

Fall 12-20-2017

Meno and Euphrates Elementary: Episodes 1 & 2

Thad F. Lee
University of New Orleans, tflee@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Screenwriting Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lee, Thad F., "Meno and Euphrates Elementary: Episodes 1 & 2" (2017). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 2416.

<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/2416>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

Meno and Euphrates Elementary: Episodes 1 & 2

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film and Theater Arts
Creative Writing

by

Thad Lee

B.A. University of Mississippi, 1996

December, 2017

Copyright 2017, Thad Lee

FADE IN:

EXT. MENO HOME - YARD - DAY

Morning. The neighborhood is still and belongs to the birds and squirrels. The one-story house is nothing special. Its front door faces Pike Street. The driveway and mailbox are on Dawn Circle. Inside, a window's curtains are drawn.

INT. MENO HOME - MAX'S ROOM - DAY

Daylight spreads into the room and over the sleeping face of MAX MENO, 6. He wears *Superman Underoos* and hugs a yellow pillow like a doll. The pillow has a pocket. *Tooth Fairy* is cross-stitched across it.

Max's mother, SANDY, 36, lovely but graying early, releases the drawstring and walks from the window to Max's bedside. She is three months pregnant and wears a pastel, fuzzy robe.

SANDY
(softly)
Time to wake up.

Max's eyes flutter. In the distance, his father, JOHNNY, 40, carries a cup of hot coffee into the room. He is a thick-bodied, confident man, whose hair is long-enough to cover-up his big ears. He wears a dark, silk pajamas.

JOHNNY
How 'bout some sweet, tan coffee?

Johnny sets the cup down on the lamp stand. Max notices that the pillow's pocket is stuffed.

SANDY
Looks like somebody was here while
you were sleeping.

Max reaches into the pillow's pocket. He pulls out a small, gold coin that is laminated and sealed with white cardboard, on which is written, *To Max, from The Tooth Fairy, July 1982.*

JOHNNY
Krugerrand! The ole Tooth Fairy
must think you're a good kid.

Max looks to his father and smiles. The missing tooth was on the top row. He spins the coin around and inspects the back.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Here...

Johnny sits on the edge of the bed and turns on the lamp. He takes hold of the coin and rocks it under the bulb.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
The shine's called luster.

MAX's POV - Luster surfs the coin's surface.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Isn't it pretty?

Max nods. Johnny flips the coin over and rocks it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What else you got?

Max swims out from under the covers and crawls off the bed. The sheets have a urine stain.

SANDY
Pancakes? Powdered-sugar donuts?
Cinnamon toast?

Max drops to the floor, reaches under the dresser, and pulls out a cigar box. In the hallway, CHARLIE, 12, lanky, walks out of his bedroom wearing a *A Flock of Seagulls* T-shirt.

CHARLIE
San Koo said to just eat eggs and
cheese toast today.

JOHNNY
Who?

Sandy pulls a little suitcase out of Max's closet. She sets it down atop a toy chest at the foot of the bed.

SANDY
His karate teacher.

JOHNNY
Oh, Jesus-God. Do we really have
to do that?

Charlie steps into Max's doorway.

CHARLIE
I'm city champion. If I'm not
there, who's the county champion
supposed to fight?

JOHNNY
Who cares? Just let 'um have it.

Sandy packs a little bathing suit into Max's suitcase but keeps her eyes locked on Johnny.

SANDY

We stayed 'till today for this.

JOHNNY

No, I stayed yesterday to see them pour our foundation at Secret Lake and speak to the Optimist Club.

SANDY

You're staying for karate.

Sandy walks to the doorway. Charlie steps back and lets her pass into the hallway.

JOHNNY

Do you have any idea how bad traffic is going to be?

Sandy turns left, towards the front of the house.

SANDY (O.S.)

Don't care.

JOHNNY

Max does.

Max sets the cigar box onto the lamp stand.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You want to see the big fireworks, don't you?

Max nods and opens the box.

MAX

And I want to see Dusty Rhodes.

JOHNNY

Dusty Rhodes? Where?

Charlie grabs the top of the doorway, stretches.

CHARLIE

In the wrestling ring. He's fighting Legion before the karate tournament starts.

Johnny looks into the box.

JOHNNY

I, for damn sure, don't give a damn about getting there early for that.

JOHNNY'S POV - The box holds \$2 bills, Confederate money, two plastic rings, a shark tooth necklace, *Skee Ball City* prize tickets, a miniature *Miami Dolphins* football helmet, silver bars, and five Krugerrands, identical to the one Max holds.

Johnny gives Max the new coin and reaches into the box. In the distance, Charlie lets go of the doorway.

CHARLIE

How come the Tooth Fairy never gave me a Krugerrand?

JOHNNY

He wasn't making as much money back then.

Johnny picks up the top coin. It's cardboard inscription reads, *Max's 6th Birthday, November 11, 1981*. Max studies the *Tooth Fairy* coin's face.

MAX

I thought the Tooth Fairy was a girl.

JOHNNY

The Tooth Fairy's whatever it wants to be. It's magic.

Max nods and rocks the magic coin under the lamp light.

INT. MENO HOME - DEN - DAY

Max still wears his *Superman Underoos*. He sits before the bulky television, eating cinnamon toast. On the screen, *Clash of the Titans's* boatman, Charon, takes a coin from Perseus and allows the hero onto the ferry.

(O.S.) - A DOG whimpers.

Max looks left and sees the breath of a mutt, LUCKY, fog up the other side of the sliding glass door that opens to the lower-level playroom, home to a pool table, an *Evel Knievel* pinball machine, and framed Leroy Neiman prints.

Johnny enters the room from the bedroom hallway. He carries suitcases, including Max's, towards the adjacent kitchen.

JOHNNY

Put him out back.

Johnny walks through the kitchen's wide doorway and veers right, continuing around the breakfast table. He exits the house through the already-opened back door.

Max grabs toy figurines off the carpet. *Darth Vader* strikes *Superman* with his red lightsaber.

MAX
(lightsaber sound)
Whoosh.

Superman falls backwards and strikes a yellow tub of toys.

MAX (CONT'D)
(as *Darth Vader*)
Ha, ha, ha.

Max hovers *Darth Vader* over the tub of toys.

MAX (CONT'D)
(as *Darth Vader*)
Who thinks they can stop me?

Max reaches into the tub, digs under a rubber shark, and pulls out a *Charon* figurine.

MAX (CONT'D)
(as *Charon*)
I can.

Max leaps *Charon* out of the tub. The Boatman tackles and chokes *Darth Vader*.

MAX (CONT'D)
(as *Charon*)
Ha, ha, ha.

Charlie enters the room from the bedroom hallway. He wears a clean karate uniform. His rank is green belt.

CHARLIE
You still aren't dressed?

Sandy follows Charlie into the den. She carries an *Izod* shirt, shorts, and flip-flops.

SANDY
He's about to be.

Sandy stops before the television and turns off the VCR. Instantly, the TV switches to cable.

MAX
Hey!

Sandy sets the clothes and down on the carpet.

SANDY
We have to go.

Sandy pulls off Max's T-shirt.

CHARLIE
Mama's little man still can't even
dress himself.

MAX
Yes, I can.

Sandy shirts Max with the *Izod*. It's tight.

SANDY
Aw, you've all-but outgrown it.

MAX
Do I have to wear it?

SANDY
One last time.

Sandy picks up Max's shorts.

CHARLIE
At least, put on your own pants!

Sandy looks at Charlie sternly and points to the kitchen.

SANDY
See if your father needs help.

CHARLIE
Nope. I want to see this whole
pathetic ordeal. I bet he won't
even put on one flip-flop.

Max offers a handshake.

MAX
Bet me then!

CHARLIE
I don't bet babies.

Charlie grabs Max's wrist.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I just slap them.

Charlie lightly slaps Max's cheek and steps back before Max can pull his hair.

SANDY

Be still.

Sandy pulls the shorts past Max's feet and up his legs.

CHARLIE

Look at his hair, his face. He's an absolute joke.

MAX

You're a joke.

Sandy buttons and zips Max's shorts.

CHARLIE

I'm the *Joker*, pal. And you ain't Batman.

Max grabs his *Superman* T-shirt off the floor and shakes it.

MAX

I'm Superman. The Man of Steel.

CHARLIE

More like, Baby Man, the Man of Squeal.

Charlie bends down and pinches Max's ribs. He squeals.

Sandy snatches *Superman*, *Darth Vader* and *Charon* off the carpet and drops them into the toy tub. She picks it up and shoves it into Charlie's hands.

SANDY

Put this on the back seat!

Charlie takes the tub, looks down to Max and shakes his head.

CHARLIE

Little Boy Blue can't even carry his own toys.

Charlie turns around and walk towards the kitchen. Max balls up the T-shirt and Max throws it at Charlie. It strikes his back. He stops, shows Max his profile, and shakes his head.

Sandy points to the back door with a flip-flop.

SANDY

Go!

Charlie goes. Sandy slides the second flip-flop onto Max's foot and swoops up the plate and milk glass.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Turn the TV off and put Lucky in the backyard, okay?

Max nods and stands and steps to the television.

MAX

Who's gonna feed him while we're at the beach?

SANDY

Either Lonnie or Mr. Vander.

Sandy enters the kitchen and turns the corner.

MAX

But they're fishing.

SANDY (O.S.)

They'll be back tomorrow.

(O.S.) - The plate and glass clank in the sink. Water runs.

Just before he turns the TV off, a commercial for Channel 4's own midday program, *High Noon*, airs. Its host, FAWN-FERRY TEMPLE, 32, a former beauty queen, stands on the sidewalk before City Hall. Its roof-clock reads 12 o'clock.

FAWN (TV)

Hello. I'm Fawn Ferry-Temple, the host of Channel 4's new midday show, *Nigh Noon*.

Max smiles. He likes this commercial.

FAWN (TV) (CONT'D)

I may be new to Euphrates, but my family and I have planted our roots into your soil.

(TV) Fawn continues along the sidewalk, coming upon a bench, where her daughter, HOLLY, 6, cute mole on her cheek, sits. Beside her is a cake, shaped like a twelve o'clock clock.

Max's smile grows big and dopey. Holly Temple is the prettiest girl he's ever seen. In the distance, Sandy reenters the room with a wet rag and walks to Max.

MAX

The moon.

CHARLIE's POV - The moon grazes treetops.

CHARLIE

You haven't ever seen the moon in
the daytime before?

Max shakes his head. Charlie twists back onto his chair.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's been there.

(O.S.) - The radio dial comes upon a live broadcast of a
wrestling match.

WRESTLING ANNOUNCER (RADIO)

(Cajun accent)

Oh-no! Legion has The American
Dream in the sleeper hold!

CHARLIE

That's it!

Sandy sits shotgun and lets go of the dial.

SANDY

I told you we hadn't missed it.

Johnny steers with both hands. The sun reflects off the face
of his gold Rolex. He pulls down the blinker.

The van comes upon an armory. It's billboard reads, *Deep
South Wrestling Presents The American Dream, Dusty Rhodes
versus Legion/ Local Karate.* Johnny enters the parking lot.

WRESTLING ANNOUNCER (RADIO)

And for those of you just tuning
it, Legion is not a tag-team. He
is one masked man with many
personalities, all of them insane
and led by, what looks to be, a
satanic centurion.

Charlie points to a parking space near the entrance.

CHARLIE

Is that one?

JOHNNY

No, that's a loading zone.

JOHNNY'S POV - The parked vehicles, their tags, and bumper stickers reveal that the year is 1982 and the town is Euphrates, Mississippi, located in Euphrates Country. There is not a parking place to be had.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
You know what?

Johnny steers the van towards the loading zone. Sandy points to the *No Parking* sign.

SANDY
You already said that's not a parking place.

JOHNNY
Now I say, *Let's see*.

Johnny parks the van in the loading zone.

EXT. ARMORY - PARKING LOT - DAY

Charlie exits the van and jogs towards the entrance. The ARMORY TICKET TAKER, a sweet-faced old-timer, opens the door.

ARMORY TICKET TAKER
(musical voice)
Hurry, hurry, young fellow. This thing's about over.

(O.S.) - The WRESTLING CROWD roars.

Charlie enters the building. The Armory Ticket Taker turns to the Good Times van as Johnny steps onto the parking lot.

ARMORY TICKET TAKER (CONT'D)
You can't park there.

JOHNNY
Yes, sir. Who's in charge here?

The Armory Ticket Taker looks into the armory.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - BLEACHERS (WEST SIDE) - DAY

MAYOR STONE DUHE, 73, sits on a front row bleacher seat. He is a burly, crew-cut fellow, suffering the big, windowless room's unreal heat. His thick spectacles fog.

(O.S.) The Wrestling Crowd is louder than a circus and emitting what sounds like a cooking sound. WRESTLERS crash into the ropes, each other, and the mat.

A metal button, thrown from a seat above, strikes the top of Mayor Duhe's head and bounces on the floor. He leans over.

MAYOR DUHE'S POV - The button reads, *Time for a Goode Mayor.*

Mayor Duhe grunts and leans his heavy, unlimber frame forward and over, and lifts it from the floor.

Mayor Duhe's momentum pulls him into a stand. He turns around and looks up to the bleachers above.

MAYOR DUHE'S POV - WOODY GOODE, 38, a baby-faced, over-tanned, hair-dyeing, candidate for mayor, passes out buttons to a row of WRESTLING FANS. He's the only other man in the armory wearing a tie.

Mayor Duhe grunts. Sunlight pops into the room. He looks to the entrance and sees Johnny, Sandy, and Max enter.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - ENTRANCE - DAY

Johnny leads the way through trapped heat.

JOHNNY

Holy God, it's even hotter in here!

Max holds Sandy's hand, follows, but doesn't look forward. His eyes are locked to the Wrestling Fans, who boo, hiss, curse, cuss, mock, and goad the Wrestlers.

Johnny stops before an ARMORY USHER, 72, giant hearing aid.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Who's in charge here?

The Armory Usher aims his hearing aid at Johnny's mouth.

ARMORY USHER

Huh?

Johnny leans closer and touches the Armory Usher's shoulder.

JOHNNY

(shouts)

Who's in charge here?

The Armory Usher points to the press box.

ARMORY USHER
Orange, checkerboard shirt.

Johnny is already sweating. He turns to Sandy.

JOHNNY
Let me see if we can move Charlie
up and get the hell out of here.

Johnny walks left and towards Mayor Duhe, who holds up the
Time for a Goode Mayor button for him to see.

Sandy moves right and has to pull Max into motion.

SANDY
This way.

Max goes with the tug and gets his first look at the ring.

MAX's POV - LEGION, 29, devil makeup, centurion costume,
hypnotizes The American Dream, DUSTY RHODES, 37, blonde, beer-
gut, with his signature move, the temple claw.

The sight of Legion scares Max, but he can't look away.

MAX's POV - Dusty Rhodes escapes Legion's temple claw and
slings himself against the ropes, creating enough space to
launch a bionic elbow. Legion drops. Rhodes pins him. The
REFEREE taps the mat.

REFEREE
One, two...

Max marvels.

MAX
Three!

REFEREE (CONT'D)
Three.

Max leaps.

MAX
He won! He won!

Sandy looks to Max.

SANDY
Is that who you wanted to win?

MAX
Yeah!

Max's POV - The Referee raises Dusty Rhodes' hand.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - KARATE WAITING AREA - DAY

Charlie is among the other thirteen KARATE FINALISTS, 5-18, seven age brackets, no black belts, and some of their PARENTS. He claps for Dusty Rhodes. Sandy and Max approach.

MAX

Did you see him win?

CHARLIE

Don't you see me looking at the ring?

Max lets go of Sandy's hand and moves on to husky and beady-eyed BO DUHE, 6, the 5-6 year-old city finalist, yellow belt.

MAX

Bo, I got a gold coin from the Tooth Fairy!

BO

So?

Bo pulls down his sleeve, revealing a digital watch.

BO (CONT'D)

I got a new watch, yesterday, just for getting my booster shot.

Bo's mother, BETH, 29, pretty face distorted by runny makeup, touches one of the watch's many buttons.

BETH

(suppressed country accent)
It's got a calculator.

Max is intrigued by the watch, but weary.

MAX

Did it hurt?

Bo nods.

BO

You gotten yours?

Max shakes his head.

BO (CONT'D)

Don't!

Bo shoves down his pants below the hip. He has a bruise.

Max scares. Sandy leans down for a better look.

SANDY

Oh-no, Bo.

Sandy looks up to Beth.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Who'd he go to?

BETH

The new one!

SANDY

Dr. Temple?

BETH

Yes. And he's not the problem,
it's his nurse.

Max looks up from Bo's bruise to Beth.

BETH (CONT'D)

She's old and mean and gives shots
like...

Beth stabs the air like Norman Bates. Max flinches.

BETH (CONT'D)

There's his wife.

Beth points to the press box. Sandy looks.

SANDY'S POV - Fawn-Ferry Temple conducts a TV interview with
Dusty Rhodes. She's striking, even from a distance.

BETH (CONT'D)

She's prettier on TV.

Beth turns back to Sandy. Her mascara willows.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - RINGSIDE - DAY

CHANNEL 4 NEWS CAMERA'S EYEPiece POV - Fawn and Dusty Rhodes
are surrounded by Wrestling Fans. Rhodes blushes.

DUSTY RHODES

You know, you prettier in real
life.

Fawn forces a smile.

FAWN

Aww.

DUSTY RHODES

I ain't lying, Fawn. I know who you are. Miss Mississippi, nineteen and seventy-what? Five?

FAWN

'73.

DUSTY RHODES

I watched it live with my ex-wife.

FAWN

Aww.

DUSTY RHODES

You should have been Miss America.

Wrestling Fans cheer.

FAWN

I should be right here holding this microphone. Anything you want to say to the Channel 4 audience?

Rhodes faces the camera.

DUSTY RHODES

They say all roads lead to Rome. Today, one Rhodes conquered it.

Rhodes points at the lens.

DUSTY RHODES (CONT'D)

Happy birthday, America from the American Dream!

The Wrestling Crowd erupts.

WRESTLING FANS

(chant)

U.S.A.!

Fawn motions for the Cameraman to stop rolling.

FAWN

Let's get that cutaway.

Channel 4 News CAMERAMAN, 42, balding, eyeglasses, leans back from the camera's eye piece. He points to the press box waiting area, where Legion waits.

CHANNEL 4 CAMERAMAN
Don't you want the devil?

Fawn shakes her head.

FAWN
We only have a little window.

Fawn leads the Cameraman away from the press box. She walks past the ogling daze of fourteen year-old LARRY BOOKOUT, smoker's teeth, rat-tail hair, jailhouse-like snake tattoo.

LARRY's POV - Rhodes, the wrestling everyman, hams it up and revels in his role of cheerleader-priest.

DUSTY RHODES
Let me have it!

WRESTLING FANS
U.S.A.!

Larry waits for Dusty Rhodes to turn his back and hops onto his bleacher seat.

DUSTY RHODES
Let me have it!

Larry leaps at Rhodes.

LARRY
Here ya go!

Larry slaps the back of Dusty Rhodes' skull and laughs before he lands on the floor. He races past the angry arms of Wrestling Fans and away from the press box area, towards the concession stand.

Rhodes chases, knocking many Wrestling Fans down.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - CONCESSION STAND - DAY

Max stands beside the condiment island and watches Sandy squeeze mustard onto a hot dog.

MAX
I don't want that.

Sandy sets the mustard bottle down and picks up a second, plain hot dog from the island's counter top.

SANDY

This is yours.

Sandy gives Max the plain hot dog.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Now, hold mine while I get the
Cokes.

Max takes the mustard dog and wishes it was anywhere else in the world. Sandy steps towards the concession stand, where two watery cups wait atop the counter top.

Larry reaches the concession area. He is still laughing and being followed by Dusty Rhodes.

DUSTY RHODES

Running out of space, boy!

LARRY'S POV - Max stands in Larry's path and is fear-frozen. They know each other.

Larry hisses and, on-the-run, snatches the mustard dog out of Max's hand, bites into it, keeps running.

LARRY'S POV - ROADIES carry boxes of unsold wrestling merchandise through a loading door, near the karate waiting area. It's not far. The Karate Finalists are curious about the hullabaloo and watch Larry's approach.

BACK TO ARMORY KARATE WAITING AREA

Larry scouts the faces of the Karate Finalists and spots the person he's looking for.

LARRY

Lookout for Bookout!

Larry throws the hotdog at the heart of Charlie's white uniform. Charlie looks at the mustard splatter like it's a gunshot wound. The other Finalists laugh.

So does Larry, who bull-rushes the ARMORY MANAGER, 62, orange, checkerboard shirt, who blocks the getaway door, grabs Larry's collar and holds him inside.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Let go!

Larry stomps the Armory Manager's foot. The Armory Manager shifts his hands to Larry's throat. He squeezes.

ARMORY MANAGER

Never again! Hear me?

Larry catches the him with solid kick to the dick. The Armory Manager drops to a knee and groans.

BACK TO ARMORY PARKING LOT

Larry's momentum carries him out of the building. He falls onto his butt. He rises and points at the Armory Manager.

LARRY's POV - The Armory Manager is still on a knee. In the distance, Dusty Rhodes runs to the door. Charlie follows.

LARRY

I kicked all your asses!

Larry gives them all a crooked, bird finger, then spins back into a sprint towards his *Indian* motorbike.

Deep South Wrestling Roadies stop loading the company trucks, rush back towards the armory, and block Dusty Rhodes from getting much farther than a few strides into the parking lot.

WRESTING ROADIE 1

Dream, dream...

WRESTING ROADIE 2

Let it go.

Larry mounts the motorbike and kick-starts the engine. He speeds away, nearly colliding with a maroon Rolls Royce, which parks in the loading zone behind Sandy's van.

He drives onto Highway 99, pops a wheelie, and holds it.

BACK TO ARMORY KARATE WAITING AREA

Johnny steps to the loading door and watches Larry escape.

JOHNNY

His name is Larry Bookout. He's bullied my son. Stolen his bicycle. Slashed my car tires.

Johnny looks to the Armory Manager.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Judge Weldy at the youth court said, next time Larry's before him for anything, he's shipping him off to the Stonewall Military Academy outside of Jackson.

BILL

It couldn't make him worse.

Johnny points to Charlie, who lets Sandy wipe mustard off his uniform with a wad of wet napkins. Max watches.

JOHNNY

Look what he just did to my son.

Johnny offers the Armory Manager his hand.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Call the Sheriff, charge him with assault, and that little jellybean will be learning how to march.

The Armory Manager grabs Johnny's hand.

BILL

Do that, and he'll just say I choked him first. And I did.

Johnny gifts him a friendly laugh and pulls him to a stand.

JOHNNY

Good.

Johnny keeps hold of his hand, shakes it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Johnny Meno.

ARMORY MANAGER

Yes, sir. I know who you are.

JOHNNY

Are you in charge here?

ARMORY MANAGER

Of the armory I am.

Johnny points back to Charlie.

JOHNNY

Look, my son is the 12 year-old city champion, and as you can see, we're having hell.

Dusty Rhodes reenters the building and walks past them.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

We're already a day late getting down to Florida for our vacation.

Johnny points to Max, who stands nearby, eating his plain hot dog. He, too, has mustard splatter on his shirt and shorts. He marvels at Dusty Rhodes as he passes.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Now, I promised my youngest we'd see the fireworks tonight, and we're not guaranteed to see them even if we leave this very second, so truly, every minute counts.

ARMORY MANAGER

What is it you want me to do?

JOHNNY

Any chance my son can fight first?

The Armory Manager thinks out loud.

ARMORY MANAGER

5-6 year old's, 7-8 year old's, 9-10 year old's, 11-12 year old's?

The Armory Manager shows Johnny four fingers.

ARMORY MANAGER (CONT'D)

Your son fights fourth. I don't see how we can, Mr. Meno.

Johnny holds a crisp, folded one-hundred dollar bill between his fingers close to his chest.

JOHNNY

Please, my wife's pregnant, not due till Christmas, but still, it's volcano hot in here...

The Armory Manager interrupts Johnny with a clean whistle.

ARMORY MANAGER

You ain't lying. I think the Mayor's gonna have a heart attack.

JOHNNY

Wouldn't that be something?

Johnny slides the money into Armory Manager's hand.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Take it...

The Armory Manager knows Johnny doesn't know his name.

ARMORY MANAGER

Bill.

JOHNNY
Take it, Bill. See what you can
do.

Johnny looks down to Max.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
You still want to see the
fireworks, don't you?

Max nods. The Armory Manger looks to the money.

ARMORY MANAGER
I'll see what I can do.

JOHNNY
Nobody will notice, Bill.

Bill pocks its the cash.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - BLEACHERS (NORTH SIDE) - DAY

Sharp-eyed, MS. CRANE, 40, ballerina frame, sits on the top
row, among a block of PROTESTORS, mostly PTA MEMBERS and
TEACHERS from Euphrates Elementary. She points.

MS. CRANE
Did y'all see that?

MS. CRANE'S POV - The Armory Manager walks to the contestant
waiting area.

MS. CRANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Johnny Meno just gave the armory
man something. I think money.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO, 54, tinted glasses, resembles Roy Orbison,
sits between Ms. Crane and the only empty seat on the row.
He's wet with sweat and breathes heavy.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO
Maybe he's paying somebody to fix
the air conditioning.

MS. CRANE
No. Charlie's competing. He's
helping his son cheat again.

Fellow first grade teacher, MRS. STEEL, 42, African-American,
silvery hair, thick eyeglasses, sits on the other side of Ms.
Crane and shakes her head.

MRS. STEEL
Are you still talking about the
science fair?

MS. CRANE
Yes, I am.

Mrs. Steel looks Ms. Crane in the eyes.

MRS. STEEL
Charlie didn't cheat.

MS. CRANE
He may have been in the room when
the model was being constructed and
sanded something here, painted this
or that, but no, sorry, doesn't
pass the smell test.

MRS. STEEL
Does pass the smell test, cause I'm
the one who smelled and passed it.

MS. CRANE
They conned you. And guess what?
Another one's coming in this year.

Ms. Crane points to the entrance.

MS. CRANE (CONT'D)
Watch him be in my class.

MS. CRANE'S POV - Sandy wipes the mustard splatter off Max.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO
What class?

MS. Crane points to the karate waiting area.

MS. CRANE
(certain)
What'd I tell you? Cheating!

MS. CRANE'S POV - The Armory Manager pulls aside SAN KOO, 35,
Korean, black belt, monogrammed uniform. He whispers in his
ear. San Koo looks to Charlie and nods. Fawn walks up the
bleacher's aisle, blocking her view.

Most of the MEN, who Fawn passes, turn and sneak a glance of
her climbing higher steps. She reaches the top row, bends
down and has the Protestors' attention.

FAWN
Go ahead and start chanting.

Fawn points ringside, where her Cameraman, has the camera set up to shoot the Protesters.

MS. CRANE

Won't that ruin the surprise?

FAWN

We need to keep the camera locked on him when he's up there, just in case he makes a mistake.

TAMMY GOODE, 33, Euphrates representative in the 1973 *Miss Mississippi Pageant*, finished 9th, leans forward and points to the empty seat, between she and Principal Manguno.

TAMMY GOODE

But Woody's not here.

FAWN

Where is he?

Tammy points to the entrance.

BACK TO ARMORY ENTRANCE

Woody Goode passes out buttons to EXITING WRESTLING FANS.

WOODY GOODE

Remember in November to vote Goode.

EXITING WRESTLING FAN

You Goode?

WOODY GOODE

I'm Woody Goode!

EXITING WRESTLING FAN 2

How 'bout that bionic elbow, baby?

WOODY

Best one I've seen.

PROTESTORS (O.S.)

(chant)

A good school is a good investment!

Woody turns to the Protesters.

WOODY'S POV - The Protesters lift up a long, paper sign that mirrors the chant.

Woody smiles. Behind him, the owner of the maroon Rolls Royce, MILTON RUBEN, 49, regal, opens entrance door and holds it for his children, SARA, 12, pretty, ISAAC, 6, tall for his age, and SAUL, 4, small for his age.

Woody turns around and is startled.

WOODY GOODE

Holy Moly, Mr. Ruben, believe it or not, I prayed three times that I might run into you today.

Milton is already uncomfortable, but smiles politely and enters the armory.

MILTON

Happy 4th of July.

Woody offers Milton a button.

WOODY GOODE

My last one. I know you can't wear it, here, today, anyway, but I'd be honored if you kept it, Mr. Ruben.

Milton takes the button.

MILTON

Thank you. Good luck.

Milton tries to walk around Woody, but Woody mirrors his path and grabs Milton's shoulder.

WOODY GOODE

I know you can't support me, even if you vote for me, and I hope you will, because I've shopped at Ruben's as long as I've lived in Euphrates. And I always will.

Woody looks to Milton's annoyed children.

WOODY

My kids shop there, my wife shopped there when she was a kid.

Woody waves to Sara.

WOODY (CONT'D)

I know Sarah, she and my daughters are about the same age...

Woody turns to Milton's sons.

WOODY (CONT'D)
But I don't know...

MILTON
Isaac and Saul.

Woody bends down, rests his elbows on his thighs, and looks Isaac into the eyes.

WOODY
How old are you?

ISAAC
Almost seven.

WOODY
Going into the first grade or
second grade?

Isaac holds up a finger.

WOODY (CONT'D)
Well, I know nobody's going to have
better threads and supplies than
you on day one, are they?

Isaac doesn't know how to answer and looks up to his father.

Milton shrugs. Woody stands up and leans towards Milton's ear, like he has a secret to whisper.

WOODY (CONT'D)
Just a heads up, the Euphrates
Elementary PTA is voting Tuesday on
whether or not to boycott Ruben's
Back to School Sale.

MILTON
Why?

WOODY
Because the Meno Inn is a tar-baby
and it's sticking to you.

MILTON
Johnny Meno called me and said
they're re-doing the old hotel and
have retail space on the first
floor. *Would you like to help
restore downtown? Sure.*

WOODY

I understand completely, and if it goes through I plan to shop there, but, if I were you, I'd tell them to remove Ruben's name from the official campaign.

Woody points to the Protestors.

PROTESTORS

(chant)

A good school is a good investment!

WOODY

Do that before Tuesday, and I promise you, not only will Ruben's not be boycotted, but the vote won't even take place.

Woody offers another handshake.

WOODY (CONT'D)

I admire you, Mr. Ruben, and I'd hate to see you and your store get taken down because you got tangled in the net that catches crooks.

Milton is uncomfortable, but shakes Woody's hand. Sara is disgusted and runs ringside.

BACK TO ARMORY RINGSIDE

Mayor Duhe and the Karate Finalists stand before the ring's foot ladder.

PROTESTORS

A good school is a good investment!

Bo stands behind Mayor Duhe, watches the Protestors.

BO

What's that mean, Papa Duhe?

Mayor Duhe grunts, looks to Bo, and sees that the Finalists stand in two rows, youngest to oldest, and that Bo's competitor is the LONE GIRL, 6, red head.

MAYOR DUHE

(deep voice, thick drawl)

It's bad luck you got a girl, but understand we are in enemy territory. Don't hurt her.

Mayor Duhe's voice carries. The Lone Girl angers.

BO
I'm not going to lose.

MAYOR DUHE
I didn't say lose. I said, *don't hurt her.*

GIRL
He ain't gonna hurt me.

San Koo walks past them, up the step ladder, and enters the ring. The thin RADIO ANNOUNCER, 56, stands in the center of the wrestling ring and speaks into a microphone.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
Who's ready to keep this inferno cooking with a little karate?

(O.S.) - The Crowd cheers.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Please welcome, honorary Marshall, Mayor Stone Duhe!

PROTESTORS (O.S.)
Boo!

Mayor Duhe lifts his heavy foot onto the foot ladder's first step. He grunts, takes step two, and nearly falls backwards.

KARATE FINALISTS
Whoa!

Charlie steps forward and presses against Mayor Duhe's wet back. Bo grabs his grandfather's arm.

The Radio Announcer drops the microphone and rushes over to the foot ladder. He grabs Mayor Duhe's hand and pulls.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
Up, up, up, big daddy!

The Cameraman shoots the Protestors. Fawn taps his shoulder and points to the ring.

FAWN
Shoot the mayor.

The Cameraman pans to the ring.

CHANNEL 4 NEWS CAMERA'S EYEPIECE POV - The Radio Announcer and San Koo pull Mayor Duhe towards the ring's ropes. Charlie and Bo push him upwards. The Armory Manager climbs into the ring. Johnny hurries to the foot ladder.

Johnny reaches the step ladder and supports Mayor Duhe's back, sandwiching Charlie.

JOHNNY
I've got him!

Charlie slides out from between the two men and sees Sara, waiting a few feet away. She points to his mustard stain.

SARA
What happened?

CHARLIE
(matter of fact)
Larry.

Mayor Duhe watches Woody Goode reach the top row of the north side bleachers and wave his arms like a Cheerleader.

PROTESTORS
(re-start the chant)
A good school is a good investment!

Mayor Duhe almost falls backwards again.

JOHNNY
Whoa!

Charlie turns around and helps Johnny hold the big man up. Mayor Duhe regains his balance. The Armory Manager stretches the wrestling ring's ropes so that Mayor Duhe will have an opening that he can step through.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
All right, on three.

Johnny, San Koo, the Radio Announcer, and the Armory Manager summon strength.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
One, two...

Mayor Duhe turns to Johnny.

MAYOR DUHE
We in an ambush.

JOHNNY
Three!

Mayor Duhe bends down. Johnny pushes. The Radio Announcer and the San Koo pull.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARMORY - RING - DAY

Mayor Duhe's heavy momentum nearly takes he, San Koo, and the Radio Announcer down to the mat.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
Stay up, up, up, big daddy!

San Koo spins around Mayor Duhe and stops the fall forward. The Armory Manager releases the ropes and helps them steady.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Now, whoa.

Mayor Duhe lets out a big, sweaty breath and looks to the Armory Manager.

ARMORY MANAGER
You okay?

MAYOR DUHE
I feel like a big, greasy piece of fried chicken.

The Armory Manager turns to San Koo.

ARMORY MANAGER
You got him?

SAN KOO
I got him.

The Armory Manager lets go of Mayor Duhe and moves towards the foot ladder. He looks down to Sara.

ARMORY MANAGER
You need to get back to your seat, Miss.

The Armory Manager climbs through the ropes and walks backwards, down the steps. Sara looks to Charlie, grabs both his hands, and blushes.

CHARLIE
What?

Sara looks to the west side bleachers.

SARA'S POV - Milton, Saul, and Isaac sitting down on front row seats. They are not paying attention to her.

She turns back to Charlie.

SARA

Good luck.

Sara kisses Charlie's lips, lets go of his hands, and jogs to the bleachers, passing Johnny along the way.

SARA (CONT'D)

Hey, Mr. Meno.

JOHNNY

I have reason to believe that
Hundred Dollar Bill, right there...

Johnny points to the Armory Manager.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Will fight Charlie first, so if you
want to say goodbye, Sandy's van is
parked in a loading zone.

SARA

We parked right behind it.

Sara continues to the bleachers and sits in the aisle seat,
beside Milton.

BACK TO ARMORY WEST SIDE BLEACHERS

Milton waves Johnny over.

MILTON

Johnny.

Johnny sees Milton's worried eyes and leans close.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Take Ruben's off the Meno Inn's
brochure.

JOHNNY

Why?

Milton points to the Protestors.

PROTESTORS (O.S.)

A good school is a good investment!

Milton leans close to Johnny's ear and whispers. Saul sits
on his father's left, looking up, hoping to hear a rouge
word. Isaac sits between Saul and Max.

ISAAC

What is that?

Isaac points to the wart on Max's left, index knuckle.

MAX

A wart.

ISAAC

How'd you get it?

Max shrugs.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Does it hurt?

Max rubs his thumb over the wart and shakes his head.

MAX

Just kinda feels funny.

Isaac looks up from Max's hand to his eyes.

ISAAC

Have you ever spent the night away
from home?

Max thinks.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Grandparents don't count.

Max shakes his head.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Me neither.

MAX

Have you ever had your booster
shot?

Isaac shoves his shorts down. He also has a bruise.

(O.S.) - The microphone squeals distortion.

BACK TO ARMORY RING

Mayor Duhe holds the microphone. He looks up to the
Protestors, whose chant grows louder.

MAYOR DUHE

Those of you complainin' and
campaignin' for a November election
on the 4th of July are doin' all
these fine youngsters a disservice.

MAYOR DUHE's POV - The Cameraman has the camera aimed at the ring and smiles. Fawn faces the Protesters and lifts up her hands, signaling, *Louder*.

Mayor Duhe steps towards Fawn, points down at her, and doesn't speak into the microphone.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
I know who you are, now. You hear me? You ain't neutral!

MAYOR DUHE's POV - Fawn turns to him and smiles defiantly.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
You're with Woody Goode...

Mayor Duhe looks up to the Protestors.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Who ain't nothin' but a piss ant, I mean, a completely bogus buffoon!

Mayor Duhe turns back to Fawn.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
So, don't be comin' to me for any interview ever about anything! No access is what you got, understand?

Mayor Duhe reaches into his pocket and pulls out the *Time for a Goode Mayor* button. He squeezes the top and bottom, snaps its back, bends it acutely, and drops it on the mat.

San Koo grabs Mayor Duhe's shoulder.

SAN KOO
Let's get started.

Mayor Duhe grunts, turns around, and sees Charlie and his OPPONENT, 11, green belt, standing in the center of the ring.

MAYOR DUHE
You ain't no five-to-six year old!
Bo, get up here!

Bo climbs the step-ladder, but is stopped by the Armory Manager, who climbs to the ring, grabs the top rope, and waves Mayor Duhe over.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
What?!

The Armory Manager shows him the list of Finalists' names. He points to the one name circled in ink, that has an arrow reaching above Bo's name. The name is *Charlie Meno*.

ARMORY MANAGER
That's Johnny Meno's boy.

MAYOR DUHE
I know who he is!

Mayor Duhe snatches the list and wipes his face with it.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
And I know how old he is! Why we skipping out of order?

ARMORY MANAGER
Mr. Meno's trying to get down to Florida before the firework show.

MAYOR DUHE
Mr. Meno's trying to get to the firework show?

Mayor Duhe's attention is caught by Johnny, who approaches the ring, waving both hands downwards.

JOHNNY
Calm down.

Mayor Duhe's lip quivers. He turns and points to Charlie.

MAYOR DUHE
Off!

Mayor Duhe points to Charlie's Opponent.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Off!

Mayor Duhe's color reddens. His breathing quickens, weakens.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Sorry, Johnny! But you gonna have to stay at least as long as you 'spose to!

Mayor Duhe points at Johnny.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
You are not king yet! You hear me?

Johnny shakes his head. He can't believe what he is seeing.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
You are not king yet!

Mayor Duhe steps on Woody Goode's wet, misshapen button and slips. He falls against the top rope. His weight carries him into a jackknife, and he flips out of the ring.

His back strikes the armory's concrete floor. One last, sorrowful grunt escapes his shaking lips. He blacks out.

Johnny turns to the Channel 4 News camera. It filmed Mayor Duhe's fall and still rolls, as help collapses on him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GOOD TIMES VAN - NIGHT

The van is stuck in gridlock on a Bay Bridge. Johnny sits behind the wheel, haunted, glazed with red brake lights. Sandy sits shotgun and counts the boats anchored below.

SANDY
Should I drive back Tuesday?

JOHNNY
For what?

SANDY
For the PTA meeting?

Johnny looks to Sandy like he doesn't understand what language she's speaking.

SANDY (CONT'D)
To vote no!

JOHNNY
Milton said, Ruben's is out.

Johnny turns back to the traffic ahead. He speaks calmly, softly, like he's dream-talking.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
There's not going to be a vote.

He perks up a bit.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Now, if there's a vote down the road to strike? Sure. Vote your heart out.

Charlie again sits by the back sliding door. He still wears his karate uniform. The mustard has dried.

CHARLIE

From what you said, Mr. Ruben just said, leave him off of the brochure. He's still putting a store in the building.

JOHNNY

How about we stop talking about it?

Sandy turns around and gets a look at the boys.

SANDY

Well, we're all thinking about it.

JOHNNY

There's nothing we can do about it on this bridge!

Johnny elbows the horn.

(O.S.) - Johnny's horn blast sets off a symphony of blasting horns across the bridge.

The gridlock breaks for two car lengths. The Good Times van moves up, stops.

SANDY

Well, what's the worst thing that could happen?

Max sits on the back bench seat. He twists Charlie's first place karate trophy in the moonlight's glow, studying how the shine moves across the golden, kicking figure.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

If Stone Duhe dies, and the Meno Inn deal doesn't go through?

Max looks to the front of the van.

JOHNNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We'd be set back ten, twenty years.

MAX'S POV - Charlie and Sandy look at Johnny, who's murky eyes cast on the rearview mirror.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

If not ruined.

SANDY

What about the house?

JOHNNY
Either stop building it or build
and hope to sell it, Sandy, I don't
know.

SANDY
People usually survive a
heatstroke.

JOHNNY
Giant, old drunks with diabetes
don't.

Sandy looks back to the bay boats.

SANDY
Let's just quit talking about it.

Fireworks are launched from a barge. They brighten the sky
and water-top. They sizzle and pop.

JOHNNY
There they are, Max. I know it's
not the same as being there but...

Johnny sinks back into his melancholy daze.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
There they are.

Johnny's worried reflection casts on the windshield. Bright,
dying sparks fall through his face.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A beached HAMMERHEAD SHARK is surrounded by gawking TOURISTS,
including Charlie and Max, whose stupefied stare is stuck to
the shark, like it was the dead body of Darth Vader.
Charlie, too, is spellbound. He points to its tail.

CHARLIE
Something even bigger bit it.

Indeed, the tip of the shark's tail has a bloody bite mark.
LIFEGUARD ONE grabs it and lifts.

LIFEGUARD ONE
Step back!

LIFEGUARD TWO loops the tail with a rope, turns to the Gulf,
grabs his whistle, and whistles three times.

LIFEGUARD ONE (CONT'D)
That means back, back, back! You
better get back!

LIFEGUARD THREE stands behind the wheel of the motorboat that wades beyond the sandbar. He whistles three times, turns around, and pulls the throttle down.

LIFEGUARD ONE (CONT'D)
Its skin is made of teeth! You
will bleed if it rubs against you!

MAX
What are its teeth made of?

Charlie shrugs and pulls Max back.

The motorboat tugs the rope. The shark rolls over and shows its teeth. Some Tourists scream. Max gasps.

The boat drags the fish into the water.

EXT. GULF - DAY

Underwater. The shark is between the motorboat and the deep. Above, shines the sun. The rope is cut and the fish falls, head first, like a kite in a dying wind through the murkier and murkier water until it strikes the seabed. Sand plumes.

INT. EUPHRATES GENERAL HOSPITAL - RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

Dark room. Television and medical machine light cling to Mayor Duhe's pale skin. Tubes connect to his nose and arms. And, as if the falling shark's hammer head struck his big belly, Duhe wakes from a coma sleep with a sore hiss.

His wife, WANDA, 71, lays on the uncomfortable sofa. She stops watching the *Channel 4 Ten O'clock News* and turns to the Mayor Duhe.

WANDA DUHE
Stone?

Mayor Duhe feels the tubes in his nose and tries to pull them out. Wanda pulls the cover off her frame and stands.

WANDA DUHE (CONT'D)
Don't pull that out!

Mayor Duhe growls and pulls harder. Wanda grabs her robe off a chair, and hurries to the beside.

WANDA DUHE (CONT'D)

Nurse!

Wanda grabs his hands and pulls them down below his neck.

WANDA DUHE (CONT'D)

You had a stroke. Now, be still
'till I get the nurse.

Wanda lets go of Mayor Duhe's hands and walks, fast-as-she-can, to the door. Mayor Duhe again grabs his nostril tubes.

WANDA DUHE (CONT'D)

Don't pull that out, Stone!

Wanda opens the door and exits. Hallway light spills into the room. Mayor Duhe smacks and blinks his eyes. Both the taste and light are sour.

CHANNEL 4 NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

More today on the state of Mayor
Stone Duhe...

Mayor Duhe grunts, lifts his head enough to see the television screen.

CHANNEL 4 NEWS ANCHOR (TV) (CONT'D)

From the reporter who has been
covering the story since it broke,
High Noon's own, Fawn Ferry-Temple.

MAYOR DUHE'S POV - The TV is blurry, washed out, and peppered with black holes. On it the Channel 4 News broadcasts footage of Mayor Duhe's fall out of the armory's wrestling ring.

FAWN (TV)

There's more to this fall than
meets the eye. Let's back it up
and listen...

MAYOR DUHE'S POV - The Channel 4 News Broadcast rewinds the footage so Mayor Duhe seemingly leaps back into the ring.

FAWN (TV) (CONT'D)

Listen closely.

Mayor Duhe slings his head to the left side and sees that his eyeglasses are atop a little, within-reach lamp stand, along with a vase of *Get Well* flowers and a rotary phone.

PROTESTERS (TV)

A good school is a good investment!

Mayor Duhe lunges up and onto his side. He reaches for the eyeglasses and knocks the flower vase to the floor. It shatters. On the television, the broadcast cuts to the cutaway of Woody Goode and the Protesters chanting the chant.

FAWN (TV)

The protest chant is, *A good school is a good investment.* So what does it mean?

A NURSE, 28, long pony tail, enters with a worried face. She looks down to the broken glass. Mayor Duhe grunts and still reaches for his eyeglasses.

NURSE

You need to lie down and relax!

FAWN (TV)

Why is it being used as a weapon against Mayor Duhe?

The Nurse rushes to Mayor Duhe's bedside. Wanda enters and hurries to the television.

WANDA DUHE

It's this damn news!

FAWN (TV)

Who still hasn't woken from what has been called, a *severe heat stroke.*

The Nurse shoves Mayor Duhe back to the bed. Across the room, Wanda turns off the TV just as the broadcast cuts to Woody Goode being interviewed by Fawn at the Euphrates Zoo.

MAYOR DUHE

Nooaur!

Mayor Duhe brutes the Nurse backwards. She slips on the pool of vase water and falls on her palms and bottom. Glass cuts her skin and white skirt.

NURSE

Aww!

The Nurse crawls out of the room like a crab.

WANDA DUHE

Stone!

Wanda runs to Mayor Duhe's bedside. He growls and reaches for his eyeglasses.

WANDA DUHE (CONT'D)
Be still, Stone!

Mayor Duhe's grabbing becomes wilder and he, wrongly, remarkably, snags the telephone from the base in swoop.

MAYOR DUHE
Baaack ooon!

WANDA DUHE
No!

Wanda grabs the phone, but Mayor Duhe jerks it away from her, tries to hit her hand with it, misses and strikes the lamp stand. Like a baby, he beats the counter again and again.

INT. BEACH CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - DAY

Johnny is tanner but wears the same defeated face he wore driving across the Bay Bridge. He stands before a window that overlooks the beach. He holds a phone to his ear. Its cord is stretched as far as it can reach.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE)
You there?

Johnny watches Charlie and Max build sand castles.

JOHNNY
Yeah.

He notices his own ghostly reflection on the window glass.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EUPHRATES GENERAL HOSPITAL - RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

Mayor Duhe's room overlooks a good chunk of downtown Euphrates. He is still pale and weak, but not attached to any machine. His eyes are sharp. His lunch has just been delivered. The Nurse, bandaged palms, exits the room.

MAYOR DUHE
Shut it!

The Nurse steps into the doorway, turns back to Mayor Duhe.

NURSE
I'll be so glad when you go to either home or hell.

The Nurse steps into the hallway and closes the door with a mean, solid shut. Mayor Duhe sets the phone back to his ear.

MAYOR DUHE

Johnny, I've been on the TV
everyday this week, screamin',
cursin', threatenin' fallin'.

Outside Mayor Duhe's window a BILLBOARD PAINTER fine-touches another billboard ad for Channel 4's *High Noon, Always Ready for a Showdown*.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)

This thing has become interesting
to people outside Euphrates, if you
understand me?

JOHNNY (PHONE)

Heatstroke is not a crime.

MAYOR DUHE

No, but it sure is entertaining to
watch, over and over, so many times
that somebody starts pickin' up
little things in the crannies.

BACK TO BEACH CONDOMINIUM

Johnny notices a moth hanging to the window glass.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Things like, 'Crooks stealin' from
school children.'

Johnny slaps the moth dead.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE) (CONT'D)

You ever been before a grand jury
over your dealings, Johnny?

JOHNNY

No.

BACK TO HOSPITAL ROOM

Mayor Duhe notices an upside down lady bug trapped on his bed-sheet. Its little legs wiggle like an earthquake.

MAYOR DUHE

Well, it's a taste of God.

Mayor Duhe thumps the bug upright.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
And it's deeply sour.

The ladybug flies across the room and onto a window.

JOHNNY (PHONE)
We're not stealing anything from
anybody.

MAYOR DUHE
I agree.

BACK TO BEACH CONDOMINIUM

Johnny wipes the moth's innards off the window with his hand.

JOHNNY
I own a desolated landmark, that
the city thinks will revitalize
downtown and bring folks back from
the suburbs.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE)
Yep.

JOHNNY
The project will deliver
construction jobs, hotel jobs,
convention jobs, restaurant jobs,
department store jobs...

Johnny wipes the guts onto the side of his shorts.

BACK TO HOSPITAL ROOM

Mayor Duhe grabs the *Euphrates Times* Newspaper from his lamp
stand and sets it on his lap.

MAYOR DUHE
Johnny, I'm with you. And I
believe it's still gonna get done.
But to get it done, we got to let
it go. And first thing, Monday.
I'm appointin' a committee to
oversee proposals on how to spend
the Hattie Ore six million.

JOHNNY (PHONE)
No, no, no! I say, we hold!

Mayor Duhe clubs the newspaper, creating a big, crumbly
crater on the front page lead story.

MAYOR DUHE

We gonna do what I already decided!

The headline, *Mayor's Son To Open Restaurant in Meno Inn.*

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)

Which is send out a press release statin' that the city will be hearin' out proposals from any citizen or group of citizens, who have an idea on how best to use the Hattie Ore enrichment money in a way that will offer the greatest chance of perpetual boon.

The pictures accompanying the story are one of Johnny's "desolate landmark," a six story-board-up building and a college yearbook photo of Mayor Duhe's son, Little Stone, a happy, good-looking kid.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)

And Johnny, if you go in there, with a full scale model of the city block, I'm talking city lights, luxury cars, well-dressed, happy pedestrians walking in and out of the hotel, carrying shopping bags, hailin' taxicabs...

Below the newspaper story, in pencil, are the names of five local men Mayor Duhe can count on to oversee his will: *Burchell, Turner, Shapley, Vander, and Thornhill.*

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)

And tell my committee what you told me just now, about rebirth, about jobs now, and maybe jobs forever?

BACK TO BEACH CONDOMINIUM

Johnny stares deathly at the blue water horizon.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE) (CONT'D)

I feel more than certain that these wise men will reward your vision.

JOHNNY

I say we hold.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE)

We holdin' by lettin' go. I need to know you understand that. I'm connected enough because of this restaurant deal alone.

Johnny closes his eyes.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Be patient, Johnny. You're real
close to becoming a force to be
reckoned with.

BACK TO HOSPITAL ROOM

Mayor Duhe opens his lunch tray. He inspects the broiled,
burnt, and possibly cold catfish, canned corn, boiled red
potatoes, and carrot cake.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
That's a popular position for
imploding people to be in.

Mayor Duhe plucks a red potato from his plate and slings it
into his mouth, chews.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
You with me?

Silence. Mayor Duhe tears the catfish with his fingers.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
You with me, Johnny?

Mayor Duhe eats the catfish.

BACK TO BEACH CONDOMINIUM

Johnny sees Sandy walk out from under a beach chair umbrella,
wearing a hat and cover shirt. She holds a super 8 film
camera and aims it at Charlie, Max, and their sand castles.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE) (CONT'D)
If your answer is, 'Yes', then say
anything but, 'No.'

JOHNNY
The sun's setting, and I want to
swim in the ocean with my children.

Below, Sandy stops filming the boys and turns to the
condominium. She sees Johnny before the window and waves for
him to come down to the beach.

MAYOR DUHE (PHONE)
Gulf!

JOHNNY
What?

Johnny signals to Sandy that he's coming with a nod and wave.

BACK TO HOSPITAL ROOM

Mayor Duhe is pleased with Johnny's, 'Yes', and perks up.

MAYOR DUHE

Your children are swimming in the
Gulf!

Mayor Duhe hangs up.

BACK TO BEACH CONDOMINIUM

Johnny watches the setting sun sink onto the horizon.
Charlie runs away from his sand castle and into the water.

EXT. GULF - DAY

Charlie dives through a crashing wave. He spins around, back
to the shore. He sees Max inspecting his sand castle.

CHARLIE

Don't touch it!

Sandy stops filming.

SANDY

He can play with it.

Max drops a toy shark in Charlie's sand castle moat.

CHARLIE

No, he can't.

SANDY

What does it matter? We're leaving
tomorrow.

CHARLIE

He made his, and I made mine. I
won't touch his, so he won't touch
mine. Now, take your toys off my
castle or pay the piper.

Charlie turns to a breaking wave and splits it with an elbow.

On the shore, Sandy points to a jellyfish on the sand.

SANDY

Watch your step.

Max looks to the jellyfish. Sunlight pushes little rainbows across its skin.

MAX
Does that hurt him?

SANDY
What?

Max points to the surf.

MAX
Not being there?

Sandy steps towards the jellyfish.

SANDY
Probably.

MAX
Or maybe he's tired of swimming and it feels good to lay down?

SANDY
Maybe?

Sandy kicks sand on the jellyfish.

MAX
Why are you doing that?

SANDY
So you won't step on it.

Sandy covers the jellyfish. Max looks at the mound.

MAX
Do I still have to get a booster shot?

SANDY
Yes.

A bust of tears burst out of him.

MAX
Why?!

SANDY
Because, you can't go into the first grade without it!

MAX

I don't want to go to the first grade!

SANDY

Yes, you do.

MAX

No, I don't!

SANDY

Why?

MAX

Because, I don't!

Charlie laughs.

SANDY

You'll miss out on meeting new friends and learning things.

MAX

I don't care.

SANDY

I do. I don't want you to fall behind. Larry Bookout has fallen back twice. He's fourteen and is still in elementary school. Do you want to be like Larry?

Max shakes his head.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Plus, this is Charlie's last year at Euphrates Elementary.

Charlie stands tall and flexes his muscles.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Next year, he'll go to the junior high, and by the time you finish elementary school, he'll be a senior in high school. You want to go to school with your brother, at least, one year.

MAX

No, I don't.

CHARLIE

That's right, punk, you don't!

Max looks to Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Because first grade's the real
world. No more Underoos till noon.
No more GI Joes and cartoons...

Max listens to Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Now, you got bells, quizzes, tests,
roll call. And don't forget the
toughs from all over town.

Charlie hops over a rouge wave.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Just wait until they see you riding
your Little Boy Blue bike! You're
gonna get eaten alive.

Charlie laughs like a cartoon villain.

SANDY
Will you stop?

CHARLIE
I'm trying to help him. Trust me,
he's not going to make it. Best
thing he can do is come out here
and live with the other baby
dolphins.

Max is becoming more mad than sad.

MAX
Shut up!

CHARLIE
Come make me, little baby dolphin.

Max grabs a handful of Charlie's sand castle dome and throws
it at his brother. It doesn't make it past the breaking
waves. Charlie laughs.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You'll need to be deeper if you
want to reach me, little baby
dolphin.

Max grabs and throws two handfuls of sand.

Charlie dunks under a wave and avoids the strike. Charlie
surfaces, laughs a cruel, funny laugh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(sings)

Little baby dolphin, come play with
me. Little baby dolphin, can't you
see?

Max runs out into the water.

MAX

Shut it!

CHARLIE

(sings louder)

Little baby dolphin, when you're
away. Little baby dolphin, we play
and play.

MAX

I said, shut it!

Max runs deeper than he can stand and swims at Charlie.

CHARLIE

Big mistake, rookie!

Charlie attacks. Max keeps coming. The little man is ready
for a brotherly scrap. They collide. Splash.

INT. TEMPLE PEDIATRIC CLINIC - LOBBY - DAY

CHILDREN and their MOTHERS are amazed, amused, frightened, or
outraged by the display Max Meno is putting on.

MAX (O.S.)

Let go!

Max holds onto the leg of a coat-rack. Sandy holds Max's
legs and pulls, while NURSE CHILDS, 75, thick, pointed-framed
eyeglasses, pries Max's fingers from the pole.

NURSE CHILDS

You let go!

Max's grip slips, and Nurse Childs grabs both his wrists.

NURSE CHILDS (CONT'D)

Up!

Sandy grabs Max's ankles, and the two women lift Max off the
floor. He wiggles like a hooked worm, but they keep hold and
approach the door that leads to the examination rooms.

Nurse Childs lets go of Max's wrist so she can twist the door knob. Max uses his free hand to claw Nurse Childs' wrist.

NURSE CHILDS (CONT'D)

Aww!

Nurse Childs lets go of Max altogether. His head and shoulders fall to the tile. He kicks free of Sandy's grip.

SANDY

Max Meno!

Max spins and crawls through the door, into the hallway.

INT. TEMPLE PEDIATRIC CLINIC - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

DR. TEMPLE, 38, muscular, balding, stands beside the examination table listening to the heartbeat of JAMIE BANO, 6, skinny, white hair, dull eyes.

(O.S.) Nurse Childs and Sandy chase Max through the hallway. Their footsteps get louder.

NURSE CHILDS (O.S.)

Young man, this is not acceptable!

Dr. Temple pulls the stethoscope off Jamie's chest and turns to the door, as Max runs past it.

DR. TEMPLE

Relax!

Nurse Childs and Sandy scurry past the door.

INT. TEMPLE PEDIATRIC CLINIC - DR. TEMPLE'S OFFICE - DAY

The lights are off. Max enters and runs behind the desk.

NURSE CHILDS (O.S.)

He went in here.

MAX'S POV - Nurse Childs' shadow spreads into the doorway.

Max ducks under the desk and shoves a rolling chair backwards. It strikes a bookcase. A framed photograph falls off a shelf and lands face-up. He grabs it.

Nurse Childs reaches the doorway and turns on the light. She shows Sandy the bloody claw marks on her wrist.

NURSE CHILDS (CONT'D)

Long, dirty fingernails!

Sandy joins her in the doorway.

SANDY

I'm so sorry, he has gotten himself
all worked up over this, and...

(O.S.) Dr. Temple's footsteps creak on the hallway floor.

Nurse Childs looks around Sandy and to him.

NURSE CHILDS

Booster shot for Max Meno!

Nurse Childs and Sandy part. Dr. Temple enters. The two
ladies collapse back into the doorway, look to the doctor.

DR. TEMPLE

(whispers)

Get the shot.

Nurse Childs points to Dr. Temple's desk.

NURSE CHILDS

(whispers)

Do it here?

Dr. Temple nods. Nurse Childs fetches the vaccine.

DR. TEMPLE

Are you the Meno's building the
house on Secret Lake?

SANDY

We are. And you're already there?

DR. TEMPLE

We're the only ones there.

Max looks at the picture and can't stop a smile.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

And we're excited to finally be
getting a neighbor, especially my
daughter, Holly...

MAX'S POV - The picture is of Holly Temple. She curtsies
before a bed of purple-petaled New England aster.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

Who was in here three days ago,
doing the same thing.

Sandy points to the desk.

SANDY
She hid under there?

Dr. Temple is tickled.

DR. TEMPLE
No, I mean, she got...
(mouths)
The shot.

Nurse Childs returns to the doorway. She holds a big needle, an alcohol-soaked cotton pad, and a band-aid.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
On my steps.

Nurse Childs nods and follows Dr. Temple into the office. He takes long, slow strides. She steps when he steps.

Max can hear them closing in on him.

DR. TEMPLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Max?

Max slides to the back of the desk's leg space and hunches over like an upsidedown, sleeping bat. He holds Holly's picture to his heart with both hands.

DR. TEMPLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That short for Maximilian?

SANDY (O.S.)
No, it's just Max.

DR. TEMPLE (O.S.)
Family name?

SANDY (O.S.)
No, we just liked the way it sounded.

MAX'S POV - Dr. Temple stands between the desk and bookcase.

DR. TEMPLE
Well, Max Meno is a cool name.

Dr. Temple grabs a *Rubik's Cube* off the bookshelf.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Had a good summer?

Dr. Temple sits down on the rolling chair, leans back.

SANDY

He's had a great summer. He played T-Ball, learned to jump off the diving board. He went to the zoo in New Orleans, the beach...

Dr. Temple shuffles the squares around the *Rubik's Cube*.

DR. TEMPLE

We went to The World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Dr. Temple leans over and shows Max the toy.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

And this was the best the world had to offer. You ever seen one?

Max shakes his head.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

It's a Rubik's Cube, and it comes from a country called Hungary.

Max snickers.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

I'm serious.

Dr. Temple keeps moving squares.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

What you want to do is make each side one color.

He offers the toy to Max. Max reaches for it.

DR. TEMPLE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Max.

Dr. Temple grabs his arms, pulls him out from the desk.

MAX

No!

Dr. Temple sits back against the chair and holds Max against his knee. Nurse Childs storms forward and pulls Max's shirt up above his hip. He squirms and drops Holly's picture.

DR. TEMPLE

Mom, he's strong!

Sandy rushes around the desk and grabs Max's feet. Nurse Childs pulls Max's shorts and *Underoos* down below the hip.

NURSE

The more you move, the more it will hurt!

Nurse Childs swabs Max's hip. Max surrenders, sobs.

DR. TEMPLE

I'm not going to lie, Max. This is a big boy shot, but you have to take it to be one.

Max looks back and sees that Nurse Childs holds the shot like a ski pole. He squirms. Nurse Childs sneers. Her arm comes down like a castle gate.

Needle stabs skin. Thumb down. Medicine in.

INT. RABBIT FOOT MALL - WALKWAYS - DAY

A massive, above ground swimming pool dominates the heart of Euphrates' lone shopping mall. Above it hangs a banner, *Back to School Fish Rodeo*. Dozens of frantic, splashing fresh water bass are hooked and pulled out of the water.

Max is one of the sixty-three Rodeo PARTICIPANTS, 5-14. A fish takes Max's bait and runs, nearly jerking the pole out of his hand. He strengthens his grip and tugs.

A Rodeo FISHING GUIDE rushes to Max. He looks like a roadie. His T-shirt reads, *Why Don't We Get Drunk and (screw decal)*.

FISHING GUIDE

(backwoods, lisp)

Reel! Reel!

Max reels. The Fishing Guide follows Max's line to the pool's rail, letting it pass through his fingers.

FISHING GUIDE (CONT'D)

That'a boy!

Max's bass surfaces. The Fishing Guide yanks the line and grabs the bass. He unhooks and drops it into a plastic bag. He ties the top of the sack and offers Max the bag.

FISHING GUIDE (CONT'D)

Here you go, little man.

Max is a bit spellbound but grabs the top of the bag.

FISHING GUIDE (CONT'D)

Tell your momma all it needs is salt, butter, and heat.

The Fishing Guide takes the pole from Max. The fish thrashes. Max drops the bag. The Fishing Guide bends over, picks up the bag, and shows Max his tight grip.

FISHING GUIDE (CONT'D)
Now, hold onto it.

The Fishing Guide shakes the bag.

FISHING GUIDE (CONT'D)
Like a man.

Max takes the bag and watches the Fishing Guide re-bait the fishing pole give it to another PARTICIPANT.

SANDY (O.S.)
Turn around, Max.

Max turns to see Sandy standing on the other side of the rope that keeps parent from child.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Smile.

Sandy aims her camera at him and smiles proudly. Behind her is the elegant entrance to Ruben's Department Store.

SANDY (CONT'D)
One...

The fish thrashes. Max holds the bag *like a man*.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Two.

Max forces a smile.

INT. RUBEN'S - BACK TO SCHOOL DEPARTMENT - DAY

Max stands before Ruben's tremendous selection of pop culture themed lunch boxes, including TV's *Three's Company*. He still holds the fish bag. The bass is dead.

MAX
How many can I get?

Sandy stands between Max and the shopping cart, which holds a haul of school supplies and clothes.

SANDY
Just one.

Sandy points to lunch boxes that Max could want.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Star Wars, Batman, Muppets, Smurfs?

Sandy's eye-line continues moving right until she sees a display of Izod shirts in the Boy's Department. The centerpiece being a blue golf shirt.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Oh, Max. Look at that beautiful
Izod.

SHOPPING MOTHERS surround the display and look for the right sizes for their BORED SONS, some who are made to try on shirts, right there.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Max?

Sandy pushes the shopping cart toward the Boy's Department.

SANDY (CONT'D)
I'm going right there and get you a
shirt or two before they run out.

Sandy points to the Jewelry Department, where Charlie flirts with Sara, who, today, works for her father and stands on the sale's end of a timepiece display.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Pick out a lunch box and walk over
to Charlie.

Sandy exits the Back to School Department. Max returns to the decision. He takes a *Muppet*-themed lunch box from the shelf and inspects the cover image, smiles.

Left of Max, stands CLEMON MILSAP, 6, African-American, thick, wears eyeglasses and an oversized Euphrates High School football jersey. He chooses *The A-Team* lunch box.

Max puts *The Muppets* back on the shelf and quickly grabs an *Evel Knievel* lunch box. Something inside it rattles.

Clemon's father, OFFICER MILSAP, 34, a uniformed Euphrates policeman, opens *The A-Team* lunch box. Clemon sees the matching thermos.

OFFICER MILSAP
For soup.

Officer Milsap grabs the red thermos, unscrews the top, and shows his son the container's inside. Clemon nods. They move on to the cashier counter.

Max opens the *Evel Knievel* lunch box and drops the fish bag.

He bends over to pick it up and the lunch box's thermos falls out, bounces, and rolls until it strikes the foot of Holly Temple. She picks it up.

Max drops the lunch box.

MAX

Save room for High Noon.

Holly laughs and turns around.

HOLLY

Mommy, he's seen it, too.

Fawn Ferry-Temple stands on the other side of Holly and pulls two lunch boxes from the shelf.

FAWN

Who in Euphrates hasn't by now?

Fawn turns to Holly and holds the lunch boxes side-by-side.

FAWN (CONT'D)

It's been running since June.

Holly shakes her head. Fawn puts the lunch boxes back.

MAX

I saw your dad's hungry box.

FAWN

His what?

Max rotates his hands like he's spinning a Rubik's Cube.

MAX

You push the colors around?

FAWN

You saw the Rubik's Cube. You must have caused quite a ruckus when you got your booster shot?

Max shows Fawn his side and pulls down his shorts and underwear down below his hip. He has a bruise.

Holly and Fawn stun.

FAWN (CONT'D)

Did you really get that from your booster shot?

Max nods with certainty. Holly gives him the thermos.

HOLLY
Did you cry?

Max nods.

MAX
Did you?

Holly nods.

FAWN
But hers was nothing like yours,
and I'll tell Dr. Temple about it
tonight. I promise you that.
What's your name?

MAX
Max.

HOLLY
Max what?

MAX
Meno.

Fawn sours and searches for just-the-right lunch box.

HOLLY
Daddy told me he met you!

Holly turns to Fawn.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
He's gonna be our neighbor!

Holly turns back to Max.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
We walked around the lake this
morning and watched the men hammer
the wood.

Holly digs into her pocket.

FAWN
I found this there.

Holly pulls out a bluebird's feather.

HOLLY
You can have it.

Max takes the feather.

FAWN

Holly.

Holly turns around. Fawn pulls two different *Annie* themed lunch boxes from the shelf.

Holly gasps and immediately chooses the one with dancing. She turns to Max

HOLLY

Have you seen *Annie*?

Max shakes his head.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I've seen it three times!

Fawn sets the other on the shelf.

FAWN

Lets go.

Holly keeps her attention on Max.

HOLLY

Whose homeroom are you in?

Max shrugs.

FAWN

There probably won't be any homerooms at Euphrates Elementary.

HOLLY

Why?

FAWN

Because, there's a man trying to get all the money that belongs everybody else.

Fawn points to Max.

FAWN (CONT'D)

And that man is Max's father. And he's about to hear everybody else say, *No*.

Fawn grabs the lunch box out of Holly's hand, drops it in the shopping cart, and pushes it away.

FAWN (CONT'D)

Don't make me say, *Let's go*, again.

Holly walks away backwards and waves. Fawn reaches back, grabs her hand, and spins Her around.

Max steps to the *Evel Knievel* lunch box on the floor, sets the thermos inside it, and then the fish bag. He locks it, stands up straight, and looks back to Holly. Behind him, Sara and Charlie enter the Back to School Department.

SARA

(sings)

Max and his girlfriend, sittin' in
a gutter...

Max turns around. Sara pokes him in the belly and plucks the feather from his hand.

MAX

Give it!

Sara raises the feather out of Max's reach.

SARA & CHARLIE

Eatin' peanut butter...

Charlie pinches Max's cheek.

SARA & CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Kissin' each other.

Max claws Charlie's wrist.

MAX

I don't eat peanut butter!

Charlie grabs Max's arm, twists it around, and pulls him into a bear hug.

CHARLIE

So your breath never smells like
this?

Charlie breathes hot, gross breath on Max's face.

MAX

Stop!

In the distance, Milton Ruben stops re-stacking a *Trapper Keeper* display.

MILTON

Boys!

Charlie lets go of Max and stands up straight.

CHARLIE
Sorry, Mr. Ruben.

Sara feels her father's stare and offers Max the feather. He snatches it out of her hand. Charlie leans to Max.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Does she know you still can't wipe
your own boo-boo?

Max shoves Charlie back.

SARA
Stop.

Sara grabs Charlie's arm and leads him back towards the Jewelry Department. Max looks to Holly.

MAX'S POV - Fawn and Holly approach the *Izod* display, where Sandy checks the size of a blue shirt, smiles, and drops it in her shopping cart. Fawn and Holly pass by her and turn right, towards the cashier. Holly faces Max and waves.

Max smiles and waves back with the blue feather.

FADE TO BLACK.

CREDITS - "Indian Summer" by the Doors accompanies Super 8 home movies of the Meno's 1982 summer, including moments from the beach, the swimming pool, baseball fields, the New Orleans Zoo, and the clearing of the Meno lot at Secret Lake.

FADE IN:

EXT. MENO HOME - YARD - NIGHT

The moon is nearly full and mostly blocked by trees. Sandy stands before Max's window and shuts the curtains.

(O.S.) - A motorbike's engine kills the neighborhood's quiet.

Sandy momentarily stops and watches Larry ride the Indian down Pike Street. Instead of slowing down for the Dawn Circle stop sign, Larry pops a wheelie and runs it.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MENO HOME - MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max is kneeling before his wooden chest at the foot of the bed. He looks to the window and catches a glimpse of Larry's tail-light before the bike is out of sight. The moon light on his face dies, as Sandy tugs the curtain's drawstring.

MAX's POV - Sandy lets it go and turns to him.

SANDY

It's way-past bedtime. Put it up.

Max looks to the wooden chest. Atop it, laid out individually and separated by category, are his cigar box treasures, which now includes the bluebird feather that Holly gave him at the mall. It is placed above all, even the gold.

MAX

What's a homeroom?

SANDY

That's the classroom you're in most of the school day.

Sandy sniffs a foul whiff.

MAX

Is that where I'll have *Show and Tell*?

SANDY

I imagine so.

Sandy sniffs again and follows the scent.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MENO HOME - CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A snake-like shelf connects the four walls and holds a collection of models, mostly rocket ships and castles. Charlie sits at his desk and works on the blueprint for this year's science fair project, *A Glass Hotel on the Moon*.

MAX (O.S.)
(the hallway carries voices)
What will I *Show* them?

SANDY (O.S.)
Whatever we have, that you think
they'd like to see.

MAX (O.S.)
Like my gold?

Charlie stops sketching an antenna tower that will be sit atop the hotel's glass dome.

SANDY (O.S.)
No.

MAX (O.S.)
Why?

SANDY (O.S.)
Because, that's tacky.

Charlie sets the pencil down beside a row of six Indian arrowheads that are used as paper weights for hand-written model dimension calculations.

BACK TO MAX'S ROOM

Max watches Sandy follow her nose to his dresser. Atop it are his school supplies, *Mickey Mouse* backpack, and *Evel Knievel* lunch box.

MAX
What's tacky?

Sandy looks down the hallway. The master bedroom's door is open. Johnny wears just his black, silk pajama bottoms and stands before the fat, wood-box TV. He scratches his nuts.

SANDY
That's when you show more than you
should.

Max grabs the coins marked, *Tooth Fairy in '82*, *Easter Bunny '82*, *Santa '81*, and *Santa '80*. He leaves the birthday in '81 and '80 coins on the chest. All the handwriting is Johnny's.

MAX

But these came from the Tooth
Fairy, The Easter Bunny, and Santa.

Sandy picks up Max's lunch box. It's heavy. She thinks she knows why, but doesn't want to be right.

SANDY

Still, they don't give gold coins
to everyone, and you don't want to
make the other children feel bad
for not getting one.

Sandy sets the lunch box down on it's side and unlocks it.

MAX

How come they don't give gold to
everybody?

SANDY

Because, there's not enough of it
to give.

Max looks down to the coins. Sandy pulls the fish bag out of the lunch box. It's decayed three days.

MAX

How come?

JOHNNY (O.S.)

(hallway carries voice)

It's rare.

Lucky steps into the door way. His tail wags.

SANDY

Oh, Max?

Max looks up and remembers that he forgot about the fish. Sandy carries it and lunch box out of the room. Lucky back away from the doorway, then follows her towards the kitchen. In the distance, Charlie enters the hallway.

CHARLIE

You want to be a *Show and Tell*
hero, huh?

Charlie enters, holding the six arrowheads.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

These always worked for me.

Max's eyes get big. He's always loved the arrowheads.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But, being a hero ain't cheap.

Charlie sets the arrowheads down on the wooden chest.

JOHNNY (O.S.)
What in the hell's that smell?

Charlie sniffs.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. MENO HOME - YARD - NIGHT

Sandy smokes a cigarette and sprays thumb-pressured, hose-water against the lunch box and thermos. In the distance, Lucky stands at the end of the driveway, eyeing the nearly-overflowing trash can, ready for the morning pick up.

SANDY
Lucky?

Lucky looks to her.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Get away from there.

Lucky crosses the street.

SANDY (CONT'D)
No, not there. Back to the house.

Sandy points her cigarette at the house. Lucky keeps trotting onto the Bassnaggle lawn.

INT. BASSNAGGLE HOME - DEN - NIGHT

MR. BASSNAGGLE, 81, Old Man Winter of the neighborhood, sits still on a rocking chair, that faces the television.

SANDY (O.S.)
(muffled)
No, Lucky!

He turns to the window that overlooks the yard. In the distance, MRS. BASSNAGGLE, 79, same white hair and eyeglasses as her husband, sits on the sofa and pulls a spoon out of her mouth that holds a glob of strawberry ice cream.

MRS. BASSNAGGLE
(ice cream gargled)
What?

Mr. Bassnaggle sneers and stands. He walks to the window. In the distance, the *Channel 4 Ten O'clock News* begins.

MRS. BASSNAGGLE (CONT'D)
What is it?

Mr. Bassnaggle steps to the window and shakes his head.

MR. BASSNAGGLE
What is it always?

CHANNEL 4 NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
I'm Robin Green. This is the
Nightly News.

MR. BASSNAGGLE'S POV - Lucky squats and relieves himself on his yard. Across the street, Sandy turns off the hose and waves Lucky back over to the Meno side of the street with her glowing cigarette. Lucky goes, like a dart.

MATCH CUT TO:

MENO HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny still stands before the television and buttons up his pajama shirt. He, too, watches the *Nightly News*. Anchor, ROBIN GREEN, 44, mustache, shares the news desk with Fawn.

ROBIN GREEN (TV)
Tomorrow is destined to be a busy
day for Channel 4's own, Fawn Ferry-
Temple, who...

JOHNNY
Has done everything she could
to hurt me.

ROBIN GREEN (TV) (CONT'D)
Not only, will take *High*
Noon to City Hall...

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Huh?

Johnny looks down the hallway and sees Max and Charlie, leaning over Max's wooden chest and looking at him.

JOHNNY
Just taking to myself. That all
right?

Johnny watches Charlie and Max turn back to the chest.

ROBIN GREEN (TV)
For live coverage of the Hattie Ore
Enrichment Committee's decision of
which proposal will win the six
million dollar investment.

Johnny looks back to the TV, as Robin Green pivots to Fawn.

ROBIN GREEN (TV) (CONT'D)
But she also has to get her
daughter to Euphrates Elementary
before 7:30 am for her first day of
the first grade.

JOHNNY
So do we, asshole.

ROBIN GREEN
But, now, even before that, to the
pharmacy to buy a breathing mask.

(TV) - Fawn shakes her head and holds up a white mask.

FAWN (TV)
No, Robin, I've already got one,
thanks to the Woody Goode for
Better Schools Proposal.

Johnny crosses his arms.

JOHNNY
What in the shit is this?

FAWN (TV)
Which if chosen tomorrow couldn't
come at a better time...

Johnny shakes his head and makes a "Tssk" sound.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GOODE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Woody Goode stands before his bedroom TV, which is small
enough to fit on the dresser top. He wears a mud-mask and is
just as upset as Johnny by the *Nightly News*.

FAWN (TV)
For the results for the asbestos
tests in each of the six Euphrates
public schools came back today.

Woody turns to the bed, where Tammy stops rubbing lotion onto her arms out of scare from her husband's stare.

FAWN (TV) (CONT'D)

And unfortunately for my daughter, the other, nearly, three hundred students, and the faculty of Euphrates Elementary, those tests came back positive.

TAMMY GOODE

Her daughter was here when the masks were delivered.

WOODY GOODE

So you had to give her one?!

TAMMY GOODE

No, she plundered!

WOODY GOODE

Why'd you let her plunder?!

TAMMY GOODE

I didn't!

WOODY GOODE

Then, why'd she do it?!

TAMMY GOODE

Because, she's a little girl. And little girls plunder!

WOODY GOODE

Then, you should have put it away!

Woody walks to the receiving end of a laundry chute. He opens the little door and sticks his head inside and shouts:

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)

Emmy?

WOODY'S POV - The upstairs' laundry shoot door opens. His daughter, EMMY, 9, rolling curlers in her hair, sticks her head into the chute and looks down.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)

From now until forever, if Holly Temple is over here while her parents are working, she is not to plunder anything, you got me?

EMMY

Yes, Daddy.

WOODY GOODE
Tell your sister!

Woody slams the chute door and turns to the TV.

(O.S.) - Emmy footsteps cross the ceiling.

(TV) - Fawn puts on the white mask. Woody shakes his head.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)
So, she had the mask, how'd she
know about the results?

TAMMY GOODE
Because I told her.

WOODY GOODE
Why?

TAMMY GOODE
(shaky but defiant)
Because, the girls were wearing the
masks when she got here! There
were five-hundred more on the
floor, and Fawn asked why!

Woody turns back to the laundry chute, opens the door and
slams it. Tammy begins to weep.

TAMMY GOODE (CONT'D)
I told her not to say anything,
that your plan was to tell
everybody to...

Woody points his finger at Tammy.

WOODY GOODE
You can't tell her not to say
anything! She says whatever she
wants! How do you think we've
gotten this far?

TAMMY GOODE
What's it matter if they hear
tonight at ten or tomorrow at noon?

Woody walks to the bed. His voice lowers with each step.

WOODY GOODE
It matters because, traces of
asbestos is much more serious than
Euphrates Elementary and all the
other schools getting passed over a
long overdue restoration!

Woody points to the TV, as the *Nightly News* cuts to stock footage of Euphrates Elementary's Main Entrance.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)
Vander's got a kid at the school!
Turner's got a kid at the school!
Burchell has grand-kids, hell, even
Duhe's got a grandkid there!

Woody looks back to Tammy.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)
What happens if they give the
schools the money?

TAMMY GOODE
Is that not what we want?

WOODY GOODE
No! What we want is an issue and
moral high ground! What we want is
for me to be elected mayor, and
then fix Euphrates Elementary!

Woody looks back to the TV, as the *Nightly News* cuts to a recent interview with Johnny, inside his office, where an impressive miniature model of the future Meno Inn & Convention Center is displayed.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)
That only happens if Johnny Meno
gets the six million tomorrow!

Woody walks around the bed to his bedside. The room's phone is on top of his lamp stand. He picks it up and dials.

TAMMY GOODE
Who are you calling?

WOODY GOODE
You let the cat out of the bag,
and, now, everybody knows we know,
knows we have masks.

Tammy wipes tears off her face with the covers.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)
So, tomorrow, we have to show up
and make a good show...

Woody dials the last number.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)
Or be monsters, too.

Principal Manguno's phone rings.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

The morning bell rings, sending STUDENTS, 6-12, away from the bus stop, bike racks, and packs of friends scattered along the front lawn. They flow towards the neglected building, forming a bottleneck at the narrow entrance.

Fawn stands beside her Cameraman, who documents Woody, Tammy, and their SUPPORTERS handing out breathing masks to passing Students. Principal Manguno waves them forward.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

(repeats)

Don't stop if you don't get a mask.
There are masks in every class.

(O.S.) The rattling motorbike approaches.

Fawn turns to the street. Larry rides his *Indian* past the bus stop and onto the school's sidewalk. He continues to the bike racks. Sandy's Good Time van approaches the school from the other direction and parks in the carpool drop-off lane.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GOOD TIMES VAN - DAY

Charlie exits the shotgun door and slams it shut. His best friend, LONNIE VANDER, 12, stumpy, meaty scar on his forehead, opens the back, sliding door, leaves it open. They race to the school.

SANDY

Charlie!

Sandy leans over the aisle and looks out the open window.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Please walk Max to his classroom.

SANDY's POV - Charlie spins, and hops backwards, towards the building.

CHARLIE

He's already made me late enough!

SANDY's POV - Lonnie passes Charlie and cackles.

LONNIE

Guess who's sitting by Sara, now?

Charlie turns back to the school and sprints. He nearly catches Lonnie as they reach the entrance.

BACK TO EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - MAIN ENTRANCE

There's still a bottleneck of Students entering. Principal Manguno continues waving them forward.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

Don't stop if you don't get a mask.
There are masks in every class.

Charlie loses his smile and lets Lonnie beat him to the mask, that Tammy Goode is offering. He then slaps the mask Woody offers to the ground. Supporters bark. Woody looks to the Channel 4 news camera.

WOODY GOODE

Hey, that's okay. He's a Meno. If
he don't breathe in the Meno sin
then he don't breathe!

Woody gets a laugh from the Supporters.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

You can't harass my students.

Tammy points to Charlie, who enters the building.

TAMMY GOODE

He slapped Woody's hand!

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

I don't care.

Charlie spins around and gives Tammy the finger.

WOODY GOODE

He's shootin' the bird!

Principal Manguno turns to the school, as Charlie drops his hand, twists back forward, and gets lost in the crowd.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

I didn't see it.

Woody points to Fawn.

WOODY GOODE

I bet she did!

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

And I bet she got the pictures you
needed for the show.

Principal Manguno touches Woody's shoulder and nudges him
away from the school.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO (CONT'D)

Now, it's time to go.

Woody picks the mask off the ground and looks to Fawn.

WOODY GOODE

Keep it rolling.

Woody looks to his Supporters.

WOODY GOODE (CONT'D)

Don't breath in the Meno sin!

Woody puts on the mask and leads his Supporters away from the
entrance, towards Fawn's camera.

WOODY & HIS SUPPORTERS

(chant)

Don't breath in the Meno sin!

Sandy's van is still parked in the carpool drop off lane.
The sliding door is still open.

BACK TO GOOD TIMES VAN

Max weeps on the back, bench seat. Sandy holds him and pets
his head. The chant makes her frown.

WOODY & HIS SUPPORTERS (O.S) (CONT'D)

(chant)

Don't breath in the Meno sin!

SANDY'S POV - Through the open, sliding door, Woody and the
Protestors walk past Fawn and away from the school.

SANDY

See, they're going. And, now, you
have to go, too.

Max sucks in a wet breath and nods.

MAX'S POV - Larry steps before the sliding door. He wears a
white T-shirt with black sleeves. Its ironed-on, hot pink
letters cross his chest and read, *Never Give Up*.

LARRY
Hell, Max, school's boring, not
scary.

MAX's POV - Larry waves Max out of the van.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Come on.

MAX's POV - Larry takes two steps towards the building.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Come on!

MAX's POV - Larry stops and turns back to Sandy.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Whose class is he in?

Sandy grabs Max's lunch box off the floorboard.

INT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - MRS. STEEL'S ROOM - DAY

MRS. STEEL, 42, African-American, silvery hair, eyeglasses,
stands at a window and doesn't wear a breathing mask.

MRS. STEEL's POV - Sandy exits the van through the sliding
door and shoos Larry away.

(O.S.) - The chatter of 14 nervous FIRST GRADERS is loud.

Mrs. Steel raises her right hand above her head, collapses
her wrist, so that her fingertips point to her crown.

(O.S.) - The chatter hushes.

Mrs. Steel turns to the heart of the classroom. The Students
share four square tables, four chairs to a table. They all
wear breathing masks.

Jamie Bano, who Dr. Temple examined during Max's booster shot
jailbreak, stands outside the doorway. No breathing mask.

MRS. STEEL
Yes?

Jamie twitches.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
What's your name?

JAMIE
(funny voice)
Jamie Bano.

Mrs. Steel finds Jamie's name near the top of the roll sheet.

MRS. STEEL
Yes, Jamie Bano. You are in my
class, so choose a seat.

There are two empty seats. One is at the table where Clemon Milsap, *A-Team* lunch Box, Isaac Ruben, and, TINO, only Asian child in first grade, sit.

The other empty chair is at the table peopled by Bo Duhe, RUSS, spaghetti hair, and ARTHUR, excellent posture. Jamie aims for that table.

BO
Saved.

Bo blocks the seat with his foot.

MRS. STEEL
No sir, Mr. Duhe. There are no
saved seats in here on day one.

Jamie is frozen.

JAMIE
What do I do?

MRS. STEEL
Pick a seat!

JAMIE's POV - Tino and Clemon nod. Isaac shakes, no.

Jamie looks back to Bo, Russ, and Arthur, none of whom's eyes are welcoming. Jamie sits with Bo, Arthur, and Russ anyway.

(O.S.) - The tardy bell rings.

Mrs. Steel walks towards the doorway.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - HALLWAY - DAY

Mrs. Steel exits the classroom and looks left.

MRS. STEEL's POV - Sandy helps Max put on his backpack.

SANDY

Shhh...

Sandy straightens Max's shirt, wipes his face, and recombs his hair with her fingers.

MRS. STEEL

Another Meno boy?

Mrs. Steel walks towards Max.

SANDY

Yes, this is Max.

MRS. STEEL

Max?

Mrs. Steel stops and squats to Max's eye level.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

Five years ago, your brother was the prince of my classroom, so just this once, I'm going to cut you some royal slack. But...

Mrs. Steel places her hand on his shoulder.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

Don't be late to my class again.

Max nods.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

Stop crying.

Max breathes a deep breath.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

Take your lunch box.

Max grabs the lunch box. Mrs. Steel points to her classroom.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

Your seat's in there.

Max goes. Behind him, Ms. Crane stands in her classroom doorway. She wears a breathing mask. Her eyes beam disgust.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

Teach your class, Cathy.

MS. CRANE

Teach yours.

Ms. Crane points to Max as he enters Mrs. Steel's classroom.

BACK TO MRS. STEEL'S CLASSROOM

Max knows he looks pitiful. He avoids eye contact as he searches for an empty seat. Bo points to Jamie.

BO

He took your seat.

Max doesn't care and keeps moving forward, finding the empty chair between Isaac and Clemon, across from Tino.

Max leaves his backpack on and sits. He sets his lunch box on the desk and hugs it. Clemon looks at his fingers.

CLEMON

What's that?

Clemon points to Max's wart. Isaac leans towards Max.

ISAAC

A wart.

Laughter erupts at the table claimed by the four, so-called, KISSING GIRLS, REBECCA, CHRISTY, VONDA, and WENDY.

KISSING GIRL REBECCA

Who's got a wart?

Tino points to Max.

KISSING GIRL CHRISTY

(country accent)

Eew!

The Kissing Girls stand and scan Max's skin.

KISSING GIRL WENDY

(thick country accent)

What'd you do? Kiss a frog?

KISSING GIRL VONDA

(very thick country accent)

Is the wart on his lip?

Most students laugh. Mrs. Steel storms into the room and points to the wall clock above the doorway. It reads 8:31.

MRS. STEEL

Tardy bell means, *School time!*

Mrs. Steel continues walking to the blackboard.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
School time means, *Quiet!*

Mrs. Steel picks up a chalk stick.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
So, tardy bell means, *Quiet.*

The Students hush. Mrs. Steel looks them over.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Take off those masks, I want to see
your faces.

KISSING GIRL VONDA
But we'll die.

MRS. STEEL
I'm been breathing in this room for
nine years. Y'all can do it for a
day, now, take them off.

The Students obey. Mrs. Steel turns to the blackboard and
writes, *My name is _ _ . This summer I _ _ .*

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
On your desk is a worksheet.
You'll need a pencil, crayons,
scissors, and glue.

Students open their backpacks and pull out the needed
supplies. Max takes advantage of everyone being busy and
gets his first good look at his Classmates.

MRS. STEEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
When everyone finishes, I will call
roll. When you hear your name...

Max's POV - He twists around until he can see the table
behind his chair. Holly Temple sits in what was his blind-
spot. She looks from her worksheet to Max and waves.

MRS. STEEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You will come stand where I am
standing and read your worksheet
answers to the class.

Max perks up and waves back. In the distance, Jamie Bano
raises his hand.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Yes, Jamie?

JAMIE

But, I can't read.

Every Student, except Jamie, laughs hard, especially Max, who is happy someone else became the fool.

Mrs. Steel stays focused on Jamie. She chalk-taps the blackboard underneath each worksheet word she reads aloud.

MRS. STEEL

My name is...

JAMIE

Jamie Bano.

Students and Mrs. Steel laugh. She writes, *Mrs. Steel* in the two blanks on the blackboard, composes herself.

MRS. STEEL

This summer I...

Max pulls the crayon pack out of his backpack.

JUMP CUT TO:

Twenty-seven minutes later. Max has answered all the worksheet fill-in-the-blanks and now crayon-draws stick figures standing before a beached, dead shark on the worksheet space reserved for a picture drawing.

Mrs. Steel stands over Max's shoulder, inspecting his work. She points to his handwriting.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)

What's that say?

MRS. STEEL'S POV - Max stops coloring and looks up, then back to the worksheet. He sees her red fingernail touching statement two, *This summer I sal a ded shark in Floorda.*

MAX

*Saw a... dead shark... in...
Florida.*

MRS. STEEL

*Saw rhymes with raw, not Paul. You
want a W where the L is.*

MAX

(to himself)

Saw.

Max writes a *W* over the *L* in *sal* with crayon.

KISSING GIRL CHRISTY
He's got warts in his ears, too!

Students laugh. Max loses his glow. Mrs. Steel turns to the Kissing Girls.

MRS. STEEL
Hey!

The Kissing Girls quiet but can't stop smiling.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Keep it up, girls, and they'll be
one of you at each table.

Mrs. Steel returns Max's worksheet. She points to *ded*.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Dead is d-e-A-d.

Max writes an *A* above and between's *ded*'s *E* and *D*.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
You spelled *shark* right.

Mrs. Steel points to *Floorda*, then addresses the room.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Who can spell *Florida*?

Holly raise her hand.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Holly?

HOLLY
F-l-o-r...

Max turns around. Holly blushes.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I-d-a.

MRS. STEEL
Good, Holly.

Mrs. Steel looks to Max.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
You got one too many *O*'s and are
missing, *I*.

Max is still looking at Holly, smiling.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
I, Max.

Mrs. Steel points between *Floorda's R* and D. Max writes, *I*. She scans his other answers and is baffled by, *I will be a muve tetr when I grow up.*

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
What are you going to be, Max?

Max is confused by his own writing. Mrs. Steel circles *muve*.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
M-u-v-e?

MAX
Movie.

Mrs. Steel circles *tetr*.

MRS. STEEL
T-e-t-r.

MAX
Theatre.

MRS. STEEL
You want to be a movie theatre?

All the Students laugh, even Max. He shakes his head and thinks of a better answer.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
You want to work there?

Max shrugs, nods.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
Then you want to be the movie theatre *attendant*.

She writes all three words above his attempt.

CLEMON
What's an attendant?

MRS. STEEL
The person who sells you candy and popcorn.

Everyone laughs. Mrs. Steel makes the corrections.

MRS. STEEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Movie is M-O-v-I-e.
Theatre is T-H-E-A-t-R-e.
Attendant is A-T-T-E-N-D-A-N-T.

Mrs. Steel makes a check mark by Max's shark drawing, and comes to the last part of the worksheet, which is a blue, construction paper cutout of Max's traced, left hand.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
That your left hand or right hand?

MAX
Right?

Mrs. Steel taps Max's left hand.

MRS. STEEL
No, that's your left hand. So are you right or left-handed?

MAX
Left?

Mrs. Steel again taps his left hand.

MRS. STEEL
You traced your *left* hand...

She taps his right hand.

MRS. STEEL (CONT'D)
With your *right* hand, which means you're *right-handed*.

She notices a blob of glue on the cut-outs index knuckle.

STEEL
Why is that on there?

Mrs. Steel swats it off with her pen. Isaac, Tino, Clemon, and the Kissing Girls laugh.

MRS. STEEL
Why is that funny?

Max knows why and holds his head down. Isaac waits for Mrs. Steel to move to another table.

ISAAC
Sorry.

Max picks up his scissors, opens the blades, looks Isaac in the eyes. He slices off the wart. It falls to the desk.

EXT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - PLAYGROUND - COURT AREA - DAY

A red, rubber ball, the size of a basketball, bounces off the *Four Square* court. Max stands in line to play and catches it. He wears a bloody *Band-Aid* on his wart-finger. There are some dried blood spots on his shirt.

ISAAC

Here you go, Max.

Isaac walks from the Queen's court to the King's court, where Bo stands. Max passes him the ball. Bo lunges forward and intercepts the ball.

BO

I said, *No spikes to the King.*

ISAAC

I didn't spike it, I stopped a spike!

Isaac snatches the ball out of Bo's hands.

BO

Yeah, by spiking it!

Bo reaches for the ball. Isaac keeps it away.

ISAAC

Bo, I'm King, Arthur's Queen, Russ is Jack, and Max's is the Fool.

Arthur moves queen. Russ to Jack. Max steps onto court.

Bo shakes his head and smirks, but leaves the court. Isaac spin-bounces the ball to himself.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

No hits backs to the King, no *spikes* to the King, no spins to the King, no babies to the King...

Isaac quickly turns and drop-spins the ball on Max's square.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Baby!

Max dives for the ball and skins his knee, but his fast hand pops a lob onto Russ' court. Bo wants back in the game and points to Max's defenseless square.

BO

Max's down! Spike it!

Max hops to his feet and readies for Russ' wrath, which worries Isaac enough that he takes two steps back.

Russ taps the ball softly into Isaac's court, which makes it rule-abiding, and not a drop shot players call, *babies*.

Isaac gasps, lunges, and howls, but the ball bounces twice. The King is dead. Isaac kicks the ball.

ISAAC

Shiatsu!

The ball rolls to the lookout spot, where Mrs. Steel, Ms. Crane, and MR. MALONE, 41, thin, reddish beard, keep watch over the three first grade classes. Only a few wear breathing masks.

MS. CRANE

What did you say, Isaac Ruben?

Ms. Crane swoops down and snatches the rolling ball.

ISAAC

Shiatsu.

Ms. Crane keeps her eyes on Isaac.

MS. CRANE

(whispers)

Can he say that?

MR. MALONE

(whispers)

Shiatsu, the dog breed?

MS. CRANE

(whispers)

Does he know that?

MRS. STEEL

Ask him.

Ms. Crane looks to Isaac.

MS. CRANE

Define shiatsu?

ISAAC

My mom's got a shiatsu. She takes a shiatsu places.

Max, Bo, Russ, and Arthur snicker.

MS. CRANE

We've got some real little monsters
this year.

Ms. Crane rolls the ball in the opposite direction, towards the grassy area, home to playground equipment, including swings, slides, monkey bars, and a merry-go-round.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - PLAYGROUND - GRASSY AREA - DAY

The ball rolls down the little hill, past the merry-go-round, that Holly rides with Clemon, Jamie Bano, and girls from Ms. Crane's homeroom, DOROTHY and MARCI.

Holly hops off and chases the ball until it stops near a concrete tube, big enough to crawl through. The Kissing Girls stand on top of it, addressing most of the other First Grade GIRLS, from all three classes.

KISSING GIRL CHRISTY

What you do is say, *Kiss Russ* or whatever the boy's name is. Then, until he's been kissed, nobody else's name can be called.

Holly picks up the four square ball and listens.

KISSING GIRL REBECCA

And if you're the one who kisses him, you have to count which number he was.

MESIKA, African-American, sharp eyes, Mrs. Steel's homeroom, steps forward.

MESIKA

What you mean, the number?

KISSING GIRL WENDY

If I say, *Kiss Arthur*, and he's my first kiss, then after I'm done, I say, *One*.

Holly's shocked over the rules of the *Kissing Girls* game.

KISSING GIRL VONDA

And then if she kisses Max Meno, after she says, *Two*, she'll get a wart on her lip!

The girls in Mrs. Steel's class laugh.

KISSING GIRL CHRISTY

Now, let us show you how it's done.

The Kissing Girls hop off the concrete tube and walk across the grassy area, towards the courts.

BACK TO PLAYGROUND COURT AREA

Max and Russ play *rock-paper-scissors* to determine who will fetch the ball. Russ throws *paper*. Max wins with *scissors*. Isaac points to Max's *Band-Aid*.

ISAAC

How'd you not know he's using scissors?

The boys laugh, even Max. Arthur points to the grassy area.

ARTHUR

Get the ball.

Russ turns and jogs after the ball. In the distance, the Kissing Girls run up the grassy hill and onto the court area.

KISSING GIRL REBECCA

Kiss Russ!

Russ' mouth opens wide, like he's looking at a landing UFO.

(O.S.) - The Kissing Girls squeal.

Isaac, Max, Arthur, and Bo turn to the Kissing Girls.

KISSING GIRL REBECCA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna kiss you, Russ!

Kissing Girl Rebecca kisses the air.

BO

Run, Russ!

Too late. Kissing Girl Rebecca snags Russ's shirt sleeve, slings herself into him, and kisses his cheek.

KISSING GIRL REBECCA

One!

Kissing Girls Christy, Vonda, and Wendy turn toward the other four boys.

KISSING GIRL CHRISTY

Kiss Arthur!

Arthur darts away and quickly changes direction and changes direction again. Kissing Girl Christy follows the zigzag and catches him. *Kiss, kiss.*

KISSING GIRL CHRISTY (CONT'D)

One!

KISSING GIRL WENDY

Kiss Bo!

Bo is happily surprised he was picked and doesn't attempt a getaway. Kissing Girl Wendy kisses his neck.

Kissing Girl Vonda scans the pickings. Isaac is already deep into playground's grassy area. It has to be Max.

KISSING GIRL VONDA

Kiss Max!

Kissing Girl Vonda chases Max off the court, laughing like a hyena. Max runs past the teachers and off the courts.

BACK TO PLAYGROUND GRASSY AREA

Max runs full speed down the little hill and slips on a rocky patch, falls right-shoulder first onto the ground.

Max's fall launches a dust cloud that reaches the merry-go-round, that just begins to spin. Holly is a rider and holds onto the rail.

HOLLY

Max Meno!

Kissing Girl Vonda runs down the hill, picking up steam, kissing the air. Max panics, hops to his feet, slaps dust off his shirt, and runs.

Clemon, Tino, and Jamie have the merry-go-round spinning fast and hop on the wheel. Holly holds onto the rail with one hand and reaches out for Max with the other.

Max is now chased by Kissing Girls Vonda and Wendy.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Hurry!

Max times the leap well and lands on the wheel. Holly stops his fall. The earth spins around them.

Kissing Girls Wendy and Vonda stop and watch them orbit.

KISSING GIRL WENDY

He doesn't count.

KISSING GIRL VONDA
Just cry warts on you anyway.

Kissing Girl Vonda cackles, grabs Wendy's hand, and pulls her toward the pack of Boys playing on the monkey bars.

KISSING GIRL VONDA (CONT'D)
Get Robert!

Holly is glad to see the Kissing Girls go. She grabs Max's left hand and studies the bloody *Band-Aid*.

HOLLY
You didn't have to do that?

Holly moves Max's hand down below the hem of her dress, back behind the knee, between her thigh and calf.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
You wouldn't like it if I did that?

Holly rubs Max's fingertips over her own wart.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Would you?

Max knows what the wart is by how it feels. He's surprised, moved, and repulsed. He shakes his head. The ride stops.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Come on.

Holly leaps off the merry-go-round. Max follows.

INT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - CAFETERIA - LUNCH LINE - DAY

Holly and Max push a lunch-line tray that holds their lunch boxes. They study the food on the other side of the glass that they will not be eating today.

The LUNCH LADY SERVER, wears breathing mask, scoops fish sticks, peas, diced potatoes, and a cookie onto a plastic plate and gives to Tino, stands before Holly.

TINO
What kind of cookie?

LUNCH LADY SERVER
Butterscotch.

Tino's not impressed and sets the plate on his tray. He leads Holly and Max toward the refrigerated milk compartment, just before the LUNCH LADY CASHIER, short hair, eyeglasses, no breathing mask. She points to the milk choices.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER
White milk or chocolate milk?

Tino grabs a carton of chocolate milk.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER (CONT'D)
One-fifty.

Tino pays and moves on into the cafeteria proper.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER (CONT'D)
White or chocolate milk?

Holly offers the Lunch Lady Cashier two quarters.

HOLLY
White milk, please.

The Cashier takes Holly's money and nods to the refrigerator.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER
Get your own milk.

Holly reaches into the cooler and sees Max pulling out two cartons of chocolate milk. She looks at him like he's done something very bizarre. She sets the white milk onto her tray, turns, and follows Tino.

Max puts both chocolate milks back into the cooler and reaches into the white milk cooler, takes one carton. He whisks by the Lunch Lady Cashier, forgetting he owes.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa, Evel.

Max stops and turns around. The Lunch Lady Cashier plucks the folded dollar bill from Max's tray like a waterbird.

Max turns back to the greater cafeteria.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER (CONT'D)
You want your fifty cents?

Max spins back around. She sets the coins onto Max's tray. He stays put. She points away from the lunch line.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER (CONT'D)
You're done.

He walks out of the lunch line and looks for a seat.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - CAFETERIA - TABLE AREA - DAY

The greater room is home to three long tables. Only Ms. Crane and her Students wear breathing masks, pulling it up to eat and drink. Max follows Holly to Mrs. Steel's table and stops at the empty seat between her and Tino.

BO (O.S.)

Max?

Max looks to the end of the table that is occupied by Bo, Arthur, Russ, and Isaac. Bo points to a saved seat.

Max shrugs and sits beside Holly. Jamie sits across from Tino, turns to Bo, and smiles.

Bo turns to Russ, who bites into a steak sandwich.

BO (CONT'D)

What's Max's problem?

RUSS

My mom said he might be a little-bit retarded.

Tino smiles and chews a fish stick like a carrot. He sees Max open his lunch box and peer inside.

TINO'S POV - Max's lunch consists of a ham and bread sandwich, *Bugle* corn chips, and a *Hostess Cupcake*. There is a note from Sandy that reads, *Way to Go, First Grader!*.

TINO

I'll trade you this...

Tino picks up the school cookie.

TINO (CONT'D)

For that.

He points to Max's *Hostess Cupcake*. This is the first lunch room deal of the school year and gets considerable attention from all those within ear distance.

MAX

What is it?

TINO

Cookie.

MAX
What kind?

TINO
Butterscotch.

MAX
Is it good?

Mesika sits across from Max and eats a school lunch.

MESIKA
You like butter, don't you?

Clemon sits across from Holly and snorts while eating soup.

TINO
It's good. Try it.

Max takes the cookie. Tino snatches the *Hostess Cupcake* from his lunch box and quickly unwraps it.

Max stares at the cookie like it might be poisonous.

HOLLY
I'll give you a Hershey's Kiss if
you don't like it.

Max bites into the cookie, puckers, and doesn't chew. Holly reaches into her lunch box and offers Max a *Hershey's Kiss*.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Does it taste bad?

Max turns to Tino, who wisely breaks the cupcake in half and licks the cream filling.

TINO
No trade backs!

Max drops the cookie in his lunch box and picks up his milk carton. Jamie and Clemon laugh. Mesika takes a heavenly-seeming bite of her Butterscotch cookie.

MESIKA
Mmm.

Max splits his milk carton lip, drinks, and swallows it all down. He makes a sour face. Holly smells her milk.

HOLLY
Does the milk taste funny?

Max, nods, pushes his seat back, stands. Clemon, Mesika, Jamie, and Tino laugh so loud that Mrs. Steel raises her hand high and points to her crown. They hush.

BACK TO CAFETERIA LUNCH LINE

Max approaches the Lunch Lady Cashier with his milk carton.

MAX
My milk tastes funny.

The Lunch Lady grabs the carton. She smells the lip, sips, smacks her lips, and swallows.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER
No, it doesn't.

The Lunch Lady Cashier gives the milk carton back to Max. He looks at her lipstick mark and returns to the table.

Mr. Malone pushes his tray toward the cash register. He wears his breathing mask on his wrist.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER (CONT'D)
You showin' up tomorrow?

Mr. Malone offers two dollars.

MR. MALONE
Are you?

LUNCH LADY CASHIER
If the gates are open and kids are here, then I'm gonna feed 'um.

The Lunch Lady Cashier takes the two bills. Mr. Malone notices Ms. Crane, who walks over to Mrs. Steel and whisper something into her ear.

MR. MALONE
You're lucky. If I show I'm a traitor. And if I don't show I'm a self-saboteur.

LUNCH LADY CASHIER
A what?

Mr. Malone turns to the Lunch Lady Cashier.

MR. MALONE
Do you have a phone back here?

The Lunch Lady points to the little office between the kitchen and loading door.

INT. HAPPY NAMES - A MONOGRAM STORE - DAY

SHEILA MALONE, the plump, sweet-faced owner of the smallest store in the Rabbit Foot Mall, writes *A Goode Ice Chest!* atop the lid of a metallic ice chest with a red marker.

(O.S.) - A television is on and turned to *High Noon*.

FAWN (TV)

I have question?

Sheila's POV - A small, black & white television on the cashier counter broadcasts the live press conference. Bottom of the screen reads, *Hattie Ore Enrichment Committee votes 5-0 in favor of Meno Inn & Convention Center.*

(O.S.) - The telephone RINGS.

Sheila stands up and walks to the cashier counter. She keeps her eyes connected to the television screen.

(TV) Fawn stands near the miniature model of the Meno Inn and Convention Center. Inspecting the model is a joyful Woody Goode.

FAWN (TV) (CONT'D)

Knowing that traces of asbestos
were detected in Euphrates
Elementary, how could you not vote
in favor of the Goode Proposal?

(TV) Speaking on behalf of the Hattie Ore ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE is VANDER, 43, bearded, bear of a man. Standing behind him are the other four members, BURCHELL, TURNER, SHAPLEY, and THORNHILL.

VANDER (TV)

Our job was to create jobs.

Sheila answers the phone.

SHEILA MALONE

Happy Names, Sheila speaking?

Sheila caps her gold marker.

INT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - AUDITORIUM - SEATING AREA - DAY

Sheila enters the big room and walks down the aisle, towards the stage. She came straight from Happy Names and is dressed the same, sans work apron.

The whole First Grade Class sits on the first three rows. Only nine wear masks, all in Ms. Crane's homeroom. Max and Holly are on the front row, side-by-side. They turn to the aisle as Sheila approaches.

SHEILA MALONE
Where's Mr. Malone?

Many of the students point to the stage.

BO
In that trap door.

The stage's trap door is near the front of the stage and open. A big box is pushed out of it and onto the stage floor. The box is full of Claves, wood percussion cylinders that are thicker than drum sticks.

SHEILA MALONE
You got both kinds of tape?

Mr. Malone sticks his head out of the trap door and sets his eyes on his wife. He points to several rolls of grip tape and rope-like, measuring tape on the stage. Close by are a stack of nine-page, typed scripts.

Sheila walks up the stage steps. She pulls a black marker from her pant pocket.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - STAGE - DAY

Mr. Malone climbs the trap door ladder and onto the stage. He looks over the First Grade Class.

MR. MALONE
Normally, I teach "My Country Tis of Thee" the first week of school, but, as some of you may know, we are probably not having school tomorrow, and may not have it for some time. And all I can say is...

Mr. Malone picks up the stack of scripts.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Bad timing, because, the state is holding a contest for an original first grade play that will be performed by every public school in Mississippi.

MR. MALONE's POV - The top script's title page, *Mississippi Symbols and World Explorers* by Eugene Malone.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
And mine is a finalist.

Sheila smiles and looks down into the trap door. Below, close to the little ladder is a rack of bright costumes.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
And is scheduled to be performed, here in this room, before the judges, on a Tuesday in early November.

Mr. Malone points to Sheila.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
This is my wonderful wife, Sheila.

Sheila smiles, waves, and picks up grip tape.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
She is a gifted artisan, who is going to help us with our set construction, which will, like her, be both striking and ambitious.

Mr. Malone pulls a pen from his shirt pocket and a cast list from his back, pant pocket.

MR. MALONE's POV - The cast is separated into three columns: *Explorers - Boys, Symbols - Girls, Chorus - Boys & Girls*. Their stage locations are mapped out on overhead diagram.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Start with the trap door?

Sheila surveys the whole stage.

SHEILA MALONE
I think so.

Mr. Malone looks to the Students.

MR. MALONE
Now, this is a question for just the girls. Who has been to the reptile exhibit at Euphrates zoo?

MR. MALONE's POV - Every Girl raises her hand, but none higher than Mesika's, who stands from her first row seat.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What's your name?

MESIKA
Mesika.

MR. MALONE
Mesika, come on up.

Mr. Malone writes, *Mesika*, beside *American Alligator*.

SHEILA MALONE
Does she leave the trap door?

MR. MALONE
No, she just pops up. Dolphin pops up and dances with Ponce de León to Neil Armstrong.

Mesika reaches the stage floor. Mr. Malone speaks both to her and the Students below.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
If there is any way I can schedule rehearsals, I will, but if I can't, or you can't attend them, please, meet up, rehearse together...

Mesika looks to the Students below.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
If you can't rehearse with each other, then practice with your parents, siblings...

SHEILA MALONE
Baby sitters.

MR. MALONE
Anybody.

Mr. Malone offers Mesika a script.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Okay?

Mesika nods and takes the script.

SHEILA MALONE
She won't need a mark?

MR. MALONE
No, but Dolphin will.

MESIKA

Who am I?

MR. MALONE

The American Alligator!

Sheila smiles, chomps, and points to the trap door's ladder.

SHEILA MALONE

You've got a cute costume.

MR. MALONE

Oh, yes.

Mr. Malone looks back to the Students below.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM SEATING

Holly listens carefully to Mr. Malone.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Girls.

Holly perks up.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We will have costumes for you.

Max isn't quite sure what's going on and looks around, sees if anyone else is confused.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And boys?

Holly looks to Max. He looks to the stage.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We will work with you, if you don't have or can't get a particular costume item, but...

MAX'S POV - Mr. Malone again looks across the Student body.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)

To save time, money, and effort, show your mother your costume list and have her dress you.

Holly taps Max's hand.

HOLLY

Don't you hope we get a part?

Holly waits for an answer, so Max nods.

MR. MALONE (O.S.)
Now, girls?

Holly turns to Mr. Malone.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Who has ever been on a cruise ship?

Holly gasps and is the only one to raise her hand.

HOLLY'S POV - Mr. Malone smiles and points at her.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Yes, I know you... You're?

Holly stands.

HOLLY
Holly Temple.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM STAGE

Sheila looks to Mr. Malone.

SHEILA MALONE
Save room for High Noon.

Mr. Malone smiles and waves her onto the stage.

MR. MALONE
Come be our Bottlenose Dolphin.

Students laugh. Holly stands and hurries to the steps.

Mr. Malone notices Mesika climbing down the trap door. Mr. Malone thinks about stopping her, but neverminds, and gives Holly her script.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Stand right here.

HOLLY
Okay!

Holly spins around and looks at Max, waves.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM SEATING

Max smiles, waves back, and gets a stern look from Bo.

MR. MALONE (O.S.)
Boys? Who's been to Florida?

Most Boys, including Max and Bo Duhe raise their hands.

MAX's POV - Holly points to Max.

HOLLY
Max Meno has.

MR. MALONE
Good enough for me. Get up here.

MAX's POV - Mr. Malone waves Max up and Holly claps.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
You are Ponce de León.

Max blushes, stands, and makes his way to the stage.

MR. MALONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You went looking for the Fountain
of Youth, got lost, and discovered
the Sunshine State.

Students laugh harder.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM STAGE

Mr. Malone points to the spot where he wants Max to stand.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

MR. MALONE's POV - Max is oblivious to his skinned knee,
dirty-shirt, and bloody-finger *Band-Aid*. He nods.

Mr. Malone bends down to Max's ear, as he reaches his mark.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
And you're Johnny Meno's son?

Max nods and notices Sheila crawling on the floor.

MAX's POV - Sheila marks where he stands with grip tape,
across it writes, *Ponce D L.*. She looks up and waves.

Max waves back and looks back to Mr. Malone, who scribbles
onto his script.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Show your father this question when
you get home, okay?

Mr. Malone circles what he wrote and shows it to Max, who
nods. Mr. Malone looks to Holly.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Do you know your phone number?

HOLLY
544-6913.

Mr. Malone writes the number onto Max's script, then snatches Holly's script from her hand.

MR. MALONE
What's your number, Max?

MAX
268...uh?

Mr. Malone doesn't care. Something about coming upon Max and Holly has sparked his hope.

MR. MALONE
It's okay, give it to her later. I bet it's written down in your milk money pocket. Now...

Mr. Malone drops both scripts on the floor and touches Holly's shoulder.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
You and Max definitely need to rehearse outside of school, for your characters dance.

(O.S.) - Student laugh.

Holly claps. Mr. Malone spins her, so she faces Max.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Now, she's a Dolphin.

Mr. Malone points to the trap door.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
And is going to be down there.

MAX'S POV - Mesika stands on the trap door ladder. Her head is just above the stage. She waves.

Mr. Malone grabs Max's shoulder.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
You ask her if she knows how to get to Florida. She does and pops out of the trap door.

Mr. Malone connects Holly's left hand to Max's right hand.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
Grabs you like a dancer.

Mr. Malone moves Max's left hand to Holly's right hip, then Holly's right hand to Max's left shoulder.

MR. MALONE (CONT'D)
(mimics Holly's voice)
*Sure, Ponce, I'll waltz you
anywhere.*

Mr. Malone pushes Max and Holly stage left in a clockwise motion, thirty-three degrees each turn.

SHEILA MALONE
One, two, three...

Max and Holly complete the waltz circle. Mr. Malone keeps them spinning. Below, the Students really laugh.

MR. MALONE
One, two, three...

SHEILIA MALONE
One, two, three...

Mr. Malone lets go of Max and Holly.

MR. MALONE
Waltz to Sheila.

The background spins around Max like it did on the merry-go-round. He feels joy.

SHEILA MALONE
One, two...

Sheila stands a few feet back from where Max and Holly should land after this last circle. She tears a strip of grip tape from the roll and readies to mark their landing spot.

EXT. EUPHRATES ELEMENTARY - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

A pool of finger-snapping SIXTH-GRADERS, including Charlie, Sara, and Lonnie, stand on the lawn before the carpool pick-up lane. Larry leads them.

LARRY
Three!

Larry points to the school entrance.

LARRY (CONT'D)
And loud enough for Man-Goon-O!

In the distance, Principal Manguno stands just outside the school entrance, watching Students leave the campus.

POOL OF SIXTH GRADERS

(sing)

We don't need no education.
We don't need no thought control.

Principal Manguno turns towards the Sixth Graders, who continue singing Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall."

Max, Holly, Isaac, Russ, Bo, and The Kissing Girls lead a pack of First Graders out of the school and past Principal Manguno. Bo, like most members of Mr. Malone's Chorus, beats his new pair of Claves irregularly.

The pack breaks apart when they reach the lawn. A third continue forward to the bus stop, a third makes a hard left towards the bike racks, and a third joins the pool of Sixth Graders before the carpool pick up lane.

Max is proud and embarrassed to see that Charlie is one of the singing Sixth Graders. The singing scares Holly.

Charlie notices how beat up Max looks and shakes his head. The singing ends. Sixth Graders cheer.

LONNIE

Anybody even showing up, tomorrow?

LARRY

Oh, hell no. And ruin a perfectly good Indian Summer?

Sara turns to Charlie.

SARA

What's an Indian Summer?

LARRY

When it stays summer longer than it's 'spose to.

Larry looks to Charlie.

LARRY (CONT'D)

And it's 'spose to, thanks to Mr. Meno and...

Tammy Goode walks through the pool of Sixth Graders to Holly.

TAMMY GOODE

Holly, your mother's at City Hall doing some important reporting, and she wants you to come to my house until she's done.

Tammy points to the carpool lane. Her daughters, Emmy, big curls, her big sister, GLENDA, 11, braces, enter Tammy's Buick Regal, which blocks cars from exiting the carpool lane.

TAMMY GOODE (CONT'D)

Glenda and Emmy will both be there.

Tammy grabs Holly's hand and pulls her away from Max.

HOLLY

Wait!

Holly turns to Max.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Your number!

Max slides off his backpack.

TAMMY GOODE

Holly, I'm needed at City Hall too, now...

(O.S.) - A carpool horn honks.

HOLLY

I gave him my phone number but I don't have his!

Charlie spots Sandy's Good Times Van down the line of vehicles waiting to enter to carpool lane.

CHARLIE

Max!

Max turns around to see Charlie and Lonnie walking to Sandy's van. Holly reaches into her back pack and pulls out Mr. Malone's script and a pencil.

HOLLY

Hurry, Max.

(O.S.) - More horns honk in the carpool lane.

Tammy grabs Holly's backpack and pulls her toward the Buick.

TAMMY GOODE
I'm sorry, but we're blocking
traffic.

Max opens his milk money pocket. Sandy wrote his name,
address, and phone number on the pouch's inside.

MAX
Max Meno! 2709 Pike Street!

HOLLY
He knows it!

TAMMY GOODE
I know it! It's Johnny Meno in the
phone book.

MAX
268...

Holly writes number down as best she can.

MAX (CONT'D)
370...

Charlie, having doubled back, grabs Max's backpack.

CHARLIE
One!

Charlie grabs Max's shirt collar and lifts him to his feet.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Come on.

Charlie drags Max toward Sandy's Good Times Van. Sandy exits
the driver's door and waves her boys over.

SANDY
Your father's got people coming
over.

Sandy sees the dirt and blood on Max's clothes and skin.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Max, what happened to you?

CHARLIE
He got bamboozled, just like I said
he would.

Charlie drops Max's backpack and walks to the van. Max picks
it up, puts it on, and steps to Sandy.

SANDY
Are you okay?

Max's eyes say, *I'm better than okay.* He shows her Mr. Malone's script.

MAX
Do we have this?

Sandy takes the script, flips it to the front and sees *Ponce de León's* costume list.

SANDY
Oh, Max! You're Ponce de León.

MAX
Yeah!

SANDY's POV - *The performance date is listed as Tuesday, 9th, 7 p.m..*

SANDY
This is on your birthday.

MAX
My birthday's on a Tuesday?

Lonnie already sits in the van's back seat, closest to the sliding door. Charlie opens the van's shotgun door.

CHARLIE
Come on, I've got karate practice!

Bo stops tapping his Claves.

BO
Charlie!

Charlie turns to Bo.

BO (CONT'D)
Tell San Koo I can't come today.

Larry grabs Bo's unguarded belly.

LARRY
What you got to do, Chef Boyardee?
Eat some more ice cream?

Larry jiggles Bo's belly, and like a mouse trap sling, Bo whacks Larry in the head with a Clave. Larry falls back and down on his butt. His forehead bleeds.

Students within eyesight shock, jaws drop. Bo realizes what he has done, turns, and runs to the school's main entrance.

Larry crawls to his feet and chases him.

BO

Help!

Bo spins around and throws a Clave at Larry and misses.

BO (CONT'D)

Help!

Principal Manguno lets Bo pass into the school and blocks Larry, grabs his arms.

LARRY

Look what he did to me!

Larry points to bloody head.

PRINCIPAL MANGUNO

What'd you do to him?

LARRY

Tickled him!

Larry shoves Principal Manguno into a school window, breaking the glass, snapping Manguno's dark eyeglasses into two and knocking the glass eye out of his left eye socket. It shatters on the sidewalk.

Larry realizes what he has done. He turns and runs toward the bike racks.

Principal Manguno reaches for his glass eye but only a third of it lifts. Blood drips on it. He touches the gash on his hairline, grunts, then chases Larry.

Max and Sandy, like everyone on the front lawn, watch Larry reach the bike rack, hop on the *Indian*, and kick-start its smoggy engine. He drives off school property turns right, and passes the carpool line, including a police car.

Principal Manguno runs into the street but is not fast enough to cut Larry off.

Officer Milsap exits the police car.

OFFICER MILSAP

What'd he do?

Principal Manguno is too winded to answer. He points to the broken window and to his bleeding head.

Principal Manguno's hollow eye shocks Officer Milsap, but he quickly recovers and spots Clemon standing on the sidewalk.

OFFICER MILSAP (CONT'D)

Clemon!

He waves him over.

EXT. SCHOOL STREET - DAY

Larry steers the motorbike around the departing buses.

(O.S.) - Officer Milsap's siren roars.

Larry turns around and watches Officer Milsap's flashing blue-lights ignite.

LARRY'S POV - There is a four-way stop at the end of school property. A vest-wearing, orange flag-waving, SAFETY PATROL MEMBER, 11, stops Students from crossing on foot or bike so the buses can pass.

LARRY (O.S.)

Get!

The Safety Patrol Member sees Larry is on line to run him over and lunges onto the sidewalk. He spins around and watches Larry turn left onto Pike Street and pop a wheelie.

EXT. MENO HOME - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Johnny's Lincoln is parked in the garage. He stands before the back door. His hands are full with files, folders, and mail. Still, he digs keys from his suit pocket.

(O.S.) - Lucky barks inside the house.

JOHNNY

It's just me, Lucky!

(O.S.) - Lucky quiets. The sound of Larry's Indian and the police siren are faint but in the wind, growing louder.

Johnny shoves the house key into the keyhole and opens the door. Lucky greets him with a wagging tail.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(baby voice)

I'll pet you in just a little bit,
okay?

Johnny surveys the doorway's girth and shakes his head.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
I don't think it'll fit through
here, even sideways.

Johnny turns to the driveway.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Y'all are going to have to walk it
around front.

JOHNNY'S POV - A work truck marked, *Gill Designs* is parked behind Johnny's car. WAYLON GILL, 49, architect, the best-dressed man in town, lowers the truck bed's hatch, revealing the miniature model of the Meno Inn & Convention Center, three different parts.

WAYLON GILL
We, Johnny. This is a twelve-arm
job. You owe at least two.

JOHNNY
All right, let me open the front
door.

Johnny steps inside the house and sets his keys and files on the kitchen table. Lucky exits.

Waylon bends down and lets the dog smell his fingers. Behind him, across the street, Vander, still dressed from the press conference, stands on his own driveway and attaches a fishing boat trailer to his pick up truck.

WAYLON GILL
Vander, get your ass over here.

VANDER
Let me do this before I get drunk.

(O.S.) - The motorbike and police approach.

Waylon turns to the street. Johnny, having exited the front door, walks around the side of the Meno house and toward the driveway. He turns to Pike street as Larry approaches.

JOHNNY
Slow down, Larry!

WAYLON'S POV - Johnny picks up a pinecone and throws it at Larry, as the Indian zooms past the Meno front yard, slowing just enough to make a hard right onto Dawn Circle. Vander sees he's readying to turn onto his property.

VANDER
No, Larry!

WAYLON's POV - Larry brakes enough to make a hard left onto the Vander lawn and down a narrow foot and bicycle path, which hugs the hedge that separates the Vander from Bassnaggle properties. Beyond it are shallow woods.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BASSNAGGLE HOME - YARD - DAY

Mr. Bassnaggle clips stray growth from his side of the hedge.

(O.S.) - Larry chokes the gas and the engine roars.

Mr. Bassnaggle's eardrums nearly pop. He drops the shears.

The blades just miss his toes and stab the grass, which is cut short and looks like a golf green. From under the hedge, Larry's tires splatter mud onto Mr. Bassnaggle's slacks.

Mr. Bassnaggle snarls and mirrors Larry's path along the hedge, stopping at the edge of the little woods, which are really just an unsold lot that the neighborhood kids have claimed with a bike trail and tree fort.

MR. BASSNAGGLE'S POV - Larry veers onto the bike trail, jumps dirt ramps and rides onto the lawn of the dark house that backs up to the far side of the bike trail. Junked cars litter the unkempt yard.

(O.S.) - Officer Milsap's police siren is now louder than Larry's motorbike.

Mr. Bassnaggle grabs his ears, turns around and sees Officer Milsap's car park on Dawn Circle, between the Bassnaggle and Vander properties. Officer Milsap gets out and looks down the hedge-line.

Mr. Bassnaggle keeps his ears covered and points to the little woods, then covers his ears again.

(O.S.) - Larry's engine shuts off.

Mr. Bassnaggle looks back to the little woods. Larry pulls down the dark house's garage door.

Mr. Bassnaggle turns back to Dawn Circle. He sees Vander and Officer Milsap speaking on the Vander driveway. They are joined by Johnny. The three men laugh, then walk off the Vander property towards the Meno home.

MR. BASSNAGGLE
He's right there!

Mr. Bassnaggle walks along the hedge. Mrs. Bassnaggle opens the back door.

MRS. BASSNAGGLE
What's happening?

Mr. Bassnaggle points to the little woods.

MR. BASSNAGGLE
That animal did something else.

(O.S.) - Officer Milsap's siren shuts off.

MR. BASSNAGGLE'S POV - Officer Milsap leans inside the front door of his police car. He says something to Clemon, shuts the door, and follows Johnny and Vander to the Meno driveway.

MR. BASSNAGGLE (CONT'D)
Hey!

Officer Milsap stops and turns to Mr. Bassnaggle.

MR. BASSNAGGLE (CONT'D)
He lives on the other side of these woods!

Mr. Bassnaggle points to Pike Street.

MR. BASSNAGGLE (CONT'D)
Just go another block, turn right.
It's the dark house on the end.

OFFICER MILSAP
I know where Larry lives.

JOHNNY
And he's gone, Bassnaggle! Going to Stonewall Military School. Hair cut, uniform, and best of all, ninety miles away.

Officer Milsap and Waylon lift one of the Meno Inn model pieces up and off Waylon's truck bed. They walk it around the Meno house, toward the front door.

MR. BASSNAGGLE
What'd he do?

Johnny helps Vander lift a second piece off the truck bed.

VANDER
Knocked out Manguno's glass eye.

Johnny and Vander laugh and follow Officer Milsap and Waylon toward the front door.

Mrs. Bassnaggle watches from a window. She bangs on it. Mr. Bassnaggle turns to her. She points right.

MR. BASSNAGGLE'S POV - Lucky lifts his leg and soils Bassnaggle's favorite cherry tree.

Mr. Bassnaggle rages and runs at Lucky, who doesn't see him coming.

The dog does see Sandy's Good Times van on Pike Street, slowing for the Dawn Circle stop sign. His tail wags and he trots towards the street, then feeling Bassnaggle's footsteps on the earth, spins around.

Mr. Bassnaggle kicks and just misses Lucky's head.

INT. DAWN CIRCLE - DAY

Lucky darts onto the street and at the Good Times van, which skids to a stop. Lonnie opens the back, sliding door, and Max exits the van, holding his clanking lunch box.

MAX

Lucky!

Lucky and Max run to each other. Max grabs his collar.

MR. BASSNAGGLE (O.S.)

You have a fence!

MAX'S POV - Mr. Bassnaggle points at Max.

MR. BASSNAGGLE (CONT'D)

Use it!

Max walks Lucky towards the Meno driveway.

EXT. MENO HOME - BACK YARD - DAY

Max opens the backyard gate and lets go of Lucky's collar.

MAX

Go.

The dog steps into the backyard. Max picks his lunch box off the driveway, follows the dog, and shuts the gate.

He walks along the narrow, paved pathway that leads to the back of the house.

On his left is a little grassy hill that flattens out and holds a sandbox, a slide, a swing set, and a rinky-dink above-ground pool. Toys and balls litter the yard.

Lucky beats Max to the house's back door.

MAX (CONT'D)

No, Lucky.

Max grabs the door knob, twists it. Lucky wants in. Max holds the door shut.

MAX (CONT'D)

You have to wait till they leave.

Lucky looks up to Max with eyes that say, *If you're going inside, so am I.*

MAX (CONT'D)

(baby voice)

Look at that bird!

Max points to a bird worming the grass. Lucky doesn't budge.

MAX (CONT'D)

(baby voice)

You hungry?

Lucky's ears perk up.

MAX (CONT'D)

(baby voice)

You want a cookie?

Lucky's tail wags. Max opens his lunch box, pulls out Tino's butterscotch cookie, and under hands it into the yard. The dog falls for the trick.

Max opens the back door.

INT. MENO HOME - PLAYROOM - DAY

Max quickly steps inside and shuts the door.

(O.S.) - Johnny, Waylon, Vander, and Officer Milsap laugh in the dining room, a few rooms away.

Max walks past slot machine and towards the den.

OFFICER MILSAP (O.S.)
And I tell you, he come runnin' out
into the road, right there behind
the buses, breathin' heavy,
bleedin', his eye look like a cave.

(O.S.) - The four men laugh.

JOHNNY (O.S.)
For once, Larry did right.

Max sets his *Evel Kinevel* lunch box on its sister pinball machine and continues up the two steps that lead to the den.

INT. MENO HOME - DEN - DAY

Max enters, but stays in the doorway. He looks to the kitchen, where Sandy opens the refrigerator's freezer and pulls out a carton of vanilla ice cream.

SANDY
Do you want a malt?

Max nods.

Sandy shuts the freezer and walks deeper into the kitchen and out of Max's sight. The kitchen windows reveal Mayor Duhe, parking his Cadillac on the Meno driveway.

Hallway light spikes as Charlie kicks the front door wide open, so he and Lonnie can carry the third piece of the Meno Inn model piece into the house.

WAYLON GILL (O.S.)
Left side, Charlie.

Max walks to the hallway.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MENO HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Max enters and immediately the hallway forks. A left takes you to the bedrooms and bathrooms. Straight ahead is the little foyer and the open front door.

Charlie and Lonnie cross the foyer and enter the adjacent dining room, which like the den, connects to the kitchen.

CHARLIE
Shut the door.

Max obeys.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MENO HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Charlie and Lonnie walk the model to the dinner table, which already holds the other two model pieces.

JOHNNY
Careful, careful.

Charlie and Lonnie set the model down softly.

VANDER
That calls for a drink.

Vander walks through the open, kitchen doorway towards a little makeshift bar.

JOHNNY
Way ahead of you.

Johnny picks up a glass of whiskey off a nearby lamp stand, drinks, and marvels at the model.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What do you say, Max Meno?

Max shrugs and enters the room. Officer Milsap spots the dirt and blood on Max's clothes and skin.

OFFICER MILSAP
You okay?

Max nods and walks past a grandfather clock.

JOHNNY
Hell yeah, he's okay. At least his bank account is, or will be.

Charlie blocks him from the table.

CHARLIE
Back, kid. This isn't a toy.

Charlie points to the model and shakes a fist.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
So don't play with it.

JOHNNY
He knows.

CHARLIE

He better, or, it's the...

Charlie elbows his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Bionic elbow.

JOHNNY

Go get dressed for karate.

Charlie walks towards the bedroom hallway. Lonnie follows.

Max steps closer to the model. Johnny beams.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

What do you think?

MAX

What is it?

JOHNNY

The future.

Johnny points to the miniature model of his current office building that's across the street from the hotel. It's one-story and like the house, nothing special.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

My office. I bought it thirteen years ago from Mayor Duhe for \$27,000. I didn't even have it.

Johnny sips his drink and shakes his head. Happy tears.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

We've come a long way, son.

In the distance, Mayor Duhe opens the back door and enters the kitchen. He's followed by Committee Members, Turner, Burchell, Shapley, and Thornhill.

MAYOR DUHE

What in the hell's happenin' here?

Johnny turns to Mayor Duhe and laughs.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MENO HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Vander stands at the small bar and pours *Cutty Sark* over ice.

VANDER
Just the spoils of a good, old-
fashioned, fixed fight.

MAYOR DUHE
Fixed? Hell, everybody got fixed
up is what they did.

Vander finishes his Scotch pour.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Let me have that one, Vander.

Vander gives Mayor Duhe the drink. The Mayor sees Officer
Milsap in the dining room doorway.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Milsap, what you doing here?

OFFICER MILSAP
Making sure nobody shoots him.

MAYOR DUHE's POV - Officer Milsap points at Johnny.

OFFICER MILSAP (CONT'D)
Or you.

MAYOR DUHE
Hell, everybody that wants me and
Johnny dead is at City Hall,
protestin'.

JOHNNY (O.S.)
Already?

Mayor Duhe points to den's television.

MAYOR DUHE
You wanna to see it for yourself on
the TV?

Mayor Duhe enters the den.

BACK TO MENO DEN

INT. MENO HOME - DEN - DAY

Mayor Duhe wobbles towards the television.

MAYOR DUHE
Come turn it on for me, Johnny.

JOHNNY (O.S.)
Max is coming.

Officer Milsap, Waylon, Shapley, Turner, Burchell and Thornhill follow Mayor Duhe into the den. Mayor Duhe stops just before the TV, bends over, and studies the dials.

BURCHELL
Just let the boy do it.

Burchell points to Max, who enters the den through the bedroom hallway.

MAYOR DUHE
Come turn this machine on, boy.

Mayor Duhe eases back a step. Max reaches the television, turns it on. It sparks static and warms up.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Put on channel 4.

Max twists the knob. Mayor Duhe pats the dirt stain on Max's shirt. A little cloud plumes.

MAYOR DUHE (CONT'D)
Your tub water's gonna be brown
tonight.

Max doesn't know what to say to that. He finds channel 4. On it, airs a campaign ad for Woody Goode. Sunlight washes through a church's stained-glass and onto his praying face.

WOODY GOODE (TV)
Hello, I'm Woody Goode, and like
most of you, I am a moral and
patriotic citizen.

MAYOR DUHE
Look at this bogus buffoon, already
runnin' ads!

(TV) Year-old footage of press conference airs in which HATTIE ORE EXECUTIVES present Mayor Duhe with an oversized check for \$6,000,000. Woody is among the white-shirts, standing on the far right end.

WOODY GOODE (TV)
Who's disgusted by the bad, good
ole boy corruption that has plagued
Euphrates public trust for decades.

(TV) Woody stands on Mayor Duhe's empty City Hall parking space and looks up at Mayor Duhe's third-story office window.

WOODY GOODE (TV) (CONT'D)
I'm doing something about it. I'm
running for Mayor. You can do
something about it, too. You can
vote Goode.

(TV) Woody sits on his home's living room sofa, flanked by
Glenda and Emmy.

GLEENDA & EMMY (TV)
We wish we could!

MAYOR DUHE
Good God, those girls are ugly.

(TV) Glenda and Emmy kiss their father's cheek. Channel 4
cuts to live coverage of the growing PROTEST outside City
Hall. At the center of it is Woody Goode, standing on a
public, concrete chess table.

PROTESTORS (TV)
(chant)
Meno out! Not Meno Inn!

Many Protestors wear breathing masks and shake picket signs
that mirror the chant. Max spooks.

(TV) Woody stops the chant by raising, above his head, a
pearly, yellow rock, the size of a child's skull.

WOODY GOODE (TV)
(speaks into microphone)
This is vermiculite, the mineral
the Hattie Ore Mining Company mined
here in Euphrates from 1939 to
1981, closing last year because of
an asbestos contamination.

PROTESTORS (TV)
Boo!

Mayor Duhe yells at the Protestors, like they can hear him
through the television.

MAYOR DUHE
Any building contaminated with
asbestos, with the exception of the
mine, itself, came from insulation
products that were not even made in
Euphrates. Vermiculite was mined
here, not processed!

(TV) Woody lets the booing die.

WOODY GOODE (TV)
First, let me say, Hattie Ore,
where I worked for nine years, did
right by its workers and the
citizens of Euphrates.

Max looks over the faces of the Men in the room. They've
each become deathly serious.

WOODY GOODE (TV) (CONT'D)
We shut it down immediately,
cleaned up what we could, but
there's no way to get all of it, so
we skipped the part where the city
sued us and gave it six million
dollars to cover future
environmental fallout.

Mayor Duhe turns around and speaks to the Committee Members.

MAYOR DUHE
We? We? If Woody Goode was such a
Hattie Ore hotshot, how come he
wasn't at one settlement meetin'?
Why didn't they carry him up to
Minnesota to operate the new mine?

(TV) Woody points to Mayor Duhe's office window.

WOODY GOODE (TV)
But what did Mayor Stone Duhe do
with the money?

PROTESTORS (TV)
Boo!

Mayor Duhe turns back to television and points at Woody.

MAYOR DUHE
Used it to renew downtown, which
was thirty years overdue!

(TV) Woody keeps pointing to Mayor Duhe's office window.

WOODY GOODE (TV)
He strong-armed the negotiations,
seeing to it that all six million
chickens hatch at once.

MAYOR DUHE
Because six million is the least
it's gonna cost to build the hotel,
convention center, pave the roads,
fix the sewer, upgrade the grid!

(TV) Woody points at Johnny's office building.

WOODY GOODE

Then he snuck a deal by all of us
that will make his golfing buddy,
Johnny Meno's worthless downtown
property priceless.

PROTESTORS (TV)

Boo!

(TV) Ms. Crane shakes her homemade sign that reads, *Duhe, You Were Voted Mayor/ Not Godfather!*. Woody points to the Channel 4 Cameraman's lens, creating an uncanny eye-line between he and Mayor Duhe.

WOODY GOODE (TV)

Mayor Duhe, salvage what's left of
your reputation, and stop this
greedy trespass.

(TV) Woody puts his hand over his heart.

WOODY GOODE (TV) (CONT'D)

If he won't do it, vote me into
office, and I promise to tear this
deal to shreds and hold a honest,
democratic referendum!

JOHNNY (O.S.)

He's a TV preacher that hasn't been
figured out yet!

WOODY GOODE (TV)

We will vote!

(TV) Woody signals, *Join me.*

PROTESTORS (TV)

(chant)

We will vote!

Max looks to his father, who stands in the kitchen/den doorway, stripped away of much of his glow.

JOHNNY

These morons can't see he's just
trying to get elected?

BURCHELL

Sure are a lot of them.

MAYOR DUHE

Of course. There's more morons
than there are anything.

That thought sobers Mayor Duhe. Max backs away from the television and around the gauntlet of Councilmen, towards the kitchen. He takes off his backpack along the way.

MAX's POV - Lonnie enters the den through the kitchen and drinks a malt. He stops beside Vander.

LONNIE

Are we going back to the lake?

Vander nods.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

When?

Vander points to the television.

VANDER

Looks like tomorrow.

LONNIE

Can Charlie come?

VANDER

I'm not coming back till this is
over, so you tell me?

LONNIE

When's it going to be over?

Mayor Duhe snaps his fingers and points to the television.

MAYOR DUHE

Hush!

Mayor Duhe points to the television, as Woody helps Ms. Crane up and onto the chess table and gives her the microphone.

Max stands before his father and digs Mr. Malone's script out of his backpack.

MAX

My teacher said to show you this.

MS. CRANE (TV)

We want the city, state, and nation
to know that the Faculty of
Euphrates Elementary is officially
on strike!

Johnny watches the Protestors cheer, then grabs Max's script.

JOHNNY'S POV - Written above Ponce de León's costume list, *Mr. Meno, Max has a great role in this play. Do you have access to a rehearsal stage? Eugene Malone. 544-6913.*

INT. JOHN THE BAPTIST, BAPTIST CHURCH - PASTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

PASTOR PERCY, 66, African-American, white beard, stands before a window that overlooks Main Street.

(O.S.) - City Hall is directly across the street. The Protest is louder in this room than it was on the Meno TV.

PASTOR PERCY'S POV - Fawn and her Cameraman, who holds the camera on his shoulder, stand on the church's front steps, facing City Hall. In the distance, Ms. Crane and Woody help Tammy join them on top of the chess table.

Mrs. Steel enters and joins Pastor Percy before the window.

PASTOR PERCY

I'm surprised you're not over there.

MRS. STEEL

No, you're not.

PASTOR PERCY

You just want that big parking lot.

MRS. STEEL

I want stained-glass windows lit by sunlight. And a clean classroom.

Rev. Steel smiles and to Tammy, who finally has her balance and takes the microphone.

TAMMY GOODE

We want the citizens of Euphrates to know that the PTA stands with Principal Manguno.

EXT. CITY HALL - FRONT GARDEN - CHESS TABLES - DAY

Tammy looks down from the table and points to Principal Manguno, who wears a eye-patch and a *Band-Aid* on his forehead. He smiles proudly.

TAMMY GOODE

And the teachers of Euphrates Elementary...

Tammy waves her hand across the picketing Teachers, including an unhappy Mr. Malone.

TAMMY GOODE (CONT'D)

And we will not stock a poisonous school with substitutes until their is a referendum!

Protestors Cheer. Woody re-grabs the microphone.

WOODY GOODE

We will vote!

The Protesters call right in line.

PROTESTORS

We will vote!

EXT. JOHN THE BAPTIST, BAPTIST CHURCH - FRONT STEPS - DAY

Fawn nods her head and sneers. She raises her hand.

FAWN & THE PROTESTORS

We will vote!

The Cameraman pans the camera at her. She stops it with a stiff-arm and points to Woody.

CHANNEL 4 NEWS CAMERA'S EYEPiece POV - He pans back to Woody and zooms in, as the chant gets louder, madder.

DISSOLVE TO:

CREDITS - "Another Brick In the Wall, Part 1" by Pink Floyd accompanies Channel 4 news footage of the future "We Will Vote!" demonstrations before City Hall, Johnny's office, the future site of the Meno Inn, and Euphrates Elementary.

FADE TO BLACK.

VITA

The author was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in English and Philosophy from the University of Mississippi. He joined the University of New Orleans MFA program for screenwriting in the fall of 2004. He graduated in the Fall of 2017.