

WAIT TILL NEXT YEAR

Written by

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OVER BLACK:

A play-by-play man calls a basketball game. He's smooth. A real pro.

JACK DAY (V.O.)
Bounce pass inside to Miller. The
defense collapses.

The familiar SQUEAK of sneakers, the crowd CHANTING in the background, CHEERLEADERS, PEP BAND -- it all adds up to that "big game, collegiate" feel.

JACK DAY (V.O.)
He's in a bit of trouble, looking
for an outlet -- an escape from the
tangle of arms and elbows --

FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL TOWN - MAIN STREET - DAY

SUPER: GARDEN CITY, KS. 1992

An ordinary, aging farm community.

JACK DAY (V.O.)
Shot clock down to five. Miller
needs some help.

SUBURBS

Older homes. Small by today's standards.

Jack Day's voice rises with excitement...

JACK DAY (V.O.)
Kick to the corner -- looking for
three --

EXT. FLANDERS' HOME - DAY

Larger than the rest, but not huge. Fresh paint.

JACK DAY (V.O.)
-- It's good! Harrison puts the
Shocks back on top.

INT. FLANDERS' HOME - BASEMENT - DAY

Makeshift basement apartment. Mis-matched furniture, hot plate, microwave, dorm fridge.

A tape recorder plays, the source of the play-by-play.

Next to it, a framed, signed photo of JACK DAY, 70s, behind a microphone. Inscribed: "TO EDWARD, NOTHING HAPPENS UNTIL YOU SAY IT DOES - JACK DAY."

JACK DAY (V.O.)

The Shocks pressure the inbound --

EDWARD, 27, should be further along in life than this, in his undies and not much of a physical presence, pours chocolate milk over a bowl of sugary cereal.

He mouths the words as they flow from the tape player...

JACK DAY (V.O.)

Left-hand steal by Harrison. He glides to the basket -- leaps and spins -- Harrison slams it home! What a player -- sneakier than a drunk on Sunday.

Edward smiles, shakes his head, snaps the recorder off. He replaces the tape with another, hits play.

A younger voice, his voice, not nearly as smooth...

EDWARD (V.O.)

Fitzgerald on the dribble.

There's a KNOCK at the door at the top of the stairs. Edward pauses the tape. His mouth full of cereal...

EDWARD

I'm awake.

Another KNOCK.

EDWARD

I said I'm up.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Don't be late. Again.

Edward rolls his eyes.

EDWARD

Thank you!

Edward restarts the tape.

EDWARD (V.O.)

Pass to the corner. Wayne looks inside. Nothing there. Steps back. Pops. Misses. Fight for the ball -- Davis -- no, Hager emerges -- Check that, it is Davis --

Edward flops back on the bed, slaps the recorder off.

EDWARD

You suck.

He pulls the cassette, tosses it into a box of other tapes, each marked with a game matchup: GARDEN CITY VS DERBY, GARDEN CITY VS SCOTT CITY, ETC.

Edward grabs a nearby file folder, flips it open.

Inside, written on the folder: ten boxes, five on each side, each with a name and a number written in large marker, arranged by basketball position. A game day cheat sheet.

He eats his cereal as he reads from the folder...

EDWARD

Luke, number fifteen, guard.
Frankel, thirty-two, wing.

He hesitates.

EDWARD

GULbrandsen -- GulBRANDsen --
GulbrandSEN. Thanks --

Leans in, reads closely.

EDWARD

-- Sven.
(moving on)
Sven G., thirty-seven, center.

Edward drops the cereal bowl in the sink, carries the folder with him as he heads for the

BATHROOM

In the shower...

EDWARD

Luke crosses midcourt. Two fingers in the air.

He washes his hair...

EDWARD

Nearing the top of the key, he
works across a pick to the right,
looks inside for Gul --

Studies the folder, taped high to the wall...

EDWARD

Gulbrand -- Gulbrandsen, whose
ancestors can kiss my butt -- Sven
spins and drops one in from five.

OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM DOOR

Behind the door...

EDWARD (O.S.)

Murphy looking to add to his
fifteen points --

A toilet FLUSHES.

EDWARD (O.S.)

It's good!

EXT. SEPTIC BUSINESS - DAY

Several septic trucks sit parked at one end of the lot of
this nondescript business, each with bold lettering on the
side, reading simply: SEPTIC.

Edward's play-by-play continues as he swings his junker of a
car into the lot.

EDWARD

Flanders turns, looks for a spot to
park. He's got one, wide open.

He turns into the parking spot, brakes to a SQUEAKY stop.

EDWARD

Nailed it! Another perfect parking
job by Edward Flanders.

INT. SEPTIC BUSINESS - DAY

Edward slips into the front office, play-by-play still
running, his attention squarely on the file folder.

EDWARD
Man-to-man, heavy pressure --

He bumps into... WILL, 60s, buttoned up in a country way.

WILL
You're late.

EDWARD
I am?

Looks at his watch.

EDWARD
I am. Sorry.

He doesn't seem sorry.

WILL
It's okay. We're just running a
business here. Not like it's
important. Like --

He grabs Edward's file folder, reads the outside.

WILL
Garden City versus Holden. That's
where the money is.

He tosses the folder into the trash.

WILL
How much they pay you?

EDWARD
I need the experience.

WILL
So, nothing.

EDWARD
Twenty-five a game. But --

WILL
You have four clean-outs today.

EDWARD
Come on, Dad. I've got a game --

WILL
-- You've got a job.

Will slams his office door, leaving Edward standing alone.
Edward retrieves the folder from the trash.

INT. SEPTIC TANK - DAY

Edward, in protective gear, suctions gunk from the septic tank corners. The tank is nearly empty.

Despite the presence of a breathing mask, he continues the play-by-play, muffled as it is.

EDWARD

Tied at sixty-four. Holden inbound
with ten seconds on the clock --

A GURGLING sound catches his attention. He turns, ducks, just in time to miss a burst of sewage from the inlet pipe.

EDWARD

(to no one in particular)
No flushing!

He checks his watch.

EDWARD

Crap.

EXT. SEPTIC TANK - DAY

Edward scrambles from the tank.

He turns off the pump, fights to disconnect the hose from the truck, but it's stuck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Edward drives the septic truck. He swings aggressively around a corner -- way too fast.

The hose flops wildly as it drags behind the truck.

EXT. RADIO STATION - PARKING LOT - DAY

The septic truck screams into the station parking lot, skids to a halt.

Edward leaps from the truck, runs to the building.

INT. RADIO STATION - NEWSROOM - DAY

Edward, still in his septic gear, panic-searches the room.

EDWARD
Where's the equipment!?

The DJ pokes his head from an adjoining booth...

DJ
Randy took it.
(off Edward's look)
You weren't here.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The septic truck screeches to a stop, half on the sidewalk.

Edward jumps from the vehicle, runs into the school.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

A small crowd fills the stands. Cheerleaders mill. Basketball teams warm up. Game day.

Edward scans the gym, sees RANDY, early 20s, skinny, meek, at a table, courtside, talking into a microphone.

Edward and Randy lock eyes: It's on.

RANDY
... And a matchup we'll be watching
closely tonight is Merkle on
Gulbrandsen.

Randy is pretty good, including his flawless pronunciation of Gulbrandsen. Edward drops into a chair next to him, pulls the mic over.

EDWARD
Thanks, Randy. Good evening, I'm
Edward Flanders. Welcome to --

Randy pulls the mic back.

RANDY
-- Garden City basketball.

Edward yanks it back.

EDWARD
Tonight's matchup --

A tug of war ensues.

RANDY
Garden City --

EDWARD
-- versus Holden.

RANDY
The Warriors --

EDWARD
-- against the Eagles.

As the two announcers wrestle for the mic, they fall to the floor. Everyone turns to watch them roll from side to side.

Eventually, Edward gets the upper hand.

EDWARD
Should be a tough battle. We're
expecting a close one tonight as
these two titans --

Randy rolls Edward onto his back.

RANDY
-- wrestle for the top spot. First
place is on the line --

The microphone cord goes taut as they roll further and further down the sideline.

EDWARD
-- Garden City, the veteran team.
Conference champs two years in a
row. It's theirs to lose.

The equipment on the table slowly slides to the edge.

RANDY
But can they hold off the up and
coming, youthful Holden Eagles?

The equipment crashes to the floor. Edward and Randy stop to glance that direction. But, only for a moment.

Randy pops Edward in the face with the mic.

INT. RADIO STATION - OWNER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Edward lowers a bloody rag from his nose.

He and Randy, bruised and battered, sit glumly across the desk from the STATION OWNER, 60s.

The Owner sits in contemplative silence.

RANDY
(to Edward)
You stink.

EDWARD
Like you're Jack Day.

RANDY
No, I mean, you stink. Literally.

Edward slumps as Randy scoots further away. The Station Owner waves Randy away. Once he's gone...

OWNER
Frankly, you did me a favor. I should have fired you last year.

EDWARD
Fired? Wait, I -- I'll do better.

OWNER
You will. Just, not here.

EDWARD
But --

OWNER
I need a team player.

EDWARD
Like Randy? 'Cause he's --

OWNER
-- You want some advice?

EDWARD
Not really.

OWNER
Do you even care?

EDWARD
Of course I care.

OWNER
I mean, about the audience.
Because, you've got no connection.

EDWARD
My job is to describe the action.

OWNER
Your job is to entertain.

Edward stomps to the door.

EDWARD
Whatever.

OWNER
You've got talent. But, you're
unreliable and impulsive. Mainly,
you're selfish. That comes through.

Edward slams the door.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Edward sits in the cab of the septic truck, parked outside
the radio station.

He slams the truck in gear, backs toward the station.

INT. RADIO STATION - OWNER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The window behind the station owner flings open. The end of a
septic hose drops inside.

The Owner turns, just in time to see: pooh. Lot's of it.

INT. FLANDERS' HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Edward listens to his tape recorder. Play-by-play. His.

EDWARD (V.O.)
Hager fights for position down low.
Pass inside. Hager spins -- slams
it home. That dog's got bark!

Disgusted, he yanks the tape from the recorder.

EDWARD
Dog's got bark? What does that even
mean?

He pulls another tape. Plays it. Fast forwards. Again.
Searching for something. Plays...

EDWARD (V.O.)
Mosley with the left-hand dribble.
Fakes right, shakes left and
drives.

Lays it up -- there's contact --
but the shot falls. Count the
basket and a chance for a three
point play.

He smiles. Rewinds. Plays it again. Sets the tape aside.

There's an angry KNOCK at the door.

WILL (O.S.)

Edward!

Edward trudges to the door, lets his father in.

Will looks at the recorder.

WILL

What are you doing?

EDWARD

Making a highlight tape. I need a
new job.

Will grabs the recorder.

WILL

Like hell you do.

Edward takes the recorder back.

WILL

You know how much it cost me to
keep you out of jail tonight?

EDWARD

I'm not cleaning septic tanks for
the rest of my life.

WILL

Six thousand dollars.

EDWARD

He called me impulsive --

WILL

-- And, unreliable. And, selfish. I
know. He told me. I wonder how he
got that idea?

Will heads back up the stairs.

WILL

Six thousand. Show up with the cash. Or, show up to work. Either way, I better see you tomorrow.

Will slams the door on his way out.

Edward looks around his "apartment."

He grabs a nearby blender.

INT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

Edward sets the blender on the counter, followed by a suitcase full of random items.

The CLERK, tired and uninterested, picks through the beat-up suitcase.

CLERK

Two hundred bucks.

Edward pulls his framed picture from the suitcase.

EDWARD

This is an autographed Jack Day.
Best announcer the Midwest has ever
seen or heard.

CLERK

I know who he is.

The Clerk points to the inscription.

CLERK

But, who's Edward?

EDWARD

That's me.

The Clerk hands the photo to Edward.

He points to the suitcase of stuff.

CLERK

Two hundred bucks.

Edward slips the blender into the suitcase, takes it all, and turns for the door.

INT. FLANDERS' HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Edward sets the suitcase on the bed.

He picks up the tape -- the good one -- slips it into the recorder. Listens to the highlight again.

He yanks it. Throws it in a box. In fact, Edward throws all the tapes into the box, along with the recorder.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Edward hikes a quiet trail, box in hand.

Eventually, the trail crosses a set of railway lines.

He follows the line.

EXT. RAILROAD BRIDGE - NIGHT

Edward carries the box across the bridge.

He stops in the middle, looks at the creek below.

Edward drops the box on the edge of the bridge, pulls out a lighter and sets the box and its contents on fire.

Once the tapes are fully engulfed, Edward kicks the flaming box into the creek below.

INT. SEPTIC BUSINESS - DAY

Edward sits at a desk, his forehead planted squarely on the desk top. A nearby phone RINGS.

Without lifting his head, he answers.

EDWARD

Septic repair and service. Your
business is our business. This is
Edward, how can I help you?

He listens.

EDWARD

Two hundred fifty dollars. I can be
there tomorrow.

(beat)

I can't be there today.

He slowly bangs his head on the table.

EDWARD

Because I can't. I'm just not in the right frame of mind.

(beat)

Yes, I realize it's just poop.

(beat)

Look, I can be there tomorrow, or next week, next month, next year. I don't care. Unless I get lucky and die tonight, I'll be available any day for the rest of my life. Just -- not today. Try to hold it, okay?

(beat)

Yes, ma'am. That was a bit smart ass. No, ma'am, I shouldn't take things out on you. Yes, ma'am, today is fine. I'm sorry, ma'am.

He hangs up. Will enters, sets a business card on the table.

WILL

I pictured a better moment than this to tell you.

Edward looks at the card: EDWARD FLANDERS, CO-OWNER, SEPTIC AND SONS.

EDWARD

I can't --

WILL

If this is about the radio thing --

EDWARD

I don't want to talk about it.

Will slides the card closer to Edward.

WILL

You say yes, we can forget about the six thousand dollars. Let's build something together.

Will heads for the door, but stops before leaving.

WILL

Not trying to be mean -- but radio? You're not that good.

He points to the card.

WILL

There's a future here.

EXT. RAILROAD BRIDGE - NIGHT

Edward sits in the center of the bridge, feet dangling over the stream below. He listens to a portable radio -- a basketball game. Jack Day with the call, smooth as ever.

LATER

Edward lies on the bridge, radio next to him, listening to post-game banter. Typical stuff, until...

JACK DAY (V.O.)

That about wraps it up for tonight.
Well, except for one more bit. The
old man here is hanging up his
sneakers. Calling it a career.

Edward sits up.

JACK DAY (V.O.)

I wanted you all to hear it from me
first, 'cause we're family.

Edward picks up the radio, enthralled.

JACK DAY (V.O.)

Oh, I'll take you through the end
of the season, of course. But,
after that... well, it's a young
man's game. And, really, that's all
I have to say about that. So, until
next time, have a good night
everybody. I'm Jack Day. Sweet
dreams from courtside.

Edward pulls the business card from his pocket, studies it: CO-OWNER, SEPTIC AND SONS. He slips it back into his pocket.

EXT. WICHITA RADIO STATION GROUP - DAY

Edward, in his best suit and tie (oversized, under-styled), walks up to a large building.

Next to the glass doors, in bold lettering: four sets of radio station call letters: KKPT, KLFM, KTRM, KDNN, followed by a slogan -- "WICHITA'S PREMIERE MEDIA GROUP."

INT. WICHITA RADIO STATION GROUP - DAY

Edward sits across from an OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, 50s.

EDWARD

... And I've been the voice of Garden City basketball for the past three years. I can do this job.

OPS DIRECTOR

Maybe. But, the station won't be hiring Mr. Day's replacement. The team will. I'll help you out, though.

The Ops Director pulls a tape player from his desk drawer.

OPS DIRECTOR

Let me hear your tape. See if I can give you some pointers.

EDWARD

Yeah, I -- uh --

OPS DIRECTOR

You do have an audition tape?

EDWARD

I -- uh -- burned --

OPS DIRECTOR

Son, you're not getting an on-air job anywhere without a tape -- let alone Jack Day's job.

EDWARD

But I can do this --

OPS DIRECTOR

Come back with a tape. If it's a good one -- a really good one, I'll get it to the right people.

Edward slumps.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Edward searches the waters below the railroad bridge.

Something on the bank catches his eye: a cassette tape.

He scurries to it.

It's melted beyond hope. There's nothing to salvage.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- RADIO STATIONS AND BIG WIGS

-- Large station, nice office, snappily-dressed EXECUTIVE.

EXECUTIVE

You have a tape?

EDWARD

See, that's the point of getting this job. To make a tape. Which I'll use to get Jack Day's job.

EXECUTIVE

Wrong answer, in so many ways. Doesn't matter.

(waves Edward away)

No tape. No job.

-- Medium station, moderate office, EXECUTIVE #2, business casual.

EXECUTIVE

Let's hear your tape.

-- Small station, small office, EXECUTIVE #3, nice jeans and nice shirt.

EXECUTIVE #3

Tape?

-- Tiny station, tiny office, EXECUTIVE #4, jeans and t-shirt. The Executive shakes his head.

EXT. KJTY RADIO - DAY

Edward stands at the edge of a cornfield, looking at a box of a building.

A radio tower looms from a nearby pasture as cows linger in the shade of the building.

Station call letters hang near the door. Most of them anyway. There's a K, J and a Y. In between, a hand-painted T.

INT. KJTY RADIO - FRONT DESK AREA - DAY

Edward stares at the bottom of cowboy boots, propped on a lonely desk.

He fidgets as TODD LEMON, 50s, big man, small town, the man in the boots, finishes his lunch.

EDWARD

I'm --

Todd holds up his hand: "Don't talk."

He checks his watch, drinks from a large soda cup. Checks his watch again -- as if counting the seconds. He nods.

TODD

Alright. Who are you?

EDWARD

Edward Flanders. Here about a job.
Play-by-play man.

TODD

Hmm. Do anything else?

EDWARD

Show host.

TODD

DJ?

EDWARD

No, I --

TODD

I need a DJ.

EDWARD

I can learn.

(his deepest voice)

I'm Edward Flanders, KJTY radio --

TODD

Don't do that.

EDWARD

See, I'm learning already.

TODD

Tape?

EDWARD

No.

Todd nods gently, contemplating.

TODD

You said you can host? Like, a
sports talk show?

EDWARD

Yes.

TODD

In that case, you're on in five.
Let's see what you got.

Todd stands, knocks dirt from his boots using the desk leg.

TODD

I get an employee, or a story. I'll
be happy either way.

Todd grabs a cowboy hat from a hook next to the door. Points.

TODD

Studio's that way.

Todd ambles out of the station.

INT. KJTY RADIO - STUDIO - DAY

Edward stands in the doorway, transfixed. He can't take his
eyes off of...

DAN, 35, large and in charge, swaying his considerable weight
to a country song. Dan doesn't notice Edward, not that it
would change anything if he did.

DAN

Um. Yeah. Get it, Dan.

He sways lower, really grooving to the music.

DAN

That's right. And lower, and lower.

He pops back up, snaps a slide step perfectly timed to the
beat. Claps.

DAN

Whoo!

He spins, sees Edward, boot scoots to him.

DAN

You want in on this?

Edward shakes his head.

DAN

I'm Dan.

Edward shouts over the music.

EDWARD

Edward. I was told -- I'm -- uh --
hosting a sports talk show?

DAN

Cool.

EDWARD

Can you tell me what it's about?

DAN

Yeah. Sports.

EDWARD

I mean -- specifically.

DAN

Don't know. It's your show.

Dan spins, pops the mic.

DAN

That's it for the Dancin' Dan show.
Back tomorrow at 2 on KJTY --
Johnson City, Kansas. Stick around.
Coming up, looks like we got a new
guy. Edward --

He looks at Edward. Edward mouths: "FLANDERS"

DAN

Don't be shy.

EDWARD

Flanders.

Dan waves him over.

DAN

Radio works better with a
microphone.

Edward joins Dan at the mic.

EDWARD

Flanders.

DAN

And Edward Flanders, what should we
look forward to on today's show?

Edward stares blankly.

DAN
What will you be talking about?

EDWARD
Uh -- sports.

DAN
Excellent. So, talking sports next on KJTY, which is good, since the show is called SportsTalk. Stay tuned for the new guy.

Dan grabs a cart, slaps it into the cart machine.

DAN
He's shy, so this should be fun.

He hits a button, plays the cart: SFX -- a bomb EXPLODING.

Dan starts a commercial, cuts the mic, looks at Edward.

DAN
All in fun. You're over there.

He points to a mic on the other side of a glass window.

DAN
Thirty seconds. I'll cue you.

INT. KJTY RADIO - HOST'S BOOTH - DAY

Edward, wearing headphones, stares through the glass into the studio. Dan glides around the studio, tethered only by the cord on his headphones. His dance moves are sick.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
It's time for SportsTalk, Johnson City's number one, and only, sports talk program. Here's your host...

Dan holds up his hand: "Not yet." He hits another big dance move, hand still in the air.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
... Todd Lemon!

Dan keeps his hand in the air. One more dance move as the music builds. He snaps his hand down, points to Edward.

Edward hesitates. Dan hits him with another signal: "Go."

Still, Edward hesitates. Finally, his demeanor shifts just a bit. He's going for it.

EDWARD

Rock bottom, Johnson City. That's where you are. This is Edward Flanders, filling in for Todd Lemon. Yes, random people off the street now get their own talk show on KJTY.

Dan cocks his head, a move that says: "This could be fun."

EDWARD

But, hey, if it's only one night, let's see if we can't make the most of it. Dan, do we have a phone number?

Dan pops the mic.

DAN

Five - five - five, eleven, eleven.

EDWARD

Excellent. You folks get tired of hearing me talk, ring that number and shut me up. I'm gonna need a cohost, so, Dan --

Dan shakes his head vigorously.

EDWARD

You know anything about sports?

DAN

I know some basketball.

Edward points to the cart machine.

EDWARD

Great. Tonight we're testing Dan's knowledge of basketball.

Edward holds up his hand: "Not yet."

EDWARD

Let's hope he doesn't crash and burn.

Edward cues Dan to hit the cart: the SFX plays - a bomb EXPLODING.

EDWARD

It's all in fun. Call 555-1111. So, Dan, the Shocks are off to a great start this year...

INT. FLANDERS' HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Edward packs in a hurry, a ball of energy.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Edward bangs on a door.

A very sleepy Will pokes his head from inside a bedroom.

EDWARD

I want to make you an offer.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Edward, nervously taps the business card against the table. Will grabs his arm, stopping the annoyance.

WILL

Out with it.

EDWARD

Jack Day is retiring.

WILL

Who's Jack Day.

EDWARD

Jack Day. Shocks basketball announcer.

WILL

And?

EDWARD

And, I want his job.

WILL

Edward -- you're a 27-year-old man, living in your parent's basement --

EDWARD

Exactly my point. One chance, Dad. That's all I'm asking. If we get to the end of this season and I can't make it work --

Edward slips the business card across the table.

EDWARD

I'll come work with you.

Will stands, moves to the window. Outside: Edward's car overflows with his stuff.

WILL

I don't know why you ask. You've already decided.

EDWARD

I got a job. A real one. Full time. I'll pay you back. Every dime.

WILL

By the end of this year?

EDWARD

Yes.

WILL

How much does this real, full-time job pay?

EDWARD

I forgot to ask.

WILL

Where is this real, full-time job?

EDWARD

Johnson City.

WILL

You think you can earn enough money in Johnson City, Kansas radio to pay me back by the end of the year?

EDWARD

I don't know, but --

WILL

-- This, I'd like to see.

EDWARD

Is that a yes?

EXT. FLANDER'S HOME - NIGHT

Edward bolts from the house, climbs into his car. Will stands on the porch.

Edward's MOTHER pokes her head from inside.

MOTHER

What's going on?

WILL
Edward's going to Johnson City for
a few days.

He calls after Edward...

WILL
Don't forget to ask how much you
make!

INT. KJTY RADIO - FRONT DESK AREA - DAY

Edward sits across from Todd.

TODD
Two hundred thirty-five a week.

EDWARD
But, that's -- I need six thousand.

Todd snags a calculator.

TODD
You'll have it --
(calculates)
-- In six months.

EDWARD
If I don't spend a dime.

Todd tosses the calculator aside.

TODD
Of course, if you sell any ads,
that's worth fifteen percent
commission to you.

INT. RADIO STATION - OFFICE AREA

Several old metal desks dot this small space.

Edward sits at one of them.

Todd sets an old, coffee-stained mug on the desk alongside an
equally-aged, station-branded trucker hat.

TODD
Your welcome packet.

Edward tries on the hat. It's not a great look.

TODD
Your day starts at five.

EDWARD
In the morning?

TODD
One hour as DJ, then cover the news for the morning show. 'Til ten. DJ again 'til noon. Sales work or news reporting until two, or whatever it takes. Coach's show Tuesday night, unless it's a game night. Then, Wednesday instead. All basketball games are yours. Usually two a week, not including tournaments. You got those, too. Saturdays, you get to sleep in. Don't have to be here 'til six. DJ until two. Sundays off, unless there's breaking news, or a storm or something. Got it?

Edward shakes his head.

TODD
Oh, and sometimes you'll fill in for me on the evening talk show. We're a team around here.

Todd spins to leave, quickly turns back, picks up the mug.

TODD
Probably shouldn't have given you this. I need it. Helps me get started in the mornings.

He starts for the door, but again, stops.

TODD
Talk to Lynn at the diner. She's got a place open above the restaurant. Small, but it's cheap.

Todd hands a small slip of paper to Edward.

TODD
From the hardware store. Sometimes we get stuff on trade around here. And, sometimes, I hand it out. It's an employee benefit.

As he leaves...

TODD

Talk to Dan, get the lay of the land before you leave today. You start tomorrow.

Edward looks at the paper: "ONE FREE BAG OF DOG FOOD."

EDWARD

(to no one in particular)
But, I don't have a dog.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Rain pelts Edward as he peers through the diner window. He holds a box of his stuff and a very large bag of dog food.

INT. DINER - DAY

Edward carries his stuff into the diner.

LYNN, 29, waits tables, very busy, but in complete control.

She spots Edward, points to a lone empty spot at the counter.

LYNN

Over there.

EDWARD

No, I --

LYNN

Not gonna hold your hand.

EDWARD

I'm looking for --

She's gone, off to serve a steady flow of customers.

Edward does as ordered, grabs a seat, sets his box and the dog food on the counter in front of him.

The move doesn't make friends with the FARMERS on each side of him. They both drop cash on the counter and leave.

Edward watches intently as Lynn works the room.

Eventually, Lynn swings back around to Edward.

LYNN

Whadya' want?

EDWARD

No -- nothing -- I'm --

LYNN

Here for company. Great. Need more of that. Well, Gene's in line ahead of you.

She waves to the end of the counter where an old gentleman, GENE, 70s, waves back, meekly.

EDWARD

I just need --

Lynn pours a cup of coffee.

LYNN

-- Conversation isn't free. Cost you a cup. I'll be back.

She spins away to another customer.

A FARMER in the corner stands, drops a bill on the table and heads for the exit.

In an instant, nearly everyone else in the diner does the same. Within seconds, the place is basically empty of customers.

Lynn begins the process of clearing tables. She drops a pile of plates in a tub behind the counter, near a stunned Edward.

He motions around the empty diner.

EDWARD

Where'd they go?

LYNN

Back to the fields. Rain stopped.

Edward looks out the window. Indeed it did.

LYNN

Nice blender.

Edwards spins back. Looks at his box. He pulls out the blender, holds it out to Lynn.

EDWARD

Yours for the low, low price of six thousand dollars.

She looks it over, as if she were considering it.

LYNN

There's a scratch. Right here.

He examines it.

EDWARD

Five thousand.

LYNN

I'll have to pass.

He looks at her name tag.

EDWARD

I think you're my landlord. That is, if you'll rent to me.

LYNN

You're Edward. Todd told me you might stop by. Nice to meet you.

EDWARD

How much? For the apartment?

LYNN

I don't know that I'd call it an apartment.

EDWARD

Studio?

LYNN

Space. Call it a space. Two hundred dollars. No pets. Sorry.

EDWARD

Oh, I don't have a pet.

Lynn looks at the dog food bag.

EDWARD

Long story.

LYNN

You got a bed?

He hesitates: Was that flirty?

LYNN

(reading his hesitation)
Oh, god. No. Just -- no. The space doesn't have --

She sets a key on the counter.

LYNN

Yeah -- here. Just -- no.

The embarrassment is strong.

LYNN

Watch things for me, Gene?

Gene nods as she bolts for the kitchen. Gene looks at Edward.

GENE

I was here before you, you know.

EXT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

Edward unlocks the apartment door, presses into what's basically an oversized closet.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward sits on the edge of a bed frame. There's no mattress.

He turns the knob on a hot plate perched on a tiny nearby counter -- easily within arm's reach.

Edward drops a square of Ramen noodles into a pot.

A BASS BEAT suddenly fills the room, muffled only by the wall between him and the source.

Edward reaches out, pounds on the wall. The music stops.

DAN (O.S.)

Sorry.

EDWARD

Dan?

DAN (O.S.)

Hey, Edward. How do you like your room?

EDWARD

It's fine, I guess.

He reaches out, touches both the wall behind him, and the wall in front of him.

EDWARD

Not sure what I'll do with all this extra living space.

DAN (O.S.)
I know, right? Like, do I get a
couch or a love seat? Why not both?
Hey, come over. Let's talk about
tomorrow's game.

EDWARD
Why would we do that?

DAN (O.S.)
Todd didn't tell you? I'm your new
color guy.

EXT. DAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward approaches the apartment door. Before he can knock,
Dan opens it, pulls Edward inside.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dan wraps Edward in a bear hug.

DAN
Thank you. Thank you.

Edward, wrapped tight in Dan's chest, can barely respond.

EDWARD
For what?

DAN
Todd heard me on the show the other
night. That's why he put me on the
game. Says we sound good together.
I owe you. Big time.

Dan lets him go.

DAN
(re: the apartment)
Whadya think? Nice, huh?

Dan's apartment matches Edward's, only he's got it strung
with Christmas lights and other bling to dress it up.

EDWARD
Sweet.

Dan excitedly rummages through piles of scraps. He finds what
he's looking for: a sheet of paper.

DAN
Rosters. For tomorrow.

Edward takes the paper, reads.

EDWARD
Johnson City only has six players?

Dan shrugs.

EDWARD
What do you know about these guys?

DAN
Nothing.

EDWARD
How long have you worked at the
station?

DAN
Couple months. I never even worked
in radio. I lived in Tribune.
Caught Todd's sports show one night
and called in. Came down to visit.
Haven't left. Real rags to riches
kind of story.

Edward looks around.

EDWARD
Yeah.

DAN
Grab a seat, let's practice.

Edward turns for the door.

EDWARD
I'm good, thanks.

He pulls the door closed behind him, leaving Dan alone.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward lies in bed.

He holds a file folder - a fresh game day cheat sheet,
complete with both teams' full rosters.

EDWARD

Johnson City brings it up court.
Montgomery with the right-hand
dribble. He swings it to the near
corner. White takes a look, kicks
it back to Montgomery.

Edward takes a bite of a sandwich. With a full mouth...

EDWARD

Montgomery tries the left side,
works across a pick from Thomas --

From next door...

DAN (O.S.)

-- Chen's open in the far corner!

Edward stops. Stares at the wall. After a few beats of
silence, a meek voice penetrates...

DAN (O.S.)

Chen's open in the far corner.

A few more beats, then...

EDWARD

Montgomery feeds Chen, wide open in
the corner. Shot's up -- it's good!

DAN (O.S.)

That's how you attack that zone,
Edward. You shoot 'em out of it!

EDWARD

Great point, Dan. The Hawks bring
the press.

DAN (O.S.)

Look at Chen. Relentless on the D.

Edward breaks from the cadence of the game call.

EDWARD

Can't look at him. This is radio.

DAN (O.S.)

Good point.

Dan picks the game call back up.

DAN (O.S.)

Chen is absolutely relentless on D.

EDWARD

He sticks with his man across mid-court. And, there's the steal. Chen streaks in for the easy layup.

DAN (O.S.)

Defense feeds the offense. That'll make Coach happy.

INT. JOHNSON CITY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

COACH RON TYSON, 50s, drops his clipboard in frustration.

Edward and Dan, hands full of broadcasting equipment, watch as the Johnson City basketball team warms up.

The team: MONTGOMERY, 18, short but wily. CHEN, 17, Asian, certainly the shortest forward in high school. WHITE, 17, pimply-faced, but developing. HAMMER, 16, a bit of a burnout. THOMAS, 16, tall and awkward. And...

DEXTER, 16, scrawny and meek, currently tying his shoes directly under the basket.

COACH

Dexter -- move!

Dexter slides a few feet to the side, but not enough to make a difference. The remaining players attempt to complete their warmup drill around him. It's chaos.

Edward and Dan work their way down the sideline, stopping at a flimsy courtside card table -- their home court broadcasting position.

As they set up...

DAN

So, I did some asking around. They're not very good.

Edward watches the Johnson City team as player after player misses easy layups while warming up.

EDWARD

You think?

DAN

Nobody can even remember the last time they won. Dale at the auto shop said he's never seen it, and he's super old. Like, 46 or something.

LATER

Edward and Dan call the game. A scoreboard BUZZER sounds.

EDWARD

And that's the end of the first quarter. Syracuse eighteen, Johnson City four. We'll be back for more -- um -- action -- after this.

Edward drops his headphones on the table. He slumps.

EDWARD

I'm screwed.

DAN

Screwed? We're living the dream, baby.

EDWARD

I need highlights. Big calls. Close games. Excitement.

He looks around the gym. The only one on the home side of the stands is CARLY, 16, a timid girl that Dexter, the lone scrub on the bench, can't seem to keep his eyes off of.

EDWARD

It's dead in here.

DAN

It's up to us to liven things up.

EDWARD

What do you want me to do, Dan? Make things up?

DAN

Have a little fun, maybe? Got to entertain.

Edward shakes his head, slides the headphones back on. Dan looks at a stopwatch, counts Edward back in. Three, two...

EDWARD

Start of the second quarter, Johnson City down by fourteen...

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward slides into a booth. The rest of the place is empty, except for Gene, who sits at the counter.

Lynn sets a slice of pie on the table.

EDWARD
It looks delicious.

Lynn pushes a fork to him.

EDWARD
Oh, I can't afford it, thank you.

He slides it toward her. She sits.

LYNN
We'll split it. Your half is on the house.

EDWARD
Wow. Thanks.

He takes a knife, carefully splits the pie down the middle.

LYNN
Okay. That's one way to do it.

They each grab a fork, eat.

LYNN
Rough night?

EDWARD
You didn't listen?

LYNN
To what?

EDWARD
The game. Basketball.

LYNN
Oh, gosh. Nobody listens to those.
(off Edward's look)
Sorry. I bet you make it interesting.

EDWARD
I don't think anybody could make these games interesting.

LYNN
That bad?

EDWARD
Historically. Like, Little Big Horn bad.

He takes a bite.

Lynn squirms, suddenly nervous.

LYNN

I don't -- I need to ask --

EDWARD

Rent?

She nods meekly.

EDWARD

Any way you can accept one-fifty?

LYNN

I'm sorry. Money's tight for me,
too.

EDWARD

Of course.

He gets an idea.

EDWARD

What if we brought in more
business?

LYNN

Advertising? Everybody already
knows I'm here.

EDWARD

We do the coach's show from here.
Should draw a crowd. One month. For
trade. If it doesn't work, I'll pay
the two-hundred.

He pulls a small stack of trade coupons from his pocket. He
flips through them. Pulls one out.

EDWARD

I'll even toss in one free bag of
mulch. From the hardware store.

He pulls another.

EDWARD

And a free hair cut, from --
(reads)
Jane's Hair Express.

LYNN

I'll take the mulch.

EDWARD
No haircut?

She shakes her head: That's a real bad idea.

EDWARD
Right.

He crumples the coupon.

She stands, walks away.

LYNN
One month.

Edward waves the coupon.

EDWARD
What about your mulch?

LYNN
Spread it out by the sign.

MONTAGE - BAD BASKETBALL

-- A series of bad plays by the home squad: missed layups, bad passes, etc. Dexter watches it all from the bench.

-- Edward hits stop on a tape recorder, pulls the tape, throws it away.

-- Coach's show at the diner. Coach clearly depressed. Diner is empty. Lynn bored, nothing to do.

-- Edward, Dan and Dexter all duck as an errant pass sails past while they broadcast from courtside.

-- Edward tosses another tape in the trash.

END MONTAGE

INT. RIVAL HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

Edward and Dan sit halfway up the mostly-empty stands. A basketball bounces off the bleachers beside them.

A BUZZER sounds.

EDWARD
That brings us to halftime with Johnson City down by twenty-eight. Now, it's back to the studio and Todd Lemon for the halftime show.

Edward droops his head, slides off his headset, hits stop on the tape recorder.

DAN
That was awesome!

The look on Edward's face says he does NOT agree.

DAN
There's a taco joint next door.
Want something?

EDWARD
I can't afford a taco.

DAN
I forget. Saving your money. Suit yourself. I'm gonna get me a taco and a burrito. Energy for the second half.

Dan makes his way down the bleachers.

DAN
Dancin' Dan coming through.

Edward watches as Dan crosses the gym. Halfway across, MUSIC kicks up in the gym. Dan stops, hits a few gigantic dance moves, then carries on as Edward shakes his head, laughing.

LATER

Edward checks his watch, slips the headphones back on. The teams warm up for the second half.

He looks at Dan's empty seat, reaches for the tape recorder, hits record.

The BUZZER sounds.

EDWARD
Welcome back for the start of the third quarter. I'm Edward Flanders. Johnson City trails by twenty-eight and they start the half with the ball -- looking for early momentum.

Chen inbounds the ball.

EDWARD
Montgomery takes the inbounds, dribbles across half court.

Montgomery looks over the defense.

EDWARD

Looking for a weak point to attack.

Montgomery passes the ball inside. It bounces off Thomas and pinballs around.

But that's not what the audience hears.

EDWARD

Monty rockets a pass inside to Thomas. Thomas spins. Kicks it out to Chen in the corner.

On the court, the scramble continues as a pile of bodies fight for the loose ball.

Edward checks for Dan: crossing the gym, an arm-full of food. With time, Edward continues to freelance...

EDWARD

Chen dekes down the line and swings the ball back out to Montgomery.

Eventually Thomas emerges with the ball. He tosses it up and it rolls around, finally drops in -- an ugly play all around.

Again, Edward has a different take...

EDWARD

Pass inside -- all alone -- Thomas slams one home! Oh my, the Hawks took flight on that one!

Edward nearly leaps out of his seat with the call.

Dexter glances back, a look that says: "What the hell was that?" Edward settles back in, resumes the regular call.

Dan climbs the bleachers, slides into his seat, mouths: What did I miss?

Edward covers his mic.

EDWARD

Nothing. Just the one basket.

Johnson City makes a steal, but immediately throws the ball away. Edward glumly calls the play...

EDWARD

A steal -- and an immediate turnover.

He glances at the rolling tape recorder.

INT. RADIO STATION - STUDIO - NIGHT

Edward watches the tape roll.

EDWARD (V.O.)
Oh my, the Hawks took flight on
that one!

He stops the tape and smiles. He grabs another tape, writes on the label: HIGHLIGHT TAPE, MASTER

He rewinds the original tape, hits record on the master and replays the call. He has his first highlight.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward tallies his cash, writes in a notebook. A number looms large at the top of the page: Need \$6,000.

A second number looms equally large at the bottom of a column of numbers: Have -\$76. He closes the notebook, slides it under a placemat.

Edward checks his fridge. Empty. He pulls out a cereal box. Also empty.

Edward plops onto his bed, prepares to sleep.

DAN (O.S.)
Good night, Edward.

EDWARD
Night, Dan.

There's a KNOCK at Edward's door. He answers to see: A very nervous Dexter.

DEXTER
Hey, Mr. Flanders. I'm Dexter.

EDWARD
I know who you are.

DEXTER
Of course. Hey -- I was wondering --
could we -- talk about --
something? In private?

Edward looks around: "There's no one here."

DEXTER
It's about the play.

EDWARD
What play?

DEXTER
That you called -- on the radio.
The one that didn't happen.

Edward yanks Dexter into the room, closes the door.

DEXTER
Whoa. Okay.

He looks around.

DEXTER
Nice place.

He means it.

DAN (O.S.)
Is that Dexter? What's up, Dexman?
Nope. The Dexinator. Dexterious?
Anyway, we're working on it.

Edward cups his hand over Dexter's mouth and pulls him out of the apartment.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

He uncovers Dexter's mouth.

EDWARD
What do you want?

DEXTER
I -- just --

EDWARD
Money? 'Cause I don't have any.

DEXTER
Money? What? No. I -- I'm not used
to asking for things like -- I need
a favor. Well, not a favor --

EDWARD
I get it. You got something on me,
you want something for silence.
But, what? You gonna tell my boss?
You want to ruin me? Well, there's
nothing to ruin.

DEXTER
I just -- more like a job --

EDWARD
-- I can't get you a job, Dexter.
And, I've got nothing else.

Edward turns away.

EDWARD
You simply picked the wrong guy to
blackmail.

Dexter grabs Edward's arm, stops him.

DEXTER
It's not blackmail. I have money.

He holds out a small wad of cash.

DEXTER
Thirty-two dollars.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a few coins.

DEXTER
And -- thirty-three cents.

Edward's face twists with confusion.

DEXTER
I want to hire you. For one play.
(off Edward's look)
There's this girl...

Edward relaxes.

DEXTER
Carly. I want to impress her. But,
I'm never getting in the game.
Like, ever. I heard you call that
play -- I got to thinking. What if -
- what if you got me in the game?
Just one play. And, a basket.
Nothing fancy even.

EDWARD
I can't -- I never should have done
what I did.

DEXTER
Please, Mr. Flanders. One play. You
could change my whole life.

Edward looks at the money.

EDWARD
How would this even work? She goes
to the games.

DEXTER
It'd have to be a road game. She
never goes to those, but I know she
listens.

EDWARD
And what about everyone else that's
listening?

Dexter laughs.

EDWARD
Right.

Edward takes the cash.

EDWARD
Between us, okay?

Dexter nods.

DEXTER
Thanks, Mr. Flanders.

EDWARD
Good lord, Dexter. I'm twenty-
seven. Just Edward, okay?

Dexter nods again, heads down the stairs. He stops at the
bottom, turns back.

DEXTER
Dexter the Dominator. My nickname.
Work that in.

Edward holds up the cash.

EDWARD
There's not enough money in this
entire town for me to say that.

DEXTER
Right.

Dexter scoots out the door.

Edward looks at the cash.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

The diner is closed. Empty. Dark.

Edward sits at the counter, flips through the menu.

He sets a five-dollar bill on the counter.

LATER

Edward, behind the counter, flips a burger on the grill.

LATER

Edward sits at the counter, ready to enjoy his burger.

He takes a dollar from his pocket, sets it on top of the five, then takes a long drink from a glass of soda.

There's a knock on the window. It's Lynn.

She swings into the diner.

LYNN

I thought it might be you.

EDWARD

I hope it's okay -- I was just --
How'd you know?

LYNN

Sheriff called.

EDWARD

I'm surprised he didn't come and
arrest me.

LYNN

Perks of living in a small town.
Not a lot of ill intent. He just
figured Gene got hungry or
something.

She grabs a napkin, drops it next to Edward, stands behind
the counter.

LYNN

I heard a few minutes of the game
the other night.

EDWARD

Yeah? What'd you think?

LYNN
"The Hawks took flight on that
one?"

EDWARD
Over the top?

LYNN
Maybe a little.

She leans in.

LYNN
But, I liked it.

Edward shifts on the stool.

LYNN
What's your story? How did you come
to be in Johnson City?

EDWARD
It's not like I have a lot of
options.

She leans back.

EDWARD
I'm supposed to take over my dad's
business. Septic tanks.

While he's talking, she pulls bottles of ketchup and mustard
from under the counter. A move she's done a thousand times.

LYNN
But, you want to do play-by-play.
Are you any good? I mean --
basketball's not really my thing.

EDWARD
So, you didn't like it?

She leans back in.

LYNN
I didn't say that.

Edward leans to match her. They're practically nose-to-nose.

EDWARD
You kind of did.

LYNN

All I'm saying, is -- from what I heard -- you don't sound like you want to be there.

Edward slumps back.

LYNN

I hurt your feelings. I'm sorry.

EDWARD

No, I'm -- fine.

LYNN

You're really good. I enjoyed listening.

Not buying it, he can only nod.

LYNN

I'm sorry, really. I'm just going to go.

She spins for the door.

LYNN

You'll clean up and turn out the lights?

EDWARD

Of course.

INT. RIVAL HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Edward and Dan carry equipment into the gym. The teams warm up. Dexter catches Edward's eye. He gives a thumbs up sign. Edward shoots him a look: "Be cool."

Dexter tries to act casual, but only draws more attention.

Edward shakes his head, continues on.

The rival ATHLETIC DIRECTOR approaches.

AD

You boys from Johnson City?

EDWARD

Yes, sir.

He points to a table at the top of the stands.

AD

Best I could do. And, the phone line you requested -- couldn't get it done. Hope that's alright.

DAN

We'll make it work.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Edward and Dan set up the equipment.

EDWARD

We'll have to use the MARTI.

Dan drops a large box on the table.

DAN

One step ahead of you.

He pulls out a large antennae, attaches it to a small pole.

DAN

Which way is the station?

Edward points. Dan swings the antennae that direction. It just happens to line up with the heads of several nearby FANS -- a giant metal arrow pointed right at them.

FAN

What is that thing?

EDWARD

It shoots the signal back to our radio station.

FAN

You ain't cooking my brain.

They quickly move. It gives Edward an idea. He swings the antennae around, points it at another close set of fans.

They, too, move.

By now, everyone is watching. He arcs a large, slow circle.

SMASH CUT:

INT. RIVAL HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Edward and Dan settle in for the broadcast. There's a wide, empty circle of stands around them.

LATER

They're in a commercial break. Dan looks at a stopwatch.

DAN
Thirty seconds.

Dexter turns from the bench, courtside, catches Edward's attention: "Well?"

Edward motions back: "Settle down."

He leans to Dan, slides a dollar bill to him.

EDWARD
Grab a hot dog. On me.

DAN
Really? But what about the game?

Edward points to the scoreboard.

DAN
Good point.

Dan bolts. Edward glances at the stopwatch. Waits. Then...

EDWARD
Johnson City down by thirty-eight
as we head into the fourth quarter.

The players fan out. All except for Dexter, of course.

EDWARD
And we've got a rare substitution
for Johnson City. Looks like Dexter
is into the game.

Edward looks around. Nobody's close. He covers the mic -- an attempt to muffle the call in the gym.

EDWARD
Johnson City inbounds. Dexter on
the dribble.

They actually do, but not to Dexter. He's on the bench.

EDWARD
The defense sags into a zone as
Dexter holds up two fingers,
calling the play. He works across a
screen, hands it off. Chen kicks it
to the top of the key.

His voice rises with excitement.

EDWARD

Out to Dexter in the corner -- man on him tight, but he gets the shot off -- it's good! And Dexter comes down hard on his ankle. Oh, wow, that's gotta hurt.

The play continues on the court, Johnson City still working its very slow, sloppy offensive sets -- no relation to what's been called.

EDWARD

Dexter hobbles to the bench, but he's got his first basket of the season on a pretty shot for the young man from Johnson City.

A Johnson City player puts up a shot. Edward silently mouths: "Make it, make it, make it."

The shot drops, Edward pumps his fist.

EDWARD

The Dexter basket closes it to thirty-six.

EXT. RIVAL HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Edward and Dan pack Edward's car with the equipment as the Johnson City team boards the bus nearby.

Spotting Dexter, Edward jogs over, pulls him aside.

DEXTER

Did you -- ?

Edward whispers.

EDWARD

From the corner. Smooth shot.

Dexter smiles.

DEXTER

Oh, yeah. I got game.

EDWARD

And, you need to limp. I threw in a hurt ankle.

DEXTER
Why -- ?

EDWARD
For sympathy.

Dexter punches Edward in the shoulder.

DEXTER
My man, Flanders. Maybe next time --

EDWARD
-- No next time. Make this count.

Dexter nods.

COACH (O.S.)
Dexter. Move!

DEXTER
Gotta go.

He runs for the bus.

EDWARD
Dexter -- don't forget --

He points to Dexter's ankle.

Dexter limps the last few steps, climbs onto the bus.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward lies on the bed, listening to his singular good call.

There's a KNOCK at the door. He stops the tape player.

WILL (O.S.)
Edward?

Edward scrambles to his feet.

EDWARD
Hey, Dad. Just a minute.

WILL (O.S.)
Can I come in?

Edward looks around the apartment.

EDWARD
It's a real mess right now.

It's not.

EDWARD

Plenty of room, of course. Just --
real messy. And, I just got out of
the shower.

He didn't.

WILL (O.S.)

Think I haven't seen you naked
before?

He gets an idea.

EDWARD

How about I meet you downstairs --
in the diner. My treat.

WILL (O.S.)

Your treat? Things must be good.
I'll see you downstairs.

Edward pulls cash from his pocket. There's not much of it.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward and Will sit in a booth, look over the menu.

Lynn approaches, pad in hand, looks at Will.

LYNN

A new face. Welcome to Johnson
City. What can I get you?

WILL

I'll have the steak. My son's
buying.

LYNN

Your son? May I suggest a bottle of
our finest wine?

WILL

Do you have a French red?

LYNN

Nice choice.

Will hands her his menu.

WILL

Soda's fine.

Edward hands Lynn his menu.

EDWARD
Soup for me. And, a glass of water.

He's not joking, but Lynn laughs, covering for him.

LYNN
I'll bring you your usual. I'm assuming you want it added to your tab?

EDWARD
Yes, please.

He relaxes as she walks away. It doesn't last long.

WILL
When are you coming home?

EDWARD
We have a deal.

WILL
Six thousand dollars. We both know you're not making it.

Edward shifts uncomfortably.

WILL
I looked up that Jack Day guy. Listened to him a bit. You don't really think you can reach that level, do you?

EDWARD
I don't know. I don't. But, I'd like to try.

WILL
Come work with me. It's not glamorous, but we make a difference. Are you going to make a difference doing this -- radio thing?

There's a TAP at the window next to them.

It's Dexter. Walking tall -- as tall as he can with that major limp. All smiles. Carly on his arm.

DEXTER
Flanders!

He gives a big thumbs up. Edward half-heartedly returns the gesture. Dexter limps happily away.

EDWARD

I have to try.

WILL

Explain it to me. Make me understand.

EDWARD

Denny Mathews. Jack Buck. Kevin Harlan. They're just names to you. But, to me, even though I've never met them -- they're friends. A part of my life. We've experienced things together. Victory. Loss. Happiness, sadness.

He leans in.

EDWARD

I'm only 27. And, I can see it already. Life -- is drudgery. Same thing. Day after day after day. Tell me I'm wrong. Sports -- you never know what's going to happen next. Might be good, might be bad. Either way -- it's something different. Doing play-by-play, I get to be the one to bring that into people's worlds. Something new. Just a touch of the unknown.

WILL

Edward, look around. This is real. You can't afford soup. The septic business -- it's real money. Real stability. You're going to want a family some day. You can't feed your kids with a fake diner tab.

Edward slumps back.

WILL

Having a job, raising a family -- that's not drudgery. That's human. What I want for you -- the only thing I want for you -- is for you to be surrounded by people who love you, working a stable job that pays the bills.

EDWARD

And after the bills are paid? Then what, Dad?

Will stands, drops a couple of twenties on the table.

WILL

I'm not the bad guy here. You'll come to see that. One way or another, I'm bringing you back.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward exits the diner.

Suddenly, everything goes black as someone throws a sack over his head.

He fights, but is quickly thrown into the bed of a truck. The truck peels away.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Someone takes the sack from Edward's head. His disappointment is immediate.

He's surrounded by six boys. In masks. Half are dressed in their basketball scrubs.

EDWARD

What are you guys doing?

One of the boys limps to him.

DEXTER

Do what we want and nobody gets hurt.

EDWARD

You're gonna hurt me, Dexter?

DEXTER

Dexter? Who's Dexter? No, you need to listen to me --

EDWARD

-- What are you even limping for? She's not even here.

Edward pulls the mask from Dexter's face. He looks at the other boys.

EDWARD

Guys?

The rest of the team pulls the masks from their faces.

HAMMER

I told you, we should just pay him.
Now we're going to jail.

Dexter panics.

DEXTER

I can't go to jail. I've got a date
tomorrow. You think they'd wait
till after tomorrow?

EDWARD

Nobody's going to jail. Well,
Dexter might someday. But, not
today. What's going on?

MONTGOMERY

Dexter told us what you did --

EDWARD

-- What did I do?

MONTGOMERY

The play. His ankle.

EDWARD

Aw, jeez guys. I can't give you all
a play. And I definitely can't give
you all injuries.

DEXTER

We don't want a play.

CHEN

Or an injury.

MONTGOMERY

We want a win.

EDWARD

A win!?

WHITE

We knew you'd say no. That's why we
kidnapped you.

DEXTER

Don't say kidnapped, man. Make it sound nice -- like -- temporarily adopted.

Everyone gives Dexter a look: "What the...?"

EDWARD

Well, there's no way I can give you a win. No way.

The boys huddle. Eventually...

THOMAS

We'll pay you. Two hundred dollars.

EDWARD

Even if I agreed, which I don't, Dexter gave me thirty-three bucks for one play. There's about a hundred plays in a game. Do the math.

The size of the number shocks them. All except Dexter.

DEXTER

Eight hundred?

EDWARD

No, Dexter. Thirty-three times a hundred. Thirty-three hundred.

DEXTER

What if you did just a half? That'd be like, eight hundred, right?

EDWARD

Thirty-three times fifty, Dexter.

DEXTER

Right. Thirty-three fifty.

He's proud.

EDWARD

Sorry, guys. Can't help you.

Edward walks from the barn.

After a couple seconds, he pokes his head inside.

EDWARD

I have no idea where I am.

Montgomery sulks past him.

MONTGOMERY
I'll take you back.

The team files past, each more dejected than the last.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Montgomery swings his pickup truck into the parking lot,
drops Edward at his car.

MONTGOMERY
Sorry about all that.

EDWARD
You gotta understand --

MONTGOMERY
-- It's not your fault. We're just
tired of being losers. Just once,
I'd like to see my dad -- you know,
never mind. You wouldn't
understand.

Edward looks to the sky: "You had to go there."

SMASH CUT:

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Montgomery counts out cash to Edward as the rest of the team
stands around them.

MONTGOMERY
Two-fifty, two-seventy, two-ninety,
three hundred. For a win.

EDWARD
For a win. Next road game.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

A light crowd.

Edward sits behind a microphone at a table in the corner. A
large radio station banner hangs from the front of the table.

The Coach sits next to him, behind another mic.

EDWARD

The boys have been looking awfully good in practice. Any chance they're turning the corner?

Coach Tyson, scrunched forehead, looks at Edward: "What have you been smoking?"

COACH

It's a hard-working group. I'll give 'em that.

Lynn slides a piece of pie in front of Edward, another in front of the Coach.

She drops a slip of paper on the table and turns to serve a customer. Edward reads the note, immediately waves Lynn back. She hesitates, but he insists.

EDWARD

Just received a generous offer from one of our great sponsors.

He motions for the Coach to give his seat to Lynn.

EDWARD

Lynn --
(covers mic, whispers to Lynn)
I don't know your last name.

She leans in to the mic.

LYNN

Russell.

EDWARD

Lynn Russell, owner of this fine establishment, is offering half-price pie for the duration of tonight's show. So, who wants pie?

Multiple customers raise their hands.

LYNN

That's right. Offer is good until eight.

EDWARD

Best pie in town. I can tell you that right now.

LYNN

And, I'll go you one further. If our boys win a game -- any game -- this year, I'll offer free pie on every order until the end of the season.

Edward's eyes go big.

EDWARD

She's kidding.
(to Lynn)
You're kidding.

LYNN

Nope. Free pie for the rest of the year. With a win.

LATER

Edward breaks down the table in the now-closed diner. Lynn clears the tables. They're the only two remaining.

EDWARD

I just don't understand why you said it.

LYNN

You told me yourself, these kids are historically bad. They haven't won a game in three years.

EDWARD

What happens if they win?

LYNN

You said they won't. I believe you.

EDWARD

I never said that.

LYNN

I'm just trying to have a little fun here. Why are you such a killjoy? You wanted to stir up some interest, and I did.

Edward rolls up the radio sign.

EDWARD

Take it back.

LYNN

I can't. Don't want to anyway.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Edward swings his car to a stop in front of the barn. He hops out, cash in hand as Montgomery pops out from the barn.

MONTGOMERY
Hey, Mr. Flanders.

Edward slaps the cash into Montgomery's hand.

EDWARD
I'm out.

MONTGOMERY
You can't be out. We paid you.
That's a contract.

Edward spins for his car.

EDWARD
Sue me.

He slides into the car, starts it up and slams it into reverse. He hits the gas, backs out, skids to a stop.

He slams the car into drive and hits the gas again.

The car lurches forward. There's a loud CLUNK, followed by a high-pitched GRINDING noise as the car coasts to a stop.

INT. CAR - DAY

Edward slaps the wheel.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Edward stomps from the car to Montgomery, snatches the cash back, walks past his broken-down car and down the road.

INT. RIVAL HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

Edward and Dan ready themselves to call the game. Edward reaches into a bag, pulls out an envelope, hands it to Dan.

EDWARD
Here's what's going to happen.
They're winning tonight. We're
going to call it. And yes, I knew
you wouldn't like it. That's why I
waited to tell you.

Dan looks at the money inside the envelope. He slides it back to Edward.

DAN

Nope.

EDWARD

This is happening. It'd be more fun with you.

Dan takes off his headphones and takes a seat in the stands behind Edward.

DAN

I got the best job in the world. And I intend to keep it.

EDWARD

I understand.

LATER

Edward sits alone at the table, headphones on.

EDWARD

And we're ready for the opening tip.

The players look to Edward. He nods: "We're doing this."

The game starts. Johnson City loses the tip, but Edward is off and running.

EDWARD

Thomas tips it back to Chen and the Hawks quickly set up shop.

Dexter, at his normal spot on the bench, leans forward, his hand over his ear.

EDWARD

Chen looks right, dribbles left. The offense in motion, Hammer runs the baseline, tries to shake his man. White takes a pass on the far side, man open in the middle, it's Thomas who slams it home! A beautiful set play by the Hawks!

Dexter leaps from the bench, celebrates the play -- his reaction WAY over the top.

He looks around: the Coach, confused, shakes his head. The ref, the fans, even the players... all eyes are on Dexter.

He looks at an opposing player.

DEXTER
Nice pass, 12.

He sits back down, puts his palm back to his ear. There's clearly a radio hidden somewhere on his body -- and a listening device in his palm.

Behind Edward, Dan fidgets with excitement.

EDWARD
An excellent opening to the game,
and the Hawks immediately pick up
on defense.

Dan can't stand it. He jumps to his broadcast position, and before he can even get his headphones on...

DAN
You can just feel the energy in the
boys tonight, Edward. I have a
feeling this is gonna be epic!

Edward slides the envelope to Dan, who waves it off.

LATER

The scoreboard sits at zero. The score, lopsided as always, shows Johnson City on the losing end. But, the team is happy, celebrating.

DEXTER
(to Thomas)
You dropped 23 on 'em.

He high-fives Hammer.

DEXTER
10 rebounds -- my man!

CHEN
What'd you get, Dex?

DEXTER
Two threes and a steal to start the
second half.

It's back-slaps and hugs all around.

Coach Tyson takes it in, not sure what to make of things. He glances to Edward and Dan.

Edward wraps up the broadcast.

EDWARD

So there it is. Johnson City's first win of the year. 76-74 final score. It's a happy group of players, and a happy coach. Good night, all. For Dancin' Dan and K-J-T-Y, I'm Edward Flanders. Kickin' it from courtside.

Edward slips off his headphones and leans back from the mic.

EDWARD

Sure hope we know what we're doing.

He looks to Dan for a reaction, but Dan is off partying with the players.

EXT. JOHNSON CITY - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The team bus turns onto the main drag.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

The DRIVER'S mouth drops open.

DRIVER

Whoa.

He brakes to a stop. Coach Tyson glances up.

COACH

What in the -- ?

The road ahead is blocked -- swarmed with citizens. Cheering. The school band plays off to the side.

EXT. JOHNSON CITY - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The Driver throws the door open and the team shuffles off, quickly absorbed into the celebrating throng.

It's not long before all the players are lifted into the air and carried to the nearby diner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Swamped. A full-on celebration. Each player is the center of a separate gaggle of fans. In one corner...

DEXTER

I don't know, I just -- took the shot. Guy was all over me...

In another corner...

MONTGOMERY

Made a few adjustments in the second half. Took it to 'em.

In another...

CHEN

Team spirit. That's what made the difference.

The door opens and a large cheer goes up.

Edward enters the diner and is immediately overwhelmed.

Several men part the crowd for him, lead him to a seat at the counter. Immediately, he's surrounded by well-wishers, each with money out to pay for his order.

GENE

Hell of a call there, Edward.

Burgers, fries, mashed potatoes, you name it -- they're all pushed in front of Edward from every angle.

Everyone who passes slaps him on the back or offers some form of encouragement/thanks.

A loud WHISTLE pierces the moment. Lynn stands on the far end of the counter.

LYNN

That's it. I'm out of pie.

A collective GROAN goes up from the crowd.

LYNN

I'll have more tomorrow.

A CHEER returns the festive atmosphere.

Edward soaks it all in, including the food. But, he's not entirely comfortable.

Lynn sweeps by, Edward pulls her to a stop.

EDWARD

I thought you said nobody listens to the games.

LYNN

At least one person does.

She points to Carly, hanging on Dexter in the corner.

LYNN

As the game stayed close, she started making calls. Word traveled fast.

The door opens and another CHEER goes up. The Coach is immediately swarmed. He works his way to Edward.

COACH

We need to talk.

Edward points to the food.

COACH

Now.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

The Coach and Edward pace behind the diner.

COACH

How the hell did you think this was a good idea?

EDWARD

It's only this one game. I swear.

COACH

I can't go along with this.

EDWARD

Please. I'll be fired for sure.

COACH

And how's that my problem?

EDWARD

This is the night of their lives. Are you going to take that away from them?

COACH

They never had it in the first place.

The Coach stomps back into the diner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

The celebration continues. Edward watches from the back, depressed, as the Coach climbs the counter.

He quiets the crowd.

COACH

I know everyone's having a good time. But, I've got something to say.

The team members exchange worried glances.

GENE

Gonna thank the team for saving your ass?

Coach looks at him, confused. Turns back to the crowd.

COACH

Tonight's game was not what you think.

FARMER IN THE CROWD

I think it was a miracle.

A CHEER goes up.

COACH

It wasn't a miracle. It wasn't even a win.

The team slowly works its way to the door.

FARMER IN THE CROWD

Was for you. Considering the school board vote last night.

The Coach clearly has no idea what the man is talking about.

GENE

Come on, Coach. Everybody knows. Don't have to pretend. They can't fire you now.

COACH

Fire? What? No -- let's talk about the game --

FARMER IN THE CROWD

-- They fire you -- we'll fire them!

A CHEER goes up.

FARMER'S WIFE

Let him speak.

The room goes silent. The Coach hesitates. He looks at Edward. Then...

COACH

It wasn't a win... just for the team. It was a win for the whole town! So, let's enjoy this win tonight. 'Cause who knows what tomorrow brings.

The celebration resumes as the Coach climbs from the counter.

LATER

Edward helps Lynn finish cleaning up. The crowd is gone, the diner closed.

He wipes a table, tosses a rag into a bucket.

EDWARD

Last one. Anything else?

Lynn works behind the counter.

LYNN

That's it. For you, anyway.

EDWARD

If there's more, I can help.

LYNN

I should have kept my mouth shut.

EDWARD

The pie?

LYNN

I don't know what I was thinking.

EDWARD

I'm sorry about that.

LYNN

Not your fault. I got myself into this. I'll get myself out.

EDWARD

You had a good night tonight.

LYNN

That'll carry me for a bit, yes.

She grabs a large sack of flour, drops it on a nearby workspace.

LYNN

How long is the season?

EDWARD

Two more months.

She flops over the flour sack.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward tosses in his tiny bed, looks at the clock: 2:40 AM.

A pan BANGS in the distance, downstairs. He gets up, dresses.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward peers into the diner. He sees: Lynn. Working hard. Covered in flour. Crying.

EXT. DEXTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Edward knocks on the door of an old farm house.

DEXTER'S DAD, 50s, opens the door.

DEXTER'S DAD

What's going on?

EDWARD

I need to talk to Dexter.

DEXTER'S DAD

Whatever it is, it can wait.

Edward sees Dexter behind the Dad.

EDWARD

We've got to fix what we broke.

DEXTER'S DAD

Fix it tomorrow.

He slams the door, turns off the lights.

A side window slides open on the house. Dexter rolls out of the window, drops clumsily to the ground, jogs to Edward.

DEXTER
What's up, Mr. Flanders?

EDWARD
It's our fault.

DEXTER
What is?

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Lynn, surrounded by half-made pies, rolls out dough.

There's a KNOCK at the door. She opens it to find: Edward. He slides past her, followed by the entire basketball team.

EDWARD
Just tell us what to do.

LATER

Lynn, the team, Edward make pies -- a well-oiled machine.

LATER

Lynn pulls a beautiful pie from the oven, sets it on the counter next to dozens just like it as the team sleeps in various awkward positions around the diner.

EDWARD
That's it?

LYNN
That's it. For now. Who knows how much pie this town eats.

Edward looks around... CLAPS to wake the team.

EDWARD
That's it, guys. Let's go.

As they stir awake, Lynn sidles up to Edward.

LYNN
Thank you. This means a lot.

She gives him a peck on the cheek. Unfortunately for them, the team is still made up of teenagers...

TEAM

Oooooooh.

EDWARD

(embarrassed)

Shut up.

Lynn ups the ante, kisses him square on the lips. The team howls with delight.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Edward and the team sleepily exit the diner.

MONTGOMERY

It feels good to make things right.

CHEN

Do you think we should tell people?
You know, the truth?

HAMMER

Why don't we just win. For real.

They all laugh.

HAMMER

Seriously. If we focus -- maybe we
could actually win one.

The laughing stops.

MONTAGE - TEAM WORKING HARD/STAR TREATMENT/ROMANCE BLOSSOMS

-- Edward watches as the team works out in the Montgomery barn. Lifting hay bales over their heads. Running in place.

-- Edward, with Lynn on his arm, comes home to find several casserole dishes at his apartment door.

-- Team weaving between cones, wearing blindfolds. Edward cheers them on.

-- Edward and Lynn walking in the park.

-- Returning home, an ELDERLY WOMAN gives Edward a container. He opens it: homemade cookies.

-- More odd workout routines. Edward smiles.

-- The scoreboard. Game day. Game on.

END MONTAGE

INT. JOHNSON CITY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

A packed house. Cheerleaders. Pep band. Dan sits at a table on the sidelines, ready for the broadcast.

Edward walks the sideline toward the table. He passes the team. High fives all around.

EDWARD

You got this guys. Focus. Execute.

The Coach, still not happy, waves him away.

Edward continues to his broadcast position.

Various members of the crowd greet Edward: "Ready for another win?" "Good luck on the call." "Go get 'em, Edward."

LATER

The teams line up for the game.

Montgomery nods to Chen. Serious. Focused.

Chen nods back.

The tip.

Thomas slaps it back to Montgomery. A good, clean play.

EDWARD

Montgomery across midcourt. Looks over the defense. Sets the play.

The team runs their half-court offense. It actually looks efficient, smooth.

EDWARD

Thomas sets the pick. He rolls down low. Pass inside. Lays it up. Good!

The crowd goes crazy, as does the team.

In fact, the team is so happy with their play, they forget to play defense.

EDWARD

And an uncontested bucket to answer. We're tied at two.

DAN

Gotta get back on defense, boys.

It's all downhill from there.

SERIES OF SHOTS - BAD BASKETBALL

-- A pass off Chen's face.

-- Another to nobody.

-- A few fans leave.

-- Montgomery practically gives the ball to a defender.

-- The crowd thins further.

-- Thomas and White smash into each other as an opponent splits them for a basket.

The BUZZER sounds, echoing through the now-empty stands.

EDWARD

Final score: Tribune 74, Johnson
City 28.

DAN

Well. That happened.

EXT. COUNTY FAIR - DEMOLITION DERBY - NIGHT

Edward, Lynn and Dan sit in the stands, watching the carnage.

One car in particular keeps most of their attention. It has an ad painted on the rear fender: "JOHNSON CITY BASKETBALL ON KJTY WITH EDWARD AND DAN."

The ELDERLY WOMAN approaches.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Young man? I don't know if you
remember, but I gave you --

EDWARD

-- Cookies. How could I forget?
They were delicious.

He looks around.

EDWARD

(hopeful)
Maybe you have more?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Actually, I was just hoping to get
my container back.

The car takes a big hit. The fender drags along the ground, barely hanging on.

EDWARD

Of course. I'll leave it at the diner.

As the Woman walks away, the car takes another hit. The radiator explodes. Smoke rolls. It's done.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Lynn cleans up from the day's business. Edward KNOCKS, she lets him in.

He hands her an empty food container, which she sets next to a pile of others -- casserole dishes, cake plates, pie tins -- all clean, all empty.

Lynn pours a couple of sodas, slides into the booth next to him and cuddles up.

LYNN

Tough day?

EDWARD

It was fun while it lasted.

LYNN

Fun's not over for me. Free pie with every purchase, I said. So, now I'm selling more cups of coffee than ever before. No meals, mind you. Just coffee.

Edward laughs.

LYNN

It's not funny. I don't think I can survive another six weeks.

EDWARD

You'll be fine.

She pushes away from him.

LYNN

No. I won't be fine. I may lose my business over this.

He pulls her back in.

EDWARD

I'm sorry.

LYNN

Why are you sorry? I'm the one with the big mouth.

EDWARD

I just --

He fiddles with her collar.

LYNN

You what?

EDWARD

Why don't you come with me?

LYNN

To where?

EDWARD

Wichita. Once the season's over, I'm moving up.

LYNN

You're leaving?

EDWARD

Of course I'm leaving. Aren't you? Eventually?

Again, she pushes away.

LYNN

This is where I live.

EDWARD

This can't be what you want for your whole life.

LYNN

What's wrong with Johnson City?

She stands, clears a nearby table.

EDWARD

Come on. Nothing's wrong with Johnson City. It's just -- not Wichita. Or, Kansas City. Or, heck, Boston for that matter.

LYNN

I've got people here.

EDWARD

Who? Like, Gene?

LYNN

What do you know about Gene? You have any idea why he sits at the end of that counter every day?

Edward shakes his head.

LYNN

That's where he met his wife. Forty-five years ago. She -- was me. Waiting tables. She died last year. So, now, he comes in every day to remember. You want to know what else? Gene gave me this place. Gave it to me. It was hers until she passed. So, yes, like Gene.

Angry, she stacks a glass inside another, just a bit too hard. It shatters.

Edward moves to help. She waves him off.

LYNN

You're telling me that the stack of empty casserole dishes over there didn't register for you? One tiny connection, and the town took to feeding you. You barely noticed.

She moves to another table.

LYNN

It may not seem like much to you right now, but this is an amazing town. Right now, everyone's hurting. Everyone. Still, they gave what they could. So, no. I'm not leaving. This is my home.

She stomps to the back. Almost instantly, she returns to the doorway.

LYNN

I shouldn't say this when I'm angry, but -- I need the rent check. Not trade. So, I'm pulling the Coach's Show. I'm sorry. But, this town really likes pie.

She spins back into the kitchen.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward writes a check. Two hundred dollars. To Lynn.

He opens his check register, looks at the balance: \$126.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward, check in hand, looks through the window, watches Lynn make more pies.

DEXTER (O.S.)
Mr. Flanders!

Dexter, the rest of the team ride bikes up to the diner.

HAMMER
We gotta talk.

Montgomery looks around.

MONTGOMERY
But, not here.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

Edward rides on the back of Montgomery's bike. A large bump makes the ride even more uncomfortable than it obviously already is.

EDWARD
You know what has shock absorbers?
Trucks.

The rest of the team coasts along with them. They skid to a stop near the playground equipment and all dismount.

Dexter immediately hops on the merry-go-round. Chen and Hammer spin it up to speed.

White heads for the slide. Thomas hangs from the monkey bars, though his height doesn't leave much room for hanging.

MONTGOMERY
(to Edward)
We've decided we need one more.

EDWARD
One more what?

DEXTER
 (as he spins past)
 Win, baby!

EDWARD
 No way. We've already caused enough
 trouble. Lynn might lose the diner.

THOMAS
 Another win doesn't cost her
 anything more.

Chen and Hammer have Dexter spinning fast now. He can only
 get one word out with each pass.

DEXTER
 Show -- him -- the -- money.

Montgomery pulls out an envelope.

MONTGOMERY
 A thousand dollars.

Edward nearly chokes on the amount.

EDWARD
 Where did -- ?

MONTGOMERY
 I sold my truck.

EDWARD
 Sold your -- ? Buy it back.
 Because, I can't do what you want.

Montgomery pulls out another envelope.

MONTGOMERY
 Two?

Edward spins at the thought.

EDWARD
 Jeez, Monty.

MONTGOMERY
 We've sold everything we can find.
 (points to Thomas)
 Baseball cards.
 (Chen)
 Dungeons and Dragons sets and Star
 Wars figures.

DEXTER

I -- sold -- my -- minibike.

MONTGOMERY

White even sold his future earnings. Got an advance from his hardware store job.

HAMMER

I didn't have anything. But, I'll wash your car for a year.

EDWARD

It's not that I don't want to guys. It's just -- these things have consequences.

Montgomery reaches for his back pocket.

EDWARD

Please don't --

He pulls out another envelope.

EDWARD

Oh, come on!

MONTGOMERY

Two thousand, three hundred. Literally everything we have.

EDWARD

Why, guys?

HAMMER

Tell me you didn't like the attention?

DEXTER

I -- got -- my -- first -- kiss.

Edward paces. Looks at the envelopes.

EDWARD

This is it. I'm not kidding.

Chen slows Dexter's ride to a stop.

They all surround Edward, celebrate the moment.

All except Dexter. He tries to join, but he's too dizzy. Instead, he vomits.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward knocks. Lynn answers.

LYNN
I'm sorry about earlier --

Edward shoves six hundred dollars into her hand.

EDWARD
Rent through the end of the season.
Plus one month.

LYNN
Where -- ?

EDWARD
Forget about it.

Lynn throws a sideways smile.

LYNN
You didn't rob a bank or anything?

EDWARD
They don't need all that money.

LYNN
I really am sorry about earlier.

EDWARD
That was on me. I'm just trying to
figure some things out.

She pulls him close.

LYNN
Let's just take this one step at a
time.

They kiss.

She pushes him away.

LYNN
Now go. I've got pie to make.

EDWARD
Aw...

She turns for the kitchen.

EDWARD

Mind if I use your phone? Long distance?

LYNN

I'll put it on your tab.

INT. DINER - OFFICE AREA - NIGHT

Edward dials. Waits.

EDWARD

Hi, Dad.

(beat)

I know it's late. It's just -- I've got a game on Friday. Scott City. Thought I'd swing by afterwards.

(beat)

Do I need a reason?

(beat)

How about money, then?

(beat)

No. I don't need it. I've got it. I'd like to make a payment. Fifteen hundred dollars.

INT. RIVAL HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Edward settles in next to Dan at their courtside broadcast position -- a couple of folding chairs and a folding table.

The players complete their warmups. As they file past Edward, each gives him a high-five.

Dan gives Edward a look: "What's going on?"

Edward slides a hundred dollar bill Dan's direction.

DAN

Are you kidding me?

EDWARD

One more. That's it. I promise.

DAN

You promised last time.

EDWARD

You had fun. What's one more?

Dan looks at the team. They're close enough to hear. Their faces desperate. They want this.

The Coach can hear, too. He spins, puts some distance between himself and the broadcasters.

DEXTER
(mouths)
Please.

DAN
Fine.

The team celebrates, takes position for the game.

The REF tosses the ball in the air.

EDWARD
And there's the opening tip. Thomas leaps but can't control it. Chen sweeps in and Johnson City gets the first possession.

Only, it's Scott City that wins the tip. Edward is calling the game in reverse.

EDWARD
Chen brings it up the floor. Montgomery cuts inside, Chen with the pass and Montgomery lays it in for an easy bucket.

Of course, all of that happened -- for Scott City.

DAN
Great alertness by Chen. A head's up pass for the early lead.

LATER

The scoreboard BUZZER sounds.

EDWARD
And that's the half. Johnson City with a 22 point lead. 38-16.

Right score. Wrong leader.

EDWARD
Back to the studio and Todd Lemon for the halftime show.

Edward sets his headphones on the table, high-fives Dan.

EDWARD
Nice work.

Dan stands, pulls the hundred dollars from his pocket.

DAN

Gonna grab a snack. Want anything?

Edward shakes his head, writes a few notes on his scoresheet as Dan heads for the concession stand.

WILL (O.S.)

So, this is how you make your money? Conning people.

Edward spins to see his Dad sitting directly behind him.

WILL

I thought maybe you were selling drugs. But, this -- What is it? Gambling? The broadcasting equivalent to point-shaving?

EDWARD

It's not like that.

Edwards pulls an envelope from his pocket.

EDWARD

Here. First payment.

Will ignores the envelope.

WILL

I don't want any part of this.

EDWARD

The team paid me. The boys. They just want a win.

WILL

Generation X. Want everything handed to them. Just like you.

Will, disgusted, walks away.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

The team jokes and laughs together as the bus pulls into town. It turns onto the main drag.

A large crowd waits. Only, this time, they are NOT happy.

The players' smiles quickly fade.

EXT. BUS - NIGHT

The Players quietly step off the bus.

Thompson is first. A woman, THOMPSON'S MOM, 46, grabs him by the ear, leads him away.

Each subsequent player is shuffled away in similar fashion by their PARENTS.

The Coach disembarks next. BOOS rain down.

COACH

I had nothing to do with it.

The boos drown out his pleas.

Dan shuffles from the bus, dodging a barrage of hats and assorted other items.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Edward stands at the top of the steps. He looks out.

At the back of the crowd: his Father leans against a wall. Not far from him, Lynn. Neither look very happy.

EDWARD

Lynn!

She turns for the diner.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Edward jumps from the bus, tries to push through the angry crowd. He's stopped by Gene.

GENE

You don't deserve her.

A hand yanks Edward from the crowd.

INT. RADIO STATION - RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

Edward sits, dejected. Again, the cowboy boots are Edward's only view.

EDWARD

I'm sorry, I --

Todd puts his hand in the air: "Stop talking."

Eventually, Todd sits up, leans forward.

TODD
Give me the hat.

EDWARD
I --

TODD
-- The hat.

Edward walks to his desk, picks up the hat, hands it to Todd.

TODD
You're one selfish son of a bitch,
you know that? I blame myself,
though. I'm usually a better judge
of character.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Edward sees Lynn through the glass. He scrambles for the front door.

As he gets close, Lynn snaps the lock on the door and flips the sign to "Closed."

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward packs his few belongings. Something BUMPS against his apartment wall.

EDWARD
Dan?

DAN (O.S.)
I'm not here.

EDWARD
I can hear you.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS, unnaturally loud, echoes from next door. A door SLAMS.

DAN (O.S.)
Now I'm not here.

Edward leans against the wall.

EDWARD
Come on, man. You're the only
friend I have left.

DAN (O.S.)
This is the only job I had. And, I liked it.

EDWARD
I'm sorry. I really am.

DAN (O.S.)
They called an emergency town meeting. To fire Coach Tyson.

Edward bolts from the room.

INT. CITY HALL - NIGHT

Full room. Angry crowd. The Coach stands at the front.

COACH
I didn't know. Not until the game started. What was I supposed to do?

MONTGOMERY'S DAD
We're supposed to let you teach our kids? To lie?

The crowd erupts: "Fire him." "We should sue." Etc.

Edward calls out from the back.

EDWARD
It's not his fault.

Everyone turns.

EDWARD
It's mine.

He walks to the front. A walk of shame.

EDWARD
I needed the money.

BOOS rain down.

EDWARD
Not an excuse. Just the reason. I was wrong. I didn't mean to hurt anybody.

FARMER
You made fools of all of us.

More BOOS.

A voice from the crowd breaks through.

CARLY
Oh, please.

The crowd falls silent.

Carly stands defiant, stares down the Farmer.

CARLY
You didn't know? Because, I did.

She looks at Dexter, hiding in the corner.

CARLY
Sorry.

Back to the crowd.

CARLY
I was supposed to believe that
Dexter hit a shot from the corner?
Dexter. From the corner. Right.
(back to Dexter)
Sorry.

She turns to Montgomery's Dad.

CARLY
And, seriously, spin moves for
baskets inside? Your son? Pulling
double digit rebounds and dropping
twenty points? Right.

She walks to the front.

CARLY
Fact is, we all knew it wasn't
true. But, we wanted it to be. Me?
I liked Dexter's new confidence. It
brought out who he really is.
(to Dexter)
He's funny. And kind. And just an
all around good guy.
(to the crowd)
But, he was never going to ask me
out. Do I feel like he lied to me?
I don't. I feel like we shared a
story. An unspoken little fairy
tale. And really, what's wrong with
a little fairy tale now and then?

To the Hardware Store Owner...

CARLY

Is it better to just sit around all day absorbing the doom and gloom?

She gestures to Gene.

CARLY

Take Gene. Given the choice between staying home alone -- or pretending that he's fifty years younger and meeting his wife for the first time every day -- he chooses the fantasy. I say, good for Gene.

She looks at Edward.

CARLY

I don't mind pretending once in a while. I'm not going to just turn over and slowly die like this town's been doing for the last ten years. So, thank you Mr. Flanders. Thank you for my Dexter. And, thank you for my little fairy tale.

She motions to Dexter who strides to her. They walk proudly, right down the middle of the crowd and out the door.

The room is silent.

Edward makes eye contact with Lynn, standing in the back. She quickly turns and leaves.

Montgomery's Dad stands.

MONTGOMERY'S DAD

What are we supposed to do? Pretend it didn't happen?

The crowd murmurs.

GENE

A championship would be fun.

Again, the crowd murmurs.

FARMER

He's right. That would be fun.

The crowd's tone shifts. They're actually considering it.

EDWARD

You've got to be kidding me.

INT. JOHNSON CITY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

Edward sits next to Dan at their broadcast position on the sideline.

EDWARD

It's a packed house as Johnson City begins the stretch drive of what could be a very exciting finish to the season.

He covers the mic with his hand, leans in to Dan and whispers...

EDWARD

Ready?

Dan smiles. He's definitely in.

Across the gym Carly waves to Edward as she stands next to the gym's speaker system, cable in hand.

She plugs it in. A BUZZ echoes through the gym.

EDWARD

It's time for tonight's starting lineup.

Edward's voice fills the gym as the game broadcast is pumped through the PA system. The crowd cheers.

DAN

It's an electric crowd tonight.

EDWARD

At point guard, leading the league in assists...

He looks at Dan, covers the mic.

EDWARD

Let's give them the full fantasy.
(back on mic)
... Josh, the Mighty, Montgomery.

Montgomery jogs to center court, plays to the crowd.

White follows.

EDWARD

Forward, Matt, the Great, White.

The crowd chops with their hands, like a shark taking a bite.

Chen is next.

EDWARD

On wing, the jersey says Chen, but
we all know him as The Sniper.

Chen pretends to shoot faraway targets.

EDWARD

The league's leading scorer,
averaging 29 points a game, center,
Jeremy, The Tank, Thomas!

The crowd chants in unison: "Boom!"

Hammer, next, gets high fives all around.

EDWARD

Shooting guard, master of the three
point shot -- Keith Hammer!

The crowd drops the hammer motion. They're in a frenzy as the
team sets up for the opening tip.

EDWARD

And on the bench, the league's most
valuable sixth man...

Dexter turns...

EDWARD

Dexter Doolittle. Or, as we know
him in Johnson City -- Dexter the
Dominator!

Dexter leaps, takes a running lap around the court, arms
raised. He stops mid-court to flex.

He points to Carly. She returns the gesture.

The REFEREE gently pushes him to the bench where Dexter
flashes a big thumbs-up to Edward.

EDWARD

Time for the opening tip.

DAN

Tank towers over the center from
Ulysses.

The much-taller Ulysses center, not happy, looks toward the
broadcast table.

The Ref tosses the ball in the air. The Ulysses Center easily wins the tip.

MONTAGE - EXCITEMENT BUILDS

-- Johnson City misses a shot badly. Edward leaps out of his seat with the call. The crowd leaps with him. Players celebrate.

-- Different games. Bigger crowds, bigger reactions.

-- Main Street. Entire families in team gear.

-- Edward, Dan and Dexter all duck as an errant pass sails past while they broadcast from courtside. Still, Edward and Dan celebrate a great play.

-- Edward tosses a tape into a box marked: "HIGHLIGHTS TO KEEP."

-- Another game. Another play. The crowd reacts in unison with a shark chomp, a hammer drop, a sniper shot. Everyone's having fun.

END MONTAGE

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

Home court. Packed house. Standing room only.

Edward and Dan sit courtside, ready to roll.

EDWARD

And here we are, Dan. The big one.
Final game of the season, for all
the marbles.

An opposing player, WALKER, retrieves a loose ball as the teams warm up for the game.

DAN

The state championship on the line.
Our boys from Johnson City against
the powerhouse De Soto Wildcats.

Walker, confused, shakes his head. Of course, it's just the last game of the season, with nothing actually at stake.

A fan, dressed as a hammer, walks past, high-fives Dan.

Something catches Edward's attention. Or, rather, someone. His father leans against a wall near an exit.

Edward refocuses to the pre-game.

EDWARD

It should be a tight matchup. No doubt the Hawks are ready...

LATER

The players tip off the game.

EDWARD

Fifty-fifty ball. Fight for control and De Soto emerges with the ball as Johnson City settles back into defense.

DAN

Chen is right up in the guard's face. It's going to be a long night for De Soto.

Actually, Chen struggles to stay with his man.

The DE SOTO GUARD zips a pass to Walker inside, who violently slams it home.

EDWARD

Pass inside. Walker to the basket. Oh my! Thomas skies to reject the shot.

DAN

What anticipation!

The crowd cheers wildly.

Now the De Soto players are really confused as Johnson City celebrates with high-fives.

Several of the De Soto players look to Edward.

Taking advantage, Johnson City quickly inbounds and streaks down the court.

EDWARD

De Soto asleep on defense. Hammer in the clear.

Hammer, all alone, lays the ball off the glass. It rolls around and out. White follows the play and the ball bangs off his head and out of bounds.

EDWARD

Hammer lays it in for the easy two.
Johnson City with the early four
point lead.

LATER

The scoreboard shows several minutes remain in the second
quarter as Thomas works the ball down low. Another blowout.

EDWARD

Thomas in a bit of trouble.
Someone's gotta help Tank out. The
ball is knocked away. De Soto
recovers.

The crowd GROANS.

DAN

White really needed to provide
support on the back side there.

Even though there's no relation to what's being called and
the action on the floor, White still reacts with frustration.

EDWARD

Nobody said this was going to be
easy. Johnson City down by two,
late in the first half.

LATER

Early fourth quarter. Edward watches as Dexter excitedly
supports his teammates -- a bundle of non-stop energy.

Edward leans back to a FAN behind him, whispers something.

The Fan nods, whispers to ANOTHER FAN, and another, down the
line. Soon, a chant goes up, quickly grows in intensity.

FANS

We want Dexter! We want Dexter!

The chant grows too loud to ignore.

The Coach waves Dexter into the game. For real.

EDWARD

And here comes the Dominator!

The crowd CHEERS. Dan stands, eggs them on. Dexter, of
course, soaks it all in, and then some, as he prances around
the court.

DAN

The Dexman. Johnson City's most experienced and creative ball handler.

The inbounds pass goes to Dexter. He catches the ball -- and doesn't move.

Immediately, he's looking to pass, his feet in virtual concrete.

Dan covers the mic, leans in to Edward, whispers...

DAN

I don't think he knows how to dribble.

The defense swarms poor Dexter -- all five players.

DAN

He's doing a great job of letting the game come to him.

Dexter swings wildly, with no options for relief.

EDWARD

Dexter calmly looks over the defense.

Dexter tucks the ball and splits the defense, like a running back through the line.

Of course, the REF immediately calls a travel, but Dexter, undeterred, sprints for the basket, ball tucked firmly under his arm.

EDWARD

Dexter down the far sideline, spins, dribbles through two defenders --

Dexter reaches the basket and tosses the ball up. He misses. Rebounds. Shoots. Misses. Rebounds again.

He finally rolls one around and in.

EDWARD

-- And lays one in for an easy two.

DAN

Back to a tie ballgame!

And it's back to the bench for Dexter with CHEERS all around.

LATER

Fourth quarter. The clock holds at ten seconds. The scoreboard shows a lopsided game, still.

EDWARD

And here we are. Everything on the line in this tied championship game.

DAN

Johnson City with a chance for the win. They just need to stay calm, execute the play.

EDWARD

Here's the inbound. Monty crosses the midline. Fakes to his right, spins to his left. Clock counts down, seven seconds.

DAN

Defense is tight.

The crowd is on their feet.

EDWARD

Five seconds, inside to Thomas. The Tank bumps his man. Three seconds.

DAN

Two!

EDWARD

Spins, puts it up --

DAN

One!

EDWARD

-- For the win and the state championship. The ball hangs on the rim --

The BUZZER sounds. The crowd collectively holds its breath.

EDWARD

-- And, falls out. We're headed to overtime!

On the court, the game is over. The visiting team celebrates quietly. This was expected.

EDWARD

What a battle between two titans.

DAN

Really impressed with that squad
from De Soto.

The Johnson City team takes a seat on the floor in front of the broadcast position. The band, cheerleaders, crowd, all form a circle around Edward and Dan.

The De Soto team gathers its stuff, preparing to leave.

EDWARD

I'll tell you who I'm most
impressed with, and Johnson City's
going to have to have an answer for
him -- Mitchell.

DAN

Oh, man, what a beast. He'll
definitely be a factor in overtime.

MITCHELL, the smallest player on the De Soto squad stops,
drops his gym bag.

He walks over, splits the crowd, sits next to the Johnson
City team.

The rest of his team follows suit.

EDWARD

And, Jones. I'm not sure we've seen
anyone this year with his kind of
speed.

Mitchell high fives JONES.

Dexter does, too.

Another De Soto bench player, FISCHER, 16, their Dexter,
calls out...

FISCHER

What about me?

Edward looks up. He motions for the player to turn.

The player does, shows him his number.

Edward checks his roster.

EDWARD

We haven't seen much from Fischer,
yet.

DAN

That's a surprise. But, you can't
look past him. He could be a real
difference maker in overtime.

EDWARD

Deadly from the corner.

Fischer smiles, nods: "That's right."

EDWARD

The teams are ready for overtime.
We're tied at 76.

He motions to the SCOREKEEPER, who resets the scoreboard to
reflect the tie game.

DAN

Dexter takes Monty's spot to start
the extra frame.

Dexter stands, flexes.

The crowd chants.

CROWD

Dex-ter. Dex-ter. Dex-ter.

EDWARD

There's the tip, and De Soto
controls.

The crowd GROANS.

LATER

Everyone crowds the broadcast table. The tension is thick.
The championship hangs in the balance.

The scoreboard shows a new score, the overtime score: DE SOTO
85, JOHNSON CITY 84. The clock counts down from 15.

The two teams sit in front, intermixed. All lean in.

EDWARD

Chen works the near sideline.

DAN

Watch the press.

EDWARD

De Soto tries to trap, but Chen steps through, sends a pass to Thomas.

DAN

Nicely done. De Soto sags into zone. 10 seconds.

EDWARD

Thomas slips in the corner! Loose ball!

The crowd gasps.

EDWARD

5 seconds on the clock. There's a scramble.

DAN

Get it! Get it!

EDWARD

The Hammer emerges. Passes to Chen. The shot -- It's blocked! Fischer from out of nowhere!

The BUZZER sounds. Game over.

EDWARD

The De Soto Wildcats are state champions!

The De Soto team goes crazy with the win. Hugs, high fives. Even the disappointed Johnson City players congratulate them.

The De Soto team grabs Fischer, hoist him on their shoulders, carry him from the gym.

The crowd is NOT happy. They swarm the broadcast table. "What are you thinking?" "It's supposed to be a championship."

Edward holds his hands up, leans into the mic.

EDWARD

It's a tough loss tonight, for sure. But, I for one, couldn't be more proud of the boys from Johnson City.

He looks over the team.

EDWARD

They brought us joy. Excitement.
 Taught us to dream. They're down
 right now, I know. Came so close.
 But, I know this team. They don't
 stay down. No. They get back up and
 fight. So, don't cry for Johnson
 City. No. Fight. Work. Play hard,
 Johnson City. Because next year,
 you'll be back! Next year, you
 could be champions!

The crowd, the team, the entire gym erupts, chants...

CROWD

Next year! Next year!

Edward holds his hands up. There's more to say.

The crowd quiets.

Edward scans the crowd -- all the familiar faces. Gene,
 Coach, the team. Lynn stands in the back.

His father leans against the bleachers, not far from her.

EDWARD

I won't be with you next year. I've
 got somewhere else I need to be.
 But, I will miss you Johnson City.
 Gene. Todd. Everyone. You've all
 been so generous to me. Forgiven
 me. Taken me in as your own. You
 gave me more casseroles than I can
 eat...

(to Lynn)

... And more love than I deserve.
 But, you're in good hands.

He looks to Dan.

EDWARD

You've got the best color guy in
 all of Kansas, right here. Dan, I'm
 going to miss you, buddy.

He shakes Dan's hand, leans into the mic.

EDWARD

Thank you, Johnson City. For K-J-T-
 Y, I'm Edward Flanders. Sharing the
 dream with you, my friends and
 neighbors.

He slips off the headphones and works his way through the crowd, toward his father and Lynn.

Members of the crowd slap his back, offer encouragement and congratulations.

The crowd opens up near the bleachers. He stands between his father and Lynn.

Edward reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope full of money.

His Father straightens, waits.

Instead, Edward turns to Lynn.

EDWARD

I can never make it right. Never
undo what I've done.

He hands her the money.

EDWARD

It's not enough, I'm sure. But, I
hope it makes a difference. For
you. The diner.

She pushes the money back.

LYNN

It's not about the money.

He tucks it into her pocket.

EDWARD

I see it now, you know? You feed
them, they feed you. The diner --
you -- the center of it all.

He turns to his father.

EDWARD

We had a deal. I intend to honor
it.

LYNN

No --

EDWARD

(to Lynn)
I have to.

She nods. Reluctant.

Edward turns to the crowd.

EDWARD
Thank you. All of you.

He points to Dan.

EDWARD
You guys are going to have so much
fun next year.

He turns for the exit, his father by his side.

The chant starts low, quickly builds to a roar:

CROWD
Ed-ward. Ed-ward. Ed-ward.

He stops. Turns. Waves.

His father watches for a moment. Then, leans in...

WILL
Stay.

EDWARD
But --

WILL
You've got a good thing going here.

EDWARD
Really?

WILL
A stable job, surrounded by people
who love you.

Will pushes his son toward the crowd, Lynn.

Edward runs to her, but, he's intercepted by Gene.

Gene smiles, hugs him.

GENE
You take care of her.

Edward nods, Gene steps aside.

Edward and Lynn embrace. The crowd swarms them.

Todd leans against a wall nearby, taking in the scene.

Will sees him.

WILL
You own the radio station, right?

Todd nods.

WILL
Ever think about selling?

The two men turn down the hall in animated conversation.

The celebration continues around Edward.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward, Dan, Lynn, Dexter and Carly sit, squeezed into the nooks and crannies of the tiny space.

Music plays. Christmas lights give the space a sparkle.

Dan dances in the corner, a whirl of sick dance moves contained in his two square feet of space.

Lynn sits on Edward's lap, their seat really just a pile of dog food bags in the shape of a chair.

A puppy pounces onto the two of them.

They laugh, play with the puppy.

Lynn grabs the puppy and smothers it with kisses.

Edward takes in the scene: Lynn. The puppy. His new friends.

He reaches to the counter, grabs a tape.

He looks at the label: "HIGHLIGHT TAPE."

Edward tosses it into the trash.

FADE OUT.