

FADE IN

STOCK FOOTAGE - RFK STADIUM - 1971 - DAY

Ninth inning. Washington 7, New York 5. An agitated crowd anxiously awaits the Senators to make the final out.

WALTER GRIFFIN, a precocious twelve-year-old boy, delivers his best 'History Channel' narration.

WALTER (V.O.)

In 1971, the Washington Senators were one out away from winning their final regular season game, and their final game in DC.

The field fills with swarming fans, tearing up the grass.

WALTER (V.O.)

In 1972, they would move to Texas.

The mob fills their pockets with infield dirt.

WALTER (V.O.)

You can't really blame them. This was the second team to flee the nation's capitol in ten years.

Two fans pull the chair out from under a frightened ball boy.

WALTER (V.O.)

They forfeited that game. It's hard to play without first base.

A fan literally 'steals' first base.

INT. GRIFFIN LIVING ROOM - DUSK - PRESENT DAY (APRIL 2005)

Walter wears the kind of striped beige shirt one only wears when Mom still picks out the clothes. Walter's voice over is the same as his own voice, twelve-years-old. He watches TV.

WALTER (V.O.)

So when they announced that a team was relocating to DC, I vowed to be its first and biggest fan.

MARY ANN GRIFFIN, 34, clangs about in the adjoining kitchen. She is pretty, but everyone, including her, has forgotten.

WALTER

Mom, you're missing it!

MARY ANN

I'm preparing the opening day feast.

WALTER (V.O.)

It doesn't matter if they finish fifty games out of first. I want them to win this first one.

An umpire on the TV calls out a strike. Walter MOANS.

WALTER (V.O.)

It doesn't look good.

Mary Ann balances a tray over her head as she opens TV tables.

MARY ANN

Hot dogs, crackerjacks, and carrots.

WALTER

Since when do they have carrots at a baseball game?

MARY ANN

They have carrots at Wendy's now. Carrots are the new french fries.

Mary Ann sits, feigning interest. On the TV, the pitcher catches the batter looking: strike three.

WALTER

God, Wilkerson!

MARY ANN

Language.

WALTER

Brad Wilkerson's struck out 3 times today. He could use God's help.

Walter bites into his hot dog.

WALTER (V.O.)

All my life, DC baseball has been nothing but stories and statistics.

GERALD GRIFFIN, 42, crashes through the door. He tosses his jacket over a nearby chair, the furniture's only purpose.

WALTER

Dad, you're missing it!

GERALD

I haven't missed it for years.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Old Washington Senators pennants decorate the walls. Framed baseball cards adorn the tops of cabinets. On his bed, Walter clips an OPENING DAY article from the newspaper.

WALTER (V.O.)
 Guess I could have been a Baltimore Orioles fan, but I hated Cal Ripken.

STOCK FOOTAGE - CAL RIPKEN

Cal Ripken breaks Gehrig's consecutive games played record.

WALTER (V.O.)
 "Ooo I'm the Iron Man, you have to love me 'cause I never get hurt and I play everyday." What a show off.

INT. GRIFFIN LIVING ROOM - DAY

Walter compares his set up of Cheese and Sausage products to an identical picture in his full-color fund-raising brochure.

WALTER (V.O.)
 No, the Nationals are my team.

Mary Ann gathers papers into her satchel.

MARY ANN
 You have to sell that crap for your school again?

WALTER
 I've got the whole neighborhood cased out this year.

Walter examines a neighborhood map he has notated, numbers listed next to each house.

WALTER
 Fifty-one Premier Pork Packs and we get a ten-pack of Nationals tickets.

MARY ANN
 Be careful, you know how your father feels about...

WALTER
 Capitalism?

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - GERALD'S OFFICE - DAY

Gerald reigns over a kingdom of paperwork.

WALTER (V.O.)

Gerald A. Griffin works at the
Library of Congress. Overseeing
something to do with copyrights.

Gerald finds what he is looking for and lifts the phone.

WALTER (V.O.)

I don't know what it is. I do know
it is NOT a political appointment.

THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL - ANOTHER DAY

Gerald bends down to Walter as CROWDS pass them.

GERALD

This is the man that screwed it all
up. And they build him a monument.

Gerald tugs Walter past a family's posed picture, ruining it.

WALTER (V.O.)

Jefferson, according to my dad,
founded the first political party,
leading inevitably to the downfall of
the world's first and last democracy.

F.D.R. MEMORIAL - ANOTHER DAY

The presidential bronze looms over the tranquil site.

GERALD

Millions in taxes to build walls
and fountains. A testament to the
Democrats' lobbying.

RONALD REAGAN WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT - ANOTHER DAY

Cars buzz past the entrance to the Ronald Reagan Airport.

GERALD (O.S.)

Testament to Republican lobbying.
Put your name on something that
already existed.

WALTER (V.O.)

In DC, it's hard to avoid politics.

INT. GRIFFIN LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Walter watches the Nationals' game on TV. Gerald walks in front of him en route to the kitchen, disgusted.

GERALD

You know the public funds they'll waste to build that team's stadium?

WALTER

Somewhere 'round 500 million.

Walter glances down at his color-coded neighborhood map, written across it in sharpie: 2005 SAUSAGE ROUTE.

GERALD

Where's your mother?

WALTER

I don't know. Wilkerson's 3 for 3 - he needs a triple for the cycle.

GERALD

That's all anyone ever needs.

WALTER

Yeah, but Wilkerson's awesome.

Gerald rummages through the kitchen cupboards.

WALTER

There's left-over chicken soup.

INT. CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Mary Ann Griffin holds court before a blackboard covered in sines, cosines, and other mathematical nonsense.

WALTER (V.O.)

Mary Ann Griffin teaches math at Catholic University. Not like division and fractions either but really hard stuff.

MARY ANN

Anybody know? Anybody do the problem set? Anybody want to pass?

200 silent undergrads stare on. A CROSS looms on the wall.

WALTER (V.O.)

My mother is the only non-Catholic in her department at Catholic.

Mary Ann solves the equation, students religiously copy it.

WALTER (V.O.)

She had been raised Catholic, but
her parents converted after Vatican
II because they missed the Latin.

INT. SAINT CONSTANTINE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH - MORNING

Incense, robes, and icons surround Walter and his mother.

WALTER (V.O.)

They became Greek Orthodox, where
the service was in another language
they didn't understand.

The Griffins stand out in their non-ethnicity. Walter smiles
at a GREEK GIRL across the aisle, her BROTHER glares at him.

CHURCH BASEMENT - LATER

Walter sits amongst a 'class' of Greek kids. An ANCIENT
GREEK GRANDMOTHER teaches them something... in Greek.

WALTER (V.O.)

Mom thinks things like religion
should remain something of a mystery.

Other kids laugh, then look to Walter who does not respond.

WALTER (V.O.)

But I can't help but think it gives
me a distinct disadvantage at times.

INT. MARY ANN GRIFFIN'S PONTIAC G6 - AFTERNOON

Walter watches houses pass by the window as Mary Ann drives.
He points to a driveway with a moving truck.

WALTER

Man...the Plinskys are moving.

MARY ANN

I don't even know who that is.

WALTER

They were good for at least five
Sausage gift packs every year.

MARY ANN

Maybe the new people will buy more.

WALTER

This sucks.

MARY ANN

So we don't go to the baseball game. No big deal.

WALTER

Maybe Michael can help me.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

MICHAEL, 13, much bigger than Walter, hasn't cleaned his room for months. Posters of demons and elves cover the walls. Walter pulls a chair up to Michael's massive computer system.

MICHAEL

I can't believe you don't have this.

WALTER

Our computer takes five minutes to count up its memory.

Michael logs into the title screen of EverQuest II.

MICHAEL

That's me, the Ratonga. I'm helping my guild defeat T'Haen The Lost.

WALTER

Why?

MICHAEL

For fortune and glory.

WALTER

You can make money playing this?

MICHAEL

No, money in the game. But this guy I chat with, he sold his paladin's sword on Ebay for \$20.

Walter watches Michael play for a few moments, mystified.

WALTER (V.O.)

At least in baseball you deal with actual people doing actual things that amount to actual statistics.

INT. GRIFFIN LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Walter, a page cut from the sports section on the table in front of him, edges up on the couch towards the game on TV.

WALTER

Brian Schneider bat .355 last year
with a runner on first base.

Gerald nods, not listening. Every now and then he highlights a phrase in his book. Walter looks back at the television.

WALTER

Won't it be cool when I get those
family pack tickets to the games?

On TV, a HAPPY FAMILY of Nationals' fans cheer together. Walter looks back at his Dad, then at his mom in the kitchen.

ON TV, the family is now HIS FAMILY, absurdly happy.

WALTER (ON TV)

Mom? Remember when you taught me
how to calculate a pitcher's Earned
Run Average? I love you.

The doorbell RINGS. Walter goes to answer the door.

WALTER (V.O.)

Don't worry, I'm not some lonely
kid who wears a trenchcoat and dyes
his hair black.

GERALD

Probably some anxious aristocrat
longing for his gourmet bacon bits.

WALTER (V.O.)

I'm not that lonely.

Walter opens the door, finding ELYSIA, 12, confident and adorable, more-so of both than any 6th grade girl should be.

WALTER

Hi... ah...

Walter can find nothing else to say.

ELYSIA

Hi, I'm Elysia. I just moved in down
the street and I'm selling Cheese
and Sausage for my new school.

Mary Ann steps up behind Walter.

WALTER

Oh no you don't, I've been working
this block for 5 years now.

Elysia drips with sweetness and smiles.

ELYSIA

I think you're gonna find you're
too late this time.

(turns to Mary Ann)

So I don't suppose you want to buy
any Cheese and Sausage gift packs?

MARY ANN

Sure, we'd be happy to help out.

Mary Ann takes the brochure. Walter heads back to the couch.

WALTER

This isn't over, new girl.

ELYSIA

It's Elysia. My Dad and I just
moved from Kansas for a job.

GERALD

Is he a Bushie?

WALTER (V.O.)

Dad doesn't like me to get close to
the 'political appointment brats.'

INT. BROWNE ACADEMY - DAY

Walter, dressed in a school uniform, sits upright in the 2nd
best school money can buy.

WALTER (V.O.)

Of course, most of my class are
political appointments from some
administration or another.

A small ethnically-diverse 6th grade class raise their hands
to answer questions from MS. PATRICK, 27, the thoroughly
unmodern teacher. Walter cycles through his classmates.

WALTER (V.O.)

Henry: Bush. Denise: Bush. Ravi:
Clinton. Gregor, Tammy: Bush.
Michael's Bush the first. Deron and
Chris: local. Valerie has lots of
older brothers: Reagan. Jeffrey:
Clinton. Larissa, Javier: Bush.

(MORE)

WALTER (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Stacy: Clinton. Max and Margaret:
 Bush. François, his father's a
 diplomat. And me: local.

Elysia stands at the door, accompanied by the PRINCIPAL.

WALTER (V.O.)
 So, by my dad's advice, I'd have
 about two friends. And a French
 kid who hates Americans.

FRANÇOIS ARGENOT has covered his notebook with an elaborate
 drawing of Uncle Sam receiving the guillotine.

The class shuffle their desks to keep alphabetical order.

MS. PATRICK
 Now leave room for Elysia.

MICHAEL
 Hey, if she's between me and Chris
 how can I cheat off his paper?

Elysia peers around Michael to smile at Walter. He ignores
 her. Ms. Patrick writes the new student's name on the board.

MS. PATRICK
 Elysia is from Kansas. Anyone know
 what the Elysian Fields were? ...Ravi.

RAVI, an Indian boy, shoots his hand up like a rocket.

RAVI
 That's where they killed all those
 people in Cambodia.

MS. PATRICK
 No, that was the Killing Fields.
 Elysian Fields was like heaven for
 the ancient Greeks. The gods
 specifically chose who was called
 to Elysian Fields after they died.

JEFFREY, spikey-hair, blurts out in extreme sarcasm.

JEFFREY
 You mean like how God specifically
 chose Bush to be our president?

A few kids snicker; others respond with minor outrage.

MS. PATRICK
 Jeffrey. After class. Now how is
 everyone doing with the fund-raiser?

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

Door after door closes in Walter's face as he hopelessly brandishes the brochure. One NEIGHBOR actually answers the door biting into the exact sausage Walter is selling.

Walter turns. Elysia smiles from the sidewalk behind him.

WALTER

You hit every house on this block?

ELYSIA

No, I left you five... but you'll have to figure out which.

Walter scans the row houses up and down the block. Elysia walks to the next house. A dog begins maniacally BARKING.

WALTER

That's Apples. He's kind of the neighborhood's least favorite dog.

Apples presses his forepaws against the door of the fence, snarling, panting, salivating over child meat.

WALTER

They fix that fence every year or so because he knocks it over.

Elysia steps back away from the house.

ELYSIA

That's one of the one's I left you.

INT. GRIFFIN LIVING ROOM

Walter stumbles through the door, exhausted. His Dad waits for him in a dirty flannel and jeans.

GERALD

Get changed. And meet me outside.

Walter MOANS and heads upstairs.

WALTER (V.O.)

In addition to railing at the two-party system, my dad's passion is growing tomatoes in our backyard.

EXT. GRIFFIN 'GARDEN' - DAY

A three-foot deep trench cuts across a ridiculously small backyard. Gerald shovels dirt into Walter's wheel barrow.

WALTER (V.O.)

Or rather, yearly investing hours of labor into some new scheme hoping this year, they finally would grow.

Mary Ann stands in the doorway, Gerald explains.

GERALD

This way they'll be out of the shade of both fences.

WALTER (V.O.)

Sometimes, it's hours of my labor.

ANOTHER DAY IN THE GARDEN

A bag of soil flies over the fence landing at Walter's feet. Gerald shouts over the fence.

GERALD (O.S.)

Imported South American rain forest soil. Anything can grow in it.

YET ANOTHER DAY IN THE GARDEN

Walter encages the trench in wire fence. Gerald 'supervises.'

GERALD

Shove it down far so they can't knock it over.

WALTER

They're rabbits, they can dig under.

GERALD

Not if you shove it down far enough.

Mary Ann slides open the glass door with the telephone.

MARY ANN

Michael's mother is taking him up to Cameron Run, you want to go?

GERALD

Hey now -

Walter hops out of the trench, the wire immediately curls up.

EXT. CAMERON RUN PARK - MINIATURE GOLF COURSE - DAY

Waterfalls and bridges fill a classy putt-putt course.
Michael grabs his ball out of the hole.

MICHAEL

She's so ridiculous. I'm
developing critical social skills.

WALTER (V.O.)

Apparently all quests in
EverQuest are forever on hold.

MICHAEL'S MOTHER reads a magazine by the Putt-Putt club
house, Michael waves to her. Walter steps over to his ball.

WALTER

I mean yeah, you could be on drugs.

MICHAEL

Exactly. Parents don't know how
good they have it.

Walter lines up a four foot putt - a couple of practice
swings, changes his stance, a few more practice swings.

ELYSIA (O.S.)

Hey Tiger, mind if we play through?

Elysia stands at the tee with her father, VIRGIL FINLEY, 52,
a skyscraper with a head of sparkling grey hair, sunglasses.

ELYSIA

I bet you a Home Chorizo Casing Kit
you miss that shot.

Walter bends down and grabs a bit of stick off the green.

ELYSIA

You scared?

WALTER

Fine, fine.

Elysia hands her putter off and sits on the edge of the
fairway, her knees just visible in Walter's view of the hole.
Walter braces himself, concentrates, his manhood on the line.

MICHAEL

Come on, Griffin.

Sweat drips. Walter swings... his ball inches up to the
hole, right on target, and stops - a half inch from the hole.

Walter taps in and angrily grabs his ball.

WALTER

Whatever. Mini Golf isn't a real sport anyway.

BATTING CAGES - MOMENTS LATER

Elysia connects with a pitch, rattling the far fence. Walter misses. Michael, his mother, and Virgil watch from outside.

ELYSIA

You should try the softball cages.

Elysia nails another baseball. Walter fouls one off.

WALTER

I'm actually a pretty good swimmer.

VIRGIL

Elysia played on the boys baseball team at her school back in Kansas.

MICHAEL

You done embarrassing yourself yet?

Elysia aims the next pitch right into the fence next to Walter. He jumps. Into the path of his own pitch.

PICNIC SHELTER - LATER

Michael's Mother serves soda and snacks under the gazebo. Walter holds an ice pack to his head.

MICHAEL

Dude, she totally schooled you.

WALTER

I gotta give her \$30 of my sales!

MICHAEL

I'd like to give her something else.

MICHAEL'S MOTHER

Michael!

MICHAEL

What? You don't know what I'd give her. Maybe my train set.

WALTER

It's weird how she just shows up.

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - DAY

Walter crouches down to look through the glass counter, rises up to see Elysia outside the window, waving.

WALTER (V.O.)
Like when I'm buying baseball cards.

Walter turns back to the display as Elysia comes inside.

ELYSIA
Whatcha buying?

WALTER
Not buying, just looking.

Walter points down to a 1907 Walter Johnson baseball card, price-tagged at \$32,000.

ELYSIA
Walter Johnson.

WALTER
That's who I'm named after.

ELYSIA
Really?

WALTER
No. Dead grandfather I never knew.
But it'd be cooler if it was him.

STOCK FOOTAGE - WALTER JOHNSON - 1907

WALTER JOHNSON, a monster of a man, steps down from a railroad car and waves to a crowd.

WALTER (V.O.)
The Big Train. Discovered in 1907
in Idaho. He even requested a
return ticket in his contract in
case things didn't work out.

Johnson on the mound, striking out batter after batter.

WALTER (V.O.)
They did. In his first game, Walter
Johnson struck out future Hall-of-
Famers Sam Crawford and Ty Cobb.

TY COBB looks back at the mound angrily.

WALTER (V.O.)
Of course Washington found a way to
lose the game 3-2.

Newsreels - "Nationals lose again," "Washington eliminated."

WALTER (V.O.)
And, despite a 1.94 ERA his first
three years, the team finished last,
second to last and last. But he
never gave up. Kinda like Elysia.

EXT. KING STREET SIDEWALK - LATE AFTERNOON

Walter rides his bike. Elysia runs to catch up to him.

ELYSIA
Where are you going?

WALTER
KFC. I'm bringing back dinner.

ELYSIA
'Putting the meal on the table.'

Walter leans over Elysia to hit the button at the crosswalk.

WALTER
Yeah, well, they were fighting
about what to have for dinner, so I
was like 'how about chicken?'

Walter hits the button again, impatiently.

WALTER
Then they fought about who'd get it.

ELYSIA
Do they fight a lot?

WALTER
No, not really. No.

The walk signal illuminates; Walter starts out into the
street but Elysia remains on the sidewalk. He looks back.

ELYSIA
I'm not really allowed this far.

Walter, stuck in the middle of the street, shrugs.

INT. BROWNE ACADEMY - DAY

Walter rests his head in his hands; Elysia's desk sits empty.

WALTER (V.O.)
And then she'll be out of school
for days at a time.

DENISE, pigtails and sunny disposition, displays her ASSAULT ON ABU GHRAIB diorama: Hot-Wheels hummers, green army men, and Playmobil people with cotton balls on their heads for turbans.

DENISE
'Some people say' the prison was
targeted to develop support for
continued terrorist actions.

Ms. Patrick ushers her back to her seat.

MS. PATRICK
Thank you Denise. That's very...
well researched. Walter, your
current event report.

Walter rises from his seat. He reads haltingly from a rag-tag piece of notebook paper, a newspaper article stapled to it.

WALTER
Today marks the home opener of the
new Washington Nationals.

No one pays attention to Walter or his report. Even the teacher looks bored.

WALTER
After 34 years without baseball, the
wait has finally ended. The
Nationals are 5 and 4 and lead the
National League East by half a game.

Walter twirls a little pennant, regrets it instantly.

WALTER
President George W. Bush will throw
out the first pitch -

INT. GRIFFIN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Walter, math book open on his lap, watches the game on TV.

WALTER (V.O.)
And I'll be home watching it on TV.

Walter glances over to his father's empty chair, back to his mother in the kitchen.

WALTER (V.O.)

Alone.

ON TV, Walter sits as now, doing his homework, but IN THE STANDS. To one side of him, his father reads and highlights. To the other, his mother stirs and tastes a soup.

MARY ANN (ON TV)

Walter, are you doing your homework?

WALTER (ON TV)

Yes.

He looks at his book, but a CRACK OF THE BAT and his neck snaps back up. A long fly...caught. Three outs. A BELL RINGS.

MARY ANN (ON TV)

Can you get the door?

Walter looks around, alone in his living room once more. The bell RINGS AGAIN. Never glancing from the TV, Walter evades the couch and end-table hazards to open the door - Elysia.

ELYSIA

Hey. Did you get my homework?

Walter GRUNTS something incoherent and retreats back to the couch, she follows. He fishes through his stuffed bookbag.

ELYSIA

You'd be surprised how many people you can sell Cheese and Sausage to when everyone else is at school.

Walter turns to her in disbelief.

ELYSIA

I'm just messing with you.

Walter hands over a HOMEWORK folder, keeping his distance.

WALTER

So are you like, really sick?

ELYSIA

Allergies. I get really tired and my dad won't let me go to school.

This makes Walter CHUCKLE. On TV the crowd CHEERS.

ELYSIA

Oh, is that the Nationals game?
Can I watch it with you?

She parks herself on the couch. He studies her.

WALTER (V.O.)

Some baseball manager once said to
ensure victory, 'know your enemy.'

Elysia looks through the folder. Walter watches the TV.

WALTER

So...with being sick and all, guess
sausage is pretty much on hold.

ELYSIA

Actually, I thought I would set up
in front of Sutton Place Gourmet.

EXT. SUTTON PLACE GOURMET GROCERY - DAY

Elysia hops out of a car with her card table and chair.
Walter, already there, wears a carnival-like striped vest and
Styrofoam hat and hawks his Cheese and Sausage to a crowd.

WALTER

Premier Pork Products make the
perfect mother's day gift.

Walter winds up a mechanical pink pig which does back-flips.

WALTER

Kids will love the spreadable bacon
paste on their toast.

Elysia shakes her head, impressed - then leaps into action.
The crowd immediately drifts toward Elysia as she sets up.

ELYSIA

Informed shoppers of Alexandria, do
not accept some pale imitation when
you can have Grade A pork.

WALTER

It's the same pork.

ELYSIA

This pork comes from only the finest
pork producers using the most -

Walter reads her speech directly off his gift pack label.

WALTER	ELYSIA (cont'd)
- humane and savory methods of modern animal husbandry.	- humane and savory methods of modern animal husbandry.

Walter stands alone as a SHOPPER hands Elysia money.

WALTER

You know, I'm collecting sales for
a really good cause.

ELYSIA

Really? I'm trying to win a bike.

WALTER

How selfish.

ELYSIA

So I can donate it to charity.

WALTER (V.O.)

By the time I got these tickets the
Nationals might move again.