

"ALWAYS PLAY SOME BLUES"

Original Screenplay by

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EXT. GLENOAKS, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Smog rises from suburban sprawl - rows of stucco homes, identical but for their diverse geometric garage door trims.

SUPER: Glenoaks, California - August, 1966

A view of picture-perfect, single story Glenoaks High School.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Well, here's my story - I graduated Glenoaks High in 1967, the Summer of Love. Sounds cool, right? Well, I didn't smoke pot or drop acid and I didn't like psychedelic music. I was a nerd and a half. I did my homework in the school library before I went home. The librarians were very helpful.

Just beyond is the town landmark: a rock cliff, embossed with the town insignia - a white letter "G" inside a white circle.

At the top of the cliff is a grassy field. Behind scattered trees is a dirt parking lot and an old water tower.

Carved on a tree trunk just above eye level reads:
K.K.K. L.A. 1957 A.T.R.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE - DAY

A teenage boy's bedroom, with low-budget furnishings and a single bed. A turntable plays an instrumental SURF SONG.

DENNIS NICHOLLS, 17, plays along on his unamplified electric guitar.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

I wanted to be a guitarist, but not like The Beatles or The Rolling Stones. I wanted to be a surf guitarist, like Dick Dale and The Surfaris.

Dennis puts his guitar down as the song ends. He picks up one of the two windbreakers from his bed. He cuts the lining with scissors to make interior pockets.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

My clean cut facade concealed my juvenile pranks. Actually, I was the mastermind behind them.

EXT. NELSON'S DRUG STORE ALLEYWAY - DAY

VINCE ROMAN, 17, owns his masculinity, smoking hot in a tight T-shirt and clean, new jeans.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

There was Vince, the muscle, who had the coolest haircut and tightest arms at Glenoaks High. Vince thought I was a genius when I kept correcting our science teacher and made him look like a fool. Vince excelled at fist-fighting and was the sharpest dresser in school.

Vince shadow-boxes the air.

BOBBY JORDAN, 18, wears ripped jeans, stained T-shirt and tattered old sneakers. He smokes and spits nearby.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

And Bobby, the slob. Vince hated Bobby as much as he liked me. But with Bobby, that was easy.

VINCE

There's that Bobby stink, again. You shower weekly or monthly these days?

BOBBY

You want me to shower every day?

VINCE

One hour a day, with heavy duty detergent and a scrub brush.

Bobby blows his nose on his T-shirt.

VINCE

Uck, even pigs don't do that!

BOBBY

Pigs don't wear T-shirts.

VINCE

You do!

Dennis approaches, wearing a windbreaker and carrying another. He tosses it to Vince, who puts it on and examines the inner pocket.

VINCE

Nice! A toaster can fit in here.

DENNIS
Don't need one.

All three stare down the alley as Dennis' kid brother MIKEY NICHOLLS, 11 - approaches. Dennis looks at Vince's watch.

DENNIS
Thanks for being late again, Mikey.

MIKEY
That's okay!

Dennis rolls his eyes.

DENNIS
C'mere.

Mikey comes close. Dennis pulls a small plastic bag filled with pennies, dimes and nickels out of his windbreaker and holds it up.

DENNIS
Hey Vince, check this out.

Dennis empties the bag into Mikey's pockets.

DENNIS
Mikey, when the cashier asks you for money, empty your left pocket first. Now remember -

MIKEY
Can I get a Snicker Bar?

DENNIS
If I see you looking at us, you're not gonna get anything! Vince and I go in first, then Bobby. When the door closes, you count to twenty. One-Mississippi, two-Mississippi -

Mikey nods.

DENNIS
Then come in and go to the cashier.

INT. NELSON'S DRUG STORE - DAY

The CASHIER, a middle-aged woman behind the counter smoking a cigarette, sees Mikey come in and looks up from the tabloid magazine she's reading.

Bobby flips through a comic book rack nearby.

In the back of the store, Dennis and Vince stuff candy bars, golf ball packs and other items into their windbreakers.

A bell above the door RINGS. Mikey strides in. He goes to the counter and hands the cashier a note. She studies it.

MIKEY

My mom said to get two packs.

CASHIER

You tell your mother this is the last time! From now on she has to come in herself. Fifty cents.

Mikey empties his pockets onto the counter. Coins and junk spill everywhere. The cashier angrily sorts the change.

Dennis and Vince signal Bobby with a look.

BOBBY

Excuse me, ma'am? Can you tell me when the...uh...the new issue of Fantastic Floor is...uh, out yet?

With the cigarette still in her mouth -

CASHIER

If it's not on the rack, we don't have it!

Dennis and Vince sneak toward the exit. The cashier starts to turn their way when -

BOBBY

Wait! It's supposed to be out today. Are you sure?

The Cashier turns to Bobby.

CASHIER

Whad'ya mean "Am I sure?" Of course I'm sure! I work here, don't I?

The bell above the door RINGS as Dennis and Vince make their escape, unseen.

EXT. NELSON'S DRUG STORE ALLEYWAY - DAY

Mikey tags along behind the older boys.

MIKEY

Can I have my Snicker Bar now?

BOBBY
We didn't get any Snicker Bars.

MIKEY
That's not fair! You said -

BOBBY
Gimme those smokes.

Mikey obediently hands over two packs of cigarettes.

MIKEY
I didn't look at you guys one time!

BOBBY
Check it out you guys, a
flamethrower!

Bobby flicks a Zippo lighter in front of a can of hair spray. A bluish flame spits out from the nozzle, singeing the back of Mikey's hair. He SCREECHES, causing a dog to BARK in a distant yard. Mikey rubs his head and starts to cry.

DENNIS
C'mon, don't be such a baby.

MIKEY
But he burned my hair!

BOBBY
Now you don't need a haircut.

Mikey timidly gives Bobby the middle finger. Bobby stops dead in his tracks and stares sternly.

BOBBY
Uh-Oh! Now you did it! That's the
most insulting thing you can do to
a person. Now I have to burn your
wiener off. That's the law! Grab
him, men!

Vince and Dennis grab Mikey's arms and legs as he squirms. Bobby moves in, aiming the spray can torch at Mikey's crotch.

BOBBY
Don't worry, kid, this is gonna
hurt you a lot more than it's gonna
hurt me, I promise.

Bobby ignites the torch, Mikey SCREECHES again. Dennis and Vince drop Mikey on his rear-end. He jumps up and bolts away, blubbering.

MIKEY

I'm tellin' Mom! I am!

The older boys catch up to him. Bobby teasingly rubs Mikey's head and he flinches.

DENNIS

Give him his damn Snicker bar. He earned it.

Vince hands him the candy bar. Mikey looks up at Dennis.

MIKEY

I didn't look at you guys one time!

DENNIS

You did good, Mikey.

EXT. BOBBY'S BACKYARD - DAY

A transistor radio plays a muffled song. Dennis sits on an old car seat, fingering his unamplified electric guitar, mimicking the song.

The backyard is filled with rusted appliances, auto parts and overgrown weeds.

Bobby tosses a golf ball in the air and swings at it with a baseball bat - THWACK! A pop fly disappears behind a tree a few houses away.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD - CONT.

The golf ball THUDS on the grass and bounces into an old dog's water dish. Chin resting on its paws, it lifts its head, SNIFFS, and then lays its head back down.

EXT. BOBBY'S BACKYARD - CONT.

BOBBY

Why do you always have that dumb guitar with you? You look like one of those hippy dippy freaks.

DENNIS

Check this out, I wrote a protest song!

(sings and plays)

*"Life used to be fun,
And now we ain't got none.*

DENNIS (CONT'D)

*Go to school, get a job,
Work 'til you retire,
Watch TV, drink some beer,
Then get sick and die!
That'll be your future,
When you go to Glenoaks High!"*

BOBBY

(sports announcer voice)
Ladies and gentlemen, Killebrew
steps up to the plate!

Bobby tosses up another golf ball and connects with a WHACK!

BOBBY

A long drive! Way back! And this
ball is fuckin' outta here! Another
towering home run by Harmon
Killebrew, ladies and gentlemen!
(fakes audience cheering)
Hey Dennis, you wanna hit a few?

DENNIS

Nah. I'd rather do something
stupendulous.

BOBBY

What the hell does that mean?

Bobby CRACKS a line drive that RIPS through the branches of a
tree and disappears. In the distance, a window SHATTERS.

Dennis looks up to see Bobby's older sister ROXIE, 19,
trashy-cute, coming out the back door. Dennis puts down his
guitar and hops on a rusty old washing machine. He awkwardly
brushes the hair off his forehead and takes off his glasses.

Roxie sashays by in tight shorts, make-up, teased hair, and a
revealing top.

DENNIS

Hi, Roxie.

Roxie strolls past, ignoring him.

ROXIE

Did you steal my cigarettes, Bobby?
I had a pack sitting on -

BOBBY

They're in my pocket.

ROXIE

Well, let me have 'em.

Bobby ignores her.

ROXIE
Gimme my cigarettes!

She reaches for the cigarette pack in Bobby's shirt pocket and he pushes her hand away.

BOBBY
Keep your hands off me, Rah-bur-ta.

ROXIE
Well, give'em here!

Bobby throws Roxie the pack. It bounces off her and falls on the ground. Dennis eyes her as she bends over to retrieve it.

ROXIE
Why don't you grow up and quit
being such an asshole, Bobby?

BOBBY
(loud)
I'm an asshole and I'm proud!

Vince enters through the backyard gate.

VINCE
You should be, you're good at it.

Roxie passes Vince.

VINCE
Someone smells nice.

She gives Vince a half smile. Vince strides over. Dennis hops off the washing machine.

VINCE
Hey, did you guys hear what
happened to Phil Gleason, man?

DENNIS
Who's Phil Gleason?

BOBBY
No, what happened?

VINCE
Some niggers jumped him over
in Booger Town and beat the crap
out of him. Todd Duncan told me.

DENNIS

Does he live by the park?

BOBBY

Who cares where he lives? He got jumped! We oughta do something.

VINCE

My brother says if you let them get away with that shit, they'll take over. Then the neighborhood's ruined. Drugs and crime everywhere.

BOBBY

How about if we -

VINCE

Leave that to Dennis, he's the brains.

BOBBY

If he's the brains, and you're the muscle, what am I?

Bobby blows his nose on his T-shirt.

VINCE

I don't know, human snot-rag?

DENNIS

What if I draw a dopey Negro face on the school auditorium?

VINCE

No way, man. You're a good drawer, but this is for real. We gotta open a can o' kick-ass.

DENNIS

You think Tony would loan us that old Dodge?

VINCE

I know he don't like niggers.

BOBBY

I heard there's gonna be one at our school this year.

DENNIS

Nah, not in our school.

VINCE
If there is, I'm gonna Rocky
Marciano his Joe Louis ass.

Vince shadow boxes the air.

INT./EXT. OLD DODGE (DRIVING) - NIGHT

The old Dodge cruises along the streets of downtown BAUERTON, a neighboring town with a mostly black population and a mix of dilapidated old shops and two-story apartment buildings.

Dennis drives. Vince rides shotgun. TODD DUNCAN, 17, white, blond and hefty, sits in back with Bobby. Tense silence, juxtaposed with a cheerful JINGLE on the car radio.

SERIES OF SHOTS - DOWNTOWN BAUERTON - SAME

A YOUNG BLACK MOTHER pushes a baby carriage accompanied by a YOUNG BLACK FATHER holding a CHILD's hand.

TWO ELDERLY BLACK MEN sit in front of a boarded up SHOE REPAIR SHOP.

A CLOSED SIGN in the window of a BARBER SHOP.

FOUR YOUNG BLACK MEN drink sodas at a HAMBURGER STAND.

INT./EXT. OLD DODGE (DRIVING) - CONT.

TODD
What about those guys?

Todd gestures to the four young black men.

VINCE
It's a fair fight, four on four.

BOBBY
No way! Same odds Bill Gleason got.
Four against one!

VINCE
Who told you that!? And it's Phil,
not Bill.

Vince looks out the passenger window and targets a LONE BLACK MAN with a conk hairstyle.

VINCE
Slow down. There's a good one.

The Dodge slowly creeps towards the lone black man.

VINCE

Pull over. When the car stops,
Bobby, Todd and me out, do him
quick and get back in the car.

Dennis pulls over. The boys jump out and chase the lone black man, who runs for his life with the boys close behind.

Dennis' attention is drawn to a golden GUITAR in the display window of a closed MUSIC SHOP up the street and he slowly pulls up to it.

INT./EXT. OLD DODGE (PARKED) - NIGHT

As Dennis gazes at the music shop window, he hears FOOTSTEPS from behind the Dodge. Dennis turns to see the lone black man running up to the car, imploring him for help. Dennis shakes his head "no". The lone man runs off. Dennis watches him disappear around a corner.

Vince, Bobby and Todd run up to the car and pile in.

VINCE

Where did he go?! Did you see him?

DENNIS

No.

VINCE

Let's get out of here!

Dennis starts the engine and drives off.

BOBBY

I think I got one hit in.

VINCE

Bullshit! Non of us got even close.
He must be a running back.

BOBBY

I thought I did.

VINCE

Well you didn't--God-damn, you piss
me off.

INT./EXT. OLD DODGE - (DRIVING) - LATER

Dennis turns on the radio and a POP SONG comes on. A red light flashes in the rear view mirror.

DENNIS

Damn! The cops.

Dennis turns off the radio and pulls over.

VINCE

Everybody stay cool!

INT./EXT. OLD DODGE (PARKED) - CONT.

FOOTSTEPS. OFFICER TERRY, mid 40's, an upright, no-nonsense black policeman, approaches.

OFFICER TERRY

What are you boys up to tonight?

BOBBY (O.S.)

Did we do something wrong, Officer?

Officer Terry shines his flashlight into the back seat.

OFFICER TERRY

I don't know. What were you doing?

DENNIS

We're just out driving, sir.

OFFICER TERRY

Let's see your license.

Dennis gets out his wallet and offers his learner's permit.

OFFICER TERRY

That isn't a driver's license. Any body else have a license?

Nobody responds.

OFFICER TERRY

Step out with the registration.

Vince hands Dennis the registration from the glove box and Dennis gets out. Blinded by the headlights from the cop car, Dennis hands Officer Terry the registration.

OFFICER TERRY

You know you need to have a licensed driver in the car, right?

DENNIS
I forgot, sir.

OFFICER TERRY
You're facing trouble here, son.

Officer Terry studies the young man carefully.

OFFICER TERRY
What's that in your pocket?

DENNIS
Guitar strings sir.

OFFICER TERRY
May I see them?

Dennis hands them over.

DENNIS
I play a little surf guitar.

OFFICER TERRY
Oh, like The Beach Boys.

DENNIS
No, uh, like Dick Dale and The
Surfaris.

OFFICER TERRY
You attend Glenoaks High?

DENNIS
Yes, sir. We start back next week.

OFFICER TERRY
Some of those Glenoaks kids like to
come to Bauerton to buy reefer.

DENNIS
No sir, not us. We're not hippies.

Officer Terry appraises Dennis, who stands at attention.

OFFICER TERRY
Is it going to be a problem if we
get your parents involved?

DENNIS
My Dad would be disappointed in me.

Officer Terry thinks for a moment, then hands Dennis his
registration and permit.

OFFICER TERRY

I want you to take this car right back where it belongs and park it. No sight-seein', no stoppin' for sodas, no nothin'. Is that clear?

Dennis relaxes his posture.

DENNIS

Yes, sir. Perfectly clear.

OFFICER TERRY

Next time I stop you without a licensed driver, you're gonna have a world of sorry to deal with.

DENNIS

Thank you, sir, but that's not going to happen.

Dennis gets back in the Dodge.

INT. OLD DODGE (DRIVING) - LATER

Dennis focuses on the road, both hands on the wheel.

BOBBY

Dumb ass nigger cop! What's with all that sir, yes sir shit?

DENNIS

All those yes sirs is the reason we're not on our way to jail.

VINCE

Dennis, remember that dopey-looking Negro face you were talking about? Could you do a drawing for me?

DENNIS

Yeah, I guess I could.

EXT. BAUERTON STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Officer Terry, leaning against his patrol car, takes notes in his police log as the agitated Lone Black Man with a conk tells his story.

EXT. TERRY HOUSE - DAY

The TERRY FAMILY - Officer Terry, his wife and teenage daughter - carry boxes from a Glenoaks moving van into their new suburban home.

EXT. BOBBY'S BACKYARD - DAY

A radio plays muffled ROCK-N-ROLL. Vince lays on a weight bench pumping a dumbbell with one arm. Bobby, smoking a cigarette, counts Vince's reps.

BOBBY

Twenty, twenty one -

Bobby stops counting to blow his nose on his T-shirt. Vince drops the weight on the ground with a THUD.

BOBBY

I can't help it. I got a cold!

VINCE

You know what? From now on you stay three feet away from me at all times. When you get too close, my clothes stink the rest of the day.

Dennis enters with a drawing of a black minstrel's face.

DENNIS

What do you think of this?

Vince takes the drawing from Dennis and studies it. They all snicker at the racial stereotype.

BOBBY

Yeah, that's exactly how they look.

VINCE

I'm gonna show this to Tony. He might want it painted on the cliff for everyone in Glenoaks to see.

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

White STUDENTS chatter on their first day back to class.

BRENDA TERRY, 17, the first and only black student at Glenoaks High - pretty, vivacious and well-dressed - walks among them confidently with good posture, holding a book.

Dennis rounds a hallway corner, shouting over his shoulder -

DENNIS

Yeah, my summer was a blast!

Dennis bumps into Brenda, knocking the book out of her hand.

BRENDA

Sorry.

He picks up her book and hands it to her, momentarily taken aback.

DENNIS

Oh, it was my fault.

With a snooty tone -

BRENDA

Maybe you should watch where you're going then, don't you think?

Scowling, Brenda turns to leave. A few steps down the hall, she looks at Dennis over her shoulder, her scowl turning into a warm smile. She waves goodbye with a wink. Dennis' eyes follow her down the hall.

A bell RINGS. Sprightly MUZAK on the P.A. system signals classes are changing. Bobby approaches.

BOBBY

Have you seen her?!

DENNIS

I just bumped into her.

BOBBY

See? I told ya one was coming!

DENNIS

I never thought it would be a girl.

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/CAFETERIA - DAY

Dennis sits at a table, watching Brenda at nearby table. Brenda sits across from LINDA, JEANIE and MARGARET, three high school seniors with teased hair, who ignore her.

LINDA

I have Mr. Wagner for Social Studies. Who do you have Jeanie?

JEANIE

Mr. Seibert. He's such a creep.

MARGARET
I'm taking drama with Mr.
Premerini.

Brenda smiles at Margaret, attempting to break the ice.

BRENDA
Me too!

Margaret smiles back. The other girls give Margaret a look.

BRENDA
(to Margaret)
That's a very pretty ring.

Linda leans behind Jeanie's back and whispers to Margaret.

LINDA
What did she say?

MARGARET
She likes my ring.

JEANIE
You better keep it on your finger!

MARGARET
Where else would I keep it?!

Dennis watches as Brenda picks up her lunch tray and leaves.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Two rows of MALE STUDENTS in blue gym shorts and white T-shirts do jumping-jacks, led by their COACH. Dennis is a row in front of Bobby and Vince.

COACH
Six - two - three - four...
Seven - two - three - four...

BOBBY
(loud whisper)
PSSST! Your hangers!

Dennis looks down to see his boxer shorts exposed below his gym shorts. He quickly stuffs them in, out of view.

COACH
Ten - two - three - four...

They stop jumping.

COACH

Okay, shake it out! Nicholls!

Dennis looks up at the coach.

COACH

Didn't we have this problem last year? No - boxers - in - class!

DENNIS

Sorry Coach, I forgot to bring my jockey shorts.

COACH

How about this? Take you and your sorry boxers over to the track and give me five laps.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/RUNNING TRACK - CONT.

Dennis casually jogs his first lap.

The center of the track is filled with FEMALE STUDENTS wearing red gym uniforms, engaged in athletic activities.

Brenda, sets up hurdles off by herself. As Dennis approaches her, she waves. He jumps over a hurdle.

BRENDA

Nice form, Dennis!

DENNIS

How do you know my name?

BRENDA

I probably shouldn't be telling you this but... we can read minds. It's an African thing.

Dennis looks confused.

DENNIS

Oh...

Brenda touches her temples.

BRENDA

For instance, right now you're thinking, "Hey, wait a minute!"

DENNIS

Actually, it was, "No they can't!"

They laugh.

BASKETBALL COURT - SAME

Vince and Bobby glare at Dennis and Brenda laughing.
Vince is anxious.

RUNNING TRACK - CONT.

BRENDA

I think you made a good impression
on my father.

DENNIS

Your father?

BRENDA

Officer Ralph Terry.

DENNIS

Really? Well, I guess he made a
good impression on me too.

BRENDA

He said I should invite you to our
house for dinner.

DENNIS

He did?

BRENDA

He's concerned about me making
friends. You know how parents are.
My daddy's a great guitar player.
He told me you play, too.

DENNIS

Really? He mentioned that?

BRENDA

He wants to show you his guitar. My
locker is number 329. Just drop a
note with your phone number in it
if you want to come for a visit.

(beat)

You don't have to feel bad if you'd
rather not. Really, I understand.

She turns to leave, then turns back to say -

BRENDA

My friends call me Brenda.

Brenda confidently walks away while a few of the girls stare and gossip. Dennis watches her leave.

DENNIS
(to himself)
Nice to meet you, Brenda.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

MRS. NICHOLLS, mid-40's, in a simple dress and apron, clears the table. Mikey helps. MR. NICHOLLS, in his maintenance work outfit, sits with his coffee and cigarette, reading a paper.

Dennis hangs up the kitchen wall phone.

DENNIS
Dad? I'm invited for dinner Friday to someone's house. If you give me a ride over, they said they'll give me a ride back. They live over by the golf course.

MR. NICHOLLS
Whose house for dinner?

DENNIS
Just this girl from school.

MRS. NICHOLLS
What's her name? Tell us about her.

Dennis, wanting to avoid their questioning, lets out a sigh.

DENNIS
Her name's Brenda.

MR. NICHOLLS
She good lookin'?

MRS. NICHOLLS
Carl!
(to Dennis)
So what's she like? She's a nice girl?

DENNIS
It doesn't matter!

Dennis gives an anguished look to his perplexed family.

MRS. NICHOLLS
Well tell us a little about her.

DENNIS
(exasperated)
She's colored, okay?

MR. NICHOLLS
You mean she's a Negro?

MRS. NICHOLLS
I heard the school has a Negro student this year.

DENNIS
So can you give me a ride or not?

MR. NICHOLLS
I don't think it's a good idea to get too friendly with them.

EXT. TERRY HOUSE - NIGHT

Officer Terry is cleaning some graffiti off the side of his house with rags. He watches as Dennis parks at the curb. Dennis gets out of the car. Mr. Nicholls slides to the driver's seat, watching warily as Officer Terry approaches.

OFFICER TERRY
Just cleaning up after some poorly educated neighbors. Hi, Dennis.

DENNIS
Hi, Mr. Terry.

Mr. Nicholls gets out of the car. Officer Terry offers his handshake.

OFFICER TERRY
Ralph Terry.

MR. NICHOLLS
Carl Nicholls.

MR. NICHOLLS
Dennis tells me you're a police officer.

OFFICER TERRY
For fifteen years.

MR. NICHOLLS
I was an M.P. for a year in Korea.

OFFICER TERRY
What branch?

MR. NICHOLLS

Army. Uh, my wife's making dinner
so I better be going.

OFFICER TERRY

Did you ever play pool, Mr.
Nicholls?

MR. NICHOLLS

Sure. We had a pool table at the
U.S.O. in Seoul.

OFFICER TERRY

I have a new table. Why don't you
stop by for a game of pool
sometime?

MR. NICHOLLS

That sounds good. I think I will!

Mr. Nicholls gets back in his car and drives off.

INT. TERRY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. MRS. TERRY, mid-40's, a gracious black
woman in a stylish dress and hairdo, opens it.

MRS. TERRY

You must be Dennis. On time, too!

Dennis and Officer Terry enter.

Dennis looks around the room as he enters, surprised by the
well furnished mid-century modern home.

MRS. TERRY

Brenda's helpin' me in the kitchen.

OFFICER TERRY

Dennis, how'd you like to shoot a
game of pool?

DENNIS

Sure!

INT. TERRY HOUSE/DEN - NIGHT

Dennis makes a particularly nice shot. He gives Officer Terry
a sly smile. He's having a good time.

OFFICER TERRY
Dennis, were you surprised I asked
you to come over tonight?

DENNIS
A little.

OFFICER TERRY
Go ahead and take your shot.

Dennis looks around the pool table.

OFFICER TERRY
That night after I let you go, a
Bauerton man told me he was chased
by four white boys in an old Dodge.

Dennis misses the shot.

OFFICER TERRY
We know who those boys were, right?

Dennis gives Officer Terry a nervous look.

DENNIS
I, uh -

OFFICER TERRY
You'd be smart to keep your
mouth shut for a minute and listen.

Dennis is stunned by Officer Terry's quick change in tone.

OFFICER TERRY
If I had stopped you later, you
guys would still be in jail. How'd
you like that?

Officer Terry calmly sinks an impossible shot.

DENNIS
But I -

OFFICER TERRY
Don't deny it. He gave me your
plate number. I thought you were a
decent kid when you said you didn't
want to disappoint your father.

BRENDA (O.S.)
Dinner's ready!

OFFICER TERRY
We're comin', Sugar!

DENNIS

Mr. Terry, I -

OFFICER TERRY

I don't wanna hear it. You and your friends just watch your step, cause I'll be watching you. Now let's go eat. You like friend chicken don't you?

INT. TERRY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Dennis and the Terry family sit after dinner, conversing over coffee and dessert.

MRS. TERRY

Dennis, have any college plans?

DENNIS

I'm not sure yet. I'm thinking about it.

OFFICER TERRY

When I was your age I wanted to be a police officer, just like my Dad. You know, he once arrested Huddie Ledbetter.

DENNIS

Huddie Ledbetter? Who's that?

OFFICER TERRY

Leadbelly! You haven't heard of him? He's a Blues legend!

Officer Terry gets up off the sofa.

OFFICER TERRY

I'll play you one of his records.

BRENDA

No, Daddy, sing him a song.

Officer Terry goes to the stereo and flips through records.

OFFICER TERRY

I don't wanna introduce him to Huddie with my caterwaulin'.

BRENDA

Caterwaulin'? What are you talking about? Mom, make him sing!

Brenda jumps up from the sofa and rushes down the hallway.

MRS. TERRY

Oh, go ahead and sing, Ralph.

OFFICER TERRY

I ain't singin' by myself.

Officer Terry sits in his chair. Brenda returns with a guitar and hands it to her Dad. She joins her mom back on the sofa.

BRENDA

Let's do "Rock Island Line".

Officer Terry does a quick tuning.

DENNIS

Wow, that's a nice guitar.

OFFICER TERRY

After Leadbelly got famous, he gave this guitar to my father.

Officer Terry plays the intro, while his wife and daughter get ready to join in.

OFFICER TERRY

(sings and plays)

*"Oh, the Rock Island Line,
It's a mighty good road,
Oh, the Rock Island Line,
It's the road to ride.
If you want to ride,
You got to ride it like you
find it,
Get your ticket at the station,
On the Rock Island Line..."*

MRS. TERRY/BRENDA

(joining in)

"Jesus died to save our sins..."

MR. TERRY (IN BASS VOICE)

*"Glory to Glory gonna meet him
again..."*

The Terry family finish the song, holding the final chord in harmony. Dennis applauds enthusiastically.

DENNIS

Wow, that was great.

OFFICER TERRY

You mentioned you play guitar.

DENNIS

I used to, in a surf band. We played house parties. No pay, but we got free chips and sodas.

MRS. TERRY

Brenda's in the Drama Club and pursuing a career in Theater Arts.

DENNIS

You should enter the Glenoaks talent show.

BRENDA

I heard about it, but I wouldn't want to do it by myself.

MRS. TERRY

Maybe Dennis could be your partner.

Officer Terry clears his throat.

OFFICER TERRY

I don't think Dennis -

DENNIS

I could come up with a few ideas. My dad says you can do anything with planning, preparation and perseverance. We could do this.

BRENDA

That would be really groovy!

Brenda raises her glass in a toast. On the wall behind her is a framed photo of Martin Luther King, Jr.

BRENDA

To paraphrase Dr. King, "we have a dream"!

Brenda hands Dennis his glass, and they all clink. Everyone is in a celebratory mood except Officer Terry.

EXT. NICHOLLS HOUSE - NIGHT

A Cadillac pulls up to the curb. Dennis jogs out of his house and gets in the back seat.

INT./EXT. TONY'S CADILLAC (DRIVING)/GLENDALE - NIGHT

TONY ROMAN, 27, in auto mechanic's uniform, slick pompadour and pinkie ring, commandeers his 1950's Caddy with his Confederate flag steering knob. Vince, also in mechanic's uniform, rides shotgun. Dennis and Bobby sit in back.

DENNIS

What's up?

Vince gives Dennis a serious look. The Cadillac slows to a crawl as it passes the burned out shell of the old Dodge.

VINCE

It was torched last night.

TONY

And don't think we don't know who did it. Gonna be some nigger blood spilled over this.

Vince gives a concerned look to Dennis.

INT./EXT. TONY'S CADILLAC (DRIVING)/BAUERTON - CONT.

Tony spots FIVE BLACK TEENAGERS leaving a store across the street, laughing. One of them is bouncing a basketball. Tony pulls over.

INT./EXT. TONY'S CADILLAC (PARKED) - CONT.

Tony steps out of the Cadillac and shouts at the teenagers -

TONY

C'mon! Five against four! You guys got the odds. Let's go!

From across the street, the teen bouncing the basketball says calmly -

BLACK TEEN

No thanks, we don't play that game.

Dennis, Vince and Bobby watch from the car as Tony glares at the teenagers. He has a small towel under one of his arms.

VINCE

I think Tony might be packing!

DENNIS

Packing what?

BOBBY

He's got a gun! He's gonna get us
killed!

Tony pulls out the towel - it's wrapped around his handgun as a silencer. He shoots the basketball, which falls to the ground. The teens scatter. Tony gets back in the car and slams the door.

VINCE

I can't believe you did that.

TONY

Nobody got hurt, I just shot their
basketball. Don't panic!

He hands the wrapped gun to his brother.

TONY

Stuff it under the seat.

Tony quickly takes off.

INT./EXT. TONY'S CADILLAC (DRIVING) - CONT.

TONY

Now, what were you guys talking
about?

DENNIS

The face on the cliff.

VINCE

Remember that drawing I showed you?
With that colored girl at our
school now, we're lookin' for a way
to chase her out.

TONY

I'll kick her ass if I have to.

DENNIS

But then they'll pity her.

Tony jerks the car over to the curb.

INT. TONY'S CADILLAC (PARKED) - CONT.

An enraged Tony glares over his shoulder at Dennis in the
back seat -

TONY

I want that face on the cliff! I'll
pay for anything you need to get it
done - just fuckin do it!

INT./EXT. MR. NICHOLLS' CAR (DRIVING)/GLENDALE - DAY

Dennis drives his father's car with both hands on the wheel.
MR. NICHOLLS, mid 40's, Dennis' blue collar dad in his
maintenance work outfit, sits in the passenger seat. Dennis
brakes for a stop sign.

MR. NICHOLLS

Get used to making full stops like
that and you won't get a ticket.

DENNIS

Dad, remember when everybody
thought the neighbors were gonna
sell their house to colored people?

MR. NICHOLLS

They were, but the coloreds
couldn't get a bank loan.

DENNIS

How come everybody hates colored
people so much?

MR. NICHOLLS

We just don't want them to move in
our neighborhood. It ruins property
values. Their houses and yards are
a mess. Usually.

Mr. Nicholls lights a cigarette with his Zippo lighter.

DENNIS

Are they all like that?

MR. NICHOLLS

Well, there's some good ones - Nat
King Cole...Willie Mays.

DENNIS

What if one of them moved on our
street?

MR. NICHOLLS

I don't think either one of them
are moving on our street.

Mr. Nicholls turns to Dennis in exasperation.

MR. NICHOLLS
Why are you asking me all this?

DENNIS
I don't know.

Mr. Nicholls looks at the dashboard.

MR. NICHOLLS
What's the speed limit here?

DENNIS
Uhh -

MR. NICHOLLS
It's thirty-five and you're speeding. When you're driving, pay attention to driving. Make a left.

Dennis turns left at the corner.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dennis sits on the sofa playing guitar. The doorbell RINGS. He puts his guitar down and answers the door. It's Vince.

VINCE
Hey, Dennis! What'cha up to?

DENNIS
Just playing my guitar.

VINCE
Hate to interrupt, but I got something really cool to show you.

EXT. NICHOLLS HOUSE - CONT.

Dennis and Vince come out to see Tony's Cadillac, parked by the front curb. Bobby's in the back seat, holding a five foot aluminium ladder, sticking out of both rear windows.

VINCE
It's twice as strong as wood and twice as light. Thirty two bucks. We got ropes and spray cans too.

Mikey appears from around the side of the house.

MIKEY
Hey, where you guys going?

VINCE
We're gonna go up to the cliff.

DENNIS
Now? You gotta be kidding.

Tony calls from the car.

TONY
What's the holdup? Get in the car.

MIKEY
Can I go too?

TONY
All of ya, get in the damn car!

They all pile in.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF/PARKING AREA - DAY

Vince, Dennis and Bobby carefully unload the ladder, a spray can and ropes from Tony's Cadillac.

TONY
Alright, do what you have to do and
I'll be back at three fifteen.

Tony drives off.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

Vince and Bobby stand guard by a rope tied around a tree going over the edge of the cliff. Mikey, off to the side, digs up stuff in the dirt.

EXT. SIDE OF CLIFF - SAME

Dennis stands on a dangling ladder suspended by the rope. He shakes a can of black spray paint. He stares with apprehension at the rock face.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - SAME

Mikey picks up a big rock near the cliff edge.

BOBBY
Watch out for spiders!

Startled, Mikey drops the rock. It rolls off the cliff edge.

EXT. SIDE OF CLIFF - CONT.

BOBBY/VINCE (O.S.)
Watch out, Dennis! Look out!

The rock whizzes past him. Dennis deliberately drops the paint can. It bounces down the cliff.

VINCE (O.S.)
You okay, Dennis?

DENNIS
It knocked the paint can out of my hand!

VINCE (O.S.)
You have another can don't you?

Dennis drops the second paint can..

DENNIS
I tried but I dropped it. I think my finger might be broken.

Dennis punches the wall a couple times bloodying his hand.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Tony's not gonna like this! You really did it now, Mikey!

VINCE (O.S.)
Don't blame it on Mikey. You're the one who scared him about spiders.

DENNIS
Just tell him the rope knocked it loose.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - CONT.

Bobby and Vince yank Dennis up as he reaches the top.

EXT. TERRY HOUSE - NIGHT

A camera FLASHES - Mrs. Terry photographs Brenda and Dennis under a shady tree as Mr. Terry watches. They resemble attractive young stars from the cover of a teen magazine - Dennis in jacket and tie, Brenda in pearls, embroidered beaded sweater and skirt.

Mrs. Terry leans in to her husband -

MRS. TERRY
Don't they make a cute couple?

MR. TERRY
What are you saying that for? Don't encourage them!

MRS. TERRY
(ignoring his comment)
Have fun, kids!

DENNIS/BRENDA
Thanks! We will! Bye!

Dennis and Brenda walk off to the garage.

Mr. Terry remarks with annoyance to his wife -

MR. TERRY
They're just doing research for their show. It's not an actual date!

INT./EXT. BUICK (PARKED)/TERRY GARAGE - NIGHT

Dennis and Brenda walk over to Mr. Terry's shiny Buick.

DENNIS
You look nice. I like your sweater.

BRENDA
Thank you. You look nice too!

Dennis, embarrassed, stuffs his hands in his pockets. Brenda smiles, flattered by his shy response.

BRENDA
You don't mind that I'm driving?

DENNIS
You have a driver's license, right?

BRENDA
Well here's the thing. I don't but don't tell Daddy. And if there's trouble, God forbid, there's a handgun in the glove box.

Dennis is surprised. He opens the driver's door and Brenda gets in. He walks around and gets in on the passenger side.

DENNIS
You're kidding, right?

BRENDA

Of course I have a driver's license. And I don't expect any trouble, so we probably won't be needing the glove box.

DENNIS

That was pretty funny! I like the way you think.

BRENDA

Thank you.

Brenda hands Dennis a boxed record collection on the seat between them.

BRENDA

I got this at the library. It was put together by John Hammond.

He studies the cover.

BRENDA

He's a famous historian of Negro music, and, he's a white man. It has Leadbelly on it, and other folk and Blues music.

DENNIS

This looks cool!

Brenda starts the car.

DENNIS

Where are we going?

BRENDA

I told you, it's a surprise!

INT./EXT. BUICK (DRIVING)/BAUERTON - NIGHT

Dennis is immersed in the boxed record liner note booklet.

BRENDA

Where we're going tonight is part of our research for the talent show. Oh - Daddy said he'd teach you some Blues guitar songs.

DENNIS

Really? He did?

BRENDA

You don't have to be scared of him.
I think he likes you. He's asked
about you several times.

DENNIS

Yeah right.

BRENDA

What kind of guitar do you have?

DENNIS

A cheap electric guitar, but it
doesn't work. I need a job so I can
buy a good acoustic guitar -

Dennis looks out the car window and notices the music shop
display window with the GOLDEN GUITAR.

DENNIS

- like that one.
(looks around)
Hey, are we in Bauerton?

BRENDA

Yes, and here we are at The Gold
Ring!

Brenda pulls up to THE GOLD RING music club.

INT. GOLD RING - NIGHT

Dennis and Brenda enter the one-room coffeehouse/music club.
It's crowded and noisy with CONVERSATION from a multi-racial
hipster AUDIENCE milling about an improvised LOBBY area.

BLUES MUSIC plays from the speakers. Rows of folding chairs
are set up by a PLATFORM STAGE. Tables are set up with
literature and pamphlets. On the walls are blues, soul and
jazz posters of the era.

Dennis and Brenda contemplate a poster of a B&W handshake
with the caption UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY.

DENNIS

I think that poster is cool, but
most of Glenoaks wouldn't think so.

BRENDA

Maybe your friends would think it's
cool if you played guitar while I
danced for the talent show.

DENNIS

My friends don't know what's cool.

BRENDA

That's not cool. I'll get coffee.

Brenda leaves.

MORRISON STEIN, early 40's, and his wife MARLO STEIN, late 30's, a Bohemian white couple - stand nearby. Morrison - soul patch, black turtleneck, tweed jacket with elbow patches. Marlo - long black hair, black leotards, beret.

MORRISON STEIN

Your girlfriend's very pretty.

DENNIS

Oh, we're not - we're just friends.

MARLO STEIN

We think you make a lovely couple.

Brenda returns, handing Dennis a coffee. He nods toward the Steins.

DENNIS

They thought we were boyfriend and girlfriend.

BRENDA

(to Marlo)

No, we've been married for years!

Marlo plays along.

MARLO STEIN

How nice! Any children?

BRENDA

Just the twins so far.

DENNIS

Yeah, one's black and one's white.

BRENDA

No silly, it's the other way around!

They all laugh.

MORRISON STEIN

I'm Morrison, and this is my wife Marlo.

Friendly handshakes all around.

MARLO STEIN

You remind me of us when we were
young. We're a mixed couple, too.
I'm Catholic, and he's Jewish.

Brenda and Dennis laugh.

DENNIS

I guess that is mixed.

MARLO STEIN

It was pretty taboo back then. It
wasn't illegal though.

MORRISON STEIN

Did you know the Supreme Court is
hearing a case on interracial
marriage this year?

Brenda and Dennis shake their heads no.

MARLO STEIN

Mixed marriage should be legal.
It's 1967 for crying out loud!

Dennis looks over at an anti-war poster on the wall.

MORRISON STEIN

I hope the Supreme Court will look
into ending that stupid war too.
It's illegal. All those young men's
lives wasted and for what?

DENNIS

If I get drafted, I don't know what
I'll do. I'm not sure how I feel.

MORRISON STEIN

Here, just in case.

Morrison hands Dennis a business card, which reads: "End This
Illegal War Now - Morrison Stein, Attorney at Law."

The houselights FLICKER. The MUSIC goes quiet. Dennis, Brenda
and the Steins shuffle with the audience to their seats.

ONSTAGE

AN ANNOUNCER stands in the SPOTLIGHT. The crowd quiets down
as he speaks into the mic.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to the Gold Ring. Tonight
 we're proud to bring you some Blues
 history. Our guest has been
 performing since before the Great
 Depression. Please welcome...
 L'il Albert McGee!

The announcer walks off as the lights dim. Big APPLAUSE from
 the audience. The SPOTLIGHT comes up shining on veteran Blues
 singer -

L'IL ALBERT McGEE, 70's, wearing a cheap, well-worn suit and
 an air of authenticity. He's seated in a wooden chair,
 holding his faithful acoustic guitar, smiling broadly.
 L'il Albert fingers some Blues GUITAR notes.

L'IL ALBERT

You know, I was so poor before the
 Depression, I didn't even know
 there was one.

The crowd LAUGHS.

L'IL ALBERT

Now it's thirty years later, and
 I'm still broke!

More LAUGHTER. His voice drops an octave.

L'IL ALBERT

I had me some bad times and some
 good times too. Even back then, we
 had women.

Some LAUGHS from the crowd.

L'il Albert performs "Always Play Some Blues":

L'IL ALBERT

*"Sometimes you get your heart broke
 And everything looks bad
 Then when things start lookin' up,
 That's when you lose your job.
 But just remember this, my friend,
 Sometimes you win,
 Sometimes you lose,
 Just make the best of things and
 You can always play some Blues."*

L'il Albert stops his guitar dramatically.

L'IL ALBERT

But you know, the Blues ain't just
about women trouble. Here's another
way you can get ya the Blues.

L'il Albert performs "Ninety Nine Year Blues":

L'IL ALBERT

*"On a Monday I was arrested,
On a Tuesday, I was tried,
The judge found me guilty,
I hung my head and cried,
I said 'Mr. Judge,
I ain't been here before',
He said 'I'll give you 99 years,
You ain't comin' back no more."*

His song ends to APPLAUSE.

IN THE AUDIENCE

DENNIS

(whispering to Brenda)

I just got an idea for our show.

ONSTAGE - LATER

L'il Albert's performance is over. Dennis, Brenda and few
others sit on the stage facing L'il Albert, seated with his
guitar on his lap face up.

L'IL ALBERT

Hey... you all think a white man
can get the Blues?

DENNIS

I get them sometimes, but I don't -

L'IL ALBERT

Nah! You too young! A white man has
to work his life into a big mess to
get the Blues. A black man? Why he
just have to get born.

Dennis solemnly nods his head.

ANNOUNCER

Shows over folks. Thanks for
coming! Come see us again.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

The announcer seems anxious to
usher the audience out.

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. PREMERINI, late 30's, the drama instructor, is big-eared, bow-tied and speaks with exaggerated enunciation. Most students think he's a character - from today's perspective, he's clearly gay. He's busy at his desk when Dennis walks in.

DENNIS

Excuse me, Mr. Premerini?

MR. PREMERINI

(not looking up)

Yes?

DENNIS

I'd like to enter the talent show
with one of your students.

MR. PREMERINI

Which student?

DENNIS

Brenda Terry. We want to win first
prize and change the world.

Mr. Premerini looks up, scrutinizing Dennis.

MR. PREMERINI

It's a big world out there.

DENNIS

We have a secret weapon.

Dennis pulls out his drawing of an old black guitarist.

MR. PREMERINI

Is he a student here?

DENNIS

No...our secret weapon is the
Blues.

MR. PREMERINI

Do you have a title for your act?

DENNIS

"Unity On Trial".

MR. PREMERINI

Hmm... that's provocative. It'll be hard getting that past Principal Sturvird. What's your talent?

DENNIS

I can draw pretty good and paint. And I also play guitar.

MR. PREMERINI

Alright, Dennis. Come by tomorrow at three fifteen, and we'll see what we can do.

DENNIS

Thanks!

Mr. Premerini watches as Dennis walks off.

INT. WAGON TRAIN DINER/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dennis hunches over a stainless steel sink, scrubbing a large pot in scalding water. Steam rises around his sweaty face.

RESTAURANT MANAGER (O.S.)

Dennis, you can take your dinner break now!

HALLWAY

Dennis sits at a tiny table, a dinner plate waiting for him. As he eats, the RESTAURANT MANAGER stops in front of him.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

Dennis, we're behind here! Whatever you can do to speed it up!

The manager taps his wristwatch and holds his hands up in helplessness. As he walks away, Dennis eats hurriedly.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/LOCKER AREA - DAY

Dennis is going through his locker when Vince walks up.

VINCE

Hey man, where you been lately? We gotta finish that thing we started, remember?

DENNIS

I got a job now. Plus, I joined the talent show so that I could play guitar. I've been pretty busy with rehearsals. Didn't you say Tony was losing interest?

VINCE

I said he might lose interest!

Vince SLAMS the locker shut. A MALE STUDENT standing nearby reacts -

STUDENT

Hey, what's with all the -

Vince aggressively turns to the student -

VINCE

Got a problem?!

The student's eyes widen with recognition -

STUDENT

Oh, sorry Vince!

The frightened student scurries away. Vince glares at Dennis.

VINCE

Dennis, this is serious! This is Tony!

DENNIS

You can tell Tony I'll have a new plan next week. Tell him it'll be effective and safe.

VINCE

That's better. And keep in touch.

Vince pats him on the back and turns to leave.

INT. TERRY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dennis sits and attentively watches Officer Terry tune his brand new golden acoustic guitar, the one from the music store display window.

OFFICER TERRY

I think you got yourself a fine Guitar, Dennis.

DENNIS

I knew this was the one the first time I saw it. Brenda said you might show me some stuff.

OFFICER TERRY

That's right. But if you want a proper Blues lesson you should look up the man you saw at that show, L'il Albert.

DENNIS

You know him?

OFFICER TERRY

I know of him.

DENNIS

Mr. Terry? Pulling us over that night was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. It helped me grow up. I want to thank you.

Officer Terry looks him in the eye.

OFFICER TERRY

Well, don't thank me too soon.

Officer Terry looks down the neck of Dennis' guitar.

OFFICER TERRY

I'll be straight with you, Dennis. It's not easy to get on my good side once you start on the wrong side.

Dennis lets that sink in.

DENNIS

We've been working hard on our rehearsals. We can't wait for you to see our show!

OFFICER TERRY

I'm sure you'll do a fine job. Here, let me show you some Delta Blues.

DENNIS

Why do they call it Delta Blues?

OFFICER TERRY

The Delta's the fertile land at the
end of the Mississippi River, and
it was fertile in musicians too.
Robert Johnson, Son House,
Mississippi John Hurt - I'll play
you somethin' by him.

Officer Terry demonstrates, to Dennis' delight.

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Mr. Premerini plays an old PIANO near the stage. Dennis is on
stage painting courtroom scenery. Brenda rehearses her dance
routine. Mr. Premerini stops playing and holds up his hand -

MR. PREMERINI

Don't you think it's too boogie-
woogie, Brenda?

BRENDA

I like it! It makes me feel like
dancing.

The auditorium door CREAKS open. They turn to look at Vince
and Bobby standing by the entrance.

MR. PREMERINI

Can I help you?

VINCE

We're here to see Dennis.

MR. PREMERINI

No, no, no! Sorry, boys - no
visitors during rehearsals!

Mr. Premerini gets up from the piano and heads toward them.

VINCE

We just wanted to tell Dennis -

MR. PREMERINI

You'll just have to talk to him
later. Now scoot!

Dennis shouts from the stage.

DENNIS

Sorry, Vince! We're really busy!

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Vince and Bobby stand guard at the entrance to the BOY'S BATHROOM.

VINCE
Go see if he's in there.

INT. BOY'S BATHROOM - CONT.

Dennis, about to exit, hides behind the half-open door and the wall, as Bobby enters. Vince leans against the open door, keeping Dennis trapped behind it.

Vince blocks a MALE STUDENT from entering.

VINCE
Bathroom's closed.
(shouts to Bobby)
Check the stalls! Make sure he's
not hiding anywhere.

Vince stops the student from entering again.

VINCE
Are you deaf?! Bathroom's closed!
Beat it!

Dennis peers out from the crack of the door jamb, making eye contact with the frightened student as he turns to leave.

BOBBY (O.S.)
He's not here. I gotta take a leak.

A SECOND STUDENT about to enter, sees Vince's tough stance, and pivots away without losing a step.

BOBBY (O.S.)
I think he's tryin' to avoid us.

VINCE
Yeah, he's tryin' to avoid us!

BOBBY (O.S.)
It's that colored bitch he's been
hanging out with.

VINCE
We gotta make damn sure he doesn't
screw this up.

The urinal FLUSHES. Bobby emerges.

VINCE

Let's get out of here before you
start to stink the place up.

Bobby and Vince swagger out.

Dennis emerges from behind the door. He goes over to a
bathroom mirror and looks anxiously at his reflection.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF - DAY

Dennis and Brenda stand at an old railing at the edge of the
cliff, admiring the view. Brenda wears her beaded sweater.

DENNIS

Looks like it might rain. After it
rains, you can see an amazing
rainbow from up here.

Brenda dreamily looks at the sky as Dennis leans on the
railing looking out, lost in thought.

BRENDA

Do you bring all your girlfriends
up here?

DENNIS

Girlfriends?
(chortles)
Yeah! Ha, ha! Right!

Then, there's a sudden downpour of rain -

DENNIS

I guess we're not in Kansas
anymore! C'mon.

Holding hands, they run over to an old dilapidated tree house
and take shelter under it.

DENNIS

You know that line I said about
Kansas? It comes from -

BRENDA

(sings)
"Some where over the..."
(speaks)
It's my all time favorite movie!
I'll sing it for you later, but
first, I want to know why you're so
shy with girls.

DENNIS

I guess I don't know what to say to a girl.

BRENDA

Just pretend I'm your favorite girl at school, and tell me why you brought me up here. What's her name?

DENNIS

I'd rather not do that.

BRENDA

That's okay. Just pretend.

Dennis struggles to find the right words.

DENNIS

Okay. Maybe this is crazy...but...I think about you all the time and what it would feel like to hold you in my arms.

Brenda smiles.

BRENDA

That's good. Go on.

Dennis thinks, then -

DENNIS

You're the prettiest girl in school. You're smart, and talented and funny, and you have a great voice.

Brenda looks at Dennis with confusion.

BRENDA

Wait a minute...what's this girl's name?

DENNIS

Her name is Brenda Terry. I think about her all the time.

BRENDA

You aren't pretending any more?

DENNIS

No. I'm serious.

Brenda's stunned.

BRENDA

Wow.

(pause)

I never really thought about you
and me. But I guess I wouldn't say
no, if you want to give me a hug.

DENNIS

You don't have to.

BRENDA

No, I want to. I'm wearing your
favorite sweater. Aren't I your
favorite girl?

DENNIS

You're actually my favorite person
in the world.

BRENDA

(pouting)

But not your favorite girl?

DENNIS

You hold a very high position on my
top ten list. Very high.

BRENDA

(laughing)

You're high on my list, too.
Well...I'm waiting for that hug.

They exchange an innocent, awkward hug that develops into an
intimate, sensual embrace.

BRENDA

Is this how you imagined it?

DENNIS

I never thought you'd be hugging me
back. But you were.

BRENDA

Would you like to give this pretty,
funny, smart girl some sugar?

DENNIS

Huh?

Brenda surprises him with a quick kiss on the lips.

BRENDA

Did you ever think I'd do that?

DENNIS

I thought about it a lot.

Dennis kisses her back softly but longer on the lips.

They embrace again and start to kiss each other passionately as the rain stops and the sun comes out.

DENNIS

You even taste good.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Dennis casually sits on a bench, sketching a portrait of Brenda in his drawing pad. He sees Vince approach. Dennis quickly closes his pad.

VINCE

Tonight. Seven-thirty. Tony's shop.
See you there.

Vince walks off.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/LOCKER AREA - DAY

Brenda is putting away some books. She closes her locker and sees Linda, Jeanie and Margaret standing behind her.

LINDA

We just want to let you know that
we don't think you belong here.

BRENDA

Here at the locker area? I'm just
putting away my books.

JEANIE

No. We mean you don't belong at our
school.

BRENDA

Of course I belong here. I'm
registered.

The girls are surprised by Brenda's response. Brenda takes a step forward.

BRENDA

And for your information, I also
hold the highest position one can
hold in a democracy.

LINDA

What's that, campus coon?

BRENDA

I don't think that's an actual position. I meant being a citizen.

LINDA

You mean higher than the President?

BRENDA

The President is one of our employees. There's no position higher than a citizen.

JEANNIE

My grandparents just became citizens. They're from Poland.

BRENDA

Congratulations, that's great!

Brenda extends her hand to congratulate Jeannie. Jeannie withdraws her hand at first, then shyly smiles and shakes Brenda's hand.

BRENDA

I did it the easy way. I was born here.

LINDA

Where are you from, Ooga Booga land?

BRENDA

No, Brooklyn, New York.

JEANNIE

I'm from Long Island.

LINDA

You can all go back to Ooga Booga land for all I care.

Linda pushes past Brenda and Jeannie and storms off.

MARGARET

I guess we all mature at different times.

JEANNIE

Hopefully.

EXT. AUTO SHOP - NIGHT

The sign outside reads: ROMAN'S AUTO SHOP. The shop has a CLOSED sign on the door.

INT. AUTO SHOP - CONT.

Two cars, a Chevy and a police car, await servicing. Vince checks one of the engines.

Fumes fill the air as Dennis spray paints an insulting pickaninny face on a six foot square piece of old plywood.

Bobby, with a camera around his neck, checks out a drawing of an elaborate wood platform.

BOBBY

Where are we supposed to get that?!

DENNIS

I need something to stand on. Todd can build it. Tony said he'll pay for it.

Bobby, shaking his head in irritation, takes out a cigarette and tosses it in his mouth. Behind him on the wall is a "CAUTION - NO SMOKING" sign.

VINCE

Don't light that thing! Do you wanna blow us all up?

BOBBY

I wasn't gonna light it!

Bobby, unlit cigarette in mouth, points his camera at Dennis.

BOBBY

Lookin' good, Dennis.

Bobby snaps a shot of Dennis and the racist painting.

DENNIS

Don't let anybody see that!

BOBBY

There's no film.

DENNIS

No matter what happens,
(points to painting)
at least we'll have this.

VINCE

What's that supposed to mean?

Bobby inhales deeply.

BOBBY

I'm getting high on the fumes!

Tony arrives, exuding authority like a general, wearing his monogrammed mechanic's uniform.

TONY

Get that damn thing outta yer mouth
or I'll slap it out.

Bobby stashes the unlit cigarette in his pocket. Dennis puts down his spray can and stiffens.

TONY

Yeah, that's good, Dennis. Exactly
what I had in mind. You guys
hungry? Bobby, go down the street
and get us four cheeseburgers and
four fries.

Tony gives Bobby a five dollar bill, who obediently leaves.

VINCE

And bring the change back!

TONY

Dennis, come here. I wanna show you
something. Vince, go do that oil
change on the Chevy. The air
filter, too.

Vince goes to work. Dennis follows Tony into his office.

INT. TONY'S OFFICE - CONT.

Tony and Dennis look at an old WOODEN CHEST on Tony's desk.

TONY

It's an authentic Civil War chest.
My grandparents gave it to me after
my parents died.

DENNIS

Vince told me it was a car
accident.

TONY

Yeah. Some drunk nigger drove right into them. I was seventeen. Vince was seven. I ended up raising him.

Tony reverently lifts the lid.

TONY

My mother was a southern belle from Louisiana.

Tony pulls out some time-worn sepia toned family photos and passes them to Dennis.

DENNIS

I thought you were Italian.

TONY

On my father's side. My birth name's Antonio Tomasso Romano - A.T.R. But everyone call's me Tony.

Tony takes a framed piece of embroidery out of the chest and hands it to Dennis.

TONY

My grandmother made this. Read it.

Dennis reads the embroidery.

DENNIS

*"When you come to this house,
Find food and good cheer,
But do be forewarned,
Niggers not welcome here."*

Tony hands Dennis an old NEWSPAPER CLIPPING with a headline indicating a public lynching in Louisiana.

TONY

My grand-uncle was the hangman.

Tony pulls a noose out of the chest and holds it up proudly.

TONY

This is the actual noose.

Tony takes a white hood out of the chest.

TONY

This was my grandfather's. He was a Klansman. He wore it with pride.

Tony puts on the hood, holds up the noose and stands in a victorious pose, to Dennis' horror.

INT. TERRY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell RINGS. Brenda opens the door. Dennis enters the sanctuary of the Terry home, relieved.

DENNIS

Boy, am I glad to see you!

BRENDA

I'm glad to see you, too.

Brenda leads Dennis to the stereo console. Mr. Terry's Leadbelly guitar is nearby.

BRENDA

Daddy said to tell you he's sorry he had to work. He said you can play his guitar.

DENNIS

Cool!

Dennis attempts to kiss her.

BRENDA

No, not here.

DENNIS

Whatever you say.

Brenda picks up a record album and hands it to Dennis.

BRENDA

Daddy wanted you to listen to some of his records.

Dennis sits cross-legged on the floor, studying the album cover.

BRENDA

Want some fresh lemonade?

DENNIS

I'd rather have some fresh sugar.

BRENDA

There's sugar in the lemonade.

Brenda puts the needle on a record and heads for the kitchen. Dennis grabs the Leadbelly guitar and starts playing along.

LATER

Brenda returns to find Dennis sitting on the floor reading the album liner notes. She sets her tray of lemonade on the console.

BRENDA

You look like a scientist hunched
over a microscope.

DENNIS

Oh, sorry.

BRENDA

No, it's one of the things I adore
about you.

"Mambo Boogie" by Johnny Otis comes on. Hand on hip, Brenda dances around Dennis and motions him up. Dennis resists.

DENNIS

I really can't dance.

BRENDA

Everyone can dance.

DENNIS

My mom taught me the Foxtrot when I
was a kid, but that's all I know.

BRENDA

I'll teach you!

Dennis groans and grudgingly stands up. Brenda dances around him. She tries to take his hand and he resists.

BRENDA

Hey, when I'm dancing and you're
not, it looks kind of cool!

DENNIS

If you say so.

BRENDA

I do say so!

She laughs, spins around him and falls into his arms.

EXT. TERRY HOUSE/BACK PORCH - DAY

Dennis and Brenda step outside, drinking lemonade and holding hands.

EXT. TERRY HOUSE/BACK ALLEY - SAME

Vince stands on Bobby's shoulders, peering over the wall looking through a camera. He snaps a photo. Bobby grimaces.

BOBBY

Owww!

VINCE

Shut up! Quit movin' around!

Vince, snaps another photo and jumps to the ground. Bobby rubs his shoulders.

VINCE

I got some doozies. C'mon, let's get outta here.

They approach the car.

VINCE (CONT)

Back seat, passenger side on the newspaper.

They take off.

EXT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Dennis sits on a lawn chair fingering his guitar. Mikey, wearing a baseball uniform, approaches, watching with interest. Dennis stops playing and looks at him.

DENNIS

So, did you win?

MIKEY

Yeah, seven to one. I got two hits!

DENNIS

That's great.

MIKEY

Guess what? Bobby said I'm gonna be the painter this time, so you don't have to worry about it.

EXT. BOBBY'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Bobby sits on an old washing machine, puffing a cigarette in the moonlight. Nearby, Vince shadowboxes. Dennis enters through the gate. Bobby hops down to greet him.

BOBBY

Hey, stranger.

DENNIS

If you guys are seriously thinking about using Mikey, you're insane. You'll get him killed.

BOBBY

If he does, it'll be your fault.

VINCE

C'mon, Dennis. You know we wouldn't trust this job to anybody but you.

DENNIS

We can't do the cliff thing anymore. I've been painting all the scenery for the talent show. If Brenda sees that face on the cliff, she'll know it's me.

VINCE

Why do you care what she thinks?

DENNIS

How many times do I have to tell you, her dad's -

VINCE

A cop? Not in our town, he ain't.

Bobby muscles up to Dennis.

BOBBY

Besides whaddya think he'd do if he knew you were fuckin' his daughter?

DENNIS

You son of a bitch!

Dennis gives a sharp push to Bobby's chest.

Vince gets between them to break up the fight.

VINCE

Hold on, Dennis. I'm on your side.

Vince pulls an envelope from his pocket. He takes a photo out and hands it to Dennis.

VINCE

This ain't exactly fuckin'. But I don't think her cop father will see a difference.

Dennis examines the photo.

VINCE

You can't tell it's you on that one. It could be any white guy. But we have some that show your face.

BOBBY

She's probably doin' lots of white guys. They fuck like bunnies.

Dennis lunges for Bobby. Vince pushes him off.

VINCE

That's enough. Here, take a look at this one.

Vince hands Dennis another photo.

INSERT: Dennis holding a spray can with the Pickaninny face.

BACK TO SCENE:

Dennis is taken aback.

VINCE

Give 'em here.

Vince takes the photos back.

DENNIS

I need to talk to you, without him.

BOBBY

Hey, fuck you! I ain't leavin'!

VINCE

Go wait in the house a minute.

BOBBY

Why should I have to -

VINCE

In the house! Now!

Bobby glares at Dennis, pushing past him as he leaves.

DENNIS

Vince, you don't understand. I'm in the show with her.

Vince holds his hand up in a stop gesture.

VINCE

It's too late. If you back out now, the photos go to her parents.

DENNIS

How do I know you won't use them anyway?

VINCE

You have Tony's word.

DENNIS

You have to swear you won't -

VINCE

I'm your friend. I don't need to swear.

INT. CITY BUS (DRIVING)/SOUTH LOS ANGELES - DAY \

Dennis sits with his guitar case, the only white among several black PASSENGERS. A nearby SLEEPY PASSENGER awakens and looks out the window -

SLEEPY PASSENGER

Damn! I missed my stop!

BUS DRIVER

Florence and Normandie!

Dennis and the sleepy passenger exit the bus.

EXT. CITY BUS (PARKED)/SOUTH LOS ANGELES CORNER - DAY

Dennis steps off the bus with other passengers. Holding his guitar case, he looks around, seemingly lost.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Dennis speaks to a middle aged black BARBER, who stands in front of his shop wearing an apron. Next to his shop is L'il Albert's APARTMENT.

INT. L'IL ALBERT'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - SAME

The Barber opens the hallway door and shouts up the stairs.

BARBER

Al! Some white boy here to see ya!

L'IL ALBERT (O.S.)

Who is it?!

Dennis shouts up the stairs -

DENNIS

I'm Dennis Nicholls. We met at the Gold Ring. I just wanted to learn this one song for a talent show.

L'IL ALBERT (O.S.)

You got any money?! I'll give you one lesson for five dollars.

DENNIS

I've got, um, two dollars!

L'IL ALBERT (O.S.)

Alright I'll teach you one song for two dollars! But I ain't be givin' no lessons!

INT. L'IL ALBERT'S APARTMENT - DAY

L'il Albert sits on his quilted bed in his sparse, dimly lit one-room apartment, looking up at Dennis.

L'IL ALBERT

So what'll it be?

DENNIS

I'd like to learn that song you played at The Gold Ring, "Always Play Some Blues".

L'IL ALBERT

Alright. Fetch me that guitar over there.

Dennis fetches the guitar and hands it to L'il Albert, then takes his own guitar out of its case and sits on a folding chair near L'il Albert's bed. One of L'il Albert's pant legs hangs empty. Dennis points to it and chuckles.

DENNIS

That's pretty funny.

L'IL ALBERT
Funny? What you talkin' about?

DENNIS
Oh, uh -

L'IL ALBERT
You never saw a crippled man
before?

DENNIS
Sorry, I didn't know your leg was
really missing.

L'il Albert's pant leg kicks up. Dennis gasps and his eyes
widen. L'il Albert lifts his pant leg to expose a stump.

L'IL ALBERT
My leg's there, it's my foot that's
missin'. I got the dia-bee-tees.
The doctor cut it off. Don't tell
nobody. I don't want folks knowin'
'bout it, feelin' sorry and all
that.

DENNIS
I won't tell, I promise.

L'IL ALBERT
A friend of mine made me a new
foot. It's over there.

L'il Albert gestures to a prosthetic foot on the floor,
wearing a shoe.

L'IL ALBERT
I don't wear it at home. It's not
comf-ta-ble.

Dennis nods.

DENNIS
You know how you said that a white
man has to get his life into a mess
to get the Blues?

L'IL ALBERT
And a black man just have to get
born.

DENNIS
I think my life's in a pretty big
mess right now.

L'IL ALBERT

You a young man. I bet you all
worked up over a little lady.

Dennis glances at L'il Albert.

L'IL ALBERT

Oh! I bet you been messin' around
with that pretty colored girl you
was with at the show? You better be
careful. Don't you let folks be
knowin' 'bout it.

DENNIS

That's the problem - they already
do, but they don't understand. When
I'm with her, I don't see the color
of her skin.

L'IL ALBERT

Oh, so you colorblind! That's
alright, I'm colorblind, too! No,
serious, I am! I can't tell red
from green from blue!

(chuckles)

You know what, Dennis? The Blues is
colorblind. We all get 'em
sometimes. Why don't you write a
song about it?

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Dennis sits alone under a tree, drawing L'il Albert in his
sketch pad. Bobby sneaks up from behind.

BOBBY

Still eating pancakes with Aunt
Jemima?

Dennis closes his pad.

BOBBY

You've been spending way too much
time with her.

DENNIS

Bobby, try to listen to this. I'm
only going to explain it one time.
You know that drawing I made at
Tony's shop.

BOBBY

Yeah, that was great!

DENNIS

I could use the exact same drawing up on the cliff, but I'm going to make a half-assed sloppy version, so when people see it, they'll say "that's definitely not Dennis". Get it?

Dennis stands up, and turns to walk away.

VINCE (O.S.)

(harsh shout)

Dennis!

Dennis stops short to wait for Vince's approach.

DENNIS

What Vince?

VINCE

Tony wants to do it this week.

DENNIS

(aggravated sigh)

I thought I was in charge of planning. Didn't we have a man-to-man agreement?

VINCE

Alright, I'm just messing with ya.

Vince smiles at Dennis and puts his arm around Dennis' shoulder and gives him a hug.

VINCE

Okay, so what's your plan, man?
I gotta tell Tony somethin'.

DENNIS

Remember last year, when you beat up that guy in the bathroom on the last day of school?

VINCE

Chuck Haney. I didn't beat him up. It was a fair fight, and I kicked his ass.

DENNIS

People were talking about it all summer. They still do! If we paint the face on the last day, everyone will remember it forever. It'll become a notorious school legend.

VINCE

That is a cool idea.

Dennis looks at Vince's watch.

DENNIS

I gotta go. Just tell your brother it's gonna be "a notorious school legend".

VINCE

Sounds really good. "A notorious school legend". Alright, I'll tell him. You goin' to Kelso's party?

DENNIS

Nah, I gotta work late.

BOBBY

I ain't goin' either. Roxie'll be there. If she's there, I'm not.

VINCE

(to Bobby)

Aww, that's too bad, I was gonna see if you wanted a ride. I know I've been tough on you lately, so I was even gonna let you sit in the front seat.

BOBBY

Really?! Wow, that would be great!

VINCE

Yeah, that would be great...in your dreams. Do you really think I would let you sit in my front seat?

BOBBY

I could sit in the back seat on the newspaper...

VINCE

Last time you rode in my car, I had to have it professionally cleaned, and the deluxe inside cleaning cost me three dollars extra. No way, not now, not ever.

INT. OLD TWO-STORY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A crowded, noisy party. Vince watches from a distance as Roxie and her equally hot girlfriend CASSIE, 19, descend the stairs like fashion models, dressed in mini-skirts, make-up, teased hair and flashy jewelry. Vince starts to approach, but slows down when he notices Dennis.

Dennis squeezes through the party crowd and positions himself at the foot of the stairs. He casually turns to the girls as they reach the bottom. Roxie is atypically friendly -

ROXIE

Heyyy, Dennis!

DENNIS

Oh, hi.

The two girls gather around Dennis. Cassie's tipsy.

CASSIE

I'm Cassie.

ROXIE

(looking around)

My brother isn't here, is he?

DENNIS

Uh, no. I don't think they would allow him in.

Cassie flirts with Dennis. Roxie lays claim by putting her hand on Dennis' shoulder. She whispers to Cassie, who then wanders off.

ROXIE

(shouts to Cassie)

I'll catch up with you later!

Roxie looks sweetly at Dennis and says softly-

ROXIE

Um, do you have anything to smoke, or anything to get high?

DENNIS
(hesitant)
No...but maybe I can get something.

ROXIE
That would be soooo bitchen'.

As Dennis wanders off, Vince discretely watches him from behind the stairwell, unseen.

INT. OLD TWO-STORY HOUSE/KITCHEN - CONT.

Dennis walks up to TOM, 22, with long hair and a moustache, who's pouring vodka into a punch bowl.

DENNIS
Hey, Tom.

Dennis looks around.

DENNIS
(hushed voice)
Are you holding?

TOM
I thought you didn't smoke.

Tom sees Roxie near the doorway, peering into the kitchen. He smiles at Dennis.

INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGEN (PARKED) - NIGHT

Dennis leads Roxie to a 1950's VOLKSWAGEN parked in front of the old party house. He gestures to it -

DENNIS
Like my brand new, beat up old car?

They get in, laughing. Dennis holds up a finely rolled joint. Roxie's eyes light up.

DENNIS
Tom asked me to not smoke out here.
You wanna go up to the water tower?

ROXIE
Yeah. Definitely. I didn't even
know you smoked, Dennis.

DENNIS
I don't. You can have the whole
thing.

ROXIE

Wait a minute! I'm not smoking the whole thing by myself!

Roxie adjusts the rear view mirror and messes with her hair.
Dennis starts the car.

DENNIS

Maybe I'll take one drag.

Roxie reaches over and turns off the ignition.

ROXIE

No! Two hits! And you have to hold them in for five seconds before you blow it out.

DENNIS

Uh -

ROXIE

C'mon, Dennis! I wanna see you get stoned!

(seductively)

I get, mmm, friendly when I'm stoned.

DENNIS

Let me think about it.

She's insulted.

ROXIE

What's to think about!? I'm not going all the way up there for nothin'!

DENNIS

How about if we -

ROXIE

Oh, forget it.

Roxie gets out. She leans into the passenger window.

ROXIE

Can I have the joint?

Dennis hesitates.

ROXIE

Oh, what? Are you gonna try to get Cassie to go up there with you now? She probably would. She's drunk.

Defeated, Dennis hands her the joint.

ROXIE

Sorry, Dennis, but you're such a loser. Thanks for the joint!

She stuffs the joint into her bra.

DENNIS

(whispers to himself)

Damn!

Dennis starts the ignition. From the sidewalk, Roxie cackles as she watches him drive off.

VINCE (O.S.)

Oh my gosh! Roxie!? Is that you!

Roxie looks surprised as Vince approaches.

ROXIE

Hey, Vince! What'cha up to?

VINCE

I just stopped by for a bit. I guess I'm heading home.

ROXIE

Wanna go up to the water tower?

VINCE

The water tower? I don't know. Ah, what the hell, okay.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis sits cross-legged on the floor, playing guitar. The phone on the end table RINGS. Dennis picks it up.

DENNIS

Hello?

INT. ROXIE'S ROOM - SAME

Roxie sits on her bed, Princess phone to her ear. The décor is reminiscent of a mid 60's Gidget movie. She fingers her hair as she talks on the phone.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL: ROXIE'S ROOM/DENNIS' LIVING ROOM

ROXIE

Hi, it's Roxie! I talked to Cassie about what happened Saturday night, and I feel awful. I'm really not a mean person!

Roxie stands up and paces back and forth, holding the phone.

ROXIE

It's just that my brother drives me nuts and I hate everything he does. He's such a retard.

Roxie shushes someone with the wave of her hand. She listens for Dennis' response, then bursts out laughing at his reply.

ROXIE

That's really funny. Look, I promise I won't ask you to smoke dope with me anymore. I think you're smart to don't use drugs. I wish I didn't. Maybe we can have a coke or something.

(pause)

How about tonight?

Dennis' foot rests on his knee, tapping out a happy beat.

DENNIS

Yeah, that sounds perfect.

ROXIE

Oh, so you're free tonight?

Nodding, Roxie takes the phone from her ear and holds it out to the side. Vince steps into view, holding a yardstick with Bobby at the end of it. Vince takes the phone from Roxie.

VINCE

Sorry, I had to be sure you were home. Listen, Tony changed his mind. We're doin' it tonight. No, no. It's a full moon. It's brighter than daylight up there.

(pause)

No, I'm not joking. This time it's for real. We got that platform thing from Todd. We're all set to go. We'll be by in -

(checks watch)

ten minutes.

ROXIE
(devilish smile)
Tell him love and kisses from
Roxie.

END INTERCUT PHONECALL.

Vince hangs up.

BOBBY
What were you laughing at?

Roxie bursts out laughing again.

BOBBY
Rah-ber-tah!

INT. DENNIS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis hangs up solemnly. He rubs his face with both hands as if trying to rub out a solution. After a moment, he picks up the phone and dials.

INT./EXT. TONY'S CADILLAC (DRIVING)/GLENOAKS CLIFF - NIGHT

Tony's Cadillac slowly rolls toward the dirt PARKING AREA. Vince rides shotgun. Dennis and Bobby are in back with a four foot wide plywood scaffold on their laps, along with coiled ropes.

DENNIS
Are you sure it's a full moon?

Vince squints out the window.

VINCE
Wait a minute.

TONY
What?

VINCE
I thought I saw a glare.

TONY
Where?

They scan the dark.

VINCE
What's that back there?

A RED LIGHT flashes behind them in the distance. They hear a police SIREN. Tony's Cadillac speeds off.

Tony races down a dark road. He reaches a fork - uphill to the right, downhill to the left. He turns downhill.

TONY
(hushed command)
Everybody shut up!

Tony turns off the engine and lights. He coasts in neutral, picking up speed.

TONY
Let me know when the cops
disappear.

Dennis scans the rear window. Bobby and Vince scan the sides.

VINCE
Watch out! There's a curve in the
road! Use the emergency brake!

TONY
I am using it!

BOBBY
Shift your gear!

TONY
Shift your mouth and shut up!

BOBBY
We're gonna go over the cliff!

Dennis, in control, spies out the back window.

DENNIS
There they go. They're gone!

Tony slams on the brakes.

There's a long SCREECH.

VINCE/BOBBY
Aaaaahhhhh!!

The car comes to a stop near the edge of a cliff.

TONY
What a bunch of pussies!
(to rear view mirror)
Except you, Dennis.

Tony starts his engine.

DENNIS

Well, at least we gave it a try.

TONY

No! Trying ain't good enough. They torched my car! C'mon, Dennis - you're supposed to be the genius. Come up with a new plan. I want that face up there now!

Dennis returns Tony's stare in the rear view mirror.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/LOCKER AREA - DAY

Dennis dials his locker combination and takes out a book. Vince stands behind him.

VINCE

I'm tellin' you Tony respects you! You've got a future, man!

DENNIS

No! I'm done. And if you were my friend, you'd give me those photos.

Dennis closes his locker and starts to walk away from Vince. Vince grabs Dennis' arm.

VINCE

I'll give 'em back if you just paint the damn thing! Just tell her Bobby did it. I'll back you up.

DENNIS

She'd never believe that. And then what? I don't want to be a gangster with you and Tony. And I don't. Hate. Negroes!

Dennis turns and walks away. Vince watches Dennis, then has a flash of awareness.

VINCE

Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Vince rushes up to Dennis. He pushes Dennis against a wall, glaring at him.

VINCE

You're the one who called the cops last night. You fuck! I'm your best friend, Dennis!

DENNIS

I didn't wanna get you in trouble! C'mon, Vince, let's face it. Things are different now.

VINCE

That's right. Ever since you met that coon, you are different. I don't know who you are anymore.

Vince walks off, delivering his closing remark with his back to Dennis.

VINCE

It's up there before school's out or somebody's gettin' some mail. It's up to you, man.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Nicholls is preparing dinner. Mr. Nicholls comes in.

MR. NICHOLLS

Ah, meatloaf. Smells good!

MRS. NICHOLLS

Carl, can I talk with you for a minute?

MR. NICHOLLS

Sounds serious. What is it?

They sit at the table.

MRS. NICHOLLS

Have you noticed how Dennis hasn't been home much lately? He says he's been working on that talent show, but I'm not so sure.

MR. NICHOLLS

I know he had that restaurant job.

MRS. NICHOLLS

He quit that awhile ago.

MR. NICHOLLS

Figures!

MRS. NICHOLLS

I think it's a girl. Maybe you should have a talk with him. A talk, not a lecture.

Mr. Nicholls thinks it over, then stands up and steels himself for the task at hand.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/DENNIS' ROOM - DAY

Dennis fingers a SLOW BLUES song on his acoustic guitar. There's a soft KNOCK on the door.

DENNIS

Come in.

Dennis stops playing as Mr. Nicholls steps in.

MR. NICHOLLS

Your mother says you haven't been home much lately. She says you've been working on a talent show?

DENNIS

Yeah, Dad. Practically every night after school. We've been working really hard on it. It's gonna be far-out. Wait 'til you see it!

MR. NICHOLLS

Are those friends of yours in it too?

DENNIS

No. I don't wanna be friends with them anymore.

Mr. Nicholls closes the door.

MR. NICHOLLS

Dennis, does this have anything to do with dope?

DENNIS

No! I just don't want to hang out with them. They're idiots with or without dope.

MR. NICHOLLS

I want you to know son, uh - you can talk to me about anything, anything at all.

As Mr. Nicholls leaves the room, he turns back to look at Dennis, who returns his look.

MR. NICHOLLS

I just wanted to say, thanks for introducing me to Mr. Terry. We played pool last week. I actually beat him and he didn't seem to mind. I guess, well - I wish I hadn't said what I said in the car. It wasn't right.

DENNIS

That's okay Dad, I understand.

MR. NICHOLLS

If you wanted to invite that Terry girl for dinner sometime, we'd be glad to have her.

Dennis smiles at his Dad.

DENNIS

Thanks, Dad.

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

Fumes fill the garage. Mikey spray paints a crude version of the pickaninny face on a large piece of cardboard. Dennis' 6x6 ft. of painted plywood stands next to it as a model. Bobby, Todd and Vince look displeased at Mikey's attempted copy. Vince holds his yardstick out with Bobby standing at the end of it.

BOBBY

I thought you said you could draw like your brother! That looks terrible!

MIKEY

I'll do it better when I'm up on the cliff, I promise!

VINCE

Forget it, Mikey. Go home, kid.

Mikey pouts. He hops on his bike, angrily throws down the spray can, and rides away.

Bobby studies Dennis' painting.

BOBBY

I think maybe I have an idea.

VINCE

Here's a good idea. Keep it to
yourself and quit wasting my time.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis is on the sofa, playing his guitar. He hears the back
door open, then close.

MRS. NICHOLLS (O.S.)

(angrily)

Your father's been driving all over
looking for you! You go straight to
your room, young man!

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/HALLWAY - CONT.

Mrs. Nicholls scoots Mikey down the hall to his room.

MRS. NICHOLLS

Wait 'til your father gets home!
You've got a lot of explaining to
do, young man!

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/MIKEY'S ROOM - CONT.

Dennis walks in. Mikey sits on his bed hiding his hands.

DENNIS

So, what happened to you?

Mikey smiles mischievously.

MIKEY

Nothin'.

Dennis grabs Mikey's paint-stained hand.

MIKEY

They said I painted it good!

DENNIS

You think you're hot shit right
now, don't you, Mikey-Boy!

Dennis looks around the room.

DENNIS

Where's your money?

Dennis rummages through Mikey's dresser and finds a piggy bank. He takes the money out and does a quick count.

DENNIS
Two dollars and twelve cents.

MIKEY
Hey, that's mine!

DENNIS
You'll get it back.

Dennis stuffs the money in his pocket.

MIKEY
Where you going?

DENNIS
To clean up the mess you made.

MIKEY
I didn't make a mess. Can I come
with you?

Dennis gives Mikey a dirty look and storms out. Sulking, Mikey lies down and pulls the covers over his head.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF BASE - NIGHT

Dennis bikes along the paved road. He stops, squints up at the cliff, does a double take and then turns his bike around and pedals away.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - CONT.

Dennis drops his bike and races to the door, just as the HARDWARE STORE OWNER is preparing to lock it.

DENNIS
(out of breath)
I know exactly what I want. I'll
just be a minute. Please?

The owner frowns, but lets him in.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF/TRAIL - CONT.

Dennis pushes his bike up the steep cliff trail. He wears a tool belt around his waist holding spray cans, and has a rope coiled around his shoulder.

Arriving at the top parking area, Dennis hides his bike behind a bush. As he walks along a row of bushes, he hears a soft GROANING. He freezes, looks around cautiously and then continues. More GROANING. Dennis freezes again. The GROANS turn to Bobby's LAUGHTER.

VINCE (O.S.)
You dumb ass.

Vince and Bobby emerge from the bushes. Dennis remains motionless as they approach.

VINCE
What are you gonna do, touch it up
a little?

DENNIS
I... uh...

VINCE
We lowered him from the top of the
cliff on that platform thing Todd
made. It worked out great and he's
not even dead.

DENNIS
Vince, I'm asking you as a friend -

VINCE
I gotta tell ya, Dennis, I'm really
disappointed in you. But you know
what pisses me off the most? The
thought of you and that - yuck,
it's too disgusting!

DENNIS
I never -

Cat-like, Vince pounces on Dennis and wrestles him to the ground. A spray can rolls out of Dennis' tool belt.

BOBBY
Don't hit him in the face!

VINCE
That movie star face. Don't worry.

BOBBY
Cause if you give him a black eye,
he'll end up looking like a hero.

VINCE
Shut it, Bobby, I know what to do.

Vince lets Dennis go as they both stand. Vince makes aggressive boxing moves as he spars with Dennis. Bobby moves in for a better view.

VINCE

C'mon, Dennis! Try to score some points on me. C'mon! Hit me in the face! Make me bleed!

Vince jabs, giving power-punches to Dennis' biceps. Dennis grimaces with pain, weakly holding up his fists.

BOBBY (O.S.)

Hurt him!

Vince pummels Dennis to the ground. He gives a final vicious kick to Dennis' thigh, flips him over and kicks the other thigh.

VINCE

That's for ratting on your friends!

Vince grins slyly as Dennis lays battered in the dirt.

VINCE

You won't be able to comb your hair or brush your teeth for a few days, but you'll survive.

Vince grabs Dennis' rope and a spray can off the ground.

VINCE

Thanks! We're gonna borrow your bike, too. You don't mind do you?

Bobby grabs Dennis' bike from behind the bush. Dennis struggles to stand up, holding onto a nearby tree as a crutch. He keeps a close watch for more of Vince's attacks.

VINCE

You better get outta here Dennis, or I'll come back for seconds. Power punches on your sore arms - think about it.

Todd pulls up in a pick-up truck. Vince and Bobby load Dennis' bike and stuff in the back. As they drive off, Dennis shuffles away in pain.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis limps past the sofa where his parents are watching TV.

MRS. NICHOLLS (O.S.)
One of your shows is on, Dennis.

DENNIS
I've been playing ball all day.
I'm really tired and going to bed.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/DENNIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis lies in bed, still fully dressed in the darkened room, his eyes wide open.

DENNIS' NIGHTMARE VISION

STUDENTS mill about Glenoaks campus. A few look up and point at the insulting pickaninny face on the cliff. They mimic its dopey smile as Brenda passes by.

STUDENTS
(sing-song)
Hi Brenda!

They SNICKER and GIGGLE at Brenda, who's unaware of the cruel joke. She turns to see where they're pointing.

BACK TO SCENE

Dennis bolts up in bed and gasps. His feet touch the floor. Cringing in pain, he sneaks out the window.

EXT. NICHOLLS BACKYARD/GARAGE - NIGHT

Dennis emerges with Mikey's bike. He wears the tool belt with spray cans around his waist.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF BASE - CONT.

Storm clouds gather overhead. Gusts of WIND. Dennis hops off Mikey's bike and it falls to the ground. He limps to a pile of jagged boulders. He shakes his spray cans, fires a test blast from each, then puts them back in his tool belt.

Wincing in pain, he starts to climb the boulders with great difficulty. Kneeling at the top of the boulders, Dennis tightens his sneaker laces. He looks up at the dark, foreboding cliff and swallows hard.

EXT. SIDE OF CLIFF - CONT.

Dennis ascends the cliff. He cringes in pain as his fingers probe the rockface for handholds and footholds.

Finally, he reaches the plywood pickaninny face painting, hanging against the rock wall. The sign is secured by ropes leading to the top of the cliff. He sees a racial slur added at the bottom in red: "Jigabooze Go Home".

Precariously balanced against the ledge, Dennis grabs a black spray can from his tool belt, shakes it and obliterates the racist face and the misspelled slur.

When he finishes, he shakes a white spray can and paints large thin letters over it.

Looking up, Dennis sees a dense, black ceiling of clouds. LIGHTNING illuminates the cliff. He hears loud THUNDER. A raindrop on his cheek, then another.

DENNIS

Perfect!

Dennis cautiously descends the now slippery rock face. More LIGHTNING and THUNDER. LIGHTNING reveals he's directly above the jagged boulders at the base.

Dennis pauses for a moment on a narrow ledge. He spots a foothold below and extends his foot over and down to reach it, but it immediately slides off the slick rock. His foot returns to the ledge.

Dennis hyperventilates. Stuck, he looks around frantically. His fingers find a crack. Leaning his forehead against the cliff, he removes the belt from his pants and jams the belt buckle in the crack.

Wrapping the belt around his fist, Dennis yanks down hard to secure it. Holding on to it, he removes his tool belt and tosses it away. He takes off his sneakers and socks, tosses them. He wipes the balls of his bare feet on the back of his pants.

LIGHTNING lights up the boulders below. Extending his foot, Dennis' bare toes grasp a jagged foothold. With a frenzied gasp, his free hand fiercely finds the next crack.

Dennis makes it to a large ledge. Exhaling, he leans his back against the ledge wall and relaxes.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF/ROCKY SLOPE - LATER

Holding a tree branch as a cane, Dennis hikes in the dark, down the muddy, rocky slope. His beltless pants fall down. Pulling them up, he slips and slides the last few yards down to the bottom.

EXT. BASE OF CLIFF - CONT.

Covered in mud and limping barefoot, Dennis looks up and sees one sock, high up in a tree. He searches the boulders, ground and bushes.

LATER

Wearing a sneaker on one foot and just a sock on the other, Dennis slips and falls to the muddy ground.

VINCE (O.S.)

You're supposed to be so smart, but
you never learn.

Dennis, horrified, looks up as Vince comes into view.

DENNIS

I only did what I thought was
right.

VINCE

C'mon. Tony wants to talk to you.

Vince grabs Dennis and pulls him up.

DENNIS

Vince, please!

VINCE

It ain't up to me, but you deserve
everything you're gonna get.

Vince drags Dennis along like a resisting prisoner of war.

Tony's Cadillac sits alone on the road. Vince drags Dennis to Tony's car, where Dennis falls on his knees in the mud.

Tony steps out, towering over Dennis. His shoes splash mud on Dennis' face.

TONY

Get up. I wanna punch you for a
while before I start kickin' ya.

Vince grabs Dennis and pulls him up to his feet. Tony grabs Dennis by the collar, pulling him in face to face.

TONY

I'm gonna pound ya 'til my knuckles
bleed, then turn you over to Vince.
And he's horny for it!

VINCE

You got that right.

Vince leans in to Tony.

VINCE

(hushed voice)

If we beat him up now, he'll end up
lookin like a hero 'cause of that
shit he just painted.

Tony and Vince lock eyes. Tony fumes, holding back his fists. Vince pulls an envelope from his pocket and hands the blackmail photos to Tony, who studies them.

VINCE

When her father sees those photos,
he'll make her stop seeing Dennis.
When she breaks up with him on
Monday at school, he'll end up
cryin' like a baby.

Vince does an exaggerated sob, breaks into a wicked laugh.

VINCE

I wish we could be there to see it!

TONY

Alright, go ahead and send 'em.

It starts to rain. Dennis' pants slip down, leaving him exposed in his boxers. Tony glares angrily at Dennis.

TONY

We won't need anymore of your queer
artwork. We're gonna carry out our
proud family tradition to keep this
town pure and nigger free.

Vince looks anxious.

TONY

(to Dennis)

You'll regret the day you crossed
Tony Roman, you asshole!

Tony angrily punches Dennis in the stomach, knocking him down into the mud.

VINCE

And you owe us fifty bucks for supplies. Bring it to the shop Saturday morning. In cash!

TONY

(to Vince)

Destroy that shit on the cliff.

Tony stalks off to his car. Vince leans over Dennis.

VINCE

It's not always easy to see, but
I'm still your best friend, Dennis.
Never forget that.

Vince gets in Tony's car and they take off, leaving Dennis lying in the mud with his pants down.

EXT. NICHOLLS BACKYARD - NIGHT

Dennis limps to a window and struggles to open it. Lights come on in the house.

DENNIS

Perfect.

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/SCHOOLYARD - DAY

The sun is shining. STUDENTS are on their way to class. A couple of them point up to the cliff, where they see the word UNITY in all caps. A faint rainbow appears in the sky.

STUDENT

(looking up)

Unity? Is that a new band?

Brenda passes the students and looks up at the cliff to see where they're pointing. She smiles.

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Dennis sees Brenda coming around a corner. To avoid her, he runs into the -

INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM - CONT.

GIRL
Hey, what are you doing in here?

DENNIS
Sorry.

Dennis sneaks out of a bathroom stall and cautiously stalls.

GIRL
What are you waiting for? Out!

EXT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/LOCKER AREA - DAY

Dennis is about to open his locker.

BRENDA (O.S.)
Dennis?

DENNIS
(under his breath)
Oh, no.

As Dennis opens his locker, a stamped envelope falls to the ground, addressed to Mr. & Mrs. Terry, no postmark. He quickly opens it to see the blackmail photos and negatives. Dennis breathes a sigh of relief and stuffs the envelope in his pocket. He closes his locker as Brenda approaches and gives her a big smile.

DENNIS
Hey Brenda! How the heck are ya?

Brenda gives him a concerned look.

BRENDA
Have you been avoiding me?

DENNIS
I'd never avoid you. I'm your
number one fan. Come on, I'll walk
you to class.

His effervescent good mood surprises Brenda. As they walk, she notices he's limping.

BRENDA
Are you hurt?

DENNIS
Nah, I just stubbed my toe. I'll be
fine for the show.

BRENDA

You know I'm leaving for college in two weeks. Have you decided what you're going to do?

DENNIS

I'm thinking about a lot of different things.

BRENDA

Don't your parents want you to go to college? It's always been really important in my family.

DENNIS

I don't think we can afford college. Besides, I'm thinking of starting a band and doing a national Blues tour about Unity. What do you think?

BRENDA

But I think college would be a good foundation for that.

DENNIS

Maybe for you, but not for me. A Unity Tour sounds better.

BRENDA

I thought that was you who did that on the cliff. I'm really impressed that you got your friends to help you! See? You were a good example to them!

DENNIS

Yeah. I wouldn't mention it to them or thank them or anything. We could still get in trouble.

BRENDA

(whispers)

I wish I could thank you right now.

DENNIS

Well, since it is the last week of school, let's give them something to remember us by.

Dennis kisses Brenda softly on the lips. She returns his kiss and gives him a warm hug. Students passing by gasp and gossip. A few racial insults can be heard.

A FEMALE STUDENT passes by, and leans in to say -

FEMALE STUDENT
(under her breath)
Ignore them, they're stupid.

Dennis shouts to her as she walks away -

DENNIS
Hey! Come to our show Friday night!

INT. MUSIC SHOP - DAY

At the counter, Dennis holds his guitar case, negotiating with the MUSIC SHOP CLERK.

DENNIS
Forty? I paid a hundred for it!
Can't you at least make it fifty?

MUSIC SHOP CLERK
Sorry. That's the best we can do.

DENNIS
Alright. I never deserved this
guitar anyway.

Dennis hands over his guitar for the cash from the clerk.

MUSIC SHOP CLERK
So does this mean you're not gonna
do your solo at the talent show?

DENNIS
Can't do it without a guitar.

The clerk reaches below the counter, pulls out an old, beat-up guitar and hands it to Dennis.

MUSIC SHOP CLERK
Here. It was headed for the trash
anyway, but it'll work.

On the sly, the clerk tucks a full pack of guitar strings under the four-stringed neck of the beat-up guitar.

DENNIS
Wow, thanks!

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

Vince, in mechanic's uniform, is working on a police car parked in the shop. Tony, also in uniform, approaches.

TONY

I wanna talk to you in the office.

Vince follows Tony into the office.

INT. TONY'S OFFICE - CONT.

The wooden Civil War chest is open on Tony's desk. Tony pulls the noose out of the chest. Vince shakes his head no.

VINCE

No! I ain't doin' it, Tony!

TONY

We ain't gonna hurt her. We're just gonna take a picture up there.

VINCE

I don't believe you.

TONY

You don't believe me? I'm your fuckin' brother!

VINCE

I don't care! It ain't right!

TONY

You think that unity shit is right? You think it's right to let those animals take over this town? Are you on his side now, traitor?

Tony pokes Vince's chest with his finger.

TONY

I'll tell you what's right! To keep this town pure like our ancestors did! It's our responsibility as Klansmen!

VINCE

I'm not a Klansman, Tony, and neither are you! And neither was anyone in our family!

VINCE (CONT'D)

I asked cousin Francie, and she told me none of that shit you're always sayin' about our grandparents is true!

TONY

It's true if I say it's true.

VINCE

They didn't hate Negroes, and neither do I!

Tony punches Vince hard, knocking him into the wall. A framed family photo falls and shatters on the ground.

INT. AUTO SHOP - CONT.

Tony gets in the police car and removes a sign in the windshield reading "Authorized Personnel Only". He starts the engine. A blue police uniform shirt and police hat hang on a hook by the back window. Vince runs toward the car, hand on his swollen eye.

VINCE

Tony! Stop! It's a felony to drive that!

TONY

Get out of my way. I'll do this myself.

The police car SCREECHES as Tony pulls away.

INT. TONY'S OFFICE - CONT.

Anxious, Vince dials a wall phone.

INT. NICHOLLS HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Dennis eats a sandwich. The phone RINGS. He picks it up.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL: AUTO SHOP OFFICE/NICHOLLS KITCHEN

VINCE

Dennis, I need your help. My brother's flipped out.

DENNIS

I've got band practice. Why don't you call Bobby for help?

VINCE
He got arrested.

DENNIS
For what?

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

EXT. BOBBY'S BACKYARD - DAY

Bobby tosses up a golf ball and is about to swing his bat when he hears -

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
Hey, batter! You are under arrest.

Startled, the golf ball bounces off Bobby's head.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL: AUTO SHOP OFFICE/NICHOLLS KITCHEN

VINCE
They got him for commercial
burglary and public endangerment.

DENNIS
Guess he's moving up in the crime
world.

VINCE
Listen, Dennis! Tony's out of
control! He just stole a cop car
and he's heading to the cliff. He
mentioned your girl.

DENNIS
Why didn't you say that in the
first place? Come and pick me up.

INT./EXT. POLICE CAR (PARKED) - DAY

Tony, in the police uniform from waist up, peers through
BINOCULARS at the TERRY HOUSE down the street.

INT./EXT. TERRY HOUSE - SAME

SEEN THROUGH TONY'S BINOCULARS:

Mrs. Terry leaves as Brenda waves goodbye on the front porch.

BACK TO SCENE:

Brenda sees flashing red and yellow lights on the living room wall. She runs to the front door.

EXT. TERRY HOUSE - CONT.

A police car is outside, its roof beacon flashing. Brenda opens the front door and squints at the driver. Tony leans out the police car window and calls to her.

TONY
You're Brandy, right?

BRENDA
Brenda Terry. Who are you?

TONY
I need to talk to your mother.

BRENDA
My mother just left.

TONY
There's been an accident.

BRENDA
Oh my god. My dad!

Tony opens the passenger side door. Brenda rushes out and gets in the passenger seat.

INT./EXT. POLICE CAR (DRIVING) - DAY

Tony drives on the HIGHWAY. Brenda notices his brown pants don't match his blue police shirt.

BRENDA
You're not a cop are you?

TONY
I am right now.

BRENDA
I don't know what you are up to but this is kidnapping. It's a felony!

TONY
Keep your mouth shut and
everything'll be fine.

BRENDA
Don't tell me what to do!

Tony threatens Brenda with a backhanded punch. She doesn't flinch.

BRENDA
You don't scare me, white boy!

She displays her fingernails like cat claws.

BRENDA
You come any closer and I'll
scratch your face so bad you'll
have scars to explain for the rest
of your life!

Brenda looks out the rear window.

BRENDA
There's cops all over here.

As Tony turns to look out the window behind him, Brenda secretly turns on the police radio. Tony takes the turnoff marked "Glenoaks Cliff".

INT. GLENOAKS SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - SAME

Two SWITCHBOARD OPERATORS sit at their consoles. Switchboard Operator #1 pokes Switchboard Operator #2 -

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR #1
Hey, check this out!

BRENDA (V.O.)
My father Officer Terry is with the
Glenoaks Sheriff's Department.

Switchboard Operator #2 picks up a phone.

BRENDA (V.O.)
When he finds out I've been
kidnapped he'll have us surrounded
at the top of Glenoaks Cliff!

TONY (V.O.)
Have you been messin' around with -

CLICK - the radio turns off.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF/TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

Birds CHIRP. Tony's K.K.K. L.A. graffiti remains carved on the tree trunk, several feet above eye level.

Brenda runs across a field. Tony chases after her through the tall RUSTLING grass with a NOOSE tied to a coiled rope in his hand.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF/PARKING AREA - DAY

A Romano Brothers truck screeches into the parking area. Vince and Dennis get out and spot Tony chasing Brenda.

VINCE

There they are!

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

Vince and Dennis take off after Tony and Brenda across the field, heading toward the edge of the cliff. POLICE SIRENS sound in the distance.

EXT. EDGE OF CLIFF - DAY

Tony and Brenda spin around at the cliff's edge, each pulling on different ends of the rope, like two snarling dogs fighting over a rubber toy.

Vince and Dennis arrive.

DENNIS

Leave her alone, Tony.

Startled, Brenda lets go of the rope and turns to look at Dennis as Tony staggers backward toward the cliff edge.

BRENDA

Dennis!

Tony falls and starts to slide down a rocky slope at the cliff's edge. Dennis races towards him and dives to catch Tony's arm. Tony is now hanging off the cliff with Dennis holding on to his wrist.

DENNIS

Hang on!

Dennis starts sliding over the cliff himself. Brenda and Vince dive to grab onto Dennis' legs, stopping him from going over the cliff. Tony's wrist starts sliding through Dennis' grip until they're just holding hands.

TONY

Please! Please! I can't -

Tony loses his grip.

EXT. SIDE OF CLIFF - CONT.

With terror in his eyes, Tony's fingers frantically trying to find a grip in a futile attempt to stop his fall. Dennis, Vince and Brenda watch in horror as Tony's slide accelerates rapidly and he falls down the cliff.

TONY

Noooo!!!

Deadly silence. Then...a THUD from below.

EXT. PARKING AREA - CONT.

Police cars appear on the scene.

EXT. BASE OF CLIFF - CONT.

Tony in a stupor with half-closed eyes on a pile of jagged rocks. Blood drips from his ears and fingers. One of his legs sticks up unnaturally, the foot mangled in a disjointed position. The other leg lies beneath him. Dazed, he stares blankly at his foot.

A muffled ambulance SIREN in the distance. Tony emits loud groaning sounds -

TONY

Uhhhh..uhhh..uhhh...

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH AUDITORIUM/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

HONK! HONK! A costumed clown HONKS his horn. Students in costumes mill about. Dennis, in a three-piece suit, with the beat-up guitar strapped over his back, rehearses his lines.

Mr. Nicholls, Mrs. Nicholls, Mrs. Terry and Mikey approach. Mrs. Terry is holding a guitar case.

MR. NICHOLLS

Dennis!

Dennis looks up, surprised.

MRS. NICHOLLS

You look so grown-up in your suit.

DENNIS

I am grown up. I'm eighteen.

MRS. TERRY

My husband's very sorry he couldn't make it tonight. He had to work.

She hands Dennis the guitar case.

MRS. TERRY

He wanted to loan it to you tonight for good luck. We also wanted to thank you for being there for my family at the cliff.

DENNIS

I just did what I had to do.

Mikey wears a camera around his neck. He holds it up.

MIKEY

I'm gonna take your picture!

Mikey snaps a photo of Dennis.

MRS. NICHOLLS

We better go find our seats now, Mikey.

MIKEY

Can't I stay back here for a little while, Mom?

DENNIS

C'mon, I'll introduce you to the star of the show.

Dennis walks Mikey over to Brenda in her stage costume, a nice dress accented by white pearls.

DENNIS

Brenda, this is my brother Mikey. Mikey, this is Brenda.

BRENDA

Really glad to meet you, Mikey.
I've heard so much about you.
Can I give you a friendship kiss?

Mikey looks at Brenda, enamored, and nods. Brenda kisses him on the cheek. Blushing he hurries off, clumsily bumping into a student performer, knocking over a backstage prop.

Mr. Premerini swoops by in a judge's robe, waving a gavel.

MR. PREMERINI

Let's go, people! Places everyone!
The show's about to start!

Backstage chaos swirls around.

INT. GLENOAKS AUDITORIUM/ONSTAGE - NIGHT

The curtains open to painted scenery of a courtroom, including a painted jury, flag, and state symbol. An old style sandwich board reads "UNITY ON TRIAL".

"THE JUDGE", played by Mr. Premerini, sits behind a prop judge's bench.

"THE LAWYER", played by Dennis, paces back and forth with his hands behind his back, in an arrogant trial lawyer stroll.

"MISS WASHINGTON", played by Brenda, sits in a prop witness stand to his right.

DENNIS

Isn't it true, Miss Washington, and please be honest, that you'd like some of your Negro friends to move into our fine community?

BRENDA

Sure! If they want to!

One or two BOOS from the audience. A recorded SOUND-TRACK emits GASPS and CHATTER. The Judge taps his GAVEL twice, and it quiets down.

BRENDA

Our school should have exchange students from local areas, instead of from other countries. We'd save a lot on airfare!

The sound-track LAUGHS. Some TITTERS from the audience.

DENNIS
Just answer the question.

BRENDA
I thought I did.

The sound-track and audience LAUGH simultaneously. Dennis leafs through papers at the prop lectern.

DENNIS
Miss Washington - you don't deny
that Negroes are very fond of -

Dennis leans slyly toward the audience.

DENNIS
(with comic enunciation)
Fried chicken and wah-tah-melon!
Mmmm, mmm!

The soundtrack emits a corny musical STING at the racist joke's punchline. A JEER from the crowd.

BRENDA
Eating cold watermelon on a hot day
is delicious and the kids have
spitting contests with the seeds.
And green people would love fried
chicken the way my mom makes it.
Don't white people like fried
chicken and watermelon, too?

The crowd yells their agreement. Dennis clears his throat.

DENNIS
I'll ask the questions. Wouldn't
you agree that Negroes are known
more for sports and show business
than for intellectual pursuits?

BRENDA
George Washington Carver wasn't a
basketball player, was he? He was a
famous inventor, scientist and
professor. And Dorothy Vaughan
won't be singing astronauts back to
Earth, will she? She's a NASA
mathematician. By the way, I've got
a 3.9 grade average. I just happen
to be a good dancer, too.

DENNIS
That's hearsay!

THE JUDGE

This is highly irregular, but
perhaps the jury would like a
demonstration. Bailiff, some
appropriate music, please.

The soundtrack blasts a BOOGIE-WOOGIE SONG. A scenery panel
with a two-dimensional painted jury is pulled offstage to
reveal a live JURY comprised of STUDENT ACTORS dressed in the
same clothes as the painted jury.

JURY (STUDENT ACTORS)

(sing)

*"Motion denied,
The prosecution rests,
The jury's reached a verdict,
It's really for the best..."*

THE JUDGE

(sings)

*"By order of the court,
The Witness takes the floor!
The evidence before the Jury
Will prove forever more."*

A SPOTLIGHT shines on Brenda. Dennis guides her from the
witness stand to the center of the stage.
Brenda's dance routine begins. Light on her feet, she dances
boogie woogie style around the stage. Dennis acts as an
uncooperative partner, pleading to the judge and trying to
walk away from Brenda as she pulls him back.

DENNIS

Ah - what the heck!

Surrendering, he tosses a stack of papers into the air,
throws up his hands and twirls into Brenda's dance. The SONG
climbs to a rousing Broadway finale, ending with Brenda
posing dramatically in front of the swaying Jury actors.

Dennis, Brenda, and the Jury actors bow and exit the stage.
The curtains close.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Half APPLAUSE, half silence. Mr. Nicholls, Mrs. Nicholls and
Mrs. Terry smile proudly. Mikey is wide-eyed in awe.

In the back row, Vince, with his arm around Roxie, stands and
enthusiastically cheers and whistles.

VINCE
 (cheers)
 Wooooooo! Dennis!

Vince urges the silent audience seated near him -

VINCE
 That's my best friend up there!
 C'mon! Stand up and cheer!

Following his lead, Roxie and a few others stand up and begin CHEERING.

ONSTAGE

The curtains part, revealing scenery depicting the interior of a PRISON CELL. Dennis, dressed in a striped prison uniform, sits on a cot. He looks out the painted prison window, tuning Leadbelly's guitar.

MR. PREMIERINI (V.O.)
 This special guitar belonged to the
 legendary Negro Blues singer named
 Leadbelly, who wrote and played
 this song that helped him get out
 of prison.

Dennis turns to the audience.

DENNIS
 (sings and plays)
*"When you get up in the morning,
 When the big bell rings,
 You go marching to the table,
 You meet the same old thing.
 Knife and fork are on the table,
 Ain't nothing in my pan.
 And if you say a thing about it,
 You have trouble with the man.
 Let the Midnight Special shine her
 Light on me..."*

A TRAIN WHISTLE blows and a light shines on Dennis.

DENNIS
*"Let the Midnight Special,
 Shine her ever-lovin'
 Light on me!"*

Dennis finishes the rest of the song and the entire audience erupts with a standing OVATION.

INT. GLENOAKS HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

A 1967 yearbook is in the trophy display case, opened to a double-page spread, titled: "The 1967 Glenoaks High School Talent Show". Near the top, a large caption reads: "First Prize Freshman Follies: Huckle and Buckle", accompanied by a photo of a pair of clowns.

Under it: "Second Prize:"Midnight Special" with Dennis Nicholls - accompanied by a photo of Dennis playing guitar on stage with the prison stripes blocked out.

Bottom of the page in smaller print: "Honorable Mention: Dennis Nicholls and Brenda Terry - Dance Review".

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF - DAY

The insulting plywood sign has been removed and the Glenoaks letter "G" has been visibly restored on the rock face again.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

Birds CHIRP. Insects BUZZ. Just above eye level on a tree trunk, a chunk of bark has been chiseled out.

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

SUPER: "1969"

Vince, in mechanic's uniform, works on a car.

Dennis enters, wearing a vest over a T-shirt, bell-bottoms and black Beatle Boots.

VINCE
Cool threads!

Vince flashes a peace sign. Dennis grins.

VINCE
So how's your tour plans goin'?

DENNIS
It's all coming together. Everybody
loves L'il Albert in the band.
We're looking for a set of wheels.

VINCE
Come here a minute.

Dennis follows Vince to an auto shop paint room.

INT. AUTO SHOP - CONT.

PAINT ROOM

The door opens, with Dennis and Vince in mid-conversation.

VINCE

You mean that guitar player who's supposedly God?

DENNIS

Yeah, he was the greatest guitar player of the British invasion. This is huge, get this - he was a fan of L'il Albert before he ever heard of blues icon Robert Johnson.

Vince is impressed.

DENNIS

He hooked us up with his U.S. publicist, who's booking our tour. After we finish in New York, they want us to go to England.

Dennis looks up to see the van of his dreams - large, clean, freshly painted. He wanders around it in awe.

DENNIS

Nice van! Wow, I know I shouldn't be thinking this, but I could picture our logo on the side of that. It would look bitchin'! So, who's that belong to?

Vince tosses the keys to Dennis.

DENNIS

You've gotta be kidding!

VINCE

It's for your tour. I got it from a junk yard. I gave it a major tune up. New tires, brakes, the works!

DENNIS

Wow. Thanks, man. But you should sell it. You need money now to take care of -

VINCE

Tony? He's coming home soon. They dropped the charges 'cause of his injuries. But, man...he's not the same Tony.

DENNIS

That could be a good thing!

VINCE

I hired a nurse to take care of him.

Vince leans in -

VINCE

And get this - she's black.

Dennis laughs.

VINCE

Dennis...remember that old Civil War chest?

DENNIS

The one you told me to burn?

VINCE

Yeah. Good thing you didn't. Our inheritance was in there, buried under all that racist stuff of Tony's. He made all that shit up about our family! I found stocks, bonds, and deeds to properties - even to this place. Don't worry about us Dennis, we'll be fine. Just make the Romano Brothers one of your tour sponsors!

DENNIS

I don't know what to say...far out!

EXT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

PARKING LOT

Dennis' new van is parked outside, adorned with Dennis' artwork. Painted in large font on the side of the van:
"ALWAYS PLAY SOME BLUES UNITY TOUR"

Painted in a smaller font: "FEATURING L'IL ALBERT MCGEE",
with an image of Albert.

A band rehearsal is underway.

BEN, an African-American DRUMMER in a fringe vest with a hair pick in his afro, plays a CYMBAL FLOURISH. The band logo on his drum reads: "BRAVE NEW WORLD"

A BASS PLAYER thumps a fluid bass line.

Vince fiddles around with some sound equipment.

Dennis and L'il Albert are trading guitar licks.

Tony is in a wheelchair attended by NURSE KIMBERLY, his African-American nurse. Both his legs are missing from the knee down along with the tips of several fingers. Kimberly leans down to listen to Tony whisper to her.

INT. AUTO SHOP - LATER

RESTROOM

The restroom door opens. Tony comes out in his wheelchair, pushed by Nurse Kimberly.

NURSE KIMBERLY

Where I grew up, the bathrooms were blacks or whites only. Those were the choices.

TONY

We're whites only.

NURSE KIMBERLY

Okay, sweetie.

She musses his hair affectionately.

INT. JAILHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

HALLWAY

Vince and lawyer Morrison Stein are standing outside a closed office door.

VINCE

I know you usually help guys get out of the army, but this is a special case.

MORRISON STEIN

Yes, it is. I'll do whatever I can
as a favor to my friend Dennis.
Your generous donation to my
anti-war group will help too,
Mr. Romano.

A JAILHOUSE OFFICER opens the door and ushers Bobby out.
Bobby, handcuffed and dressed in civilian clothes, nods to
Vince as Morrison motions for him to take a seat.

MORRISON STEIN

Here's the deal, Bobby. You have to
serve a full two year term and get
an honorable discharge, and then
all your charges will be dropped.

BOBBY

Yeah, I wanna do that. I wanna
serve my country.

JAILHOUSE OFFICER

He's your property now, Mr. Stein.

The Jailhouse Officer removes Bobby's handcuffs.

EXT. ARMY RECRUITMENT CENTER - DAY

Vince parks his Cadillac in front. Bobby's seated next to
him. Vince hands Bobby a long, thin gift box.

VINCE

Here, this is from your sister.

Bobby reads off the box -

BOBBY

"To my brother - congratulations on
joining the army. Don't get shot,
okay? Love, Roxie."

Bobby opens the gift - fine linen handkerchiefs.

Vince and Bobby get out of the car.

As Vince and Bobby approach the entrance -

VINCE

Hold on a second.

They stop -

VINCE

I know I've been hard on you, but
you know you deserved it. This is
the best thing for you.

(beat)

Besides, by the time you get out, I
might be your brother-in-law.

Vince extends his hand to shake.

VINCE

Good luck, man.

As they shake, Bobby tries to pull him into a hug.
Vince pushes him away.

VINCE

Don't get carried away. Now go
defend your country. And write to
your sister!

Vince turns to walk away.

BOBBY (O.S.)

Hey, Vince -

Vince turns around impatiently -

VINCE

What?

BOBBY

Good luck on your tour.

VINCE

It's not my tour, it's Dennis'
tour. But I'll tell him you said
that.

BOBBY

And tell him I don't hate Negroes
any more.

With a half-smile -

VINCE

I guess we're all growing up.

Vince gives Bobby an awkward hug goodbye. Vince leaves.

Bobby looks up to see an African-American SERGEANT by the
recruitment center door.

SERGEANT
Are you Robert Jordan?

Bobby nods.

SERGEANT
Well, get your ass in here. Your
bus leaves soon. And what's this
about hating Negroes?

EXT. GOLD RING - NIGHT

SUPER: "1970"

A sandwich board reads: "ALWAYS PLAY SOME BLUES UNITY TOUR
FEATURING BRAVE NEW WORLD", with Dennis' drawing of a multi-
racial band.

INT. GOLD RING - NIGHT

Generic BLUES MUSIC plays over a speaker.

Dennis, with long hair, mustache and beard, is tuning up with
his band onstage. The bass drum has a Brave New World logo.

Dennis steps up to the mic and plays a few notes on his
guitar. The crowd applauds.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)
Our Unity Tour launched that night
at the Gold Ring with Albert. Vince
had a special prosthetic foot made
for Albert so he could tap his foot
on stage, and tap he did!

Albert does his best to tap his prosthetic foot along with
the beat.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO BLUES CLUB - NIGHT

A Brave New World flyer with Dennis' drawing is stapled to a
telephone pole in front of the club.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)
Our next stop was San Francisco.
That was a groovy gig.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BLUES CLUB - NIGHT

Dennis, with a pony tail, is mingling with the mid-sized hippie crowd.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

I didn't smoke pot or drop acid,
but I still had a great time.

A hippie offers Dennis a joint. Dennis smiles and gives him a peace sign. Dennis climbs on the platform stage to join Brave New World and Albert in performing a Blues Rock version of "ALWAYS PLAY SOME BLUES", to enthusiastic APPLAUSE.

INT. CHICAGO BLUES CLUB - NIGHT

An intimate, urban crowd, seated at tables in a smoky room.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Our publicist arranged for some
great gigs that kept us working and
making money. We went on to Denver,
St. Louis, Chicago, and other
cities. It was cool travelling
cross-country.

EXT. ATLANTA BLUES CLUB - NIGHT

Dennis, Albert and drummer Ben exit the rear stage door.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

We had a little trouble in Atlanta,
though.

They see Brave New World's van parked at the curb, covered with racist slurs.

BEN

Oh, man! Look what those fools did!

L'IL ALBERT

They're just ignert. Even I know
how to spell "coon"!

Dennis looks at the van, thinking.

DENNIS

I saw Vince take graffiti off a cop
car once. I think I can do it.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Dennis is in mid-conversation on the phone.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

When we got to New York, I got in touch with an old friend - my favorite person in the world.

DENNIS (INTO PHONE)

Sure, I'd love to.

(pause)

Backstage? Really?

(pause)

Cool!

EXT. NEW YORK THEATER - NIGHT

"BRENDA TERRY IN 'RAINBOWS' " appears in large letters on the marquee.

INT. NEW YORK THEATER - NIGHT

BACKSTAGE

Theater actors and visitors chat amiably. Brenda, in costume, warmly greets Dennis. Brenda introduces Dennis to her handsome African-American friend, LAMONT.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

It was great to see her. I met her Writer/Director Lamont. We chatted for awhile. I praised their show, and he said he wished he'd seen "Unity on Trial".

INT. DENNIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dennis sits at a desk, typing at a manual typewriter. Next to him are two large bulletin boards with 3" x 5" cards held up with thumb tacks.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

I tried to write a play for Brenda and Lamont, but it didn't work out.

Dennis pulls a sheet of paper out of the typewriter in frustration. He puts in new paper and starts again.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

It just wasn't my thing. Brenda and Lamont became very successful and got married. That ended my childish dream of spending the rest of my life with my first love.

INT. LONDON AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

A crowd of fans and media are waiting. Dennis and Li'l Albert arrive at the terminal to CHEERS and adulation. They sign autographs, answer journalists' questions, pose for photos.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

It turned out our benefactor in England didn't want to pay for the entire band. They didn't even want to pay for me but Albert insisted. Albert was welcomed like royalty.

INT. LONDON BLUES CLUB - NIGHT

A dark, smoky club, packed with a large audience.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Those British musicians idolized L'il Albert.

ONSTAGE

Albert performs on acoustic guitar to an admiring, reverent audience.

AUDIENCE - LATER

Dennis and Albert sit at a table near the stage. Albert is approached by fans, including celebrities and musicians.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

The British musicians ignored me, so I just sat at the table and, as Vince would say, "drew".

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Dennis sketching celebrity rock musicians meeting with Li'l Albert.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Dennis and Albert drink tea at a table.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Everywhere we went, people gave us
gifts - even royalty.

The QUEEN'S GRANDDAUGHTER, an attractive blonde, approaches,
handing Albert a gift package.

QUEEN'S GRANDDAUGHTER

Mr. Albert, My Grandmum listened to
your songs. "Simply charming and
delightful" were her exact words.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Dennis packing crates -

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Albert got afghans, pipes, china,
guitars, jewelry, and fine liquor.
It took six crates to ship it home.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Dennis and Albert sit together.

DENNIS

Are you disappointed we didn't go
to Japan?

L'IL ALBERT

You ever heard Japan music? Those
English folks treated me like I was
King of America. Now I can go home
and die happy.

DENNIS

I was hoping you'd stick around for
awhile.

INT. GOLD RING - DAY

The ambiance is eclectic, with a retro 1940's sofa, record
albums and musical instruments hanging on the wall, marked
with price tags. Unity Tour mementos are in a display case.
Dennis stands behind a counter. He's now in his 30's.

SUPER: A FEW YEARS LATER

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Vince had so much money that he bought The Gold Ring and he put me in charge. I expanded it into a music memorabilia shop. I even gave guitar lessons and performed onstage from time to time.

INSERT: L'il Albert's record hangs on the wall with a twelve dollar price tag.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Albert put out a record, and I illustrated the cover. You can still buy a signed copy for twelve bucks at the Gold Ring.

INSERT: Photo of Bobby in army uniform, pinned with a medal, standing with his young, conservatively dressed Vietnamese wife.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Bobby came home from Viet Nam with a Purple Heart for I don't know what, and a Vietnamese wife, Pham.

EXT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

A shiny, colorful new sign reads: "ROMANO BROTHERS AUTO SHOP". Some expensive cars are parked in the lot.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Vince's wealth from his inheritance grew exponentially. The Auto Shop was prospering.

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

The Romano Brothers auto shop has been vastly improved. Bobby, in mechanic's uniform, works on an engine.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Vince hired Bobby as a mechanic. Vince and Roxie were living large.

Vince and Roxie, dressed sharp, drive into the shop with a flashy new car.

EXT. GLENOAKS STREET - DAY

Roxie and PHAM, Bobby's Vietnamese wife, fashionably dressed, sashay down the street holding shopping bags.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Roxie saw an opportunity to create another "hottie" pal for herself. She took Pham to upscale department stores, bought her stylish clothes, make up, and paraded her around Glenoaks as her own creation. They were the Toast of the Town.

INT. VINCE AND ROXIE'S LIVING ROOM - MONTHS LATER

Sitting on a sofa, Roxie and Pham hold their newborn babies.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

The husbands obviously responded to their hottie wives. Roxie and Pham went from being babes to having babies born the same month.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony in wheelchair, with Nurse Kimberly shaking her head no.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Even Tony proposed marriage to Nurse Kimberly, but she told him her father would never allow it.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A group of mourners stand around a gravestone, including Dennis, Brave New World band members, Vince, Roxie, Tony, Nurse Kimberly, Bobby, Pham and their YOUNG CHILDREN. Journalists and photographers are present.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

Everyone was at L'il Albert's funeral. Celebrities, Brave New World, and even some media were there. Roxie and Pham's kids were asking -

YOUNG CHILDREN

Where's Unca Albie?

Dennis stands in front of the mourners mouthing a speech.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

I said a few words and then we
played a song for Albert.

Dennis and Brave New World perform an acoustic version of
"Always Play Some Blues".

INT. GOLD RING - DAY

Dennis looks toward the entrance.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

I have to admit, I was kinda hoping
someone like Brenda would come
through the door. It's not easy to
find a new favorite person.

Dennis notices a fashionable young black woman enter and look
around the shop.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

I grabbed my best guitar, smiled
warmly, and asked -

DENNIS

Do you like The Blues?

FASHIONABLE YOUNG BLACK WOMAN

No, I don't. It's the kinda music
my parents would listen to. I like
Hip-Hop.

Dennis looks disappointed.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Hip-Hop? Not a fan. But life's
always interesting...you never know
who's gonna come through your door.

A FEW DAYS LATER

While sweeping, Dennis looks up to see a vivacious white girl
in her late 20's, SAMANTHA, enter the shop.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Samantha came in looking for props
for a film she was working on.

Samantha chats with Dennis. He shows her some items in the
shop.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Dennis and Samantha stroll hand in hand.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

We hit it off, and did all those things new couples do.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Dennis and Samantha sit at a table, chatting and enjoying themselves.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

I regaled her with tales of Glenoaks High, Vince, Bobby, Tony, and of course, Brenda. I told her all about the Unity Tour and how L'il Albert was revered in England.

INT. DENNIS' APARTMENT - DAY

LIVING ROOM

Samantha sits near Dennis typing on a manual typewriter as he dictates -

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

Samantha loved hearing my life story and suggested I might want to write a screenplay. She even volunteered to type it for me.

Samantha and Dennis arrange index cards on a cork board as they discuss his story.

OLDER DENNIS (V.O.)

We used a large cork board with push pins, and wrote notes on 3" x 5" index cards with scenes and dialogue, just like professional writers do.

INT. GOLD RING - DAY

Dennis loses balance as he walks through his shop.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

I first noticed I was having trouble walking when I accidentally stomped on a six hundred dollar guitar.

Dennis accidentally knocks over and stomps on an expensive guitar. He looks at the broken guitar with disbelief.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Dennis tries to play guitar, but his fingers no longer work.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

Then my fingers started to go, and I couldn't play guitar any longer.

- Dennis holds his drawing pad and his shaky hand can barely draw a line.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

I couldn't draw any longer either.

Dennis looks unhappy at the shaky drawing. He rips off the page and throws it in the trash.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

With each new change, I was losing confidence. But Samantha wouldn't let that happen. Every day, she had good ideas about how to make this work.

- Dennis walks with a cane with Samantha next to him, helping him with his balance.

- Dennis sits in a wheelchair. He dictates to Samantha, who types for him.

OLDER DENNIS V.O.

Even though I can't play the Blues anymore, with Samantha's help, I got a chance to write my life story.

- Samantha helps Dennis brush his teeth.

- Samantha helps Dennis take a shower.

DENNIS V.O.

She was always on top of things and was a great captain...always there, supportive and loving. With Samantha, I was always upbeat and happy, regardless of the situation.

- A motorized "hoyer lift", operated by Samantha, carries Dennis out of his bed and lowers him into his wheelchair. She gives him a kiss.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. GLENOAKS CLIFF - DAY

Samantha, in a folding chair, and Dennis, in his wheelchair, sit looking at a rainbow, holding hands.

DENNIS V.O.

Samantha ended up being my new favorite person in the world. She taught me to take life as it comes and do your best. It's just like Albert used to say -

L'IL ALBERT V.O.

"Sometimes you win,
Sometimes you lose,
Just make the best of things..."

DENNIS V.O.

"And you can always play some Blues."

- Dennis takes headphones from his pocket and puts them on. A Brave New World BLUES GUITAR SOLO comes on. He smiles.

THE END

FADE OUT.