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, carrying a book and notebook, approaches Jordan. He lays the book, Dreams from My Father, in front of Jordan.

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.0.)

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.

**GRANDMA** 

A man asked me for money this morning. He was very aggressive.

BARACK

That's all?

GRANDMA

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.

BARACK

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

**GRAMPS** 

By a panhandler?

BARACK

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.

**GRAMPS** 

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.

BARACK

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.

#### END FLASHBACK

**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.0.)

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 methat 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.

FD

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.

MIT

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.0.)

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!'

**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 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.0.)

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 appartment.

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.

SADTK

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 109<sup>th</sup> 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.

BARACK(V.O.)

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 form 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.

SMATITI

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 middleaged women, Barack, with nothing better 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-STORY 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.

RAFIO

Sit.

BARACK

How could our churches help encourage local economic development?

Rafiq hands Barack a leaflet.

RAFIO

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.

RAFIO

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 her turns down thirty application 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 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.

WRIGHT

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.

WRIGHT

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.

BARACK(V.O.)

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 enters the office.

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.

ED

Oh, that was just a friend of mine.

Ed hands Jordan a couple of dollars.

ED

Here's your money back.

Jordan exams the dollars.

**JORDAN** 

What? Why?

ED

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?

**JORDAN** 

Well, a little.

ED

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

**JORDAN** 

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

ED

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.

JORDAN

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 someone 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.

ED

Hey, I got to get going. Good luck with the screenplay.

Ed offers Jordan his hand. They shake.

**JORDAN** 

Yeah, thanks. It was nice working with you.

ED

Same here.

JORDAN

I'll probably finish it tomorrow.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM-DAY

Jordan sits in front of large flat screen computer.

INT. HALLWAY BETWEEN OFFICES-DAY

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

SUPERIMPOSE: Chicago 1993

INT. LAW OFFICE-DAY

A black well-dressed LAWYER, 40'S, sits at his desk reading a resume.

Barack sits in front of the desk.

LAWYER

Why did you pick our firm?

BARACK

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

LAWYER

Why didn't you apply sooner?

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.

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.

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.

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 over seas, 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?

### WIFE

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 surounded 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 Amercian 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