

**Jumping into Hemingway's Pool**

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FADE IN:

EXT. STREET SCENE OF MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD-- AFTERNOON

Single-story houses with one-car garages and small grass lawns line the street. One of the lawns is in dire need of mowing. Children ride bicycles past a photographer who sets up a camera on the neglected lawn. The camera points at OAKLEY, 8, who sits atop a small pony. The year "1961" is superimposed onto the screen.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

In the small Texas town where I grew up I thought I was born in just the right place at just the right time. And you know, I was right. Life was different then. It was a time when a door-to-door pony photographer didn't raise an eyebrow.

Oakley wears a round cowboy hat pushed down over his ears. A large dog barks incessantly at the pony while the photo session lasts.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's hard to say which one of us, donkey included, was most miserable.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY

Students sit at cluttered school desks. Letters of the alphabet stretch across the wall above the blackboard. A plump, middle-aged TEACHER speaks to students and points to posters of Eskimos wrapped in fur parkas and living in igloos.

A few of the students jab each other. Oakley sits at his desk and surreptitiously reads a comic book. On his lunchbox is a drawing of the 16th-century sailing ship, "The Golden Hind."

TEACHER

And whenever the men of the village capture a whale, there is a celebration. As a treat the children get to eat whale blubber.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

It always amazed me that people decide to live in certain places. Why did those Eskimos live in all that ice? Surely they knew it was warmer down south. Why didn't they just start walking until it warmed up? Or maybe, they stayed in the Arctic because that's where their families were.

INT. LIVING ROOM WITH ADJOINING DINING TABLE -- EVENING

TRUDY, 16, sits on the floor and talks on the telephone. She carefully applies red nail polish on her fingernails and stares dreamlike up at the ceiling. HAROLD LEVIT, late 30s, the father, sits on the couch and watches television. JULIE Levit, mid 30s, the mother, sets the table. The other two children, Oakley and 2-year-old SUZY play with cards on the floor.

TRUDY

Did you see Donna and Rusty necking in the balcony! How tacky! They've only been going steady for two days. A boy has to wait a week to kiss me.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Trudy, my step-sister, spent more time in make-up than Elizabeth Taylor on the set of Cleopatra. It seems that she went through more boyfriends than Elizabeth Taylor as well.

Harold stares at a sporting event on television.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Dad worked at Sears in the appliance department. Dad was Jewish. There was nothing unusual about that, even in the South. But Mom happened to be Southern Baptist from Tennessee, which made for an unusual combination--lox and buttermilk biscuits.

JULIE

Dinner's ready! Come to the table.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

I never really thought much about it. They were just my parents to me.

Everyone slowly moves toward the dinner table, except for Harold.

JULIE

(irritated)

Harold, I'm not going to ask you twice!

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Of course, she just had.

INT. DINING ROOM -- LATER

The dishes are cleared away and Harold has a map spread open on the table. Julie and the children sit around the table.

HAROLD

We'll follow the highway to Fort Worth, then this road to Memphis and to your cousin J.D. in Dereksberg, then down this highway to the coast and to Miami. You know, they're building highways where you can go from one side of the country to the other and from top to bottom without stopping.

TRUDY

That's impossible.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

The concept was too much to comprehend for my sister.

TRUDY

What happens when the highways cross each other? Someone has to stop.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Then again, maybe she had a point.

HAROLD

I guess we'll have to wait and find out.

He then puts a ruler on the map and begins mumbling about distance.

JULIE

Oh, I forgot to tell you. Mrs. Pratt wants to ride with us part of the way.

HAROLD

(cautiously)  
To where?

JULIE

To Tennessee . . . to see her sister.

Harold covers his face.

HAROLD

My God! What did you tell her?

JULIE

I had no choice! I couldn't turn her down. What could I say?

TRUDY

Mother! How could you?

INT. MRS. PRATT'S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

MRS. PRATT, a strict, stout 70-year-old, and Oakley sit at a card table and play dominoes. She wears a conservative, black dress and reading glasses hang from a chain around her neck. Action cartoons play on tv in b.g.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Now lest one think we'd overreacted, that person hasn't spent an evening with Mrs. Pratt. She'd call my mother every Saturday evening to summon me over to her house down the street under the pretense of playing dominoes. Actually, it was a Sunday school lesson from the Book of Pratt.

Oakley sneaks a look away from the dominoes toward the cartoons on television.

MRS. PRATT

Young man! Stop watching that nonsense and pay attention. When I became a man, I put away childish things. First Corinthians.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

I was a child!

OAKLEY (CONT'D)

Yes, Mrs. Pratt.

Mrs. Pratt turns all the dominoes face-down and mixes them up.

MRS. PRATT

I can imagine what type of training you get at home, but there are some important things a young man like you needs to know.

Oakley intently stares at her.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Don't say it!

Mrs. Pratts' demeanor suddenly changes.

MRS. PRATT

Girls.

Oakley continues to stare as Mrs. Pratt struggles to find the right words.

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)

There's things you need to know about girls.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
I wasn't going to find out here.

MRS. PRATT  
Good God-fearing boys and girls know  
the proper way to behave with each  
other . . .

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
As she prattled on, my attention was  
drawn to a commercial playing on tv.

CLOSE on tv. In the commercial a beautiful woman wears a Playtex Living Bra and sways from side-to-side. She smiles and pulls her hair behind her shoulders. Lost in thought, Oakley smiles. Suddenly, a book SLAMS in front of him. He looks up to see Mrs. Pratt with her hand on top of a Bible.

MRS. PRATT  
It looks like I have more work to do  
than I thought.

Mrs. Pratt stands and looks down at Oakley.

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)  
You should never touch a woman's  
body or try to see her without her  
clothes. If you do, you'll go to  
Hell when you die.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
Therapy, here I come.

MRS. PRATT  
Another thing. It is a sin to touch  
yourself.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
I was beginning to see a common thread  
here.

MRS. PRATT  
Do you understand what I mean?

Oakley shakes his head "No."

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)  
Don't touch your private parts, in  
your pants.

OAKLEY  
How do I use the bathroom? Is that  
a sin?

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
I was quickly coming to the conclusion  
that Mrs. Pratt was insane.

Mrs. Pratt becomes increasingly uncomfortable.

MRS. PRATT

No. It's not a sin to touch your private parts to use the bathroom, if you touch them as little as possible. Do you understand now?

Oakley shakes his head "No."

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)

Just remember that nudity is acceptable only if there's no pleasure involved.

Mrs. Pratt looks at her watch.

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)

Oh, it's time for the Lawrence Welk Show. We'll play dominoes again next week.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

I'd be counting the minutes.

INT. TRUDY'S BEDROOM -- AFTERNOON

Trudy and her friend, BETH, 16, sit on the bed looking at a magazine photos of a beach resort town with sunbathers sprawled on the beach. Hidden, Oakley lies on the floor and peers into the bedroom through a partially closed door.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Besides baseball, my other favorite form of entertainment was listening to my sister, Trudy, and her friends. Why should I watch tv when I could get gripping drama, heart-rending pathos, and all the insight and wisdom that a pubescent teenage girl can offer.

TRUDY

I would just die to be Brigitte Bardot. Wouldn't you, Beth? Look how beautiful she is in that bikini!

BETH

Look at her house! This is how the fabulous people live. They live in places, like in France, and they go to parties with other fabulous people. And they don't work.

TRUDY

How do they live, then?

BETH

People see how fabulous they are and put them in movies and that sort of thing.

TRUDY

(impressed)

Wow! I wonder if we could ever be that fabulous?

BETH

Sure, it's not that hard. You wear gorgeous clothes to parties where all the men are wearing tuxedos. When the orchestra starts playing, a count or prince might ask you to dance. And, before you know it, you're sitting on the beach with Brigitte Bardot.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

As far as I knew, Beth wasn't on drugs.

TRUDY

I've already bought a bikini with my birthday money. I'm wearing it in Miami.

BETH

Your mother is letting you wear a bikini?

TRUDY

You just need to know how to handle parents.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

That meant she hadn't told them yet.

BETH

Why are you going to Miami, anyway?

TRUDY

It's really weird, of course. We're going to visit my step-father's parents. He hasn't seen them in, like, 10 years. None of us kids have even met them. All of a sudden, someone decided that we have to go visit them.

(softer)

They're Jewish, you know.

BETH

I thought your step-father is Jewish.



TRUDY

(irritated)

He is! I'm just saying his parents are, too.

BETH

What's it like having a Jewish step-father?

TRUDY

He's a regular Dad, I guess, except he keeps this beanie in the drawer with a book written in some foreign language. He never takes them out, though.

BETH

You think it might be a secret code and he might be some kind of spy?

TRUDY

I wish it was that exciting. All Jews have those things. I think it's required. He's okay, I guess. My real father died when I was a little kid. I don't even remember him.

Trudy jumps up from the bed and stands in front of the mirror. She wraps various scarves around her shoulders and preens.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

(coyly)

We're going to visit a rock and roll star on our way to Miami.

BETH

What?! How exciting! Who is he?

TRUDY

My mother has a cousin or some such relative in Tennessee. It's his son, Leon.

(she says the word  
"Leon" in a tender,  
romantic manner)

I hear he's dreamy.

(more animated)

He's in a band and they make records and everything.

BETH

Wow! Wouldn't it be great if he invited you on a world tour and you got to hang out with all the royals. My best friend is practically one of the fabulous people already.

Beth notices a tissue peeking above the opening of Trudy's blouse.

BETH (CONT'D)

Oh, Trudy. Your breasts are falling out.

Trudy looks down on the floor for the tissue box.

TRUDY

Where's that tissue box? I need some more ammunition.

She jumps off the bed and looks under it when she discovers Oakley. Trudy's eyes grow large with anger.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Mother! Oakley is spying on me!  
(louder)  
Mother!

Oakley jumps up and runs into the

DINING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Julie sits at the dining table with her sister, AUNT JOELY, late 30s. Her bleached blonde hair is mounted on top of her head in a beehive of ratted swirls, shellacked with hairspray. A lit cigarette dangles from her lips. Oakley sits down in a chair away from the table.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

My Aunt Joely had been married and divorced three times, actually twice. She got married once to someone who was still legally married to another woman. The other two husbands ran off after a year or two. Taking marital advice from Aunt Joely was like letting Jack the Ripper do eye surgery on you.

AUNT JOELY

If you're smart, you'll hire a detective to watch him. One time I found a matchbook from a bar in Billy Ray's pocket. Every time he was late from work, I'd go by that bar to see if his car was there. It wasn't long before I found him there, sitting at the bar, drunk. He was blubbering all over some waitress.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

She didn't mention that Billy Ray didn't start drinking till he married Aunt Joely.

JULIE

I'm not worried about Harold running around. It just seems like I'm last on his list of priorities. When it's between me and his work or his friends, I seem to get the short end.

AUNT JOELY

Like what?

JULIE

We couldn't go out for our anniversary because he had to take inventory at work.

AUNT JOELY

(sneering)

That dirty dog.

JULIE

He doesn't have time to paint the kitchen, but he has time to help his buddy work on his car.

AUNT JOELY

(more venomously)

The scoundrel.

JULIE

And now that he wants us all to visit his parents, I worry that it'll be more of the same.

AUNT JOELY

You poor, wretched soul. If the judge hears that, he'll give you everything.

She opens her purse.

AUNT JOELY (CONT'D)

I'll give you the business cards of my private detective and lawyer.

JULIE

Hold on a minute. I don't want a divorce. It's not *that big a deal*.

AUNT JOELY

All right, then.

(she thinks a moment)

I'd have an affair. Make him appreciate me.

JULIE

Can we change the subject?

Neither woman says anything. Aunt Joely looks up and sees Oakley sitting in a nearby chair.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Oakley, why don't you show your Aunt Joely the model ship you made for school.

Oakley takes an assembled ship from a nearby shelf and holds it up for his mother and aunt.

OAKLEY

It's a model of The Golden Hind. That's the ship our ancestor, Sir Francis Drake, sailed.

Aunt Joely laughs.

AUNT JOELY

Our ancestor is Sir Francis Drake? That's the first I heard. Who told you that?

JULIE

Didn't Mama used to tell us we were related to Sir Francis Drake?

AUNT JOELY

You're thinking of Joseph Derek, remember. "Coon Dog" Derek. He started Dereksberg, where we grew up.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Dereksberg?!

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY

Oakley stands in front of the class and holds the model of The Golden Hind. A drawing of Sir Francis Drake is taped on the blackboard behind him. Oakley speaks animatedly MOS to his fellow students.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Now that I'd bragged to every kid I know that I'm practically *Sir* Oakley Levit, how could I admit that I'm really "Coon Dog" Levit?

CLOSE ON of Oakley.

MATCH CUT:

CLOSE ON Oakley who is revealed to wear a ragged straw hat, dressed in hillbilly clothing.

He speaks in front of the same classroom.

END FLASHBACK

INT. DINING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

JULIE  
Maybe you're right.

She turns to Oakley.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
Did you know you're related to "Coon  
Dog" Derek? He started the town of  
Dereksberg.

Oakley gives her a weak smile.

INT. BEDROOM IN LEVIT HOME -- EVENING

Both Julie and Harold lie in bed while Harold watches tv and Julie reads a paperback. Table lights illuminate each side of the bed. BOXING COMMENTARY is softly audible in b.g. as Harold moves slightly with the boxers as if dodging punches.

The commentary gets louder and louder until Julie is visibly irritated. She turns the book face-down in her lap. The boxing crowd SCREAMS and the commentary gets more animated. She picks up the Zenith Space Command remote control between them and turns off the tv. She picks up her book again and resumes reading. He turns his head and looks at her with more curiosity than hostility.

He picks up the remote and turns the tv back on. From the tv commentary it is obvious that the fight is over. In disgust he turns off the tv himself. He picks up a magazine from beside the bed and reads. After a few moments, Harold softly reads aloud. At first, Julie takes only passing notice. After a few sentences she again puts her book face down on her lap.

JULIE  
Will you PLEASE stop reading aloud?

HAROLD  
I'm not reading aloud.

JULIE  
Then please stop mumbling aloud.

Harold silently mouths the words while Julie stares. Although irritated, she picks up her book and resumes reading. After a few moments Harold picks up some pork rinds from a bag next to his bed. As he CRUNCHES Julie SLAMS her book shut.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Are you some sort of demonic sound effects machine? If I pinch you, am I going to hear goat bleats?

HAROLD

Depends where you pinch me. Now tell me. Why are you really mad?

Julie turns off her night light and turns over, away from Harold.

JULIE

What do you care?

HAROLD

For Crissakes! I asked, didn't I?

She doesn't answer. After a few moments Harold turns over and turns off his light, casting the room into total darkness. A few beats pass.

JULIE

You don't care about my feelings.

After some RATTLING and the sound of something falling on the floor, Harold's light comes on.

HAROLD

Yes, I do.

He stares at Julie.

JULIE

Is that it?

HAROLD

What else do you want?

JULIE

Forget it.

She turns over and sticks her head in the pillow. He rolls his eyes and reaches over to turn off the light. Again, total darkness. There is silence for a few more beats. We hear the RUSTLING of covers and then a sharp SLAP.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I said, "Forget it."

INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR -- DAWN

Harold approaches the front door, luggage in each hand. Suzy, asleep, and Oakley, half-asleep, wait at the door. Julie carries smaller luggage and a sleeping Suzy. Trudy, curlers in her hair, carries her make-up case.

As Harold opens the front door, Mrs. Pratt, holding her purse, stands there facing him. Her bag sits beside her on the ground.

MRS. PRATT

To be on time is to show respect.  
I've been waiting out here for 20  
minutes.

JULIE

Why didn't you knock? We've been  
getting ready.

MRS. PRATT

I didn't come to visit. I came for  
the ride to see my sister.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold closes the trunk filled with suitcases and climbs into the drivers seat. Julie scoots into the center of the front seat. Mrs. Pratt then positions her ample behind on the passenger side by the window. She attaches a picture of the Pope to the dashboard in front of her and crosses herself.

The three children, in various stages of consciousness, are in the back seat among blankets, pillows and the make-up case.

MRS. PRATT

I brought seven dollars for expenses.  
I trust that will be sufficient.

Harold looks at Julie and shakes his head.

HAROLD

(facetiously)

Mrs. Pratt, you better not go flashing  
that kind of money around. Some  
rascal might take it off your hands.

MRS. PRATT

You're quite right, Mr. Levit.  
Besides, I'll need some of that money  
while I'm at my sister's.

Harold looks up and rolls his eyes. He then suddenly remembers something.

HAROLD

I left the road map on the dining  
table. I'll be right back.

INT. DINING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The front door SLAMS Harold enters the dining room, the roadmap in the foreground. He walks over to pick it up.

As he reaches for it, the telephone RINGS. He walks over to the phone on the wall and answers it.

INTERCUT HAROLD AND GRANDMA LEVIT

GRANDMA LEVIT, a heavy-set, "big-boned" woman in her late 60s, stands in her living room, hand on hip. She has a strong voice and a scowl like a bulldog.

HAROLD  
(into phone)  
Hello?

GRANDMA LEVIT  
Harold, what do you think you're doing?

HAROLD  
What do you mean, Mama?

GRANDMA LEVIT  
You know exactly what I mean. Your father told me that you're planning to come to Miami with the whole family.

HAROLD  
I thought I'd surprise you.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
Don't pull that crap with me. You thought you'd push that shikseh and her kid on me and everything would be forgotten.

HAROLD  
But Mama . . .

GRANDMA LEVIT  
You've always brought shame and disgrace on the family. From now on, be so good as to forget I exist. Do not come to my door and do not bring that wife and family to see me.

HAROLD  
Wait a minute. You're not being fair. There's . . .

Harold hears a dial tone.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold wobbles back out to the automobile, gets in the driver's seat and closes the door. Harold looks up with a shaky smile.



HAROLD

Ready to go?

JULIE

Where's the road map?

Harold, still somewhat dazed, slowly opens the door, gets out of the automobile and walks back to the house. Julie looks at him with a perplexed stare.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- MORNING

Harold carries groceries to the car and unwraps a smoking block of dry ice and puts it under the driver's seat.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Mom and Dad always thought that we could save money by buying sandwich meat at the store instead of eating out at roadside restaurants. This theory eventually caused the entire family to develop an unnatural fear of bologna. The dry ice? Because the car didn't have air conditioning, Dad thought the dry ice would help ease the Texas heat.

As the car pulls onto the road, smoke from the dry ice fills the car and billows from the partially open windows. After several yards, the car comes to an abrupt stop. The window rolls down and a chunk of dry ice falls from the window onto the street.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- DAY

Harold drives down the highway with Julie and Mrs. Pratt in the front seat and the children in the back seat. Trudy reads a movie fan magazine while Oakley makes paper airplanes. Suzy sits in Trudy's lap and gazes out the window. A paper airplane drifts into the front seat.

TRUDY

Mother, make Oakley move his legs.  
He's on my side of the car.

JULIE

Oakley, move your legs.

OAKLEY

There's not enough room back here.

They squabble and push at each other.

MRS. PRATT

The problem today with children is that they lack discipline.

Julie ignores Mrs. Pratt.

JULIE

Well, this is fun. We don't normally have a chance to all be together this way.

TRUDY

There's a reason for it.

JULIE

Come on. Let's communicate as a family.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Mom was the hopeless optimist.

JULIE

Trudy, is there a special boy that you'd like to tell us about?

Trudy stares straight ahead and shrugs.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Okay.

(beat)

Oakley. If you could be anything when you grow up, what would you do?

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Are there prizes involved in this game?

OAKLEY

I don't know.

HAROLD

Oakley, remember you said you'd like to be a baseball player?

OAKLEY

Well, if I really could be anything I want, I'd play for the New York Yankees with Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris.

JULIE

You never know. Maybe you will.

TRUDY

Yeah. Fat chance.

Trudy sits up straight.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

If I could be anything, I'd be Miss America. I'd walk toward the camera at the end of the runway, wearing my diamond tiara, with tears streaming down my face.

Trudy stares starry-eyed into the distance. From the look on Trudy's face, it's apparent that she is walking down that runway in her mind.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

If I had to hear much more, there'd be tears streaming down my face. You know, at first I was impressed with the Miss America thing until I saw the judges. They were always some low-level celebrities or some popular athlete from the latest "big game." Why were they any more qualified than me to choose the winner?

JULIE

That was very nice, dear. What about you, Harold?

Harold pauses, thoughtfully.

HAROLD

I always dreamed of selling refrigerators.

Julie gives him an irritated glance.

JULIE

Mrs. Pratt, was there something you always wanted to do?

MRS. PRATT

Just to do God's will and some day go to Heaven.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Her dream was to be dead?

HAROLD

(to Julie)

What about you? What did you want to be?

JULIE

Besides having a family, I always wanted to be a singer.

HAROLD

Really? I didn't know that.

Julie sings a few bars of "Bye, Bye, Blackbird" in a slow, soulful manner. After she finishes, everyone sits quietly. Trudy then puts one hand on her hip, points a finger at the others, and sings Ray Charles' "Hit the Road Jack."

TRUDY

*Woah, Woman, oh woman, don't you  
treat me so mean. You're the meanest  
old woman that I've ever seen. I  
guess if you said so, I'd have to  
pack my bags and go.*

The others, except Mrs. Pratt, join in the singing and answer back.

EVERYONE

*That's right. Hit the road, Jack,  
and don't you come back no more, no  
more, no more, no more.*

As the automobile moves down the road, the singing grows fainter.

LATER

In the back seat, Suzy sits up with a big smile on her face. Mrs. Pratt wrinkles up her nose and looks toward the back.

MRS. PRATT

What is that disgusting odor?

OAKLEY

*(looking down and  
checking her shorts)  
Suzy made a mistake in her pants  
(beat)  
A big mistake.*

Everyone rolls down their window.

JULIE

Trudy, get a diaper out of the bag.

MRS. PRATT

It's disgraceful that a child this  
old still wears a diaper.

Julie is turned toward the back seat as she cleans and changes Suzy. Trudy pulls two scarves from her purse and hands one to Oakley. Each ties the scarf around their mouth and nose. They've obviously done this many times before.

TRUDY

It's like traveling with this sort  
of baby bomb. You never know when  
it's going to go off.

JULIE

Sometimes Suzy has an accident on long trips. It's no big deal.

Julie gathers the full diaper together into a ball and heaves the malodorous projectile out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

An old farmer and his wife sit in rockers beside their pickup truck. Watermelons fill the bed of the truck and a sign reads "Watermelons 4 Sale." After the family car zooms past, they look up. A look of shock forms on their faces as they see a dirty diaper homing in on them.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- AFTERNOON

Children stretch out in the back seat with legs going in all directions. Trudy's hair is in curlers, covered with a net. She pushes Oakley's legs away from her.

TRUDY

Mom, do they play any of Leon's records on the radio?

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Trudy felt being a groupie was the highest calling in life.

JULIE

I doubt it. J.D. said he was just talking to a record company. I don't think it's gone that far yet, but you never know.

TRUDY

Maybe he'll be the next Elvis Presley. Oooh!

MRS. PRATT

Let's hope not! We don't need any more trash like that Elvis boy. Ever since he got popular this country has gone to the Devil. Kids growing long sideburns, writhing with that Negro music like they were fornicating, questioning their parents.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

This was starting to sound pretty good to me.

MRS. PRATT

The next thing you know all the races  
will be mingling together.

HAROLD

(sarcastically)

That's true. It was that jungle  
beat of Glen Miller that made me go  
for Julie. The music was pounding.  
I think the song was "Little Brown  
Jug." I could only think "Gotta get  
some forbidden gentile fruit."

JULIE

Hey, are you calling me a fruit?

MRS. PRATT

Go ahead and mock me if you want,  
but if I were you I'd enroll all  
three at St. Vincent's for a Christian  
education. Sister Mary Bernadette  
knows how to make unruly children  
respect their betters.

JULIE

I think the children are getting a  
fine religious education and -

Suddenly, a police siren WHINES through the air.

HAROLD

Oh, shit.

As the siren continues the automobile slows down and comes  
to a stop beside the road. Everyone sits quietly until the  
officer walks into view outside the driver's window.

POLICE OFFICER

Can I see your driver's license?

He studies the license for a moment.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

What's your hurry? I clocked you at  
85 miles per hour.

HAROLD

I'm sorry, officer. We just got  
carried away. We're on the way to a  
revival and we were all singing "He's  
Got the Whole World in His Hands."  
Praise Jesus. I guess we forgot  
earthly things like the speed limit.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

I couldn't believe my ears!

(MORE)

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Dad, a not-very-religious Jew, was lying to an officer of the law . . . about Jesus. Was this allowed? Would he get away with it?

POLICE OFFICER

Well, those things can happen. Just take it easy and watch your speed.

HAROLD

I sure will, officer. Thank you and God bless you.

The police officer walks away from the vehicle. Harold starts the motor and pulls back onto the highway. The children CHEER. Harold smiles at the children and acknowledges their adulation.

JULIE

Harold, you should be ashamed of yourself.

She looks over at Mrs. Pratt who shakes her head.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- EVENING

The children are spread out in disarray in apparent exhaustion. Comic books and sheets filled with completed tic-tac-toe and hangman's noose games are scattered about.

OAKLEY

Mom, I'm hungry.

TRUDY

We, too. Why don't we stop to eat something. We've been in this car all day. Aren't prisoners covered under the Geneva Convention?

JULIE

Would you like a break, too, Mrs. Pratt?

MRS. PRATT

I needed a break three hours ago, Mrs. Levit.

HAROLD

Okay, okay. I'll stop at the next rest stop. You kids finish up the bologna sandwiches.

Julie hands out the remaining sandwiches.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

I watched in terror as the dreaded bologna sandwich was thrust in my face. Maybe I could stomach one more rubbery . . . pink . . . sandwich.

As Oakley slowly chews and swallows, it becomes apparent that Oakley is no longer enjoying his meal.

TRUDY

Mother! Oakley is getting car sick!

She pushes Oakley away from her so that he leans over the front seat in back of Mrs. Pratt. He heaves, then vomits down the front of Mrs. Pratt's dress. As he vomits, she emits a loud SCREAM. Several GURGLING SPURTS of vomit are each followed by a SCREAM.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

The automobile comes to a stop in front of the motel. In the distance we see a sign on which is written a flashing "Bates Motel." A neon sign reads "No Vacancy." The "No" light goes out.

HAROLD

This looks like a good place to stop for the night.

Mrs. Pratt angrily opens the car door and walks toward the motel office. She stops for a moment, pulls her dress out from her body and shakes herself up and down. Vomit SPLASHES on the ground. Julie walks beside her.

JULIE

I'm so sorry. He's just a little boy. He can't help it. He gets car sick when he rides too long.

MRS. PRATT

So the little one can't control her bowels on long trips. The boy can't keep his food down and the teenager can't control her mouth. It certainly seems like these children have a problem with self-restraint!

JULIE

(as she opens the motel office door)

I know. Sister Mary Bernadette.

Mrs. Pratt digs into her purse.



MRS. PRATT

Here's a dollar and twenty-five cents.  
Give it to Mr. Levit to pay for my  
room.

She SNAPS her purse shut and walks away.

EXT. DOOR TO MOTEL ROOM -- EARLY EVENING

The Levits walk out of their motel room after having freshened up. While the children slowly make their way out, Julie knocks on the motel room door next to theirs. Mrs. Pratt comes to the door in a high-necked robe.

JULIE

The desk clerk said there's going to  
be a local theater production in the  
town square. Are you sure you don't  
want to come to the play with us?

MRS. PRATT

(curtly)

Thank you, Mrs. Levit. But I am  
going to turn in early. Good night.

Mrs. Pratt closes the door as Harold closes the door to his family's room behind him.

JULIE

Ready?

Harold, Julie, Trudy and Oakley march forth. After a few steps, all stop in their tracks. Harold spins around and goes back inside the motel room where he soon re-emerges with Suzy across his shoulder.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE -- LATER

A temporary stage on a raised platform has been set up in the town square. Rows of chairs face the front of the stage. Almost every chair is filled, but the Levits find a small group of empty chairs. They slide down the row and sit down.

On stage is TODD, late 20s, the star of the play. Todd wears a medieval soldier's uniform and carries a crown in his hands. A cape hangs from his shoulders.

BETSY DAVIS, mid 40s, stands beside him. Her hair is pulled back by a headband and her clothing is about two decades too young for her. Her gestures are excessively theatrical.

BETSY DAVIS

Ladies and gentlemen. As you know,  
I am Betsy Davis, the drama teacher  
at Atherton High School.

The audience politely CLAPS.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

I'm very pleased to introduce someone whom you know very well. His professional name is Todd Star, but we all know him as Todd Peedleman.

The audience enthusiastically claps.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

When Todd left Atherton, we knew he was destined for great things. And great things he's done. Those who have followed his career, and isn't that everyone,

(smiles broadly)

Know he's played roles such as Mr. Zookeeper in the off-Broadway production of "Curious George."

The audience APPLAUDS appreciatively.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

He was Mr. Jeepers, the sad gerbil, in the musical "Gerbils."

As she says "sad gerbil" she runs each of her index fingers down her cheeks.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

And, he is best known as the confused customer in the Pepsodent Toothpaste commercial.

The audience explodes with APPLAUSE. She hands Todd a tube of toothpaste.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

Todd, here is that tube of toothpaste you were looking for.

She laughs at her own cleverness. The audience laughs heartily.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

Girls, he's still available.

Todd smiles and waves.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

Now, Todd is only with us for a brief stay this time. Tomorrow, he will be taking off again for New York where he will be auditioning for a Hoover Vacuum Cleaner spot. Let's cross our fingers.

She crosses her fingers for the audience.

BETSY DAVIS (CONT'D)

Tonight, he'll be recreating the role he made famous at Atherton High-King Arthur in the "Quest of King Arthur." Would you like to say anything before we begin, Todd?

Todd leans forward.

TODD

Thank you, Miss Davis. Everyone, enjoy the show!

The audience CHEERS and APPLAUDS while Todd runs behind the curtain. Miss Davis walks down the steps of the stage and takes a seat up front. After a few moments, the curtain opens in a jerky manner. Todd, the crown upon his head, holds a scepter in the air above him.

TODD (CONT'D)

When I, King Arthur, have a task to ponder, I ask myself "What would Merlin say?"

LATER

Todd and four other actors dressed as medieval soldiers with breastplates, etc. stand in the middle of the stage. Todd speaks. His head is tilted up.

TODD

My sweet queen, Guinevere. Neither Heaven nor Hell will stay my quest. I will find you or perish in the attempt.

We see a young man, MICHAEL, climb the steps onto the stage. As Todd notices the young man, he becomes unnerved.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Todd! Todd!

SOLDIER 1

(whispering to Todd)  
What's he doing here?

The audience is puzzled as well and a low BUZZ can be heard in the audience.

TODD

(looking up)  
Oh, wicked Esmerelda! Have you bewitched us? Make these visions vanish and guide me to my fair Queen Guinevere.

Michael walks up to the group of actors.

MICHAEL

How dare you ignore me, Todd! Did you really think you could leave tomorrow and pretend I didn't exist? I think I deserve better than this!

Todd whispers to the other actors.

TODD

We've got to do something. When I give the word, rush him off the stage.

The other actors nod "okay."

TODD (CONT'D)

Witch Esmerelda! You do not fool me by taking human form. We will vanquish you! Men! Charge!

As the actors/soldiers start toward Michael, Michael rushes toward them first. The actors/soldiers throw down their plastic swords and run offstage, leaving Todd and Michael alone. Michael walks slowly toward Todd.

MICHAEL

I gave up everything to support your career.

Todd, sweating profusely, backs up.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Now you spend most of your time in New York and I'm not good enough for you and your actor friends. Well, Todd Star, I seem to remember I was good enough for you at David's party when you begged me to . . .

Trying to distract the audience, Todd breaks into song.

TODD

*Oklahoma, where the wind comes  
sweepin' down the plain*

Still wearing his crown, he pumps both arms together in time to the music. As Michael becomes more aggressive, Todd backs away until Michael chases him around the stage.

TODD (CONT'D)

*And the wavin' wheat can sure smell  
sweet when the wind comes right behind  
the rain.*

Still singing, Todd, with Michael in pursuit, scrambles down the steps off the stage and runs down the aisle out of the square. Soon the singing and the clamor fade in the distance.

After a few moments Soldier 1 decides to take advantage of the situation. He walks onto the stage and turns to the astonished audience. He takes off his helmet.

SOLDIER 1  
Ladies and gentlemen. This is a little something I've been working on. Please indulge.

He curls himself up on the stage. Slowly, he uncurls. And finally, he wriggles himself to a standing position.

SOLDIER 1 (CONT'D)  
It is 2:31 a.m. on a cold, November morning. I am born.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE -- LATER

In the b.g. the stage is empty and the people have mostly left. A few men in soldier uniforms and others mill about below the stage. The family walks away from the town square back toward the motel.

TRUDY  
So did King Arthur ever find his queen?

HAROLD  
No, but I think his queen found him.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- MORNING

Mrs. Pratt and the family have resumed their usual places inside the automobile. Trudy still wears curlers in her hair.

HAROLD  
Hey, gang. You know, I was thinking. We don't necessarily have to go all the way to Miami. We could just drive where the road takes us.

Julie and the children look at Harold like he's lost his mind.

JULIE  
*What* are you talking about?

HAROLD  
Just in case you want to consider the options. I know how you hate to get sunburned and get sand in your hair. I just want you to be happy.

TRUDY  
We've been looking forward to going to the beach.

HAROLD

I know. I'm not saying . . .

JULIE

And your parents are expecting us.  
How could you even consider not going?

OAKLEY

Dad! I want to see the alligators!

As the vehicle makes a turn, a woman stands on the corner, holding a Chihuahua in her arms. The dog has a red collar and wears a dog sweater.

HAROLD

All right! All right! I'm just  
saying I'm flexible.

Distracted, Harold comes very close to the woman.

JULIE

Watch it! Do you want me to drive?

HAROLD

No! I'm okay. Really.

The woman stands in the street and shouts. She no longer has the dog.

WOMAN WITH DOG

Pee Wee! Pee Wee!

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- LATER

The automobile pulls into the driveway in front of a snack stand. Restrooms are visibly accessible from the outside of the snack stand window.

HAROLD

Everybody out. Time for a break.

Everyone opens a door and climbs out. Harold gets out and walks around in front of the automobile. The children walk behind him. As he walks in front of the car, he sees the Chihuahua pasted on the front of the grill. It wears a red collar and a sweater. He quickly positions himself in front of the stiff dog until the children walk past.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF RESTROOMS -- MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Pratt and Julie stand outside the restrooms and wait for the children. In the distance, Harold pries the Chihuahua off the grill with a stick.

MRS. PRATT

What in the world is Mr. Levit doing?

JULIE

I think he's prying a dog off the car grill.

MRS. PRATT

(matter-of factly)

Oh.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF RESTROOMS -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold walks up and past Julie and Mrs. Pratt. The children walk about behind them.

HAROLD

I think I'll check out the restroom.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

As Harold washes his hands, he looks up to see a pay telephone on the wall

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold leans against the wall, speaks into the telephone handset. Operator's voice is filtered.

HAROLD

(into the phone)

Yes, operator. Tell her it's a collect call from Harold Levit.

There is CLICKING and the phone RINGS. The ring abruptly ends when someone answers.

INTERCUT HAROLD AND GRANDMA LEVIT AND GRANDPA LEVIT

Seated in her living room, Grandma Levit holds the phone to her ear.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

I have a collect call from a Mr. Harold Levit.

GRANDMA LEVIT

You tell my son if he wants to talk to me, he should call me himself.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

This is a collect call.

GRANDMA LEVIT

What?! He wants me to pay for the telephone call?

Grandpa Levit gets on the extension.

GRANDPA LEVIT

Anna, what the yelling about? Is that you, Harold?

GRANDMA LEVIT

No, it's that shikseh calling for Harold, asking for money.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

I do not have to listen to you call me names.

GRANDPA LEVIT

He must be having money problems.

Harold closes his eyes and hangs up the phone.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF RESTROOMS -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold walks toward the automobile. The rest follow, carrying drinks.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- MOMENTS LATER

The children get in the automobile carrying hot chocolate. The others are already seated, waiting to go.

JULIE

You kids be careful with that hot chocolate.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

We didn't know it at the time, but we kids weren't the only ones getting their fingers burned.

The automobile abruptly starts, causing the cups of hot chocolate to splash about the back seat. As the rear of the vehicle speeds onto the highway, SCREAMS emanate from the back seat.

EXT. RURAL COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

The Levit automobile slowly travels down a dirt road past intermittent wooden-frame houses. Trees and the occasional mailbox line the road. The car pulls to the side of the road and parks.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- CONTINUOUS

Harold sits behind the wheel and studies the map.

JULIE

Not that you'll listen, but you're going in the wrong direction.



HAROLD

I know this is the right road. We should have passed Hog Holler or whatever that place is twenty miles ago.

MRS. PRATT

Mr. Levit. If you don't mind, the name of the town is Hogston.

Harold ignores her.

HAROLD

Why don't they put road signs up?  
(beat)  
Maybe no one around here can read.

JULIE

Hardy har har. Maybe it's an intelligence test. They want to see if you can find them. How are you doing so far, Harold?

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Uh-oh. The road was taking its toll.

HAROLD

Didn't your cousin J.D. give you directions?

JULIE

Yes, he did. But not to Mrs. Pratt's sister. And you know he isn't my cousin. He's my mother's sister's husband's son's wife's brother. He's like a brother to me.

HAROLD

Uh, whatever.

As the vehicle moves back onto the road two farmers come into view ahead. One sits on a tractor talking to the other who stands beside him.

JULIE

Let's do something out of the ordinary. Ask someone for directions, like them.

The automobile slows and stops beside the farmers.

HAROLD

Can either of you gents get me to Hog Holler? Make that Hogston.

FARMER BESIDE TRACTOR

Never heard of neither one.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

That was a bad sign.

HAROLD

I know you people don't get around much, but it's only a few miles from here.

The farmer just stares at him.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

It's about 30 miles north of Jacksonville?

FARMER BESIDE TRACTOR

You don't say?

Julie interjects.

JULIE

Pardon me, Sir. Where is Jacksonville?

FARMER BESIDE TRACTOR

I'd say about an hour and a half north from here.

HAROLD

What? We're south of Jacksonville?

FARMER BESIDE TRACTOR

Yep. Looks like you folks took the wrong road. Where you coming from?

JULIE

We live down in Texas, but I grew up in Tennessee.

HAROLD

(whispers to Julie)

For Crissakes! We're not inviting them to dinner. Let's get out of here before we wind up at some Klan meeting.

JULIE

It's called being sociable. Your way . . . *ain't working*.

HAROLD

Well, maybe if I'd had decent directions I'd have a fighting chance. I mean "turn left after the clump of trees?"

MRS. PRATT

If you'd been watching closer, I'm sure you would have seen them.

HAROLD

I looked on the roadmap, Mrs. Pratt. No trees mentioned.

FARMER BESIDE TRACTOR

No wonder you all get lost. Nobody shuts their mouth long enough to concentrate on where to go.

Upon hearing the farmer, everyone sits in surprised silence.

FARMER BESIDE TRACTOR (CONT'D)

To get to the road to Jacksonville, take the next three rights you come to.

Talking to himself, the farmer walks away.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- LATER

Bored, Oakley twirls a rubber ball in his hands while Trudy reads the ingredients on her lipstick tube. Without looking up, an annoyed Trudy flicks the ball out of his hands. Mrs. Pratt sits in her usual place in the front seat, her head leans back against the seat and eyes closed.

MRS. PRATT

(with sing-song voice)

. . . and I told my niece that she should sell that house and move out of the city. She could be raped and murdered outside her own house . . .

Oakley bounces the rubber ball off the back seat side window. After a seemingly long period of constant bouncing, Mrs. Pratt stops speaking and looks at Oakley.

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)

(to Oakley)

Young man, I would appreciate it if you would cease bouncing the ball.

Oakley puts the ball down.

OAKLEY

Trudy, do you want to play the word game.

TRUDY

I must be desperate. Sure. You go first.

A	OAKLEY
Donkey	TRUDY
Flew	OAKLEY
Over	TRUDY
The	OAKLEY
Desert	TRUDY
Because	OAKLEY
It	TRUDY
Saw	OAKLEY

Mrs. Pratt grows increasingly angry.

Dinosaurs	TRUDY
Licking	OAKLEY
Cactus	TRUDY
Which	OAKLEY
Grew	TRUDY
In	OAKLEY

MRS. PRATT  
 Stop it! Stop it! Can't you two  
 just sit quietly?

TRUDY  
 (quietly)  
 Pat Boone's

OAKLEY

(quietly)

Nose.

JULIE

Children!

After a few beats they toss the rubber ball to each other. Trudy misses it and it bounces against Mrs. Pratt's head. She is obviously agitated, but doesn't say anything.

The two children giggle, but try to remain quiet. The two throw the ball to each other a few more times. Again, the ball bounces off Mrs. Pratt's skull who still doesn't say anything.

The two suddenly stop what they're doing and look at each other. Trudy pulls scarves out of her purse and hands one to Oakley. They each tie their scarf around their nose and mouth. Harold and the children roll down their windows.

Julie turns toward the back seat.

JULIE (CONT'D)

My God, Suzy! You're going to suffocate us all.

Trudy looks down Suzy's diaper.

TRUDY

Mom, Suzy's diaper is clean.

JULIE

Are you sure?

TRUDY

She's clean.

Suddenly, everyone turns toward Mrs. Pratt who has become enraged.

MRS. PRATT

What do you expect with all those delinquents torturing me! No God-fearing Christian could stand it without something happening. It's just a miracle they haven't killed me yet.

She points her finger at Harold and Julie.

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)

And if you tried to instill just a smidgen of discipline, maybe they'd act like human beings.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- MOMENTS LATER

The automobile pulls over and stops in front of a country store with a public telephone out front.

MRS. PRATT

This will be fine. My sister can pick me up from here.

She gathers up her belongings, takes her picture of the Pope off the dashboard, and gets out of the car. Tearful, she stands a few paces from the car.

MRS. PRATT (CONT'D)

I know I was in the way. I just tried to do what is right. But none of you appreciated my advice. I may be 70 years old, but that doesn't mean I don't have anything to teach children.

She gets a tissue out of her purse and blows her nose.

JULIE

I know, Mrs. Pratt. We appreciate you. We're just tired from driving.  
(to Trudy and Oakley)  
Kids, tell Mrs. Pratt you're sorry.

TRUDY

We're sorry, Mrs. Pratt.

OAKLEY

We didn't mean nothing, Mrs. Pratt.

HAROLD

We enjoyed you coming with us. We're sorry if we were inconsiderate.

MRS. PRATT

Well, I guess what's done is done. There still might be hope for those kids with the right training.

JULIE

Yes, Mrs. Pratt.

Mrs. Pratt picks up her bag and walks toward the public telephone. She stops and turns back toward the stopped automobile.

MRS. PRATT

Goodbye.

The family waves back at her and she continues on to the telephone. The automobile then drives off.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- CONTINUOUS

JULIE

She's gone!

Everyone erupts in CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

It's one of those ironies that Mrs. Pratt, who wanted to do good, did us the most good by leaving. She made us realize we were more alike than different. Like a family.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- DAY

The family has resumed their trip as the automobile travels down a two-lane highway. A sign reading "Roadside Cafe Ahead" appears on the side of the highway.

JULIE

Harold, I'm hungry. Why don't we stop at that cafe.

The Roadside Cafe comes into view. A typical "greasy spoon" diner, an old pick-up truck is parked in front on the gravel parking lot.

HAROLD

Roadside Cafe. Catchy name.  
(affects a British  
accent)  
My Michelin Guide only gives this establishment three stars.

JULIE

Pull in.

HAROLD

As you wish, my lady.

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE -- MOMENTS LATER

The diner has a one-room eating area. Behind the counter is a window where the cook sets his dishes after they are prepared.

The MANAGER, a heavy-set woman, late 20s, sits behind the register. Her name tag reads "Manager" and 5 gold stars are carefully displayed. Her hair is pulled up and secured with a ribbon. The COOK wears a dirty, white shirt with the sleeves rolled up and a food-stained, white apron. He has two-stars on his name tag.

Patrons sit at one of the tables. The Levits sit at a table near the counter and pick up menus. The cook loudly sets two plates in the window in front of the manager.

COOK  
Two cheeseburgers.

The manager leans with one arm on the counter and stares at him.

MANAGER  
How many times do I have to tell you to say "Order up" when the order's ready?

COOK  
You see the food. You see it's "up."  
What's the difference?

MANAGER  
It's procedure. You got to go by procedure.

The cook throws down his towel. The manager sees a teenage busboy standing nearby.

MANAGER (CONT'D)  
(to busboy)  
What're you doing standing around.  
Go clean those tables!

The busboy's name tag has only one star on it.

LEVIT'S TABLE -- CONTINUOUS

Harold and Julie look up from their menus to listen.

COOK (O.S.)  
Ever since they made you manager,  
you've been too big for your britches-  
and you've got some big britches.

HAROLD  
(with mock  
sophisticated accent)  
Should we order an aperitif before  
the meal?

MANAGER (O.S.)  
Either do it the way I say, or I'll  
write you up!

COOK (O.S.)  
Who cares, dimwit!

JULIE  
Perhaps the waiter can bring us the  
wine list.



CAFE COUNTER -- CONTINUOUS

A customer approaches the manager.

CUSTOMER

I think this steak is a little underdone. Could you cook it a little more?

MANAGER

(smiles)

I'm sorry, Sir. I'll take care of it and bring it to your table.

As the customer walks off, she turns to the cook. Her smile changes into a snarl.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Is it asking too much of you to actually cook the food?

The cook picks up the steak with his fingers and takes a big bite out of it.

COOK

Tastes okay to me.

He throws the steak back in the plate.

LEVIT'S TABLE -- CONTINUOUS

Even though everyone holds a menu, no one reads it. They all stare ahead, listening.

MANAGER (O.S.)

Why you big, ugly sack of -

A plate CRASHES against the wall.

JULIE

I hear their Chicken Kiev is not what it used to be.

MANAGER (O.S.)

The cost of that steak is coming out of your paycheck!

HAROLD

Are you finished reviewing this establishment?

Julie nods and stands up. Everyone quickly stands up and leaves.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I warned you it only had three stars.

JULIE

That's okay. We'll pick up some  
bologna and bread down the road.

Oakley slows and a sick look comes over him.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- AFTERNOON

All the occupants are quiet. Trudy carefully takes her  
curlers out of hair and brushes the curls into a hairdo.  
She examines each brush stroke in a hand-held mirror.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

This was very strange. Trudy without  
her curlers. It had to be Leon, aka  
Elvis Lite. Her heart was going  
pitter-patter as she anxiously awaited  
being in the presence of someone who  
actually played in a band. There  
was a lesson here somewhere, but I  
had other more pressing concerns.

OAKLEY

Dad, I need to use the bathroom.

There is no response. Oakley watches as the automobile passes  
a restaurant and service station.

OAKLEY (CONT'D)

Dad! I got to pee!

HAROLD

Wait until we get to J.D.'s.

Oakley is desperate.

OAKLEY

I can't wait!

HAROLD

Use the empty Coke bottle in the  
back.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Now here was a classic example of  
the difference between how kids and  
adults are treated. I didn't ever  
remember Dad having to pee in a Coke  
bottle. But then again, I think I  
was a better fit.

Oakley sits and faces the car door in the corner of the back  
seat with a Coke bottle between his legs. As he finishes he  
hands the full bottle to Julie in the front seat. The bottle  
is filled to the brim. She very gingerly rolls down the  
window and pours the urine out. A SCREAM quickly follows.

We pan back to see urine splattered across the half-rolled down backseat car window and onto Trudy's face. Her hair and face drips urine.

EXT. SHELTON FARMHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

The Levit automobile slows down while passing the mailbox, upon which is written by hand "Sheltons." The automobile turns into the dirt driveway which leads to a white, slightly ramshackle clapboard farmhouse. The road leads to the back of the house.

On a porch attached to the back of the house, a large man, J.D., 50s, sits in a rocker. He wears overalls and a cowboy hat. A rusted car without a hood or wheels sits in the yard several yards from the porch.

The Levits slow to a stop near the porch. The automobile sits without sign of life. After several beats the car door slowly cracks open. A blanket slides to the ground. Then, a ball rolls out and bounces to the ground. Oakley slides out, headfirst. The other doors slowly open and the others slowly limp out looking like shipwreck survivors.

J.D.

(to Winnie)

Winnie, come out! I think some folks were in some kind of accident.

JULIE

Shut up, J.D. It's me.

WINNIE, late 40s and plump, LEON, 17, and CORKY, 9, come out on the porch.

J.D.

Well, Lord Amighty. Guess who finally decided to sneak up on my back porch to see her cousin J.D.

Harold gives Julie a "told-you-so" look.

J.D. (CONT'D)

(to Harold)

And this must be your new husband.

Harold shakes J.D.'s hand.

HAROLD

Harold. New to you. Back home I'm already old and worn out. These are the children, Trudy, and "new" kids Oakley and Suzy.

WINNIE

What a sweet bunch of youngins.

She stretches her arms out.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

Trudy, baby, why don't you give your Winnie a big hug. It seems you were just starting school the last time I saw you.

Embarrassed and her hair stringy from urine, Trudy keeps her head down and rushes past Winnie and Leon with a small suitcase in her hand.

TRUDY

I need to use your restroom.

LEON

(to Winnie, smiling earnestly)

She's not too friendly, but her perfume sure smells good.

INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM -- MORNING

Striped wallpaper cover the walls of the bedroom. An old iron bed is pushed up against the open window as the breeze flows through flimsy curtains. Roosters CROW outside.

Oakley lies in bed with a view of the outdoors through the window. Also in bed with him are Leon and Corky, both asleep. Corky lies next to Oakley. Oakley gently wakes, stretches his arms and looks out the window.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

This wasn't bad. Fresh air.  
Nature. Quiet.

He gets up and walks to the bathroom. He opens the

BATHROOM DOOR

And discovers J.D. on the toilet reading the Farmers Gazette.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

J.D. sitting on the toilet.

OAKLEY

Sorry. I didn't know . . .

J.D. doesn't react and continues to read his magazine. Oakley shuts the door.

INT. DINING ROOM -- LATER

All the children are seated around the table, along with Harold. J.D., securing the shoulder straps on his overalls, pulls out a chair and sits down. Winnie and Julie bring food into the dining room.

Winnie sets down towering plates of biscuits, ham, grits and bowls of gravy. Julie pours iced tea into glasses.

J.D.

Julie, you won't recognize Dereksberg. We got a new city hall. The old one fell down. We got a new donut shop and grocery store.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

A bustling metropolis.

J.D.

Remember Vernon Carver?

JULIE

The boy who knocked down the barber shop with that tractor?

J.D.

The one and the same. He went to Nashville to be a guitar player. He came back to Dereksberg a year later and moved into a trailer in back of his mama's house. That boy is so lazy he'd marry a pregnant woman.

WINNIE

We thought we'd show you all around your old stompin' grounds.

TRUDY

I thought maybe I'd stay and watch Leon practice with his band.

JULIE

How about you, Oakley? Do you want to stay and play with Corky while we're gone?

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Hmmm. Did I want to spend the day with J.D. and Winnie in beautiful downtown Hooterville or check out the farm?

Oakley shrugs his shoulders. As the last plate is set on the table, J.D. pauses and looks at Corky.

J.D.

Corky, say the blessing.

CORKY

Thank you, Jesus, for the meat. Thank you for the eggs we eat. Thank you for the apple pie. If someone eats mine, hope they die.

EVERYONE

Amen.

Suddenly, arms are thrust in front of the Levits as forks quickly puncture meat and biscuits are grabbed in bunches. After it becomes apparent that the food is dwindling, the Levits jump in with their forks and scavenge for their food.

EXT. BACK PORCH OF FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Seated, Leon strums a guitar. Trudy sits on a stool at his feet, barely concealing her awe. As he strums he pretends to ignore Trudy's gaze.

TRUDY

I heard you're getting a record contract.

LEON

I 'spect so.

TRUDY

You must be excited. You might become rich and famous.

Leon obviously enjoys the attention.

LEON

I already played live on the radio station in Beaverton, you know. I guess I'm already a media star, in a way. One of these days, I hope to be famous like George Jones or Hank Williams.

TRUDY

I thought I knew all of the rock and roll stars. Are they new?

Leon ignores her question and continues to slowly strum.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

I sing back home. Every Sunday in church. Baptist church.

LEON

You're in the choir?

TRUDY

No, not exactly. I sing in the audience. But I've been told I have a very distinctive voice.

There is a noticeable silence.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Have you ever met Elvis?

LEON

No, but I met Ernest Tubb after a concert at the VFW hall last year.

More silence.

TRUDY

What do people here do for fun?

LEON

Besides go to dances and the like? Oh, play sports. Go to church. Church is a big deal here.

(beat)

You know we don't see too many Jews in these parts. If you don't mind me askin', I've always wondered something. How come Jews don't want to be like the rest of us? You know, more American and Christian-like.

TRUDY

Why are you asking me?

LEON

I figured you should know . . . with a name like "Levit."

TRUDY

I don't know anything about such matters.

Leon laughs and turns away.

LEON

You didn't know "Levit" is a Jew name?

Leon turns back and stares at Trudy.

TRUDY

Well. I guess now that you mention it, my step-father MAY have some Jewish ancestry . . . somewhere.

She looks over to the porch railing and sees a roadmap titled "Florida" on it.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Anyway, he's my step-father, not my real father.

EXT. GRASSY WOODED AREA NEAR FARM -- DAY

Oakley, Corky and GEORGE walk along a path past trees and shrubs. All wear t-shirts and shorts, except for George, who wears overalls.

George is the same age as Corky, but is taller and somewhat husky.

CORKY

(to Oakley)

Do you want to see my dog, Tiger?  
We buried him over there.

Corky leads the boys to an area on the ground where a large piece of cardboard protrudes from under fresh dirt. Corky kicks away the dirt and lifts the cardboard for the other boys to see. The boys stare at the contents.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

A good host likes to keep his guests entertained.

Corky lays the cardboard back down and kicks dirt back over Tiger's grave. The boys sit in a circle on the ground and look straight ahead.

GEORGE

(to Oakley)

You a Jew?

OAKLEY

(slightly surprised)

Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

An honest answer.

GEORGE

The Jews killed Christ.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

That was a new one on me. I knew I didn't have anything to do with it.

OAKLEY

They catch who did it?

George shrugs his shoulders.

GEORGE

Dunno.

After several beats, the boys slowly stand up and walk till they reach a steep grassy slope next to a large pond. The boys lie on their backs against the slope opposite the pond and gaze upward. Suddenly, a SPLASH comes from behind the slope. A nude young man splashes in the pond, clothes piled on the bank. A young woman stands on the bank and giggles.

MALE SWIMMER

Come in!



As she peels off each article of clothing, three heads peer over the slope, agape. When she drops the last item of clothing and jumps into the pond, the boys sink behind the slope.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- DAY

J.D. and Harold ride in the front, Julie and Winnie in the back. Julie holds Suzy beside her as they drive through Dereksberg.

J.D.

How y'all like our new Chevy? First new car I ever got.

WINNIE

J.D. bought it with his settlement.

J.D.

They gave me some money for losing a ball. A compressor blew up at work and blew one of those suckers off. They never did find it. It probably stuck to the ceiling. One of these days it'll probably drop down into someone's coffee.

(guffaws to Winnie)

You still like me. Don't you, baby? One's all I need.

WINNIE

One's all I need, too.

Winnie looks at Julie and smiles. Julie forces a smile.

JULIE

I hope Oakley's all right. I think he wanted to come with us.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRASSY SLOPE -- DAY

The nude young man and woman lie on the bank of the pond, vigorously having sex. The three boys, hidden behind foliage, watch intently.

BACK TO:

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- DAY

J.D.

(pointing to a building)

That furniture store is where your cousin Merrill worked. We bought our couch from him, from that very store.

HAROLD

What were the chances?

The automobile slows in front of a vacant lot.

J.D.

Here's where the cafe used to be.  
Burned down.

The automobile moves forward and slows again in front of a barn-like structure.

J.D. (CONT'D)

I was standing in front of the door  
one time and a pig came out and ran  
between my legs.

HAROLD

You know, J.D., I feel we should be  
paying you for this tour.

J.D.

No, no. Think nothing of it. We're  
kin.

INT. JODY'S BARN -- DAY

Leon, guitar in hand, and Trudy enter the barn door. Two  
other boys, JODY and RICHARD, both 17, practice a few notes.  
JODY has a guitar and RICHARD has a fiddle.

LEON

Meet the Dereksberg Pickers. That's  
Jody. Richard.

Jody and Richard wave to Trudy.

TRUDY

(to Richard)  
Like Little Richard.

RICHARD

Not likely. We don't listen to race  
records.

JODY

So Leon decided to share you. You're  
even cuter than he said.

TRUDY

(demurely)  
So I see I'm the topic of  
conversation.

She walks over close to where the boys stand and politely  
sits down. Leon walks over to the other boys and leans  
against a post.

RICHARD

Leon said you all are from Texas.  
Do y'all ride horses?

Sensing her growing power, Trudy pats her hair in place.

TRUDY

Silly boy. That's only in the movies.  
Our, um, estate is in the city. We  
don't have horses where I live.

Trudy thinks back.

BEGIN FLASHBACK.

EXT. LEVIT HOME -- AFTERNOON

Oakley sits in the saddle wearing an ill-fitting cowboy hat.  
A photographer stands in front of him, gesticulating.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

TRUDY

It's really very sophisticated there.

Awkward silence.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Where do you boys play?

JODY

Mainly at the Saturday dance in  
Beaverton. We're the best players  
hereabouts.

TRUDY

How does it feel when you're on stage?

JODY

It's like a hundred people patting  
ya on the back at one time.

TRUDY

Fabulous.

The boys tune their instruments.

LEON

Why don't you stick around. We're  
gonna get tuned up and then play  
some.

TRUDY

Sure. If you'll excuse me a minute.  
(MORE)

TRUDY (CONT'D)

(to Jody)

Do you have a powder room I can use?

JODY

No, I don't think we do.

RICHARD

She's talking about your danged bathroom, Jody. That's what ladies call it.

JODY

It's in the house around the corner.

TRUDY

Thank you.

Trudy sashays out the door.

EXT. JODY'S BARN -- LATER

As Trudy starts to enter the barn, she realizes the boys are talking about her. She stops to listen before entering.

INT. JODY'S BARN -- CONTINUOUS

RICHARD

. . . I don't know. Maybe she got a nose job. And who says she would even want to go out with you?

JODY

All them Jew girls would love to go out with a white boy like me.

RICHARD

Only ugly Jew girls.

LEON

She says she's not a Jew. Her step-daddy is. She made that real plain. I don't blame her, though. Who wants to be Miss Lipschitz?

All the boys break into laughter.

JODY

I betcha that old kike makes everybody kick in for gas money.

They all laugh again.

LEON

I actually feel kind of sorry for the old guy.

(MORE)

LEON (CONT'D)

He raises a kid and she doesn't even claim him as her real daddy.

EXT. JODY'S BARN -- CONTINUOUS

Trudy, downcast, slowly backs up and turns around to walk away.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN DOWNTOWN DEREKSBERG -- DAY

J.D., Winnie, Harold and Julie walk down the sidewalk. Harold carries Suzy against his shoulder. The wooden storefront buildings and their occupants haven't changed in decades. Julie sees an old man ahead who sits in a rocker in front of one of the stores.

JULIE

There's Mr. Johnston. I haven't seen him in who knows how many years.

They stroll past the old man.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Hello, Mr. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston stares directly ahead, without looking at Julie.

MR. JOHNSTON

Hello, Julie.

They continue to walk down the sidewalk.

HAROLD

Was that it?

JULIE

We had our say.

They approach a bench where upon sits a pretty young woman. The young woman picks up her purse and confidently walks away. The group watches from behind as she sensually sways from side to side with each step.

J.D.

Oo-wee. If I had that swing in my backyard, I'd ride in it every day.

He walks over to where the woman had sat and bends down and sniffs.

WINNIE

Why, you jackass. If we didn't have company I'd cut off what little you have left in your shorts.

J.D.

Now, Mama, you know I'm just playing.  
You're gonna leave my puppy alone,  
aren't ya?

He looks at Harold and Julie and laughs.

WINNIE

(mock anger)

You just watch it now.

J.D.

Listen, Mama. I got to get me some  
cigarettes from the drug store over  
there.

(to Harold)

Want to go with me, Chief?

HAROLD

(to Julie)

We'll be right back.

The men turn and walk toward the drug store. Winnie shouts  
to J.D.

WINNIE

Pick me up some Marlboros.

Winnie and Julie, along with Suzy, walk down the street.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

How's it feel to be back home?

JULIE

Like stepping into an old photograph  
that I've looked at a thousand times,  
but one where I don't belong anymore.  
My life has changed a lot since I  
left Dereksberg.

WINNIE

I imagine so. You've had two  
husbands, three kids and lived all  
over.

(beat)

Harold seems like a real nice man.

JULIE

Let me ask you. Does it bother you  
when J.D. goes on, you know . . . ?

WINNIE

Like when he ogles women so that his  
dern tongue almost flops on the  
ground?

JULIE

Kinda like that.

WINNIE

That's just J.D. having a good time. If he couldn't get a reaction out of me, he'd stop doing it. I know he cares about me more than anything else. As long as I know that, everything else works itself out.

Julie puts her head down.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

What's wrong, baby. Was it something I said?

JULIE

No. I'm all right.

MOMENTS LATER

J.D. approaches from a distance.

J.D.

Hey, Mama. Look at the goodies I brought you.

J.D. walks up with an armload of cigarette cartons, Harold at his side.

HAROLD

Guess what we're having for dinner tonight?

JULIE

In these parts, they consider tobacco a food group.

INT. SHELTON LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Winnie and Julie put dishes up in the cabinets while J.D. and Harold sit at the table. A cat is stretched out on the floor at J.D.'s foot.

J.D.

I never believed that old notion about a cat being like a woman till this cat started hanging around. She'd come around me caterwauling for food. But when I got the food out to put in her bowl there was food in there already. She just wanted to see *me* put some in it. Now if that's not just like a woman, I don't know what is.

Winnie and Julie move behind J.D. to listen.

J.D. (CONT'D)

You sometimes wonder if they're all worth the trouble. But then you watch the cat slowly rise from her pillow, her sleek figure risin' and stretchin'. Then you watch her glide over to you and slowly rub against you. Then you figure, yep, they're worth it.

Winnie, standing behind J.D., rubs against him.

WINNIE

Meow.

J.D.

Mama, you're gonna kill this old man. But you can't live forever.  
(laughs)

J.D. stands.

J.D. (CONT'D)

Mama, bring your daddy his banjo, won't you?

JULIE

(to Trudy)

Where's your brother?

TRUDY

He went out on the porch.

HAROLD

I'll get him.

EXT. BACK PORCH OF SHELTON HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Harold walks out onto the porch to see Oakley sitting on the steps. Harold comes over and sits down beside him.

HAROLD

It's awfully nice out here, isn't it? You can see all the stars out here in the country. Fresh breeze.

They sit and look at the scenery from the porch.

OAKLEY

Dad?

HAROLD

Yes, son?



OAKLEY

Am I a Jew?

HAROLD

Hmm. I don't know. Let's see. I'm Jewish and your mother is Hillbilly. Racially, that would make you a Jew-billy. But, since your mother drags you to church every Sunday, your religion would be Baptist. Does that make sense?

OAKLEY

I guess.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Actually, I didn't have a clue.

The two sit quietly for a few moments.

OAKLEY

Dad?

HAROLD

Yes, son?

OAKLEY

Did Jews kill Jesus?

HAROLD

Whoa! Who said that?

OAKLEY

A friend of Corky's.

HAROLD

Now I want you to listen to me and remember what I tell you. There's always going to be some people who dislike you for what you are or what they think you are. Never take their insults personally. Just look at them for what they are- ignorant, weak people who want to feel strong by trying to make someone else feel weak. You'll learn that truly strong people don't need to prove their strength. Be brave, son, and never let anyone make you forget how special you are. Oh, and by the way, Jesus was a Jew.

Harold stands up and puts his arm around Oakley's shoulder. Both of them walk toward the door to the living room.

INT. SHELTON LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Both families sit in chairs gathered in a circle. J.D. sits in his rocking chair with his banjo in his lap. Leon picks a few notes on his guitar. Suzy bounces up and down on Julie's lap. The others laugh and clap, except for Trudy who sits quietly with her hands in her lap.

J.D.

Trudy, darlin', your mother says you sing in church. So join in, if you want.

TRUDY

Thank you, Cousin J.D. I do sing, but I don't go to church since I'm Jewish. Isn't that right, Daddy?

Harold and Julie look at each other in astonishment.

J.D.

(to Leon)

Boy, play where you came from.

Leon picks a country-style opening on his guitar. Suddenly, J.D. joins him on the banjo and the two meld their playing together, to everyone's delight.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

As J.D.'s banjo wove melodies around Leon's guitar strings, I couldn't help thinking life was good here. In a way, it felt like home. But in other ways, I didn't belong. In every paradise, there's always a snake hiding, waiting to take a nip at your delusions.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- DAY

The Levit automobile travels down a two-lane Florida highway. A roadside sign reads "Seminole Wonder Land - 10 miles."

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Like Burma Shave signs, these countdowns to adventure beckoned every kid who traveled down America's roads and filled every parent with dread.

MOMENTS LATER

Another roadside sign reads "Seminole Wonder Land- 5 miles."

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

We'd already passed by Freaks of Nature Zoo and Hitler's Death Car Museum, so I didn't have much hope that we'd stop for this one.

MOMENTS LATER

A roadside sign reads "Seminole Wonder Land - 1 mile."

HAROLD

You kids want to stop?

The children look at each other in wonderment and some concern. Then, they cheer their approval.

MOMENTS LATER

They drive past the sign which announces, "Seminole Wonder Land" and park in front of a half dozen or so scattered small structures. Some of the structures are log frames, topped with palmetto thatch roofs.

They exit the automobile as an elderly SEMINOLE MAN greets the family.

SEMINOLE MAN

Welcome to Seminole Wonder Land.  
Please feel free to look around. We  
will have alligator wrestling in 15  
minutes.

He points to a fenced-in area in back. As the family walks toward the "arena," they pass a kiosk with the sign "Native Art" above it. On the shelves are baskets, cloth-wrapped dolls dressed in Native American clothing, souvenir plates, and alligators dressed in clothes and posed in human positions. One of the alligators wears glasses.

TRUDY

So does this mean if we dig up ancient  
Indian graves we'll find mummified  
families of tiny alligators sitting  
at a tiny dinner table?

HAROLD

Yes, it does. They'll be eating on  
little plates with "Florida" painted  
on them.

As the family browses the items, the elderly Seminole man argues with a YOUNG SEMINOLE MAN in b.g. Finally, the younger man shakes his head and resignedly walks away from the elderly one. The elderly man walks toward the tourists.

## OLD SEMINOLE MAN

The alligator wrestling will now begin. Please follow me.

EXT. FENCED-IN ALLIGATOR PIT -- CONTINUOUS

The young Seminole man stands in the middle of the fenced-in area. He wears Indian-style clothing over a pair of red gym shorts and a t-shirt with "Las Vegas" across the front. The bottom of the fenced-in area is covered with sand. A large, immobile alligator lies off to the side within the fence. The Levits and other tourists gather along the fence and watch from the outside.

## YOUNG SEMINOLE MAN

Welcome to Seminole Wonder Land.

The crowd lightly APPLAUDS.

## YOUNG SEMINOLE MAN (CONT'D)

Before I begin I'd like to tell you a little bit about our history. The Seminole Nation was once a great people. We occupied what is now known as the states of Georgia and Florida. Then, in 1835 the White Man decided he didn't want us here anymore and ordered everyone to leave. Our great leader Osceola led our warriors of 3,000 against 200,000 of the White Man. The White Man could not defeat him. Then, by pretending to meet with Osceola under a flag of truce, the White Man captured him.

The Seminole looks out at the crowd around the fence. He sneers at the crowd.

## YOUNG SEMINOLE MAN (CONT'D)

Now, the once proud Seminole dances for the enjoyment of the White tourist. Enjoy the show.

The crowd CLAPS and CHEERS without regard to his speech. The man faces the motionless alligator and warily walks toward it. Suddenly, he jumps to the side of the alligator and grabs it from behind. He starts rolling over and over, clinging to the back of the alligator. He grabs the mouth of the alligator and holds it shut while he rolls again.

Then, he jumps back and stands up again. The alligator has not moved during this time. The man then approaches the alligator from the side and plops on top of it. As he grabs it again, he wraps his arms around its belly.

As he turns the alligator over, one of the alligator's front legs falls off.

The man quickly brushes sand over the solitary limb. The people along the fence look at each other.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Everyone was becoming painfully aware that the alligator . . . was dead.

The man continues to flop around on the ground while holding on to the alligator.

MAN IN THE CROWD

Should we shoot it if it gets out of control?

There are some titters from the crowd. The young Seminole man looks up.

MAN IN THE CROWD (CONT'D)

Should you wrestle it or bury it?

The crowd breaks into laughter. The young man stops wrestling, stands up, and kicks the alligator in the side.

YOUNG SEMINOLE MAN

Wrestling's over. Thank you for coming.

The young man walks away from the alligator and out the gate. As the crowd drifts away, the elderly man walks up to the crowd.

OLD SEMINOLE MAN

Please put any donations in the container next to the fence.

(beat)

If you're still here Saturday, there's bingo till midnight.

EXT. ENTRANCE OF SEMINOLE WONDER LAND -- LATER

The Levits approach their automobile in the parking lot.

HAROLD

You know, that was much better than I expected. It makes me wonder what we missed at the Freaks of Nature Zoo.

JULIE

I think I have to agree with you. It was compelling, like storm disaster films.

HAROLD

More like snuff films.

As the family gets into the automobile, Oakley carries a miniature alligator wearing tiny glasses lying in a recliner, reading a book.

EXT. CITY OF MIAMI -- DAY

MONTAGE

Familiar Miami scenes, including palm tree-lined streets with Art Deco buildings, the Fountainebleu Hotel, and the beach.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Ah, Miami. Ocean Drive, the Fountainebleu Hotel, the beaches, the old people.

Several overweight, elderly people relax on the beach. Some recline in lounge chairs under umbrellas, while others are stand ankle-deep in the surf.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Back in the early '60s, the drink of choice in Miami was prune juice, not the mojito.

The Levit automobile pulls in front of a slightly dilapidated, Art Deco hotel. On the front reads "Brocken Arms." The "C" has fallen off, leaving the vague shadow of the former letter.

EXT. BROCKEN ARMS HOTEL -- DAY

The family, attired in beach wear, walk out the front of the hotel. Harold carries Suzy. Julie and Trudy carry shoulder bags. Trudy wears her bikini.

JULIE

I still think that swimsuit is awfully skimpy, Trudy.

TRUDY

Mother! All the fabulous people are wearing bikinis. Do you think Brigitte Bardot would wear a one-piece? Please!

JULIE

But, Trudy . . .

HAROLD

(to Julie)

Quiet. If the fabulous people hear you talking like this, she'll never get invited to the best parties. And then where will she be?

JULIE  
At Tupperware parties?

HAROLD  
Exactly.

TRUDY  
(dramatically)  
How long must I endure the chains of  
provincialism?

Harold and Julie look at each other with subtle smiles.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- LATER

The family strolls down the sidewalk, past souvenir shops, clothing stores and cafes. They walk up to a street side snack stand with a window open to the street. An ELDERLY LADY approaches the window tended by an ELDERLY CLERK.

HAROLD  
Whoever wants a snow cone, get in  
back of me.

Everyone crowds behind Harold as he stands behind the elderly lady.

JULIE  
So when were you planning on calling  
your mother?

HAROLD  
What's the rush? I thought we'd  
spend some quality family time  
together first. Once my mother gets  
involved, she'll want to monopolize  
all of our time.

JULIE  
Isn't that why we're here?

Harold becomes anxious.

HAROLD  
I'll call her. I promise.

ELDERLY CLERK  
(to the elderly lady)  
So what do you want?

She doesn't answer, but stares straight ahead. She looks at the menu and squints her eyes.

ELDERLY LADY  
I'll take a ham sandwich with  
provolone. No mayonnaise.

ELDERLY CLERK

Lady, this is a snow cone stand. We got snow cones.

ELDERLY LADY

And a Dr. Pepper.

ELDERLY CLERK

(shouts)

Look at me. We - got - snow - cones. Understand?

ELDERLY LADY

You-got-snow-cones. I heard you. If you stop mumbling when you talk, people could understand you.

ELDERLY CLERK

(frustrated, he shouts)

What kind of snow cone do you want?

ELDERLY LADY

Why would I want a snow cone?

Harold turns toward his family.

HAROLD

Say, why don't we skip the snow cones and pick up something later?

The family walks away.

ELDERLY CLERK (O.S.)

(shouting)

Do you want to order or not?

EXT. SIDEWALK -- LATER

The family passes by various shops as Julie slows to look at the items for sale along the sidewalk.

TRUDY

If we don't hurry, we won't have much time at the beach.

JULIE

Don't worry, Trudy, we have lots of time. Learn to enjoy the journey.

TRUDY

(derisively)

*This* is the journey?

They approach a man in front of a fish tank inhabited by baby alligators. He lifts up one that resembles a lizard with teeth. From Oakley's POV, a sign offers "Baby Alligators For Sale."



ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

This was every boy's dream. What kid wouldn't want their own pet alligator? This was a million times better than a turtle. I could walk him to school on a leash. He could guard the house like a creature from Jason and the Argonauts.

OAKLEY

Can I have one? Please!

TRUDY

What do you think, genius?

JULIE

Now wait a minute, Trudy. Let's think about it.

She turns to Oakley.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Now, Oakley. Assuming that it survives the trip home, how long do you think it'd be before it ate the dog? Three months max, wouldn't you say, Harold?

HAROLD

A pretty good guess.

JULIE

And I'd think Suzy would be gone before Godzilla here reached adulthood. Then, you'd probably be next.

HAROLD

If you were lucky, he'd eat you in two pieces. Otherwise, you'd lie in his stomach, still alive.

Oakley looks down, contemplates his parents' warning, then looks up.

OAKLEY

So can I, please? I'll take care of it.

JULIE

(mock serious)

I think we should get it for him.

Harold turns Oakley toward the sidewalk and pats him forward.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE -- AFTERNOON

Down the boulevards of Miami, Harold drives while Julie reads a map. The children sit in the back seat.

TRUDY

Mother, can we go back to the beach tonight? It's so romantic!

JULIE

We'll see.

HAROLD

There ought to be a hamburger joint around here somewhere.

JULIE

Why don't we stop by your parents' while we're out?

HAROLD

I need to call first. I don't want to barge in. Mama likes to fix everything up.

JULIE

Look! We're leaving in a few days. When were you planning on visiting them?

HAROLD

I'll call them when we get back to the hotel.

JULIE

Is there something you're not telling me?

HAROLD

(laughs weakly)  
Like what?

JULIE

It just seems like you're avoiding seeing your mother.

HAROLD

Ridiculous!

Julie looks at him suspiciously and returns to her map.

JULIE

They live pretty close to here. Why don't we drop by and surprise them.

Harold is slightly panicked.

HAROLD

No, no. That's okay. I'll drop by later first. Make sure they're healthy.

JULIE

They were healthy before we left home. Why wouldn't they still be healthy?

HAROLD

When you get old, things happen quick.

JULIE

Turn at the next right.

HAROLD

Why?

The vehicle makes a right turn.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Where are we going?

JULIE

Make a left at the next light.

The vehicle slows and turns left. Harold starts to realize the gravity of the situation.

HAROLD

Okay, listen. I'll park the car and go in first.

JULIE

Make another left on Elm. It should be about four or five blocks.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- CONTINUOUS

The vehicle turns onto a residential street shaded with trees and lined with small, neat brick houses and duplexes. The vehicle parks in front of one of the houses. Harold gets out and walks toward one of the houses. The others stay inside the car.

HAROLD

Wait here!

He speaks aloud to himself while looking at the houses.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

One thousand three Elm. One thousand three Elm.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- CONTINUOUS

TRUDY

Mom, I thought they lived at one thousand eight.

They look at each other. Suddenly, the car doors swing open and Julie and the children jump out and start across the street toward 1008 Elm. As they approach the appropriate duplex, Harold looks across the street and sees them as they walk up the sidewalk.

He speaks to the occupant of the house who points across the street toward the duplex. We can see him wave "thank you" to the occupant and hurry across the street, panic in his eyes.

JULIE

(to children)

You're going to meet your grandparents. When they open the door, I want all of you tell yell "Surprise!"

As Julie knocks on the door, she looks around to make sure all the children's collars are straight and hair untangled. Harold in b.g. run toward the duplex. Grandma Levit opens the door and sees the group (except Harold) on her doorstep.

EVERYONE

Surprise!

Grandma Levit stares in astonishment at a grinning Julie and children. Suddenly, she sees Harold run up behind the others. Before Harold has a chance to speak, the front door SLAMS in all their faces. Julie and the children look at each other, dumbfounded. Realizing Harold knows more than he's admitting, she turns to him.

JULIE

She looked healthy to me.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Harold and Julie sit on beds opposite each other. The children walk in and out of the hotel room. Both Harold and Julie are upset and argue.

HAROLD

I blame myself in this deal.

JULIE

How generous! Like there's someone else to blame?

HAROLD

She's not mad at you. It's me she hates.

JULIE

Do you want to take a vote? I think that's something we can all agree on.

HAROLD

Look. What do you want me to do? Kill myself?

JULIE

Not with your insurance plan.  
(beat)  
So what did your father say?

HAROLD

He said Mama's calmed down. Two shots of Mogan David. Since this may be the last time she'll have a chance to humiliate me, she's going to make an effort to be civil. Pop said they'll be at the hotel at 3 o'clock. We've got about 15 minutes. Why don't we just hang out in the lobby till they get here. They're always late.

Julie picks up Suzy.

JULIE

Come on, kids. Let's wait for Grandma Lucifer in the lobby.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- MOMENTS LATER

The family stands inside the elevator, facing the front. The doors of the elevator open and the family steps into the lobby.

JULIE

I don't know if I can stand to spend the evening with that woman.

HAROLD

Don't worry about her. Mama's just a crazy old woman.

As he finishes his sentence, he looks up to see his parents in the chairs directly in front of them. Grandma Levit glares at him as Harold and the family walk up to them.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Hey, Pops! Mama!

Grandpa Levit stands and gives him and Julie a hug. Grandma Levit remains in her seat.

GRANDMA LEVIT

We've been waiting here 30 minutes.  
Is this how you treat your parents?

Harold looks at his watch.

HAROLD

But Mama, Pop said to meet you here  
at 3. It's 15 till.

GRANDMA LEVIT

When your father says three o'clock,  
you know he means come 30 minutes  
early.

HAROLD

How would I know . . .

GRANDMA LEVIT

(dismissively)  
If you're late, you're late. I didn't  
come down here to argue with you.

HAROLD

You know Julie.

JULIE

(smiles icily)  
We've met.

HAROLD

Say, there's a cafe next to the hotel.  
Let's sit down and get something to  
drink. Come on, kids.

Everyone moves toward the front of the hotel.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE -- LATER

Everyone is sits around the table with glasses of tea in  
front of them. Harold sits next to Grandma Levit. Julie  
sits across from them next to Grandpa Levit. Trudy and Oakley  
sit in chairs between them. Suzy sits in Grandma Levit's  
lap.

GRANDMA LEVIT

(to Oakley)  
How are you doing in school?

He shrugs his shoulders.

OAKLEY

I don't know.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
I wasn't very good at small talk.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
Did you observe the Passover Seder  
this year?

OAKLEY  
(earnestly)  
No, ma'am. I never saw it.

She shoots an angry glance at Harold.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
The Passover Seder is not an object.  
It's a religious celebration where  
Jews remember their escape from Egypt.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
Well, why didn't she say so in the  
first place?

GRANDMA LEVIT  
Does your mother ever fix you matzo  
ball soup?

HAROLD  
(interrupting)  
So how have you two been?

GRANDMA LEVIT  
Like you care. I only hear from you  
3 times in 10 years. Now you want  
to know how we've been?

HAROLD  
Mama, you told me not to ever call  
you again.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
For the first time, you do what I  
say?

HAROLD  
Well, do you see me sitting here?  
I'm visiting now, aren't I?

GRANDMA LEVIT  
I have to hear about it from your  
father.

Harold looks down at his tea on the table and takes a deep breath. Grandpa Levit chats with Julie while Suzy tugs at Grandma Levit's hair. Grandma Levit pushes Suzy's hand away without looking down at her.

Harold and Grandma Levit lean toward each other so that only they two can hear each other.

HAROLD

It was about time you met Julie and the children.

GRANDMA LEVIT

We have met Julie . . .when you got married.

HAROLD

I don't think that inquisition over the telephone qualifies as a meeting.

GRANDMA LEVIT

I was trying to be fair.

HAROLD

How were you trying to be fair?

GRANDMA LEVIT

Before I disowned you, I wanted to know if she was going to convert.

Harold leans back in his chair. A waiter who stands at the next table walks away.

HAROLD

Excuse me, waiter.

The waiter walks over to Harold.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Please bring me a scotch and soda.

WAITER

Sorry, Sir. We don't serve alcohol.

Harold waves him off.

GRANDMA LEVIT

(to Grandpa Levit)

Oi! He's a drinker now.

Harold starts to respond, but instead, slightly raises his hands in a gesture of futility.

GRANDPA LEVIT

You know my cousin Lou died last year. You remember him. He built that boat in his garage. He had to tear down the garage to get it out. Anyways, he was always saying he wanted to visit Jerusalem. It was always Jerusalem.

(MORE)



GRANDPA LEVIT (CONT'D)

After the funeral, they cremated him and sent his ashes to Jerusalem. They spent all that money on airfare, and he didn't even know he was there.

HAROLD

Maybe that's a lesson for us. We never know how much time we have. We ought to do what we want while we're alive.

GRANDPA LEVIT

I don't want to go to Jerusalem.

HAROLD

I know that, Pop. That's not what I'm saying.

GRANDPA LEVIT

(shouts to waiter)

I need some more tea over here.

He looks back up at Harold.

GRANDPA LEVIT (CONT'D)

Can you believe the prices they charge in these restaurants for tea?

HAROLD

(resigned)

No, I can't.

His parents speak to him at the same time, apparently oblivious of the other.

GRANDMA LEVIT

(to Harold)

My back's been acting up again. You remember when you were growing up that I was strong as an ox. Now, I can hardly get out of bed, sometimes. My neighbor recommended a chiropractor, but I'm kind of scared to go. Someone told me they're not real doctors, but they must be. Otherwise, they wouldn't call themselves doctors.

GRANDPA LEVIT

(to Harold)

How's the appliance business these days? You should appreciate having a job to go to every day. Sitting around the house is the worst. Sometimes, I think that when they put you out to pasture, they should go ahead and put a bullet in your brain. My advice to you is "never get old." What do you think of the Yankees this year? I don't see them winning the pennant again.

Harold feigns interest in each conversation, looking back and forth, shakes his head up and down, back and forth.

They suddenly stop speaking at the same time, waiting for a response.

HAROLD  
 (looks at both parents)  
 You are absolutely right.

They both seem satisfied with his response. Grandpa turns his attention to Julie.

GRANDPA LEVIT  
 How do you like Miami?

JULIE  
 It sort of feels like it's not part of the U.S. I even saw a Cuban family on Lincoln Road.

GRANDPA LEVIT  
 There are a few Cubans here who escaped Castro. They're only here for a few months, till Castro's gone.  
 (beat)  
 Hey!

Everyone looks up.

GRANDPA LEVIT (CONT'D)  
 Do you know how to keep a Jewish woman from having sex.  
 (beat)  
 Marry her.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 Sid. That's not true. Telling stupid jokes keep a Jewish woman from having sex.

GRANDPA LEVIT  
 (softly)  
 Whoops!

He laughs and puts his hand over his mouth.

GRANDPA LEVIT (CONT'D)  
 Oakley, I hear you're a big baseball fan.

Curious, Oakley looks up and nods his head.

GRANDPA LEVIT (CONT'D)  
 Cousin Lou left me an autographed baseball when he died. I don't know why. I think the Yankees signed it. Maybe you want it?

Oakley's eyes widen.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
 Did I want it? Do fat ladies wear  
 girdles?

Oakley smiles to himself.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I'll be a hero at school. Kids will  
 line up to see the "ball." This was  
 almost too good . . .

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 Sid, your cousin Lou wanted you to  
 have that ball. You can't give it  
 away.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)  
 . . . to be true.

Grandpa Levit looks at Oakley and shrugs his shoulders.  
 Oakley sits, stunned.

HAROLD  
 It's getting late. So why don't we  
 walk around, maybe catch a movie or  
 something.

JULIE  
 Now you kids stay in the room and  
 watch tv, all right? We'll be back  
 in a couple of hours.

TRUDY  
 Mother! Please! I'm almost  
 graduating from high school.

HAROLD  
 Ready to go, Mama?

Grandma Levit stands and hands Suzy to Harold.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 (indifferent)  
 If you want.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- LATER

Trudy, holding Oakley's and Suzy's hands, walks past the  
 front desk on the way back up to the room. The desk clerk  
 stands behind the front desk.

TRUDY  
 What do people here do at night for  
 fun? It looks pretty dead.

DESK CLERK

It is, mostly. We do get celebrities coming through from time to time- Frank Sinatra, Jackie Gleason. Elvis Presley's in town tonight.

We hear angelic, REVELATORY MUSIC. Trudy's eyes widen.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

This was the Holy Grail. I'd never seen Trudy this way before. It was a cross between the ecstasy of being named Miss America and the determination of a Japanese Kamikaze pilot.

TRUDY

What? Omigod! Where is he?

DESK CLERK

He's staying at the Fountainebleu.

TRUDY

Would you please call us a taxi, and tell them to hurry.

OAKLEY

Mom told us to stay in the room and watch tv.

Her face suddenly turns angry.

TRUDY

If you screw this up for me or tell anyone about it, your life will become worthless.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

That's all I needed to hear.

INT. FOUNTAINEBLEU HOTEL FRONT DESK -- LATER

Trudy stands in front of the desk with Suzy and Oakley beside her. The desk clerk is busy working.

TRUDY

Sir? Sir? Would you help me. I'm Elvis Presley's nanny. I'm here with his son and little girl. I need to bring the kids to him, personally.

She signals Oakley.

OAKLEY

I want my daddy, Elvis Presley.

Oakley smiles bravely at the desk clerk. He eyes her suspiciously.

DESK CLERK

I didn't know Mr. Presley had children.

TRUDY

It's very hush-hush. The fans, you know.

She pretends to be frightened.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

You won't say anything, will you?  
I'll get fired.

The desk clerk turns and picks up the telephone.

DESK CLERK

Connect me with the Penthouse, please.

He waits a moment.

DESK CLERK (CONT'D)

No one answers. You're welcome to wait here. His manager should be here soon. You can speak to him.

TRUDY

Thank you.

Trudy and the other children sit in nearby chairs. When the clerk turns his back, she and the others slip away.

INT. FRONT OF ELEVATOR -- MOMENTS LATER

Trudy, Oakley and Suzy face forward inside the elevator, waiting for the door to close. A few other people stand inside. As the doors close, Trudy reaches for the floor button.

INT. INSIDE OF ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

The top button has a description beside it reading "Penthouse." There is a keyhole next to it. Trudy punches it, but nothing happens. She punches it several more times, but nothing happens.

ELEVATOR PASSENGER

I think you have to have a key to make it go to the Penthouse.

EXT. TICKET BOOTH OF CINEMA -- LATE AFTERNOON

Harold, Julie, Grandpa Levit and Grandma Levit walk up to the ticket booth.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 (to the ticket seller)  
 What's playing?

TICKET SELLER  
 Lust for Life.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 I don't like the sound of that.  
 What's it about?

People have gathered in back of the group and wait to buy their tickets.

TICKET SELLER  
 It's about Vincent van Gogh. He was an artist.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 Is there any sex in it? I'm not going in if people are taking off their clothes.

People behind them become restless.

TICKET SELLER  
 (impatiently)  
 There's no sex. You'll feel right at home. Four tickets at 75 cents each is \$3.00.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 Seventy-five cents apiece? That's outrageous. Isn't there a senior's discount?

Harold puts three dollars through the ticket window.

HAROLD  
 Forget it, Mama. I'm paying.

GRANDMA LEVIT  
 No, you're not. Let me see the manager.

Harold pushes her forward through the doors.

INT. CINEMA -- LATER

The theater is populated mostly with elderly patrons. Harold, Julie, Grandma Levit and Grandpa Levit sit together. Grandpa Levit is asleep. His head leans against Julie's shoulder, his SNORING audible. Two elderly women sit a few rows in front of them. Others are scattered about, ahead and behind them. MOVIE DIALOGUE can be heard.

ELDERLY FEMALE THEATER PATRON  
(with unintentionally  
loud voice)

That actress looks just like my  
daughter-in-law, Tina, in Chicago.  
Everyone tells my son, Jules, that  
she's quite a catch. All the girls  
were crazy about Jules. When Jules  
was . . .

FIRST ANONYMOUS ELDERLY MALE THEATER  
PATRON

Who cares about your son? We're  
trying to watch Kirk Douglas.

ELDERLY FEMALE THEATER PATRON  
(indignantly)

This is a private conversation over  
here!

FIRST ANONYMOUS ELDERLY MALE THEATER  
PATRON

It's so private everyone in the  
goddamn theater can hear you!

Grandma Levit turns and cranes her neck toward the voice.

GRANDMA LEVIT

If you're going to use that gutter  
language in here, I'm going to call  
the usher to have you thrown out!

SECOND ANONYMOUS ELDERLY PATRON

Youse people over there, shut up! I  
didn't pay 75 cents to come in here  
to listen to you crackpots!

JULIE

(sotto voce)  
Ay yi yi!

GRANDMA LEVIT

(to second anonymous  
elderly patron)  
If you don't shut up I'm sending my  
son over there to slap you!

SECOND ANONYMOUS ELDERLY PATRON

(defiantly)  
Come and get me!

EXT. SIDEWALK -- EARLY EVENING

Harold, Julie Grandpa Levit, and Grandma Levit solemnly walk  
from the exit of the theater down the sidewalk. Finally,  
Grandma speaks.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Your brother, Freddie, would have defended me and slapped that ruffian.

HAROLD

Eighty-year-old ruffians are the only kind Freddie would tackle. Look, I didn't come to get involved in nursing home brawls. You're always getting into fights with everyone.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Freddie would never talk to me like this. You were always a bad boy, a real shaigetz. I had to go to school all the time to get you out of trouble. You never showed any respect.

HAROLD

You never showed any love.

They walk in silence for a few beats.

GRANDPA LEVIT

(to Julie)

That's some young woman you have for a daughter. She's quite the looker.

JULIE

Harold's the only father she's ever known. We're very proud of her. She's very level-headed for her age.

INT. FOUNTAINEBLEU HOTEL POOL -- CONTINUOUS

Trudy roams the pool area, Oakley by her side and Suzy draped across her back. Trudy waves a folded up paper in her hand.

TRUDY

Telegram! Telegram for Mr. Elvis Presley!

EXT. SIDEWALK -- EVENING

Julie, Harold and his parents pass by a diner.

JULIE

Let's grab a quick bite. I need to pick up some sandwiches for the kids.

HAROLD

Good idea. That okay? Mama? Pops?



INT. DINER -- MOMENTS LATER

Everyone takes a chair at one of the tables. The waiter hands them menus.

WAITER

Drinks?

HAROLD

Tea for everyone. We're in a bit of a hurry. We'll go ahead and order our food now, too.

The waiter takes out his order pad and pen, ready to write.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Mama?

She stares at the menu.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Do you know what you want?

She continues to study the menu.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Come back to me.

HAROLD

Pops?

GRANDPA LEVIT

I'll take a pastrami on rye.

JULIE

A cheeseburger and fries.

HAROLD

For me, a chicken salad sandwich.

Everyone looks at Grandma Levit with anticipation.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Are you ready to order, Mama?

(beat)

Mama?

GRANDMA LEVIT

Why is everyone rushing me? Okay, okay. I guess I'll take the corned beef sandwich.

JULIE

And waiter, please give us two hamburgers and a chicken salad to go.

The waiter walks off. Everyone around the table sits without speaking.

GRANDMA LEVIT

I wish I'd ordered the pastrami.  
Everyone was rushing me. I don't  
know what I ordered.

HAROLD

I can tell the waiter to change your  
order.

GRANDMA LEVIT

That's okay. I don't want to be any  
more trouble.

HAROLD

Don't be silly, Mama. That's not  
possible.

EXT. FRONT OF FOUNTAINEBLEU HOTEL -- EVENING

Trudy, with Oakley and Suzy in tow, dejectedly walks toward the curb in front of the passenger drop-off of the hotel where taxis are lined up. Suddenly, a limousine arrives. A crowd of people mill in front of it. Trudy and the other children stand in the crowd, facing the limousine.

As the car door opens, we hear excited SQUEALS and SHOUTS of "Elvis" and "Over here, Elvis." Only Trudy's thunderstruck face is visible as it takes on a beatific glow. After she watches the entourage pass, she "floats" over to the taxi.

TRUDY

(breathless and still  
in awe, to taxi driver)  
Brocken Arms on Elvis Drive, please.

After Trudy and Oakley climb into the taxi and close the door, the taxi speeds away.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

That was the day my sister, Trudy,  
became one of the "fabulous people."

INT. OUTSIDE THE LEVIT HOTEL ROOM -- EVENING

In the hallway of the hotel, Harold and Julie put the key in the lock.

JULIE

I hope the kids are okay. I shouldn't  
have left them alone.

They open the door.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Trudy and Oakley lie on the bed and watch tv. Suzy is asleep on the adjacent bed.

JULIE

Anything happen while we were gone?

TRUDY

No. Nothing at all.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- DAY

Harold, Julie and the children sit in the family automobile. The car comes to a stop in front of Harold's parents' duplex. Harold turns off the motor.

JULIE

She didn't say three words to me the whole time we were with them.

HAROLD

You have to make an effort.

JULIE

Wait a minute. Now it's my fault?

HAROLD

I'm not saying that.

JULIE

Thanks for your support.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Everyone gets out and walks up the sidewalk to the DUPLEX FRONT DOOR.

HAROLD

We'll eat lunch, say our goodbyes, and off we go. Just try to tolerate her a few more hours. She said she had something special prepared for me.

As Harold lifts his fist to knock on the front door, it opens. DELORES STEINMAN, an attractive, bleached blonde woman in her late 30s stands in the open door. She wears a very expensive, seductive-looking dress.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Delores! Delores Steinman!

INSIDE THE DUPLEX.

Harold enters the house and they both hug each other. Delores then plants a big kiss on Harold's lips as Julie stares in disbelief. She and the rest enter the house into the living room.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Julie, I want you to meet Delores Steinman. Make that Delores Greene.

DELORES

Make that Delores Steinman. Me and Bernie's divorce was final six months ago last week.

(to Julie)

I'm sure Harold told you that we were engaged once, before Harold took that job in Texas.

HAROLD

(with nervous smile)

It wasn't official or anything.

Julie's eyes narrow as she stares at Harold. Everyone finds a place to sit down in the living room. Grandma Levit enters the room.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Delores! What do you think? Harold hasn't changed a bit after all these years.

JULIE

(to Grandma Levit)

You'd be surprised how much he's changed.

(to Delores)

Tell us more about this engagement. You may not believe it, but it seemed to have slipped Harold's mind.

Delores touches Harold on the knee.

DELORES

Why don't you tell the story, Harold?  
(beat)

No, that's okay. I will. Harold's family and mine lived next door to each other when we were kids. Then, after we got older, we became very good neighbors.

She laughs with a flirty expression.

DELORES (CONT'D)

Isn't that right, Harold?

HAROLD

(embarrassed)

Julie's not interested in ancient history.

(to Julie)

Are you?

Bristling, Julie doesn't respond.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Delores made your favorite food, noodle pudding and cholent. It's already on the table. Let's go ahead and eat before it gets cold.

As Julie stands up, she discreetly points her finger at Harold and distinctly, but silently, mouths the words "You are dead." With the silent articulation of the word "dead," she makes the gesture of slitting a neck.

Oakley also stands and follows his mother. He passes a shelf and notices a small stand which supports a baseball. Moving closer, Oakley can make out the signatures of "Roger Maris" and "Mickey Mantle" nestled in the center of a dozen other haphazardly scrawled names. He reverently approaches the ball and stares.

DELORES

You like baseball?

Oakley looks up.

DELORES (CONT'D)

Mrs. Levit, this ball doesn't do much for your decor. Is it okay if we give it to the boy?

Grandma Levit looks at the two grouped around the ball and frowns. When Delores looks up, Grandma Levit forces a smile.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Of course, Delores. I was going to offer it to him before. It just slipped my mind.

Delores takes the ball from its stand and hands it to Oakley. Oakley holds both cupped hands out to receive it like a crown at a coronation.

INT. DINING TABLE -- LATER

Harold, Julie, and Delores sit at the dining table. Grandma Levit cleans off the table. Trudy sits in a chair in the backyard and watches Suzy. While Delores reminisces with Harold, Grandpa Levit gets up and goes into the living room where Oakley sits, studying his baseball.

HAROLD

Hey, Pops. Where're you going?

GRANDPA LEVIT

I got to sit down in my chair for awhile.

DELORES

(laughing, to Harold)

Do you remember your friend Eddie's bat mitzvah gift to me? He made a big show about presenting it in front of everyone. When I opened it, there was this training bra in the box. I couldn't figure out what it was at first. I held it up like a dead chicken. I was the last one to figure out what it was.

Harold laughs.

HAROLD

If I remember right, your breasts didn't need much training.

As Harold turns, he sees Julie's expression and immediately stops laughing.

JULIE

So, Delores, how did you know Harold was going to be here?

DELORES

Harold's mother called my mother. Isn't Mrs. Levit a dear?

JULIE

(icily)

I was thinking more of a wolf.

No one speaks for a moment.

DELORES

Oh! I'm a buyer now for Franklin Department Stores. It's wonderful. I get to go to fashion shows all over the country. We make deals with different designers and put their fashions in our stores.  
(to Julie)

What type of work do you do?

JULIE

I take care of the house and these kids you see sitting around.

Delores responds with a patronizing tone.

DELORES

So you're a housewife. How nice.  
You're so lucky. I wish I could  
toss on some old shift. In my  
business, I always have to watch the  
way I look.

Suddenly self-conscious, Julie looks down at her dress and starts examining it.

DELORES (CONT'D)

I wouldn't worry about it, dear.  
You're on vacation.

Grandma Levit comes over and sets a plate of cookies on the table.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Remember how much you used to like  
macaroons, Harold?

HAROLD

Thanks, Mama.

Grandma Levit sits down at the table.

GRANDMA LEVIT

(looks at Harold and  
Delores)

It must be delightful seeing each  
other after all these years.

HAROLD

It's nice to come home again, for  
awhile.

Harold picks up a macaroon. No one says anything.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Delores, what happened between you  
and Bernie?

HAROLD

Mama! That's personal.

DELORES

That's all right. Really. We just  
grew apart. Didn't really have  
anything in common to begin with.  
He was Orthodox. I was Reform.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Mixed marriages never work out.

HAROLD

Mother! That's insulting to Julie  
and me!

GRANDMA LEVIT

Forgive me for telling the truth.  
What do you know about Julie's  
culture? What does she know about  
satisfying you

(points to her heart)

Here? How can you even begin to  
understand each other enough to live  
together for fifty years . . . like  
me and your father?

HAROLD

Julie and I may not know everything  
about each other's religion or culture  
or whatever you call it. She doesn't  
know a kugle from a bugle - and I  
consider grits building material.  
But we do know how each other thinks  
and feels. And I know that she's  
the most important thing in my life.  
Without her, nothing would matter.

(beat)

Mama, Julie is my wife. I want us  
to all get along. But if you can't  
accept her, then you'll have to live  
without your son, too.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Are you sure this is how you want  
it?

HAROLD

I'm very sure.

Grandma Levit walks over and picks up her purse.

GRANDMA LEVIT

Sid, Delores and I are leaving.  
Tell the children goodbye for me.

Grandpa Levit stands.

GRANDPA LEVIT

Anna. Sit down and shut up. And  
leave these kids alone.

Grandma Levit stops and looks at her husband. He points to  
her chair.

GRANDPA LEVIT (CONT'D)

(softer)

Sit.

She sits down. Grandpa Levit winks at Harold.



EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE -- LATER

Harold and Julie walk down his parent's sidewalk toward their car. Harold has his arm around her shoulder. The children follow. She looks up at Harold.

JULIE

(softly)

I love you.

Oakley turns and runs back to the front door. He carefully sets the baseball on the mailbox next to the door and runs back to his family.

EXT. STREETS OF KEY WEST -- MORNING OF NEXT DAY

MONTAGE.

White, tropical wooden houses with plantation shutters line the streets. Coconut palm trees, tamarind trees and flowers dot the landscape. Sloppy Joe's Bar, ocean front and people walking around in semi-beach wear. A sign reads, "Kick your shoes off. You're in Key West."

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

Before we left, Dad wanted to check out Key West, islands so far south, we were closer to Havana than Miami. To paraphrase Dorothy, we weren't in Texas anymore.

EXT. DOWNTOWN KEY WEST -- MORNING

A parade rolls through downtown. It's informality has the air of a festival. CALYPSO MUSIC rolls across the crowd. People line the street, watching the procession. The Levits are among those who stand on the curb, all dressed in shorts and cotton shirts. Most of the people in the parade wear costumes of various sorts.

A group of women march down the street wearing barrels supported by shoulder straps, apparently with nothing on underneath. Another group are shirtless men which have the words to the "Star Spangled Banner" written on their backs, one word to a man. A few men wear female attire. As the parade moves past, each member of the Levit family stare in amazement.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

This beat the Rose Bowl Parade any day.

Trudy taps a FELLOW PARADE WATCHER. From his informal appearance, he is obviously a native of Key West.

TRUDY

How come the people aren't marching  
like in a regular parade.

FELLOW PARADE WATCHER

What would be the fun in that?

HAROLD

(to Julie)

Here comes the marching band.

The marching band is composed of supposed beachcombers in frayed shorts and straw hats. They bang coconut shells and eat bananas in synchronized cadence.

Another group follows. One man walks in front and carries a banner with a large marine snail drawn on it. Underneath it reads "Long Live the Conch Republic." He and his group wear bright Hawaiian shirts and straw beachcomber hats. They all march in different colors of plaid boxer underwear. Harold turns to the fellow parade watcher.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

What is the Conch Republic?  
(pronounced "conk")

FELLOW PARADE WATCHER

Freedom, brother. Freedom.

Harold turns back to Julie. They both smile.

HAROLD

Yeah!

EXT. MALLORY SQUARE IN KEY WEST -- DAY

The Levits stand against the railing of the pier and look out over the Atlantic Ocean. The children hold ice cream cones. MUSIC drifts in the background. Harold points toward the ocean horizon. Seagulls SQUAWK and children play and SQUEAL in the distance.

HAROLD

Oakley, if you kept on going in that direction for a little while, you'd be in Havana, Cuba. Right now, there's some woman over there doing the rhumba.

JULIE

You know he's only eight.

Harold stares out over the water, seemingly in a daydream.

HAROLD

Sometimes, I think it might be nice to live somewhere where life is more enjoyable. Someplace like here.

JULIE

What about your work? You have responsibilities, you know. Ages two, eight and sixteen.

HAROLD

People work here, too.

JULIE

Maybe when the kids leave home, we'll talk about it.

Harold continues to look out over the ocean.

HAROLD

Why don't we go by Ernest Hemingway's house? Maybe he'll be sitting outside.

JULIE

What would you say to him if you saw him?

HAROLD

(waves his hand)  
Hey, Ernest.

Julie just stares at him.

JULIE

Okay. We'll go visit Ernest, go back the hotel to freshen up, and then go get something to eat.

TRUDY

Who is Ernest Hemingway?

JULIE

Only your father's favorite author.

HAROLD

He won the Nobel Prize for literature?

There is no response from Trudy.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

He wrote A Farewell to Arms?

No response.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

For Whom the Bell Tolls?

TRUDY

Oh, the movie with Ingrid Bergman  
and Gary Cooper.

HAROLD

Er, more or less.

EXT. WHITEHEAD STREET -- LATER

The Levits drive down the street and slow in front of the Hemingway house, a two-story, stone Spanish colonial. They sit in front with the motor running.

HAROLD

So this is where Ernest Hemingway  
lives.

JULIE

They're going to think we're stalkers  
and call the police.

HAROLD

Isn't this what stalkers do?  
(beat)  
Do you think Ernie's home?

EXT. BALCONY OF HEMINGWAY HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

A woman, 60s, sits in a chair on the balcony, apparently enjoying the breeze.

JULIE (O.S.)

Who knows? There's a woman sitting  
on the balcony. Maybe it's his wife.

Below the balcony is a swimming pool.

OAKLEY (O.S.)

Look. They have a swimming pool.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- CONTINUOUS

Oakley and Trudy lean over the front seat. Oakley is anxious with anticipation.

OAKLEY

Dad! Can we jump in Ernest  
Hemingway's pool?

JULIE

Of course not, Oakley. That's someone  
else's property.

HAROLD

(almost to himself)  
It *would* be something to remember,  
though, wouldn't it.

EXT. BALCONY OF HEMINGWAY HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The woman on the balcony gets up and goes inside the house.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- CONTINUOUS

The family members watch her as she goes inside.

HAROLD

Well, everyone. Let's get out of here before they call the cops.

Julie looks up from thought and smiles.

JULIE

Why not? Let's do it.

Like a Chinese fire drill, everyone throws off terry cloth cover-ups and shoes and leaps out of the car.

HAROLD

I got Suzy!

EXT. WHITEHEAD STREET -- CONTINUOUS

The family runs pell-mell through the gates of the Hemingway house and out of sight. We hear SQUEALS and several SPLASHES. Subsequently, we hear a cat SHRIEK.

INT. AUTOMOBILE -- LATER

Everyone back in the car, Julie and Trudy dry their hair with towels.

JULIE

(still laughing)

That was so crazy. I loved it.

(beat)

Did you step on a cat?

HAROLD

I couldn't help it. They were everywhere.

Harold puts his hand on Julie's leg.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Thanks.

EXT. BEACH IN FRONT OF OCEAN -- DAY

Julie and Trudy sit on towels on the sand. Suzy, dressed in a sunsuit, plays in the sand next to her mother while Oakley plays on the water's edge. Harold stands nearby, fidgeting with a camera. All wear swimsuits, including Trudy, who wears a bikini.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.)

I learned something that summer,  
too. I wasn't half this or half  
that. I was a whole member of a  
family that loved one another. That's  
what family is.

Harold walks over to a nearby stranger who walks along the beach. After asking the man to take a photograph of the family, he motions everyone to come together in one place. Julie hugs Harold. The kids move closer and hug their parents. The scene freezes and turns into a black and white photograph.

ADULT OAKLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Over the years you lose many things  
you love. But when you think about  
it, you realize the love you've shared  
and the memories you've gained make  
those losses just a little bit more  
bearable.

(beat)

We lost Dad in 1988. Mom left us a  
few years later. They never did  
leave Texas. Suzy? She became an  
executive for a company which  
manufactured adult diapers. Trudy  
became an advocate for the labeling  
of obscene lyrics on rock albums.  
Me? I'm still a dreamer- dreaming  
of times long ago lost.

FADE OUT:

THE END