FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

On a television screen, BARACK, 47, tall, thin and African/American, gives a speech.

BARACK

They’re going to tell you, you know, he’s not patriotic enough, he’s got got a funny name, you know, he doesn’t look like all the other presidents on the dollar bills.

ED GREEN, 61, African/American, well-built, sits on a sofa in a nicely furnished living room. He grins as he moves his head side-to-side.

WIFE(O.S.)

Aren’t you going to class?

ED

Yeah, I’m leaving in a couple of minutes.

EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE-NIGHT

On a summer night a 2006 Toyota Camry pulls into a parking spot and stops. Ed gets out of the car.

INT. STAIRWAY-NIGHT

Ed perspires and has trouble breathing as he climbs the stairs. He stops and rests at the top.

JORDAN, 20, carries a screenplay as he rushes up the stairway, two-steps at a time. He stops next to Ed.

JORDAN

What’s up, Mr. Green? You don’t look well.

Ed catches his breath, and he has trouble speaking.

ED

Those steps are killing me. I must be getting old.
JORDAN
You are old. Shouldn’t you be in a rest home or something, instead of going to summer school?

Ed takes in a deep breath as he stands straight up.

ED
Thanks, Jordan. I needed that.

JORDAN
Huh?

ED
Ya showed me how grateful I should be for having a mind.

JORDAN
I don’t get it.

ED
I know. Let’s go to class.

INT. CLASSROOM—NIGHT

Jordan, holding ten pages from his screenplay, stands by his desk and reads out loud

JORDAN
Simpson: I’ll be spending my weekends with my kids. No golf. Reporter: What about your future? Simpson: In time, I’ll be able to resume my career of being O.J.

The TEACHER, mid 40s, sits on top of his desk.

TEACHER
Thank you, Jordan. Well, any comments?

Lola, 21, raises her hand.

TEACHER
Lola.
LOLA
It seems like Simpson’s a victim of racism.

BRIAN, 19, raises his hand. The teacher points at him.

BRIAN
He was. The cop planted the glove and put blood in his car. That cop, Fuhrman, was a racist.

TODD, 20, leans back in his chair with his arms folded across his chest.

TODD
So were the jurors.

Ed shows Todd a half smile.

ED
I thought maybe they weren’t good thinkers. And people liked O.J.

TODD
Right. It had nothing to do with racism.

ED
Even the prosecutor, Clark, in her closing, said she didn’t want to convict O.J. Was she a racist?

TODD
My point is there are black racists. In fact, one’s running for president.

JORDAN
No way, you idiot! He’s trying to unite everybody.

TODD
Watch who you call idiot or I’ll unite my fist with your face.

The teacher gets off his desk.
TEACHER

That’s enough!

Todd rolls his eyes as he looks over the ceiling.

TEACHER

The next assignment: at least forty pages. And you’re all going to have a writing partner.

EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE-NIGHT

Ed walks up to his car and unlocks the door. Jordan comes from behind and startles him.

ED

Damn, Jordan! What do you have against me?

JORDAN

Sorry, Mr. Green. I forgot how jumpy you old folks can be. Can we get together tomorrow, about six?

ED

Sorry, Jordan. I have a doctor appointment after work. Thursday will be a good time for me.

JORDAN

Great! Hey, don’t die before we finish this. I need the credits.

ED

I’ll try not to. Ya never know. When you reach my age, you take it an hour at a time. No promises.

INT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE-DAY

Ed sits on a chair in front of the doctor’s desk. The doctor sits behind his desk and stares at Ed.

ED

How long?
DOCTOR
With chemotherapy, two, maybe four years.

ED
Ya know, Doc, I’m kind of fond of my hair. If I pass on the chemo, how long?

DOCTOR
Six months, if you’re lucky.

ED
Good, I’ll be able to vote.

DOCTOR
Without the chemotherapy, you won’t be watching Obama take the oath of office.

ED
Doc, are you a racist?

DOCTOR
No, of course not! Why do you ask?

ED
I didn’t say who I was voting for.

INT. LIBRARY-NIGHT
Jordan reads ‘Mad’ magazine at a table in the back of the library.


ED
I want to write about him.

Jordan examines it.

JORDAN
Obama?
Ed pulls out the chair next to Jordan.

ED
Yes, starting from his early days

Jordon thinks for a moment.

JORDAN
Yeah, a journey from the jungle to the White House. That’s even better than a log cabin to the White House.

Jordan sits up, chest forward, proud of himself.

ED
I’d like to start in Hawaii, from being enrolled in a prestigious prep school.

Ed opens his notebook and hands it to Jordan.

ED
I spent the entire day working on that outline.

JORDAN
You don’t work?

ED
Not any more. I can meet you here, about ten A.M., after I try out the swimming pool, here. Care to join me?

INT. LOCKER ROOM—DAY

Jordan pulls up his bathing suit. He turns, looks down, and displays a look of surprise.

JORDAN
Wow!

A young MAN, nearby, with a puzzled expression on his face, turns.

Ed, nude and embarrassed, scans the locker room.
ED
Jordan, you shouldn’t be saying that in a men’s locker room.

Jordan, staring down, squints.

JORDAN
I never saw an appendix scar that long, and that wide.

ED
It’s not an appendix scar. And stop staring.

JORDAN
What’s it from?

ED
(pulling up his suit)
A knife fight. I lost. Let’s hit the water.

INT. SWIMMING POOL AREA—DAY

The Olympic size pool is divided into eight lanes for swimming laps.

Ed cautiously enters the pool and commences to swimming a slow breast stroke. He has trouble breathing.

Jordan dives in and moves quickly down his lane with a free style stroke.

Ed turns over and swims on his back.

INT. LIBRARY—DAY

Ed and Jordan sit together at a table in a corner.

ED
Did you read any of the book?

JORDAN
Yeah, he wrote that he went to a Muslim school for two years. CNN reported that he didn’t.
ED
He may have been a Muslim while living with his step-father, so what? We don’t know enough about his first ten years to write about it.

JORDAN
You don’t want to show him making faces during Koranic studies?

ED
No! Here’s where I want to start.

Ed hands Jordan ten pages of the screenplay. Jordan starts reading the first page.

EXT. PUNAHOU ACADEMY CAMPUS -DAY

The campus spreads over several acres of green fields and trees, old masonry schoolhouses and modern structures. There are tennis courts and a swimming pool.

GRAMPS, mid 50s, white, wearing an Hawaiian shirt, walks with Barack, 10.

BARACK (V.O.)
My grandfather’s boss got me into a prestigious prep school. There was a long waiting list, but he was an alumnus. My first experience with affirmative action, but it had little to do with race.

Gramps grins as he looks around the area.

GRAMPS
Hell, Bar, this isn’t a school. This is heaven.
INT. CLASSROOM-DAY

The classroom is filled with well-off children. Barack sits at a desk. The girl behind him leans over her desk.

GIRL
Can I touch your hair?

BARACK
No!

The girl pouts.

The boy next to Barack stares at him.

BOY
Does your father eat people?

BARACK
No!

Barack folds his arms across his chest, angry.

EXT. PLAYGROUND-DAY

CORETTA, 10, a chubby black girl, laughs as she chases Barack around a jungle gym and swings.

BARACK(V.O.)
Coretta reminded me of a different sort of pain. At first we avoided each other as if direct contact would only remind us more keenly of our isolation. She was the only other black person in our grade.

She catches him and they fall to the ground, breathless.

A group of CHILDREN gather around them.

CHILDREN
Coretta has a boyfriend! Coretta has a boyfriend!

Barack and Coretta stand.
BARACK
(stammers)
She’s not my g-girlfriend.

Barack turns to Coretta for some assistance. She looks down at the ground.

BOY
Why don’t you kiss her, mister boyfriend?

BARACK
(shouts)
I’m not her boyfriend!

Barack goes over to Coretta and shoves her. She staggers back, stunned.

BARACK
(shouts to Coretta)
Leave me alone!

Coretta runs away. Some of the children laugh. The school bell RINGS.

INT. CLASSROOM-DAY

Coretta works at her desk as though nothing had happened. Barack watches her from his desk.

BARACK(V.O.)
I wanted to explain to her that it had been nothing personal. I’d just never had a girlfriend before and saw no particular need to have one now.

INT. BURGER KING-DAY

Barack, now 16, sits with KEITH, 18, fat, at a small table.

KEITH
Man, I’m not going to any more of them bullshit Punahou parties. Them bitches are A-1, USDA certified racists. All of ‘em. Think we got a disease or something.
BARACK
Maybe they’re looking at that big butt of yours.

Barack reaches for a French fry in front of Keith.

KEITH
Get your hands out of my fries. You ain’t my bitch, nigger. Tell me the bitches wouldn’t treat us different if we was white. Or Japanese. Or Hawaiian. Or fucking Eskimo.

BARACK
My mom’s white. She says Harry Belafonte is the best-looking man on the planet. Trust me, Keith, if you looked like Belafonte, the white girls would date you.

KEITH
Shiitt! I don’t see you doing any better in the white booty department.

BARACK
I haven’t been rejected, either.

KEITH
The sisters like us. They on us like there’s no tomorrow. High school chicks, university chicks – it don’t matter. All smiles. ‘Sure you can have my number, baby.’

BARACK
Maybe the white girls just want somebody that looks like daddy, or their brother, or whatever, and we ain’t it.

Keith stands and crumples his trash into a tight ball.

KEITH
Man, I don’t know why you making excuses for them bitches. Let’s get out of here.
EXT. HAWAIIAN STREET-NIGHT

Barack strolls down a sidewalk.

BARACK (V.O.)
Only Malcolm X’s autobiography seemed to speak to me. The blunt poetry of his words. The wish that the white blood that ran through him, might somehow be expunged. And, too, that some whites might live besides him as brothers in Islam, that hope, appeared in a distant future, in a far-off land.

A young Hawaiian COUPLE approaches him. He moves to the side to let the couple pass. They smile at him.

BARACK (V.O.)
I was left to wonder what else I would be serving if and when I left my mother and my grandparents at some uncharted border. I never doubted their love, but I knew that men who might easily have been my brothers could still inspire their rawest fears.

Barack walks up to a high rise apartment building.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Gramps and GRANDMA, mid 50s, sit on a sofa. They both appear angry.

Barack examines them.

BARACK
What’s wrong, Grandma?

GRANDMA
Nothing! Gramps won’t drive me to work tomorrow, that’s all.

GRAMPS
She’s been catching the bus every morning without any problems. And, now, she gets pestered a little, she wants to change everything.
A man asked me for money this morning. He was very aggressive.

That’s all?

No! I gave him a dollar and he kept asking for more. If the bus hadn’t come, I think he would have hit me. He was a big man. I was scared.

Gramps, you should give her a ride. She seems pretty upset.

By a panhandler?

Yeah, I know, but it’s probably a little scary. Seeing some big man block your way. It’s really not a big deal.

Gramps starts to shake as he tightens his teeth.

It is a big deal to me. You know why she was scared? I’ll tell you why. She told me the fella was black.

Barack looks stunned. He wobbles as he tries to gain his composure.

That kind of attitude bothers me a lot.

Barack storms out of the living room, into his bedroom, slamming the door behind him.
INT. BEDROOM-NIGHT

Barack flops on his bed.

A KNOCK on the door. It opens and Gramps enters the room.

GRAMPS
I think we’re both over reacting a little bit—don’t you?

BARACK
No, it felt as though I was punched in the stomach.

GRAMPS
Well, you’ll get over it. The University of Hawaii basketball team just made the national rankings.

BARACK
I know. On the strength of an all-black starting five.

GRAMPS
What you don’t know is I have tickets for Saturday’s game.

INT. GYM-NIGHT

Two college TEAMS play basketball.

Barack and Gramps, watching the game, sit in the stands.

BARACK(V.O.)
I watched as those confident warriors joined in furious battle. I decided to become a part of that world.

EXT. PLAYGROUND-DAY

Alone, Barack practices basketball.

EXT. PLAYGROUND-NIGHT

Still alone, Barack practices.
BARACK(V.O.)
I was about to live out a caricature of the black male adolescence. On the basketball court I could find a community of sorts, with an inner life all its own.

Barack goes in for a lay-up.

BARACK(V.O.)
It was there I would make my closest white friends, on turf where blackness couldn’t be a disadvantage.

INT. GYM-NIGHT

Two high school teams play basketball. Keith dribbles the ball down the court. When he gets within shooting range, he tosses it to Barack. Barack shoots and scores. The crowd ROARS.

An opposing team PLAYER dribbles the ball down the court. JEFF, 17, steals the ball. A large black BOY knocks Jeff to the floor. A REFEREE blows his whistle.

Barack and his team members huddle with their COACH, 28. They touch hands before heading for the court.

COACH
(mutters to Jeff)
Watch out for that nigger.

In a fury, Barack charges at the coach.

BARACK
You better watch your mouth.

COACH
There are black people, and there are niggers. That kid’s a nigger.

Barack appears enraged.

BARACK
There are white folks, and then there are ignorant motherfuckers like you.
Barack storms off the court towards the locker room.

EXT. PUNAHOU CAMPUS—DAY

Barack and Keith stroll towards a stone bench that circles a big banyan tree.

KURT, 17, a stout white boy, approaches them.

KURT
Hey, Keith! Mah main man! Wha’s happenin’?

Keith and Kurt slap outstretched hands. Kurt tries to repeat the gesture to Barack, but he waves him off and walks away.

KURT
What’s his problem?

KEITH
Later!

Keith rushes after Barack.

KEITH
What’s wrong?

BARACK
Man those white folks are just making fun of us.

KEITH
What’re you talking about?

BARACK
All that ‘Yo baby, give me five bullshit.

Barack, very tense, bites his lower lip.

KEITH
So who’s mister sensitive all of a sudden? Kurt don’t mean nothing by it.
BARACK
If that’s what you think, then hey, forgive me for not being ignorant.

Keith, enraged, gets in Barack’s face.

KEITH
(shouts)
Look, I’m just getting along, all right? Just like I see you talking your game with the teachers. “Yes, Miss Snooty Bitch, I just find that novel so engaging, if I can just have one more day for that paper, I’ll kiss your white ass.’

Keith pushes a finger into Barack’s chest.

KEITH
It’s their world, they own it, and we in it. So just get the fuck outta my face.

Barack struts away, not looking back.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

INT. LIBRARY-DAY

Jordan lays the screenplay on the table.

JORDAN
Isn’t everything from his book?

ED
So far.

JORDAN
Won’t we get in trouble?

ED
No, I’ll have all the footnotes at the end.

JORDAN
I hope you’re right. I need those four credits.
ED
Trust me.

JORDAN
That’s what an old girlfriend of mine said. That cheating bitch. He had it pretty bad, didn’t he?

ED
Who?

JORDAN
Barack.

ED
That’s what you thought?

JORDAN
Yes, didn’t you?

ED
Have you ever been discriminated against?

JORDAN
No, but I’m a great looking rich white kid.

ED
Never? Think about it.

Jordan ponders over the question.

JORDAN
Maybe a little in grade school. And one time in high school.

FLASHBACK

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA—NIGHT

Jordan and five white high school STUDENTS sit at one table and play chess. No one else is in the cafeteria.

One boy leaves the area and returns carrying five cans of soda. He gives a can to everybody except Jordan.
JORDAN
That hurt, and I didn’t even want a soda. When I tried to have a conversation with one of them, I was ignored.

ED
Jordan, it’s chess, people have to concentrate.

JORDAN
They would talk to each other.

ED
Were you a bad chess player?

JORDAN
No, I was the second highest rated player.

ED
Probably just a bunch of snobs.

JORDAN
I don’t know. Sometime later, I picked a fight with Miller, the kid who brought the sodas. He was the first kid I ever punched after I had him pinned to the ground. His big nose bled like a stuck pig.

ED
Have you ever been turned down by a girl?

JORDAN
Hasn’t everybody? That doesn’t count.

ED
Why not? It hurts your feelings doesn’t it? Especially if you have a big crush on the girl.

JORDAN
It’s not discrimination.
ED
What if the girl only dates tall dark men? Isn’t that discrimination?

JORDAN
Noooo! It’s just a matter of taste. I don’t date fat girls. That makes me prejudice?

ED
No, that makes you a fool. You don’t know what you’re missing. Let’s call it a day. Tomorrow, the pool, same time?

JORDAN
Okay, I’ll be there.

INT. KITCHEN-NIGHT
Several white containers used for carrying out Chinese food lie on the table.

Ed, at the kitchen table, eats small pieces of broccoli.

His WIFE, 58, a very fat woman, sits down across from him.

WIFE
You have to eat more than that. How much weight did you lose?

ED
I don’t know. Fifteen, twenty pounds. I feel full all the time.

WIFE
I think you should take the chemo.

ED
Honey, I love you, but we been though this several times.

WIFE
That religion helped you after Leon died, now it’s killing you.
ED
Not taking certain drugs is a belief. Besides, the drugs only slows things down. It’s not a cure.

WIFE
You’ll live longer.

ED
Maybe, dying slowly is not living.

WIFE
You’ll have more time with me.

ED
Again, maybe, but I’ll be sleeping most of the time. Chemo makes you weak and sleepy. I know that much.

WIFE
It’ll be worth it for four more years.

ED
That’s not likely. I read most die within the first year. I’m going to work on my screenplay.

Ed gets up from the table.

WIFE
That really helps?

ED
Yes, it does. It helps to ease the hopelessness. And it takes my mind off dying.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT
Ed sits at his computer.

EXT. HAWAIIAN BEACH-DAY
Barack and Keith sit on the beach.
BARACK
Jeff and Scott treat us like they treat each other. It seems like they want to be black themselves or at least Doctor J.

KEITH
That’s true.

BARACK
Maybe we could afford to give the bad-assed nigger pose a rest. Save it for when we really need it.

Keith shakes his head.

KEITH
A pose, huh? Speak for your own self. Why don’t you invite Jeff and Scott to my party?

BARACK
We never brought white friends along to a black party.

KEITH
I like to see how they react outside of their white environment.

BARACK
Okay, I’ll ask them.

INT. RECREATION ROOM—NIGHT

Black MEN and black WOMEN socialize and some dance.

Barack, Jeff and SCOTT, 17, enter the room. Keith greets them and introduces Jeff and Scott to some of his FRIENDS.

Jeff and Scott smile at the guests as they wander over to a corner of the room and stand there, avoiding eye contact with the other guests.

EXT. KEITH’S HOUSE—NIGHT

Jeff and Scott come out of the doorway. Barack steps out as Keith stands in the doorway.
KEITH
Things just starting to heat up.

Barack turns to him.

BARACK
They’re not into it, I guess.

KEITH
Later, then.

Keith closes the door.

Barack rushes up to Jeff. They all stop and stand there.

BARACK
An hour? You guys could only stay for an hour?

Jeff lays an arm on Barack’s shoulder and looks him in the eye.

JEFF
You know, man, that really taught me something. I mean, I can see how you and Keith sometimes, at school parties...being the only black guys and all.

Barack stares at Jeff.

BARACK(V.O.)
A part of me wanted to punch him right there.

Barack pushes Jeff’s arm away from him.

BARACK
Yeah! Right!

Barack walks away. Jeff and Scott follow him.

BARACK(V.O.)
I had begun to see a new map of the world. We were playing on the white man’s court, Keith had told me, by the white man’s rules.
EXT. WINDING ROAD—NIGHT

An old Ford Granada moves down the road.

INT. FORD GRANADA—NIGHT

Barack drives, Jeff sits in the front, Scott in the back. No one says a word.

BARACK (V.O.)
The only thing a black person could choose as your own was withdrawal into a smaller coil of rage, until black meant only the knowledge of your own powerlessness, of your own defeat. Should you refuse this defeat and lash out at your captors, they would have a name for that: paranoid, militant, violent, nigger.

INT. PUNAHOU GYM—DAY

Barack, Keith and MALIK, a tall skinny black man, practice with three teenage black BOYS.

Barack dribbles the ball in front of Malik.

BARACK
Yeah, I read Malcolm. He abandoned all that stuff about blue-eyed devils before he died. Religious baggage.

Barack goes around Malik and shoots. The ball goes through the basket.

MALIK
I was a follower of the Nation of Islam. Now I get comfort in solitary prayer. No more meetings.

BOY 1 dribbles the ball.

BOY 1
Malcolm told it like it is, no doubt about it.
BOY 2
Yeah, but you won’t see me moving
to no African jungle anytime soon.
And I gotta have them ribs.

BOY 1
And pussy, too. Don’t Malcolm talk
about no pussy? Now you know that
ain’t gonna work.

Boy 1 shoots. The ball bounces off the rim, and Barack
catches it.

Keith laughs out loud.

Barack gives him a stern look.

BARACK
What are you laughing at? You’ve
never read Malcolm. You don’t know
what he says.

Keith steals the ball from Barack.

KEITH
I don’t need no books to tell me
how to be black.

Keith dribbles towards the opposite rim.

BARACK(V.O.)
I decided to keep my own counsel
after that, learning to disguise
my feverish mood.

INT. BEDROOM-NIGHT

The sound of Billie Holiday singing fills the room.
Barack, smoking a cigarette, lies on his bed.

BARACK(V.O.)
Junkie! Pothead! That’s where I’d
been headed. It didn’t make any
difference where I smoked reefer.
Pot had helped, and booze: maybe
a little blow when I could afford
it. Not smack, though.
A KNOCK on the door.

Barack’s MOTHER, 37, a fat white woman, enters the room.

BARACK (V.O.)
My mother had returned to Hawaii, and I lived with her my last year of high school.

MOTHER
Don’t you think you’re being a little casual about your future?

Barack sits up and dangles his legs over the side of the bed.

BARACK
What do you mean?

Mother puts her hands on her hips.

MOTHER
You know exactly what I mean. One of your friends was just arrested for drug possession.

Barack gets off the bed and goes over to his mother. He touches her hands and gives her a reassuring smile.

BARACK
Not to worry, I wouldn’t do anything stupid.

The mother appears satisfied.

BARACK (V.O.)
A friendly smile was usually an effective tactic, another one of those tricks I learned. People were satisfied so long as you were courteous and smiled and made no sudden moves.

MOTHER
Your grades are slipping.
BARACK
I’m not flunking out.

MOTHER
You haven’t even started on your college applications.

BARACK
I’d been thinking about maybe not going away to...

Mother cuts him off.

MOTHER
You could get into any school in the country if you put in a little effort. Bar, you can’t just sit around like a good-time Charlie, waiting for luck to see you through.

Barack displays a look of confusion.

BARACK
A good-time what?

MOTHER
A good-time Charlie. A loafer.

BARACK
A good-time Charlie, huh? Well, why not? Maybe that’s what I want out of life. What, are you afraid I’ll end up like Gramps?

Mother’s face goes slack, her eyes waver.

BARACK
Is that what you’re worried about? That I’ll end up like Gramps?

Mother shakes her head.

MOTHER
You’re already much better educated than your grandfather.
BARACK (V.O.)
Hawaii was heaven for a kid and
I was sort of a goof-off.

Barack leaves his room.

EXT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE—NIGHT

Barack goes up to the door and KNOCKS.

The door opens and FRANK, late 70’s, gray Afro, appears.

INT. LIVING ROOM—NIGHT

The room is a mess and poorly furnished.

Frank carries two glasses of whiskey over to Barack. He
hands one to Barack as he sits down on a beat-up sofa
next to Barack.

They both take a sip.

FRANK
My feet hurt. The cones and bone
spurs are a direct result of trying
to force African feet into European
shoes. What do you expect to get
out of college?

BARACK
I don’t know.

FRANK
Well, that’s the problem, isn’t
it? You don’t know. You’re
just like the rest of these
young cats out there.

Frank takes a sip of whiskey.

FRANK
The ones who know, who fought all
those years for your right to go to
college won’t tell you the truth.
The real price of admission.
BARACK
And what’s that?

FRANK
Leaving your race at the door.
Leaving your people behind.

BARACK
That’s the price for an education?

FRANK
No, to be trained. They’ll train you to want what you don’t need. They’ll train you to forget what you already know. You’ll start believing what they tell you about equal opportunity and the American way and all that shit. They’ll tell you that you’re a credit to your race until you want to start running things.

Frank takes another sip of whiskey.

FRANK
Then they’ll yank on your chain and let you know that you may be a well-trained, well-paid nigger, but you’re a nigger just the same.

BARACK
So what is it you’re telling me—that I shouldn’t be going to college?

FRANK
No, I didn’t say that. You’ve got to go. I’m just telling you to keep your eyes open. Stay awake.

BARACK(V.O.)
It makes me smile thinking back on Frank and his old Black Power, dashiki self. Keep your eyes open. That wasn’t as easy as it sounded.
INT. LIVING ROOM—NIGHT

Ed sits at his computer.

WIFE (O.S.)
Ed, I’m out of cigarettes. Could you go to Cumberland Farms and pick me up a couple of packs?

EXT. CUMBERLAND FARMS—NIGHT

A 2006 Toyota Camry pulls into the parking lot and parks.

Ed gets out of the car.

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS—NIGHT

An Indian WOMAN, 40, with a red circle on her forehead, stands behind the counter. The clock behind her reads 10:45.

Ed enters and he moseys over to the counter.

The woman appears scared and watches him closely.

ED
Two packs of Winston’s, please.

The woman gets the cigarettes and lays them on the counter. Ed pays for them. He picks up his change and cigarettes off the counter.

ED
Thank you.

Ed examines the woman’s face. A half smile appears on his face.

ED
Excuse me for asking, did I frighten you?

WOMAN
No!

ED
I’m sorry. It must be my imagination.
Ed leaves the store.

EXT. CUMBERLAND FARMS-NIGHT

Ed saunters over to his car and gets in.

A police car is parked in the parking lot across the street.

The Camry pulls out of the parking lot.

EXT. STREET-NIGHT

A police car follows the Camry down the street. Its flashing lights go on.

The Camry pulls over to the side of the road. The window comes down.

The police car stops behind the Camry. A police OFFICER gets out of the car. He walks over to the open window.

    OFFICER
    License and registration, please.

Ed hands the officer the documents.

    ED
    Did I do something wrong, officer?

    OFFICER
    You weren’t wearing your seatbelt when you pulled out of the parking lot.

After looking at the back of Ed’s car, the officer returns to his car and gets in.

INT. KITCHEN-NIGHT

Ed hands his wife the cigarettes.

    WIFE
    What took you? You were gone almost an hour.
Ed sits down at the kitchen table.

   ED
   I got a seventy-five dollar ticket for not wearing a seatbelt. What pisses me off is the waiting for that ticket. If I was white, it wouldn’t have taken that long.

The wife takes out a cigarette and tosses the pack on the counter.

   WIFE
   No seatbelt? You should know better.

She lights the cigarette.

   ED
   I know. I put it on a minute after I left the place. I wasn’t thinking.

The wife exhales the smoke away from Ed.

   WIFE
   Your face looks almost white. Do you feel okay?

   ED
   No, I feel terrible. I gotta lie down.

Ed gets up and mopes out of the kitchen.

INT. SWIMMING POOL AREA—DAY

Ed slowly lowers himself into the pool as Jordan dives in.

Ed starts to breast stroke and has trouble breathing. He stops, with his head just above the water and his arms moving to keep him afloat. He tries to breath. His eyes close and he goes under.

Jordan swims back to where he dove in. He stops and looks around. He dives towards where Ed went under.
INT. HOSPITAL ROOM—DAY

Ed sleeps on a hospital bed. His doctor walks up to him.

DOCTOR
Mr. Green.

Ed’s eyes open. He stares up at the doctor.

DOCTOR
We drained your lung. It’s filling up faster than I had anticipated. It’s imperative that we start chemotherapy right away.

ED
No!

DOCTOR
Mr. Green, at this rate you won’t last four months.

ED
If you could guarantee me a couple of years, I’d do it.

DOCTOR
I can say you’ll have a good chance of surviving more than two years. Without the treatment, no chance at all.

ED
When can I go home?

DOCTOR
As soon as someone can pick you up.

INT. CAR—DAY

Ed’s wife drives as Ed goes through his notebook.

WIFE
You’re not going to class Tuesday night, are you?
ED
I can handle those stairs one night a week. I’ll just rest a few times on the way up.

WIFE
Why bother? You’re never going to have a chance to write the screenplay you wanted to.

Ed glares at his wife.

ED
I’ll write it. First I have to finish the one I started.

INT. LIVING ROOM-DAY

Ed sits in front of his computer. A screenplay appears on the screen.

EXT. OCCIDENTAL CAMPUS-DAY

SUPER IMPOSE: 1979

TIM, 19, black, wearing an argyle sweater and jeans, enters a college dormitory.

INT. DORM HALLWAY-DAY

Tim knocks on a door. It opens and MARCUS, 20, tall and lean, appears.

TIM
Hey, Marcus! Is Barry here?

Barack appears next to Marcus. He hands Tim a paper.

BARACK
Here’s the assignment.

TIM
Thanks.

Tim starts down the hallway as Marcus closes the door.
INT. DORM-DAY

Marcus and Barack stroll away from the door in this small room furnished with two small desks, a stereo, a small refrigerator and a twin bed by each wall.

REGGIE, 19, black, sits one of the beds.

BARACK
Tim’s a trip, ain’t he? Should change his name from Tim to Tom.

Reggie laughs.

Marcus gets in Barack’s face.

MARCUS
Why you say that, man?

BARACK
I don’t know. The dude’s just goofy, that’s all.

MARCUS
Tim seems all right with me. Don’t bother nobody. Seems to me we should be worrying about whether our own stuff’s together instead of passing judgment on how other folks are supposed to act.

Marcus and Barack stare into each other’s eyes for a few seconds. Barack turns and heads for the door.

BARACK
I’ll see you at the coffee shop.

INT. HALLWAY-DAY

Barack talks to JOYCE, 19, pretty with dark skin.

BARACK
Hi, Joyce, are you going to the Black Students’ Association meeting tonight?

She looks at him funny and shakes her head no.
JOYCE
I’m not black. I’m multiracial. I’m part Italian, part French, part Native American and my mother happened to be part African. Why should I have to choose between them?

BARACK
You don’t.

Barack storms away from her.

BARACK(V.O.)
I wanted to distance myself from Joyce. To avoid being mistaken for a sellout, I chose my friends carefully: the more political active black students, foreign students, Marxist professors, structural feminists and punk rock performance poets. It remained necessary to prove which side you were on, to show your loyalty to the black masses, to strike out.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE-DAY

Barack and Marcus sit at a table.

BARACK
I thought Joyce was going to cry, ‘No, it’s black people who always have to make everything racial. They’re the ones making me choose. They’re the ones who are telling me that I can’t be who I am. They! They! They!’

MARCUS
Isn’t it a matter of conscious choice?

BARACK
No, I understand people like Joyce, her and all the other black kids who feel the way she does. The half-breeds think to themselves: why should we get lumped in with the losers if we don’t have to?
MARCUS
Are you saying blacks are losers?

BARACK
No, we’re individuals, but even when we dress well and speak impeccable English and yet, somehow, we’re mistaken for an ordinary nigger.

Marcus picks the book ‘Heart of Darkness’ off the table and waves it.

MARCUS
You’re reading too much of this racist shit.

Marcus notices REGINA, 19, an attractive black girl, enter the coffee shop. He waves her over to the table. When she arrives at the table, Marcus pulls out a chair.

MARCUS
Sister Regina, you know Barack, don’t you? I’m trying to tell Brother Barack here about this racist trash he’s reading.

He waves the book again.

BARACK
Man, stop waving that thing around.

MARCUS
Makes you embarrassed, don’t it? Just being seen with a book like this. I’m telling you, man, this stuff will poison your mind.

Marcus looks at his watch.

MARCUS
Damn, I’m late for class.
(stands and kisses Regina on the cheek)
Talk to this brother, will you? I think he can be saved.
Marcus heads for the exit.

REGINA
Marcus is in one of his preaching moods, I see.

Barack takes the book off the table and puts into a backpack.

BARACK
Actually, he’s right. It is a racist book. The way Conrad sees it, Africa’s the cesspool of the world, black folks are savages, and any contact with them breeds infection.

REGINA
So, why are you reading it?

BARACK
Because it’s assigned, and it teaches me things. About white people, I mean. It’s about the man who wrote it. The European. The American. A particular way of looking at the world.

REGINA
I thought it was about Africa?

BARACK
If you can keep your distance, it’s all there, in what’s said and what’s left unsaid. So I read the book to help me understand just what makes white people so afraid. Their demons. The way ideas get twisted around.

REGINA
But, why?

BARACK
It helps me understand how people learn to hate.
REGINA
And that’s important to you?

BARACK
That’s the only way to cure an illness, right? Diagnose it.

REGINA
What did Marcus call you?

BARACK
Barack.

REGINA
I thought your name was Barry.

BARACK
Baracks my given name. My father’s name. My grandfather was a Muslim.

REGINA
So, why does everybody call you Barry?

BARACK
Habit, I guess.

REGINA
Do you mind if I call you Barack?

BARACK
Not as long as you say it right.

Regina tilted her head back, her eyes ready to surrender to laughter.

BARACK(V.O.)
We ended up spending that afternoon together and remained good friends until my sophomore year.

EXT. A PARK-DAY

A restless crowd of two hundred stands in front of a small stage. A microphone mounts near the center edge, close to the crowd.
Marcus, Regina, Barack, and two white BOYS, about 20 and wearing dark sunglasses, stand on the back of the stage.

Barack goes over to the microphone.

BARACK
I say, there’s a struggle going on. It’s happening an ocean away.

He stops and waits for the crowd to quiet down.

BARACK
But it touches each and every one of us. A struggle that demands we choose sides. It’s a choice between dignity and servitude. Between fairness and injustice.

Barack stops. Somebody claps.

STUDENT(O.S.)
Go on with it, Barack. Tell it like it is.

The crowd starts to clap and cheer.

The two white boys run over to Barack and pull him to the back of the stage.

Marcus, wearing a white T-shirt and denims, rushes over to the microphone.

MARCUS
Stopping Barack from speaking was just an act. Our current administration waffling on the issues of South Africa is real and unacceptable.

Regina takes Marcus’ place in front of the microphone.

REGINA
My family is very proud that I’m attending college, but I feel ashamed knowing that I’m part of an institution that pays for privileges with the profits of oppression.
BARACK(V.0.)
I really wanted to stay up there, to hear my voice bouncing off the crowd and returning back to me in applause. I had so much more to say.

INT. BARROOM-NIGHT

Barack takes a sip from a bottle of beer. Regina strolls up to him with a broad smile on her face.

REGINA
Congratulations.

BARACK
For what?

REGINA
For that wonderful speech you gave.

BARACK
It was short, anyway.

REGINA
That’s what made it so effective. You spoke from the heart, Barack. When they pulled you away, it was as if...

BARACK
Listen, Regina, you are a very sweet lady, but that’s the last time you’ll ever hear another speech out of me.

REGINA
And why’s that?

BARACK
I don’t believe what happens to a kid in Soweto makes much difference to those people. So why do I pretend otherwise? It makes me feel important. I like the applause. It gives me a nice cheap thrill. That’s all!
Regina stares at Barack, wondering if he was serious.

REGINA
Seemed to me like I heard a man
speak who believed in something.
A black man who cared. But, hey,
I guess I’m stupid.

BARACK
Not stupid, Regina. Naive.

Regina takes a step back and puts her hands on her hips.

REGINA
Naive? You’re calling me naive?
Uh-uh, I don’t think so. If
anybody’s naive, it’s you. You
always think everything is about
you. You’re just like Marcus and
all the other brothers out here.
The rally is about you. It’s not
just about you. It’s about the
people who need your help. They’re
not interested in your irony or
your sophistication or your ego
getting bruised. And neither am I.

Regina struts away.

BARACK(V.O.)
Regina might have triggered a change
in me, left me warm with good intentions.

Barack, carrying a bottle of beer and a cigarette makes
it through the crowd of partiers.

BARACK(V.O.)
I needed a community that cut deeper
than common despair that black friends
and I shared when reading the latest
crime statistics, or the high fives
on a basketball court. A place where
I could test my commitments. When I
heard about a transfer program arranged
with Columbia University, I was quick
to apply.
EXT. NEW YORK CITY-DAY

A taxi pulls up in front of an apartment on the Upper East Side. Barack, holding a suitcase, steps out of the taxi. SADIK, a short, well-built Pakistani, greets Barack on the sidewalk. They shake hands.

Barack follows Sadik over to a large apartment house.

INT. APARTMENT-DAY

SOPHIE, late 30’s, unattractive, wearing just her underwear sits at a kitchen table.

Sadik and Barack enter the apartment.

SADIK
Sophie, this is Barry...

BARACK
Barack.

Sophie, not paying too much attention, gives a little wave.

SADIK
Leave your suitcase by the door, let’s go to breakfast.

Barack puts his suitcase down and they start out the door.

SOPHIE
I’ll be gone by the time you get back.

Sadik looks back at Sophie, and he makes a face.

INT. HALLWAY-DAY

Barack and Sadik step out into the hallway. Sadik closes the door behind him.

SADIK
She seemed much prettier last night. Come, there’s a good Greek restaurant across the street.
INT. GREEK RESTAURANT-DAY

Sadik dips his toast into the yolk of an egg while Barack sips his coffee.

SADIK
So tell me, Bar...sorry.

BARACK
Barack.

SADIK
Yes, Barack. Tell me, Barack, what brings you to our fair city?

BARACK
The state of the world and the state of my soul. I want to make amends. Make myself of some use.

SADIK
Well, you can talk all you want about saving the world, but this city tends to eat away at such noble sentiments. Everybody looks out for number one. Survival of the fittest. Tooth and claw. Elbow the other guy out of the way. That my friend is New York.

Sadik tips his coffee towards Barack in a mock salute.

BARACK(V.O.)
I lived with Sadik, an illegal immigrant who worked on tables, for a short time and again after I lost my apartment on 109th street for lack of heat. When he lost his own lease, we got an apartment together.

INT. APARTMENT-NIGHT

Barack sits at a kitchen table doing some homework.

Sadik enters the room.
SADIK
How about hitting a bar with me tonight.

BARACK
I have too much work and not enough cash.

SADIK
You’re becoming a bore.

BARACK
I going to stop getting high for a while. My mother and sister are coming for a visit.

INT. KITCHEN-NIGHT

Barack sits at the kitchen table, writing a letter.

His mother comes up behind him and looks over his shoulder.

MOTHER
You’re writing your father?

BARACK
Yes.

MOTHER
Are you guys arranging a visit?

BARACK
I’d like to see him again. It’s been over ten years since his one and only visit.

MOTHER
It wasn’t your father’s fault that he left, you know. I divorced him. When we got married your grandparents weren’t happy with the idea, but they said okay. Then Barack’s father, your grandfather Hussein wrote Gramps this long and nasty letter saying that he didn’t approve. He didn’t want the Obama blood soiled by a white woman.
Her lip began to tremble, and she bit down on her lip.

MOTHER
When you were two you father received two scholarship offers. One to New School here in New York. They agreed to pay for everything: room and board and enough money to support the three of us. Harvard just agreed to pay tuition.

Mother starts to get all choked-up, so she pauses.

MOTHER
But Barack was a stubborn bastard, he had to go to Harvard. How can I refuse the best education? he told me. That’s all he could think about, proving that he was the best.

She stopped and laughed to herself.

MOTHER
Your father was late for our first date. He showed up an hour late with two of his friends. He said, as serious as can be, 'You see, gentlemen, I told you she was a fine girl, and that she would wait for me.'

BARACK(V.O.)
She saw my father as everyone hopes at least one other person might see him: she had tried to help the child who never knew him see him in the same way. A few months later I called to tell her that my father had died in a car accident and heard her cry out over the distance. And a year later my brother, David, was killed in a motorcycle accident. Who was that person, I asked myself, this stranger who carried my blood? What wild, unspoken dreams had this boy possessed? Who was I, who shed no tears at the loss of his own?
INT. CAR-NIGHT

Barack drives as a pretty white WOMAN sits at his side.

BARACK (V.O.)
While in New York I saw a white woman. I loved her, but on a visit to her family’s country house I realized that our two worlds were a distant from each other. And I knew if we stayed together I’d eventually live in hers.

WOMAN
I thought it was a very angry play.

BARACK
Yes, but very funny, typical black American humor. The playwright is black.

WOMAN
All the black characters were so angry all the time.

BARACK
It’s a matter of remembering. Nobody asks why Jews remember the Holocaust.

WOMAN
That’s different.

BARACK
No, it isn’t. You don’t understand because you’re not black.

WOMAN
I can’t be black. I would if I could. I can only be myself, isn’t that enough for you?

BARACK
No, it isn’t. I’m sorry, but it’s never going to work out. I can’t live in your world.

The woman breaks down and cries.
INT. COFFEE SHOP—DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 1983

JERRY KELLMAN, 38, pudgy, wire-rimmed glasses, sits in a booth across from Barack.

JERRY
So, why does someone from Hawaii want to be an organizer?

BARACK
To help my people.

JERRY
Hmmmph! You must be angry about something.

BARACK
What do you mean by that?

JERRY
Don’t get me wrong, anger’s a requirement for the job. The only reason anybody decides to become an organizer. Well-adjusted people find more relaxing work.

BARACK
Why me?

JERRY
I need somebody to work with me. somebody black. What do you know about Chicago?

BARACK
Hog butcher to the world.

JERRY
The butcheries closed a while ago.

BARACK
The Cubs never win.

JERRY
True. What else?
BARACK
America’s most segregated city. A black man was elected mayor and the white people don’t like it.

JERRY
So you’ve been following Harold Washington’s career. I’m surprised you haven’t gone to work for him.

BARACK
I tried. His office wouldn’t write back.

JERRY
The whole atmosphere in Chicago is polarized. A big media circus. Not much is getting done.

Barack leans back in his chair.

BARACK
And whose fault is that?

Jerry adjusts his glasses and stares at Barack.

JERRY
It’s not a question of fault. It’s a question of whether any politician can do much to break the cycle.

BARACK
How much?

JERRY
Ten thousand your first year, with a two-thousand-dollar travel allowance to buy a car.

BARACK(V.O.)
A week later, I loaded my car and drove to Chicago.

EXT. SMITTY’S BARBERSHOP—DAY

A brick on the floor holds the door open.
Barack walks down the sidewalk.

BARACK (V.O.)
When I was asked what it was that a community organizer did, I couldn’t answer them directly. Instead, I’d pronounce on the need for change. I organize black folks, at the grass roots, for change.

Barack steps through the doorway and into the barbershop.

INT. BARBERSHOP—DAY

There are four empty barber chairs. SMITTY, an old black man, stands by one. He talks to a heavy black MAN, holding a newspaper and sitting on chair by the wall.

Barack sits on the barber chair.

MAN
Vrdolyak and the rest of them crackers don’t know when to quit. When Daley was mayor, didn’t nobody say nothing about him putting all them Irish up in City Hall. But the minute Harold tries to hire some black people, just to even things out, they call it reverse racism.

SMITTY
Man, that’s how it always is. Whenever a black man gets into power, they gonna try and change the rules on him.

Smitty starts to cut Barack’s hair.

MAN
Worse part is, newspaper acting like it was black folks that started this whole mess.

SMITTY
What do you expect from the white man’s paper?

Barack stares at Harold’s picture on the wall.
SMITTY
You here during the election?

BARACK
I was in New York, but I read about it.

SMITTY
Before Harold, seemed like we’d always be second-class citizens.

MAN
Plantation politics.

SMITTY
Black people in the worst jobs. The worst housing. Police brutality rampant. But when the so-called black committeemen came around election time, we’d all line up and vote the straight Democratic ticket. Sell our souls for a Christmas turkey. White folks spitting in our faces, and we’d reward ’em with the vote.

BARACK(V.O.)
I listened to the men recall Harold’s rise. How his first candidacy had faltered, the lack of unity within the black community. He won the second time even though the press played up on the income taxes he’d failed to pay.

MAN
Like the white cats don’t cheat on every damn thing every minute of their lives.

SMITTY
The night Harold won, let me tell you, people just ran the streets. People were proud of themselves. When I woke up it seemed like the most beautiful day of my life.
I had shared in their pride, the same sort of pride that made me root for any pro football team that fielded a black quarterback.

Smitty pulls the smock off Barack and brushes off the back of his shirt.

BARACK
Thanks for the history lesson.

SMITTY
That part’s free. Haircut’s ten dollars. What’s your name?

BARACK
Barack.

SMITTY
Barack, huh. You a Muslim?

BARACK
Grandfather was.

Smitty takes Barack’s money and shakes his hand.

SMITTY
Well, Barack, you should come back sooner next time. Your hair was looking awful raggedy when you walked in.

INT. OFFICE-DAY

Jerry sits at his desk. Barack tosses a report in front of him.

BARACK
That’s my report.

Jerry glances over the paperwork.

JERRY
Not bad for three weeks.
BARACK
Not bad?

JERRY
Yeah, not bad. It’s still too abstract, like you’re taking a survey of something. If you want to organize people, you need to steer away from peripheral stuff and go towards people’s centers. The stuff that makes them tick. Otherwise you’ll never form the relationship you need to get them involved.

Barack displayed that the man was getting on his nerves.

BARACK
Did you ever worry about becoming too calculating, if the idea of probing people’s psyches and gaining their trust just to build an organization ever felt manipulative?

JERRY
I’m not a poet, Barack, I’m an organizer.

BARACK(V.O.)
What did that mean? I left his office in a foul mood.

INT. BAPTIST CHURCH—DAY

REVEREND REYNOLDS, a middle aged black man, meets with Barack.

BARACK
There had been some increased gang activity and we have planned a meeting. With your leadership, this can be a step towards cooperation on all kinds of issues.

REVEREND SMALLS, a tall pecan-colored man, enters the room.
REYNOLDS
This young man, Brother Obama, has a plan to organize a meeting about the recent gang shooting.

SMALL
What’s the name of your organization?

BARACK
Developing Communities Project.

SMALL
I remember a white man coming around here. Funny looking guy. Jewish name. You connected with the Catholics?

BARACK
Some of the Catholic churches are involved.

SMALL
Like I told the white man, we don’t need nothing like that around here.

BARACK
I...

SMALL
Listen, Obama, you may mean well, but the last thing we need here is to join up with a bunch of white money and Catholic churches and Jewish organizations to solve our problems.

BARACK
But...

SMALL
White folks come in here thinking they know what’s best for us, hiring a buncha high-talking college-educated brothers like yourself who don’t know no better, and all they want to do is take over. It’s all a political thing.
BARACK
The church had always taken the lead in addressing community issues.

SMALL
You don’t understand. Things have changed around here with the new mayor. We have a direct line to City Hall.

REYNOLDS
The man’s new around here. He’s just trying to help.

Reverend Small smiles and pats Barack on the shoulder.

SMALL
Don’t misunderstand me now. Like I said, I know you mean well. We need some young blood to help our cause. All I’m saying is that right now you’re on the wrong side of the battle.

BARACK(V.O.)
We went forward with our meeting, which proved a small disaster. Only thirteen people showed up.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GARDENS CHURCH-DAY

A small sub-compact car pulls up in front of the church. Barack gets out of the car.

BARACK(V.O.)
Over two months had passed since the botched meeting, and things had gone badly. No marches. No sit-ins. No freedom songs. Just a series of miscues and misunderstandings, tedium and stress.

INT. MEETING ROOM-DAY

Barack stands with ANGELA, SHIRLEY and MONA, three middle aged black women.
ANGELA
(to Shirley)
Watch out girl, Barack’s about
to interview you. He’s got that
look.

Mona chuckles.

SHIRLEY
We’re just a bunch of bored middle-aged women, Barack, with nothing
to do with our time. If Mr. Right comes along, it’s good-bye,
hello Monte Carlo.

MONA
They told me Jerry’s a racist.
He’s just looking out for his own.

ANGELA
Yeah, I like to know where that
five hundred thousand dollars went to. It sure as Hell didn’t
go into our neighborhood.

BARACK(V.O.)
I had tried my best to mediate
the conflict, defending Jerry.
He had told me if I was going
to do this work, you got to stop
worrying about if people like you.
They won’t.

ANGELA
I’m quitting! I’m sorry, Barack.
I’ve been at this for two years,
and I got nothing to show for it.

BARACK
I understand, you’re frustrated,
Angela. But you need to give it
a little more time.

SHIRLEY
We can’t keep on making promises
to our people, and then have nothing
happen. We need something now.
BARACK
I came here because Jerry said there were some people who were serious about doing something to change their neighborhood. I you don’t think anything happened after working with me, then I’ll be the first one to tell you to quit.

SHIRLEY
Jerry knows we got a problem, that’s why he hired Barack. Ain’t that right, Barack?

Barack nods.

BARACK
I’m going to concentrate more time on the problems in your neighborhood.

ANGELA
Well, I’ll give it a few more months.

Angela and Shirley leave.

Mona goes up to Barack and grabs an arm.

MONA
You handled that meeting pretty good, Barack. Seems like you know what you’re doing.

BARACK
I don’t, Mona. I don’t have a clue.

MONA
Well, I promise I won’t tell nobody.

BARACK
I appreciate that, Mona. I sure do appreciate that.
INT. SUBCOMPACT CAR-DAY

Barack drives, Angela sits next to him, Mona and Shirley are on the back seat.

BARACK(V.O.)
A week later I was back, trying to stuff Mona, Shirley and Angela in my car.

MONA
There’s no room back here.

SHIRLEY
It’s built for the skinny little girls Barack goes out with.

ANGELA
Who are we meeting with?

BARACK
I scheduled three meetings.

EXT. TWO-STYLE WAREHOUSE-DAY

Barack’s car pulls in front of the warehouse and parks.

INT. WAREHOUSE-DAY

The three women follow Barack down a flight of stairs into a basement filled with old furniture.

RAFIQ AL SHAZZ, a wiry man, goatee, sits in an office.

RAFIQ
Can I help you?

BARACK
I spoke to you on the phone.

SHIRLEY
I know you. You’re Mrs. Thompson’s boy, Wally.

Rafiq points at some chairs.
RAFIQ

Sit.

BARACK

How could our churches help encourage local economic development?

Rafiq hands Barack a leaflet.

RAFIQ

The Arab stores are selling bad meat. People from outside our community making money of us and showing our brothers and sisters disrespect. The Koreans and Arabs run the stores. The Jews own the buildings. We gonna insist that they make a contribution back to the community, fund our programs, what have you.

BARACK

How can you help us?

Rafiq looks over the women.

RAFIQ

If y’all are interested in jobs, then you can help by spreading the message about this here plan. We need more support. I gotta get going, but, hey, we’ll talk again.

Rafiq leads them to the stairway.

INT. CAR-DAY

Barack drives and the women sit where they were before.

BARACK

Sounds like you knew him, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Yeah, before he got that fancy name. Wally was a big-time gang-banger before he became a Muslim.
ANGELA
Once a thug, always a thug.

INT. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE—DAY

In an area that looked like a pawnshop, FOSTER, a plump black man, packs boxes.

Barack and the women enter the area.

BARACK
I’m looking for Mr. Foster.

FOSTER
I’m Foster.

BARACK
We were told you were the president of the Chamber...

FOSTER
Was, I resigned last week. I done my best to organize the local merchants, but the lack of support finally left me discouraged.

BARACK
Care to tell me why?

FOSTER
The Koreans were the only ones that paid their dues to the Chamber.

ANGELA
Do you have any work for our youth?

Mr. Foster looked at her as if she was crazy.

FOSTER
Every merchant around here turns down thirty applications a day. Sorry.

Angela storms off as Barack shakes Foster’s hand.
BARACK(V.O.)
Our final meeting was with the administrator of a local branch of the Mayor’s Office of Employment and training, MET. By the time we arrived the administrator was gone, but I found an issue. A brochure contained a list of all the MET programs in the city, none of them were south of Ninety-fifth street. Within a few months I had my own MET office.

INT. GYM-DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: SPRING 1987

A group of TEENAGERS play basketball. Barack talks to KYLE, 16, black.

BARACK
Are you still thinking about joining the air force?

Kyle shakes his head.

KYLE
The air force will never let a black man fly a plane.

BARACK
Who told you that mess?

Kyle shrugs.

KYLE
Don’t need somebody to tell me that. Just is, that’s all.

BARACK
That’s the wrong attitude. You can do whatever you want if you’re willing to work for it.

KYLE
Yeah, well, how many black pilots do you know?
Barack ponders over the question.

    KYLE
    Thought so. I gotta play some hoops.

LATER

Kyle is guarding a short black MAN, 28. The Man dribbles around Kyle and scores. He grabs the ball after it hits the floor.

    MAN
    (to Kyle)
    You can’t do better than that, boy?

The man tosses the ball at Kyle’s chest and turns to one of his teammates.

    MAN
    That punk can’t guard me.

Kyle punches the man on the jaw, knocking him to the floor.

    KYLE
    (to the man)
    I ain’t no punk! I ain’t no punk.

INT. CAR-DAY

Barack drives as Kyle sits to his right.

    BARACK
    You have to keep cool, Kyle. You could have been arrested.

    KYLE
    Please don’t tell my momma.

    BARACK
    I want you to tell her. And I’m going to look into funding for a pilot program.
INT. OFFICE—DAY

Barack sits at his desk. JOHNNIE, 29, black enters the room and struts to the front of the desk.

JOHNNIE
Good news. We met with the state senator. He committed to introducing a bill to get funding for a pilot program. Maybe not the whole half million, but enough.

BARACK
Fantastic! Did you find any other pastors who might be interested in organizing?

JOHNNIE
I got one who might be worth talking to. Reverend Jeremiah Wright. His message seems to appeal to young people.

EXT. TRINITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST—DAY

The church is a red brick building surrounded by sculptured shrubs. Stuck in the lawn is a sign that reads; FREE SOUTH AFRICA.

INT. CHURCH—DAY

TRACY, a pretty black woman, leads Barack to a door located in the back of the church. They pass through the doorway.

INT. KITCHEN AREA—DAY

REV. WRIGHT, 40’s, black with a silver mustache and goatee, glasses, greets Barack.

WRIGHT
Barack, let’s see if Tracy here will let me have a minute of your time.

Tracy leaves the area.
WRIGHT
Nothing harder than reaching young brothers like yourself. They worry about looking soft. They tell themselves church is a woman’s thing, a sign of weakness for a man to admit that he’s got spiritual needs.

BARACK
That’s not me. Listen, I’m looking for involvement from larger churches like yours. To help the people in our community.

WRIGHT
You said on the phone that you were trying to organize the churches in Chicago?

BARACK
Yes, I believe if the leaders of the churches work together they can help make our people’s lives better.

WRIGHT
I’ll try to help you if I can, but you should know that having us involved in your effort isn’t necessarily a feather in your cap.

BARACK
Why’s that?

WRIGHT
My fellow clergy feel like we’re too radical. Too emotional. Our emphasis on African history, on scholarship...

Barack interrupts.

BARACK
Some people say that the church is too upwardly mobile.
That’s a lot of bull. Half of them think former gang-bangers or the former Muslim got no business in a Christian church. Other half think any black man with an education or a job, or any church that respects scholarship, is somehow suspect.

Wright takes off his glasses and rubs his eyes.

Life’s not safe for a black man in this country, Barack. Never has been, probably never will be. I’ll have Tracy prepare a list of members for you to meet. I have another appointment. We’ll talk later.

They shake hands.

INT. OFFICE—DAY

Barack sits at his desk.

Months have passed at a breathless pace. We worked with a citywide coalition in support of school reform and held a series of meeting with Mexicans to craft a common environmental strategy for the region.

JOHNNIE

I heard you were accepted into Harvard?

BARACK

Yes, I’ll be leaving in May.

JOHNNIE

Congratulations.

BARACK

I want you to take over as director.
JOHNNIE
Sure, we’re going to miss you.

BARACK
I’ll be back after I graduate. Even if it’s just to help part time.

JOHNNIE
And I heard that you become a member of Reverend Wright’s church.

BARACK
Yes, I have. I figured I better attend some services myself and see what it was all about.

INT. CHURCH-DAY

Barack sits in a church filled to capacity.

Rev. Wright preaches.

WRIGHT
It is this world, a world where cruise ships throw away more food in a day than most residents of Port-au Prince see in a year, where white folks’ greed runs a world in need. That’s the world! On which hope sits!

BARACK(V.O.)
And so it went, a meditation on a fallen world. Rev. Wright spoke of Sharpsville and Hiroshima, the callousness of policymakers in the White House and in the State House. And as the Reverend finished his sermon, I felt tears running down my cheeks. He had called this sermon “The Audacity of Hope.”
INT. LIVING ROOM—NIGHT

Ed shuts down his computer. The computer screen turns black.

EXT. EXPENSIVE LOOKING CONTEMPORARY HOUSE—DAY

A 2007 Jaguar is parked in the driveway. Jordan, talking on a cellular phone, comes out of the house.

JORDAN
Okay, I’ll meet you there tonight.

EXT. BAR—NIGHT

Jordan stands in front of the bar. He glances at his watch.

A large muscular white MAN, late 30’s, marches up to Jordan. He puts his hand out.

MAN
Can you spare a few bucks.

Jordan looks up at the man as he reaches for his billfold. He pulls out a couple of dollars and hands them to the man.

MAN
How about a little more?

The man grins as he moves his open hand closer to Jordan.

Jordan turns and hurries into the bar.

INT. BAR—NIGHT

The BARTENDER and all the PATRONS are black.

Jordan appears worried as he scans the bar. He stares straight ahead as he rushes towards the bar. After he gets on a barstool, the bartender goes up to him.

BARTENDER
You have an I D?
Jordan pulls out his driver’s license and hands it to the bartender.

    JORDAN
    Twenty-one, yesterday.

The bartender hands the license back.

    BARTENDER
    I can read. What can I get you?

    JORDAN
    A bottle of Bud, please.

Jordan stares ahead and downward until the bottle is placed in front of him. He glances at the bartender for a moment.

    JORDAN
    Thanks.

The bartender just walks away.

Jordan takes a sip and then just stares at the bottle. Beads of perspiration appear on his forehead.

A big man sits down next to him. Jordan avoids looking at him. His hand shakes slightly as he reaches for the bottle of beer.

    ED
    What’s up Jordan? You look scared. Somebody say something to you?

Jordan appears relieved.

    JORDAN
    Ed, you just scared the shit out of me.

    ED
    How’s that? I just sat down.

    JORDAN
    I thought you were this big guy who hassled me outside. I thought the guy was going to rob me.
Oh, that was just a friend of mine.

Ed hands Jordan a couple of dollars.

Here’s your money back.

Jordan exams the dollars.

What? Why?

To teach you a lesson. Scary, wasn’t he? It had nothing to do with race. On the other hand, you were uncomfortable in here, weren’t you?

Well, a little.

That’s understandable. Contrary to what Senator Obama would think, that doesn’t make you a racist.

You’re really against that guy, aren’t you?

I never said that. He’s a good man that wants to help his race. My race. For whatever reasons not clear to me, he appears to have this hatred thing, similar to Rev. Wright. He’s still my candidate.

It seems like you’re trying to turn me against him. Aren’t you?
ED
No! Vote for whoever you want. Just
don’t go around babbling about some-
one you know nothing about. And
don’t imply a person’s a racist
because he doesn’t like the guy. That
turns people against my race.
Just like that ridiculous story
you wrote about the O.J. trial.

JORDAN
Your opinion. I think the guy was
framed.

ED
It’s not an opinion. It’s an
absolute fact that you’re just
too stupid to realize. Hey,
Reggie.

The bartender comes over to Ed.

ED
O.J., guilty or not?

BARTENDER
My mom didn’t raise no fool, Ed.
The rich brother fucked up. Must
have been on drugs or something.

The bartender strolls away.

JORDAN
That doesn’t prove anything.

Ed scans all the other patrons.

ED
(shouts)
Listen up! Does anybody here
believe O.J. didn’t kill his wife.
If so, please raise your hand.

No one does.
ED
(to Jordan)
You want to tell them they’re wrong, Jordan?

Jordan looks down and shakes his head.

ED
Do you want to get out of here?

Jordan nods.

EXT. BAR—NIGHT
Ed and Jordan exit the bar.

ED
You have to finish our assignment. I can’t go on. Any questions?

JORDAN
Just one, how did you get your scar?

ED
In Vietnam. This rebel hated the Vietnamese and probably blacks.

FLASHBACK

EXT. VIETNAM—DAY
A military convoy moves along on a dirt road.

REBEL, 22, sits on a tank, firing his M-79 grenade launcher.

A series of grades explode behind a small BOY running through a rice patty. The final one explodes next to the boy, he disappears.

The rebel sits on his tank, grinning.

A young Ed drives a jeep behind the tank. He appears angry.
EXT. FIRE SUPPORT BASE-NIGHT

After buttoning up his pants, Rebel heads towards a bunker.

Ed goes up to him and punches him in the face. Rebel falls to the ground.

Ed turns and walks away.

Rebel gets up and pulls a switchblade out of his pocket. He pushes the button and a long thin blade appears. He runs up to Ed and grabs him from behind. He sticks the knife in several inches above the crotch area and pulls the knife upward and outward on an angle.

Ed falls to the ground.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BAR-NIGHT

Ed puts a hand on Jordan’s shoulder.

ED
I should have died. I was lucky.
My son, Leon, wasn’t so lucky.
A small needle in his arm ended his life.

JORDAN
I’m sorry, I didn’t know.

ED
Don’t ever experiment with drugs, they can kill you.

JORDAN
I know what drugs can do, I’m not stupid. I tried coke and liked it, but for a couple days afterwards, I had the urge to do more. I could see how people get addicted to that shit.
Hey, I got to get going. Good luck with the screenplay.

Ed offers Jordan his hand. They shake.

Yeah, thanks. It was nice working with you.

Same here.

I’ll probably finish it tomorrow.

Jordan sits in front of large flat screen computer.

The inscription on the door reads, ‘The Law Firm of Miner, Barnhill & Galland’

SUPERIMPOSE: Chicago 1993

A black well-dressed lawyer, 40’s, sits at his desk reading a resume.

Why did you pick our firm?

Because your firm mainly handles civil rights and discrimination cases. That interests me, a lot.

Why didn’t you apply sooner?
BARACK
After Harvard, I got involved with Project Vote. I was busy signing up new voters during the day and writing a book at night. There are only so many hours in a day.

LAWYER
You realize your job here will be working with teams of lawyers who write documents and contracts? No trials.

BARACK
I understand that.

LAWYER
May I ask what you plan on doing a few years from now?

BARACK
Not at all. I plan on being the mayor of Chicago.

INT. LIVING ROOM—NIGHT
A dozen well-dressed ADULTS stand in a large living room.

ALICE PALMER, 56, black, leads Barack over to DR. YOUNG, 72, white.

PALMER
Dr. Young I like to introduce you to my successor, Barack Obama.

Barack offers his hand. They shake.

BARACK
Pleased to meet you.

YOUNG
I’ve heard a lot of good things about you from Bill.

BILL AYERS, 51, white, strolls over to them.
BILL
Dr. Young, you’re talking to our next congresswoman and the next state senator of our district. And we’re seeking your support.

INT. OFFICE—DAY

Barack meets with an ATTORNEY.

BARACK
She promised she wouldn’t run against me if she lost.

ATTORNEY
Alice said she never said that. The fact is she’s running. But I can get her knocked out of the race.

BARACK
How?

ATTORNEY
You can challenge the names on her petition.

BARACK
What will that take?

ATTORNEY
Money. Ron Davis is the man for the job.

BARACK
What constitutes an invalid signature?

ATTORNEY
Printed names rather than written in cursive script. And if the person collecting the signatures wasn’t registered to perform the task, any names he or she collected don’t count.
BARACK
I don’t think this is very sporting. Yet, if she couldn’t run a successful petition, how effective a representative is she going to be. Call Davis.

EXT. STREET-DAY

Barack walks down the street with several black MEN. A REPORTER goes up to him and pushes a microphone near his face.

REPORTER
Do you think it was proper getting all your fellow democrats off the ballot?

BARACK
To my mind, we were just abiding by the rules that had been set up.

REPORTER
But you were eliminating members of your party by technicalities.

BARACK
If you can win, you should win and get to work doing the people’s business.

INT. CHURCH-DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: MARCH 2000

Barack gives a speech to a small crowd.

BARACK
The first thing people ask me is ‘How did you get that name, Obama?’, but they usually say, ‘Alabama’ or ‘Yo mama’.

The crowd laughs.
BARACK
Bobby Rush rips me for going to Harvard. I refuse to be ashamed of my education. I want all children to go to Harvard, especially from the south side of Chicago.

The crowd cheers.

BARACK
I promise as your congressman I would turn south side colleges into technology centers that would instruct local schools in computer use.

EXT. RAMADA INN-NIGHT

Two black MEN wearing overcoats walk towards the entrance.

MAN 1
I can’t believe Barack only got thirty-one percent.

MAN 2
It’s hard to beat a former Black Panther.

MAN 1
Fuck you! Barack is just too white for blacks and too dark for them crackers.

INT. BALLROOM-NIGHT

Barack gives a speech to fifty of his supporters.

BARACK
We ran a wonderful campaign. We’ve galvanized and mobilized young people who might have been disenfranchised with politics. In two-thousand and four, we will win!
INT. LIVING ROOM—NIGHT

A half-a-dozen African Americans sit around and chat.

BARACK
I want to run for the U. S. Senate.

Everybody but Barack laughs.

BARACK
No, really, I am going to run for the U. S. Senate. I could win. I’m just going to need millions of dollars to pull off a victory.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING—DAY

Barack and several of his aides leave the building. A reporter pushes a microphone towards him.

REPORTER
Sen. Obama, did you help get that ethics reform package passed?

Barack doesn’t look at the reporter as he struts towards a parking lot.

BARACK
I did.

REPORTER
Isn’t spending more than seventeen thousand dollars to send out your mailers to seventy thousand voters in violation of your law?

BARACK
I chewed out my staff for mailing that out when they did. It should have gone out a long time ago.

Barack and his aides get into a car. The reporter watches them drive away.

INT. LIVING ROOM—NIGHT

Barack is on the television screen.
BARACK
Now they say you can’t change Washington. I’m Barack Obama and I am running for the U.S. Senate to say, ‘Yes, we can!’

A telephone RINGS. Obama, on a sofa, picks up the phone.

BARACK
I like it. (pause) Fantastic. After speaking there, how can I lose? I’ll make it my best speech, ever.

EXT. BOSTON, FLEET CENTER ARENA-DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: JULY 27, 2004

Barack followed by reporters and aides marches around a maze of chain-link fences. DAVID MENDELL, 30’s, white, tries to keep up with the fast moving Barack.

DAVID
Barack, you seem to be impressing many people.

BARACK
I’m LeBron. I can play on this level. I got some game.

INT. FLEET CENTER AREA-DAY

Barack speaks at the Democratic National Convention.

BARACK
Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can’t teach our kids to learn, they know that parents have to parent, that children can’t achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. They know those things.
EXT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS—DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: JANUARY 2005

Barack leads a large group of followers and reporters towards the Library of Congress. He spots Jesse Jackson and runs up to him. He gives Jackson a big bear hug as he talks into his ear.

BARACK
I’m not a toy senator. I’m not a play senator. I’m a real senator now.

JACKSON
What are your plans now: V.P., president?

BARACK
Absolutely not! I’ll be too busy taking care of the voters in Illinois.

EXT. CAPITAL BUILDING, ILLINOIS—DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: FEBRUARY 2007

Barack and several aids go down the stairs. A reporter shoves a microphone towards Barack.

REPORTER
With the time spent promoting your second book, and all your time overseas, and now with you running for the presidency, when will you have time to work for the people of Illinois?

BARACK
I’ll find the time.

Barack hurries away from the reporter.

INT. LIVING ROOM—DAY

Barack and his WIFE sit on a sofa watching television. GEORGE WILL is on the screen.
WILLS
Obama is not scary, just disappointing. He is unjust regarding the nomination of Leslie Southwick to the U. S. Court of appeals. The A.B.A. gave him its highest rating, but because he is a white Mississippian many liberals consider him fair game for unfairness.

Wills reaches for a glass of water and takes a sip.

WILLS
Sen. Obama stated that he reviewed seven thousand opinions and couldn't find one case in which he sided with a civil rights plaintiff in a non-unanimous verdict. Out of Southwick's nine-hundred-eighty-five opinions, not seven thousand, his opponents only cited two cases they didn't like. And in both cases Southwick sided with the law. Does Obama think Southwick applied the law inappropriately? Or is it because he didn't like the results? Sen. Obama has explaining to do.

Barack turns the television off with a remote control.

BARACK
Southwick is a racist. A white woman was justly fired for referring to a colleague as a 'good old nigger'. Because he wasn't there and he didn't care, the state agency reinstated the bigot. Southwick voted with the majority to uphold the agency's decision.

WIFE
What was the other case?

BARACK
The courts awarded a child to his father. It was obvious the courts discriminated against the mother due to her lesbian lifestyle. When are we going to escape the dark ages?
BY LAW, THE COURT COULD NOT OVERTURN THE AGENCY’S ACTION WITHOUT FINDING LEGAL ERROR OR ‘ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS’ JUDGMENT.

BARACK
There are seventeen judges for that district. Only one African American. Is that fair?

EXT. CONFERENCE ROOM—DAY

GERALDINE FERRARO stands in front of several reporters pushing microphones towards her.

REPORTER 1
Why do you think Barack Obama is the party’s delegate front-runner today?

FERRARO
If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position. And I think Hillary Clinton is a victim of a ‘sexist media’.

EXT. A PHILADELPHIA STREET—DAY

Barack is surrounded by a pack of reporters.

BARACK
I don’t think Geraldine Ferraro’s comments have any place in our politics or in the Democratic Party. They are divisive. I think anybody who understands the history of this country knows they are patently absurd. That comment coupled with Sen. Clinton’s own inexplicable unwillingness to deny that I was a Muslim during an interview is part of an insidious pattern that needs to be addressed.
INT. CONSTITUTION CENTER, PHILADELPHIA—NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: MARCH 18, 2008

Barack stands on a stage between two American flags.

BARACK
We can dismiss Reverend Wright as a crank or a demagogue, just as some have dismissed Geraldine Ferraro, in the aftermath of her recent statements, as harboring some deep-seated racial bias. But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore now.

INT. TV STUDIO—NIGHT

Ferraro meets with SEAN HANNITY, early 40’s.

FERRARO
To equate what I said with what that racist bigot has said from the pulpit is unbelievable. He gave a very good speech on race relations, but he did not address the fact that this man is up there spewing hatred. You don’t preach that from the pulpit.

HANNITY
Why would Obama include you in his speech?

FERRARO
I have no clue. Wright raises serious questions about Obama’s judgment. What this man is doing is he is spewing that stuff out to young people, and to younger people than Obama, and putting it in their heads that it’s OK to say ‘Goddamn America’ and it’s OK to beat up on white people. I also can’t understand why Obama had called out his own white grandmother for using racial stereotypes that had made him cringe. I could not believe that.
INT. RADIO STATION—DAY

A radio talk show HOST interviews Barack over a speaker telephone.

HOST
You called your grandmother a
typical white person who would
cross the street to avoid blacks.

BARACK
The point I was making was not that
my grandmother harbors any racial
animosity, but that she is a typical
white person. If she sees somebody on
the street that she doesn't know (pause)
there's a reaction in her that doesn't
go away and it comes out in the wrong
way.

INT. AUDITORIUM—NIGHT

HILLARY CLINTON and Barack stand in front of podiums. Six
PEOPLE from the media sit at tables in front of them.

STEPHANOPOULOS
Senator, do you think Reverend Wright
loves America as much as you do?

BARACK
You know, George, look, if it's not
this, then it would be something else.
And, you know, the notion that somehow
that the American people are going to be
distracted once again by comments not made
by me, but somebody who is associated with
me that I have disowned, I think doesn't
give the American people enough credit.

STEPHANOPOULOS
You've disowned him?

BARACK
The comments, comments that I've disowned.
Then that is not something I...
STEPHANOPOULOS
But you do believe he's as patriotic as you are?

BARACK
This is somebody who's a former marine. So, I believe that he loves this country. But I also believe that he's somebody who, because of the experiences he's had over the course of a lifetime, is also angry about the injustices that he's had.

GIBSON
Do you want to take a few seconds or do you want to go to the next question?

CLINTON
I think in addition to the questions about Reverend Wright there were so many different variations on the explanations that we heard. And it is something that I think deserves further exploration. It is clear that, as leaders, we have a choice who we associate with. And, so, this is a legitimate area for for people to be exploring and trying to find answers.

STEPHANOPOULOS
Senator Clinton, we also did a poll today. And there's also questions about you raised in this poll.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO-DAY

BILL MOYERS and Rev. Wright sit across from each other.

MOYERS
You were, for 20 years, Obama’s spiritual counselor. He has said that. And, yet, he, in that speech at Philadelphia, had to say some hard things about you. How, how did it go down with you when you heard Barack Obama say those things.
REV. WRIGHT
It went down very simply. He’s a politician. And he says what he has to say as a politician. He does what politicians do. So that what happened in Philadelphia where he had to respond to the sound bytes, he responded as a politician. But he did not disown me.

EXT. ARENA, ST. PAUL MINN.-NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: JUNE 3, 2008

PEOPLE enter the arena.

INT. ARENA-NIGHT

Barack speaks to thousands.

BARACK
Tonight we mark the end of one historic journey with the beginning of another: a journey that will bring a new and better day to America. Because of you, tonight I can stand before you and say that I will be the Democratic nominee for president of the United States. This is our moment.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM-NIGHT

Jordan turns off his computer.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Ed, reading the screenplay, sits on a recliner. His face is very paste and he has lost a great deal of weight. His skin hangs below his boney face.

Jordan watches Ed from a sofa.

Ed looks up from the screenplay.

ED
Good job, Jordan.
JORDAN
You wrote most of it. Hey, what happened? You look terrible.

ED
Thanks. Let’s call it a very bad hair day.

JORDAN
I think you should see a doctor, not a barber.

ED
I’m thinking about it. Jordan, thanks for stopping by.

Ed puts his hand out. Jordan shakes it.

JORDAN
Are you dying?

Ed laughs.

ED
Yeah, I’ll be taking a dirt nap in a couple of months.

Jordan appears stunned.

JORDAN
Damn! Does it hurt?

ED
Only when I breath.

Ed fights to keep his eyes open.

JORDAN
Can I do anything for you?

ED
Just call and let me know our grade. We spent a lot of hours on that assignment.

Ed falls asleep in the recliner.
INT. CLASSROOM-NIGHT

The teacher passes corrected screenplays to his students. He tosses one in front of Jordan and walks away.

Smiling, Jordan examines his screenplay. His face transforms to a look of angry.

JORDAN
(murmurs)
What the...

The teacher turns and stares at Jordan.

TEACHER
Did you say something, Jordan?

JORDAN
How could you give us a D?

The teacher glances around the room.

TEACHER
Us? Your partner quit. Somehow I think you have something to do with that.

JORDAN
What? He was sick. You didn’t notice?

TEACHER
Whatever! Your screenplay was an adaptation of the works of others. That wasn’t the assignment. You should have known better.

Jordan just sits there and pouts.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Ed talks on the telephone.

ED
An A! Great job, Jordan. You deserved it.
EXT. STREET-NIGHT

Jordan’s Jaguar travels along route 32.

INT. CAR-NIGHT

Jordan drives as SEAN HANNITY’S voice comes out the speakers.

HANNITY(O.S.)
Obama’s people criticizes McCain for owning houses. Since when is it considered unpatriotic to prosper in American?

EXT. FUNERAL HOME-NIGHT

Jordan’s Jaguar parks in a full parking lot.

INT. FUNERAL HOME-NIGHT

Ed’s body lies in an open casket. He’s almost unreconizable. He’s nothing but skin and bone.

Jordan kneels in front of the casket and examines Ed’s body.

JORDAN
(murmurs)
Damn, I hope I’m in the right room. You don’t look like Ed.

Jordan gets up and goes over to the FAMILY members standing by the wall.

He approaches Ed’s wife and offers his hand.

JORDAN
I’m sorry for your loss. I was Ed’s writing partner at Connecticut College.

ED’S WIFE
Ed told me what a nice boy you are. Thank you for coming.

Jordan shakes hand with all the family members.
Jordan mopes by the pews filled with black people, and he sits in the back row next to a large black MAN. The man gives him a funny look.

Jordan looks up at the man.

JORDAN
How about them Red Sox?

FADE TO BLACK