

Montana Joe

By

Barry Cole

CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS

Speaking Roles:

JOSEPH (Joe) TALL BULL	Native American 29
JOSEPH (Joe) TALL BULL	Native American 16
SHANNON (adult)	Joe's wife 28
SHANNON (teenager)	Joe's girlfriend 15
BILL TRASK	Ranch owner 65
HARVEY STONE	High school football coach 50
KARL BECKENBAUM	student 16 - Joe's love rival
JOE'S GRANDFATHER	Native American 70
DAN FISK	Committee chairman 50
JUDGE	No-nonsense lawman 65
COURT CLERK	Male 40
WAYNE	Police officer 20
EARL	Police officer 40
CHARLIE	Rancher 60
ATTORNEY	Inexperienced local lawyer 25
JIM ARNOTT	Rancher 40 - Shannon's father
ELIZABETH ARNOTT	Jim's wife 35 - Shannon's mother
DOCTOR	Local Practitioner 65
MITCH	Injured quarterback 16
COACHING ASSISTANT	Male - mid-twenties
MAN #1	Customer - middle-aged
MAN #2	Customer - middle-aged
COMMITTEE MEMBER #1	Tribunal official 45
COMMITTEE MEMBER #2	Tribunal official 40

Featured Non-Speaking Roles:

BRAXTONVILLE BEAR'S HEAD COACH
FOOTBALL OFFICIALS
2 NATIVE AMERICAN TEENAGERS - JOE'S ACCOMPLICES
VETERINARIAN

Extras:

1 3-year-old boy, Joe's son
7 Native American boys 12 - 15 years
50 High school students
40 High school football players
100 mixed crowd of supporters
5 Cheerleaders - teenage girls
5 School band members

Featured Livestock:

1 trained horse
1 trained dog
6 horses

FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY/PRESENT-DAY MONTANA - DAY

A small rural cemetery enclosed by a white-painted picket fence. A burial service has just concluded and groups of MOURNERS make their way to their cars.

Among them is JOSEPH TALL BULL a tall, handsome man in his late-twenties with jet-black hair reaching down to his broad shoulders. He is dressed in a sombre suit, white shirt and black tie. Walking beside him is his wife SHANNON. A year younger than Joseph, she is an attractive woman with a slender figure and long blonde hair. Holding onto her hand is the couple's three-year-old son BILLIE.

JOE

Honey you and Billie go on back
with your folks, I'm gonna take
a ride out to the ranch.

SHANNON

Can't it wait until tomorrow?

JOE

I guess not.

SHANNON

Okay but don't be too long. Ma's
invited people over for a bite to
eat and it's gonna look strange if
you're not there.

JOE

They'll understand. Besides I won't
be long, I promise.

Joe kisses her and ruffling his young son's hair, he walks across to a new Jeep Grand Cherokee in the parking lot. Getting in he starts the engine.

Backing the Jeep onto the highway Joe accelerates away.

We FOLLOW the jeep as it as it travels through miles of rolling grassland. Away in the far distance, snow-capped peaks dominate the horizon.

INT. JEEP/RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Turning off the highway onto a dirt road Joe pulls up alongside a rusting mailbox sitting atop a wooden post. Painted on its side in faded letters is the name "TRASK"

Lowering his window, he reaches out and opens the mailbox. Finding the box is empty, closing the flap, he continues down the dirt road.

A timber-built ranch house with a shingle roof and wide front porch comes into view. Off to one side is a corral and behind that, stables and a hay barn. The place looks deserted.

Pulling up Joe turns off the engine. Leaning over the steering wheel he fixes his gaze on the house.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY

Climbing out of the jeep Joe walks across to the house. Stepping onto the porch he retrieves a key from the lintel above the front door. Fitting it into the lock, he opens the door.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Entering the house Joe looks around him. Decorated in traditional western style, the living room is dominated by a stone fireplace with a high wooden mantel. All the furniture is old but good quality and solid. Homemade curtains hang at each window and there are Navajo rugs scattered on the wood-boarded floor.

Walking into the living room, Joe picks up a framed photograph of himself and Bill Trask taken years earlier. After cleaning the glass with his sleeve, he returns it to the table. Moving towards the rear of the house he enters a narrow hallway with three doors leading off it.

Opening one of the doors he peers in. This had been his old room and it was just as he remembered it. His bed was still covered by the same brightly coloured quilt. Old RODEO POSTERS were still pinned up on the main wall.

Closing the door Joe turns to the room on the opposite side of the hallway. Feeling like an intruder, he opens the door, and steps inside.

BILL TRASK'S BEDROOM

Standing for a moment Joe surveys the Spartan room.

Pushed up against the back wall is a metal-framed single bed, covered in a faded patchwork quilt. Standing beside it is a pine dresser. A straight-back chair occupies one corner. Over by the window is a low table covered in a lace cloth. On top of the table, in a simple silver frame is a photograph of a woman and a young boy. Beside it is an old leather football.

All the walls are bare save for one which is completely covered in NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE CLIPPINGS.

Amazed, Joe scrutinises the clippings. Each one is a chronicle of his football achievements in High School, College and the NFL.

Overcome with nostalgia, picking up the football Joe leaves the room.

EXT. PORCH/TRASK RANCH - DAY

Stepping out onto the porch Joe sits down on the top step. Clutching the old football, he gazes pensively towards a dilapidated PICKUP TRUCK parked over by the corral.

FLASHBACK:**EXT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT - 13 YEARS EARLIER**

A full moon reveals a YOUNG JOE and two NATIVE AMERICAN TEENAGERS, all wearing jeans and windcheaters moving cautiously towards the pickup. One opens the door and they all get in.

INT. PICKUP - NIGHT

One of the teenagers hot-wires the ignition and the engine ROARS into life. The driver lets out the clutch and the truck, shoots forward.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT

BILL TRASK a lean-built man in his late sixties with thinning grey hair and a weather-beaten face RUSHES out the front door.

He is barefoot and wearing just a vest and long-johns. Clutched in one hand is a rifle.

Throwing up his rifle, he FIRES at the pickup.

A FLASH of brake lights and the truck is gone.

Bill lowers his gun. Cursing out loud, he goes back into the house. A light comes on and through the window we SEE him talking on the telephone.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A police patrol car is parked beside the highway. Seated in the front are TWO POLICE OFFICERS

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

EARL a portly middle-aged man with receding hair and a double chin helps himself to a cup of coffee from a thermos.

His partner, WAYNE a skinny, fresh-faced twenty-year-old with slicked-back hair stares thoughtfully up at the star-filled night sky through the windshield.

WAYNE

You reckon them, astrologer
people really got names for
all them stars, Earl?

EARL

Well, they sure as heck spend
enough of our taxes looking at
the darn things.

(taking a swig of coffee)
Hell, if I had my way, they...

The car's two-way radio CRACKLES into life.

DESPATCHER (V.O.)
Control to all cars. We just
got a call from Bill Trask. He
says his pickup's just been stolen.
It's likely some kids from the Res
and they'll sure as not be heading
for the highway. Units in the area
please respond. Over.

Gunning the motor Wayne pulls onto the highway.

Earl, unprepared, spills coffee into his lap.

EARL
Jesus Christ Wayne, watch it,
will you!

Oblivious, switching on the siren Wayne hits the
accelerator pedal. The car leaps forward.

EARL
(dealing with the thermos)
And turn off that goddam noise.

Reluctantly Wayne obliges.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - LATER

The PICKUP TRUCK moving at speed, its tires screeching as
the driver steers recklessly from one side of the road to
the other.

INT. PATROL CAR - TRAVELLING

Wayne, his heart pumping, grips the steering wheel.

The speedometer NEEDLE creeps past seventy.

Scowling, Earl mops up the coffee spill with his
handkerchief.

Up ahead, the FLASH of tail lights, illuminate the
darkness.

Wayne sees them. Reaching out, he flicks a switch. The
WAIL of the siren shatters the silence.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - TRAVELLING

The three teenagers are in high spirits, WHOOPING AND YELLING. Suddenly, the glare of headlights are reflected in the rear-view mirror followed by the SOUND of the police siren. The teenagers fall silent.

The driver glances across at his wing mirror. Alarmed, he slams his foot down hard on the accelerator. The truck picks up speed.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY

The two vehicles speeding along the un-lit highway, their headlights STABBING the darkness.

Suddenly, the driver of the pickup loses control. Swerving off the highway the truck hits a fence post, coming to a sudden stop with its front wheels in a ditch.

The driver's door opens and the driver clambers out. Together with a second teenager, they race off into the darkness.

Joe climbs groggily from the pickup. BLOOD is running down his face.

The patrol car pulls up, BLINDING Joe with its headlights.

Leaping out of the patrol car Wayne draws his gun. Pointing it at Joe, he takes him into custody.

INT. COURTROOM/MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

With a bandage covering the cut on his forehead Joe stands behind a desk facing the judge's bench. Sitting beside him is his ATTORNEY, a man in his mid-twenties wearing a crumpled suit sits beside him.

Seated among the crowd of people in the courtroom are Bill Trask and the two arresting officers.

The CLERK, a middle-aged man dressed in a dark suit stands up. Clearing his throat, he reads out the charges.

CLERK

Joseph Tall Bull, you are charged that on the night of September twentieth you stole a motor vehicle from the home of Mr William Trask and that you drove said vehicle on the public highway in a dangerous and wreck-less manner and without the benefit of a driver's licence or insurance.

The JUDGE, a big-jawed man in his late sixties, with swept-back greying hair, peers at Joe over the top of his glasses.

JUDGE

Well, young fella how do you plead?

Joe, head down, remains silent.

JUDGE

You heard the charges. Now I need you to tell me how you intend to plead. Guilty, or not guilty?

And when Joe doesn't respond.

JUDGE

So, what's it to be young fella?

JOE

Guilty, I guess.

(glancing at the judge)
It was me who stole the truck.

JUDGE

And were you the one driving?

Joe hesitates for a moment.

JOE

Yes Sir.

Joe's attorney gets to his feet and whispers urgently in Joe's ear.

JOE

I mean yes, Your Honor.

The judge throws the attorney a look.

JUDGE

Are you sure about that? Only in their report the Police officers say that there were another two people in the truck with you.

Joe shoots a look at the two policemen.

JOE

No, Your Honor, guess they got it wrong. There was just me. I stole the truck and it was me driving it.

Earl glares at Joe. Thinks about getting to his feet then changes his mind.

The judge adjusts his glasses, scans the papers, in front of him then fixes his gaze on Joe.

JUDGE

I see you took a knock on the head. Could be you're not remembering things too well?

Self-consciously, Joe lowers his head.

JUDGE

Only the officers also reported that they found blood on the windshield.

(letting the fact sink in)
Right about where a passenger might have hit if he'd forgotten to buckle up.

JOE

Well, I sure don't know how that could have happened. All I recall is getting flung around some when I crashed the truck... Could be that's when I hit my head.

JUDGE

Has your attorney made you aware of the sentence, you can receive if I find you guilty of committing these offences?

Joe's attorney JUMPS to his feet.

ATTORNEY

Your Honor I...

JOE

(interrupting)

Yes, Your Honor. He told me I
could do time in Pine Hills
Detention Center.

JUDGE

Did he now, and did he also tell
you that it would go a whole lot
easier for you if you were to tell
the court who else was involved?

JOE

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Very well then, I...

COURTROOM BENCH

BILL TRASK jumps to his feet.

BILL

(interrupting)

Can I say something, Your Honor?

The judge looks over his glasses at Bill.

CLERK

That's Mr Trask, Your Honor. It
was his pickup that got stolen.

JUDGE

Yes, yes, I'm aware of that.

(glaring at the attorney)

Very well Mr Trask, let's hear
what it is you have to say.

BILL

Well, your Honor the way I see
it, it looks to me like we're
all gonna end up losers here.

JUDGE

You care to enlighten us on why
that might be, Mr Trask.

BILL

Well, no offense Your Honor but
the way I see it you ain't gonna
have no option except to lock
this here young fella up.

The judge frowns but remains silent.

BILL (CONT'D)

Now I ain't saying that he, don't
deserve to be punished for what
he done. No sir, he's gotta learn
that you go around stealing other
folk's property and there's a price
to pay. Truth is though, him going
off to jail sure don't help me get
my truck fixed. So, like I say, I
sure, don't see any winners in this.
Not a one.

JUDGE

You don't carry insurance, Mr Trask?

BILL

Just third party Your Honor.
(looking around the courtroom)
Ranching don't pay real well.

LAUGHTER ripples through the people in the courtroom.

JUDGE

(banging down his gavel)
Order! Order!
(waiting until there is silence)
Well then Mr Trask seeing as how
you've done my sentencing for me,
perhaps you'd be good enough to
tell the court what you propose.
I take it you have an alternative
in mind?

BILL

Reckon I do.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

Let the boy come and work for me.
Least-ways till he's earned enough
to pay for the damage to my truck.

A MURMUR goes up from the people in the courtroom.

BILL (CONT'D)

I'll see to his room and board and
pay him a fair wage.

The people in the courtroom fall silent.

JUDGE

Well Mr Trask, while I can see
how that arrangement might work
for you, my concerns and the
concerns of this court are in
seeing that justice is done and
not in helping you to get your
truck fixed.

A chorus of LAUGHTER fills the courtroom

BILL

(letting the laughter subside)
I appreciate that, your Honor, but
I ain't proposing that he shouldn't
get punished for what he done. No
sir that ain't my intention at all.
It's just that I reckon by paying
his dues this way he'd learn a whole
lot more about right and wrong than
if he was locked up in some detention
centre. As for justice, well I reckon
you could say it was being served in
an eye for an eye kinda way. It's
sure, gonna feel that way to him...
I can guarantee you that.

Removing his glasses, the judge deliberates on the matter.

JUDGE

What you're proposing Mr Trask is
highly irregular but that's not to
say it doesn't have its merits.

(looking across at Joe)

You have any objections to what Mr
Trask is proposing young fella?

JOE
No sir, Your Honor.

JUDGE
Counsellor?

ATTORNEY
No, Your Honor none whatsoever.

JUDGE
Very well then. Subject to certain conditions being imposed the court rules that the defendant be placed into Mr Trask's custody until such time as he has paid his dues.
(peering at Joe over his glasses)
Now I haven't taken this decision lightly young fella so see to it that you don't let me down... Is that understood?

JOE
Yes, sir Your Honor. I sure won't let you down.

JUDGE
See to it that you don't.

The judge looks across at Bill.

JUDGE
I'll see you in my office Mr Trask.
(bringing down his gavel)
Court is adjourned.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY

A police patrol car driven by Earl pulls up outside the ranch-house.

Bill accompanied by his DOG, steps down off the porch and approaches the car.

Earl lowers the driver's window.

EARL
Howdy Bill.

BILL

Earl.

EARL

I brung you your new hired hand.

The car's rear door opens and Joe gets out clutching a duffel bag.

BILL

So, I see.

(glancing at Joe)

You coming in for coffee?

EARL

Thanks all the same but I best be heading back.

BILL

Suite yourself.

As the patrol car pulls away Earl calls out through the open window.

EARL

Sure, hope you know what you're doing.

Bill gives a dismissive wave and with the dog at his heel, he heads for the barn. Joe follows after them.

INT. BARN

A wide timber building with a slopping roof and dirt floor. There are double doors at each end and a row of stalls line each side.

The door to a small tack room stands open. Bill leads Joe inside.

TACK ROOM

A narrow room with a cobweb-covered window allowing in some daylight. A bed is pushed into one corner and an assortment of saddles, bridles and ropes cover the walls. Joe wrinkles up his nose at the overpowering smell of horse liniment.

BILL

Bed ain't much but it's solid enough. You can wash out back and there's an outhouse behind the barn. You take your meals with me up at the house. My cooking ain't fancy but nobody's died from it yet.

Joe puts his duffel bag on the bed.

BILL

I'll let you get settled in. Come on up to the house when you're done.

Joe bends down and makes friends with Bill's dog.

JOE

What's your dog's name?

BILL

Can't say as I ever gave him one. Never seemed the need for it.

Bill walks towards the doorway. Stops and turns around.

BILL

Speaking of names. Do you want me to call you Joe or Joseph?

JOE

Joe is fine by me.

BILL

You call me Mr Trask. Okay?

Joe nods.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY

Joe sits on an upturned crate applying a coat of paint to Bill's newly repaired pickup.

A beat-up station wagon towing a HORSE TRAILER drives up and parks alongside the corral. Bill walks over and greets the driver.

BILL
Howdy, Charlie.

CHARLIE, a short stocky man in his early sixties, with a weather-beaten face and deep-set eyes climbs out from behind the wheel. He is dressed in jeans, boots and a quilted jacket and with a battered Stetson pulled low across his face. The quintessential cowboy.

Favouring his right leg, he moves round to the rear of the trailer.

CHARLIE
Got a real mean one for you this
time Bill.
(rubbing his leg)
Kicked me yesterday, damn near
broke the bone.

Bill calls across to Joe.

BILL
Joe, open that gate and go fetch
us a couple of ropes.

Putting down his brush Joe hurries away.

Returning with the ropes just as Charlie lets down the tailgate.

Taking one of the ropes, Bill opens the trailer's side door and climbs in.

A moment later the horse backs out. KICKING OUT with its hind legs.

Charlie steps back. Joe stands ready with the second rope.

Pulling on the halter Bill leads the horse into the corral. Joe closes the gate behind them.

As Charlie closes the tailgate Bill walks across to him and the two men shake hands.

Charlie climbs into the station wagon.

BILL
I'll give you a call in a couple
of days, okay?

CHARLIE
You watch out for that mean son
of a bitch now.

BILL
Hell, I've broken worse.

CHARLIE
I sure hope you ain't gonna have
to eat your words.

Bill SLAMS his hand down on the roof of the station wagon.

BILL
Get outta here, you old Coot.

The station wagon drives away in a cloud of dust.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - LATER

Bill is in the corral with Charlie's horse. Despite his best efforts, he is not having much success in getting a saddle on it.

Joe, busy applying a second coat of paint to the pickup, looks on.

Bill finally gives up and leads the horse back into the barn.

He emerges moments later. Clearly in a bad mood, he stomps off towards the house.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Joe emerges from the tack room with a blanket in his arms and crosses to the stall where Charlie's horse is stabled. He opens the door and goes in. After bolting the door, Joe spreads out his bedding on the straw and lies down. The horse eyes him nervously.

INT. TRASK RANCH/KITCHEN - MORNING

Bill is preparing breakfast. The sound of BARKING draws him to the window. Looking out towards the corral he sees Joe riding Charlie's horse.

BILL
Well, I'll be darned.

After watching for a moment Bill opens the window and SHOUTS out.

BILL
Breakfasts on the table.

Bill closes the window. Crossing to the stove he breaks two eggs into a frying pan. The eggs SIZZLE in the hot fat.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - LATER

Bill and Joe emerge carrying a variety of tools: A post-hole shovel, wire cutters and a nail-box. They walk across to the pickup. Looped over Joe's shoulders are coils of baling wire.

In the back of the truck are several fence posts. Bill and Joe dump the tools and wire on top of them.

Bill walks towards the driver's door, hesitates, turns and throws the keys to Joe.

BILL
How about you drive?

Joe catches the keys. Embarrassed he lowers his head.

JOE
I can't. I ain't never learned how to.

BILL
(resisting the urge to smile)
Well, I guess now's as good a time as any to start.
(seeing Joe hesitate)
Get in, I ain't got all day.

INT. PICKUP

Bill sits behind the wheel. He demonstrates the rudiments of driving. Joe watches, taking it all in.

Lesson over, Bill gets out, walks around to the passenger door and opens it. The dog jumps up onto the seat. Bill climbs in after it.

Reluctantly, Joe slides in behind the wheel. Turning on the ignition he puts the truck in gear. With both hands gripping the steering wheel Joe lets out the clutch too fast and stalls the engine.

BILL

Try it again but ease off real slow this time.

Joe starts the truck, puts it into gear then eases back slowly on the pedal. The pickup inches forward.

BILL

Now give it some more gas.

Obediently Joe pushes down on the gas pedal. The truck speeds up.

BILL

Okay, now change gear.

Joe pulls down on the gear stick. The transmission WHINES in protest.

BILL

Push down real hard.

Joe extends his leg. Pulling down on the gear stick as he does so. Mercifully, the gears mesh and the truck picks up speed.

Struggling with the steering wheel, Joe stares out through the windshield as the pickup begins heading straight towards the corner of the porch.

Instinctively he yanks on the steering wheel.

Shutting his eyes, Bill whispers a silent prayer.

His request is granted, and the porch slides by unscathed.

Relieved, Joe steers the pickup onto the dirt road.

BILL
(reassuringly)
You're doing just fine.

Terrified, staring straight ahead, Joe grips the wheel.

INT. PICKUP - LATER - TRAVELLING

Despite Joe's best efforts, the pickup weaves erratically from side to side along the dirt road.

A front wheel hits a pot hole, sending the pickup careering towards the fence.

Instinctively, Bill grabs hold of the steering wheel. As he does so, the dog jumps out of the open window.

Horrified, Joe stares after it.

Disaster averted Bill releases his grip on the steering wheel.

BILL
Don't pay him any heed...
The time for you to worry is
when I jump out!

Focusing on his driving, Joe manages an unconvincing smile.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - LATER

A length of wire barbed fence runs off into the distance. At one point there are several broken fence posts.

The pickup pulls up and Bill and Joe climb out. Bill surveys the damaged fence while Joe begins unloading the truck.

INT. PICKUP - LATE AFTERNOON - TRAVELLING

Joe is driving. Seated beside him on the front seat are Bill and his dog. Relaxed, leaning back Bill closes his eyes.

Joe throws him a look and smiles.

INT. KITCHEN/TRASK RANCH - EVENING

Joe is finishing the washing up. He begins putting the dishes away in a cupboard.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Crossing to the TV set Bill switches it on.

Joe walks in from the kitchen.

JOE

Night Mr Trask, thanks for supper.

BILL

Say, you wanna watch the game?
The dolphins are playing the
Raiders.

Smiling his thanks Joe sits down on the sofa. Slumping down into a beaten-up armchair, Bill stretches out his legs.

ON SCREEN - The game kicks-off.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

TV SET - The Miami quarterback is under pressure.

Animated, Bill leans forward in his chair. He shouts at the TV screen.

BILL

Get rid! Throw the damn ball
away.

TV SET - The quarterback's pass is intercepted and run in for a touchdown.

Slumping back in his chair, Bill groans.

BILL

Damn fool.

Turning to Joe, he sees that he has fallen asleep. Getting up Bill crosses to the TV. Switching it off he leaves the room. Moments later Bill returns holding a

blanket. Spreading it over Joe, turning off the lamp he leaves the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GROCERY STORE/LOCAL TOWN - DAY

Bill and Joe are carrying boxes of provisions from the store and loading them into the pickup.

HARVEY STONE, a well-built man in his late fifties with close-cropped hair and dressed in a seersucker jacket and jeans approaches them along the raised sidewalk.

HARVEY
Morning Bill.

BILL
Harvey.

HARVEY
This here your new hired hand?

BILL
Yup sure is.

HARVEY
Kinda young ain't he?

BILL
Young's just fine. I got me enough age for both of us.

HARVEY
Can't argue with that but you sure, you ain't breaking the law?

BILL
Heck no. Matter of fact I got me a judge's say so.

HARVEY
Yeah, I heard about your performance over at the courthouse. You sure got some nerve Bill Trask and that's a fact.

Bill looks across at Joe. Winks knowingly.

BILL

Oh, I'd say it worked out just fine for all concerned.

Joe smiles and goes back into the store.

HARVEY

Well, most folks wouldn't agree but I reckon your heart's in the right place... Anyway, you aiming to come to the game on Friday night?

Bill climbs into the pickup.

BILL

You gonna win this time coach?

Harvey tosses a dismissive hand and strides away. Without turning his head, he SHOUTS over his shoulder.

HARVEY

I'll see you Friday.

BILL

I'll be there.

Joe comes out from the store. Loading the last box, he gets in behind the wheel.

EXT. SPORTS GROUND/COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - EVENING

A football game is underway. An appreciative CROWD look on from the Bleachers. Sitting with them are Bill and Joe.

Down on the side-line Coach Stone acknowledges them with a wave.

Alongside him, the Coulter High CHEERLEADERS go through their routine. SHANNON, a pretty fifteen-year-old with long blonde hair, catches Joe's eye.

Shannon notices him too. She likes what she sees.

PLAYING FIELD

Coulter High's running back is tackled and the play ends.

The PUNT KICKER jogs onto the field.

The ball is snapped. The kicker shanks the kick. The football sails over the heads of the crowd.

Jumping down from the stand, Joe runs across and retrieves the football. With apparent ease, he throws it back to an OFFICIAL.

Bill watches the incident with interest.

INT. PICKUP - EVENING - TRAVELLING

Joe is driving, Bill sits beside him.

BILL
You play much football, son?

JOE
I fooled around some but I ain't never played in a real game before. Why you asking?

BILL
Oh, no particular reason.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - LATER

The pickup pulls into the yard. Bill and Joe climb out.

The dog, its tail wagging, walks across to them.

BILL
Wait here.

Joe squats down and makes a fuss of the dog. Bill disappears into the house.

Moments later Bill re-appears carrying an old LEATHER FOOTBALL. He tosses it to Joe.

Joe catches the football. Gives Bill a puzzled look.

BILL
Stay put.

With measured strides, Bill walks away. Stopping when he is beyond the corral, he turns to face Joe.

BILL

Okay, now let's see you make
that throw again.

Joe shrugs his shoulders. Setting himself, he throws the football. The ball sails through the air in a perfect spiral.

Stepping back Bill jumps up and makes the catch. He throws the football back to Joe.

BILL

Try it again but don't put so
much on it this time.

Joe sets himself and throws the football back to Bill.

Bill catches the perfectly thrown pass.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Bill and Joe bring in a small herd of horses.

B) Bill and Joe throwing the football.

C) Joe painting the side of the barn.

D) Bill imparting quarterback skills to his protégé.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. BARN/RANCH - DAY

Joe pitchforks fresh straw into a stall.

BILL (S.O.)

Hey Joe, come on out here.

Putting down the pitchfork, Joe walks to the open barn door.

OUTSIDE BARN

Bill stands outside holding the football. A steady rain is falling.

The barn door opens and Joe peers outside.

Bill calls out to him.

BILL
Get on out here.

Joe hesitates.

BILL
It's just a little rain.

JOE
If it's all the same to you
I'd just as soon tend to my
chores.

Bill smiles slowly. Holds up the football.

BILL
Time you learned football
ain't just a fair-weather game.

JOE
But I got chores to do.

BILL
Chores can wait... Now get on
out here before I drown.

Turning up his collar reluctantly, Joe steps outside.

Bill throws him the football.

Joe attempts to catch it but it slips from his grasp and falls onto the ground.

BILL
Slippery little devil ain't
it?

Joe retrieves the football. Throws Bill a wobbly duck!

Bill manages to hold onto the badly thrown pass.

BILL
Dry off your hand next time.
(wiping his hand under
the arm of his jacket)

Bill throws the football.

Joe catches it cleanly. Taking Bill's advice, he throws the football back to him.

Bill and Joe pass the football back and forth. Their rain-soaked clothes clinging to their bodies.

THE PORCH

Bill's dog, head on paws, watches them, fixedly.

Bill makes a catch. Losing his footing, he falls onto his backside in the mud.

Joe walks across to him. Struggling to keep a straight face, reaching out he takes hold of Bill's outstretched arm.

Catching Joe unaware, Bill pulls him down onto the muddy ground.

The two men lay side by side on their backs in the mud. Simultaneously, they burst into fits of LAUGHTER.

Abruptly, Bill falls silent. Something has just occurred to him.

BILL

You know what we need?

JOE

A hot bath maybe?

BILL

Hell no. What we need is more players.

INT. KITCHEN/TRASK RANCH - MORNING

Bill is standing at the stove. He drops some butter into a frying pan.

We HEAR the sound of BARKING coming from outside.

Pan in hand, Bill crosses to the window. Pulling aside the curtain, he peers outside.

EXT. PORCH/TRASK RANCH - MORNING

The front door opens and Bill steps onto the porch. He looks across at the pickup.

THE PICKUP

Joe is standing by the driver's door, a huge grin on his face. Formed up a line alongside him are SEVEN BOYS of varying ages and builds.

Bill steps down off the porch. Straight-faced, he walks along the line of boys. Inspecting each one like a parade ground NCO.

JOE
You said we needed more players
right?

BILL
I do believe I did.

Inspection over Bill ponders for a moment.

BILL
You fella's ate breakfast?

Acting in unison, the seven boys SHAKE their heads from side to side.

BILL
Well, I guess we can't have you
playing football on an empty
stomach now, can we?

Turning away Bill walks towards the house. Waving for the boys to follow him, he calls out over his shoulder.

BILL
Be sure and wipe your boots.

Obediently, the seven boys troop after him.

TRASK RANCH - LATER**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:**

(A) Bill makes breakfast for his 'players'.

- (B) Bill organises the boys into offense and defence.
- (C) Joe, showcases his quarterback skills.
- (D) Bill takes a hit from a young 'William Perry' lookalike.
- (E) Practice over, the seven boys pile into the pickup.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. PICKUP/LOCAL TOWN - DAY

Window down, Bill drives his pickup through town. He slows when he spots Harvey leaving the barber shop sporting a GI haircut. Bill calls out to him.

BILL
You sure that barber wasn't a
sheep farmer in a previous life?

Bill pulls up alongside the sidewalk.

HARVEY
Least I got me some hair to cut.
Not like some folk I could mention.

Lifting his Stetson, Bill Runs a hand through his thinning hair.

BILL
Shucks who need's hair when the
good Lord gave us the Stetson.

Harvey laughs in spite of himself.

HARVEY
Where's your chauffeur today?

BILL
Oh, I like to keep my hand in.

HARVEY
You ain't forgotten about the
Play-off game next week, have you?

BILL
Nope. I'll be there.

HARVEY

We got us a good team this year
Bill. I'm real optimistic.

BILL

Well, I guess the whole town will
be rooting for you. Been quite a
while since the Cougars reached the
play-offs. Sure, be nice to have a
winning team to brag about.

HARVEY

Well, I ain't counting my chickens
but we'll sure as hell give it our
best shot.

BILL

Can't ask for more than that. Any
way I'll see you at the game.

EXT. SPORTS GROUND/COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - EVENING

The Play-off game between the COULTER COUGARS and the
BRAXTONVILLE BEARS is underway.

PLAYING FIELD

The COUGARS OFFENSE, have the ball. They break from the
huddle and move to the Line of Scrimmage. It's third down
and eight on their own forty-yard-line.

SCOREBOARD

Bears 7 - Cougars 7.

BACK TO SCENE

The ball is snapped. The QUARTERBACK looks downfield. He
doesn't see the Bears LINEBACKER and takes a hard hit.

The CENTER recovers the football and the REFEREE signals
the play dead with a blast on his whistle.

The Cougars quarterback leaves the field clutching his
throwing arm.

The Cougars PUNT KICKER jogs onto the field.

Concerned, Harvey walks across to the quarterback.

HARVEY
You okay, Mitch?

MITCH
I ain't sure coach. My arm hurts
like hell though.

Harvey beckons to a young COACHING ASSISTANT.

HARVEY
Okay, we'll get the doc to take
a look at it.

The assistant leads Mitch away.

PLAYING FIELD

The Bears KICK RETURNER catches the ball and runs it back to the fifty-yard-line before being tackled.

The COUGARS DEFENSE, take the field.

INT. COUGARS LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The DOCTOR, a portly man in his late sixties, with glasses perched on the end of his nose examines Mitch's arm. He turns to the assistant. Shakes his head, woefully.

DOCTOR
I can't be a hundred percent sure
but my guess is that the boy has a
fractured arm. Either way, he won't
be throwing a football for a while.

ASSISTANT
I'll go tell coach Stone.
(pausing in the doorway)
You want me to come back and take
Mitch down to the hospital?

DOCTOR
Yes, I'd be obliged. Sooner we get
that arm X-rayed the better.

The assistant hurries away.

EXT. SPORTS GROUND/COUGARS SIDELINE - LATER

The assistant approaches Harvey and gives him the bad news.

PLAYING FIELD

KARL BECKENBAUM, a muscular, blonde-haired teenager, six two with broad shoulders and big hands, the Cougars star LINEBACKER tackles the Bear's TIGHT END.

A BLAST on the referee's whistle signals the end of the first Quarter.

The teams walk off the field.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey strides across to the team bench. Laying a hand on the BACKUP QUARTERBACK'S shoulder, he tells him to warm up.

PLAYING FIELD - LATER

The BEARS' OFFENSE lines up in shotgun formation on the Cougar's forty-yard-line, it's third down and four.

Karl instinctively moves up onto the shoulder of the Cougars DEFENSIVE END.

The ball is snapped. The quarterback buys time with a pump fake, before handing the football off to the RUNNING BACK.

Karl isn't fooled. He rushes forward, turns the GUARD and stops the RUNNING BACK for a loss of yardage.

BLEACHERS

CHEERS from the Cougars supporters. Seated among them are Bill and Joe.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Shannon and the other Cougars cheerleaders WAVE their pom-poms.

Behind them, the Bears KICKING TEAM run onto the field.

BLEACHERS

Joe tries to spot Shannon but his view is obscured by the crowd.

PLAYING FIELD

The referee spots the ball on the fifty-yard-line.

The offense and defense face each other at the Line of Scrimmage. The Cougars have a first and ten.

The backup quarterback takes the snap and hands-off to the RUNNING BACK who powers ahead for a five-yard gain.

SIDELINE

The CHAIN CREW move the sticks.

PLAYING FIELD

The offense runs the same play and gains a first down.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey looks on anxiously. Consulting his playbook, he sends two wide receivers into the huddle.

The running back and tight end jog off the field.

PLAYING FIELD

At the Line of Scrimmage, the backup quarterback calls the play. The defensive players adjust their formation in response.

The ball is snapped and the defense blitz.

Overwhelmed, the offensive line is pushed back.

The backup quarterback frantically looks for an open receiver. He sees a linebacker bearing down on him. Panic-stricken, he throws a wild pass.

The pass is intercepted by a CORNER who runs it in for a touchdown.

BLEACHERS

The Bears supporters go wild.

Bill and Joe sitting surrounded by glum-faced Cougar supporters.

BILL
Seems the kid's been watching
too many Monday-night games.

PLAYING FIELD

A fired-up defense leaves the field.

BEARS SIDELINE

The players watch as the kicker goes for the point after.

They WHOOP with delight as the football splits the uprights.

PLAYING FIELD

The kick-off unit takes to the field. The Bears kicker sends the ball deep into Cougar territory.

Fielding the football, the Cougars KICK RETURNER begins his run-back.

Two Bears players head him off, forcing him out of bounds.

COUGARS SIDELINE

The Cougars offense troops onto the field.

Harvey rallies his players.

Singling out the backup quarterback, he pat's him encouragingly on the helmet.

PLAYING FIELD

The Cougars fullback rushes for a first down.

The offense moves up to the Line of Scrimmage. It's first and ten on their own forty-yard-line.

The center snaps the ball. The backup quarterback spots an open wide receiver and gets off his pass.

The WIDE RECEIVER makes the catch. Shrugging off a tackle, he races across the fifty-yard-line. A safety drags him to the ground.

Pumped-up the backup quarterback takes the snap. He fumbles the football.

Players scramble to recover the ball. A defensive LINEMAN smothers it and secures a turnover.

Chants of DEFENCE! DEFENCE! Ring out from the Bears supporters.

BLEACHERS

Bill looks at Joe and pulls a face.

PLAYING FIELD

The Bear's offense, begin their drive downfield. Their QUARTERBACK throws for a first down.

The offense, go into the huddle and the Bear's HEAD COACH rotates his players

The players move to the Line of Scrimmage and the Bears CENTER snaps the ball.

Dropping back the quarterback hands the ball off to the FULLBACK, who powers his way into the end zone.

BLEACHERS

CHEERS ring out from the Bears supporters.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Head in his hands, Harvy turns away.

SPORTS GROUND - LATER

PLAYING FIELD

The Cougars have possession. The backup quarterback scrambles to avoid the pass rush and throws the football to a wide receiver.

A Bears LINEBACKER intercepts the pass and runs it back. The Cougars fullback tackles him.

BEARS SIDELINE

Looking up at the GAME CLOCK, the Bears coach sends on his field goal unit.

PLAYING FIELD

The ball is snapped. The CATCHER positions the football and the KICKER takes the kick. Turning away he PUNCHES the air. Behind him the football sails between the uprights. The kick is good.

The referee BLOWS his whistle for the half-time intermission and both teams troop off the field.

SCOREBOARD

Bears 24 - Cougars 7

INT. COUGARS LOCKER ROOM

The locker room has a tiled floor. Wooden benches line two walls. At the far end is a row of lockers. A door leads into the showers.

Disconsolate, helmets off, the Cougar players sit on the benches staring down at the floor.

Harvey moves among them offering words of encouragement.

A door opens and Bill and Joe enter the locker room.

Leaving Joe by the door Bill crosses over to Harvey. Taking him by the arm, he leads him over to a corner of the room.

Several of the players look across at Joe standing by the doorway.

Joe acknowledges them with a nod but they don't respond.

FAR CORNER

Bill and Harvey stand together like two conspirators.

BILL
You're sure getting your ass
whipped out there.

HARVEY

You think I don't know it!

BILL

Don't you have another quarterback?

HARVEY

What kind of dumb-ass question is that? If I had, don't you think I'd play him.

BILL

Okay, okay don't go biting my head off. Could be I got me an idea.

Harvey stares at him. Frowns.

BILL

(ignoring the look)

Now I know you're gonna think this is a little crazy but just hear me out, okay?

HARVEY

I'm all ears.

BILL

You remember Joe the young fella I got working for me? Well, I reckon as how you could play him at quarterback.

(holding up his hand)

Like I say, it sounds a little crazy but you just gotta trust me on this. I've been coaching him some, and believe me the boys got a real talent for the game.

Harvey stares at Bill in disbelief.

HARVEY

Jesus Bill, I ain't doubting what you're saying but I can't risk playing him at quarterback. Whole idea is just plumb crazy.

BILL

You done?

Harvey nods.

BILL

Good! Now it's true he ain't never played in a game before, but like I said I've been coaching him, and I know he can play a whole lot better than that backup of yours. I wouldn't be suggesting it if I didn't think so.

Harvey smiles weakly.

HARVEY

I appreciate that, heck you of all people should know what you're talking about. But aside from all that, there's something else you're forgetting?

BILL

Oh, and what might that be?

HARVEY

He's not on the team roster. Heck he's not even in school.

BILL

You and I know that but Braxtonville sure don't.

(grinning)

You put a helmet on him and who's gonna know.

HARVEY

(shaking his head)

I can't believe what I'm hearing.

BILL

Come on Harvey, you telling me you never bent the rules before?

HARVEY

Sure, I've bent the rules on occasion, who hasn't but you're asking me to throw them out the goddam window.

BILL

So, what if I am?

Harvey remains silent.

BILL

What about them other young fellas?
(looking towards the benches)
Way, I see it, you carry on playing
with that backup of yours an they're
gonna get beat so bad, chances are
they won't ever want to play football
again.
(staring at Harvey)
You want that on your conscience?

Harvey casts a rueful look at his dejected players.

BILL

Now I ain't saying playing Joe can
win you the game, I reckon that
might be asking too much, but at
least they'll go down fighting
and walk off the field with their
heads held high, and that would
mean a lot to them, youngsters.
You and I both know that.

EXT. SPORTS GROUND - LATER

The Cougars players emerge from their locker room. JOE brings up the rear. He's wearing the injured quarterback's uniform and helmet.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Taking Joe aside, Harvey draws plays on a chalkboard.

Joe stares apprehensively at the lines and crosses.

PLAYING FIELD

The Bears kick-off and the Cougars kick returner catches the ball and runs it back to the forty-yard-line.

Offense and defense take the field. Joe lines up in shotgun formation. The center snaps the football.

The Bear's defense comes on a blitz. Just in time Joe spots an open receiver and gets off his pass.

The ball is dropped and the play is called dead.

The offense hurry to the Line of Scrimmage. The center snaps the ball.

Joe catches the football and runs for a first down.

SIDELINE

The chain crew mark off the yardage.

PLAYING FIELD

Joe, growing in confidence, takes the snap, turns and hands the football off to the running back who rushes for an eight-yard-gain.

Second and two. Joe spots a linebacker racing towards him. Avoiding the tackle, he throws the football to an open receiver.

DOWNFIELD

The wide receiver makes the catch and runs in for a touchdown.

BLEACHERS

CHEERS ring out from the Cougars supporters.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Elated, Joe walks off the field. The kicking unit runs on.

Harvey pats Joe on the helmet. Turning, he looks up towards Bill in the bleachers.

PLAYING FIELD

The extra point is good and Karl leads the Cougar's defense onto the field.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

- (A) The Bears quarterback throws an incomplete pass.
- (B) The Bear's running back is stopped at the Line of Scrimmage.

(C) Karl sacks the opposing quarterback.

(D) The Bears field goal attempt is no good.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. BEARS SIDELINE/SPORTS FIELD - LATER

The Bears coach exhorts his players.

PLAYING FIELD

Joe's teammates huddle around him. The referee BLOWS his whistle and the players move up to the Line of Scrimmage.

The center takes his stance and places a hand on the football.

The ball is snapped high. Joe jumps up to catch it. A pass rush threatens to envelopes him.

Remembering Bill's advice, he throws the football away.

BLEACHERS

Bill smiles appreciatively.

PLAYING FIELD

Second down and ten. Joe drops back into the shotgun. The defense blitz and a defensive lineman grabs Joe's arm. Joe spins out of the tackle.

Spotting the TIGHT END running a slant Joe side-arms a pass to him. A linebacker attempts to strip the ball but the tight end holds onto the football. The linebacker drags him to the ground.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey SCREAMS at the offense for more protection.

PLAYING FIELD

It's third and five and the offense responds. The fullback steps up and blocks a defensive end.

Stepping up into the pocket Joe scrambles for a first down on the Bears thirty-yard-line.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey sends on a third WIDE RECEIVER. The tight end jogs off the field. Joe signals the play.

PLAYING FIELD

The offensive line blocks the Bears pass rush. Looking downfield Joe steps up and throws the football. The ball ARCS through the air in a glorious spiral.

DOWNFIELD

The wide receiver out-jumps the covering safety and makes a spectacular two-handed catch in the end zone for a touchdown.

BLEACHERS

CHEERS from the Cougars supporters.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey, ecstatic, PUNCHES the air with his fist.

The cheerleaders SHAKE their pom poms at the crowd.

PLAYING FIELD

The kicker makes the extra point. Blowing his whistle, the referee brings the third quarter to an end.

SCOREBOARD

Bears 24 - Cougars 21

EXT. SPORTS GROUND - FOURTH QUARTER

PLAYING FIELD

The Bear's offense has the ball. The quarterback hands it off to his running back. He barrels forward for a four-yard gain.

The offense goes into the huddle.

Karl moves among the defense motivating them.

The referee spots the ball and the opposing teams face each other at the Line of Scrimmage.

Karl lines up outside the defensive end.

Chants of DEFENSE! DEFENCE! Reverberate around the playing field.

The ball is snapped and the Bears quarterback back-pedals. He looks down-field for an open receiver.

Karl powers forward. Evading the despairing tackle of an offensive lineman he slams into the quarterback, knocking the football out of his hand.

Throwing himself onto the ground Karl recovers the fumble. Triumphant, he holds it aloft.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey and the entire offense leap into the air.

BLEACHERS

The Cougars supporters are on their feet. Pushing his way through them Bill makes his way to the steps.

COUGARS SIDELINE

The offensive players replace their helmets all except for Joe, who has kept his on.

Harvey looks up at the game clock.

GAME CLOCK - Fifty seconds before the final whistle

BACK TO SCENE

Harvey gathers the offense around him.

HARVEY

Okay, first off, we don't panic. We got time on the clock and we're in good field position.

(leaning forward)

(MORE)

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Now, they know we need a field goal to take us into extra time so chances are they're going to expect us to run the football. So, instead, I want us to pass the ball.

(looks at the players)

Yes, I know it's kinda risky but if we get it right we can win the game. Going without a huddle gives us time for four plays so it's up to you wide receivers to get open and give Joe a chance to get off a pass... Any questions?

The players all shake their heads. No.

HARVEY

Okay, let's go to it. And just remember the golden rule, don't give up the football.

As the Cougars offense jogs onto the field Harvey takes Joe aside.

HARVEY

If you can't pass on third down run the ball. As long as we can get into field goal range we're still in with a chance.

JOE

Yes, coach.

Smiling, Harvey pats Joe on the back. Turns around he finds Bill standing beside him.

Both men watch as the two sides line up.

HARVEY

Hell, I ain't felt this nervous since you got me on a horse.

Bill smiles knowingly.

PLAYING FIELD

The referee spots the ball close to the halfway line.

Joe calls the play from the shotgun. Catches the football and hands off to the running back.

The running back cuts to the outside. A linebacker forces him out of bounds and stops the clock.

The offense hurry back to the Line of Scrimmage. The center snaps the ball.

Joe fakes a hand-off to the running back. The defence buys it and Joe rushes forward. A defensive back evades his blocker and slams into Joe. Stopping him just short of a first down.

The play is whistled dead and the umpire spots the ball. It's third and two on the Bears forty-yard line.

BEARS SIDELINE

The Bears coach signals a timeout.

COUGARS SIDELINE

The Cougar's offense gathers around Harvey. Joe and his wide receivers watch as Harvey begins drawing on his play-board.

PLAYING FIELD

The referee signals the end of the timeout. Both team's players move up to the Line of Scrimmage.

Surveying the defense Joe signals his fullback to move up alongside him.

The center snaps the ball and the three wide receivers, race downfield. The Bears SAFETIES and CORNERBACKS cover them.

A linebacker breaks through the offensive line. The fullback blocks him. Gradually, the offensive line is forced back. Joe, under pressure, looks downfield.

DOWNFIELD

Evading his marker, a wide receiver cuts into mid-field.

COLLAPSING POCKET

Joe spots him. Torn between scrambling into field goal range and making the pass, setting himself, he throws the football.

DOWNFIELD

The receiver catches the perfectly thrown pass and high steps into the end zone for the winning touchdown!

COUGARS SIDELINE

Bill and Harvey BEARHUG.

BLEACHERS

The Cougars supporters CHEER their team.

COUGARS SIDELINE

The Cougars defensive players, surge onto the field. Elated, the offense jog towards them.

Harvey moves among the melee of players congratulating them.

Spotting Shannon, removing his helmet Joe walks towards her.

The Bears coach and Harvey shake hands. As they do, the Bears coach catches sight of Joe without his helmet on. A frown creases his brow.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Stripping off his uniform Joe changes into his own clothes.

All around him, players in various stages of undress are letting off steam.

Unnoticed, Joe makes his way to the door.

Suddenly a hand grabs him by the shoulder.

KARL

Hey, you leaving already?

JOE
Yeah, I got a lift waiting.

KARL
Man, you were awesome out there tonight. We were sure taking a beating till you showed up.

JOE
You played pretty well yourself. Sure, glad I wasn't the other quarterback.

KARL
Say how come you got to play for us anyway? Only...

Joe steps back.

JOE
Look I gotta go. Maybe I'll see you around.
(turning away)

KARL
Yeah, sure thing.

As Joe heads for the door Karl calls out to him.

KARL
We have a school dance tomorrow night. You're sure welcome to come along if you want.

Joe walks out the door without replying.

INT. SCHOOL HALL/LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

A five-piece school band is playing on stage.

TEENAGE couples crowd the floor. Standing off to one, side two TEACHERS keep a watchful eye on proceedings.

FAR CORNER

Shannon and two of her GIRLFRIENDS help themselves to refreshments.

Karl approaches them. He asks Shannon if she would like a dance.

Shannon accepts his invitation. Puts down her drinks cup, she follows Karl onto the dance floor.

Shannon's friends watch them dance. One of them places a hand on her heart and flutters her eyelashes demurely.

Shannon sees her and pulls a face.

The two girls begin to GIGGLE.

EXT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT

Joe peers in through a window. He sees Shannon and Karl dancing together.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT

Shannon spots Joe looking in through the window.

The dance ends. Beaming, Karl walks Shannon back to her friends.

The band begins to play again. Two boys walk up and ask Shannon's girl-friends for a dance. The girls accept.

Making his way to the buffet table Karl fills two cups with lemonade. Taking a small flask out of his pocket, surreptitiously, he pours a little of the contents into each of the cups.

Returning to where he had left Shannon, he finds she has disappeared. Instinctively, he looks around for her.

EXT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT

Joe stands looking in through the window. He doesn't hear Shannon approach.

SHANNON

Hi. Aren't you going to come inside?

JOE
(taken by surprise)
Oh, I was just...

Sensing his embarrassment, Shannon smiles.

SHANNON
I'm Shannon.

Joe, feeling a little self-conscious.

JOE
Pleased to meet you.

An awkward silence follows. Then Shannon speaks up.

SHANNON
Well, aren't you going to introduce yourself?

JOE
Sorry. Names Joseph but most people call me Joe.

SHANNON
That's a shame, I think Joseph is a really nice name.

JOE
Thanks. I guess I've just got used to people calling me Joe.

After an awkward silence, follows. Then they both begin speaking at the same time.

JOE
So how long...

SHANNON
The game yesterday...

They both burst out LAUGHING.

JOE
Sorry. You go first.

SHANNON
In the game against Braxtonville the other night, you were great.

JOE
You really think so?

SHANNON

Don't be so modest, of course you were. Randy's a nice guy an all but he's not much of a quarterback. If it hadn't been for you, we would have lost for sure.

JOE

Randy?

SHANNON

The backup!

JOE

Oh, he didn't so bad.

Shannon pulls a face.

SHANNON

Coach Stone says Mitch, he's our regular quarterback has fractured his arm. So does that mean you'll be playing for us in the champion-ship game?

JOE

(ignoring the question)
Say I best be going. I've got an early start in the morning.

SHANNON

Maybe I'll see you in school?

Without answering her Joe turns and walks away. Stopping, he looks back.

JOE

It's been real nice meeting you Shannon.

HALL DOORWAY

Karl stands in the doorway watching them, his face like thunder. Putting the whisky flask to his lips he takes a swig.

INT. DINER/LOCAL TOWN - DAY

Two casually dressed MIDDLE-AGED MEN are sitting in a booth drinking cups of coffee.

MAN #1

Sure, is a shame about the Cougars.

MAN #2

Yeah, real shame but then rules are rules I reckon.

MAN #1

What, you telling me that if you were the coach, you wouldn't have done the same?

Man #2 shrugs. Reaches for his cup of coffee.

MAN #1

Well, I sure as hell would. I mean there was no way the Cougars were gonna win that game the way things stood, any fool could see that.

MAN #2

I ain't saying I wouldn't have done what coach Stone did. All I'm saying is he broke the rules and he got caught.

MAN #1

You reckon the team will get disqualified?

MAN #2

Likely as not they will.

MAN #1

Don't seem fair somehow.

(setting down his cup)

I surely would have liked to have seen them play in the Championship game. Especially if that young kid was playing quarterback. He sure turned the game around, and that's a fact.

MAN #2

Yeah, he played a hell of a game.
Been a long time since I've seen a
youngster play football like that.
That last pass was quite a throw.

MAN #1

Did coach Stone say who he was?

MAN #2

Nope. And if he does, he ain't
saying.

MAN #1

You reckon he'll lose his job
cause of this?

MAN #2

Seems likely he will. School board
sure, ain't gonna be too happy about
something like this happening, and
that's a fact.

ADJOINING BOOTH

Having overheard the two men's conversation, grim-faced
Bill counts out some money and puts it onto the plate in
front of him.

Getting up he leaves the diner.

INT. HARVEY'S OFFICE/LOCAL SCHOOL - DAY

Harvey is sitting at his desk signing some papers. He
looks up when the door is suddenly FLUNG open.

Seething with anger, Bill strides into the room.

BILL

That right what I am hearing?

Harvey stops writing and looks up.

HARVEY

(leaning back in his chair)
I guess it all depends on what
it is your hearing.

BILL

Now don't go playing games with me. You know darn well what I am talking about. Are the team really gonna be disqualified on account of Joe playing at quarterback?

Harvey gestures towards a vacant chair. Bill ignores him.

HARVEY

Truth is, I don't rightly know.

BILL

But it's a possibility?

HARVEY

Yes, it's a possibility.

Bill THUMPS the desk hard with his fist.

BILL

Jesus H. Christ, some mess I got you into.

HARVEY

May have been your idea Bill but I decided to go along with it, so don't go blaming yourself for what happened. Besides what's done is done and there ain't a darn thing we can do about it.

Bill slumps down in a chair.

BILL

You're sure taking this mighty calmly. Word is you could lose your job on account of it.

Ignoring the remark, picking up an official-looking letter Harvey hands it to Bill.

HARVEY

This came a couple of days ago.

Bill scrutinises the letter before placing it on the desk.

BILL

How in hell's name did they find
out we played a ringer?

HARVEY

Truth is, I don't know and they
sure, as hell ain't gonna tell us,
leastways not until the hearing.

BILL

What hearing?

HARVEY

The one they mentioned in the letter
I just showed you.

Picking up the letter Bill squints at the writing.

Removing his glasses, Harvey offers them to Bill.

HARVEY

You wanna try these?

BILL

Hell no. Just tell me about this
damn hearing.

HARVEY

Nothing much to tell, the letter just
just say's that Braxtonville have
lodged a complaint and that I gotta
appear before a hearing of the State
Football Commission next month.

BILL

This mean you get a chance to put
your side of things?

HARVEY

I ain't counting on it. Like as not
all they're gonna do is tell me that
as we broke the rules the teams gonna
be disqualified. Can't see they have
any choice in the matter.

BILL

What and you're just gonna roll over
and let them do it without putting
up some kinda fight?

HARVEY

Face the facts, Bill, we tried some -thing we shouldn't have, and we got caught out. Now it's time to take our medicine.

Taking off his Stetson Bill runs a finger around the sweat-stained headband.

BILL

Sure, leaves a bad taste.

HARVEY

I guess it does... still, it was one hell of a game. One I won't forget in a hurry. And you were right about young Joe, the boys got real talent.

Animated, Bill jumps to his feet.

BILL

When did you say this hearing was?

HARVEY

(scanning the letter)
Twenty-seventh of next month. Twelve days from now. Why you asking?

BILL

(smiling)
I got me an idea.

Dropping his head into his hands Harvey groans despairingly.

BILL

Now don't go all righteous on me. Just hear me out, okay?

HARVEY

I'm listening. But it better be good.

BILL

Say if I was to get Joe to attend school. You reckon that committee might go easy on the team?

HARVEY

Kinda like a goodwill gesture,
you mean?

BILL

Something like that. I know it
don't alter the facts none but
if they see Joe's gone back to
school maybe they just might let
you off with a warning. What do
you think?

Harvey ponders for a moment.

HARVEY

I don't rightly know. I suppose
it might help. No harm in trying
I guess.

Pulling on his Stetson Bill heads for the door.

HARVEY

What if he doesn't want to go
back to school?... You thought
of that?

BILL

Could be he won't but I got him to
play football for you, didn't I?

Harvey smiles ruefully.

HARVEY

I wish you luck.

INT. KITCHEN/TRASK RANCH - EVENING

Bill and Joe have just finished supper. Together they
clear away their plates. Filling the basin with hot water,
Bill begins washing up the dirty dishes. Picking up a
towel Joe begins drying them.

BILL

(matter-of-factly)
I called in on coach Stone
today.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

(placing a dish on the draining board)

He tells me Braxtonville ain't too happy about you playing the other night. Seems they've gone and lodged a complaint with the State Football Commission. He reckons the team could be disqualified, it being a playoff game an all.

JOE

That sure don't seem right. I mean we won fair and square.

BILL

Well, that ain't how they see it, and it's likely the State Football Commission is gonna feel the same way too.

JOE

Ain't there nothing anybody can do about it?

Bill carries on washing up.

BILL

I guess not. The way they see it, given you don't attend Coulter High then technically you shouldn't have been playing for the team.

JOE

(frowning)

Shouldn't coach Stone have known that before he got me to play?

BILL

Truth is he did. But I persuaded him otherwise.

Putting down the plate he was drying Joe scowls at Bill.

BILL (CONT'D)

Come on now, you saw how bad things were. Hell with that backup playing they were gonna lose for sure.

JOE

So, you're saying the whole thing was your idea and not coach Stones?

BILL

(pleased with himself)
Sure, as heck worked too, didn't it?

JOE

(sarcastically)
Oh, yeah, it sure did. Except now the teams gonna be disqualified on account of it.

BILL

Maybe, maybe not. It all depends on how the Commission sees things.

JOE

From what you're saying it don't seem they have much choice.

BILL

Could be but there is something we could do that just might persuade them otherwise... We could get you enrolled at Coulter High.

(seeing the shocked look on Joe's face) Now I ain't saying it'll work but it's sure gotta be worth a try.

JOE

So, you're saying you want me to go back to school?

BILL

That's the general idea.

JOE

Well, I hate to disappoint you but there ain't no way that's happening.

BILL

Not even if it means helping to fix things for the team?

JOE

Oh, so my going back to school, is gonna make things, alright is it?

BILL

Maybe, maybe not, it's hard to say.
All I'm saying is it might just be
enough to get the commission to
change their mind.

JOE

Well, I guess we'll never get to know,
because there ain't no way I'm going
back to school.

BILL

Oh, is that a fact? And what about
coach Stone and the football team?
You just gonna turn your back on
them?

JOE

They ain't my concern.

BILL

Maybe not but you could at least
try helping them out.

JOE

Seeing as you're the one who got
them into this mess. Maybe telling
this Committee that it was all your
idea might help some.

BILL

You think I hadn't thought of that?
Chances are that even if I could,
it ain't gonna change matters.

Bill takes a deep breath. Calms himself.

BILL

Just what is it you've got against
going back to school anyways? I
mean it ain't like it's such a bad
thing. You could get a scholarship
and go on to college. Maybe play
College football. You sure got the
talent for it and that's a fact.

JOE

(glaring at Bill)
Got it all figured out ain't you?

Bill glares back at him.

JOE (CONT'D)

Just cause you got me working for you, it don't give you the right tell me what to do. I ain't going back to school and that's an end to it.

Bill rounds on him. His voice is full of venom.

BILL

Is that a fact? So, what are you gonna do then? Spend your life on that reservation of yours? Waste your life away like the rest of the down and outs. Get liquored up and go around stealing from honest folks. Hell, maybe even get yourself shot by a Federal Agent... Sure, is some future you're looking at boy.

Incensed, throwing down the towel Joe storms out of the house.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

- (A) Bill sits alone at the table. Across from him is Joe's plate, the food untouched. Bill picks up the plate and puts it on the floor for the dog to eat.
- (B) Joe is forking bedding into a stable. Bill leads in the horses. Neither of them speaks.
- (C) Bill and Joe sit at the kitchen table eating there evening meal in silence.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. KITCHEN/TRASK RANCH - DAYS LATER - EVENING

Joe is at the sink washing the dishes.

Bill walks in and makes his way to a cupboard. Opening a drawer, he removes a TIN BOX.

Setting it down on the table, lifting off the lid he empties out the contents: A folded invoice and a quantity of dollar bills in various denominations.

Unfolding the invoice Bill begins to count out most of the money into a pile.

BILL

That about covers the repairs.
The rest is yours.

Crossing to the table Joe picks up his share of the money.

BILL

That makes us fair and square.
(avoiding eye contact) Pack
up your things and I'll drive you
to the reservation in the morning.

JOE

Yes sir.

Joe returns to the sink.

BILL

Leave the dishes. Get yourself
off to bed.

Putting down the towel Joe slowly walks towards the door.

INT. TACK ROOM - NIGHT

Joe lays fully clothed on the bed Bill's dog beside him.
He gazes out at the night sky through the small window.

INT. LIVING ROOM/TRASK RANCH - NIGHT

The room is dark and silent. Bill, still in his work clothes is sitting in his chair. Resting in his lap is the old leather football. Deep in thought, he runs a hand over its worn casing.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - MORNING

Bill's pickup is parked outside the house, with its engine running.

Joe walks out of the barn carrying his duffel bag. Making his way to the pickup, he opens the passenger door.

INT. PICKUP

Bill is sitting behind the steering wheel staring out through the windshield. Joe climbs in beside him and closes the door. Bill turns to him.

BILL

I reckon I owe you an apology. I had no right saying what I did to you the other night.

JOE

That's okay... I guess I made you pretty mad at me.

BILL

Maybe so, but I still shouldn't have said what I did. It ain't my place to go passing judgement on how other folks choose to live their lives.

They both fall silent.

JOE

I did me some thinking last night. About what you said an all.

BILL

I seem to remember I said a lot of things that I hadn't ought to.

JOE

I mean about me going back to School.

Bill looks at him, questioningly.

JOE

Do you reckon I could really play college football?

BILL

Wouldn't have said so if I
didn't mean it. Course first
you gotta get a Scholarship,
and that means going back to
school, which as I recall you
you weren't too keen on.

JOE

(facing Bill)

A person can change his mind
can't he?

BILL

Sure, he can... Heck, I do it
all the time.

Joe smiles, feeling a little more relaxed.

BILL

So, you saying you're having a
change of heart about school?

JOE

Could be I am.

BILL

Well, I'm might glad to hear it.
And before you go snapping my head
off, it ain't got nothing to do
with the ruckus over the football
team. Okay?

Joe nods his head.

BILL

Truth is, the reason I got so
all-fired up was on account of
how you were throwing away a God
given talent.

Frowning, Joe glances across at Bill.

BILL

I know you wouldn't think so,
but I played me some football
when I was younger so, I know
what I'm talking about.

JOE
But what if I can't get into
school?

BILL
(smiling)
You leave that up to me.
(turning off the ignition)
Course you going back to school
don't change things. I'll still
expect you to help out around the
place... You gonna have a problem
with that?

Joe stares at Bill in amazement.

JOE
Are you saying I can stay on?

BILL
Guess I am.
(straight-faced)
Just don't go thinking you're
indispensable... Truth is I've
kinda gotten used to having you
around the place is all.

JOE
Gee, thanks, Mr Trask.

BILL
Well, that's settled then. Now how
about you go and see to the stock
while I rustle us up some breakfast.

Obediently, Joe climbs out of the pickup. As he walks away
Bill calls out to him.

BILL
When you're finished you best move
your things into the house. Can't
have a sophomore living out in the
barn now, can we?

EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Bill's pickup pulls up outside the entrance to Coulter
High School. Standing by the door is Harvey Stone.

The passenger door opens and Joe gets out. With a backward glance at Bill, he makes his way towards the main door.

INT. PICKUP

Looking out the driver's window Bill watches anxiously as Joe and Harvey disappear inside the building.

EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Bill pacing up and down outside like an expectant father. Not for the first time he throws a nervous look towards the main door. He spots Harvey walking out the entrance. Relieved, climbing into his pickup, he drives off.

INT. MEN'S WEAR SECTION/CLOTHING STORE - LOCAL TOWN - DAY

Scanning the rail of shirts, after selecting two Bill moves across to the rack displaying a selection of Levi's.

STORE COUNTER

As she finishes serving a customer, Shannon sees Bill checking a pair of Levi's for length. She walks over to him.

SHANNON

Hello Mr Trask. Can I help you?

BILL

That's mighty kind of you Shannon.
I've got a young fella helping out
on the ranch and he needs some new
clothes.

SHANNON

Is he the boy who played quarterback
for us in the playoff game?

BILL

You heard about that then?

SHANNON

It's all over the school. They're
even saying that the football teams
going to be disqualified on account
of him not being a student.

Unsure, Bill returns the Levi's to the rack.

BILL

Well, that sure ain't the case now.
Matter of fact that's the reason
I'm in here.

(pulling a face)

His present wardrobe ain't what
you might call extensive.

SHANNON

Gee, that's great news. Does that
mean the team won't be disqualified?

BILL

Well that I ain't sure of. Guess
we'll just have to wait and see
what's decided. Important thing
is he's back in school.

SHANNON

Could be he'll be in tenth grade
like me.

(eagerly)

If you like I could call by and
go over some of my class work
with him... Help him catch up.

BILL

Say that's real kind of you Shannon,
I'm sure he'd appreciate it. I ain't
much help when it comes to schooling.

Shannon turns her attention to the Levi's.

SHANNON

Do you know what size he is?

BILL

Can't say as I do. Stands about
six feet or so I reckon. Kinda
skinny-looking fella.

Shannon smiles. Thinking to herself; more 'cute looking'
as she sorts through the Levi's.

SHANNON

These here should fit him just
fine.

BILL
Well, I guess I better take
two pairs.

Shannon looks at the two shirts Bill is holding.
Recognising the disapproving look, smiling good-naturedly,
he hands her the shirts.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY

Shannon rides up on horseback.

Stepping down off the porch Bill takes her reigns.

BILL
He still behaving himself?

SHANNON
Oh, he gives me a little buck now
and then but he knows who's boss.

BILL
(calling out)
Joe, you got company. Come on up
to the house.

Shannon removes some school books from her saddle-bag.

BILL
You go on in Shannon.

Bill leads Shannon's horse towards the corral.

INT. LIVING ROOM/TRASK RANCH - DAY

Shannon puts her books down on the table. Looking around
the room, her eyes are drawn towards the painting of a
horse above the fireplace.

Distracted by the sound of the door being opened she turns
just as Joe walks in. A smile lights up his face.

JOE
Hi.

SHANNON
Hi yourself.

Joe looks at the stack of books on the table.

JOE

Wow, sure looks like I got plenty of catching up to do.

SHANNON

It looks worse than it is. Anyway you probably know a lot of this stuff already.

JOE

I doubt it but thanks anyway. It's real nice of you to go all this trouble.

Joe pulls out a chair and Shannon sits down. Sitting down beside her, he watches as she selects a textbook.

Bill walks in and heads for the kitchen.

BILL (O.S.)

You kids want something to drink?

Joe looks at Shannon. She shakes her head.

JOE

We're both fine thanks.

Joe and Shannon give their attention to the text book.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

Joe sits on a fence where the dirt road to the ranch meets the highway. Seeing the school bus approaching, he jumps down off the fence.

The bus pulls up, and Joe climbs aboard.

INT. SCHOOL BUS

Joe sees Shannon seated near the back. Encouraged by her smile he goes and sits in the seat next to her.

As the bus pulls away a group of TEENAGE GIRLS steal surreptitious glances at them. Moments later they begin a whispered conversation.

EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

The school bus pulls up outside. The door opens and the STUDENTS head for the school entrance.

INT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Crowds of students throng the main hallway. We MOVE with Joe and Shannon as they make their way to their classroom.

CLASSROOM

Shannon goes to her desk. Spotting an empty desk close by Joe goes and sits at it.

Smiling, Shannon looks across at him.

Seated at the back of the classroom Karl observes the smile. His expression betrayed his disapproval.

INT. LIVING ROOM/TRASK RANCH - DAY

Joe and Shannon sit opposite each other at the table. Scattered on it are several school books.

As they both reach for the same book their hand's touch.

Walking in through the front door, Bill spots Joe and Shannon holding hands.

Instantly, they pull their hands away. Each focusing their eyes on the book in front of them.

Hiding his smile, Bill walks through to the kitchen.

Peering up from their books, Joe and Shannon smile self-consciously at each other.

Sneaking a look towards the kitchen, Joe reaches for Shannon's hand. Frowning, she SLAPS it away.

Sulking, Joe pulls a face.

BILL (O.S.)

Time Shannon was getting back.
Don't want her folks worrying.

JOE
Sure, thing Mr Trask.

Gathering up her books Shannon and Joe make their way towards the door.

SHANNON
Bye, Mr Trask.

BILL (O.S.)
Bye, Shannon. Say Hi to your folks for me.

SHANNON
I will.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - DAY

Joe and Shannon on horseback GALLOPING across open range land. They race neck and neck towards a gate set in the fence.

Reigning in their mounts, Joe leans down and opens the gate. Holding it while Shannon rides through, the couple walk their horses a little way then dismount.

Joe looks towards a cluster of buildings in the distance, surrounded by mature trees.

JOE
Sure, is a nice place your folks have got.

SHANNON
My Grandpa and his brother built the house and planted all the trees too. They keep the house nice and cool in the summer.

Joe looks down, not wanting to say goodbye just yet but too tongue-tied to say anything.

Suddenly, Shannon's horse spooks and pushes her into him.

Instinctively, Joe puts his arms around her. Pulling her to him, he KISSES her on the lips.

EXT. ARNOTT RANCH - DAY

JIM ARNOTT, Shannon's father, a man in his mid-forties with rugged features and greying hair, steps out of the barn.

Spotting Joe and Shannon kissing, a look of displeasure clouds his face.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - EARLY MORING

Joe waits for the bus where we last saw him. The bus pulls up and he climbs aboard.

INT. SCHOOL BUS

Joe makes his way down the aisle looking for Shannon. He sees her sitting with a group of teenage girls.

Shannon averts her eyes as Joe walks past.

Puzzled, Joe takes a seat near the back.

EXT. CLASSROOM/COULTER HIGH - LATER THAT MORNING

Shannon makes her way to her desk. Joe walks into the classroom behind her. Confused by why Shannon won't speak to him, Joe walks across to his desk.

Sitting at the back of the class, Karl watches events with interest. Sensing all is not well between 'Romeo and Juliette' a smile crosses his face.

EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - MIDDAY

Karl and several classmates are fooling around with a football on an area of lawn. Karl spots Joe.

KARL

Hey Joe come and play a little football.

Joe walks over. Karl tosses him the football.

The classmates split into defense and offense. The ball is snapped and Joe gets off his pass.

Karl tackles the receiver. Pats him playfully on the head.

KARL
Come to Daddy.

Joe and the offense go into the huddle and then line up.

Joe takes the hand-off. Charging forward, Karl bats down Joe's pass. He celebrates by mimicking a war dance.

Ignoring his antics, Joe sets himself for the next play.

Joe runs a bootleg. The defense buys it and he scores a touchdown.

Joe runs the same play again. Sidestepping Karl, he scores.

FOOTPATH

Shannon and a group of girls are walking along the path. They stop to watch the impromptu game.

LAWN

As they line-up Karl and Joe spot her.

Joe takes the snap. Picking out a receiver, he throws the football to him. Long after he has released the football, Karl hits with a late tackle, knocking him to the ground.

Winded, Joe lies on the grass. Karl walks over to him. Reaching out a hand, he pulls Joe to his feet.

KARL
Gee sorry chief, guess I got
a little carried away.

Smiling, Karl looks across at Shannon.

The game continues.

EXT. CLASSROOM WINDOW

We SEE the figure of Harvey framed in the window.

LAWN

Faking a hand off, Joe runs past the defense and touches

the ball down.

The next moment Karl slams into him, knocking Joe backwards onto the ground.

Furious, Joe climbs to his feet.

Clenching his fists, Karl braces himself.

HARVEY
(striding across the lawn)
Okay! Okay, knock it off the pair
of you.

Joe and Karl glare at each other.

Picking up the football, Harvey turns to the group of girls.

HARVEY
Haven't you all got classes you
should be at?

The girls hurry away into the school building.

Harvey turns to Joe and Karl.

HARVEY
I'll deal with you two at football
practice. See if we can't work out
this little problem... Now go on
back to your class.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The school bus pulls up and Karl gets off. He begins walking along the highway.

The school bus pulls away and we SEE Joe standing by the roadside.

EXT. THE BUS

The rear window is filled with High School students peering out, their faces PRESSED up against the glass.

HIGHWAY

Crossing the highway, Karl sees Joe standing by the side of the road.

KARL

Well, well, what's the matter
Tonto, you get off at the wrong
stop?

Ignoring him, Joe drops his school bag onto the ground.

JOE

I figure you and me need to
settling things.

Karl drops his school bag.

KARL

That suits me just fine.

Fists clenched, Karl and Joe walk towards each other until they are standing face to face.

With an angry ROAR, Karl throws a punch. The blow catches Joe on the side of the face.

Lowering his shoulder Joe charges forward, throwing punches.

Karl staggers backwards, Joe's fists thudding into his body.

Reaching out Karl wraps his massive arms around Joe's waist, locking him in a bearhug.

Pushing the palm of his hand against Karl's chin, Joe forces his head backwards.

Forced to release his grip the two stagger back, breathing heavily.

Like a raging bull, Karl rushes forward again. Joe stands his ground. Toe to toe they slug it out like bare-knuckle fighters

A station wagon drives up and stops. Climbing out, Charlie strides across to the fighters. Grabbing hold of each of them he pulls them apart.

CHARLIE
Okay, that's enough! Quit it now
you hear me?

Karl and Joe glare at each other, both gasping for air.

Charlie releases his hold.

CHARLIE
That's better.
(turning to Karl)
Now get on home. Go on now
before I get mad.

Wiping away the blood running from his nose, Karl snatches up his school bag and stomps off.

CHARLIE
(turning to Joe)
Go get in the truck.

Retrieving his school bag Joe walks across to the station wagon. Opening the passenger door, he climbs in.

Getting behind the wheel, Charlie guns the engine.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - LATER

Charlie's station wagon pulls up alongside the dirt road leading to Bill Trask's ranch. The passenger door opens and Joe gets out.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Sneaking in through the front door, Joe makes for his bedroom.

BILL (O.S.)
Home kinda late ain't you?

Joe freezes.

JOE
(matter-of-factly)
I guess so.

Emerging from the kitchen Bill confronts him.

BILL
(looking at Joe's eye)
My, that sure looks painful.

Joe lowers his head.

BILL
You wanna tell me what happened?

JOE
I walked into a door.

Looking at Joe's hands, Bill notices his grazed and swollen knuckles.

BILL
Is that a fact?

Embarrassed, Joe shrugs his shoulders.

BILL
Let's get you patched up.

Bill leads Joe into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Pulling out a chair Joe watches as Bill opens a cupboard. Taking out a bottle of iodine and a pad of cotton-wool Bill sets them down on the table.

BILL
Let's see your hands.

Sheepishly, Joe extends his arms out in front of him.

After examining Joe's knuckles, Bill reaches for the bottle of iodine. Unscrewing the cap, he soaks the cotton pad.

BILL
This might just sting a little.

Taking hold of Joe's hand, he gently dabs the damaged knuckles with the pad. Repeating the procedure on the other knuckle. Joe winces but remains silent.

JOE

If you must know I got in a
fight with Karl Beckenbaum.

Suppressing a smile Bill walks across to the refrigerator.
Opening it he removes a dinner plate containing two good
size steaks.

Returning to his 'patient' he places one over Joe's
swollen eye.

BILL

Hold onto that. You're gonna
be eating it later.

Joe holds the raw steak to his swollen eye.

BILL

This here Karl Beckenbaum ain't
he the big fella who plays at
linebacker?

Joe doesn't answer him.

BILL (CONT'D)

Sure, ain't somebody I'd wanna go
up against, an that's a fact.

JOE

Yeah well, he don't scare me none.
Besides, he had it coming to him.

BILL

Is that so?

Picking up a saucepan Bill crosses to the sink. After
filling it with water he sets it down on the stove.
Reaching for a colander containing peeled potatoes, he
tips them into the saucepan.

BILL

This here disagreement wouldn't
have anything to do with Shannon
now, would it?

Joe takes the fifth amendment.

Smiling, Bill sprinkles a fist full of salt into the
saucepan.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM/CAPITAL BUILDING - HELENA - DAY

A spacious airy room with maple wood panelled walls. A long table stands at one end. Grouped in front of it are several rows of matching chairs. Seated behind the table are FOUR MEMBERS of the Montana State Football Commission.

An uncomfortable-looking Harvey sits facing them.

Leaning forward, DAN FISK, the Committee Chairman, a smartly dressed man in his early fifties focuses his gaze on Harvey.

DAN FISK

You'll admit, coach Stone, there was a violation of the rules?

HARVEY

Yes, Mr Chairman that much I'll admit to, and I know it looks bad but the reason I did it...

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

(interrupting)

We're not interested in your reason for doing it coach Stone, the simple fact is you broke the rules.

HARVEY

Okay, so I played someone who wasn't on the team roster.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

Not only did you play someone who wasn't on your roster coach Stone but isn't it also true that this 'someone' wasn't even one of your students?

Harvey fidgets uneasily in his chair.

HARVEY

Yes, that's true.

INT. CORRIDOR/CAPITAL BUILDING - LATER

Bill strides along the corridor scrutinising each door as he passes them.

Attached to the door at the far end of the corridor a notice reads:

"STATE FOOTBALL COMMISSION
NO UNAUTHORISED ADMISSION"

Undeterred, Bill reaches for the door handle.

CONFERENCE ROOM/CAPITAL BUILDING

The door opens and Bill enters the room. Marching up to the table, he runs his eyes over the four men seated behind it.

BILL
Name's Trask. Bill Trask, and I
got me something to say on the
matter you're discussing.

Committee Member #1 reaches for a telephone.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1
I'll call security.

Dan Fisk raises his hand.

DAN FISK
That won't be necessary. Please
take a seat, Mr Trask.

Reluctantly, Bill sits down in the chair next to Harvey.

Harvey leans towards Bill. Whispers to him to take off his Stetson. Bill gives him a look but obliges.

DAN FISK
So, coach Stone now you've admitted
to breaking the rules, I for one,
(glancing at member #1)
would like to hear why you did so.

HARVEY
Truth is I...

Before he can finish Bill jumps to his feet.

BILL

(interrupting)

Truth is he did it on account of I persuaded him to. Whole idea was mine, he had nothing to do with it.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

Would you sit down sir, and let coach Stone answer the question!

BILL

Like hell if I will! Truth of the matter is it's me you should be talking to, not coach Stone.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

This is intolerable Mr Chairman. I demand that Mr Trask be asked to leave the room at once.

Ignoring his suggestion Dan Fisk fixes his gaze on Bill's face.

DAN FISK

(quizzically)

Forgive me if I'm wrong sir, but I seem to recall a certain Bill Trask once played at quarterback for the New York Giants?

Bill looks at Harvey, questioningly. Harvey shrugs his shoulders.

BILL

(somewhat reluctantly)

You got a mighty fine memory, sir. The last time I threw a football for the Giants was over forty years ago.

DAN FISK

(smiling)

Let's just say that there are some people you never forget, and in my case you happen to be one of them.

(glancing left and right) Given Mr Trask's obvious involvement in the matter at hand if there are no objections. I think we should hear what he has to say.

The three Committee Members nod their heads in their agreement.

DAN FISK

Good... Very well Mr Trask, the floor is all yours.

Clearing his throat, Bill composes himself.

BILL

The truth of the matter is I got a young fella working for me who has a natural talent for the game. I've coached him some, and in my opinion, he's got real potential. Yes sir, no doubt about it.

Smiling, Dan Fisk nods his head.

BILL (CONT'D)

So, when we were at the game and I seen coach Stones' team getting beat like they were, I talked him into playing the boy at quarterback.

DAN FISK

Even though you both knew that you would be breaking the rules?

BILL

Yes sir, ain't no point in denying it. But the fact of the matter is we never thought that by playing him we would win the game.

(glancing towards Harvey)

No sir, we sure never reckoned on that happening.

DAN FISK

Forgive me Mr Trask but I'm a little confused. You said that the reason you convinced coach Stone to play this youngster at quarterback was because his team were losing?

BILL

That's right.

DAN FISK

Then why change quarterbacks if you didn't think it would win you the game? It doesn't make any sense.

BILL

We did it on account of how they were getting beat, not because they were getting beat.

DAN TRASK

(frowning)

Would you care to elaborate on that? Only I am having a hard time understanding your reasoning.

The other three committee members nod their agreement.

BILL

Truth is when I seen them young players in the locker room at half time I knew for sure their spirits was broken. Not just because they were losing, but on account of how they were losing. They all knew that when they went back out on that field they weren't just gonna get beat, they was gonna get humiliated, and I sure couldn't stand by and let that happen. Not when there was a chance to fix it so that even if they lost, they could still hold their heads up high.

DAN FISK

And that's why you decided to convince coach Stone to play this young prodigy of yours?

BILL

Yes, sir, I figured having Joe, that's the boy's name, playing at quarterback would at least save them young fella's from being beat so bad that they might never want to play a game of football again.

DAN FISK

And you feel that justifies what you did do you?

BILL

No sir, I can't rightly say that, all I can say is, the reason I came here today was so you'd know why coach Stone did what he did, and that for you to go punishing a whole team on account of what I did, sure don't seem fair.

DAN FISK

Thank you for your, honesty, Mr Trask. And although uninvited I'm sure we all appreciate you turning up today... Now if you and coach...

BILL

(interrupting)

Not that this makes things right but the fact of the matter is the boy's back in school.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

(sarcastically)

A little after the event wouldn't you say, Mr Trask?

Bill chokes back his anger.

DAN FISK

Thank you again, Mr Trask, I'm sure we'll bear that in mind.

(throwing a look at member #1)

Now if you two gentlemen would care to wait outside, my fellow members and I will discuss the matter, and we'll advise you of our decision in due course.

Getting up from their seats, Bill and Harvey make their way towards the door. Framed in the doorway Bill turns and looks back at Dan Fisk.

The two men make eye contact.

INT. CORRIDOR/CAPITAL BUILDING - LATER

Seated on a chair, Harvey watches as Bill paces up and down like a caged lion.

The door to the committee room opens and COMMITTEE MEMBER #2 ushers them inside.

CONFERENCE ROOM

Bill and Harvey return to their seats. Their collective gaze fixed on Dan Fisk.

DAN FISK

Well gentlemen, while we have not been able to reach a unanimous decision.

Judging by his sour expression Committee Member #1 is clearly the odd one out.

DAN FISK (CONT'D)

While in no way condone coach Stone's actions, taking into account Mr Trask's testimony, the committee has decided that rather than disqualifying Coulter High that the game should be replayed and that in view of the rule-breaking that Braxtonville High should have home field advantage. I trust you have no objection to this coach Stone?

Dumbstruck, Bill and Harvey stare at each other.

DAN FISK

I'll take that as a no then.

(grinning) Well, that concludes the hearing. You will be notified of the date for the replay in due course... Thank you, gentlemen, and I wish you good day.

His composure restored, Harvey steps forward.

HARVEY

Just one thing Mr Chairman. Seeing as how Joe is now attending school is he eligible to play for the team?

Dan Fisk and the committee members nod their approval.

DAN FISK

Just make sure his name is on the team roster this time.

Elated, after shaking hands with each of the committee members, Bill and Harvey leave the room.

Collecting up his paperwork, Dan Fisk is approached by Committee member #2.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Hey Dan, is it true that old cowboy really played quarterback for the Giants?

DAN FISK

He did forty years ago.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

You sure must have a memory for names.

DAN FISK

Like I say, he was one of those people you never forget.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Did you ever see him play?

DAN FISK

I sure did. Back when we lived in New York my dad took me to all the home games. We were both big Giant fans.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Was he good?

DAN FISK

Well, my dad sure thought so. He said, he was as good as Joe Namath, but he just never got the credit he deserved. And he was a pretty good judge.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

So how come he's ended up living way out here?

DAN FISK

Kind of a sad story.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

How come?

DAN FISK

Well, I was just a kid at the time but I remember it was in all the papers. Seems Bill was driving his wife and son to the game as always and his car was involved in a real bad accident, He walked away with barely a scratch but his wife and son were both killed... There was talk of him being to blame for the crash but nothing came of it. Next thing was he quit the game, and just vanished into thin air. People said it was on account of him blaming him-self for what happened.

(putting his papers into a briefcase) I sure never thought I'd get to see him again.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Sure, is a small world.

DAN FISK

You can say that again.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

He must think a lot of that young kid speaking up for him like he did. Do you think he's as good as he says?

DAN FISK

Well, if Coulter High make it through to the final, I guess we'll get to find out.

INT. CLOTHING STORE/LOCAL TOWN - DAY

Bill walks into the store and makes a show of inspecting some men's jackets.

Shannon is serving a customer. Seeing Bill, she averts her eyes.

Waiting until the customer has left the store Bill walks across to her.

BILL

Howdy Shannon.

SHANNON

Hi Mr Trask.

BILL

Ain't seen much of you lately. Is everything alright between you and Joe?

Shannon doesn't reply.

BILL (CONT'D)

He ain't been making a nuisance of himself now, has he?

SHANNON

No, it's nothing like that.

BILL

Is it on account of him and that Karl fella getting in a fight?

Shannon blushes but doesn't say anything.

BILL

So, you wanna tell me what's going on or not? Only...

SHANNON

(interrupting)

It's my Pa. He says I'm not to see Joe anymore.

BILL

Any particular reason?

SHANNON

It's on account of him seeing Joe and me kissing.

(brushing away a tear)

I really like Joe and it wasn't like we were doing anything wrong.

BILL

But your Pa don't want you taking up with him on account of him being an Indian is that it?

SHANNON

No, it's nothing like that. Least I don't think so. He just says I'm too young to be seeing boys and that school work is more important.

BILL

If my memory serves me right, I seem to recall him marrying your Ma when she was just turned seventeen. I guess her Pa didn't think school work was so important that it had to stop two people falling in love.

Shannon smiles.

BILL (CONT'D)

What's your Ma have to say on the matter?

SHANNON

Oh, I think she reckons the same. She's always saying how she wants me to do well at school and go to college. Make something of myself.

BILL

Well, I guess that ain't such a bad thing. But it sure don't mean you can't smell the roses along the way now, does it? Way, I see it your Ma and Pa made their choices, and one day, even if they don't agree with it, your gonna make yours. That's just how it is. Anyway, I'd best be going. See you around Shannon. You take care now.

Teary-eyed, Shannon watches Bill as he leaves the store.

INT. HALLWAY/ARNOTT RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

A loud knock at the front door.

TOP OF STAIRS

Shannon appears, dressed in her pyjamas. She starts to descend the stairs.

HALLWAY

ELIZABETH ARNOTT, an attractive woman in her mid-thirties with shoulder-length blonde hair and a figure that could still turn men's heads, walks towards the door.

She sees Shannon on the stairs.

ELIZABETH
It's okay, Honey I'll go.

Reluctantly, Shannon climbs back up the stairs.

Elizabeth opens the door and finds Bill Trask standing outside on the porch.

ELIZABETH
Mr Trask.

BILL
Howdy Elizabeth, sorry to call on you so late. You mind if I come in? It won't take but a minute.

ELIZABETH
Not at all. Come on in.

Bill steps into the hallway. Closing the door behind him.

ELIZABETH
Come on through, Jim's in the parlour.

PARLOUR

Elizabeth leads Bill into the parlour. Jim Arnott gets up out of his chair and the two men shake hands. Jim indicates a chair and Bill sits down.

ELIZABETH
Can I get you anything? A cup of coffee? I've got some made.

BILL
No, thank you kindly.
(removing his Stetson)
I'm real sorry to be calling on

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

you folks so late. Truth is I've been meaning to come over to thank you for letting Shannon help Joe out with his school work. I just never got round to it.

ELIZABETH

That's alright, we understand how busy you must be, you running the place on your own.

HALLWAY

Creeping down the stairs, Shannon eavesdrops.

PARLOUR

BILL

Still ain't no excuse for me not thanking you both.

An uneasy silence follows.

BILL

Truth is, I got me another reason for calling on you tonight. It's been on my mind for a while and I need to get it off my chest.

JIM

Now see here Bill...

BILL

(holds up a hand)

Now hear me out. It won't take but a few minutes and I need to get it off my chest... I reckon you know the reason I got Joe living with me. Well, the truth is it worked out a whole lot different than I imagined. Now I can't pretend that I know too much about the boy but what I can say is I've found him to be a decent, hard-working young man.

(fingering his Stetson)

Now I appreciate you wasn't to know this when you allowed Shannon to visit after school...

ELIZABETH
(interrupting)
Mr Trask...

Bill raises his hand, cutting her short.

BILL
No, let me finish... Now the way
I see it, what happened between
the two of them was only natural
for young people who have feelings
for each other and I can't punish
the boy for that. But that being
said I appreciate your entitled to
your concerns and so I want you to
know that from now on I'll see to
it that Joe respects your wishes
and he don't see Shannon anymore.

Bill gets to his feet.

BILL
I'm obliged to you for your time.
I'll see myself out.

Bill makes his way towards the hallway. Jim and Elizabeth
get up from their chairs and follow after him.

HALLWAY

Shannon scurries back up-stairs. She has heard everything.

Bill opens the front door and disappears into the night.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY

Bill and Joe are fooling around with the football.

A four-by-four driven by Jim Arnott pulls up outside the
ranch house.

Clutching an arm full of books, Shannon jumps out and goes
to stand beside Joe.

Lowering his car window, Jim Arnott looks across at Joe.
Joe meets his gaze.

JIM

When you're done with your bookwork,
you might want to ask you're young
fella to come over for supper.

Shannon smiles. Handing Joe, the pile of books, she pushes him towards the house.

Acknowledging Bill with a wave of his hand, Jim Arnott drives away.

Walking up to Bill Shannon plants a kiss on his cheek.

EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Two school buses are parked outside. Students, members of the football team and cheerleaders climb aboard.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD/BRAXTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The Bleachers are packed with supporters watching the Braxtonville SCHOOL BAND parading up and down the field.

On the sidelines, both sets of CHEERLEADERS perform their well-rehearsed routines.

The referee calls the captains together for the coin toss. Braxtonville win and elect to receive the football.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

- (A) Bill looks on anxiously, as the VETERINARIAN bandages a horse's injured leg.
- (B) The Bears wide receiver runs into the end zone for a touchdown.
- (C) SCORE BOARD Bears 14 - Cougars 7
- (D) The Veterinarian drives off in his car. Bill gives him a wave, turns and walks towards the house.
- (E) Joe is sacked by a blitzing linebacker.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. KITCHEN/TRASK RANCH - EVENING

Bill is sitting at the table eating his meal. Looking up at the clock on the wall, he pushes his plate away.

INT. LIVING ROOM/TRASK RANCH - NIGHT

Bill sits in his chair reading a newspaper. Agitated, he gets up and paces around the room.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A school bus pulls up. The door opens and Joe jumps down. The bus pulls away. Slinging his bag over his shoulder, Joe begins walking along the road towards the ranch house.

INT. LIVING ROOM/TRASK RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Bill is fast asleep in his chair with the dog stretched out at his feet. Suddenly the dog begins to BARK. Waking with a start Bill heads for the front door.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT

Framed in the doorway Bill sees Joe walking towards him.

Seeing Bill, Joe punches his fist in the air.

Elated, they run towards each other. Jumping up they execute a perfect high-five. Then, WHOOPING and YELLING the pair break into a crazy dance. A combination of a reel and a war dance.

EXT. TRASK RANCH - AFTERNOON

Bill is sitting on the porch enjoying a little late afternoon sun.

Shannon rides up on her horse. Dismounting she walks over to him. Without saying a word, she sits down beside him.

BILL

If you've come to see Joe, he
ain't here. I sent him into town.

Shannon remains silent.

BILL
(sensing something is wrong)
You two had a fight?

SHANNON
No nothing like that.
(pulling a face) he's just
being pig-headed!

Smiling, Bill puts his arm around her.

BILL
You wanna tell me what he's
being so onery about?

SHANNON
He says he won't take me to
the end-of-year dance.

BILL
He say why?

SHANNON
He says it's because he can't
dance.

BILL
Well, maybe he can't. Him being an
Indian an all.

SHANNON
Maybe so, but if he really liked
me he could learn, couldn't he?

Seeing what's coming, Bill remains silent

SHANNON
I bet you could teach him.

BILL
Now hold on young lady. It's been
quite a while since I did me any
dancing.

SHANNON
Yes, but you must still know how.
Oh, please Mr Trask, please say you
will. It would mean so much to me.
Pleeese!

Removing his arm, Bill strokes his chin thoughtfully.

BILL

Well, I guess I could give it a try.
Course that's assuming he's willing
to go along with the idea.

Beaming, Shannon throws her arms around him.

SHANNON

Oh, thank you, Mr Trask. I just
know you can do it.

BILL

(climbing to his feet)
That reminds me, I got something
for you.

He walks into the house. Returning moments later holding a brown paper package tied up with string. He hands it to Shannon.

SHANNON

What is it?

BILL

Search me. Joe's Grandfather came
over with it yesterday. Said I was
to give it to you but not to say a
word to Joe.

Shrugging her shoulders, Shannon walks over to her horse. Putting the package into her saddle bag, she climbs into the saddle and rides away.

INT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT

The furniture has been pushed back against the walls, and a Strauss waltz in PLAYING on an old record player.

In the center of the room, arm-in-arm Bill and Joe move around the floor.

BILL

One two three. One two three.
Slow down, will you. This here's
a waltz, not a goddam war dance!

INT. SCHOOL HALL/COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Dance couples move around the floor. The young men are all dressed in tuxedos. Their partners are all wearing beautiful ball gowns.

Joe stands alone over in a corner. TUGGING at his collar, he gazes nervously around the room.

On stage, the band stops playing and the couples drift away from the dance floor.

Suddenly GASPS of surprise emanate from across the room. Turning, Joe sees Shannon walking towards him. She is wearing a beautiful doeskin dress, exquisitely decorated with coloured beads and quills.

The band STRIKES UP and Joe leads Shannon onto the dance floor.

EXT. JOE'S GRANDPARENTS HOUSE/RESERVATION - MORNING

Joe's GRANDFATHER, a thin man, in his late 60's with stooped shoulders and wearing worn-out Levi's and a padded jacket is standing by an ancient pickup. He has the hood up and is tinkering with the engine.

Joe rides up on horseback. Dismounting, he walks over to him.

The old man looks up at him, his lined and weathered face betraying no emotion.

JOE

Sure, don't sound too healthy.

GRANDFATHER

No, it sure don't. I reckon if it was a horse, I'd have to shoot it.

Pushing his hands into his pockets, Joe kicks aimlessly at a stone.

His grandfather continues tinkering with the engine.

GRANDFATHER

Don't see much of you these days.

JOE

Well, what with school an all I don't get much chance. Beside which Mr Trask keeps me pretty busy helping out around the place.

Straightening up, the old man wipes his hands on a piece of rag.

GRANDFATHER

You two seem to be getting along pretty well.

(pushing the rag in a pocket)
It was a good thing that he did for you.

JOE

Yeah, I guess it was.

He kicks at another stone.

GRANDFATHER

So, you want to stop kicking rocks and tell me what's on your mind.

JOE

I guess you know about the big game tomorrow?

Joe's grandfather nods his head.

JOE

Well, truth is I'm feeling pretty nervous. I mean what if I don't play well?

GRANDFATHER

Only natural you should feel a little nervous but it don't mean you have to go doubting yourself.

JOE

That's all well and good but this is mighty important for the school. The football team have never made it to the final before. Suppose I go and let them down?

GRANDFATHER
That's true, but ain't you
forgetting something?

Puzzled, Joe stares at him.

GRANDFATHER
From what I hear the only reason
they're in the final at all is on
account of you.

Joe smiles, self-consciously.

JOE
Now I'm really nervous.

GRANDFATHER
It's a big game, only natural that
you should be. Even I'd be nervous.

Joe swings his foot at another stone.

JOE
Yeah, but it ain't you who's gonna
be playing, is it? You ain't the
one letting the team down.

GRANDFATHER
Sounds to me like you lost the game
already.

Joe shrugs his shoulders.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
Feeling sorry for yourself ain't
gonna help things. Times like this
you gotta have some faith in your
ability, and get rid of those bad
thoughts.

JOE
That's easy for you to say.

GRANDFATHER
Guess it is.

Their conversation dries up.

GRANDFATHER

There is something you could try.
I ain't saying it will work but
it sure won't do you any harm.

JOE

(intrigued)

What is it?

GRANDFATHER

You could spend time in a sweat
lodge.

JOE

A sweat lodge! Ain't they used
for religious ceremonies?

GRANDFATHER

Sometimes, but not always. Its
more a way of purifying the mind.

JOE

You saying I need purifying?

GRANDFATHER

All I'm saying is you need to get
rid of all them doubts you're
having... Clear your mind.

JOE

Sounds kinda drastic to me.

GRANDFATHER

Best I can do for you.

Joe contemplates kicking another stone but decides against
it.

JOE

I guess it can't hurt any.

GRANDFATHER

First off, this ain't something to
treat lightly.

(giving Joe a hard look)

You gotta take this seriously. This
is a ceremony our people have been
using for a long, time and you have
to honor that.

JOE
I understand that Grandpa.

GRANDFATHER
Okay, just as long as you remember
that.

Joe nods his head.

GRANDFATHER
(shutting the hood)
Wait there while I go get some
things from the house.

EXT. REMOTE CREEK - DAY

Joe's grandfather's pickup is parked under some trees with
Joe's horse tethered to it.

On a cleared patch of ground is a shallow, circular fire
pit. Stacked beside are a pile of chopped wood and several
large stones.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

- (A) Joe and his grandfather appear each carrying a
number of large stones. They place them beside the
other stones.
- (B) Down by the creek Joe and his grandfather begin
cutting lengths of willow.
- (C) With the lengths of willow set in a circle, working
as a team Joe and his grandfather begin bending them
over to form a dome-shaped structure.
- (D) Shovel in hand Joe finishes digging a shallow hole in
the center of the lodge.
- (E) Over by the pickup Joe's grandfather unloads a
tarpaulin.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. SWEAT LODGE - DAY

Stripped to the waist Joe sits cross-legged on the ground.
His upper body glistens with sweat.

Reaching for an earthen wear container, he pours some water onto the cluster of heated stones. The lodge is instantly enveloped in a CLOUD of steam.

EXT. REMOTE CREEK - EVENING

Joe stands beside the pickup. His face is emblazoned with war paint. His grandfather loops a buffalo bone breastplate over Joe's head and secures it with rawhide ties.

GRANDFATHER

Find a high place, my grandson, and
let all your bad thoughts be carried
away on the wind.

Mounting his horse Joe rides off.

INT. KITCHEN/TRASK RANCH - EARLY MORNING

Bill is preparing a breakfast of bacon, eggs, hash browns and toast.

The dog waits patiently beside the table. Throwing it a piece of bacon Bill calls out in a loud voice.

BILL

Hey lazy bones, you gonna lay
in bed all morning?

Bill dishes up the food onto two plates. Putting them on the table, he sits down.

BILL

(impatiently)
Breakfasts on the table. If you
ain't out here in two minutes, I
got a hungry dog who's sure gonna
enjoy eating yours.

Shaking some ketchup onto his plate Bill begins eating. After a couple of mouthfuls, he stops. SLAMMING down his fork, he heads for Joe's bedroom.

JOE'S BEDROOM

Opening the door, Bill looks inside. The room is empty and Joe's bed hasn't been slept in.

Closing the door, Bill makes for the front door.

EXT. TRASK RANCH

We MOVE WITH him as he walks over to the barn. Opening the barn door, he calls out.

BILL
You in there, Joe?

Getting no reply, he turns away.

As he makes his way back to the house, Joe's grandfather pulls up in his old pickup truck. Opening the driver's door, he gets out.

BILL
Howdy. Say, have you seen your grandson? Only his bed ain't been slept in and we got us a big game coming up today.

GRANDFATHER
No need for you to worry Mr Trask, Joe will be along soon, he just had something to do first.

BILL
Well, I sure as hell hope so.
(turning away)
I got my breakfast getting cold, you wanna come inside and tell me what the heck is going on?

Joe's grandfather follows Bill into the house.

EXT. HIGH BUTTE - EARLY MORING

Fingers of golden sunlight reach out from the horizon. Joe sits cross-legged on a shoulder of rock, a buffalo robe wrapped around him. Eyes closed he extends his arms upwards.

Standing behind him, his horse paws at the ground.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM/UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA - DAY

PLAYING FIELD

CLOSE UP of Joe's face. His war paint is visible through the face mask.

Moving up behind the center Joe looks along the opposition's defensive line. Seeing two opposing LINEBACKERS showing blitz, he shouts out a change of play.

His tight end drops back from the Line of Scrimmage and re-sets.

JOE
Twenty-seven! Forty-six!
Hut!

Joe takes the snap. Back-pedalling, he gets off his pass.

A blitzing linebacker delivers a late hit.

An UMPIRE throws a yellow flag.

REFEREE
Roughing the passer, fifteen-yard
penalty automatic first down.

The official spots the ball on the opposing team's thirty-yard-line. Both sets of players step up to the Line of Scrimmage.

Joe hands off to his running back. His slashing run brings up another first down.

The opposing team's head coach calls for a timeout.

COUGARS SIDELINE

The offence walks over to the sideline and Harvey calls them into a huddle.

The official's WHISTLE signals the end of the time-out.

PLAYING FIELD

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS - FOURTH QUARTER

- (A) The Cougars back runs for a five-yard gain.
- (B) Joe scrambles for three yards.
- (C) Joe's pass is caught for a touchdown.
- (D) Karl leads the defense onto the field.

END SERIES OF SHOTS**SIDELINE**

Harvey looks towards the scoreboard.

SCOREBOARD

Broncos 31 - Cougars 35

PLAYING FIELD

The Broncos offense moves downfield with a succession of first downs. Faced with a long third down on the Cougar's fifteen-yard line, their QUARTERBACK fakes a hand-off and hits an open receiver.

The Cougar's safety misses his tackle and the Broncos wide receiver runs into the end zone for a touchdown.

BLEACHERS

The Broncos supporters go WILD.

The extra point is good.

Pulling on his helmet Joe leads his offense onto the field.

GAME CLOCK

A minute and fifty-six seconds remaining.

PLAYING FIELD

Joe's first pass finds a receiver for a first down just short of his own forty-yard-line.

Going without a huddle Joe's next pass is batted down by a lineman.

Throwing on second down Joe completes a first down pass to the tight end. Stepping out of bounds, he stops the clock.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Harvey sends on a running back.

Joe runs a quarterback draw and gains another first down.

It's first and ten on the Bronco's twenty-yard-line. Joe goes with a hurry-up offense.

He hands off to the running back. A blitzing linebacker tackles him at the line of scrimmage.

Second and ten. Dropping back into the shotgun, the center snaps the ball. Desperately, Joe looks for an open receiver.

With the pass rush threatening to break through the offensive line, to avoid a sack, Joe throws the football away.

COUGARS SIDELINE

The field goal kicker begins to warm up.

PLAYING FIELD

On third and ten Joe's pass play splits the defense and he scrambles for eight yards before being tackled and brought down.

The kicking team jogs onto the field. A hush falls over the watching spectators.

The football is snapped and the holder spots the ball. The kick is made.

GOALPOSTS

The football sails just wide of the uprights. The two match officials signal that the kick is no good!

BLEACHERS

The GROUNDS of disappointment from the Cougars supporters are drowned out by the jubilant CHEERS from the Broncos supporters.

SCOREBOARD

Broncos 38 - Cougars 35

COUGARS SIDELINE

Karl leads his defense onto the field. Joe hurries across to him.

JOE

Get me one more shot, Karl.

Eyeing his old antagonist, Karl pulls on his helmet.

KARL

You got it chief!

PLAYING FIELD

The Cougars kick-off.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Joe and his offense look on, anxiously.

PLAYING FIELD

The kick returner is tackled at his own thirty-yard-line.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Encouraged, the Cougar's offense, leap to their feet.

PLAYING FIELD

It's first and ten. Karl moves up onto the shoulder of the defensive end.

The Broncos center snaps the ball. Powering between two offensive linemen Karl sacks the quarterback.

The two teams move up to the Line of Scrimmage.

Chants of "DEFENSE" "DEFENSE" ring out around the stadium.

Second and twenty. Karl, unstoppable, goes after the quarterback, forcing him to throw the football out of bounds.

Third and twenty. Fired up the defense blitz.

Dropping back, the quarterback gets off his pass.

Downfield the receiver reaches up to take the catch. At the last moment covering safety bats it away.

Forced to punt on fourth down the Cougars kick returner runs it back to the twenty-yard line.

COUGARS SIDELINE

Pulling on his helmet Joe leads the offense onto the field.

GAME CLOCK

Forty-six seconds remaining.

PLAYING FIELD

It's first and ten on the Cougar's twenty-yard-line and Joe sets up in the shotgun.

Sensing a pass play the defense drops back into zone coverage.

Reading the situation Joe calls the play.

Faking a hand-off to the running back, using him as a blocker Joe runs up the middle for a fifteen-yard gain and a first down.

The offense hurries back to the Line of Scrimmage.

Spiking the ball Joe takes his players into the huddle.

Offense and defense face each other at the Line of Scrimmage. Back in the shotgun, Joe calls the play.

Two wide receivers run clear-out routes downfield. The tight end runs a slant. Joe side-arms the ball to him but he drops the football.

Second and ten. Joe runs a play-action pass but with both his receivers covered, he is forced to throw the football out of bounds.

With seconds remaining, and the Cougar's offense out of field goal range the Broncos linebackers drop back into cover.

The center snaps the ball. Looking downfield Joe spots an open receiver. Setting himself he gets off his pass.

A HUSH descends over the stadium as the football flies through the air in a perfect spiral.

DOWNFIELD

Catching the football in mid-stride, the receiver races for the end zone. With a despairing tackle, a Broncos safety brings him down just short of the goal line.

Joe and the offense rush forward to the Line of Scrimmage. Joe shouts instructions to the fullback.

THE GAME CLOCK

Eight seconds remaining.

Stepping up behind the center Joe takes the snap. Faking a hand-off to the running back, spotting a gap in the offense Joe powers forward into the end zone.

BLEACHERS

CHEERS ring out around the stadium.

VIP SEATING AREA

Dan Fisk and Committee Member #2 are sitting together.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Well, the old cowboy was right, the young kid's sure got the makings of a great quarterback.

Dan Fisk smiles knowingly.

DAN FISK

Never doubted it for a minute.

PLAYING FIELD

The Cougars players celebrate their victory. Pulling off his helmet, Joe scans the stands populated by Cougar supporters.

BLEACHERS

Standing side by side, Bill and Joe's grandfather raise their arms aloft.

BACK TO THE PRESENT:**EXT. TRASK RANCH**

Sitting on the top step, Joe cradles the old leather football in the palm of his hand, a far-away look in his eyes.

Getting to his feet, he walks away from the house. Pulling back his arm he throws the football towards the empty coral.

As the football sails through the air an APPARITION of Bill Trask appears, jumping up arms outstretched to make the catch.

As the football reaches it, the apparition vanishes and the football falls to the ground.

With a heavy heart, Joe walks slowly back to his car.

FADE OUT

THE END

