

AMERICAN WHISKEY

Written by Domenic Ferrari

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - DAY

We are immediately consumed with the brilliance of Wall Street's tallest building and taken away when we step inside to revel in the Christmas decorations that fill the main lobby.

INSIDE LOBBY we're FLYING high above all sorts of people, mostly suits. Coming closer to the ground, we pick out...

JOHN BRENNAN, age 22, six-one, muscular, average length hair, a convicted felon. John served thirteen months at Altona Correctional Facility on an assault charge.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Here is the inside of the elevator. Notice that we are not consulted or greeted during our ride up, this is common.

John is devoid of expression. He takes a Kleenex out of his pocket.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The elevator doors open on the 28th FLOOR and the first person we see is a crimped receptionist sitting at her desk, under a heavy sign which says: GLOBAL RECRUITING.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

As you walk you will see an infantry of green cubicles. These cubicles seat well over two dozen recruiters.

SOUND of office busy at work: shuffling, data entry, soliciting.

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Sheets with heading "Fight to the Finish" and so forth are tacked to cubicle wall.

Global Recruiting is assigned to hire university graduates to teach abroad and spends a great deal of money to insure their clients carry the highest confidence in the world.

Desk is cluttered with forms, reports and a Macintosh terminal.

Clean, middle-aged man looks up from desk. We CUT IN to ongoing conversation between the middle-aged RECRUITER and young man sitting across from him.

The young man is JOHN BRENNAN. On the surface he's difficult to judge, sporting a black suit and tie. He has an engaging smile that flashes an innocence from time to time. But behind that smile one can see the wounds caused by a tortured upbringing.

The RECRUITER is upbeat; he starts his day before sunrise. JOHN is not his usual introverted self. His squared shoulders are ready to take this high flying circus act for a ride:

RECRUITER

I must say I'm very impressed with what I see here -- Bachelor's degree in Science, Bachelor in American Lit.

JOHN

(a snuffle)

Thank you, sir. I plan to earn my Master's in no time - pardon me.

John whips out the Kleenex and blasts a loud horn to clear his sinuses.

RECRUITER

Call me Pete. May I get you something, a hot cup of tea?

JOHN

Thank you, but I'll be fine. It's just a cold.

RECRUITER

Well, you know what they say, feed a cold, starve a fever.

The RECRUITER is mildly perusing JOHN'S resume. JOHN isn't at all naïve to childish talk.

RECRUITER (CONT'D)

When I had the sniffles as a child the feed a cold thing was usually good for a Twinkie.

John smiles. For a moment, he is a picture of complete obedience.

JOHN
That's clever.

The Recruiter puts the resume down, takes off his glasses and leans across the desk toward John.

RECRUITER
Tell me a little about yourself,
John.

JOHN
I was born in New York. I've lived
here all my life. I'm an only child.
I've worked as a lifeguard, camp
counselor, tutor...

RECRUITER
Tutor? Tell me more about that.

JOHN
I'm sure this is where I caught the
teaching bug. I tutored high school
kids mostly.

RECRUITER
What did you learn most?

JOHN
What's done to children, they will
do to society.

RECRUITER
Interesting.

JOHN
(in a very small voice)
It's not mine. It's a quote by
Karl Menninger.

RECRUITER
(clearing throat)
Where did you hear about us?

JOHN

(a snuffle)

In my job search, I investigated a number of recruiters. Yours was one of the few that interested me. I understand you pride yourself at being the best?

A thin smile cracks almost indiscernibly across JOHN'S lips.

RECRUITER

(caught off guard)

Oh, yes! Everyone's heard about Global Recruiting, we're by far the best recruitment office in the country. We only hire university graduates here. We're very strict with that. We work closely with private organizations around the world concentrating primarily with teaching English as a second language. Currently, we're working very hard to fill a high demand in Beijing.

JOHN

Beijing?

RECRUITER

That's right. Beijing, China. Any problem?

JOHN

(slight nervousness)

No, problem.

RECRUITER

It involves committing to a three year contract. Flight and expenses are paid. Room and board are paid. Your salary begins at sixty-thousand per year with a raise after the first year. How does it sound so far?

JOHN
(a deep breath)
Sixty thousand?

RECRUITER
That's right.

JOHN
When does the position start?

RECRUITER
First of the New Year. This is why
we called our candidates in as fast
as we did. We're all running frantic.

JOHN
No apologies needed.

RECRUITER
Do you mind if I ask you a number
of personal questions? It's company
policy.

JOHN
I don't mind.

RECRUITER
(casually, almost to himself)
Are you on any psychiatric medication?

JOHN
No.

RECRUITER
(looks at John)
Are you a convicted felon?

JOHN
No.

RECRUITER
What is your denomination?

JOHN
Undecided.

RECRUITER

(shrugs, smiles)

It doesn't matter to us one bit,
young man. We're sending you to
a bunch of atheists.

SUPERIMPOSED MAIN TITLE AND CREDITS

TITLES follow as indicated, sound and action continuing
after each credit.

SLIGHT TIMECUT: The Recruiter continues talking. JOHN'S soft,
piercing eyes make contact. He is like a vulture taunting the
warm prey, playing song and image as CREDITS continue over...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The Recruiter escorts JOHN to the elevator, playing song and
image as CREDITS continue over...

... The film's opening song eventually fades away. John exits
the elevator...

EXT. STREET - DAY

From a high angle - John walks the downtown street, trashing the
unnecessary Kleenex at the nearest trash bin. John's pace slows
as he catches a patch of ice in front of a tavern...

EXT. TAVERN - DAY

... a neon-lettered sign in the window, glittering in mid-
afternoon: "NOAH'S ARK TAVERN".

SOUND of Canned Heat singing "Going Up The Country" over the
loudspeaker. O.S. "I'm going up the country, babe don't you
wanna go I'm going up the country, babe don't you wanna go I'm
going to some place where I've never been before I'm going, I'm
going where the water tastes like wine Well I'm going where the
water tastes like wine We can jump in the water, stay drunk all
the time..."

John presses his face up against the glass and looks inside.

Bustling noise of busy bar: a man sizing up his steak, a couple toasting, a busboy collecting plates, a waitress pouring a glass of whiskey on the rocks.

INT. REMEMBERED TAVERN - ANOTHER TIME

JOY BRENNAN, hunched up against the bar, drunken, while Little John plays with a coaster. The song continues over the noises of tinkling glasses "... I'm gonna leave this city, got to get away I'm gonna leave this city, got to get away..."

BARTENDER'S VOICE

Mrs.?

JOY BRENNAN

Did I tell you to stop pouring?

INT. TAVERN - DAY

John lights a cigarette as he curiously gazes about the tavern. Slouched at a square table several WELL-DRESSED SCHOOLTEACHERS (too well-dressed for this place), a cluster of CATHOLICS who hang onto their rosaries as if it were their ticket into the ark.

A plump WAITRESS startles John out of a daze.

WAITRESS

You can't smoke in here.

John ignores the woman and leaves. The waitress isn't impressed:

WAITRESS

Merry Christmas -- asshole!

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - ONE HOUR LATER

Angle widens to include John as he walks and smokes.

We are somewhere off West 57th Street. The bustle has not let up.

EXT. of CATHOLIC CEMETERY - DAY

Large neon sign reads, "Holy Cross" next to less prominent sign "Resting Home." People of all race and color are permitted in here, as long as one can afford it.

INT. LANDING - Everybody is familiar with their brochures:

HOLY CROSS CEMETERY - "Holy Cross is a place like no other - we're famous for our comfort and affordability. But our people make us famous." An Ad sign indicates: "Up To 20% Off."

EXT. CATHOLIC CEMETERY - DAY

John walks past a Spanish family, praying aloud...

EXT. CATHOLIC CEMETERY SECTION 2 - DAY

... an endless section of plain stone markers. John makes the sign of the cross to a photo of a young girl, guiltily stepping over her in order to get to his parent's grave, indistinguishable from the other graves except for the name on the headstone. John kneels on the grave with almost absurd solemnity, head tilted down. He is frowning, sorrow repressed by anger.

The headstone reads:

JOY BRENNAN
May 3, 1946 - October 2, 2005

JACK BRENNAN
November 12, 1943 - November 14, 2005

John gazes over his father:

JOHN
You should've gone before Mommy --
lousy fuck...

STREET IN THE WEST END - NIGHT

John walks briskly up to a five storey apartment.

INT. APARTMENT FOYER - MAILBOX - NIGHT

John checks his mailbox and looks at his bills with distaste. He hears loud music blaring down the hallway. Now he separates bills from junk mail, junk mail from letters stated "Urgent" and dumps them among other "Urgent" notices laid to rest in a recycling bin on the floor. These include:

A THIRTY DAY PAYMENT OVERDUE notice from the cemetery, a FOUR MONTH PAYMENT OVERDUE notice from one of three credit card collection agencies and a SIX MONTH PAYMENT OVERDUE notice from the telephone company.

INT. APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

John starts toward his flat.

He lives on the ground floor, conveniently next door to the superintendent. John is ready to head inside when the door next to his clicks open. A woman in her early thirties wearing a pink bathrobe pops out.

She is MARGARET COX, the Superintendent's wife, and she looks overly friendly this evening:

MARGARET

How come your dressed like a priest?

JOHN

I was at a cemetery.

MARGARET

A cemetery, yuk!

(she exposes her tongue)

Who died?

JOHN

My parents.

MARGARET

Oh, poor baby. I know what will make you feel better. Do you want to come in and cheer up?

JOHN

Where's your husband?

MARGARET

He's on the seventh floor fixing a leaky faucet.

JOHN

We don't have a seventh floor.

MARGARET
 I know, silly!
 (she laughs through her
 nostrils)
 You can be such a silly, Willy!

He ducks into his apartment.

MARGARET'S VOICE
 You know where to find me --

INT. FLAT 112 - HALLWAY/KITCHEN - NIGHT

As we enter we are immediately greeted by two cats, Stan and Oliver. We HEAR the harsh BUZZING of a fan. This keeps the cat litter stench tolerant. The walls are white, the floors are hardwood, and the furniture requires new upholstery. There are plenty of books, mostly hard covers.

A CD player, stacks of CD's and videos, a 21-inch TV, an unframed print of fictional anti-hero Travis Bickle (Mohawk-cut, armed and bloodstained) tacked up on the wall.

A black crucifix is hung over the front door to keep some of the nastier ghosts away. CAMERA continues to PAN, examining the kitchen. On the kitchen counter is a kettle. It is a Wal-Mart model with the spout shaped like a cuckoo bird. As you walk through the kitchen you will see a sign that reads *Bless This Home*. This came from John's mother before she passed away.

INT. FLAT 112 - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John flicks on a lamp, drops the mail and the key on a small table, looks around with distaste at the mess he's created over the past month. He crumples a stack of newspapers, mostly Classifieds with snippets of ADS reading: "WORK OVERSEAS", "MAKE A MINT", "TEACH FOR FREE" and "ARE YOU A UNIVERSITY GRADUATE WITH NO EXPERIENCE?"

Then there are some more motivational snippets: "FREE YOURSELF", "READY FOR CHANGE?", "STUCK IN A RUT - WANT TO KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO?", "GET MORE OUT OF LIFE & CREATE MEANING..."

Now he slips off his jacket, gathers up a number of Coca-Cola cans. Hands full he notices the lamp light bulb flickering.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP on LIGHTBULB, a BEAM OF LIGHT refracting through it just before it begins to FLASH...

PULLING BACK slowly, we see FLASH speed up and FLICKER in a steady rhythm: FLICKER...FLICKER... FLICKER...

At the same moment, a recognizable variant of heavy metal artist JUDAS PRIEST'S "Breaking The Law" song blares loud.

John peers closely at the light bulb.

INT. REMEMBERED COLD CELLER - ANOTHER TIME

A LIGHTBULB

A long string hangs from the bulb. The room in which it hangs is damp. We hear off screen slurping.

We track off to reveal a jug of homemade moonshine, which we see flowing through a thin plastic hose. The continuing track reveals a man (John's father), filling long-neck bottles. The man, fortyish, wearing jeans, is short, and big bellied. He's crouched. He sucks air out of the hose in order to bring up spirit from the jug.

We hold for a long beat as JACK BRENNAN slurps the spirit.

INT. FLAT 112 - NIGHT

CLOSE on JOHN: He hears his mother and father.

JOY BRENNAN'S VOICE
What were you doing in the cellar?

JACK BRENNAN'S VOICE
Fixing a light bulb.

INT. REMEMBERED KITCHEN - ANOTHER TIME

We ZOOM slowly toward an open door leading into a luxuriously decorated DINING ROOM, reserved for special meals. A PHOTOGRAPH on the wall shows Jack, Joy and Little John Brennan.

JOY BRENNAN
It takes you two hours to fix a light bulb?

Joy lights a cigarette. Severely depressed, she calms her nerves with a hard drink and turns on her radio, finds only static and snaps it off. Further depressed, she examines her reflection in the oven window and fills another glass with whiskey. Through this, leading into the next scene, Judas Priest continues "... There I was completely wasting, out of work and down All inside its so frustrating as I drift from town to town Feel as though nobody cares if I live or die So I might as well begin to put some action in my life Breaking the law, breaking the law, Breaking the law..."

INT. FLAT 112 - NIGHT

From a high angle -- the light bulb finally burns out.

INT. FLAT 112 - KITCHEN - NIGHT

John turns on the kitchen light, dumps the newspapers with the other garbage under the sink and heads toward the front door. There is no thought of recycling at this time.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

It's convenient to have a garbage shoot just outside your front door and John appreciates it. He opens what looks like a closet door, lifts the shoot and drops a load. He's been known to drop everything down that shoot: broken glass, broken kitchen appliances, cat litter, you name it.

Releasing the shoot, John closes the door behind him. Just then, PERCY SHELBY, whose music continues to blare: "So much for the golden future, I cant even start I've had every promise broken, there's anger in my heart You don't know what its like, you don't have a clue If you did you'd find yourselves doing the same thing too Breaking the law..." Percy comes trudging out of his apartment with his cat, Sidney. Percy is a tall, thin man of thirty who looks like he's expecting with a pouch the size of a watermelon. No one can mistake PERCY with his trademark frizzy hair.

PERCY

Howdy.

Percy has "burnout" written all over him. His eyes tell it all: spacey, repressed, lonely, but spacey nonetheless.

JOHN
Like Judas Priest, do you?

PERCY
Their Sidney's favorite. Going home
for the holidays?

JOHN
I am home.
(opens apartment door)

PERCY
Frosty's on tonight.

JOHN
Frosty The Snowman?

PERCY
(smiling)
I'm making popcorn for Sidney and
I. You're welcomed to join us.

JOHN
No thanks.

He heads in as Percy adds:

PERCY
Merry Christmas 'case I don't see you.

INT. FLAT 112 - BATHROOM - NIGHT

John, standing in front of the mirror, proceeds to shave his
head using clippers. A telephone is ringing. John lets it
ring...

JOHN'S VOICE MAIL
Leave your name and number.

INSERT

A close up picture of TRAVIS BICKLE blasting away.

RECRUITER (V.O.)
John, it's Pete from Global
Recruiting...

CUT TO JOHN: shaving his head into a Mohawk-cut.

RECRUITER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Hey, we're in a bind and you got
the job if you want it.

As the proceeding events occur, we are still tuned in to the RECRUITER background voiceover.

INT. FLAT 112 - ANOTHER DAY

TRACKING SHOT across interior JOHN'S FLAT. On the edge of the bed there is an airline ticket.

RECRUITER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Like I said we're desperate for
bodies, the teaching job pays
sixty thousand after the first year.
That's board included.

As John buttons his army jacket (camouflage design), cut to...

RECRUITER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Here's the catch -- you're expected
out there in a week.

... John's fingers fasten his zipper...

RECRUITER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Here's an honest deal. The money's
there if you want it. We'll take
care of the rest.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

John locks the door to his flat behind him, leaving his cats nestled safely by Percy's door.

RECRUITER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Just remember to offer your respect
to those students. Their parents
are our rich clients. Without them,
we're both in high heaven -- you
catch my drift.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

John leaves the apartment, carrying his suitcase.

RECRUITER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I hope to hear from you, John! Like I said we're running out of time here, so if you're interested you better get back to me by morning or I'll have to go searching for wild geese.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

High angle of departing cab, ending voice mail "... if you get this message tonight don't hesitate to call me on my home line. Here's the number," as John enters terminal. BAGGAGE HANDLER wearing red gloves walks past him.

INT. AIRPORT DEPARTURE TERMINAL - DAY

All sorts of people push and run down the massive hallway. John rides the wave, alongside a suit, biting his pinky as he watches the huge neon billboards streaking by, reminding him of the grind: "Getting extra cash is more convenient and accessible than ever! Visit CitiCommerce and you could pick up your check for \$5,000 today."

Suits and suitcases are congested everywhere; well-dressed sorts are pushing, running with the Vegas crowds.

The number of passengers passing through LaGuardia Airport is estimated at over 25,000,000 per year.

INT. TERMINAL CHECK-IN - DAY

A long line up awaits John. He walks briskly to the back and joins the line, his face glowing in the reflected light from the sign reading, "VIRGIN AIRLINES".

Our eyes scan the long line. The regulars - businessmen, socialites, retirees, gamblers, Yuppies all prepare to board.

Our eyes now focus on (as anyone would) a YOUNG GAY COUPLE embracing in the distance.

INT. GATE 204 - DAY

John sits and reads. It's been years but over the next twenty some odd hours he plans to re-read Jack London's "The Call Of The Wild."

We're relaxed, looking down on John from OVERHEAD.

We ZOOM slowly down as he reads, transfixed. Somewhere beneath those youthful, beady eyes lurks an animal waiting too to release itself.

In John's POV, the tiny print of London is inviting. "He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his after life he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law."

For the time being John remains reposed and calm like a cub in hibernation...

LOUDSPEAKER'S VOICE

Now boarding Flight 9201. . .
All passengers to the gate.

John picks up his suitcase and walks toward GATE, then pauses in a window to inspect his Mohawk.

INT. PLANE - DAY

An attractive, FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT welcomes everyone aboard with a big smile: Angle widens to include John, holding a carry-on and paperback.

John moves enthusiastically along and finds his seat next to the window. He finds the limited space at his feet bothersome and decides to pack his duffel bag in the upper compartment.

We wait for John to get comfortable. It is a long flight into Beijing - almost 26 hours, which includes a stopover in LA and Hong Kong.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The nose of the plane glares against the sun.

INT. SEAT J203 - DAY

John turns to the window as the plane hauls its long, swaying tail. Next to it a BAGGAGE HANDLER, bent down, is hauling a slew of bags, his back, arms, and muscle bound legs straining as he moves forward at a slow, bobbing pace.

John is reading again. The plane is gliding along, passengers trying to relax after a shaky takeoff. Only one middle-aged black lady stands, irritably struggling to use the restroom. John makes brief eye contact with her.

ONE HOUR LATER

Carting down the aisle, at a turtle pace, the FLIGHT ATTENDANT, an attractive woman, offers drinks. John takes a vial from his coat pocket and shakes out a Gravol.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Care for a drink, sir?

John smells perfume and leans into her for a better scent.

JOHN
Water.

John pops the pill into his mouth, takes the bottled water and refuses the tiny package of pretzels. He doesn't bother to thank the FLIGHT ATTENDANT for her service and hospitality.

Bored, John slips on his earphones, staring out at the sky and unable to concentrate on his book. On the radio, several recording artists cut in and out, "These voices, these voices! I hear them! (hear them, hear them, hear them)! I'll follow! I'll follow! I'll follow! I'll follow! I'll follow all these voices!..." ... continuing his song as he eyes (almost staring) the clear blue sky, growing sleepier by the second. "But you know nowadays it's the old man, he's got all the money and a young man ain't got nothin' in the world these days I said nothing..."

John watches a cloud pass. "... Holes in our spirit causin' tears and fears one-sided..." Through this, leading into the next scene, Gordon Lightfoot sings softly "... Out on runway number Nine Big 707 set to go But I'm stuck here in the grass where the cold wind blows Now the liquor tasted good..."

INT. REMEMBERED TRAIN RIDE - ANOTHER TIME

Joy Brennan, relaxing in her seat, eyes closed, while Little John plays chess with one hand while the other grips his mother's wrist tightly. Elvis Presley's cover continues "...

... You can't jump a jet plane Like you can a freight train So I'd best be on my way In the early morning rain..."

JOY BRENNAN

Mommy wants to sleep a little, baby boy, okay? Mommy loves you.

PILOT'S VOICE

-- Folks, we have a special treat for you this evening. Back by popular demand our Classic Movie Pick will be "Rocky" starring Sylvester Stallone and Talia Shire. Winner of the Academy Award for BEST PICTURE we're sure you'll enjoy this CLASSIC feature.

EXT. BLACK SKY - NIGHT

A stunning view through the pilot's windshield.

INTERCUT MOVIE SCREEN

Sylvester Stallone in his familiar black drab walks in the late night offering acknowledgement to a young girl.

INT. SEAT J203 - NIGHT

John is woken by his neighbor, a muscular woman who can't stop coughing.

Annoyed by the MUSCLE WOMAN, John turns over and covers his face with a blanket.

MUSCLE WOMAN

(scanning John's jacket)

What war are you fighting?

John closes his eyes, irritably struggling with the MUSCLE WOMAN'S constant jarring.

MUSCLE WOMAN (CONT'D)

You ever watch this movie? It's great!
I especially like this scene with the
girl -- she's such a little whore.

She scowls as she's made aware that John wants no part of the conversation, then pulls her blanket around her chest and turns away from him.

INT. REMEMBERED KITCHEN - ANOTHER TIME

Little John sits at the kitchen table, playing chess with his father while Joy cooks supper.

LITTLE JOHN

Checkmate.

Jack turns, pretending to be stern as Joy laughs.

JOY'S VOICE

I told you our son's smart.
(flips a pancake)
How many six-year-olds you know
can beat a grown man at chess?

INT. SEAT J203 - NIGHT

John pulls the blanket off his face, takes his earphones and slips them on, offering a good-natured grin to the MUSCLE WOMAN. She's occupied, drinking a tall milk shake. She looks away when she sees John watching her. John sits up, rubbing his eyes.

MOVIE SCREEN: Rocky is walking a young girl through the neighborhood streets of Philadelphia.

ROCKY

'Cause that's the way guys are -
They laugh when ya talk dirty.
They think ya cute for a while,
but then ya getta reputation an'
watch out.

The MUSCLE WOMAN pops several pills of assorted shapes and colors. John concentrates on the film.

ROCKY

Nobody's ever gonna take ya serious.
Ya get no respect... I gotta use a
bad word -- Whore. You'll end up
maybe becomin' a whore.

MARIE

C'mon, Rocky. I'm twelve.

INT. REMEMBERED KITCHEN - ANOTHER TIME

Jack Brennan lashes out on Little John - upset about the chess game -- a bottle of whiskey in full view.

JOY BRENNAN

It was just a game.

JACK BRENNAN

I don't want to play the stupid
game, no more.

INT. SEAT J203 - NIGHT

John leans his head back, closing his eyes.

MARIE'S VOICE

... Fuck you, Creepo!!!

ROCKY'S VOICE

... Yeah, who're you to give advice,
Creepo.

EXT. COUNTRY LAND - DAY

From a high angle, the plane begins to quietly descend.

INT. AIRPORT RESTROOM - DAY

John fixes his Mohawk in the mirror.

INT. AIRPORT - CUSTOM HANDLING - DAY

John and a fellow American check their baggage in L.A.

EXT. PLANE - VIRGIN AIRLINES - DAY

The jumbo takes off.

INT. SEAT D331 - DAY

John now sits between two young CHINESE EXECUTIVES and a group of CHINESE STUDENTS wearing military caps, passing an electronic game. John follows the conversation between the EXECUTIVES. It's like listening to the World Series on the radio.

John leans back in his seat and sleeps.

INT. BOARDING TUNNEL - DAY

From a high angle, John walks swiftly from the plane, along side a group of Chinese students dressed like Hollywood celebrities.

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY

Sparkling on a near wall - RENT A CAR IN BEIJING!

EXT. BEIJING AIRPORT - DAY

SOUND of car horns, shuffling feet, squealing wheels.

First impression of Beijing is of a serene vastness, conveyed by the sprawl of white faces wearing black baseball caps. It's the third week of December and surprisingly cold.

EXT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

The GOLDEN ARCHES shine bright!

Outside the doors, a Chinese bluesman plays a mean harmonica.

One is immediately convinced of McDonald's claim to fame in China. John's pace slows as he looks inside...

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

... a Beijing family of four sitting at a table devouring an assortment of hamburger and French fries...

... another family taking photographs of each other in front of that red-headed clown.

EXT. BUILDING - NEON SIGN - DAY

Colonel with his white goatee and spectacles can be found looking jealously out at his counterpart.

EXT. CHANG'AN JIE - DAY

The giant freeway zooms east-west across the city. Sound of blaring car horns.

EXT. THERMOMETER READING - DAY

In winter it gets very cold, down to minus 20°C, and the mean winds that whip off the Mongolian plains feel like they're freezing your ears off.

This is John's new world: flashy signs, garish glaring main streets, speedier evaluations - a dozen instantaneous decisions a minute. Not much different than his old world.

Only in Beijing will a foreign face elicit no second glances. The city is home to a large expat population, housed for the most part in separate suburban ghettos with little contact with the local Chinese. Indeed, it's quite possible to spend years in Beijing eating Western food, dancing to Western music, and socializing with like-minded foreigners - hardened veterans of the expat scene compare it favorably with Hong Kong.

EXT. JOHN'S taxi speeds downtown.

Beijing is the front line of China's attempts to grapple with modernity - the cranes that skewer the skyline and the white character *chai* ("demolish") painted on old buildings attest to the city's furious pace of change.

Taxi pulls into the Beijing Plaza Condominium.

INT. ROOM 1414 - DAY

Entering the room, John notices immediately an envelope attached to a basket of fruit.

ENGLISHMAN'S VOICE OVER BEGINS:

As he reads we see SHOTS of JOHN examining his furnished condo, which includes visiting the kitchen, shower stall, bedroom and balcony.

LAYTON (V.O.)
(cockney accent)

Dearest John,
Fresh fruit, flowers - you might wonder what the catch is. Guess what, there's no catch. It's just our little way of saying welcome. WELCOME! And there's entertainment too.

Off Screen song ends "... Just exactly where we're going I cannot say, but We might even leave the USA 'Cause there's a brand new game that I want to play No use of you running..."

LAYTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You won't want to miss our very own Christmas Day bash. Enclosed you'll find the details to where and when. No use replying, we'll be expecting you!

JOHN examines the card.

LAYTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In the meantime, take in some of the attractions. Check out the Wall! You can catch one of our Americans playing his guitar by the market. Go on over and meet Happy. You can't miss him!

Close Up: Cover of Card. It is a Greeting card with a vibrant poinsettia bloom. The design could only be described as wishy-washy. A gold foil lined envelope is included. The card opens to read:

MERRY XMAS
Pausing for a moment to let you know how much your decision to join us means to us. Happy Holidays!

Underneath the word "Happy Holidays!" reads: "See you at the party!" Yours truly, Principal Lewis Layton.

In the bathroom, John, starts to undress. He is covered with tattoos (professional and homemade) below the neck line. A brimful of philosophy and art (an American flag with skulls) escalates down his forearm. John hits the ground, raising a count"... one, two, three, four, five, six, seven..."

Such poetic sayings include: "Unused power slips imperceptibly into the hands of another." "There is no such thing as inner peace, there is only nervousness and death." "God keeps the wicked to give them time to repent."

On the bathroom tile, John lies on the cold ceramic and begins to do push-ups. He raises his behind high in the air, sticks out his chest and lifts his head. After several minutes, he begins to count out loud:

JOHN

One sixty-two, sixty-three, sixty four, sixty five, sixty-six, sixty-seven, one sixty-eight, sixty-nine, one seventy, one seventy-one, one seventy-two, one seventy-three, one-seventy-four...

THE FOLLOWING DAY. JOHN sits in McDonalds. Teenagers in the latest baggy fashions wallow away their time.

John sits, all freshened up, somewhat aware, but mostly oblivious to the huge bus ads streaking by:

"You Want To Be King? Use our Royal Treatment face products" promising those "Keys To The Kingdom" of wealth and happiness.

THROUGH A WINDSHIELD - DAY

We are driving past a huge billboard offering an opportunity to travel and explore: "Visit Hong Kong and Complete Your Life."

High angle of moving bus, alternating high shots with close-ups of the bus exhaust.

Angle widens to include John seated at the front of the bus.

EXT. BANK OF HONG KONG BILLBOARD - DAY

The big Chinese AD flutters over the cityscape "This New Year don't leave for school without a Six Pack: Bank Of Hong Kong's Student "Six Pack" is the best student banking bundle on the market with your student financial needs. Let Bank of Hong Kong help you."

EXT. FREEWAY SIGN - DAY

... passing a sign marking the easiest route to the GREAT WALL...

EXT. TIA'ANMEN SQUARE - DAY

... passing a window which features a blue sapphire bracelet - pausing as horns blast and a long-legged Chinese woman in heavy makeup and heels is hailing a taxicab.

EXT. QIANMEN AREA - DAY

The bus moves through a crowd of noisy market shoppers...

EXT. DOMINO'S PIZZA - DAY

John has started up before he notices a man wearing a T-shirt that says "Happy", struggling to play an acoustic guitar.

HAPPY
(shouting)

Don't wind up as a human sacrifice...

John studies Happy across the corner of the bar -- a sickly, tall, curly red-headed man with Go-Tee and ten-gallon hat who could be mistaken for the giant-sized Yosemite Sam - hustling a dime by selling condoms.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
You get protection now. That's it.
Better safe than sorry.

John gets closer to examine the man.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
What's the matter, Comanche, never seen a condom before?

JOHN
I'm John Brennan. I was supposed
to meet you.

Happy sells a box to an English bloke before giving his full
and undivided attention to John.

HAPPY
Oh, yeah. Right the Yankee. Step
into my office.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

John has difficulty keeping up with Happy, who takes long
undivided strides.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Look, with these folks you gotta
give them what they need, they're
hornier than hell in winter. They
don't care about my guitar playing
or my gospel preaching. They need
protection. They want to feel safe,
right? That's what I do. I make
them feel safe.

John hesitates as Happy darts into traffic against a red
light, yelling gospel chants at a racecar driver who nearly
sideswipes him.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
It's a damn crime this rat race.
People don't know if they're
coming or going. You think they'd
learn a thing or two from our
mistakes, right? Damn shame. You
probably thought you were getting
out of the grind, didn't ya?

JOHN
(a stage whisper)
Yeah.

Happy stops at a parked van. John looks puzzled.

HAPPY

Company car, Comanche...

(big smile)

This little venture's something I'm doing on the side when I'm not moving and shaking with my students. First thing you gotta learn about survival, brother: You gotta strike when the iron's hot and these babies are skillet H-O-T, hot.

JOHN

Condom business is booming, eh?

HAPPY

Are you kidding me? I can barely keep these babies in stock as it is. Damn shame, though. Too many rich locals already in on the action. Damn shame if you ask me. Hop in, Comanche, door's open.

Happy pops open his van door, sets his guitar case inside and starts the engine.

EXT. HAPPY'S VAN - DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Happy's van slows as it moves into a freeway jam.

INT. HAPPY'S VAN - DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

He gestures out at the traffic as John fails to raise a brow.

HAPPY

I'm sure glad you showed up.

Happy takes a drink from a half pint of bard liquor, then angrily hits at the steering wheel.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

It's a damn blessing! That's what it is.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

A dozen stalled cars ahead.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

It's one of those things where you
have to be in two places at once,
you know.

EXT. DOWNTOWN JAM - DAY

Nobody's going anywhere.

INT. HAPPY'S VAN - DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Happy suddenly throws the van into "park"...

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Take Layton for size?

... and offers John a swig of whiskey but John refuses.

JOHN

We haven't met.

Happy swigs.

HAPPY

He's really lonely, real lonely, you
know. Being its holiday time, we're
all in itching good spirit. All of
us teachers wanted to get Principal
Layton a little something to show our
gratitude and appreciation.

JOHN

What about a fruit basket?

HAPPY

That's real funny, Comanche. We're
gonna get along just fine, you and me.
No, the girls and I thought we'd get
Layton a puppy, you know, a companion
to keep him company. Sort of like
offering man's best friend. What do
you think of the idea, Comanche? You
like dogs?

Happy can be seen drinking.

JOHN

Who doesn't like dogs?

HAPPY

That's the spirit, boy. We're sure glad you feel that way. We're hoping, to be perfectly honest, I was hoping you wouldn't mind picking a little critter out for the old man? I'd do it myself but I've got some errands to run before the big party tonight. Will you offer a helping hand, Comanche?

JOHN

Sure.

EXT. DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC JAM - DAY

Cars are beginning to move.

INT. HAPPY'S VAN - DAY

Happy keeps swigging.

HAPPY

I really appreciate it. The ladies will be very happy about this. Especially that rascal, Layton.

Happy makes a sharp right and resumes driving.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

You don't need to know much with this fellow named Lee. He breeds all kinds privately. He owes me so don't worry about paying him. Just pick one from the batch he has to offer and he'll get it for you.

EXT. DELICATESSIN - DAY

Happy stops in front of a store with a sign that reads: "Lee's Deli."

HAPPY
Breeding's his part-time gig.

John steps out.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
... Lee's a real nice fella.

He reaches behind John and pushes the door shut.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Pick anything you like. Don't be
bashful...

... and as Happy checks his watch, John lowers his gaze to Lee's window.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
I'll see you tonight.

INT. LEE'S DELI - DAY

John walks up to the front counter and rings a bell, hearing some grunts in the backroom as he sits back in a chair and waits. He overhears a VOICE as he looks at the photos of hot sandwich specials on the far wall.

U2 blares from a cheap radio, "Sunday, Bloody Sunday, Sunday, Bloody Sunday. How long? ..."

Then the door is thrown open by a thin, middle-aged Chinese man -- for an instant appearing to wear a white night gown, the gown is smeared with blood and guts.

The man eyes John closely.

JOHN
Are you Lee?

CHINESE MAN
I'm Lee.

Lee, fat, examines John like a fatted calf as he leads him back to the counter.

JOHN
Happy asked me to pick out a dog.

LEE
Happy sent you? ...

Lee offers him a cheap brochure with a list of dogs and prices attached.

LEE (CONT'D)
... Pick any one you want.

John peruses the brochure, scanning a large assortment of dogs.

JOHN
You have all these dogs?

LEE
We have them all.

JOHN
I won't have to wait long?

LEE
No. Take me five minutes.

John, remains perusing, undetermined.

JOHN
Let's go with something small.
He'll want to play catch.

Lee smiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Give me the Terrier. Is it anything
like the Boston Terrier?

LEE
Boston, Chinese, it's all the same.

Lee exits. John sits in the chair. Beside the chair is a picture of Marilyn Monroe wearing a red dress. John tries to light a cigarette but his lighter fails him - he breaks the cigarette in half - almost knocking the lamp off the table in his impatience.

John looks around aimlessly: A cluster of PEDESTRIANS on the crowded street has stopped to watch him through the window. John turns his head and gazes at the small TV perched on the wall.

John is watching an early evening COOKING PROGRAM. TV background SOUND. Chef is cutting carrots. He speaks Chinese:

CHEF (V.O.)
Don't be afraid to cut along the shaft of the carrot in order to pass through the delicate skin.

John is contently watching the program when Lee suddenly appears before him.

JOHN
That was fast.

LEE
Here you go, sir.

Lee offers a wrapped package of meat for John. John looks at him, trying to understand:

JOHN
What's that?

John tries to make some sense of the situation, but is interrupted by Lee:

LEE
Your Terrier.

John is disgusted by this outcome. His hand has already rolled into a fist, his lips continue to move, but words do not come out. Unable to respond to Lee's remark, John picks up where he left off:

JOHN
My Terrier?!

LEE
(interrupting)
Take it.

JOHN
I don't want it.

John pushes the package away.

LEE
(insisting)
Take it. Take it.

JOHN
You take it.

John storms out of the store in rage, pushing through the crowded sidewalk, pursued by Lee's voice.

LEE'S VOICE
Don't be mad!

EXT. TEMPLE OF HEAVEN - NIGHT

John's walks a busy block of nightclubs and discos. A man's voice sings "Yo listen up here's a story about a little guy that lives in a blue world" in counterpoint to the blasting horns, a siren, a fire bell, a screech of brakes. John's spirits rise as he hears the boom-boom-boom-boom-boom-boom of electronic drums overtaking the constant whistling of brakes and sirens. He quickens his pace into the nightclub.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A bank of lights blinds John as he enters -- electronic dance music blasts his ears -- a grim woman eyes him - the club is crowded with a random selection, oddly with a majority of blue faces...

... two slick-hair men bump their way past him...

... a fast dance number continues...

... "And all day and all night and everything he sees is just blue like him inside and outside blue his house with a blue little window and a blue corvette and everything is blue for him and hissself and everybody around cos he ain't got nobody to listen to..."

... glancing around at those on the dance floor, intrigued to say the least -- the duck flapper, who flaps his arms -- the rooster who struts -- the peacock who bobs his neck...

... John bobs himself slightly dizzy, starting to annoy those he bumps -- the action around him slowing almost imperceptibly - a veil of blue light hanging over the EXIT SIGN -- a similar veil around BARTENDER in the distance, spontaneously curious about the play of light...

The song meanders on as John enters a crowd "... I'm blue da ba dee da ba die..."

John searches the faces of the crowd, elbowed in the mouth suddenly.

From a high angle -- John trudges toward the bar struggling to get through the crowded mass. John's crawling pace comes to stop...

... once last ditch effort...

BAR

A flashy looking male CHINESE BARTENDER races about, taking up to six orders in one breath. The SOUND of the cash register drones in the background.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Two CHINESE MALES gaze into the mirror, at each other, and laugh sinisterly.

MALE VOICE #1
(in Chinese)
You want it from Superman, bitch?

MALE VOICE #2
You wanna see Green Lantern?

INT. STALL - NIGHT

John sits on the toilet.

... from a high angle, looking into the other stall, a YOUNG CHINESE MAN snorts cocaine from the toilet basin, his head tilted upward for full effect...

... zooming in, we see a large BODYBUILDER sitting on the toilet, offering himself to all comers...

... the receding flash of light reveals John moving alone on the dance floor.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

A pair of combat boots, walking...

... flipping up the collar of his jacket, John slouches over and walks toward Layton's place.

EXT. CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

Light rain drizzles as John walks, head lowered, turning into...

INT. CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

... an elegant entrance hall, brightly lit -- signs identifying various residential tenants -- a yellow-on-black holiday card reading LAYTON, TWENTY-SIX FLIGHTS UP. John has started for the elevator when he notices Happy stooped over a giant water fountain, struggling not to heave...

... John staring out at Happy, now paralyzed in the act of heaving his guts out -- intercut in flashing close-ups - John at the elevator, Happy at the fountain...

... beaming Happy's smiling face versus John's quiet glare. Here is an intimate moment unrealized at the present moment...

INT. CONDOMINIUM/FOYER - NIGHT

... Happy staring down into camera, smiling.

HAPPY
No hard feelings.

John remains unmoved like a Roman statue.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Oh, come on, Comanche, don't be sore.
It was a joke, a little harmless
practical joke...

In a moment of silence, distant sounds can be heard - a siren, the grinding teeth of a meat grinder, the squeal of sinister laughter - then John jumps into the elevator in a fit of anger and disappears.

INT. LAYTON'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

A bank of lights blinds John as he enters -- Jamaican reggae music blasts his ears -- a bearded man holds a broom stick while a monstrous collage of bodies limbo - the bearded man shouts over the amplified music.

LAYTON'S VOICE

How low can you go?

The party looks like a hit. The bearded man, fiftyish, identified as Principal Lewis Layton, finally sees the lone wolf at the door and figures it's the American...

... John with anything but a smile, turns his attention to Layton as he raises his stick.

LAYTON

Well, you made it. This here is the New Yorker everybody. Help yourself to some old-fashioned cold Chinese beer. I'm sure that will be quite sufficient for your taste buds.

The man holding the limbo stick runs to the bathroom - he can't wait anymore - leaving Layton to fend for himself.

The condo is crowded with teachers, gathered to let loose and celebrate.

The games continue - now focused on an unattractive old flower child with dirty fingernails, clutching a mistletoe, her eyes glazed. Scrawled in huge letters on the wall over her head - MERRY XMAS!

OLD FLOWER CHILD
Who wants to be the lucky fella?

John heads for the buffet table. Layton meets up with John baring an empty glass.

LAYTON
How ya doing, young fella?
(eyeing the Mohawk)
Cute hairdo, but don't feel you
have to fight anyone here.

... glancing around at the others, Layton is too preoccupied and drunk to wait for a reply from John ...

LAYTON (CONT'D)
You'll like it here just fine. Gets
a bit of getting used to at first but
you'll mix in fine in no time.

John looking around, objectively judging...

... the group total is about twenty, average age no less than forty, maybe thirty-five -- the majority are female and still stand over fifty...

... the dance floor is populated with the remains of what once was the hippie movement: DIVORCEES, RETIRED ACTIVISTS, OUT VOTED POLITICIANS, FAILED BUSINESSMEN, drunken POETS on the prowl...

... whatever the rest of the world got tired of hearing turns up in places like this...

... A burly grease-haired GERMAN stands over the punch bowl. A SOUTH AFRICAN shuffles his penis to one side with hopes of being caught in the act...

... Slouched over the buffet table are several UNDER-DRESSED CANADIANS (too under-dressed for this party), a cluster of RUSSIANS and a lost FRENCHMAN who hangs onto his glass of gin as if it were a gun.

LAYTON
I better get into costume.

... a POLISH woman handling a video-camera documents all she can command.

POLISH CAMERA WOMAN
Let's gather around the American
if we can...

... John reaches for a can of Coke as he sneers into the camera...

POLISH CAMERA WOMAN (CONT'D)
We've got a friendly one here, girls.

INT. COUCH - NIGHT

THREE TEACHERS, all women, middle-aged, drunk, sit on a couch with martinis.

POLISH CAMERA WOMAN (CONT'D)
Smile.

The three women raise their glasses.

The three women are:

QUINN
This Russian is always the first to talk.

BETTY
A middle-aged Canadian with an Axel Rose hair-do, who has a mean stick of her own, sits in the middle of the other two.

CAROL
A black African with a blow-dry afro.

John takes his place next to the couch, with his hands in his pocket. Camera woman keeps shooting.

QUINN
Is it true American's are packed?

The women laugh.

BETTY
That's not what I heard.

LAYTON
I beg to differ, ladies. Coming
from an Englishman.

... Layton laughs as he dances for a moment with a passing tall black woman - the mistletoe swinging around them-faces swimming with curiosity around John...

CAROL
Have the man dance for Chrissake, ee's
not crippled is ee?

LAYTON
Lighten up, young fella?

CAROL
What part of New York is ee from?

John relentlessly gives in.

JOHN
Queens.

Carol turns and quickly hails victory.

CAROL
(to Layton)
You'll be happy with that, Lewis!

The ladies feebly smile.

HAPPY
Leave the boy alone...

Happy in fleeting camera eye close-up, gone in an instant, reappearing.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
... He was dogged by yours truly.

LAYTON
(to John in a whisper)
Happy belongs in the rodeo with the
rest of the clowns.

INT. LAYTON BALCONY - NIGHT

... Carol following Happy and John out...

... John standing on the balcony, smoking, unhurriedly, admiring the cityscape.

HAPPY'S VOICE

Have you heard the one about the
Italian-Jew parole officer?

Happy's name is called in the distance, urging him in. Carol looks peeved.

CAROL

That man's always running. But men
are always running.
(walking away)

... John standing self-consciously, unappreciative of the black woman's remark, glances at the other party goers, automatically crouching his shoulders...

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

A weary Layton dressed as SANTA CLAUS, in a rented beard and over-large costume, warms his hands over the steam of his coffee cup. Happy and John finally have a word on the couch. Happy uncompromisingly tells jokes to anybody listening:

HAPPY

Here's one for you - a teenage girl comes home from school and asks her mother, "Is it true what Rita just told me?" "What's that?" asks her mother. "That babies come out of the same place where boys put their penises?" "Yes it is dear!" replies the mother. "But then, when I have a baby," the daughter says, "won't it knock my teeth out?"

In the background, as Happy speaks, Layton enters the lounge with a bottle in hand, pouring glasses as he goes along.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

One more -- A man and a woman were driving down the road arguing about his deplorable fidelity practices...

(chuckles)

... suddenly the woman reaches over and slices off the man's pecker... angrily the woman tosses the pecker out the window of the car...Driving behind the car is a pickup truck with a fella with his 10 year old daughter chatting away beside him... all of the sudden, the pecker smacks the pickup in the windshield and flies off...

John starts to smile for the first time. Happy sees this and plumes forward. Standing behind him, studying him, Layton interrupts:

LAYTON

(to John)

Where's yer glass?

JOHN

I don't drink.

Layton, clutching the bottle, stares at John blankly.

HAPPY

... surprised, the daughter asks her daddy, "Daddy what in the heck was that?"... Not wanting to expose his 10 year old daughter to sex at such a tender age, the father replies, "It was only a bug, honey"... the daughter gets a confused look on her face, and after a minute, she says... "sure had a big dick !!!"

LAYTON

What the hell are you going on about?

Happy smiles, turning upright:

HAPPY

I got one for you too, sir -- A man was having problems with premature ejaculation so he decided to go to the doctor. He asked the doctor what he could do to cure his problem. In response, the doctor said, "When you feel like you are getting ready to ejaculate, try startling yourself." That same day the man went to the store and bought himself a starter pistol. All excited to try this suggestion, he ran home to his wife. At home, he found his wife was in bed, naked and waiting. As the two began, they found themselves in the 69 position. The man, moments later, felt the sudden urge to ejaculate and fired the starter pistol. The next day, the man went back to the doctor. The doctor asked, "How did it go?" The man answered, "Not that well...when I fired the pistol, my wife shit on my face, bit 3 inches off my penis and my neighbor came out of the closet with his hands in the air!"

LAYTON

I'd call that tasteless...

BETTY

That almost happened to me.

CAROL

It didn't.

BETTY

It did.

HAPPY

(interrupting)

There you go, sir.

... Layton is whisked away by a few of his colleagues to help refill glasses...

EXT. LAYTON'S PENTHOUSE DECK - NIGHT

John munches on a few celery sticks while Layton bellows hoarsely over Burl Ives' "Have a holly, jolly Christmas; It's the best time of the year, I don't know if there'll Be snow, but have a cup of cheer..."

LAYTON'S VOICE
Come and get it!

... Layton bringing John a massive hot dog on a paper plate, watching him bite into it...

LAYTON
(smiling)
Dig in.

BURL IVES
Have a holly, jolly Christmas;
and when you walk down the street
say Hello to friends you know,

LAYTON
(biting into dog)
I don't need a bun.

John balances a plate and a cup of coffee, catching up to Layton as they make their way through the crowd.

LAYTON (CONT'D)
So what brings you to China, my
boy?

Layton spots what he's looking for and seats himself next to a fat Hungarian woman, immersed in the buffet.

JOHN
Teaching.

John remains standing.

LAYTON
What I mean is why China?

JOHN
It's free.

Layton smiles at John.

LAYTON
Free from what, son?

JOHN
The past.

LAYTON
You got a point, there, the ways...

... glancing around with a serious brow, but the only one looking is the fat Hungarian woman, scratching her thigh with her fork.

LAYTON (CONT'D)
... of the world are new here
and there's no point fighting
or making any attempts to change
it, is there? Why, think of it,
the last person they need any
approval for is God...

His hand reaches unconsciously for John's leg.

LAYTON (CONT'D)
... Besides, my boy, don't think
for a moment that you know these
folks. They're far, far more
powerful...

INT. LAYTON LOUNGE - NIGHT

High angle of Happy intruding on conversation between John and Layton, ending song "...Have a holly jolly Christmas, and in case you didn't hear, Oh by golly, have a holly, jolly Christmas this year."

HAPPY
... and richer than you think.

LAYTON
And don't you forget it.

HAPPY

Cardinal rule: Do not bite the hand
that feeds.

John hurls the empty plate into a basket as he rises from his
chair, his glass at his mouth.

LAYTON

Or thy hand shall be chopped off
with no pinky to fend and thine
judgment too frail and meek to mend.

HAPPY

Shakespeare?

LAYTON

Don't you have a bottle to
finish?

HAPPY

Well, sir, the reason I conveniently
interrupted you and our kind Yankee
friend is several of the Russians have
been asking for you. I think you'll
find them on the balcony - if they're
not already gone.

LAYTON

Why didn't you talk sooner?

LAYTON, hypnotically dazed, gladly accepts the invite and dashes
off.

HAPPY

(to John)

Aren't you going to thank me? That
English tart's been eyeing your
pecker ever since you got here.

Happy swings a bottle toward John, who shrugs, grinning. Happy's
eyes glare wildly.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

You gotta lot to learn, Comanche.

... Happy's eyes unnaturally bright, inspecting John, lingering on his Mohawk.

INT. LAYTON PENTHOUSE/FRONT DOORWAY - NIGHT

Happy, fondling his keys, staggers near the opened doorway like a victorious matador after a fight.

HAPPY
Give me my sword and van!

John turns from Happy to Layton, whose attention is fixed on the Russians in the hallway, then back to Happy.

JOHN
(to Happy)
You can't drive.

HAPPY
(to Russians)
Merry Christmas, ladies...

JOHN
(to Layton)
He can't drive.

HAPPY'S VOICE
Don't forget to say bye-bye to the
Russians!

John has to grab Layton's arm and tug in order to be heard, taking too many seconds in the intern. Layton, who finally responds, is not his old cheerful self at the end of a scoreless evening.

LAYTON
God, at least give me one of them.

JOHN
Sir?

LAYTON
(eyeing Russians)
Just for one night.

JOHN'S VOICE

Sir?

LAYTON

For god's sake, don't call me, sir.
I hate that. It makes me feel old
and useless. What the hell is it?

JOHN

Happy can't drive in his condition.

LAYTON

He's a drunk. That's what drunks do.
They drive drunk. Besides, he's driven
a million times before, what's one more?

JOHN

I'm just saying it's not safe for
anybody.

LAYTON

You're so worried about him, you drive
him home. What do you want from me?

They glance up as Happy re-appears, falling face first into the
carpeted corridor. He raises his head and smiles - a clown's
smile.

LAYTON

On second thought, let him drive if he
wants. It may teach him a lesson.

HAPPY

(rises, mimics)
Teach me a lesson!

JOHN

I'll drive.

LAYTON

(to Happy)
Give him your keys, you idiot.

HAPPY

Give him your keys, you idiot!

Layton returns inside, closing the door angrily.

INT. HAPPY'S VAN - NIGHT

John is driving. Happy, eyes nearly shut, rolls down the window.

EXT. QIANMEN AREA - NIGHT

Happy leans out of the car window, bellowing out:

HAPPY
He likes you.

JOHN
Who?

HAPPY
Layton. Consider yourself lucky.
He can be a prick. A real prick.
You'll see where I live. I bet
you're at the Plaza. I know, I
was there until I refused to suck
him off.

EXT/INT. HEIGHTS HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

John helps Happy make his way up the converted hotel/rental building, fending off prostitutes.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Not tonight, sweetheart.

ELEVATOR

Happy presses the number eight button, countering John.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
I'm happily married, really...

ELEVATOR DOOR OPENS

Happy staggers down the hallway. John is closely behind.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
... and I've got five daughters.

JOHN

What are you doing ten thousand miles away?

HAPPY

(smiling)

I knew you'd ask me that, Comanche.

INT. HAPPY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Happy finds a smoke, lights up and drops on his couch, staring at John's arm.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

I write poetry. "That which God writes on thy forehead, thou wilt come to it."

JOHN

Did you write that?

Close on Happy - gazing at the ceiling.

HAPPY

No.

(awkwardly smiling)

God beat me to it.

John composes his face, reaching out for the doorknob. Happy reacts immediately.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Here's one for you, Comanche. After a night of drinking a man stumbles out of the bar to look for his car. Unable to find it he sees a police officer. "Orficcer" he slurs. "There was a car at the end of this key." The officer looks at the drunk and says, "You're too drunk remember to where it is. Secondly you're lucky you can't find it because you're too drunk to drive. Call a cab and come back when you've sobered up. By the way your fly is open."

... camera pulling back to show John easing the door open.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
... The drunk looks down at his zipper, and stutters "God dammit someone stole the bitch too."

John steps out.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Hey, where you going? Hey, don't leave. I was going to cook us some steak and eggs...

John closes the door behind him.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)
... Thanks for the ride, Comanche. I won't forget it.

EXT. TIA'ANMEN SQUARE - NIGHT

John walks the square.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

ANGLE INCLUSIVE OF JOHN

Seated in an all-night café, still introspective as he stares out the window.

EXT. TRUCK REMEMBERED - NIGHT

(FILM SONG OVER:)

The truck slows and comes to a stop in front of the Brennan house. Jack staggers out, carrying a lunch pail and hard hat toward the house.

FOLLOWING with him as he staggers, boozed, along the front walkway.

INT. BRENNAN'S HOUSE REMEMBERED - NIGHT

Joy clears some plates from an empty table and, crossing the kitchen, sees...

... Jack walking up the driveway. She preps herself, starting with her hair.

Little John watches TV in the living room.

Joy gestures at Little John and he acknowledges his father's return. As she pours him a glass of milk, Joy moves to the stove, ignites a burner, then turns and exits to the living room.

JOY
You see your father, baby boy?

THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW

LITTLE JOHN
(look through, smiling)
Daddy!

INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Jack leans in to kiss Joy on the mouth.

She returns into the kitchen smiling, sending a sparkling eye to Little John's way.

JOY
Two minutes to supper.

Jack catches up with Joy in the hallway. Then harshly taking hold of her arm, he turns her toward him, bringing his face close to hers...

JOY (CONT'D)
Our boy's looking...

... and as she turns away, he begins to kiss her neck. She lowers her gaze to the ground, quietly uttering:

JACK
Let him look. We're not doing anything wrong.

Jack sweeps her into the bathroom. A minute later a collection of moans and grunts are heard.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

John nurses a cup of coffee. He looks up as a Chinese couple enters, smiling.

INT. BRENNAN'S KITCHEN REMEMBERED - NIGHT

Little John enters the kitchen, munching on a cookie while the boiling pot overflows.

LITTLE JOHN

Mom?

Little John stares at the boiling pot blankly. Eventually, the boiling oil overflows the pot and catches fire. With a soft voice, John calls out:

LITTLE JOHN

Mom, the pot is burning.

... glancing around with a dazed look, scratching his head with the cookie. John steps back from the fire as he moves to the entrance. The oil has now spread over the entire stove top. He blushes as his mother walks in:

JOY

Jesus Christ, all Mighty! Why didn't you call me?

John tries to explain but he's interrupted by his father. Jack barely gives him a chance to defend himself:

JACK

Are you stupid?

LITTLE JOHN

No.

Joy crumples out the fire with a bag of flour. Jack isn't finished with Little John:

JACK

What do you mean no?

(nods)

Then why didn't you call us?

LITTLE JOHN
I didn't mean it.

JACK
What do you mean you didn't mean it?

Little John, crying:

LITTLE JOHN
I didn't mean it...

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

John closes the door behind him as he emerges from the diner, striking a match...

... the receding flash of the match revealing John in close conversation with a much sobered LAYTON, whose eyes plead for reassurance as John scowls.

INT. ROOM 1014 - DAY

John's stands in front of Layton's oak desk.

JOHN
... I didn't mean it, sir. I
didn't mean it. I swear it...

Layton sits back, trying to empathize, his hands clutched together. In front of him, once again, John stands tall, hard as nails.

LAYTON'S VOICE
Relax, son. Of course, you didn't.

John breathes heavily, turning his face away as Layton eyes him.

JOHN
... I didn't mean to lie.

... John's face in extreme close-up, sounds of both scenes merging.

LAYTON
No apologies needed.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John sprawls, trying to sleep.

LAYTON'S VOICE

Take your mind off the meaningless,
you get a good night sleep for your
first day of school...

EXT. SIXTH AVENUE - DAY

From a high angle, only John's combat boots can be seen above a passing bus, its side panel advertising GET HARD QUICK, VIAGRA.

LAYTON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

We don't want any disruptions, do we? Let's put this silly little lie behind us. Who really cares if you fibbed about your felony? I don't. Hell, all boys like to fight...

John stands looking at the school from a distance.

LAYTON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

More importantly, John, you need to lighten up. Smile! We don't want to upset these people, do we? Go on and enjoy your first day of school...Go on...Go on...

EXT. BRENNAN'S FRONT DOOR REMEMBERED - DAY

Little John is pushed off to school. In the distance, an encroaching school bus.

JOY

Go on!

INT. CLASSROOM - PRESENT DAY

John, wearing a t-shirt and jeans, speaks to the class.

JOHN

Good morning, my name is John. You can call me teacher if you want...

A school bell rings, interrupting John's opener.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

A YOUNG CHINESE MAN is, at best, 18 or 19, although he has been made up to look older. He wears designer slacks. His face is handsome. He wears large black-tinted sunglasses.

His name, as we shall learn later, is TAEJUN SHUN.

Taejun's fist slams a fender violently...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

... The class staring out at John, paralyzed - intercut in flashing close-ups at his Mohawk - John at the head of the class, the students sitting at their desks - there's twenty of them -- John's eyes scan suspiciously - the student's look scared -- one almost subliminal flash of each revealing something like pleasure at seeing a real life American...
THREE TEENAGE STUDENTS sit in the front row and speak Chinese:

FEMALE VOICE

... Is he our teacher?

MALE VOICE

He looks angry.

MALE VOICE

I bet he's Apache Indian.

The three front row students are:

MING

A young Chinese hip-hop kid with a "Paris Hilton" haircut, sits at her desk with a pink alligator purse.

PHILIP

A Chinese, preppy-looking sort with a blow-dry haircut.

JONG

A Chinese tank with a spiky haircut, sits breathing heavily.

JOHN

Anybody missing?

MING
(in Chinese)
This must be a mistake.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

The cigarette in Taejun's mouth burns into his lip. He jerks spasmodically, choking on smoke as he rips skin away with the butt.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

John raises his eyes, somehow not surprised.

JOHN
Does anyone speak English?

MING
Me, teacher.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Coughing, Taejun walks briskly down the hallway.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

John scans a list of names from a file folder, glancing at Ming.

JOHN
Good.

John looks at Philip.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Anyone else?

PHILIP
(points to JONG)
Him, teacher.

JONG
(in Chinese)
Fuck off, Phillip!

EXT. ROOM 12 - DAY

Taejun steps up to the classroom door.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

John turns abruptly and watches Taejun stroll in.

JOHN
Don't be shy?

Taejun sits in the empty chair next to Ming, pretending he doesn't hear...

JOHN'S VOICE
Anyone?

... Taejun eyeing John, not appreciative of his tone of voice.

TAEJUN
(in Chinese)
This is our teacher?

PHILIP
(in Chinese)
He's American.

MING
(to John)
Are you American?

The class awaits his response.

JOHN
(shows off his American flag
tattoo)
...Yes, I'm American.

A bellow of awe resonates and carries forward into the next scene:

EXT. HAPPY'S APARTMENT - DAY

A huge metal sign on the 30th Floor reads (in Chinese): "Don't be afraid to get high. For rental call 888-809090."

INT. HAPPY'S FLAT - DAY

John's face seems to radiate frustration as he lights a cigarette.

HAPPY
How was your first day?

Happy shivers, pulls a blanket around him. John notices his discomfort.

JOHN
They were afraid.

Coughing, eyes tearing, Happy pours himself a glass of something. He drinks, somehow repaired.

HAPPY
(pulling on army jacket
sleeve)
You're dressed to kill, Comanche.
What did you expect? A game of
ping-pong?

Happy picks up his empty glass and tilts it, glancing at the bottle.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Who are you fighting, anyway?

Wild-eyed, Happy jumps from the couch. He heads toward the door and opens it.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
(pats John on the back)
Forget it. What did you expect
from a bunch of spoiled rich kids,
anyway?

John steps into the hallway.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Relax and go for a swim, Comanche.
Take a load off.

Happy smiles.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

You Yankee soldiers are all alike.

Happy closes the door abruptly in John's face.

EXT. SWIMMING COMPLEX - DAY

The 23,000 square foot complex is one of Beijing's newest facilities. One large sign proclaims "Open 24hrs".

It is LATE AFTERNOON.

INSIDE COMPLEX

A variety of STUDENTS joke and chatter as they glide through the water to the sound of EMINEM.

Seen from a distance - the only way John can see them - those are China's chosen youth: Healthy, energetic, well-groomed, attractive, all strained from well-oiled blood. CAMERA FAVORS LI, an extremely attractive teenager sitting at the edge of the pool between two other girls.

Her attractions, however, are more than skin deep. Beneath that Cover Girl facial there is a keen, though highly specialized sensibility: Her eyes scan every man who passes her as her mind computes his desirability: Intellectual, sexual, emotional, material. Money and status do not impress her; she seeks out the anarchic qualities in men. She is, in other words, more competitive than a prized race horse.

Li's attention is being distracted by something she sees across the pool. She puts on her glasses and looks out across the pool.

Li, adjusting her peach-sized breasts, calls Ming, who we've already met, to her. They speak in Chinese.

LI

Who's that?

MING

That's my teacher.

LI

Look at that body.

MING
I don't think we should stare.

LI
(as if instructing a child)
I think we should. What are you
scared of? No one's gonna see us here.

MING
You never know.

LI
I'd like to grab his penis. You know
what they say about American penis?

Ming looks toward John, then back at Li.

MING
How long do you think it is?

John's cold piercingly eyes stare out from the deep end. He is
like a lone wolf.

Li exchanges John's gaze.

LI
(determined)
How long is my brother's. Six inches?

As Li soaks her head, Ming bursts out:

MING
Li!

The other swimmers deliberately turn their backs, avoiding
involvement. As Li grabs Ming, John ambles into the water.

LI
I'm trying to make an educated guess.
Help me.

Ming measures the span of her outstretched palm.

MING
Four.

Li looks shocked.

LI
That's embarrassing, Ming.

MING
He's your brother.

LI
Let's say it's five.

Ming interrupts.

MING
It's four.

LI
For argument sake let's stick with five.
(gazing over to John)
He's at least four inches taller than
Taejun. That makes him nine.

MING
That can't be right.

LI
Do the math.

Ming's eyes close, her voice continuing out a set of numbers.

INT. SWIMMING POOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Taejun, wrapped in a towel, walks proudly toward the girls as he unleashes his whip.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Li notices Taejun strutting toward them.

LI
Here comes the Sheriff.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DEEP END PLATFORM - DAY

Taejun hums a tune as he adjusts his thong.

TAEJUN
Lose yourself... never, never let it go...

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Holding her Gucci, Ming wags a finger at Taejun.

MING
(to Li)
That's enough!

Taejun smiles as he exposes an erection.

LI
Four.

TAEJUN
Four what?

MING
It's four o'clock.

Taejun looks at his Rolex.

TAEJUN
It's not even three.

The girls look at each other and burst out laughing.

INT. SWIMMING COMPLEX - MEN'S CHANGEROOM - DAY

Over ten dozen lockers are provided for staff, teachers and students. Everyone also having an opportunity to relax in one of six saunas offered, by the COMPLEX.

INT. SAUNA - DAY

Each sauna is large enough to sit twelve comfortably, comprising of two tiers.

John sits on the second tier, wrapped in a white towel.

Angle widens to include a middle-aged Chinese man, sitting on the first tier with his head down.

The door opens to reveal Taejun wrapped in a white towel.

TAEJUN
Teacher.

John faintly smiles.

JOHN
Hi.

Taejun sits on the second tier, across from John, wearing his towel, obviously uncomfortable with being naked.

John lays his head back and takes off his towel, revealing his oversized crotch. Taejun is speechless. He's never seen a foot-long penis in his entire life.

TAEJUN (CONT'D)
(in Chinese)
He's an alien! ...

John remains uninterrupted. Only the middle-aged man is alerted.

CHINESE MAN
(to Taejun in Chinese)
...or the messiah.

The Chinese man puts his head back down, uninterested. Taejun remains thunderstruck.

EXT. SWIMMING COMPLEX - DAY

John is interrupted by Taejun and the girls outside.

MING
Teacher, this is Li.

JOHN
Li.

MING
(to Li)
Say Hi.

LI
Hi.

John takes his time turning his attention to Li while Taejun tries to remain as polite as possible.

TAEJUN
Hi again, Teacher.

MING
Isn't Li beautiful, Teacher.

JOHN
She's very beautiful.

Ming shifts her body to expose Li further. John smiles and waits for response, while the girls giggle.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Is she a model?

TAEJUN
(to MING in Chinese)
Tell him she thinks he's cute.

Ming obeys her boyfriend's instruction.

MING
She wants you. I mean she likes you, Teacher.

John smiles.

TAEJUN
(to Ming in Chinese)
Look at him smile. Ask him to double date.

MING
Do you like movies, Teacher?

JOHN
Sure.

MING
(to Li in Chinese)
We'll all go to the Drive-In, tonight.

Taejun slips on his sunglasses.

TAEJUN
(to Ming in Chinese)
Make sure he understands.

John and Li smile at each other as the conversation ends.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

John's back is to us as he walks.

EXT. DRIVE-IN THEATRE - NIGHT

Beijing's newest Drive-In Theatre offers the opportunity to view a drive-in movie offering the luxury of an indoor theatre. Every couple is supplied with a Classic 1950's model.

INT. DRIVE-IN THEATRE - ARCADE - NIGHT

Wearing his combat boots, John stands tall - angle widening to show Taejun, spotting John's muscular frame. As John starts to load an arcade machine, Taejun intervenes solicitously, speaking in broken English and Chinese...

TAEJUN
High score!!...

JOHN
Where are the girls?

Taejun blasts the gun away.

TAEJUN
Pee.

A Drive-In attendant brings John his tickets. John slips them into his pocket as Taejun continues blasting away on the machine.

JOHN
You like guns?

EXT. BEIJING SKYLINE - NIGHT

The AD sign flashes prime-time favorite crime program AMERICAN JUSTICE.

INT. DRIVE IN THEATRE - TICKET COUNTER - NIGHT

A clerk takes a credit card.

TAEJUN'S VOICE
(in Chinese)
This one's on my mother's card.

John stands in line behind Li and Ming.

MING
(in Chinese)
It's always on your mother's card.

Taejun cracks his gum and starts across the theatre.

TAEJUN'S VOICE
Mission Impossible! Tom Cruise,
baby!

INT. DRIVE-IN THEATRE - CAR LOT - NIGHT

John picks a 1957 candy apple red Chevy. A THEATRE HOST opens the door for Li.

THEATRE HOST
(in Chinese)
Enjoy your movie!

INT. DRIVE IN CONCESSION STAND - NIGHT

Joe picks up a box of popcorn and two sodas.

INT. DRIVE IN THEATRE CONCESSION STAND - NIGHT

John carries popcorn and sodas, seeing...

... zoom close-up, Li painting her lips in the rearview mirror.

INT. 1959 BLACK CADILLAC - NIGHT

Taejun sees John adjust his crotch as he enters the Chevy.

EXT. DRIVE IN THEATRE - LOT - NIGHT

John notices Taejun parked three car lengths away.

INT. 1957 CHEVY - NIGHT

John turns to face Li, offering a soda and the popcorn.

JOHN

I forgot to ask for butter...

EXT. DRIVE IN - NIGHT

The lights in the theatre suddenly switch off, blacking out the theatre. John glances toward the growl of a siren.

From a high angle -- the screen lights up -- a minute AD discussing the detailed dangers of Breast Cancer told by a neurotic Chinese host: "No worries. A simple cut can solve all your headaches."

Li munches her popcorn while the previews begin, watching a missile demolish HONG KONG. O.S. a radio announcer sells ESKIMO PIE EXPLOSION.

INT. 1957 CHEVY - NIGHT

From a 1957 Chevy - the Tom Cruise film grinds endlessly through the night -- a lost spaceman trying to make contact with a tantalizing earthling made over as a geisha girl:

TOM CRUISE'S CHINESE VOICE

Prepare to blast off...

In the driver seat, John leans back as Li unzips his fly, kissing John's cheek and neck, her head moving down and out of frame.

EXT. GOODYEAR BLIMP - NIGHT

From a high angle, only John's Mohawk can be seen above.

LI'S VOICE

(in Chinese)

Give me your gun!

John appears relaxed as Li commences her duties.

LI'S VOICE

Give me your gun!

EXT. MOVIE SCREEN - NIGHT

A second missile prepares to launch.

INT. 1957 CHEVY - NIGHT

John staring out the driver window, paralyzed in the act of lighting a cigarette. Li's lifts her head up and kisses John on the mouth.

LI
(in Chinese)
I want you inside of me...

Laughing, eyes tearing, Li unzips her jeans.

LI (CONT'D)
Yeah, oh, oh! ...

John holds her tight, forcing her to bobble faster.

LI (CONT'D)
(in Chinese)
Oh, yeah, yeah, oh yeah! ...Yeah,
Yeah, yeah!!

EXT. MOVIE SCREEN - NIGHT

The spacecraft is launched - traveling at six thousand miles per hour, tearing through the stratosphere and exploding on impact with an enemy cruiser missile...

INT. 1957 CHEVY - NIGHT

... John and Li frozen - clutching each other. O. S. a intermission commercial plays warm, sentimental music while a cozy Chinese voice explains how easy it is to relax with massage cream.

EXT. LUXURY APARTMENTS - DAY

John and Li cuddled in bed, watching TV. O. S. a Chinese announcer sells birth control protection.

INT. JOHN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

John trims his Mohawk in the bathroom mirror. O.S. a singing commercial, "Don't take life for granted. Buy vitamin Time Capsules today before their taken off the shelf! Remember Time waits for no one!"

EXT. CANDY VENDOR - DAY

John and Li share a snow-cone, laughing as they run off to an angered vendor.

CANDY VENDOR
(in Chinese)
Where's my money? Hey! Hey, you
crazy kids!!

INT. BED - DAY

John and Li lay in bed, wrapped in strawberry sauce as...

... a candle burns down and out, leaving the screen dark.

EXT. TIA'ANMEN SQUARE - DAY

John and Happy wander casually along the bustling streets of the city.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Happy peruses the latest specials and, crossing the store, sees an old friend...

... JIM BEAM. As he takes the bottle from the shelf, he goes about his tasks, ignoring John.

JOHN'S VOICE
I'm happy.

John follows Happy to the check-out counter.

Another sampler appears with a whiskey shot glass. A sales clerk offers it to John and he nods. As she pours him a shot, John ignores her and catches up with Happy.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - CHECK OUT - DAY

Happy pays the clerk and takes his purchase.

HAPPY
(to John)
I thought I was Happy.

EXT. TIA'ANMEN STREET - DAY

Happy cracks open the bottle and drinks.

JOHN
I was just saying I'm happy.

HAPPY
I'm glad you're happy. I really am,
have a swig...

Happy offers John a swig.

JOHN
No thanks.

John clutches the bottle like he was holding a firecracker.

HAPPY
How long have you been seeing this
girl?

JOHN
Five weeks tomorrow.

EXT. TIA'ANMEN WATER FOUNTAIN - DAY

High angle -- John and Happy sit, passer-bys attracted by Long John Silver and Tonto.

HAPPY
How old is she?

JOHN
Eighteen, nineteen. Why?
What does it matter?

John and Happy are seated on the fountain ledge.

HAPPY

(smirking)

What does it matter? Of course
it doesn't matter when you're
happy and in love. Are you having
sex with your little missy?

JOHN

Of, course.

HAPPY

Of, course -- Let me tell you something
about Confucious, Comanche.

Happy hands John his bottle and as John pushes it away,

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Confucius Say: "Young man screw with dicks;
Girl screw with minds."

Happy swigs.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Especially young girl.

Happy turns to John with a gap-toothed grin:

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Confucius say: "A vagina is like
a very small hotel. One must leave
his bag outside."

Happy scowls hostilely at him.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

You know what he also says, Comanche?

JOHN

What?

HAPPY

Confucius Say: "Man who checks out
woman's package, doesn't always work
for UPS."

JOHN

What are you saying?

Happy spills a drop as he takes another swig.

HAPPY

I'm saying: "Learn to masturbate—
come in handy."

Happy grabs his bottle, jumps off the ledge and begins walking toward his van parked by the river.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

Was she a virgin?

JOHN

Yes.

Happy quickens his pace, frowning at first, suddenly smiling, turning as if gone loony. John catches up to Happy.

HAPPY

You're playing Chinese Slaughterhouse.

John stops in his tracks.

JOHN

What?!!

Happy walking away, unaware he's left John behind.

HAPPY

Confucious say: "Yankee rooster who
humps Chinese sparrow bound to be
minced Cantonese chicken."

From a high angle, John can be seen standing in confusion.
Happy retraces his steps.

JOHN

I'm meeting her family tonight. It's
the old man's sixtieth birthday.

HAPPY

You're going to her house?

JOHN

Yes.

Happy is thrown a curve ball.

HAPPY

Don't go.

JOHN

Why not?

HAPPY

Just listen to me and don't go.

JOHN

I'm going.

John begins walking.

HAPPY

(sternly)

If you go, remember one thing.

JOHN

What?

Happy hands John a cigarette. John strikes a match angrily.

HAPPY

Confucious always say,
Comanche:

(a beat)

"Man who scratches ass should not
bite fingernails or smoke cigarettes."

Happy offers an elusive smile.

EXT. SHUN ESTATE - NIGHT

Rain swirls as John's taxi turns into...

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

... a muscular entrance hall, brightly lit - Arabian marble --
a Picasso. John has started up before he notices a butler,
showing him to the men's room.

INT. MANSION - RESTROOM - NIGHT

John stares fixedly into the mirror.

INT. MANSION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

CLOSER ON John as he hesitates, listening briefly to the FAINT SOUND of two pianos coming from within the study.

Then he opens the door and goes inside.

INT. MANSION STUDY - NIGHT

(TWO PIANOS OVER:)

John tentatively wanders the study, taking in the ghosts of the present.

He pauses at a table to look at several framed photographs. He picks up one of Li and Taejun as children, looks closely at it, then gently returns it to its place and resumes wandering.

He stops at the music room and looks in through the half-opened door:

POV INTO MUSIC ROOM:

On the far side of the room, near windows which give view to a verdant exterior, are two concert grands. Taejun is seated at one of the pianos, and Li is seated at the other.

Li looks up and, seeing John, grins unhappily, then turns away from him.

ON JOHN

looking from Li, to Taejun. He watches him briefly tinker with the ivories, then steps out of the doorway...

... and moves closer to Li. He reaches halfway when he is interrupted:

MRS. SHUN

She looks up and, seeing John, smiles happily.

MRS. SHUN
Please to meet you, Mr. Brennan.

JOHN
Pleased to meet you.

MRS. SHUN
You look shocked?

JOHN
You speak English very well.

MRS. SHUN
I studied in England in my youth.
It's taken me fifteen years to
convince my husband the importance
of language.

Mrs. Shun points to her husband. Mr. Shun looks like a man of few words. They shake hands. The room is crowded with a random selection, gathered to serve respect to one of Beijing's most powerful government officials.

MRS. SHUN (CONT'D)
He finally agreed to enroll
Taejun in your school.

JOHN
Do you plan to enroll your daughter?

Mrs. Shun gazes at Li.

MRS. SHUN
She's much too young.

JOHN
Young? How old is she?

MRS. SHUN
Fourteen.

John stands in silence.

MRS. SHUN
My son tells me you're a good swimmer.

Mrs. Shun smiles without response.

MRS. SHUN (CONT'D)

I would introduce you but most of these people don't speak English, you understand. You're my son's guest so please enjoy yourself.

Mrs. Shun moves away, pausing gracefully to confer with an elderly couple.

The scene -- from John's viewpoint -- becomes increasingly confusing and fragmented, dialogue and image moving in and out of focus...

... to John's surprise, Li, has disappeared.

INT. SHUN DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Shun sits at the head of the table, next to his wife.

John, at the opposite end of the table, is seated next to Taejun. The rest of the guests are scattered about, twelve in total. Li is missing. John raises his eyes from his plate to ask Taejun something, just as Li enters the room:

LI

(in Chinese)

Why is he here?

MR. SHUN

(to Mrs. Shun in Chinese)

Tell her to sit down...

LI

(in Chinese)

No, I'm not going to sit down...

MR. SHUN

(to Mrs. Shun in Chinese)

I'm not going to ask you again.

MRS. SHUN

(to Li in Chinese)

Sit down, Li.

LI
(to Mrs. Shun in Chinese)
Answer me.

MRS. SHUN
(to Li in Chinese)
Sit down, Li.

John starts to reply and is interrupted by:

TAEJUN
(to Li in Chinese)
You can be so schizo sometimes.

John is watching with terrible fascination as Li finally sits at the table with her head down.

LI
(to Taejun in Chinese)
Why did you bring him here?

A passing waiter holds a bottle of white wine over John, but John declines.

MRS. SHUN
(to everyone)
Enjoy your supper.

John glances at Mrs. Shun and smiles. Then he turns his attention toward Li.

TAEJUN
(to Mrs. Shun in Chinese)
Mom, I have something to tell you.

Mrs. Shun begins eating her dinner.

MRS. SHUN
(to Taejun in Chinese)
We'll speak after, Taejun.

Taejun makes an attempt to continue but he is overridden by Li:

LI
(to Mrs. Shun in Chinese)
Don't listen to him, Mummy.

Li gets up from the table and, taking her plate, exits to the kitchen. And as Mr. Shun readjusts himself in his chair and takes a sip from his wine glass, John looks at Mrs. Shun to find her looking at him. He quickly alters his gaze to Taejun.

JOHN
(to Taejun)
Why is Li upset?

MR. SHUN
(to Mrs. Shun in Chinese)
Tell your teacher to eat his
supper.

MRS. SHUN
(looking at John)
My husband says stop asking so
many questions.

CLOSE ON JOHN

in extreme discomfort at being scolded. He looks down at his plate, poking at the remainder of his dinner, then braves a look down the table.

INT. MANSION GAME ROOM - NIGHT

Taejun and John, playing a game of table tennis.

As they volley the ball back and forth:

JOHN
You play well.

Taejun hits into the net, and as the ball rebounds to him, he tosses it to John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(serving ball)
I appreciate your hospitality,
but I'm curious...

Taejun hits the net again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
...Why did you invite me here?

Taejun serves and as they volley:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Does your father know about Li and I?

Taejun tries a smash and mis-hits the ball...

TAEJUN
No.

... and as he retrieves it:

JOHN
(somewhat relieved)
Does your mother?

Taejun comes back to the table.

TAEJUN
(returning ball)
No.

He hits a smash and it sails past John.

TAEJUN
(in Chinese)
Why should I have to suffer when
you can suffer.

John looks over at Taejun, picking up the ball from the floor.

JOHN
What did you say?

John gestures his paddle at Taejun.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can you tell Li that I would like
to speak with her?

Taejun rests his paddle on the table and exits the room.

TAEJUN
(in Chinese)
Why should I?

INT. MANSION GAME ROOM - NIGHT

John stands in the game room. It is dark and the only light comes from some burning logs in the fireplace. He listens briefly to the sounds of a Bach concerto coming from the music room...

JOHN
Mrs. Shun?

... and opens the door. No one is there.

INT. MANSION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

John walks down the empty hallway.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

He enters the music room.

ON JOHN

...as he listens to the heightening to Bach's concerto...

...he is suddenly jolted by a loud thud and falls back, looking up to:

a knife yielded by Mrs. Shun.

John grins, watching Taejun's lips move, unable to withstand the blow he receives to the back of his head.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Happy slips in a c.d. and reaches his right hand under the seat and grasps for what he hopes is a pint of Blue Grass Whiskey. He swerves the van, finding his pint and curtly singing over:

LYNYRD SKYNYRD
Big wheels keep on turning
Carry me home to see my kin
Singing songs about the Southland
I miss Alabamy once again
And I think its a sin, yes...

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Van moving along.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Shun raising knife:

MRS. SHUN
(in Chinese)
Is this what you wanted, Mr.
Brennan?

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Happy makes a sharp right and resumes driving.

LYNYRD SKYNYRD
Sweet home Alabama
Where the skies are so blue...

EXT. SHUN ESTATE GATE - NIGHT

Happy makes his way slowly from the building to the curb, whistling between his teeth sharply. The van slows to a crawl. Happy sees a figure on the side of the road, shifts into park and jumps out.

LYNYRD SKYNYRD
Sweet home Alabama
Lord, I'm coming back home to you...

LAYTON'S VOICE
Nobody wants to fight, son.

John lies on his back, bloodied from the torso, stirring listlessly.

HAPPY'S VOICE
... What did you expect, Free
Bird?

Happy drops to the ground, looking at John sympathetically, fighting an almost irrepressible desire to laugh.

JOHN
She cut my dick!

Happy raises John over his shoulders, opens the van doors and lays him down, still fighting back a laugh.

... camera pulling back to show Happy racing down the road.

INT. HAPPY'S VAN - NIGHT

Happy has difficulty reverting to his serious side. Half-drunk, he is driving with both hands on the wheel, his eyes on the open road, fighting back a tear.

HAPPY
Hold yourself together, Comanche.
Keep your airwaves open. Keep
your head up. You know what I
mean.

Happy swigs from a bottle, savoring the taste. As he makes a wild left turn...

INT. BEIJING HOSPITAL - NIGHT

... Happy carries John through the emergency doors, screaming for assistance...

INT. ER - DAY

... Happy rings the nurse's bell to speed things up. Three personnel lay John on a stretcher and wheel him away.

INT. ER - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Happy reads GQ to kill time...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

... John laying in bed -- wrapped in blankets, his teeth chattering, in spite of the sweat on his forehead...

... John stops abruptly, his mood shattered by a white nurse's aggressiveness.

NURSE

(in Chinese)

Poor baby couldn't sleep. In two minutes you'll be back in the stratosphere.

John closes his eyes, feeling the needle. The rush of morphine will soon takeover. John's eyes close momentarily.

INT. REMEMBERED - ANOTHER TIME

Little John is laying in bed with an undiagnosed fever. His Mother urges him to settle down while an old woman twists her fingers over John's navel, unlocking the kingdom.

OLD WOMAN

Demons fly out!

EXT. BLUE SKY - DAY

A swarm of bats fly out of a cave, permeating into the horizon.

INT. PRESENT DAY - HOSPITAL BED - DAY

Nurse's face seems to radiate evil as she stabs John's arm. John forces his eyes half-open.

JOHN

Damn!

NURSE

Stop your whining already.

John shivers, pulls a blanket around him, resisting sleep, but the numbing begins.

NURSE (CONT'D)

You always cry like a girl?...

John's eyes close, his voice continuing out of half-sleep.

INT. REMEMBERED BRENNAN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack's thumbnail flares a match, exposing Joy on the couch, drunk.

JOY
 He's sick. Do you understand?
 You're boy's sick.

JACK
 I'm sick. I'm sick of hearing you
 go on and on.

JOY
 Stay away from me. I'll kill you,
 I swear.

Jack lunges at Joy who manages to escape his grasp. A knife suddenly is garnished.

NIGHTMARE - MULTIPLE SPLIT SCREEN

Low angle Nurse bending over John, into camera...
 ... Joy crying, hand still on knife...
 ... Jack taken back...
 ... John's mouth cussing soundlessly...
 ... headlights multiplying on living room window...

Full frame - Jack wounded and bloodied - Joy's voice
 "Are you satisfied?"...
 ... police cars surrounding house with headlights...
 ... Jack shrieking "You bitch"...
 ... police storming into the house...
 ... hand closing on John's naked body...
 ... Joy laying on the floor...
 ... nurse leaning over John...
 ... police handcuffing Jack...

INT. HOSPITAL BED - DAY

John awakens in a cold sweat, still as a corpse, red-eyed as he sees Happy standing over him, holding a bouquet of flowers.

HAPPY
 I got you daisies, Comanche!

Dazed and confused, John fails to respond:

HAPPY (CONT'D)
 Thought it would brighten up the room.

John inspects the flowers briefly before closing his eyes.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Here's one for you...

JOHN
No jokes.

HAPPY
This Irish guy walks up to a prostitute
and hands her a c-note...

JOHN
No jokes! ...

Happy stops in mid-verse. He offers a cigarette, staring at John.

HAPPY
I got a better one...

JOHN
Go away.

HAPPY
This businessmen gets caught jerking off
in a woman's toilet, see...

John makes a slow move to pull on Happy's sleeve.

JOHN
You're a drunk! Go away!

HAPPY
What's that, Comanche?

John turns over and wraps himself in a blanket.

JOHN
I said you're a drunk. As long
as I've known you, you've been
a drunk. I don't like drunks
and I don't want you here if you
are drunk. I appreciate your
flowers but you can go away now.
Don't come back anymore.

Happy looks painfully at John, swallowing before he replies:

HAPPY
I understand you're upset.

JOHN
Don't come back until you're
dry. I mean it. Go away.
(uncomfortably in pain)
Go!!

Happy slips off his cowboy hat.

HAPPY
Hey, Comanche!

JOHN
Go!! Get the fuck outta here, cowboy!!

Happy is left with one more:

HAPPY
I'm sorry for your pain, Comanche.

Happy exits.

INT. HOSPITAL BED - ANOTHER DAY

John lights a candle and watches it melt, hearing a phone ring.
Then the phone is answered by a machine:

HAPPY'S VOICE
Hey, Comanche... You hanging in
there? Sorry about you getting
fired from the position. Dumb
bastards adding salt to injury.
Oh, yeah, well, I've been thinking
about what you said...

John hangs up while the answering service's voice is still
going. The candle has burned out.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Got good news...

JOHN lies on his mattress, all bundled up. His face is turned toward the ceiling, but his eyes are closed. Although the room is flooded with light, he is finally catching some sleep.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I finally got my senses together.

(more quietly)

More importantly, my head.

It's time I get back home. I can't forget I've got angels to raise...

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

In front of a mirror, John shaves off his Mohawk.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I've been dry for eight weeks. It would've been ten but I ran into an old commie from California who treated me to a barrel of that homegrown dandelion wine, anyway...

John now resembles a prisoner of war.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

... like I said it's been eight weeks and a day exactly.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRS - NIGHT

Happy walking up.

HAPPY'S VOICE

I want to come by and say goodbye properly. I'm sorry for your stress, you're a proud man. So don't worry I won't make my visit long.

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - NIGHT

John stares down at his bandaged groin.

HAPPY'S VOICE

Did you hear the one about the Polish monk who couldn't get it up?...

INT. HOSPITAL BEDROOM-SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

John is stretched out on the couch, staring morosely at the ceiling.

HAPPY

How are you feeling?

John moves into frame past camera, standing in front of him, so that we can see the scene from behind John's waist.

JOHN

I'm alright.

HAPPY

Did you want to hear one?

JOHN

No.

HAPPY

I understand.

JOHN

You're going home?

HAPPY

Back home to Alabama.

JOHN

I'm happy for you. You belong with your family. I...

HAPPY

What's next for you, Comanche?

JOHN

... hear me out. I want to tell you something before you leave. You've been honest with me and I haven't been honest with you.

HAPPY

No sweat, Comanche.

JOHN

Hear me out - I should have been honest. My mother was a drunk and I don't take whiskey well.

Happy doesn't respond.

JOHN (CONT'D)

She drank a bottle a day. I never, never saw her without a glass in her hand.

INT. REMEMBERED APARTMENT - ANOTHER TIME

JOY BRENNAN, a middle-aged blonde, smiles down at camera, clasping a rock glass.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

John lights a cigarette as he continues:

JOHN

... she always had one in her left hand. It was always in her left. She was right-handed. She held a cigarette in her right.

INT. REMEMBERED APARTMENT - ANOTHER TIME

JOY BRENNAN smiles down at camera, smoking a cigarette.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Happy counters:

JOHN

Did the old man drink?

HAPPY

He liked his whiskey more than the old lady. But he was a real mean fucker when he drank. He was lucky to have my mother.

INSERT: Extreme close up of JOY BRENNAN.

INT. REMEMBERED APARTMENT - ANOTHER TIME

JACK BRENNAN, relaxing in the middle of a busy day, eyes closed wearily.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

John stands by the window, looking out.

JOHN
She loved him, but...

Happy sits back with anticipation.

The remembered events is accompanied by John's narration:

JOHN (V.O.)
... they battled all the time. If
it wasn't for the newspaper it was
for the last cigarette.

JACK slugging JOY across the face.

JOHN (V.O.)
Oh, they fought with fists. Nobody
held back. They were too drunk to
feel anything.

JOY, now on the floor, treating a bruised lip.

JOHN (V.O.)
My father should have known better
but he didn't. He was too high on his
horse to understand my mother's pain.

JACK, like a prizefighter, encourages her to stand up.

JOHN (V.O.)
One night he taunted her over and over
again until she finally lost it.

RINGSIDE: JACK'S P.O.V. JOY hangs half-drunk waiting for
another left hook.

JOHN (V.O.)
It was their last gunfight.

JOHN, sporting long hair, walks through park.

JOHN (V.O.)
I just got out of jail. I came
home and my Dad was lying on the
floor crying over my mother.

HAPPY stares blankly ahead.

JOHN (V.O.)
She lay there at the bottom of
the stairs with her head split
open.

JOHN, enters apartment, seeing Jack sitting in a chair.

JOHN (V.O.)
My Dad told me they had fought
and she fell down the stairs.

JOY'S lifeless body.

JOHN (V.O.)
I knew he pushed her.

JOY falling down flight of stairs.

JOHN (V.O.)
But I kept my mouth shut.
(a beat)
My mother would have wanted it that
way.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

John reaches across the end table and butts his cigarette.

HAPPY
What did the cops say?

JOHN
Nothing. They were drunk. Cops
blamed it on mishap...an unfortunate
accident.

INT. REMEMBERED APARTMENT - ANOTHER TIME

JACK BRENNAN, older and frail, laying in a hospital bed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

John sits in a chair.

JOHN (CONT'D)

My father didn't gain anything but
two more months in a hospital bed,
suffering. He couldn't live without
my mother.

Happy is reaching for another cigarette. John leans back,
clutching his head...

HAPPY

You know what we're gonna do,
Comanche?

John remains clutching his head.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

We're going to start a rodeo. We're
gonna take off with it!

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

The pilot revs the powerful engine, lifting off.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

... Happy jumps out of his chair and yells out -- he shoves a
cigarette in his mouth and starts dancing.

HAPPY (CONT'D)

I've got my very own ranch and angels on
top of it. We can't go wrong there.

(dancing)

You hear what I'm saying!!

EXT. PLANE - DAY

The plane flying at 30000 feet.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

You and me, Comanche. We can be partners here. What do you say we fly this coop together?

(then another cowboy yell)

INT. PLANE - DAY

Happy's eyes squint in a dazed half-sleep. John leans across to whisper:

JOHN

Wait a minute! What did you say you knew about the rodeo?

HAPPY

Not a damn thing.

John sees himself in a neighboring mirror reflection, admiring his golden locks.

HAPPY'S VOICE

Say, I got you something. I hope you like it.

JOHN

What is it?

HAPPY

A book.

JOHN

(John gazes at it)
Hemingway.

HAPPY

Have you read it?

JOHN

No.
(John gazes at the title)
The Sun Also Rises.

HAPPY

I think you can appreciate it.

JOHN
(he looks suspicious)
What's it about?

HAPPY
Just read it.
(sees John grin)
What?

JOHN
Is this a joke?

HAPPY
Would I joke at a time like this,
Comanche! Shee-it! Tell me,
you've learned something from me.

JOHN
Okay, I'll read it.

HAPPY
Good.

JOHN
(gazing at front page)
I'll read it.

HAPPY
You do that. I'll expect an
apology after you're done.

EXT. PLANE - DAY

The long frame of the plane soars by.

INT. PLANE - DUSK

Two aging young ladies in brand-new resort wear are casually examining Joe, along with the other men on the bus, but Joe is frowning at Happy, who shivers despite the bright sun.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
I was just thinking, where do you
think the other half of your penis
went to?

JOHN
Stop thinking.

HAPPY
No, no hear me out, Comanche. That young, rich fellow - you know -- he's probably making it with your tool. With technology today anything's possible. I bet he had some doctor sew it on as he got it.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Taejun stands proudly wearing tight slacks, an obvious bulge.

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Heck, I think that's something to be proud of. I'll bet you he'll have it bronzed one day. You know, rich folks do that kind of stuff, really. Yeah, you're one lucky son-of-a-bitch if you ask me, Comanche. I can't claim the same fame for my pecker.

(a beat)

Shee-it, any man would do anything for a foot long hot dog!

Happy nods. John closes his eyes, momentarily silenced.

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT

John and Happy watch the conveyor belt.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The bus is parked in the distance. Happy comes from a telephone booth.

HAPPY
It's faster if we ride.

John smiles, shakes his head. Happy smiles, starts on toward the bus.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

Twenty minutes into the ride, Happy dozes off. John shakes his head, scowling, annoyed, but continues, sulking enough to awaken Happy.

JOHN
How much further?

HAPPY
(yawns, looks at watch)
Six more hours, my good man.

John pulls out his MP3, takes out a package of earphones, glances at Happy shutting his eyes and puts it away.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The headlights of the bus flash past a huge crucifix, planted in the earth.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

John glances at Happy, but there is no response.

EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT

A blackened view through the bus window. John doesn't know what to think.

HAPPY'S VOICE
You still got to love them,
Comanche! They're still
your parents.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

John crowded as Happy prepares to elbow him, snoring like a freight train.

EXT. ALABAMA COUNTRY - NIGHT

The bus suddenly surrounded by nothing but blackness.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

John takes his earphones out of his ears, then turns to examine his new home -- as anonymous as his last home -- but boasting rolling hills. Fascinated, John peers through the window.

... a Neil Young song prepares to begin.

HAPPY'S VOICE

Let them go, Comanche, they
love you...

INT. REMEMBERED LIVING ROOM - ANOTHER TIME

Little John stares sullenly at a record player while his mother puts her empty glass on the fireplace mantel. There is a framed picture of Little John on the mantle.

NEIL YOUNG

... Come a little bit closer
Hear what I have to say
Just like children sleepin
We could dream this night away.
But theres a full moon risin
Lets go dancin in the light...

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

John hears Happy's voice, "... let them go, Comanche, let them rest in peace..."

INT. REMEMBERED PORCH - ANOTHER TIME

Little John catches up with his parents -- continuing the earlier scene.

NEIL YOUNG

... When we were strangers
I watched you from afar
When we were lovers
I loved you with all my heart.
But now its gettin late
And the moon is climbin high

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

John stares at the full moon, tears running down his cheeks.

INT. REMEMBERED PORCH - ANOTHER TIME

Little John stares unblinking at his mother and father, dancing under the moon.

NEIL YOUNG

... Because I'm still in love with you
I want to see you dance again
Because I'm still in love with you
On this harvest moon.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

While Happy speaks, John settles back in his seat and closes his eyes.

HAPPY

Now there's a couple of things every person should know before setting foot in the south. For example, we're just as prone to swearing as you Yankees. I bet you didn't know our confederate flag is a direct descendant of St. Patrick's Cross, that's right. And unsterotypically, my wife isn't named Daisy. That's my youngest daughter's name.

INT. SILVER CREEK COUNTYLINE - DAY

As Happy offers a tip to the driver, John steps off the bus and a song sung by Bob Dylan begins. John walks side by side with Happy along a dirt road "... Well, Frankie Lee and Judas Priest, They were the best of friends. So when Frankie Lee needed money one day, Judas quickly pulled out a roll of tens..."

HAPPY'S VOICE

Most people around here own a homemade fur coat. Swear it!

... but John never looks back, ignoring the reverberating sound of the bus engine. John looks ahead, grateful to find a hot sun beating down on his neck.

HAPPY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Down here our pimps carry a sheep under each arm.

EXT. SILVER CREEK ROAD - DAY

Called the State of Alabama's vegetable basket, the Silver Creek countryside features deep fertile soil.

Farming activity ranges from large crop farms and livestock operations and dairy farms to market gardens and small pick-your-own orchards.

HAPPY'S VOICE

Most people come to burn their front yard rather than mow it.

Supporting the agribusiness are a variety of stores, feed mills and farm implement dealers. Horses of all statuses, breeds and classes are a common sight on grassy slopes or along country roads.

HAPPY'S VOICE

You're gonna love my girls. My baby's first words were "Attention K-Mart shoppers.

EXT. HAPPY RANCH - DAY

Happy's rolling hills provide the environment required to raise horses that have gained distinction around the country.

HAPPY'S VOICE

My second's got a gun rack on her bicycle.

EXT. HAPPY HOUSE - DAY

John walks stiffly, though very relaxed, as Happy waves to his six girls hanging out of second floor windows. Then John glances up, waving and smiling, like a soldier returning home.

THE END