. Ah, the tribulations of being a Blue Ribbon. Something has to be done about these psychopathic episodes...

STEVE

They're gone, Gavin. Trent, Andy, Caldicott. All of them --

GAVIN

I know. And I would've been too. Except --

He plucks cotton balls from his ears --

GAVIN (CONT.)

-- I always was smarter than the average robot...

STEVE

Gavin --

GAVIN

Look at you, Stevie Boy: you got Rachel and U.V., your sister, the dog, the truck. You're like the king of your own little mini-society. The Ayatollah of Coca-Cola. And what do I have? A dead wixen. A tweaked brain. A ruined town. But, oh, look, boys and girls: I've also got a shotgun. Out of the truck. All of you --

STEVE

Gavin --

GAVIN

Stevie Boy. I want to demystify the process for you: we live, we die, no one knows why. Okay?

They get out of the truck. Steve keeps a protective hand on Lindsay's shoulder --

STEVE

Come with us. We'll get you a doctor --

GAVIN

I had a doctor. Caldicott was a visionary. A genius. He created a psychic jambalaya. Perfect youth. I was honestly beginning to enjoy supervised athletics, chamber music, my studies. What's wrong with that, Stevie Boy? Why did you have to fuck things up?

STEVE

You're not well, Gavin. Remember what you used to be like?

GAVIN

A fat, drug-addled burn-out. A bad dresser. A shambles with the ladies --

RACHEL

You're still a bad dresser --

GAVIN

Very funny. You didn't get to graduate, huh, 'Rae? No problem -- where there's a trailer park, there's a gang-bang - so you'll never be alone --

RACHEL

Fuck you --

GAVIN

Still the raconteur. I see the treatment didn't have a chance to kick in --

(raises the gun)

Try this on for size --

He trains the gun on Rachel --

STEVE

No --

As Gavin's about to shoot --

GAVIN

Shut-up, Stevie. Your bitch is going downwwnn --

He cocks the gun, dead at Rachel, and --

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

But the bullets don't come from Gavin's gun --

Rather, they punch into his body, squibs-a-flying --

Gavin goes down --

U.V. stands there, Officer Cox's PISTOL smoking in his hand --

There is a beat. As the gun's reports echo about the bay --

U.V. goes to where Rachel is crouched by Gavin's fallen form --

Gavin can barely speak --

GAVIN

Three times? You hadda shoot me three times -- ?

U.V.

I'm sorry, man... but --

RACHEL

Gavin --

GAVIN

I remember the days when I was the leader. Now it's Stevie Boy. I wonder where he'll take you? I wonder where you'll go? I gotta tell you: you make some twisted family --

Gavin coughs a little blood. His eyes lose their light.

GAVIN (CONT.)

This diminishes considerably the chances of me ever getting to meet Trent Reznor --

(beat; he coughs)

Wow. Maybe I'm coming around --

But Gavin dies. U.V. and Rachel bow their heads. Steve goes to them. He helps Rachel to her feet.

STEVE

C'mon --

Rachel and Rachel get into the cab of the truck. Lindsay too --

Steve looks at Gavin's fallen form a beat --

Steve slides behind the wheel, offers the others a smile, starts the truck.

And they drive onto the ferry, as we

CUT TO:

A TV REPORTER

doing her "stand-upper" to the side of a

INT. CROWDED AUDITORIUM - FLASH FORWARD - NIGHT

Cameras film the on-stage doings...

TV REPORTER

... thank-you, Joan. I'm here at New York's Madison Hall, where we have a winner in this year's All-American Spelling Bee... Here's her winning word...

TAPE IS ROLLED - WE SEE - THE MODERATOR...

MODERATOR

... the last word, for the win, is "Phlegm."

And a tiny GIRL stands, facing the Moderator (we only see her from behind).

GIRL (O.S.)

"Phlegm." P. H. L. E. G. M. "Phlegm."

And the crowd goes crazy... And the moderator cries "we have a winner..."

AND A NEW ANGLE REVEALS - little Shannon. Victorious at least.

And she looks into the camera. And gives us that smile...

And we

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. CRADLE BAY - THE FERRY - NIGHT

U.V. at the helm... The ferry chuffs out into the water...

And once again we bump Cinderella's "Coming Home" with its opening cries of "I took a walk down a road/It's the road I was meant to stay/I see the fire in your eyes/But a man's got to make his way..."

As Steve, Rachel and Lindsay watch the island vanish in the fog.

As the blue haze of the lonely cool before dawn glows on the horizon --

And the ferry crosses the water.

Leaving Cradle Bay.

Forever.

THE END