PANAMA

by Ryan and Russell Smith

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FADE IN ON BLACK:

"Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught."

- Oscar Wilde

INT. - LUKE WILSON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Focus on an alarm clock: 6:29 am...6:30 am the alarm blares.

A hand comes into frame and shuts it off.

INT. - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The shower is going. Through the steamy curtain we can see the silhouette of LUKE WILSON. He is humming an obscure but easily recognizable tune while he showers.

INT. - KITCHEN - LATER

Dressed in a nice pair of black slacks, a white dress shirt and blue tie LUKE grabs a bowl from the cabinet. He then makes his way over to the cabinet above the sink opens it and browses for some cereal. The choices seem limited but they make do.

He pours cereal into his bowl and then makes his way to the refrigerator. After seconds of searching the inevitable ensues...no milk.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The living room, small and spotless. Just seen is a single sofa and television. LUKE sits on the couch watching the morning news while spooning dry cereal into his mouth. His expression is unpleasant to say the least.

EXT - LUKE'S DRIVEWAY - LATER

LUKE, now with a briefcase in hand, walks up to his beat up, ridiculously small (compact) car, unlocks the door and gets in.

INT. - LUKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

LUKE gets into his car and takes a look at the gas gauge. It isn't empty but it's close to it. Sitting in the driver's seat he contemplates for a moment and then looks down at his watch.

CUT TO:

EXT. - BUS STOP - LATER

At a bus stop bench LUKE sits, hands folded on his lap staring straight forward. The bus pulls up and he boards almost reluctantly.

INT. - CITY BUS - LATER

The bus contains a handful of people. People riding to work, mostly blue-collar types. LUKE sits near the middle of the bus. His briefcase sits on his lap and his hands are folded, he stares straight ahead.

The man searches for a seat, there are many open ones but as it were he chooses the seat right next to LUKE.

The bus departs.

LUKE continues to look straight forward. The man puts his hand out and greets LUKE.

HOBO

Howdy, just made the bus, almost missed the damn thing. Didn't want to have to walk to work.

LUKE smiles, just to humor the man.

HOBO (CONT'D)

Just pulling your chain. Nope, no work for me today. I don't exactly have a job, per se. So where you headed?

LUKE

Work. Start a new job today.

HOBO

Howabout that. That's nice. I don't work anymore cause I found careers to be dull and boring, for suckers really. No offense.

None taken.

HOBO

You see, for years I did that whole nine to five gig, not for me. I found a loophole where I don't have to work ever again. I'm as of yet to find a flaw in my system.

LUKE

Is that right?

HOBO

Yeah, you see people think a lot of us,

(emphasizing)

Homeless, have no power over our situation but just between you and me, I love this life.

LUKE

Naturally.

HOBO

Sure I'm shunned by half of society and haven't even talked to a woman since the Regan-era but the pros dramatically outweighed the cons.

For some reason out of his control LUKE is becoming interested in what this man has to say.

LUKE

Are you serious?

HOBO

Sure. I mean look at me do I look like I'm depressed? On the brink of starvation? Hell no, I'm living the dream.

LUKE

What dream?

HOBO

The dream. In fact, living on my own terms and not having to work like a pawn to survive and to live, very well may be my greatest accomplishment.

(BEAT)

(MORE)

HOBO (CONT'D)

Oh and coming home from Vietnam the same day I was sent. But that is for very different reasons.

LUKE just nods. The bus comes to a stop.

EXT. - PANAMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

The bus pulls up to PANAMA elementary school, it seems to be the normal elementary school. Its a suburban setting, kids are being dropped off by their parents and buses are letting off drones of children who walk in through the front gates.

LUKE gets off the bus and turns his head back to the window and sees the HOBO waving goodbye. He just half-hardily smiles.

LUKE proceeds to walk in through two glass doors in the front of the school that say: "Front Office".

INT. - FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

LUKE walks into the office.

He looks around for a minute and takes in his surroundings. He stares at some trophies inside a case and a few plaques on the wall (teachers of the month pap. A teacher, MR. SAGE graces the wall six times but this award was given some time ago. The awards are collecting dust and cobwebs)

LUKE gets up to the secretaries' front desks. The name tag on one woman's desk says: PENNY, one in front of the other reads: DEBBIE, whom is on the phone but PENNY greets him with an enthusiastic smile.

PENNY

Hello, may I help you?

LUKE

Well hello, my name is Luke Wilson, I'm here to fill in for a Mr. Lowell.

PENNY

Oh yes.

LUKE

On the phone they didn't tell me if it was permanent or?

PENNY

Oh yes , you will be filling in for the remainder of the year, at least.

LUKE

Um? Why is Mr. Lowell out for the year?

PENNY

The school isn't quite at liberty to discuss the matter, but I'm sure you'll be a more than an adequate replacement. You look like you'll fit right in.

TIUKF

Well I hope to Ms?

He fishes for a name.

PENNY

Penny.

LUKE

Oh, Penny what?

PENNY points to her name tag proudly.

PENNY

Just Penny, and this fine woman next to me or my better half as she's become known down here in the front office is, Debbie.

LUKE

Let me guess, just Debbie.

DEBBIE

That's right just Debbie.

LUKE

Howabout Deb?

DEBBIE

Not unless you have a death wish.

LUKE points at DEBBIE with his hand, as if it is a gun and smiles.

LUKE

I just might.

PENNY and DEBBIE laugh, in unison, in a quite annoying manner.

PENNY

Well class starts in about half an hour but I was told to send you into David's office when you arrived so just go on in.

LUKE

David?

DEBBIE

The principal.

LUKE

OK, well thanks. I'll catch you guys later.

PENNY

Good luck.

LUKE

Am I going to need it?

PENNY

That's difficult to answer. Maybe he'll like you, I sure do. Then again maybe he won't.

LUKE

Does he like most people?

PENNY and DEBBIE laugh, in unison, in a quite annoying manner, once again.

INT. - DAVID BRADY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DAVID BRADY sits behind his desk.

He can only be described as a short man; hair parted perfectly down the middle, wearing a red sweater vest and a bow tie that complements the huge gap between his front teeth nicely.

A knock on the door.

DAVID BRADY

Come on in.

In comes LUKE, a bit frightened and a bit disturbed.

He peers around the office; on the walls are plenty of posters that are meant to evoke inspiration.

Examples include: A poster cleverly stating, "Hang in there" with a cat hanging from a tree branch. Another saying "A child's mind is for molding, a child's heart is for holding." And last but not least, one says, "Get a mental high!" Which displays a picture of a cartoon guy injecting a syringe that says "knowledge" into his veins.

LUKE sits down. The office is silent. MR. BRADY reads over a file, probably LUKE'S. Finally the silence is broken.

DAVID BRADY (CONT'D)

So, Mr. Wilson.

LUKE

Mr. Brady.

DAVID BRADY

So you've come highly recommended out of Fresno's regional school district, I see you were awarded favorite substitute by the students two years in a row.

LUKE seems unenthusiastic.

LUKE

Well you know, it was a little poll by the children, they gave me a little plaque, not a big deal.

DAVID BRADY

Well don't be coy, Mr. Wilson, what it means is that children like you and you are probably an effective instructor. Which is becoming extremely rare these days.

LUKE

Well.

MR. GEORGE reads over the file once again.

DAVID BRADY

It also says here that you majored in Physical education And minored in culinary arts. How ambitious.
(BEAT)

A renaissance man really.

Yeah, I'm not going to lie to you, at first, I wasn't thinking teaching per se but after a few missed opportunities and eight years of community college, I found out I only needed a few more credits to become a certified instructor. I decided to take the road less traveled, teaching.

DAVID BRADY

A less traveled road yes but a high one at that.

LUKE

Oh, no argument here, I love what I do. There's a sense of gratification in educating the minds of the future.

DAVID BRADY

A first class attitude indeed.

LUKE

Well I hope to do my best here at Panama elementary. Rise fast, heck, maybe even find myself gracing that teacher of the month wall.

DAVID BRADY

We haven't had a teacher of the month in some time.

LUKE

Oh, I'm sorry, work ethic down?

DAVID BRADY

Well productivity is at an all time low but maybe with your help we can correct this problem. It is, in my mind, achievable.

LUKE

I'll try my best here, sir.

DAVID BRADY

Well that's all we can hope for. Well, we're all done here, you can go up to Carl's office to get the key to your classroom.

LUKE

Carl?

DAVID BRADY Yeah, the head custodian.

CUT TO:

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - MORNING

CARL, the main man when it comes to janitorial services at this school sits at a desk in his office. If this can even be called an office, its more like a dark room in the corner of the school, secluded from everything and everybody.

Again, the room is dark, smells like ammonia and houses dozens of cleaning supplies and in the corner is a small desk with a lonesome computer, this is where CARL sits.

LUKE walks in on him. CARL seems happy to have a visitor.

LUKE

Excuse me, Carl?

CARL gets up form his desk and walks up to LUKE.

CARL

Yep, I'm Carl.

They shake hands.

LUKE

I'm new and Mr. Brady sent me here to pick up the key for my classroom.

CARL

Oh, not a problem, which classroom is this.

CARL walks up to a near wall that has many sets of keys just hanging.

LUKE

Its Mr. Lowell's old class.

CARL seems a little sad to hear this.

CARL

Wow. Lowell. That bastard finally got the shaft. About time.

LUKE

Yeah but I don't know why, no one has even told me. They must be hiding something, am I right?

LUKE chuckles. CARL doesn't laugh but gets a serious demeanor.

CARL

They must be and are trying to cover it up. I know. They think old crazy Carl just cleans up the messes, you know replaces the toilet paper and repairs the electric hand dryers, which don't dry your hands anyway, its insane but boy do I ever know what goes on in this place. Mr. Lowell, he isn't exactly someone you wanted around children, If you catch my drift. I mean, its nice to have a passion for the students but not like that. The man was disturbed.

LUKE

Figures. In this day and age.

CARL

A frightening statement, if there ever was one.

LUKE

Yep but you know the deterioration of the moral fibers that once held our society together seems quite inevitable.

CARL

Its sad but true. Your a smart guy, I like that.

CARL jumbles through the wall of keys and finally pulls a set down.

CARL (CONT'D)

Here we are, room 908, or as I like to call it: Where it all happens. The place where the future politicians, doctors, firemen, police officers and garbage men do their daily geography. Its a noble cause what you do.

LUKE

And you too.

CARL

You really feel that way or are you just saying that.

No. I wouldn't patronize you like that. Don't ever let anyone tell you that what you do isn't cause for praise. Somebody has got to do it and you deserve to be recognized, in some form.

CARL

Well I appreciate that.

CARL sits back down at his computer and turns the monitor on.

CARL (CONT'D)

Well before you leave, if I may ask, I reckon you know something about computers? I mean your technologically literate I assume.

LUKE

Considerably.

CARL

Well. I was just wondering how I could have multiple windows of these adult web sites open at the same time. I've been getting into this whole Asian thing lately.

LUKE seems plaqued with embarrassment but not for himself.

LUKE

I'll see you later, Carl.

INT. - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - MORNING

Three teachers: MRS. HERDER, a six-foot woman, with short brown hair and an apparent limp cursing her right leg, MR. SHERWYN, a six-foot four ogre with a goatee, sunglasses and a blue Hawaiian t-shirt and MR. WILLIS, an athletic, muscular looking man wearing a jogging suit are in line awaiting their turn for coffee.

LUKE comes in the teacher's lounge. Stealthily and with compassion he ducks into the coffee line. HERDER gets coffee, and then SHERWYN but MR. WILLIS holds an obnoxiously large coffee mug that is about the size of one pot of coffee. He pours liberally.

When LUKE gets to the coffee station, no coffee remains. No more in the pot, no more to be made, none in sight whatsoever. He casually walks up to MR. WILLIS.

Excuse me.

He taps MR. WILLIS on the shoulder. He turns around.

MR. WILLIS

Yes? Do I know you?

LUKE

Nope. I'm new. I'm a new teacher here.

MR. WILLIS

Well put a feather in your cap.

LUKE senses some tension.

LUKE

Alright. Well, I just wanted to ask if you would mind if I had some coffee?

MR. WILLIS

Why would I mind? Its a free country. Or haven't you heard, friend.

LUKE chuckles, just slightly.

LUKE

You see you took all the coffee and there seems to be no more left. I don't mean to pry but what you have in that cup seems like enough for two, hell, even maybe three people.

MR. WILLIS

I'm confused.

LUKE

I'm sorry? Which part confused you?

MR. WILLIS raises his voice for all the teachers in the lounge to hear.

MR. WILLIS

You see, it seems that the new guy, who hasn't been here for no more than say an hour is demanding me to give up my coffee. What next my salary, my coaching position or my department chair responsibilities.

Maybe we got lost along somewhere but I was just simply inferring that maybe the awkward proportion of your cup could be divided into several smaller cups of coffee that could ultimately be shared among the staff.

MR. WILLIS

Oh. Well you know what happens when you infer.

(BEAT)

LUKE

I'm truly at a loss.

MR. WILLIS

Well if I can remember correctly I think the saying goes, if you infer you open a doorway to trouble.

LUKE

I don't think anyone ever said that.

MR. WILLIS

And do you know what's behind that doorway?

MR. WILLIS sets down his coffee. LUKE shrugs but remains silent.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

This quy

(flexes and points to his left biceps)

And this guy.

(points to his right
biceps)

LUKE

Enjoy your coffee, sir.

MR. WILLIS

You enjoy your first day, I sure will.

(BEAT)

Sir.

MR. WILLIS picks up his coffee and takes a long drawn out \sin .

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

Hot and black, just how I like it.

MR. WILLIS then looks at the only African American teacher in the room.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

No pun intended.

LUKE walks over to a nearby couch and sits down. MR. SHERWYN sits next to him and diligently looks over the back cover of a CROSBY, STILLS, NASH and YOUNG vinyl. Where he got this album from or why he is even looking at it is beyond the realm of human comprehension altogether but he just is.

SHERYWN

Mr. Willis, what an asshole, am I
right?

LUKE

Is he always like this?

SHERYWN

Level with me, it wasn't about the coffee but about the naked ambition of the human spirit, man.

LUKE

I think I just wanted some coffee.

SHERYWN

Oh, right on. So let me introduce myself, I am Mr. Sherywn art teacher here at Panama elementary.

LUKE

Nice.

SHERYWN

I mean in a nutshell that's who I am but do you want to know my real passion?

LUKE scans him over.

LUKE

Uh? Gardening?

SHERYWN

No. Try again.

LUKE studies his face and once again takes an open-ended guess.

Pottery?

SHERWYN

Close, but it's way better than that. Me and a couple friends of mine get together in front of this local coffee shop, real low-key establishment, every weekend and we drum?

LUKE

Drum?

SHERYWN

(excited)

Yeah. Drum.

LUKE

Like with real drums or?

SHERYWN

Well more like with bongos and tambourines and the occasional maraca and chime, just to keep them quessing. Guess what we call it?

LUKE

I don't know, fun?

SHERYWN

Oh no. I mean its loads of fun but no. Now brace yourself for this and take it in for all its worth.

> (places index and middle finger on mouth, then removes as he speaks)

Drum circle.

SHERWYN elaborately motion a circle with his hands.

LUKE

Drum circle?

SHERYWN

Sure. Its simple and to the point. I mean we drum in a circle, its right there, plain as day, clear as crystal.

LUKE

I guess it has that whole straight faced quality to it. I mean you drum in a circle and all.

SHERYWN

This is what I'm saying.

LUKE

Level with me. Your kind of that crazy, out of whack, unconventional, post-modern hippie teacher aren't you?

SHERWYN just stares at him for a moment.

SHERYWN

Self-classification is the first step into the crumbling of the human psyche, so no.

LUKE

I will catch you later, Mr. Sherwyn.

SHERYWN

Not if I catch you first.

LUKE gets off the couch and walks away. SHERWYN continues to look at the album exactly how he was before LUKE came and sat down.

EXT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

LUKE walks through the hallway.

Kids of all grades stare at him as he passes by, he sees one kid in particular getting picked on by two bigger kids, they start to push him around. He intervenes.

The BULLIES are your average looking bullies, we all know the type. The kid that is getting picked on looks of Indian decent, that's India not Native American.

LUKE

Gentleman, will you leave this kid alone?

BULLY 1

What the hell is it to you?

LUKE

Let's watch the language son.

BULLY 1

Who are you? I've never seen you before.

(MORE)

BULLY 1 (CONT'D)

I live by the code if you've never given me a test, an F or detention, then I don't listen to you.

LUKE

Well I'm a new teacher but that doesn't matter. Why are you messing with this kid?

BULLY 1

(impersonating LUKE)

Why are you messing with this kid? (normal)

Just look at him, he looks like one of those guys who bombed our country. Plus we caught him peeing in the drinking fountain, last week.

TTMA

Not True! You lie!

LUKE

Alright. Do you know the term racist? Do you know what it means?

BULLY 1

Are you serious. Of course I know what racist means. My Grandpa once called our gardener racist because he came into this country in the back of a van.

LUKE

OK, do you have a dictionary?

BULLY 1

(cheerfully)

Yeah. Let me pull it out of my ass really quick.

The second bully laughs his head off.

BULLY 1 (CONT'D)

Hell no. Who carries around a dictionary.

BULLY 2

I have a mini-pocket thesaurus, if that helps.

He pulls it out to show it off.

BULLY 1

Faggot.

He puts it away in dismay.

LUKE

Now, I want you to find a dictionary. Next, I want you to flip it open to the "I" section and look up the word ignorance. Then, write me a full page on why you and your Grandpa's flawed outlook on life is generally considered ignorant by society.

BULLY 1

Why would I do that?

BULLY 2

Yeah, why would he do that?

LUKE

If you don't then I'll have to take you up to the principals office. He'll probably suspend you from school for a few days and you'll end up learning nothing. So I offer you this option, one page, ignorance and leave this kid alone. Now get outta here.

They exit.

LUKE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

TIMA

Amit Gupta.

LUKE

Well Amit, you alright?

TIMA

Yeah, I'm ok. When those guys mess with me I just imagine where they'll be in fifteen years.

LUKE

And where do you guess that'll be?

AMIT

Well, with their current views on the importance of a proper education, I believe they will be abusing the comforts of our social welfare programs.

(he laughs)

LUKE

Wow, that was really smart. How old are you?

TIMA

eleven, but I'm supposed to be moved up to the 8th grade after the end of the year. Finally I can be with my own intellectual peers.

LUKE

Well, good luck, maybe you'll cure some disease or something, then you'll show those bullies who gets the last laugh. Unless they have the disease you may in fact cure. But I wouldn't worry to much on that, the odds on that can't be very significant.

INT. - CLASSROOM - LATER

The elementary school classroom, it truly brings back memories. Only usually upon memory we remember a vibrant room with lots of colors and decorated walls but in this case all four walls are bare. The room is off-white and rings quite dull.

LUKE sits in the front of the class behind his desk. Fifteen or twenty kids file in and await for class to start.

LUKE gets up and walks over to the blackboard and in chalk writes: MR. WILSON

A student raises his hand. LUKE points at him immediately.

LUKE

Ouestion?

CHARLES

Yes, my name is Charles Dunmeyer, you can call me Charlie.
(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Well myself as well as many of my classmates would like to know why we are getting a teacher change mid-year.

Another student, REN, interrupts.

REN

Yes, I feel this change in events will ultimately lead to the further decline of my already slumping grades.

LUKE

Well Charlie and I didn't catch your name.

REN

Ren.

LUKE pulls a paper out of his jacket pocket and begins to read it.

LUKE

Well Charlie and Ren (begins to read very generically)

I will try my best to pick-up where your last teacher left off. In hope to further progress your curriculum so you can make the most out of the remainder of your school year.

REN

That sounds like a pre-written statement from the principal. Is that a pre-written statement from the principal?

LUKE

Uh? Yes it is. Though I must say I strongly agree with your principal's outlooks on the matter.

LUKE walks back to his desk and looks at some papers.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Well if what I read here is correct it seems that we're off the magical world of mathematics. So buckle up your seat belts, we're off. Another STUDENT in the back of the classroom raises his hand.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Yeah. In the back there.

STUDENT

Before we take off can we take a quick pit stop? Unless you-

LUKE

For what?

STUDENT

I need to use the bathroom.

LUKE

Is it an emergency? An immediate threat?

STUDENT

Somewhat.

LUKE

Number one or number two?

Scattered laughs ensue.

STUDENT

(sighs)

Frankly, a little bit of both.

More laughing ensues. REN interrupts.

REN

Nice.

LUKE

Just go.

He leaves the room.

LUKE (CONT'D)

OK, Math, where did you leave off?

CHARLES

Leave off?

LUKE

Yeah. What's the last thing you learned?

A girl near the front, JENNIFER, raises her hand. LUKE points to her.

JENNIFER

Yeah, we didn't leave off anywhere.

LUKE

I don't understand.

JENNIFER

Mr. Lowell never taught us anything. Well nothing worth learning that is.

LUKE

What did he teach you then?

JENNIFER

How he owed a lot of what he called back taxes. Oh and how his girlfriend left him and how he was indeed contemplating suicide.

REN

He also told us this cool trick to do with a can of whip cream. I think he called it Whip-its.

LUKE

Hmm. Wow. Well no wonder he's not your teacher anymore. But I am and I'm going to teach you math, reading, grammar, history and some science. Oh, and if we have time then maybe just about life in general.

REN raises his hand.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Yes, Ren?

REN

Yeah, that last subject, life, we only have a few weeks left in school so we're probably not going to get to that.

LUKE

Well Ren, that last subject, life, I will be teaching you that at all times. Lucky for you it just comes extra.

REN

Alright lets do some math then.

Alright, grab your math books and turn to page one, we'll cover all we can.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

It is now recess. LUKE comes out of his classroom and locks the door behind him. He walks into the classroom right next to his.

INT. - MR. SAGE'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

LUKE enters the room. The lights are dim and a dreary rock song like "AS TEARS GO BY" by THE ROLLING STONES plays faintly in the background.

Sitting at a corner desk is MR. SAGE, his head is buried deep inside a book, HEART OF DARKNESS or perhaps an unauthorized biography of Henry Kissinger but whatever it is we cannot see his face, nor has he acknowledged LUKE'S presence yet.

As LUKE approaches closer, he bumps into a nearby table and knocks a stack of papers on the ground. MR. SAGE sets down the book and stares LUKE directly in the eyes.

We now see his face; this is not the same MR. SAGE whose pictures were plastered all over the front office as teacher of the month. His face is covered in a thick, slovenly kept beard and his hair is long, almost shoulder length, he no more dons a dress shirt and tie but wears a faded black shirt and dark black ray bans but it sure as hell ain't bright.

MR. SAGE What are you doing?

LUKE

Mr. Sage?

MR. SAGE

Yes. Again what do you want?

LUKE

I'm Luke Wilson, the teacher from next door taking over for Mr. Lowell. Just wanted to introduce myself.

MR. SAGE

Oh right. Mr. Lowell, sorry to hear that we lost him.

LUKE

That's strange.

MR. SAGE

What is?

LUKE

Oh, its just that no one else feels that way. Everyone else on the faculty seemed to embrace his departure.

MR. SAGE removes his sunglasses and stares at LUKE with a sort of fury.

MR. SAGE

Oh. Is that so? Its because they're all cowards. The bunch of em'. Cowards. Bred from the same machine and they're all sucking off the same tit but sadly that milk went bad years ago.

LUKE

(seemingly confused)

Pardon?

MR. SAGE

Wait. That's good stuff.

MR SAGE puts down his book and grabs a small memo book out of his back pocket and opens it, roughly to the middle. He grabs a freshly sharpened pencil, licks the tip and begins to jot something down.

MR. SAGE (CONT'D)

(to self)

Cowards...

Bred from the same machine...

Tit, milk went bad years ago.

He finishes writing and puts the notebook back in his pocket.

MR. SAGE (CONT'D)

So why are you here again?

LUKE

Again I just wanted to introduce myself.

MR. SAGE

Well the pleasure is all mine. I hope you find a little niche for yourself in the place. God knows I have.

He goes back to reading his book. A school bell rings.

LUKE

Well I better get back to my classroom but I hope to see you later.

MR. SAGE

(staring into his book)
Well our paths are destined to
cross again, inevitable as death it
would seem.

LUKE exits.

EXT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

LUKE strolls out of MR. SAGE'S classroom and immediately crosses paths with MR. WILLIS. He has fire in his eyes.

MR. WILLIS

Sweet. The temp. Just the man I was looking for.

He puts his arm firmly around LUKE'S neck; this makes us as uncomfortable as LUKE.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

You see I have a problem. Well we have a problem because your actually directly involved with this dilemma. Granted your not the catalyst of my sorrows but you are indeed the solution, You interested?

LUKE shrugs, He's clearly not interested.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

Oh come on tenderfoot. Be a sport.

LUKE

Fine. I'm listening.

MR. WILLIS

Good. Here's the thing. You see today, after lunch, is the annual teacher-student-flag-football-game. We have it every year and every year the teachers win.

LUKE

I fail to see the problem.

MR. WILLIS

Well you see, I groomed Mr. Lowell to be our star quarterback. I trained with that guy day and night rain and shine for two weeks straight. He was a well-conditioned machine but unfortunately for us he is here no more.

LUKE

Drag.

MR. WILLIS

Drag? That's all you got. Come on you fucking dote. Its more than that, its a goddamned tragedy what has happened to our once elite team. Without a finesse and competent quarterback those students, those fucking kids could beat us. You know what that would do don't you.

LUKE

A morale boost for the children?

MR. WILLIS

No. My reputation would be shot. A long running tradition here at Panama Elementary would be tarnished and not to mention bragging rights are clearly on the line.

LUKE

Well, Its just a game right?

MR. WILLIS

Just a game? That's sweet but seriously how about it? Do you know your way around the gridiron? Can you handle the rock? Last but not least could you lead my

(MORE)

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

(bites tongue)

Our team to victory?

LUKE

Why don't you play quarterback.

MR. WILLIS

(stunned)

What are you insane? Who's going to play running back? Average twenty yards per carry, break and elude tackles all the way down the field and stomp his way into the end zone? Huh? Is it going to be you? Carl?!

He points to CARL, who we now see on his hands and knees nearby, scraping old gum off the floor. CARL looks at them.

CARL

That ain't my bag baby.

MR. WILLIS

Fucking A.

LUKE

Fine I'll do it.

MR. WILLIS

That, is what I thought. Meet me in the lounge during lunch we'll go over the playbook.

MR. WILLIS leaves. LUKE walks over to CARL still on the ground.

CARL

(looks up)

Man you folded like a card house, built by a hippie, on a bad acid trip.

(he looks down again)

LUKE

Could you find a more obscure reference?

CARL

(looks up once again)

What?

INT. - CLASSROOM - LATER

The Classroom is dark; the only thing we can see is the television in the front of the classroom. We see black and white footage of Hitler and the Nazi party on the screen.

We hear a narrator overlay, maybe Morgan Freeman or even an Alec Baldwin type:

NARRATOR

So in conclusion the Nazis were bad. Really, very bad. Actually suspiciously bad.

We see the end credits roll up on the screen. LUKE turns on the lights in the classroom and with the illumination of the room many of the kids wake up from their naps.

LUKE strides over to the television and turns off the T.V.

LUKE

So that concludes our video, Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party: How Bad Were They?

CHARLES raises his hand.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Yes, question, Charlie.

CHARLES

That was a terrible film.

LUKE

More of a statement really. Why, I feel as if it dealt a valuable yet positive message.

CHARLES

A repetitive message. I mean we all knew the Nazis were bad.

REN

(interrupts abruptly) Suspiciously bad.

LUKE

Thank you Ren.

REN

No problem.

Anyway, that was the only video that I could find on such short notice.

REN

So what's on the agenda now boss?

LUKE reads a schedule on his desk.

LUKE

Well if my schedule serves correct which it should, it is time to walk you down to music class. That sounds like a treat. Its probably a real learning environment down there, huh?

REN

Not exactly.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. - MR. BIRCHBECK'S CLASSROOM - MUSIC CLASS

The frame is filled up with the awkward mug of MR. BIRCHBECK, music teacher and acoustic guitar guru.

His hair, which is in the process of thinning dramatically, is in a short flattop but the back is longer, very enproportional to the front, like a mullet but not quite that groomed.

He is wearing a plain t-shirt with a vest over it, which holds his three differently tuned harmonicas, and on the other side is his gold-plated pitch pipe.

He is the true archetype of musical visionary. His look is dramatically topped off with black sweat pants and Birkenstocks.

He is sitting in the front of the class on a stool. Posters ranging from Beethoven to Fleetwood Mac seemingly cover the walls.

LUKE stands up in the back of the classroom just taking in that, which is music class here at Panama Elementary.

MR. BIRCHBECK is strumming away a tune on his guitar and then abruptly stops.

MR. BIRCHBECK

So can anyone name the notes that I cleverly and slyly crafted together to form that little ditty?

A student raises his hand.

STUDENT

G. Or something along those lines.

MR. BIRCHBECK

Not quite but its alright. Let me tell you a story about another young man who didn't really even know music but overcame this retardation and became simply phenomenal in the field. Anyone familiar with a Mr. Jimi Hendrix? A raise of hands please.

A few students raise their hands.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

Come on, don't be shy. Touch some sky.

Reluctantly and slowly more students raise their hands.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

Good. I mean that is great, the majority of you are with me. So you guys know that Jimi Hendrix, was arguably the greatest guitar player of all time. Well let me slap you with some knowledge, you don't know. Hendrix, didn't even know how to play the quitar properly, he just memorized songs. There was no chord progressions, music notes or names like A's, B's, C's, G's or whatever. In his world, it was strictly what strings to hit on his guitar and where to hold down on the neck. So the lesson here is even though you guys don't know about reading music or the specifics of music appreciation that should never hold you back from achieving true musical genius. As I myself did years ago.

CHARLES

Wow, your humble.

REN

That sounds made up, is that made up?

The other children laugh at the teacher. MR. BIRCHBECK seems oddly offended.

MR. BIRCHBECK

How dare you. Both of you. I open my classroom for creative learning and you throw it back in my face and insult me. I wish I could express in words what I am feeling right now but instead I will sing it in a song I wrote for occasions just as this.

He pulls out his pitch pipe and tunes his guitar, without true reason. He then proceeds to pull a harmonica holder out of nowhere and put it around his neck and inserts one of his harmonicas.

He strums down on his guitar slowly.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

You, back there, Mr. Wilson.

LUKE responds but is taken aback when he is called upon.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

Yes, you. Come on up I need someone to man the tambourine and you seem rightly fit.

LUKE

I've never done that.

MR. BIRCHBECK

You would never had needed to until now. Come on get up here. If Linda McCartney could do it, so can you.

The class starts a slow chant: MR. WILSON

LUKE

What the hell.

He jogs to the front of the classroom and grabs the tambourine out off MR. BIRCHBECK'S hand.

MR. BIRCHBECK

I need something slow, yet at the same time, rhythmic.

LUKE plays a default tambourine beat, simple and slow.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

Speed it up a little.

He speeds up just a bit.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

That tempo is a little rapid for my taste. What do you say we bring her down a peg.

He slows down a tad and gets the thumbs up from BIRCHBECK. BIRCHBECK starts to play an upbeat and soothing guitar intro.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

I wrote this one after I was semihonorably discharged from the war.

LUKE

(still beating the tambourine)

Oh, Vietnam?

MR. BIRCHBECK

That goes without saying.

MR. BIRCHBECK begins to sing the song, the lyrics a tad disturbing and almost surreal for the students only because the tempo is a little upbeat compared to the stark lyrics.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

(singing)

First it was the Indians, you raped and killed their people. Then it was the black man you singed and burned their steeple. Then it was the women they could not even vote. The worst thing to ever happen to the world were the rich white folk...

LUKE seems dumbfounded. As are the students.

MR. BIRCHBECK (CONT'D)

Sing it with me, rich white folk.

FADE OUT.

INT. - CLASSROOM - LATER

LUKE is in front of his class. They finish reading a short story.

So, the main character in the short story is whom?

A student raises their hand.

STUDENT

I think it was the narrator.

LUKE

Good, I mean your wrong but good.

JENNIFER raises her hand.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Yes, Jennifer.

JENNIFER

I think, well no, unlike him, I know, that the main character is the farmer.

LUKE

Good. Now what is the writer and the main character trying to stress here? What's the focal point?

JENNIFER

Well I think it deals with what the farmer thinks is the most important thing in life. In his case he almost sells his soul for a healthy crop so we can see he thinks wealth is the most important thing in life.

LUKE

Very good. Financial security everybody, we got that. Its the most important thing in life, we all agree.

REN raises his hand.

LUKE (CONT'D)

My man Ren, an objection?

REN

Yeah. I don't think money is all that matters. There's other things in life more important.

LUKE

Well, examples.

REN

How about your family. Or more specifically the safety of friends and loved ones. That's certainly more important than money, in my opinion.

Another student speaks up.

STUDENT 2

Good call Ren. To friends and family.

LUKE

Yes Ren. Good call. Anyone disagree?

JENNIFER raises her hand and without being called on speaks.

JENNIFER

I sort of feel, in a way, money and wealth can be more important.

REN

In what way? That's absurd.

JENNIFER

Well, I think money can buy security for your family, money can help quarantee their safety.

LUKE

That's an interesting thought, Jennifer. Money buying your safety. Can I ask you something though?

JENNIFER

I guess.

LUKE walks up next to her.

LUKE

Well Jennifer. Lets pretend, for a minute that I sit here before you and tell you Ren over there is planning on coming to your house later tonight and burglarizing your home. Its hypothetical and just a threat.

JENNIFER

Alright.

Fine. So the threat is out there. SO you take the most important thing in the world to you, your money and use it to protect yourself and your family. Buy security systems, guard dogs and whatever need be to protect yourself.

JENNIFER

Yeah that's right like I said money can buy security.

LUKE

But can it really? So, your sleeping at home comfortable in your bed and you hear a noise downstairs. You walk down cautiously and you see Ren, clad in all black, wearing a ski mask climbing through your open window. He's in the house.

The class laughs.

REN

(deep voice)

Oh yeah.

LUKE

You see, he's disabled the security system and I won't even tell you how he got rid of the dogs and he's on his way to burglarize your home. Your vulnerable, your family is vulnerable and what do you do? Pull out your check book? Credit cards?

JENNIFER

I don't get it.

LUKE

Can money truly buy security? Can money buy anything, really? Well anything valuable that is?

REN

It can't buy love or happiness.

STUDENT

Or friendship.

LUKE walks back up to his desk and sits down.

So the most valuable things in the world cannot be bought.

They all nod.

LUKE (CONT'D)

That's what I'm saying. That is what that story is saying.

The students have a look on their faces. Like they actually just learned something.

INT - CAFETERIA - DAY

Students slide their trays down the line, each grabbing miscellaneous foods that in a way distinguish each of their different personalities.

A slim kid grabs a salad, another larger kid passes it right up and just grabs the main course, something that we can't exactly pin-point, definitely deep-fried, maybe a corndog, its always a guessing game in this cafeteria.

The slim kid pays the cafeteria lady for his food, and then it is the larger kid's turn.

CAFETERIA LADY

What is this now?

LARGE KID

What is what. Oh this?
(pointing to his tray)
That's my lunch, obviously.

We see the lunch tray contains merely the fried concoction, two cookies and a carton of chocolate milk.

CAFETERIA LADY

Now that's hardly a lunch, dear.

LARGE KID

Well I feel as if its a lunch. I mean, its food and its drink aka, lunch.

CAFETERIA LADY

You probably haven't heard but the state has made a new law that each student must have at least one serving of fruits and vegetables with their lunch. No if's, and's, or but's.

LARGE KID

That's a gyp.

CAFETERIA LADY

Why?

LARGE KID

Why? I'll tell you why because I hate vegetables and only like a select group of fruit. None of which are available in this cafeteria.

CAFETERIA LADY

I think we have a wide variety of fruit available. I mean apples, oranges, bananas, pears, peaches, plums and the list goes on and on.

LARGE KID

Yet no tangelos, Pomegranates, kiwis, apricots nor any (scans the fruit selection)

Papaya. And you try to call yourselves a cafeteria.

CAFETERIA LADY
You do know why we are making children eat fruit, right?

LARGE KID

Out of spite?

CAFETERIA LADY
No. Childhood obesity is now an absolutely staggering epidemic.

The child seems distraught, almost sad.

LARGE KID

Am I obese?

CAFETERIA LADY (compassionately)
I'm afraid so, sweetheart.

LARGE KID

Bummer.

CAFETERIA LADY

Now go back there, get a salad and save yourself, before its to late.

CUT TO:

INT. - LUNCHROOM - DAY

At a table in the back of the lunchroom sits LUKE, reading over a newspaper and eating a small lunch.

Suddenly we see MR. SHERWYN. He sits next to LUKE and holds a box of something in his hand.

LUKE

Oh, hey. What's going on Mr. Sherwyn.

SHERYWN

Not a damn thing. Want some granola?

He opens the box he's holding and offers some granola to LUKE.

LUKE

Granola, that's what you eat for lunch, ay?

SHERYWN

Sure. It keeps me young. I used to go for the bars and whatnot. But this stuff in the box is so much more natural, its organic, its like the closest thing to consuming nature.

LUKE

In that case I guess I'll take some.

SHERYWN

Far out. Hold your hand out.

LUKE holds out his hand flat out like a small child. SHERWYN seems irate.

SHERYWN (CONT'D)

Come on, cup it!

He cups it and takes a handful of granola. He throws it in his mouth.

SHERWYN

Huh? What do you think? Good, right?

LUKE

It's good, it is good.

It isn't good, we can tell because he hasn't truly swallowed it yet but he pretends it's delicious anyway. He finally swallows it. Granola usually tastes alright but this isn't just any granola, this is Mr. Sherwyn's granola.

SHERYWN

So, I heard through the grapevine that your playing in the football game. Any truth in this?

LUKE

Well Willis was just relentless he wouldn't leave me alone until I said yes.

SHERWYN

So he muscled you into it?

LUKE

Hardly. I mean I know I shouldn't have said yeah but frankly, I'm kind of looking forward to playing. As weird as that sounds.

SHERYWN

Oh, so your good?

LUKE

Not to pat myself on the back or anything but yeah.

SHERYWN

Well this we will see.

LUKE

So what about you, do you usually play?

SHERWYN

I mean I'm always on the team but I never played before. I'm a alternate tight-end but no one ever gets hurt.

LUKE

Surprisingly. But you don't really even want to play do you?

(MORE)

LUKE (CONT'D)

You just kind of go through the motions and everything.

SHERYWN

Well, honestly? I have always wanted to try it. It looks like loads of fun but Willis would never let me. I mean who am I? The art teacher.

LUKE

Well, I can try and get you some play time. I mean I am the quarterback and all.

SHERYWN

(ecstatic)

Really? You'd do that for me?

LUKE

Oh yeah, no problem.

SHERWYN

Man, thank you, I'll owe you.

LUKE

Oh, don't even mention it.

LUKE gets up and prepares to leave.

SHERYWN

Oh hey, you want some more granola? For the road?

LUKE thinks for a second and then sticks his hand out. He gets a nice helping of granola and walks away.

EXT. - OUTSIDE CAFETERIA/HALLWAY- DAY

LUKE comes out of the cafeteria doors and immediately dumps his handful of granola into a nearby trash barrel.

He makes his way to a nearby drinking fountain and indulges himself into the luke-warm almost acidic tasting water.

A voice is heard and it surprises LUKE.

VOICE (O.C.)

You know there is better tasting water in the teacher's lounge.

LUKE turns around, only to see DANA ERICSSON, a fairly good looking blonde woman, about 26 years old, he is taken aback because a normal looking woman such as herself should never be found in a place like this.

DANA

The sour tasting, warm water is usually reserved for the students.

LUKE laughs while wiping his mouth dry.

LUKE

I take it you are?

DANA

Dana Ericsson.

LUKE

Are you a teacher, or?

DANA

Of course, I teach fourth grade two classes down from yourself. I heard Mr. Lowell's replacement was here today and I just wanted to introduce myself.

LUKE

Well the pleasure is all mine.

DANA

Well do you want to go into the lounge with me and grab some coffee?

LUKE

Well, we just met (beat)

But what the hell.

WHAT THE HELL.

(LUKE checks his watch)
I got ten minutes to spare anyway.

INT. - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

DANA and LUKE walk into the lounge and MR. SAGE walks right past them.

LUKE

Hey Mr. Sage.

MR. SAGE

Go fuck yourself.

MR. SAGE, steams right out of the door.

LUKE

Well if you couldn't tell, he probably doesn't like me.

DANA laughs briefly. Then collects herself.

DANA

Well that's more then I have heard him say to anybody recently.

LUKE

Well then I should be honored, right?

They laugh. LUKE and DANA walk over to the coffee pot. She pours a cup for herself and one for LUKE.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Coffee, sensational.

DANA

Never heard anybody so fond of a cup of coffee.

LUKE

Oh well, you should of been there. This morning it was this guy, with this silo of coffee, he wouldn't let me have any, it wasn't a pretty sight. Let's just leave it at that.

DANA

Sounds that way.

LUKE

Yeah well, lets just say I had to kick some ass and take some names. But don't you worry this guy knows not to mess with me again.

DANA

Let me guess. Mr. Willis?

LUKE

That's him. That's the son of a bitch that wronged me. You familar with the gentleman.

DANA

You can say that.

Well then you know how much of an asshole he is.

DANA

Yeah he's my fiance.

Its like she just dropped a bomb on him.

LUKE

Fiance. Your marrying that guy?

DANA

That's usually what a fiance is.

LUKE

Well its a small world.

DANA

Nope. Just a small school.

LUKE

Congratulations, good luck or whatever.

DANA

Well thank you.

They walk over to the nearby couch and sit down.

LUKE

So how did you guys end up hitting it off? If you don't mind me asking.

DANA

Well you know how these things go.

LUKE

Oh, I'm sorry, lack of options?

DANA

No. There's a side to him that no one sees but me. A good side, a loving side.

LUKE

Well good luck with that.

DANA

Thanks, I guess.

Well this whole thing is kind of funny.

DANA

Why?

LUKE

Because until about two minutes ago I was going to ask you out on a date, or something. I guess that's dead in the water.

DANA

That's a shame.

LUKE

So what was the first date like? I'm thinking (BEAT)

Bowling? He probably yelled at you and made you keep playing until you bowled like a two-fifty, two-seventy five. Was that it? Bowling?

DANA laughs but not for long.

DANA

We went to a Beatles concert.

LUKE

(confused)

Like *The* Beatles. John, Paul, George and the drummer?

DANA

Well a mock band. Impersonators. You see that was the first real connection we had, The Beatles. He loves them and I love them. It built off that.

LUKE

Well I love the Beatles. I always felt as if they were the best band of all time.

Out of nowhere from behind the couch comes MR. BIRCHBECK, he interrupts.

MR. BIRCHBECK

Couldn't help but notice you referring to The Beatles as the best band of all time.

Yeah, So?

MR. BIRCHBECK

Well that crown would belong to The Rolling Stones not the Beatles.

LUKE

Well that's debateable. Your opinion, really.

MR. BIRCHBECK

Well I being a musician feel as if my opinion holds just a little more weight than yours.

TIUKF

Well let's agree to disagree.

MR. BIRCHBECK

Well certainly.

As quickly as he appeared, MR. BIRCHBECK disappears.

LUKE

That's a strange guy. Actually, can I speak frankly?

DANA

Be my guest.

LUKE

Well this administration is full of strange and awkward people.

DANA

I don't know, I mean there sure are a few characters.

LUKE

Characters? Have you met the music teacher or Mr. Sherwyn? How about Carl the janitor? Its like a goddamned David Lynch movie in here.

DANA

Hey, Carl is a sweetheart.

LUKE

That may be so but, still. Come on.

Suddenly MR. WILLIS comes into the lounge. He alerts his presence with a yell.

MR. WILLIS

Who's ready to kick some prepubescent ass? Who wants to kick the shit out of these little tykes?

LUKE

Oh god. Its him.

DANA

Oh, stop it.

MR. WILLIS makes his way towards DANA and LUKE.

MR. WILLIS

Hey sweetheart.

He kisses her on the cheek and sits between LUKE and DANA on the couch. He throws a packet of papers on LUKE'S lap.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

So here they are.

LUKE

What's this?

MR. WILLIS

The plays.

LUKE

Our plays?

MR. WILLIS

No their plays.

LUKE

The children's?

MR. WILLIS

Yeah.

He seems to be laughing erratically. LUKE stares blankly. MR. WILLIS composes himself.

MR. WILLIS

Yeah you see, we got them right where we want them. Directly amidst our cross hairs. Now all we got to do is lock it, load it and pull the trigger.

They're kids. Not our cross-town high school rivals. Aren't you taking this a bit to far?

MR. WILLIS

To far? If by to far you mean the ambition and the hunger to win anyway necessary then I've taken it above and beyond.

An awkward silence ensues.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)
Go ahead. Open it up. Peek inside.
They're running a cute little
system. But I've taken it apart
from every angle, they're getting
nothing past this guy.

LUKE

So where are our plays?

MR. WILLIS

I've got em'. Don't you worry I got them right here.

(pointing to his head)

LUKE

So they're not on paper?

MR. WILLIS

On paper? What are you cracked? And what, leave a paper trail? Give those fucking kids a chance to steal my plays? No way,

(BEAT)

Jose.

LUKE

Your gonna need to calm down.

MR. WILLIS

No. Your gonna need to calm up and get your head in the game. The plays, don't worry you'll get them soon enough. I'm going to go change, I expect you to do the same. See you on the field in ten.

LUKE

I have no other clothes.

MR. WILLIS Check your cubby.

CUT TO:

INT. - STAFF BOXES - MOMENTS LATER

This is the room with all the staff boxes. LUKE scans over the boxes and then finds a box that is labeled: LOWELL but scratched out and replaced with WILSON.

He sees a pair of black athletic shorts and a white shirt folded nicely. He unfolds the shorts and looks at them.

LUKE

(to self)

Nice.

Then he unfolds the shirt and it says: TEAM WILLIS.

LUKE (CONT'D)

(inaudibly mouthing)

What the fuck?

CUT TO:

EXT. - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

This is not an actual football field but just a big open space of grass next to the playground where the children can play soccer, baseball or in this case a game of football.

All along the sidelines are children of all grades sitting. Just anticipating what is about to go down.

In the middle of the field we can see MR. WILLIS stretching, he is wearing a neon green tank top that says TEAM WILLIS, a pair of white sweat pants, and a white Adidas headband he's clearly come ready to play.

LUKE steps onto the field he is wearing his uniform.

MR. WILLIS and LUKE meet in the middle of the field.

LUKE

Why are you wearing that? Why don't we have the same uniforms?

MR. WILLIS

Cause I'm the leader, I have to make a statement. Anyway, are you ready to play?

LUKE

Somewhat?

MR. WILLIS

(quietly)

Did you study their plays?

LUKE

Do you mean in the ten minutes since you gave me the plays have I read over them? No.

MR. WILLIS

(irate)

Why not?

LUKE

I refuse. I believe in equal opportunity and a little concept called fair play.

MR. WILLIS

That's fair. You respect the opponent. I don't but whatever. I guess we're gonna have to play the little fuckers straight up. Well fuck it.

LUKE

Oh, I was going to ask you, do you think Mr. Sherwyn could get some play time?

MR. WILLIS

Who? You mean that granola-munching-drum-playing-gorilla that teaches art? That Sherwyn.

LUKE

Yeah.

MR. WILLIS

That ogre couldn't play a slot machine let alone football. Where could he play?

He say's he's been alternate tight end, forever.

MR. WILLIS

(stunned)

Who made that son of a bitch an alternate. He can't play football.

LUKE

Look you don't even know the guy.

MR. WILLIS

Hey don't put this on me. I tried to get to know that guy. I once had a conversation with him for ten minutes on why he keeps a picture of Jerry Garcia in his wallet. One time he told me he sneaks onto private property just to pick flowers. Know what else he told me that he named his twin sons Buddy and Herbert, just so he could call them Herb and Bud for short. This cat is fucked up.

LUKE

I know. I know he's a little cooky and out there but he just wants to play. So can he play or not?

MR. WILLIS

So you vouch for him?

LUKE

Yes.

MR. WILLIS

Fine but one slip up and its your ass.

FADE TO:

EXT. - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

A group of about eight teachers including LUKE stand in attention towards MR. WILLIS, who reminds us of a really lame version of Sgt. Hartman from FULL METAL JACKET.

A few noticeable teachers at attention are: MR. SHERWYN, MRS. HERDER, MR. BIRCHBECK and of course CARL the janitor, not exactly a teacher but he plays anyway.

MR. WILLIS paces back and forth in front of the row of teachers and then stops in front of MR. SHERWYN.

SHERWYN is sweating profusely and is wearing the TEAM WILLIS shirt only his is tye-died.

MR. WILLIS

(forcefully)

Mr. Sherwyn, I just gave out these shirts this morning how in the hell did you have enough time to turn it fucking rainbow. You look like you should be marching in a fag parade.

CARL interrupts.

CARL

That might not be politically correct. I believe the preferred nomenclature is gay pride parade.
(BEAT)

Sir.

MR. WILLIS

(outraged towards CARL)
What janitor? Did you say something
custodian? This doesn't concern
you. If a kid throws up his lunch
by the monkey bars that's your
deal. Somebody tries to piss in
bathroom, misses and the walls
become soaked with urine, that's
when you throw in your two cents
but until that time lets keep that
mouth shut.

CARL

Sorry sir.

MR. WILLIS

Now back to Mr. Sherwyn.
(looking at Sherwyn)
You know what your problem is?

SHERYWN

I'm selfless?

MR. WILLIS

No. You aging hipster. You think your the cat's meow and that your values and way of life seem genuine but realistically their moronic and make no sense.

(MORE)

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

What's the matter you couldn't find a jersey made of hemp? Huh? Peace and love my ass. Clean yourself up, take a shower and shave your beard, the hippies lost.

SHERWYN somewhat enjoys this in a weird, weird way. He faintly smiles.

MR. WILLIS

What are you smiling at green peace? You tree-hugging beatnik, your nickname on this field today will be the green machine. Congratulations your playing football.

He slaps SHERYWN on the cheek. SHERWYN just abosorbs the hit and keeps staring forward and once again faintly smiling.

WILLIS steps up to MRS. HERDER.

MR. WILLIS
 (CONT'D)

Mrs. Herder. The only thing this school knows you for is what? What's your claim to fame?

MRS. HERDER

I would have to say that it's because my classes score he highest on the state tests each year.

WILLIS makes an obscene buzzer sound with his mouth.

MR. WILLIS

Wrong. The reason people know you is for that limp. The awkward, crippling of that leg to the likes of which I have never seen, is what your known for.

BEAT.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

When a student asks me who Mrs. Herder is I tell them, the lady that limps, you can't miss her. And you know what they retort?

MRS. HERDER is silent. She is utterly offended and who wouldn't be.

MR. WILLIS

They retort, "Oh, that freak show." So what's the story of that limp anyway.

MRS. HERDER

If you must know, I'll tell you. When I was a teenager I was riding on the back of my boyfriend's motorcycle. One late night while coming home another car clipped us from behind. He died. I came away with nothing.

MR. WILLIS

(pointing to her leg) Except that limp.

MRS. HERDER

What's the point of this? If its to prove your an asshole, good job.

MR. WILLIS

That's fair. Do you know what that limp is? What it makes you?

MRS. HERDER

I always felt it a reminder to myself to never take life for granted, that any day could be your last and you should thank god everyday that your alive.

These comments seem to spring an emotional moment but sadly it is broken up by MR. WILLIS.

MR. WILLIS

Wrong.

MRS. HERDER

Wrong?

MR. WILLIS

Yes, that is wrong. That leg, your limp. It's an emotional block, an impediment if you will. It's the only thing holding you back from playing your heart out here today and proving something to yourself and your teammates.

We see LUKE lean over and whisper to CARL.

(whispering)

Man, this is borderline harassment, its getting out of hand.

CARL

(whispering)

Yeah but I kind of want to see where its going.

MRS. HERDER

Why are you doing this to me.

MR. WILLIS

Well, are you mad?

She nods yes.

MRS. HERDER

You riled up?

Once again she nods.

MR. WILLIS

Right about now don't you want to just kill me?

MRS. HERDER

Yes.

MR. WILLIS

Well then, take that mentality, those feelings, onto the field with you and positively direct them towards us winning the game.

In a weird and twisted way she seems inspired. There is fire in her eyes. Last but not least MR. WILLIS walks towards LUKE, we can tell he's been waiting a long time to dish out this speech.

MR. WILLIS

What can I say about you that hasn't already been said about abortion? Your worthless, criminal and a product of a night of heavy drinking and I will pretty much leave it at that.

Unlike the others LUKE clearly doesn't accept this as some sort of twisted motivational speech.

Your laying it on pretty thick, huh?

MR. WILLIS

Huh?

LUKE

I mean, criticizing Mr. Sherwyn for his social beliefs and crucifying Mrs. Herder for a handicap, you believe this to be motivational speech?

MR. WILLIS

Are you questioning my coaching techniques?

LUKE

No, those I know suck. I'm questioning your moral and intellectual values.

Everyone is intrigued by this exchange of words. It becomes silent while WILLIS mulls over a comeback.

MR. WILLIS

You stand up for yourself and your not afraid to be a man, that's exactly why you're on this team. See everybody This is how you handle yourself, this man is well composed and here to take nothing from anybody, that includes myself and finding someone who'll stand up to me is a seldom experience. Learn from this man. This is our quarterback. Round of applause.

The group of teachers begins a slow-clap, while LUKE stares MR. WILLIS straight in the eyes, unimpressed. Everyone knows this is a cop out answer because LUKE isn't so much standing up to MR. WILLIS as much as MR. WILLIS is backing down from LUKE.

CUT TO:

EXT. - FOOTBALL FIELD/GAME- DAY

In offensive formation we have CARL playing center, MR. SHERWYN as a slot receiver, MR. BIRCHBECK is playing a lineman, along with another unknown teacher.

MRS. HERDER awkwardly enough is on the end, as a wide receiver and MR. WILLIS is playing running back behind LUKE who is about ready to take his first snap.

The team looks like one of the most jumbled and pathetic that we have ever seen grace a field.

The opposing team of students seems to have no familiar faces but they looking hungry for a win.

LUKE

(yelling)

Red ant, Mary seven!

MR. WILLIS

(also yelling)

You got that everybody, Red ant, Mary seven!

LUKE turns around and faces MR. WILLIS.

LUKE

I'm the quarterback, I'll call the plays.

MR. WILLIS

Alright, I'm easy.

This scene would be much more effective if slowed down (SLOW MOTION) for dramatic effect.

LUKE

Ready!

BEAT

LUKE (CONT'D)

Set!

BEAT

LUKE (CONT'D)

Hike!

Instantly, MRS. HERDER goes out, slowly but surely and SHERWYN runs a slant pattern up the middle, LUKE looks for the open receivers and sees MR. SHERWYN wide in the middle he prepares himself for the throw but before it leaves his hand MR. WILLIS snatches it out of his grip from behind and smiles at LUKE.

MR. WILLIS briskly jogs down the field, stiff-arming and jumping over kids as they try to pull his flag;

he throws a kid to the ground and steps over his body, his unbridled desire to score this touchdown is almost sick to look at.

He makes it to the end zone and does a flashy touchdown dance, by placing the football next to his crotch and rubbing it in what seems like a sexual inappropriate manor, then dropping it on the field.

MR. WILLIS
(yelling to nobody)
That's right, son! Can you believe
Riverside community cut this beast!

The game continues through montage:

The kids are on offense, the teachers or defending but not exactly well. The quarterback throws a touchdown pass to another kid; he receives it and then hands the ball back to the ref.

CUT TO:

LUKE is quarterback again and he passes to SHERWYN down the middle, SHERWYN runs it in for a touchdown but unlike MR. WILLIS he doesn't injure any kids on his way to scoring.

CUT TO:

We see the students on the sideline enjoying the game, cheering on their fellow students, who we now see getting the ball intercepted by MR. WILLIS on a deep pass.

MR. WILLIS runs the ball down all the way into the end zone but out comes a penalty flag. The ref, who is a student himself, runs to the middle of the field.

STUDENT REF Pass interference defense.

The students in the crowd applaud but MR. WILLIS on the other end of the field runs over to the STUDENT REF and gets in his face.

MR. WILLIS What interference! Who are you?

STUDENT REF
The student ref, what of it?

MR. WILLIS Well that's a bad call junior.

STUDENT REF

Well I call them like I see them.

MR. WILLIS

Oh, is that right? Can I see your credentials?

STUDENT REF

My what?

MR. WILLIS

Your officiating credentials. Can I see them?

STUDENT REF

I got them. Don't you worry your pretty little head, I've got them. Now get away before I pull the flag for unsportsman like conduct.

MR. WILLIS

Do it. I dare you.

STUDENT REF

Get away or I will.

MR. WILLIS

I double dare you.

As expected up goes the flag.

STUDENT REF

Unsportsman like conduct, fifteen yards.

MR. WILLIS

Oh that's it.

He looks like he is going to charge the kid but LUKE intervenes and drags MR. WILLIS away.

CUT TO:

It is half time and we are at the sidelines. The scoreboard rings 14-7 in favor of the teachers.

MR. WILLIS is pouring a small cup of water on his head and drying himself off with a towel and being interviewed by a student JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

So put your first half performance In perspective for us here at the Panama press.

MR. WILLIS

Performance? What haven't I been doing? I opened the game with a seventy-five yard rushing TD, been a shut-down corner on defense and capped the first half off with an interception for a touchdown, so you rate me.

JOURNALIST

Very well. Though that touchdown was taken back due to defensive pass interference, so what's your take on the officiating thus far?

MR. WILLIS

Shoddy, at best. I gotta ask what game that ref was watching? Son of a Bitch.

(BEAT)

Strike that from the record.

DISSOLVE TO:

Its the 4th quarter. The scoreboard says 14-21, teachers up with two minutes left.

The teachers are on defense and the kids are fifteen-yards from their goal line.

The quarterback goes into shotgun formation and hikes the ball. After a few moments, MR. WILLIS runs in for the sack but the quarterback sees what we see, MRS. HERDER has blown her coverage and the quarterback heaves the ball into the end zone for the touchdown.

The kids are ecstatic and the teachers are down, they regroup in a huddle.

MR. WILLIS

(CONT'D)

Oh, this is great.

LUKE

It's not that bad we're tied, not losing.

MR. WILLIS

Tying is just as bad as losing. Maybe worse. I can't believe you Mrs. Herder.

He flashes an ugly face towards her.

MRS. HERDER

What, I didn't do anything.

MR. WILLIS

That kid exploited your limp for all it was worth, your pass coverage was beyond terrible and you may have cost us this game. But that's not anything, right?

LUKE

Calm down, we still have (looks at clock)

A minute and a second to make this right again. This is the time losers are made and legends are born.

MR. WILLIS

Damn it.

LUKE

What?

MR. WILLIS

That was my line.

LUKE

Well sorry.

CUT TO:

The field is set, one minute left. The teachers are on the field, LUKE is in shotgun formation and all the receivers are set, including MR. WILLIS who is playing receiver.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Down, set, hike!

LUKE comes back and then drops into the pocket, he sees no one open, the students are on the teachers like white on rice but even more so.

He has left only one option, to run the ball himself, he takes off and escapes the first kid, the second kid tries to grab his flag but LUKE prevents this cleverly with a spin and juke that would put Randy Moss to shame.

He is inching closer and closer to the end zone but just as he approaches the end zone a student trying to grab LUKE'S flag inadvertently hits the ball out of his hands, resulting in a fumble near the end zone.

Another student rushes in picks up the fumble and strides his way to the end zone on the other side of the field. No one is going to catch the kid because nobody even wants to or tries for that matter, except WILLIS who runs swiftly to try to catch the kid but he fails as the kid high-steps his way into the end zone and then spikes the ball only as an exclamation point to their victory.

All the teachers are grouped in the middle of the field trying to catch their breaths. WILLIS runs up to them with a furious look on his face.

MR. WILLIS

Are you serious? Was I the only one chasing him. That was fucking ridiculous. I hate you guys.

MRS. HERDER

Well the feeling is mutual, trust me on that.

MR. WILLIS gets a look on his face that cannot be described, almost of disgust but a shade past that.

MR. WILLIS

Is that right? Mrs. "I couldn't play defense to save my life". Unbelievable, its going in the record books, hell the history books will always remember this year's administration as some of the most incompetent, sad losers to ever be on the fucking payroll! Led by the champion loser, Mr. Wilson.

MR. WILLIS looks at LUKE.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

Your lousy leadership will never be forgotten and quite frankly, I put all the weight of our loss on your shoulders.

LUKE

Uh, I thought you were the coach, so you take on the blame not this guy.

MR. WILLIS

I can blame whomever I want. Though I will say, this fucking guy, Mr. Sherwyn is the unsung hero of the game. Him as well as myself were the only ones who kept this game close. For this I commend him.

SHERWYN smiles and walks up to MR. WILLIS, he then proceeds to put his arm around his shoulder in a show of affection.

SHERYWN

You really think so, thanks brother.

MR. WILLIS

Get your arm off me you fucking ogre.

SHERWYN

I'm sorry, I just though since you-

MR. WILLIS

Pathetic, all of you. I'll be in the showers.

All of the teachers take off in different directions, except CARL, SHERWYN and LUKE.

SHERYWN

It was a good effort. We tried and if we're going down in history as losers at the very least we can be lovable losers.

CARL

The lovable loser. Story of my life. Now if you can excuse me, I need to finsh degumming the sidewalks.

CARL leaves. DANA walks up to SHERWYN and LUKE.

DANA

So fellas, how'd the game go?

LUKE

You mean you didn't see it?

DANA

Nope I was stuck in my class grading some papers. You guys look distraught, to say the least.

well, so not to bore you with the Particulars I will give you the abridged version, basically we lost and your Soon-to-be-husband went off the deep-end and I have the feeling that by the end of the day, he may very well kill me.

DANA

Oh don't be silly. How did you guys really do?

LUKE

No, honestly, we lost.

DANA

Oh, wow. That has never happened. Well the good thing is the kids finally get a well deserved win.

LUKE

Try explaining that to your fiance.

INT. - CLASSROOM - DAY

LUKE comes into his classroom. He is still wearing his football attire. The students are quiet, too quiet.

LUKE sits down at his desk. Someone finally speaks up.

CHARLES

Good game.

LUKE

Well Charlie, thank you. We tried our best.

REN

My Dad used to tell me that sometimes your best just isn't good enough.

(BEAT)

Luckily, my mom divorced him and my step dad, Bruce, told me that as long as you tried that's all that mattered.

LUKE

That's a valid point.

Another STUDENT stands up.

STUDENT

I say we give this man a round of applause.

He begins the slow clap. No one joins him. This is becoming awkward.

LUKE

That's alright. Let's just do some work . Howabout I take you guys over to Mr. Sherwyn's, for art.

JENNIFER

We only do art on Fridays. Its not Friday. Its actually Monday.

LUKE

Who cares. Lets just wing it.

CUT TO:

INT. - MR. SHERWYN'S ART CLASS - DAY

Finally we get to see the class that SHERWYN built, so to speak. The room seems awfully colorful, different paintings and portraits of landscapes grace the wall as well as original paintings by SHERWYN. Also seen are framed and autographed pictures of Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and oddly enough Donald Fagen.

The students sit at different workstations around the classroom. In front of each of them sits a small chunk of modeling clay. They stare at MR. SHERWYN who stands in front of them holding his own ball of clay, somewhat instructing.

SHERYWN

Let the clay be you. Or you be clay, your choice entirely.

(Squeezing the clay in his palm firmly)

Remember art is everything and coincidentally everything is art. Well more specifically everything can be interpreted as art.

A student abruptly speaks up.

STUDENT

Everything can be art?

SHERYWN

That's correct, chief. The little doodles you make in class when your bored, art. When you deface your text books by putting little thought bubbles over the pictures with such clever saying as, man, I suck or I'm boring. That's art.

STUDENT

Cool, I do-do that.

SHERWYN

As you should. And when you find yourself eating lunch and playing with the food on your tray, you know, rearranging the peas, turning your mashed potatoes into a volcano, that's art. The point I'm trying to stress here is that creating art is easy. Its in all of us.

REN interrupts.

REN

Even me?

SHERYWN

No one laughs. Cricket chirps wouldn't be enough.

SHERYWN (CONT'D)

Just a little art humor.

He swipes his hand over his head because he thinks they didn't get it

The kids begin working. SHERWYN walks over to LUKE who is sitting in the back of the classroom.

LUKE

That was interesting, to say the least.

SHERWYN

Well I try. Hey come with me to go and put some of these little clay animals in the kiln.

We see a batch of oddly shaped clay farm animals ready to be hardened.

LUKE

Those are animals? I thought they were paper weights, who made those the kindergarten classes?

SHERYWN

(oddly offended)

No, I did.

LUKE

Oh. Any way we can't leave the students here alone.

SHERWYN

Don't worry I'll just have my apprentice watch them.

LUKE

Apprentice?

SHERYWN

Yeah this teacher I'm training, the district sent him. He's helpful, he'll take care of shit while we leave.

LUKE

Oh. Whatever, I'm easy.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

SHERWYN and LUKE walk through the hallway. SHERWYN holds the tray of clay animals.

SHERWYN

Your gonna love going to the kiln.

LUKE

We're just going to the kiln right?

SHERYWN

Just going to the kiln, your funny.

They stop in front of a door, it seems to be CARL'S office.

SHERWYN

Open the door, man. My hands are full.

This is Carl's office.

SHERYWN

(smiling)
Yeah the kiln.

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SHERWYN isn't shy about entering but LUKE proceeds with what seems like caution.

CARL is on his computer typing. He doesn't acknowledge their presence.

SHERWYN

Hey, Carl. Here to use the kiln.

CARL

(staring at computer)

Whatever.

All of a sudden the door opens and in comes MR. SAGE. He seems paranoid. He looks out the door behind him and then proceeds to lock it.

MR. SAGE

Great, I'm not late.

LUKE whispers to SHERWYN.

LUKE

Late? For what?

SHERWYN

Don't worry about it, come on just go sit down.

LUKE proceeds to sit down on a nearby sofa and MR. SAGE oddly enough sits right next to him. MR. SAGE seems anxious, he rubs his hands together in anticipation.

MR. SAGE

I've been waiting for this all day, I'll tell you. Man, actually all week.

LUKE

(confused)

What's going on? I'm a little in the dark.

MR. SAGE

You can say that again, fruit loop.

LUKE

Fruit loop? I think I'm going go back to my class. I don't know what's going on, I'm a little confused. I'm in Carl's office, you trample in and then lock the door behind you and now I'm sitting here, not knowing what going to happen next. So maybe I should just leave.

LUKE begins to get up. SHERWYN appears and pushes him back down.

SHERYWN

Not so fast, cracker jack.

SHERWYN sits down next to them on the couch. He has a small box and places it on his lap. He opens it only to pull out a small baggy full of already rolled joints.

LUKE seems disturbed by this. Once again, who wouldn't be.

LUKE

(stammering)

Is that-

I mean, are those Marijuana cigarettes. What are you fucking nuts?

SHERWYN pulls one out and lights it. He blows the smoke right in LUKE'S face.

LUKE (CONT'D)

You really are fucking nuts!

SHERWYN laughs and then passes the joint to MR. SAGE. Before he smokes it he looks at LUKE.

MR. SAGE

Your not gonna narc us out are you? Sherwyn, is this guy cool?

SHERWYN pulls out another joint, lights and inhales.

SHERYWN

(exhales)

Cool? Is that what your asking? This guy is fucking Peter Fonda.

They both just stare at him.

SHERWYN

Oh, he's cool.

MR. SAGE

Oh, if he's so cool then he'll smoke this.

MR. SAGE pushes the joint into LUKE'S face. LUKE proceeds to push it away.

LUKE

Oh, I much rather get second-hand high, much easier, same effect.

MR. SAGE stares blankly.

MR. SAGE

Whatever,

(BEAT)

Girl. More for this cat, good thing too, I needed it.

SHERWYN

(In a daze)

You can say that again.

LUKE

Say, Mr. Sherwyn?

SHERWYN

What?

LUKE

What are kids doing while we're gone?

SHERYWN

Like I said my teacher's assistant is watching em'. They're in good hands.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. - MR. SHERWYN'S ART CLASS - SIMULTANEOUS

In the front of the class sits the TEACHER'S ASSISTANT. He looks like an aged biker. Meaning in his early days he probably rode with the Hell's Angels. Those days are over my friends, he now seems reformed.

His face is covered with a long scar and tatoos are clearly visible on his neck. He sports a formal attire, consisting of a sweater, khakis and unscuffed construction boots.

We enter the conclusion of his story.

TEACHER'S ASSISTANT
-So that's the last time I did that
for money. So I guess what I'm
trying to say here is that, the
angels, had no rules.

He abruptly comes out of his storytelling mind-set and looks at one of the students molding a clay snowman.

TEACHER'S ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

(Cheerfully)

Wow, look at that snowman, good job!

CUT TO:

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - LATER

LUKE, SHERWYN and MR. SAGE are done smoking but now just sit in their drug-induced haze. Seemingly talking amongst themselves.

We enter their exchange:

LUKE

-So what I never got was, that little fucker found some spare change in the gutter and buys a wonka bar not knowing there was a golden ticket inside.

SHERWYN interrupts.

SHERWYN

It was a gamble.

LUKE

Yeah it was. I mean your eating cabbage water and the occasional loaf of bread, when your lucky, every night and a when an opportunity arises such as that, I mean finding money. You just spend it?

MR. SAGE

(Nods head)

Selfish move.

LUKE

Howabout Grandpa Joe, when Charlie brings home that ticket made of gold, that old coot starts singing and dancing like Gene Kelly in the fuckin' rain! I mean if you got the stamina and agility of a twenty-five year old; why not get a job and support your family?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - LATER

They are still ranting.

MR. SAGE

I had this student, hell of a kid. He wrote phenomenal essays, aced all his tests and had the most extensive vocabulary I have ever encountered, child or adult. But, (BEAT)

Frankly, he reeked of piss.

LUKE not paying attention to MR. SAGE, interrupts.

LUKE

And what about Charlie's mom? Clearly she had to be working two jobs, poor thing. Why didn't Charlie pick his mom for the magical tour, she deserved it.

CUT TO:

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

They are staring at SHERWYN telling a joke.

SHERWYN

So the Priest tells the Rabbi, mind your meat and potatoes!

They all burst out in laughter.

MR. SAGE

(Pointing to SHERWYN)

This fuckin' guy!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

They are still in their post-high conversation but they are all sad, almost crying.

SHERWYN

(sad)

So when I went to the dance she was already there with John Reinhold.

LUKE

(Stunned)

No!

SHERWYN

Yeah, she said she was just playing around and wasn't really going to the prom with me all along. Like as a cruel joke.

MR. SAGE

How dare her play with your emotions like that, it going to be alright.

MR. SAGE places his hand on SHERWYN'S shoulder

CUT TO:

QUICK-SILENT-MONTAGE-ENSUES:

First we see MR. SAGE acting like a mime in a box and LUKE and SHERWYN laughing hysterically.

CUT TO:

We see them passed out on the couch. LUKE in the middle has MR. SAGE'S and SHERWYN'S heads on each of his shoulders.

CUT TO:

 ${\tt MR.}$ SAGE and LUKE sit on the couch as SHERWYN stands behind them.

They stare at SHERWYN as he makes a fake mustache with his finger across his upper lip and does an over the top "Nazi march".

(Including high stepping and a hail Hitler to top it all off)

CUT TO:

INT. - CARL'S OFFICE - LATER

They are once again passed out in the same position. Suddenly we see CARL approach them. He nudges each of them on the shoulder in hopes to wake them.

Slowly but surely they wake.

LUKE

(groggy)
What time is it, Carl?

CART

I think its time for you fellas to get back to work.

EXT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

MR. SAGE rolls out of CARL'S office first, looking paranoid as hell. He puts on his sunglasses, sticks his hands in his pockets and begins to whistle inconspicuously as he strolls on down the hallway.

MR. SHERWYN and LUKE come out next and begin to walk together towards MR. SHERWYN'S art class but then LUKE stops.

LUKE

You know what I'm going to head back to my class just send the kids over, will ya?

SHERWYN

Sure thing, boss. I will catch you on the flip-flop.

LUKE

Whatever.

They part ways. We follow LUKE as he walks down the hallway towards his class but along the way he passes by the BULLY kid from earlier.

Oh hey, I expect that paper on my desk by morning.

BULLY

(cheerful tone)

You got it sir!

LUKE keeps walking but we can see the BULLY making multiple obscene gestures behind his back. (I.E.: flipping the bird)

LUKE

(to self)

And they said Rome wasn't built in a day.

He keeps striding along minding his own business when around the corner come who else but MR. WILLIS.

LUKE seems taken back to see him.

LUKE (CONT'D)

(to self)

Well this might be awkward.

MR. WILLIS is holding an unusually large stack of papers. They confront each other.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Hey Mr. Willis, that's an awful lot of paper you got there. What did you cut down a forest?

He chuckles nervously.

MR. WILLIS

For your information, I just came out of the duplicating room, where for the last hour I've been cooking up these babies.

He hands him a paper off the large stack.

CU: The paper reads:

Dear Parents, I regret to inform you that quite a tragic event has taken place today within the confines of Panama Elementary. During the annual student/teacher flag football game, certain events transpired that frankly I nor anybody involved is proud of....

We see LUKE'S face as he reads the paper.

What is this?

MR. WILLIS

That, is a letter of apology for our poor performance on the field during this afternoon's flag football game.

(BEAT)

Scratch that, not my performance, I played my heart out, but I'm apologizing for you and the rest of the teachers. Just so you can save face.

LUKE

(confused)

O.K. Let me try and understand what you did here. You created a letter to the parents of the students emphasizing how sorry you are for their children, winning?

MR. WILLIS realizes that LUKE has a point but his ego won't allow him to give in.

MR. WILLIS

(Nodding)

Yeah that's right.

LUKE

Does that not strike you as a tad dumb?

MR. WILLIS

(fire in his eyes)

Are you calling me dumb?

LUKE

No, I'm calling your flyer dumb.

MR. WILLIS

(forcefully)

You take it back.

LUKE

I don't think I'm going to.

MR. WILLIS

Are we doing this?

LUKE

Are we?

MR. WILLIS

I think we are.

The line is drawn and they pick their sides. LUKE begins to roll-up his sleeves to decrease the chances staining them with blood. MR. WILLIS abruptly drops his stack of paper and sucker punches LUKE in the nose and he falls to the fetal position, his nose bleeds.

MR. WILLIS then kicks LUKE in the ribs three to four times, we feel his pain.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

(mimicing)

"Oh I'm the new guy, I'm so much better than the old guy, I want your coffee, cause I'm the new guy. Nah-nah, nah-nah smart comment!"

MR. WILLIS moves back and takes in what just happened. After a moment he picks up his papers and looks at LUKE once again.

MR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

Now stay the fuck away from me.

He walks away.

LUKE is on his back and stares at the sky for just a moment, he sits up and grabs his stomach wincing in pain.

A door behind him opens up and we see DANA. She is apparently trying to see what all the commotion is. She then sees LUKE on the ground, nose bloody and in pain.

DANA

Oh my gosh, what happened to you!?

LUKE

I slipped.

(groans in pain)

DANA

You slipped? It looks really serious. Are you alright?

LUKE

Yeah.

(looks at the ground)

Fuckin' linoleum.

She reaches her hand out to help him up. LUKE looks at it for a second and then grabs it. He stands to his feet.

Thanks.

DANA

No problem. SO you want me to walk you over to the office or something?

LUKE

No, I'll be fine. I gotta get back to class.

DANA

Alright. Your sure your gonna be fine?

LUKE

Yeah don't worry about me I'm going to be alright.

She seems to know something is up. They look at each other for a moment. Awkward silence.

LUKE (CONT'D)

So, I guess I better go.

Just then a young girl peeks her head out of the door.

GIRL

Ms. Ericcson, we finished reading that poem.

(she sees LUKE)

What happened to that man? Why is his nose bleeding?

DANA

I'm not quite sure, Chelsea but why don't you go back into class I'll be there in a second.

LUKE

(to CHELSEA)

See you later, Chelsea, oh, and watch out for this linoleum, tell your friends.

CHELSEA nods. Then goes back into the class.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Well, I'll let you get back to that poem. See ya.

He abruptly speed walks away.

INT. - CLASSROOM - LATER

The students are talking amongst themselves. SHERWYN'S assistant is sitting behind LUKE'S desk looking through his belongings.

LUKE walks in. The room goes quiet as the students stare at LUKE. The teacher's assistant just gets up and begins to walk to the door to leave.

TEACHER'S ASSISTANT

Well your back, I'll get out of your hair.

He exits oblivious to the fact LUKE'S nose is bleeding and that he seems beat-up.

LUKE strides casually towards his desk and flops down on his chair, closing his eyes for a quick breather.

The brief silence is broken:

REN

So what happened to your face?

LUKE opens his eyes slowly and looks at REN and the other students.

LUKE

Well Ren, funny story.

LUKE gets up and walks towards a sink in the back of the room. He talks while he rinses his face off.

LUKE (CONT'D)

I ran into Mr. Willis and apparently he had a problem with my performance at the flag football game.

LUKE goes to the paper towel holder and pulls on the handle for the roll of towel to come down for several seconds, creating a long piece of paper towel that is completely unnecessary for sopping up the little bit of water on his face.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Some words were said and I guess you could say, I don't think I will be hanging out with him any time soon.

LUKE finishes drying of his face and rips off two chunks of the towel and carefully wads them in his nose, as to prevent blood from continuing to run.

REN

So, Mr. Willis beat you up?

LUKE sits back down in his chair and look directly at Ren.

LUKE

Well he fights dirty, so no. I didn't lose. I was just trying to roll up my sleeves, you know to become more prepared to fight and he hits me in the face, unprepared. I didn't know we were street fighting but regardless he really didn't need to karate kick me either.

LUKE takes a deep, long, drawn out sigh.

LUKE (CONT'D)

It's been a very long day today, when does school let out?

REN

We got some time, a few minutes.

LUKE

(To self)

It never ends, does it.

REN

What did you say, sir?

LUKE

Uh, nothing. What do say we learn something. Do you guys want to learn something?

REN

Sure. It'll be a change.

LUKE stands up from his chair walks in front of his desk, in the center of the room.

LUKE

Ren, let's talk about life.

REN

I'm game.

First of all, here's a little lesson on the part of life that stings the most.

LUKE walks to the chalkboard and writes: All of it.

Another student raises his hand.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Yeah.

STUDENT

All of it. All of it stings? Is that right? Life sucks?

 ${ t LUKE}$

I didn't say life sucks but I did say that along the way it stings like a bee. I mean, I would come right out and say that life does indeed suck but occasionally you get those days or sometimes weeks where nothing goes wrong and it seems like nothing can until something does, a la me coming to this school. Frankly, I had a nice thing going on before I came here, no disruptions or anything of the sort holding me back and putting me in awkward and unwanted positions but today, I experienced life's sting and it sucks.

REN

It wasn't us was it, I'm so sorry.

LUKE

Nope Ren, wasn't you. It was it.

JENNIFER

It?

LUKE sighs.

LUKE

Your school.

LUKE grabs his jacket off his chair and starts to put things back in his briefcase and closes it. He then begins to head for the door.

A STUDENT stands up.

STUDENT

Where you going Mr. Wilson? You can't just leave.

LUKE

I'm sorry, I have no choice.

REN

Yes you do. You could stay.

JENNIFER

Yeah, Mr. Wilson you don't have to leave. Don't you see you're a breath of fresh air in this place.

REN

Yeah, a day and your already giving up? A day? That's ridiculous, I've been here since kindergarten and when weird things happen or a teacher goes over the edge I don't just leave and never come back, I mean, don't get me wrong I would love to do that,

(falsetto)

Parents wouldn't let me.

(normal voice)

But I keep on keeping on because I knew one day I could stumble upon someone like you in a place like this.

LUKE

And what am I to you Ren?

REN

A teacher.

LUKE

What do you mean a teacher? Mr. Sage is a teacher. Mr. Sherwyn is a teacher, and Mr. Willis has to have some type of teaching credential.

REN

No, you don't get what I'm saying here. Let me explain it like this. The guys you are talking about don't understand what school is supposed to be. I understand that by trying in school, my future will be easier, guaranteed.

(MORE)

REN (CONT'D)

But some where in teacher school, I quess these guys thought that kids were impossible just to teach. Maybe they thought that they needed to spice up math, or make English funny. I mean, I appreciate a funny joke as much as the next guy, But the things these guys put themselves through, thinking this is what kids want. It's like as soon as they got their teaching certificate, they had to get a masters in clown college. Have you seen a clown in real life? They're just depressing. I don't laugh, I just want to give them some money so they don't have to cry themselves to sleep with out their fix of booze and cigarettes.

LUKE

(BEAT)

That was insane rhetoric but I liked it.

REN

Yeah, I've been mulling over that speech for a while.

LUKE

It was good.

REN

So, what do you say? Will you stay and be our teacher or do we have to beg?

LUKE

This isn't begging? Then what is?

The class laughs, slightly.

REN

No, but seriously, don't leave.
Well I mean go home but please come
back tomorrow because if you just
leave and never look back you'll
regret it. Maybe not today and
maybe not tomorrow but one day you
will look back and say, "Man, that
Ren was right, I regret leaving."

Suddenly the bell rings. School's out.

Well that's something I'll have to deal with down the road. Class dismissed.

LUKE gathers his stuff and leaves the classroom. All of the students are stuck to their seats and don't seem to leave.

After a brief moment of silence:

REN

I wonder if he'll come back?

EXT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

LUKE walks down the hallway which is extremely congested with students rushing madly to get out of school.

As LUKE walks semi-rapidly down the hallway, not looking back, DANA, leaving school also, sees him and catches up.

DANA

Mr. Wilson, wait up.

He doesn't hear nor acknowledge her.

DANA (CONT'D)

(raising voice)

Luke, wait.

LUKE turns around and sees DANA. He stops with mixed emotions. She catches up with him and they begin to walk together down the hallway.

DANA (CONT'D)

So?

LUKE

So...what?

DANA

So how was your first day? Are you excited to come back tomorrow?

LUKE

Its not looking good.

DANA

What is that supposed to mean?

They suddenly stop in the middle of the school hallway.

Really? I mean really? Do I really have to dive into it. You know, you've been here forever, its a goddamned circus around here.

DANA

Excuse me, what? A circus?

LUKE

If you don't see it, I feel sorry for you but I'm not going to stay here another day and be exposed to this, this--

(he can't find the words)

Suddenly we see MR. GEORGE approach them. He interrupts:

DAVID BRADY

--This fine institution. Is that what your looking for.

LUKE isn't happy to see him. We can see LUKE has had enough and he just lays into MR. BRADY.

LUKE

Nope Mr. George I said circus and I meant fucking circus and your the fucking ringleader.

DANA

Luke that was inappropriate.

DAVID BRADY

Well Mr. Wilson congratulations your first day is your last. Your fired.

LUKE

(pleased)

THANK GOD! I thought I was going to have to quit. Thank you for freeing me from this fucking nightmare!

This exchange is now becoming quite a scene. Students circle LUKE as well as other teachers.

We see SHERWYN approach the commotion. MR. SAGE comes out of his classroom to see what's up and like clock work we begin to see teacher after teacher gather around the LUKE and MR. BRADY exchange.

Hey Mr. Brady, you want to know why productivity is down? Why don't you visit the fucking kiln, see what's happening down there. Its a fucking party down there, good times!

We see MR. SAGE and SHERWYN try and remain casual.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Howabout the music teacher, what's his deal!? He's clearly unstable but yet he teaches children to sing fucking acapella. Is that smart? DOes that make sense? Not to me.

We see REN and another STUDENT watching this melt-down.

STUDENT

Man, Ren you ever hear anyone drop the f-bomb that many times?

LUKE

Besides my dad. Nope.

MR. BRADY is confused by many of the things LUKE is saying.

In the background we can see MR. WILLIS handing out his flyers amongst the masses.

DAVID BRADY

The kiln, the music teacher what does all of this mean?

LUKE

I don't know, why don't you ask Mr. Willis. There's a mature individual...Not! This fucking guy beat me up over a flag football game. Look at my nose, bloody! He needs anger management and psychological therapy. He's fucking crazy. I believe because his parents didn't love him enough. Which brings me to you Mr. Brady. You seem like a borderline pedophile, just saying. I see posters in your office about a child's heart is for holding and you part your hair nicely, like Jeffrey Dahmer-ish. Its weird, just an observation, but you fit the mold.

(MORE)

Your not running the school anywhere but into the ground to be honest. I first get here this kid over here

(pointing to the BULLY who
stands nearby)

Is spouting racist rhetoric towards that kid over there

(points to AMIT, also standing nearby)

And I assume that its because of his ignorant parents or family but now I can see he's a product of his environment and its sad.

We see a random TEACHER standing next to MR. SAGE and SHERWYN. He leans over to them.

TEACHER

(whispering)

What was that about the kiln?

They silently shrug their shoulders pretending that they don't know a thing.

The melt-down continues.

LUKE looks around at everyone staring at him. He singles out PENNY and DEBBIE the office secretaries.

LUKE

(to PENNY and DEBBIE)

And you two, get some fucking last names will ya. Its fucking creepy.

They just nod.

We see REN and a few of his classmates.

REN

This meltdown is almost poetic.

They all nod in agreement.

LUKE looks at SHERWYN and he motions for him to come closer. SHERWYN approaches him.

LUKE

Mr. Sherwyn, your a good guy but just stop smoking the devil's lettuce, will ya.

SHERWYN

I probably should. I probably will. See ya buddy.

LUKE

And tell Mr. Sage to stop being such an asshole. We only have one life to live.

SHERWYN

Not in my religion but can do buddy.

LUKE stares at DANA.

LUKE

Dana, Dana, Dana.

He walks up to her and puts his hands on her shoulders and looks her straight in the eyes.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Get out of here. You don't belong here. Stay far, far way from this place and from that man, whom you call your fiance, he isn't good people. Trust me on this.

He lightly kisses her on the forehead. Picks up his briefcase and walks away.

Suddenly out of his office walks CARL. LUKE stops to look at him.

CARL

(confused)

What's going on out here.

LUKE stares for a moment and then grabs CARL for a hug. He speaks into his ear.

LUKE

Carl, outside of your overwhelming fascination for Asian pornography your the greatest person I met at this place and I hold you above all these people. Stay true to yourself.

Everybody watches as LUKE walks away into the distance but he turns around for one last look. He takes it in, a mental picture perhaps and then steams out the front gate.

SHERWYN approaches CARL and puts his arm around him, for comfort.

CARL

(sadly)

He told me I was the greatest person he met in this place.

SHERWYN

Relax Carl, that's not saying much.

LUKE disappears into the distance.

EXT. - BUS STOP - OUTSIDE OF PANAMA SCHOOL - LATER

LUKE sits at the bus stop outside of the school identically as he did at the beginning of his saga.

The bus approaches and LUKE boards.

INT. - CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

LUKE gets on the bus, which is seemingly empty. Except for the lonesome HOBO who graced the bus once before earlier.

The HOBO stares at LUKE and smiles. LUKE stares back and smiles and for some unexplained reason he sits right next to him.

The bus strolls away and LUKE gets one last glimpse of Panama through the back window. He stares straight forward and never looks back.

FADE TO:

EXT. - PANAMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

The morning of the next day. We see the front of the school.

INSERT MUSIC: "EVERYDAY I WRITE THE BOOK" BY ELVIS COSTELLO

Slow motion: sequence timed to music

The camera dollies into the school, through the front office doors.

INT. - FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Camera continues to pull through the office and we see familiar faces pass the camera; DAVID GEORGE, PENNY and DEBBIE.

Camera pulls through the office into the school hallway.

EXT. - SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We pull through the hallway and see MR. SHERWYN holding a tray of ceramic animals. MR. SAGE, now with a much livelier appearance strolls right behind him.

We see the BULLY kid standing next to AMIT and hassling him a bit.

We see REN and a few of his classmates listening to MR. BIRCHBECK strum a quitar.

We continue to pull through the hallway. We see MR. WILLIS and DANA standing in front of a classroom. She slowly pulls a ring off her finger and hands it to him and then heads into a classroom, the door closes behind her.

MR. WILLIS, angry, throws the ring down the hallway. We see it slowly slide down the hallway and conveniently stop before CARL who is on his knees scraping old gum off the floor. He picks it up, looks around to ensure nobody is looking and sticks it in his pocket.

For some reason we are convinced that LUKE WILSON left his mark.

FADE OUT.